



Northeastern Illinois University

Millennium Student Report

AUGUST 2008



Final Report of the Presidential Task Force on the Millennium Student

Acknowledgements

The Co-Chairs of The Presidential Task Force on the Millennium Student wish to thank the more than 400 individuals who participated in the focus groups, follow-up meetings and the Millennium Student Survey. This report would not have been possible without their support and input. We would like to specially thank our two Graduate Assistants and ENLACE Fellows Kendy Oláquez and Evelyn Rivera-Swint who assisted with the coordination of the Task Force and this report. Finally, we also like to acknowledge the following contributors to this report:

Keith Atterberry, Undergraduate Student

Murrell Duster, Dean, Academic Development

Dr. Diane Ehrlich, Professor, Educational Leadership and Development

Yvonne Gulli, Director, Academic Advisement Center

Amy Hendricksen, Grant Developer, Chicago Teacher's Center

Suleyma Perez, Director, Government Relations

Elizabeth Rodriguez, Undergraduate Student

Dr. Richard Rutschman, Program Development Coordinator, Chicago Teacher's Center

Dr. Terry Schuepfer, Professor, Psychology

Luvia Valentin, Graduate Student

Maria Zepeda, Assistant Director, Institutional Studies and Planning

It is our hope that this report and its recommendations will help to better understand the NEIU Millennium Student in order to meet their needs and to assist with the current Strategic Planning Initiative.

Thank you,

Dr. Barbara Scott, Professor, Sociology, African & African American and Women's
Studies, Coordinator, African and African American Studies Program

Dr. Santos Rivera, Senior Executive Director, Affirmative Action Office & Institutional
Outreach Initiative

Table of Contents

Introduction 4

Methods 6

Findings 11

Conclusions 30

Recommendations 34

Appendix A: Focus Groups Notes 37

Appendix B: Student Survey 47

Appendix C: Student Survey Results 51

Appendix D: Carruthers Center for Inner City Studies:
Manifesto for the Village and Focus Group Notes..... 56

Introduction

In the demanding economic and global environment of the twenty-first century, institutions of higher education are challenged in unprecedented ways, and those involved in this academic enterprise are grappling with the implications of these challenges. Higher education institutions are faced with the increasing pressures of a growing number of students entering college, demographic changes, the expansion of access, college learning, the reduction of costs, affordability, and accountability for student success. Northeastern Illinois University (NEIU) is not exempt from these challenges. Indeed, as a public institution of higher learning with a student body that is largely made up of non-traditional students in terms of age, race/ethnicity, first-generation college students, part-time students and returning adult students, Northeastern Illinois University has recently come under scrutiny relative to the issue of *student success*. Using traditional measures of student success---enrollment, persistence, and degree attainment---NEIU's graduation rate has been described by some as dismal and has been part of a debate, locally and nationally, about whether or not universities should be held accountable if a large number of its students do not graduate.

In response to this issue generally and to the issues of retention and timely progress toward graduation for its twenty-first century students specifically, former University President, Dr. Salme Harju Steinberg, formed a Presidential Taskforce to address a broad range of issues related to the needs of NEIU students in the 21st century. The Taskforce, co-chaired by Dr. Barbara M. Scott, Professor, Sociology, African & African American and Women's Studies and Coordinator, African and African American Studies Program and Dr. Santos Rivera, Senior Executive Director of Affirmative Action & Institutional Outreach Initiatives, was charged to investigate the university's best practices and issues that included, but was not limited to, student retention, time to degree, minority populations, first generation, part-time students and overall excellence across the University for each and every student. Drs. Scott and Rivera's responsibilities also included establishing subcommittees within the Task Force made up of students, faculty, staff and other key stakeholders that

would address a range of undergraduate and graduate student issues related to student success.

As pointed out in various previous retention reports to the university, it is imperative that factors which facilitate, enhance or impede student progress are clearly identified and articulated to those who have the power to facilitate and/or implement meaningful change. Northeastern's commitment to the retention and success of its unique student body is central to the university's mission and is expressed in its 2008-2013 Priorities Statements, particularly Goals 1-4:

Goal 1: Recruit, retain and graduate a diverse student body at both the undergraduate and graduate levels through coordinated enrollment management.

Goal 2: Foster a student/learner-centered community that supports successful outcomes.

Goal 3: Create a University environment that fosters excellence in teaching, learning and scholarship through the use of information technology and learning resources.

Goal 4: Strengthen and expand educational opportunities to enhance understanding of international and global issues.

Moreover, the university's commitment to student success is also evident in the fact that the university has undertaken a number of studies and initiatives over the last several years to address student retention and time to degree, including the initiation of this task force and its current Strategic Plan Initiative.

This report presents major findings from a series of focus group meetings and a student survey designed to identify key issues, challenges, concerns, opportunities, best practices and recommendations for millennium student success at NEIU. We conclude the

report with recommendations presented in the voice of those in the NEIU community who participated in these meetings and survey. These recommendations draw upon and expand previous recommendations for ways in which the university can act to increase the success of *all* of its students.

Methods

The data and its analysis presented in this report are based upon the results of a series of focus group discussions and an electronic student survey. Participants in the discussion included students, faculty, staff and other stakeholders in the university community. The data represent a major effort to elicit relevant information about critical transitions, issues, and concerns experienced by students as they advance through Northeastern Illinois University. The work of the Task Force was carried out through three phases:

Phase One: Focus Groups and meetings with key Illinois State Legislators

During 2006-2007 academic year, Drs. Scott and Rivera, along with other university administrators, met with Illinois State Representatives David Miller and Antonia Berrios. These legislators expressed an interest in working with the Task Force in order to gain a better understanding of NEIU and its student body, the goal of which is to advocate in the state legislature for our students/our institution. In addition, a total of five focus group discussions were conducted across the university and its campuses. The purpose of these discussions was to give key stakeholders (students, faculty, staff, administrators) in the university a voice; to listen and gather information about the participants' perceptions, points of view; and their identification of issues, challenges, concerns, opportunities, best practices, and recommendations for student success. The discussions were conducted each time with similar types of participants in order to allow for the identification of trends and patterns.

The five focus group discussions included two meetings on the North Campus (one during the day hours and another in the evening) and one meeting at the other NEIU campuses: Jacob H. Carruthers Center for Inner City Studies (CCICS), El

Centro, and the Chicago Teacher's Center (CTC) (for field notes see Appendix A). Each meeting was conducted in a permissive environment that encouraged the participants to openly share their perceptions and points of view, primarily about the broad issue of student success. In a very general sense, focus group members talked about the broader issue of student success within the context of retention and time-to-degree (strategies that facilitated and barriers than hindered retention and time to degree).

Research on the Focus Group methodology consistently show that this method of collecting data is one of the best tools to generate valid information important for the advancement of programs. Unlike structured interviews that limit respondents by offering them narrow predetermined answer choices and thus potentially influencing their responses, the focus group method allows respondents to be active participants in the process. This method shifts attention away from the interviewer(s) or leader(s) to the respondents, allowing them to respond without setting boundaries or providing clues for potential response categories. Given that we wanted to address key issues around the uniqueness of the students at Northeastern, the focus group method was ideal for the information gathering purposes of our Presidential Task Force on the Millennium Student.

The five focus group meetings were led by the two co-chairs of the Presidential Task Force on the Millennium Student. An open-ended approach was used in order to allow the participants ample opportunity to comment, explain and share their experiences, attitudes, ideas, issues, and concerns. Spreading the focus group discussions across the university (on each of its campuses) was intentional. The objective was to be not only inclusive but also to make the participants feel comfortable by holding the discussions in locations familiar to them. A major goal of the Focus Group discussions was to promote self-disclosure among the participants to get at what they were really thinking and feeling relative to the issue of student success. In this context, on several occasions respondents revealed sensitive information about issues and concerns that might not have otherwise surfaced.

Instead of a predetermined set of questions, each Focus Group discussion opened with the Focus Group Leaders explanation of the purpose of the Presidential Task Force on the Millennium Student and the agenda or purpose of the ensuing Focus Group discussion. Each group was told that the purpose of the discussion was not to debate *who the millennium student is* but rather to obtain input - ideas, suggestions, recommendations from stakeholders in several areas that impact 21st century or millennium student success at Northeastern Illinois University. Although the topic was general in the beginning, over the course of the discussions the leaders asked specific or more focused questions in response to the groups' comments. From these focus groups and follow-up meetings, the Taskforce, with input from graduate and undergraduate students, analyzed the focus group data and identified key themes that would define the work for Phase Two.

Phase Two: Sub-Committees and Survey

This phase included the formation of key/strategic sub-committees that assisted in the development of the student survey and the gathering of information. Continued meetings with key legislators also occurred. However, the development and execution of the student survey, which was to supplement the data from the focus group meetings, was what mainly took place during this phase.

Student Survey

In order to supplement the data collected from the 5 Focus Group discussions, a survey was designed to collect additional data from students attending Northeastern Illinois University (See Appendix B). The survey was designed to be brief yet capture key demographic information about the NEIU millennium student and information on students' perceptions and points of view around key issues and concerns about student success. Students across the university and its campuses were encouraged to participate in the survey and were advised that: the survey was compiled with the ultimate purpose of enriching the climate at Northeastern Illinois

University by seeking input from them (students) regarding best ways to improve services, programs, and the overall campus climate to facilitate student success.

The survey questions centered around five topical areas: Advisement, Curriculum, University Environment, Matrices (measurements of student success), and Policy. During the Spring 2008 semester students had the option of taking the survey online or at stations set up in Village Square on the North campus. Students were encouraged to participate by offering them a chance to enter into a drawing for a \$25 gift card to Beck's bookstore.

