

CASE STUDY

Helping students before they even know they need help

At Chippewa Valley Technical College, proactive outreach keeps students on track

“Our students balance so much more than academics, and are often too busy to seek out or access resources,” says Natalyn Marlaire, director of advising and services at Chippewa Valley Technical College (CVTC). “If they’re not coming to us, we’re coming to them—in person, by text, by email, through the web. And when we’re proactive, what we’re really saying is, ‘You may not know you need these resources, but you need them.’ This kind of outreach only works if our student communications are streamlined and everyone involved can easily see the same data about the students we serve.”

Since 2012, Marlaire has focused on a complete overhaul of CVTC’s culture and practice for student advising. Her cause is straightforward, and the college’s leadership supports it: students’ lives are more complex than ever, and they’re much more likely to persist when given the right combination of assistance at the right time. Led in part by Marlaire’s work on the advising administration side, the college supports its approximately 11,000 students with proactive outreach that includes resources offered both in-person and online.



Enrollment

10,943 students

Chippewa Valley Technical College is a public two-year institution based in Eau Claire, Wisconsin, with four regional campuses throughout western Wisconsin.

Challenges

Enable more proactive and effective student assistance campus-wide using a single, integrated advising system

Solutions

Ellucian CRM Advise

Results

Campus-wide data integration

Improved processes for case notes and early alerts

Ability to improve student success models over time

To support that work and make CVTC's vision come to life, the college first needed a single, integrated, modern system to handle the flow of information. In November 2017, CVTC went live with a constituent relationship management (CRM) tool, Ellucian CRM Advise, that helps enable its proactive, comprehensive student-support strategy. The tool integrates with departments across campus, including faculty members, advisors, and staff in the student services division. This holistic approach allows staff to improve the ways they help students navigate through the college.

"This kind of connectivity to student information, easily and quickly accessed, helps faculty, staff, and leadership see the whole student," says Jessica Schwartz, registrar at CVTC. "Which means they can support the whole student."

According to Schwartz, faculty members are often students' first and most trusted option for services and support—but CVTC's culture of strong relationship-building between students and faculty can have drawbacks if not every instructor has the same information, or even the right information, to help a student.

"Faculty shouldn't be expected to understand all the ins and outs of financial aid and registration, and the rules around, say, a student veteran dropping a class and suddenly causing an automatic loss of benefits," says Schwartz. "But they do need to know if a conflict exists and to reach out to Student Services to assist the student."

In the new CRM system, faculty members can submit an early alert. That triggers members of the student success team to proactively reach out to students with informed support, direction, and timely information. Faculty members can view the interventions the student success team has provided to the students through a customized faculty dashboard. Together, they can deliver the efficiency and accuracy of student services and data that are so crucial to today's college experience.

More efficient, accurate, comprehensive student support

Before implementing its new advising system, CVTC knew that students who were flagged with an early alert persisted at a rate 35 percent higher than those who didn't. That led to a big push for early alerts, which became a time-consuming, arduous process.

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NATALYN MARLAIRE, Director of Advising and Services, Chippewa Valley Technical College



CVTC also knew that a student can become at-risk at any point in time, whether or not they already have an early alert on their record. At CVTC, every accepted student has both an advisor and a student success specialist assigned to them. Still, quality advising relies on quality information.

In the previous system, different departments stored information in a variety of independent systems. Since many issues are resolved through coordination between multiple departments, students had to retell their whole story to each support office. And for department heads trying to chase down a complete record of actions taken to help a student in need, it was a puzzle that often took hours to solve, with a lot of data cleanup and rework along the way. Their new CRM solution solved those problems by centralizing all student information into one place,

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According to Marlaire, it’s now faster and easier than ever for faculty members to submit an early alert, a process that now takes roughly one-third the time it used to. And for the 2018-19 academic year, she projects time savings of 5 hours each week, or 260 hours per year, for the administrative processing of early alerts.

“When we piloted the new early alert system to faculty,” says Marlaire, “one of the first things they commented on was how much easier it made their lives.”

