Starfish

Lake-Sumter State College: Increasing the Bottom Line with Starfish Solutions

Lake-Sumter State College, Leesburg, Florida

Lake-Sumter State College (LSSC) was established in 1962 for students in Florida's Lake and Sumter Counties. It has since grown into a three-campus institution serving over 7,500 students in over 30 degree, certificate and diploma programs. The college's name was changed from Lake-Sumter Community College to Lake-Sumter State College in 2012, when bachelor degree programs were introduced on campus.

A Communication Gap with Commuter Students

LSSC is largely populated by students juggling school with full-time employment, off-campus housing, and family duties - similar challenges other community or state college students face.

"Communicating with and motivating commuter students can be a challenge," said Carolyn Scott, LSSC's Dean of Students and Starfish administrator on campus. "Increasing their awareness of student support services can be especially difficult."
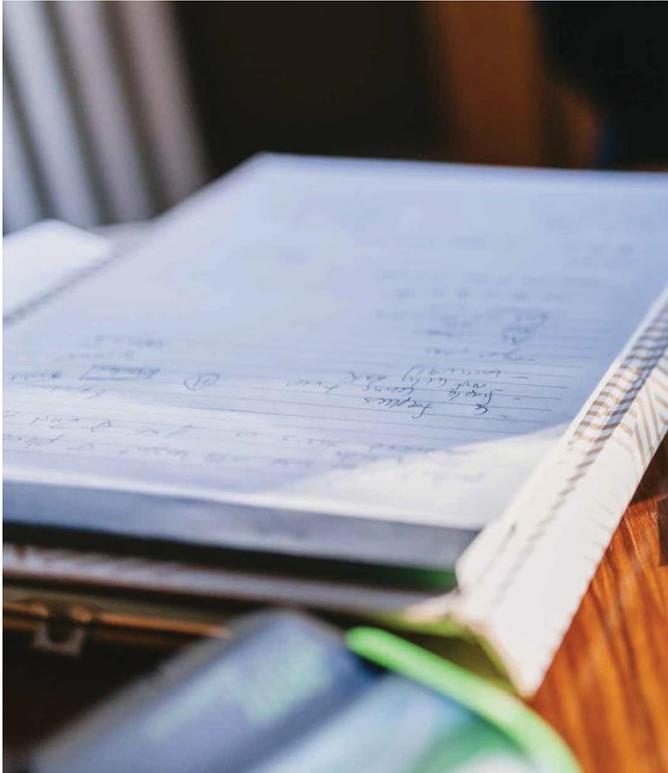
Prior to using Starfish, LSSC used a homegrown early alert system. However, the previous system did not foster faculty buy-in or collaboration with campus resources after an alert was created. In short, faculty rarely, if ever, heard how identified issues were resolved because student support services simply weren't connected.

Lake-Sumter chose Starfish to provide an online student success solution to connect students with needed services like academic advising, tutoring, career services, and financial aid – with the goal of improving student success, satisfaction and retention. A pilot program focused on faculty in

"When we saw a 1% retention rate increase after the first semester using Starfish, we realized that the resulting additional revenue more than paid for our Starfish annual license."

- Carolyn Scott, Dean of Students at LSSC

Since implementing Starfish:

1% retention increase after one year

3500 additional student meetings held with academic advising

2% increase in student progress survey response rate

80-90% faculty progress survey completion

developmental math and social and behavioral sciences was implemented in Summer 2016. Starfish was then implemented institution-wide in Fall 2016.

Impacting the Bottom Line

Prior to using Starfish, one advisor at Lake-Sumter was in charge of triaging all flags. "That tended to take a lot of time, especially during progress survey time," said Scott. "Now that the work is done in Starfish, we are seeing better relationships between advisors and advisees.
Because of Starfish, we understand where students are doing less self-advising, meaning that they are taking the right classes to keep them on track. Ultimately, that will only help with retention."

"We quickly realized how important Starfish is to our retention efforts," said Scott. In a recent fall-to-fall comparison, LSSC's retention rate rose from a four-year average of 47% to 48%. The spring-to-fall rate rose from 58% to 59%. Every student retention percentage point counts, both in human terms, and with regard to

the college's bottom line. "When we saw a 1% retention rate increase after the first semester using Starfish, we realized that the resulting additional revenue more than paid for our Starfish annual license," Scott explained.

Today, all of LSSC's student services are connected through Starfish. "We're all using the appointment features and kiosks, and our messaging is now reaching the right audience," reported Scott. "We're no longer using multiple conflicting tools to accomplish our goals." Along the way, Starfish has changed the culture of the college community. The faculty is completing progress surveys twice a semester at a response rate of 80 - 90%. "We know Starfish is having a big impact," said Scott, "because we hear stories all the time about how much that feedback means to the students."

"We love Starfish and what it does for us," said Scott. "We're excited about the next steps when we begin leveraging its data to be even more strategic and proactive."