

Program Title: RaiseMe Micro-Scholarship Program for Student Success

Institution: Wayne State University

Innovation Category: Financial Aid, Retention/Completion

Point Person & Contact Information:

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**WAYNE STATE
UNIVERSITY**

Website: The RaiseMe Student Success Pilot Program application platform is currently only accessible by invitation link. The high school platform is available at [Raise.Me](https://www.raise.me).

Project Description:

Wayne State University (WSU) first partnered with RaiseMe in 2017 to offer high school students the opportunity to earn micro-scholarships, ranging from \$150 to \$3000, for various achievements and participation in activities associated with college preparedness and academic success. Through this high school platform, WSU allows students to earn up to \$20,000 to use across four years of undergraduate education. In late 2018, RaiseMe approached WSU to be the first in the nation to pilot their new student success program, aimed at addressing the phenomena of summer melt (students who were accepted for fall, but did not enroll) and stop or drop out and increasing four and six-year graduation rates.

Launched in May 2019, the program consists of two parts – one aimed at decreasing summer melt for those at greatest risk of not matriculating, and the second which addresses first-to-second year retention for those at greatest risk of stopping or dropping out. The student success program utilizes personalized nudges to positively impact students' behavior and leverages small monetary awards (micro-scholarships) ranging from \$10 - \$60 to incentivize the completion of activities in three target areas that address issues related to academic success, sense of belonging, or financial wellness. Students who are invited to participate in this pilot access these activities via a mobile application or the web and add activities to their portfolios, earning up to \$250 per semester. Additionally, the student success platform can be tailored at the individual student level to trigger additional activities for students who show signs of struggling in any of the three target areas. As of December 2019, we have over 580 freshman participants who have collectively earned more than \$20K in micro-scholarship awards to be applied toward their financial aid in fall 2020.

Project Objectives:

- Provide students with financial aid funding to offset educational costs
- Help students learn and implement best practices associated with student success
- Provide students with additional support in one of three key areas: financial wellness, academic success, or sense of belonging
- Curb summer melt of at-risk student populations
- Curb stop and drop-out rates of at-risk student populations
- Increase first-to-second year retention rates
- Increase four and six-year graduation rates
- Cross-promote existing WSU student support programs to drive student participation in those programs

Target Population:

This program is targeted at incoming and continuing first-year students who are identified as being at risk of melting (never matriculating) or stopping or dropping out of college. Some of the contributing risk factors assessed include expected family contribution (EFC), grades, test scores, and self-reported student data. The program is designed to grow with each student, so that those who enroll in the summer melt program are automatically enrolled in fall/winter student success program and will continue as a cohort through their second, third, and fourth year at WSU. We plan to invite additional students with each incoming fall freshman class.

Quantifiable/Qualifiable Outcomes:

Currently, over 580 students are actively participating in the program and earning micro-scholarships. We anticipate seeing the following results as year one concludes and the program rolls into fall 2020:

- Student participants will earn between \$250 - \$500 in micro-scholarships to be applied to F20 financial aid package, thus reducing their debt burden and offsetting the cost of the annual tuition increase.
- Student participants will retain at a higher than normal average, with as much as a 5% increase in retention for our target population from year 1-2.
- As we roll this program out across the entire FTIAC F20 student class, we anticipate an increase in retention of 2% in year 3 of the program (2021).
- We also anticipate our FTIAC yield for F20 will be as much as 5% higher for participants enrolled in the summer melt program in spring 2020.
- In subsequent years, we anticipate that we will see greater year-to-year retention as well as increased six-year graduation rates for those students who have actively participated in the program.
- We anticipate that students who participate in the program will feel more connected to WSU and more academically and financially prepared than their peers who are not in the program.
- Finally, we anticipate seeing higher tuition revenue as a result of increased yield and retention.

Challenges/Problems Encountered:

We were fortunate that stakeholders at Wayne State were supportive of the program early on. The greatest challenge has been in data collection and dissemination. Though a significant portion of our data is housed in a central database, some data is siloed in individual departments and thus timeliness of data retrieval for platform development have been somewhat of an issue. When designing the program, we gathered together a core team of enrollment, admissions, student service, financial aid, and student success experts who have guided the process, and have been key in creating a smooth rollout and implementation of the program. As this pilot is the first of its kind in the nation, we are dedicated to experimentation while maintaining a student-centered focus. The Student Success team has been integral in ensuring we do not overburden our student participants with unnecessary activities and interventions, by utilizing only those intentionally designed to make optimal positive impact.

Evaluation Approach:

The platform is evaluated by RaiseMe, the project manager (PM) and the AVP Enrollment Management (AVPEM) on an ongoing basis. The AVPEM reports progress to the Provost, who will make the final determination on continuation or termination of the program. We will not

know the full ROI of the program until census of fall 2020 when we are able to evaluate first-to-second year retention rates. The primary goal for year one is a 5% increase in the retention rate for students enrolled in the pilot, as well as a positive evaluation of student engagement. The internal goal for student engagement is for at least 75% of participants to have earned a minimum of \$250 in micro-scholarships to be applied to their F20 financial aid packages.

Value Proposition, Financing Strategy and Return-On-Investment Indicators:

This initiative is a medium-to-high-cost effort with the potential for a high ROI in the form of tuition revenue stemming from increased yield and retention rates. The program is currently funded primarily due to a commitment from our Provost as well as grant funding provided by MCAN and a significant program discount in years one and two from our vendor partner RaiseMe. The monetary value of this program will be evaluated via comparison of increased tuition revenue versus program costs (annual service fee to RaiseMe plus scholarship funding provided by WSU to student participants). We will also be looking at non-monetary ROI value in the form of student program participation, academic performance, and year-to-year retention rates.

Potential for Replication:

This program is easily replicable if institutions partner with RaiseMe; the sole-source provider of this micro-scholarship platform. RaiseMe is able to completely customize the program platform, which will allow college partners to tailor the platform to their students' needs - choosing unique activities, target demographics, scholarship packaging, communication methods, etc. The program is also easily scalable to any size student population.

The planning and implementation of the program included a significant time investment from many WSU stakeholders, but minimal WSU staff support post-implementation. For those interested in implementing a similar program at their institutions, they should consider that student success and enrollment management professionals will need to work closely on the design of the platform to ensure it is correctly tailored toward their unique student populations. Further, every institution will also need to create a partnership between their IT units and the IT support staff at RaiseMe, as extensive data reporting is integral to the success of the program. Finally, the program must be administered by a PM who is versed in both enrollment and student success best practices.

Vendor Involvement:

Wayne State University has partnered with RaiseMe - the inventors and sole-source for micro-scholarships. The RaiseMe team is uniquely positioned to drive successful enrollment and retention outcomes for their higher education partners due to their expertise in the behavioral science of college readiness, efficacy in student engagement and motivation, existing track record driving of student success, and leading technological capabilities. WSU has seen good results via their high school platform, and thus is excited to have the opportunity to pilot the new student success program at WSU.

Requisite Program Manager Competencies:

The program manager acts as a liaison between campus stakeholders and RaiseMe and must be able to effectively balance the input, concerns, and demands of all parties; must be able to effectively approve and manage the transfer of data; and must be able to creatively problem solve at a fast pace in order to effectively implement this platform. PM must also be highly collaborative, have a high attention to detail, and be a clear and effective communicator. PM must be versed in best practices for enrollment and student success.

Additional Resources:

Vendor Website: [Raise.Me](#)

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