

Integrating Student Supports

Santa Rosa Junior College

Their Approach

Santa Rosa Junior College built its Student Success Programs around four main goals. Students should (1) be invited and welcomed; (2) be guided and supported; (3) be engaged and empowered; and (4) succeed and complete a certificate, degree, or transfer. Student services leaders felt students were most likely to utilize college resources such as counseling, health services, and clubs, and to participate in student success programs such as Umoja, Puente, and EOPS if they built a relationship with a peer early on. So they chose a peer-led coaching model and the Starfish case management tool to create a peer connection for each student before the student steps into a classroom.

What They Did

Each new SRJC student now receives a call during the summer from a peer coach, who connects them with the SRJC app. Coaches also send a welcome newsletter, host a Welcome Day event, staff a campus Welcome Center, and schedule a 30-minute appointment with each incoming student. Coaches, who receive leadership training in the summer and meet weekly throughout the year, discuss each student's interests; recommend applicable supports, clubs, and learning communities; and help students understand why it's important to meet with a counselor. If a student hasn't seen a counselor, the coach walks them to the counseling office to schedule an appointment. Each coach is assigned to an academic "house" and works with the campuswide director of student success and a classified staff manager to identify which students in the house need high-touch, mid-touch, or low-touch peer support, including students' equity-related characteristics in their criteria. Coaches also design, organize, and lead monthly workshops on retention themes. During midterms and finals, they organize "jams" where students can get help and food and can re-energize.

What They Learned

- Building relationships is key: Students who connect early with a peer are more likely (than the district average) to complete matriculation steps and stay in school.
- Support for student coaches is critical: They learn about becoming leaders, understand their roles (as connectors, not advisors), and can debrief, problem solve, and coordinate.
- Serving as a peer coach can be life-changing: Coaches develop leadership skills, build confidence, and solidify a focus and direction in their academic careers.

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