Colleagues,

It is my pleasure to provide my inaugural Welcome to the Division of Student Affairs & Enrollment Management in this fall’s eNewsletter! As I reflect on my time as your Vice President thus far, I am reminded of why I wanted to work in the Division of Student Affairs & Enrollment Management at Northern Illinois University. Our Division is full of leaders, innovators, and passionate educators. In my short time here, I have learned from you and have been inspired by you. This eNewsletter illustrates just a few of the ways our Division constantly strives to fulfill our mission, vision, and core values. From the reopening of Gilbert Hall, to the success of Welcome Days, to being committed to healthy lifestyles, the contents of this eNewsletter remind me of why I am proud to call myself a Huskie.

I also hope this eNewsletter helps you get to know more about me. In this eNewsletter, I share more details about my past, as well as some personal facts about myself. Many of you have allowed me to get to know you throughout my time at NIU, and I would like to take the opportunity to return the favor.

I have also shared some of the key initiatives I would like to focus on during the 2013-2014 academic year in this eNewsletter. These initiatives include enhancing student-career success, expanding the four-year student engagement plan, and making NIU a more competitive institution. Many of these initiatives are reflective of the goals of President Baker. I am eager for our Division to work together on these initiatives, and I know we can accomplish great things this year and beyond.

I look forward to our continued collaboration throughout the year, and I am excited to be a part of the Huskie family!

In Huskie Pride,

Eric A. Weldy, Ed.D.
Vice President for Student Affairs & Enrollment Management
STAFF SPOTLIGHT: Eric A. Weldy, Ed.D.

At the beginning of the academic year, I was fortunate to have the opportunity to sit down and talk with Dr. Eric A. Weldy, Vice President for Student Affairs & Enrollment Management, about a variety of topics. Dr. Weldy’s interest in Student Affairs, his thoughts on our Division, and some of the key initiatives he plans to work on this year were just a few of the topics we discussed.

I began our sit-down by asking Dr. Weldy how he knew that Student Affairs was the right path for him. Being an RA during his undergraduate years provided him the opportunity to learn more about the Student Affairs profession as well as the importance of holistically developing students. Being an RA also changed Dr. Weldy as a person: “I was an introvert before becoming an RA. Being an RA forces you to be outgoing and build relationships with others,” he said. After his experience as an RA, he went on to become a GA in a residence hall at Illinois State University, where he officially caught the Student Affairs “bug.”

Dr. Weldy also touched on why he was interested in applying for the Vice Presidential position at NIU. Dr. Weldy knew he wanted to work for a school where he would make a positive impact and make a difference. He also knew that Student Affairs & Enrollment Management at NIU had a great reputation, and the vision and mission of Student Affairs & Enrollment Management resonated with him. His respect for Dr. Brian Hemphill, former Vice President for Student Affairs & Enrollment Management and current President of West Virginia State University, also interested him in the position. Dr. Weldy and Dr. Hemphill had an opportunity to meet at a conference. Their initial conversation helped Dr. Weldy know that NIU was a great place for him to further his career: “Brian came off as a passionate, confident person who gave great advice. That meeting helped me realize that NIU is a great place to work.”

Since he began his position on July 1, Dr. Weldy has met individually with all directors in the Division. When asked what struck him the most about staff members in our Division, he cited their depth of knowledge: “Our staff members have so much knowledge. They are experts in their area, regardless of the amount of years they have been here.” He has also noticed a sense of urgency and sense of hope among the staff: “There seems to be a sense of urgency that we need to come together and collaborate to address issues we face. With that, there also seems to be a new sense of hope and feelings of anticipation that change can happen.”

Dr. Weldy is working on a variety of initiatives for the 2013-2014 school year. Along with President Baker, Dr. Weldy is focused on enhancing student career success. Collaborating with the Provost and Alumni Relations to create a Student-Alumni Mentor Program and working heavily with Career Services and Academic Affairs to expand the four-year student engagement plan are just two of the ways he is helping student career success become a priority in our Division and at NIU. Revisiting the allocation of scholarship funds, looking at financial aid packaging, and building relationships with community colleges are also all on Dr. Weldy’s priority list, with NIU becoming a more competitive institution being his ultimate goal.

At the conclusion of our meeting, Dr. Weldy shared a few facts about himself that staff members might be surprised learn. For example, he used to ride a Yamaha Seca sport bike, a hobby he enjoyed until the bike was destroyed in a storm. He also shared some facts about his educational experience. When Dr. Weldy was in 4th grade, he was reading at a 2nd grade level and was a D/F student. His 6th grade history teacher, however, changed his life as a student. That teacher made history come so alive for Dr. Weldy, he began reading books on the different historical characters his teacher mentioned in class. In a year’s time, Dr. Weldy went from a D/F student to a straight A student, illustrating the power of engaging education in students’ lives.

