Bold Futures workshop team consisting of:
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Upon interviewing various non-traditional NIU students, patterns emerge relative to the nature of this important element of the NIU community:

- Many non-traditional students commute from between 20 and 60 miles of campus.
- Many non-traditional students are unmarried and without children, while a lesser number commute because life priorities include looking after their families and working.
- Many non-traditional students who choose to commute to campus do so in the interest of avoiding room and board expenses, thus saving money.
- Many students who commute tend to enjoy the comforts of their home towns more than they believe they would enjoy campus life.
- A small number of non-traditional students opt for campus ‘transfer housing’ in Stevenson Towers.
- A fair number of non-traditional students have no interest in campus life, only an interest in achieving their degree.
- Most non-traditional students spend four or five days and 18-30 hours per week on campus.
- A fair number of non-traditional students are NIU employees who attend class because it is free to do so.
- Many commuter students cite poor parking accommodations as their biggest concern.
- Many non-traditional students indicate that it is difficult to meet fellow students and ‘fit in’ with traditional students.
- Many non-traditional students express difficulty in finding balance between campus life and off-campus life.
- Many non-traditional students believe that poor lines of communication exist between campus entities and themselves.
- Many non-traditional students feel ‘disconnected’ from the campus community.
- Many non-traditional students frequent University lounges or the library between classes.
- Many non-traditional students have no desire to be part of the campus community, believing their advanced level of maturity is ill-suited for campus life.
- Many non-traditional students believe fees they pay that support activities that only traditional students engage in should be waived.
- Many non-traditional students who indicate they would like to interact more with traditional students are at the same time opposed to doing so in a setting designed to accommodate traditional students.

RECAP: While our sampling size was relatively small (twelve students), the group interviewed were quite diverse in age, background and ethnicity. The diversity is reflected in the responses above, and we believe that the responses are an indication of the multi-layered challenges associated with enhancing the NIU experience for non-traditional and commuter students.
Possible solutions include:

- Enhanced access to campus parking resources, including additional parking for commuter students and public transportation to campus facilities and amenities from peripheral parking venues.
- Creation of additional student lounges in high-traffic campus buildings such as DuSable Hall, Holmes Student Center, and Founders Library.
- Development of campus programming and activities that would better facilitate integration of non-traditional and commuter students into the fabric of the overall campus community.