



Location: Longmeadow, MA

Focus Areas: Holistic

Bay Path University (BPU) is a private four-year institution that serves a diverse student body of 1,817 undergraduate students - 40% women of color; 45% first generation; 54% Pell eligible - via its traditional undergraduate residential college and online degree programs that are part of The American Women's College (TAWC).



At A Glance:

- » Built a high-touch, high-tech virtual program that integrates data streams and spans across the student journey
- » Applied existing practices and frameworks already in place for online students to its traditionally in-person student population

Approach Overview

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, BPU's online division – The American Women's College (TAWC) – developed a Social Online Universal Learning virtual ecosystem (SOUL) used to reimagine online learning through a student-centered lens. Using data analytics and personalized supports, the SOUL model includes on-boarding for new students; wraparound supports including a variety of interventions and proactive outreach; and peer-to-peer social engagement and mentoring. When students from BPU's residential college moved completely online, the institution was well positioned to scale data-informed practices from the SOUL model to all students.

BPU adapted approaches from TAWC and transformed traditionally in-person supports from the residential college to provide virtual supports that span across the student journey. BPU's orientation programs and activities were swiftly moved online. Upon acceptance to the institution, students engaged in a virtual advising experience in the learning management system to introduce advising resources, academic requirements, and the wider net of student supports. Students then engaged in virtual advising appointments and WELLcome week in the lead up to their first semester. Peer mentors and advisors communicated and met with students regularly via tools like chat, SMS, and Zoom.

BPU's Office of Multicultural Affairs also transitioned campus-based events into the virtual environment, and created a new online initiative to celebrate students' diverse

experiences and provide a platform for cultural contributions. Students collaborated with the office to design, coordinate and implement cultural, diversity and inclusion, and social programs to support and engage peers. Based on student feedback, academic and career services also collaborated to sustain discipline-specific virtual learning communities (VLCs). First established based on student feedback, VLCs offer forums where faculty and industry experts can provide mentorship to students, students can learn about hot topics in their desired field, and students are exposed to professional networks and membership opportunities that may benefit them as they enter or advance their career.

In response to all students learning online, BPU augmented existing supports with vendors by expanding engagement with Tutor.com to provide 24/7 virtual tutoring and by partnering with UWill to offer virtual mental health counseling. To integrate these new data streams, BPU's residential division adopted TAWC's customer relationship management system. This system centralized formerly siloed data streams and helped empower faculty and staff to understand student needs holistically. BPU anticipated student needs through engagement and performance data dashboards, which provided insights about students needed to design personalized outreach interventions. High-touch, data-enabled approaches provided the backbone of virtual (and face to face) student services at BPU.

Professionals from the university used the following quotes to describe their work:

“ I think a big part of making this successful was not working in silos. You have to put in those bridges from different offices – using technology and data – to make it work.”

“ You have intentionally let go and be willing to let others in and to work across divisions and silos. That, for me, would be my best advice to get the work and is in the best interest of the students.”

“ How do you know where your students are in an online environment? How are you measuring online student attendance and engagement? It sounds so basic, but I think it's actually a challenge at a lot of institutions.”

Learn more at virtualsuccess.naspa.org