SNHU turns student data into student success

Using data to provide students a personalized learning experience

Brightspace helps deliver SNHU's mission to provide a quality academic experience in student data and analytics. The data allows advisors and instructors to act quickly and make data-driven decisions and take the action that is best suited to each student's individual situation.

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> "With data drawn from Brightspace, we can intervene with
> an at-risk student even before they're aware they're at risk."
>
> *Matthew Thornton, Associate Vice President, Student Technology Experience, SNHU*

SUMMARY

By aggregating and reporting on data from the LMS, their Student Information System, and CRM system, SNHU's analytics team is able to provide tactical operational reports for instructors and advising staff. With this data, all stakeholders can take immediate action to address a student who may be at risk. This holistic and individual approach to each student's progress is something SNHU takes pride in. This is the SNHU approach to personalized learning. And it's one of their key successes.

QUICK FACTS

- 450+ advisors in need of access to student information

- Provide online programs, campus, and competency-based education

- Need to identify at-risk students quickly

HOW SNHU TURNS STUDENT DATA INTO STUDENT SUCCESS

Ensuring student success has become one of the biggest challenges for colleges and universities. With the adoption of education technology, higher education institutions are looking at data and analytics to assist them in keeping students on the right path. At the vanguard of this technological revolution is Southern New Hampshire University. It offers courses both on-campus as well as online and relies upon its student data to maintain positive learning outcomes and a focus on student success. But it also relies upon diligent educators, administrators, and advisors to make sense of the data and ensure that the next steps are taken when needed.

GIVING STUDENTS A PERSONAL APPROACH

Providing students with a personalized and professional learning experience is one the top missions of Matthew Thornton, Associate Vice President, Student Technology Experience. Matthew works with all of the student-facing departments at SNHU to ensure that the technology ecosystem provides a world-class student experience and high level of student support.

One of the main ways that the Brightspace LMS for higher education has helped Matthew deliver on SNHU's mission to provide a quality academic experience is in the area of student data and analytics. But more than simply numbers on a sheet, the data allows advisors and instructors to act quickly and make data-driven decisions based upon the trends and red flags they discover on a day-to-day basis. "We take a pro-active service approach to reaching students before they are at-risk," says Matthew. "Quick intervention is extremely important, especially in an eight-week course."

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Intervention can be done in many forms. It can be a short email from an advisor with words of encouragement. It can be a link to a helpful resource. It can be a direct phone call with an academic advisor. The key to an effective intervention, claims Matthew, is the ability to have more insight into the details of the student's issue. "With access to the student's rubric, for example, we can see if a student is struggling with understanding the content, or perhaps it's an issue with their writing mechanics. With that knowledge, advisors can take the action that is best suited to each student's individual situation." This is the SNHU approach to personalized learning. And it's one of their key successes.

WHAT SNHU DOES WITH DATA AND ANALYTICS
SNHU draws data from a number of different systems: a student information system (SIS), a customer relationship management system (CRM), financial systems and the Brightspace learning management system (LMS), to name a few.

With so many points of data to provide a holistic view of each student, advisors are supplied with the information they need to make impactful decisions and act with speed and confidence. At a high level, datasets can reveal a simple risk assessment: low, medium, and high. Reports reveal the login time with their courses, but also with 3rd-party vendor

learning resources to gauge each student's level of engagement. Data can verify if a student receiving financial aid is meeting the obligations for student participation. This is critical in the first week of a course and early intervention can ensure a student maintains their funding.

From a high level, advisors and administration can examine the completion rate of each student. Engagement with advisors can be quantified by looking at CRM data to determine when the last contact was made. GPA data from a prior term, or cumulative GPA can be weighed against a current academic issue. This data allows advisors to consider whether a drop in grade is an ongoing trend, or perhaps simply an anomaly due to a personal event in the student's life. By examining the final grade range (for example, it drops below a certain threshold) advisors can look for opportunities to raise them up as the term continues.

They can pinpoint the moment in a course where something began to falter in the student's learning path and reach out to that student to make a personal enquiry. If a student is struggling within their own course, advisors can quickly look at other students in that course to determine if the issue is with the assignment itself, which can lead to a review of the assignment's parameters, its instructions, its scope, etc.

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> "Some colleges may believe that if a student needs help, they're going to raise their hands, but this isn't always true."
> *Matthew Thornton, Associate Vice President, Student Technology Experience, SNHU*

Adult learners run into many challenges, whether it's a life crisis or family problem, a sudden change in work schedule or projects, or academic challenges with their school work. "Our goal," explains Matthew, "is to identify these issues and work with students to help them balance their academic goals with their life circumstance."

Students can work with their advisor to build their path to graduation. Their advisor can assist them in running "what if" scenarios to see if there are alternative options that can help them graduate faster, or if a different path might affect the total end cost of their education. This allows students to participate with their education and help them to feel more in control over their academic experience.

By aggregating and reporting on data from the LMS, their Student Information System, and CRM system, their analytics team is able to provide tactical operational reports for instructors and advising staff. With this data, all stakeholders can take immediate action to address a student who may be at risk. For example, if a student appears to be maxing out their credit limit, the school can have a financial advisor reach out to help them better manage their finances. Gerry Fulbrook, AVP of Academic Technologies (ITS) at SNHU explains that this holistic and individual approach to each student's progress is something SNHU takes pride in. "Student success is more than simply completing the degree, or advancing their career. It also means graduating without a crippling financial burden."

