Consultant's Report Prepared for Salt Lake City Community College

On August 26th, 2019, I, Susan Hawkins-Wilding, visited Salt Lake Community College (SLCC) with the charge to conduct a review of the Hobson's Starfish product use and process in order to identify the strengths and challenges, and make suggestions for improvement.

During the visit, I met with and interviewed: Dr. Chuck Lepper, VP for Student Affairs & Enrollment Management; Dr. Kathryn Kay Coquemont, AVP Student Success; Ms. Candida Darling, Interim Senior Director for Planning & Implementation; Ms. Ashley Sokia, Director; Ms. Anni Garcia, Assistant Director; Holly Perry, Operations Associate; Jourdan McCall, Director of Computing Services; Nate Reynolds, Database Analyst; Richard Diaz, Interim Director of ODMA; Ella Butler, Director of Career Services; Tung Thantrong; Director of TRIO; Suzanne Modzy, Associate Dean of Math. As a result of the information provided to me prior to me visit and in our meetings, I gained a greater understanding of implementation and use of Starfish at Salt Lake Community College.

My overall observations in this report will cover what I believe are the strengths of the system to date as well as opportunities for greater use and impact. Finally, I will offer recommendations for your consideration that I believe will improve the academic advising experiences and student success outcomes at SLCC by using Hobson's Starfish.

General Observations

The following list of **strengths** include**:**

- The commitment from top level administration to support academic advising.
- As stated by NACADA during their visit, there is a strong commitment to, and belief in, the value of academic advising to student success demonstrated by the advisors who work very well together, focus on each student as an individual, and serve as resources for each other.
- The College recognizes the important relationship and impact of advising upon student retention, transfer, and degree completion.
- Dedicated staff persons to manage the Starfish system including a part time administrator.
- Dedicated staff member to lead planning and implantation of student success initiatives.
- Knowledgeable Director who implemented the system and has the historical knowledge and training from Starfish.
- Key stakeholders from offices outside of academic advising to use the tool in order to engage with students and connect information across departments. Two programs I would highlight is the work of your Math Department and Office of Diversity and Multicultural Affairs.

The following is a list of **challenges**:

- Low percentage of faculty raising flags within the system. Your team told me you are at about 17 percent. This lessens the impact and number of students that are identified as at risk.
- Manually assigning and maintaining roles within Starfish.
- No flags created automatically from the SIS system (Two Banner raised flag examples are withdrawal or drop flags).
- Lack of knowledge of what Starfish can do or what the purpose of the tool is or can be beyond a handful of key players.
- Lack of specific goals connected to features or tools that Starfish can help you achieve.
- Lack of a campus wide communication plan for Starfish use.
- No clear tie to assessment using both early alert and appointment data to evaluate effectiveness of the tool and assessment tied to student success and learning outcomes.

Key Recommendations:

- Implement a Starfish specific Strategic Plan or Project plan that includes clear assessment metrics tied to the current features of the system.
    - Define how starfish fits into your broader student success goals and strategic plan.
    - Use the features within the Starfish system that you currently have to help you achieve your student success goals. These main features are the Early Alert flags and kudos, Appointments, and Notes with a potential to increase the use of the Success Plans feature that can span beyond advising offices.
    For example:
    1) If your goal is to have a case management approach to advising how can the notes and appointments features help you assess that goal? By reviewing current appointment and note data in the system define a weekly, monthly, or semester goal for advising outreach and engagement. How might other offices do the same?
    2) Tie Advising appointments or engagement to retention metrics. Are students that are advised or seen by other support offices more likely to be retained?
    3) If you goal is to increase retention how might the early alert feature help you track and reach out to students at risk? By increasing your number of students identified through the use of both system raised and manually raised flags you can increase the support offered to those students.
    4) If your goal is to encourage student success and attainment, how can the use of the kudos feature help you recognize great performance of your students? One of the strongest retention tools Starfish has is the Kudo feature. Students that received Kudos at Ivy Tech Community College state that it is one of the main communications that kept them on track and engaged. Champions you currently have doing this work is Suzanne Modzy, your Associate Dean of Math. This program could easily be replicated in other departments.

5) The student success plan within Starfish could also help you create a comprehensive success plan for students utilizing cross departmental outreach and tracking through the use of referrals and to do's.

6) Create incremental goals to increase impact

   a. Slowly implement new flags within the system using both system raised flags and faculty or staff raised flags.
   For example:
      i. 1st Class Missed (Manually raised)
      ii. Off Academic Plan (System raised)
      iii. Course Withdrawal or drop flags (System raised)
      iv. Failed all courses (System raised) (* See full list of examples in the attached Ivy Tech Training Manual)

   b. Evaluate the use of other tools Starfish provides like the Student Success Score. (See informational materials attached.)

   c. Add new roles or users to the system as you train current users or as you assess your current student success goals

   d. Assign students to different success plans in starfish and have those individuals engage with your larger student success team– (Automate the coding of these roles using Banner.)
      i. Career Coaches
      ii. Advisors
      iii. Trio Support Role
      iv. Multicultural Role
      v. Faculty

   e. As stated in your NACADA Review you have yet to create a comprehensive advising assessment plan. Defining what is advising with stated learning outcomes and then measuring that success helps advisors prioritize competing demands for their time that may have lesser impact on student success. We have found at Ivy Tech it is easy to get dragged into those activities that are transactional in nature for students that may not have the greater impact on their being retained. Are there things others could be doing for students that are transactional that would free up advisor time? Are there ways to increase the efficiency of starfish by increasing and using system raised flags? Can the Starfish tool help advisors and other success offices prioritize their time by utilizing the filters within the system to manage their caseload?

