“It was a pleasant surprise to receive the e-mail, I was expecting to have to make the first contact and am relieved UTas have taken the initiative.”

“Keep doing what you’re doing as it was clear, concise and a positive experience dealing with Louisa on the phone, making me feel encouraged and even more positive. I must say Louisa is very professional and her interpersonal skills are outstanding!”
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What is the Student Success Program?

The Student Success Program is a University-wide student engagement and retention initiative that focuses on direct contact by phone with all incoming students to assist in their orientation to university, and to particular groups of students identified as ‘at risk’ due to demographic factors or (more frequently) measures of disengagement or academic difficulty. This may include students who have lost confidence, become overwhelmed, stopped participating, missed an assessment due date or failed an assessment task. Some students may be either contemplating leaving university permanently or already withdrawn completely.

Student Success offers a peer-facilitated service, whereby a small team of trained students make contact with students by phone at key points of the semester to support them in their transition to university and provide proactive advice and referral.

The aims of the program are to:

- Welcome new students to the University
- Improve retention rates within and beyond first year
- Connect students to support and social networks
- Enhance early identification of and intervention with students at risk

Overview of the Program

The Student Success Program was initially trialled in Semester 2, 2013. Student Success provides an invaluable addition to Student Adviser activity through peak workload periods in which the team’s ability to contact students individually is limited. The type of support that is offered also contrasts that which can be offered by a staff member – peers can share their own experiences with the students and help normalise the process of engaging with University staff and support services.

The success of the initial trial led to the continuation of the project into 2014 where the number of units involved has increased. Each of the campaigns has been modified to reflect institutional needs and some new campaigns have been introduced. There has been a greater emphasis on working collaboratively with other key service areas in the Division of Students and Education such as TILT. The evolution of the project during 2014 has been strongly connected to a number of developments at the institutional level, including:

- Re-imagining how the University will focus on retention initiatives, including the better use of institutional data and reporting
- An emphasis on International student engagement and success
- Support and growth in the area of student employment and leadership
- An increasing number of academic staff interested in student analytics and exploring the opportunities to enhance teaching and learning practices through MyLO

The Student Success Program receives funding though the Student Services and Amenities Fee (SSAF). The funding has enabled the program to employ a part-time Program Coordinator and a team of student casuals throughout 2014.

Student Success Officers

Student Success Officers (SSOs) are responsible for providing proactive contact and referral by phone to students identified through each of the scheduled campaigns. Student Success Officers receive extensive training prior to the commencement of their role and ongoing
Professional development and debriefing opportunities. Training is closely aligned to that offered by similar programs at other Australian institutions, including Queensland University of Technology, Charles Sturt University and RMIT. Our practice is underpinned by The Five Senses of Success (Lizzio, 2006) model, where each interaction with a student is assessed against all five domains of success. This assists the Student Success Officer to ‘unpack’ the conversation and identify appropriate strategies and referral points for each individual regardless of the original intention behind the call.

Student Success Officers usually work weekdays between the hours of 2pm and 6pm, but also work outside semester timelines to conduct a number of pre-semester campaigns. SSOs send a follow-up email to students after successful contact had been made, thanking them for their time, confirming what was discussed and providing the student with details of referral points, websites, resources and forms, depending on the students’ needs and situation. Students who are not successfully contacted after two attempts are also sent an email letting them know why they were being contacted and offering support and information about useful contacts should they wish to speak to someone further. Often students will respond to this email thanking the team for the information or asking to be called back.

**Key Outcomes for 2014**

Evaluation of the Student Success Program in 2014 evidences the following successes, aligned with program aims:

- Student contact has been almost uniformly well received; scoring 4.39 and 4.6 out of 5 for quality of information provided and the feeling about the interaction respectively
- Qualitative feedback from students engaged by the program, where received, has been overwhelmingly positive. A selection of this feedback has been included at the end of this report.
- Anecdotal evidence from Unit Coordinators that for some students involved in unit-based campaigns, the call has helped to get them ‘over the line’ (further analysis of the data needs to be done to look at this further) or that fail grades have decreased since the program has been introduced.

**Overview of 2014 Campaigns**

Throughout 2014, Student Success designed and implemented a number of campaigns targeted at different student cohorts. For each campaign, Student Success Officers are provided with the contact lists of students, key referral points, important resources to direct students to and any other relevant information required. There is ongoing communication throughout each campaign between each of the relevant stakeholders (most often between the Program Coordinator, academic staff and members of the Student Advice team) and opportunities for SSOs to reflect on any issues they have recorded throughout the campaign. A summary of each of the 2014 campaigns is reflected in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Timing</th>
<th>Campaign</th>
<th>Target Cohort</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-semester - Week 4</td>
<td>Welcome to UTAS (Sem 1, 2, 5 &amp; 3)</td>
<td>First year undergraduate students commencing studies in Semester 3, 1, 2 &amp; 5 in 2014. This campaign also included first year students who arrived after the beginning of semester and were at-risk due to missing key pre-commencement milestones such as UniStart and Orientation.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Week 3 (Sem 1 only) | MyLO Engagement | First year students enrolled in targeted undergraduate units, who had not engaged with MyLO. This was a particularly significant at-risk indicator for students studying via distance.

