

Katy Oliveira ([00:07](#)):

Welcome to Next Practices Data Informed Strategies to Shape the Future of Higher Ed. In each episode, you'll hear from transformational higher ed leaders on how they're tackling today's most pressing challenges to make a difference for their students and institutions. I'm your host, Katy Oliveira.

([00:28](#)):

Hi, I'm Katy Oliveira, the host of Next Practices, and I'm here to announce that season two of Next Practices is just around the corner. We'll be sharing a sneak peek of the coming season in just a few weeks. But in the meantime, we've created this bonus episode to explore one theme that kept popping up in each of my conversations throughout season one. Again and again. Our guests would come back to the idea of not limiting your use of data to just historical analytics that reveal past trends and patterns, but instead they recommend using a broad range of actionable analytics to both orient teams around a shared set of priorities and to more efficiently and effectively organized case management and student engagement efforts. Actionable analytics are analytics like L MS engagement relative to peers, changes in persistence within the term and the ability to identify exactly which student success initiatives are making a difference and benefiting specific student groups.

([01:39](#)):

We've pulled together a compilation of our guests talking you through this practice to help you explore ways your institution can use actionable analytics to support students throughout their college experience. We'll hear from Karl Smith from Tacoma Community College, Dr. Tammy Wyatt of the University of Texas at San Antonio, and Rob Fried Hoff of our very own Civitas Learning about how to use actionable analytics to prioritize and organize student success efforts. Without further ado, let's jump into my conversation with Karl Smith, VP of Student Affairs at Tacoma Community College in Tacoma, Washington. In episode one, Carl shares how the TCC team delivers more proactive and equitable support to students.

([02:27](#)):

Oftentimes in the conversation around using data to proactively reach out to students and know what's happening in their lives in real time. Or you don't know specifically what's happening, but you can see that something's happening that shifted their behavior in a way that might not support them being successful as intrusive or big brother big data.

([02:50](#)):

But more and more as I talk to our partner institutions, I find that students, like you were saying, I find it really interesting what you're saying about students have an expectation that there is information out there and they want the convenience almost or the the service of you knowing, hey, I need help. And us proactively reaching out that that's almost the expectation because they've been kind of conditioned that way in other environments and other places where they're interfacing with society. And so I'm just curious, are you finding that it's maybe easier or more effective to get students connected to the resources that they need than in a previous world where maybe we mass marketed a service and students who didn't think it applied to them just kept on hanging out with their friends or doing whatever they were doing and the hand raisers were often the student, not necessarily we wanted to help all students, but that wasn't necessarily the student that the marketing was intended for.

Karl Smith ([03:47](#)):

No, that that makes sense. First out very succinctly, students are mainly say thank you when we do this outreach. And so when we do this, when we call intrusive advising, most of the time students say thank

you. And in fact, I know of no situations where students said, mind your business and <laugh> and leave me alone. Most of the time they say thank you. And then it opens up a level of relationship and rapport with whoever's doing the outreach that may not have existed before just because it shows that you cared more about them than just what they were going on in the classroom. Big picture wise, we asked ourselves that same question and so I could give you a very specific example related to our equity work that we're doing on our campus. We know that the graduation rates and retention rates for underrepresented minority students is lower than it is for our average population, our average graduation and retention rate on campus.

[\(04:45\)](#):

And so we had a student focused group come together and I asked that question in particular, I said, if we have a list of 600 students that we need to do outreach to based on the data that we see in our systems, if we prioritize that list based on race and ethnicity and you were receiving a phone call because we are trying to improve the graduation rates of African American students, how would you respond to that phone call? Cause I said, eventually all the African American students who are on the list would know that hey, uh, we're being called and part of the reason that we're being called is because we're African American. And so all the students that we asked in that conversation had the conversation with, they said they would be appreciative and supporting a supportive of the outreach effort because if they did need the help, then they wanted, they would like someone to reach out to them.

[\(05:38\)](#):

It alleviated concern that I had that a student whose race was being used as one particular way to do outreach might respond differently. Uh, now the message has to be right. You just can't get out there and say, I see you're failing a class. You need to improve that <laugh>. That's not the message that you want to let you wanna send. But if you reach out to 'em and just ask them, I see your grade has changed in this class. We have some resources that you may not be aware of and we'd like to offer some support to you. The student responds a lot different to that. And based on our open rates on click through rates and some of the responses that we've gotten back, everybody's been appreciative of it. And so I think that there are some difficult conversations as you have access to this level of data on students about making sure that that message is right, making sure that the person who's doing that outreach uses the right framework.

[\(06:30\)](#):

You can be intrusive in someone's life and get the wrong message and, and they will have the wrong takeaway from it. If it's a parent and you reach out to them and they're struggling partially cuz they're struggling to find childcare, if your only response and resource that you're able to offer to 'em is that you need to figure it out, then obviously that's not gonna help that parent out and that's gonna leave a bitter taste in their mouth. And ultimately it shows that you just don't understand what they're going through. And so it's also retraining your teams and your staff as well to make sure that they are practice a certain level of cultural humility as they're going into these conversations. And understanding that education is, is just one part of this person's identity that you're trying to support. Once you get that through and you have the resources and you're supporting students to help them find those resources, I think that there's nothing but positive that can come out of reaching out and using data to reach out to students who might be struggling.

