

Starfish Stakeholders Report

Spring 2021

The essential initiatives of our current strategic plan capture the most pressing work we must do to thrive, and to position the College for a sound future. These include initiatives that advance our foremost purpose: student learning and student success. Our focus this year will include improving academic advising and predictive analytics, and further building academic and student affairs collaborations.

President Donald P. Christian, State of the College Address, August 25th, 2017

Overview

The purpose of this report is to provide campus stakeholders with a current snapshot of Starfish activity and the system's use at New Paltz in support of student learning and student success. An analysis of perceived strengths, challenges, and areas of opportunity are also included.

Background

Following the Strategic Planning Council's recommendation in the fall of 2016, the College developed and launched its first early academic warning system in spring 2017. The academic referral system was proposed as part of a comprehensive plan to promote student retention, persistence, and degree attainment for all New Paltz students.

The automated referral system provided a centralized way for instructors to identify students who were struggling academically in their courses early in the term. The system was administered by, and integrated with, the Center for Student Success and its peer-to-peer services. A dedicated staff person would coordinate referrals among the many student programs and services on campus, as appropriate. On average, over 90 instructors would use the system in any given semester, providing over 260 student referrals.

Starfish Enterprise Student Success Platform

In fall 2017, New Paltz joined the second cohort of a SUNY-wide Starfish Early Alerts Initiative. The goals of this initiative support those of SUNY's Completion Agenda and align with New Paltz's strategic initiatives and institutional priorities. Starfish was implemented and launched in the spring of 2018, providing the College with a unified campus-wide communication system, with a focus on enhancing student engagement and learning, improving academic advising, and improving campus-wide workflows (Strategic Initiatives 1, 2, and 6).

Functionality

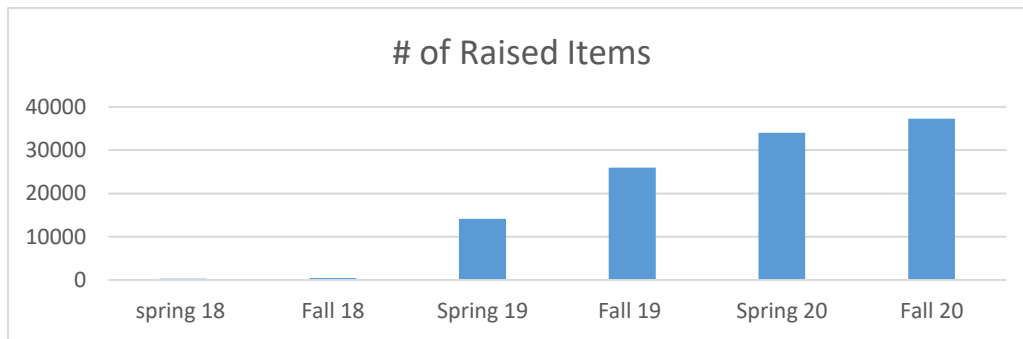
Starfish is a roles and relationships system that connects students to the information, resources, and services they need to succeed. These relationships form a student's personalized success network. This personalized network provides for a seamless, student-centered environment that decreases the campus runaround for students, i.e., when they are inadvertently bounced from office to office.

In addition to the success network outlined above, Starfish currently operates in two ways at New Paltz:

- 1) As a **student management and communications system**, connecting students with a dedicated primary-role advisor and a departmental/faculty advisor. In this way, the platform supports important connections between a student, their primary-role advisor, and their faculty advisor through the entire student life cycle: from a student’s entry through to graduation.
- 2) As a robust **early warning system**, facilitating course-based instructor feedback. Timely instructor feedback to students also informs advisor outreach and supports a personalized approach to student interventions. This partnership is critical in helping students stay on their educational paths to a timely graduation.

Growing Adoption and Platform Use

We continue to see an increase in Starfish activity and overall use. The following graph illustrates the growth in tracking items (flags, kudos, referrals, and to-dos) submitted each term since implementation.



Fall 2020 Activity Dashboard

The Starfish Activity Dashboard provides a snapshot of engagement across four areas:

Student Engagement	Faculty Engagement	Staff Engagement	Automation
Student Created Appointments 7,321	Progress Survey: Raised Items 10,346	Office Hours Created 9,152	System Raised Flags 1,407
Student Cancelled Appointments 592	Progress Survey: Cleared Items 1,364	Office Owner Created Appointments 889	System Cleared Flags 926
Student Raised Items 5	Attendance Tracking Instructors 21	Appointments with Prospective Students 0	
Total Student Attendance Records 15,196	Courses with Attendance Tracked 34	Updated Appointments 2,831	
Intake Forms Created 94	Course Sections with Attendance Tracked 34	Total Appointments Conducted 8,496	
Intake Forms Updated 99	Total Class Sessions Attendance Tracked 661	Speed Notes Recorded 3,551	
Student Profiles Created 508		Appointment Notes Recorded 4,696	
Student Profiles Updated 26		Staff Cancelled Appointments 440	
Photos Uploaded 2,247		Manually Raised Items 5,229	
Completed Success Plans 2		Manually Cleared Items 929	
Active In-Process Success Plans 482		Group Sessions Created 47	
Prospective Students Created 0		Events Created 2	

