Western Texas College:
Specific Metrics Targeted at Student Success

" Because ZogoTech captures snapshots of data, I can easily do longitudinal studies. I can also pull up a chart and drag and drop the specific metrics I want to see in that chart; it gives me flexible ways of viewing the data. "

– Britt Canada, Director of Institutional Research, Western Texas College

Situation

With a main campus and a downtown location focused on workforce development and community service, Western Texas is committed to helping students reach their potential. WTC serves 2,300 students across ten counties and was listed as the fastest growing community college in the state by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board.

WTC began using ZogoTech so that end users would be able to access and use data without needing to go through Institutional Research. "We wanted to move this out of my area and into the hands of the people who really need data to make decisions," says Britt Canada, Director of Institutional Research.

ZogoTech has made it possible for WTC to do just that, and in a faster and more efficient manner than they ever thought possible. Prior to working with ZogoTech, WTC relied on POISE to pull reports of this nature. "POISE is our transactional database, or dynamic database and student information system," Canada explains. "If I want to do a study of the dual credit students, as long as I stay in that semester, everything works great. But at the end of the semester, if they change their status, I can't pull their data anymore because they are no longer flagged as dual credit." This kind of discrepancy made it difficult to verify the quality of the data and made reporting exceedingly time-consuming.

Results

Now, numerous departments are accessing data on the metrics that matter to them. "Student Services is now able to view records and transcripts, share contact notes and keep track of student progress," says Canada. "We're adding alerts for the Athletic Department, so that student profiles will show their involvement in an athletic program. We're also adding alerts for the 5th, 10th, and end of semester grade so that the Athletic Department or any department can see if students are eligible."

WTC also uses ZogoTech to quickly retrieve accurate data and track progress over time. "Because ZogoTech captures snapshots of data, I can easily do longitudinal studies. I can also pull up a chart and drag and drop the specific metrics I want to see in that chart; it gives me flexible ways of viewing the data that aren't available in POISE," says Canada. "It allows me to visualize, for example, the difference between male and female graduation rates, or other variables like ethnicity. I can get detailed information on each student and programs, and drill down further to understand what's happened across terms."

This ability has had significant implications for users such as Mary Higdon, Project Director for the College's Title V Co-op Grant. "I use ZogoTech to gather data for reporting my grant objectives to the Department of Education at the end of each fiscal year. We have an objective that by September 30, 2012, Hispanic students graduating within 3.5 years of initial enrollment will increase from 15% to 18%. With ZogoTech, I will easily be able to see how we are progressing towards that objective."

In addition to helping track specific goals, ZogoTech also enables Higdon to measure baseline figures when creating a plan of action for spending line item savings from the grant. "We saved money last year because of personnel vacancies, so I used the savings to purchase iPads for our distance education instructors. Since this wasn't in the original grant, I used ZogoTech to obtain baseline benchmark measures that we can use to evaluate improvements after using the iPads for the year."

Southwest Texas Junior College: Proactive Intervention

"We see so many students that it can be difficult to remember what was said. With ZogoTech, you can look at the contact notes and refresh your memory."

– Joe Barker, Dean of Admissions and Student Services, Southwest Texas Junior College

Challenges

Southwest Texas Junior College needed to institute a multi-campus campaign to identify at-risk students in order to proactively contact them through email, traditional mail, and phone. They also wanted to measure the results to see how effective the campaign was at ensuring the ongoing success of these students.

As Dean of Admissions and Student Services, Joe Barker oversees all counseling and advising across the four SWTJC campuses. He found it difficult to manage retention efforts and get data from the school's student information system, Datatel Colleague.

The process of identifying at-risk students involved advisors manually reviewing the student's degree plan, GPA, and test scores when they came in for registration, and many users found it prohibitively difficult to get even simple reports such as a list of students enrolled in the current term. They often relied on a programmer to run more complicated reports, such as which students were re-taking a class, and this process was expensive and time-consuming.

It wasn't just a matter of retrieving the data, but of recording it as well. Contacts with students and appointment notes were handwritten on scraps of paper or not recorded at all, so there was no way of tracking student contacts with each advisor or what was said in each session. This meant that SWTJC had no reliable method of determining whether interventions were successful or not. There was no ability to run reports on which students were served or how much time advisors were spending on each activity/agenda.

Solution

Using ZogoTech, Barker and others at SWTJC are now able to see, at a glance, how many students are enrolled for any given term. Easy access to student information has also given them the ability to record student contacts for future reference, assessment, and auditing.

ZogoTech has replaced the tedious manual entry of student data while also consolidating information silos, meaning that accurate and comprehesive student information is now available on-demand. Users can create their own ad-hoc queries and reports in a secure, central location—all designed from the ground up specifically for higher education, and customized for the precise needs of SWTJC.

Results

Integrating with Datatel Colleague, ZogoTech provides a user-friendly interface for advisors to run reports. A list of students retaking classes is easily obtained and sent to advisors at each campus. ZogoTech enables these advisors to mail-merge letters, create mailing labels, send personalized emails, and easily retrieve the phone numbers of at-risk students.

The ease of accessing information is a large part of the reason ZogoTech is so effective. According to Barker, "Intervention programs used to take weeks to assemble all of the data and contact students. However, if a student is at risk, every day makes a difference. With ZogoTech, I can get a list of high-risk students with a few clicks."

zogotech

As advisors make contact with students, ZogoTech can record the contacts for future reference and assessment. Advisors (with proper permissions) can see all contacts the student has had; gone is the need for handwritten scraps of paper. According to Barker, "We see so many students that it can be difficult to remember what was said. With ZogoTech, you can look at the contact notes and refresh your memory."

Typically, one of the most significant problems with retention efforts is coordination between departments. Previously, this would have required calling all departments, giving them a list of students and hoping that they remember to talk to the student when they see him or her. Now, using ZogoTech, this process is automated. When an advisor in any department (advising, financial aid, student support services, developmental education, etc.) looks up the student, ZogoTech notifies the advisor that the student is at-risk. Advisors are alerted if the student is retaking a class, is enrolled in internet classes, has not passed state-mandated tests, has a low GPA, or is enrolled in developmental classes, among other factors. The speed and accuracy with which data is delivered has enabled SWTJC to intervene with at-risk students, and track the success of those interventions.