Kelli Bradley
(Former) Professional Development & Operations Coordinator
Vice President’s Office
GILBERT HALL REOPENS FOR STUDENTS

Despite the thunderstorms that plagued Move-in Day on Thursday, August 22, the anticipation and excitement of many of our first-year Huskies were not dampened as they moved into their new “home away from home” in the residence halls. The enthusiasm and eagerness were heightened on the far east side of campus, as the newly renovated Gilbert Hall officially opened its doors to residence hall students.

This marked the first time Gilbert Hall was used as a residence hall since 1995. Between 1995 and 2011, Gilbert Hall has been used by several University offices, including University Publications and the Office of Support & Advocacy.

Many of the Gilbert Hall residents who moved in that Thursday morning were greeted by President Baker. He, along with several other volunteer faculty, staff, and students, assisted the residents in unpacking cars and carrying belongings to the residence hall rooms.

Gilbert Hall reopened with complete abatement of asbestos materials and complete retrofit of the mechanical, electrical, and plumbing systems. Gilbert now has updated student rooms, lounges, and meeting spaces. The building has dedicated spaces for the hall director and administrative offices, as well as the hall council and community assistant work area.

As you enter through the west entrance between Wirtz and Gilbert Halls, located on the second floor, you are greeted with a redesigned residence hall reception desk. If you enter through the first floor west entrance (Gilbert Avenue), you will find the East Side Café, featuring Starbucks coffee.

Also located on the first floor is an activity/lounge area with a large screen television, comfortable seating, group tables and chairs, computer stations, foosball table, and air-hockey table. There is also a meeting room that seats approximately 35 people. The aforementioned hall council and community assistants’ offices are also located on the first floor.

Like the New Hall, there is a fitness center that any resident student living in any of the residence halls may use. The fitness center is staffed and operated by Campus Recreation.

The Gilbert Hall dining room includes a baby grand piano for use by residents and others for special events. Dining tables and booths give residents and guests several seating options, and there are two outdoor patio terraces.

Dino Martinez
Associate Director, Housing & Dining
SAEM Staff Members Present at AHEAD Preconference Session

Melanie Tucker, Acting Assistant Vice President for Student Services, and Randall Ward, Acting Director of the Disability Resource Center, address disability issues daily in the Division of Student Affairs & Enrollment Management. Their efforts are not limited, however, to NIU alone; Tucker and Ward are also involved in the Association for Higher Education and Disability (AHEAD). AHEAD is a professional membership organization for individuals involved in the development of policy and in the provision of quality services to meet the needs of persons with disabilities involved in all areas of higher education.

At this time, AHEAD consists of more than 2,500 members throughout the United States, Canada, England, Australia, Ireland, Northern Ireland, New Zealand, South Africa, Sweden, Japan, and Greece. AHEAD is actively involved in all facets of promoting full and equal participation by individuals with disabilities in higher education and supporting the systems, institutions, professions, and professionals who attend to the fulfillment of this important mission. The Challenging and Changing Disability Perspectives: AHEAD 2013 conference was held July 8-13, 2013, in Baltimore, Maryland.

One of the ways Tucker, a Director at Large Board Member for AHEAD, and Ward fulfilled the AHEAD mission was through presenting at an AHEAD preconference session with five colleagues from across the country. Their sold-out preconference session, entitled “OUT OF THE BOX II: A Fresh Focus for the Continuing Professional,” explored the basics of social justice, the social model of disability, and disability studies. The session covered models of disability, personal core values and current values of the field, social welfare vs. social justice, and much more. Tucker and Ward also discussed topics higher education professionals should consider, such as office language, office job descriptions, and awareness programming. Ward was able to reflect on his experience presenting during the 2013 AHEAD conference: "It was a wonderful opportunity to be invited to provide progressive professional training for experienced and established disability professionals at a national level. I believe having two of the seven presenters represent NIU speaks to the positive work that is being done regarding building an inclusive and accessible environment at NIU.”

