



## Westfield State University: Increasing Student Support through Seamless Implementation



### Westfield State University, Westfield, Mass.

Westfield State University is a four-year public university in Westfield, Massachusetts. Founded in 1839, Westfield State University was the first public college in America without barrier to race, gender, or economic class. Today, Westfield serves over 5,000 undergraduate students, 91% of which receive some type of financial aid assistance.

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- Nicole West, Assistant Director of Retention Westfield State University

As the Assistant Director of Retention, Nicole West is responsible for developing meaningful strategies to assist at-risk student populations, including overseeing the implementation of the Starfish Enterprise Success Platform. "I feel a responsibility to create a circle of care between our faculty, students, and staff advisors across campus and that's what Starfish is designed to do."

### Streamlining Support for At-Risk Students

Prior to implementing Starfish in Fall 2014, student progress reports were paper documents, which were not conducive to sharing information and concerns with various groups across the university. "One student with multiple affinity groups needed multiple forms with essentially the same information. It was obvious we needed a streamlined way to capture that information."

To establish buy-in on campus, Starfish was first introduced to five affinity groups on campus, including those in the learning disability program, first-year athletes, and students on academic probation. Each semester, additional student populations were supported through the Starfish platform. Today, all first-year and exploratory students, new transfers, academically at-risk students (those with GPAs below 2.0 who are still academically eligible), and students who were admitted to the university with an exemption are engaged with Starfish.



104%

increase in referrals to student service

2k+

unique students received a tracking item through Starfish

48%

of all alerts are Kudos in Starfish

Westfield brought their IT team to the table early and made sure they were engaged throughout the implementation cycle. "Our implementation manager was really engaged with us and always available to answer our questions," said West. "The Starfish team did a great job of involving our IT team in the conversation, so that they did not feel usurped or overshadowed."

### Focus on Faculty

While Westfield has a 17:1 student to faculty ratio, it can still be difficult and time-consuming for faculty to provide the appropriate assistance to every student. "This system truly is engineered to help faculty," said West. By providing faculty with a convenient way to keep track of their students - through raising flags when they observe a pattern of concerning behavior, or a Kudo when they want to give positive feedback - Starfish allows faculty to address the progress of every student in a personalized way.

"This system enables us to predict our at-risk students so we can intervene before drastic measures are needed," says West. "In fact, Starfish is our only way to capture the in-progress data we need to accurately forecast if students will qualify for the next semester."

By establishing a central location for faculty and students to track progress, report concerns or achievements, and connect with the appropriate support and resources, Westfield has seen an increase in students receiving the support they need in order to achieve their academic goals.

4100

appointments made during one academic year

77%

more appointments made through Starfish