Welcome!

The Office of Student Academic Success (OSAS) is pleased to present *Impacting Success*, a tri-annual publication devoted to student success and retention.

The Office of Student Academic Success was created in July 2009 as an outgrowth of the *Great Journeys Strategic Plan*. From an initial staff of 2, the OSAS has grown into a multi-dimensional support services office that features 8 Student Success Specialists (SSSs) who each work for the benefit of a particular college or a specific population of students such as undeclared students or adult and non-traditional learners. The OSAS is committed to student success. Through intervention programs such as Early Alert, Absence Tracking, and Map-Works, we strive to help faculty, staff and students identify possible barriers that could impede students’ progress and persistence. Additionally, the OSAS is committed to the utilization of student and institutional data to make informed decisions regarding programs and services. Furthermore, we pride ourselves on our knowledge of student development theory and strategic learning initiatives, as well as in best practices regarding student success and retention.

*Impacting Success* is a semestery publication that will showcase OSAS programs and services as well as feature pertinent success and persistence issues. I hope that you enjoy the first edition of *Impacting Success*. Please be certain to let us know what you think! We invite article suggestions and guest columnists. Contact the OSAS at osas@niu.edu. Sincerely,

Dana Gautcher
Director

Inside this Issue:
- **Welcome** Page 1
- **Events Affecting You and Your Students** Page 1
- **By the Numbers:** Students Leaving NIU Page 2
- **Why Are Students Leaving NIU?** Page 2
- **Empowering Students to Become Their Best Advocate for Success** Page 2
- **7 Steps to Helping Students Set and Meet Goals** Page 3
- **Why MAP-Works?** Page 3
- **Meet Our Staff!** Page 6

Events Affecting You & Your Students:

**SPRING 2012**

**OSAS Success Events**

**Academic Calendar Events:**
- **Last Day to Withdraw from University (Academic Jeopardy)** Fri., Apr. 13th
- **Last Day of Classes** Thurs., May 3rd
- **Final Examinations** Sat., May 5th-Fri., May 11th
- **Beginning of Summer Term** Mon., Jun. 18th
- **Independence Day (University closed)** Wed., Jul. 4th
- **Summer Session Ends** Sun., Aug. 12th
- **Beginning of Fall Term** Mon., Aug. 27th

**By the Numbers:** Students Leaving NIU

- **Why Are Students Leaving NIU?**
- **Empowering Students to Become Their Best Advocate for Success**
- **7 Steps to Helping Students Set and Meet Goals**
- **Why MAP-Works?**
- **Meet Our Staff!**

*Impacting Success* is a semestery publication that will showcase OSAS programs and services as well as feature pertinent success and persistence issues. I hope that you enjoy the first edition of *Impacting Success*. Please be certain to let us know what you think! We invite article suggestions and guest columnists. Contact the OSAS at osas@niu.edu. Sincerely,

Dana Gautcher
Director

**Academic Calendar Events (continued):**
- **Last Day of Classes** Thurs., May 3rd
- **Final Examinations** Sat., May 5th-Fri., May 11th
- **Beginning of Summer Term** Mon., Jun. 18th
- **Independence Day (University closed)** Wed., Jul. 4th
- **Summer Session Ends** Sun., Aug. 12th
- **Beginning of Fall Term** Mon., Aug. 27th
Should I Stay or Should I Go: Why Are Students Leaving NIU?

Dr. Amy Hinz Horn

True or false: Most students drop out of NIU because they flunk out. According to the beliefs held by many on campus, the answer is true. However, according to the data collected and analyzed by NIU researchers, the answer is false (Seaver, Changnon, Barker, & Gautcher, 2011). Likewise, experts on student retention have not only found this statement to be erroneous, but they have also asserted that this myth is quite problematic on college campuses across the country (Cuseo & Farnum, 2011).

Indeed, research has indicated that the majority of students who leave college are not being forced out due to failing grades; rather, most students who leave college are doing so voluntarily (Cuseo & Farnum, 2011; Gardiner, 1994; Tinto, 1993). Researchers at NIU collected and analyzed data related to the “leavers” in two groups of NIU undergraduate students—all enrolled on the tenth day of fall 2008 and all enrolled on the tenth day of fall 2009. The data indicated that nearly as many students left NIU who were in poor academic standing [21% in spring 2009 and 19% in spring 2010] as did students who were eligible to enroll [20% in 2009 and 21% in 2010] (Seaver et al., 2011).

