



Prioritizing the Right System

Why Harper College's Division of Workforce Solutions is Bringing on a Tailor-Made System to Serve Non-Traditional Community College Students



Harper College



How Harper CE is leveraging Destiny One to take control of their future

Harper College is a two-year, community college in Palatine, IL—just half an hour from downtown Chicago. Their Division of Workforce Solutions (Harper CE) serves working adults looking for credentials to help them progress professionally. Harper CE includes continuing education, workforce development, community education, and contract training in addition to adult-focused credit programs.

However, despite the unique and specific needs of their student base, Harper CE was using processes and systems better suited to 18- to 22-year-olds to manage their students' experience.

“Most online enrollment registration systems in higher ed grew up around the physical structure of the college or university, and were built with an administrative focus in mind rather than the needs of the student,” said Mark Mrozinski, Assistant Vice President of Workforce Development and Executive Dean of Community Education at Harper College. “The student navigated the online system just as they would if they walked on campus and you sent them from one office to another to another. There was no continuity of service.”

This inconsistent model doesn't align with the style of service community colleges are providing students in person. Further, it absolutely doesn't fit the needs of adult learners who mostly engage with institutional administration online.

“Community colleges are shifting to a one-stop on-campus model for student services, because they realize the fallacy in making a student jump from department to department in search of answers,” said Mrozinski. “Prior to implementing Destiny One, that lesson hadn't carried over into Harper College's CE online environment.”

“Students expect a seamless online experience. They don't want to have to work between departments—they want to use a process that looks familiar based on their experiences with commercial sites,” he continued. “That was the experience we were looking for when we chose Destiny One.”

Crafted specifically for non-traditional education, Destiny One provides staff with the tools they need to efficiently manage all aspects of the learner lifecycle, including marketing, enrollment, curriculum, finance and more. The SLM software platform integrates with main-campus systems, engages students with an Amazon-like experience, optimizes staff efficiency, and provides business intelligence that empowers data-driven decision making.

Mrozinski and his team were looking first and foremost to deliver a seamless student experience that also allowed staff to spend less time mired in administrative tasks. Destiny One is helping to address their needs on both fronts: the student side and the staff side.

Transforming the Student Experience: Delivering Seamlessness and Ease

Modern students think and behave like customers—a shift many two-year colleges are still getting used to. Their expectations are built around a few central elements:

1. eCommerce market leaders like Amazon and Uber set the standard for the level of service today's consumers expect.
2. As online shopping becomes more popular, students expect at the very least to conduct their entire registration experience online.
3. With everything from banking to travel managed online, students expect self-service tools that allow them to complete administrative tasks online, on their own schedule and without barriers.

“As an online consumer myself, control and ease are what I expect,” said Mrozinski. “I'm often doing my shopping online at eleven o'clock at night. I'm often registering my children for events online. If I have to call a

Driving Family Enrollments and Improving Conference Management with Destiny One's Conference Manager Module



Harper CE doesn't just deliver workforce development programming to adults—they serve thousands of children and teens every year in programming designed for the K-12 audience. Finding a way to improve the experience of parents registering their children was a priority for Harper CE as they looked for a new system, and Destiny One's Conference Manager module was the perfect fit.

The Conference Manager allows for group and family registrations, taking the burden off busy parents as they try to sign their children up for programs through Harper CE.

"Imagine having four children and having to log in four different times to register your kids for the same program," said Mrozinski. "The Conference Manager is going to be an incredible problem solver for us, because it facilitates those group registrations."

Destiny One's Family Checkout allows parents or guardians to enroll multiple family members in offerings. Additionally, similar to the Student Portal, the Family Portal allows parents to edit their contact profile, view historical transactions, start and manage applications for their family, and more.

The Conference Manager will also be a significant help to Harper CE as they look to increase their margins on hosting academic conferences at the college while improving the experience they offer both to staff managing conferences and to attendees.

"We needed a system that would reduce the amount of labour involved in hosting the conference, by automating many of the processes that we were doing manually," said Mrozinski. "At the same time, we wanted to improve the registration experience for the person attending the conference by giving them a more self-supported experience. The Conference Manager module accomplishes those goals for us."

number or mail in a form, I'll likely drop it. If a system allows me to register conveniently, intuitively—and without a screen that tells me I need to call the office—I'm much more likely to use the service."

Ultimately, the reality for Mrozinski, Harper CE and all other colleges serving students in the non-credit space is that it's competitive and its customers are fickle.

"Our nightmare scenario is having a system that's cumbersome, because the student will go someplace else."

For Harper CE, two key elements compounded their need to deliver a world-class customer experience. First, the majority of the students they serve are adults who might not be technologically inclined. This means the product needed to be as easy to understand and use as possible.

"We were looking for a product that could push more students to use online registration exclusively," Mrozinski said. "Given that half of our student body is above the age of 38, that was a tall order. The product we had been using previously just wasn't intuitive enough for older learners, so many hadn't migrated online."

