Date: Tuesday, April 22, 2014

From: Table #7 – Paul Carpenter, Michael Eads, Jack King, Julia Lamb, Patricia Liberty-Baczek, Laura Vasquez and Carrie Williams

Topic: Ensure every student knows, and is known by, an academic advisor, who’s tracking their success

Interviewed students who have not previously participated in a Bold Futures event, asking, “What is your year at NIU? What is your major? Are you a transfer student?”

The following results are constituted from anecdotal research information, gathered from a handful of students:

Four KNPE majors said: All knew advisor’s name; advisor visited classes, explained their roles; all stated advisor knew their name, reached out to them 2-3 times each semester, sets meetings w/students and acknowledges them by name in the hallway. All four appreciated their advisors’ efforts to become familiar with their individualism and stated they’d heard about other programs where the students weren’t connected to an academic advisor.

Suggestions from students for improvement: have faculty/instructors ask students early each semester whether the students know their advisor and if not to find out before the next class; have the advisor introduce themselves to students; require mandatory meetings in order to register for classes; emphasize the importance of meeting and knowing your advisor through orientation.

Freshman, Nursing Major, Advisor is Clanique from Academic Advising Center; saw advisor before spring break; when I meet w/her, she is helpful. Suggestions for improvement: It should be required that students check in with their advisor at least 3 times a semester (The beginning, Middle and just before Finals). This would allow the advisor to step in with academics as well as develop a connection into the lives of their students to see the roadblocks or setbacks with the choices (personally and academically) that will ultimately impact their experience on this campus.

Sophomore, Journalism Major, Advisor is Jaquez; see him once/semester; knows me by name; our meetings are productive because I do my research first; Suggestions for improvement: create a “check-in” quick questionnaire for student to complete prior to meeting w/advisor. This will allow the student to quickly inform the advisors about how things are going, financial aid matters, and class issues (if any); aspirations related to their majors or any concerns about their future...just a suggestion.

Freshman, Engineering Major, did not know advisor by name, but stated CEET has a very formalized advisory system in place; seems to be a four-year plan and not much need for advising unless you stray from the plan; freshman see general college advisors and see specific advisors later in their college career.

Junior, Senior, Recent Grad, Physics Majors; department has faculty advisors and not sure if assigned or student choice as far as who their advisor is; dept does not require annual/semester appointments; students spoke of confusion and complication s.
Junior, Health Administration, Transfer Student; does not know her advisor-recent major change; previous advisor was seen four times over 1.5 yrs and her name is Christina Villa, who took notes during their meetings, help this transfer student w class selection and gave referrals; expectations of advisor are friendliness, comprehensive svc, to be properly gendered and use proper pronouns/name, answer my questions, help navigate NIUs various systems, confidential and available.

Senior, Biology Major; advisor is Ken Gasser, both an instructor and bio advisor; seen two or three times, previous advisor was CLAS generalist; expect advisor to know NIUs various systems, my college systems to avoid schedule conflicts, strive for personal connection so student feels like someone cares, no judgment, an occasional email to check on the students’ progress, to be helpful.

Grad Student, Counseling Major, Transfer; first generation student as well as nontrade; their experience with advising can be summed up by stating, “No one ever asked me what I wanted to do.”

Senior, Sociology Major, Transfer Student; came from McHenry Community College and was given very little help during transition – help they were provided was advisor signed them up for wrong class and didn’t listen to this students’ concerns; Sociology advisor listens, does what she can for student; expect a requirement to meet so student can become more comfortable asking questions. Sociology Dept survey to all program enrolled students Oct 2013; contact Jack King for data.

Junior, Communication Major, Transfer Student, NIU was second choice, did Orientation and met w/advisor; on scale of 1 – 10, gave advisor a 4.

Junior, Chance student, Latina; sees advisor at NIUs Academic Advising Center, who sees 900 students; advisor seems rushed and uneven, overworked; this student used AAC then COMS advisor; expects advisor to recognize her in hallway, but usually doesn’t.

Freshman, Nursing Major; doesn’t know advisor, informed about RN 3.5 GPA by fall or won’t be accepted; meetings are helpful, advisor breaks the wording/thoughts down so I can understand the advantages; Advice for NIU about Advisors? Make semester appointments required and connections will be made.

Sophomore, Journalism/COMS Major; knows all advisors names; seen once/semester; they know students by name; expects quick informed answers to questions; Advice for NIU advisors? Don’t try to offer cookie-cutter advice-personalize it so I know you hear me.

General suggestions from students and Table 7 members –

- Mandate advisor appointments each semester for every student
- Mandate UNIV 101 & 201
- MAPworks use – across all branches and divisions
- Get campus-wide buy-in for student success
- Hire advisors who are interested in students and their individual success
- Regular, consistent communication
- Survey students