

The Lee Noel-Randi Levitz Retention Excellence Awards

Presented at the 2017

**National Conference on Student
Recruitment, Marketing, and Retention**

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2017 Winners

Southeast Technical Institute
Southeast Tech Cares

University of South Florida
USF Student Success Case Management Program

Walsh University
*The Cavalier Connection: A Campuswide
Commitment to Student Retention*

Awarded by

RUFFALOSM
NOEL LEVITZ

Southeast Technical Institute (Sioux Falls, South Dakota)

Southeast Tech Cares

- **Robert Griggs—President**
- **Tracy Noldner—Vice President, Student Affairs and Institutional Research**

Southeast Technical Institute, located in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, is a public, state-supported, technical institute serving 3,000 students annually. Southeast offers 55 certificate and AAS degree programs, including many online. The institution celebrates the state's third largest higher education graduating class with a mission to educate for employment. A graduate placement rate of 98 percent with 91 percent in a related field is evidence of student success.

The Program

Southeast Tech Cares is an innovative process for retention, not a program. It focuses efforts on student achievement across campus through the use of an hourglass approach. Cares begins by capturing inputs to better understand students and their needs, including: ACT/Accuplacer scores; HS/college GPA; GRIT; College Readiness data; predictive modeling; Ruffalo Noel Levitz SSI; CESS; retention, persistence, grad rates; job placement; employer surveys; and others. These inputs are used to help meet the immediate needs of students and to plan for the future.

For immediate student needs, the process empowers employees to solve issues directly and quickly. When not possible, employees submit Care Referrals to retention coordinators, who assign interventions to the appropriate employee. Regardless of whether the employee solves the concern directly or through a referral, the action is documented in Cares for further review and improvements as well as sharing information with other employees so they can assist that student.

For needs of key student groups and overall student support, the Student Success Team, with membership from across campus, reviews the inputs and develops and implements retention programs to improve student support, including:

- **JumpStart Days**—faculty-led program for incoming students the week prior to the start of classes;
- **Attendance Challenge**—students are rewarded for perfect attendance during the first 14 and 30 days of the semester;

- **Seminar Course**—new students take a success seminar, taught by success advisors, who then become their permanent non-academic advisor;
- **Co-requisite Classes**—Math/English pre-academic courses taken at the same time as required courses;
- **Emergency Loan**—funds available to students for emergencies up to \$500; and
- **Academic Recovery**—required course for students on financial aid warning.

Once retention programs have been implemented, the Success Team evaluates their success and adjusts accordingly. The Team annually reviews the inputs, referrals, and program outcome data to determine effectiveness and improve services.

Outcomes, Measurements, and Results

Each Cares program has its own desired outcomes measurement in addition to target levels for retention and graduation rates for the Institute. All key student groups are assigned a “champion” to assure programs and key student groups are making progress toward the set targets. While there is not room to publish all of the outcomes within this document, because there are many, the Cares programs are producing the positive results for the students of STI. Below are a few:

- **JumpStart Days** participation increased from 84 percent in fall 2013 to 96 percent in fall 2016; persistence for attendees improved from 85 percent to 96 percent over the same period.
- **Seminar Course** completion increased from 83 percent in fall 2012 to 89 percent in fall 2016; persistence also improved from 80 percent to 84 percent.
- **Co-requisite Classes** completion increased from 59 percent in fall 2012 to 72 percent in fall 2016; persistence also improved from 72 percent to 78 percent.

Overall results have exceeded expectations and targets. Southeast Technical Institute continues to adjust programs for improvement, to find value in all of them, and to embed them into their overall retention process.

University of South Florida (Tampa, Florida)

USF Student Success Case Management Program

- **Judy Genshaft—President**
- **Paul Dosal—Vice President for Student Affairs and Student Success**

The University of South Florida (USF) is a high-impact, global research university dedicated to student success. With nearly 50,000 students, USF serves a high percentage of underrepresented minorities, limited income, and first-generation students. USF has worked successfully to close the achievement gap by race, ethnicity, and income.

