Case Study

Ramapo College of New Jersey Expands Academic Advising to Improve Student Success

Ramapo College of New Jersey

Ramapo College of New Jersey is a public liberal arts college located in Mahwah, New Jersey. Founded in 1969, it is committed to individualized attention, hands-on learning, and student mentoring.

A Necessity to Reach All Students Efficiently

Ramapo is intentional about improving academic advising. Before 2013, their model of student support focused on three departments: Educational Opportunity Fund Program, Office of Specialized Services, and Athletics. Student outreach was dependent on slow manual processes and only 30 percent of Ramapo students were receiving this support. Students often didn't have enough time to respond to an intervention before an academic deadline. To address this problem, Ramapo’s overall strategic plan included investing in a comprehensive student success solution.

Quick Stats:

- **Website:** www.ramapo.edu
- **Profile:** Public, four-year Liberal Arts university
- **Population:** 6,234 students
- **Student to Faculty Ratio:** 18:1
- **Demographics:** 65% White; 13.5% Hispanic or Latino/a, any race; 6.3% Unknown; 5.0% Black

“[Starfish] not only allows us to connect with students, but it also allows us to connect with ourselves. We have more conversations across silos since implementing Starfish than we ever had before.”

– Joseph Connell
Assistant Vice President of Student Success, Ramapo College of New Jersey
Making Student Success Strategies a Priority

A taskforce of faculty, staff, and students researched tools that could improve case management across departments and reach more students. In 2013, Ramapo chose Starfish by Hobsons. In the first year of implementation, Ramapo consolidated three academic progress paper surveys into one digital survey. They quickly saw results. For the first time, over 50 percent of courses completed surveys and 77 percent of faculty submitted academic progress surveys.

Proactive Advising

With Starfish, advisors can now identify academically at-risk students and prioritize outreach based on the severity of the concern. In 2015, advisors began using Starfish Success Plans to give academic warnings to first-year students prior to spring term course registrations. As a result, 61.7 percent of those students met with an advisor to resolve concerns before they registered for classes. In 2012-13, less than 20 percent of students with warnings met with advisors.

Results and Looking Forward

The athletics department needed a better way to comply with NCAA regulations that require athletes to maintain full-time enrollment. With Starfish, athletics advisors can log in and identify students in violation of this policy and get them back on track.

“Starfish has helped Ramapo’s athletics advisors and coaches connect more closely with their student’s faulty members and ensure both academic and athletic success,” said Hendro Yauw, Assistant Athletic Director.

Last year, Ramapo received an EDUCAUSE Integrated Planning and Advisement for Student Success (iPASS) grant to continue using Starfish to reach retention and advisement goals. Ramapo continues to expand their use of Starfish in innovative ways. The Starfish platform connects more than 12 offices at Ramapo, allowing faculty and staff to better support students. It empowers students to be proactive about their success. Ramapo has also integrated predictive analytics into their student outreach efforts.