



SIUE's Boutelle Featured Panelist on Starfish National Conference

by Doug McIllaga
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EDWARDSVILLE – Southern Illinois University Edwardsville’s Sally Boutelle will be a featured panelist at Starfish by Hobson’s COVID Pandemic virtual conference on Thursday, March 11. Starfish helps colleges and universities achieve increases in retention rate, exceed graduation rate goals, and set the standard for student academic success.

Representatives from both 4-year and 2-year institutions will discuss how they leveraged Starfish to support changed policies, processes, practices, and implementation during COVID, along with challenges they have faced and the approach to overcome those obstacles.

“I’ll be sharing how SIUE jumped into action last spring to support our students as quickly as possible using Starfish,” said Boutelle, assistant director in SIUE’s Enrollment Systems, Research & Analysis (ESRA) Department. “Last spring in response to Illinois Gov. Pritzker’s Stay-at-Home order, we launched a Starfish initiative where students could ask for help by virtually raising their hand and be immediately connected with someone to help.”

Boutelle enumerated some other successful student-centered initiatives. “In addition, a campus-wide effort for supporting student success with online learning gathered faculty feedback by raising alerts for anyone struggling in their classes,” she said. “Advisors and faculty worked together to raise these alerts, and then followed up individually, assisting students and providing resources where possible. This enhanced effort saw a 111% increase in participation compared to the prior year.”

Boutelle said Starfish also provides a great tool for faculty to give “kudos” to students who are achieving outstanding academic performance. “These notifications are sent to students to recognize their dedication and perseverance in this unprecedented time,” she said. “This small gesture helps motivate students to stay on track and continue conquering everyday challenges.”

“When our Enrollment Systems, Research & Analysis unit was formed a few years ago, Starfish was propelled to the top of the list of technology tools primed for enhancement,” ESRA Director Chris Leopold said. “The challenges of shifting teaching and learning to alternative modalities during the past year accelerated that work.

“Under Sally’s implementation leadership and in collaboration with the professional advising community, Information Technology Services, committed faculty, and cross-divisional partners throughout the University, Starfish is emerging as SIUE’s signature retention tool.”

Boutelle will be joined on the panel by:

Megan Court, student success technology specialist – Seattle Colleges

Mary Ann Tietjen, associate director Office of Student Retention – Creighton University

Kasie Von Haden, director of academic advising – Viterbo University

J.D. Douglas, director, Undergraduate Education and Student Success Academic Affairs – Duquesne University

Melissa Hediger Gallagher, assistant director, Center for Academic Achievement – La Salle University

Katie Breedlove, assistant director, Office of Student Retention – Creighton University

“I am thrilled that Sally is representing SIUE on a panel of higher education peers from across the country,” Leopold said. “She will have the opportunity to spotlight ways in which SIUE is using Starfish to innovate student success, both in spite of and in response to the unique challenges of the pandemic learning environment.”

Southern Illinois University Edwardsville provides students with a high-quality, affordable education that prepares them for successful careers and lives of purpose to shape a changing world. Built on the foundation of a broad-based liberal education, and enhanced by hands-on research and real-world experiences, the academic preparation SIUE students receive equips them to thrive in the global marketplace and make our communities better places to live. Situated on 2,660 acres of beautiful woodland atop the bluffs overlooking the natural beauty of the Mississippi River’s rich bottomland and only a short drive from downtown St. Louis, the SIUE campus is home to a diverse student body of nearly 13,000.

Sally Boutelle, assistant director in SIUE’s Enrollment Systems, Research & Analysis Department.