Coastal Carolina University (CCU) is committed to increasing student retention, persistence, and success. One of the many ways the University can do this is by using the early alert module, Beacon. This module is designed to quickly identify students, who may be at risk of academic difficulty or failure, and connect them with campus resources.

Faculty often have the most daily contact with students. As such, faculty may be able to identify alarming academic and non-academic behaviors that can greatly impact a student’s chance of success. By identifying these behaviors and creating an alert, faculty and staff are better informed to connect students with campus resources such as Academic Advising, Academic Coaching Experience Department, Counseling Services, Accessibility & Disability Services, the Tutoring and Learning Center, the Dean of Students Office, etc.

Concerns about a student’s mental health or safety

Do not submit an early alert in Beacon for emergency situations concerning a student’s mental health or safety. The resources for these situations are listed below:

Counseling Services: Crisis situations include when students are experiencing psychological emergencies such as suicidal behavior, sexual assault or psychotic thoughts. Students can show up and be seen during regular office hours (M-F, 8:30 – 5). Services are offered after hours by contacting Public Safety at 843-349-2911 and requesting a counselor.

843-349-2305 (Mon-Fri, 8:30am-5pm)

CHANT Intervention Team (C-IT):

sai@coastal.edu

843-349-4161

Dean of Students Office:

dso@coastal.edu

843-349-4161

Department of Public Safety:

843-349-2911

Protecting Student Privacy & Adhering to FERPA

The Family Education Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA) is designed to protect the privacy of student records. CCU conforms to the law regarding conditions under which confidential records will be released. Under FERPA, CCU personnel are permitted to share information from student education records with other school officials who have legitimate educational interests. As such, reporting a student concern does not violate FERPA; however, the means by which faculty report the concern could become a FERPA violation, if not done correctly.
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What is Beacon?

Beacon is an early alert system. It is one of several Campus Labs modules that CCU is currently using. Beacon provides a platform for individuals across campus – including faculty, academic advisors, athletic advisors, academic coaches, and staff in student support offices – to communicate information regarding a student’s academic and non-academic behaviors. Beacon allows individuals that frequently interact with a student the ability to identify trends inside and outside of the classroom. Being able to identify these trends could be valuable in many instances, such as planning a course schedule and guiding a student to campus resources.

When a notification is submitted in Beacon, members of the student’s success network are able to view and respond to notifications as needed. The student’s success network is made up of University stakeholders that frequently interact with a student. Depending upon the student’s major and involvement on campus, these individuals might include academic advisors, academic coaches, athletic advisors, and/or mentors.

What is a Beacon notification?

Notifications within Beacon include three types: alert, update, or encouragement. This user guide is focused on alerts and updates, but feel free to submit encouragements to the student for positive behaviors.

An alert is a notification sent to the student’s success network requesting that an action be taken with the student. For instance, a faculty member may submit an alert when a student has performed poorly on a major exam. In this case, the student’s advisor could reach out to the student to arrange a meeting or to refer the student to academic resources.

An update is a notification to the student’s success network indicating any change (or continuing behavior) with the student that does not require action. For instance, a faculty member may submit an update that the student has indicated that they have begun full-time employment off-campus. This does not require an advisor to reach out to the student; however, it may be beneficial for the advisor to know for future interactions with the student.

Who Sees Notifications?

The user creating the notification can select different options for allowing others to view it:

1. By default, students cannot see notifications. In the future, users may elect to let students view notifications.
2. Professional staff – all connected faculty and staff, excluding peer advisors (peer advisors are often graduate assistants)
3. Full network – all connected faculty, staff, and peer advisors
4. Specific network members – allows the user to select specific faculty and staff that are connected to a student in Beacon, such as advisors, academic coaches, athletic advisors, etc.
5. Additional audience members – allows the user to select faculty and staff that are not on the student’s success network, such as Associate Deans, academic coaches, etc.
When to Send an Alert?

Prior to submitting an alert, *faculty should attempt to provide classroom or private interventions*. Faculty should continue having open and honest communication with students, while using Beacon as a resource to communicate valuable information about a student’s progress and to seek assistance from others on the student’s network.

