Hello There,

My apologies if this is not the correct e-mail address for sending our "Bold Futures: Bold Ideas" Homework. But hopefully this will get things to the right place. :)

Please see below for our group’s work.

Thanks,
Cathy

**Bold Futures Homework:**

**Topic Area** -- "Ensure every student knows and is known by an academic advisor who is tracking their academic success."

**Group Members** -- Amy Franklin, Gina Nicolosi, Jay Monteiro, Peter Olson, John Rey, Lauren Boddy, and Cathy Doederlein

**Workshop Date** -- 3/20/2014

**Total Students Interviewed** -- 12 students

**Student demographic breakdown** --
11 Undergraduates, 1 Graduate Student
7 Transfer Students
1 Communication, 1 Music, 5 Finance, 2 Art History, 1 Computer Science (Graduate Student), 1 English, 1 Early Childhood

**Consistent Themes Noted** --
*All but 1 of the students seemed to know who there advisor was (some referenced multiple advisors)*
*A little over half of the students interviewed did not feel that there was anyone specifically checking on their progress towards a degree.*
*A lot of the efforts students’ noted in terms of tracking of academic progress seemed to be general, mass-mailing contact via e-mail, rather than personalized, specific outreach.*
*Students used a variety of formal and informal sources for picking classes.*
*Misinformation has led to extra work/time for just under half of the students we interviewed.*
*Advisor turnover seems to be high, contributing to inconsistency of messages conveyed from each advisor.*
*Some advisors do not seem to be as helpful/motivated as other advisors -- seemed to relate in some way to general morale issues, which may in turn lead to some of the high turnover that students seem to be noticing (and the general turnover could also decrease the morale of those advisors who are left). All of this can of course directly impact enrollment.*
**Bold Ideas Proposals**--

*By working with current academic advisors in the colleges, and others with academic advising roles on campus, as well as integrating “best practices” in the advising field, NIU could pilot an academic advisor training program including online and on paper formats for wide applicability.*

*Create a formalized recognition program for advisors. Implement a way that advisors can be recognized for their efforts with students...almost like an “employee of the month” type of recognition program that a corporation might have, where advisors could be celebrated and therefore hopefully feel more appreciated (and therefore more likely to stay). Possible award names -- "Admirable Advisor Award", "Outstanding Advisor Award", "The Extra Mile Award".*

*Conduct a comprehensive review (perhaps internal and external) of the advising process at NIU to help guide any changes that might be important for us moving forward. By conducting a comprehensive review which would include active participants in the current advising process, those most knowledgeable about this content area get to have a “seat at the table” in proposing changes to the system.*

*Place a hold on a student’s ability to enroll within MyNIU, so they are not able to enroll for classes for the following semester until they meet with an Advisor. The timing for this would only occur twice in a student’s academic career -- once in the second semester of their first year on campus (whether a freshman or a transfer) and once in the second semester of their junior year. Once a student has a meeting with their academic advisor, the advisor could remove the hold on their account, allowing them to enroll for classes. This would ensure each student is seeing an advisor at least twice during their academic career, hopefully helping them better stay on target towards their degree. ***NOTE: While this option could have a great deal of impact, we realize it would be the hardest one to implement as the current advisor:student ratio in many departments and colleges is very high...so, in order to implement this idea, a great deal of additional resources would likely be needed. Also, it should be noted that it’s possible that not every student will like/appreciate this and see it as a frustrating step added to their enrollment process. If tried, it should likely best be piloted with a small group of students at first, and close consideration of their feedback would be vital in determining if long-term implementation is reasonable.***

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