

## **Target outcomes for 2022-2025 Retention from Primary to Secondary Term**

### **Measurements**

Outcome Year 1 '22-'23: Measure how many of our online students identify as African American and Latinx are connected to services to Foothill Connect.

- Through put referral
- Number of faculty using Foothill Connect

Outcome Year 2: By the end of the 23-24 AY, increase number of Math faculty using Foothill Connect by 15%

Outcome Year 3: Increase African American and Latinx online students (defined as taking at least one online class) connected to services through Foothill Connect by 10%.

### **Structure Evaluation: Friction Points**

#### **Friction Points: Current Structure**

Our main student friction point is the underutilization of campus support resources by our disproportionately impacted students. This underutilization is more pronounced with our disproportionately impacted students in fully online classes.

The Early Alert/Owl Scholars Program was created in 2015 to address the equity gap by offering wraparound support (examples: tutoring, academic coaching, mental health counseling, financial aid, etc.) in the foundational classes in Math, English, and ESLL.

Just prior to Fall 2017, Foothill was invited to participate in the second phase of a statewide initiative implemented by the State Chancellor's Office to adopt the Starfish software platform to assist in our referral and retention efforts. Foothill joined this initiative, and Starfish became the primary form of referral and retention services reporting for the Owl Scholars program. At this time, Starfish was only offered in the Foundational classes.

When AB 705 was implemented in the 2018-19 academic year, Owl Scholars moved into the college level classes in Math, English, and ESLL. Only these specific classes had access to Starfish and Early Alert/Owl Scholars services. Starting Fall 2019, the Starfish platform was then made available to **all** Foothill classes through My Portal, but Owl Scholars/Early Alert continued to operate primarily in Math, English, and ESLL. Few faculty outside these departments were aware of this change and therefore did not know the Starfish referral system was available to them.

To address the lack of awareness of Starfish, in Spring 2022, Owl Scholars was rebranded as "The Office of Retention Services" and Starfish was rebranded as "Foothill Connect" to more accurately describe the goal of the office. A pilot program launched Spring 2022 in order to increase the integration of instruction and retention services through an increased utilization of Foothill Connect by faculty in all programs.

The focus on attracting faculty to use Foothill Connect so that they can refer students to support services is our main structural friction point. Many faculty are hesitant to adopt an additional tool which they view automates some of the strategies they use to increase course success. For example, many already reach out to their students to offer support if the student is disengaged in the classroom. They send encouraging emails or Canvas messages to the students who are doing well. However, the current faculty process is siloed to the individual instructor and does not show an aggregate view of how many students campus wide need services and to what extent. This information is vital if the campus is to develop a holistic retention program. Moreover, while the Foothill Connect software can send messages to students directly, faculty collaboration is essential in targeting students early in the quarter, when there are opportunities to retain students who are at risk of dropping a course or not attending the following quarter.

## **Structure Evaluation**

### **Current Structure**

To increase retention from the primary term to the secondary term, we are focusing on increasing student utilization of campus support services by expanding the Foothill Connect program targeting African American and Latinx students who are exclusively online, which is Issue 10 Goal 4 of the Strategic Vision for Equity plan.

We believe that if students access the array of support services on campus, they will feel a greater sense of connection to the campus. A sense of belonging has been shown to increase retention. Moreover, student access of support services would ideally provide them the course success strategies and help the student understand course content all leading to improved course success.

Currently, students can access an array of support services both on campus and online. These services are often presented in an uncoordinated, highly distributed fashion, leaving many students unclear of what services are most appropriate, and faculty confused about how to connect students to these resources.

Using the Foothill Connect tool can assist both faculty and students by providing a hub of support to faculty, staff, and students.

Over the years, we've recruited several of our programs and services to use Foothill Connect including the TLC, STEM Center, Pass the Torch, and Financial Aid. It is now their preferred referral system. Athletics, EOPS, Puente, and UMOJA have all utilized Foothill Connect to help track their students and have expressed interest in expanding the use of Foothill Connect. This feedback encourages us to scale up by increasing the number of faculty using the system and thus the number of students being referred to appropriate support services.

Encouragingly, Starfish Student Success Platform is an expansive tool with robust features that are meant to be implemented across campus. To date, Foothill has only utilized a small number of the features that are included in our current package so scaling up our services is not only possible but an ideal use of the software platform.

The main friction point in scaling operations can be gleaned from faculty feedback. Instructors have shared they are already tracking student information somewhere (personal grade-book, Canvas, etc). To reduce the “double work” the Starfish platform allows for Canvas integration to use system-raised flags without faculty having to re-enter information they’ve already been tracking. Faculty have requested this feature. Canvas integration would include a SSO link in Canvas and can connect with a courses’ gradebook to automatically raise alerts based on criteria we set (falling below a certain overall grade, low grade on a midterm, etc). Once implemented, instructors would have to opt into this feature. To restate, the goal of Canvas integration is more faculty engagement which translates into more student referrals to the Office of Retention Services.

