

Case study 2

Charles Sturt University (CSU) *Student Success Team*

Context and purpose

Since January 2011 Charles Sturt University (CSU) has undertaken a program to actively identify and support students identified as at-risk of disengagement from the university. This proactive intervention activity was a primary outcome of CSU's Transition Project⁵ which examined how the institution could increase the participation and success of students. CSU is a multi-campus institution, providing access to higher education from its various campuses across two states. CSU has a substantial cohort of distance education students (over 50 per cent), adding to the challenges of providing targeted and timely support to students.

The Student Success Team (SST) are a group of trained students who make phone calls to first year students to support them in their transition to university. Students are identified according to the various campaigns (discussed below) via data collected from a variety of institutional sources including Student Administration, IT systems and information ascertained from engagement in assessment activities.

Key institutional references

CSU Academic Support Operational Plan 2012 – Student Experience Plan 2.1:
http://www.csu.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0003/214878/Operational-Plan-2012.pdf

Scale of the activity

This intervention activity is a centrally coordinated approach to student success and retention. Currently, the SST programs concentrate on domestic, undergraduate students who are categorised in a low socio-economic status (low SES) or are enrolled in a course included in CSU's Student Transition and Retention (STAR) Plan.⁶ In 2011, 3000 students were contacted via phone and/or email and by late 2012 to 8000 students had been contacted.

⁵ CSU's Transition Project (2009) details and a summary can be found at <http://www.csu.edu.au/student/transition/project-scope.htm>

⁶ CSU's STAR Plan – details located at <http://www.csu.edu.au/academic-support/welcome/star>

Organisational process

The SST refers and directs students to a variety of support services including Learning Advisors, Student Services and the library depending on the circumstances of each student. Each call is followed up by an email outlining the plan of action discussed in the phone call. The SST works closely with Student Transition and Retention (STAR) academics and their support staff appointed to each of the four institutional faculties who identify triggers for disengagement.

The team operates five campaigns each session⁷, as outlined below:

1. Welcome to CSU

This campaign begins around six weeks before the start of session and continues until around week two of session to catch late enrollers. Students from low SES backgrounds and students enrolled in one of the twelve STAR courses are the targets for this campaign. Students are welcomed to CSU and are told about some of the support services available to students and the orientation website as part of this campaign.

2. No Access to Subject Outline

The Division of Information Technology can produce a list of students who have not accessed their subject outlines for one or more of the subjects in which they're enrolled. Not accessing subject outlines, which contain information vital for success in a subject, is a very strong indication of a student's disengagement from a subject. This campaign seeks to proactively contact these students and attempt to direct them to support services that can help them re-engage in these subjects.

3. STAR Course Campaign

This campaign is tailored to each of the courses within the STAR courses. STAR Academic Leads and lecturers assist with the identification of subject-based triggers that indicate that students are at risk of disengagement. These students are then called by members of the Student Success Team, who offer general and subject specific advice to help students remain engaged in their learning.

4. At Risk of Exclusion

Students who fail to make satisfactory academic progress, in the first instance, receive a notice that they are At Risk of Exclusion. The Student Success Team will make contact with these students and discuss the sort of help that exists for students.

5. Fail a Subject

Any commencing STAR or low SES students who fail one or more subjects in their first session receive a call from the SST. This call aims to identify areas for improvement and direct students to the appropriate support services at CSU.

Outcomes and evaluation

Contacted students are offered the chance to participate in a short survey to provide feedback on their contact experience. Feedback and comments from students are also reported back to stakeholders, including STAR staff, after each campaign.

⁷ A 'session' is also referred to as a 'semester' or 'term'. CSU has three sessions per year.

Critical success factors

- High call success rate
- Professionalism, knowledge and empathy of SST members
- Key relationships with institutional stakeholders
- Program based on higher education sector research and other effective intervention programs.

Challenges

- Call rates can be dependent on variables (time of day)
- Study commitments of SST members means rostering can be a challenge.

Website

<http://www.csu.edu.au/academic-support/welcome/student-success-team>

Key contact

Mr Peter Greening, Team Leader, Student Success Team

Key resources

- Training documentation for SST
- Call scripts
- Emails to students
- Support Services Guide
- Student Satisfaction Survey.

Artefact B

Type: Training

Student Success Team Role Playing Activity – Day Two

The role play activity is the culminating activity in the Student Success Team (SST) training package. It enables the team members to utilise all of the skills that they have learned in the last two days, including interacting with other students, recommending appropriate support services, and using the technology (computer programs, websites, telephones, etc). The activity takes place in the workplace, and as a result the team members have access to all of the resources that they have on the job.

