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IUP Increases Fall to Spring Retention
3%

For Fall 2020 Freshman Cohort, Defying Industry Trends

IUP

othot℠
by LIAISON

THE CHALLENGE

- Off-set first year enrollment decline, focusing on retention and persistence

THE SOLUTION

- Othot's Advanced Analytics Platform

THE RESULTS

- 3% increase in fall to spring retention for Fall 2020 freshman cohort

Located in the rolling hills of western Pennsylvania, Indiana University of Pennsylvania (IUP) consistently ranks among the top 100 public universities in the United States and is recognized as an academic regional powerhouse.

Founded in 1875, the University has traditionally been the largest institution among the 14 within the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education (PASSHE), but a recent drop in market share has affected the university's ranking. University leaders identified retention and persistence as opportunities to offset the first-year enrollment decline.

"We were anticipating some changes as demographics changed, of course, but what we started to see was that our market share of students really began to decline," noted Patricia McCarthy, D.Ed., vice president for enrollment management. "When I analyzed the retention numbers, I recognized that there was a strategic opportunity to regain ground."

Using Data Strategically: Insight Leads to Action

Through the organization of a team across campus, committees were formed to gather information from students who may be having problems with registration, or grades, or finances, and strategies were developed to provide help. A communication campaign, greater faculty engagement during registration, new tuition options — these easy-to-implement tactics were the start of a notable turnaround in retention and persistence.

The next step was to leverage Othot's advanced analytics to dig deeper. Using the Student Success platform to examine predicted outcomes helped IUP to:

- identify specific at-risk students
- segment data by various colleges and financial aid variables
- analyze data by diversity and different student groups
- validate or adjust institutional policies and practices

Calculating Risk: Improving Likelihood to Retain Students

The deep dive uncovered detailed critical information that shed light on students' likelihood to remain at the university. As an example, using the platform, IUP found, among other things, that:

- the fall-to-fall retention rate for students with an unmet financial need greater than $15K decreased by 8.5 percent, year-over-year
- students who were under-registered for a semester, with less than ten credits, were ~30% less likely to return to campus — a percentage equal to those who remained unregistered
- low student usage of meal plans could be an indicator of risk which is something to be analyzed longer term

This information contributed to postiive and effective changes in faculty and advisor outreach programs and policies to improve retention among these newly identified, at-risk students across the university's eight colleges.

> " I am always looking at year-over-year data and trying to identify the reasons for change. **The Othot tool is a critical part of our overall long-term strategy,** and we're seeing positive results and a solid return on our investment."

DR. PATRICIA MCCARTHY
Vice President for enrollment management
Indiana University of Pennsylvania

According to Chris Kitas, IUP's associate director for institutional research, planning and assessment, "Othot's platform provides the types of real-time, in-depth insights that help affect change.

For instance, why would a student with a 3.5 GPA leave? What was wrong? I had my hypotheses. The platform opened my eyes and provided answers to some of the questions that we had. It gives us all a better sense of where we're going with our students, and how we can make sure they're retained and graduate."

Gaining Ground: Effective Strategy Pays Off

As the conversations across campus continue, IUP is seeing positive results. A quick review of fall to spring retention shows a three percent lift — almost a 50-student gain over the prior year despite starting with a smaller cohort. "I am always looking at year-over-year data and trying to identify the reasons for change," notes Dr. McCarthy. "The Othot tool is a critical part of our overall long-term strategy, and we're seeing positive results and a solid return on our investment." ∎

Click here to schedule a demo or for more information on how Othot can improve your admissions process.

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