Starfish

Morgan State University Increases Retention with Starfish

Morgan State University:

Morgan State University, officially designated as Maryland's preeminent public urban research university, is the largest HBCU in Maryland with nearly 8,000 students on their urban campus in northeast Baltimore, MD.

Morgan State was the only HBCU to win a $100,000 grant from the Gates Foundation for the implementation of Integrated Planning and Advising Services (IPAS) technology in 2013, which enabled them to purchase Starfish. Their goal was to improve student retention, persistence and completion through higher- quality advising and increasing students' utilization of campus resources.

"One of the best parts of the Starfish platform is how inviting and engaging it is for faculty, students and staff. Once end users access the system, they appreciate how easy it is to use."

- Dr. Tiffany Beth Mfume, Assistant Vice President for Student Success and Retention

Supporting a Diverse Student Body

By every traditional measure, many Morgan State students are "high risk" students. Students who attend Morgan State are mostly first-time, full-time African American students, many of whom are first-generation students receiving some type of financial aid assistance.

"We have challenges not unlike any other institution with retaining our students for a number of reasons," said Dr. Tiffany Mfume, Assistant Vice President for Student Success and Retention. "Starfish has allowed us to take an even more dynamic and integrated approach to early intervention strategies, systematic tracking and monitoring, and academic coaching and mentoring in order to support our students."

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2017 Winner of Starfish Education Advances Award for Student Success

High levels of faculty and staff adoption

Starfish feedback found to be a significant predictor of student success

Building Connections with Faculty, Staff and Students

Morgan State rolled out the Starfish platform with more than 6,300 undergraduate students and more than 500 faculty and staff. To not overwhelm their faculty, they launched Starfish with only two automated alerts from other campus systems, neither of which were triggered by academic performance or grades.

"Starfish has really brought us together as a campus, and the students have caught on," says Dr. Mfume. "The RDs, the coaches, the advisors, the faculty are all on the same page in a way that we never have been before. We give better advice to the student and share our notes with one another."

Morgan State students even coined the term "StarSNITCH" because of the transparency and accountability built into the Starfish tool. This level of connection has another aspect: faculty report that students respond better to messages received through Starfish, since they know it's no longer a one-on-one issue.

Moving the Needle on Student Success

Morgan State's success has been achieved by taking a thoughtful approach to technology to support their student success strategy. After the implementation of Starfish, Morgan State's retention rate rose from 72% to 76%, their highest retention rate in 20 years, and the second highest retention rate ever recorded.

"Data excites me because we all have theories and hypotheses, but we need objective analysis and validation," said Dr. Mfume. "The bottom line is that grades are likely to improve when the student has received Starfish flags or feedback before the end of the semester."

76%
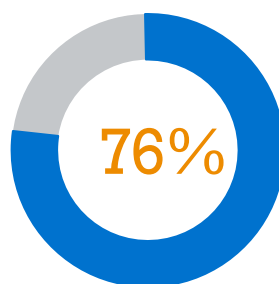
Retention rate rose from **72% to 76%,** their highest retention rate in 20 years

3%

Improvement in student retention in one year after launching Starfish