“Huskie Shuffle” Defined

The “Huskie Shuffle” refers to the student experience of being directed (and redirected) to multiple sources or locations when seeking information or advice. Most students interviewed for this exercise were familiar with this phenomenon (if not with the specific terminology) and several had first-hand experience of it.

Student Experiences of the “Huskie Shuffle”

- Students frequently cited experiences with poor academic advising as examples of the “Huskie Shuffle.” Complaints included not getting helpful or accurate information from academic advisors and/or department staff within specific colleges. In particular, students reported problems with advisors sending them elsewhere (i.e., to a different advisor or office) only to be sent back to the original advisor or redirected to another person or location for the help they needed. Students expressed frustration with “going back and forth” between several faculty/staff and some ultimately researched and found the information they needed on their own.
- Some students perceive a lack of communication between faculty/staff that often results in students getting inconsistent information/advice. For example, a front office staff member advises a student to "go to X" for help. The student then goes to X only to be told to go back to the original staff member (or to someone else). Students perceive that not enough information is given to employees so that they know what functions other offices or divisions are actually responsible for and who, in particular, students should see for help.
- One student related an experience of going back and forth between folks in a particular college in order to get re-admitted after taking one year off. (He deliberately took the year; he was not out for academic or behavioral reasons).
- Some students have experienced the “Huskie Shuffle” when attempting to register for classes, particularly when transfer credits do not show up on their student records. It is not unheard of for students to send transcripts to the Office Registration and Records more than once or to hand deliver them after experiencing problems. Some students reported difficulty in registering for classes when a transferred class is a prerequisite for other classes they need. Students perceive that the student records available to academic departments are not updated in a timely fashion (which in turn prevents them from registering for certain required classes).
- Students reported difficulty in trying to plan and organize student group events, indicating that they have to go to quite a few different departments to get them all to sign off on the event.

Student-Generated Ideas for Addressing the “Huskie Shuffle”

- Identify key staff members in each college, department, division who have "all the information."
- Hire, train, and support more academic advisors.
- Consolidate/streamline students' advising experience (preferably within each academic department) so that students don’t have to visit one office for advising about major requirements and another office for advising about general education requirements, etc.
- Place all student services in a centralized location to allow students easy access to the resources they need. For instance, place the Bursar’s Office and the Financial Aid Office next to one another (since one might easily be mistaken for the other).
- Create a student services helpline that students can call (and/or text message) with questions. Helpline staff would need to be well-trained in order to provide students with timely and accurate information.
- Create an online chatroom that students can log into with questions. Ensure that the response team is well-prepared to respond to inquiries.
- Ensure that online information is accurate and current. Remove outdated information from online sources.
- For online searches of the NIU website, accommodate a greater variety of synonyms or key words so that students don’t have to know the exact word(s) to find the information they are seeking. Likewise, expand the A-Z index to include more terminology that might be recognizable to students.
- Better educate residence hall community advisors about resources available to students.
- Encourage employees to help students more directly by personally putting them in touch with the right persons.
- Develop consistent and standardized processes across colleges so that students who know how to do something in one college can help students do the same thing in another college (e.g., change their major, drop a class, get advising, etc.).
- Develop college specific "orientations" that occur after students have completed university-wide orientation and have arrived on campus for semester (i.e., a few weeks after the start of the semester).
- Develop better communication between/among academic units to support positive experiences for students who must take major coursework in more than one department.