- Advisement question: designed to capture the participants' perceptions about the appropriateness, effectiveness, and accessibility of advising.
- Curriculum question: designed to capture the participants' perceptions about whether or not, in their opinion, NEIU's academic curriculum articulates the university's values and goals of excellence, access, diversity, and community. The guiding question centered around issues of the inclusiveness in the curriculum of the experiences, contributions, and perspectives of non-dominant individuals and groups in all subject areas, and whether or not it reflects the changing demographics of the NEIU Millennium Student and a greater social awareness of issues of race, class, gender and other forms of diversity.
- University Environment/Climate question: designed to capture the participants' perceptions of whether or not they view and/or experience the university as inclusive, diverse, and fostering a spirit of community among its students, faculty, staff, and administrators.
- Matrices question: designed to capture the participants' perceptions of student success. The intent was to measure students understanding and self-definitions of success and NEIU's institutional effectiveness in facilitating

that success. Although this category emerged as an important issue in the Focus Group discussions, it yielded the least amount of usable data from the student survey. A major limitation here was that the concept was not clearly articulated in the survey. Thus, students did not clearly understand the question in this section nor did they seem to have a clear articulated notion of success beyond the traditional means of grades and GPA.

- Policy question: designed to capture the participants' perceptions about fiscal issues and resources needed by the university to facilitate their academic success. Unlike the other four areas described above, this issue emerged primarily from discussions with key Illinois State Legislators (Representatives David Miller and Maria Antonia Berrios) who indicated a willingness to work with the NEIU administration to better understand the unique needs of NEIU students---the issues, challenges and opportunities they face---in order to inform their colleagues and better advocate for resources for NEIU. Student survey questions in this regard, thus, centered on what students perceived were the best ways to communicate and what to communicate to Illinois State Legislators about the needs of the Millennium student.

Phase Three: Data Analysis and the Report

Description of the Student Survey Participants:

The survey included 9 demographic questions and 14 additional questions spread over the 5 key topical areas that emerged from an analysis of data from the five focus group discussions. Key demographic data collected included: gender, age, student attendance status, current student level (e.g. year), credit hours completed, major status/specific major, race/ethnicity, and employment status.

- A total of 123 students responded to the survey: 92 females and 31 males. Fifty four of the students (44 percent) were between the ages of 18 and 25; sixty seven students (54 percent) indicated that they were 26 to 39 years of

age; 9 students (7 percent) were between 40 to 50 years of age, and three students (2 percent) were over the age of 50.

- The majority of the respondents were full time students (73) compared to 50 who held a part time status. Likewise, the majority were undergraduates (96) compared to 27 who were graduate students.
- Over three-fourths (approximately 78 percent) of the students had completed 60 credit hours or more, 9 of whom had completed more than 120 credit hours. Only 9 students could be described as holding first year status (had completed 0-29 credit hours) and another 11 could be described as second year or sophomores (had completed 30 -59 credit hours).
- Declared majors ran the gamut across the three major colleges in the university: Arts and Sciences (49 percent), Education (38 percent), and Business (9 percent) and included several students who were Board of Governor students. Four percent did not specify a major.
- The racial/ethnic composition of the sample included 63 white (non-Hispanic), 28 Hispanic, 15 Asian or Pacific Islander, and 12 Black (non-Hispanic) students. Five students responded “Other.”
- All of the student respondents were employed; two-thirds (80) of whom worked part-time and the rest, full-time (43).

Findings

Overall, the study findings indicate that NEIU students, faculty, staff, administrators and other stakeholders are all very much concerned for the well-being of the institution. This was evident in the over-all contribution of over 400 participants in the focus groups and 123 students who completed the student survey.

To more fully capture and contextualize the issues and concerns raised by the participants in this study, the findings are presented under each of the five key themes that emerged from the focus group meetings and that shaped the student survey: Advisement, Curriculum, University Environment/Climate, Matrices, and Policy. Under each theme we will present the major strengths and concerns articulated by participants. By describing our findings in this manner, we hope that key administrators and policymakers will be able to more readily see and understand how an important cross-section of the university community views both the strengths and barriers for NEIU student success and will be able to use these findings in its current strategic planning as well as in other ways that make sense given the realities and uniqueness of the NEIU millennium student. Where appropriate, selective quotes from the participants in the five focus group meetings and the student survey are included in our discussion. In addition, Appendix C contains 5 tables that show a quantitative summary of the findings from each section of the student survey.

Advisement

Advisement is a major area of concern for many participants. The findings here with respect to advisement at NEIU are consistent with those from previous studies of the university which found that advisement, at the very minimum, is inconsistent across the university. Some participants find advising at NEIU to be of great value while others find it just okay and still others say that it is sporadic and generally not good. The following represent key strengths and concerns expressed about advisement:

Strengths

Strengths relative to advising seem tied to the availability, knowledge of university and departmental requirements, and courtesy of advisors.

- Overall, advisement is useful to students especially those who have had the good fortune to meet a specific faculty person or other advisor who has taken the time to advise them beyond simply telling them which courses to take.

For example, many participants identified specific faculty by name and academic department affiliation as great advisors who were approachable, available, knowledgeable, patient, and willing to go the extra mile to advise them. These advisors not only advised but often helped with extraneous activities such as resume writing and career advising. They were willing to admit when they didn't have the information the student needed and would pick up the phone and obtain the desired information. For example, a participant said of her/his advisor:

“(He) has been wonderful. He helped me to the best of his ability. There have been a few times when he didn't know the answer to some of my questions, but he immediately (in front of me) got on the phone and obtained an answer for me.”

Statements such as this notwithstanding, as indicated above, most who feel that advising is either good or okay based their rating on whether or not the advisor was available, adequately helped them with scheduling of classes, could answer their questions or direct them to someone who could, was knowledgeable about specific majors and requirements, saved them time vis-à-vis moving toward graduation, and was pleasant (not rude).

- Advising in most majors (in most academic departments) is excellent. This is particularly so when measured against what several participants referred to as “general all-purpose” advising. We interpreted this to be a reference to academic advising or any non-academic department advising. For example, one participant described “general all-purpose advisors” as “acting bored” and appearing to not want to listen to what s/he had to say. In addition, the advisor gave her/him the wrong information about requirements that caused major problems for the student down the line. On the other hand, an example of the positive comments specifically about advising in academic departments can from a participant who described her/his advising experience as follows:

“I am absolutely ecstatic about the support and advice that I have received from Dr. ----. Dr. --- is always willing to help with laying out the plan for my classes. She is very knowledgeable and just an all around pleasant person.”

- **Specific advising:** The majority of positive comments about advising came from participants who had positive advising experiences that they attribute to advising in specific programs such as the Board of Governor’s Program, Cohort advisors (e.g. ENLACE/ELAD, Special Education), the International Program, Proyecto Palante, and academic departments that have structured programs/curriculum requirements for graduation such as the Social Work Department. The following examples make this point:

“As an undergraduate student I was able to have a smooth transition and a good experience in the area of advisement because of ENLACE who directed me to advisors that understood me.”

Another participant commented:

“I am currently part of a cohort. To that end, I have had a very good experience with advising at NEIU. The program coordinator and the major advisor are approachable and always willing to answer questions.”

Concerns

Major concerns about advisement centered around issues of inconsistency, the manner of delivery of information (e.g. staff attitudes and behaviors), misinformation or confusing information, and limited advisement.

- Inconsistency: Students receive different answers to the same question from different individuals across as well within departments. For example, one student said:

“As a recent transfer student to NEU, I have been disappointed with the lack of consistency in the advising center. I don’t think I have received the same answer twice on any question I’ve asked, which has led me to lots of wasted time and confusion...”

Another student was even more descriptive:

“Personally, I have had a horrible experience with the advising here until I was accepted into the Special Education Program. All of the advisors told me different things...no one ever gave me the same answer...I went to the University of Iowa before this, which is a much bigger campus, and never had these problems. I am very unhappy with how no one seems to know what they are doing at this school. I was very close to transferring out and have told many people not to come here due to the lack of knowledge that every employee seems to have at Northeastern.”

Several participants felt that the inconsistency in advisement often leads to errors in students’ decision-making about course requirements and available programs which, in turn, often results in added time-to-degree as well as additional cost to the student. Students not only receive inconsistent information but also they often receive inaccurate information. This was a common theme among those who voiced concerns about advising. Typical comments about the inconsistency of advising included descriptions such as:

- advising is sporadic;
- (it) lacks consistency/it is frustrating when you hear different things from different places and then you have to piece them all together;
- advising is confusing especially for double majors or those earning a second Bachelors Degree;
- Poor/incorrect advising information given in some specific academic departments.

Some participants singled out the Financial Aid and Academic Advising areas as particularly problematic. They described advising in the Financial Aid Office as totally inadequate and advisors in Academic Advising as confusing and/or too busy to deal with so many students.

“They send students to wrong places and just do not seem pleasant on top of giving out misinformation.”

- Limited knowledge and expertise in advising: In addition to inconsistency and inaccuracy in advising there is a general sense that advisors generally have limited knowledge and expertise in advising. Comments such as the following were typical:
 - general advisors do not know enough about the different major and minor programs that are offered at NEIU and that is very frustrating;
 - do not or cannot offer information beyond the question asked (if you don't ask no one tells you);
 - some advisors simply do not know what to do in certain situations;

- some advisors more knowledgeable than others; some advisors seem absolutely and completely clueless about what the actual needs of students are and how to address them.

One participant, after a lengthy description of the contradictions of advising in her/his experience, went on to say:

“...Even more disconcerting (than the inconsistency) is that staff is often not helpful with referring me to someone who can help. I have had numerous times when I was ping-ponged back and forth between departments and never got an answer to my question(s). NEIU is not a huge university; it is reasonable (for students) to ask that advisors, department heads, etc. be better prepared to assist students when needed and/or be armed with the proper information to funnel them to the appropriate person.”

Other participants said that they did not get useful or accurate information until they declared a major. Others, focusing on referrals, indicated that some advisors referrals are frequently inappropriate, resulting in wasted time and confusion on the part of both students and staff members.

