Institutionalizing Student Success Using Retention Action Teams (RATs)

Dr. Don Tomas, President
Dr. Thom Brooks, VP for Instruction & Student Services
Cheryl Contino-Conner, Executive Director – Student Success
Today we will discuss:

The evolution of Southwestern Community College from a Student Success “information reporting” Committee to Student Success Action Driven RATs.
How did our need for RATs emerge?

- Increased accountability for student retention, academic progression and graduation/transfer rates from the local, state and national level.

- Luxury of strong enrollment growth from prior years as a result of the poor economy was no longer sustainable.

- Concern regarding the cost of student attrition.
2010 Student First Year Student Progression*

- NCCCS Average: 67%
- Southwestern Average: 61%
- 44/58 system rank

*2013 Performance Measures for Student Success, North Carolina Community College System. First Year Progression is a percentage of first-time fall credential-seeking students attempting at least twelve hours within their first academic year who successfully complete (“P”, “C” or better) at least twelve of those hours (including developmental)
Student Success at SCC  2010

- 2009-10 Year 1 to Year 2 Persistence*
  - NCCCS Average: 54%
  - Southwestern Average: 60.1%
  - 14/58 system rank

*Completion by Design Key Performance Indicators,
Fall 2013 Success NC Institute
Persistor is a first-time student who attempted at least one course during any term in the second academic year (including developmental). Non-term specific.
2009-2010 Students earning 12 credits in 1 year*

- NCCCS Average: 39%
- Southwestern Average 43%
- 18/58 system rank

*Completion by Design Key Performance Indicators, Fall 2013 Success NC Institute
Student Success at SCC  2010

• 2008-2009 Students earning 24 credits in 2 years*
  • NCCCS Average: 31%
  • Southwestern Average 35%
  • 12/58 system rank

*Completion by Design Key Performance Indicators, Fall 2013 Success NC Institute
Student Success at SCC

- 2011 Graduation Rate – 150% time (begin in 2008)*
  - NCCCS Average: 24%
  - Southwestern Average: 14%
  - 47/58 system rank

* Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS)

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Internal Reflection:

- At SCC, What did retention mean in 2010?
- What mechanisms were in place to retain students? Were the mechanisms part of the culture – were they coordinated with Instruction and Student Services Strategic Plan?
- Who had primary ownership for communicating retention efforts and outcomes?
Internal Reflection:

Student Success Committee (2004-2010):

“This cross-functional committee focuses on planning and reviewing strategies for improving the quality of students’ experiences from consideration to graduation. The group reviews student retention and persistence statistics, enrollment indicators of attrition and student engagement survey results and develops strategies for improvement where needed.”
Decision: Create Retention Action Teams (RATs)

Retention Action Teams (RATs) as task forces to tackle specific initiatives to support student retention and success.
Formula for creating effective RATs:

1) Facilitator
2) 8-10 Team members (college wide)
3) Articulate a Goal
4) Articulate Initiatives – approximately three to four
5) Articulate Accomplishments as progress is made
6) Articulate a Measure(s) of Success
7) Articulate Outcomes

* Use data to make informed decisions and create next steps
First Generation RATs:

- **Orientation RAT:** Enhancing New Student Orientation
- **Success Course RAT:** Developing Student Success Course Modules
- **Retention Alert RAT:** Reviewing and Supporting Retention Alert Processes
- **Student Engagement RAT:** Analyzing SENSE and CCSSE Survey Results
- **Policy RAT:** Policy review to enhance student success
First Generation RATs:

Orientation RAT:

**Goal:** Review seat-based and online orientation programs to determine if maximum student-college connections are being created.

- Restructuring orientation programs to maximize student-college experience.
- Institutional engagement of faculty and staff for maximum student service and advice.
- Requiring all new students to participate in the SCC orientation experience.
- Orientation survey to all participants at each event – a request for feedback.
First Generation RATs:

Success Course RAT:

Goal: Develop and implement an extended orientation experience through a required college student success course that is completed by all new students

- Developing curricula for traditional and online student success courses to include the following learning modules: academic planning, advising, study skills, budgeting, and campus resources
- Engaging the Curriculum and Instruction Committee to add the student success course as a requirement for degree programs
- Providing professional development to prepare all instructors teaching student success courses
- Conducting seminars for instructors to share ideas and experiences from their success courses
Retention Alert RAT:

Goal: Implement a Retention Alert Initiative which identifies students who are in need of academic support.