Secondly, since they offer short-term credentials, courses and other offerings designed for working adults, Harper CE tends to serve short-term training needs of students for just-in-time offerings. They're not serving students who enroll for a long, consecutive period of time.

"Our retention rate is about 40 percent from year to year. That's a lot of turnover in students, and it's part of a short-term training paradigm," Mrozinski said. "What that means for our work with Destiny One is that new students are constantly acquainting themselves with our online experience."

"Our students are constantly learning the system, so we need to offer them something intuitive, which they can easily navigate and which puts up few barriers," he continued. "Destiny One provides that, and I think it's key for Harper College moving forward."

When it comes to the impact Destiny One is having on Harper CE's capacity to deliver a seamless and intuitive student experience, Mrozinski focused on two key areas:

1. Simplifying the Registration Experience
2. Offering a World-Class Customer Experience

Simplifying the Registration Experience

Destiny One is designed around the needs and expectations of non-traditional students, allowing Harper CE to make its registration process intuitive.

"Adult learners have so many options for higher education. We're not the only provider of certification training," said Mrozinski. "The last thing that we wanted to happen was for a student to navigate to our site, run into a barrier as they try to register, and move to the next company in the Google search."

Destiny One's simplified registration process starts by allowing Harper CE staff to ensure students have access to as much accurate information as possible at all times. After all,

today's customers don't want to call an office to learn about an offering that interests them—they want to get all the information they need online and register on the spot.

Of course, information alone isn't enough to entice a student to enroll online—especially students who aren't technologically-inclined.

The Destiny One SLM provides an intuitive platform that makes registering for a course as easy as buying a book on Amazon. Students can add their desired courses to their online shopping cart, progress through a registration process that aligns with eCommerce best practices and pay securely online with a credit card (even applying whatever relevant discount codes they may have at checkout). What's more, if they add courses to their cart but wind up leaving without checking out, Destiny One will send the prospective student an automated email encouraging them to complete their purchase.

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“Destiny One's ability to offer an “Amazon” experience really was the stand-out,” said Mrozinski. “The student experience—giving them the intuitive, seamless online registration process that they rightly expect—was our number-one consideration.”

Offering a World-Class Customer Experience

Harper CE is leveraging Destiny One to deliver students a front-end experience that aligns with what they expect from market leaders like Amazon.

Once a student is enrolled, the expectation of a great experience doesn't end. If anything, students expect more from their institution once they choose to register there. In fact, all it takes for a student to leave an institution is [three administrative experiences](#) that fall short of their expectations.

Destiny One's innovative Student Portal plays a significant role in helping Harper CE deliver the intuitive customer experience their learners expect. The self-service portal allows students to engage with Harper CE on their own terms and manage their own experience. Rather than coming onto campus and waiting in line for service, students can perform most bureaucratic tasks simply and easily online, whether it's requesting transcripts, reviewing historical financial information, getting receipts and much, much more. They can also start and save applications (to submit when they're ready), drop courses and track their progress toward credentials, without having to rely on staff for help.

Ultimately, the great customer experience delivered through Destiny One allows Harper CE to keep their students satisfied and enrolled. It also means that when they need further education down the road, they're more likely to re-enroll with Harper. And this is easy for them to do, since they can simply log back into their Student Portal account to start the process again without having to re-enter all their information.

Transforming the Staff Experience: Improving Efficiency and Impact

It's impossible to deliver an Amazon-like experience on the front end without an infrastructure designed to support it. Unfortunately, many institutions wind up relying on superhuman staff effort to make manual processes seem automated and, eventually, students and tasks wind up falling through the cracks.

For Harper CE, the Destiny One SLM is making the staff experience more efficient. Not only does it reduce the number of manual processes staff have on their plates, since students can manage their own administrative experience it frees up staff to focus their time on the kind of high-value work that makes a significant difference to learners.

“We were looking for a platform that would reduce the amount of staff time spent in the system,” Mrozinski

said. “Our old system was cumbersome from a back-end perspective, and when we were considering Destiny One, it was clear that the platform would free up a lot of time for our staff. Rather than focusing on data entry, our staff will now be able to spend more time out of the system focusing on ways to add value to our students.”

Specifically, Destiny One is transforming Harper CE’s staff experience with two significant shifts:

1. Improving and Targeting Marketing Efforts
2. Accelerating and Streamlining Course Approvals

Improving and Targeting Marketing Efforts

By taking advantage of the data available in the Destiny One SLM, Harper CE is better able to market its offerings to the students who would benefit most.

“One of our goals is to foster greater market penetration as measured by enrollment growth,” said Mrozinski.

Accomplishing this goal goes beyond ensuring the enrollment process is smooth—prospective students need to know Harper CE has offerings that meet their specific needs. Marketing efforts are central to supporting this outcome, and Destiny One will play a key role in supporting Harper CE’s marketers.

First, as mentioned earlier, students want access to as much information about an offering as possible before they choose to enroll. Destiny One makes it easy for staff to input and update all relevant information about a course (including rich media, fee information, prerequisite requirements, search engine optimization keywords and much more) in a single spot on a single screen. Since the system is connected into Harper CE’s website, course calendar, LMS and more, staff are assured that the right information is displaying at the right time to the right audiences. That means as soon as an offering goes to market, it’s SEO-optimized by Destiny One and findable by the right students.

