Executive Summary

a. Introduction

Orientation & First-Year Experience coordinates the orientation, advising, and registration of students new to the University and offers special programs for family members of new students. The department works collaboratively with many NIU offices and programs to provide a high quality first-year experience to incoming students. Orientation programs are provided for students entering NIU for the fall, spring, and summer terms. Every student entering NIU is required to attend a one-day orientation. When a student attends Orientation, the office places a “positive service indicator” in the student’s record; when academic advising is completed at Orientation, the student’s college office releases the registration hold.

The office also coordinates the First-Year Connections programs, which include Student Faculty Links (SFL), Retention Efforts for All in Coming Huskies (REACH), the First-Year Success Series (FYSS), the Common Reading Experience, and the UNIV 101 and 201 courses. These programs strive to enhance the persistence of students from the first to second year and to help students gain confidence and agency as they personally, socially, and academically adjust to campus life at NIU.

b. Overview of Goals

1) Provide high quality programs to educate and meet the needs of new students and their family members/guests in a welcoming environment which promotes student engagement within the university community.

2) Recruit and hire/select outstanding UNIV 101/201 instructors and undergraduate student leaders for positions such as Orientation Leaders, Student Orientation Coordinators, Graduate Student Leaders, Peer Instructors, and Student Interns who are representative of the NIU student body and able to positively represent the University and the department.

3) Conduct high quality training and development sessions for Orientation Leaders, First-Year Connections student staff, and UNIV 101/201 faculty, Graduate Student Leaders, and Peer Instructors.

4) Serve as a collaborative partner with Academic and Student Affairs to inform new students and family members/guests about programs, services, and opportunities for involvement.

c. Brief Analysis of Departmental Assessment Status

Between August 2007 and August 2012, Orientation & First-Year Experience served over 31,914 students and 31,119 family members who participated in Orientation. More than 8,575 students were enrolled in UNIV 101/201 courses, approximately 171 students were involved with the Student Faculty Links program, and more than 4,800 students were contacted through the REACH program. Hundreds more have participated in the First-Year Success Series and the Common Reading Experience.
d. Select Recommendations

Assessment related to the UNIV 101 course through Educational Benchmarking, Inc.

2. Departmental History

Orientation & First-Year Experience began as an initiative of the Division of Student Affairs in 1974. At that time, Vice President for Student Affairs Harry J. Canon appointed Dr. Robert P. Wanzek to the position of Director of Orientation, and charged him with developing an orientation program to serve the needs of Northern’s incoming freshmen, transfer students, and their parents. This unit grew to include the Campus Information Center shortly thereafter, and at one time incorporated an Academic Options Center to work with students who were denied access to Northern’s limited admission programs, primarily in the rapidly expanding College of Business. In 1982, oversight for the Orientation and Campus Information Center was transferred to Academic Affairs under the aegis of the Associate Provost, as it was believed that the orientation programs could be better supported in that division. At that time, the Director reported to the Director of Undergraduate Admissions, initiating a long-term collaboration of jointly recruiting, hiring, training, and supervising student staff for Orientation, Campus Visits, and STARS (a volunteer recruitment outreach effort involving trained undergraduate students). During the 1980s and 1990s, programs and services were added to the unit. Responsibility for the campus tours and visits component of the Admissions Office was shifted to Orientation & Campus Information.

Additionally, professional orientation staff assisted Admissions in developing publications and initiating Northern’s open house programs for prospective students and families. Daily and special campus tours were coordinated from this unit. In September 2005, the Orientation Office was moved from Academic Affairs to Student Affairs as part of the comprehensive five-year strategic plan for the Division of Student Affairs. Convoked in late 2005, a Task Force on a Comprehensive First-Year Experience, consisting of 13 faculty, staff, and students, engaged in a process to study best practices, benchmark, and provide recommendations for a comprehensive FYE plan at NIU. In 2006, the department’s title was changed to Orientation & First-Year Experience to more appropriately reflect the programmatic initiatives associated with the office. In July 2007, the Northern Ambassadors/Campus Visits program was returned to the Office of Admissions. Now seated in the Enrollment Management Community of Practice, Orientation & First-Year Experience is a direct collaborative partner with Undergraduate Admissions, Scholarship, and Financial Aid, and is working toward unifying the experiences students have from admission to graduation. Several recent initiatives have included implementing Foundations of Excellence® in the first college year, a first-year Common Reading Experience, and a pilot Sophomore Year Experience.

3. Departmental Mission and Goals

Mission Statement

In support of the academic missions of the University and the Division of Student Affairs & Enrollment Management, Orientation & First-Year Experience aims to help all first-year freshmen and transfer students make a successful transition to Northern Illinois University. Through student-centered programs, courses, and collaborative partnerships with faculty and staff, Orientation & First-Year Experience strives to enhance students' academic achievement, increase their persistence to the second year, and help them integrate into the academic and social communities found on NIU's campus.
Program Goals of Orientation & First-Year Experience 2007–2012:

1. Provide high quality programs to educate and meet the needs of new students and their family members/guests in a welcoming environment which promotes student engagement within the university community.

2. Recruit and hire/select outstanding UNIV 101/201 instructors and undergraduate student leaders for positions such as Orientation Leaders, Student Orientation Coordinators, Graduate Student Leaders, Peer Instructors, and Student Interns who are representative of the NIU student body and able to positively represent the University and the department.

3. Conduct high quality training and development sessions for Orientation Leaders, First-Year Connections student staff, and UNIV 101/201 faculty, student Graduate Student Leaders, and Peer Instructors.

4. Serve as a collaborative partner with Academic and Student Affairs to inform new students and family members/guests about programs, services, and opportunities for involvement.

