

ANALYSIS & SYNTHESIS

Team: The Track Team

Problem:

Many students struggle with matching interests and passions with an academic program and have little knowledge of the long-term consequences of their decisions.

This team's research led them to an early surprise. During the expert interviews they were told about a new system that the University had implemented called DegreeWorks. This online program would allow students to do exactly what this team was so concerned about: track your progress.

The program connected advisers and students together to show and track the sometimes complicated set of graduation requirements. The program contained a lot of functionality, allowing students to create 4 year graduation plans, see what classes they had left, and how close they were to graduation.

An even greater surprise: DegreeWorks had been available at USU for several years. Yet of the 15 "high-performing" students in the class, all but one had heard of it.

The team used this experience as a springboard for their student interviews by seeking to understand the organizational environment in which students were tracking their progress.



*"Our general findings showed us that the majority of students are doing something, one way or another, to track their progress at Utah State. The main problem is the students' lack of knowledge of the resources offered to them. With the proper awareness and understanding of the tools available, I truly believe that students would use them."
- Kara*

The team found that students were highly adaptive, each carving their own way through the university, some utilizing resources more than others and responding to the current system in different ways.

Based on their student interviews, the team then grouped students into the following matrix:

INFORMED/MOTIVATED	UNINFORMED/MOTIVATED
INFORMED/UNMOTIVATED	UNINFORMED/UNMOTIVATED

Using this matrix revealed cracks in the system: Even the most motivated student, when uninformed, will navigate themselves poorly through the university system. Viewing the university through the lens of these different types of students proved to be very powerful when the team moved on to solution development.