### **Ideal Structure**

The Office of Retention Services, housed in the Counseling Division, is tasked with increasing the number of disproportionately impacted exclusively online students who use support services. To fully support the retention of our most underserved student populations, deeper integration of instruction and student services is needed. There are two ways this can happen. First, through the integration of Foothill Connect and Canvas, our learning management system. This will require partnership with the Office of Online Learning.

The second way to integrate instruction and student services is by actively engaging faculty who can provide timely and targeted students referrals and encouraging them to use the only tool the college currently has that can collect data on who needs what services and how much of those services they need. This data might inform how we direct our budget depending upon the services students are requesting.

A deeper integration of instruction and student services is needed more than ever now that Guided Pathways is implementing Meta Majors (on our campus it’s called CAPS: Career and Academic Pathways).

Foothill Connect is a hub for sharing and accessing critical information that community partners need in order to make resources and support available to students when the students need it most. This communication has a positive impact on students as it helps them become aware of and connected to vital campus resources that help promote their course success which aids in their retention. The use of Foothill Connect will allow instructional faculty and student services to increase their level of communication by serving as the hub for sharing information. As of now, when an instructor refers a student to a particular service through email, this communication remains between that individual instructor and the service. If the referral is made through Foothill Connect, the broader campus community in student services can also access that information to get a better understanding of student needs. This process will aid student services in getting the full picture of what services students need and help inform their processes.

Our hope is to increase the number of students who use support services, thus increasing the likelihood of course success, thus retaining more students from the primary to secondary term.

An area of value provided by Foothill Connect is the nationwide database of Foothill Connect schools and the interventions they used. One we identify the disproportionately impacted group of students and study their unique characteristics and needs, we can develop a more robust retention program taking their cultural needs into account.

## **Structure Evaluation: Necessary Transformation to Reach Ideal**

### **Necessary Transformation to Reach Ideal**

Foothill College has been working towards creating equitable outcomes in instruction and providing equitable services for years. In 2020, like most educational institutions, we went fully online. That tragedy of Covid expedited our need to provide services to online students and we met the challenge head on. Foothill now offers all tutoring, transfer help, career guidance, writing services and Counseling, both academic and psychological, virtually. This was one of our goals and we've met that goal.

Now that we offer these services online, we need to ensure students are aware of these services and help students access them. This is where faculty engagement is critical. As stated previously, faculty provide targeted and timely referrals that students interpret as faculty valuing them, caring about them, and personally wanting them to succeed. Mass communication informing students about services doesn't create that feeling of care and concern.

Foothill Connect will facilitate communication between faculty, students, and the Office of Retention while educating students on the services that will be most beneficial to them, as well as collecting valuable data on the types of services students need.

Not only do we want our services more accessible for our online students, we need to increase the number of students using the services. Currently, once students receive a referral, students have to schedule appointments with Counseling or tutoring (or any support service) on their own. Foothill Connect emails the student a "welcome email" and encourages students to use the service; however, some of the students who require these services most, might need an additional push. One way to do this is put resources towards in-reach. This can be specific personnel, whether faculty or staff, directly assigned to following up on referrals to the Office of Instruction. These individuals would provide the high touch services of directly calling students and helping them schedule appointments rather than solely providing them with the information of how to schedule appointments and assuming they will follow up.

While we work on increasing student usage of online services, we need to be intentional about how some of our disproportionately impacted groups perceive asking for help and design our intervention strategies that make some of the supports automatic rather than an extra step that a student needs to take.

## **Action**

### **Action Steps**

Framed by the guiding principles of ownership, assessment and sustainability, the Office of Equity has identified four approaches that will be used to ensure the college is moving current practices towards more equitable outcomes. Section leads will be identified, consisting of at least one administrator, paired with at least one faculty or staff colleague. Teams will act as points of contact for the various sub sections identified within Equity Plan 2.0 (i.e., Successful Enrollment, Completed Transfer-Level Math and English, Persistence: First Primary Term to Secondary Term, Transfer and Completion) and will work with various stakeholder groups to develop specific action plans that make intentional connections to the Strategic Vision for Equity plan. Action plans, created by the Office of Institutional Research and Planning, will help section leads to further flush out and identify resources, activities, milestones and collect evidence in pursuit of creating more equitable structures that support student success. Last, over the next three academic years (i.e., 2022-2023, 2023-2024 and 2024-2025) section leads will create follow up action plans. Plans will build off past actions and ensure we are closing the assessment cycle and applying new knowledge to future endeavors.

Promoting transparency and accountability, action plans will be hosted on the Office of Equity webpage (<https://foothill.edu/equity/>).