STARFISH GETTING STARTED GUIDE FOR FACULTY AND STAFF AT VALLEY CITY STATE UNIVERSITY
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What is Starfish?
Starfish is an early alert and early warning system that Valley City State University uses to enhance students’ success. Starfish is integrated into Blackboard and allows the campus community to identify those students who may need additional academic support.

Starfish is a high tech tool designed to help VCSU improve retention rates through better communication among students, faculty and staff. Starfish is accessed through your Blackboard account.

Starfish at VCSU
VCSU Objectives for Use

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Goal</th>
<th>Metric</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Increase the access and efficiency of contact with student support services/referrals</td>
<td>Completed Starfish Referrals and increased number of students making appointments and using services compared to previous terms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase usage of early alert system</td>
<td>Number of Flag Referrals raised, Number of manual flags raised, comparison to previous terms</td>
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<tr>
<td>Increase overall term to term persistence rates as well as completion rates for students</td>
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<tr>
<td>Increase the use of Starfish in other departments at VCSU</td>
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What am I Required to do in Starfish?
As a faculty member, you will be required to do the following in Starfish:

1. Update and complete your Institutional Profile
2. Complete any Progress surveys you receive from Starfish during the week that the Survey is available. (You will receive an email from Starfish letting you know when w flag survey is ready for you to complete).
3. Use the Starfish system to raise flags or referrals when you have academic or personal concerns about a student.
4. Use the Starfish system to praise students by giving them “kudos.”

***Remember to Set up Office Hours in Starfish so students can make appointments with you***

**What Do I Do First?**
To get Started in Starfish:

1. Log into Blackboard
2. Click the Starfish Tab
3. Set up your Office Hours
4. Edit and update your Institutional Profile

**Setting Up Office Hours**
On your first visit, Starfish will walk you through setting up your office hours, which enables a student to then schedule time with you. If you do not wish to provide online scheduling at this time, click Dismiss.

Indicate the day(s) you hold office hours.

Specify the start and end time for the day(s).

Set the location of the office hours. You will be able to setup multiple office hour locations in your profile later. Enter details such as building, room number or phone number. You can also enter special instructions such as a phone conference code.

Click the Set up Office Hours button.

To setup additional office hours or make any changes, click **Appointments** at the top of any page. Here you will find links to **Add Office Hours, Add Appointment** and **Add Group Session**. Or, use the **Scheduling Wizard** to map out your availability for an entire week or the entire term.

**Setting Up Your Profile**
As an advisor or faculty member, one of the first things to do in Starfish is to update your profile. Students who you have a relationship with at VCSU will be able to see your profile which will contain your contact information, photo and general information just to give students an
opportunity to learn more about you. Student will see this information when they set up appointment with you.

1. On the Starfish homepage, click on the down arrow by your name in the top right hand corner.

2. Click on “Institutional Profile” and then start editing!

3. Try and complete as much of your profile as possible as students are more likely to reach out for help when they can learn more about you!!!

Note: Students will be able to view your profile through their “My Success Network.”
**Appointment Preferences**
Use the appointment preferences to set defaults for office hours and office locations.

1. Click on the arrow by your name

![Hello, Nadja Johnson ▾ help logout](image)

2. Click on the Appointment Preferences

![Appointment Preferences](image)

**Adding Appointments**
1. On the Starfish homepage, click the **Appointments** tab.

![Appointments](image)

2. Click **Add Appointment**

![Add Appointment](image)
3. The Add Appointment box will open. Here you will be able to select a student and schedule an appointment. Click Submit.

![Add Appointment](image)

**NOTE:** Appointments with students can also be made through the Students tab.

4. Click Outcomes to enter notes about the appointment. Click Submit.

![Add Appointment](image)
Coordinating Your Starfish and Outlook Calendars
When you receive an iCal from Starfish, you must accept the iCal or decline the iCal without sending a response. Accepting the iCal will reserve your office hours in the Outlook calendar as Busy; you will receive additional iCal requests when a student schedules with you. Declining the iCal without sending a response will not reserve your office hours in Outlook, but will keep your office hours available in Starfish; you will still receive a new iCal request if a student schedules with you during office hours (which will reserve that block of time). If you decline the iCal and send a response, your office hours will be cancelled in Starfish and nothing will appear in Outlook; students will not be able to schedule with you.

Control Email Notifications
Starfish will notify you by email about appointments and items that you are tracking. Examples include Email Notifications to Flag Raiser and Email Notification to Flagged Student(s). The Email Notifications option is also used to set preferences on when and how often you receive these emails.

1. Click on the Down Arrow by Your Name

2. Click on Email Notifications

3. Use the Appointments Notification section to set your preferences on Starfish appointment reminder emails.
4. To allow your Starfish Calendar to read “Free/Busy” times from your Outlook calendar, you must click in the box next to **Read free/busy times from my external calendar**.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Read free/busy times from my external calendar</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Important: In order for this setting to take effect, you must share your calendar with <a href="mailto:starfish@vcsu.edu">starfish@vcsu.edu</a>. <a href="#">Click here</a> for further instructions.</td>
</tr>
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5. In order for the Starfish calendar to sync with your Outlook calendar, you must also make adjustments to your Outlook calendar. See the section below on Syncing your Outlook Calendar and Starfish calendar.

