

CASE STUDY **University of Northern Colorado**



UNIVERSITY OF
**NORTHERN
COLORADO**



The University of Northern Colorado (UNCO) is a 4-year, public university that serves over 9,800 undergraduate students annually. The University, tucked between the Rocky Mountains and stunning Colorado plains, seeks to transform the lives of students by focusing on all aspects of their success. As such they place a significant emphasis on innovation, making intentional decisions that meet the needs of their students, leveraging technology, and creating a tight-knit community that embraces diversity and authentic learning experiences.

"We use data to identify challenges student's face so Housing can create intentional programming and match staff training to our students needs."

Michael Klitzke, Assistant Director of Academic Programs

GOALS

The University of Northern Colorado's strategic plan emphasizes leading with innovation as well as leveraging technology that enhance their effectiveness. Student Housing contributes to this strategic plan by developing residents interpersonal skills, supporting both academic and non-academic adjustments, fostering a sense of community, and supporting academic success. As such, assessment is crucial to the departments overall mission.

SOLUTION

To support their departmental goals, UNCO's Department of Housing & Residential Education uses data from the ACUHO-I / Benchworks Resident Assessment to:

- ◆ Inform efforts to support the transition needs of first-year students
- ◆ Monitor the impact of changes to their residential education program, including the implementation of intentional conversations
- ◆ Drive continuous improvement efforts



KEY INITIATIVES & INSIGHTS

FIRST-YEAR SUPPORT

With two-thirds of their residents being first-year students, UNCO uses their data combined with a context of student development and retention research to better understand the challenges and needs of their first-year students.

INTENTIONAL CONVERSATIONS

To support their first-year students, UNCO has implemented a series of intentional, one-on-one conversations with residents that include both student and professional staff. Data from residents has been used to adjust the frequency of these check-ins and make them more open-ended versus having a topical focus for each one.

POSITION REQUIREMENTS

UNCO separated programming from the requirements of the student staff position to allow student staff to focus more of their time and effort on building meaningful relationship with their residents. Much of their programming is now planned by professional staff and faculty-in-residence.

STAFF TRAINING ADJUSTMENTS

To accommodate the new dialogue model, UNCO used survey results to update staff training so they are prepared to have more effective conversations. Student staff training focuses on de-escalation, motivational interviewing, and communications skills.

ENGAGEMENT CENTERS

UNCO established community engagement centers in the residence halls. These physical spaces are intended to be a place where residents can connect with each other, student staff can hold intentional conversations, and programs can be hosted. The centers also help staff foster connections between residents and improve their sense of community.

USING THEIR RESULTS

UNCO staff are increasingly focused on using data to inform their efforts. With improvements to residential education and adjustments to the student staff position, staff focus more on monitoring how RA results have changed over time and use insights to inform future program improvements.

