

# IMPROVED STUDENT TRACKING AND SATISFACTION AT WAYNE STATE UNIVERSITY

## CHALLENGE

Wayne State University is an urban public research university located in Detroit. A comprehensive institution, it has a large medical school and receives more than \$250 million a year in research funding. Faced with declining numbers of high school graduates in Detroit and in Michigan overall, along with state cuts to higher education appropriations, Wayne State's leadership team realized that a variety of external and internal factors were forcing the university to make dramatic changes quickly, or face even more

"Huron has proved to be a great partner in providing solid advice and an experienced external perspective. They have helped us radically improve our student customer services and other key administrative processes. We are confident the processes now in place will lead to greater successes in the future."

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dire consequences. A top priority for WSU was improving its enrollment revenues — now the school's No. 1 source of income. To accomplish that, Wayne State sought to improve its student retention rate, enhance overall enrollment and draw out-of-state students.

## APPROACH

Wayne State needed help identifying students it could attract efficiently and effectively, and retain. The school felt that its strategic planning and

## RESULTS

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The new system has instituted greater accountability and reporting, permitting WSU to set and measure a new performance standard: a **95%** success rate with answering students' questions in the first call.

The number of current student phone calls decreased from a 2010 average of **20,200** per month to a new average of **18,000** per month, more than a **10%** drop.

management efforts could be greatly improved with increased use of data.

Further, students who had enrolled expressed very low satisfaction with customer service at central offices, complaining that they were frequently bounced between several departments. Added to this, Huron found that WSU's central offices were slightly overstaffed relative to peers, as a number of inefficient processes had resulted in the hiring of additional personnel.

In an effort to boost student satisfaction and — consequently — retention, WSU worked with Huron on a recommendation to streamline the financial aid, admissions and registrar departments to create a one-stop shop (the Student Services Center) that would improve customer service for students, as well as increase efficiency.

The Huron team began with an overall review of the processes within admissions, financial aid and the registrar's departments to determine what processes could best be addressed within the proposed Student Service Center (SSC). The Huron team recognized WSU's largest challenge, in the short term, was meeting a self-imposed deadline for opening the SSC during the fall term, without a detailed action plan or a sense of what new processes and technology would support the new center. The Huron team quickly stepped into the role of project manager, working closely with WSU leadership to create a plan to address the impending deadline. Huron worked as the liaison between the technical team and the admissions, financial aid, bursar and registrar's offices to implement a new customer relationship management tool, Salesforce.com, that allows for the tracking of interactions with students to create a rich data repository combining records from all those offices within a single student record.

## **THE RESULTS**

With Huron's support, the Student Service Center was able to open on its scheduled date with a system that allowed its staff to report, track and evaluate the success and satisfaction of its students. Along with the internal WSU customer relationship management and information technology teams, the Huron team participated in building training materials and then delivering training to more than 100 end users prior to the system and department go-live date.

The new system has instituted greater accountability and reporting, permitting WSU to set and measure a new performance standard: a 95% success rate with answering students' questions in the first call (the first-time answer rate.) The use of the new Salesforce.com system, coupled with new staff, resulted in standardized documentation and follow-up to inquiries. Overall, the number of inquiries decreased. WSU has seen the number of current student phone calls decrease from a 2010 average of 20,200 per month to a new average of 18,000 per month, more than a 10% drop.

With its goal of improving customer service now within reach, Wayne State will next work to use the valuable data being captured in its CRM system to assist with enrollment and retention efforts. The team is also using the data gathered to help coordinate communication efforts between the enrollment-related offices and other campus units.



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19-1329