Bunker Hill Community College: Improving Student Outcomes

"The data have shown that students in the learning communities courses have retention rates that are consistently 10-15% higher than students who are not in those courses… We've already been able to use that data to to submit new grant proposals and secure funds so that we can make learning communities available to every single matriculating student."

– David Leavitt, Director of Institutional Effectiveness, Bunker Hill Community College

Challenge

As the largest community college in Massachusetts, serving more than 13,600 students in the greater Boston area, BHCC seeks to become a national model for successfully incorporating the diversity of many cultures, age groups, and learning styles into college life. In 2006, BHCC received a Title III grant and determined to tackle its core institutional goal of increasing student engagement, persistence, and program completion.

Over the grant period, BHCC implemented three levels of Learning Communities to equip new students with the skills and support necessary for success, as well as enable students to learn and study interdisciplinary academic themes with a consistent peer group

Situation

Success coaches at BHCC were committed to raising graduation and retention rates by increasing the quality and the quantity of their student contacts for these Learning Communities.

In order to efficiently capture data on student success, the college required a tool that would allow coaches to enter and track student contacts, verify the effectiveness of interventions, and share that data with decision makers. Success Coach Amanda Teker Dooling explains, "Previously we were using spreadsheets and everything was manual; it was very tedious. Ultimately, we weren't capturing the data as well as we wanted to."

The Success Coaching program entails a variety of support services and requires regular interactions with students; the comprehensive nature of the initiative required that everyone have access to the same student contact information. "There's quite a bit of contact that needs to be documented, so it was important that we have an easy way of recording them," says Anne K. Brown, Director of Advising and Assessment.

Solution

"Now, with ZogoTech, I can come back from meeting with a class and enter the details of that meeting for the rest of the department to see. It keeps us all on the same page and prevents students from seeking out different advice from another coach," says Teker Dooling.

In addition to gathering that contact data, ZogoTech's Student Engagement module enables administrators to also create and track interventions based on that data, and then assess outcomes. This data can be shared with everyone in the department as well as faculty or executives. "I track the progress of my students and my interactions with them. I want to document that so that we can, for data purposes, see if we're retaining the students and if the work that I'm doing is making a difference," Teker Dooling explains. Now instead of sending her spreadsheets to the Institutional Research Department, Teker Dooling and her colleagues can immediately share information with the research team from a secure, reliable platform, meaning that the entire institution can focus on the data and gain actionable insights.

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Before ZogoTech, "we would have to go through IR each time there was a data request," Lori Catallozzi, Dean of Humanities and Learning Communities, explains. "We would make that request, it would be prioritized in the queue of other data requests and it could take weeks to get results. We wanted data to play a role in decision-making, so we needed access to those numbers at a faster pace."

The ease of logging student contacts has meant a significant change in reporting capabilities. "Due to the volume of students we have, it's crucial that we are able to easily track student contacts with a tool like ZogoTech. Because ZogoTech includes all the types of contacts we have with students, I can accurately describe the kind of interaction I've had with any student," says Brown.

"We're using ZogoTech to track students around campus. If a student has attended a specific orientation session we note that so we can see which services are being utilized. With that data, we can assess which programs are successful," says Teker Dooling. "We're also beginning to use it for our early alert and probation students, so that if we have a conversation with a student we can document that and assess if what we're doing is working."

Brown has already seen the benefits of the "on-the-fly decision-making capabilities" that ZogoTech delivers. "For planning purposes, when I have to decide how many group sessions we need in a particular department, I need to compare enrollment in that major from this semester to the last. If I see that there are 400 students this semester compared to 300 from last semester, I automatically know that we need to have 5 sessions instead of 4."
Catallozzi has found the data to be useful in assessing the success of Learning Communities. "I pull a whole report based on the contacts," she says. "We analyze the data and look at the positive results for our learning communities. In conjunction with qualitative data from other sources, the quantitative data I get from ZogoTech gives me a comprehensive view of what's happening. The more contacts the success coaches have, the more success the students are having."

In summing up how the reporting and analytics tools from ZogoTech have streamlined data use on campus, Director of Institutional Research David Leavitt explains, "Our grants require longitudinal analysis of the students — with ZogoTech we were able to see the students who enrolled in a learning community seminar or cluster, flag those students, save the students to a list. Then, we can do retention analyses, I can look at their course success every semester and see how successful those learning communities have been."

"The data showed that their retention rates are consistently 10-15% higher than students who are not in those courses. The students in the learning community clusters had a higher success rate than students in the stand-alone versions of those courses. If we didn't have ZogoTech, we would have to pull individual section data and do our own SPSS analyses, it's a real challenge. With ZogoTech, it's just a matter of checking the right boxes and selecting the right filters. And with that, we're able to see retention, the course success, and have been able to scale up our learning communities — using the success data to submit new grant proposals and securing those funds so that we can make learning communities available to every single matriculating student," Leavitt concludes.