Introduction

Welcome faculty and congratulations on implementing GradesFirst at your institution. We are very excited for you to be participating in what we believe is both the “now” and the future of student support. As a 100% web-based system, we trust you will find GradesFirst to be beneficial in day-to-day tasks and an overall enjoyable experience as you utilize all of the innovative and user-friendly tools that the system offers. Our mission is three-fold:

“To increase student success, to enhance student support, to make a difference.”

We seek to increase student success primarily by increasing student retention and eligibility. We believe that our early alerts, progress reporting, tutor management and study hall features facilitate this process in an invaluable way.

We enhance student support with a system that has been specifically designed to maximize efficiency both inside and outside of the classroom. Some of our enhanced functionalities include attendance recording, assignment tracking, faculty-student messaging, and more.

We make a difference by providing both faculty and students with all of the tools necessary for a dynamic, efficient, and truly successful academic experience. We are certain that you have the power to make a difference in students’ lives; we’re here to make that job easier.

Getting Started

Visit this URL to access your GradesFirst site:

https://app.gradesfirst.com/session/new

You will log in with your school specific System Administration ID and Password setup by GradesFirst. Your login information should be provided to you by your institution’s GradesFirst Administrator.

Support

How do I contact technical support? You can log a support ticket by emailing support@gradesfirst.com. This will automatically create a support ticket, viewable by our entire support staff, to ensure a speedy reply.

Once you are logged in, we also have a “live chat” option which can be found at the bottom right hand corner of the screen. This is a great way to get help in real time!
Home

When you log into GradesFirst, the first page you see will be your Home page. Below is a screen shot of what your Home page will look like. Since everything in GradesFirst is permission-based, your Home page may or may not have all of the features shown below.

Here are some of the great things you can access right from this page:

1. **Send a Message**: message students individually or en masse
2. **My Conversations**: manage and view threads of conversation
3. **Record My Class Attendance**: track student attendance and recognize absence patterns
4. **Assignments**: create new assignments and due dates for students
5. **Progress Reports**: create and view progress reports for individual students

Let’s go over each of these features in greater detail, starting with sending a message and My Conversations.
Messages

Sending a message in GradesFirst couldn’t be easier. Simply select the student(s) and hit the Send a Message Button. You will be given the option to send either an email or a text message. Any text messages that are not able to be received will be sent as an email instead.

My Conversations

This link will take you to a list of all of your sent and received messages in GradesFirst. You can even filter your Conversations by type (email, SMS, not delivered, etc.) or search for specific users that have been part of a Conversation.
Record My Class Attendance

Once you have selected the Record My Attendance link from your homepage, you will be directed to the following screen, where you will be prompted to select a course.

![Record My Class Attendance Screen](image)

After choosing the correct class, the appropriate roster will be generated, and it is from this screen that you take attendance, view patterns and comments, etc.
A) **Mark All Students as Present** – This feature allows professors to mark all students as present rather than indicating attendance for each individual.

B) **Toggle Pattern / Comment** – This button allows the professor to change between viewing student attendance patterns and a blank field in which to record comments about the student and his or her absence.

C) **Identify At-Risk** – When this link is selected, a box will appear allowing the professor to submit a progress report for that particular student. Previous progress reports will also be shown.

D) **Mark Remaining Present** – This check box allows professors to mark all remaining students as “Present.”

E) **To Excel** – This link exports all of the classes recorded attendance to Excel, allowing for quick and easy manipulation, printing, saving, etc.
F) **Census** – This link will direct you to a page where you can fill out the last day of attendance for those students who are no longer active in your course. This is commonly referred to as an Attendance Audit or Course Census.

Clicking the number of absences (the total number of absences is the number outside of the parentheses - the number of unexcused absences is the number on the inside of the parentheses) will generate a list view of all those student’s absences.
You can also select “Detailed View” to get just that – more details about each of the absences for a student.

Classroom Assignments

Creating assignments for your students in GradesFirst is quick and easy. Start by selecting the “Assignments” link next to any of the classes listed on your homepage.

You will then be directed to a page where you can select the students for which you want to create the assignment and then do just that. Simply check all of the appropriate students’ boxes, and then select “Create a New Assignment.” This will generate a box (shown on the following page) for the details of this assignment to be entered.
Once you have saved the assignment, it will appear under your list of “current assignments.” Note the “Update Status” link under the last column. This link will allow you to make updates and other changes to the assignment, including the ability to mark a student’s assignment as finished “On-Time,” along with entering the points and comments for a student’s work.
Progress Reports

Another capability available from your homepage is the submission of Progress Reports for your students. You may also submit Progress Reports in response to a Progress Report Campaign, typically sent out by an Advisor or Administrator. In those instances, you will be providing feedback via email; however we will first take a look at submitting Progress Reports straight from your class rosters.

The first thing you will do is select the “Prog Reports” link next to the class for which you would like to submit Progress Reports. This will redirect you to the Progress Reports page for that particular class.

Once there, you will select the student for whom you would like to submit a report, and then simply click the “Create a New Progress Report” button. This will open up a blank progress report in which you can enter the student’s information and then save for later viewing.
Once you have saved the progress report(s), it will show up under your list of reports at the top of this page.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Name</th>
<th>At Risk?</th>
<th>Absences</th>
<th>Expected</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gregar, Cass</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>always sleeps in class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eberson, Nick</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>always sleeps in class</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note that on your homepage, students are only marked “At-Risk” if they have been marked overall “At-Risk” by an Advisor or an Administrator. When filling out a progress report, a student is only marked “At-Risk” for that particular class. In the above screenshot we have marked Cass and Nick as “At-Risk” for our class. However, in the screenshot below (which shows all of our assigned students on our homepage) neither student is seen as “At-Risk.” Steve is shown as “At-Risk,” because he has been marked thus by his Advisor (and not just for one particular class).