- Staff attitude and behaviors: While the accuracy and consistency of advising information is a critical component of student success, staff attitudes and professional behavior are also key to this success. To this end, a common theme of rudeness, unprofessional behavior, and lack of concern for students emerged throughout participant responses about advising. While the majority of NEIU staff, whose job is to service students, are professional (have a professional attitude and behavior) and helpful, many participants indicated that there are several advisors who are impersonal and rude. These

staff/faculty advisors are often late to appointments and appear clueless about the needs of students. Moreover, very often, because many NEIU students work full time and/or have other family responsibilities, the advisor and students' schedules of availability do not always match and either these staff are inflexible and unwilling to accommodate students' unique circumstances or such accommodations are difficult to arrange. Furthermore, there are staff that fail to return phone calls and/or e-mail responses to student requests, inquiries, and so forth, are not present during their office hours, and generally are undependable. For example, a student noted, "*Some of the advisors are very helpful while others are rude and don't care about students when they come to see them.*" Participants say it is very discouraging to go to these advisors because they do not listen, they are often distracted (i.e. talking on the telephone while serving the student), and generally inconsiderate of their educational needs. One older returning adult student gave the following lengthy response about career counseling:

"Meeting with the (advisor) was a total waste of time. This person and the advising he offered were as useful as teats on a bull. I kept trying to explain him that there were no funeral director/embalmer jobs currently available in the immediate metropolitan area due to abrupt industry-wide changes (I had recently graduated from Worsham College with a degree in mortuary science) and he did not hear me and kept telling me: (1) to write a better resume and (2) not everybody needed to have a bachelors degree (how about people who want one for personal achievement and/or to move in a totally different direction if they encounter obstacles in employment?) Why would this (advisor) try to convince me to quit going to school? Aren't you people in the business of selling a product (education) as well as trying to have people actually graduate? I felt profoundly insulted ... You people really need somebody

that can work with intelligent older people switching careers--- this (advisor) may have been great with the under-30 crowd that doesn't have a long work history---but for someone like me (51 years old with a solid work history who is gaining "credentials" and switching careers to keep from dying of boredom, I found (the advisor) to be totally out of touch, condescending (although probably not intentionally), and unable to provide any kind of useful advice."

Although this response was not specifically about academic counseling, participants generally viewed all advisement (from a variety of offices) as important in their movement toward degree completion. Finally, very often students very purposefully and consciously skipped availing themselves to formal advising, meeting with advisors only out of absolute necessity such as needing an academic hold removed.

- Limited or Non-Use of Advising: A significant number of students responding to the student survey indicated that they rarely go to an advisor or that they have not used any form of advising at all during their tenure at NEIU. Interestingly, several of these students report using sources other than advisors for needed information. They indicate that they either figure it out for themselves or they rely on friends or mentors. For example, a participant reported:

"(I) never went for advising. The best advice has come from another student or teacher. I like to keep on top of things myself, so I haven't been advised that much."

In general, some students indicated that going to an advisor was a total waste of time because there is no advising at NEIU that fits their needs. Still others seemed outright hostile to the idea of using an advisor because for these students, advisors seem indifferent to their unique set of circumstances. Some typical responses included:

- *I find it much easier to figure things out myself.*
- *I am just happy to be able to register myself for classes without going through an advisor. In fact, I am able to better advise myself than the advising counselors have. Just do a little research and everything works out fine.*
- *...It was clear from my brief meeting with them that they didn't really know what was going on, and I have heard horror stories so I certainly wouldn't trust the advisors.*

Curriculum

Issues around curriculum emerged from responses in the various focus group sessions; however, when translated into a question on the student survey, it did not lend itself easily for responses that would neatly fall into a strengths/concerns dichotomy. Although the question on the student survey asked: “What types of courses are currently not offered at NEIU that you would like to see *offered* and why?” and although some few participants indicated that they were satisfied with the current curriculum, the overall concern among those responding to this question was the issue access/availability of courses. Participants among the five focus groups as well as those responding in the student survey overwhelmingly spoke to the need for more sections of courses, particularly pre-requisites and especially more course offerings at night. The remaining responses primarily provided general feedback and suggestions about specific types of curriculum offerings (courses) and ideas for improvement.

Strengths/ Concerns

- Access to Courses and Sections: students would like to see additional sections offered in the evening and possibly on the weekends. Participants also felt the variety of course offerings is limited to the main campus and would like additional courses offered at El Centro and CCICS. The shortage of sections

of courses, especially prerequisite courses, and the limited offerings of courses in the late evening, night, and on Saturday by some academic departments is viewed by many of the participants as a barrier to a timely completion of their degree goals.

- Type of Courses: the types of courses that participants want to see offered at NEIU cover the gamut from experimental, to experiential, to intellectual and practical skills courses, and to courses with a global perspective. The feedback and suggestions were for field-based courses, study abroad, lab courses, practicum, internships, independent study courses, and credit for campus committee work. Online courses or hybrid courses were also mentioned by a number of participants in the survey and focus groups. Students felt such access would allow them to better plan and track for graduation and would help to accommodate work/schedule demands of adult students. Another aspect of their responses consisted of a desire for short one-credit seminars or workshop courses. They believe that such courses would help students who transfer credits into NEIU and would address relevant special topics. Participants also indicated that they would like more courses that deal with the diversity of cultures in the world and that represent the diverse student body at NEIU. In general, several participants espoused the view that Northeastern's diversity is a source of vitality and strength and thus, they believe that offering more courses that deal with that diversity would be an empowering learning experience. For example, a focus group participant shared the following:

"I would like to study Middle Eastern culture but NEIU does not offer a program. With so many Arab students, why not?"

Another participant commented:

"The school is diverse but cultural classes like African American Studies are only offered during the day."

There were also several suggestions about expanding the offerings in Latin American Studies to include course that cover Central American countries, Cuba, and Mexico. Other course suggestions include: a variety of certificate or degree programs in nursing, journalism, engineering, and pharmacy; mandatory courses for a global perspective such as women's studies, race relations, culture, and study abroad; and even a Master's and PhD program in Sociology.

Finally, a few participants seem to view the Liberal Arts requirement as a barrier to a timely completion of a degree. One participant, for example, said the following:

“Liberal arts classes prolong education and matriculation for students in specialized programs such as Social Work or programs where students are concentrating on a set of career skills; want to earn a degree to improve their employability and increase their worth in the job market.”

Environment

Research on institutional effectiveness in student success consistently indicate that a student-centered environment that encourages high levels of student engagement on campus and student-faculty interaction, like curricula and other campus services, is a vital component in the overall success of college students. The issue of campus environment came up time and again as participants across the focus groups and in the student survey expressed their concerns and ideas about how to improve the NEIU campus climate. This issue was particularly compelling for those participants at CCICS.

Responses about NEIU's environment were many and varied. Participants clearly care a great deal about what happens to them while on campus and they identified several areas or issues which, in their opinion, are of critical importance to a supportive and enriching university environment. These issues are grouped into the following key categories: Access/Technology/ Communication, Safety, Attitudes and Process, Multicultural Programming and Leadership Development, and Service.

Access, Technology and Communication

“NEIU needs to keep up with (current) technology and (the type of) technology students use...NEIU needs to adapt to the needs of the students and not the other way around.”
(Response from the Student Survey)

Participants believe that the improvement of and better access to all forms of technology and communication is of crucial importance to their engagement on campus and ultimate success in completing their degree goals. The following list identifies key concerns in this regard:

- NEIU’s technology labs and library hours are not sufficient to accommodate non-traditional students. They should remain open longer hours.
- Prohibiting the use of the internet beyond homework and other academic projects does not support the needs of the contemporary students’ mindset and high school socialization and orientation.
- Computers with internet access should be available to students at all times.
- Flyers advertising campus events are often outdated and left over long after the advertised event. A more effective method of keeping students apprised of important campus events is needed.
- More workspaces with wifi and power outlets should be readily available to allow students to work on assignments at various locations on campus, not just in the electronic labs, computer labs, or the library.
- Dedicated space for students to post job openings, housing options or for sale/wanted items would create an added incentive for students to visit the website. In addition, make all transcripts, records, financial aid, available on the website for ease of access by students via their login/password.

Safety and the Campus Environment

Several participants observed that the classrooms in the Classroom and Science Buildings are cramped and crowded with non-user friendly desks; they are also dark, dreary, depressing and dismal. Accordingly, several suggested that every classroom should have windows, improved ventilation, and air circulation and be fully electronically climate controlled. In lounge areas and other open indoor spaces, a contemporary look is desirable to entice students to linger beyond class times and free associate. More welcoming spaces should be made available for students to gather and engage with each other (i.e. a gaming zone in the Student Union Building would be a perfect gathering place for students to de-stress, stay later and enjoy the campus). The recent increase of crime on and around the university campus was also very much on the mind of the participants as they articulated their views about the campus environment. Security cameras, metal detectors in classrooms, limiting access via entrance doors and creating others as fire exit doors only, increased patrol and visibility of public safety officers would all be deterrents, were all suggested remedies and/or solutions to foster a more student-friendly and safe campus environment.

Other areas of environmental/campus concern included:

- Bathrooms: The bathrooms are not hygienic, and need more intense attention, especially during peak usage hours. Loose tiles and running, standing water are unsanitary and should be fixed.
- Signage: Visible, useful information on clearly marked signs where student traffic is heaviest would greatly enhance students' ability to navigate the various buildings on campus.
- Campus Employment: The University should make available more job opportunities for students. This helps to make the services offered to students by students which create a student-friendly environment. Two salient comments about NEIU's campus climate including the following:

“NEIU is a ‘commuter school,’ so people are constantly coming and going from campus. I do not get much of a

sense of ‘community’ at NEIU, and I think it may be because people do not seem to be that interested in being involved with campus life. I think that the biggest thing would be for students to spend more time on campus.”

“Most of the students here seem to not want to be here...(it is) not a friendly environment.”

Attitudes and Processes

The issue of staff/faculty attitudes, behaviors, and institutional processes came up repeatedly in a variety of participants’ responses. This signifies that these are clearly important issues for those who participated in the focus group sessions and the student survey. As indicated under the discussion of advisement, many of the participants view some staff in key areas of the university that service students as insensitive, incompetent and unprofessional. These participants identified the key areas of Registration, Financial Aid, and Admissions as examples of university offices that are not student-friendly and whose staff are insensitive to students’ needs. Some students, especially those who come from the other campuses such as CCICS, say that they do not feel welcome or wanted on campus. Examples of concerns in this area are:

- Registration Process: flexibility with registration would make students feel less stressed (i.e. allow students seeking a second degree to register simultaneously with seniors and juniors).
- Financial Aid: requirements are communicated carelessly and first-time students are overwhelmed with the quantity of documentation required. A more unified, well documentation approach is required to unpack the mystery of the Financial Aid process. Distribution of financial aid refunds via direct deposit, and book waiver distribution online or options to purchase books from Becks Bookstore online would streamline students’ lives enormously.

