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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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News Release

UW System investment provides timely tools for COVID-19 responses

MADISON, Wis.—A University of Wisconsin System investment in the student advising software Navigate has proved fortuitous as campuses turned to remote instruction and advising in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Within the first weeks of campuses moving to remote instruction, UW universities immediately identified ways to expand their use of the Navigate software to engage with students located off-campus.

“I’m very pleased to see how UW institutions are using Navigate to provide holistic support for our students,” said UW System President Ray Cross. “The software has proven to be remarkably flexible, helping ease the transition to remote learning and will continue to be an important tool as we connect with and advise students for the fall. This is another way we can help ensure student success.”

In December 2018, the UW System Board of Regents entered a contract to use the Education Advisory Board’s (EAB) Navigate Student Success Collaborative software aimed at improving undergraduate retention and guiding students on a path toward graduation.

In mid-March, as UW universities pivoted to remote instruction and advising, many of them expanded their use of the Navigate student success platform to help assess student preparedness for virtual instruction, collect early feedback for potential interventions with faculty, support fall registration/orientation, and mitigate “summer melt.” Many of the uses were not initially planned during the first phase of Navigate implementation.

UW-Parkside, for example, used Navigate to quickly identify students who needed a loaned laptop or hotspot before they could participate remotely. The university scheduled more than 1,100 counseling appointments in the first weeks after moving to remote instruction. UW-Parkside, UW-Superior, and UW-Whitewater used Navigate to help identify students who could benefit from assistance programs, including the newly created federal Emergency Grants program. Faculty have used the software to identify students who were missing early activity in their online courses or had yet to log in to courses.

“Students have responded incredibly well to the campaigns that we created using Navigate this spring,” said Mickey Fitch-Collins, UW-Superior Executive Director of Student Services. “Students were able to seamlessly schedule appointments with key staff on campus to help realize their goals academically, socially, and personally. It has been a real difference maker for us.”

“Going remote disrupted students’ communication with faculty and their advisors, so we used Navigate to fill some of that gap,” said Greg Cook, UW-Whitewater Interim Provost. “It was indispensable for reaching out to individual students to meet their particular needs.”

UW universities are now looking at how they can use Navigate to help prepare for the fall. UW-La Crosse, for example, uses the text messaging feature to send reminders to students who still need to register for classes.

"Any student who doesn't register within 24 hours of their registration time receives a text reminding them to register and asking if we can help," says Jo Arney, UW-La Crosse Director of Student Success. "Navigate is a great tool that also helps us with student advising, communication campaigns, and scheduling appointments."

Rob Ducoffe, UW-Parkside Provost and Vice Chancellor of Academic and Student Affairs, recognizes the positive impact Navigate has already had and could continue to have going forward. At UW-Parkside, overall enrollment fell by less than 0.5 percent during the spring semester and summer enrollment increased by about 8 percent.

"EAB Navigate facilitated our efforts to stay connected with students, especially at-risk populations, throughout the spring 2020 semester," he said. "We look forward to using it again this fall."

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The University of Wisconsin System serves approximately 170,000 students. Awarding nearly 37,000 degrees annually, the UW System is Wisconsin's talent pipeline, putting graduates in position to increase their earning power, contribute to their communities, and make Wisconsin a better place to live. Nearly 90 percent of in-state UW System graduates stay in Wisconsin five years after earning a degree. The UW System provides a 23:1 return on state investment. UW System universities also contribute to the richness of Wisconsin's culture and economy with groundbreaking research, new companies and patents, and boundless creative intellectual energy.

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