The problem for our group was: “The Huskie Shuffle”

Of the students in our group only one was familiar with the term “Huskie Shuffle”. However, all of them were familiar with the concept as we explained it. Most had stories to share about their experience as well as recommendations.

It was clear from all of the stories that NIU faculty and staff need to be more aware of how students have been treated in difficult or confusing situations here. Misinformation, avoidance, inability to assist, lack of information and not treating student issues as an institutional priority. It appears that poor customer service is pervasive on our campus, and students have a lot to say about what to do about it.

Recommendations:

1. Training: Students have asked for faculty and staff to undergo training on many aspects of this issue. Training is essential to understand this large complex institution. The Huskie Shuffle is most prominent when a staff member lacks information, lacks time, or just doesn’t know what to do.
   a. Faculty and staff need to have knowledge of major offices on our campus.
   b. They need to be aware of important dates during each semester.
   c. They also need to have training and protocols for how to best help students when working with them to solve their problem, and quick and easy connections to resources to help them help students. A hotline such as (1-800) HUSKYHELP, a website, a smartphone app, a work around for phone calls to quickly get to talk to a person all advertised all the time.
   d. Students should also receive training via UNIV and other resources (e.g. residence hall floor meetings) so that they can navigate a complex system, learn how to find resources themselves and self-advocate.

2. Staffing: It seems that many offices and faculty lack the time or just don’t know how to help students when they need help.
   a. Busy offices must give careful consideration to managing “crunch time” situations and long lines.
   b. If these offices are not able to meet the work load with their current staff levels, consideration should be given to adding additional staff. Bad experiences with the Huskie Shuffle directly impact retention based on the feedback we received.
   c. Front line staff also should have training on working with angry customers, emotional customers and other difficult situations that include resource booklets and materials to refer to.
   d. Front line staff require breaks to maintain a good face for students. Supervisors must be sensitive to burnout among front line staff, interceding when staff need a break or a chat or a walk outside and away from the madness for a few minutes.
   e. Staff should also have the opportunity to have regularly scheduled times each week to follow up on issues.
   f. Academic departments should have a go-to person in the chair’s office or elsewhere who can help them help students and locate resources.
   g. Academic departments should have a faculty-student advance planning and communication process that provides transparency and participation.

3. Bully pulpit: The campus as a whole must buy in to good customer service. It must be part of the fiber of the university.
   a. Just as Student Career Success and Bold Futures has started to change the culture, so should the message of students are our first priority.
   b. Starting with the president and working through training sessions, another phrase such as “Students Count” or “We are all Huskie Helpers” (or something better than that) should become another meaningful phrase to become woven into the fiber of institutional culture.
   c. New employees especially should know from their first days and their first trainings that we are a campus that cares about students.
   d. Customer service should be included as a category on every type of performance evaluation.