Gear Up Partners with Center for Student Analytics to Tap into New Student Insights

Center for Student Analytics

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A student researcher uses analytics to help Gear Up increase student success.
- Center for Student Analytics

In fall 2018, Erik Dickamore, a student researcher for the Center for Student Analytics, started working with Utah State University (USU) STARS Gear Up to produce insights into how the program is helping students. Dickamore helped narrow down the unique experiences USU STARS have to eight categories: Advising, family involvement, college and career experience, direct student services, tutoring, rigorous curriculum, interpersonal skills, and student workshops.

According to Jim Dorward, director of USU STARS Gear Up, their partnership with the Center for Student Analytics is bringing insights and perspectives to help understand how to more effectively help students. “One of the advantages is being able to analyze information on first year student college academic experiences with similar information on middle and high school experiences. This has led to several, sometimes counter-intuitive, realizations that will influence future programming and resource allocation.”

Using analytics software, Dickamore was able to further segment these students and discovered a common experience thread lead to higher success rates in college. The three experiences that led to more students attending college are student workshops, college and career experiences, and advising. About 62.1% of USU STARS who participate in these three types of activities go to college.

“Knowing this, USU STARS can develop new methods to ensure all participants have access to these experiences,” said Dickamore. “Our analytics tools allow us to understand already successful university programs, like USU STARS, and find new innovative ways to make them even more powerful and effective.”

This in-depth breakdown of Gear Up sheds light on important factors for student access, allowing those who work with the students to shift focus if needed. “For example, while academic tutoring during middle and high school years may help students succeed in those grades, other Gear Up supported activities such as college centered workshops may have more of an influence on college enrollment and success,” said Dorward.

Gear Up, Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs, is a federally-funded program through the U.S. Department of Education designed to help students prepare for and succeed in college. Gear Up participants are low-income middle and high school students, starting with cohorts in the seventh grade, and continuing until their first year of post-secondary education.

For more information about the Center for Student Analytics and their work with USU STARS Gear Up, contact Mitchell Colver, manager and senior data analyst, at 435-797-0623.

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