

ADVOCATE



A Business Case

Benefits that uniquely position Advocate in the student conduct and behavioral intervention space to enhance campus safety.

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INTRODUCTION

As the amount of critical information managed by student conduct, residential life, and behavioral intervention teams grows and reporting demands increase, campuses are moving their business processes to a web-based environment. Web-based, management information systems (MIS) help to ensure that key staff is responsive, collaborative, and equipped with the necessary tools to make timely, well-informed decisions.

With this goal in mind, over 100 colleges and universities have deployed Symplicity's Advocate product.

Advocate enables online incident reporting, provides more effective case management, tracks resolutions and outcomes, identifies students of concern, automatically generates all letters, and provides state-of-the-art data analysis and reporting.

This business case explores the opportunities and benefits that can be realized by deploying this system.

Below you will find a high-level overview of the benefits provided by Symplicity that are unique in the space, which justifies Symplicity as a sole-source provider of student conduct, residential life, and behavioral intervention technology.

WHY IS SYMPLICITY'S IT SECURITY UNIQUE?

Minimize risk

Symplicity is the only stable, cash-flow positive, vertically integrated organization in the space. The organization has deployed web-based products for over 1,000 colleges and universities worldwide. By partnering with an established technology provider with a robust customer base and industry-best customer retention rate, the business risk typically associated with a migration to a vendor-managed, web-based platform is mitigated.

Guaranteed data access and control

As a vertically integrated organization, Symplicity does not outsource its web hosting operations. And while competitors in the space may claim to offer secure web hosting, these flat organizations often do not control the server infrastructure, which is commonly outsourced to third-party providers such as Rackspace™, ThePlanet™, or Data Pipe™. As such, while the security certifications of competitors may speak to data security, the documents are typically in the third-party hosting company's name, not their own.

This is an important distinction, because if the company licensing software is not the same company that is managing the servers, then it is impossible to control which individuals have access to the servers. Therefore, exclusive access to sensitive student data cannot be guaranteed. In comparison, Symplicity does not outsource any aspect of Advocate and offers the highest level of security available on the market.

Documentation for piece of mind

Organizations that outsource their web hosting are not able to determine their hiring policies, training programs, or conduct background checks on the employees who have access to the hardware. As an established, vertically-integrated technology organization, Symplicity has undergone SAS-70 Type II, CMMI Level 3, and NIST-800 audits specifically for the web hosting infrastructure for which the company manages.

Additionally, Symplicity holds a top secret security rating for data hosting for the Department of Defense, Whitehouse, and the United States Treasury. This certification is for the same hosting infrastructure on which our higher education customers are deployed, and should alleviate concerns about data privacy and security.

Best-of-breed back-up solution

While competitors often backup systems from one site to another using the public Internet, Symplicity does not. Symplicity has a private fiber connection between its primary and backup sites, which allows for live block level replication and the ability to revert back to moments before any hardware failure (instead of 24 hours).

Highly skilled in-house web development team

Symplicity does not outsource its web development operations. Rather, Symplicity has chosen to hire full-time software engineers who work out of our corporate headquarters in Arlington, VA. The benefits of this model include enhanced security and accountability, and quicker resolution to system issues. Currently, Advocate has five dedicated web developers and are supported by over forty other full time software engineers who update the SympleObjects platform (the framework Advocate is built on) on a daily basis.

WHY IS ADVOCATE FUNCTIONALITY UNMATCHED?

Frequent enhancements that customers want

Symplicity releases more feature updates more frequently than its competitors. Enhancements are included as part of Advocate's annual license fee with no additional charges.

Prospective enhancements are identified by the Advocate Support Team. The team coordinates regular conference calls with school points-of-contact to ensure that Symplicity has a deep understanding of its customers' needs. Based on this feedback, the team maintains a product roadmap – a prioritized list of features requested by customers.

The support team then collaborates face-to-face with Symplicity's Web Development Team to ensure that all functional requirements are properly communicated. This methodology ensures that the system evolves with our college and university partners.

Feature updates are released on a regular schedule, and prior to updating client systems, new functionality goes through Symplicity's Quality Assurance process. Symplicity provides a summary of updates via email to its customers and hosts webinars to introduce all new features. Symplicity also updates its video tutorials and user manuals for each release.

Identify and track students of concern

Advocate is the only product on the market that includes an integrated CAREnetwork module. CARE enhances campus safety by mitigating risks proactively.

