Student Engagement Strategies

Best practices to promote Smart Track use on your campus

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SUNY Smart Track℠
Empowered Financial Planning

Inceptia recommends the following strategies to help increase Smart Track utilization by both professional staff and students. The feasibility of recommended strategies may vary by location.

Provide Staff Training

It's easier to begin using online programs after a guided tour of program features and benefits. Inceptia can help staff and faculty increase their awareness of and comfortability with Smart Track with guided onboarding sessions. Send us a request at inceptiacs@inceptia.org.

Campus Point Person

- Identify a Smart Track champion at each institution that will work to build an implementation plan or taskforce to oversee the program

- Expand beyond the financial aid office! Financial education can be relevant to a number of different departments, so be sure to cast a wide net when looking for a leader:

  - Residence life
  - Student Health/Wellness
  - Academic development programs
  - Scholarship programs
  - Career Services
  - Alumni Services

- A taskforce can also include or consist of student ambassadors to incorporate peer promotion of Smart Track

Academics

Courses can be included as supplemental assignments to corresponding majors:

Students in this major…	Complete this Smart Track course
General/Undecided	College and Money
Psychology/Sociology/Social Work	Psychology of Money
Business/Finance	Future of Your Money
Students leaving the institution	College and Money, Loan Guidance
Graduating students	Earning Money

- In addition to tying coursework to first-year experience programs, courses can also be assigned based on the extended student lifecycle.

- English/Composition instructors can assign research or expository papers on financial topics found within Smart Track courses.

- Faculty training with course PowerPoints and Prezis can help faculty feel comfortable leading in-class discussions with students.

TARGET	STUDENT LIFE CYCLE	CONTENT
UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS	ADMISSIONS	College and Money FAFSA
	FIRST YEAR	Credit and Protecting Your Money Foundation of Money Loan Guidiance Psychology of Money
	SECOND YEAR	Debt and Repayment Earning Money Future of Your Money Loan Guidiance Spending and Borrowing

Social Media

Inceptia provides social media content and resources as part of the Administrator Marketing Toolkit.

These can be shared with the appropriate SUNY social media contacts to implement the following:

Twitter:

- Provide relevant info to keep students coming back for more – it doesn't have to just be about Smart Track! Tweet to announce when is aid being processed, when refund checks go out, institutional scholarships opportunities, answer quick FA questions, tax tips, etc.

- Have FWS students help manage your account after establishing social media guidelines. It helps to provide student perspective!

- Retweet content from @MoneyKnowl and articles from the Inceptia student blog at www.financialavenue.org/blog.

Best Practices

Review case studies to see how other schools are successfully using Smart Track (referred to as Financial Avenue at other institutions):

- University of Dayton – course completions allow students to obtain premium residence hall accommodations

- University of Nebraska Kearney – sophomore scholarship winners complete courses as a mandatory part of a career preparation track

- Fashion Institute of Design and Merchandising – all first time Stafford borrowers must complete courses before they can register for their second term

On the next few pages, we've also included best practices from around SUNY to inspire you.

Insights from SUNY Campuses

Student Usage and Course Completion

Registered Users: 4,464
Courses Completed: 8,069

What best practice or requirement has your campus implemented regarding usage of the financial literacy tools/website?

In Fall 2014, as part of campus-wide effort to raise school ranking, the Financial Aid office, using Campus Labs survey tool, concluded that off-campus student budgets were higher than actual needs. We identified this group as a cohort and lowered budgets for this group. As part of the process to request a budget increase and/or alternative loan, students in the cohort were required to take the Smart Track financial literacy course Foundations of Money and create a monthly spending plan. In one year, student loan borrowing was reduced by $4 million.

Are there any other offices on campus involved with this or is this handled completely in financial aid?

The part requiring financial literacy was done by the financial aid office.

How difficult was this requirement to implement?

Initially, there was much work and follow-up. However, the FAO planned for this. Since then, it is very manageable to enact.

Does your campus use Banner to implement or monitor this requirement?

Yes and uses the (Inceptia) Administrator Portal to run reports. We also use the Marketing and Educator Toolkits.

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SUNY CORNING
COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Student Usage and Course Completion

Registered Users: 5,391
Courses Completed: 7,863

What best practice or requirement has your campus implemented regarding usage of the financial literacy tools/website?

In Fall 2014, Corning CC suggested (as a "Soft Requirement"), that freshman borrowers complete two SUNY Smart Track Financial Literacy courses. The information is mailed to them with their award letter which includes instructions on how and what courses to complete.

Are there any other offices on campus involved with this or is this handled completely in financial aid?

Yes – the Financial Aid Office and our Educational Planning Center (EPC) is involved. The EPC staff assists students with completing the literacy courses.

How difficult was this requirement to implement?

It was fairly easy to implement, as the school was able to provide assistance to students in completing the courses and we found the Smart Track Financial Literacy website was user friendly for students.

