Increasing Student Retention in Higher Education Through Digital Engagement

A guide to improving student success

SQUIZ

Contents

Introduction

About 1 in 3 students who enrol in college never earn a degree.

Most colleges simply aren't wired to deliver the kind of student experiences that lead to greater levels of student success.

Universities today are under incredible pressure to compete not just with each other, but for the attention of their student cohort. Students are dropping out in record numbers and universities are scrambling to keep them.

1 in 3

American higher education has a dropout problem. About one in three students who enroll in college never earn a degree ... this suggests that the problem isn't the students – it's the schools.

NY Times, 23 May 2019

The relationship between a student and their college has never been more important but how a university engages with its students is more complex than ever.

Students want to interact with their college as seamlessly as their interactions with digital leaders such as Uber, Spotify, Instagram and Whatsapp. But many efforts by universities to better connect with students have actually contributed to more complexity and poorer outcomes.

Institutions are struggling with technical debt created when different technologies have been adopted in an ad hoc fashion. Too many universities are guilty of presenting information to students that serve internal, departmental structures, rather than addressing the wants and needs of students.

To resolve these challenges and improve student success – through all stages of the student lifecycle, from recruitment and admission, through to campus experiences and advancement – institutions must deliver value at every touchpoint.

When complex operating infrastructures struggle to deliver cohesive, cross-organizational services, students simply log off. They don't engage. They're no longer listening. And they are lost to their educational potential.

The institutions that are making progress are those that are measuring their student success efforts by one key variable: the strength of engagement between student and school.

By 2021, more than 50% of higher education institutions will begin redesigning their student experience with the goal of making it more integrated and personalized.

Gartner

Shifting to a student-centric approach

Improved engagement starts with the student context. And institutions who have been able to leverage learnings from the corporate sector, are achieving better student outcomes.

Viewing the student as a customer is a significant cultural shift for many universities who have traditionally not seen themselves as a business even when student drop out rates affect their bottom line, so the imperatives are multiple and interdependent – student success, societal gain, institutional growth.

But to improve student drop rates institutions will need to become more student-centric.

A key enabler in aligning around the student is to better leverage the data already available across your organization to get a clearer view of the student context. This data can help you understand key student behaviors and enable you to provide a better experience.

"

"Students have become customers who bring their own digital world expectations to university. These customers are more savvy, better connected and more vocal than ever."

Purple Consultancy

"

"A lot of it seems like it's attention to detail in catering to students."

Leebo Tyler, recent graduate of Troy, an Alabama university with a higher-than-expected graduation rate.

SQUIZ

Leading with data insights

Institutions who are leading in the student success space are using data to powerfully transform the way they communicate and engage with their students. Those that are successful at leveraging their data are utilizing technology-enabled solutions to deliver personalized content and on-demand digital services across the student lifecycle.

They collect data on their students, study that data and use it to remove hurdles for students. They deepen students' connections to other people on campus, including their classmates (through extracurriculars), professors and advisers.

Doing this well means that admin staff and advisors have the information they need to support students based on their individual needs. Gathering insight along the student's entire educational journey – from application to graduation, and beyond means the quality of service can be drastically improved leading to better student outcomes.

Behavioral Data Collection

Analysis

Optimization

Keeping students connected

Institutions are providing students with engagement and connection to their college through technology-enabled solutions that provide digital services such as:

Course guidance and assistance in degree planning

'Early alert' systems that intervene and help students before it's too late

Tools to suggest course improvement and academic resources

Course tracking tools for credits and credit transfers

Analytics dashboards to clearly display course progression

Self-service tools for conducting student-related business

Self-service referral systems to social or community services

"The bottom line is connection – feeling like somebody cares."

Devorah Lieberman, President, University of La Verne
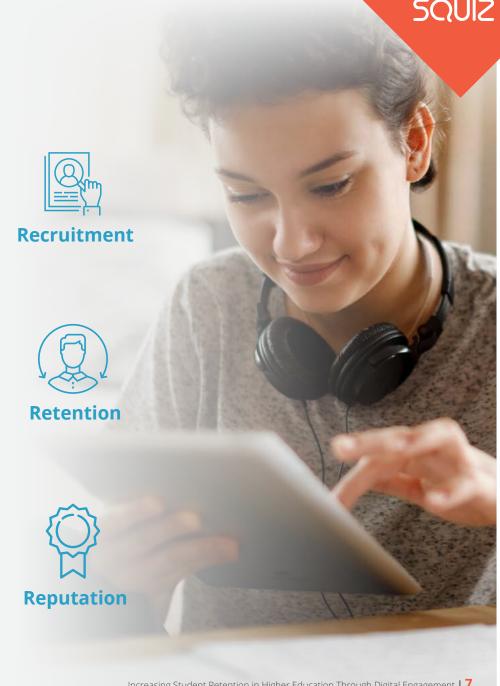
Personalizing the student experience

These digital services can be delivered through a student portal that simplifies the touchpoints a student encounters while providing a vehicle to the institution to understand their student's needs and react accordingly.

Personalized, self-service student portals provide your students with individualized attention along every step of their pathway. And they expect it to work as simply and efficiently as Spotify, Netflix and Uber.

Transforming the delivery of higher education by using data and analytics not only improves the day-to-day experience for students but powerfully improves outcomes for both the student and the institution along the entire journey.

A great experience is key to supporting students through their education. They start the journey highly motivated to succeed but can rapidly become disillusioned by a lack of engagement and communication, ineffective student support and social isolation, clunky systems that overwhelm them with complex information and are difficult to navigate, and a feeling that – put simply – no-one cares.

Recruitment

Retention

Reputation

About Squiz Edify

Squiz Edify enables educational institutions to track, engage and personalize students' experience in one platform.

Edify's suite of tools connects systems, resources, and information on one modern student experience platform. This provides institutions with a 360 view of students and centralized insights to identify at risk students, at speed.

Designed to maximize student success, our platform equips institutions with the functionality to create personalized experiences through custom content, notifications and dashboards.

Built on the Squiz Digital Experience Platform (DXP), our software is positioned within three Gartner Magic Quadrants – Insights Engine, Web Content Management and Digital Experience Platform. Ovum have named us a world leader in their Web Content Management Solution Decision Matrix every year since 2012.

Squiz works with over 130 of the world's leading Higher Education institutions including Fordham and New York University in the US, the University of the Arts and London South Bank University in the UK, Monash University and the University of Sydney in Australia.

Interested in learning more about how Edify can increase student retention through digital engagement and drive them to success?
Find out more or request a demo today.

Get the insights and tools essential for success

Squiz
575 Fifth Avenue, 14th Floor
NYC, NY 10017
T (877) 394 0640

**www.squiz.net/he
hi@squiz.net**