Big Bold Futures Team Assignment

Team Members: Amanda Ferguson, Joyce Keller, Steve Lux, Lynn Mallory, Fr. Matthew McMorrow, Renee Page

Total Student Interviews Conducted: 14

Task: Discuss student perceptions that NIU is a “suitcase campus” and offer recommendations on how students could come to think of NIU as a “seven day per week” campus.

Interview Findings

Students’ perceptions about things to do on weekends:
• “Nothing to do, on or off campus”
• Bus system does not work well for transporting to “sprawl” areas such as Sycamore Road

Facts about campus life on weekends that were elicited through interviews:
• Not having cars limits their opportunities.
• There are activities, but many students are not aware of them.
• Dining halls and rec center have limited weekend hours.
• Many students choose NIU intentionally so they can go home on weekends, and this intention might not be affected by different activities. They choose to go home because of work obligations (better pay), to see friends/family, and for the standard of living they enjoy in their home environments.

Team Recommendations

Communications about weekend activities:
• Improve NIU smartphone app and main website calendar navigation to make activities easier to find
• Based on interest surveys completed at new student orientation, arrange to have texts/emails sent to students about activities that match their stated interests
• Timing: communication about student activity options needs to extend further than first week or two
• Communicate more frequently about DeKalb/Sycamore community activities

Development of weekend activity options:
• Extend rec center hours and dining hall hours
• Develop both small-group activities and large-scale events (weekend trips, outdoor trips, Convo Center parties/events, events sponsored by individual colleges/departments, sports teams)
• Promote bowling, billiards, on-campus movies
• Develop non-alcoholic gathering spaces
• Develop gathering spaces near west campus residence halls (similar to Daily Grind in HSC)
• Study transportation options for students on west campus
• Offer bus transportation to community activities (plays, Egyptian theatre, Pumpkin Fest, etc.)
• Provide the ability to sign up for intramurals as an individual, without requiring full-team signup