- Transfer Process: stream line the transcript request process and post all student records to the web.
- Faculty/Staff Attitudes: some teachers and staff do not seem to understand the academic and social needs of the average NEIU student. Sensitivity training would benefit faculty and staff to deal with student issues in an enlightened, more compassionate manner. Faculty should be mandated to document student contact hours and feel compelled to be more available to answer students' questions and engage in out of classroom discussion. They should also use more student-centered strategies in their teaching repertoire.
- Various Colleges in the university should establish clear procedures for the various documents needed, timelines, course options, testing requirements, etc. This would ensure that students understand the big picture and would help them stay on track to degree completion. The following are examples of the general responses to the issue of faculty/staff attitudes and institutional processes:

“I think a lot of the employees at NEIU may see their work as a job and not a career. They may not be student focused or have somewhere along their way lost their passion.”

“Too many people at NEIU seem content to say, “Well, it’s a bureaucracy, what do you expect? when things go wrong at this school. This attitude needs to stop. I realize that we are a state institution, but it seems that too many people use this as an excuse to treat students as if they are a burden.”

Multicultural Programming and Leadership Development

Understanding the dynamics of the student body requires employees that are competent in their jobs and are willing to help students. The bureaucratic shuffle in some departments is over-whelming. NEIU programming is not student oriented,

student-centered nor does it reflect the rich diversity of NEIU. Participants offered the following observations/suggestions:

- More International and student-centered events that celebrate diversity and ethnicity.
- More lectures/guest speakers who can encourage participation in community activism on campus and increase community engagement of students.
- Open and informal dialogue between students and those in leadership positions such as professors, deans, and administrators.
- Multi-Age, Multi-Ethnic student populations require a varied co-curricular schedule of activities, clubs, cultural events and programming. Expand these and use an aggressive method of outreach to ensure students are engaged in activities of their choice. Have seniors use a “buddy system” to mentor freshmen and help them find areas of interest. A participant comment in this category:

“Incorporate programming that is truly student oriented. I understand that the dynamics of the student body is mostly apathetic at best, but there are things that can be done. Also, we need employees that are competent in their jobs and are willing to help students. The bureaucratic shuffle that goes on in some departments amazes me. Again, additional information can be provided.”

Services

Improving services at NEU is a must. This would help to better meet the needs of the NEIU students and to create a more welcoming environment. Participants identified a number of services that they believe need improvement:

- Cafeteria: A more welcoming and relaxed ambience would create a student friendly environment. While the food is alright, it is an exclusive, over-priced monopoly that prohibits many students from affording the high priced menu options. Furthermore, the cafeteria is not accessible to evening students. Closing at 2:00-3:00 p.m. is problematic and does not support a student service-centered campus. For evening students, the only options are vending machines.
- Beck's Bookstore: The same goes for Beck's Bookstore; it should remain open longer hours to accommodate the needs of the non-traditional and graduate student on campus. Books are exorbitant and new editions are unnecessary and wasteful. Create customized online packages so students can access reading materials online obviating the necessity for high priced textbooks. Alternatively, have a book-loan program, or book-exchange managed by University staff. Books represent over 15-20 percent of the cost of each course.
- Transportation (UPass): NEIU is the only state university that does not have a UPass. Subsidized and reduced bus/train passes and subsidized meal plans for NEIU students would keep students at NEIU and help them graduate sooner. Shuttles running from the train station would be an added value to students using public transportation.
- Gymnasium and PE: Division I athletic teams would increase ownership among students. Promoting school spirit would make Northeastern more sought after, recognized by other universities as a competitor, and gain visibility and recognition. This would necessarily create more activities for the student body, i.e. (basketball team, maybe football) and would put Northeastern back on the map, increasing the school's popularity.

Developing New Matrices

The idea of measuring success at the postsecondary level was new to many of the participants. This is evident in the number of participants in the Student Survey

(32.5 percent) who did not answer this question. In addition, few focus group participants addressed this area in a direct manner. Of those participants who did comment on this issue, most did not seem to have a clear idea of measuring success. A few students thought that GPA was a sufficient measure. However, there was a consensus that time to degree measured in terms of a four-year time period is an inappropriate measure of student success at NEIU given the type of students it serves. Participants centered on the idea that NEIU, unlike many other universities, cater to a non-traditional student population whose characteristics include but are not limited to commuting, adult learning, full-time employment, and family responsibilities. The following two responses capture the views of those who addressed this issue:

“I do not have an answer to this question since I do a lot of side projects to enhance my work resume. In other words, I measure my own success; I do not need the school to tell me how well I am doing. I just want the degree so I can move onto my Masters program.”

“In seeing how long it takes to get through NEIU with regards to the classes that are needed, yet not available, I think that the time it takes to complete a degree is actually held against some students. Imagine finally graduating after five or six years and then having to explain to a potential employer why it took so long. The answer of “I couldn’t get the classes I needed when I needed them,” sounds a little like “the dog ate my homework.”

Some suggestion from participants include:

- Alumni/employer surveys. Follow-up surveys with alumni and employers including salary, job performance and job-satisfaction were suggested as a matrix for measuring the success of NEIU graduates.
- Student surveys. Student satisfaction surveys could provide feedback on degree completion because some participants felt that issues such as

- motivation, student engagement, communication experiences, and attendance correlated with successful degree completion.
- Service learning. Volunteer work and experience in the community could be used to measure contributions to the broader community and social responsibility.
 - Assessment linked to professional goals. Expanding the use of portfolios and other such alternative assessments tied to professional requirements could measure 21st Century skills like communication, critical thinking ability to use a data set to inform decision-making, writing, and mastery of specific subject matter.

Policy

The participants expressed their relationship to policy-makers in very concrete statements about the needs of the University and its stakeholders. Participants emphasized the fact that the NEIU student body does not reflect the “traditional” student archetype stressed in higher education. For the most part, responses centered on the diversity of NEIU students in terms of age, college readiness, priorities, needs and experience at the institution. In addition, many students who responded to the student survey advocated for more funding to support adequate enrollment, advisement, instruction, and administrative functions; better facilities; affordable tuition and fees; and more financial aid. The following bullet points represent a composite of the issues that participants felt should be transmitted to Illinois State Legislators:

- Student Population: Many participants characterize NEIU as a university of choice for students who are first generation college students, who work as they attend college full-time or part-time, and who have significant family responsibilities. Some embrace the idea of personally sharing with legislators more about the students that attend. Others are dissatisfied with traditional time-to-degree expectations because they are not reflective of all students attending NEIU. Additionally, participants expressed concern about the external image people have of NEIU students. NEIU students want to be

respected by legislators as responsible scholars, employees and family members. They want legislators to be aware of their value to the State of Illinois as residents and tax payers and recognize that despite their commuter status, they are deserving of the same opportunities that are made available to students on more traditional state university campuses. It is important for legislators to understand the needs of non-traditional students with a one hundred percent commuter student body.

- Financial Aid: NEIU students need more financial support. Many are not eligible for the traditional financial aid because they are working adults and earn too much to qualify for the state and federal financial aid programs. They feel that the need to support themselves and their families is not factored into financial aid requirements. In addition, they would like to see more scholarships, fellowships, and internships being offered to further professional and personal development as well to offset tuition costs. The following response from a participant in the student survey sums up the general feeling in terms of what policy-makers and State Legislators need to know about NEIU and its student body:

“I think that legislators need to know that the new millennium students are working full time jobs and attending school full time and/or part time. Another vital fact that needs to be shared is that it takes students like myself longer to attain a degree because we have husbands, children, jobs and other obligations that we are trying to maintain while attending school in the days, evening or whatever a class can be scheduled into our busy lives. Most importantly, we need more financial aid for those attending college.”

Although the voices of those who participated in the focus group meeting conducted at CCICS are heard throughout the presentation of findings, we believe that the issues and concerns raised by the participants at CCICS are so important and unique to CCICS that they merit a special recognition in this report. Rather than simply present/repeat the CCICS Focus Group notes of 25 April 2007 we refer the

reader to Appendix D for a copy of a “Manifesto for the Whole Village,” developed by CCICS students and presented on University Day 2007, and a copy of the focus group field notes. We have removed these documents from the rest of the focus group field notes and present them in a separate appendix for easier reading. The seriousness of the concerns at CCICS compels us to recommend that the NEIU administration make every effort to not only resolve as many of the issues as possible but also to do so with all speed.

Conclusions

The faculty, staff, students and other stakeholders that participated in the work of the Millennium Student Task Force provided critical insight into their views, feelings, ideas and concerns about millennium student success at Northeastern Illinois University. While the number of students who participated in the Focus Groups and Student Survey represent a small percentage of the entire campus population, it does not diminish at all the importance of hearing their issues and concerns in their own voices.

The findings indicate that the participants are deeply invested in the educational enterprise at NEIU and often have some very specific and sometimes pointed and concrete ideas about both the strengths and the barriers that impede student retention, time-to-degree and overall student success. The participants frequently connected their (student) success to their personal lives---family responsibilities, full-time workers, returning adult student status (adult learners), commuters---and institutional policies, practices, staff attitudes and behaviors. They also identified on-campus factors that they believe to be important to student success, including quality educational delivery as manifested in: a global, contemporary and relevant curriculum, a student-centered campus climate, competent, professional and timely delivery of student services, integration of experiences, knowledge and skills, opportunities for active learning, leadership and activism, respect for diversity, more contact with faculty, deans and other administrators, scheduling of more sections of courses, particularly prerequisites, more evening/night classes, the integration and coordination of policies and procedures across colleges, and the development of an effective advising system.

Moreover, if we expect our students to be successful, we must serve them better. There is a need for transparency in addressing issues relative to student enrollment, financial aid and student support services. NEIU students are intelligent and committed to completing educational benchmarks that will lead to more successful, meaningful and enriching lives. They are looking for outcomes that support better jobs, more involvement in their communities, and stronger families. Based upon the participant comments in both focus group meetings and the student survey, students often feel acted upon rather than acted on behalf of.

