



Quick Stats

- ▶ **Freshman retention rate rose from 76 to 81.5 percent in first year**
- ▶ **Saves time with automatic communications to students**
- Offers 37 majors and 31 minors
- 2,354 undergraduate students; 1,362 graduate students
- Mission: "To educate leaders for a global society who are strong in character and judgment, confident in their identity and vocation, and committed to service and justice."

Challenge

Located midway between Los Angeles and Santa Barbara, California Lutheran University is part of a 500-year-old tradition of Lutheran higher education. The university encourages critical inquiry into matters of both faith and reason and is dedicated to excellence at the undergraduate and graduate levels.

In 2006–2007, staff members at CLU noticed a drop in its first-year retention rate from 81 percent to 76 percent. The administration became concerned and felt it needed to refocus its attention on retention efforts. As stabilizing goals were created, staff members recognized a need to track and talk to students to understand what their issues were through a case management style.

"I have been here for a long time and because we are a small institution, it's easy to remember [retention issues] when the alert comes up about a specific student. However, I also have to go back through e-mails and try to both remember and understand what we need to do to help the student overcome their obstacles and attain his or her degree," said Angela Naginey, director of retention. "I needed software management."

Solution

After seriously considering a retention solution from Datatel, staff members at CLU found that Hobsons' Retain CRM would be a better fit.

"Communication management was key. [We wanted] to be able to make communications look nicer, plus have e-mails come to the student looking more professional. [Retain provides] opportunities to embed surveys and to get quick feedback, along with a reporting function," Naginey said.

Some of the benefits Naginey and other staff members at CLU have seen from Retain include:

- Utilization of the alerts function helps identify what students need extra support
- Ability to organize and look at data strategically; forces staff to think about what information they are gathering for the future
- Engaging faculty with various communication methods (Web links, open-ended alerts) to work with students

"As the one-person show who is out there to try to champion our retention efforts, I would have to ask faculty to give me alerts anyway they can—sometimes someone would stop me in the hall, to e-mails, to phone messages, or they'd call someone else who would then call me. It was very

Retain has given me the ability to comprehensively put everything in one place like a storehouse of information.

- Angela Naginey,
Director of Retention

scattered, and now, while I still get the e-mails randomly, I'm also able to translate those e-mails in Retain and can quickly search on the students," Naginey said.

Results

Since implementing Retain, staff members at CLU have seen great benefits.

"Retain has helped me do my job by having the software package organize who we've got and keep track of the issues going. It helps me know what I need to pay attention to and see what trends are happening. Retain has given me the ability to comprehensively put everything in one place like a storehouse of information," Naginey said.

Other beneficial aspects CLU has seen include:

- Retention rate went from 76 percent to 81.5 percent in the first year (freshman to sophomore)
- Ability to contact students who haven't re-registered yet and learn why
- Staff members have saved several hours a week on sending communications as they are now automatic through Retain. Filters can also be used instead of running Excel lists and creating mail merges or new e-mails
- All communication is stored in Retain's central filing system; no need to keep notes on students in other places; ability to use Retain as a case management system

Naginey said she would recommend Retain to others as it has worked wonders for CLU.

"People might underestimate that if you are small, Retain is too robust. However, unless you've got an entire staff dedicated to retaining students, it can be really helpful for small or large schools," she said.

About Hobsons

Headquartered in Cincinnati, OH, Hobsons supports education professionals in the preparation, recruitment, management, and advancement of students. With secondary school solutions, integrated marketing tools, enrollment management technology, and retention solutions, Hobsons provides innovative solutions that make it easy to help students make the best decisions throughout the entire education lifecycle.