Student Support Services Work Group
August 12, 2014, 1 p.m.
Lowden Hall 304

Eric Weldy (NIU), John Coffin (ECC – phone), Angela Hite-Carter (RPS), Dana Gautcher (NIU), Flecia Thomas (MCC – phone), Marilyn Bellert and Debbie Pixton (NIU)

Consideration of Themes

Theme 1: Share current research and best practices in comprehensive student support services

- Collect data on current regional students demographics and where students go after high school

Theme 2: Provide current, concise, useful information for counselors, advisors, and mentors across the region through a dynamic web-based system, face-to-face meetings, and professional development

- Consider a conference or series of workshops to bring high school and post-secondary counselors and advisors together to share information on the breadth of options available to students, raise aspirations for post-secondary studies, and learn about new tools to connect students to career pathways.

Theme 3: Establish a culture of higher expectations among advisors and counselors

- Survey activities currently underway in the region to connect counselors and advisors; identify gaps and possibilities

Theme 4: Develop near-peer advising, coaching, and mentoring programs and offer training and support

- Explore establishment of near-peer advising among NIU students and current community college and high school students, prioritizing first generation college students in under-represented groups.
- Organize and deliver training and support at the regional level for peer advisors, coaches, and mentors who are directly involved in developing, planning or actively participating in a mentoring program.

Theme 5: Establish a regional database of career coaches, mentors, and workplaces experiences

- This theme was not discussed, but may be a support feature of the other mentoring work

Theme 6: Offer new or expanded workshops on financial literacy for students, families, and educators at college and career fairs

- Develop a comprehensive program of financial literacy activities across the P-20 continuum, including information for families about financing college beginning in elementary school, professional development for K-12 teachers to integrate financial literacy into their classrooms,
increased competitions and other informal learning opportunities for students in high school and college, outreach on financial issues to prospective students as well as current post-secondary students.

30 Day Agenda

- Survey work group institutions to determine what current resources exist for students and families regarding financial education and what programs currently exist to teach financial literacy to students and families
- Review Laurie Elish-Piper’s fall 2013 data on existing peer mentoring programs at NIU at http://www.niu.edu/mentor/programs/index.shtml
- Survey activities to share information and raise aspirations among high school and post-secondary advisors and counselors
- Collect and share data on where students are going after high school
  - Break out by gender and ethnicity
  - Include information on persistence and retention
  - Filter by first generation college students if possible

Long Term Work

The work group has decided to focus on two major themes in the coming months—(a) Financial Literacy and (b) Student Peer Mentors. Members also agreed to give added feedback on the two major themes included major objectives, activities, metrics and timeline. Feedback must be shared via email with all work group members no later than Wednesday, August 20.

- Financial Literacy
  - Document best practices and resources for developing financial literacy for parents and students of all ages across the P-20 continuum
  - Consider new ways to communicate with students where they are about finance, including using current students to share their experiences
  - Career Exploration – consider embedding financial literacy education into career exploration; take care not to overlap with the work done by the Aligning Standards for Accelerated Student Opportunities work group
- Student Peer Mentors
  - Identify students at NIU to serve as mentors to students at community colleges and high schools, especially for underserved populations
  - Provide programs to teach students about personal responsibility as a key factor in college and career success
  - Consider a regional peer mentoring conference
- Advisors and Counselors - Hold a conference for advisors and counselors at all levels to review best practices and current information on the opportunities students have and the range of choices available to them and to provide training to encourage all students to consider college as an option

August 25, 2014 at 1 p.m. – Next Meeting in Lowden Hall 304 at NIU or by phone at 815.753.0013

Finalize recommendations for activities to accomplish over the next 12 months.