

**Southeast Tech**  
Retention Process, Tools and Outcomes  
**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

**Purpose:**

To provide the School Board an overview of Southeast Tech's Retention Process, Tools and Outcomes.

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Since 2009, Southeast Tech has dedicated time and resources to develop a retention process to help its students succeed. Through the efforts of faculty, staff, and administration, the institute has developed a Student Success Center and numerous retention tools that provide a more systematic and integrated approach to retaining students. The result has been a more comprehensive approach to helping our students succeed. By recognizing student issues and concerns earlier, and assisting with meeting those needs or solving those concerns more quickly, Southeast Tech has experienced stronger retention rates as well as improved results in other key measures.

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**Administrative Recommendation to School Board:**

Acknowledge the Retention Process, Tools and Outcomes Report.

# Southeast Tech Retention Process, Tools, and Outcomes Report

**Goal:** To provide a comprehensive approach to student retention that will improve Southeast Tech's retention and related outcome measures.

**Explanation:** Southeast Tech started the development of its comprehensive student retention process in FY2008. The Retention Committee (later renamed the Student Success Team) reviewed Southeast Tech's current retention data and processes and over a period of six years developed the process and tools we now have in place.

The primary objective of the Student Success Team and the processes and tools it has created is to help students succeed. This is accomplished through an integrated approach using the following retention tools:

**JumpStart Days** – during the week prior to the start of the semester, every program holds a JumpStart Day for new program students. Students have the opportunity to meet their instructors, learn more about the program including instructor expectations and program completion requirements, complete any necessary testing, attend a student success session to learn more about how to have a successful start to the semester, and receive and learn how to effectively use their laptops and iPads and connect to the Southeast Tech network. Some programs include a fall JumpStart Day for returning students to get them started on a successful new year.

**Student Success Center** – provides a single location for all students to receive the help they need. The Center houses our Student Success Advisors, student activities and student government, Library, Retention Coordinators, Registrar and Career Center. Students are directed to other campus services located elsewhere as needed (tutoring, counseling, etc.).

**Student Success Advisors** – provide a direct contact for students. Every student is assigned a Success Advisor who will continue to be their contact person for any student concern or need as long as the student is enrolled at Southeast Tech. Success Advisors provide student support on non-academic needs and encourage and support students in the completion of their program. Caseloads for Students Success Advisors is roughly 400 students each. Several Success Advisors fulfill other roles on campus, such as Librarian, Student Activities/Government Coordinator, and Career Center Coordinator.

**Student Success Seminar course** – helps students with the transition to post-secondary education, provides them with information regarding Southeast Tech policies, procedures and guidelines (drop/add period, withdrawing from courses, etc.), and teaches them academic skills

such as test-taking strategies, note-taking, study skills, etc. Life skills, such as personal finance, are also covered. The two credit course also helps connect students to other on-campus services including tutoring and counseling. Student Success Advisors teach the courses. The students in their courses then become their assigned students. Transfer students who have completed nine successful post-secondary credits are not required to take the course; however, they are assigned to the transfer-student Success Advisor.

**Southeast Tech Cares** – integrated into Southeast Tech’s administrative software, Southeast Tech Cares provides immediate access to basic information on students, allowing all Southeast Tech employees to quickly find information regarding a student. The system provides two key features:

- **At-Risk Student Identification** – using statistical analysis, the software can help Southeast Tech better determine which students are more or less likely to be retained. Using Southeast Tech data from previous years, the system uses a predictive model to indicate which students are at risk of leaving the institute. Southeast Tech can then use this information to help and retain these students.
- **Internal Communications** – whenever a faculty or staff member becomes concerned about a student, either for academic or non-academic reasons, the employee can enter a Southeast Tech Cares referral. The referral is then sent automatically to a Retention Coordinator who assigns the referral to the appropriate office or individual. Once assigned, the system then tracks any responses to the referral, and if no action is taken, the software sends out reminders to complete the follow-up. The initial employee making the referral can review the interventions and is kept informed on any outcomes.

**Emergency Loan** – provides up to \$500 in emergency loan funds should a student find themselves in need of financial assistance. In the past students who had sudden emergency funding needs often felt that dropping out of their classes was their only option. Now, students have the option of taking out an emergency loan. Payment back is expected, and in most cases students do this through their future financial aid awards. Funding for the emergency loans is provided from fund drives by the Southeast Tech Foundation.

