Remedying the ‘Huskie Shuffle’

**Summary:** We interviewed 14 undergraduate and graduate students, asking questions on their experience with the Huskie Shuffle. While most students weren’t familiar with the phrase, “Huskie Shuffle,” nine of the 14 interviewees indicated they had experienced such problems. Examples:

- Being shuffled between Financial Aid and the Bursar’s Office on financial questions.
- Inadequate and incorrect advising that impacted student understanding of academic programming requirements and timelines.
- Shuffled on the phone when trying to get residence hall housing information.
- A lack of, or out-of-date, information online.

Students commonly said the shuffle made them feel frustrated; some added that it gave them a negative perception of NIU. One 23-year-old senior said it made him rethink his school choice. A graduate student added, “Even though I returned to an institution I knew, I felt very lost.” (Note: Five students said they had no problems; the vast majority of students were generally happy with NIU.)

**Where students go to get info:** When seeking information, students said they go to NIU websites (most frequent) and to their advisers, departments, peers, faculty, Blackboard and e-mail.

**Student Suggestions (students making similar suggestions)**

- Have a where-to-get information or orientation event at start of year for graduate students and undergraduates. (III)
- Designate a central location, such as the HSC, or a call center where students can go for information (II).
- Ensure department websites are always up-to-date and contain complete information. Always list a contact person for more information. (II)
- Better train staff to answer questions, make sure they know their responsibilities and empower them to make decisions (II).
- Designate knowledgeable students to assist peers.
- Identify and assist departments where the most complaints arise.
- Survey students to see where they are encountering problems.
- Make a separate web page for most searched items or services.
- Create degree-program timelines so students know they are on track.
- Make more people available to speak with students about financial aid options.

**Potential solutions:**

- Increase training for employees; encourage better information sharing between departments.
- Investigate the potential for creating a “Students Advocates Office and Call Center,” similar to what is done at Indiana University. IU’s center is staffed by 3 employees and volunteer retired administrators/faculty. See http://studentaffairs.iub.edu/advocates/about/ for a description.
- Enhance the training of peer mentors and/or First-Year Comp. instructors to be student information experts. Provide them with a one-page resource listing to give to mentees/students. Note: A peer mentoring pilot program is already in place in FY Comp, a freshman requirement.
- Increase sessions within Orientation on where to go for information and emphasize the importance of the Student Handbook.
- Enhance the information provided in Univ 101 on where to go for information, and have it earlier in the semester.