Colleagues,

Thank you all for your continued commitment to supporting the growth of our students. You demonstrate this in countless variations and your actions reflect the core values of the Division, from the memorable anniversary events on February 14, 2010, to our welcoming open-house events. As we continue to embody the core values, please take time to reflect on ways in which you exemplify student-centered service, partnerships focused on student learning, establishing an inclusive community, and actively building collaborative relationships.

Each time you embrace an opportunity to support a student, you are helping to create an essential network of support. These actions, seemingly inconsequential at the moment, can hold significant implications for the persistence of a student. Although we seldom realize it, through our individual actions we begin to impact the lives of our students. With that, I would like to challenge all of you to expand your understanding of student retention and persistence. How do we help students persist to their goals? There is not one answer, but I can assure you that it begins with our individual actions. Please take time to consciously reflect on your daily tasks, duties, and interactions with students. These sometimes routine interactions can be a springboard for engaging and subsequently retaining our students.

I hope you enjoy this spring edition of the Student Affairs & Enrollment Management eNewsletter. You will find this edition reflective of our continued commitment to student success in the form of great informational articles. The Center for Access-Ability Resources provides tips on accommodating individuals with disabilities; the Financial Aid office shares details on an exciting new program. Here are updates on campus veterans services, NIU Cares Day, and one staff member’s Fulbright Experience. We also bid a sad but heartfelt farewell to two beloved staff members.

Sincerely,

Brian O. Hemphill, Ph.D.
Vice President for Student Affairs & Enrollment Management

Linda Herrmann Retirement Announcement

The Division of Student Affairs & Enrollment Management would like to thank Dr. Linda Herrmann for her 13 years of dedicated service to NIU.

Linda assumed her current role as Assistant Vice President for Student Health & Wellness in 2005. With her extensive medical background and exemplary leadership, she brought to our division a well-rounded perspective that was a welcome complement to the Division's Executive Group. Dr. Herrmann began her service at NIU in 1987, left to pursue developmental opportunities at institutions such as the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, the University of Illinois College of Medicine-Rockford, and the College of William and Mary, and returned to NIU in 2000. Thank you Linda, we wish you every happiness in your new venture.
We bid farewell to Margie Cook

The division of Student Affairs & Enrollment Management would like to thank Margaret “Margie” Cook for her years of service. She resigned this February to accept a position as the Assistant Director of the Center for Student Diversity at The College of William & Mary in Williamsburg, VA.

Margie began professional work at NIU in 1994 and became the inaugural director of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender Resource Center in 2003. Under Margie’s leadership, NIU was recognized as one of the 100 best LGBT-friendly colleges and universities by the Advocate College Guide.

Margie frequently referred to herself as a “professional lesbian” for her work in advocating for the often-invisible LGBT community at NIU. Margie’s NIU Ally program currently features over 300 active allies and has become a model program for campuses nationwide. She has been a tireless advocate for encouraging students to embrace leadership roles, including the creation of the annual Margaret Cook Service Award to honor LGBT student leaders.

Students describe Margie as frequently going above and beyond to be there to support them. Renowned for her generous smile and encouraging hugs, Margie is an icon of the NIU community. She will be missed.

Center for Access-Ability Resources Offers Conscientious Advice

Having students who are blind, deaf, or using a wheelchair show up at the CAAR office is nothing unusual, but, as a university and a division, we want all students, with or without disability, to be involved in the many programs and services offered at NIU. If a student who uses a wheelchair comes to your office, can they get to and into your office? If not, what is your plan? If a student who is blind comes to see you, do you and the office staff know how to assist that student without offending him, or do you panic and try to figure out, “What do I do now?” What if a student with a disability comes to a program that you are hosting? Are you prepared?

Initial planning will minimize the embarrassment and “last-minute” changes that you might have to implement to make a program accessible. As programs and services are created, they should be designed with concepts of “Universal Design” in place. Universal Design means considering people with a broad range of abilities, cultures, and other characteristics rather than designing facilities and programs for the “average” user. Basic information on Universal Design, specifically as it relates to Student Services and students with disabilities, can be found at www.washington.edu/doit/Conf

Preparing for basic accessibility includes being sure that everyone can get to the facility and maneuver within it, that all print and electronic resources can be accessed by students with disabilities, and that communication needs are considered in advance. When putting together publicity for an event, always include a statement that invites anyone planning to attend the event and who might need accommodations to contact ___________ by (date).

Train your staff to know how to respond to students with disabilities and requests for accommodations. Knowledgeable, appropriately helpful staff will make your unit a welcoming environment to students with disabilities. You might want to plan regular staff training/orientations around this topic. Staff members from the Center for Access-Ability Resources would be happy to provide training within units to help your department feel comfortable and confident in working with students with disabilities. Think ahead – be prepared!
FAFSA Fridays

The Director of the Student Financial Aid Office, Kathleen Brunson, presented her staff with an exciting new initiative this year called FAFSA Fridays. This program is aimed at supporting our current students in filing the 2010/2011 Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). This important application must be completed by the student each academic year in order to determine eligibility to participate in federal, state, and institutional grant and loan programs.

