Imagine ways to address the needs of students who believe they can’t afford to stay

Financial Aid

Issue: So much information, so little knowledge

- Design easier payment plans where the individual could pay off tuition and fees over time without having to take out loans.
- Show students how to budget in a responsible way to get loans and also how to set up payment plans to pay them off in the future.
- Provide education regarding loans and good places to get loans from.
- When students are introduced to Financial Aid and the Bursar at Orientation, their heads are already swimming with a surplus of information. To have a greater emphasis upon Financial Aid - when these notions are not so abstract to students, maybe mid-semester? - would be an asset.
- Create a reference manual, akin to the Undergraduate Catalog, that addresses every policy/plan/contingency of Financial Aid? Might there be college-specific Financial Aid/Bursar presentations that address this very issue: "I can't afford to remain enrolled at NIU” at key times of the year - just prior to course registration and breaks..?
- Students need more accessible information up front about the possible consequences of poor grades and unexpected delays in degree completion upon their qualification for financial aid.
- We should offer well-timed workshops, presented by Financial Aid staff exclusively, for matriculated students and parents/families so that all players receive the same key information.

Scholarships

Issue: Students do not regularly visit the scholarship office or use the "Scholarship Search" web site.

- Each semester, have a "Scholarship Week Celebration" that showcases available scholarship for the upcoming semester. Past scholarship recipients/success stories could be celebrated. Writing Center staff could share tips on how to write a persuasive scholarship essay.
- Promote the available scholarships! Social media – large campus banners - One student shared a story about winning a scholarship for (4) people and only (3) people applied for it.
- In one students fraternity there is a Scholarship Chair that seeks out advice from the Scholarship Office at NIU and encourages his fraternity brothers to apply and meet deadlines. Encourage all organizations to see this same assistance.

Make NIU home

Issue: I’m bored.

- Promote what students are already paying for; enhance the perception of affordability (Huskie buses, student tickets to athletics, utilities)
- Generate more revenue from Convocation Center and Holmes Student Center to off-set tuition
- Grow commuter-student population from the closest large cities (Chicago, Joliet, Naperville, Rockford) by making it more inviting for them (better parking, things to do)
- Student recommendation: If I could revitalize NIU, I would focus on Annie Glidden - Make a grand entrance on Annie Glidden south of the rail road tracks.
- Re-do Chick Evans field house and invest money into the Rec center (with parking)
- Capitalize on the excitement of Welcome Week activities. One student commented that after welcome week, the campus dies. Spread the initiative throughout the semester.
- There are a lot of organizations that have activities over the weekend, but if you aren't in that organization, you generally don't know about it. Utilize social media/web presence to have a general place that all organizations can post their activities to invite all students to participate.
- Have competitions among the largest organizations to generate participation. Have a traveling trophy presented to the organization that gives back the local community. Who doesn't like a good competition and bragging rights?
- Engage organizations to come to games and have student-athletes support the respective groups.
- Create lasting traditions at football/basketball games. Utilize the “Who Let the Dogs Out?” song by creating a quick dance. Create a crowd cheer unique to NIU.

3/20 WS: Table 7 David Haas, Logan Halstead, Michele Hill, Jason Leverton, Tara Mitchell, Bess Mueller, Jerry Smith