



UC Santa Barbara Professional and Continuing Education

# Building Pathways to Degrees for Non-Traditional Learners

*How Destiny One Supports UC Santa Barbara Professional and Continuing Education's Work with Credit-Seeking Students*



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*UC Santa Barbara Professional and Continuing Education is leveraging technology to bring learners into credit-bearing programming who otherwise wouldn't have had access to it—and making the student experience as smooth as buying a book online.*

Located in California's Silicon Beach, home to over 500 tech startups and countless other major employers, the University of California Santa Barbara Professional and Continuing Education (UCSB PCE) provides non-traditional learners (and main campus students who need extra courses) access to credit-bearing offerings through their innovative Open University.

Made possible through an agreement between UCSB PCE and the university's main campus, the Open University allows students to enroll in credit-bearing courses offered by faculties across UCSB without being formally admitted to the university. Basically, if there are empty seats in any given course, access to those seats is opened up through Open University to anyone who has the necessary prerequisites.

This approach to filling classes lets the university maximize revenue and ensures resources are being used to their fullest potential. What's more, it creates a low-cost pathway for students to earn academic credit and progress toward a degree while gaining access to the unique services made available through UCSB PCE.

"If there are seats available the departments are very happy to give them to us because the revenues from each given student are shared with them," said Paolo Gardinali, Manager of Information Systems and Analysis at UCSB PCE. "They get a profit, and they maximize the resources they're mobilizing to deliver the course."

## Leveraging Back-End Technology to Expand Access

UCSB PCE's capacity to create access to this kind of programming—while also delivering the student experience adult learners expect—is supported by Destiny One, the customer lifecycle management (CLM) system designed by Destiny Solutions.

Crafted specifically for non-traditional education, Destiny One manages the entire learner lifecycle by providing staff with the tools they need to efficiently manage curriculum, enrollment, marketing, finance and more. The Destiny One CLM 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.

For UCSB PCE, that means they can deliver a great experience to credit-seeking students who typically have to navigate significant bureaucratic hurdles to simply enroll in a course. With Destiny One in their toolkit, UCSB PCE can make enrolling in a credit-bearing course as simple for learners as making a purchase online, and deliver the kind of experience that keeps students coming back.

## Why Create Access to Credit-Bearing Programs Through Non-Traditional Divisions?



The value of earning a postsecondary credential is well known and widely understood, but at most colleges and universities across North America, degree-directed programming is geared towards 18- to 22-year-olds. Unfortunately, this focus doesn't address the needs of the majority of the potential student demographic.

The Georgetown Center on Education and the Workforce estimates the lifetime earnings of a college graduate to be at least \$1 million higher than someone whose furthest education is a high school diploma. This trend hasn't gone unnoticed, and the NCES has noted that increasing numbers of adults are enrolling in degree programs across the United States.

Adding to this, the market of adult learners who could enroll in degree programs to earn a credential is massive. According to the Lumina Foundation, 15.8 percent of American adults (nearly 27.3 million people) have some college credits but no credential. A further 25.9 percent of American adults (over 43.8 million people) graduated from high school but never enrolled in a postsecondary program or course.

Ultimately, the earning potential that comes from a postsecondary degree combined with the critical importance of postsecondary education to employability in the evolving labor market means more must be done to create pathways for adults to earn college and university degrees.

This is where non-traditional divisions can play a role in shaping the future of the American labor market and economy. With expertise in serving adult learners, and experience in designing programs that support their academic outcomes, these units can lead the charge on increasing degree completion for non-traditional students.

## Delivering a Great Student Experience

The student experience is critical to retention for all learners, and Destiny One allows UCSB PCE to deliver the personalized and responsive experience that today's students expect.

Being able to deliver this opportunity for students to enroll in UCSB PCE and take credit-bearing courses offered by the main campus only works if the student experience matches the quality of the programming on offer. This is where Destiny One has helped the institution serve its non-traditional learners.

Non-traditional learners are experienced consumers who have high expectations of their postsecondary experience.

"These learners are busy. They are professionals with lives and families and responsibilities—they do not have time to wait in line at the registrar to sign up for courses and work through administrative red tape," Gardinali said. "They want to get what they're paying for."

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Nationally, adult persistence in credit-bearing offerings is nearly 15 percent lower than persistence among younger learners, and one of the reasons for that is the student experience delivered to credit-seeking students is designed for residential, full-time students.

By leveraging the Destiny One CLM, UCSB PCE is able to put the needs of their non-traditional learners at the forefront.

Destiny One makes it easy for students to find and enroll in courses, to track their progress toward a credential, to find critical information on their own schedule, and much more. Ultimately, this means UCSB PCE is better able to meet the expectations of their students and help them persist through their courses and, ideally, toward a credential.

