



Coleg Cambria was formed in March 2013 with the merger of Deeside College- including Northop College, Llysfasi College and Wrexham Training- with Yale College in Wrexham. The College has over 27,000 students and 1,600 staff, and is part of the 157 Group – a consortium of the largest FE colleges in the UK. Coleg Cambria's goal is to be the strategic leader in delivering the highest quality of teaching and learning in Europe.

The Challenge

Following the merger, the College was spread over seven sites, with over one hundred managers and various student monitoring and information management systems including EBS, Banner, ProMonitor and ProObserve. The Reporting Team and Quality Team were highly skilled at producing detailed reports using Reporting Services; but found it increasingly time consuming and labour intensive to then tailor those reports to each individual manager's needs.

If a manager wanted to understand what was going on in a particular area it could take up to a week to

collate all the relevant information so managers were, effectively, working 'in the past' on out of date information.

Paula Wood, Executive Director of Curriculum and Services to People explains: 'Prior to working with Active Dashboards I used to spend a lot of time looking for data; looking for information across lots of different data sets. It became apparent that we needed something to work quickly, smartly, to pull all information into one place, so that we're able to access the data and cut our data in many different ways.' They saw the need to streamline the whole reporting process and increase

SMT and staff engagement by speeding up access to key performance information for staff and management.

“ It became apparent that we needed something to work quickly, smartly, to pull all information into one place. ”

– PAULA WOOD
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF
SERVICES & CURRICULUM
COLEG CAMBRIA



Active Dashboards Solution

Coleg Cambria rolled out Active Dashboards to senior managers and all teaching staff across the curriculum areas. Each member of staff has access to the specific information they need about student and staff performance, their own scorecard for their courses and are now able to work in real-time to take corrective action faster to resolve issues.

Clwyd Jones, Coleg Cambria's Quality Manager said "I chose Active Dashboards as our solution because I just found the product visually good. I was taken with the clarity in terms of the product and also when we were researching for a solution I got the reporting team together. They liked the way that it could be implemented and

also it could link nicely into the way we'd already been writing our reports; it was using the same language so therefore the whole transition from what had previously been used was so much easier". Coleg Cambria's Reporting Team and Quality Team worked with the Curriculum managers and Dynistics consultants to map out initial dashboard requirements and data sources to ensure a smooth implementation and roll out. They then put a comprehensive process in place internally where managers could feedback their opinions for tailored changes and improvements.

They also decided to deploy the solution within the College's business functions, starting with their Human Resources department to monitor staff utilisation and sickness absence.

"I saw the dashboard that had been developed for the student and the wider college data and I thought instantly that it was something that would lend itself really well to HR to help us with our strategic workforce planning."

– JULIE DAVIES
HR & OD DIRECTOR
COLEG CAMBRIA

Results

Within the curriculum areas Active Dashboards enables tutors to look at performance to identify key trends, monitor and track learners and fundamentally be able to report on how successful they are – in real time.

"Active Dashboards also gives people the information that they need to do their job." Said Paula. "It empowers staff to be able to identify how well they themselves are performing and also where there could be some issues in the data. They're able to drill down into the data to look at trends and also be responsive to the information that Active Dashboards is providing."

The College uses Active Dashboards to inform one to one meetings at all levels across the College. Staff are able to access the information they need for those meetings which enables them to have real, meaningful conversations to identify support, quality improvement or key performance actions straight away. "Feedback from staff so far is very, very positive and they've asked why they haven't had it before. So it's about embracing the new technology and working with it to bring about learner success" she added.

For monthly SMT meetings HR are now able to get instant access to all the information they need about staff in terms of sickness absence, appraisals and staff utilisation to help managers with their staff planning. They also use Active Dashboards for workforce profiling to enable accurate skills, experience and knowledge planning for the future – something not easily possible using their previous reporting systems.

Julie Davies explains “Active Dashboards is extremely easy to use. One of the delights of using the dashboard is that we haven’t had to accompany it with a huge training exercise for all our managers and staff. It’s very intuitive, and very easy to use.”

“Active Dashboards has been really successful at Coleg Cambria. We’re a really ambitious college and if you want to be at the head of your sector then you need to know about what’s going on; you need to understand about performance in every single way across your organisation. And that’s what Active Dashboards provides for us. The ultimate measure for me is that performance is up and improving – we’re the highest performing college in Wales.”

– DAVID JONES
PRINCIPAL & CEO
COLEG CAMBRIA

Paula Wood used Active Dashboards to help self-assess college performance in terms of success of learners from different decile areas in North East Wales. It soon became apparent they needed to cut their data in a

different way. “Active dashboards is really responsive in that we’re able to change the way we use and profile our data. We’re now able to use it really productively with teams of staff to identify how well learners now achieve from different decile areas. From a quality improvement perspective this gives us the ability to really focus quality improvement in the areas that need it.” She added. She looks at success data, trends in performance with regards to retention, attainment and successful completion as well as being able to look at the data as a whole for the College and drill down into individual course level.