- **Student Engagement:** Students are engaging with the platform at a high rate (7,321 tracked student created appointments, fall '20). We're seeing a low student cancellation rate (~8%), and they are actively creating and updating their student profiles. The Starfish responsive student intake survey helps us immediately connect students to critical campus services and resources, including resources for students who identify as being food, housing, or transportation insecure.
- **Faculty Engagement:** Faculty are strong partners, having raised nearly 7,000 flags in addition to the tracking items they have raised through the progress survey. Instructors also posted a 74% progress survey completion rate last fall, exceeding Hobsons Starfish national client average of 39%!
- **Staff Engagement:** This category highlights and helps to quantify the effectiveness of case management student support. Starfish reports also provide critical, time-sensitive qualitative student data which assists in monitoring trends for planning and programming purposes.
- **Automation:** System-raised flags (i.e., neither instructor nor advisor facing) are triggered by predetermined student performance behaviors, i.e., student's failure to log into the LMS after a determined period, GPA drops below threshold, etc.

Early Academic Warning System: Fall '20 Tracking Items & Progress Survey

The Center for Student Success administered one progress survey during fall '20. Of the 18,608 tracking items raised, 15,917 (85%) were kudos (i.e., tracking items recognizing good academic behaviors, effort, or work). New Paltz trends high in the kudo category. Of the 2,691 flags (used to identify academically at-risk student behaviors) that were raised through the fall survey, 1,874 were successfully cleared, i.e., the issue was addressed. While there is room for improvement in this area, we view the **70% flag clearance rate** as satisfactory in light of current resource constraints.

Outside of the fall progress survey, an additional 6,950 flags were raised throughout the semester. Of these, 3,871 flags were cleared. (56% flag clearance rate¹.)

Assessing Effectiveness: Starfish 3 Semester Impact Analysis

8.5% improvement in retention when a flag was successfully addressed with student or was auto-cleared by a student action

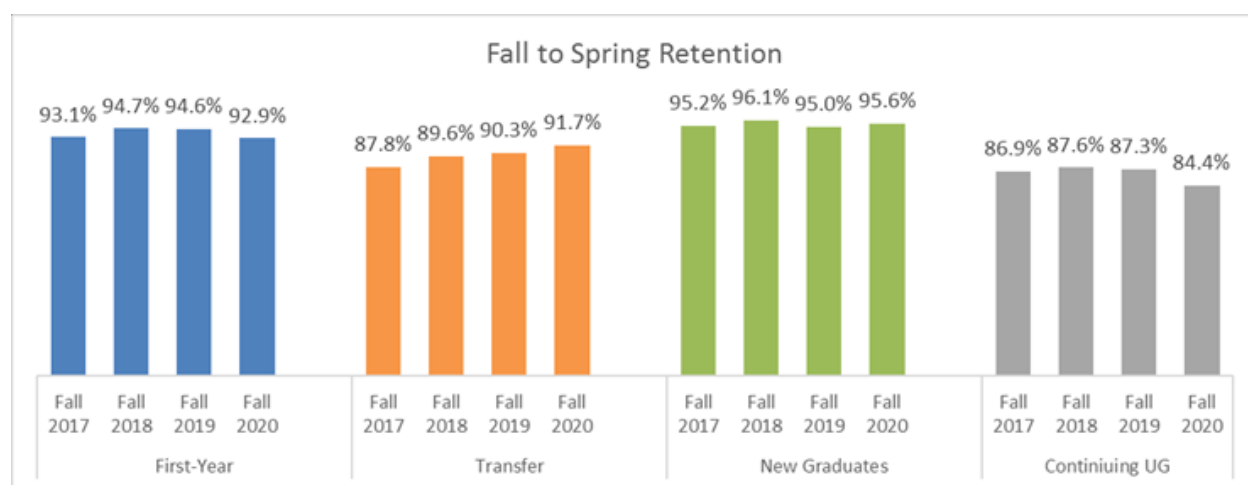
		Studied Term: 202001	Before Term 201909	Next Term: 202009			Next Term: 202009			Next Term	After Retention
Tracking Item Type Summary		Cumulative GPA			Credit Ratio		Unique Students				
Row Labels	Items Raised	Items Studied	Before Term	Current Term	Next Term	Before Term	Current Term	Before Term	Current Term	Next Term	
FLAG	3,255	2,336	2.72	2.72	2.78	0.80	0.77	1,777	1,799	1,424	79.2%
ACTIVE	1,035	750	2.77	2.77	2.84	0.79	0.77	532	521	408	78.3%
The concern was successfully addressed	1,071	635	2.72	2.75	2.80	0.81	0.80	514	486	394	81.1%
The concern is no longer relevant	423	363	2.85	2.85	2.89	0.87	0.86	289	307	242	78.8%
Auto-cleared based on data	368	312	2.67	2.62	2.69	0.79	0.75	237	288	234	81.3%
Auto-cleared when enrollment ended	228	185	2.56	2.50	2.53	0.75	0.47	113	117	87	74.4%
Was not able to get in contact with the student	114	84	2.25	2.40	2.52	0.62	0.69	88	73	53	72.6%
The flag was raised by mistake	16	7	2.58	2.63	2.40	0.80	0.86	4	7	6	85.7%
KUDO	9,438	6,913	3.23	3.27	3.30	0.94	0.93	3,672	3,863	3,516	91.0%
ACTIVE	9,438	6,913	3.23	3.27	3.30	0.94	0.93	3,672	3,863	3,516	91.0%
TO_DO	8,965	1,462	2.61	2.49	2.45	0.79	0.74	599	467	298	63.8%

