

# Benefitfocus® Success Story

## Company Overview

Western Kentucky University (WKU), home of the Hilltoppers, is a public university located in Bowling Green, Kentucky, with regional campuses located in Glasgow, Owensboro and Elizabethtown-Fort Knox. Founded in 1906, WKU has grown to support research, service and lifelong learning opportunities for its over 20,000 enrolled students and 2,300 employees. WKU is committed to preparing students of all backgrounds to be productive, engaged and socially responsible citizen-leaders of a global society, and seeks to enrich the quality of life for those within its reach.

## Challenge

In 2015, Western Kentucky University (WKU) had a goal to implement cost-saving strategies around health and wellness, but were facing an uphill battle. Their benefits program needed an overhaul—the same traditional PPO plans had been in place for the previous 16 years.

Living the University's motto, Hilltoppers know that life at the top is worth the climb, the HR team at WKU decided to go all in on plan design changes with a full replacement strategy of all-new consumer directed health plans (CDHP), including one high-deductible health plan (HDHP). At the same time, they implemented a new integrated wellness program with incentives tied to health plans through premium credits and HSA/HRA funds.

With all of this shake up, they knew it had the potential to lead to employee confusion. They needed a way to communicate the changes and clearly demonstrate the value of their benefit offerings. Was it possible to gain control over health care costs while educating employees on their new benefit options?

## Solution

WKU leveraged Benefitfocus Benefitplace™ to present employees with plan options through a thoughtfully-designed interface and clear educational content. They also added Health Insights to provide powerful tools for employees to make better informed benefits decisions.

The result? WKU achieved a first-year adoption rate of 54 percent in their key strategic HDHP plan, which was nearly double their initial goal. Ultimately, this led to \$2 million reduction in total health care spend in the first year of roll-out.



### Industry

Education

### Number of Employees

2,300

### Solution

Benefitplace™ with Health Insights

### Results

- \$2M health care savings in first year
- 54% HDHP adoption rate in first year
- 92% participation in wellness program

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“Benefitfocus helped us show our employees the true value of the new plan designs.”

### Kari Aikins

Assistant HR Director, Total Compensation,  
Western Kentucky University



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## \$2M

## reduction in health care spend

“Benefitplace was the difference maker that enabled us to achieve these results,” explained Kari Aikins, Assistant HR Director, Total Compensation, Western Kentucky University. “It enabled us to optimize the enrollment workflow and incorporate decision support features that really helped our employees understand their benefits on a more personal level.”

That personalization was amplified by Health Insights, which integrates personal claims data for employees to estimate out-of-pockets costs for each plan option based on historical and expected usage. This level of transparency gives WKU employees the ability to see the financial impact of their benefits plan decisions in real-time.

Wellness participation at WKU had been at 35 percent. With the ability to tie wellness incentives to health plans through Benefitplace, employees now see the benefits of the pledge as they enroll. This helped WKU increase wellness program participation to 92 percent.

And because the HDHP model requires employees to have more skin in the game, WKU made an effort to illustrate the true value of the new plan designs postopen enrollment. At the end of the first year under the new HDHP model, WKU compared total out-of-pocket costs for their employees. They found that 75 percent of employees under the new HDHP

model actually had less total out-of-pocket costs than under their previous PPO offerings. WKU then prepared a year-over-year comparison with data from the platform that showed total health care spend for each employee, including premium and account funding and out-of-pocket-spend. Employees gained so much insight from this comparison that WKU continues to use this method to assist employees in health plan decision making each enrollment.

Another way WKU engages their entire workforce during open enrollment is by using the integrated tools for embedded and targeted communication. Customizable widgets and the plan document feature gives them the ability to insert key pieces of communication about plan changes at the point of enrollment. Additionally, the WKU administrators can send personalized messages to different employee segments directly from the platform based on plan participation and other factors such as location, demographics and job level, helping them engage employees throughout the year.

Learn how data-driven insights and communication tools from Benefitfocus can help you achieve significant savings.

Contact [sales@benefitfocus.com](mailto:sales@benefitfocus.com) today.

