OSAS reorganization takes effect

In an effort to better serve NIU students and support success initiatives, the Office of Student Academic Success (OSAS) reorganized effective for the fall 2013 semester.

The primary changes relate to the Student Success Specialist positions. The Student Success Specialists, previously located in each of the academic colleges, are now located in the OSAS main office, room 113 in the Academic Advising Center Building.

“Having everyone in one location has allowed us to better serve students. The Student Success Specialists are able to seamlessly collaborate with one another to devise specialized support plans for individual students. Furthermore, the feedback we’ve received from students about having our Student Success Specialists in one location has been extremely positive,” enthused Dana Gautcher, the Director of the Office of Student Academic Success.

“Now that the OSAS office has centralized, we as a staff are better able to support each other. With four specialists and six colleges, plus the Academic Advising Center and Division of Outreach, restructuring has allowed us to collaborate and more effectively support the colleges’ needs from one central location,” said OSAS Student Success Specialist Missy Lugo, who was previously located in Wirtz Hall with the College of Health and Human Sciences. “Although we are no longer physically located in the colleges we represent, we have been given the opportunity to make a larger impact on our students and the NIU community.”

The Student Success Specialist role was developed in direct response to recommendations made by the Presidential Task Force on Student Success in 2008. Specifically, this task force set several goals aimed toward increasing the overall retention rates of the NIU student population.

In working with students, Student Success Specialists employ a success coaching model based on research, existing models, and other information in the fields of higher education, counseling, and psychology. The OSAS’ success coaching model works with students to help them overcome obstacles while utilizing positive psychology to improve student success. This model encourages students to take charge of developing and refining their ability to self-advocate as well as make informed decisions about their education.

“Student Success Specialists partner with students to assist them as they work towards their goals by providing support, encouragement, and campus resources,” said OSAS Student Success Specialist Ashleigh Sorenson. “To begin this process, the Student Success Specialist develops rapport with the student, asks intentional questions, and actively listens to the student’s needs. Based on those conversations, the Student Success Specialist and the student work together to develop an action plan.”

Student Success Specialists also work diligently to develop and nurture campus partnerships that support student success. Through a model of developmental advocacy (which is based upon developmental advising), Student Success Specialists partner with faculty, advisors, residence hall directors, and other pertinent staff at NIU to help students take ownership of their education while assisting students in the development of their rational process, environmental and interpersonal interactions, behavioral awareness, and problem-solving, decision-making, and evaluation skills.
What is a Student Success Specialist?

OSAS utilizes student success coaching to help students reach their full potential and become their own best advocates.

By: Mandy Wescott, Student Success Specialist

Student Success Specialists are assigned to each of the academic colleges as well as the Academic Advising Center and the Division of Outreach. Specialists collaborate with students, their families, advisors, faculty members, and other administrators to develop appropriate action plans regarding personal and academic support issues.

Student Success Specialists connect students to relevant campus resources through direct referrals and personal connections. Student Success Specialists are committed to helping students persist and succeed in their academic endeavors and understand the demands and challenges that students may face while attending the university. Student Success Specialists can be viewed as academic coaches - which means we guide students towards becoming their own best advocates.

Instead of prescriptive mentoring in which students are told exactly where to go, what to do, and what to say, Student Success Specialists approach the situation from a developmental or coaching perspective. When meeting with a student, Specialists ask a series of questions aimed at identifying specific areas in which a student needs assistance, then work with the student to develop an action plan for tackling the issues at hand. The range of issues with which we assist students is wide and varied — although there is seldom just one isolated problem. For example, a student who seems to have simple time management challenges may, in reality, be struggling to balance studies and employment due to financial challenges.

A student may return regularly to modify or re-evaluate how things are going, or one meeting may be enough. The key is that the student is empowered to become their own best advocate moving forward. By taking the coaching approach we help students take ownership of (and responsibility for) their educational process.

Meet Your Student Success Specialist!

Missy Lugo
Areas of Concentration: College of Business
College of Health and Human Sciences

Debra Miller
Areas of Concentration: College of Education
College of Liberal Arts and Sciences

Ashleigh Sorenson
Areas of Concentration: College of Visual and Performing Arts
Academic Advising Center

Mandy Wescott
Areas of Concentration: College of Engineering and Engineering Technology

The MAP-Works Scholarship is a national essay contest for college students who have participated in the MAP-Works program.

EBI® created this scholarship to highlight the experiences and achievements of MAP-Works students.

For each of the past two years, EBI® has awarded three scholarships to students who demonstrated the importance that MAP-Works has had in their success.

Students who have completed at least one survey at one of the over 200 participating MAP-Works institutions are eligible for the scholarship.

