

Wake Technical Community College Re-Enrollment Coaching Program Success

Background

The state of North Carolina has a goal to increase the number of adult graduates ages 25-44 by 700,000 (from 1.3M to 2M) by 2030, in order to meet employer demand for skilled labor in the state. If no new initiatives are taken to increase current enrollment, retention, and completion rates, the projected gap in reaching this attainment goal is assessed at 400,000. Fortunately, higher education leaders are using innovative approaches to close this gap and achieve the goal, especially by focusing on students with some college and no degree or credential.

In partnership with SHEEO, The UNC System and the NC Community College System received Lumina grant funding to support state-wide programs focused on engaging and supporting adult learners, including efforts to re-engage them and support their re-enrollment. As part of that work, InsideTrack was brought in as a partner to conduct a two month re-enrollment pilot campaign in October 2019, with successful results at three UNC institutions. In 2020, a second pilot program began, with a focus on how to efficiently and effectively use technology to engage and “nudge” students toward re-enrolling at Wake Tech.

About Wake Technical Community College (Wake Tech)

Enrollment declines for North Carolina's two year public colleges



5%

For-credit
enrollment
decline



17%

Total
enrollment
decline

Based in Wake County, Wake Tech is North Carolina's largest community college, serving over 70,000 adults annually. Like most higher ed institutions, Wake Tech has shifted to fully online and hybrid offerings for their 200+ degrees, diplomas, and certificates during the COVID-19 pandemic. Following national trends, community colleges in North Carolina have struggled with enrollment during the pandemic. This enrollment decline not only strains the institutions, but also spells big trouble for the future of the US economy and the employers that depend on community colleges to equip their future employees with in-demand skills.

Program Details

The goal of the Wake Tech/InsideTrack partnership on a re-enrollment program was to help students who were very close to completing a degree or credential, but stopped-out from attending college. Wake Tech developed a degree-auditing tool to better understand their students' enrollment behavior and patterns, including a simplified way to use their own data to identify students who were close to completing credentials but had not done so. That tool, Finish First NC, has been utilized in a variety of ways, including distribution to other North Carolina community colleges - all with the goal of promoting student success. Using this tool, Wake Tech identified 1,288 students who were not currently enrolled, but who were close to completing a credential.

InsideTrack's Completion Coaches used phone, email, and text messages to outreach and engage students. Specifically, coaches worked with students to:

- Re-connect to their purpose for pursuing a credential from Wake Tech
- Define and execute a plan for re-enrolling in their desired program
- Develop the skills needed to effectively balance work, family, financial and academic obligations
- Seek out a Completion Scholarship, when applicable



Once students were engaged, coaches connected them to designated campus Enrollment Services staff to discuss their re-enrollment and degree completion options.

Tangible Results

In total, through the Wake Tech and InsideTrack partnership, **201 students returned for Spring 2021 classes, a rate of 15.6%**. The rate of return for Wake Tech's internal stop out campaign was 10.1%. Kai Wang, Senior Dean, Strategic Innovations and Chief Campus Officer for Wake Tech Online calculated that this re-enrollment program yielded a **383% return on the investment** for the institution in just over a 3-month period from launch through census.

1.5x more likely
to re-enroll

383% return on
investment

For students who cited reasons for not returning to Wake Tech, the most common reason corresponded to Covid-19. Students reported a preference for in-person learning, financial strain, increased responsibilities, and lack of health and support as the applicable factors for their not attending. Coaching can surface the challenges that students are facing, normalize the process of asking for help, and connect individuals to wrap-around support resources at the college and in their community.

“I didn't think about going back to school until you contacted me. Thank you so much for all of your help, I really appreciate it.” Wake Tech Student

Summary

Overall, individuals reported being grateful for Wake Tech's support and the InsideTrack Coaches who reached out during the campaign. InsideTrack re-enrollment campaigns are easy to implement, help add capacity at institutions struggling with staff bandwidth, and quickly drive impact for institutions and students. During a time with a nationwide trend of declining enrollment at community and technical colleges, targeted and carefully executed re-enrollment programs show promise in helping institutions, individuals, and regional economies succeed.

“Honestly if you hadn't called me, I wouldn't have signed up for classes at all. I really appreciate it.”

Wake Tech Student

“I really want to finish. I have been working on this degree since 2010 and only need one more class. It's just the money situation at this point. I think I'm eligible for a Pell Grant again but I don't know. When I dropped the class because of COVID in the Spring, I still owe Wake Tech for some of the class I dropped in the Spring because of COVID. Thanks so much for reaching out. I will contact support tomorrow and email them about the scholarship”

Wake Tech Student



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InsideTrack is passionate about student success. We partner with institutions and organizations to generate insights about student goals and challenges and measurably improve outcomes. Our partners create a more student-centered experience that increases enrollment, persistence, completion and career readiness. We've supported more than 2 million students since 2001 and currently serve over 4,000 programs. Join us and the leading institutions, foundations and others working to bring the transformative power of education to all individuals.