Clwyd Jones said “The introduction of the dashboard was very much about being open and transparent because to drive up standards and meet our aspirational targets we wanted our staff to share good practice.” All data regarding student and area performance is now shared and all managers and staff have access. So there’s complete transparency of how the College is performing. Staff and management engagement has improved as Active Dashboards is used throughout the entire self- assessment process – from course level all the way to the final delivery document to the Welsh government. “It’s all about empowerment” said Clwyd. “Active Dashboards is not seen by staff as a performance management ‘stick’ to beat them with. It’s a tool to enable high challenge and high support: staff have the information and are able to tell us what support they need in order to help them improve”.

Coleg Cambria is part of the 157 Group whose ethos is focussed on understanding and improving the impact of college provision

for the regional environment. As such, the College has used Active Dashboards in conjunction with the local authority to identify trends across areas in line with Welsh government agenda – e.g. tackling poverty and addressing deprivation: understanding as a college where learners are coming from, socio economic background for example in order to ensure accurate representation to meet the needs of the local population. Coleg Cambria has developed a dashboard view to address each of the key areas of financial, organisational, quality improvement and general performance, have made this accessible to their Governors and the hope is in the future schools can see their student attendance rates in real-time.

Benefits

Julie Davies said: “Active Dashboards has had a huge impact in terms of saving our managers and my own team in HR time, effort, energy and investment through having easily accessible information that’s accurate and up to date. We don’t need specialist skills and knowledge to run reports, our managers aren’t waiting for reports – the information’s there at their fingertips and we don’t need specialist skills and knowledge to interpret the data - it’s very intuitive. We can then use that data to inform our workforce planning both day to day in terms of operational decision making, and also at a very strategic level in terms of planning the year ahead, the next 3 years ahead and how we invest in professional development”.

Some significant benefits of Active Dashboards have been identified in the improvement of learner success within the College's hair and beauty curriculum area. Staff have been able to use the data and Active Dashboards to really hone in on learner numbers, enrolments, current performance and also successful completion. This enabled them to bring about improvement in attainment and retention. "Since we've been using Active Dashboards we've brought about a successful improvement of 13 percentage points in overall learners success" said Paula Wood. "This now sees hair and beauty at Coleg Cambria ranked at the top of the first quartile of all colleges in Wales. Active Dashboards was fundamental to that quality improvement. We use Active Dashboards at the core of our monitoring and tracking and it really enabled our managers to facilitate and improve the success of our learners. It's fantastic. I can't imagine not using it".

The College doesn't just use Active Dashboards for performance reporting. As Clwyd Jones put it "It's an early warning system. We use it as a monitoring tool to show what has or hasn't happened, highlighting anomalies and to help us understand why. For example if a learner hasn't been in attendance during a week then our administration team who have access to Active Dashboards will phone through; if in the admissions process a learner shows an interest, enrolls but then doesn't turn up for the first day of the course then that allows us to highlight him or her and the recruitment and retention team will engage with them to find out why. It helps us put in a host

of measures to ensure we are still engaging with the learner".

Both Yale and Deeside colleges were Grade 1 colleges. When the merger took place there was an expectation that there might be a dip in performance in the first few years. But as Clwyd Jones explains "But what we've actually seen with the introduction of the Active Dashboards we're looking at a 6% success rate increase and that's on our long course provision".

David Jones, Principal and CEO said "Creating a new college, with a totally new name as well and trying to bring everyone on board is a massive challenge and it doesn't happen overnight. So what we needed to do was to bring all of our data into one place and provide one common platform that works for everybody. Our performance in terms of success rates are the best in Wales, we're 2nd for work based learning and our financial performance is the best as well. Now we're not here resting on our laurels, but we're absolutely clear that using Active Dashboards is a key part of that success".

The Future

With the inevitable changes to college funding, Coleg Cambria are bracing themselves again for more austerity measures. "Active Dashboards gives us the base information to allow us to reconfigure our portfolio of courses;

to look at change in a holistic way in terms of our provision within a shrinking funding regime. This information – and the ability we now have for that insight- is extremely critical as things get tighter". Said Clwyd. "I'd recommend Active Dashboards because in the changing face of education in the UK this is going to make you ready for whatever changes are coming. Whether it be a change in the inspection regime or whether it be a change in funding. This gives you the power to be able to plan and to make those decisions".

Looking at their performance and reporting to their Governing body isn't just a once a year exercise for Coleg Cambria. As David Jones explains "It's a 24/7 operation; every indicator we've got is still in the right place. We use a red, amber, green approach at the top level to look at the organisation and the vast majority of our indicators are in green-and we have none in red. I found the team at Dynistics have been amazingly good at responding to what we want; and the flexibility of Active Dashboards means our Reporting Team and Quality Team have been able to easily tailor the solution to fit the needs and ambitions of one of the top colleges in the UK. I would wholly recommend it as a real consideration for colleges if they share the ambition that we have".



To find out how Active Dashboards can improve college reporting for you, visit www.Dynistics.com