

Report to the Minot State University Faculty Senate on Starfish Implementation
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In the fall of 2016, the Starfish Implementation group met three times. This group consists of Tammy Wolf, Tutoring and Starfish Coordinator, CETL; Heather Martin, Advising Coordinator, CETL; Rebecca Ringham, Registrar; Darren Olson, Director of Network Services, IT; Kathy Hintz, Academic Advising Council (since November, 2016); Lori Willoughby, Academic Advising Council (since November, 2016); and Mark Singer, Faculty Senate representative. Some members of this group helped facilitate the Starfish Advisor Training developed by Heather and Tammy on February 2 and 3, 2017.

In addition, Starfish has been discussed by the Academic Advising, Career Planning, and Starfish subcommittee of the Retention Committee. Members of that subcommittee are Tammy Wolf; Heather Martin (since March 2017); Tracey Mays, College of Business; Christina Paxman, College of Arts and Sciences; Evan Borisinkoff, College of Education and Health Sciences; Lynda Bertsch, Student Success Center/Career Services; Aaron Richard, Student representative; and Mark Singer, Faculty Senate representative.

Starfish, software created by Hobsons, was purchased by the North Dakota University System for NDUS institutions to use to address student success, persistence, and retention. President Shirley reports our progress in implementing Starfish to the Chancellor and the State Board. Starfish itself is primarily a tool that enables instructors to communicate with both a student and the student's "success network," which includes the advisor and student support staff assigned to that student. Data appearing in Starfish is derived from Campus Connection and is subject to FERPA; for example, an instructor can see that a student has been flagged in another class but cannot see the contents of that flag, while the student's advisor can see the contents for all of his or her students' flags. Changes and improvements implemented in Starfish since the start of this academic year including more robust filtering of student lists, the addition of more student data in the advisors' view, and the (planned) addition of athletic coaches to students' network so that those coaches can see their student-athletes' academic flags.

Earlier this semester, Tammy Wolf provided the following data on Starfish use (see attached). We have been using Starfish for mandatory attendance reporting since Spring 2016, and the Starfish group has solicited voluntary Early Alert "survey" (i.e., roster)-based reporting since Fall 2015. The number of academic flags raised (which appears to include Academic, Attendance, Never Attended, and In Danger of D, F, or U flags) was not much different in Fall 2016 than it was in Fall 2015. Roughly two-thirds of these flags are raised through the two survey-based reports, which currently are the Week 3 Attendance and the Week 6 Early Alert reports. The number of flags cleared—i.e., the number of flags raised that have been acknowledged and closed by the person notified, generally a student's advisor—has declined from 21% to 16% over these three semesters.

Based on faculty feedback, I raised questions about the usefulness of determining and submitting Early Alert academic reports for students through Starfish only two weeks before midterm

grades are determined and submitted. I was told that one of the purposes of this Week 6 Early Alert report was to “get faculty used to using Starfish” and that this report was suggested by the faculty members who were part of the Starfish Implementation group. The minutes I have from the Starfish Weekly Information Meeting from July 7, 2015 identify one of the goals of Starfish implementation as increasing faculty support for use of the tool and state that the metrics for measuring achievement of that goal that include the percentage of faculty submitting Early Alert referrals and the number of flags raised. However, there is agreement that one focus for Starfish implementation should be using it on an individual or “manual” basis to raise flags whenever needed to communicate with the student, the student’s advisor, and student support services.

Members of the Starfish subcommittee of the Retention Committee are scheduling time to attend department meetings, distribute the Advising Training PowerPoint slides from the training held in February, and solicit feedback on Starfish implementation and use. I encourage you to make comments and raise questions about Starfish and its use during those visits, and I also welcome your questions as well as your telling me anything that you want me to take back to the implementation committee. I particularly would welcome feedback about the Starfish website, which I am pushing to have updated.

