

Mt. SAC Athletics Online Progress Check Process

Joe Jennum, July 9, 2015

The Mt. SAC Athletics Program has had a longstanding commitment to the academic success and matriculation of our student-athletes. These students often enter the college with deficiencies and challenges academically but have high levels of success in their respective sport. In an effort to identify issues within our student-athletes academic courses we have utilized a paper progress check process for years, in which the student-athletes hand carry a form to be filled out by each of their respective professors at various times within a semester.

While simplistic, this process had several deficiencies. First, the responsibility falling on the student-athlete to see the process through. Paperwork was lost, some courses were not completed for a number of reasons and thus the data was insufficient. Second, the process was very labor intensive to compile. It would take weeks for staff to pull all of the data into a format that faculty, counselors and administration could discern in a meaningful way, severely delaying the ability to intervene and effectively assist the students towards successful completion of the courses.

Approximately 3 years ago, in a yearly meeting with Dr. Scroggins, we discussed the concept of online progress check processes. At the time Dr. Scroggins recommended we look into Banner as a means of this process, as he was familiar with a similar function at College of the Sequoias. Unfortunately, IT was immersed in a number of Banner add-ons and was incapable of putting forth time and energy to assist with our needs. We investigated outside vendors who had created packaged programs that would work for our needs and tutoring and counseling follow up. Several two-year colleges were utilizing these programs but they also came with some issues. The systems needed access to student-athlete data within our Banner system and unfortunately, the institution was unwilling to allow this access for security and FERPA reasons. And, like many available after-market products, they were also very costly.

We broached the subject of online progress checks once again with IT and with the help of Bob Hughes and his staff, we utilized an existing module for counseling and tutoring referrals and created a workable process that would contact faculty, teaching courses with our student-athletes, identified through a cohort flag, and thus, notifying them of the need to provide feedback regarding the student-athletes progress in their class.

This past Fall and Spring we rolled out the online progress check process, after piloting over the Summer, and saw immediate benefits. First, were able to aggregate the data in almost a real time way. Within two days of the deadline we have had student-success workshops and academic success modules conducted by our team of counselors. This pushed our intervention up two to three weeks, a time when our student-athletes could benefit the most from the efforts. Second, faculty could address academic issues with our student-athletes on their time, in a convenient way through their portal. The issues of lost or incomplete paperwork has been a moot point, since all data and comments are submitted electronically, directly from faculty.

The only issue that we've encountered is reminding faculty to submit at the deadline. We have been working closely with Division Deans to follow up with faculty on this new process and have seen a significant improvement from Fall to Spring in submittals.

We look forward to continue to develop this process and once again thank IT and their staff for their efforts in providing a system that works for us and our needs.