Any student with financial aid (grants, work benefits) is required to have a certain amount of participation in the program during the first 1-2 weeks. This information needs to be reported to federal/state/university financial aid as all funding entities require some tracking and monitoring of students. Should a student be in peril of losing their funding, early intervention can help resolve this issue before it becomes a major issue and ensure the student remains eligible for their financial aid.

> "Providing this level of service to students is highly important to SNHU's business."
> *Matthew Thornton, Associate Vice President, Student Technology Experience, SNHU*

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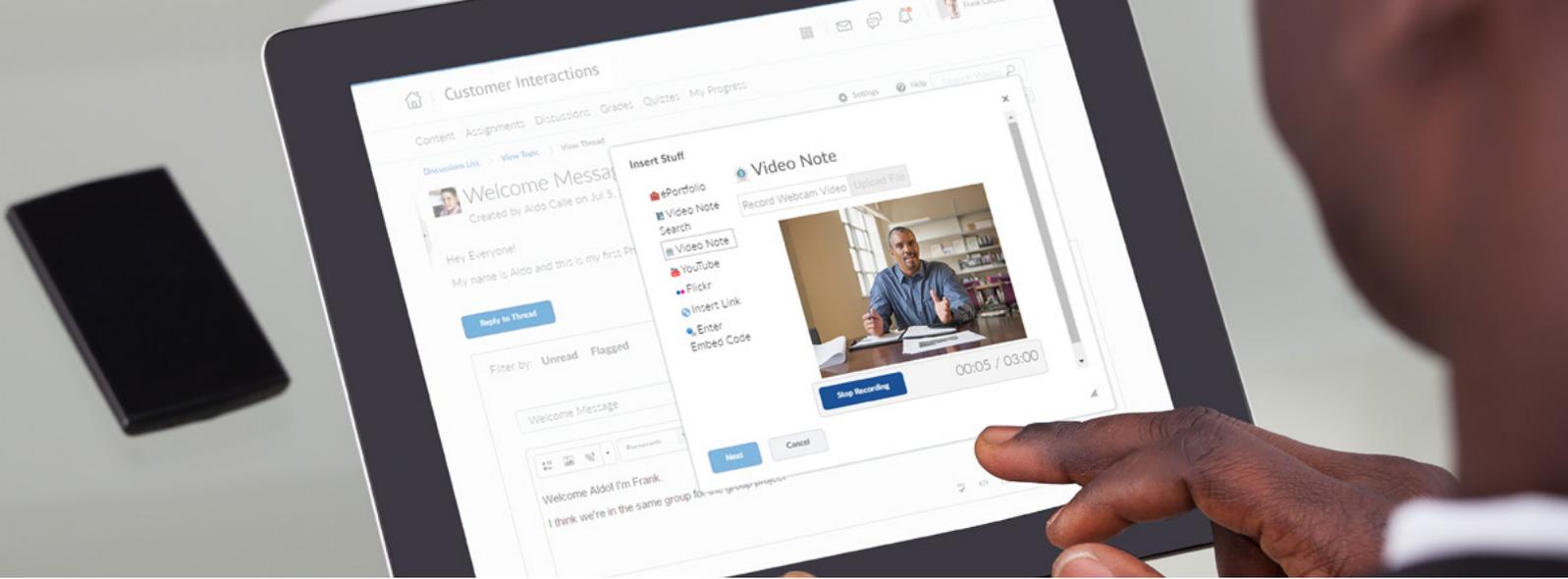
WHY BRIGHTSPACE WAS THE LMS OF CHOICE

SNHU is a rapidly growing higher education institution with major plans to expand into innovative areas of education. New, cutting-edge modalities are in the works at SNHU and they need an education partner that has the same vision for the future. As such, their legacy LMS was not going to work for much longer and they needed to find a system that could support:

- Online programs, campus, and Competency-based education (CBE)

- A great mobile platform using responsive design

- Unique permissions to data while providing security

Extending CBE to all students

Because Brightspace supports CBE programs with tools such as Release Conditions and Intelligent Agents, SNHU was confident that it could handle its plans for the future. They intend to develop a learning model that's more interoperable and that doesn't differentiate between on-campus, on-line, and CBE, to provide students more competency-based options, regardless of their program.

Mobile LMS a must

"One thing we started to notice," says Matthew, "was that more and more of our leads were coming through mobile phones." SNHU realized that having a great mobile experience and an LMS with responsive design was going to have a significant impact on the way that students could access their course content.

Permissions and security

While their legacy LMS did a good job of providing granular access to their 450+ advisors, it was extremely limited in the permissions it could support. For example, advisors might have restricted access to view course materials or assignment instructions, but not be able to see the details of a student's gradebook. Full access was possible, but then this exposed them to security risks. They needed an LMS that could be configured to provide different levels of permissions based upon the many stakeholders in the system.

A FINAL THOUGHT

SNHU is becoming the model of how to build, grow, and maintain an online, on-campus, and CBE institution. With their eye towards the future of education, SNHU will be at the forefront of developing new and innovative ways to use the technology tools at their disposal. As their education partner, D2L is extremely excited to see what the future holds and what we will innovate together as we build student success for the student of the future.