**Syncing Your Outlook Calendar and Starfish Calendar**

1. In the calendar display in Outlook, right-click on **My Calendars > Calendar**.
2. Select **Share > Calendar Permissions** from the menu that appears.

![Outlook Calendar Menu](image)
3. Click the **Add...** button in the **Permissions** tab that appears in the **Calendar Properties** window.

4. Search for Starfish in the Global Address List and select the “Starfish” entry.

5. Click the **Add ->** button at the bottom of the **Add Users** window.

6. Click the **OK** button.

7. Select the entry for Starfish from the list at the top of the **Permissions tab** in the **Calendar Properties** window.

8. Select **Reviewer** from the **Permission Level** list.

9. Confirm the following details are marked:
10. Click **OK** to apply the changes.

**My Students**

Instructors, advisors and staff can view a student’s secure online folder in Starfish at any time. The information is particularly helpful prior to meeting with the student. Depending on your relationship with the student, and your role in Starfish you may be able to see some of the student’s information including appointments, notes and tacking. Depending on your role, you may also be able to raise flags, award kudos and send emails from the student folder.

1. On the Starfish homepage, click the **Students tab**.

![Starfish homepage with Students tab highlighted]

2. The My Students window will open. Here you can Flag students, Resolve flags, Refer students, Grant Kudos, add notes, email students and access students’ information based on your role in Starfish.

![My Students window with flags highlighted]

**NOTE**: You can search by Name and Connection. The Connections available to you are based on your role in Starfish. If you cannot find a student, first make sure you are using the proper role as your connection.

**Accessing the Student Folder**

To access a student’s folder, double click on the student’s name and the student window will open.

**What are Flags**

To enhance and increase communication among faculty, students, and staff, Starfish enables users to raise “Flags,” on students in order to alert others at VCSU to various concerns about a student. For example, faculty or staff may “Raise a Flag” if they are concerned about a student’s
Flags may be raised manually by the faculty/staff member or automatically by certain events, such as when a student’s grade entered in Blackboard drops below a designated percentage.

**When Do I Raise a Flag?**

Flags should be raised whenever a student, another staff member, or both should be alerted about some aspect of the student’s experience at VCSU. If you would like to document an observation about the student, but do not feel that an alert is required, you might instead choose to add a “Note” in the student’s folder.

**How to Raise a Flag**

1. On the Starfish homepage, click the **Students** tab.

2. The My Students window will open. To flag a student, search for a student by Name or Connection, and Term then click “Go.”

3. To Flag a student, you may click in the box to the left of the student’s name. You may also flag a student from the Student Folder option.

   **Note:** You may choose multiple students by clicking in the box to the left of each student’s name. You may also select all the students by clicking in the box directly to the left of “Name.”

4. If you click in the box to the left of the student’s name, you will have to press “Raise Flag.”

   See the example below:
5. The “Raise Flag” window will open (see below). Select the appropriate flag type by clicking on the drop down down arrow and highlighting the flag type.

**Note:** You will need to scroll to see all of the available flag types. Available flag types are based on your role in Starfish.

![Raise Flag Window](image)

6. Type in any comments indicating why the flag is being raised in the Comment text box. Click Save.

**Note:** Students view designated flags from their Starfish home page **under My Success Path. Only flags where the student has the “View” permission will be displayed.** If you raise an item that can be viewed by a student, you will see a message indicating that the student will be able to see the item.

**Manual Flags**

Manual flags must be raised by a faculty or staff member. Depending on your role, you may be able to raise many of these flags such as: Danger of Failing, Missed Appointments, Attendance Concerns, General Concern, Refer, Create To-do.

Manual Flags give you the ability to raise a flag at any time you feel it is needed. Additionally, some of these flags are not ever raised automatically nor included in flag surveys.

**Resolve/Clear Flags**

A flag is marked as resolved when some positive action has taken place by the student or on the student’s behalf. For example, if a student shows up for an appointment at the Learning Center, the “Referral Flag” will be resolved. You can clear flags you have raised in Starfish by checking the student name and clicking “resolve.” Additionally, you can clear flags in the student’s folder.

1. Double click on the student’s name. Go to overview and click on the down arrows by the Flag that you raised.
2. When you click the drop down arrow, you will see the different options. One of which is “Clear Flag.” You can also Add comments, edit the flags.

