

Records & Registration: How to Impact Student Success

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Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Research Review	1
Applying The Resesarch	2
What Our Customers Are Saying	4
Murray State University	4
Leeward Community College	4
Southern New Hampshire University	5
Interested in Learning More?	5



INTRODUCTION

Student success has become the buzzword of vendors and institutions in recent years. Performance-based funding, national institution rankings, and the need to maintain—and increase, if possible—student enrollment continues to drive the need to improve student performance and the ever-elusive student success metric. Improving student success seems like it would be a simple, straightforward task. However, with a large number of variables influencing students, it can be difficult to identify which interventions are most effective and how to stratify interventions for the right student at the right time.

In come ed-tech vendors. Vendors across the ed-tech space claim to have the golden ticket to improving student outcomes despite not being able to articulate how their solutions actually accomplish this outcome. Instead of making empty claims, let's dive into some research to understand ways institutions can positively and effectively impact student outcomes. After reviewing the research and laying a foundation, we'll connect how curriculum, catalog, and similar software solutions can support student success.

RESEARCH REVIEW

[Sneyers and De Witte](#) focused on three intervention types to help improve retention and student success. For the sake of this article, we'll review their findings on mentoring as an effective intervention. According to the research conducted in this study, mentoring had a “positive and significant” impact on retention and graduation. An additional note from this study is found in the introduction citing research that states the positive impact big data can have on student success by identifying the students at risk and supporting intervention efforts.

In a [2019 study](#) reviewing 10 years of data from Carnegie R1 institutions to inform and assist institutions as they strive for increased rates of student success, Arizona State University (ASU) was identified as an institution with impressive retention and graduation rates. The study explains ASU's use of technology and analytics to help improve their retention and graduation rates through individual targeting rather than general or cohort support. The specific applied example cited in the study is that of “precision advising”. Precision advising provides intentional intervention at the right time for each student.

Richard J. Light's book, *Making the Most of College*, utilizes 1600 interviews executed over 10 years in an attempt to understand how students can get the most out of their time at the institution and what administrators can do to increase the impact for students. Among Light's findings, one that pertains to administrators involves advising. He asserts that advising must be about more than just a degree plan.



Advising must be proactive and support students in finding their passions and talents and applying them to achieving their goals in a realistic way. After visiting 90 campuses of different sizes and types, Light reports that advising is a consistent and top problem. [Julia Colyar](#) states in a review of Making the Most of College, “Good advising is time consuming and individualistic; ideally, students develop good relationships with several faculty members.”

Within institutions, academic advising and the functions of the registrars office are closely intertwined. In a [NACADA article](#), Maura M. Reynolds discusses the importance of better understanding the work of the registrars office and a close relationship to help support and improve academic advising. Reynolds asserts “a number of functions handled by the staff of the registrar’s office directly affect advisors’ work.” These functions include information about majors, minors, and other graduation criteria, academic policies, and so much more. A good percentage of the work of the registrars office impacts the pathway to graduation making alignment with advising very critical.

In an [interactive panel discussion hosted by AACRAO](#), Cem Sunata, Registrar at California Polytechnic State University - San Luis Obispo, Seven Shablin, Registrar at Oakland University, Beth Merritt-Miller, Assistant Vice Provost for University Advising at California Polytechnic State University - San Luis Obispo, and Carmen Etienne, Director, SECS advising at Oakland University discuss the collaboration between the academic advising and registrars offices. In this discussion, Etienne states “Collaboration is essential because we are working with students and dealing with many registrarial rules, policies, and deadlines.” A shared perspective among the panelists is the importance of collaboration to inform the registrars office staff about how academic policies impact students, as well as to help inform advising of academic policies, changes, etc. During the panel discussion, Etienne explained a collaborative effort taking place at Oakland University between the registrars office and advising to help understand hurdles to graduation, what slows the process, and how to make positive changes. This is a great example of how collaboration can impact graduation rates and retention.

Now that we’ve established research-supported ways to improve student success, let’s shift to discussing ways technology can support these efforts.

Applying The Research

In the research review section, we discussed academic advising’s impact on student success and how advising can partner with the registrars office to support the efforts. Supporting this partnership requires a mix of collaboration and data insights. This collaboration takes time and resources to support. It can be difficult to allocate time and resources away from other tasks that are mission-critical but take an unnecessarily large amount of time. Additionally, gaining data insights to inform the collaboration can be difficult without stellar supporting tools.



Effective curriculum and catalog management software solutions offer the opportunity to automate tasks and processes related to curriculum management and catalog development and deployment. Automating these tasks and processes allows for a reallocation of time and resources to the collaboration between advising and other departments within the institution to support student success.