Does your campus use Banner to implement or monitor this requirement?

Yes, we use Banner to monitor when the student completes the courses. We have a tracking requirement for each course on the student's record in Banner.

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Insights from SUNY Campuses

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Fulton-Montgomery Community College

Student Usage and Course Completion

Registered Users: 6,300
Courses Completed: 4,728

What best practice or requirement has your campus implemented regarding usage of the financial literacy tools/website?

In 2016, FMCC implemented a requirement for all students to complete at least 1 Smart Track Financial Literacy course per year.

Are there any other offices on campus involved with this or is this handled completely in financial aid?

No other office is involved. The requirement comes from the financial aid office and it is part of their financial aid list of things to do.

How difficult was this requirement to implement?

Pretty simple to implement.

Does your campus use Banner to implement or monitor this requirement?

Students are notified through the financial aid system. FMCC is a PowerCampus/PowerFaids school. The system monitors who hasn't completed the requirement.

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Insights from SUNY Campuses

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Student Usage and Course Completion

Registered Users: 2,660
Courses Completed: 3,206

What best practice or requirement has your campus implemented regarding usage of the financial literacy tools/website?

In June 2017, NCC implemented a requirement for students requesting a SAP appeal to complete the SUNY Smart Track Financial Literacy course College and Money.

In addition to completing the SAP appeal form and completing College and Money, the student must submit a signed, legible letter explaining the extenuating circumstance leading to the failure to maintain satisfactory academic progress and the corrective action taken to resolve the circumstance from continuing or happening again. Documentation to support their reasons must also be submitted. This can include, but is not limited to, medical documentation, a letter (on letterhead) from a doctor, lawyer, clergy or educational advisor. Approval for a federal aid appeal can only be given by the Office of Financial Aid.

Are there any other offices on campus involved with this or is this handled completely in financial aid?

No.

How difficult was this requirement to implement?

So, so easy!

Does your campus use Banner to implement or monitor this requirement?

NCC also created a tracking code on RRAAREQ (Banner school). When the student submits the appeal, they are required to attach the confirmation page from the College and Money course. The school also runs a completion report from Inceptia's Administrator Portal.

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Insights from SUNY Campuses

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New Paltz
STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

Student Usage and Course Completion

Registered Users: 2,717
Courses Completed: 2,181

What best practice or requirement has your campus implemented regarding usage of the financial literacy tools/website?

New Paltz has a multi-layered approach to marketing Smart Track that included flyers, tabling events, raffles, and a "soft "requirement. A "soft" requirement does not prevent a student from moving forward and having financial aid appear on their account if unsatisfied. The goal is to raise awareness of financial literacy and point students to resources.

The cohort for the "soft requirement" is comprised of students who were already slated to receive a communication with other verification checklist requirements. New Paltz could have selected any cohort (such as freshmen or seniors, or possibly students with high loan debt), but targeting students selected for verification was really easy to implement. Students selected for verification tend to call the office anyway, so any questions or concerns regarding Smart Track can be addressed within that phone call without overwhelming the system.

The Smart Track requirement is not tied to a specific course at this time. We simply ask them to create a login and access the financial aid modules. In the future, as time and resources allow, we may tie certain modules to specific cohorts.

Are there any other offices on campus involved with this or is this handled completely in financial aid?

Financial Aid did suggest to the Student Accounts Office that they use Smart Track as a bargaining tool in certain situations. For example, if a student asked to have a late fee waived, they were told that the fee would be waived if they did a Smart Track module.

New Paltz also listed the financial aid module completion as a requirement on their Satisfactory Academic Appeal Form.

How difficult was this requirement to implement?

It was very simple to set up and does not require much monitoring. IT helped with the initial set up, and the Financial Aid Office has a student worker who runs a list of students who have created a login. The student worker uses the list to update the requirement as satisfied on Banner.

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New Paltz
STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

Does your campus use Banner to implement or monitor this requirement?

Yes. New Paltz used the tracking functionality to post a Smart Track requirement for selected students and provided a link to the Smart Track web site. The requirement showed up on the checklist of items that a student must satisfy to complete the verification process and receive aid.

Banner gives the school the ability to set parameters in the background that determine how an outstanding requirement will affect packaging, memoing, and disbursement.

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SUNY OLD WESTBURY

Student Usage and Course Completion

Registered Users: 9,772
Courses Completed: 30,205

What best practice or requirement has your campus implemented regarding usage of the financial literacy tools/website?

