

Campus-Wide Student Support System

"Effective retention programs have come to understand that academic advising is at the very core of successful institutional efforts to educate and retain students."

Vincent Tinto

Leaving College: Rethinking the Causes & Cures of Student Attrition

GradesFirst's Student Support System combines early alert, advising, and tutor management into an exclusively web-based solution. Our Enterprise version provides all campus advising and tutoring centers a unified solution, which facilitates collaboration and produces campus-wide results.

The system centralizes student documentation, provides online appointment scheduling, integrates tutor management, and automates communication with students via text message, Facebook, mobile apps, and email.

Key Components of GradesFirst:

- Centralized Student Support Documentation
- Enhanced Early Alert
- Online Appointment Scheduling
- Text Messaging & Email Support
- Advising & Tutor Management
- GradesFirst Conversation Capture & Communications Routing
- Attendance Management
- Student Kiosk for Visit Tracking
- Calendar Synchronization



Client Responses

"GradesFirst has been an outstanding tool for us, and the customer service is amazing. Anyone who is looking for a retention tool to help them work smarter, not harder, should definitely consider GradesFirst."

Karen Schiferl

Senior Associate AD for
Academic Support
University of Mississippi

Centralized Student Documentation

Imagine an environment in which student information exists at your fingertips. Instead, frequently disparate information is socked away in file folders, Excel spreadsheets, multiple campus information systems, or inside the heads of various faculty members, tutors, or other student advisors. Using GradesFirst, instant information becomes a reality.

GradesFirst aggregates student information and schedules, advising reports, progress reports, tutor information, and notes from student meetings. When valuable student information is easily shared across campus departments, the ability to respond in a timely and effective manner is dramatically improved. Student support personnel are often the first responders to students in crisis, and successful intervention at the critical moment can help students succeed.

Centralized Student Documentation Features:

- Ability to quickly review all student communications, notes, schedules, information, and captured conversations
- Simple automated methods for faculty members to communicate student progress, highlight potential problems, and generate valuable feedback
- Shared notes between advisors, faculty, and tutors
- All Early Alerts on a student
- All evaluations from tutor and advisor sessions
- All information that GradesFirst tracks is available to any user with appropriate permissions to view data
- Visits to Student Success Centers



Best Practices

"Intrusive or proactive advising is based on the philosophy that we should not wait for student to get into trouble before reaching out to them."

Dr. Robert Glennon

"Advising is viewed as a way to connect students to the campus and help them feel that someone is looking out for them."

George Kuh

Student Success in College

Early Alert

Early identification of students who are 'at-risk' is critical for successful student intervention. The more quickly you can provide support services, the better chance you have to make a difference.

Early Alert Campaigns

GradesFirst makes Early Alert simple. In three clicks, you can create a campaign for any cohort and distribute them to faculty. In order to encourage faculty response, we've worked to eliminate all obstacles on their end. Faculty can simply respond to an embedded link with no additional login or password. Professors are only required to mark the students at-risk and submit the report.

Attendance Tracking

Often, academic performance improves just by instituting a level of accountability. An "A" student attends class more often than a "C" student. When professors take attendance, customizable messages are immediately sent to interested parties instead of being filed away in a gradebook. Staff can then collaborate on how best to support students with too many absences.

GradesFirst Conversations

Where there's relationship, there's retention. GradesFirst incorporates communication options that students prefer while automatically documenting every 'conversation'. Two-way texting, Click-to-call, Facebook, and email enable student support to reach students quickly. In response, students are able to call, text, or email - with their messages routed to the sender's office, not their personal mobile phones. When it comes to student relations, you'll be more connected than ever!

Actionable Reports

Graphs and reports let you know in a glance the response rate from faculty and the percentage of students who have been identified at-risk. GradesFirst also lets you easily see the faculty members who have not responded, and provides an easy way to re-send requests to them.



Client Responses

"I can't tell you how much time the professor email saves us! The ease of progress reports has been one of the most effective tools in improving the academic performance of our student-athletes."

Kristina Therriault,
Assistant Athletic Director
Southern Illinois University –
Carbondale

"Advisors can send progress reports at the touch of a button and receive instantaneous feedback regarding their respective student-athletes academic progress."

Tara Wuorinen,
Academic-Athletic Coordinator
Saint Peter's College

GradesFirst Conversations

Student retention is built on relationships between students and support staff, and communications technology is a powerful tool to cultivate healthy relationships. Unfortunately, although e-mail is still the official means of communication at most universities, it is no longer sufficient for connecting with students. This creates problems for student support and engagement. GradesFirst is the solution: enabling e-mail, texting, voice, and Facebook conversations while providing market-leading features for each of them.

E-mail

Everybody uses e-mail, but GradesFirst's advanced recipient search, student status notifications, conversation capture, and precise group mailings empower you to utilize e-mail like never before.

Two-Way Texting

Other companies may provide texting capability, but can students respond to these texts? Are these responses routed to the correct person without disclosing their personal contact info? Are these interactions automatically added to the student's record? They are with GradesFirst! You can truly connect with students via texting because GradesFirst supports conversations, not just notifications.