What does that mean for NIU, and more specifically, what does that mean for the Office of Student Academic Success [OSAS]? It means that we need to start asking different questions. Instead of simply examining why certain students are not cutting it at NIU, we need to examine why some (Continued on page 4)

Empowering Students to Become Their Best Advocate for Success

Karla Vílchez-Neal

As professionals working in a Higher Education institution, regardless of our role, there are many things we can do to help our students succeed. One such thing is to help our students feel motivated and empowered to be highly involved in their educational process. According to Astin (1999), “student involvement refers to the amount of physical and psychological energy that the student devotes to the academic experience” (p. 518). The author provides examples of actions of a student who is highly involved: “devotes considerable energy to studying, spends much time on campus, participates actively in student organizations, and interacts frequently with faculty members and other students” (Astin, 1999, p.518). Do your students exhibit these characteristics?

Ideally, our students would become highly involved from the moment they arrive on our campus; but the reality is that they arrive with different levels of academic and personal preparedness, and that there are a number of variables that can affect their ability to be involved. For example, up until they come to campus some students may be used to having others do their work for them, some may have grown up thinking that they could achieve very little, some may be lacking focus and may not know where to start, and some may have overwhelming outside responsibilities that hinder their (Continued on page 5)
7 Steps to Helping Students Set and Meet Goals

Debra A. Miller
Adapted from: Goal-Setting Activities for Adults
Nov 18, 2010 | By Peter Mitchell

The future depends on what we do in the present.
Mahatma Gandhi

Setting goals allows students to focus on the future as a direct result of what is done in the present. Adult goal setting can apply to anything – from education and career and relationships to exercise routines and money management. The key is to break down goals and develop plans for the near and long term.

Suggestions to assist students with setting goals:

Writing down goals: Writing things down helps make a thought more definite. Students are more likely to stick to their aim when a thought is written out. In the same sense, poorly defined goals are harder to accomplish. For example, writing “Get better grades” is too vague to act upon. Instead, have students write several key steps such as "plan a specific study time each day," and "schedule regular appointments with instructor/advisor/tutor, etc."

Discuss goals: Talking about goals with friends, family members or colleagues helps students focus on what they want. Goal discussions can help students identify any opportunities or challenges ahead. Perhaps most important, it gives students a sense of accountability. By having students tell people close to them of their plans, you're giving them extra incentive to follow through. (Continued on page 5)

Why MAP-Works? Because IT Works!

Randi Napientek and Andrew Hrubec

Starting a college career on the right track is important for establishing success, and NIU’s MAP-Works program is here to help from day one.

Incoming students have shown the ability to earn a higher GPA, successfully complete additional courses, and reduce the risk of academic probation while benefitting from additional NIU support and assistance.

All new Huskies are automatically enrolled in the MAP-Works program. MAP-Works participants complete a series of brief personal surveys regarding academic skills and behaviors, social interactions, campus involvement and overall expectations.

The answers to these questions are combined with the student’s academic credentials and provide a summary report that highlights personal strengths and possible challenges as well as related campus resources. Students can view their reports online or print a PDF copy.

Likewise, dedicated NIU faculty and staff who work with the students on a regular basis also have access to the information. Some of these professionals include instructors, academic advisors, student success specialists, and residence hall directors. Together, they provide an individualized network of support for each student by helping them achieve academic success and personal victories.

Two surveys were administered during the fall semester and the last survey was completed on March 2nd.

While opportunities for you to encourage your first-year students to take the survey this year are in the past, please do not hesitate to contact the Office of Student Academic Success with questions on how the many MAP-Works connections can benefit your students.
students who are cutting it, are choosing not to any longer.

The OSAS has implemented a variety of initiatives in an effort to begin asking those types of questions and collecting valuable feedback. One such initiative is carried out by the Student Success Specialists (SSSs) at the beginning of each semester. SSSs contact students who are eligible to enroll for the current semester but have not yet registered for courses. The SSSs aim to help these students overcome any roadblocks preventing them from registering. However, if the students disclose that they are simply choosing not to enroll, the SSSs attempt to glean information as to why the students are making that choice.

In a similar vein, the OSAS monitors students’ requests for transcripts. On a monthly basis, SSSs contact students who have requested that transcripts be sent to other institutions. The SSSs make an effort to determine if the transcripts are requested for innocuous reasons, such as applying to graduate school or enrolling in concurrent courses to meet certain requirements. However, if the SSSs discover transcript requests are a result of students planning to transfer to other universities or colleges, they attempt to uncover why the students want to transfer and if NIU could have done anything differently to prevent their choice to leave.

In all of these conversations with students, SSSs ensure that they build a bridge back to NIU for students, allowing the students to know that people, programs, and resources are in place to help students succeed at NIU if they choose to return. In the meantime, the OSAS will continue to ask important questions, analyze insightful answers, and utilize the information collected to help students stay and succeed at NIU.

