Eliminating internal silos and focusing on student success at Central Arizona College

Automation of clerical workloads—and centralizing them into one student information system—has brought registration and financial aid teams together, giving them the bandwidth to become advisors for their learners.

Central Arizona College (CAC) has been serving the diverse communities of Pinal County since 1969. From students of Hispanic and Native American descent to participants in their lifelong learners program, the college community values innovation, continuous improvement, and the contribution of the individual.

With five campuses and three centers located strategically throughout the rural county, CAC provides accessible, educational, economic, cultural, and personal growth opportunities for learners of all ages.

ABOUT CENTRAL ARIZONA COLLEGE

INSTITUTION TYPE:
TWO-YEAR PUBLIC

LOCATIONS:
CAMPUSES IN COOLIDGE, WINKELMAN, MARICOPA, APACHE JUNCTION, AND SAN TAN VALLEY, ARIZONA

POPULATION: 5,250

ANTHOLOGY PRODUCTS:

Anthology **Student**

Blackboard LEARN

Anthology **Reach**

Anthology **Finance & HCM**

Anthology **Payroll**

The Challenges

Prior to implementing Anthology® Student, CAC had separate teams operating on separate systems for admissions, registration, and financial aid.

The existing processes and systems in place for these teams created barriers to their ability to work together, dragging out tasks and creating unnecessary back-and-forth across departments. Because the teams did not have organic opportunities to collaborate, they had to go out of their way to create the best possible outcomes for their learners, rendering that important work frustratingly inefficient.

"In our legacy system, before switching over to Anthology, the limitation was that we were siloed in our different departments and divisions. We had financial aid doing their processing, we had student services doing their processing, and academics doing their processing. None of us were working together."

-Veronica Duran, *Registrar, Central Arizona College*

The Solutions

In 2017, CAC implemented Anthology Student, which centralized their enrollment management, curriculum management, course scheduling, academic records, student progress monitoring, and degree processing. The automation of financial aid processes, the increased ease with which learners could now self-register for their courses, and the extensive transparency between teams, became a game-changer for CAC's administration.

During implementation, Anthology developed a customized scheduling system for CAC's administrative teams. But shortly after the go-live of Student, they received feedback that faculty desired different functionality. Anthology immediately convened a meeting with faculty to develop a clear understanding of what they needed. Following those meetings, Anthology took this faculty input and, going a step further, gathered feedback from faculty at other customer institutions as well. A new scheduling system that integrated all the collected customer input was launched for Student.

"Any time we have ideas, Anthology has been open to taking in those ideas and working with us to implement them, to make changes within the system. They've been a great supporter of our college."

-Veronica Duran, *Registrar, Central Arizona College*

Insights Delivered

Freeing up more time to advise learners: Processes that were previously heavily manual or conducted in a time-consuming legacy system have now been automated, allowing administrators to shed countless hours of processing time. It lets them focus on imparting their specialized knowledge to learners. Financial aid automation has significantly reduced the paperwork load of the financial aid staff, giving them the time they need to focus on improving the financial literacy of their learners.

Anthology Student allows staff within different departments to come together and truly focus on what is going to benefit the learner most. Registration staff and admissions staff are now working more closely with financial aid staff to ensure changes to a learner's program will benefit that learner across both areas. Student is leveraged by previously distinct administrative teams to work collaboratively—and to allow learners to do more for themselves.

> "We can now work closely together by building out a system that has helped both financial aid and student services come together and automate our processes," added Duran. "It allows our students to have a better learning environment."

11X
increase

An 11X increase in learner self-service: Before implementing Student, registration staff spent the majority of their time manually tracking and managing learner course schedules and degree progress. At that time, less than 4% of learners were self-sufficient in handling their own course registration. Over the past five years, CAC has seen that percentage increase to 44% of learners utilizing the self-service option through the student portal in the system.