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Passive marketing isn’t enough, though—Harper CE’s marketers need to be able to actively reach out to prospective students who would be well suited to their offerings. Destiny One can play a key role in these efforts as well.

The SLM collects a significant amount of information on learners, from their preferences, goals and interests to their employer to their communication preferences. This rich repository of information can help staff understand what kinds of students are benefitting from offerings, and can also give them a leg up on reaching out to past students with new learning opportunities. Both sets of information are critical to the success of a marketing campaign.

What’s more, marketers can use a closed-loop feedback mechanism within Destiny One to track the effectiveness of each marketing campaign, ensuring that Harper CE is maximizing its marketing time and resources.

“Under our old system, we didn’t leverage the data we gather through our registration platform to inform our marketing efforts. It would have required a lot of back-end work from our staff,” Mrozinski said. “Destiny One will enable us to better integrate and direct our digital marketing initiatives.”

Accelerating and Streamlining Course Approvals

Automated workflows and back-end efficiencies in Destiny One are going to help Harper CE get relevant programming to market quicker and more easily than ever.

As a division largely addressing students’ just-in-time learning needs, it’s critical for Harper CE to be able to keep pace with changing labor market conditions. This way, they ensure the programming they have on offer aligns

with employers’—and importantly, prospective students’—needs.

Keeping pace with rapidly evolving labor market needs can put a lot of pressure on staff when they don’t have the right system behind them.

“We offer about 1,200 courses a semester, and about 35 percent of those courses are new. That amounts to approximately 400 new courses a year,” said Mrozinski. “In our old platform, we had to hand-build a system to allow us to create, review and approve new courses, which was quite a lot of work for our team. The system required a lot of maintenance and updating.”

“With Destiny One, we’re going to save scores of hours every semester in new course approvals.”

Destiny One is helping Harper CE overcome this obstacle with its automated approval workflows, designed to help get new courses and programs to market quickly, easily and with all the proper approvals. As a new course is being created or updated, the system automatically notifies each person involved in the approval process and alerts them to any outstanding tasks. This way, everyone knows exactly where a new course is in its journey to being launched and nothing falls through the cracks.

“With Destiny One, we’re going to save scores of hours every semester in new course approvals,” Mrozinski said. “By releasing staff from the labour involved in the approval process, we can free them up to focus on ensuring that new course content is relevant and up to date.”

Assessing Priorities: Finding the Right System to Prepare for the Future

It’s no secret that community colleges are under immense pressure to deliver high-quality programming on often-small budgets, and Harper CE is no different. For Mrozinski, though, the cost of bringing on the Destiny One SLM was well worth the capacity to position the division for future growth and expansion.

“It’s all about allocating resources to the things that matter: You can afford to do whatever you want, so long as you make it a priority,” said Mrozinski. “Nothing will grow unless you resource it. We chose to prioritize Destiny One over other initiatives because we felt that the time was right to position ourselves for growth over for the next decade.”

According to Mrozinski, many college CE divisions will attempt to jerry-rig their main campus systems to serve CE—effectively trying to fit the square peg of traditional higher education into the round hole of non-traditional program management.

“Rather than taking the unique needs of non-traditional students into consideration, most community colleges simply apply their existing system of record for credit-bearing programming to non-credit courses,” he said. “Typically, this infrastructure is not appropriate for workforce or non-credit students. It’s a quick fix, rather than a lasting one.”

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Initially anticipating a three-year timeline to improve their online registration numbers, Harper College exceeded their initial targets within their first term using Destiny One. Before implementing Destiny One, Harper processed online 35% of their registrations online. With Destiny One, that number has skyrocketed to 93%—saving countless hours of staff time and clearly providing students the experience they expect.

Ultimately, Harper CE prioritized bringing in a system that will allow them to transform their student experience, improve their staff efficiency, and prepare them for long-term growth and continued success.

“Many community colleges have the resources and commitment to their non-traditional students to implement a purpose-built platform like Destiny One,” said Mrozinski. “We anticipate that the payoff in increased market penetration will offset the licensing cost of Destiny One within two years.”

About Destiny One

Destiny One is student lifecycle management software for higher education administrators serving non-traditional students. It integrates with main-campus systems, engages students with an Amazon-like experience, optimizes staff efficiency, and provides business intelligence empowering data-driven decisions. Destiny One lets schools unite, understand and control all aspects of their business at once.

Destiny One manages the entire learner lifecycle.

Curriculum

Plan and manage courses, certificates and programs

Marketing

Target marketing campaigns and define consistent branding

Finance

Govern accounting transactions and manage financial information

Enrollment

Increase registrations by engaging learners and automating the enrollment process

Reporting

Leverage dashboards and reports to make business-intelligent decisions

System Administration

Configure workflows, staff roles and permissions, and business rules and fees

Want to learn more?

Contact us at
info@destinysolutions.com

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