4. Methods
(*Found in Appendix)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Description of Method</th>
<th>Timeline (Frequency)</th>
<th>Person Responsible</th>
<th>Goals Addressed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Survey*</td>
<td>Orientation student survey: 40-question online survey which assesses satisfaction with students’ experience during orientation.</td>
<td>Every orientation date</td>
<td>Orientation Coordinator</td>
<td>1, 2, 3, 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Survey*</td>
<td>Orientation family survey: 35-question paper survey which assesses satisfaction with family members’ experience during orientation.</td>
<td>Every orientation date</td>
<td>Orientation Coordinator</td>
<td>1, 2, 3, 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survey</td>
<td>INVOLVE Survey: 6-question online survey which connects students’ interest with campus organizations.</td>
<td>Every summer orientation date</td>
<td>Orientation Coordinator</td>
<td>1, 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survey</td>
<td>August Peer Instructor Training survey: 20-question online survey which assesses the effectiveness of Fall P.I. Training.</td>
<td>Every August</td>
<td>Assistant Director for First-Year Connections</td>
<td>2, 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survey*</td>
<td>UNIV Instructor Development Workshop: 21-question online survey that assesses the effectiveness of the workshop from the perspective of new and returning instructors.</td>
<td>Every May</td>
<td>Assistant Director for First-Year Connections</td>
<td>1, 2, 3, 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survey</td>
<td>Student-Faculty Links: 20-question online survey which provides information about becoming a mentor and collects applicant information.</td>
<td>Summer</td>
<td>Assistant Director for First-Year Connections</td>
<td>1, 2, 3, 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Method</td>
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<td>Timeline (Frequency)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Survey</td>
<td><strong>UNIV 101/201 Instructor Application</strong>: 35-question online survey which provides information about teaching UNIV 101/201 and collects applicant information.</td>
<td>Spring semester</td>
<td>Assistant Director for First-Year Connections</td>
<td>1, 2, 3, 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survey</td>
<td><strong>Fall 2012 Peer Instructor - April Training</strong>: 15-question online survey which assess the effectiveness of Spring P.I. Training.</td>
<td>Every April</td>
<td>Assistant Director for First-Year Connections</td>
<td>1, 2, 3, 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survey</td>
<td><strong>Student-Faculty Links End-of-Year Survey</strong>: 9-question online survey that assesses the quality of the mentor experience and collects feedback for program improvement.</td>
<td>Every December</td>
<td>Assistant Director for First-Year Connections</td>
<td>1, 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survey</td>
<td><strong>FYSS Program Evaluation</strong>: 11-question survey distributed to participants after attending an FYSS event, collecting feedback for future program improvements.</td>
<td>After each scheduled FYSS event</td>
<td>Assistant Director for First-Year Connections</td>
<td>1, 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survey</td>
<td><strong>MAP-Works questions about the Common Reading Experience</strong>: 5-8 questions added to the MAP-Works survey about students’ engagement with the Common Reading Experience.</td>
<td>Every September and November</td>
<td>Assistant Director for First-Year Connections</td>
<td>1, 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survey</td>
<td><strong>REACH</strong>: 3-question survey determining focus and usefulness of REACH caller contact.</td>
<td>Every evening after REACH calls are made</td>
<td>Assistant Director for First-Year Connections</td>
<td>1, 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survey*</td>
<td><strong>Mid-Semester Peer Instructor survey</strong>: 10- to 15-question survey assessing their experiences working with the UNIV 101/201 courses.</td>
<td>Every October</td>
<td>Assistant Director for First-Year Connections</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survey*</td>
<td><strong>Mid-Semester Instructor survey</strong>: 10-to 15-question survey assessing their experiences teaching the UNIV 101/201 courses.</td>
<td>Every October</td>
<td>Assistant Director for First-Year Connections</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survey*</td>
<td><strong>Orientation Leader Evaluation survey</strong>: Open-ended 16-question survey assessing their satisfaction and how the experiences affected their development.</td>
<td>Every August</td>
<td>Orientation Coordinator</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survey*</td>
<td><strong>August Peer Instructor training survey</strong>: 10- to 15-question survey designed to assess satisfaction and learning outcomes of the PI training sessions.</td>
<td>Every August after Peer Instructor training</td>
<td>Assistant Director for First-Year Connections</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Method</td>
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<tr>
<td>Survey*</td>
<td>UNIV 101/201 course evaluations: 45- to 50-question survey designed to capture students’ satisfaction with the course, instruction, and instructors.</td>
<td>Mid-November</td>
<td>Assistant Director for First-Year Connections</td>
<td>1, 2, 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survey</td>
<td>Sophomore Experiences Survey®: Measured the thriving quotient of NIU second-year students against international norms.</td>
<td>Spring 2012</td>
<td>Director of Orientation &amp; First-Year Experience</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survey</td>
<td>Foundations of Excellence® Self-Study and Improvement Process</td>
<td>2008 – 2011</td>
<td>Director of Orientation &amp; First-Year Experience/ Vice Provost</td>
<td>1, 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflective Journal*</td>
<td>Orientation Leader learning outcomes pre-test/post-test: Measures orientation leaders’ knowledge of campus, communication skills, critical and analytical skills, and appreciation of diversity.</td>
<td>Every February and August</td>
<td>Orientation Coordinator</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflective Journal</td>
<td>Graduate Student Leader Reflection Journals and End-of-Course Paper: GSLs are asked to reflect on their significant learnings over the course of the semester in relation to their personal and/or professional growth/development, leadership in the UNIV classroom and as a participant in the supplemental seminar, and student development in the first year of college.</td>
<td>Weekly for the first 12 weeks of the semester</td>
<td>Assistant Director for First-Year Connections/ Director of Orientation &amp; First-Year Experience</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journaling</td>
<td>Review of Orientation Program: This formative assessment is designed to improve orientation programs through reflection and discussion of professional staff’s experiences and perceptions. During the summer orientation program staff meets daily (weekly throughout the rest of the year) to discuss their observations.</td>
<td>Every September</td>
<td>Director of Orientation &amp; First-Year Experience</td>
<td>1, 3, 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individualized feedback</td>
<td>UNIV Instructor Observations: Master teachers observe a class taught by various UNIV instructors and review feedback together afterwards in an effort to provide instructors with</td>
<td>Late September</td>
<td>Assistant Director for First-Year Connections</td>
<td>2, 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Method</td>
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<tr>
<td>Benchmarking</td>
<td><strong>EBI Benchmarking Study:</strong> This national survey of UNIV 101 students includes questions to assess their first-year experiences at NIU and benchmark against comparable institutions.</td>
<td>Every 3-5 years; 2002, 2005, 2008</td>
<td>Director of Orientation &amp; First-Year Experience</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benchmarking</td>
<td><strong>Orientation &amp; First Year Experience Benchmarking Study:</strong> This comprehensive survey researched staffing, programming, and other functions of orientation offices from 26 Illinois and MAC institutions.</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Orientation Coordinator/Associate Director of Orientation &amp; First-Year Experience</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview</td>
<td><strong>Orientation Leader Selection Workshop Group interview:</strong> Designed to assess the ability for candidates to interact and work effectively with other students.</td>
<td>January</td>
<td>Orientation Coordinator</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus Groups</td>
<td><strong>Foundations of Excellence® Self-Study and Improvement Process</strong></td>
<td>2008-2011</td>
<td>Director of Orientation &amp; First-Year Experience/Assistant Director of Provost</td>
<td>1, 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus Groups</td>
<td><strong>UNIV textbook evaluation:</strong> Focus groups designed to formatively assess the effectiveness of the UNIV 101/201 new customized textbook.</td>
<td>Three focus groups of instructors and students each held in 2010 and 2011</td>
<td>Assistant Director for First-Year Connections/Director of Orientation &amp; First-Year Experience</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal Review</td>
<td><strong>Website review:</strong> This internal review assesses the department’s website for accuracy, effectiveness, and ways to be more interactive online.</td>
<td>At least twice annually</td>
<td>Orientation Coordinator/Assistant Director for First-Year Connections</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Document Review</td>
<td><strong>UNIV 101/201 Syllabus Evaluation:</strong> This document analysis ensures that all instructors are including the required components in their section and not demanding too little or too much for the one-credit hour UNIV.</td>
<td>Every August</td>
<td>Assistant Director for First-Year Connections/Director of Orientation &amp; First-Year Experience</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Document Review</td>
<td><strong>UNIV101 Retention/GPA study:</strong> Working with Institutional Research, this assessment is designed to compare traditionally admitted UNIV 101 students with non-UNIV 101 students to identify the impact of these courses as a campus retention and success effort.</td>
<td>Every Winter</td>
<td>Assistant Director for First-Year Connections</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observation</td>
<td><strong>Review of Orientation Program:</strong> This formative assessment is designed to improve orientation programs through reflection and discussion of professional staff’s experiences and perceptions. During the summer orientation program staff meets daily (weekly throughout the rest of the year) to discuss their observations.</td>
<td>Every September</td>
<td>Director of Orientation &amp; First-Year Experience</td>
<td>1, 3, 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance Task/Analytical Writing Task (production formats)</td>
<td><strong>Collegiate Learning Assessment:</strong> Administered as part of NIU’s participation in the Voluntary System of Accountability.</td>
<td>Every September/ October; completed by 100+ UNIV 101 first-year students</td>
<td>Director of Orientation &amp; First-Year Experience/ Assistant Director for First-Year Connections</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
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5. Goals by Method