Weeks 4 – 6 | Class Attendance | First year students enrolled in targeted undergraduate units who had missed multiple practicals or tutorials and were at-risk being ineligible to pass the unit.

Weeks 4-8 | Non-submission of Assessment Item | First year students enrolled in targeted undergraduate units who were identified as at-risk through non-submission of their first assessment task.

Weeks 6-11 | Failed Assessment | First year students enrolled in targeted undergraduate units who were identified as at risk by achieving <50% on their first assignment.

Week 5-8 | Probation | First year students who were placed on Academic Probation as a result of unsatisfactory course progression. These students had completed one or two semesters of study. This campaign also included undergraduate International and CALD students who were not in their first year.

Week 10 (Sem 1 only) | Cancelled Enrolment | Students who had had their enrolment cancelled due to the non-payment of fees or failure to submit an eCAF.

Week 3-6 (Sem 2 only) | International Students At-Risk | All International students who had failed one or more units in Semester 1, but had not been placed on academic Probation.

Week 12-13 | Distance Students | First year students in their first semester, who were studying via distance. Due to the isolation often experienced by distance students, they received a follow-up call prior to the end of the semester to enquire about their progress so far, talk them through exam arrangements and requirements and to reinforce awareness of the relevant support services and how to access them.

Week 12-13 | Ineligible to Sit Exam | First year students enrolled in targeted undergraduate units who were ineligible to sit the exam due to non-submission of assessment.

Of the campaigns, the Welcome to UTAS Campaign is our largest. Due to staffing and physical space constraints we are unable to reach every commencing student so students are prioritised due to factors such as lack of enrolment or late acceptance of offer to pick up those most vulnerable to difficulties. Table 2 illustrates the number of students who have been contacted successfully across each of the combined Semester 1 and 2 Campaigns.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2: 2014 Campaigns Success Rates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Weeks</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
International Student Engagement

In 2014, Student Success contacted 659 International students. The International Student Failed Units Campaign focused completely on International students who had failed one or more units in Semester 1, but had not been placed on Academic Probation (these were contacted separately in the Probation Campaign). As shown in Table 3, 210 students from all faculties and institutes were contacted during this campaign.

Table 3: Total number of students by faculty and number of successful calls

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Faculty</th>
<th>Successful</th>
<th>Not Successful</th>
<th>Phone Unavailable</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AMC</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SET</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TSBE</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>210</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of those students successfully contacted, the qualitative data evidenced a strong thread of isolation for students in this group. Some students commented that they were not aware of the type of support discussed on the phone and were appreciative that someone had taken the time to phone them and find out how their studies were progressing. Of those successfully contacted, the most common issues reported are illustrated in Figure 1 below.

![Areas of Difficulty Reported by Student](image_url)
Distance Student Engagement

The Student Success Program was particularly well received by distance students for whom engagement with the university environment is often restricted to MyLO and other online learning resources. This style of interaction can sometimes lead to feelings of isolation. Many students who were contacted by phone were going well with their studies and reported no issues, but commented on what a good change it was to speak to someone from the University on the phone. In 2014, 490 Distance students were contacted and provided with support and information relevant to their needs. A collection of the qualitative feedback from this cohort can be found at the end of this report. Of those contacted successfully in Semester 2, a summary of the issues reported are in Figure 2 below.

![Issues Affecting Distance Students](image)

Figure 2: Issues affecting distance students

Unit Specific Campaigns

Unit-specific campaigns are currently our best predictor of risk and disengagement. As shown in Table 4 and 5, a total of 26 units were involved in the program in 2014.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unit</th>
<th>Campus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BFA103 – Accounting and Financial Decision Making</td>
<td>H, L, W, D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BMA101 – Introduction to Management</td>
<td>H, L, W, D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CNA116 – Introduction to Nursing</td>
<td>H, L, R, V</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CNA126 – Health Care Where People Live and Work</td>
<td>H, L, W, R, V</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSA155 – Pharmaceutical Science and Practice 1A</td>
<td>H</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CXA171 – Cell Biology</td>
<td>L</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESH120 – Personal and Professional Numeracy</td>
<td>L, W, D</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Another 3 units – BEA140, ESH120 and CNA145 – were involved in Semester 5 in conjunction with the MyLO Gradebook trial. This data is not included in this report. As the Program expands and our data capabilities are improved, unit-based campaigns will be our biggest area of growth. The ability to track risk and measure retention will be most relevant to these campaigns.

**Looking Forward: 2015**

The collaboration between academic staff, Student Advisers, the program team and the broader Student Centre service areas has been pivotal to the success of the program in 2014. The program has continued to refine and expand its referral practices, including the increased monitoring of Aboriginal students in collaboration with staff at the Riawunna Centre. This collaboration was instrumental in identifying a number of students who needed to modify their
study arrangements (accessing a LAP, re-locating, accessing ITAS tutoring) for a better chance of succeeding in their studies. We look forward to continuing this partnership in 2015.