Discussions and responses to specific questions about the NEIU campus climate indicate that many students feel that they deserve but lack respectful and knowledgeable treatment from all university faculty and staff. While many student issues can be handled through self-service options, there are many exceptions that require personal contact by phone, e-mail or in-person assistance. Good student service begins with universal access to timely and accurate information and workloads that permit faculty and staff to support all of the students assigned to them.

As well, various participant responses call into question the merit of using traditional measures (matrices) of student success and suggest rather that the uniqueness of the NEIU millennium student should be taken into account when measuring student success. No doubt that the graduation rate is an appropriate indicator of student success, however the unique circumstances of the millennium student coupled with the institutional and personal barriers that extend many NEIU students' time-to-degree is cause for NEIU administrators to rethink and develop new measures of student success. These might include indicators that focus on the extent to which students, regardless of degree attainment, are prepared for jobs with firm prospects and earnings potential, find employment or advance in their current employment, gain an understanding of social, economic, and political issues, become critically engaged, and develop an intercultural and global understanding. These factors, among others, are often cited in recent retention literature as "new student success indicators" and can easily become part of an assessment of student success. They must, however, be coupled with an assessment of the policies and practices impacting student success that are under the university's control.

Without a doubt, one of the most critical responsibilities of higher education institutions is the facilitation of student success. This demands the best institutional policies and practices possible. We firmly believe that the findings of this Task Force provide critical information that must be taken seriously and integrated into the work of strategic planning that is currently taking place at the university.

Recommendations

Given the structure of this report and the decision to present the findings in the voice of the participants, there are many recommendations embedded in the presentation of findings. In addition to those suggestions, we offer the following recommendations to be incorporated into strategic planning and implemented where appropriate at the institutional level:

Highest priority: Implementation of institutional and strategic planning that seriously takes into account the issues raised by the participants in the Presidential Task Force on the Millennium Student focus groups and student survey.

- Develop a comprehensive retention program focusing on the special characteristics and circumstances of NEIU’s millennium student.
- Develop or enhance significant, continuous information gathering, measurement, and assessment relating to student success.
- Form a task force or committee to develop appropriate measures for student success.
- Recognize and support the diversity of graduation time lines of NEIU millennium students.
- Assess and improve ways for tracking students that leave NEIU in order to determine the reasons that they leave.

- Strengthen and better align student services, including putting more information and documents online for student access.
- Review and overhaul policies and practices that impede student progress toward degree completion; eliminate ineffective policies, practices and procedures that counteract those favoring student success.
- Develop methods to create a sense of shared community by promoting student involvement in campus activities and events. Research has repeatedly suggested that the more intensively students are integrated academically and socially into their institution, the more likely they are to succeed.
- Develop a comprehensive training program for *ALL* advisors (faculty, staff, admissions and career counselors).
- Develop a comprehensive training program for all university personnel that service students.
- Internationalize or globalize the curriculum throughout the university.
- Review class scheduling procedures and develop a systematic plan to increase the frequency of offering prerequisite courses, including offering more courses at night across the colleges.
- Commit resources to effective student-success initiatives.
- Assess and enhance mentoring programs.
- Identify and develop ways to better serve the different student types at NEIU.
- Assess different student educational barriers, backgrounds and career goals.

- Continue to improve information on-line in order for students to have access to their academic profiles, student resources and university information.
- Continue to explore or renew efforts to negotiate with CTA to have a U-PASS program that works for NEIU students.

Specific Recommendations for CCICS

- Develop a plan to address the transportation concerns of students, faculty and staff at CCICS but that will be beneficial to the wider NEIU student, faculty, staff population.
- Address the serious issues of the CCICS physical plant (i.e. the halls and bathrooms are not wheel chair accessible; there is no emergency evacuation plan for those unable to use the stairs; poor signage is also a problem.
- Student access to technology is limited at CCICS. Improve the CCICS Library and Computer Lab, including providing up-to-date equipment and technology; in addition, a sound system is need in the auditorium.
- Develop a realistic and workable plan to deliver more student services at CCICS (i.e. graduates receiving caps and gowns on site, taking senior pictures on site, a financial aid counselor on site, career and job fairs extended to CCICS).

Appendix A: Focus Group Notes

Task Force on the Millennium Student Meeting of January 16, 2007

The Task Force held its first open meeting on Tuesday, January 16th. Following are concerns and recommendations that were shared at this first exploratory session. The Task Force invites you to attend the next scheduled session which will be held, Tuesday, February 13 at 6:00 PM. Room to be announced.

- Underscored the commitment to maintaining a diverse student body
- Two State legislators are working with the taskforce: David Miller and Antonia Berrios
- The purpose is not to debate who is the millennium student or the agenda but to obtain input from stakeholders in several areas:
 - Recruiting students for success
 - Eliminating barriers and enhancing supports
 - Developing new matrices for the new student
 - Advocating for the new student

“Developing new matrices” refers to developing new ways to evaluate and assess student success. In order to do that a better understanding of the goals and needs of our students is necessary and then ways to measure success against these goals.

The following represent comments, discussion points and viewpoints of focus group participants:

ADVISEMENT

- Advisement is an area of concern. There is no link to advising on “quick links.” Program requirements are not clear nor are they uniformly presented in current publications and the website. Departmental control of content is important but there needs to be a standard way to present the information to students. We could use an on-line self-advising function tied to student records. Paper holds us up.

ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENT

- Student with low English language skills need opportunities to build proficiencies in reading and writing in English.
- Where are the redundancies? i.e. ECE and Basic Skills Test require a similar writing sample. The ECE scoring takes longer than Basic Skills scoring and often holds up registration. Delays in registration lead to the unavailability of required classes and can push back graduation by a semester.
- What are we asking student to do? In a 120-hour program are all the courses necessary?

- What technology competencies are we to expect from our graduates?
- Access and excellence are often in conflict. We need to keep an eye on the quality of the degrees we grant.

ACCESS

- Student surveys say that students get a run-around when seeking information. How do we minimize this run around? How do we develop a service orientation across the University?
- Students are unaware of many services that are available to them including scholarship assistance. We need to promote these services better, perhaps train faculty and staff.
- We need to share information with one another in the University. Much of our work on retention over the last few years has not been disseminated.
- We need to make services and procedures visible.
- Where is our radio, TV and billboard advertising? Students need to feel they are “someplace” when they are at Northeastern.

STUDENT RETENTION

- We lose sophomores. One way to improve retention might be to extend initial advisement assignments to two years from one year. We also lose our better students to other institutions because classes they need are often filled before they can register.
- After 30 hours, students are not required to meet with an advisor. Students delay filing for their major, often until just before graduation. Some find that they are missing requirements, a situation that would have been caught had they had ongoing advisement. CAESEP requires ongoing advisement, one key to high retention rates.
- ESL and learning disabled student need more support!!!
- We need to look at male students in particular.
- What is reasonable in terms of time to degree for our students?

DIVERSITY

- 44% of our freshmen are Latino/a.
- There is no transfer orientation despite many students who transfer into the University from two-year programs and other four-year institutions. In UPRS and Plantando Semillas, students surveyed suggested developing a cultural center to provide a place to build community. Participating in student groups is work the effort for students! A cultural center would provide access to multiple cultural identities and provide a “safe place to go.”
- The diversity of our faculty and administration does not reflect the diversity of our students.

CAREER DEVELOPMENT

- Career development is disconnected from advisement leaving a void in student preparedness for the workforce and difficult workforce transitions.
- We have many opportunities for positive out-of-classroom experiences— leadership, volunteering, service learning, mentoring, career development.

STUDENT SUCCESS

- There are different definitions of success depending on the stakeholder—faculty/students/administrators/state legislators. We each need to better articulate what is meant by success in order to move toward more homogeneity in our thinking.
- How successful are our graduates?

ACADEMIC DELIVERY

- Academic content and instructional delivery systems are issues. The new student is demanding greater relevance in a multi-cultural environment.
- What is the role of different instructional delivery for NEIU?

STUDENT POPULATION

- We need to pay attention to the branding of our students/graduates in terms of core values we want them to develop to be able to contribute to our global society.
- We need to address the adult students and transfers. They may have different needs. We don't intentionally address their maturity and transitioning issues in our programs.

K-12

- Many CPS graduates are under-prepared for post-secondary work. There is a gap between K-12 and 13-20 standards. Perhaps the University could teach summer courses in the high schools for juniors and seniors.
- A new program at El Centro of early college courses linked to the university funded by the Gates Foundation is in the planning stages.
- The Chicago Teachers' Center has partnership with 21 Chicago high schools. These are well documented in the accreditation report. We are strengthening the K-16 pipeline, working with over 15,000 students. There are not enough AP courses offered in high schools for student to experience the rigor of post-secondary work. This is another opportunity where a university can reach down.

GENERAL

- We could use a graduation committee to make graduations more celebratory and meaningful to our community. The separate graduation ceremonies this winter were a good start.
- We need a carpooling bulletin board and child care options in addition to the Child Care Center.
- Perhaps the University could obtain ongoing input by regularly surveying alumni.
- We need to define a role for student in this calendar year process. There needs to be student representation on committees. Which ones?

**Presidential Task Force on the Millennium Student
Meeting of February 27, 2007**

The Presidential Task Force on the Millennium Student held its second open meeting on February 27th. Following are concerns and recommendations that were shared at this exploratory session. The task force invites you to attend the next scheduled session on Thursday, March 15, 2007, 6:15 p.m. at El Centro, 3119 N. Pulaski.

Informational:

- The task force will maintain the university's commitment to a diverse student body.
- Two state legislators are working with the task force: Representative David Miller and Representative Maria Antonia (Toni) Berrios.
- The purpose of these informational meetings is not to debate who the millennium student is or the agenda, but to obtain input from stakeholders. The following key areas were identified:
 - Recruiting students for success
 - Eliminating barriers and enhancing supports
 - Developing new matrices for the new student
 - Advocating for the new student

“Developing new matrices” refers to developing new ways to evaluate and assess student success. In order to do that, a better understanding of the goals and needs of our students is necessary and then ways to measure success against these goals.

