



Improving Student Experience, from Orientation to Graduation

Course schedules shape a student's university experience, work-life balance, and potential for success. For this reason, the beginning of a school year can be highly stressful for both students and advisors.



For the University of North Texas at Dallas (UNT Dallas), registration used to be a laborious and dreaded process. Every term, students would spend hours researching course descriptions, prerequisites, professors and course sections, then recording their choices with pen and paper. Jessica Gilmore, Senior Academic Counselor, refers to this as an “emotional experience” for many students. She has spent many advising sessions with students filtering through up to 20 course sections, trying to find “the right one.”

Rian Wilhite, Director of Academic Advising and Student Success, recalls that orientation required a 45-minute tutorial on the registration process, followed by up to an hour-and-a-half of registration. The whole process used to take over two hours. The time required to craft a schedule was such that advisors were rarely able to complete registration with students one-on-one.

“Enrollment always managed to get done in the end, but it was a huge backlog of appointments just before school started... that’s where we were before VSB; very old fashioned, using worksheets, figuring out student registration on paper.”

Rian Wilhite, Director of Academic Advising and Student Success

With the implementation of VSB in 2016, orientation and course registration were transformed. Wilhite notes that with VSB, the tutorial has been condensed and registration takes only 10-15 minutes for new students. The entire orientation process can now be completed in less than one hour. For the vast majority of continuing students, registration takes five minutes.

Several key features of VSB allow for this dramatic reduction in time. First, rather than searching through a catalog for course descriptions and prerequisites, VSB integrates the necessary information on a single platform. Next, in selecting class sections, students are able to block out times when they are unavailable, thereby tailoring their schedules to best fit their needs. This is a popular feature among UNT Dallas students as it makes a work-life balance feasible in the midst of otherwise busy university years and allows students to register with confidence in a schedule that matches their lifestyle. Overall, VSB’s user-friendly design and accessibility has eased the student registration experience.



"I can't tell you how many times I've had students, whether it was in orientation sessions or one-on-one, as I'm going through [VSB] with them, where their immediate comment is, 'that's so easy.'"

Rian Wilhite, Director of Academic Advising and Student Success



Advisors have noticed that VSB has also increased student responsibility in the registration process. Wilhite explains: "We want [our students] to be able to take responsibility for their education. VSB allows students to do that in the registration process in a way that's pretty easy to figure out, but it's also pretty meaningful." Previously, students found registration arduous and often relied heavily on advisor support, many times leading to delayed registration and a buildup of advisor appointments. These issues have mitigated as VSB enables students to take control of their own registration process.

For advisors, this has reduced time previously spent coaching students to navigate registration and enriched the quality of one-on-one appointments. Gilmore, the Senior Academic Counselor, describes previous advising sessions as being largely centered around registering for courses. Now, advising appointments can focus on more essential questions about a student's choice of major, potential career paths, financial aid and more. At a stage where students are faced with many critical decisions beyond course selection, it is important for advisors to be available for this more holistic support.

"Advising appointments now are not registration related... because of the extra time, it allows us to do a whole lot more with that appointment. Advising is now a holistic process."

Rian Wilhite, Director of Academic Advising and Student Success