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcomes by Methods Matrix</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Surveys</td>
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<tr>
<td>High Quality First-Year Programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recruitment of Student and Staff Members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training and Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>Collaborative Partnerships</td>
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</tbody>
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6. Results by Goal

Goal 1: “To provide high quality programs to educate and meet the needs of new students and their family members/guests in a welcoming environment which promotes student engagement within the university community” was met based on the following methods:

FY08
Annual Priority 1:
- Expand and enhance transfer orientation and transition programs (revised/new).
Target:
- Increase of 10% on orientation exit surveys and on UNIV 201 course effectiveness evaluations.
Results:
- Orientation Student Survey: Orientation evaluation responses increased 4% from 2008 to 2009.
- UNIV 101/201 Course Evaluations: The percentage of students satisfied or very satisfied with the course did not change from 2008 to 2009.
Use of Results:
- Added a student panel on transfer orientation dates.

Annual Priority 4:
- Launch Common Reading Experience (new).
Target:
- 80% of new freshmen will read some or all of selected book by October 2008.
- Learning outcome measures will show 75-80% level of achievement.
Results:
- 85% of students in UNIV sections using the Common Reading selection read all or part of the book.
- 10 UNIV course sections implemented the Common Reading Experience.
- 87% of students in UNIV sections using the Common Reading selection reported successfully reaching a learning outcome.
Use of Results:
- Set more realistic and achievable goals for upcoming years.
- Expand the Common Reading program as an option for all UNIV instructors to implement in their course sections.
- Increase program planning efforts outside the classroom.
- Engage the English and Communications Departments in the Common Reading Experience.
- Utilize the same book during the next academic year.

FY09
Annual Priority 1:
- Restructure current department and staffing to meet the needs of a comprehensive First-Year Experience (continuing).
Target:
- Revised position descriptions and organizational chart, and establishment of advisory councils and coordinating boards.
- Development of a departmental strategic plan which parallels the University’s & Division's plans.
Results:
- Made minor revisions on position descriptions and organizational chart.
Use of Results:
- Deferred action until completion of Foundations of Excellence® Self Study and Improvement process.

Annual Priority 3:
- Launch a Common Reading Experience (continuing).

Target:
- 60% of new freshmen will read some or all of selected book by October 2008. 30% of new freshmen will discuss the book in a class or workshop format.
- Learning outcome measures will show 75% level of achievement.