Next we’ll take a look at how you can submit a Progress Report in response to a Progress Report Campaign. Below is what the email you will receive should look like. It will include a link leading to the progress report, as well as a link that can be copy/pasted into your browser if the original link does not work. You will also see that there is a notation about the date the link will expire. This is very important, because after this date you will not be able to fill out any more of the report. Neither the Advisor nor GradesFirst Support will be able to reactivate the link. Once the date has passed (which in this case is 08/31/12) the link will be null.
Once you click to begin entering student feedback, you will see the following progress report. Note that you do not have to log in to GradesFirst to fill out the progress report(s).

Nothing on the progress report is required, so you can fill out as much or as little as you want. However, the more feedback you do give the Advisor, the easier it will be to identify those students who need an extra push. It will also give the Advisor a better overall view of the student population’s academic progress. For these reasons, we encourage you to fill out as much as you can.
Above is what a completed progress report could look like. You can list the number of absences, current grade, and/or comments about the student. You will also notice that there are two different options for submitting your progress report. Let’s take a look at each of these options in a bit more detail.

Submit only marked students (but I’m not done)

This button will submit students you have marked into GradesFirst as being complete (effectively removing them from your list of students). However, the students you have not marked will remain on your list. As a result, you can re-use the link in the progress report email, at any time, to continue marking the rest of the students in your classes. Repeat this process until all students have been marked in some form or fashion.

Submit unmarked students as not at-risk (I’m all done)

This is your “I’m all done” button. It will submit the students you have marked as you indicated. It will also submit the rest of your students as not at-risk. For example, in your first year of teaching and only two of them are at-risk, you don’t have to mark them all. You can mark the two at-risk students and then use this button to mark the remaining students as not at-risk, therefore saving time and effort. Please use this button carefully because with just a single click, it will totally complete your progress report campaign.

The first option (shown above) allows you to only submit the students you have marked on the report. This can be very helpful if you only have time to fill out part of the progress report. Instead of leaving the report pulled up on your computer, you can simply submit your completed work, and return to the email in order to finish later that day or any day before the link expiration date.
The second option (shown above) can be used in two different scenarios. The first is when you would like to only fill out the information for your “At-Risk” students. After marking those students, you can select this button, and it will mark all of your other students “Not At-Risk.” Note that it will not fill out Absences, Current Grade, or Comments for those “Not At-Risk” students.

The second instance in which you can use this option is when you have completely filled out all of the students, both “At-Risk” and “Not At-Risk” students. Once you have used one of the above options, that’s it—you’re done!

Enrollment Census

There is one other campaign that you make be asked to fill out via GradesFirst. This Campaign is actually called an “Enrollment Census.” Through the census, you will give information about which students attended class and date of their last attendance. This information can be very helpful as Administrators seek to compile and quantify campus attendance at the end of a semester or school year.

You will receive an email very similar to the one you receive for progress reports. Note the link and address that can be copied into your web browser (in the event that the link does not work) are included this email. However, unlike the Progress Report Campaign, there is no expiration date for the Enrollment Census link.
Below is the form you will see once you have selected “Click to Begin Entering Student Feedback.”

Here you will be able to mark students who are currently attending your class as “Active.” Those students who have a last day of attendance will have that date listed in the middle column. For those students who were enrolled in your class but never attended, you will check the last column. You also have a space for additional comments, as well as a box to check that will mark all unmarked student as “Active” (this is similar to the “Mark Remaining Student Not At-Risk” button for progress reports).

Once you are finished, simply hit the “submit” button, and you will receive a message letting you know that you have successfully completed the report.

Now we’ll take a look at is your GradesFirst calendar. Here you will be able to keep up with class schedules and any other appointments you may have on campus.
My Calendar

There are a number of different things you can do with your calendar on GradesFirst; however many of these things are permissions based. For example, in order to use the “Add a Calendar Event” link, you must have permission to create an appointment. You will also need the permission to edit appointments in order to use the drag and drop feature.

Below you will see a shot of what your calendar may look like. You can choose to view month, day, or week, as well as change the calendar to a list view. Everything is color-coded, so seeing your different appointments is easy. We also support syncing you GradesFirst Calendar with other calendar clients.

If you feel that you should have permission that you have not been given (specifically adding, editing, or deleting calendar instances), please contact your GradesFirst Administrator to discuss changing your permissions.

Search

The last thing we will discuss is the Search tab. Again, this is a tab that is based on the permissions you have been given within GradesFirst, so you may or may not see the tab on your Home screen.
Once you have selected the student(s) or other GradesFirst user(s) for whom you were searching, you may be able to Send a Message or Schedule an Appointment with that user. Again, this is a specific permission.

Now that you know how to send messages to students, take attendance, add assignments, submit progress reports, complete enrollment censuses, and utilize your calendar, you should have all you need for a successful use of the GradesFirst software. If you have any questions, please contact either your GradesFirst Administrator or GradesFirst Support at support@gradesfirst.com.