

# Case Study: eCollege Supports the Iowa Community College Online Consortium's Reporting Strategy

## Online College Consortium Guides At-Risk Students toward Successful Learning with eCollege's Reporting Suite

Education programs continually face the same question—How can we create greater student success rates? Many colleges and universities have turned to business-intelligence principles, like data-informed decisions, to help resolve this challenge.

The Iowa Community College Online Consortium (ICCOC) developed a reporting strategy to identify at-risk students early. The ICCOC's strategy leveraged eCollege's program reporting suite, providing key indicators of student performance and patterns for success. Early identification allowed consortium instructors and administrators to guide at-risk students toward more successful learning paths.

The ICCOC is comprised of ten Iowa community colleges that partner together to provide online education to their students. The community colleges that make up the consortium are Clinton, Eastern Iowa, Iowa Lakes, Iowa Western, Muscatine, Northwest Iowa, Scott, Southeastern, Southwestern and Western Iowa Tech. With the eCollege eLearning solution, the multi-campus ICCOC delivers a variety of online courses and 11 fully online degrees to students across the state of Iowa.

## The Challenge: Falling Student Success Rates and Difficult Reporting

*"The eCollege Reporting Suite has evolved into an efficient tool which allows us to identify, track and target specific areas for improvement."*

Steve Rheinschmidt,  
Director, Iowa Community College  
Online Consortium



The ten colleges of the ICCOC needed a means of increasing the number of students who successfully completed their courses. In 2005, only 77% of the ICCOC's at-risk students completed their courses and only 57% of those students passed with a C grade or higher. The consortium recognized that 40% of their students were new to online learning and, as a result, could benefit from increased guidance and preparation.

The consortium sought to increase the student success rate to 85%. To accomplish this goal, the ICCOC prioritized early identification of at-risk students and created an administrative role to target at-risk students and develop a plan for minimizing attrition.

### Iowa Community College Online Consortium

- Ten community colleges across Iowa
- Eleven fully online degrees and multiple certificates
- 8,000 full-time students per term
- eCollege Educational Partner since 2000

The consortium hired Rhonda McElroy as the coordinator of Student Services for over 8,000 enrollments. Among McElroy's many responsibilities was the development of an at-risk reporting strategy that would enhance the program's student retention and success. Additionally, McElroy would provide learning preparation resources to new students, develop at-risk identification criteria and intervene with these students. "The challenge with the at-risk reporting process in the beginning was that everything had to be done manually," said McElroy. "The reports were developed by pulling data from multiple places and various systems. This delayed our response time to students, slowing our ability to intervene and risking the students' ability to succeed."

Although successful, the ICCOC's first efforts at data-informed decisions were limited by the tools available to the consortium. Gathering course- and program-specific data is cumbersome with only a student information system (SIS). This process was extremely time-consuming. The ICCOC turned to eCollege, seeking a more effective method for gathering data.

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### The Solution: eCollege's Reporting Suite Helps the ICCOC Detect At-Risk Behavior Early

eCollege's reporting suite provided the ICCOC with efficient tools for identifying at-risk students across all courses in the nine colleges. "Once the ICCOC had developed a reporting strategy, eCollege was able to provide more effective tools," said Scot Chadwick, eCollege Vice President of Account Management.

"Our reporting suite offered the ICCOC centrally located, Web-based tools that provided enterprise-wide visibility of student activity and performance," said Chadwick.

eCollege's data warehousing and business-intelligence packages are capable of discriminating and aggregating detailed levels of program data. For example, eCollege's Student Activity Report displayed the time individual students were spending within a specific course or across the program's entire offering—in weekly snapshots or over a considerable period of time. Inactive students, or those who hadn't logged into their courses, were labeled at risk for failure.

In addition to the Student Activity Report, McElroy used eCollege's reporting tools to define other at-risk criteria. The ICCOC students were identified as at-risk if they had failed online courses in the previous two years, were registered for three or more courses simultaneously or were first-time online students. With more efficient data trending and reporting, the ICCOC identified at-risk students earlier, allowing educators to intervene in time to guide students back to success.

The ICCOC also participated in an eCollege course communication tool that allows instructors to notify program administrators of at-risk behavior. The At-Risk Notification form is available in every ICCOC eCollege course, providing instructors with a roster of students, a list of reasons for concern and a text entry box for additional information. This student information helped the ICCOC communicate more effectively with at-risk students.

"With eCollege's global Student Activity Reports, I can remind inactive students that the semester has begun or inform them of an approaching deadline," said McElroy. "The At-Risk Notification form provides me with enough information to provide students with the resources they need to succeed."

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### The Result: Success Rates Increased by 9%

Although the ICCOC's reporting strategy has been in place for only a few years, the results have been significant. Between fall 2005 and fall 2007, retention and success rates have improved by as much as 9%.

"Our goal," said McElroy, "was always to have instructors and administrators advise students better through these reports. Our online students are always surprised that someone's paying attention and is concerned about their work."

"The eCollege reporting suite has evolved into an efficient tool which allows us to identify, track and target specific areas for improvement," said Steve Rheinschmidt, Director of the ICCOC. "We can now proactively target our communication, professional development and operational planning where they have the greatest potential for improving student success."

The eCollege reporting suite has emerged as a comprehensive business intelligence solution that supports the ICCOC's at-risk strategy. These tools allow administrators to monitor daily performance trends, identify troubled students and provide assistance to help them succeed.

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**At-Risk Students'  
Course Completion  
Rates**

Fall 2005: 77%  
Fall 2007: 82%

**At-Risk Students'  
Success Rates  
(Grade of C or Higher)**

Fall 2005: 57%  
Fall 2007: 66%

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