¹ A closer analysis may reveal the reasons for the discrepancy between the rate of flags cleared during the progress survey and the overall clearance rate of flags outside the survey but during the semester. We suspect that the concentrated nature of the progress survey and other competing priorities, i.e. advance registration, may be factors.

An increasing number of institutions are aiming to achieve integration across supports to serve the whole student... Institutions with integrated student supports, through clear lines of responsibility and communication between stakeholders, as a whole, demonstrate higher rates of retention and completion. ²

Starfish’s Role in Supporting Student Success at Scale

Consistent with best practices and emerging trends for integrated student supports, the College’s general advising unit was paired with the learning center, the Center for Student Success (CSS), in 2017. Starfish provides the necessary infrastructure between the two offices to facilitate an integrated approach to student support and the introduction of a case management model for student advising (Office of Academic Advising). In this way, Starfish allowed for the introduction of intentional whole student advising spanning the entire student life cycle - from arrival to the College and through to graduation.



Source: OIR

OAA advisors maintain a primary, undeclared caseload (ACAD), and a secondary caseload of declared students (GEN, introduced in fall 2018). The general advising relationship is intended to complement the role of departmental advisors, who focus on advisement in the academic major. In addition to general advisement, OAA advisors follow-up whenever instructors raise flags (i.e., providing students with personalized interventions and redirection, as appropriate), assist declared students in navigating the university, provide resource referrals, and assist students with questions regarding academic policy or college-wide requirements, and more.

In this way, Starfish enables and extends intentional whole student advising support, promoting progression, retention (including seamless referrals to the learning center), and degree attainment for all students, including continuing and transfer students. (See increase in fall to spring retention for transfers, as reflected above.) We continue to monitor, evaluate, and [assess](#) the impact that the College’s integrated student advising and support model is having in promoting student persistence and retention in partnership with the academic areas.

² Gates Bryant, Jeff Seaman, Nicholas Java, and Michael Chiaro, “Driving Toward a Degree: The Evolution of Academic Advising in Higher Education: Part 1 Institutional Perspective,” Tyton Partners, 2019.

Spring '21 Student Success Campaign: Streamlined & Targeted

- **Automation:** Due to competing priorities and resource restraints, we were unable to develop, test, and implement new system-raised flags in time for the start of the spring semester. These types of system-raised flags are intended to nudge students to log into their LMS after 4 days of inactivity, for instance, during the first week or two of the term. We plan to develop and test them throughout the summer in time for full implementation this fall.
- **Enrollment Census Reporting, Feb 8th – 14th** (compliance purposes): Given the early nature of the semester's reporting date, we streamlined this survey for the benefit of instructors by omitting the flags/kudos/feedback options and merely requesting verification of course enrollment.
- **Early Warning Progress Survey, Feb 22nd – 28th:** An easy way for instructors to provide early feedback to support the success of our most academically vulnerable student cohorts.
- **Mid-Semester Evaluations, March 1st – March 21st:** We continue to explore ways to incorporate this process within the Starfish platform to present instructors with a single student success platform.

