



Why Early Alert Systems Are Essential for Student Success

What is an early alert system (EAS)?

An early alert system is a proactive approach to identifying students who are at most at risk of academic failure to provide support ([Villano et al., 2018](#)). The University uses Anthology's Beacon early alert system, and it is supported through the Student Success Center (SCC). It goes beyond simply reporting low grades. The goal is to gather various data points of concern regarding attendance, assignment completion, class participation, and even interactions with support services, to paint a holistic picture of a student's well-being and academic progress. These systems are most beneficial to underrepresented student populations ([Gierdowski, 2019](#)). By providing students with the support they need, we can help them overcome these challenges and stay on track to graduation.

Why are early alert systems important?

- **Early intervention is key:** By identifying students who are struggling early on, we can intervene before they fall too far behind. This can make a world of difference in their academic outcomes.
- **Tailored support:** Early alert systems, such as Beacon, allow us to provide targeted support to students based on their specific needs and connect them with the resources they need to succeed.
- **Improved communication:** Early alert systems foster better communication between faculty, advisors, and support services. This fosters a collaborative network to ensure students receive the support they need.
- **Increased student engagement:** Knowing that someone cares about their success can motivate students to seek help and take ownership of their learning. This can lead to increased engagement and a more positive learning experience.

Beacon: getting started

SSC has created a series of "How-to" videos that can help you to navigate Beacon. Please review the videos below that include an introduction to Beacon, how to log in, access the widget, and create a notation within the Beacon online platform below. Here are the links to get started:

- [What is Beacon? An Introduction](#)
- [How to Log into Beacon](#)



Why Early Alert Systems Are Essential for Student Success

- [How to Access the Beacon Widget](#)
- [How to Create Notations](#)

What to expect after submitting a Notation? A few points to know.

- The Student Success Center will be monitoring all alerts behind-the-scenes to ensure the students are connected to the support service to best address their needs
- If you are assigned an alert or you are the student's advisor, you will receive an email notification.
- If the student is in one of your courses but you are not their advisor, you may not always receive updates related to the submission to Beacon.

***Please note that attending to alerts and documenting in Beacon should not replace your advising notes that still need to be recorded in Banner.**

The use of early alert systems has been found to improve student retention, especially when identified early ([Harrison et al., 2021](#)). We can make a real difference in the lives of our students before it is too late to salvage their academic journeys. The Beacon early alert system is a valuable tool for supporting student success at Detroit Mercy, but Beacon is only one part of our student support efforts. Community participation is required for our students to succeed, and every student deserves a chance to achieve academic success.

If you have any questions, support needs, or training requests for Beacon, please contact the Erica Graze at grazeem@udmercy.edu or 313-993-1811

Gierdowski, D. C. (2019). *ECAR Study of Undergraduate Students and Information Technology, 2019*. Educause.

<https://library.educause.edu/-/media/files/library/2019/10/studentstudy2019.pdf>

Harrison, S., Villano, R., Lynch, G., & Chen, G. (2021). Microeconomic Approaches in Exploring the Relationships Between Early Alert Systems and Student Retention: A Case Study of a Regionally Based University in Australia. *Journal of Learning Analytics*, 8(3), 170-186. <https://doi.org/10.18608/jla.2021.7087>

Villano, R., Harrison, S., Lynch, G., & Chen, G. (2018). Linking early alert systems and student retention: a survival analysis approach. *Higher Education*, 76(5), 903-920. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-018-0249-y>