



Starfish Retention Solutions Announces Availability of *Starfish Office Hours*[™] in Spring 2008

Solution Designed to Facilitate Instructor Contact Outside the Classroom, a Leading Predictor of Student Persistence

ARLINGTON, VA – January 3, 2008 – Starfish Retention Solutions, Inc., an emerging provider of student success solutions, announced today the intended availability of the ***Starfish Office Hours*[™]** solution in Spring 2008. In collaboration with industry leaders, the solution is being designed to facilitate meaningful interaction outside the classroom between instructors and their students, especially at-risk students who have less access and are more reluctant to seek assistance from their instructor.

Research indicates that having access to faculty outside the classroom is a leading predictor of a student's ability to be successful. Research also shows the neediest students are traditionally more poorly served by the variety of support services available.

Starfish Office Hours is being designed to welcome students to engage with their instructors; make instructor appointments more effective; and provide senior leadership new insight into faculty-student collaboration. The solution is set to support:

Academic Appointment Scheduling

- Web-based appointment scheduling simplified by knowing class enrollments and teaching assignments.
- Email reminders.
- Pre-populating student, instructors, and enrollments from a course management system.
- A unified user experience via single login with Blackboard, WebCT, Angel, and Moodle.
- Directly placing appointments on personal calendars: Outlook, Google, and more.

Effective Student Meetings

- Up-to-date student data provided to instructors in advance of each appointment, including photo, reason for visit, and current grades.
- Scheduling for face-to-face, phone, or online appointments supporting full-time and adjunct instructors.
- Engagement tools that encourage deeper interactions through students recording their educational goals and instructors providing information to creating a welcoming environment.

Utilization Analysis Reporting

- Analysis of the breadth of instructor-student interaction across a range of factors e.g. department, course level, course size.
- Insight into the degree to which students with poor grades are seeking help.
- Reporting on performance changes after students attend office hours.

With *Starfish Office Hours*, in less than one minute an instructor (or their assistant) can provide students 24x7 online academic appointment scheduling. From then on the instructor only needs to receive email to work with the system. The system helps to remove the anxiety of students who are unsure of themselves and feel uncomfortable discussing tough topics with other students waiting. In addition, the system makes appointments both more efficient and effective by helping instructors be prepared for the specific student's needs.

"Our research shows that the majority of instructors want more contact with students. Instructors aren't sure why so few students seek them out. At the same time students are saying they don't like feeling rushed by knowing other students are waiting for them to finish at office hours or when seeing an instructor before or after class. Today's busy student needs a simple, convenient, and inviting path to their instructor." said David Yaskin, CEO and founder of Starfish Retention Solutions, Inc. "With *Starfish Office Hours*, instructors and students will have the ability to easily schedule dedicated appointment times – one on one time that research shows is a valuable support tool that helps students stay in school and ultimately graduate. We look forward to making this new solution available in Spring 2008."

The student population is changing and academic institutions are searching for ways to improve engagement. Increased access to the variety of support services that are the most effective is an important component of any plan. For example, first generation college students, who will soon make up 43% of the student body, tend to believe interacting with faculty is something that is fraught with dangers, not rewards. Part-time, commuting, and working students need an easier way to secure private time with their instructors. Administrators today have limited insight into the level and breadth of how at-risk students interact with their instructors. *Starfish Office Hours* will be an important tool in driving more and deeper engagement.

About Starfish Retention Solutions, Inc.

Starfish Retention Solutions, Inc. is an emerging provider of student success solutions. Comprised of e-Learning pioneers, Starfish offers innovative software solutions that help academic institutions graduate more students by harnessing the power of their community to engage and motivate students. Starfish Retention Solutions, Inc. headquarters are in Arlington, Virginia. For more information, please call 866.STAR.035 or visit www.starfishsolutions.com.

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