CONCERNS

Time to Degree

- Critical and fundamental to define student success at NEIU. It was suggested that success should mean that graduating within a four-year time period should not be the only model to follow, but other time-to-degree periods better suited to the necessities of the student body of NEIU.
- Lack of funding to increase the number of courses offered by the university was raised as a concern. Students' responsibilities become even more challenging when the courses they need to take are not available.
- Weak advising on courses and requirements towards graduation.

Student Retention

- Lack of consistency with regards to advising. It was reported that students share their frustration in having to talk to different advisors regarding the same issue, which leads to students transferring to other universities.

Technology

- Concern on implementation and efficiency of new technologies.

Curriculum and Teaching

- Assessment of curriculum to ensure that is aligned with job performance.

Diversity

- Hiring of faculty and staff that represents the university student body.

Career Development

- Assessment of career success in the areas of job readiness and employment.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Time to Degree

- Support and embrace a six year graduation (Faculty and Staff voice).

Student Retention and Advisement

- Assessing and improving ways for tracking students that leave NEIU to learn reasons why they leave.
- Assessment and enhancement of mentoring programs.
- Assessment of special programs and cohorts such Proyecto Pa'Lante, Project Success, Summer Transition Program, KCEP and ENLACE, etc., to enhance best practices.

Student Population

- Identify and develop ways to better serve the different student types at NEIU.
- Assess different student educational barriers, backgrounds and career goals.

Technology

- Continue to improve information on-line for students to have access to their academic profiles, student resources and university information.

Career Development

- Assessment and enhancement of information and preparation by academic departments for graduate school and career opportunities.
- Consideration of developing programs with student services similar to the McNair program.

General

- Recommendation to hold task force meetings at El Centro, CCICS and CTC.
- Recommendation to place suggestion boxes around the university where suggestions can be submitted.
- Continue to strengthen the Touchtone Telephone Registration System (TTRS).
- Continue to explore a negotiation with CTA to have a U-PASS program that works for NEIU students.

**Presidential Task Force on the Millennium Student
Meeting of March 15, 2007 at NEIU/EI Centro**

In Attendance: Approximately 50 students, faculty, and staff from three classes - psychology, computer science, and sociology- were present.

Introduction by Dr. Barbara Scott and Dr. Santos Rivera:

- Underscored the commitment to maintaining a diverse student body.
- The purpose is not to debate who the millennium student is or the agenda but to obtain input from stakeholders in several areas:
 - Recruiting students for success
 - Eliminating barriers and enhancing supports
 - Developing new matrices for the new student
 - Advocating for the new student
- Two State legislators are working with the taskforce: David Miller and Antonia Berrios.
- While today's student takes longer to graduate, the expectation of policy and decision makers is that students will graduate in 4-6 years. When dollars are distributed based on these faulty assumptions, commuter universities like NEIU are at a disadvantage. The State covers only 22 percent of NEIU's budget. These data do not take into consideration the large number of transfer students either that account for 52 percent of NEIU's undergraduates. Today's students are also most often heads of households as well. Are our services responding to your needs?

FOCUS GROUP RESPONSES BY STUDENT STATUS

SOPHMORE STUDENTS

- Would like to study Middle Eastern culture but NEIU does not offer a program. With so many Arab students why not? Are there any plans to offer this type of program in the future?
- We have to go to many offices—financial aid, advising. There is lack of communications between the offices, lack of consistency of information, lack of knowledge of what needs to be done. The lack of communication between offices all boils down to money. I will be happy to write to legislators.

JUNIOR STUDENT

- The school is diverse but cultural classes like African American studies are only offered during the day.

RETURNING ADULT STUDENT

- There are not enough sections of pre-requisites scheduled, especially for evening students.

STUDENT-AT-LARGE STUDENT

- I am an immigrant and a US citizen. I have some professional background from outside the US. My status keeps changes between a number of programs. Each time it changes I have to present my documents to a different office and pay an additional fee. I am now a student at large. This is holding me up.

TRANSFER STUDENTS

- Is there anything that can be done to increase State funding for NEIU?
- Liberal arts classes prolong education and matriculation for students in specialized programs such as Social Work or programs where students are concentrating on a set of career skills; want to earn a degree to improve their employability and increase their worth in the job market.
- There are a limited number of classes in many departments offered at night making it difficult to get all of the required courses in without taking a leave from work to take classes during the day. If students could take more classes at night they would graduate sooner.
- Is the UPASS going to be implemented at NEIU?

TEACHER CERTIFICATION PROGRAM STUDENT

- Not enough programs or sections are offered at night. I wanted to be a part of MSTQE but it is offered only during the day. Also, processes students need to do are all on campus only during the day making it difficult to do them in a timely manner. There should be an online option.

**Presidential Task Force on the Millennium Student
Meeting of April 18, 2007 at Chicago Teachers' Center**

Introduction by Dr. Barbara Scott and Dr. Santos Rivera:

- Underscored the commitment to maintaining a diverse student body
- The purpose is not to debate who the millennium student is or the agenda but to obtain input from stakeholders in several areas:
 - Recruiting students for success
 - Eliminating barriers and enhancing supports
 - Developing new matrices for the new student
 - Advocating for the new student
- Two State legislators are working with the taskforce: David Miller and Antonia Berrios

FOCUS GROUP RESPONSES

Student Retention and Experience

- CTC works extensively in high schools. Research and experience show that students stay in school if they feel they belong. NEIU has an outstanding team-building program. Adventure education should be part of the 1st Year Experience. Research also shows that support is very important. Need to look at tutoring, availability of the professors, so students feel they can get support if they need to keep up with the work.
- Feeling that one belongs is not the highest priority for some students. Needed to know that they are getting a solid education is sometimes more important. Community is also important to new students.
- My son attended NEIU for a semester before he started another university. He was not well treated. First, advisors wouldn't accept that he wanted to be a student-at-large without a major.
- He took four courses and thought two of them weren't up to his standard and wanted to change.
- His advisor told him that he had to visit the professors of any other classes that interested him to find out if he could get in. Overall, he felt like there was no place to turn for help or advice. My son would have understood if someone had explained, but no one bothered to. My son won't go back. It isn't just him, either. He's told his entire social network about what happened to him at NEIU.
- NEIU needs a better cafeteria – something more personalized. Students need a place to work that is accessible to food and drink. The cafeteria is built to socialize, not work. Maybe smaller, square tables where people can spread out and work, not round tables. You have to go to computer areas to work and there is no food or drinks allowed.
- NEIU should bring students and families in for activities. It isn't connected to the community.

There are good stories. The same sister was majoring in Spanish. She took a philosophy course and was challenged by the teachers. He told her that she was smart enough to take more challenging courses and now she has a double major. Here is an instance when a teacher encouraged a student to take fuller advantage of NEIU's resources.

Academic Support

I found that having extensive internship opportunities in my selected field was very important. It motivated me to stay focused. It was a way to apply what I was learning.

Student Services

- Students need better customer service. There are nice people on campus, but there are abusive and mean people working with students. An example is undocumented student who went to pay for his classes. A cashier insisted that he had to pay the international student rate. Luckily, his sister was there to pay for her classes and she told the cashier that in Illinois, they paid in-state tuition costs. The cashier argued the point with her. If his sister hadn't been there, the young man would probably have left. How many students did this cashier turn away who never came back? Staff should have been trained, she should have known about this. Why didn't she?
- There were instances in the past of students being treated badly when they went to get their student teaching placement. This has gotten better.

Time to Degree

- Required courses are offered and this delays graduation. This is a frequent problem. In some departments, professors are teaching on an-off semester so that students get the courses they need to graduate.

Academic Advising

- Students end up in the wrong major. They change, then their graduation is delayed. Maybe they don't understand what they are getting into when they pick majors. It goes back to better advising.
- I met with my formal advisor once during my freshman orientation session. After that, I turned to the teachers I knew, teachers who were friends, to advise me. But I could meet the faculty socially through my church and campus activities. NEIU students don't have the off-campus options.
- In some small liberal arts schools, faculty has 12 hours and sometimes more office hours. This has to do with customer service. At NEIU, we need more formal and informal guidance. Adults throughout the university have to see themselves as advisors, guides.

Student Population

NEIU is obviously offering something people want because we have students, but we have an admittedly non-traditional population to whom we are offering a traditional education. This doesn't fit.

Tuition

I don't see a problem with raising tuition in order to deliver services, but we have to deliver to the students.

Chicago Teachers' Center's Engagement and Service

- Right now, our students are entering high school. As they get older, we'll be focused more on them. In the past GEAR UP has done lots of college trips so parents can see their children as college students.
- Parents are both ignorant and afraid of college. We try to make it less foreign.
- Parents don't understand "I have to study," or that "reading" is work. What is the background and education of African-Americans and Latinos? What do we do for parents?
- In addition to parent orientations and parent weekends, we should consider spouse and family orientations. Do we ask students what they need, e.g., what time is most convenient for classes?
- Do we ask students why they leave?
- CTC wrote a FIPSY grant. It focused on how to work with families so they are better able to support students. Basically, it acknowledges that the family goes to college, not just the students.

THE PRESIDENTIAL TASK FORCE ON THE MILLENNIUM STUDENT

Dear Millennium Student,

THE PRESIDENTIAL TASK FORCE ON THE MILLENNIUM STUDENT was formed to address a broad range of issues related to the needs of Northeastern students in the 21st century. Because addressing the needs of the ‘Millennium Student’ is our priority, it is important to hear from you!

As such, the survey below has been compiled with the purpose of enriching the climate at Northeastern by seeking input from students about the best ways to improve services, programs, and the overall campus climate. These results will be taken into consideration to formulate a final report that will be given to the President in hopes of providing additional information for the strategic planning.

You should get an acknowledgement screen after submitting your survey. If you do not see the screen, please try submitting your survey again to make sure we get your response. If you still have difficulty, please contact us at 773.442.4694.

As a thank-you for your participation, you will be entered in a drawing for a \$25 gift card to Beck's Bookstore.

THANK YOU FOR COMMITMENT TO THIS STUDY!

