



# Supporting Students from a Distance

## Chaffey College

### Their Approach

When the COVID-19 shelter-in-place order went into effect and all services and instruction had to move online, Chaffey College knew they needed to break down previously siloed academic and student service operations. Building on previous campus work on a virtual hub for online students and on their Guided Pathways redesign efforts, Chaffey set out to design a digital support ecosystem where students could easily access services. This system, designed on principles of integration and interdependency, provided immediate access to “live” communication through multiple access points aimed at immersing students in connectivity and creating a sense of belonging.

### What They Did

In two weeks, Chaffey College scaled a student support services digital hub in Canvas with access to “live” counseling, library, tutoring, career, transfer, and health services. To navigate the hub, Chaffey created a digital doorway in Canvas’ global navigation bar on the college website home page. Prospective students who hadn’t yet accessed Canvas could immediately connect with a staff member through a chat widget on the home page of Chaffey’s website, which was staffed by over 100 employees from various divisions. Tutors, counselors, library apprentices, and student workers were cross-trained in only two days to route questions to student service divisions. Students can immediately get questions answered and be connected to the right person in tutoring, admissions and records (A&R), financial aid, counseling, library, and career and transfer services departments. Financial aid and A&R staff host all-day Zoom rooms and call on students for immediate service using the cell phone text queuing tool, Qless. Similarly, the counseling department streamlined scheduling by making the move online using Cranium Cafe and integrating all counselors’ schedules in ConnexEd Campus Calibrate.

### What They Learned

Like most colleges, Chaffey had a common theory about distance education that allowed for a scalable battery of professional development to move instruction online quickly. To scale student support services online, however, Chaffey “was vulnerable because our student services are each discreet and different,” said Director of Intersegmental Partnerships Matthew Morin. The rush online changed people’s thinking about how students navigate college services and why a holistic, user-centered system, such as the one guided pathways colleges use, would be easier and practical for everyone.

“Digital doesn’t mean students have to feel disconnected. They can still be part of a community,” observed Success Center/SI Coordinator Rose Ann Osmanian. “We rely on technology to automate stuff, but it still takes a lot of people power to make that virtual space really work.”

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