Since 2014, the Senior VP of Business and Finance created an across-the-board full campus financial literacy campaign branded as FLOW (Financial Literacy at Old Westbury) to provide financial education for Old Westbury (OW) students to become financially literate using SUNY Smart Track Financial Literacy tools/website:

- (Implemented in 2016 for all OW financial aid recipients) – "Soft Requirement" in Banner to complete two Smart Track courses – Foundations of Money (includes user creating a monthly spending plan) and Spending and Borrowing. Additionally, OW students have taken other non-required courses
- *Requirement* – FYE experience class for all freshmen – Smart Track course Loan Guidance required as part of FYE class
- *Workshops on campus* – Debt and Repayment course was completed by workshop recipients
- *Orientation Office gets incoming OW students registered/set up to have access to Smart Track Financial Literacy Tools/ Website.* OW students are familiar with tools/website when required to complete courses and use tools/blog articles
- *Monthly Financial Literacy Newsletter distributed to OW students*
- *Other year-round campus offerings:* tabling, OW financial literacy campaign (FLOW) branded give away items (see next page) and contests

Are there any other offices on campus involved with this or is this handled completely in financial aid?

Yes –Old Westbury has a Financial Literacy Committee that includes: Residence Life, Financial Aid, Student Affairs, Orientation, First Year Experience, Faculty and Students represented on the committee and (see above) the hands-on participation of campus faculty and staff in implementing financial literacy education.

How difficult was this requirement to implement?

The job was made easier by the Senior VP of Business and Finance leading the across-the-board effort. The implementation of the "Soft Requirement" was very easy.

Does your campus use Banner to implement or monitor this requirement?

The "Soft Requirement" is set up in Banner, but Old Westbury uses the Inceptia Administrator Portal tracking and reports to monitor student course completion on a weekly basis.

Contact:

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STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK
PLATTSBURGH

Student Usage and Course Completion

Registered Users: 3,641
Courses Completed: 6,003

What best practice or requirement has your campus implemented regarding usage of the financial literacy tools/website?

In October 2015, as part of efforts to complete the campus' SUNY System Performance Improvement Plan (2015-2020), the President's Office at SUNY Plattsburgh contacted the Financial Aid Office to inquire about their financial literacy efforts. The Financial Aid Office shared current financial literacy activities with the President's Office at SUNY Plattsburgh and expressed interest in expanding efforts by partnering with SUNY Smart Track. We focused on new DL borrowers (never had a DL – regardless of year in school) as the cohort because they are less experienced with financial decision-making. We implemented a "Soft Requirement" in Banner: students in the cohort must complete two Smart Track Financial Literacy courses (Spending and Borrowing and Debt and Repayment). NOTE- "Soft Requirement" in Banner does NOT block awarding of financial aid, thus it is compliant with federal regulations.

Are there any other offices on campus involved with this or is this handled completely in financial aid?

No, it is handled completely in Financial Aid.

How difficult was this requirement to implement?

Very easy – create Pop Sel to identify students, set up in Banner (see below) and can remove requirement after time.

Does your campus use Banner to implement or monitor this requirement?

Set up on RTVTREQ (Banner) form – can remove requirement after time.

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SUNY SCHENECTADY
COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Student Usage and Course Completion

Registered Users: 2,221
Courses Completed: 2,209

What best practice or requirement has your campus implemented regarding usage of the financial literacy tools/website?

In 2016, SCCC incorporated Smart Track into our First Year Experience (FYE) course. All incoming freshman *are required* to take an FYE course for 1 academic credit during their first semester. One of the modules within the course is financial literacy and students set up a Smart Track account and complete two financial literacy courses.

SCCC revamped the website in 2016. When a student visits the financial aid page, the second section talks about financial literacy and gives students a direct link to Smart Track. Also, SCCC added a blurb about Smart Track to our FA pamphlets that students get from admissions, advising, and the FA office.

Are there any other offices on campus involved with this or is this handled completely in financial aid?

The Academic Affairs Office was instrumental in building the financial literacy component into the FYE course.

How difficult was this requirement to implement?

It wasn't. The website and marketing materials are basically turn-key (from Inceptia) and the FYE course was easy, as it was built into the required curriculum.

Does your campus use Banner to implement or monitor this requirement?

SCCC does not use Banner to implement or monitor.

Contact:

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Insights from SUNY Campuses

Westchester Community College
State University of New York

Student Usage and Course Completion

Registered Users: 3,287
Courses Completed: 3,283

What best practice or requirement has your campus implemented regarding usage of the financial literacy tools/website?

WCC added Smart Track as a requirement of the SAP appeal process.

Many WCC students fail or withdraw from courses, hence losing their financial aid, because they have financial issues that they haven't planned for or work schedules that interfere with class attendance. WCC gives them the option to choose a module. Students are asked to submit a confirmation page (from the Smart Track module completed) as proof that they completed at least one module.

Are there any other offices on campus involved with this or is this handled completely in financial aid?

The Financial Aid Office is talking to the Student Involvement staff to see if WCC can add Smart Track Financial Literacy Tools/Website to new student orientation or to our new FYE program.

How difficult was this requirement to implement?

Very easy and it's working well at WCC.

Does your campus use Banner to implement or monitor this requirement?

Our system is PeopleSoft, not Banner.

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