



A Success Story  
from ACT

# The Real Impact of Increasing Student Retention

**ACT**<sup>®</sup> Engage<sup>®</sup>  
College



## **FACT:** College dropout rates have gotten worse

Of the students who started school in the fall of 2008, only 55 percent graduated within six years—an overall decrease compared to recent years.

## **FACT:** ACT Engage® helps increase student retention

Based on our decades of research in secondary and postsecondary college readiness, we developed ACT Engage to measure the often-overlooked behaviors and attributes that contribute to student success during the first year.

## **GREAT:** But what does the real impact look like?

In addition to higher grade point averages, there's also a dollars-and-cents reason for increasing retention that we can't ignore in an era of shrinking budgets and limited resources.

How does increasing student retention really impact a postsecondary institution like yours? To tell this story, let's take a trip to Texas.



# One School's Success Story

When the University of North Texas (UNT) received a grant for improving student retention, Dean of Undergraduate Studies Dale Tampke wanted to focus on where the impact would be greatest—first-semester students. Previously, Tampke had used ACT Engage to help increase student retention at Ohio University.

Based on his recommendation, UNT began administering ACT Engage to all first-year students during orientation for the 2009 fall semester. Using these results they identified students with the highest risk of academic difficulties and followed up with an immediate, individualized approach throughout their first semester.

“We want to use ACT Engage and these interventions together as a vehicle around which first-year students can connect to the university, and a relationship between students and advisors can be formed.”  
*Dale Tampke*

## Higher GPA Averages, Increased Retention

Following intervention, UNT tracked student progress (see Table 1). They found that students who received intervention:

- Earned a higher average GPA
- Were more likely to be in good academic standing at the end of the fall semester
- Returned for the spring semester at higher rates

**Table 1: First-Year Student Success With and Without Intervention**

	UNT Students Who Received Intervention	UNT Students Who Did Not Receive Intervention
<b>Average First-Semester GPA</b>	<b>2.24</b>	2.14
<b>In Good Standing at End of Fall Semester</b>	<b>73%</b>	63%
<b>Returned for Spring Semester</b>	<b>93%</b>	89%

Most important, this early intervention helped build a positive foundation for success in both college and the workplace.

# Student Retention = Tuition Retention

What does increased retention mean at the institutional level? The University of North Texas used ACT Engage College to improve retention by 3 percent. This represented about 105 students at \$5,662.80 in annual tuition—totaling \$594,594 in savings for the institution. Not bad—especially in a climate of decreasing budgets and dwindling resources.

## What Will Your Story Be?

Start your success story by scheduling a consultation with an ACT Engage Success Specialist. Simply complete the form found at [act.org/engage/contact](https://act.org/engage/contact).

Learn more at [act.org/engagecollege](https://act.org/engagecollege)



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