- Purchasing software to serve as a reporting and tracking tool.
- Developing procedures and training for faculty and staff to report student concerns.
- Identifying staff to serve as Retention Alert managers and student connectors.
- Reviewing of data to implement best-practices in retaining students.
Student Engagement RAT:

Goal: Analyze results of student engagement surveys and develop recommendations for areas of improvement

- Assisting with the administration of the CCSSE
- Analyzing SENSE results to identify early academic planning as an opportunity to enhance student engagement
- Ensuring the inclusion of strong academic planning component in student success courses
- Providing recommendations for strategic initiatives to support student engagement
First Generation RATs:

Policy RAT:

Goal: Review college policies and recommend revisions to enhance opportunities for student success.

- Requiring all new students to enroll in a student success course (extended orientation) during their first semester
- Examining relationship between registration period (late registration) and course completion and grades
- Proposing administrative withdrawals for students who stop attending class
- Revising GPA for graduation to be cumulative program rather overall cumulative
RATs run wild....

The need for more RATs at SCC!
Second Generation RATs:

- **Readiness RAT:** Student Readiness for Online Learning
- **Admissions Communication RAT:** Enhancing Admissions Counseling and Communications
- **Test Prep RAT:** Placement Test Preparations
- **Grad RAT:** Recruit back former students for graduation completion
- **DATA RAT:** Institutional Policy Review and Data Analysis
Second Generation RATs:

Readiness RAT:

Goal: Select an instrument of student readiness for online and traditional learning and develop strategies for integration into student success processes

- Evaluating various instruments and identifying SmarterMeasure
- Securing funding from Title III grant to implement the readiness measure
- Developing procedures for completion of SmarterMeasure by all new students
- Developing procedures and training for faculty and staff to access, interpret, and utilize results to enhance student success
Second Generation RATs:

Admissions Communication RAT:

Goal: Analyze admission processes and implement strategies to enhance the effectiveness of communications with prospective students during their application and initial enrollment periods

- Designating an admissions staff member to act as an enrollment concierge by connecting prospective students with enrollment resources
- Making personal telephone contacts with all prospective students
- Capturing data concerning common questions and enrollment needs for incoming students
Second Generation RATs:

Test Prep RAT:

**Goal:** Develop and deliver placement test preparation workshops for new students

- Collaborating with developmental education faculty and staff to develop prep seminars and materials for math, algebra, English, and college reading
- Offering face-to-face workshops
- Enhancing and developing online test prep resources
- Results indicate significant increases in average test scores with test prep
Grad RAT:

**Goal: Implement a Graduation Project Initiative to recruit back former students and facilitate their degree completion**

- Developing database queries to identify former students with 20+ hours of credit and 2.5+ GPA
- Contacting students to present degree completion options
- Leveraging reverse-articulation to transfer credit completed at 4-year institutions
- Developing bridge course to assist students in planning and transition to careers or further education
DATA RAT:

Goal: Provide assistance to other RATs to identify research questions and collect and analyze data to assist decision-making and assess retention efforts

- Assembling participation from faculty and staff in institutional effectiveness, information technology, and academic and student services
- Collaborating with each RAT to develop data needs and research questions
- Assisting with the development of database queries and reports to meet team needs
- Assisting with data interpretation and improvement of the effectiveness of team activities
Third Generation RATs

- Southwestern joined the North Carolina cohort of Completion by Design Colleges in Fall 2013
- Third generation RATs were directly inspired by CbD initiatives:
  - Curriculum Mapping
  - Student Recognition
  - Student Focus groups
STUDENT RECOGNITION RAT:

**Goal:** To identify, encourage, and reward the individual progress of students toward meeting their educational goals

- Develop a comprehensive strategy to identify a variety of student recognition points
- Create queries to capture students meeting established criteria
- Establish a calendar that promotes yearlong student recognition
CURRICULUM MAPPING RAT:

Goal: To analyze the time for completion for each credential offered by the college and to ensure that information is shared with students for their academic planning.