Results:
- 75% of students in UNIV sections using the Common Reading selection read all or part of the book.
- 24 UNIV course sections implemented the Common Reading Experience.
- 75% of students in UNIV sections using the Common Reading selection reported successfully reaching a learning outcome.

Use of Results:
- Increased programming around the book.

FY10
Annual Priority 1:
- Review, evaluate, and benchmark current transfer student programs to create a transfer student advisory panel in order to strengthen services offered to transfer students.

Target:
- Orientation data and focus groups demonstrate that current practices could be strengthened to better meet the needs of transfer students.

Results:
- No formal transfer student advisory panel has been developed; however, UNIV 201 students have become more involved in departmental programs as Peer Instructors, panelists on transfer orientation dates, and in informal advisory capacities.

Use of Results:
- Expanded the REACH program to include transfer student population.

Annual Priority 2:
- Expand Common Reading Experience in Pilot Year 2.

Target:
- Increase sections of UNIV utilizing the Common Reading Book by 50%.

Results:
- Increased sections of UNIV utilizing the Common Reading selection by 122%.

Use of Results:
- Continue to collaborate across divisional lines to increase the influence of the Common Reading Experience on student involvement and success.
Annual Priority 3:
- Improve the quality of the First-Year Success Series and increase attendance at FYSS events.

Target:
- 20% of 2010 freshman class will participate in at least one FYSS event.
- 80% of those students attending events will rate them as "good or "very good" on program evaluations.

Results:
- No data collected for fall 2010 FYSS due to staff vacancies.

Use of Results:
- Not applicable.

FY11
Annual Priority 1:

Target:
- Average attendance at FYSS events will meet or exceed 35 students.

Results:
- Created and administered FYSS Program Evaluation at each FYSS event.

Use of Results:
- Approximately 15 people attended each FYSS event in fall 2011.
- Determined topics of interest to students (e.g., scholarships, employment) and determined other ways to make the FYSS programs more appealing to first-year students, (e.g., changing location and time of events).

FY12
Annual Priority 2:
- Benchmarking with comparable institutions on best practices and staffing patterns.

Target:
- List of institutions is developed using data from NODA and the National Resource Center on the FYE-SIT.
- No more than 25 questions will be included in the calls and/or survey instrument.
- At least 20 comparable institutions will provide data.
- 2011 data will be analyzed and compared with 2007 –2008 data.
- Work load and scope of responsibilities evaluated from prior benchmarking to 2011 results.

Results:
- Picked comparable institutions from the Mid-American Conference, four-year Illinois public universities, and best practice institutions nationally.
- 25 questions were included in the calls and/or survey instrument.
- 26 comparable institutions provided data.
- 69% offered no placement testing at orientation.
- The average number of professional staff in each office was two to four.
- Benchmarking completed.
Use of Results:
- Compiled data and presented it to Student Affairs & Enrollment Management Cabinet in spring 2012.
- New student fee increase was based on data from benchmarking survey.
- Some data is now irrelevant due to department restructure.
- Attempted to include students in the closing presentation to end the day with a high level of energy.

Annual Priority 3:
- Expand Common Reading Experience (CRE) beyond O&FYE.

Target:
- 50% of freshman class (approximately 1,375 students) will read This I Believe II in full or part.
- 50% of freshman class (1,375 students) will participate in at least one in-class or out-of-class activity related to the CRE.
- At least 50 faculty/staff members will donate a copy of This I Believe II to needy first-year students.

Results:
- Approximately 86 instructors utilized the Common Reading Experience selection in their course sections across campus. At an average of 18 students enrolled in each course, approximately 1,548 students read or discussed at least part of the book.
- Approximately 350 students, faculty, staff, and community members attended Dan Gediman’s (the editor of the This I Believe II) speaking engagement on campus.
- Received approximately 30 book donations from thisibelieve.org and various faculty and staff members.

Use of Results:
- Continue to partner with English, Communications, and UNIV instructors to utilize the book in their courses. Work to expand collaborations to increase faculty involvement.

Other Evidence by Goal:

- **FY08 –12**
  - **Orientation Student Survey:** Orientation evaluations from 2008 –2012 indicate that students who participated in a summer orientation session and completed the evaluation rated the following items on a 5.00 scale with 5 being “strongly agree” and 1 being “strongly disagree”:
    - **Results:**
      - 4.37/5.00—The orientation materials were helpful and provided a good overview of the orientation day.
      - 4.30/5.00—I have a better understanding of student life at NIU because of the interactions with the orientation leader.
      - 4.31/5.00—Found NIU’s orientation program to be well organized.
      - 4.43/5.00—I feel confident in my decision to attend NIU this fall.
    - **Use of Results**
      - In the students’ online evaluation of their orientation experience, immediate feedback is available, which helps the department pinpoint areas of concern, including academic advising, lack of course availability during registration, and the lunch portion of the day (usually the lowest-ranked program component). Using data from previous years, the 2012 orientation lunch menu saw considerable changes, and lunch ratings from both students and family members increased significantly.
**Orientation Family Survey:** Orientation evaluations from 2008 –2012 indicate that family members who participated in a summer orientation session and completed the evaluation rated the following items on a 5.00 scale with 5 being “strongly agree” and 1 being “strongly disagree”:

- **Results**
  - 4.67/5.00—Many of my questions and concerns were addressed during the orientation program.
  - 4.74/5.00—Would recommend the NIU Orientation program to family members and guests of other new NIU students.

- **Use of Results**
  - **Student and Family Member Orientation Survey:** Each written comment was tallied into a subject area that is review and related to the quantitative data collected through these surveys. Collectively, these data were used formatively to enhance and strengthen the orientation program. The “Guiding for Student Success” session for parents and family members has been refocused to include more theory-based information.