Katy Oliveira [\(07:25\)](#):

Yeah. And having it be more tailored to their needs and understanding that needs are holistic and broad and that it's not always a matter of just connecting them to an academic resource. It's about asking them what's going on with their life.

Karl Smith ([07:39](#)):

Very true. And it also gives us the opportunity to balance our resources in a correct way. Cause you're right, we used to just send that same email message out to all students at different times in the academic year, whether it's you need to register or midterm to coming up, come visit the tutoring center. And then typically what happens in those situations, the students are doing the best. The students who have learned to navigate the system, they show up first. And so whether if it's an advising appointment and you send out the same message to all students to say, look, we have this opportunity for this advising and there's a limited number of slots. Who's gonna show up? The ones who are doing well in class, who understand the systems and prioritize even if it's tutoring. Next thing you know, your staff is stretched really, really thin and they haven't even got to the students who are most need of the resources and support.

[\(08:28\)](#):

And it's nothing against the students who are taking advantage in and leveraging all of these different systems. They're doing great. It's just that they may not need the same level of engagement. And so if I need to do a second check-in on a particular group of students, I'm not gonna send an email to all of our students. I'm just gonna send it to that group of students so that they know that this is for them and that they have access for the additional support that they need. And that is an equity framework where you can use different pieces of information and data that's out there to make sure that the student who needs it most ne needs those resources the most in order to be successful, gets those resources.

Katy Oliveira ([09:10](#)):

This podcast is brought to you by Civitas Learning. Civitas Learning empowers colleges and universities to achieve transformative levels of student success to reshape higher education for decades to come. Civitas Learnings Student Impact platform brings institutional data together for a clearer picture of each student and situation, equipping institutions to take data informed action and lead with a new purpose to impact student success, ready to help students succeed every day. Visit civitaslearning.com to get started.

[\(09:47\)](#):

In our next clip. We're here from Dr. Tammy Wyatt, vice Provost for Student Success at the University of Texas at San Antonio. In episode five, she discusses how they've built a student success coalition that incorporates everyone on campus using data and analytics to unify institutional goals and how access to actual data insights builds consensus and buy-in.

[\(10:12\)](#):

You have a very strategic cross-functional approach to student success. So I'd love to to have you share more about how your student success team is working together to help your students succeed.

Tammy Wyatt ([10:27](#)):

We have the division of student success here at the university, but everyone's role that's just in our name, right? Everyone's role across the institution is to help students succeed. There's a couple of ways that we've addressed this from a strategic standpoint. One is just simply every week our provost works with a team of leaders myself overseeing the division of student success, our institutional effectiveness,

institutional research team, student affairs, our university college, our strategic enrollment grad school, and on and on, academic innovation being another group. We meet every week and we're looking at what are, what are some of the challenges facing our students? What are the things that are coming up in the months ahead? What are things that we need to be thinking about and how can we address that? So we are trying to stay one on top of any type of issue and proactively address as many things as we can as we see things starting to rumble up.

[\(11:32\)](#):

So that's one thing that we do. And I think it's made a huge difference because everyone owns a little piece of what we need to help best support our students. And so whether it's saying, Hey, student affairs, this is the area that we need you to guys to work on in strategic enrollment over here and and us with our centralized programming and in other pieces that we do, we work collectively as a team and we work really, really well and in our eyes on the data, and we're always looking at the data and making those adjustments. And from that work, we created what we call our hub and spoke model, which is where some of our centralized programming that falls under the division of Student success, we typically provide services for students early on in their academic career that first year, second year. So we house our first year experience program, we have housing and residence life, our academic support, uh, programs like tutoring and supplemental instruction, academic advising, those types of of programs.

[\(12:37\)](#):

And now what we've done is we've created a model to where all of our academic colleges also have a student success center located within them. They dotted line report back to us and we've identified some unified goals and strategies in how to utilize our student success technology tools in a way to meet our goals, uh, our unified goals and approaches, and making sure that everyone stays in their lane as to what they need to do so that we're not overburdening students. Um, but also making sure that we're not creating gaps in services as well. So we're trying to make sure that we're streamlining whether they start out and they provi get most of their services from a program that my team direct team would oversee to where now they're a junior or a senior in our Alvarez College of Business and they're getting primarily services and programming from the college. And so how do we build that bridge? And so we've done that through this new model and the technology tools that we use have become integral to making sure that we are looking at this from a data focused lens as well as making sure that we are not leaving any gaps along the way, cracks that students could fall through. And we're also not in a time of limited resources and budgets that we're not having redundant services when those aren't needed.

