



# **Student Success – A Journey Best Taken Together (Early Alerts-Case Study)**

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# Presentation Overview

- Victoria University of Wellington
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- Student Academic Services Improvement Programme
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- What is Course Signals
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- Benefits
- What's Next



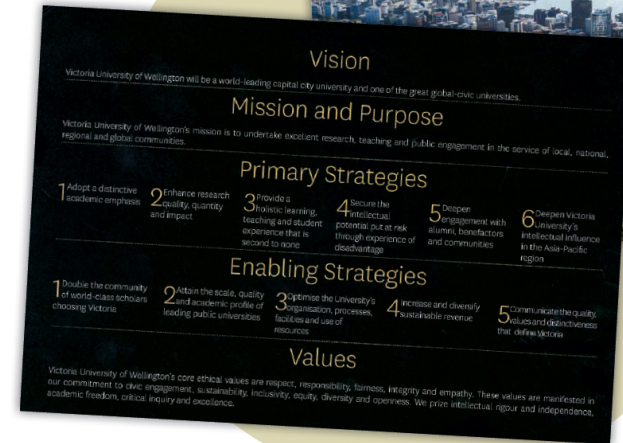


# Victoria University of Wellington

- 16,901 equivalent full-time students (EFTS)
- 21,201 headcount - 3,000 international students
- 4,902 qualifications awarded
- Top 1% of the world's 7,000 universities' law, humanities, social sciences and management disciplines
- Number 1 ranked University in New Zealand for research quality \$42.5m in external research revenue
- Over 90% students rate our services and facilities highly

# Our Strategic Plan

- Vision
- Mission
- Primary Strategies
- Enabling Strategies



Capital thinking. Globally minded.

# Our Strategic Context



## Primary Strategies

There are 6 primary strategies but will highlight 2

- Provide a holistic learning, teaching and student experience that is second to none
- Secure the intellectual potential put at risk through experience of disadvantage

# Our Strategic Context



## Enabling Strategies

There are 5 enabling strategies

- Attain the scale, quality and academic profile of leading public universities
- Optimise the university's organisation, processes, facilities and use of resources

# Student Services Improvement Programme



This is an exciting programme of work that supports the University's strategic goal of providing a holistic learning, teaching and student experience that is second to none

- It aims to provide staff with the tools they need to offer a connected and consistent experience for students from first point of contact through to graduation and beyond
- It also aims to provide students with the tools to manage their own learning journey
- enhance effective teaching, learning, research and support services to achieve successful academic outcomes for students



# Case Study

## Early Alerts (Course Signals) Project

The overarching objective for the pilot project was to determine how Course Signals could be used as an appropriate tool for the University to receive early alerts about potentially underperforming students

Additionally, the tool was used to encourage those students that were performing at a level of effort that would ensure successful completion

The importance of early intervention for students at academic risk is widely recognised as a part of managing retention

The introduction of an electronic early alert tool [Course Signals] to support key University initiatives around student retention and success was piloted in Trimester 1, and Trimester 2 2014

## Project Aims

- Determine how Course Signals can be configured to provide appropriate alerts for the University's environment
- Work collaboratively with the wider academic community
- Work collaboratively with Information Technology Services (ITS) and our Vendor Partner Ellucian
- Develop and document policies, practices and procedures for University-wide implementation
- Promote wider user interest and understanding
- Training and support
- Pilot - 21 courses in 2014

# What is Course Signals

- Ellucian Course Signals is built on a powerful predictive model developed by Purdue University. Launched at Purdue as a pilot program in 2007
- Alerts the student within their Blackboard course page through a traffic light signal:



Red High likelihood of failing the course



Yellow Potential problem with succeeding in a course



Green High likelihood of success in the course

- Automates email communication between academic staff & students and facilitates timely intervention
- Provides academic and support staff with student trend views

# The Algorithm

- Institutional defined settings for grade risk bands
- Course Grades + LMS activity = Signal
- Demographic data from SMS
- Academic preparation from SMS
- Risk expression

Course Coordinator can adjust grade risk bands, effort criteria and messages



# Pilot Evaluation

- Determine how Course Signals can be used by academic staff
- Statistical analysis and limitations
- Student questionnaire, staff feedback and interviews, and focus groups

