Northern Illinois P-20 Network  
Student Support Services Summary of Progress February 10, 2015

**Goal** Coordinate student support systems across institutions to ease transitions and increase success.

**White House Commitments**

- Develop a comprehensive menu of financial literacy activities for P-20 students and families.
- Assess student support services to identify gaps and develop needed interventions.
- Embark on a regional peer mentoring initiative for 400 high-need, pre-college and freshman students with 80 trained peer mentors.

**Work Group Members**

- Eric Weldy (NIU) Facilitator
- John Coffin (ECC)
- Paul Crawford (NIU)
- Kaitlyn Curta (H/BR 429)
- Amy Franklin (NIU)
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- Sue Martin (CoD)
- Jacque Mecklenburg (H/BR 429)
- Nancy Partch (KC)
- Greg Robinson (ECC)
- Dustin Seemann (HS 214)
- Flecia Thomas (MCC)
- Danielle Welch (DeKalb 428)

**Objectives**

**Comprehensive Student Support**

- Build a comprehensive, coordinated student support system that includes "soft skills" training, orientation courses such as UNIV 101, course advising, career planning, counseling and coaching, financial literacy, financial aid advising, impact of current choices on life, systems navigation, and mentoring.

**January 2015** Report on a survey of institutions to assess strengths and gaps in the region's student support services and identify additional targets for development of regional services.

**September 2015** Present project plans to coordinate student services in areas of need.

**Progress**

- **Completed** Assessment surveys were administered to community colleges and high schools to collect information on existing services and gaps in programming.

**Community Colleges** 13 responded. All offered introductory college success courses, but not all are required. All have instituted new programs to address challenges in the college success classes, academic advising, transfer services, career planning, student-to-student mentoring, and career success skills. Most have mandatory academic advising. Evaluation of these programs is inconsistent.

**School Districts** Six districts responded. The majority provide college planning and preparation, help transitioning to college or career, and career planning. Most districts mentioned shortages of staff for these functions. Half provide student-to-student peer mentoring, and four districts will participate in a regional peer networking conference.

**On Track for 9/15 Completion**

- **Next Steps** Analysis of extensive survey data is continuing to identify gaps and potential targets for regional services.

  Using survey results, prioritize program needs and determine appropriate regional approaches to gaps, which may include new services; tools for planning, tracking, or evaluation; and metrics to measure effectiveness of new programs and services.
| **P-20 Financial Education** | **Completed** The financial literacy education survey received responses from 22 post-secondary institutions and 6 school districts, who offer a broad range of financial literacy programs. Community colleges open their FAFSA workshops to both current and prospective students and their families. Only one institution does not offer FAFSA completion workshops. Econ Illinois contributed an extensive list of local, state, and national financial literacy programs and services, both face to face and online.  
**Still in Progress** Analysis of the extensive data collected by this survey has not been completed. The work group will use the analysis to plan next steps. The group intends to use the Illinois Shared Learning Environment resource database platform to generate a list of vetted resources that can be filtered by grade level, end user, and a variety of other categories on the web. To date, 25 pages of resources will be included in the online database. Alternate methods of communicating about the most useful and needed resources are still being discussed. | **Next Steps** Complete collection of data on the effectiveness of the financial literacy programs. Plan and implement posting of the online database. Develop a communications plan and pieces that address both personal finance knowledge and decision-making and post-secondary financial aid. |
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| **Regional Peer Mentoring** | **Completed** The needs assessment survey generated 21 names (9 community college, 6 high school, and 6 NIU) who will participate in planning a regional peer mentoring conference in June 2015. The first planning meeting is being scheduled for an enthusiastic group of peer mentoring advocates.  
**Still in Progress** Planning and implementation of the regional conference in June, which will offer sessions on different types of mentoring and sharing of successes and challenges in existing programs. | **Next Steps** The June conference will organize P-20 Network resources to meet the White House goal of training and supporting 80 student mentors for 400 at-risk students. |
| **Build a comprehensive menu of financial literacy activities for P-20 students and families.** January 2015 - Identify existing programs at all levels and needs for development of new programs. **September 2015** Share a full continuum of financial literacy activities for schools and post-secondary institutions with identified providers and resources. | Organize a northern Illinois regional network of peer mentors who receive training and support to increase the success of students in high school and college. **January 2015** Identify existing programs and best practices in peer mentoring, plus training and support. See ISAC Student Assistance Corps for one model. **September 2015** Report on a regional conference on peer mentoring held in summer 2015 and next steps to expand and improve peer mentoring. |