**UNIV 101/201 course evaluations:** The UNIV 101/201 course evaluations have averaged 1,122 student respondents in each year from 2008 to 2011, and have consistently indicated that:

- **Results**
  - Over 87% of respondents expressed the course met or exceeded their expectations.
  - Over 83% of respondents indicated that they were satisfied or very satisfied with the course.
  - Over 90% of respondents said the course increased their understanding of how to locate and use university resources.
  - On average, 73% of respondents indicated that the course readings were relevant, interesting, and helpful.

- **Use of Results**
  - Course evaluations are shared with instructors to provide critical feedback and allow instructors an opportunity to reflect on how they might want to change the course and/or teaching style. Additionally, written feedback is themed and coded. Combined with the aggregate data from course evaluations, the results are used in preparation for training and development workshops for instructors and Peer Instructors. One example is the indicator on how the textbook was used. Question 30 on the Scantron survey asked students if the instructor utilized the textbook in the course, and question 3 on the written evaluation asked students what improvements to the textbook would they make (e.g., activities, content, format). Course evaluations from 2011 indicated that instructors reported to have used the textbook received more positive comments on the usefulness and quality of the textbook. These results were used to inform a session at the May training for the 2012 UNIV Instructors.
  - UNIV 101/201 written evaluations provided direction for the revised edition of the UNIV 101/201 textbook. After transcribing and coding the data, areas were identified for improvement. Specifically, chapter layouts, activities, objectives, student tips, updating the diversity chapter, and adding additional information on safety and technology were identified as changes for the 2012 edition.

- **FY12**
  - **UNIV 101/201 Syllabus Document Review:** Every August, instructors are required to submit their syllabi. The course coordinators review syllabi to make certain that a) all required course content will be covered, b) instructors have provided contact information, grading criteria, and course timeline, and c) instructors are not requiring too much or too little work for the one-credit-hour course.
Results
- In 2012, seven syllabi were returned to instructors for minor revisions.

Use of Results
- After reviewing all syllabi, the course coordinators ensure that course objectives will be met and that the required content and activities are in the document. When major variances from the required and recommended elements of the course are found, instructors are contacted by one of the course coordinators and informed of necessary changes to bring the syllabus into alignment with course parameters. A revised syllabus is required in these cases, and a discussion usually takes place between the instructor and a course coordinator so that a common understanding is reached. Additionally, syllabi are selected to demonstrate both positive and negative aspects of syllabus development at the course-planning workshop.

FY11 –12
Observed Review of Orientation Program:
Results
- In 2012 it was observed that new directional signs are needed for the program.
- In 2011 it was noted that Cole Hall would be open for summer 2012.

Use of Results
- The presentation for students in Wirtz Hall, “New Roles, Responsibilities, and Resources,” was moved to Cole Hall. This provided for the use of state-of-the-art technology and better seating for students.
- The “Northern Pact” Reception was added for family members and guests following the closing presentation. This allowed new students an opportunity to share their thoughts about the Northern Pact. Staff members attended the reception to mingle with guests.
- New directional signs may be purchased for FY13.

Website Review: In 2011 Common Reading Experience (CRE) websites from other colleges were reviewed to answer the types of CRE programming and marketing used by comparable institutions, including Ball State University, Bowling Green State University and Appalachian State University.
Results
- Many websites had a section for an explanation of the Common Reading Experience, including a history of the book, events, and links to resources.

Use of Results
- The First-Year Connections Common Reading website changed to include links on Why a Common Reading, Events, Instructional Resources, Read the Book: Give the Book, Submit your Essay, History, and Quotes.
- Corporate sponsors were also added to the website.

Goal 2: “To recruit and hire outstanding UNIV 101/201 instructors and undergraduate student leaders for positions such as Orientation Leaders, Student Orientation Coordinators, Graduate Student Leaders, Peer Instructors, and Student Interns who are representative of the NIU student body and able to positively represent the University and the department” was met based on the following methods:

FY09
Annual Priority 2:
- Implement a Campus-Wide FYE Advocate Award (to parallel national award given by the National Center on the First-Year Experience & Students in Transition).
Target:
- Recipient will be recognized at an annual recognition event.

Results:
- Implemented Outstanding Service Award.

Use of Results:
- This award will lead into a campus-wide FYE Advocate Award.

FY10
Annual Priority 4:
- Complete Foundations of Excellence® Self-Study and Improvement Initiative and begin implementing recommendation.

Target:
- Complete Foundations of Excellence® Self-Study and Improvement Initiative and begin implementing recommendation.

Results:
- Completed in fall 2011.

Use of Results:
- Report was presented to the Committee on the Undergraduate Academic Environment (CUAE) on November 13, 2012. Awaiting decision from the CUAE on willingness to assume oversight.

FY11
Annual Priority 2:
- Create and implement a Graduate Student Leadership position within UNIV 101/201 courses.

Target:
- 90% of Graduate Student Leaders will participate in all three seminars offered during fall 2011.
- Graduate Student Leader effectiveness, as rated on the course evaluation, will be 4.3 or higher.

Results:
- 100% of Graduate Student Leaders participated in all three seminars offered during the fall of 2011.
- 86% of students enrolled in UNIV courses with a Graduate Student Leader said they benefitted from having a Graduate Student Leader in the course.

Use of Results:
- Continue to seek out students interested in the Graduate Student Leader position, invite them to instructor training sessions, and concurrently enroll them in the Graduate Student Leader Seminar.

Other Evidence by Goal:

- **FY08 –12**
  - **Orientation Student Survey:** Evaluations from 2008 –2012 indicated that students who participated in a summer orientation session and completed the evaluation rated the following items on a 5.00 scale, 5 being “strongly agree” and 1 being “strongly disagree”: 
○ Results:
  ○ 4.62/5.00—Their orientation leader was engaging and personable.
  ○ 4.30/5.00—The information provided by the orientation leader will help in their transition to NIU.