This drastic increase in learner self-service has allowed the registration and enrollment staff to focus their attention on the progress of learners through their degree programs. Having a streamlined, automated software system working for them has created an environment where time, once taken up by clerical duties and records management, is now dedicated to keeping learners on track. Student has made it possible for this team to truly redirect their energy toward ensuring learner progress toward graduation.
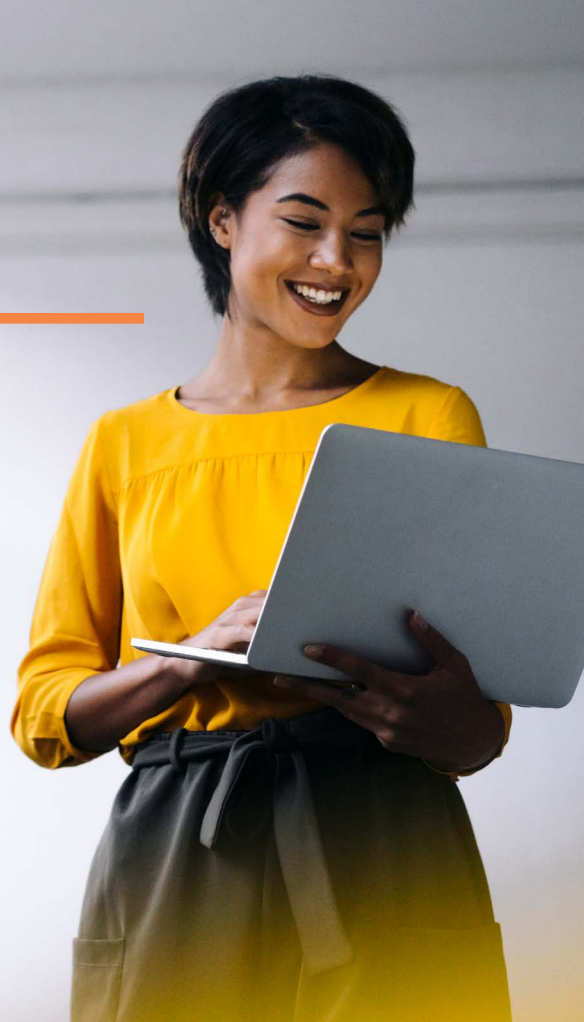
Providing a clear path to degree completion

The feedback from learners at CAC has been overwhelmingly positive. They can access their portal to view a dashboard clearly displaying degree progress and financial aid award status, and it allows them to navigate their studies themselves.

Administration reports that learners enjoy having the ability to go from start to finish in their studies with minimal help—reaching out only occasionally with questions. The streamlined processes in the system provide learners with the kind of independent technological experience that they want and expect.

But perhaps the most valuable feature for learners is the Degree Progress Audit, where they can see their progress through their program of study. CAC's student advisors report the "smiles on students' faces" as they progress and can visualize what they need to do to complete a degree or certificate. For so many learners, that's a big deal.

What's Next

A long-term goal of CAC is to engage faculty in proactively leveraging data from Anthology's products—specifically in the realm of student success.

For instance, when a learner has stopped participating in classes, that information is flagged for faculty.

"Something we're really looking forward to as a next step," said Duran, **"[is] getting our faculty more involved in the success of the students."**

This level of data creates an environment where faculty and staff can collaboratively reach out to their learners as individuals and become aware of personal circumstances where academic tutoring or financial resources can help them stay on track.

These are circumstances that may have been missed opportunities in the past to help learners keep their degree on track and graduate—if the institution had had real-time access to this type of information, and the ability to collaborate easily across departments.

A True Partnership

More than five years after implementing Student, CAC enjoys the same level of support and attentiveness from Anthology now as they did on day one. And the institution is excited to see what the continued partnership will bring.

"You feel like Anthology is really there to help support the institutions. We're the ones that are working with the students and dealing with their day-to-day. Anthology is really there to help you do that."

Hear more from Veronica Duran at
anthology.com/central-arizona-college

Products highlighted in this success story:

Anthology Student

Learn more at **anthology.com.**

anthology
Advancing Knowledge