BOLD FUTURES TEAM TOPIC, assigned 3/20/14: Provide effective and compelling campus connections for non—
traditional students... designed to support the objectives/needs of Bold Futures Concept. The team interviewed 23
non-traditional students, 11 of whom are military.

OBJECTIVE: Identify ways for NIU to be more welcoming to students, specifically with a view towards attracting and
retaining high-value students. We understand “high-value” students to mean those who are tuition-paying and
capable of completing a degree in a timely manner.

SUMMARY OF RESULTS: The team identified common needs shared by non-traditional students:
1) More flexible scheduling of social events to accommodate students with other commitments, including
families and jobs.
2) On-line courses that are available to all students, including those who may live a great distances (such
as residents or military personal in other countries).
3) Greater support for non-traditional students, especially ex-military.

While recognizing the diversity of “non’traditional” students, it became apparent that the most promising group is ex-
military. Accordingly we recommend that NIU immediately turn its attention to positioning itself to become Veterans’
School of Choice in Illinois. Within the non-traditional segment, Military Students offer the most advantages:

- Easily defined target market; approximately one million veterans will be discharged in the next four years,
  providing increased enrollment on-campus and on-line.
- Significant increase in revenue to NIU (on-campus and on-line) because they are fully funded under the GI
  Bill, providing immediate revenue to the university.
- High moral social obligations leading to positive publicity
- High level of team spirit and commitment, very relationship-oriented, mature.
- Integration of Educational Experience.
- Advertising can appeal to military organizations such as Great Lakes, Illinois National Guard, Tillman
  Foundation, Wounded Warriors, Semper Fi Foundation
- Advocating for vets is the right thing to do—important for an institution that has made ethical leadership one
  of its pillars.

CHALLENGES

- Learning to understand the difference between military friendly/military supportive.
- Articulation of grades/transferability/ACE review. This has been an especially vexing problem for military
  students who have already earned credits at community colleges, and who often have credit-worthy
  experience.
- Establishing an attractive and inviting Military Student Service Center.
- Need for a mentor who can relate to ex-military. combat veteran with experience to enhance work of
  Director of Non-Traditional Students.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Identify and hire a veteran, preferably someone with combat and business experience, to enhance the work
   of NIU’s Director of Non-Traditional Students.
2. Begin advertising and recruiting campaigns to reach veterans, and implement programs and facilities that
   will welcome and accommodate these students.
3. Identify appropriate courses for on-line learning, develop curricula, train instructors as needed, and offer on-
   line learning.

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