Orientation Family Survey: Evaluations from 2008 –2012 indicated that family members who participated in a summer orientation session and completed the evaluation rated the following items on a 5.00 scale, 5 being “strongly agree” and 1 being “strongly disagree”:

○ Results:
  ○ 4.85/5.00—Their orientation leader addressed many of their questions and concerns.
  ○ 4.87/5.00—Their orientation leader was a positive role model for new students.

○ Use of Results (Orientation Student Survey and Orientation Family Survey)
  ○ The results of this survey provide a summative evaluation of orientation leaders’ performance. Due to the positive feedback, no changes have been needed. In general, contact with the orientation leaders is the highest-rated component of the orientation program by both students and family members. This overwhelmingly confirms the value of the recruitment, selection, and training processes and allows for immediate feedback for leaders. When deviations are seen for specific orientation leaders, the data provided a starting point for a discussion of a leader’s strengths and weaknesses as perceived by program participants. High marks in results indicate that the student is a positive role model and has performed at a satisfactory level or above; lower marks may suggest areas for improvement.

• FY08 –11
  The UNIV 101/201 Course Evaluations: On average from 2008 to 2011, students indicated the following:
  • Results
    ○ Over 94% of respondents said their instructors were approachable and not intimidating.
    ○ Over 94% of respondents said their instructors were effective in teaching the course.
    ○ 84% of respondents indicated they felt comfortable approaching their Peer Instructor with problems, concerns, or questions.
  • Use of Results
    ○ Course evaluations provide evidence of the effectiveness of both UNIV 101 Instructors and Peer Instructors. These results are used by the course coordinators to determine the re-hiring of Instructors and Peer Instructors and where any additional training and/or supervision may be needed. Additionally, the results are used to market the course to incoming freshmen.

Goal 3: “To conduct high quality training and development sessions for Orientation Leaders, First-Year Connections student staff, and UNIV 101/201 faculty, Graduate Student Leaders, and Peer Instructors,” was met based on the following methods:

FY09
Annual Priority 4:
  ● Host a regional conference on First-Year student learning (new)
Target:
  ● Recruit 100 conference attendees from a diverse group of institutions within a 150- mile radius.
  ● Receive 20 conference session presentations from which the committee will select 12.
Receive 75% satisfied or very satisfied results on the conference evaluation.

Results:
- Recruited 165 conference attendees from six states: 35 different institutions of higher education including 17 four-year universities and colleges, 18 community colleges, and 1 high school.
- Received 20 program proposals and chose 12 to be presented at the conference.
- 88.2% rated the overall quality of the conference as good or excellent.

Use of Results:
- Realization of the need for an annual regional drive-in conference on the first-year experience. Conference attendance has continued to grow each year, with a 2012 attendance of 256.

FY11
Annual Priority 3:
- Enhance and promote high-quality, student-centered instruction in UNIV 101/201 courses.

Target:
- Raise overall instructor effectiveness score by 0.2 points from 2009 to 2010 as stated in course evaluations.
- Instructors will report greater satisfaction with their UNIV experience on the end-of-the-semester evaluation by at least 5%.

Results:
- Course effectiveness was rated at 3.97 in 2009, 4.05 in 2010, and 4.11 in 2011.
- Instructor effectiveness was rated at 4.54 in 2008, 4.53 in 2009, 4.55 in 2010, and 4.56 in 2011.

Use of Results:
- We utilize these results to provide feedback to UNIV Instructors and structure effective training sessions.

FY2012
Annual Priority 1:
- Document psychosocial and cognitive development of student orientation leaders.

Target:
- 80% of areas evaluated from pre-test to post-test will show gains in psychosocial and cognitive development as measured by quantitative and qualitative instruments/protocols.
- As a group, orientation leaders will move one position on the Perry scheme of cognitive/intellectual development as evaluated by trained raters.
- As a group, orientation leaders will demonstrate a statistically significant difference on a pre-test/post-test such as the multicultural organization development scale.
- As a group, orientation leaders will demonstrate a statistically significant difference from pre-test to post-test on a measure of psychosocial development (yet to be determined).

Results:
- Postponed due to staff vacancies and lack of funding.

Use of Results:
- Assessment likely to occur at a later date.
Other Evidence by Goal

- **FY08 –12**
  **Orientation Student and Family Surveys:** From 2008 –2012 indicated that students and family members who participated in a summer orientation session and completed the evaluation rated the following items on a 5.00 scale with 5 being “strongly agree” and 1 being “strongly disagree”:
  - **Results:**
    - 4.74/5.00—Their orientation leader was well prepared and knowledgeable about NIU.
    - 4.48/5.00—They have a better understanding of student life at NIU because of their orientation leader.
  - **Use of Results (Orientation Student Survey and Orientation Family Survey)**
    - These survey results indicate the program’s effectiveness and areas that may need to be included for future training. These assessments are used on a weekly basis to shape the ongoing development of Orientation Leaders that occurs in weekly staff meetings. Additionally, this information is used in the planning of future Orientation Leader training and development sessions. This information is shared with the Orientation Leaders in order to help them improve their performance.

- **FY11**
  **UNIV 101/201 Course Evaluations:**
  - **Results:**
    - 85% of respondents indicated that they felt they benefitted from the Peer Instructor in their UNIV 101 course.
    - 86% of respondents indicated they felt they benefitted from having a Graduate Student Leader in the course.
    - 94% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the instructor(s) was/were effective in teaching the course.
  - **Use of Results:**
    - Results from course evaluations provide evidence in areas that may need to be addressed in future development workshops. One area that has consistently been brought up in the course evaluations is instructors not using the textbook enough. We included this in our training session by providing examples on how to incorporate the textbook into teaching.

