

ORACLE®
Customer Success

Lone Star College



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Successful colleges and universities understand the importance of retaining students and helping them achieve their academic goals, particularly as retention rates drop to around 40 percent at many U.S. institutions. While students attend college for cultural and intellectual enrichment, they also expect to see a direct monetary return on their educational investments, as measured by better job opportunities, sustainable careers, and higher salaries. As Lone Star College (LSC) has learned, ensuring positive student outcomes and maintaining positive enrollment trends requires a new advisement strategy, backed by modern software applications that automate student advisement, class selection, and curriculum maps.

THE PERENNIAL OBJECTIVE: STUDENT SUCCESS

Lone Star College offers high-quality, low-cost academic transfer and career training education to 99,000 students each semester. As the largest institution of higher education in the Houston, Texas area, with an annual economic impact of nearly \$3 billion, LSC consists of seven colleges, eight centers, two university centers, Lone Star Corporate College, and LSC-Online.

Like many institutions of higher education, Lone Star College works diligently to increase student retention, increase graduation rates, and support students in their efforts to complete their studies, earn degrees, and prepare for the workforce. Lone Star must also comply with state funding efforts, such as a statewide master plan for higher education known as *Closing the Gaps*. Established by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, *Closing the Gaps* includes an outcomes-based funding component in which colleges are awarded for academic progression milestones, such as total number of degrees awarded, number of degrees earned in critical fields, and the proportion of “at-risk” students within the college population.

In addition to complying with this statewide mandate, LSC saw *Closing the Gaps* as an opportunity to focus on making students more successful by helping them achieve their academic goals. Previously, the institution favored a broad, open advising module. The emphasis was on giving students unbridled freedom for selecting classes, completing studies, and obtaining degrees. Led by Stephen C. Head, Ph.D., chancellor of LSC, Lone Star’s faculty and staff embraced a more structured advisement model, as successfully promulgated by many European colleges. Once students have identified a major, they are offered explicit guidance about which courses they should take, with the objective of helping them complete their studies in the prescribed amount of time. Rather than haphazardly selecting elective classes from dozens of choices, they are encouraged to focus on courses that help them complete the requirements for a particular major, so they can move more quickly towards graduation, and succeed with their post-academic endeavors.

“With an increased focus on graduation rates and the necessity to comply with state funding programs, our goal is on making sure students don’t accumulate unnecessary credit hours and courses during their college careers,” says Longin Gogu, Associate Vice Chancellor of Enterprise Applications, Office of Technology Services, LSC. “Our advisement model helps students stay focused on the end goal.”



To remain competitive with other college institutions and continually relevant to students, today’s institutions of higher education must intelligently optimize their operations, boost their institutional standings, and improve student outcomes.

“Student success is first and foremost our priority from a leadership perspective at Lone Star College. One of the programs I am most excited about is our Guided Programs of Study project, laddering nicely to Lone Star’s core mission of student success. By connecting the dots from academic planning to technology, this project will help our students stay on track and graduate in a timely manner.”

Link Alander
Vice Chancellor of College Services and CIO,
Lone Star College

INTRODUCING THE GUIDED PROGRAMS OF STUDY PROJECT

So began a two-year effort to redesign LSC's curriculum and to guide students on paths that maximize their success. Many faculty and staff members participated in this endeavor, which yielded new pathways, standards, and academic structures. "This was not just an effort to look at pre-requisites, but to create structured pathways and program maps," Gogu adds.

Once the basic guidelines were in place, Gogu and other stakeholders shifted their attention to acquiring a technology platform that could manage student data related to advisement, class selection, and curriculum maps. They wanted a system that was easy to use and that could help LSC address state funding requirements. "A complex curriculum pathway must meet the goals of students," Gogu says. "Signing up for classes should be easy and intuitive."

LSC evaluated several different software applications that could potentially help with this effort. "There are a few products on the market that focus on pathways and degree planning topics, which are related to the challenges LCS was facing," Gogu recalls. "A big factor involved integration with our Student Information System."

In short, LSC wanted a technology platform that could support real-time synchronization of student data among the college's critical information systems. For example, instead of periodically transferring flat files in batch mode, which introduces time delays, they wanted a system that could perform real-time updates as transactions occur and student data changes. In addition, Gogu and his team insisted on a solution that could provide a consumer-like experience for faculty, staff, and students.

