



studentvoice

University of Colorado - Boulder | Case Study

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Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs

Situated high in the Rocky Mountains, the University of Colorado - Boulder is among the most picturesque campuses in America, with almost 30,000 students from all corners of the United States engaged in hundreds of clubs, activities and programs. Recently, the flagship campus in the Colorado state system has made significant strides to monitor and assess campus life.

While Colorado has long been an advocate for ongoing research in student life, day-to-day assessment activities have recently become a more emphasized component of the student affairs curriculum, as the Colorado state system continues to experience unprecedented budgetary restrictions and uncertainty. “Currently, we are in the unfortunate position to make some difficult budget reduction decisions,” says Ronald Stump, Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs, “and it becomes critically important to understand student opinions and levels of interest or participation in selected activities to determine if we will continue to fund those programs in the future.”

With assessment becoming so critical, Colorado began to consider a revision of assessment practice. After considering several options, StudentVoice was selected to assist with that process. “We decided to utilize StudentVoice because it met some important requirements we have for doing assessment - efficiency, easy administration, and less expensive in the long run. As a result of those advantages, our staff enjoys using it, which for assessment projects is critical,” says Dr. Stump.

A new assessment program was constructed and coordinated at Colorado by Jennifer Simpson through the Office of the Vice Chancellor. When assessment projects are suggested by Student Affairs departments, Simpson helps with implementation and administration. “In the past,” notes Dr. Simpson, “staff would have an idea for a project, but the logistical concerns for data collection and the length of time before receiving results was daunting enough that these projects would be put on hold or just not happen at all. With StudentVoice technology, departments have the tools and are getting excited about the



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Projects at Colorado are as varied and unique as the students themselves: “We have some departments conducting projects on an on-going basis and some that do a single project when necessary,” says Simpson. “I can set up a separate login and password for people in the department to monitor their project, while I have access to see all the projects in progress, so I can monitor them and occasionally give suggestions, if needed.”

Some on-going projects serve to clarify importance and satisfaction before and after the application of student service interactions. The Centers of Counseling and Psychological Health Services use StudentVoice to evaluate student stress levels, academic issues, social functioning, eating disorders, behavioral health counseling and substance abuse both before and after treatment or counseling. Projects frequently administered to first-year and transfer students measure the quality of the orientation programs, ease of online registration, and general adaptation to a new environment, as well as asking for suggestions to improve in those areas. The Disability Task Force evaluates professorial compliance with letters of accommodation and services provided to students with disabilities. Student Academic Services and the Student Union are also areas that receive regular attention.

While assessment of everyday activities and programs are most important for Colorado, there are also a number of projects that address imminent, critical decisions that will impact the campus community. “The University was considering development on nearby, unoccupied land,” said Dr. Simpson. “Of course with new development would come an increase in student fees. We used the StudentVoice system to really define what students wanted in terms of new facilities, with the intent to make suggestions and recommendations to the student body for an upcoming vote about use of this land in conjunction with student fees. Interestingly, even after we had started our partnership with StudentVoice, this project was scheduled to be a web survey for the entire



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campus. After some internal research of our own, we realized that the web project would not be proactive enough and would not get us results in the necessary period of time. Instead, we used the StudentVoice tool with very specific demographic definitions to complete the project much faster and have representative, actionable data immediately.”

Simpson feels that StudentVoice has made a major impact at Colorado. “Before we began using the system, staff would sometimes go forward and make decisions without collecting data from students because gathering data was too cumbersome,” she notes, “but they don’t have to do that anymore.” Now, the University has access to tools that efficiently collect and report data in all Student Affairs departments, while providing the Vice Chancellor with a continuous view of the performance and effectiveness of campus activities and services.

Immediate access to data serves not only to help the decision-making process, but has also showed the campus community that assessment projects were not gratuitous and will be acted upon. “It is very important to us that the students feel interested to participate and invested in the results, as we intentionally have a short time lapse between administering the instrument, reviewing the data and acting on the results,” says Stump.

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