



Metropolitan State University of Denver Goes to New Heights with Raise Me



Affordability, location, and individual family situations all come into play on a student's journey to college. For universities, this kicks off an effort to ensure students have access to information as well as plenty of support and insights to help them overcome all the challenges they will face. Regardless of their students' circumstances, most universities have the necessary tools to help them overcome barriers and find an early and clear path to college.

Metropolitan State University of Denver began leveraging the Raise Me platform a few years ago to allow students, as early as 9th grade, to earn micro-scholarships for their achievements. As an institution with high percentages of first generation and PELL-eligible students, ensuring students understand all available awards and financial opportunities is a mission-critical value for the institution.

With transfers accounting for more than 50% of the student's population, MSU Denver began searching for new ways to target in-state students and engage transfer students before it was too late. MSU Denver is one of the country's top transfer institutions, and last summer they recognized the need to engage students earlier in the communication process and decided to explore solutions. Vaughn Toland, Executive Director of Admissions and Outreach at Metropolitan State University of Denver, stated: "Transfer students are a vital population. They're so important to our enrollment. For over two decades, they've made up a significant portion of our total student body."

Like many colleges, MSU Denver has minimal transfer scholarship funds available. Toland continued, "We're the lowest-funded school in the state per pupil, and we're lower staffed. We have to make efficient and economical choices." In order to show students the school's affordability without straining their financial

resources, they quickly turned to Raise Me Enrollment's transfer options during the summer of 2019.

By partnering with Raise Me, MSU Denver could create custom micro-scholarships for prospective transfer students, which allowed them to choose which college-prep activities they wanted to reward. When students register for the Raise Me application, they can browse colleges and choose to follow those they are interested in. They are prompted to enter their accomplishments, like good grades, club memberships, volunteer work, and more, and they are awarded micro-scholarships from the schools they follow for those actions. The process creates a two-way connection between students and their potential colleges.

The micro-scholarships provide a preview of guaranteed institutional aid upon acceptance and enrollment to the university. Toland recalls the excitement, saying, "Whenever you mention Raise Me in a room full of students and parents, you see their faces light up. It resonates with them; that they can earn scholarship dollars for things they're already doing. For an institution that doesn't have a lot of money, and for transfer students that don't get a lot of award funds to begin with, it's really powerful to offer that."

Prior to using Raise Me, MSU Denver did not have a lot of processes in place to communicate with prospective transfer students. Unlike undergraduate students seeking to start at college, there is no list-buying or traditional way of recruiting. Similarly, there is no best path for a community college student to prepare to transfer to a 4-year university. Toland said, "A lot of the time we don't meet transfer students until they're ready to transfer, which is too late to advise them. When students come through Raise Me earlier in the transfer process, we're able to guide them to being successful at our school."

Toland confirmed, "Students love getting \$50 to talk to a transfer representative – it's like a reward for just being interested. They're excited about the opportunity, and the earlier they start the process, the better. They're incentivized to do things like meet with counselors, and that makes them more likely to matriculate. Raise Me is a guide to being successful."

When a prospective transfer student begins to communicate with MSU Denver through Raise Me or another avenue, the transfer team meets with each person to assist them on their journey. "We want to support students in any way we can, so we will show them how to finish an Associate's, help them with transfer credits, and then come in with the scholarship information."

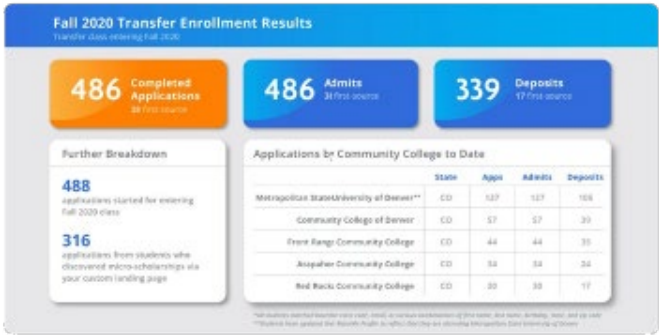
They hand out flyers when students go on campus tours, include it in email blasts, have staff educated on the platform so they can talk to it, and have it directly linked on their scholarship page. And their efforts have paid off: Between the first and second years of using Raise Me Enrollment for transfer students, MSU Denver went from three-digit followers in the fall of 2019, to four-digit followers in the fall of 2020, with follower numbers for 2021 tracking even higher. "Raise Me doesn't require a lot of work and it's extremely cost effective. The ROI is unmistakable," Toland commented.

Looking to the future, MSU Denver is excited to continue using Raise Me for first-year and transfer students, which provides them with all the information they need to be successful. Toland summarized, "We're admissions counselors, advisors, and financial aid and scholarship advisors in one. We touch on all those pieces because that's what transfer students need. Raise Me helps us provide that support."

We look forward to working with our current partners and the new partners we'll be welcoming to uniquely support students to and through college. Learn more about Raise Me and how it can support your student engagement and success goals.

GET STARTED

While MSU Denver's profile can be seen by any Raise Me student user in the app, the college also has encouraged students to join and follow them in a multitude of ways.



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