

Promising Practices Application: Starfish

Background

Crafton Hills College (CHC) is a comprehensive, public two-year institution located in Yucaipa CA. Founded in 1972, it is the newer and smaller of the two colleges in the San Bernardino Community College District (SBCCD), serving the economically and ethnically diverse communities of the eastern San Bernardino Valley.

Since its founding, CHC has helped an thousands of students achieve their educational and career aspirations, many of whom have faced socioeconomic challenges (62%), are students of color (53%) and/or are the first in their families to attend college (35%.) In spring 2018, the college awarded over 1,100 degrees and certificates to its 700 graduates, representing the highest number of completions in the college's 50-year history. Among the 114 California Community Colleges, Crafton Hills College is ninth in student success and course completion, and it has the highest degree and certificate completion rate among the nine colleges in San Bernardino and Riverside Counties. An annual student satisfaction survey consistently shows students are happy with their overall experience at CHC and with the services they receive, and transfer rates continue to climb. The College has grown significantly in recent years, from a student body of 7,432 in 2011-2012 to 8,592 in 2017-2018.

What sparked the need for this practice?

In 2012, the statewide Student Success Task Force developed a set of recommendations focused on improving student success and completion throughout the California Community College system. Among those recommendations was a mandate to use technology such as online educational planning and placement tools to help students and create greater efficiency. When the state Chancellor's Office invited colleges to participate in a pilot project to implement a new online educational planning and degree audit software, Crafton Hills College became one of eight colleges in the pilot program. Initially, Crafton Hills College was interested in creating a more student and counselor-friendly educational planning tool; the college was not in the market for a new Early Alert tool. However, during the planning and setup process, Hobsons acquired Starfish Early Alert, and the two products merged. This was adventitious for Crafton Hills College. Though the college had an early alert system in place, the tool was difficult to use; faculty complained that there was no feedback when they sent an early alert notice, and the link between noticing a student was struggling and their accessing support was not easy to make. Starfish Early Alert had the features the college needed to build a stronger retention approach.

The College began building the system with the vendor in January of 2016, piloted the software with a small group of volunteer faculty in spring 2017, and rolled out to the entire campus in fall 2017.

How is the practice organized (e.g. people, budget, timing, infrastructure, etc.)?

The entire District has supported the implementation of Starfish Early Alert. Two core implementation groups, responsible for the implementation of Starfish at each of the colleges in the district, has included District IT staff, and Student Services and Instructional personnel.

At Crafton Hills College, Counselors and Student Success Staff run the day-to-day operations, following up on tracking items and closing loops. To ensure buy-in from Instructional Faculty, an instructional faculty member on reassignment, trains instructional faculty in the value, use, and best practices of Starfish, and maintains the system settings for the campus.

How are the college or district mission and core initiatives linked to the practice?

The goal of Starfish Early Alert—to better retain, support, and guide CHC students—is closely linked with the mission of Crafton Hills College, "To advance the educational, career, and personal success of our diverse campus community

through engagement and learning.” Both the college and Starfish believe, “...engaging post-secondary students with a connected, informed campus community increases their chances of reaching their academic and life goals. ”The mission of the San Bernardino Community College District (SBCCD) is to transform lives through the education of our students for the benefit of our diverse communities,” which resonates with Hobson’s mission of “connecting learning to life by matching students to opportunity across a lifetime of education decisions.” The close alignment of the college’s purpose and the vendor’s mission made Starfish a good fit for Crafton Hills College and the San Bernardino Community College District.

How does this practice address equity gaps?

According to the 2017 Crafton Hills College Equity audit, CHC students in the 20-24 age range struggle with Math and English throughput, degree and certificate completion, and transfer.

Starfish appears to have the potential to decrease this equity gap by increasing course success and retention. For example, African American Students in classes that did not use Starfish had a 62.63% pass rate, versus a 64.9% success rate in In courses that did use Starfish, a difference of +2.27%.

Additionally, as the table below illustrates, students of all ages in classes using Starfish were more likely to complete their courses successfully, whether their instructor issued them a kudo or whether their instructor used multiple tracking items. Although we are still in the beginning phases on implementation and in the second year of data collection, we are optimistic that these numbers are just the beginning of a positive trend.