## Findings

Overall the evaluation showed that Course Signals has potential to significantly improve student engagement and is an effective tool to identify students at academic risk, if it is used well



- The Business Owners and the project team noted the significant evidence that, for those students for whom it was effective, Course Signals made a positive difference
- Both course coordinators and students recognised that the system enhanced the sense of connectedness between course coordinators and students and it is considered a strength that it facilitates the engagement of academic staff with students and their progress
- Whilst the analysis of final grades in Trimester 1 was not compelling recent research into predictive analytics tells us that knowing a student is at risk is only part of the equation. Being able to respond to the needs of the student is just as important

## Student Questionnaire

- 51% were satisfied with the frequency: 43% felt they were not often enough
- 72% felt it was somewhat effective in helping to better understand their progress
- 57% were prompted to take some level of action
- 20% of students who took action as a result of receiving a signal indicated that they took actions that would be classified as enhancing learner autonomy
- Students who had received red and/or yellow signals were more likely to rate Course Signals as “extremely” or “very” effective

In Trimester 2, of those who sought help, 49% reported that they would not have done so had they not received a signal

## Staff Comments

‘Students felt that in a sea of thousands of students [they were] receiving a signal to say that someone cares and is monitoring their progress.’

*‘...I am sure that some of the students who contacted me would not have done so without this as a prompt.’*

‘I had the profile of the class at my fingertips. I felt connected to them.’

*‘The most important part is the message and to make sure they feel like it is tailored to them.’*

‘I think we got better attendance, better note taking and better engagement with the material’.



## Student comments

*'It really helped me in making an effort to engage with every lecture. When during the term if you are sick, or can't make a class, it forces you to engage with the lecture (even if it is just online), and keep up to date. I think it is really good.'*

*'I loved the signals I got for this course. It let me know how well I was doing in a simple way.'*

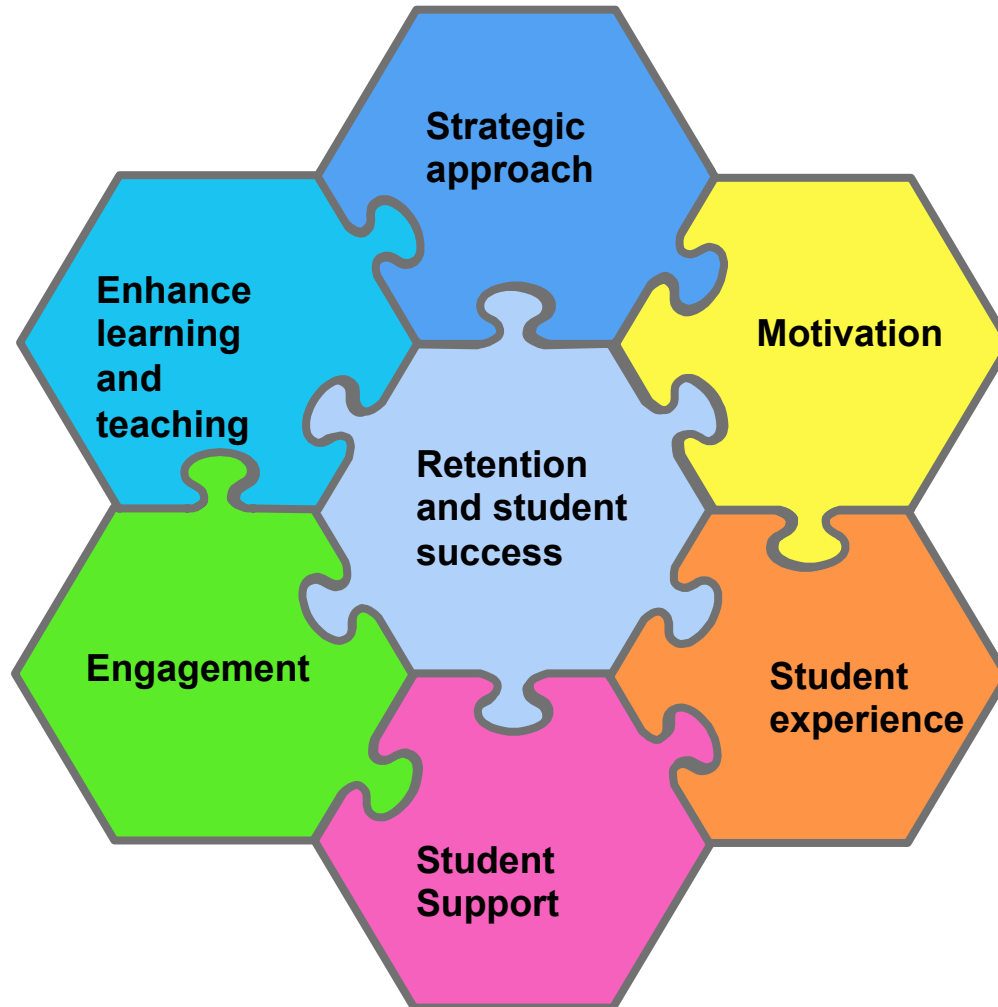
*'With the Course Signals, I was able to tell just how much extra effort I was supposed to put into my course to pass. This was very helpful, even though I did keep track of how I was doing, it felt like the course co-ordinator gave me an extra "pat on the head" so to speak.'*