The collection and evaluation of data across a range of relatively disconnected institutional sources has been a significant challenge that will need to be overcome. The largest weakness of the program is the lack of staff time and resources available to analyse and report on the data that has been collected over the past year. It is expected that there will be improvements and developments to this process in 2015. The full implementation of the new Student Management system and provision of a strong Business Intelligence (BI) capacity, coupled with the introduction of a University-wide Customer Relationship Management (CRM) should help remove duplication, but also enhance our interactions with students and contribute positively to the student experience. Employment of a dedicated data and reporting professional within this space will provide an opportunity to report more comprehensively on issues experienced by students and also the retention rates of those students who have been engaged by the team.

**Recommendations**

1. Engage more first year unit coordinators across the University of Tasmania
   - Establish unit-based reports for each Unit Coordinator to provide timely feedback on student engagement with the unit
   - Further develop relationships with first year unit coordinators and increase the number of unit-based campaigns
2. Promote the Program more widely within the university community
   - Create a website for to showcase the student leaders employed by the Program, provide access to reports to staff and clearly demonstrate to current students the purpose of the Program
   - Promote student employment opportunities more widely and increase the level of collaboration with other student employment and leadership programs such as PASS, CFNP and VCLA.
3. Identify improvements in data collection and analysis methods
   - Facilitate the implementation of the CRM
   - Work with the Business Intelligence group to enhance the use of university data for student interventions
   - Engage the services of dedicated data and reporting personnel
4. Increase the number of International, Indigenous and CALD students engaged
   - Formulate strategies for influencing the recording up to date student contact details in university systems to increase the chances of a successful phone contact
   - Engage the services of dedicated data and reporting personnel

**References**

Student Feedback

“The information provided is on time & very helpful & easy to access, I am really happy that our Uni have such a great support team with us and I will definitely get help from them if there is any question or help of study I need. Thank you. “

“I was very impressed by receiving a phone call from Kim to welcome me to UTAS and find out how I was doing with settling in to my studies and navigating the system. As mine was a late enrolment I found this interaction extremely useful and encouraging. Thank you to all involved and my early impression of UTAS in general is excellent. I am looking forward to studying the BBehSc and am impressed with the teaching staff and course structure. I trust it will be a very rewarding experience. “

“Keep doing what you’re doing as it was clear, concise and a positive experience dealing with Louisa on the phone, making me feel encouraged and even more positive. I must say Louisa is very professional and her interpersonal skills are outstanding! “

“I have been provided with links to great information, which I did not know existed! All services provided through UTAS are certainly way above than I expected, so I do not think any improvements need to be made. “

“Tsionawit was lovely to talk to and she managed to answer all the questions I had. i am very happy with the service that she gave. “

“It’s great that there are so many helpful people for first year students! It makes it less stressful :)”

“I was impressed by how even after trying to call me, an email was sent :)”

“Excellent to be contact prior to the start of Uni to make sure all that has to be done is being done. Good to be contacted personally. Looking forward to the start of Uni.”

“I think the Student Success project is a very good idea. It has made me feel more comfortable and my transition into Uni easier. I really appreciate it.”

“It was a very helpful and easy process to take part in. Thank you very much for this service.”

“This is a really good opportunity to develop study skills. You are doing excellent.”

“Thank you it’s wonderful to know someone cares!”

“Elleke’s email was lovely, well written and very friendly. As someone with an anxiety disorder, it was full of useful information, given in a calm and soothing manner. Keep up the wonderful work Elleke, and thank you so much for welcoming me to my studies!”

“Super helpful! Friendly phone call, immediate email with the right information that I need. Definitely has encouraged me to get further assistance with my studies for this unit, very pleased with the service.”

“Fantastic and supportive phone service and follow-up emails; very glad to have student support like this.”
“Thank you for the call - as a distance student, I appreciate being able to have my questions answered at various points along the way & then receive the detailed follow up email directing me to various resources.”

“I think it's really good that UTAS takes the time to call their students. Well done!!”

“Thanks for the great support that is available for Distance students!”

“So far all the interactions and feedback have been very positive. A good experience so far!”

“It was lovely to get a phone call to make sure - as a first time Uni student - that I wasn’t struggling with navigating the UTAS website, MyLO or having any other issue. Being in a customer-focussed work environment I was very impressed with the follow-up contact and felt it was terrific Customer Care.”

“It’s a great idea, having someone from Uni ring you. Thanks.”

“It was a nice surprise to receive the call, Louisa was very cheerful and helpful.”

“Loved my phone call today, what a brilliant idea! It gave me the confidence to not give up. What a wonderful ambassador you have in Bess, a pure delight to talk to.”

“Was surprised to receive a telephone call - much appreciated. Made to feel included and not just a number participating in the unit - thank you.”

“Knowing the University of Tasmania are active in ensuring students are aware of services to support their studies is fantastic! Thank you for the contact.”

Hollie Greeves
Student Success Program Coordinator
March 2015
Further Information

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