



Syracuse University: Building a University-Wide Student Success Culture

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Dr. Kal Srinivas, Director of Retention in the Office of Academic Programs

Syracuse University, Syracuse, New York

Syracuse University is a private research university in the heart of New York State. The university offers a choice of more than 200 majors for 15,000 undergraduates and 7,000 graduate students. The university boasts high graduation and retention rates, including a 69% 4-year graduation rate and 80% 6-year graduation rate for the 2008 student cohort.

Dr. Kal Srinivas, Director for Retention in the Office of Academic Programs, said her team understands moving the needle on retention is difficult for institutions but, "We understood that the best path to a comprehensive student success model was through leveraging technology."

A Promising Start

With this in mind, a selection team comprised of key stakeholders from across campus was created to select a vendor that could implement a centralized advising system to improve student persistence and streamline the process of advising across Syracuse's schools and colleges.

The team selected Starfish because of the solution's ability to best match at-risk students and available campus resources to help them in real-time. "Starfish's timely responsiveness during the exploration phase to our questions and concerns was one of the reasons we chose them," said Dr. Srinivas. "This change was going to virtually touch every member of our community and not everyone in our diverse environment was ready for it. Thankfully, Starfish provided us with the guidance we needed to embark on this journey."

A Culture of Collaboration

In order to ensure a successful implementation, Dr. Srinivas felt her team had to perform careful due diligence up front to assess the school's "institutional will" to



Spring 2016 - Fall 2017

93% of Undergraduate faculty and **100%** of Advisors have adopted Starfish.

Spring 2018

Over **12,000** students received feedback on classroom performance

Over **13,000** student-initiated appointments were made with advisors, faculty, and support staff

76% of undergraduate courses/sections completed the Mid-Semester Survey

56% of all undergraduate & graduate students received a flag/kudo

2.63 Average number of flags per student

1.59 Average number of Kudos per student

get it done. "After we signed the contract with Starfish, we implemented the initiative in a way that would inspire, create, and maintain trust through careful use of change management principles."

Implementation began in earnest with a pilot for all 100 and 200 level courses in the College of Arts and Sciences, the Martin J. Whitman School of Management, and University College with three primary user types: students, instructors and advisers.

Starfish, rebranded Orange SUccess on campus, actively engaged more than a third of undergraduate students during its pilot. During Spring and Fall of 2016, more than 600 faculty and staff used Starfish to respond to students, raise concerns, offer praise for work well done, and coordinate advising protocols.

"Change is never easy," said Dr. Srinivas. "We shared the good, the bad, the ugly, and the awesome of the Starfish implementation from the pilot through the rollout. The result has been an attitudinal and cultural shift across campus characterized by the willingness to share data."

Increasing Success Metrics

Those early wins paved the way for a campus-wide Starfish rollout in Fall 2017 across all ten schools and colleges for both undergraduate and graduate students. "The response we received from students, advisors and faculty during the early phase of campus-wide implementation was very encouraging," said Dr. Srinivas. "Faculty told us that, in several instances, early feedback helped students bounce back in their courses when they might otherwise have fallen behind."

Today, faculty participation is consistently high, even for large enrollment courses. Usage metrics throughout Fall 2017 demonstrate that 93% of undergraduate faculty and 100% of advisors have adopted Starfish. Over 12,000 students received feedback on classroom performance and over 13,000 student-initiated appointments were made with advisors, faculty, and support staff. Impressively, 56% of all undergraduate and graduate students received a flag or kudo in the Orange SUccess system.

For her part, Dr. Srinivas sees Starfish as integral to their students' success. "If it takes a village to support our students, then I see Starfish as a virtual village that all of our constituents can use to help our students succeed."