



Unishare: Student Relationship Management at UCD

This institutional approach...

...is based in University College Dublin.

...was developed in-house.

...allows for the tracking of student interactions with services, with a view to improving efficiencies and enhancing student experiences.

...helps to inform institutional decision making regarding resource deployment.

Identified Need

The management of student queries can be a difficult area to control. Prior to there being a student relationship management system in place, the Administrative Services Unit in UCD did not typically keep a record of interactions with students who presented with queries about the academic administrative supports in areas such as registration or fees. Staff within the Unit wanted to ensure that students experienced the best possible service and that as many of their queries as possible could be dealt with by a single point of contact. They also wished to be well positioned to make informed, evidence-based decisions about how support resources could be most effectively deployed to support students.

Solution

The team concluded that their needs would be best served by a single system, modelled on customer relations management (CRM) platforms, that could record and track student queries and interactions. They anticipated that this approach would enhance the service to students, allow staff to better understand student requirements and allow decisions to be better informed by reliable data. Unishare, a bespoke student relationship management system, was therefore designed and developed by an internal project team, requiring only existing institutional resources. Its use has become a part of the normal day-to-day operations of the Student Desk in UCD, typically recording approximately 50,000 interactions per year.



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Enablers and Challenges

Senior management support was a key enabler. The initiative was also facilitated by a strong, shared customer-service mindset. Having access to the technical expertise to develop the system was also an essential factor. Finally, consultation with stakeholders ensured that the tool was fit-for-purpose. Facilitating a mindset shift among users was a challenge. This required an effective communication plan to convey the benefits for staff and students and to emphasise that the function of the system was to augment, not to replace, face-to-face interactions. Consensus on the full functionality and data for inclusion was achieved through the close working relationship between the business owners and the IT department.

Advice

The advice from the project team to those interested in adopting a similar service is to ensure that the reasons for implementing a data-enabled approach are well understood and communicated. This is a key aspect of achieving the crucial co-operation of users. An authentically consultative approach that is informed by stakeholders from across the institution is also essential for the successful implementation of the system. The project team advise beginning with a pilot phase to iron out any issues before the platform is rolled out further across the campus. Finally, their advice is that it won't be perfect from the start, but to stick with it!

Further Information

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