Starfish

Carroll Community College: Increasing Retention When Faced with Declining Student Populations

CARROLL
COMMUNITY COLLEGE

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- Kristie Crumley, Dean of Student Affairs

Carroll Community College, Westminster, Md.

Carroll Community College is a premier learning community for convenient, affordable, state-of-the-market postsecondary training, baccalaureate preparation, and lifelong education. A combination of adult learners and students straight out of high school form a school community whose motto is "no school so near can take you so far."

A Need to Increase Retention: A Decline in the Traditional Student Population

Like most community colleges, many of Carroll's students begin their academic careers at risk for not completing their degrees. Of the 3,300 students that the college serves, 60% attend part-time and nearly 25% are first-generation students.

89% of Carroll's students are Carroll County residents, with half of the college- bound high school students in the county beginning their academic careers at Carroll. However, the county's population growth rate continues to fall, with recent data showing the percentage is the lowest it's been in more than 80 years.

Faced with declining student populations in the county, Carroll Community College cannot continue to rely on the high school population to fill their incoming class. "When high school enrollment decreases, the percentage of students walking through our doors is going to drop as well," said Dr. Kristie Crumley, the Dean of Student Affairs at Carroll Community College. "The ripple effect then extends to our budgets and the resources we are able to offer."

25% first generation students

66% of student body only attends part-time

50% of student population aged 20 and above

Using Starfish Solutions to Increase Student Success

With a large population of at-risk students and a decline in the traditional population of incoming students, Dr. Crumley and her team knew they needed to update their college's student success and academic alert system in order to assist their students persevere on to graduation and career.

"We needed the right software solution to help our student success efforts," said Crumley. While Carroll Community College had tried other systems in the past, they found them to be insufficient for their needs. "In the past, students would get an email that said something along the lines of 'you're not doing well in one of your classes, you should look into tutoring,' and that's just not enough. We have great resources here, but they weren't being communicated properly, leading to the resources being under-utilized."

Crumley and her team began a search for a new student success solution. In order to ensure that voices across the university were involved in the selection, the selection committee included representatives from the faculty, IT staff, advisors, judicial affairs, and disability services.

"We had implemented other software systems where we felt like guinea pigs for the company," said Crumley. "We were really impressed with the Starfish implementation

plan. Clearly they've done this a lot and done it well. And that's what we need – someone to lead us through implementation - not the other way around."

Connecting Faculty and Students to Increase Retention

Crumley and her team have many goals they hope to achieve with Starfish. Crumley is especially excited about the ability to map Carroll's retention strategies to specific students and then report back on the success of those efforts.

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