The Student Success Team members break into pairs. Within each group one person is the SST member and one is the target student. Below are the scenarios, to be given to the target students. Each scenario is developed in line with the five campaigns run in the program (Welcome to CSU; No Access to Subject Outline; STAR Course Campaign, At Risk of Exclusion; and Fail a Subject). The SST member will have the necessary interactions on Talisma (CRM).⁸ The SST member logs into Talisma, views their interactions, makes the calls, talks to the target students, sends a follow up e-mail and resolves the interaction. This simulates the complete range of actions that an SST member would make on the job. The shift lasts for approximately 20 minutes after which the group shares their experiences and debriefs the other groups.

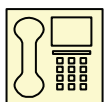
⁸ CRM stands for customer relationship management, a model used by an organisation or institution to manage interactions with customers and clients.

Alignment to the Social Justice Principles

This resource articulates both the principles of *Access* and *Equity*. The information transfer from advisor to student interprets university systems and protocols. Engagement with another student humanises the support activity easing the sense of confusion or isolation the student may be feeling. Essentially the scenarios assist in articulating the multiple issues student face at crucial times during the year.

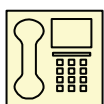
Scenario selections

Scenario A – Welcome to CSU



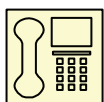
You are thankful for the call and agree to look at the orientation website. You want to know more about scholarships – what they are, how to apply, who to apply to, when do applications close, what scholarships are right for me? You also want to know what resources are available at the library for an on-campus student. Be very appreciative.

Scenario B – STAR Based



You have failed the first assignment in Microeconomics. You did not use enough references and journal articles. Those you did use were not referenced correctly in-text. You have since downloaded the CSU referencing guide and now understand how to reference.

Scenario C – At Risk of Exclusion



You have read the eBox message and have been worrying about it ever since. You are happy to have someone to talk to that will not judge them. You have failed a core subject Human Bioscience 2 and if you fail it again you will be kicked out of uni. You have troubles with writing assignments, you worry about plagiarism and you struggle with applying what you learn in class to the assignment questions. If the SST offers you an appointment with an LSA you take it.



To access the complete scenarios utilised in the CSU SST Training activity please visit:
https://safeguardingstudentlearning.net/?page_id=433

Institutional profile*

Charles Sturt University (CSU) is an Australian public university with regional campuses across New South Wales (NSW) and the Australian Capital Territory (ACT). Established in 1895 and becoming a university in 1990, campus locations include Albury-Wodonga, Orange, Bathurst, Dubbo, Parramatta and Canberra.

Total student enrolment	34,627
Undergraduate	22,729
Postgraduate	8,586
Domestic+	86.4%
International+	13.6%
Student demographics	
Indigenous	2% this is high compared to other institutions
Regional/remote students+	44.5%
Low SES+#	18.42%
Non-English speaking background+	1.7%
Mature age (over 25 years) undergraduates	48% this is very high compared to other institutions
Student study options	
Undergraduate part-time	47% this is very high compared to other institutions
Undergraduate external or mixed mode	54% this is very high compared to other institutions
Postgraduate part-time	84% this is high compared to other institutions
Postgraduate external or mixed mode	87% this is high compared to other institutions
Student entry details	
School-leavers	12% this is very low compared to other institutions
Prior TAFE credits	22% this is very high compared to other institutions
International undergraduates	3,384 this is a big number compared to other institutions
International postgraduates	1,522 this is an average number compared to other institutions

*Except for items marked with '+' all profile information is from The Good Universities Guide (2012). Retrieved from <http://gooduniguide.com.au/ratings/compare/CSU?studyType=UG&state=NSW&actionSearch=Search>

+This profile information is from the Australian Government website MyUniversity with data collected for the 2011 year. CSU information is retrieved from <http://www.myuniversity.gov.au/Charles-Sturt-University/Statistics/3005>

#Currently in Australia the SES of higher education students is determined by the geographic area or postcode of the student's home. The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) Index of Education and Occupation (IEO) is used to rank postcodes. The postcodes that comprise the bottom 25% of the population aged between 15 to 64 years at the date of the latest census, based on this ranking, are considered low SES postcodes. Students who have home locations in these low SES postcodes are counted as 'low SES' students.

Source: Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations. (2009) *Measuring the Socio-economic Status of Higher Education Students*. Discussion Paper. Retrieved from http://www.innovation.gov.au/HigherEducation/Documents/LowSES_Discussionpaper.rtf