

Case Study: YANA Conversational Chatbot to Improve Student Success

Client:

US Public University with 23 campuses in California with an enrollment of over 40,000 students (among the largest US university systems)

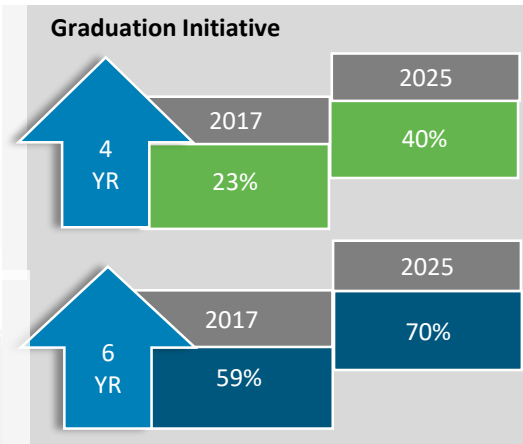
Business Challenge:

Facilitate the success of a graduation initiative to reduce opportunity and achievement gaps.

Advisors are stretched, spending 70% of their time answering basic questions. This has decreased their ability to perform more important interventions and denied access to many students.

Objectives:

- Improve enrollment management – courses needed, when needed
- Drive greater student engagement and well-being
- Provide easier navigation for financial aid services
- Create greater awareness for academic support programs
- Remove administrative barriers



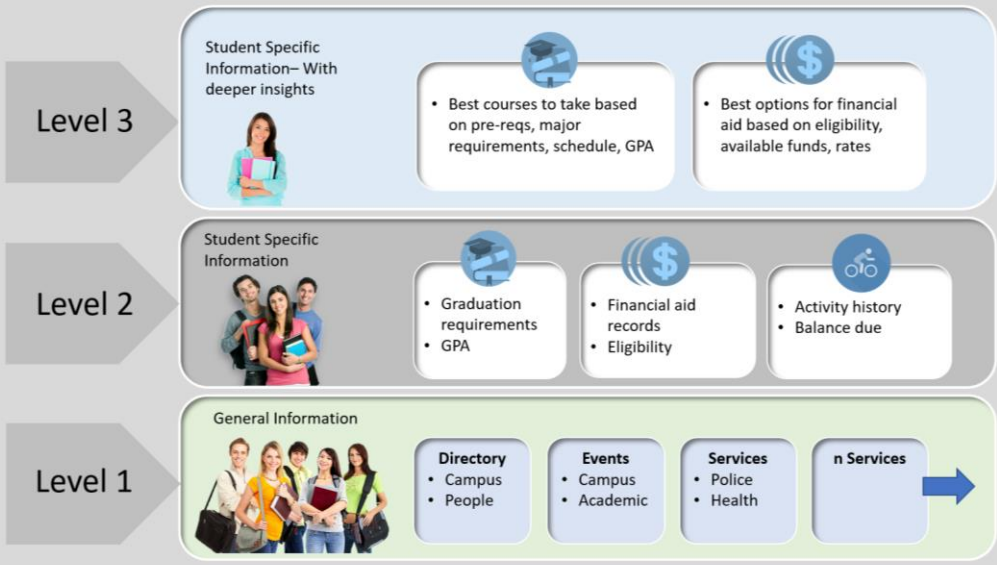
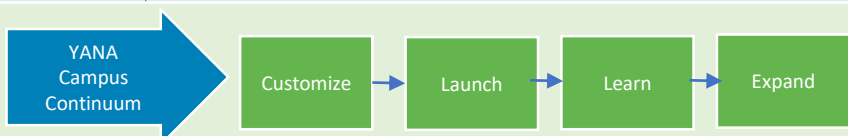
Approach:

- Developments in cognitive computing are driving innovations in Higher Ed. IBM Watson and Amazon Lex platforms were of great interest to the campus IT team. The challenge was to implement the technology in a way that: 1) advisors across the university would accept it as a helping hand, 2) students adopted it as their campus buddy and 3) university IT integrated the technology as a manageable platform.
- ThoughtFocus created a blueprint for execution drawing upon its experience on university IT systems and PeopleSoft integrations. A phased roll-out began with our YANA Campus Continuum as a starting point. Services were customized to campus needs then launched to focus user groups. After we learned from experience, the roll-out continued to expand our reach.

Results:

Three expansion releases occurred over nine months to a test user group starting with 1,500 and extended in phases to 40,000 students. We worked with specific user groups to build capability. The platform was delivered on Android and iOS platforms with focus on security and delivering Level 1, 2 & 3 information.

Week 1:	Delivered Level 1 for user group. 90% of the user group active. This usage delivered learning opportunities to the YANA chatbot
Week 15:	Delivered Level 2 with input from Advisory. YANA was trained to satisfy all functions.
Week 30:	Delivered Level 3. YANA recognizes question intents with 99.99% accuracy.



Business Benefits:

- The University has seen positive changes in the student, Advisory and IT since deployment.
- Advisors spend less time on common questions
 - Students get access to information 24x7, 365 days a year.
 - Students get notified on important dates so they do not miss important events
 - IT praised the platform as manageable with minimal overheads of maintenance
 - The faculty believes YANA will contribute to improved graduation and retention rates
 - Better inter-department collaboration has resulted.
 - Students get the right information, all the time