Academic Affairs
School of Business Administration

Reaching Out: Utilizing Technology to Enhance the Student Experience

End-of-Project Report
Project Description
Utilize technology in the School of Business Administration to enhance the undergraduate student experience: put systems in place to offer online advising and job counseling using video chats and create two promotional videos about the value of a business degree with a direct link to apply to SBA undergraduate programs.

Project Outcomes
- Production of three promotional videos about the value of a business degree for the SBA website including the use of web analytics that track video views and website hits.
- Creation of Standards of Practice (SOP) for distance advising including:
  a.) SOP for advisors - how to advise Online including Worksheet tools and technology use routines
  b.) SOP for students - how can students access Online appointments and what tools do they need to do so
- Execution of a student satisfaction survey measuring web page quality and advising availability/satisfaction

Project Lead
Becky Sanchez - Director, Undergraduate Programs Office, School of Business Administration

Project Team
- Nathanial Garrod, Degree Completion Specialist, School of Business Administration
- Saori Clark - Academic Advisor, School of Business Administration
- Haley Holmes - Academic Advisor, School of Business Administration
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- Weny Tang - Director of Marketing and Recruitment, Undergraduate Business Programs, School of Business Administration
- Keri McGee - Academic Advisor, School of Business Administration
- Ashley Storey- Academic advisor School of Business Administration

Project Sponsor(s)
- Scott Marshall - Associate Dean of Graduate Programs, School of Business Administration
- Erica Wagner - Associate Dean of Undergraduate Programs, School of Business Administration

Impact of Project
The undergraduate advising team was able to begin delivering and assessing the effectiveness of video appointments immediately and three marketing videos were created to send to prospective students and eventually post on the SBA website.

The addition of laptops in the Undergraduate Programs Office resulted in our ability to bring technology and thus increase effectiveness of advising/recruiting at over 20 campus visit and
community college recruiting events. The cameras that were on the laptops and the addition of cameras to our desktops (via the SBA budget) enabled the Undergraduate Advisors to provide over 40 Skype or Google hangout appointments to students throughout the globe. We were able to provide a personal advising interaction to students who could otherwise not see an advisor face to face. This resulted in greater connections made between advisee and advisor and enabled advisors to read students to better to gauge understanding. A standard of practice was developed for delivering appointments via video chat and this will be shared with the PSU campus for advisors from other units to use as they develop their own systems and practices with regard to distance advising. The SOP for students was created in email format that is sent to the students.

The marketing videos will help with our recruitment efforts and will give the SBA website a more modern feel. The student exit survey on advising and web/email communication satisfaction will give the Undergraduate Program feedback on areas for improvement on a regular basis.

Project Deliverables

- Three videos were created or use in marketing materials and on the web.
- Guidelines were created to help advisors provide effective video appointments (standards of practice).
- An email template with instructions was created for students to assist them with engaging in effective video appointments.
- An exit survey was created that included a component about communication (web/email) and advising satisfaction. This survey was first administered at the end of spring term 2014 and will be utilized each term going forward.

Project Sustainability

The systems we put in place are mostly sustainable on their own with the exception of technology.

The exit survey will be distributed to graduates every term by PSU’s Office of Institutional Research and Planning (OIRP) going forward and the data is collected and organized within OIRP.

Appointment protocol for distance advising is in place, advertised on our website and utilized on a regular basis. The best practices document for what works in video advising is constantly being updated and refined within our office and I expect other offices will discuss on a regular basis what works and does not so as to continually improve the service they provide.

The laptops used for recruiting events will eventually become out of date which will require a reinvestment in technology for the Undergraduate Programs Office by the SBA. This reinvestment need should be at least five years away.

The videos we created should be usable for the next three to five years. We may want to plan/budget for the development of updated videos in 2017.
Lessons Learned
Distance Advising:
It is a whole new world for more students than we expected: Many students are also new to communicating via Skype/Google Hangout and can use some encouragement to connect with us in that way.
Appearance matters: Students are evaluating the University, advisor and department based on not only what they hear but now also by what they see behind you and in your facial expressions. Take the time to make a clear, friendly and uncluttered first impression.
Communicate ahead of time: Students need clear communication before the appointment about how to be prepared for their meeting. We tell students the following things: have a solid internet connection, run your Degree Audit Reporting System (DARS) or review the DARS that is emailed to you, have a list of your questions and paper and pen to take notes about the appointment.
It is more about them than you: Engage more with the student by looking at the camera rather than looking at them on the screen. If you are looking at the camera you appear to be looking at them. When they are talking, you can glance down at your screen but when you are talking you should primarily be looking at the camera so they begin to feel more connected to you as their advisor.

Marketing Video Creation:
Find great talent – Begin to watch for prospective stars now in your advising appointments - those students who gush about their experience at PSU and you feel would represent PSU and your department in the best light.
Plan your timeline then double it - Allow twice the time you think it will take to shoot and edit the videos.

Organization of Provost’s Challenge
Project management was extraordinarily helpful. My only suggestion would be to give project leads more advance notice/reminders of upcoming necessary reports. Adding the reporting element to what the project lead must manage in their full time job may become difficult if reporting turnaround times are short.