

# Leveraging data to simplify processes, enhance schedules, and improve efficiency



CASE STUDY | MESA COMMUNITY COLLEGE



Better understanding of student behavior enhances the efficiency of student-centered schedules

## Objective: Upgrade manual scheduling practices to more efficient data-driven processes

Scheduling is increasingly complex, and Mesa Community College in Mesa, Arizona, understood that manual processes and changing student behaviors would necessitate the implementation of new scheduling processes at the institution.

As the largest of the 10 community colleges in the Maricopa County Community College district, Mesa Community College was experiencing a high concentration of last-minute cancellations, indicating manual scheduling methods were no longer meeting the needs of its growing population of adult learners.

When long-time Ad Astra advocate, Jennifer Stroops, Instructional Services Supervisor, got the go ahead to implement Ad Astra last year, she decided to forgo a pilot in favor of pushing out the tools to everyone in Academic Affairs.

“This was a chance to elevate our scheduling game and focus on better efficiencies to create student-centered schedules,” Stroops said. “We now had the data and the visual piece to see what students are doing in the pathways.”

## Solution: Apply course-taking behaviors and historical data to optimize schedules and financial sustainability

Data provided by Ad Astra offered Mesa Community College insight into student behavior and highlighted the many ways better scheduling methods could help its students get “in, through, and out,” Stroops said.

Implementation of Ad Astra also proved to be timely as a new executive team sought to address an impending budget crisis. With scheduling at the center of the academic budget, Stroops saw an opportunity to demonstrate how Ad Astra data could help address the budget crisis by looking at reduction candidates to improve scheduling efficiency.

“This was the best conversation starter,” she said. “Ad Astra provided a tool that could blend data and the art of scheduling together, all supported by reporting and visualization that offered multiple ways to look at our historical and current data.”

## RESULTS

**\$2.5M saved**

in the annual scheduling budget by looking at reduction candidates



“ Ad Astra is the tool that combines data and the art of scheduling into one. Its reporting and visualization capabilities allow us to move the needle of completion to help more students.

JENNIFER STROOPS

Instructional Services Supervisor

The tools implemented to modernize scheduling practices at Mesa Community College would become instrumental in helping the institution save \$2.5 million in the annual scheduling budget last year. Its success has the college planning to use Ad Astra data again to reduce the current academic budget by an additional \$500,000 this year.

“Ad Astra helps us to work with information from the population we have,” Stroops said. “We can look at student behavior and the particular courses that draw a student to a pathway. The use of Student Demand Forecasting data allows us to create a schedule that places our students on a better completion path.”

### School background

Mesa Community College, Mesa, Arizona, is one of 10 community colleges in the Maricopa County Community College District. Originally a Mesa extension of Phoenix College, the institution enrolled 330 students during its first semester in 1963. Today, the college serves more than 25,500 learners annually. Mesa Community College is accredited by the Higher Learning Commission.

### Products in use

- + Academic Scheduling
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- + Room Scheduling
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