



The University of Toledo: Customizing Interventions to Improve Student Success for At-Risk Students



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-Julie Fischer-Kinney, Ph.D.,
Assistant Provost for Student
Success and Retention at the
University of Toledo

The University of Toledo, Toledo, Ohio

The University of Toledo is a public metropolitan research university that serves over 16,000 undergraduate students. The university has a high population of first-generation students, and exceeds the state average on PELL eligible students by ten percentage points.

Increasing Case Management with Starfish Connect

In an effort to increase retention, student success and graduation rates of at-risk student populations, UT launched a Success Coaching initiative in 2013. However, UT did not have efficient documentation systems in place to track student interactions and progress. "My primary objective quickly became finding a system that would better support their work," said Julie Fischer-Kinney, Ph.D., Assistant Provost for Student Success and Retention at the University of Toledo. After much searching, UT implemented Starfish in January 2015.

Through intentional design of attributes, cohorts, and tracking items, the University of Toledo has re-engineered its process and communication workflows using Starfish's case management framework, Starfish Connect. Along the way, they've reinvented their student success efforts by utilizing Starfish to encourage students to attend programs, proactively complete financial processes, and register for classes in a timely manner. "Starfish gives us the ability to customize, enhance, and improve our student success efforts to focus on students most at risk of attrition," said Fischer-Kinney. And their hard work is paying off – the school is now seeing its highest retention rate in over a decade.



47%

of former probationary students now in academic good standing

73%

of the students on probation completed a Student Intake Form

74.5%

retention rate - the highest in over a decade

Helping Students on Academic Probation Find Their Footing

Fisher-Kinney and her team chose to utilize the intake forms within Starfish to upgrade their process when working with students on academic probation. "Our student success plans for probation students had been paper-based and needless to say, were unwieldy and inefficient," she said. The team saw an opportunity to enable students to self-report information in Starfish, allowing anyone working with a student to see the information.

"Once a student completes the form in Starfish, we run filters on the data to get a good look into how many of these students have visited the counseling center or indicate they're struggling with study strategies," said Fischer-Kinney. "We then use that information to inform our case management work, create individualized plans for the students, and refer them to the appropriate resources."

This system was piloted with three academic colleges that tend to have the largest at-risk student populations. Students were sent a communication informing them to meet with their academic advisor and success coach and fill out the intake form.

"73% of the students on probation completed the intake form – a much higher percentage than when we were paper-based and really struggling to get students to complete the paperwork," she said. "47% of the students that were part of this pilot are now in academic good standing – a complete turnaround. That's amazing, because across the institution we typically see a 15-19% improvement rate for students on probation. This is a really good sign that we're on the right intervention track."

"We've been quite pleasantly surprised by the capabilities in Connect and our staff's response to Starfish in general," said Fischer-Kinney. "We wanted a system that would allow us the flexibility to customize the product to fit our changing needs, and we've found it. Simply said, it's been transformational."



"Starfish gives us the ability to customize, enhance, and improve our abilities to focus on students most at risk of attrition at our institution."

-Julie Fischer-Kinney, Ph.D., Assistant Provost for Student Success and Retention at the University of Toledo