The Program

In 2016, as part of their Student Success movement, USF developed a Persistence Committee to coordinate cross-functional, data-informed student support. The committee is comprised of faculty and staff from across the institution—from academic advisors and advocates to financial aid advisors, career counselors, resident assistants, and other support personnel. Since 2012, members of this team had utilized an internally developed predictive model to determine the risk of attrition of first time in college students. This model, based on pre-enrollment data, had helped USF raise retention rates to 89 percent.

In 2014, USF contracted with Civitas Learning to deploy a Student Success platform that generated predictors of persistence for all students. This predictive analytics platform, drawing from student data, provided actionable, real-time information that enabled the Persistence Committee to identify struggling students and provide them with personalized support.

In the process of utilizing predictive analytics and developing appropriate and timely interventions, the Persistence Committee began to apply a case management approach to address at-risk students. Members of the Persistence Committee now survey real-time data and retrieve an exact list of active students who are at-risk.

Full-time case managers (academic advocates) provide the immediate outreach identified by the Persistence Committee. The case management system allows advocates to provide personalized and relevant communications with each of the at-risk students and coordinate outreach and intervention of all student support personnel. This approach results in timely one-on-one conversations

with a specialist who recognizes the individuality of each student and his or her specific needs and interests. The advocates work with the specialists to remove obstacles and align resources to assist each student back to a successful path. With a strong focus on first-time-in-college students, this approach is having a positive impact on first-year student progression.

Results

In 2009, USF launched the Student Success Task Force with the goal of radically transforming the culture of the university and raising persistence and completion rates to levels consistent with the aspiration to become eligible for membership in the Association of American Universities. By 2012, they had increased their six-year graduation rate to 68 percent and the first-year retention rate to 88 percent, but then hit a three-year performance plateau with retention and graduation rates holding steady.

In 2015, a more specific goal of breaking through the performance plateau and achieving a first-year retention rate of 90 percent and a six-year graduation of 70 percent in order to meet state performance benchmarks was established. The individualized approach of our Student Success Case Management program is now considered core to achieving this goal.

The data recently submitted to Florida's Board of Governors shows that USF has achieved their benchmark of a 90 percent retention rate for the 2015 cohort and is on track to also surpass the 70 percent six-year graduation rate later in 2017. In doing so, USF will unlock up to \$15 million in performance-based funding.

USF's case management model has positioned the institution as a national leader in using analytics to improve student success. For their work, USF was recognized by Eduventures as the top student success performer among all public universities in the country and received the Eduventures 2016 Innovation Award. USF also received an iPASS Grant to develop the case management system.

Over the past seven years, the student success initiative at USF has eliminated the achievement gap by race, ethnicity, and income. Black and Hispanic students, like lower-income students, graduate at rates equal or superior to white and higher income students. These achievements have been recognized by the Education Trust (which ranked USF #6 in the country in black student success) and the Center for American Progress.

These achievements are not just numeric; at-risk students across the institution are experiencing a higher quality, more personalized and effective outreach, and guidance as the result of the Student Success Case Management program.

Walsh University (North Canton, Ohio)

The Cavalier Connection: A Campuswide Commitment to Student Retention

- **Richard Jusseume—President**
- **Edna McCulloh—Dean of Academic Services**
- **Rebecca Coneglio—Director of Undergraduate Admissions**
- **Rachel Hammel—Director of Grants and Sponsored Research**

Walsh University is a liberal arts and sciences institution founded by the Brothers of Christian Instruction, a worldwide order whose mission is to educate working-class children. Walsh maintains a connection with this legacy by providing educational opportunities to underrepresented students. Walsh is located in North Canton, Ohio, with 3,000 students.

The Program

The Walsh University Cavalier Connection (CC) is a campuswide retention program committed to connecting students to key academic resources and social supports to ensure student success. The CC consists of administrators, faculty, and staff from academic affairs and student affairs. Dedicated to supporting the University's mission, individuals collaborate year-round to retain first-generation, working class, and ethnically diverse populations. The Cavalier Connection includes four major teams, which are described below, working to achieve the following goals.