References
 Goals come in different timescales. Short-term goals may lead to longer-term goals. However, until one maps out what their plans are, it’s hard to know how they fit together. Career advice from the University of Hawaii suggests breaking down goals by timescale. Have students write down their goals: for the next five years, for the next year and for the next month. Students should look at how these fit together. For example, does the goal for next year relate to the student’s lifetime goal? If it doesn’t, students should ask, “How can I change my aim?”

• **STEP 1 - Ask:** What do you want to CHANGE? Earn Better Grades? Find more study time? Lose Weight? Earn More Money? Socialize more?

• **STEP 2 - Make Practical Goals:** Student’s goals should "fit in" to what they desire to learn, are interested in changing, or can afford (financially or time involved). If goals are not practical (too hard, too time-consuming, too expensive, etc.), students are likely to quit before they’re reached.

• **STEP 3 - Make a First Pass:** If these goal setting activities are new to students, have them think of things they like, do well, will be good for them, and that they want to do. Have students do a “trial-run” of a short-term goals they would likely be successful at completing.

• **STEP 4 - Figure out how much TIME & RESOURCES each goal will take to complete:** Students need to balance the payback with the likely costs. Some goals could give a payback within a year or longer, and once in a while, investments will return within a month!

• **STEP 5 - Prioritize Goals:** Students can't address all of their areas for improvement once. Have students organize goals in a logical order: "Priority A" goals should be done first. These are most important: they may have the biggest payback for the effort required, and/or may be something a student absolutely MUST do right away!

• **STEP 6 - Figure out Realistic Completion Dates:** Writing down expected completion dates will likely reduce temptations to procrastinate.

• **STEP 7 - Revisit Goals Frequently:** Goals will evolve over time. As students complete some, have them create new ones! High priority goals that don’t get completed may not really be high priority after all. (Or maybe we’re seeing more procrastination.)

• **GENERAL COMMENTS - Stay Real:** These goal setting ideas could help many students take off the rose-colored glasses. Express to students how they should expect to have unexpected setbacks occasionally. On the flip side, warn against setting goals too low and having too much time to complete.

Empowering (Continued from page 2)

ability to be highly involved.

There is one uniform message that we can give to our students, regardless of our area of expertise and their level of preparedness. We can remind our students that a big part of their success is dependent upon their drive to be involved, to be self-advocates, to be resourceful, and to remain committed to achieving their goals. We can remind them that it is up to them to show up to class, to meet with their professors during office hours, to do their homework, to meet with their advisor once a semester so they can make sure to graduate when they plan to, to make use of the great resources we have available for them, and to seek help to find those resources if they need to.

Astin (1999) states “learning will be greatest when the learning environment is structured to encourage active participation by the student” (p. 522). Whatever our role on this campus is, we can challenge our students so they find the strength to take ownership over their success. If we provide this uniform message, we may be able to influence our culture in a positive way.

Reference

Meet Our Staff!

Dana Gautcher, M.Ed.
Director
Office of Student and Academic Success
Academic Advising Center 112
(815) 753-5701
dana@niu.edu

Erin Engle, M.A.
Student Success Specialist
College of Engineering and Engineering Technology
Engineering Building 321A
(815) 753-9961
erin@niu.edu

Jason Goode, M.A.
Student Success Specialist
College of Liberal Arts and Sciences
Zulauf 218
(815) 753-7960
jason@niu.edu

Amy Hinz Horn, Ed.D.
Student Success Specialist
Academic Advising Center
Academic Advising Center 100A
(815) 753-2403
amy@niu.edu

Missy Lugo, M.S.Ed.
Student Success Specialist
College of Health and Human Sciences
Wirtz Hall 227K
(815) 752-2007
MissyLugo@niu.edu

Debra Miller, M.A.
Student Success Specialist
College of Education
Gable Hall 138B
(815) 753-5718
dmiller20@niu.edu

Randi Napientek, M.S.Ed.
Program Coordinator
Office of Student and Academic Success
Academic Advising Center 114
(815) 753-0713
randi@niu.edu

Karla Vilchez Neal, M.M.
Student Success Specialist
College of Visual and Performing Arts
Music Building 310
(815) 753-6534
kneal@niu.edu

Chelsea Smith, M.A.Ed.
Student Success Specialist
College of Business
Barsema Hall 201G
(815) 753-6171
chelsea@niu.edu

Mandy Wescott, M.A.
Student Success Specialist
Division of Outreach
Academic Advising Center 116
(815) 753-5725
mandy@niu.edu

Written and edited by
The Office of Student Academic Success Staff.

Academic Advising Center 110
Phone: (815) 753-5721
Fax: (815) 753-2902
Email: osas@niu.edu