L. Scott Lissner, President of AHEAD, also commented on Tucker’s integral involvement in the organization: "In the short time Melanie Tucker has served on AHEAD’s Board of Directors, she has proven herself to be an invaluable addition. Her understanding of student affairs, practical experience, and thoughtful analysis have contributed to the clarity of the Board’s conversation and its breadth. Her broad perspective, commitment to students, and collaborative approach are also apparent in her contributions as a presenter of our premiere preconference session at this year’s conference.”
Welcome Days 2013 Ends in Success

We are excited to report a successful Welcome Days 2013! Thanks to the leadership and support of countless Student Affairs & Enrollment Management staff members, as well as numerous campus partners, Welcome Days 2013 afforded thousands of students opportunities to meet each other, to connect to NIU, and to serve the local community.

Thursday, August 22, began with a downpour but ended with thankful students and family members who received move-in help from numerous drenched campus volunteers. As the rain gave way to sun that afternoon, over 200 family members attended the Family Fair, where they discovered essential campus resources to help them support their students’ transition to NIU. That evening, thousands of students attended the Residence Hall Association (RHA) Block Party – an annual event featuring inflatable games, student DJs, and entertainment.

Friday, August 23, included the second annual Band Run. The NIU marching band led the campus community from Neptune Hall to the Convocation Center, where students, faculty, and staff attended Academic Convocation. Academic Convocation featured new programmatic aspects, including a student theatrical performance and the recognition of students by their College. Following Academic Convocation, students headed to the “We Are Huskies” tailgate, where they enjoyed food prepared by Housing & Dining and were introduced to Huskie athletic traditions. Later that day, students attended Academic College Receptions offered by each of the colleges. Students had a great time meeting faculty from their major college in a social atmosphere. Friday evening, over 700 students packed into the Carl Sandburg Auditorium to stare in wonderment as the Mentalist Team blew their minds. Campus Activities Board (CAB) organized the culminating event for the day featuring a Glow in the Dark Dance Party in the MLK Commons, where thousands of students danced under the cover of black lights.

Saturday of Service kicked off August 24 with numerous students wishing to give back to the greater DeKalb community of the group served at Feed ‘Em Soup, and the other half supported Pay it Forward. Hundreds of students enjoyed a free barbeque, met student leaders, and learned more about Greek life at the Fraternity & Sorority Life BBQ – a brand new event for Welcome Days. Later that day, Campus Recreation staff hosted Rec Fest, where hundreds of students enjoyed the thrill of a zip line, group fitness activities, crate stacking, and much more! That evening, hundreds of students attended Rock Tha’ Mic: Huskie Talent Jam – a long-standing campus tradition. Following that event, over 1,300 students participated in the DJ Battle – another new event this year!

Sunday featured the Huskie “How-To: Teaching New Dogs Old Tricks,” which attracted nearly 100 students this year! The Involvement Fair followed, providing new students with opportunities to meet student leaders from 160 student organizations and campus departments. Finally, the President’s Welcome Back Picnic closed out Welcome Days with thousands of campus community members in attendance, allowing Huskies to meet President Baker, enjoy dinner, and listen to local music.

Thank you all for your contributions to a very successful Welcome Days 2013!

Jill Zambito
Director, Student Involvement & Leadership Development
Co-Chair, Welcome Days Committee
Campus Recreation

The Student Affairs & Enrollment Management Fitness Program can help you jump start your pursuit toward a healthier lifestyle! You have an opportunity to purchase a Campus Recreation membership at a reduced rate. Campus Recreation’s certified staff can help you get started! Your membership includes a cardio and strength training orientation, a nutrition session, and Group Fitness classes. You have access to multiple facilities, including the Student Recreation Center, Chick Evans Field House, Gabel and Anderson Pools, and the Outdoor Recreation Sports complex during Open Recreation drop-in hours.

For more information go to: www.stuaff.niu.edu/stuaff/division_employee_resources/fitness or contact Patty Lee at patlee@niu.edu or 753-7863.

Student Involvement & Leadership Development

Huskie families new and experienced shared a summer afternoon at the first annual Parents’ Assist Summer Send-off (PASS It On) hosted by Huskie Family Connections (HFC). HFC’s Parents’ Advisory Committee Membership Chairperson Terry Howe and her husband, Jeff, hosted the event in their West Chicago back yard, graciously allowing it to be claimed as Huskie Territory for a fun afternoon filled with games, delicious food, and wonderful camaraderie. Huskie families shared tips on Huskie success and formed new friendships, and soon-to-be NIU co-eds got to know one another. Simple Sweets of Elgin provided delicious and beautiful desserts, and a raffle prize package consisting of tickets to the Huskie football home-opener, t-shirts, and newly released football team poster was given away. All families left with an HFC tote bag filled with goodies.