



# Scaling New Student Registration to Personalize Academic & Career Guidance

## GETTING 6,000 INCOMING STUDENTS OFF TO A STRONG START

### Background:

As a growing, emerging research university, Texas State University is prioritizing many strategic initiatives, including a simultaneous increase in the size, quality and diversity of their incoming freshman class. Total fall enrollment grew nearly 10 percent from 2013 to 2016. Around this time, the number of Personalized Academic and Career Exploration (PACE) freshmen rose by nearly 30 percent. Additionally, the university grew more diverse as the percentage of Hispanic freshmen students increased from 33 percent to 37 percent in two years.

2014

 **5,304**  
PACE FRESHMEN

Texas State successfully grows its incoming freshman admission activity:

- 13% increase in applications
- 8% increase in PACE freshman enrollment

2016

 **5,724**  
PACE FRESHMEN

### Problem:

“We anticipated that growth in enrollment would bring us new challenges,” said Dr. Daniel Brown, Dean of University College. “The number of required summer orientation sessions doubled. This put strain on our staff and PACE Center resources as the two-day sessions began to overlap.”

JUNE 2014						
SU	MO	TU	WE	TH	FR	SA
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30					

JUNE 2017						
SU	MO	TU	WE	TH	FR	SA
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	

Increased enrollment required additional Summer orientation sessions which created multiple overlaps. To overcome this, Texas State needed to find new ways to scale registration and provide personal attention to incoming freshman.

At Texas State, PACE provides the first-year programs and services that help students get a strong start in their paths toward earning their degrees. PACE Advisors provide academic and personal guidance to help students plan their degree and stay on track. This program is critical to improving student persistence because it ensures that students are informed and empowered early on, so that they may take control of their educational career and make the best possible decisions along that journey.

“To make enrollment sustainable, we had to find a way to empower each new student to choose the right courses and to optimize their journey toward a degree at Texas State. We saw an opportunity to do this at the point of registration, by enabling a three-person registration team and 17 PACE advisors to orient, advise and register more than 6,000 students in an eight-week window.”



**Martha Fraire-Cuellar**  
Associate University Registrar

## Solution:

To effectively scale registration and provide the personalized attention they wanted to give each incoming freshman, Texas State selected Civitas Learning's Schedule Planner application developed by College Scheduler. This application automates the tedious schedule-planning process and quickly presents every possible schedule option that's open and available for immediate registration.

**"We never could have attempted to do this work outside of Schedule Planner. It's impossible to do manually and extremely complicated and costly,"** said Fraire-Cuellar.

The Office of the University Registrar runs a report of all incoming freshmen and the dates the students have selected for their two-day orientation. PACE advisors share a list of all required courses each student will need to take in their first semester, according to their specific major. It then takes three people in the Registrar's office only days to pre-register thousands of students before they come to orientation.

"We spoke to one institution trying to develop something through the SIS and it's taking dozens of developers, which we don't have. Not to mention that any modification of our out-of-the-box SIS would create complications when new patches and updates come out," said Fraire-Cuellar. Checking in with Fraire-Cuellar halfway through the summer, she reported that her team has already pre-registered half of the incoming class – with 942 of the students attending the first week of new student orientation (NSO) registered in one day. They registered 724 of the students attending week two of NSO, 611 attending week three and 570 for week four.

**"The magic happens when Schedule Planner is able to cross-reference new student IDs with the list of required courses that have seats available,"** she said. **"Each group I input may populate as many as 1,000 potential schedules. I can quickly scan to find the schedules that spread their classes evenly over the weekdays, build in a morning or afternoon break, and give them a strong start to their first semester."**

"By using Schedule Planner, we spend less time on logistics and more time on supporting each student's academic journey," said Dr. Brown. Students spend their first day of NSO touring the campus, making friends and learning about valuable resources. On day two, PACE advisors take 15 minutes to give students guidance on their schedules before sending them to the registration labs to complete their enrollment. "With Schedule Planner, the full 15 minutes are now spent on a conversation about what it will take to succeed – and not on logistical details regarding their schedules," said Brown. "We see the impact of those conversations in students' ratings of their access to advisors, which have changed from 'good' to nearly 'excellent'. We've increased the number of credits completed by students in their first year from 26.1 to 27."

BEFORE	NOW	RETURN ON VALUE
<b>26.1 credits</b>	<b>27 credits</b>	<b>\$1.37M</b>
✓ completed in first year	✓ completed in first year	+ retained tuition revenue

Academic Departments and university administration now have a line of sight into course demand and availability in advance of bottlenecks. "We can see which course sections are filling up and predict which ones we'll need to open additional sections for ahead of time," said Fraire-Cuellar. "This is a critical signal in support of our efforts to enhance course offerings and students' educational journeys. *Not to mention that Texas State University is ranked #1 for space utilization in the state* – an indicator of our continued improvements navigating the scheduling process from administrative and student perspectives."



## University-Driven Innovation

*"Previously, the institution had limited visibility into course availability throughout the registration period. Academic departments didn't know when to open additional sections, or how many to offer each term,"* said Fraire-Cuellar. *"This resulted in confusion for students, as no one was able to articulate for them which sections might be made available to fit their needs. So we suggested a feature within Schedule Planner to preload courses and pre-register students—at scale."*

*Now added, this feature helps partner institutions manage course section availability and predict future course demand, while also ensuring students can maximize credit hours per term.*

*"As a result, this supports our pathways and learning communities by allowing the pre-registration process to be batched by majors, ensuring, for example, that business majors are taking core courses with other students sharing the same major, and so on,"* said Fraire-Cuellar.

*"By using Schedule Planner, we're able to spend less time on logistics and more time supporting each student's academic journey and giving them the special treatment they deserve."*



**Dr. Daniel Brown**  
Dean of University  
College