**HOLYOKE
COMMUNITY
COLLEGE**

CASE STUDY

Helping students transfer with clear guided pathways

How Holyoke Community College used Ellucian Degree Works to simplify transcript processes

Located north of Springfield, Massachusetts, Holyoke Community College (HCC) is a mid-sized, two-year institution within the Massachusetts Community College System. It is a designated Hispanic-Serving Institution with more than 25 percent Hispanic student enrollment.

HCC participates in the MassTransfer A2B Pathways program, which provides pathways for Massachusetts community college students to transfer to a state university or University of Massachusetts campus. The pathways are preapproved courses within a degree field that are guaranteed to transfer, reducing the time and expense of earning a degree.

"We lead the community colleges in this part of the state in transfer to both state and private universities," said Christine Holbrook, registrar, Holyoke Community College.

Enrollment
10,749 (2018)

A Hispanic-Serving Institution, Holyoke Community College in Massachusetts offers 100 degree and certificate programs.

Challenge
Audit 25 transfer pathways and report the results on the transcript in a user-friendly way

Solution
Ellucian Degree Works
Ellucian Banner

Results
Reduced manual processes and simplified the pathways audit process for students and staff

Saved 175 hours of manual work

Evaluating all pathways using a single what-if audit

The Massachusetts Department of Higher Education mandates that community colleges evaluate students for all pathways for which they qualify and report the results on the official transcript. This helps admissions officials at the university level clearly see the degree paths student are on and helps students transfer seamlessly with their credits accepted.

Auditing for 25 pathways and displaying the results in a user-friendly way for students and advisors presented a challenge for HCC. Students do not declare their pathway. So, the transfer coordinator had to manually review and hand-stamp each transcript in order to comply with the mandate. This was time-consuming and unwieldy given that HCC processes 2,100 transcripts each year. They needed a better way.

HCC compared notes with other community colleges but did not find an approach that would work for them. They did not want to create extra work and further complicate the process by attaching a physical letter to the transcript that noted completed pathways. So, they decided to leverage the technology they already had—Ellucian Degree Works™, a comprehensive academic advising, transfer articulation, and degree audit solution.

One audit for all pathways

Since HCC was already using Degree Works to indicate when students met general education requirements, the solution seemed like a logical starting point for the pathways project. HCC assembled a team from Student Records, Advising, and IT to determine how best to leverage the solution to meet the state's mandate and enhance the information provided to students, advisors, and state universities. They wanted the Registrar's office to maintain control of the process and they wanted to increase student awareness of A2B Pathways and the opportunities they represent.

HCC accomplished this by adding a MassTransfer block, a section of the student worksheet that evaluates all pathways for completion using a single what-if degree audit. When the audit is run, the results clearly display all pathways, their required courses, and the student's progress. Students and advisors can run the pathways audit anytime and check progress as they plan a course toward their target university.

"Giving students and advisors the ability to quickly audit for the pathways is invaluable in helping them tailor course selections to the university bachelor program of the students' choice," said Holbrook.

After each term, the Registrar runs the audit for 6,000 students and a script to update the Ellucian Banner® enterprise resource planning (ERP) system with the pathways completed. The results are noted on the transcript under Academic Achievements.

Saving time leads to greater transfer success

Shortly after HCC sent out the first round of notated transcripts, an Admissions official from a state university remarked on how clear and prominent the A2B Pathways notations were on HCC's transcripts. Other community colleges included a separate attachment rather than noting the pathways on the transcript itself.

"We are very pleased that our transcript is easy for university admissions personnel to interpret," said Holbrook, "and to know that this technical collaboration between IT and Student Records is having a positive impact for our graduates heading to in-state universities."

For students and staff, there is less paperwork involved in the process and the information provided is easy for everyone to understand. Students can see which pathways they are in the process of completing and work with their advisors to complete them so they can transfer to the school of their choice.

The transfer coordinator has more time to work directly with students and universities to ensure transfer success. By eliminating manual processes, HCC saved 175 hours. The only manual work that remains is launching the what-if audit at the end of the term and executing the update script, both of which take little time.

This new process not only meets HCC's current needs but also lends itself to tracking and assessing additional academic achievements. HCC now audits for pathways in-progress (those that will be completed in the current term) and notes those on the transcript as well. This benefits students who transfer before earning a degree.

"In a more general sense, our institution is really looking for ways to better utilize human and electronic resources to streamline processing and have humans spend time on the things that really matter to have humans doing," said Holbrook. "And so, this fit into that theme of streamlining and becoming more efficient really nicely."

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