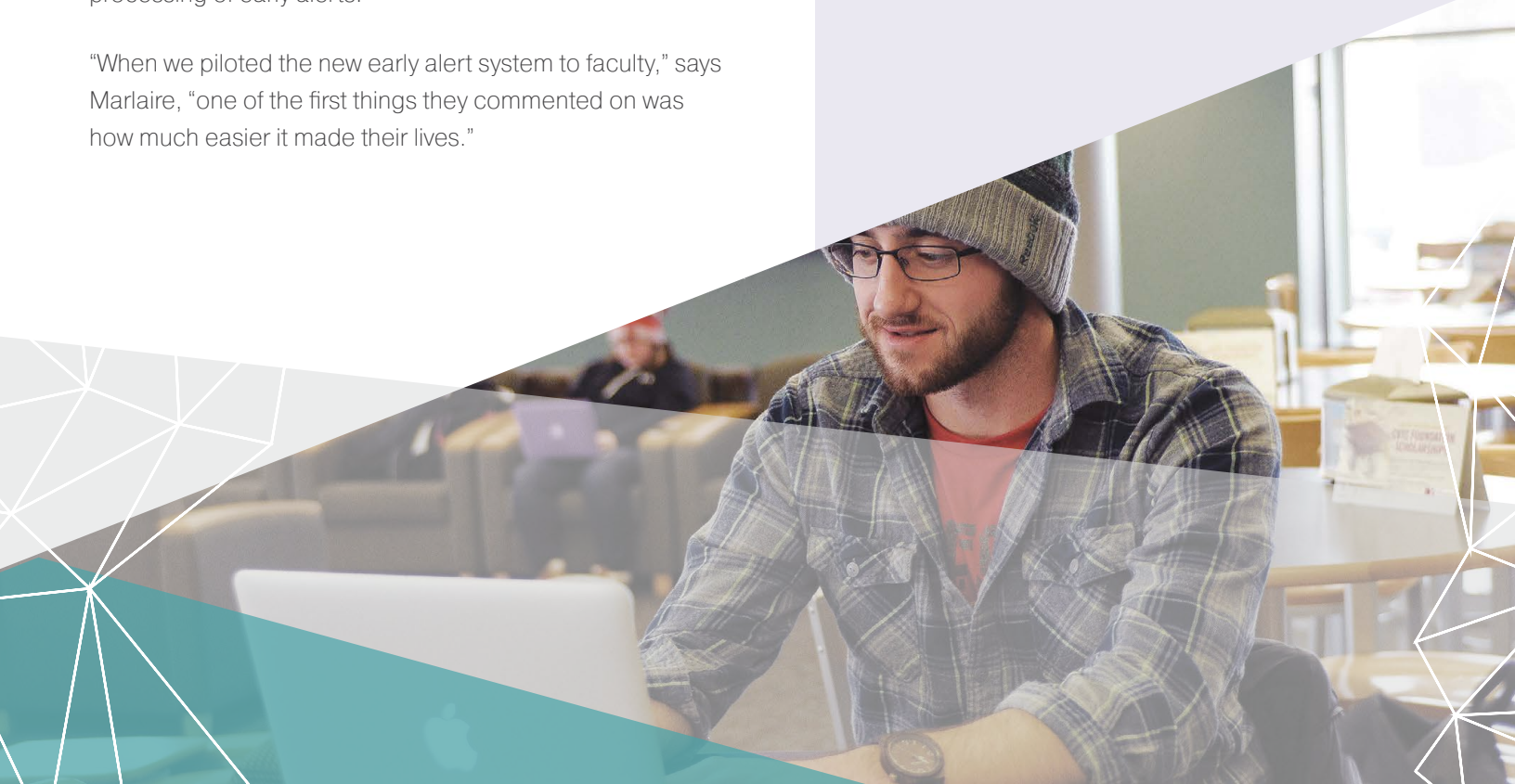
Coming together to build best-ever retention models

While iterating and fine-tuning the software and designing new processes for campus-wide rollout, Marlaire relied on a highly collaborative interdepartmental team. Short-term goals involved testing, troubleshooting, and incremental releases of system features and processes.



260 hours...

projected to be saved this year by processing early alerts with CRM Advise.



Along the way, the team discovered best practices hidden across campus and established new ones for ensuring the best support for students. Here are a few examples:

- Eliminating inconsistencies in case-noting practices
- Academic advisors, previously unable to see if a student had an early alert on their record, are now involved in the early alert process
- Adding Student Central, Adult Education Services, and the Veteran Services office into a shared system, leading to better sharing of department best practices supporting the student pathway

“We learned, and taught each other, how every department could use data and be propelled forward in their own way,” says Marlaire. “That’s why it was so important to have everybody at the table with a common vision for this project to keep it moving forward.”

A long-term goal for using the CRM system involves building new student success scoring plans for assessing the effectiveness of student support. The hope is that through measuring and monitoring data over each successive academic term, breakthrough models for student persistence will emerge. It will take time to build those models, but this system is where the analytics can start.

Already, Marlaire looks at recent data in the system and asks, “Out of the 1,600 students last semester who received an early alert from a faculty member, what interventions did we take with each student? And how many persisted? That’s something I just couldn’t accurately do before CRM Advise.”

Now that CVTC’s data and departments are more connected than ever, it’s time for leadership across campus to look deeper at their data and work toward the long-term insights that can change the model for student success for years to come.

“Every time we hit an obstacle while implementing or building out a feature of the new system,” says Schwartz, “we find our way forward by coming back to one question: What’s best for the students?”

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JESSICA SCHWARTZ, Registrar,
Chippewa Valley Technical College



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