Northern Illinois P-20 Network
Student Support Services Work Group

NOTES
October 28, 2014, 1:00 p.m.
Douglas Room, Holmes Student Center, Northern Illinois University

Participants
John Coffin (ECC - phone), Paul Crawford (NIU), Kaitlyn Curta (HBR) Amy Franklin (NIU), Melinda James (WCC), Sue Martin (COD), SyLinda Menafee (KC), Jacque Mecklenburg (HBR), Nancy Partch (KC), Debbie Pixton (NIU), Flecia Thomas (MCC - phone), Eric Weldy (NIU)

Opening
Eric Weldy reviewed the September 3 meeting. The group needs to define financial literacy or come up with an alternate term that better describes what we are looking for information about before asking questions of institutions. The group will need to determine metrics for our progress, which will be implicit in the questions asked.

Review of Work Group Goal – Coordinate student support systems across institutions in the northern Illinois region to ease transitions and increase student success.

Objectives, Tasks, and Next Steps
1. 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.
   a. Financial literacy and mentoring are part of this
   b. One larger needs assessment may be a better approach than smaller surveys.
2. Build a comprehensive menu of financial literacy activities for P-20 students and families.
   a. A review of the financial literacy survey resulted in an understanding that “financial literacy” means different things to different institutions. A definition of financial literacy must be developed prior to survey dissemination.
   b. Consideration is being given to working with Econ Illinois to conduct a needs assessment among regional institutions. This may include a survey or more targeted interviews. Concern exists regarding the cost associated with Econ Illinois. A question was also raised as to whether they would be willing to facilitate a survey and analysis of questions beyond financial piece to include other support services.
   c. The survey needs to gather information about what is currently offered K-12, at community colleges, and at the university level, and gather information about the existing challenges that professionals see among students across all levels. (What are the biggest challenges facing your students? What are you doing to address those issues?)
   d. A variety of activities to help families make informed decisions will be developed based on the data.
e. Future actions will depend on the results of this data.

3. 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.
   a. Flecia Thomas shared her proposal, which includes pre-NIU enrollment and post-NIU enrollment mentoring. Questions were raised about whether mentors would be paid or volunteer. Proposal offers good structure, but has many requirements that would make it difficult for part-time students to participate in the program.
   b. Eric Weldy shared information about the impending pilot of a mentoring program with Kishwaukee College for Spring 2015. He pointed out that some of the benefits of the program are dependent on the close proximity of Kish and NIU.
   c. MCC would like to be a pilot site for a mentoring program with NIU for transitioning students.
   d. Waubonsee is piloting an internal mentoring program this year. Once there are results from the Kish-NIU pilot, they would consider piloting the program as well. Of course the distance would require changes to the program.
   e. Will continue with smaller pilots.

4. Next Steps
   a. Group members should provide feedback on the first financial literacy survey to Debbie by November 10.
      i. The survey is at [https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/financial-lit](https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/financial-lit)
      ii. Be sure to also send information about what you want to know about the comprehensive, coordinated student support system to dpixton@niu.edu
         1. What do we need to know?
         2. What services are currently provided?
         3. Where are the gaps?
         4. What are the current challenges?
   b. This feedback will be combined into a large scale general survey.
   c. Amy, Eric, and Debbie will have a preliminary meeting with Econ Illinois to determine the feasibility of a partnership.

Future Meetings
- December 9, 1:30-3:30 p.m., Waubonsee Community College
- January 12, tentatively at McHenry County College