Katy Oliveira [\(14:09\)](#):

In my conversation with Rob Friedhoff, Vice President of Community Development at Civitas Learning, we talk about how to use data to move away from one size fits all approach to student engagement. Instead, we discuss ways advising teams can scale proactive support by matching students to the right kinds of outreach and interventions. I think that there's some hesitation I've heard in, in my conversations and advising communities of moving away from providing equal support. So every student gets the same treatment. We call all the students in at certain moments during the semester, or we deliver an advising appointment in the same way to each and every student to a shift more equitable student support. Um, not just to try to drive to close equity gaps, but to provide support that meets the needs of each particular students and recognizing that there are students who are going to be able to navigate the landscape a little bit more easily versus students who maybe will need more support and trying to differentiate approach across those different needs as one way of addressing some of these capacity constraints.

Rob Friedhoff ([15:25](#)):

It's an interesting idea, right? And at the end of the day, for me, I always come back to by nature academic advisors are helpers, right? They wanna make sure that students are helped and that the student gets the, the most outta the experience. And and that's why I love, love the academic advising space. Uh, but I do think that there has been the idea of what we do for one, we do for all. And I do think, uh, we have opportunities and we can see this in the data, right, Katie, that you've got some students that really need minimal assistance. If you, you send an email nudge at the right time, you have a walk-in hour group advising that they can drop into that, they're not gonna need a whole lot of help to kinda get from point A to point B. Unfortunately, what you also see is that those are often the students who end up eating up a lot of your advising hours and instead of spending the time with the students who most need it, right?

([16:14](#)):

And so I do think in the advising space, we need to think about what you said, right? It's, it's not about equal, but it's about equity. Who needs the help, who needs the time with the advisor? And, and at what point do they need that interaction? And so I do think one of the things with the predictive tools that we've got, it's really nice because from day one, you can know if you've got a student who is, is struggling and, and needs some assistance and can do the reach out. But there is a difference in frame of mine in the advising world is to get their heads around the idea and the concept that, hey, um, I can focus on a particular group and in doing so, I'm gonna lift that group and help that group to come up and to be successful. And then again, with some strategic communication and timed outreaches and different things like that, your folks who, uh, are more likely gonna make it without heavy interaction, they're still gonna be fine.

([17:05](#)):

I saw this lot when I, at the University of Michigan, um, so I was part of their college of engineering and computing area and, and you know, we had students who were fourth generation, fifth generation college of engineering, and they to, to a certain extent had had advisors at home, right? And then we had our students who were first generation, first time they'd ever been in Ann Arbor, first time they'd ever been to the University of Michigan or you know, the first in their family to go through school. There's a difference between those two students, right? And I think what you're talking about is how do we honor and kinda respect those differences and give the help to that fourth generation student that he or she needs, but also spending maybe a little bit more time with the first generation student so that that student can understand kinda the rules of engagement, uh, and learn a little bit about the ecosystem that is higher education.

Katy Oliveira ([17:52](#)):

Yeah. It's moving from sort of a passive, like, I have a calendar open, come and see me for advising and letting students determine how they're gonna fill that calendar to more intentional approach where you are prioritizing students who maybe are less likely to be a hand raiser or to come seek the support or know what kinds of supports are available, making space for them to get in. I know oftentimes when I led my advising team, my advisors would say, but my, my calendar is packed. How can I get these students in who aren't making appointments? They felt busy. Our lobby was full, they had full inboxes, but that percentage of students who was the most vulnerable was often not amongst the students populating that, that lobby.

Rob Friedhoff ([18:39](#)):

Yeah. And I think some of the ways that we've kind of come around that to a certain extent, right, is, so let's, let's say that you've got a group of students that you want to get in and they're not necessarily responding to the typical email outreach, and so they're not coming to your calendar and you're, you're working with a student who is likely to persist anyways. We utilize graduate assistance quite a lot and also our front desk student workers. And so we provide 'em a list and it would just say something like, Hey, here's the, you know, 50 students that we wanna invite in. And so it'd be, you know, this is Rob from, uh, college of Engineering and and Computing. Um, I'm a front desk worker and your advisor would love to see you sent you an email if you could take a look at that and maybe come in and see us.

[\(19:18\)](#):

We'd love to see you. And maybe they answer the phone, maybe they don't. But even if they don't answer the phone, they may go back in, take a look at that email and there's some kind of personalization. But I think sometimes the advisor feels like, well, I've gotta do all of it, right? I don't wanna turn over the agency, so to speak to the graduate assistant or to the student worker. But I think cause of the amount of work that's on the advisor sending, uh, a well thought out email makes some sense. Sending a text certainly can work, but the good old telephone, right? And, and having somebody make calls can be a really good way to do that. And we found some success with our grad students making those calls and with student workers making the calls. And I think that's a way that you can, not putting it all onto the advisor, right? The advisor, all of the steps of the process. They can kind lay it out, get the list, and then get that over to whoever they may have and support of them and start trying to get more students into the center that need to be there.

Katy Oliveira [\(20:12\)](#):

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[\(20:27\)](#):

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