Bold Futures Assignment: Provide effective and compelling campus connections for non-traditional students.

March 31, 2014 Workshop; Table 13

Team Members:

April Arnold          Andrew Pemberton
Bridgett Davis       Grace Wahler
Teri Gensler          Nan Xiao

Summary of Findings: (Eight Non-Traditional Student Interviews)

**Situational:** The affordability of the education and the proximity of the Northern Illinois University (NIU) Naperville facility make it easy for learning and working full-time to occur so one can achieve their own desired outcomes. Non-traditional students require a lot of flexibility from the university and could benefit from specialized orientation and more diverse activities on campus. Additionally, since many non-traditional students might access the campus in the evenings, attention to campus safety is particularly important. For those living on campus, obtaining a list of local realtors or off campus student housing suggestions from the graduate school or individual college could make a big difference in helping non-traditional students get better acclimated and find the most affordable place in the best location.

**Institutional:** NIU has a lot to offer students and most of the faculty and staff is great at what they do. It is a great choice for an education with quality faculty, varied coursework and collaborative opportunities. As non-traditional students with time restraints anything that can make the college experience easier: more class availability, especially on nights and weekends; easier access to parking; online classes; a more interactive university website with more access to university departments and services—is of utmost importance. Some masters programs have started offering 8-week classes, which allows students to take two classes per semester and graduate sooner while still working full time. This has been a very positive adjustment. Some on campus experiences suggest necessary upgrades and renovations to central campus (Reavis, Dusable, Gabel, and Graham) to accommodate the style of classroom teaching and learning today. Students spend most of their time in these classroom spaces and they pay money to do so, so the facilities should reflect that and reinforce a sense of pride in this place.

**Dispositional:** International non-traditional students expressed nervousness about coming to NIU. They suggested the creation of a support system to help non-traditional students find resources on and around campus, i.e... a buddy or mentoring system paring non-traditional students. Improving interaction between the non-traditional student and the college (tutors and dedicated advisors) would increase the value the student places on Northern Illinois University as it relates to their personal experience of attachment and belonging.

**Psychological:** For the most part, NIU is a great place to learn and grow. However, there are many cost effective things that can be done to enhance the NIU experience vs adding to the experience. We should enhance what we have. Keep the things that work and get rid of what doesn’t. Some students think NIU is too different from where they want to be and the experiences they want in life. Therefore, NIU needs to continue its research on what is happening on other campuses around the city of Chicago colleges and work to bring some of that same feeling to its own campus.