Examples of tasks and processes to be automated include curriculum proposals, catalog development and deployment, and the numerous student forms processed by the department. In addition to the tasks, the streamlining and increased efficiency of communication and other process elements offered by an effective curriculum and catalog management software solution helps free up more time to re-allocate to more strategic priorities. Examples of strategic priorities include:

- Assessing and planning ways to [improve credentialing](#) to better document the skills learned or acquired as a part of the degree program.
- Collecting and synthesizing data related to curriculum, scheduling, learning outcomes, etc., and sharing with leadership.
- Using the above data to help create and/or guide interventions to improve student outcomes.
- Collaborating with the Advising department to review or iterate on current policies or create new policies impacting student success including time to graduation.

Automating these tasks requires a software solution like the Kuali Student suite. The Kuali Student suite is made up of Curriculum, Catalog, and Syllabus management modules, as well as Build for Provosts, Registrars, and Admissions Officers. The suite allows institutions to automate tasks, increase collaboration in an efficient way (workflows, commenting, etc.), and reduce the requisite time needed to create and manage records. An additional, unique benefit to using the Kuali Student suite is the ability to extend the use of data pulled from the suite. Partner institutions have connected the data from their Kuali Student suite to data from other systems like their LMS and SIS to create a big picture view of how all of the academic elements work together for student learning and outcomes, providing insight into what's working and what's not, ultimately impacting student success.

The ways to leverage and capitalize on the data within the Kuali Student suite, as well as with other campus systems, have just started to be explored. The time savings created by using the Kuali Student suite has allowed partner institutions to reallocate time to more strategic efforts including analyzing data, discovering ways to make the data actionable, and improving processes, curriculum, and academic policies.



What Our Partner Institutions Are Saying



[Murray State University](#) saved time for individuals involved in the curriculum process while increasing communication and transparency on curriculum projects despite the decline in face-to-face touchpoints due to COVID-19.

“Traditionally, committees met in person to discuss curriculum changes. With forced remote work due to social distancing, these committees had initially planned to meet via video conference; however, with Kualī, they don’t need to meet at all. Instead, committee members used Kualī Curriculum Management’s reporting, agenda, and commenting tools to complete their work and stay on track asynchronously with the same levels of success. Ashley Rogers, Assistant Registrar, Curriculum Management, noted that, on average, the institution probably saved some people 20 hours by cutting out those meetings. This includes upper-level administrators like deans, chairs, and provosts, who could then spend more time on other initiatives.”

“Administrators can run quick reports to check a proposal’s progress at a moment’s notice without sorting through dozens of emails. Committee members, who had been known to accidentally spend time working on an out-dated proposal, know they’re seeing the most current version. Per Rogers, “(Without the option of in-person meetings), I don’t know what we would have done without Kualī; I know things would have slipped through the cracks.”



[Leeward Community College](#) found ways to support both curriculum development and advising through dependency and prerequisite analysis.

“Dependency and prerequisite analysis provided a significant improvement for Leeward. As a community college, they have sub-100 level course offerings and more prerequisites than other campuses in the University of Hawaii System. The prerequisite analysis makes it easier to manage when courses are changed or deleted—and it’s easier to see what else needs to be updated. Leeward also uses the dependency and prerequisite analysis to help advisors and students understand possible hidden prerequisites that may not be easily discovered by reviewing the program requirements (though, this is something the Curriculum Committee is working to eliminate).”

“Dependency analysis makes it so much easier to help students go through their program,” said Gross, “and it has implications for financial aid.”

[Southern New Hampshire University \(SNHU\)](#) has used Kuali Curriculum and Catalog Management for over four years. In that time SNHU has been able to enhance their curriculum and improve their processes while also keeping departments across campus including admissions, advising, scheduling, and transfer credit teams better informed of the most up-to-date curriculum information.

“SNHU’s original modes of curriculum—online, on-campus, and international—are now all managed in one instance of Kuali Curriculum. Additionally, a Spanish language curriculum and policies have been added. SNHU’s Curriculum and Catalog administrators have their hands full; they processed 2,000 competencies last year and over 800 proposals in the last two months alone, excluding Experiences and Policies.”

“I don’t think the curriculum office could have kept up this year if we didn’t have Kuali,” said Mike O’Connor, Director of System Analytics in the Office of the University Registrar.

In 2022, SNHU will make big changes to the internal workings of their catalogs. This change will consolidate courses and improve the scheduling and graduation-planning experience for all students, on campus or otherwise. Additionally, this project will impact administrators by reducing management work, in some cases by up to 5 times.

“This university catalog project will lead to business process improvement across the entire university,” said O’Connor. “We wouldn’t have the resources to do this kind of project, at least on the curriculum side, if we were managing everything manually and doing all the communication that Kuali does.”

Interested in Learning More?

Interested to learn more about the Kuali Student Suite and what it can do for your institution’s students, faculty, and administrators? [Take Kuali Curriculum Management for a spin today](#) or contact one of our higher ed consultants for a tailored look at the solution, simply email experience@kuali.co.