Instructions:

Please answer all questions in Part I. and Part II. as they relate to you. *Note that your answers are anonymous and your privacy will remain confidential.*

Please provide the following (*required)

First Name*	<input type="text"/>
--------------------	----------------------

Last Name*	<input type="text"/>
-------------------	----------------------

Email*	<input type="text"/>
---------------	----------------------

Part I.

Demographics

1. Gender

- Male
- Female

2. Age

- 18 years old
- 20 years old
- 25 years old
- 30 years old
- 40 years old
- 50 years old
- Other:

3. Student Attendance Status

- Part-time
- Full-time

4. Current Student Level

- Undergraduate
- Graduate ([Skip to Q. 6](#))

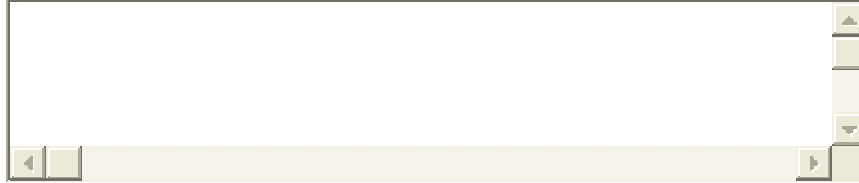
5. Credit Hours completed

- 0 - 29
- 30 - 59
- 60 - 89
- 90 - 120
- more than 120
- Other:

6. Major Status

- Undeclared ([Skip to Q. 8](#))
- Declared

7. Specify Major



8. Ethnicity

- White (non-Hispanic)
- Hispanic
- Asian or Pacific Islander
- Black (non-Hispanic)
- American Indian or Alaskan Native
- Other:

9. Employment Status

- Part-time
- Full-time

Part II.

10. To what extent has advising at NEIU met your needs? (Please explain and share your experience.)

11. What types of courses are currently not offered at NEIU that you would like to see offered? Why?

12. What changes should NEIU implement to become more student-friendly/student-centered?

13. Other than grade point average and the time it takes to complete a degree, what other metric should be in place that could measure the success of the NEIU student?

- 14. What do you think legislators need to know about NEIU that will help them understand what students need?**

Appendix C: Student Survey Summary Tables

Table 1: Responses Regarding Advisement

To what extent had advising at NEIU met your needs?

Total Number of Overall Survey Respondents (N=123)

Patterns	Indicators	Participants	Percentages
Feedback/ Comments	Overall advising was helpful	23	18.7
	Advising was somewhat helpful	19	15.4
	Advising was not helpful	14	11.4
	Only specific advising was helpful (i.e. department, cohort, major advisor)	31	25.2
Suggestions/ Examples	Not helpful towards graduation goal	1	0.8
	Unwelcoming environment by counselors (i.e. rude, discriminatory, arrogant)	7	5.7
	Limited Advising/ No advising preferred; other services used instead (i.e. self-advising, ttrs, course catalog)	14	11.4
	Advising for registration purposes	1	0.8
	Advising lacks a pro-active element; self-seeking must take place	3	2.4
	used to choose courses	15	12.2
	for guidance in major	13	10.6
	Need to better computer lab services; not adequate for class preparation (i.e. lack of internet, computers, research resources)	2	1.6
	to choose professor	1	0.8
	used for scholarship information	2	1.6
	advising used to stay on track for graduation	10	8
	to remove holds	1	0.8
	to obtain advice on resume and internship search	2	1.6
	Advising is frustrating, a waste of time, and confusing (i.e. no calls returned, re-take of same tests despite score, lack of assistance, not enough advisors, advisors too busy, long lines)	17	13.8
	Advising provides excellent resources	2	1.6
	to obtain transcripts	1	0.8
	bad advising in major	5	4.1
No advising outside of NEIU (i.e. U-Pass, housing, multiple courses, meal plans)	1	0.8	
Other	Don't know	4	3.3

Table 2: Responses Regarding Curriculum

What types of courses are currently not offered at NEIU that you would like to see offered? Why?

Total Number of Overall Survey Respondents (N=123)

Patterns	Indicators	Participants	Percentages	
Feedback Comments	Overall Satisfied	6	4.9	
	Hire more full-time faculty to solve issues courses	1	0.8	
	more variety in History courses	1	0.8	
	more English courses in the evening	1	0.8	
	more foreign language options	2	1.6	
	an all online program	1	0.8	
	Mandatory courses for global perspective (i.e. women study, race relations, cultura, study abroad)	2	1.6	
	discouraging environment by professor	1	0.8	
	course selection satisfactory	1	0.8	
	more evening courses offered year-round	6	4.9	
	AACSB accreditation for NEIU COBM	1	0.8	
	double major in education and special education	1	0.8	
	more courses during the summer	2	1.6	
	more courses in the main campus offered at CCICS and EI Centro	2	1.6	
	greater preparation in master degree programs	2	1.6	
	more independent study courses	1	0.8	
	adequate computers for G+ES	1	0.8	
	restructuring of HPER department	1	0.8	
	overall more availablity of courses; not enough sections open	15	12.2	
	Suggestions/ Examples	course on how teachers deal with issues in school	1	0.8
		Bussiness/Management(i.e income tax course, non-profit mtg., education business., accounting course)	4	3.3
		Vocational Training (cooking, automotive, cosmetology, mechanics)	3	2.4
		developmental seminars/skill prep classes/ 1-credit	4	3.3
theology		1	0.8	
race relations		1	0.8	
300-level courses		2	1.6	
special education		4	3.3	
cyber-security		1	0.8	
doctoral courses		1	0.8	
drug counseling & rehabilitation		1	0.8	
online courses in all areas/programs		8	6.5	
more Latin American Courses (i.e. Central American Countries, Cuba, Mexico)		2	1.6	
History of England (i.e. Tudor)		1	0.8	
Hebrew		1	0.8	
Theater certification		1	0.8	
nursing		1	0.8	
human anatomy for lower level science majors		1	0.8	
degree in sustainability		1	0.8	
Master's in Sociology		1	0.8	
PhD in Sociology		1	0.8	
experimental offerings with credit (i.e. participation in SGA, internship)		1	0.8	
e-learning curriculum design		1	0.8	
GE&S (i.e. Conservation, global warming, water, pollution, hydrogeology, remote sensing, energy, geowater)		1	0.8	
more Biological/Physical Anthropology		1	0.8	
more field-based science courses (biology, geography, earth science)		2	1.6	
more laboratory courses in CMT		1	0.8	
more video and tv course		1	0.8	
larger linguistics program and course offering (Ling 300, Ling 343, syntax, linguistics research methodology, psycholinguistics, phonetics, phonology, morphology, language typology, philosophy of language)		3	2.4	
more courses in education (i.e. teaching, current challenges in education)		1	0.8	
Mode Illinois Government		1	0.8	
degree in nursing		1	0.8	
degree in journalism		1	0.8	
engineering		1	0.8	
more writing courses		1	0.8	
more theron-chemistry courses		1	0.8	
personal training/ bioscientific foundations		1	0.8	
logic courses (philosophy)		1	0.8	
pharmacy		2	1.6	
law		1	0.8	
sign language	1	0.8		
real estate/ broker	1	0.8		
photography	1	0.8		
veterinary technician courses	1	0.8		
web 2.0 digital movie making	1	0.8		
sewing class	1	0.8		
history course in U.S history (i.e. civil wars)	1	0.8		
Architecture	2	1.6		
educational pshycology	1	0.8		
interior design	1	0.8		
Other	Don't know/ not sure/ not applicable	28	22.8	

Table 3: Responses Regarding Campus Environment			
What changes should NEIU implement to become more student-friendly/student-centered?			
Total Number of Overall Survey Respondents (N=123)			
Themes	Indicators	Participants	Percentages
Feedback/ Comments	all good	8	6.5
	employees hate students	1	0.8
	commuter school (not community)	1	0.8
Suggestions/ Examples	Technology	5	4.1
	Cafeteria (food and surroundings)	6	4.9
	more job opportunities	1	0.8
	game zone	2	1.6
	later hours for services (labs, library, food services)	5	4.1
	listening to students	4	3.3
	prices too high (café, tuition, books)	3	2.4
	food availability for evening students	2	1.6
	friendly resgistration	2	1.6
	better looking and friendly buildings	6	4.9
	direct deposit checks for refunds	1	0.8
	faculty communicate with students	4	3.3
	online registration	3	2.4
	security concerns	3	2.4
	dirty bathrooms	2	1.6
	friendly employees (job not career)	4	3.3
	PA for safety but for announcements	1	0.8
	adult services/classes	4	3.3
	more activities to promote socializing	10	8.1
	nap/study areas	6	4.9
	aid for undocumented	1	0.8
	student oriented programs for employees	1	0.8
	more clubs	4	3.3
	housing	3	2.4
	website for students to post info	1	0.8
	outdated info on bulletin boards	3	2.4
	better staff	10	8.1
	relating/communicating info to students	7	5.7
	choir member	1	0.8
	class availability	2	1.6
bigger gym	1	0.8	
buddy system	1	0.8	
building directory	2	1.6	
sports	4	3.3	
Other			
	Don't Know	12	9.8

Table 4: Responses Regarding Matrices			
Other than GPA and the time to complete a degree, what other metric should be in place that could measure the success of the NEIU student?			
Total Number of Overall Survey Respondents (N=123)			
Themes	Indicators	Participants	Percentages
Feedback/ Comments	better employees and staff advisors	2	1.6
	time to degree not students' fault	2	1.6
Suggestions/ Examples	exit interview	1	0.8
	portfolio- student improvement	2	1.6
	effort and willingness to succeed	1	1.6
	advisors involment	1	1.6
	attendance	4	3.3
	awards	1	0.8
	career placement/tracking	11	8.9
	community and school involment	7	5.7
	elimination of remedial classes (financial stain and time to degree)	1	0.8
	public policy course	1	0.8
	graduation requirements	1	0.8
	grades	1	0.8
	not taking too many courses	1	0.8
	focus on curriculum/ continuing to not drop out	1	0.8
	percentage of classes completed	1	0.8
	returning grad degree	1	0.8
	student measures own success	1	0.8
	measure understanding	2	1.6
	work	5	4.1
	class rank	1	0.8
recommendation letters	1	0.8	
critical thinking	1	0.8	
Other	Not Sure	40	32.5

