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Within nine months, the product was live and user adoption was fast and strong. “The product is really user friendly and understandable, and available 24/7,” said George. “Our previous product was very laborious and time consuming.”

**DegreeWorks Provides Tools for Students to Take Control of Academic Path**

“DegreeWorks is being looked at and touched all day everyday,” emphasized Denny Savage, associate registrar for Academic Services. “It is used day to day by our advising community, from our college student services personnel to professional advisors and faculty advisors who are advising students for registration for their next term. And the Office of the University Registrar uses it for degree checkout constantly to verify completion of students’ programs in advance of our three commencement ceremonies that are held throughout the year.”

To encourage student adoption, the University offered several book scholarships to students who built educational planners using the software. And colleges and advising offices mandate that students have plans in place before coming to advisement class. The Planner is a tool within DegreeWorks that allows students to create a personalized semester-by-semester academic plan, or to use a template-based plan provided by their department. The University also gives students an overview of DegreeWorks during freshman orientation.

> "When I say that DegreeWorks is this revolutionary program and it is going to change our academic lives, my friends laugh at me and roll their eyes, but I do believe that it’s true. DegreeWorks is so simple and so easy to use. It leads students right through what they need to graduate." — Meg McCrummen, SGA chief of staff

“Our freshmen are using DegreeWorks before they even set foot on campus,” said Savage. “Students make heavy use of the educational planner and we’ve also gotten good feedback on the GPA calculators. Another heavily-used function is the ‘what if’. Students and advisors both like that feature, especially if a student is considering changing a major, or is undecided.”

“As our students build an educational planner not only helps them achieve their goals, it also provides important data to the University of Alabama to assist in its curriculum and capacity planning efforts. Having students build an educational planner not only helps them achieve their goals, it also provides important data to the University of Alabama to assist in its curriculum and capacity planning efforts. It is used day to day by our advising community, from our college student services personnel to professional advisors and faculty advisors who are advising students for registration for their next term. And the Office of the University Registrar uses it for degree checkout constantly to verify completion of students’ programs in advance of our three commencement ceremonies that are held throughout the year.”

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“One of my favorite features is the ‘what if’ tab,” said Meg McCrummen, Student Government Association (SGA) chief of staff at the University. “It helps you understand how far along you would be in your degree if you changed your major, and how a change in a major would affect the courses that you would need to take and the length of time that you will be at the University. I also think the standardized checklist feature is an important tool.”

“DegreeWorks has demystified advising and made students take responsibility for their academic path,” emphasized George. “Now when they go to see their advisors, they have already looked at their plan and audit and are better prepared to have a meaningful discussion. The student planning reduces the amount of time our advisors need to spend with students who have a solid path, and frees them up to spend more time with the students who need more help. DegreeWorks supports the University’s goal of being student centric and supporting our students. It gives students the tools to get their education completed in the shortest time possible.”

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The Student Government Association quickly put its support behind the product when they saw its value, and students are driving further staff adoption of the solution. SGA members distributed DegreeWorks T-shirts, and demonstrated the product for students. Their activities were complemented with ads on campus bus systems and in campus publications.

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The University credits its rapid nine-month go live to its strong implementation team, campus-wide support for the program and support from SunGard Higher Education. “We assembled a very strong implementation team that included our associate registrar for SIS, a functional lead, advisors, faculty and our student government who were all committed to making this project work,” said George.

The University staff mapped out degree requirements in the existing catalog against those in the actual system and vetted them with each college. Once the data was accurate, it was sent to SunGard Higher Education for scribing into DegreeWorks. The University also engaged with SunGard Higher Education to provide a project manager to oversee the process.

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“The student role and promotion among peers is a really important part of the program being successful,” said McCrummen. “I’m able to tell other students about it because I have full knowledge of what DegreeWorks is, and what it will do for students and do for the University and for the advising process.”

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Fostering Student Success and Keeping Students On Track to Graduation

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Profile:
- Tuscaloosa, Alabama
- Enrollment: 30,232
- www.ua.edu

Challenge:
- Provide quality advising to growing student population to help keep them on track to graduation

Solution:
- SunGard Higher Education DegreeWorks

Results:
- Students have more control and responsibility for their course of study, keeping them on track to graduation
- University gains insight into data to support planning efforts
- Advisors are able to keep up with growing student population