"We recognized early on that integration with our core student information system would be paramount," Gogu says. "Today's users expect instant responses, just like they obtain with an Amazon shopping experience. Because we have a large student population, we cannot afford a 12-hour or 24-hour delay for updating advisement data. When students enroll in classes, those events must be reflected immediately in the curriculum maps and degree plans, so all students can make informed choices."

In other words, changes in the student information system must trigger similar updates to student records and enrollment records, so the advisement content is always current. These real-time updates ensure that students are fully informed about available enrollment options. For example, if a student's degree audit report or advisement report tells her that she needs a certain math class, the data will be transferred from the advisement solution to the enrollment solution—allowing her to see right away whether the class is available.

"Real-time integration is critical, and all changes must be instantly reflected," Gogu reiterates. "If there is a delay, a student might not know that a class is full. Delays create unnecessary barriers that could lead to lower enrollment. The easier we can make it for the students, the better we can help them achieve success."

AN INTEGRATED SOLUTION THAT PRESERVES EXISTING INVESTMENTS

After evaluating several potential technology solutions, Gogu and other LSC stakeholders determined that the Program Enrollment module within Oracle PeopleSoft Campus Solution was best suited to helping them achieve their goals for advising and guiding students. LSC already uses the PeopleSoft student information system, part of the Oracle PeopleSoft application portfolio, which would simplify the integration process. To spearhead the initiative, LSC retained a European consulting firm that had experience with structured program enrollment models. This firm helped LSC configure an extensible system and develop a Fluid mobile front-end that ensures an engaging student experience.

LSC's PeopleSoft Program Enrollment module is now entering production mode. Incoming students enrolling in Spring 2020 classes will utilize the new system. In successive semesters, existing and

"The higher education industry is experiencing a period of historic disruption, driving colleges and universities to consider new operating models, seek out innovative ways to engage students, and deliver targeted education services. Student information systems have a pivotal role to play in whether or not institutions are successful in these endeavors, but established approaches and many existing solutions may prove insufficient to meet the rising expectations of students for more personalized, frictionless, and proactive services."

Ovum¹



Oracle Solutions for Higher Ed

Built natively for the cloud to support the entire institution and student lifecycle, Oracle Higher Education solutions include:

- Student Cloud
- Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP)
- Enterprise Performance Management (EPM)
- Human Capital Management (HCM)

All modules work together as part of a shared cloud platform.

continuing students will rely on the PeopleSoft system to ease the transition from a traditional to a more structured advisement model.

HIGHER EDUCATION SOLUTIONS FROM ORACLE

While Lone Star College is leveraging the capabilities of Oracle's Campus Solutions product, they are also actively involved in the development and design of Oracle's next-generation student information system, Oracle Student Cloud, which is natively built in the cloud. Oracle offers a comprehensive approach to managing the student lifecycle, communications, and relationships—from recruiting through alumni and donor management. By more effectively engaging students, Oracle Student Cloud helps colleges and universities improve student outcomes, raise institutional standing, and increase operational efficiency with intelligent automation.

Oracle's next-generation Student Cloud includes six interconnected modules:

- Student Financial Planning
- Student Management
- Student Recruiting
- Student Engagement
- Student Support
- Advancement

Each module works with the others and shares pertinent data to streamline essential activities. From attracting students and assigning courses to managing student accounts and providing easy payment processing during the enrollment process, these applications provide all the tools colleges need to run efficient operations geared for student success.

Oracle offers a practical path to the cloud, with a range of choices to help you get started right away. You can deploy cloud services incrementally on Oracle's robust public cloud and gradually build a unified higher education platform that encompasses all these functions.

To learn how you can launch your own cloud SIS initiative, visit oracle.com/industries/higher-education/student-cloud.html.

Guided Pathways for Students

Oracle Student Management, part of Oracle Student Cloud, keeps advisors informed so they can help students make the right academic choices. Establish guided pathways that allow students to enroll in courses and track their academic progress.

Oracle Solutions for Student Success

- COMPLETE to gain efficiency from one single data model
- INTELLIGENT to drive innovation and fast decisions
- ADAPTABLE to meet each institution's specific needs

¹ "Intelligence Will Transform Student Information Systems" (30 October 2017)

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Integrated Cloud Applications & Platform Services

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