

THE CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY SMART PLANNER

The California State University is using an interactive online degree planning system that helps students be more proactive with their course planning by providing them with a visual presentation of their current academic status and their future path. This online tool assists students in completing their degrees more quickly and efficiently.

In spring 2013, the CSU began a thorough examination of the PeopleSoft Academic Advising system, the primary online method used to advise students. What the research showed was although PeopleSoft Academic Advising was great for degree checkout, it did not provide an easy way for students to plan for the next semester, much less for the years ahead. Undergraduates, for example, instead would typically spend just 15-30 minutes with their advisers each semester, mainly to determine their upcoming schedules.

Based on this, the decision was made to examine other online advising options that campuses could offer their students.

After reviewing several software packages, it was decided that Smart Planner, developed by academic advisers for academic advisers at the University of Arizona, was the way to go. Smart Planner is fully integrated within the PeopleSoft academic advising module and is recognized as a model for not only keeping students on a successful path to graduation, but also for creating a more engaging and valuable academic advising experience.

The benefits of Smart Planner include:

- Dynamic features to create individualized student plans.
- More efficient communication between students and academic advisers.
- The ability to predict enrollment demand for courses.
- The opportunity for advisers to spend in-person time on career counseling.

In 2014, three CSU campuses licensed the Smart Planner software: Long Beach, Chico and San Marcos.

OPPORTUNITIES AND SOLUTIONS

- Smart Planner provides more accountability for retention and timely student graduations, thus creating opportunity for higher enrollments.
- The result is a more efficient and engaging experience that provides students a visual presentation of their current academic status and their future path.
- More effective and efficient advising interactions.
- Predicts seat demand, which campuses can use for future curriculum and staffing decisions.
- Saves time for advisers and gives students a tool to own and understand their degree plan.

MILESTONES

Apr
2015

- Sonoma State and CSU Dominguez Hills prepare for implementation.

Oct
2014

- CSU Long Beach, CSU Chico and CSU San Marcos go live. Campuses refer to the Smart Planner as the Degree Planner.

Mar
2014

- CSU Long Beach typically offered courses information available for fall 2014 registration.

Feb
2014

- Smart Planner project kick-off.

Dec
2013

- Polling completed for typically offered courses.

Jul
2013

- Campuses began flagging courses that were typically offered.

QUANTIFICATION AND RESULTS

CSULB coded 84 high-enrollment programs for 25,822 undergraduate students.

85 percent of CSULB undergraduate students had a planner available for fall 2015 registration.

CSUSM coded 189 primary majors for 12,065 undergraduate students.

99 percent of CSUSM undergraduates had a planner available for fall 2015 registration.

CSU Chico coded 57 percent of their majors for use with the Degree Planner.

Even without advertising, 11 percent of CSU Chico students have already created a plan, which includes student use for fall 2015.

IMPACT AND BENEFIT

Advising departments are able to restructure and reorganize the quantity and quality of advising appointments. Rather than using paper, advisement is done online with other online tools. Departments use the data students enter into the planner to inform class schedules and for proactive intervention (i.e., identifying plans that go beyond six years).

LESSONS LEARNED

- 1 Having approved, accurate and established roadmaps to graduation for majors prior to implementing the Smart Planner focuses the campus on the implementation of the software rather than the creation of roadmaps and chasing approvals during the project.
- 2 Communications to and engagement of the campus community grows the knowledge and use of the Smart Planner, not only by students but by advising staff and academic department advisers.
- 3 Know how and where the Smart Planner fits into the campus e-advising plan.

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