CREATING THE CULTURE OF RETENTION
Presenters

Angel Rhodes, M.A.

Financial Aid Director and Retention Coordinator

10+ years experience in higher education including TRIO and financial aid
Presenters

Nate Slaton, M.A.E., M.B.A.

Vice President of Enrollment Management

12+ years experience in higher education including TRIO, Records, Financial Aid, and Enrollment Management
WKCTC is a two-year college located in Paducah, KY—about halfway between St. Louis, MO and Nashville, TN

Enroll approximately 9,000 students/year
WKCTC has been named a finalist for the Aspen Institute Prize for community college excellence every year since 2011.

Most recently, WKCTC was named a finalist with distinction.
The Aspen institute has recognized WKCTC in three areas:

1. Measuring Student Learning Outcomes
2. No achievement gap for minority and low-income students
3. Retention and completion
Despite our recognition, we had trouble articulating what we did to support completion/retention.

We were recognized for a “culture of retention”... but what does this mean?
We chose to form a Retention & Completion Council

1. The President made selections
2. Even mix of faculty and staff
3. Kept to 10 people
4. Met monthly
What did the committee do?

1. Identified all retention initiatives on campus

This process took approximately 2 months

WE WROTE IT DOWN
What did the committee do?

2. Reviewed retention data

Committee made a data request based on existing initiatives, hunches, or proposed initiatives. IE/IR offices ran data and developed reports.
What did the committee do?

3. Chose areas of focus/expansion based on our data

All of this was written, saved, and shared
Initiatives Selected

The committee narrowed down to three initiatives based on data.

The committee established goals and measurements and then wrote work plans.
The process seems simple and straight-forward, but it paid off by assisting us in the development of detailed plans based on data.

Here are two examples of the work this committee did.
Initiative 1: At-risk Reporting and Support

- Replaced paper early alert with homemade electronic early alert in 2004
- In 2014 we replaced with an at-risk report software package
Initiative 1: At-risk Reporting and Support

• To get faculty buy-in to a new system, we had to explain the value
• To explain the value, we had to be more responsive to at-risk reports
Initiative 1: At-risk Reporting and Support

- Began by training faculty by academic division
- First training only focused on how/when to raise alert flags or offer praise
Initiative 1: At-risk Reporting and Support

- Behind the scenes, a success coach was responding to flags for a group of ~400 students
- Financial aid was also responding to flags for students with Title IV aid
Initiative 1: At-risk Reporting and Support

- Faculty use of the new system went from approximately 10% to 60% with the new system
Initiative 1: At-risk Reporting and Support

- After seeing the success of the group with the success coach, this was expanded to reach all students and their titles renamed to “Completion Coach”
Initiative 1: At-risk Reporting and Support

- There was now a formal response system to at-risk flags
- Round 2 of faculty training was refresher training on the software and explanation of the response system
Initiative 1: At-risk Reporting and Support

- Faculty utilization reached 90%
- The Retention Council set a goal of 100% faculty utilization by 2020
- Academic Deans supported noting use of reporting system in evaluations
Initiative 1: At-risk Reporting and Support

Lessons Learned:
• Train, train, train
• Respond, respond, respond
• Feedback & Evaluation
• Write it down and share across campus
Initiative 2: Academic Advising
Student Learning Outcomes

• Shared advising model—faculty work with current students, staff work with new/undecided students
• Developed student learning outcomes for advising, but no way to measure them
Initiative 2: Academic Advising Student Learning Outcomes

- Developed an electronic, mandatory student “pre-advising” form to measure student knowledge of learning outcomes before the appointment
Initiative 2: Academic Advising Student Learning Outcomes

- Developed an electronic, mandatory student post-advising checklist to measure student learning outcomes after the appointment
Initiative 2: Academic Advising Student Learning Outcomes

- Developed an electronic advisor evaluation of student learning during the advising session
Initiative 2: Academic Advising
Student Learning Outcomes

- Developed an evaluation to compare pre/post advising session outcomes
- Developed an evaluation to compare advisor and student measurements of learning outcomes
Initiative 2: Academic Advising Student Learning Outcomes

- Developed a response program to improve advising based on the electronic evaluations from advisors and students
Initiative 2: Academic Advising
Student Learning Outcomes

- We wrote all of this down and made it available to faculty and staff across campus
- Training is key
Questions and Comments