

## Complete College America Game Changers

### Game Changer #1 - 15 to finish

According to research done by Complete College America, students are simply not taking or completing enough college credits to graduate on time. Their research suggests that creating awareness around the importance of taking a full load is critical. Furthermore, the Complete College American research urges colleges and universities to pursue initiatives such as advertising campaigns, advisor engagement and new institutional policies to educate the community about the importance of taking 15 credit hours each term. However, simply showing data and advising students to take 15 credits each semester will only solve part of the problem.

Ad Astra assists colleges and universities in this area by ensuring students can take 15 credit hours. Furthermore, the Ad Astra dashboards also ensures that the 15 credit hours will apply toward their program of study. Ad Astra helps with this Game Changer by using demand analytics to help academic leaders determine the best mix of courses (# of sections, days, times, instructor availability, learning modalities, etc.) to ensure students can:

- 1) Register for 15 credit hours in any given semester
- 2) Register for courses that apply toward their program of study
- 3) Stay on track to graduate in a reasonable amount of time

Taking a full load of courses each semester will not solve the problem. Taking a full load of the right courses each semester will.

### Game Changer #2 – Math Pathways

Complete College America suggests that all students should successfully complete a gateway math course in their first year. These gateway math courses should be aligned with the skills students need based on their chosen program of study. Research toward this Game Changer shows that students who complete a college-level math course within their first academic year are more likely to earn a postsecondary credential.

Knowing the importance of successfully completing a gateway math course in the first year, academic leaders can use the Ad Astra dashboards to ensure students can access their gateway math courses as well as be informed of which students are “at risk” of not accomplishing this milestone in their first academic year. The tool allows colleges and universities to ensure there are enough math sections offered as well as at the right times for students to successfully complete a gateway math course in their first year.

## **Game Changer #3 – Corequisite Support**

Rather than placing students in remedial courses, Complete College America recommends offering support services for students enrolled in co-requisite courses (namely English and math courses) during their first academic year. Research shows a dramatic increase in course completion rates for students enrolled directly into college-level courses while receiving academic support alongside their regular classes.

Although Ad Astra does not offer student support services directly, course and room schedules provide data related to when co-requisites are offered and how many students are enrolled in those sections. This data allows colleges and universities to offer Math and English workshops, office hours, and tutoring during times that are convenient for the students.

## **Game Changer #4 – Momentum Year**

Directly tied to the first three Game Changers, making early choices about a meta major or major, enrolling in 30 college credits, and successfully completing a gateway math and English requirement in the first year are influencing completion rates. Yet, without offering the right set of courses, students may not be able to generate the momentum suggested by Complete College America.

In addition to offering a scheduling sandbox where academic leaders can determine what, when, where, what times, and who teaches courses, Ad Astra also provides a Momentum Year dashboard. This dashboard provides actionable data on student progress toward enrolling in 30 college credits and completing math and English gateway courses during their first academic year. The dashboard allows student advisors to reach out early and often to ensure students stay on track to reach these pivotal milestones.

## **Game Changer #5 – Academic Maps with Proactive Advising**

Once students make a choice on a meta-major or major, advisors must have a course schedule they can rely on and trust. Providing students with a clear path to graduate and encouraging them to complete 30 college credits per year will all be lost if students cannot register for the courses they need when registration opens. Furthermore, if students cannot register for the courses they need, advisors will spend more time trying to put the student plan back together which will hinder their ability to be proactive with students.

Ad Astra helps round out the student eco-system by pulling data from a student planner, academic plan, pathway, and degree audit system. This data can be used to help academic leaders build a course schedule that aligns with what students are being advised to take. If students can take 15 productive credits each term that contribute to their program of study, advisors can spend their time on more proactive academic advising initiatives (early alert, unproductive registration alerts, absences, etc.). Conversely, if students are constantly revising plans due to poor scheduling, advisors will be reactive.

## **Game Changer #6 – A Better Deal for Returning Students**

Complete College America suggests that adult and non-traditional students cannot be adequately solved for in with the other 5 Game Changers. In fact, research shows that adults and non-traditional students typically take 1-2 courses per term and struggle to find courses that work around their schedules. If this population of students are only taking 1-2 courses per term, it would take them 5 years to earn an associate degree and 10 years to earn a bachelor's degree. Therefore, Complete College America encourages colleges and universities to consider offering accelerated courses, year-round enrollment, and schedules that accommodate their busy lifestyles. Furthermore, adult and non-traditional students can be awarded college credits for prior learning assessment through training and tests.

Much like Game Changer #3, Ad Astra does not directly build or implement non-traditional programs. However, many colleges and universities using Ad Astra offer traditional 16-week terms as well as accelerated terms for evening and online learners (typically comprised of adult and non-traditional students). Although these schedules are typically more lock-step and sequential, the need to assess student demand by program and modality still exists. Furthermore, Ad Astra's solutions do account for prior learning assessment credits or tests (such as CLEP/DANTES/CAEL) when mapping out what courses need to be offered so that students can stay on track to graduate in a reasonable amount of time.