This past year, student from Northern Illinois University won the scholarship. Here is an expert from her essay:

“If MAP-Works were a person and they were standing in front of me right now, what I would say to them is thank you so much. I strongly believe that MAP-Works helps guide students on to the road of success.”

- Griselda Rodriguez

Impacting Success Volume 03 Issue 02 Fall 2013
Success Question of the Semester

Q: If I know a student is planning on leaving NIU, what should I do?

A: Contact the Office of Student Academic Success!

There are multiple ways that OSAS is here to help. One way is that our student success specialists reach out to students who are at risk of leaving NIU. We identify these students through numerous ways including MAP-Works, Early Alert, and faculty and staff referrals. We will gladly reach out to your student to see if there is something that we can help them with.

While some students will transfer or leave NIU for reasons that are outside of the university’s control, there are plenty of campus resources available to help.

Finances
Students continue to tell us that financing their education is a major concern. 32% of students report having serious concerns about paying for the next semester and academic year.

Struggling in Courses
Nearly 1 out of every 4 NIU students reports struggling in at least two of their classes.

For more information about MAP-Works, or to learn what your specific students are saying, please contact the Office of Student Academic Success.

MAP-Works: What are our students saying?

MAP-Works provides a significant amount of information about our students, what they are interested in, and the challenges they face as new NIU students. For each survey, MAP-Works provides information on the five biggest challenges that students at NIU say they are facing. For the 2013 Fall Transition Survey, the following five issues were found to be of biggest concern for students:

Homesickness
While feeling a little homesick may be common at the start of a student’s college experience, it could potentially be a sign of serious issues. 43% of NIU students reported struggling with homesickness to some extent in the first MAP-Works survey.

Study Habits
36% of NIU students said they planned to study five hours or less per week. Many students are not even aware that this is a problem, so helping to show students realistic expectations for hours spent studying is crucial.

Test Anxiety
This tends to be a common concern among students, with 35% of NIU students reporting they have some form of test anxiety. Fortunately, there are plenty of campus resources available to help.

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OSAS is pleased to welcome our second graduate assistant, Paul Jonff, to our office! Paul is a graduate student studying Physical Therapy and started in our office on September 1st.

Paul, along with our additional graduate assistant Nilay, will be working diligently throughout the year to support the OSAS mission!

Click HERE to learn more about Paul!

Edible Education: Students are Hungry for knowledge!

OSAS re-vamped the Soup and Success Series to create Edible Education. Edible Education is a series of workshops that are student centered and encourage Student Success initiatives. Each workshop is based on a topic that is very important to being a successful NIU student. Our fall series had 107 students attend.

Click HERE for the spring series topics and dates.

In Other News...

Meet our newest team member: Paul Jonff
Summer in September: A great collaboration and another great success!

On September 25, the Office of Student Academic Success (OSAS) and Off-Campus and Non-Traditional Student Services (OCNTSS) hosted their second annual Summer in September BBQ. This year, over 300 students stopped by to visit with OSAS and OCNTSS staff, learn about different programs and services, and enjoy an afternoon of free food and games.

By hosting the BBQ on the front lawn of the Academic Advising Center, right next to the parking deck, OSAS and OCNTSS benefit from the numerous commuter students who pass by the area each and every day.

### December

**2 / Monday**
Last day to change or declare a major to be effective for the fall semester

**9 / Monday - 14 / Saturday**
Final Exams

**15 / Sunday**
Last day of Fall 2013 semester

### January

**2 / Thursday**
University reopens

**13 / Monday**
Classes begin

**19 / Sunday**
Last day for undergraduates to withdraw from a full-semester course or from NIU

**20 / Monday**
University closed

**24 / Friday**
Last day for undergraduates to add a first-half-semester or full-semester course with approval of major college

**29 / Wednesday**
Edible Education Series: Building Your Resume
12-1pm – Campus Life 100

### February

**1 / Saturday**
Last day to apply for spring 2014 graduation via self-service in MyNIU

**25 / Tuesday**
Destination Graduation
630-830pm – Altgeld Hall Auditorium

**26 / Wednesday**
Destination Graduation
530-730pm – Altgeld Hall Auditorium

**18 / Tuesday**
MAP-Works Food for Thought: Let’s Compare Notes
12-1pm – HSC Capital Room South

**20 / Thursday**
Edible Education Series: Reading Strategies
1230-130pm – Stevenson North 113

**24 / Monday**
MAP-Works Spring Transition Survey opens

**25 / Tuesday**
Edible Education Series: Which Major? Which Career?
1230-130pm – Stevenson North 113

**January**

**5 / Wednesday**
Edible Education Series: Internships 101
12-1pm – Campus Life 100

**13 / Thursday**
Edible Education Series: Time Management
1230-130pm – HSC Illinois Room

**BLUE** events are academic deadlines or events

**RED** events are hosted by the Office of Student Academic Success