The earlier an alert is sent, the better chance an advisor has of encouraging or helping the student to overcome obstacles and retain them in the classroom/program. In general, an alert should be sent as soon as a student meets one or more of the following criteria AND action from the student’s support network is being requested:

- Student is in jeopardy of meeting the excessive absenteeism limit (excessive is defined as the number of absences where the student will automatically fail the course)
- Student has below a “C” average
- Student has missed assignments and/or exams that are significantly affecting the student’s grade

General alert submission deadlines:

- Week 3 through Week 5
- Week 7 through Week 9

Some coordinated courses may have other specific criteria. If you are teaching one of these courses, you will receive specific alert submission deadlines from a course coordinator or department chair.

**Do not use Beacon to create an alert for a student that has never attended class.** Contact the Registrar’s Office or refer to policy [STUD-SENA 332](#) for more information regarding mandatory absence reporting.

Note: Alerts should not be sent when the student continues to exhibit the same behavior. For instance, once an alert is submitted indicating poor academic performance, an advisor has contacted the student, and the alert is closed, any future notifications concerning the same academic behavior should be created as updates.

When it becomes mathematically impossible for a student to pass a course, the following example text may be useful in the description box for the alert: “Strongly recommend dropping the course.” Those responding to the alert will need clear information to assist the student.

When to Send an Update?

Updates **do not require any action to be taken** with the student. You may document correspondence with a student (emails, in-person interactions, phone, etc.) using updates. For instance, it might be helpful for an advisor to know that a faculty member has referred the student to tutoring. The advisor will then have the ability to follow up with that student about the referral in future interactions.

Sample reasons to send an update might include:

- Student has been verbally referred to tutoring,
- Student has made improvements in course, or
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- Student is continuing to struggle in course (once an initial alert has already been submitted).

How to Send a Notification?

1. Log in to https://coastal.campuslabs.com/faculty using your CCU credentials

2. Select “Success Notifications” in the upper right-hand corner.

3. Select Alert or Update from “Pick Notification Type”

4. Look up student in Search bar. You may search by first name, last name, or email address. As you type, options for students on your current course rosters should automatically display.

5. Currently, students will not be able to see alerts and updates on their stream. However, it is a best practice to assume students will have access to any information you provide in Beacon.

6. Indicate who should know about this alert. For most alerts, selecting Full Network is appropriate. See Who Sees Notifications? section for who this includes.
7. Select appropriate categories and reasons. You may select as many as needed.

8. Click the “Save” button to submit the notification. You will need to fill in all areas with an asterisk before you may save the notification.

Tips for Submitting a Notification

General guidelines for submitting a notification:

- Select appropriate categories and reasons. This will help when tracking the student’s progress later.
- Only provide what information is necessary. Information that is necessary but considered sensitive is best shared with follow-up verbal communication.
- Be mindful of the audience when submitting notifications.
- Speak to the student prior to submitting a notification when appropriate. This will help the student understand that other faculty and staff may be contacting the student about resources and that the student is not in trouble.
• **Do not include specific details about a student’s medical, financial, or personal well-being.** Even if the student shares personal details with a faculty or staff member, the student may not be comfortable with having those details shared with others.

Helpful information to include in the notification:

- Any communications you’ve had with the student about the issue
- The name of the course the student is enrolled in
- If the student is allowed to make up work
- Changes that may indicate deteriorating academic focus (disclosure of major life event, drop in attendance)
- Disengagement in the classroom
- Resources you feel could be beneficial to the student’s success

It is best to limit specific details that might make a student less likely to communicate with those on his or her success network. For instance, providing the information that a student did not perform well on the first exam will provide enough information for an advisor or coach to provide a student with resources. Providing the exact grade is unlikely to change an advisor’s or coach’s approach to helping the student.

Below are some basic examples.

**Instead of:**

Matt scored a 17 on the first exam. I do not believe he will pass the class.

**Try:**

Matt has consistently attended class; however, he scored a low grade on his first exam. I am concerned about his progress in the course. I have spoken to him about resources available and referred him to the Academic Coaching Department.

**Instead of:**

Sarah failed her first in-class assignment as she did not finish in time. She communicated that she has issues with dyslexia, yet she does not have any documentation for accommodations.

**Try:**

Sarah is consistently attending class and putting forth effort. However, it appears that some personal issues are impeding her success. I have referred her to the appropriate resource on campus and encouraged her to follow-up with her advisor.
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**What Happens Next?**

For an alert, the student’s advisor of record attempts to contact the student within 48 hours. The advisor may ask for a meeting or refer the student to appropriate campus resources. The advisor will update and then close the alert. In some cases, the advisor may need to contact the individual that submitted the alert if further information is needed.

For an update, nothing further will happen but the student’s success network will still be notified of the update.

**Questions?**

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