

Dominican University boosts retention by focusing on student experience

Jenzabar One helps DU improve engagement, identify issues and track interventions

Q&A with Jill Albin-Hill, VP for Technology and Operations, CIO, Dominican University (Ill.)



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How does Dominican University engage students?

This year, we streamlined the student experience to bring information about their progress toward a degree, such as their GPA, advisor and credits earned. We’re now working with Jenzabar to incorporate more of a mobile app experience so we can do additional push notifications to students.

We also leverage Jenzabar’s predictive analytics to help us identify students who could be at risk, and then we have one place to track the different touchpoints and see who is responsible for them. Jenzabar’s web reporting tool enables staff to set up different reports, making data actionable. This lets us be relationship-centered when it matters, and reach students at urgent times.

What is the philosophy behind your new Guided Pathways program?

Two years ago, we piloted intrusive advising to increase student awareness of the high-impact practices available, so they can have a more fulfilling experience. We want them to connect their learning to experiences beyond the classroom. With Jenzabar’s help, we are working to layer these practices in the advising module with the map of curriculum requirements, so we won’t have to track things separately.

How are you segmenting student populations and building success strategies for different groups?

We are mindful of how to segment student populations by not isolating students and recognizing their unique needs. We had great success with The Village, a group targeted to African-American students with study halls, special advising and social gatherings. Last year, we had 93 percent retention.

Another example is our Transitions Program—a group for incoming freshmen who may need a bit more preparation time. It’s now a residential model, so students live on campus for two weeks before the first term. We’re trying to immerse them in the school.

Why did you go to the cloud for this?

We felt the cloud could give us scalability and help with potential resource constraints, particularly the capital investment often needed for hardware upgrades. We also wouldn’t have to buy a new server farm. It has also allowed us to use Jenzabar’s professional services to do our upgrades and backups, which frees up staff.

What results have you experienced?

We were on the Jenzabar-hosted platform for spring registration. It was the best registration experience we’ve ever had because we were able to scale up for it. At 8:01 a.m., when practically everyone was registering at the same time, the system was able to handle that. We’ve been able to change our staffing model for the better, and our uptime has been 99.8 percent.

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