The FAFSA Fridays workshop allows students to stop by the office each Friday morning where a team of advisors and counselors are on hand to assist with completing the FAFSA on the Web Worksheet and the online FAFSA completion process. Early filing is crucial for students who are eligible to participate in the Illinois State Monetary Award Program (MAP) Grant. Last spring, the Illinois Assistance Commission suspended the awarding of MAP Grants to those students who had not filed their 2009/2010 FAFSA by May 14, 2009.

The Student Financial Aid Office plans to continually promote the workshop through April to allow all NIU students the opportunity to have their FAFSA filed before they leave campus at the end of the spring term. Students are also welcome each day to visit the Student Financial Aid customer service area and receive assistance. The department hopes the catchy name and publicity efforts will keep the FAFSA in the forefront of students’ minds and that they will commit to completing the application whether during FAFSA Fridays or any other time.

If you have questions regarding FAFSA Fridays or any other FAFSA Completion Workshops, please contact Jane Jordan, Associate Director, at jjordan1@niu.edu

NIU Cares Day

NIU Cares Day, our campus-wide day of service, is back for a fourth year! Coordinated by Student Involvement & Leadership Development, NIU Cares Day brings students, faculty, and staff members together to complete service projects that benefit the surrounding communities in order to thank them for their support of the university. NIU Cares Day 2009 brought almost 1,500 participants together to complete work at over 60 different project sites in the DeKalb/Sycamore area.

NIU Cares Day 2010 will kick off at 10:00 a.m. on April 17. at the Holmes Student Center. Students can sign up online at http://niucareday.niu.edu as individuals or with a student team (student organizations, residence hall floors, groups of friends, etc.).

The NIU Cares Day committee is currently looking for faculty, staff, and graduate assistants to serve as Project Site Leaders. Each PSL will serve as a resource for students at their project sites as well as ensure that students are having the best experience possible. Serving as a PSL is a great opportunity to work alongside students in a fun and unique environment. Interested individuals can sign up for the “Project Site Leader” team at http://niucareday.niu.edu All PSLs will be supplied with a t-shirt, lunch, and training.

All questions regarding NIU Cares Day 2010 can be directed to Becky Harlow at rharlow@niu.edu
Fullbright Scholar

In 2009, Dr. Emily Prieto, Director of the Latino Resource Center at NIU, was awarded a Fulbright Specialist Grant by J. William Fulbright Foreign Scholarship Board, the Bureau of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Department of State, and the Council for International Exchange of Scholars to visit The University of Ibadan (UI), Department of Religious Studies in Nigeria, Africa. The purpose of Dr. Prieto’s trip was to collaborate with several of the senior lecturers and review the educational materials being used at the undergraduate and graduate level in the areas of Religious Studies and Sociology/Ethics. In addition, Dr. Prieto worked with faculty on research focused on how community-based leaders in Nigeria affect or influence sexual behavior that may provide protective effects against HIV. Many of Dr. Prieto’s program activities centered on strengthening and developing the needs of UI. Dr. Prieto stayed at the University of Ibadan for two weeks in December 2009 and plans to continue collaboration with UI. Dr. Prieto stated, “It was an incredible experience to establish connections between NIU and UI that fostered a comprehensive understanding of the global community at both institutions. This academic partnership provided an exciting opportunity to promote intellectual creativity. The trip itself left a lasting impression and was a life changing experience.”

Veterans Services

NIU has a long history of supporting student military veterans. With the anticipated rise in numbers of veterans coming to college, the Division of Student Affairs & Enrollment Management stands ready to meet the needs of these students through a variety of support programs and services. The Veterans’ Assistance Office, located in Student Financial Aid, is focused on assisting students with understanding and applying for Veterans’ tuition assistance programs. The office also houses the newly hired Veteran’s Services Coordinator, Justin Faulkner, a staff member dedicated to assisting veterans in navigating the institution. Additionally, a veterans’ resource Web site has been developed. This comprehensive electronic resource provides information on deployment and re-entry procedures, veterans’ benefits, campus support services, and answers to frequently asked questions. This office also hosts visiting staff from the Veterans Administration who spend time on the campus twice a month and who provide support and guidance to our student veteran population.

To assist with the transition to college, NIU has developed veteran information sessions during in-coming student orientation as well as a section of the UNIV 100 course, a course which educates students on NIU resources dedicated to veterans. Lastly, NIU has maintained one of the oldest Student Veterans Organization in the nation. This group not only provides an important social support, but has been an opportunity for those who have served our country to continue this tradition of service through participation in community assistance projects on the campus and in the surrounding area.

For additional information on Veterans Services at NIU, contact Justin Faulkner, Veteran’s Services Coordinator, at jfaulkner1@niu.edu