Table 1: Age Group and *Course Success Rate of Students in Courses Using Starfish versus Students in Courses Not Using Starfish*

Age Group	Average Course Success Rate		
	Courses Not Using Starfish	Courses Using Starfish, Students with at Least One Kudo	Courses using Starfish, Students with Multiple Tracking Items
Age 19 or younger:	69.62%	88.88%	74.02%
20-24	71.20%	88.17%	75.77%
25-29	75.59%	89.24%	77.75%
30-34	77.82%	91.47%	82.28%
35-39	78.00%	96.58%	88.70%
40-49	77.86%	89.36%	81.29%
50 or older	74.68%	92.21%	87.50%

Describe the measurable outcomes as a result of the practice, and how the practice is evaluated for effectiveness. What evidence has been gathered to demonstrate the effectiveness of the practice?

The college collects and analyzes data to gauge instructor use of the Starfish tool, and to determine the relationship between use of Starfish and students’ grades, completion, and course success. The college research team disaggregates the data by gender, age, and race/ethnicity. The college plans to disaggregate the data further.

As indicated Table 1, our data show that, when examined on a pass/fail basis, students in classes that were using Starfish tended to have higher success rates if the instructor issued a kudo, and tended to have higher success rates if the instructor made a practice of raising multiple types of Starfish flags.

Prior to the implementation of Starfish, faculty use of the previous early alert program was low, with few instructional faculty using the system at any given time. Within the first year of full campus rollout of Starfish Early Alert, 154 faculty members used the system at least once, over half of our full- and part-time faculty.

The effects of these results are powerful. When the impact of Starfish on student course withdrawal is examined, a strong pattern emerges. Students who receive any type of Starfish feedback from their instructors, whether the information is complimentary (kudo), or an expression of concern (e.g. a “to-do,” or a referral), tend to be less likely to withdraw from class than their peers enrolled in classes that do not use Starfish.

Table 2: Student Withdrawal from Classes Using Starfish versus Classes Not Using Starfish by Type and Number of Flag(s) Raised

Type and Number of Flag(s) Raises	Student Withdrawal in Classes Using Starfish Versus Classes Not Using Starfish			
	Classes Using Starfish		Classes Not Using Starfish	
	Verified grade count	Percent of total grades	Verified grade count	Percent of total grades
Students receiving at least one flag	227	8.24%	10.09%	2036
Students receiving multiple tracking notices	306	4.43%		
Students receiving at least one kudo	59	1.47		

It is also noteworthy to mention that our preliminary data shows students who received at least one kudo also were more likely to earn a grade of A, B or C, and less likely to earn a grade of D or F grades when compared to students in courses not using Starfish.

Is the practice linked to college or districtwide indicators of effectiveness?

Goal 1 of the District Strategic Plan is to “Increase student success while preserving access, enhancing quality, and reducing attainment gaps associated with income, race, ethnicity, age, and gender. There are six key performance indicators associated with this goal. They include: 1) percent of students with an educational plan; 2) fall to spring retention; 3) number of degrees and certificates awarded annually; 4) number of students graduating within 3 years; 5) number of transfers to four-year colleges and universities; and 6) course success rate. The data cited in Tables 1 and 2 suggest Starfish has the potential to affect course success positively.

How has the practice benefited students?

In courses using Starfish, students receiving feedback through the system are more likely to complete successfully and less likely to withdraw.

How has the practice improved enrollments?

While Starfish has only been in place for one pilot semester and one full semester, the preliminary data suggest that students in courses using Starfish who receive any type of feedback are less likely to withdraw. Over time, this will increase enrollments.

If you have supporting documents posted on a website, please provide hyperlinks to the supporting documentation or materials related to your promising practice (e.g. dashboards, research paper, report, PowerPoint, website, etc.). The following links are to the CHC Campus Starfish Resource page containing information for faculty, counselors, and students.

- <https://www.craftonhills.edu/current-students/counseling/starfish/index.php>
- <https://www.craftonhills.edu/current-students/counseling/starfish/resources-for-instructional-faculty.php>
- <https://www.craftonhills.edu/current-students/counseling/starfish/resources-for-counseling-faculty-student-support-staff.php>
- <https://www.craftonhills.edu/current-students/counseling/starfish/resources-for-students.php>

The following link is to the YouTube channel where all our demo resource videos have been posted.

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLBJL-0o-31xouKUWax92qcJmEOj809sVs>