The module allows students, faculty members, and other parties on campus to quickly submit Students of Concern reports online. CARE's proprietary algorithm constantly updates each student's At-Risk Score based on various criteria (case types, time elapsed, etc.) and alerts appropriate staff when an At-Risk Threshold has been reached or exceeded.

CARE reports and workflows may be configured by the campus Behavioral Intervention Task Force to specifically align with the existing processes and may be set up independently from the incident reporting system. While it is a separate module, CAREnetwork cases may be forwarded to Student Conduct with just a click, and its flexible access controls facilitate the sharing of critical information between interested and authenticated parties.

Custom workflow and staff data access controls

Advocate is the only product of its kind that allows school administrators to configure where incident reports are routed, who is notified, and who can access to the information according to incident type, severity, housing location, department, and any other necessary criteria.

Both large and small schools leverage Advocate's comprehensive workflow schema to completely customize how cases are handled internally. This capability has positioned Advocate as the only product that adapts fully to each college and university's processes and policies.

All authorized staff, including those with vision challenges may access Advocate, which is 100% compliant with the ADA's documented accessibility standards as well as Section 508.

Powerful reporting

The Advocate Reporting Engine allows for ad hoc reporting on any database field. Additionally, the Advocate Support Team will create any custom ad hoc report on-the-fly and free of charge to ensure that customers have timely access to key data and statistics.

Popular custom reports also can be saved to your library, and predefined reports can be created with a few clicks. Additionally, Advocate's Clery Report feature is automatically updated based on the current requirements of the United States Federal Government.

Transaction auditing and usage tracking

Advocate's system-wide event log tracks all transactions, including creation, modification, and deletions. This tamper-proof audit trail includes logins, logouts, letters sent, and any other action that occurs in the system offering school administrators' unparalleled visibility into all transactions that have occurred.

On-the-fly customization capability

Advocate's localization, dropdown/picklist, and form editing tools allow administrators to customize any and all screens from an easy-to-use web interface. These tools empower system users to make key modifications in real-time. In comparison, competitors often request that their customers submit customization tickets that may reside in a development queue for days or weeks before being resolved.

Fully automated systems integration

Advocate is the most widely deployed product with the most successful integrations to student information systems (SIS) such as SCT Banner, Peoplesoft, DataTel, as well as in-house developed systems. This integration provides an automatic, daily data transfer of key student information, class schedules, housing data, student photos, and more using batch methods or live, via web services.

Single sign-on (SSO)

Advocate interfaces with Single Sign-on (SSO) systems that provide staff with direct access from university portals. Symplicity supports various SSO methods such as LDAP, Shibboleth, CAS, Luminis Portal, and custom web forms.

Maximum uptime and availability

Advocate is deployed across the most advanced and secure hosting infrastructure on the market. The hosting infrastructure is hosted in a secure cage within a Department of Defense-grade facility that only authorized Symplicity staff members may access.

Advocate is currently hosted across a cluster of 200 different load-balanced servers that ensure that the system remains online and operational while also providing a quick responsiveness of the system. The sheer number of servers that Advocate is hosted on ensures very quick page responses and the assurance of continuity of service in the event of an isolated server outage.

WHO IS ADVOCATE?

Supported by seasoned professionals

Members of the Advocate Support Team have backgrounds in student conduct, residence life, and at-risk teams in university settings, and they understand both the policy and technology to make your job much easier. The team has a wide reaching breadth of experience from Directors of Student Life at large public institutions, to former Directors of Student Conduct and Residence Life.

Advocate customers have access to a Help Desk for real-time troubleshooting and consulting. Each school also is assigned a customer relationship specialist to ensure ongoing satisfaction.

Comprehensive staff training

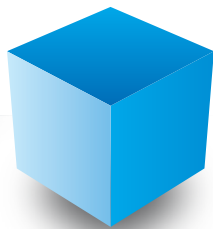
During the system implementation phase, an Advocate Transition Specialist is assigned to coordinate the appropriate resources during the implementation. To make sure that all data is migrated successfully, staff members are fully trained, and system customizations are completed to ensure a timely system deployment and launch.

Flexible licensing terms

While our competitors typically require multi-year licensing agreements and significant upfront investments for the product, the Advocate start-up cost is relatively nominal and the license may be renewed yearly, which incentivizes Symplicity to deliver top notch system functionality and customer service.

ADVOCATE

Allow students to enhance their own experience by providing context sensitive, real-time feedback to advisers, student government, faculty, and staff.



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