  **The UNIV 101/201 Instructor Development Workshop Evaluations:**
  - **Results**
    - 94.4% of respondents indicated feeling prepared or well prepared to teach UNIV 101/201 in the fall.
    - 100% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that it was important for UNIV 101/201 instructors to learn how to connect with first-year students, and 100% agreed or strongly agreed that it was presented in an effective and interesting manner.
    - 100% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that it was important for UNIV 101/201 instructors to learn classroom management techniques, and 100% agreed or strongly agreed that it was presented in an effective and interesting manner.
  - **Use of Results**
    - The evaluations from UNIV 101/201 instructors and Peer Instructors are used to plan for future training sessions. These evaluations also provide insight as to how effectively the development workshops achieved the intended learning outcomes.
FY12

Orientation Leader Student Learning Outcomes Pre-test/Post-test: This pre-test/ post-test assessment was conducted before and after students participated orientation leader training throughout the spring 2012 semester and after orientation. The orientation leaders tend to rate themselves higher on the scale during the pre-test in certain competencies (e.g., communication/diversity) showing a higher confidence in their abilities. Observations indicate there are two competencies that see the most growth. The pre-test/post-test indicated a significant increase in the following areas:

- **Results:**
  - Understanding the purpose of orientation at NIU (increased from 2.7 to 3.9.).
  - Knowledge of campus resources and how to use them (increased from 2.5 to 4.0.).
  - Ability to explain issues pertaining to freshman, transfer, and non-traditional students (increased from 2.1 to 4.0.).
  - Ability to confidently describe diversity at NIU (increased from 3.3 to 3.8.).

- **Use of Results**
  - These instruments are used to determine content areas that can be strengthened throughout the orientation leader training. In general, the data confirmed the efficacy of the orientation leader training program. An area targeted for further development was the leaders’ understanding of the Division of Student Affairs & Enrollment Management. Pre- and post-test scores on this item were among the lowest on the survey. This has been addressed by having the Vice President for Student Affairs & Enrollment Management speak to orientation staff during training, and sharing the Divisional printed material with the students in training. Additionally, this pre-test/post-test allows the Assistant Director to plan for additional training and development during the summer orientation program, to further educate the orientation leaders. An area for continued training and education has been diversity awareness, which has been incorporated into staff meetings and discussions led by the student orientation coordinators. Orientation leaders are asked to attend one resource center event each semester.

Mid-Semester Peer Instructor Survey:

- **Results:**
  - 77.7% of respondents were satisfied or very satisfied (33.3%) with their class.
  - 81.4% of respondents were satisfied or very satisfied (48.1%) with their instructor’s performance.

Mid-Semester Instructor Survey:

- **Results:**
  - 77.1% of instructor respondents were satisfied or very satisfied (40%) with their Peer Instructor’s performance.
  - 68.2% of respondents were satisfied or very satisfied (18.6%) with their students’ responsiveness in class.

Use of Results (Mid-semester UNIV 101/201 Instructor and Peer Instructor Evaluations)

- These surveys provide information during the instruction of UNIV 101/201 and allow for Instructors and Peer Instructors to share which topics are going well or not so well, and to share any problems they face while instructing these courses. This information is used to plan for the future development and training opportunities. This year, Peer Instructors indicated using the Peer Instructor Weekly Newsletter frequently, whereas fewer Peer Instructors were utilizing the Peer Instructor Blackboard site. This indicates a need for increased focus on the Blackboard shell for Peer Instructors at the 2013 training.
The UNIV 101/201 Instructor Development Workshop Evaluations:

- **Results**
  - 91.4% of respondents indicated feeling prepared or well prepared to teach UNIV 101/201 in the fall.
  - 94.6% of respondents reported they were able to identify 2-3 teaching strategies or activities from this workshop that they could use in their UNIV 101/201 course to teach a relevant topic or chapter content.
  - 100% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that it was important for UNIV 101/201 instructors to learn how to teach reflection, and 100% agreed or strongly agreed that it was presented in an effective and interesting manner.
  - 100% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that it was important for UNIV 101/201 instructors to learn strategies on how to use the textbook, and 100% agreed or strongly agreed that it was presented in an effective and interesting manner.
  - 100% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that it was important for UNIV 101/201 instructors to learn how to build community throughout the course, and 100% agreed or strongly agreed that it was presented in an effective and interesting manner.
  - Qualitative feedback on the 2012 survey suggested a change in workshop location from Stevenson Residence Hall.

- **Use of Results**
  - The evaluations from UNIV 101/201 Instructors and Peer Instructors are used to plan for future training sessions. These evaluations also provide insight as to how effectively the development workshops achieved the intended learning outcomes.

Peer Instructor August Training Survey:

- **Results**
  - 92% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the icebreakers and team builders were effective.
  - 88% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that training made them aware of the importance of how Peer Instructors affect students' development.
  - 92% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that training helped them to identify information and resources available to assist them in their role as a Peer Instructor.
  - 92% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that training offered suggestions for icebreakers and ways to use the textbook in their UNIV class.

- **Use of Results**
  - The evaluations from UNIV 101/201 Instructors and Peer Instructors are used to plan for future training sessions. These evaluations also provide insight as to how effectively the development workshops achieved the intended learning outcomes.

Goal 4: “To serve as a collaborative partner with Academic and Student Affairs to inform new students and family members/guests about programs, services, and opportunities for involvement,” was met based on the following assessment methods:

**FY10**

**Annual Priority 3:**
- Improve the quality of the First-Year Success Series and increase attendance at FYSS events.

**Target:**
- 20% of 2010 freshman class will participate in at least one FYSS event.
- 80% of those students attending events will rate them as "good or "very good" on program evaluations.
Results:
- No data collected in 2010 due to staffing vacancies.
- Rewrite goals to be more realistic and achievable.
- 286 students attended FYSS events in fall 2011.
- 93% of 2011 FYSS attendees agreed or somewhat agreed that the program met their expectations.

Use of Results:
- Revise targets to be more attainable and realistic.