"We try to assist them in areas like enrolling and succeeding in their classes through our robust customer service offerings," said Gardinali.

Specifically, UCSB PCE uses the Destiny One CLM to personalize the student experience and stay responsive to learners—both of which make a significant difference for credit-seeking non-traditional students.

### Personalizing the Student Experience

Personalization is an expectation consumers bring to every industry and higher education is no different. In fact, for non-traditional learners who are pressed for time and see higher education as an investment with a specific outcome, personalized service is critically important to satisfaction.

Of course, personalization means more than having a field in emails that generates the recipients' first names. It means designing every aspect of the



division and institution to address the needs of the learner. This is where Destiny One makes a huge difference for UCSB PCE.

To start, credit-seeking students at UCSB Open University enroll through UCSB PCE, not the main campus. This means they have access to Destiny One's innovative Student Portal, which serves as a self-service gateway to the institution.

Through the Student Portal, learners can track their progress through their courses, access their grades, and interact with UCSB on their own terms. Additionally, they can access historical enrollment information, receipts and transcripts quickly and without having to contact the institution. What's more, students can track their progress toward credentials, which is critically important to learners who are in credit-bearing courses.

These elements make a huge difference for non-traditional learners who have limited time at their disposal. Given the sacrifices this demographic makes to enroll in postsecondary programming, it's vital for institutions serving them to ensure they can dedicate as much time as possible to their coursework rather than to the bureaucracy surrounding their enrollment.

From the institutional perspective, the Destiny One CLM allows UCSB PCE to collect and leverage student data to serve their learners in the best way possible. Students are able to specify preferences, like their preferred communication methods, allowing staff to ensure they're contacting students on their terms. Additionally, the system goes beyond the basics and collects information on a student's occupation, employer, goals, interests and more. This allows UCSB PCE to craft communications and act as a recommendation engine, providing students with options for future enrollments that might appeal to them.

## Staying Responsive to Students

Responsiveness is another feature that really stands out to consumers, no matter the industry, and has a significant impact on customer retention.

While responsiveness to student inquiries isn't a common trait among many main campus institutions, it's a feature that sets non-traditional divisions apart. At UCSB PCE, their responsiveness to students meets their expectations and makes it clear that they are valued.

"We try to be very responsive—we have a customer service department that's modeled on IT services ticketing systems, which guarantees a response within one business day," said Gardinali. "That's something that the traditional university does not and cannot provide. Traditional students actually have to stand in a line, ask a question, and they might not even get an answer. At UCSB PCE, you can send an email to our helpdesk and get an answer within a business day. We deliver what people need and expect in terms of customer service."

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That level of responsiveness and support is backed by the robust information made available to staff through the Destiny One CLM. Staff have permissioned access to student records that log every touchpoint a given student has had with the institution.

This means staff members can quickly and easily provide contextual support and advice to learners without having to get the student to tell their story from the start.

What's more, the efficiencies and workflows that are built into the Destiny One CLM allow staff to spend more time focused on serving students. After all, when everything from launching a program to updating the website to managing divisional accounting is simplified in the back-end, it allows UCSB PCE's staff to spend more of their limited time serving learners on the front-end.

## Creating Access to Credit-Bearing Offerings Through UCSB PCE

Access to courses that allow students to earn postsecondary credit is critical for today's non-traditional students. While many adults will grit their teeth and try to enroll in credit-bearing offerings designed for 18- to 22-year-old residential students, UCSB PCE has crafted a unique and supportive mechanism to facilitate access to credit-bearing offerings designed for non-traditional students.

By taking advantage of the student centricity of the Destiny One Customer Lifecycle Management system, UCSB PCE's Open University allows students to take courses and earn credit towards a degree while still receiving the personalized and responsive service that characterizes non-traditional divisions.

"Any continuing education department has to replicate the services provided by the main university. It has to be able to enroll students, register them for classes, market those classes and take payments. It has to have a robust financial system, the ability to build class rosters, and provide grading in a timely and accurate manner. It has to enable us to collect data and conduct institutional research," said Gardinali. "Destiny One allows us to do all that. It's a whole campus in a box."

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Ultimately, by leveraging the Destiny One CLM, UCSB PCE is broadening access to credit-bearing offerings for non-traditional students while removing as many barriers as possible to their persistence and eventual success.

"Destiny One allows them to enroll through us rather than through the larger university's administrative system," he said. "It's much more efficient and allows our students to access the resources offered by the university at lesser cost, and in less time."

# About Destiny One

Destiny One is customer 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](mailto:info@destinysolutions.com)

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