Summary Analysis

There is national evidence that academic advising is central to student learning and student success. Advising can also play a key role in coordinating holistic student supports across an institution. As the past few years at New Paltz suggests, technology will continue to inform the evolution of the College's advising program, facilitating a more seamless, individualized student experience while also providing the technical capacity to bring the College's student success efforts to scale.



TYPICAL STUDENT SUPPORT

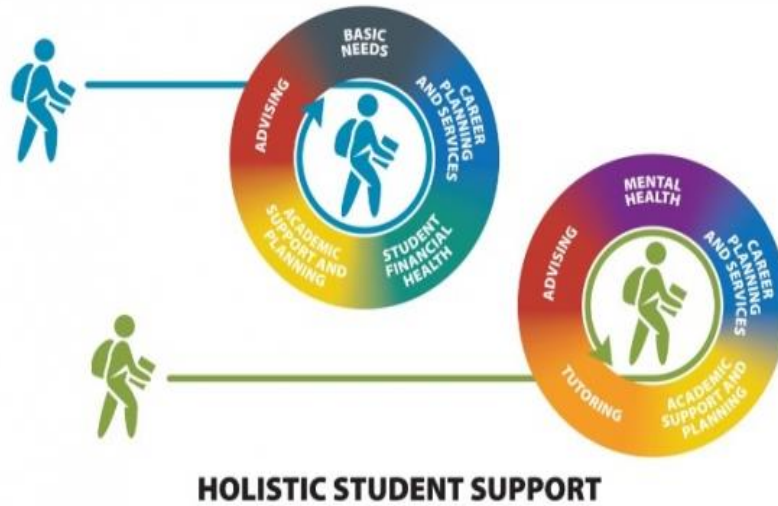


Image Source: Achieving the Dream

As reflected in this report, New Paltz has only begun to tap into the potential that technology-enabled advising offers in facilitating improved workflows, increased efficiencies, and in providing personalized holistic student supports across the institution.

Strengths

As a comprehensive communications platform, Starfish has proven increasingly valuable in keeping our students connected through the pandemic and the predominantly remote learning environment. We anticipate that Starfish will continue to serve as a valuable resource to the College community as student services explore hybrid delivery models and an increasingly technology-enabled student experience.

- Actionable data: Recent improvements in data reporting provide for a timely understanding of students' concerns and possible barriers to educational success. Real-time data and reporting features allow us to identify peak operating times, to inform operational adjustments, and aid in monitoring emerging trends to inform planning and program development.
- Case management: As mentioned, the platform provides for a case management model for advising, as currently exemplified in the Center for Student Success (OAA), EOP, embedded advising in the School of Education. It is also used by SMP, AC², Athletics, the Center for Business Advising, among other student-facing offices. The platform helps bring College-wide student success efforts to scale with a focus on fostering student learning, persistence, and retention, in partnership with the academic areas.

Challenges

Staffing: Starfish is a major university initiative and technical program and therefore demands resources in alignment with other major systems on campus. This helps provide dedicated IT programming support, functional/technical support for configurations and setup, communications and marketing, and customer service/faculty and staff training/troubleshooting and other "help desk" support that is

difficult to achieve as a side duty on top of staff's formal responsibilities. The more Starfish is deeply embedded and adopted across New Paltz, the more attention and ongoing maintenance it requires.

We have been without a dedicated coordinator since March of 2020 and have stretched as a department to support its maintenance and existing functionality. As a result, current capacity for handling day-to-day troubleshooting, training, marketing, as well as the rich potential for data extraction, analysis, and the regular sharing of data with campus stakeholders, is limited.

Areas of Opportunity

The data, early findings, and ongoing analyses (including the corresponding lifts in student retention), have made it clear that regaining a dedicated coordinator is mission critical. With the hope that we can fill the position in the near future, we have identified and will continue to prioritize the following areas of opportunity:

- Faculty input: Reconstitute the Starfish/Student Success Faculty Advisory Council.
- Consistent training and communication of best practices: Establish a monthly Starfish Users Group, in a manner consistent with the recommendations outlined in the Excellence in Academic Advising [final report](#).
- Increase automation: Continued development of system-raised flags (goal: pilot advancements this summer, 30% increase for the fall).
- Increase adoption by student-facing programs and administrative offices.
- Prioritizing projects that promote improved workflows, greater efficiencies, and a seamless student experience, including projects for the Office of Records & Registration, the on boarding of the Office of the Graduate School & Extended Learning, and further migration of advisor resources from my.newpaltz.edu into Starfish.

Thank you for partnering with us in support of our students' success, and please let me know if you have any questions regarding the information in this report.

Dante Cantú

Executive Director, Academic Advising & Student Success

February 9th, 2021