Voice

Make outgoing phone calls without even dialing the number. Simply select a student and click to call. GradesFirst will instantly connect your phone and the student's phone. To top it off, GradesFirst automatically logs the call's duration and participants, while also accommodating easy documentation for future reference or sharing.

Facebook

The GradesFirst Facebook app lets students request tutors, schedule advising appointments, and view up-to-date contact info for faculty, advisors, and other support staff. It even allows students to interact with faculty who don't have a Facebook account of their own! All this while providing air-tight security and FERPA compliance.



Client Responses

"Thank you for GradesFirst. Your partnership is invaluable. Seriously, I'm not sure I can begin to tell you how you have enhanced our operation. Not to mention our credibility with our own students and the CU faculty."

Kris Livingston
Director of Academics
University of Colorado

GradesFirst Conversations Continued

GradesFirst Conversations provides E-mail, 2-way Texting, Voice, and Facebook capabilities. But it doesn't just enable basic functionality. GradesFirst's groundbreaking communications platform facilitates natural conversations with students and provides powerful tools to address the engagement issues facing higher education.

Communications Routing

Most students favor texting and Facebook, but university staff often prefer e-mail. This creates a disconnect and a communications barrier. GradesFirst acts as a technology translator, allowing support staff and students to have conversations with each other using *different technologies*. An advisor can use e-mail, but all the while, students think they are texting! Or, a student might wish to reply to a text with a phone call. No worries - GradesFirst automatically receives the call and rings the advisor's phone(s) based on their preference.

Targeted Communications

Need to contact all your Football Linebackers? Freshmen in English 101, Section 3? Probation students with a GPA less than 2.5? You can do it in seconds with GradesFirst's precise communications tools.

Conversation Capture

Keeping track of all your student interactions can be overwhelming. That's why we built Conversation Capture. It creates automatic documentation of student support interactions that occur via e-mail, text, or telephone. Once documented, you can share access to notes and interactions across your department or campus with professors, coaches, and other support staff.

Stats Tracking and Assessment

Access detailed reporting on every student support interaction. Easily track outgoing/incoming phone calls, texts, and e-mails. Monitor the number of appointments advisors, tutors, and professors have made, and utilize these reports for efficient and informed assessments.



Client Responses

"Sure, text messaging allows me to reach students quickly. If I need them to come and see me between classes, all I have to do is text them since many of our students do not check their email frequently. Also, if a student misses a tutoring or academic meeting, they have no excuse as they were sent a text message reminding them. Many of our students have come to rely on those messages. Basically, with text messaging I am sure that the student received the message in a timely fashion which has cut down on the 'I didn't read my email' excuse."

Emily Blackman – University of Tennessee at Chattanooga

Appointment Scheduling

Time management is a critical component of improving efficiencies. GradesFirst online appointment scheduling automates the process of determining availability of advisors and students. When making an appointment, GradesFirst cross-references the schedules of multiple students and support personnel to recommend possible appointment times based on everyone's availability.

Online Appointment Scheduling:

- Set individual schedules and dictate available appointment times
- Set and automatically send text message and email reminders for upcoming appointments
- Integrate calendars with Outlook, Google Calendar, iCal, or other personal calendars that support the iCalendar protocol
- Generate activity reports documenting advisor/student interactions



Client Responses

"We've found that GradesFirst has simplified many of the tasks we do around here, shortening work times by days in some instances. The interface is clean, the program is so simple to use, and each day, we discover a new (and very useful) function. Appointment scheduling has never been easier."

Joy Shaw

Administrative Support Coordinator
San Jose State University

Tutor Management

Providing tutoring services to students is a proven component of student retention and academic success. GradesFirst integrates tutor management functionality in the enterprise version.

Scheduling tutors, tracking attendance, and reporting results is traditionally a time-consuming task. GradesFirst automates this process for students, advisors, tutors, and faculty members.

Maximize Tutor Management Resources:

- Simplify requests for tutor resources with Facebook integration, mobile apps, and online scheduling
- Allow tutors to easily report on results of tutoring sessions
- Report missed sessions in real-time
- Automate reminders to students via text messages and email
- Report the number of hours students spend in tutoring
- Analyze tutoring activities using interactive drill down reporting to find inefficiencies
- Extensive reporting
- Tutor Payroll



Client Responses

"The other component that has been very helpful for our student-athletes is the tutor request. The tutor request function makes it very easy for our student-athletes to request a tutor and allows our tutor coordinator to get the information immediately and start matching the student-athlete with a tutor. If we don't already have a tutor for that subject, she is able to start searching for one quickly."

Kristina Therriault
Assistant Athletic Director of
Student Services
Southern Illinois University -
Carbondale

Attendance Tracking

Have you ever wanted a simple and convenient way to record class attendance? Instead of filing away attendance records that will never be seen or used again, wouldn't it be better to have the ability to share that information and use it to help your students succeed?

GradesFirst's enhanced attendance tool will do just that! When students do not attend class, it is difficult for them to succeed. That's not a new revelation. The challenge is how to implement a process that encourages accountability without becoming a burden to an already overloaded staff and faculty.

