**Bold Futures Workshop Group:** Paul Palian, Jane Boardman, Brian Glick, Brett Russell, Barbara Hancock, Carol Wahlstrom

**Goal:** “Provide effective and compelling campus connections for non-traditional students”

**Sample size:** 10

**Student Profiles/Issues:**

**Student 1:** This non-traditional student is currently participating in an internship and she feels this experience is providing valuable connections. Not living on campus my student feels she is missing a place to call her own and feels isolated. When she has to study between classes she sits in her car.

The proposed “Hub” could provide the non-traditional student a place to study, create and develop school spirit, and offer the student exposure to information (invitations, etc.) so they can become more involved.

Finally, the ever present lack of parking spaces was mentioned.

**Student 2:** This non-traditional student would like to see more programming offered and better advertised programming. Suggestions included using the student portal in MyNIU, text messages, better use of the Facebook page.

**Student 3:** This 26-year-old non-traditional student lives in Davis Junction and is a director for a day care center. She is a single mother with one child that lives 40 minutes from campus.

She enrolled in fall courses at NIU last year but dropped all due to inconvenient class schedules and the early childhood program at NIU was not willing to accept some transfer credits or current position as an internship.

In talking to this individual, going back to school is very difficult to begin with being a single mother. Although she receives sufficient financial aid to attend, the time constraints and inconveniently scheduled courses detour her from continuing her educational program. She wishes there were more online courses.

In terms of campus connections, her only interactions were with her advisor. She found her advisor unwilling to work with her and provide a plan that fits her schedule to be able to finish her bachelors. She wishes the advisor was more friendly and willing to provide her guidance. Overall, campus connections were not important to her as her main concern was being able to finish her bachelors, not to create connections since she only had a career.

**Student 4:** This 26-year-old veteran lives with his wife and 15-month-old son in Huntley and commutes five days a week, spending approximately two hours a day in the car. He should be a junior with an associate’s degree in Arabic from the Defense Language Institute, but not all his classes transferred. He works at the Northern Star in order to stay connected to NIU more and to
give himself a voice on campus. His wife is also in the process of applying to NIU and just got accepted 4/17, starting fall 2014. Admissions had an error in spelling her name on the transcripts, which delayed processing.

Military student services has been great in processing all benefits and compared to other universities, they have been great. They made the process of degree program change easy. Respond to all emails in 24 hours or less.

He and his wife and daughter are living with his dad right now, but now wife is accepted, moving to DeKalb.

“Sometimes I wish Military Student Services communicated more in advance – some of the items seem to be notified late. NIU veterans club website doesn’t seem to be updated often. Maybe club could be more active in building relationship with Military studies students.”

Convenient parking—yellow parking in key places. Thinks people that live on campus use parents’ address and purchase yellow permits.

Many transfer students don’t understand why certain classes don’t transfer.

Have had trouble with advisors here...Biology/Education Dept. advisors don’t answer questions well or offer personalized service. If everything is in black and white, then you really don’t need advisors. Advisors should be advocates for students. Business school advisor has been great.

Small stuff: lack of microwaves on campus for reheating leftovers. Commuter accessibility to resources they would need.

Tear down Lincoln and make it a parking structure with Lincoln commuter lounge/computer lab/etc.

“Let’s embrace the fact that 30% are commuters and make their experience better.”

Technology fee should go to tablets when you walk in the door. Professor at beginning of course puts all documentation on Blackboard share and distribute to students

Why don’t we promote resources/workshops more?

***Some emails that come in as promotion emails instead of directly to the primary mailbox (President, Announcements)***

We need to let students know that they have a vested interest in how the school grows, he says: “We should feel like we are running/own the university”

Offer actual courses at the regional education centers. Commuter students can register a day earlier to get access to courses – feel like they aren’t special.
Improve/increase amount of online courses—especially GenEd courses. Or stream large lecture hall classes/Time-place shifting for 1-2 days. Instructors post their notes to Blackboard.

Peers have been one of the biggest challenges...Many don’t seem to understand the value of the education and the opportunities that they have...Students for change group would be great.

He wants to be a part of bold futures initiative.

70% of professors are phenomenal.

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**Student 5:** This non-traditional student is a transfer student from Aurora, Ill. The senior journalism major lives off-campus with her son in DeKalb and utilizes the Campus Childcare Center while she takes classes and works an on-campus job.

She had no problems transferring from Waubonsee with her associate’s degree. However, having a child, there are some classes that are offered only at certain times. For example, this person had a journalism class that was only offered at night, when the campus childcare center is closed. It was often tough to find babysitters. Maybe students in early childhood program could form a group where they get paid internship credit and babysit during these hours.

Hard to find parking.

Nontraditional student services is kind of hidden in the basement of the HSC. Feel like sometimes its hard to get to know other students outside her program.

Loved the movie night at the stadium on the jumbotron. It would be great to be able to do that.

Bring your kid to

College parents group talk about NIU doing more with youth. Week of the young child was great. Shouldn’t just limit those activities to just one week. Opportunity to integrate that with the community.

NIU does a decent job of helping transfers but it is a lot of info to take in. Transfer Tuesday sealed the deal.

Create workshops for students to track degree requirements by themselves. Advisors not helpful and in many cases mislead students or offer incorrect advice.

**Students 6-7:** Non-traditional graduate students in the School of Art.

These non-traditional students are more responsive regarding fees charged for services they do not use (i.e. recreational activities, athletic activities, etc). They would like to see them waived for students that would never use these services/facilities as they are not on campus enough to utilize them. These non-traditional students were not looking for a campus connection, simply a degree or certification.
We may increase the number of non-traditional students if there was some method of identifying them and waiving or lowering fees for amenities they don’t use, thereby making their education at NIU more affordable.

Students 8-10: These non-traditional international students were older (25-35). They would like a mentor, and orientation to the student organization with their background. Older US students also thought a mentor or advisor that stayed consistent would be helpful.

Bold Ideas to foster effective and compelling campus connections for non-traditional students:

- Monthly/quarterly town hall meetings with President, cabinet members

-Integrate Non-traditional Student Services in a place with other students/activities (perhaps satellite offices around campus)

-Create parking structures on the periphery of campus that also contain space for non-traditional students to stay. One idea includes tearing down Lincoln hall and creating a combination parking structure/wi-fi coffee/restaurant on first floor where students from residence halls and off campus can congregate. Floors above this space could contain rooms where non-traditional/commuter students can stay between classes and even overnight if needed. Perhaps there could be a membership to use these facilities, which would have a desk, futon sofa, wifi, and a mini-fridge and microwave. Another location could be adjacent to Anderson Hall on the east side of campus to serve business, engineering, physical education, music, art and health students. One other potential location could be near the football stadium in the lot that runs between Lincoln Hwy and Stadium Drive.

-Utilize MyNIU to serve up appropriate content using audience segmentation based on your login and place in NIU (ie. Separate content for non-traditional students, commuter students, residence hall students, frosh, soph, junior, seniors, Greeks, etc.)

-Enhanced mentoring programs for non-traditional students, alumni and/or peer mentors, to aid them in taking advantage of all of the opportunities—socially and academically—that exist for NIU students.