- Create a Campus Wide Communication Plan for Starfish aimed at staff, faculty, students
  o Include what Starfish is and what it can do.
  o Include how it aligns with your broader students success goals
  o Include national retention data on Early Alert Systems and academic advising case management and proactive approaches. (See resources at the end of this document).
  o I read that you are holding off on creating your Advising Council while you are implementing pathways. Can you incorporate that work and determine how Starfish can help you with that work? Can informal meetings take place with key stakeholders

so that information is still shared? I sensed during my visit that the last group benefited from hearing how each other was using the tool and what the future goals were for Starfish. The team had great ideas on how to increase the use and effectiveness of the tool. Use the awesome people you have to build greater capacity.

- o One way to connect faculty formally to students is to create a faculty mentor role within Starfish. This connects students, professional advisors, and faculty mentors to each other thus creating a communication and information pipeline. These mentors could be part of the student's larger success network and help tie your greater pathways work together. Current retention literature shows that connecting students to their program faculty early leads to greater retention.   (See references below and the attached Image 1 for a sample of a Student Success Network)
- o Include the student voice and student success stories of connecting with advisors.
- o Include how it has already helped make connections and support student success. Bring out examples from Career Coaching, Multicultural Student Success, and your Math program. I heard stories of how this is already happening. I left with a sense that those teams are hungry to take those beginning wins and expand it to reach more students.
- o Create student specific marketing and messaging.
    - ▪ Can you include a college wide Starfish syllabus statement?
    - ▪ Message to students about advising and how to make an appointment using Canvas messaging
    - ▪ As stated on the NACADA review, your advising website. Provide students with information on what Starfish is, how faculty and staff will use the tool to connect with them.
    - ▪ Provide training resources online to students on how to make an advising appointment.
    - ▪ Explain Starfish during Orientation. Show them the tool. Explain how faculty will alert them to successes and challenges using this tool and how it is a way to connect with campus resources.
- o Consider smaller campaigns to promote faculty use of specific flags. We do a 1st class missed flag campaign where we have departmental leadership request and email their faculty to raise flags on students missing within the first week of classes. Advisors then call those students to find out how they can help. This is one of our greatest retention campaigns we do and one of our highest faculty response rates because our communication is given by their direct leadership. It is timely, specific, relatively easy, and targeted. We also do a Kudos campaign at midterms and have the same response. Students respond to this type of care and attention.

- Provide on-going campus wide training and professional development to staff and faculty
    - o Show and tell faculty how it creates less work for them by providing them information about their students and helps others across campus support their work within the classroom.
    - o Do refresher training or bring users together to share best practices. There are often multiple ways to do the same thing within Starfish and users enjoy brainstorming and sharing ways to make the system more useful.

- o Have key staff members attend Hobson's Summer Institute. This Starfish specific professional development opportunity helps connect you to other users, learn about best practices, and understand new innovations for the tool. https://www.hobsonssummerinstitute.com/
  - o Provide ongoing training on case management and proactive advising. Advisors at Ivy Tech always ask for more training on how to reach students and be more efficient. This training has to be ongoing and interactive. There are many demands on student success teams around the country. Helping them prioritize and training them how to greatly increases both the job satisfaction and service to students.
- Request that Hobson's provide you with your yearly usage data including where you stand in relation to similar schools
- Provide leadership in key areas access to reports within the system. You can provide users with the ability to run their own reports or have your administer provide them. By providing users access to reporting in the system, you greatly increase the effectiveness of the tool, the ability to assess their goals and student learning outcomes, and save them time.

Conclusion

I very much enjoyed visiting SLCC and loved seeing the passion and enthusiasm for student success. I congratulate you on reviewing how Starfish can be enhanced. I know there are so many competing needs at a community college and limited time. Your commitment to evaluating your processes and programs shows your pledge to your students and their completion. Hopefully you will find these suggestions and observations as helpful ideas to help you build greater use and impact of the system. The goal of technology is to help improve work efficiency and assessment when done well. SLCC's commitment to undertaking this review on behalf of your students is meant to be applauded. I wish your team success in this next step toward your larger student success goals. Please let me know how I can help. I am happy to dial in for questions or provide information or resources through email.

Additional resources for you to review are attached and good research articles are below:

References

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Academic Advising Retention Research articles:

https://www.nacada.ksu.edu/Resources/Clearinghouse/

View-Articles/Advising-and-Student-Retention-article.aspx

https://evolllution.com/attracting-students/retention/the-

role-of-proactive-advising-in-student-success-and-

retention/

http://mars.gmu.edu/jspui/bitstream/handle/1920/10141/

Thimblin_gmu_0883E_11059.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y (large dissertation)

Image 1 – Student Success Network