Other Evidence by Goal

- **FY08 –12**
  **Orientation Student and Family Surveys:** From 2008 –2012 indicated that students and family members who participated in a summer orientation session and completed the evaluation rated the following items on a 5.00 scale with 5 being “strongly agree” and 1 being “strongly disagree”:
  - **Results**
    - 4.30/5.00—Northern Neighborhood (resource fair) provided valuable resources and answered many of their concerns and questions.
    - 4.42/5.00—After their orientation day, stated they felt comfortable contacting university offices and services to ask additional questions.
    - 4.57/5.00—(Family member evaluations only) Family member seminar provided them with a sufficient amount of information regarding the topic and addressed many questions and concerns.

- **Use of Results**
  - The evaluations filled out by students and family members/guests provide evidence that the “Northern Neighborhood” is a collaborative effort that is satisfying the student/family members’ needs. Information from these evaluations provides direction for future family member sessions and the time/format of the Northern Neighborhood portion of the orientation day. For example, a family seminar, “Mi Casa, es Su Casa,” was added to meet the needs for our Hispanic population. A seminar on information technology was removed due to lack of attendance and the ability for family members to access this information through other methods.

7. Further Information Needed & Timeline

- Data needed to cover any gaps in current information.
  - **Common Reading Experience:** The CRE committee will need to fine-tune the learning objectives of program using benchmarking results from website revision. The CRE is also in need of further and more intentional assessment.
  - **Educational Benchmarking Inc.:** Gather data on NIU’s first-year seminar course and compare it to six other similar schools. Participation indicates where the course is most effective and where it can be improved/enhanced, setting the stage for improvement goals related to course content, materials, instructor training, and overall impact.

- **Prepare timeline for collecting further information, if any was identified.**
  - First-Year Experience staff will attend a conference session on CRE assessment in spring 2013 in an effort to increase assessment efforts in this area.
  - We plan to implement the EBI survey in the fall of 2013.
8. Resources Needed

The department requests support to conduct assessment related to the UNIV 101 course through Educational Benchmarking, Inc. The First-Year Initiative will present a picture of how NIU’s course compares in effectiveness with a cohort (“Select Six”) of comparable institutions. Participation indicates where the course is most effective and where it can be improved/enhanced, setting the stage for improvement goals related to course content, materials, instructor training, and overall impact. The last time NIU participated in this type of benchmarking was in 2008. The goal is to conduct this study every 3-5 years, so we are at the end of this window.

Two estimates from EBI follow. The second, more expensive, one breaks out course effectiveness by section, which would give us additional data on the type of course (e.g., linked with a learning community, stand-alone course) and instructor effectiveness. We would, of course, like to run the advanced assessment, but would be pleased to have any funding toward this benchmarking goal.

Official Quote #1

EBI Service Center
3058 E. Elm Street, Springfield, MO 65802
(417) 429-0081

Northern Illinois University 10/14/2012
Quote Good for 30 Days
Order Contact: Email: Phone:
Denise Rode drode@niu.edu 815.753.6781

Bill To: Ship To:
Denise Rode
023 Holmes Student Center
DeKalb, IL 60115 DeKalb, IL 60115

Description Quantity Unit Price Total
EBI First-Year Initiative Assessment
Complete Assessment Package (2012/2013) 1 $2,195.00 $2,195.00
Online WESS Administration 1 $0.00 $0.00
Standard Comparative Analysis with Longitudinal 1 $0.00 $0.00
Custom Statistical Analysis Report (CSAR) 1 $0.00 $0.00
Online Executive Summary 1 $0.00 $0.00
Cross Study Comparison 1 $0.00 $0.00
FYI Assessment Customization 1 $0.00 $0.00
Advanced Filtering for Online Reporting 1 $0.00 $0.00
Advanced Institution Specific Questions (Online Only) 1 $0.00 $0.00
Surveys Over 250 @ $0.48 Ea. 1250 $0.48 $600.00
Processing Fee (3%) 1 $83.85

Order Total $2,878.85.
Number of surveys ordered for EBI First-Year Initiative Assessment (2013): 1500
Official Quote #2
EBI Service Center
3058 E. Elm Street, Springfield, MO 65802
(417) 429-0081

Northern Illinois University 10/14/2012
Quote Good for 30 Days
Order Contact: Email: Phone:
Denise Rode drode@niu.edu 815.753.6781

Bill To: Ship To:
Denise Rode
023 Holmes Student Center
DeKalb, IL 60115 DeKalb, IL 60115

Description Quantity Unit Price Total
EBI First-Year Initiative Assessment
Complete Assessment Package (2012/2013) 1 $2,195.00
Online WESS Administration 1 $0.00 $0.00
Standard Comparative Analysis with Longitudinal 1 $0.00 $0.00
Custom Statistical Analysis Report (CSAR) 1 $0.00 $0.00
Online Executive Summary 1 $0.00 $0.00
Cross Study Comparison 1 $0.00 $0.00
FYI Assessment Customization 1 $0.00 $0.00
Advanced Filtering for Online Reporting 1 $0.00 $0.00
Advanced Institution Specific Questions (Online Only) 1 $0.00 $0.00
Course Sections Level Analysis 80 $950.00
Course Sections Level Reports (Requires IE 5.5+) 80 $400.00
Surveys Over 250 @ $0.48 Ea. 1250 $0.48 $600.00
Processing Fee (3%) 1 $124.35

Order Total $4,269.35
Number of surveys ordered for EBI First-Year Initiative Assessment (2013): 1500

Appendix*
A. May Instructor Development Workshop Survey Results FA 2012
B. Instructor Mid-Semester Survey Results FA 2012
C. PI Mid-Semester Survey Results FA 2012
D. PI Training Workshop Survey Results FA 2012
E. UNIV 101-201 Course Evaluation Survey FA 2012
F. Family Member Orientation Survey Results FA 2012
G. New Student Orientation Survey Results FA 2012
H. Orientation Leader Selection Workshop Form FA 2012
I. Pre-test & Post-test Orientation Leader Learning Outcomes Survey Results FA 2012