Pilot Expansion of Foothill Connect (formerly Starfish) Spring 2022
As part of the Expansion of Office of Retention Services

I. Background:

The Early Alert/Owl Scholars Program was created in 2015 to address the equity gap by offering wraparound support (examples: tutoring, academic coaching, mental health counseling, financial aid, etc.) in the foundational classes in Math, English, and ESLL. Early Alert/Owl Scholars was only made available to the students and faculty in the foundational classes in these departments, and referrals by faculty to the Owl Scholars team were made via excel spreadsheets and email communication.

Just prior to Fall 2017, Foothill was invited to participate in the second phase of a statewide initiative implemented by the State Chancellor's office to adopt the Starfish software platform to assist in our referral and retention efforts. Foothill joined this initiative, and Starfish was implemented at Foothill in Fall 2017 and became the primary form of referral and retention services reporting for the Owl Scholars program.

When AB 705 was implemented in the 2018-19 academic year, Owl Scholars was expanded to serve all classes in Math, English, and ESLL. Starting in Fall 2019, the Starfish platform was then made available to all Foothill classes through My Portal, but Owl Scholars/Early Alert continued to operate primarily in Math, English, and ESLL, and very few faculty outside of these departments were made aware of this change and therefore did not know it was available to them and were not trained to use the system.

Many services including the TLC, STEM Center, Pass the Torch, and Financial Aid have all utilized Starfish, and it is their preferred referral system. Athletics, EOPS, Puente, and UMOJA have all utilized Starfish to help track their students and have expressed interest in expanding the use of Starfish in their programs.

Starting in Spring 2022, Owl Scholars is being rebranded as "The Office of Retention Services" and Starfish is being rebranded as "Foothill Connect," and a pilot program to increase the integration of instruction and retention services through an increased utilization of Foothill Connect by faculty in all programs is being launched. Please see the accompanying Foothill Connect Referral System Guide.

II. Vision/Goals:

The vision for the Office of Retention Services is to advocate for and bring forward resources and follow-up supports in collaboration with college services and individuals, community partners, and other stakeholders to help students manage circumstances of academic life. Office of Retention Services staff help coordinate campus-wide retention efforts by further integrating Instruction and Student Services and promoting collaboration. This collaboration will be part of a holistic approach to supporting students by combining the efforts of the instructors (face-to-face

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and online) and student services professionals who need help getting connected to students in need of their assistance. This process is vital in coordinating campus retention efforts to increase course completion and student success.

The vision of Foothill Connect is to serve as the primary point of connection for a range of college services. It is a hub for sharing and accessing critical information that community partners need to make resources and support available to students when they need it most. The system is used by instructors to refer students in need to student services, and by these services to provide communication to instructors on how these students were served. This communication has a positive impact on students as it helps them become aware of and connected to vital campus resources that help promote their success which aids in their retention.

III. How we can get there: Pilot of Expansion of Foothill Connect

Objectives:

- See an increased use of Foothill Connect (Starfish) for referrals to student support services by instructional faculty.
- Engage instructional faculty in referral/retention efforts through Foothill Connect who have never used the system before.
- Grow the utility of Foothill Connect for all faculty users, by improving communication, increasing the understanding of the flow of referrals, ensuring effective workflow of the referral process, and addressing faculty concerns about the process.
- Increase the understanding of the impact of using Foothill Connect, and how using this system can help boost retention.
- Identify patterns that can help identify services needed in and from the Office of Retention Services.

Participants: Up to 15 instructional faculty (minimum 10)

- Looking for instructional faculty representing a diversity of demographics & disciplines who are committed to supporting students and who are willing to try something new and help improve communication and systems.

Faculty Commitments:

Participation from the start of pilot (estimated start Week 1 of Spring 2022) through the end of Spring 2022.

- Attend a 2-hour kick-off meeting and Foothill Connect training the first week of spring quarter (April 4-8) and start using Foothill Connect by the second week.
- Attend bi-weekly check-ins (alternating individual and group, 45 minutes to 1 hour per check-in, also possibly by email). During the check-ins we will discuss: the understanding of the flow of referrals, how to improve the workflow of the referral process, faculty concerns about the process, and identify patterns that can help identify services needed in and from the Office of Retention Services.

- Review tracking items report (analytics from usage of Foothill Connect) monthly.
- Deliverables: Respond to Progress Surveys in Foothill Connect (2x/quarter during weeks 3 and 6) participants will meet with Chris Chavez and provide feedback (30-45 minutes per session, 1-2 hours total, will serve as check-in meeting for that week), identify barriers, and propose improvements to training module on how to complete Survey and raise referrals, workflow and/or retention services that will be written up in a summary.
- Complete referrals in Foothill Connect throughout the spring quarter
- Present on their experiences and recommendations to the campus (forums TBD, may include academic senate, division meetings, deans meetings) in Spring quarter (1-2 hours, including prep time and presentation)

What do faculty participants get out of participating?

- More support of faculty, resulting in more support for their students.
- Opportunity to help shape the direction of retention services at Foothill.
- Be part of an innovative movement to grow the connection between instruction & student services, improving community engagement in the student experience.
- Compensation (PGA or stipend on Schedule G for hours based on hourly tracking, up to a pre-determined maximum).

How will this help students/our college:

- Help institutionalize a referral system to student supports so that there is more consistency for students and faculty, speedier response times connecting students to the services they need, and more useful follow-up to ensure services are resulting in retention and student success.
- Participate in a systematic effort to collect data that will help Foothill better understand the specific challenges students face, and help in the development of solutions.

IV: Next steps

- Share the plans and the opportunity to participate in the pilot with the college (email, Parliament, academic senate, division meetings, Guided Pathways Steering Committee, etc.).
- Recruit faculty.
- Start the pilot!
- Evaluate the success of the pilot, incorporate suggestions for improvements to the process, institutionalize expansion of Foothill Connect to all faculty.

For more information and/or to sign up to participate in the pilot, please contact Chris Chavez (chavezchris@fhda.edu) in the Foothill College Office of Retention Services.

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