



Karl Konsdorf
Analytics and Reporting Manager

SAS® HELPS SINCLAIR INCREASE ENROLLMENT

Sinclair Community College in Dayton, OH, is a popular choice for young people entering college for the first time and adults returning to school. When population growth in Dayton leveled off and the school was on the verge of a 14 percent drop in students, school officials used SAS to identify the most promising enrollees. The result: Enrollment actually improved by 15 percent.

Business Issue

Sinclair Community College needed to improve enrollment and retention; market more effectively; and help struggling students graduate.

Solution

SAS® empowers the college's Business Intelligence Competency Center, which was established to be the school's single source of data-driven decision making. The enterprise-wide initiative supports more than 50 departments to analyze data gathered by the college's ERP system. College officials have built statistical models that help them understand which students are most likely to enroll, be successful or drop out.

Benefits

Using SAS® to analyze student data, the college was able to turn a possible 14 percent enrollment drop into a 1 percent enrollment increase in a matter of weeks – an improvement of nearly 15 percent.

Systems

Sinclair uses HP hardware and the ERP system Datatel Colleague System.

One of the top-12 two-year institutions in North America, Sinclair Community College already has 24,000 students and one of the highest penetration rates of any community college in Ohio. But like most community colleges, it strives to improve retention and graduation rates. That's not an easy task when nearly half its students are low-income workers who hold down full-time jobs, and more than half need remedial help.

Couple those challenges with flat funding, and Sinclair concluded it needed to analyze its own data to serve current and potential students even better. Sinclair chose SAS for data analysis because it can be used without programming knowledge or help from IT. In fact, Sinclair created a Business Intelligence Competency Center by merging a data integration team with an analytics and reporting team. The center was created to be the school's single source of decision-support information.

First increase in years

With SAS, Sinclair saw fall-term enrollment increase by 1 percent over the previous year – the first time in four years that enrollment increased in the fall. "We are always looking for better ways to serve our students and help them reach their educational goals," says Karl Konsdorf, the college's Analytics and Reporting Manager. "Using knowledge we gained with SAS about our prospective students, we hope to see an increase for a second straight year."

Enrolling more students helps the college meet its fiscal needs, especially since state funding can change from

year to year. "Also, Ohio has one of the lowest college attainment rates in the United States," Konsdorf says. "Increased enrollment will help the state meet its goal of improving the college attainment rate of its citizens."

Portraits of success

One of Sinclair's first goals with SAS was to understand what factors make a student successful. With the help of SAS Consulting, Sinclair was able to mine 10 years' worth of student data, including age, gender, GPA, graduation rate, field of study and marital status. Using data mining, the students were divided into clusters of populations. Sinclair compares existing students to these clusters to understand their likelihood of success.

For instance, 50 percent of single women under 28 enrolled in the healthcare field will get a degree. The college then further studies the half who succeeded in order to understand the trends and behaviors that led to their success. Had career counseling identified them as well-suited for health care? Did they need remedial courses?



"It takes about seven years, on average, for someone to graduate. With data analysis, we can find out why it is taking that long, and then we can predict which factors contribute to more timely graduation so that we can help

“No other software has the power and capability to provide us the insights that we get from SAS.”

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Analytics and Reporting Manager
Sinclair Community College

students graduate faster,” says Dr. Ken Moore, Sinclair’s Senior Vice President.

The college also uses SAS for an “early alert system.” Professors alert counselors to struggling students. The counselors can now see students’ profiles and predict what needs to be done that has been effective with that “similar type of student model” in the past to make them more successful. That guides advisors in offering assistance and makes their jobs much more effective and on target. For example, students who enroll but fit a model that suggests they are likely to struggle receive more guidance counseling to help them navigate the college experience. Sinclair is a participant in the “Achieving the Dream: Community Colleges Count” program to increase community college success rates.

The cluster project’s biggest success occurred last year before fall term. After years of growth, Sinclair enrollment had leveled off as the Dayton area lost population because of the ailing auto industry. Last July, it looked like enrollment was going to be down. Using SAS, students who were most likely to enroll were identified. With six weeks to go, enrollment was down 14 percent from the year before. Then counselors, department heads and teachers began calling those students – both enrolled and admitted – and helped them work through whatever issue had kept them from signing up for classes. By the end of the “Success Squad” push, the college saw an improvement of 1 percent over the previous year for fall term enroll-

ment. “Now we’re planning to make it an every-term occurrence,” Moore says.

“One student success factor that we found using SAS – particularly for students who juggle jobs and children – is offering the right courses at the right locations and at the right times,” Moore says.

In the past, the school scheduled classes based on gut instinct and often had to cancel under-enrolled classes after registration or turn away students from over-enrolled courses. “We aren’t canceling classes anymore,” Moore says. “We know ahead of time which sections are going to grow, and our chairs are able to find faculty so that we don’t have to worry about accommodating students.”

The college also looked at who applies versus who enrolls. “This helps us choose where to spend our limited marketing and counseling dollars,” Moore says.

Community college education is considered critical to Ohio’s ability to attract and retain employers. “I visited an assembly plant, and they told us that within five years every person at the plant would need to have at least an associate degree,” Moore says. The state is also pushing for more people to enroll in community college.

Sinclair prefers ease of use

Before choosing SAS, Sinclair was trying to analyze data with another provider. But the



Dr. Ken Moore
Senior Vice President
Sinclair Community College

college wasn’t getting answers to questions such as:

- Which students are most likely to enroll, drop out or graduate?
- Which intervention will work best for a particular student segment?
- Which courses will be the most requested?
- Which services will help students graduate sooner?

“Before SAS, our internal research group had to rely on IT to write custom applications to extract data,” Konsdorf says. “With other vendors, we couldn’t scale it out or deploy to the entire enterprise. Other products just helped us look at what happened – not what is going to happen.”

Sinclair is so pleased with its SAS experience that it is adding a scorecard to track strategic performance. “I don’t think there is any end to what you can achieve with SAS,” Moore says.



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TO KNOW.**

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