**Progress Surveys**

As a faculty member, you are a big part of the students’ success network. Starfish is also a tool that will enable you to report on students’ progress through surveys. At VCSU a survey will be administered after the first two weeks of school as well as one week prior to the last day that students can withdraw from classes. The second survey will be primarily geared towards you making note of academic concerns, unsatisfactory grades, general concerns, potential danger of failing as well as awarding kudos for excellent work. This will involve just checking a box next to the student’s name and comments regarding the concern. You will receive an email through Starfish when it is time for these surveys to be administered. The surveys are there to ensure that concerns are expediently reported for all at-risk students. These surveys are also an easy way for faculty to report concerns about a large number of students from one class all at once. On a progress survey, an instructor may be able to raise many of the manual flags.
**Kudos**
Kudos are used to congratulate students on exemplary academic work. Students are immediately notified when they receive kudos.

**Tracking**
From the top menu in Starfish, click on Students, then Tracking. This shows you all the students who have been flagged, the flag name, status, created by, and creation date. You can also view recent changes to flags from your Starfish home page in the “Recent Changes” section to the right-hand side of the home page.

**What happens when a Flag is Raised?**
When you raise a flag, the student will automatically receive a customized email from Starfish indicating the flag raised as well as information about resources that will help them get back on track. The customized email they receive is determined by the type of flag raised. You are also encouraged to personalize the flag raised by adding comments.

Nadja Johnson, the Retention, Diversity & Inclusion Coordinator, manages the majority of Starfish flags and coordinates support efforts for students. Nadja is available to proactively reach out to students, meet with them and collaborate with students.

**Entering Notes**
Instructors, advisors and other staff members can enter notes in a student’s online folder in Starfish at any time. It is important to note that a report can be generated on all notes entered in Starfish, including those marked as private. **Therefore, do not put anything in a note that you do not want others to see.**

1. On the Starfish homepage, click the Students tab.

   ![Image of Starfish homepage with Students tab highlighted]

2. The My Students window will open. To add a note for a particular student, type in a student’s last name in the search box and select the appropriate connection to the student. You can search for a student by Name or Connection, and Term then click “Go.”
3. Click in the box to the left of the student’s name then click “Add Note.”

4. The “Create Note” window will open (see below). Type in your note.

**NOTE:** When the option “shared” is chosen, you will see a list of people who can view the note; for example, the Retention Coordinator can view all notes. Selecting private means the note will be viewable only to you. However, a report can be generated on all notes, including those marked as private, which means that no note is actually “private” in Starfish. Therefore, **do not put anything in a note that you do now want others to see.**

5. Click Submit.
Email Students
You can send emails to students through Starfish. This is encouraged since it will allow you to keep better track of communication with students about specific tracking items.

1. On the Starfish homepage, click the Students tab.

2. Type in the student’s last name in the search box and select the appropriate connection to the student. Click Go.

3. Click in the box to the left of the student’s name. Click Send Message.

4. The “Send Message” window will open (See below). Type a subject and your email and click submit.

NOTE: You may choose multiple students by clicking in the box to the left of each student’s name or clicking in the box left of “Name.” However, remember that there is no blind copy option available.
**Success Network**

Valley City State University offers students a wide variety of support services, and Starfish wants to ensure that all students can efficiently utilize those services. As such, at the top of the Starfish homepage, a catalog of services available at VCSU can be found under the “Success Network” tab. The Success Network allows users to:

- Discover who the staff members are for each service, find out where the office is located and the hours
- Find the contact information for the various departments
- Schedule appointments directly with the service providers

**Technical Assistance**

**Online Help**

For technical assistance access the help feature in Starfish by clicking on the word “help” at the top right of each screen. See below:

You can also contact Starfish directly by Email: support@dostarfish.com

For questions regarding using Starfish as part of the VCSU retention and student success services, contact Nadja Johnson, Retention, Diversity & Inclusion Coordinator at 701-845-7306 or by email at Nadja.johnson@vcsu.edu.
Frequently Asked Questions

**How Does Starfish help VCSU?**
Starfish is a tool at VCSU that helps us to coordinate and connect students with support services that will help them succeed. It is especially helpful for advisors who can make notes, share notes and make comments with others.

**How do I complete the “Flag Survey”?**
It is a way to send a report for the all enrolled students in the course at once:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DXl02ey-edU

**How Do I View the Student Folder?**
How can I view more information about the student in the “student folder” in Starfish?:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Qfa1BvPdu4

**How Do I set up My Profile in Starfish?**
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vjx5bCDn_uo

**Why am I important in VCSU Retention Efforts?**
As a faculty or staff member at VCSU, you are one of the most important contacts that students will make and a crucial part of their success network. You see the students regularly, so you will likely have more information about their progress and what is going on. Because of your frequent contact and communication with students, they oftentimes turn to you for support, your relationship is key. As such, you play a crucial role in helping to retain these students. Your words, actions, attitudes all relate to retention efforts. Starfish is a tool to help facilitate your meaningful feedback to our students in a timely manner, eventually helping to ensure they have the tools they need to succeed.

**Will Starfish overwhelm me with emails?**
No. You are able to change your settings for email notifications in Starfish to be in keeping with what will work for you. You can change your settings in Starfish on your profile page to only get a Starfish summary email either once per day or once per week.