1. Identify high-risk freshmen through an early-alert system to increase retention.
2. Seek innovative methods to identify and address the diverse needs of each freshman cohort.
3. Empower faculty and staff to embrace mentoring relationships with students to allow for early identification of student challenges.
4. Foster a holistic approach to student retention through strong intradepartmental communication.

Cavalier Connection Teams

Enrollment Management Team identifies high-risk freshmen early to promote successful academic and social transitions within the following areas.

- **Structured Education Program**—supports academically under-prepared freshmen in mathematics, English, study skills, and time management.
- **First-year Experience Course**—including mission-aligned common-reader, Ruffalo Noel Levitz Student Retention Predictor (SRP) and College Student Inventory (CSI) and Mid-Year Student Assessment (MYSA), personal librarians, peer bonding.
- **Student Support Resources**—tutoring, mental health/wellness, and financial aid workshops.

Care Team investigates concerns forwarded from faculty and staff regarding student challenges.

- **Wrap-around Response**—a strategic response plan with appropriate campus constituents to connect and support students with necessary resources.
- **Student Peer Support Systems**—residential and commuter student peer connection to address student obstacles.

Retention Team utilizes a comprehensive tracking system to identify students requiring immediate assistance.

- **Connection to Campus Advocates**—specialized support advocates in designated areas: commuter services, information technology, multicultural affairs, accessibility accommodations, and bursar.
- **Recruit Back**—outreach from academic advisors and admissions staff to non-registered students.

Freshman Academic Advising Team provides intrusive advising and mentoring during the first year to instill a sense of belonging.

- **Summer Connections**—frequent student contacts to reduce freshman “melt” prior to sophomore year.
- **Student Action Plans**—Student Retention Predictor, College Student Inventory, and Mid-Year Student Assessment results utilized to develop student success plans.
- **Intentional Process to Link Advisees to Major Specific Advisors**—students connect with their major advisors during the first semester and at the beginning of sophomore year.

Results

Freshman to Sophomore Retention

Cavalier Connection (CC) has experienced impressive retention outcomes over the past five years. There was a notable 5 percent increase from 2014 to 2015 (78.1 percent to 83.0 percent), which is the highest increase in the University's history.

Student Athlete Retention

The athletic population accounts for nearly 36 percent of the University's total undergraduate enrollment and comprises a significant portion of the minority population. The CC has implemented specific outreach tailored to student athletes. The number of athletes who achieved a grade point average (GPA) above 3.0 increased 10 percent from fall 2011 to fall 2015 and another 5 percent from fall 2015 to fall 2016.

Minority Students Inclusion and Retention

The CC program addresses the needs of at-risk minority students through academic and financial resources. The University has seen a 10 percent increase in retention of minority students within the past five years (from 67 percent for the freshman cohort fall 2011 to 77 percent for the freshman cohort fall 2015).

Structured Education Program (SEP) Retention

SEP is a mandatory program for freshmen identified as academically at-risk. On average, 10 percent of each freshman class meets the SEP requirements. During the first year of enrollment, SEP provides structured assistance in English and Mathematics courses, as well as participation in a structured learning community. Retention increased from 57.8 percent for fall 2011 to 75.9 percent for fall 2015.

The Lee Noel-Randi Levitz Retention Excellence Awards Program was established in 1989 to honor the retention achievements of post-secondary institutions throughout North America. Each year, awards are given to recognize the most successful, state-of-the-art retention programs in use at many kinds of institutions, with many different target groups of students. Nominees for awards are judged on identifiable and measurable

institutional outcomes, originality and creativity, use of resources, and adaptability for use at other institutions. Winners are selected by a national panel comprised of leading retention practitioners. Since the program began, 174 public and private colleges and universities have been honored with Retention Excellence Awards. As a result of this national exposure, these award-winning programs

have served as models of retention excellence to stimulate the creativity and energy of hundreds of two-year and four-year institutions.

For more information about the Retention Excellence Awards Program:
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