March 31 Table 2 Summary

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Issue: The Huskie Shuffle

Students Interviewed: 8 undergraduate students and 1 graduate student.

About half of the students are transfer students. No student had heard of the “Huskie Shuffle,” though two students did mention problems with early advising and seeking student employment (discussed further).

Positive Themes: campus is close to family and home, cost of attending is less that other places, diversity, traditional campus, renovated dorms, club activities, the Peer Assisted Learning (PAL) tutoring, and campus telephone operators (always know who to direct some to).

Negative Themes: Unattractive and unappealing campus, poor building maintenance (roof leaks, crumbling sidewalks and steps, poor bathroom and plumbing facilities, broken furniture), poor communication (e.g., early advisement and student employment opportunities), lower quality dorm food, poor internet reliability, faculty unavailability, busses are too packed and take too long to get to destination, sense of “every person for himself,” poor

There is a necessity to address student needs—which are diverse.

- Some students commute and need accessible parking and places to study in close proximity to where their classes are and where they are parked (e.g., limited places for private study near engineering and business buildings).
- Students feel disconnected when they first arrive (unsure where they fit in and what they can do).
- Students feel some staff (the university) doesn’t care about their needs (treated like a number, unsigned email, poorly maintained facilities, faculty unavailable).

Solutions to the Huskie Shuffle: There weren’t many suggested solutions to the Huskie Shuffle problem, in part because it wasn’t the predominant issue. Suggestions included:

- Dedicating (and training) departmental business managers and front line staff to know the needs of students and where/how those needs can be addressed. The university phone operators might be a good model to follow given the positive comment made by one student.
- Training staff on effective communication skills, including proper email etiquette (e.g., use of contact information, signature settings in GroupWise, etc.).

Respectfully Submitted April 14, 2014 by Steve Wallace (swallace@niu.edu)