Student Success Starfish Focus Groups

The Center for Student Success hosted a series of focus group sessions during the week of August 8, 2022 to receive stakeholder feedback on the College's student success platform, Starfish. The purpose was to review the platform's capabilities and performance in order to provide informed next stage recommendations in support of division- and college-wide student retention goals for the 22-23 Academic Year.

**Desired outcomes**:

1) Informed feedback to guide the ongoing development of the platform, including feedback to inform the identification of next stage priorities
2) Recommendations to fully leverage the platform's early warning capabilities (early warning and mid-semester instructor-student feedback campaigns) to support students' learning, retention, and overall success, e.g., fall communications campaign

**Location**: The focus groups took place on campus, in the Wooster Hall Conference Room (139). Each session spanned two hours in length.

**Desired composition**: 2-3 academic faculty; 3-4 professional faculty/staff; 1-2-students.

Participants included:

Jennifer Bluma (academic faculty)

Kevin Caskey (academic faculty)

Jason Gilliland (professional faculty)

Elizabeth Hill-Caruso (GA/student)

Dylan Hurley (professional faculty)

Rachel Rigolino (academic faculty)

Vika Schock (professional faculty)

Wendy Wasserman (GA/student)

Representatives from the Center for Student Engagement and Residence Life previously confirmed but were ultimately unable to attend. Professional faculty with EOP, SMP, AC^2, and SoB advising were also invited.

**Feedback summary & recommendations:**

The general feedback was constructive and pointed to the following areas for focus and development: communicating the hierarchy of flag outreach by advisors to faculty (transparency, awareness); earlier efforts were encouraged (early alerts); training for new faculty, including contingent faculty; aligning efforts with high DFW courses; exploring ways to "synch" with D2L; making it clear to faculty that progress survey participation, while consistent with best practice, is voluntary; more personalized communication templates. Faculty encouraged the staff to connect with the Comp program to explore a possible targeted pilot initiative, especially the SWW instructors (developmental students). Two faculty agreed that the legacy mid-term evaluation system came too late to be most effective but that it was familiar to the culture.

Action steps include:

- Engage Committee on Education Technology to bring up to speed and to invite informed feedback to inform a forthcoming process toward a 2 to 3-year roadmap.
- Engage Comp program to explore the feasibility of a targeted early alerts campaign.
- Engage Faculty Development Center to explore programming/partnership opportunities through the semester and beyond.
- Enhanced and expanded training: Two training videos, developed in conjunction with HRDI (Starfish overview/set up your office hours; How to raise a flag), are now complete.
- Draw from feedback to develop a fall communication plan that includes an emphasis on early warning awareness (voluntary) for instructors.
- Continue to explore with EAB ways to address folks' connection with the MTE functions while cultivating a more proactive culture of student success. (Adjustment added for the coming cycle.)
- Invite EAB Starfish folks to New Paltz. An onsite visit has been scheduled for October 26. The campus community will be invited to participate in this important strategic planning process.

*September 1, 2022*