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To: Boldfutures@niu.edu
Date: 4/6/14 7:32 PM
Subject: Group 1 (Sunday March 23, 2014) - Financial Issues

Bold Future Team,

Our Topic: Addressing the Needs of Students who conclude they can't afford to stay at NIU

Collectively our group interviewed 8 students. I am sharing the core messages that surfaced from those conversations and our groups thoughts on possible considerations. It was really interesting that our discrete conversations had a such a common thread.. Thank you for the opportunity to participate in such a challenging endeavor.

Best Regards,
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Problem Statements 1:

Financial Aid services are not readily available when needed & there is the perception that employees are not helpful.

MyNIU provides a portal to financial aid info but Financial aid deadlines are hard to keep up with & manage in the students schedule.

Information about Scholarship & grant money is not targeting to post freshman students.

Problem Solutions 1:

Proactively market scholarship & grant opportunities to all student groups using multiple venues like digital signage, kiosks in high traffic area including academic buildings, recreational areas & events periodically throughout the year.

Push opt in text notifications to students for financial deadline updates, grant & scholarship promotions & event notifications (reference below for new event ideas)

Develop peer mentoring groups to host informal get together's to talk about available grants & scholarships; could be grouped by majors to access niche sources of funding.

Consider leveraging UNIV 101/201 formatting to develop UNIV 301/ 401 groups to connect back to incoming cohorts similar to peer mentoring.

Host "How to finance your college education" fairs & seminars throughout semester

Summer Boot camp for 1 week to fully assess skill levels for reading, writing or math skills intensive. To offset the cost of living away from home, make more classes available online for example more general education courses.

Problem Statements 2:

Financial Aid, loans and student employment may cover primary expenses but no pocket cash to improve quality of daily life.

Can't commit to full part time employment because academics may suffer (lower GPA) and impact scholarship eligibility.
Financial trouble is often a result of academic trouble.

Failed classes have to be retaken increasing time in school and cost.

**Problem Solutions 2:**

Ad Hoc employment - per student - "FAST CASH GIGS" - Extra help type jobs for projects that need day labor only could be offered.

For example, quick cash to help set up for an event at Convocation Center. Students could pre-register to be on a call list per semester or school year.

**Problem Statements 3:**

Summer school offerings are shallow so due to cost it's not worth it to go to summer school to help complete on time.

Required courses are generally not readily available

**Problem Solution 3**

Offer more General Education classes online allowing students to keep to an aggressive schedule to complete degree in 4 years while keeping down costs by staying home for summer or working FT during day.

**Misc Comment of Concern:**

Fix what is broken before worrying about getting new services.

For example, Dining - No Dining options in Grant Dorm & have to walk out in cold to go to another area. End up spending more $$ at local eateries

Sick of cafeteria food so have to spend more $$ on local dining even though they have already paid for RH dining.

$$ don't roll over, want more options included because money is spent unnecessarily on other off campus food options or at end of semester on junk food that can be taken out & stored in room like chips and other snacks.

Sent from my iPad

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