- Work with program coordinators to analyze curriculum maps
- Develop structured pathways for both full time and part time students
- Identify potential areas of completion en route to credential attainment
- Establish a timeline for completion
STUDENT FOCUS GROUP RAT:

Goal: To engage a representative group of students in an ongoing dialogue about issues impacting student success

- Employ the CCSSE Focus Group Toolkit
- Conduct focus groups at key points: Connection, Entry, Progress, and Completion (from CbD)
- To understand students’ motivations and academic experiences, impact of outside responsibilities, importance of various college services, significance of relationships, and the college’s effectiveness and opportunities for improvement in meeting their needs for success
RATs add value to SCC:

1) Mainstreams retention and success initiatives.
2) The RATs bundle and brand our retention initiatives.
3) Catalysts for interest and involvement by faculty and staff
RAT Accomplishments:

- **DATA RAT:** Analyzed late registration and withdrawal data to determine the correlation between the two. Advanced policy revisions to support success.

- **Orientation RAT:** Redesigned NSO to focus on making connections – Required of all new students. Designed a new online program for distance students and those who missed the live program.

- **Success Course RAT:** Implemented ACA 111 (College Student Success) with a common syllabus and course outcomes. Required of all new students.

- **Retention Alert RAT:** Implemented a retention alert process to provide a timely “report and intervene” system for academic and behavioral concerns.

- **Student Engagement RAT:** Administered the SENSE (Fall 2010 and 2012) and CCSSE 2013 surveys, reviewed data.
RAT Accomplishments:

- **Readiness RAT**: Launched new online distance learning page as well as the readiness assessment (Smarter Measure).

- **Admissions Communication RAT**: Hired a pre-admissions (and GRAD) staff member to make connections with new applications.

- **Test Prep RAT**: Implemented study preparation sessions for students to attend prior to taking the CPT.

- **Grad RAT**: Staff member (Admissions above) finds former students near credential completion and contacts for re-enrollment.

- **Policy RAT**: Initiated study of registration periods; modified withdrawal and graduation policies.
2010 First Year Student Progression Rate
- NCCCS Average: **67%**
- Southwestern Average: **61%**
- **44/58** system rank

2013 First Year Student Progression Rate
- NCCCS Average: **68.3%**
- Southwestern Average: **73.2%**
- **13/58** system rank
Student Success at SCC

- 2009-10 Year 1 to Year 2 Persistence
  - NCCCS Average: 54%
  - Southwestern Average: 60.1%
  - 14/58 system rank
- 2011-12 Year 1 to Year 2 Persistence
  - NCCCS Average: 54%
  - Southwestern Average: 62.7%
  - 4/58 system rank
Student Success at SCC

- 2009-2010 Students earning 12 credits in 1 year
  - NCCCS Average: 39%
  - Southwestern Average 43%
  - 18/58 system rank
- 2011-2012 Students earning 12 credits in 1 year
  - NCCCS Average: 36%
  - Southwestern Average 51.7%
  - 1/58 system rank
Student Success at SCC

- 2008-2009 Students earning 24 credits in 2 years
  - NCCCS Average: 31%
  - Southwestern Average 35%
  - 12/58 system rank
- 2010-2011 Students earning 24 credits in 2 years
  - NCCCS Average: 28%
  - Southwestern Average 36%
  - 4/58 system rank
Student Success at SCC

- 2011 Graduation Rate – 150% time (begin in 2008)
  - NCCCS Average: 24%
  - Southwestern Average: 14%
  - 47/58 system rank

- 2012 Graduation Rate – 150% time (begin in 2009)
  - NCCCS Average: 22%
  - Southwestern Average 32%
  - 8/58 system rank
Lessons Learned:

RATs are good!
RATs bring focus and cohesion
People like being RATs
RATs are Marketable
RATs can produce immediate results
CONTACT:

Southwestern Community College
Sylva, NC 28779

Dr. Don Tomas: (828) 339-4242
Dr. Thom Brooks: (828) 339-4202
Cheryl Contino-Conner: (828) 339-4245