Some of GradesFirst's Attendance Features:

- Customizable email notifications automatically alert support personnel and/or students of missed classes based on user preference
- Direct accessibility of Early Alert from the attendance page to mark 'at-risk' students
- Centralized storage of attendance data that is easily accessible to units across campus
- Snapshot of students' recent attendance history
- Real-time attendance reporting
- Simple, easy-to-use interface



Client Responses

"GradesFirst has been very useful in my classwork. I've been able to see a huge improvement in my attendance with regard to student grades...Their grades, I would say, have improved at least a letter grade."

Sonya Tapper
Professor
Pearl River Community College

On-Site Kiosk Module

The GradesFirst Kiosk Module is a way to keep track of your students' Study Hall and Student Services Center activities. The kiosk screen is customizable and allows you to create and set up your student services facilities and visit reasons specific to your unit. Some of the available options are:

- Track a student(s) visit to an Advising Center
- Manage appointment queues
- Manage advising related appointments or activities
- Track a student(s) time in Study Hall
- Track workshop attendance
- Allow students to send a message from the Kiosk
- Track a student(s) computer usage
- Notify when student logs in
- Compile reports of your services center's different utilizations

Appointment Management

Students can request or manage scheduled appointments. They can check in for an appointment or add themselves to the wait list.

Support Center Visitation

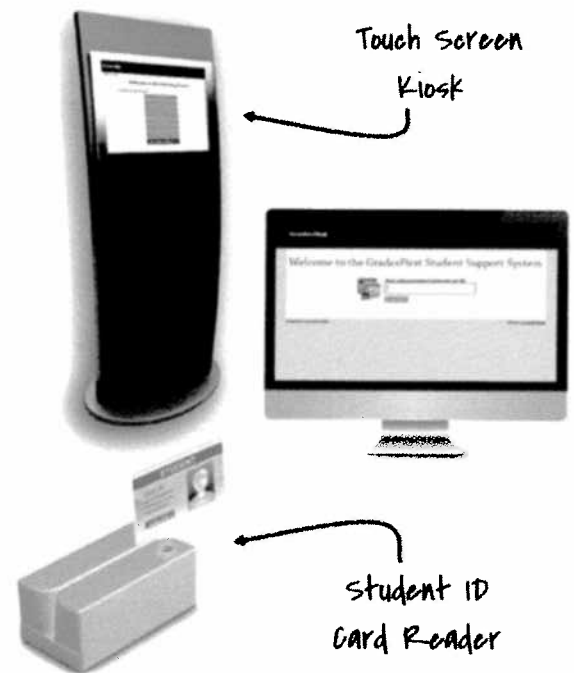
Support units may track students visiting the advising or student support/learning center. Additional information such as the reasons why the student visited and the duration of their visit along with other data will enhance reporting and evaluation capabilities.

Support Center Dashboard

Students can also choose to be added to a wait list to see an advisor in a first-come first-serve approach. School personnel are alerted when a student "swipes in".

Touch Screen Capabilities

These tools are built to be used with touch-screen capable computers and other touch screen devices, such as Apple's iPad. It allows students to easily interact with the system and clear up desk space normally required for a keyboard and mouse.



Data Integration

So how does GradesFirst get the necessary data? Don't worry, you do not have to re-enter all of the information! GradesFirst integrates with student information and learning management systems like Banner, DataTel, Jenzabar, and Blackboard.

Single Sign-On Campus Authentication

No need for new logins or passwords! GradesFirst's Single Sign-On (SSO) feature allows users to gain access to GradesFirst without requiring multiple usernames and passwords. GradesFirst SSO is based on best practice industry standards.

Security

The security of your information is our priority. Our data centers are world-class, SAS70 Type II compliant facilities, and they provide the security that IT departments require where student information is concerned. GradesFirst complies with FERPA and student privacy regulations.

Software as a Service

GradesFirst is provided in a "software-as-a-service" (SaaS) format, meaning the services we offer are hosted, managed, secured, and maintained by our team of IT experts. Advantages include:

Low Cost of Entry & Predictable Costs – Upfront costs for GradesFirst are low. With no hidden costs, technology expenditures are easy to incorporate into a monthly/annual budget.

Rapid Deployment – GradesFirst can be up and running on campus or in an advising center in a matter of days or weeks, not months or years.

Automatic Upgrades – GradesFirst is focused on continuously expanding the features and functionality of our application. Our customers automatically receive the latest core updates and feature releases that GradesFirst delivers throughout the year.



Client Responses

"The folks at GradesFirst are always asking us what they can do to improve their product to allow us to better monitor the academic progress of our students. They understand today's demands on student academic support and strive to make our jobs, if not easier, then definitely more orderly."

Matt Mayotte
Director of Academic Services for
Student-Athletes
Troy University

Customer Satisfaction Survey



How would you rate the support and customer service you receive with GradesFirst?

How would you rate how quickly issues are resolved for you?

How likely would you be to recommend GradesFirst to another school?

