**Bold Futures Workshop of April 2, 2014 – Table 12**

**Team members:** Diane Mayfield, Sharon L. Nelson, Jennice O’Brien, Chloe Saint Arbor, Anne Seitzinger, Dan Stovall, Adam White. (Katherine Frank withdrew but another team member did her student interview so we had a total of 8)

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

**Our group identified the following situations and challenges related to advising at NIU:**

- The current orientation system (for first year & transfer students) “catches” all students at least once. However, students often feel overwhelmed by the amount of information they receive during orientation. They may not make strong connection with their initial advisor and may not understand the importance of meeting with their advisor regularly (no matter how many times they are told this is important by orientation staff).

- Students have many sources of advising support on campus. There are many excellent programs such as UNIV 101/201, REACH, OSAS, Career Counseling, Mapworks, etc. In addition, special groups of students have additional advising opportunities (Honors Program, Athletics, CHANCE, ROTC, etc.). However, all these different services and programs may leave students feeling unsure about whom they are supposed to see about what.

- The Advising Center, OSAS, and Orientation teams are trained in advising students. Once the student moves to being advised in his/her major department, things are more hit or miss because each College does advising differently. Some colleges/departments excel at advising (e.g., Business, Nursing) while others do not (LA&S seems to be overwhelmed by the number of its students). In addition, the quality of advice students get at the departmental level can be dependent on which adviser they see. Some faculty are excellent at advising and providing personal guidance; others less so (one of our group’s student interviewees said his advisor told him he had met all the prerequisites so he should “take what you want”).

**Our group’s possible suggestions/solutions:**

- **Ensure that regular advising sessions take place and that students understand their importance:** Make regular advising appointments mandatory through the student’s entire career (e.g. put an advising hold on the student’s record every semester until they have seen an advisor). Place trained advisors in the residence halls and require students to meet with them regularly (this would also offer opportunities for informal interaction). Make UNIV 101/201 mandatory so students can absorb information about the many advising/support systems available to them at a slower pace than in orientation, or possibly extend orientation to a 2-day format.

- **Collect and track advising-related information in one place so the advising experience can be continuous and consistent even when a student sees multiple advisors/campus offices:** This is especially important at times when there are handoffs between advisors (e.g., a student goes from undeclared to a major, a student changes majors). Use MyNIU (or another uniform campus system?) to keep track of multiple advisors (most students we interviewed had more than one advisor, either sequentially or concurrently) and ensure the name of the student’s primary advisor is up to date. The system should allow anyone authorized to participate in the student’s advising to record notes and to review notes from all other advising appointments, and to put up red flags for action if necessary.

- **Establish a consistent standard of quality, personal advising across campus:** Ensure that all faculty and staff recognize the importance of advising to student success (and thus the success of NIU). Provide additional advising support to overwhelmed programs like LA&S. Incentivize advising for tenure and tenure-track faculty (e.g., make advising service “count more” towards promotion/tenure than committee or other types of university service). Institute advising evaluations for faculty/staff (these would work like teaching evaluations, filled out by the person’s advisees). Require or strongly encourage all faculty/staff involved in advising to obtain regular training in advising (e.g., attendance at annual NIU Advising Summits or other similar continuing education programs).