# The Pilot Journey Continued

- We continued to run Course Signals over 2014 and into 2015
- Course Coordinators were interviewed at end of Trimester 2 and findings continued to be positive
- Provided an opportunity to make specific enhancements such as improved administrator views
- There was a large interest by academic staff to participate
- Courses have been chosen on a more strategic level

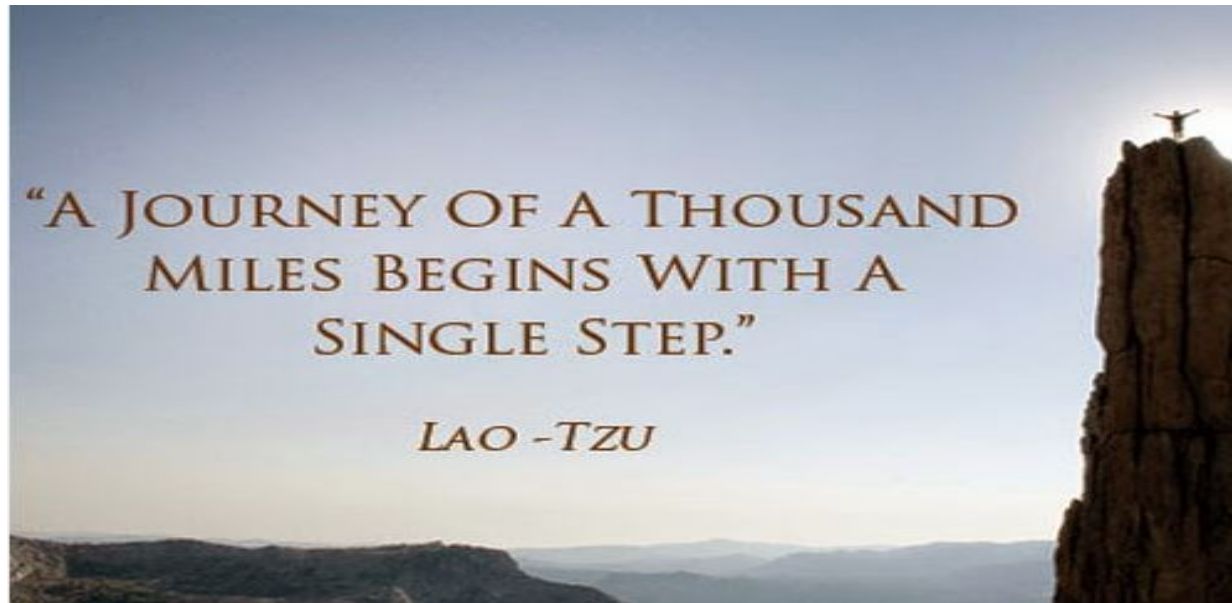
# Benefits



# What's Next

The Journey will continue throughout 2015-17 Victoria remains committed to an early alerts programme

We are exploring the next generation product for implementation in 2016-2017







# Questions?

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