“Ensure every student knows, and is known by, an academic advisor who is tracking their success.”

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Student sample:
We spoke with 19 students, to broaden our range and get a more diverse group. Our sampling included
- freshmen through recent graduates and all stages between
- students who live on-campus as well as those who are living off-campus
- diverse focus of majors
- diverse ethnicities

Findings Overview:
- Of those 19, only 7 had positive things to say about their advising experience...an approval rating of only 36.8%.
- By and large, students don’t know the counselors’ names, and the students feel the counselors don’t know their names.
- There seems to be a lack of consistency in advising from college to college.
- Only one student mentioned receiving unsolicited information from their advisor (reminders, etc.)

Common frustrations:
Below is a list of the most commonly heard frustrations from our students. Taken together, it boils down to one issue: poor customer service.
- Students feel:
  - Advisors:
    - are not invested/focused on their needs and in their success
    - are not accessible to them during their available times
    - do not get to know them or treat them as individuals
  - Unsure of who their advisor is and how to contact them.
  - Unimportant and not listened to.
  - Frustrated, afraid and unsure they are on the correct degree path.
  - Alone in big decisions about the future of their education.
  - Frustrated when poor advising leads to extending their time on campus, thus costing them time and money they weren’t prepared to spend here...some have to drop out just a few credits shy of a degree for lack of financial support.
• Word-of-mouth on bad advising experiences seems to have some students avoiding contacting advisors, some opting to attempt to “go it alone” and run into requirement and scheduling issues there.

• Depending on programs, students can have multiple advisors.
  - Gen Ed (one student may have multiple advisors in this area)
  - CHANCE
  - Academic program-specific
  - Departmental undergraduate studies advisors.

• Poor Customer Service – while this goes a bit outside our purview on this assignment, we felt it incumbent upon us to provide this feedback as well. Complaints about customer services were fairly common in our interactions. Specifically about: multiple unreturned phone calls and emails, unhelpful responses, the “Huskie Shuffle,” being made to feel like they are unimportant to university staff and rote responses to what they felt were complex questions about their unique experience.

Questions:
Below are questions that came up as we interview students that none of us could answer effectively.
• How are students getting advising info?
• Is there consistency and accountability among diverse advising programs?
• Who encourages them to go to an Advisor?
• If students have multiple advisors, do those advisors meet to be sure they’re providing comprehensive support, and not offering conflicting advice (as was heard in one interview)?
• How do we train our advisors?

Suggestions:
• An audit of all NIU employees who are currently advising, and how large their student portfolio is.
• Customer service training (this may be a good investment campus-wide...not just in advising).
• In the UNIV 101/201 classes, the instructors for those UNIV classes are all sent an email with an assigned day to visit the Career Center for a co-presentation from Career Services and the Advising Center. The instructor can accept or decline the invitation. All instructors should accept
• Survey Advisors to ask them what they need to be more effective in their job. (more advising staff, training, communications or clerical support, etc.)
• Encourage advisors to be more proactive in reaching out to students, encourage visits, etc.
• Create an advising consortium on campus to share best practices, offer support and encourage community.
• Possibly engage the NACADA to have a consultant do a review of our advising pockets across campus or to come to campus for a consultation and perhaps a presentation.
• Provide a focused training for all advisors on how NIU advisors communicate, advise, evaluate, and assist our students on their paths.
Standouts:
It seemed that two programs may have above average success in advising on campus: College of Ed’s Special Ed and Early Childhood Department; College of Visual and Performing Arts, School of Theatre and Dance.