Table 5: Responses Regarding Policy			
What do you think legislators need to know about NEIU that will help them understand what students need?			
Total Number of Overall Survey Respondents (N=123)			
Themes	Indicators	Participants	Percentages
Feedback/ Comments	NEIU is okay	3	2.4
	NEIU is a great school	1	0.8
	There should be monthly meetings	1	0.8
	show NEIU statistics with students	1	0.8
	NEIU has motivated teachers and students that want to succeed	1	0.8
	NEIU provided quality education	1	0.8
	NEIU has a diverse student population	12	9.8
Suggestions/ Examples	More Financial Aid (i.e. grants, fellowships, scholarships, assistanships, interships)	24	19.5
	more aid for graduate students	3	2.4
	"Traditional students" non-existent at NEIU (i.e. full-time employed, adult learners, commuters, family responsibility)	34	27.6
	U-Pass needed	6	4.9
	Better technology needed (i.e. upgrade computers & classrooms)	7	5.7
	better affordability of college & books	2	1.6
	Better Facilities (new, buildings, maintenance)	8	6.5
	there is a need for full-time professors	2	1.6
	need for PA system (security)	1	0.8
	more parking	1	0.8
	NEIU should have more graduate programs	1	0.8
	Childcare needed	1	0.8
	why students on verge of dropping out	1	0.8
	more students involved in school	1	0.8
	NEIU needs to expresshow it impacts the community and society	1	0.8
Other	Not Sure/ Don't Care	23	18.7

Appendix D: Carruthers Center for Inner City Studies: Manifesto for the Whole Community and Focus Group Notes

Presidential Task Force on the Millennium Student Meeting of April 25, 2007 at Jacob Carruthers' Center for Inner City Studies

This was the last of the open meetings held by the Presidential Task Force on the Millennium Student. We are now in the process of integrating all of the comments from all of the Focus Group meetings from which we will create a list of categories of issues and concerns. From this list, the Coordinators of the Task Force will create a number of sub-committees to work on specific issues that have been identified through this process. We want to build upon and strengthen what we are doing well, identify the gaps in service and obstacles to success for students so that they can be bridged. Throughout the Focus Group responses it is clear that students, faculty, and staff see a lack of access to classes as a major problem. As our students become older, with families depending on them for support, we may need to be more flexible and respond and provide different kinds of support than we have been providing.

The following content represents the minutes of the Focus Group session held at the Carruthers' Center for Inner City Studies on 25 April 2007. Ten faculty and staff that administer the Center teach and provide outreach, admissions and student support services, were in attendance. At the start of the meeting, a copy of "Manifesto for the Whole Village" was given to Dr. Scott and Dr. Rivera. This Manifesto was developed by CCICS students and presented on this past University Day.

Manifesto for the Whole Village

The Carruthers' Center for Inner city Studies' mission has always been about access and community. Our open door admission's policy has long heralded preparing citizens to improve themselves and their community. The Center is interested in providing students with adequate services that support the whole individual. Our students, staff and faculty are calling for the attention of pertinent university administrators and departments, with the power to provide for solutions to our concerns. We students are interested in collaborating with university personnel to address our issues. It will take the whole village to support this effort on behalf of the students and this is a call to step up. The concerned undergraduate and graduate students have met with administrators, faculty and staff who have recommended this manifesto for actions. There are serious issues to be addressed. As student leaders we would like to see more improvements done here at the Center.

We have identified the points listed below as some major concerns and have moved forward with dialogue and brainstorming sessions that address possible solutions.

- *Provide consistent personal, family and health counseling support to the Center's students*
- *Expand and create more opportunities for work/study; internships and organized volunteer initiative which will better training student participants in leadership and professional arenas, i.e. reinstitute a Center/University Ambassador or Cadre to support the Center's recruitment efforts and departmental special events and activities; provide assistance to develop student run entrepreneur businesses in partnership with the University which*

can address food services, tutoring and transportation issues of our student body.

- *Address transportation concerns with solutions and methods that will be beneficial to wider student populations, i.e. CTC UPasses/student operated shuttle services/car pools/Center's parking lot revenues assigned to the Center's operational funds to support projects.*
- *Adhere to the Center's capital improvement mission. Involve students in the plans; solicit their input on building improvements and revisit the student lounge and canteen Charette idea, new classroom furniture, floor plans and configurations pertinent to special needs student populations.*
- *Improve the Center's library and computer lab operations with expanded operating hours and specific training programs for students designed to develop technology skills in media, research and archival methods and practices.*

Northeastern Illinois University's mission state two distinctive features of diversity and community partnerships. The Center's history and location in the Chicago Metropolitan area has always served a population that is diverse in age, culture, language and race. We students, too, see this diversity as a major asset. The Inner City Studies and Education Leadership curricula thrust assumes that the academic programs utilize a variety of perspectives to enrich the teaching and learning experience and prepare students for the multiculturalism, which characterizes our society. Our location also should provide students and faculty with many opportunities to integrate field-based learning, research and service within our classroom instruction. We only need our village to do the work to make that a functioning reality.

CCICS Focus Group Responses/Issues/Concerns

- CCICS students have many challenges in their lives. The Center, with area developers, is looking at options for providing housing with supportive services in the neighborhood for some students.
- Travel between CCICS and the main campus for students to register and obtain IDs is difficult, expensive, and time-consuming for students. There is a need for a shuttle to main campus on some kind of a schedule, especially around registration deadlines. Most students and adjuncts rely on public transportation. CCICS should be able to produce ID cards for students and faculty on site.
- New students are being forced to participate in the first year experience on campus and charged an additional \$45 for this requirement. No one has explained it. Why do students and staff have to go to the main campus for orientation and to participate in this required 3-day activity? Why can it not be provided at CCICS?
- Validations of schedules and payment for coursework must be done on campus, in person as well. The telephone registration program is not reliable and it provides no confirmation numbers or copies to prove your registration.

- CCICS students pay fees for services that they do not receive. Insurance and parking fees are difficult to waive. People working the counters in the bursar's office do not systematically inform students of their options, i.e., waivers for some fees can be obtained. CCICS students are also assessed fees for use of the exercise program and the swimming pool despite the fact that they cannot get to campus to use them.
- It would make sense to schedule more services at the CCICS. For example, graduating students must travel to campus to order/receive caps and gowns and get their pictures taken. Why can't a day be set aside to have this done at CCICS?
- Reception on main campus to faculty, staff and students from CCICS is not respectful. Racist comments and attitudes are common, this on a campus that claims to celebrate diversity.
- When the Center (CCICS) requests supplies and furniture, "we get the old stuff." For example, the chairs currently in the Student Lounge were purchased when the University moved into the building in 1977.
- Food items in the vending machines at CCICS costs more than the same items in vending machines on main campus. In addition, there is no food service in the building (or in the immediate neighborhood for that matter) despite the fact that full-time students as well as staff and some faculty are here all day.
- Students and faculty of CCICS do not feel and, are not made to feel very connected to main campus.
- The condition of our building negatively affects the CCICS brand.
- What happened to the \$80,000 set aside to renovate the student lounge and create SMART classrooms at CCICS?
- The second phase of the asbestos removal has not happened.
- The auditorium has no sound system.
- CCICS has no way of giving students the "college experience." There is no space for study groups. The library is not open mornings or weekends. Nor is the library included in student orientation.
- Students begin to think of the Center's Programs as inferior because of the environment. Our program is known nationally but it is not respected here at NEIU.
- Services like enrollment, financial aid and the library should have evening and weekends hours as well.

- CCICS students have no access to a Financial Aid Officer on their campus. They must travel to the main campus to problem-solve their financial aid applications. This compromises students' academic performance, as they cannot focus on academics until they are sure their financial aid will come through.
- Many students drop out because of their frustration with the bureaucracy on top of all the other issues they face.
- NEIU is not student-centered or student-friendly.
- Recruiting for CCICS is very difficult. There is nothing to offer. Yes, we do offer general education courses and some majors on our site. But we can't even offer students lunch and a comfortable place to student. Students have no access to water here either. Academics are good here but education is more than simply sitting in a class. CCICS has no science lab or art studio, yet students registering for lab science or art are charged "lab fees."
- ADA services are hard to obtain. Though ordered when students register, software and other ADA adaptations often don't arrive until the end of the semester. Wheelchair access to halls and bathrooms is difficult, featuring pillars in the middle of hallways, sinks by doors, and awkward access to stalls. There is no emergency evacuation plan for people who cannot take the stairs nor are there telephones that operate off the electrical system. When the electrical system crashes so does the phone system.
- What makes students come to CCICS?
 - ✓ Alternative admissions (like special programs on campus but without the contract).
 - ✓ There is no minimum ACT or GPA but once admitted they must perform like everyone else.
 - ✓ Strong relationships with a network of school administrators, however NEIU is usually the 3rd choice.
- CCICS has poor signage making for little presence in the neighborhood as a university. Many students at King High School just blocks south of the Center don't know that this building is a post-secondary institution. Students find out about CCICS by accident. It doesn't get promoted as a viable location in the university's overall institutional advertising.
- Vendors don't know about CCICS. Employers don't know about CCICS students. Career and Job Fairs are not scheduled on the CCICS campus. We constantly have to send our student to other Institutions of Higher Education for services.
- NEIU is missing a big opportunity. This neighborhood is HOT!
- Could students be surveyed about classes they need to be offered at CCICS?

- Access to technology is limited to a couple of computer labs (one with 19 computers, the second with 12, all more than 5 years old), one SMART classroom, and a distance-learning lab that is not being used and is outdated. There are two media carts with equipment that is also over 5 years old. There are no monitors in the lobby. Wireless access is not available in the building. Internet access is a problem. The building does not have its own server and frequently loses contact with the server on the main campus.
- Space is needed for an academic support center including writing and math labs.
- Security is a problem. Only one officer is assigned to the building to cover the lobby and the facility's six floors. There are no outside security cameras. The inside cameras do not work.
- Enrollment is increasing but our budget is being cut each year. Offices on campus operate on a reactive rather than proactive basis; sort of "let them come to us."