UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI CASE STUDY

Mizzou University of Missouri

iClicker Insights driving early intervention to support student success

Institutional Context

THE UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI set a priority goal to increase the retention rate of new students to 93% by 2023. The goal of increasing retention rates is to achieve higher four- and six-year graduation rates. The executive sponsor of the project, Dr. Jim Spain, Vice Provost for Undergraduate Studies said, "The retention rate isn't just a number for us. We made a commitment to our students when we admitted them. The students and their families place their trust in Mizzou and we have a responsibility to honor their trust. We want to provide opportunities for each student to succeed while recognizing that the students are responsible for taking advantage of the opportunities and student success programs." Increasing the first-year retention rate to 93% from their current level of 87% will take a variety of initiatives. The University of Missouri has begun establishing a student success network, campus-wide early alert system, and a campus-wide inclusive excellence approach to serve underrepresented and underserved students, and more. With various outreach processes already in place, the success team was looking for ways to provide high-touch care in reaching more students.

A next step Mizzou took was to coordinate a campus-wide new student success survey to understand the needs of new and incoming students. The divisions of Undergraduate Studies and Student Affairs came together and fostered a collaborative approach.

Course Goals and Challenges

Student success, and specifically retention, is a primary institutional goal of the University of Missouri's strategic plan. With the current retention at 87%, Mizzou leadership understands that it will take high-touch, intentional and individualized efforts to move the needle to 93%, their 2023 goal. Coupled with this is the challenge of institutionalizing high-touch efforts within a decentralized organization structure. Not only are advising efforts decentralized across the academic units, but also other non-academic areas such as financial aid, residential life and student affairs needed to be included. As a result, Mizzou needed a solution that would integrate these various support services in a holistic way to address individual student needs and concerns. To do this, the solution needed to be grounded in data that also addressed student success holistically.

Solution

The University of Missouri worked with Macmillan Learning as an early partner on the iClicker Insights project and used the iClicker Insights retention surveys to enhance their existing student success initiatives.

SURVEYS

The iClicker Insights retention surveys are focused, 12-question surveys administered in the first 3-5 weeks of the semester. The surveys cover key transition issues for new students such as institutional commitment, social integration, academic resiliency and homesickness. The surveys were developed by Macmillan Learning's Analytics and Research Team using 20+ years of Mapworks research at 150+ institutions.

COLLABORATION

Collaboration at Mizzou started with leadership. Both the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Studies and the Vice Provost for Student Affairs partnered with Undergraduate Deans and campus leadership to implement the survey. Under the coordination of two project managers (one from each area), a success team came together with key advocates for student success including advising leadership from 9 academic units, residential life staff, Mizzou Online, financial aid, cashiers, health and well-being, The Center for Student Academic Success and Excellence, fraternity and sorority life, the care team and off-campus student services.

Collaboration also occurred behind the scenes to market and implement the survey, integrate various systems to manage implementation, as well as manage and document interventions. Partners included Student Information Systems, Course Design and Technology (Canvas), the marketing and communications team, class instructors, residential life staff and more.

INTERVENTIONS

Although implementation was fast ("We were building the plane as we were flying it."), the team developed clear plans for assigning outreach based on survey pathway groups (academic, financial, social, institutional and holistic), specific groups of students, the numbers of issues, and the specific issues raised. The goal was to use key staff members, existing relationships, and clear plans to ensure timely responses and manageable workloads. The Mizzou Care Team worked with students who had 4 or more issues. Students with fewer issues were connected with offices to help address those targeted issues. For instance, students with financial issues were handled by the financial aid office, which reached out to every student flagged with financial concerns. Outreach varied from emails, knocks on residence hall doors, phone calls and intrusive scheduling.

Results

In the first semester of implementation, the combination of iClicker Insights' analytics and iClicker Insights retention surveys helped student advocates from across campus to better identify students and make a meaningful difference in their success.

Student advocates felt empowered by receiving actionable insights earlier in the semester based on student feedback. The current early alert system utilizes faculty concerns, and this provided a new layer to scale support like never before. It truly added more "early" into early alert, and they no longer had to wait until later in the semester to identify students who might be struggling with academic issues. Instructors were also able to spot issues that would have gone unnoticed in their existing flags, such as homesickness, ability to pay and sense of belonging. Faculty and staff in offices across campus were able to support retention efforts by working with a manageable number of students that might otherwise have been missed.

The data suggests that students who engaged in interventions were more likely to persist than students who identified issues but did not engage in interventions. For instance, among the 244 students who were flagged for sense of belonging issues, those who engaged in interventions had a significantly higher fall-spring retention rate than those who did not (94% compared to 84%).

	No Interventions			Interventions		
	n	Fall GPA	Fall-to-Spring Retention	n	Fall GPA	Fall-to-Spring Retention
Flagged for Academic Issues	553	2.95	92%	344	3.10	94%
Flagged for Financial Issues	206	3.20	89%	343	3.12	93%
Flagged for Sense of Belonging Issues	177	3.17	84%	64	3.33	94%
Flagged for Multiple Concerns*	n<5	-	-	35	3.14	80%

*Because almost all of the students who were flagged for multiple concerns participated in interventions, there is not a comparison group who did not have interventions.