**Attendance Challenge** – provides an incentive “competition” for students to attend every course every class time for the first two weeks and then the first four weeks. Students attending all classes during the first two weeks have their name entered into a drawing for two \$50 gift certificates. Students attending all classes during the first four weeks receive an Attendance Challenge t-shirt and have their names put into a drawing for a Kindle Fire. The goal is to get students into the habit of attending classes every day. Once students start this habit, it is much easier to maintain it.

**Academic Recovery Course** – required course for all Southeast Tech students who are on financial aid warning for the first time. Rather than just tell students they are on financial aid warning and that failure to do better academically will result in financial aid suspension, Southeast Tech decided that we needed to provide these students with more support. Therefore, these students take a two credit course with one hour dedicated to helping students learn how to be successful, and two hours dedicated to a student assistance lab. During lab time, students can work with tutors, visit counselors, advisors or instructors, work in small groups, receive assistance from recovery instructors, etc. The lab structure is very open so that it meets the individual needs of the students.

**Retention Coordinators** – connects faculty and staff who have recognized student issues and concerns to other faculty and staff for follow-up and intervention. As referrals come into Southeast Tech Cares, Retention Coordinators monitor the system, assign follow-up, assure interventions take place, track usage statistics, and build additional processes and activities to help at-risk students. Southeast Tech’s Retention Coordinators also teach the Academic Recovery courses and are assigned to Southeast Tech housing as live-in Housing Coordinators.

**Pre-Academic Course Sequencing** – allows students whose skills are not quite academically ready for ENGL 101 Composition or Math 101 Intermediate Algebra/Math 102 College Algebra to take a pre-academic 099 two credit course at the same time they are completing their ENGL 101 or Math 101/Math 102 course. (Prior to this option, students had to take the pre-academic course in their first semester and then take the required academic course in their next semester.) Taking the two courses at the same time provides the student with more assistance to complete the required courses satisfactorily, while at the same time keeping the students on track academically to complete their degree on time. Statistics have shown that students are much more likely to complete the sequence of courses if they can be taken together rather than in separate semesters.

**Online Tutoring** – by using Smarthinking, an online tutoring company, traditional, hybrid and online students all have the option to receive online tutoring services 24/7 in many courses including composition and mathematics. Students can send in questions and receive responses or they can speak with a tutor interactively through the software.

## Results:

Although the following results cannot be attributed to a single tool listed above, Southeast Tech is very pleased with what our faculty, staff and administration have been able to accomplish in terms of the following key areas:

- **Increase in Fall to Fall retention (1<sup>st</sup> time student at Southeast Tech from high school or transfer):**
  - 2011-2012 60%
  - 2012-2013 65%
  - 2013-2014 68% (implemented a 2 week drop period)
  
- **Fall to Spring retention at 84% in Spring 2014 (the highest level since before 2005)**
  
- **New student GPA (attending Southeast Tech directly from high school)**
  - Fall 2007: 2.55 GPA
  - Fall 2011: 2.66 GPA
  - Fall 2013: 2.66 GPA
  
- **New students moving to financial aid warning after their first semester**
  - Fall 2007: 42% on warning
  - Fall 2011: 34% on warning
  - Fall 2012: 31% on warning
  - Fall 2013: 26% on warning (implemented a 2 week drop period)
  
- **Academic Recovery course impact on Financial Aid Warning Status**
  - 47.7% of students on financial aid warning moved back to good standing (Spring 2012 to Fall 2013) – increase of 6.9%
  - 40.8% the previous year (Spring 2011 to Fall 2012)

In 2014, Southeast Tech received the 2014 Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE) Academic Leaders Toolkit of the Year.

Southeast Tech representatives will be presenting our retention process at the Higher Learning Commission's annual conference this March.

For more information about the toolkit, including additional results, go to:

[https://stinet.southeasttech.edu/ICS/Academics/SSS/Student\\_Retention/TrainingDevelopment-Student\\_Retention-2012/](https://stinet.southeasttech.edu/ICS/Academics/SSS/Student_Retention/TrainingDevelopment-Student_Retention-2012/)

**Summary:** The development and implementation of a comprehensive retention process has helped Southeast Tech focus its efforts on students and how to best meet their needs and help them succeed. To do this effectively, it has required the teamwork of all Southeast Tech employees. The results of this teamwork have been impressive, but the work is not done yet. We are continuing to find more ways to improve and expand our retention processes and tools. Our next opportunity is to develop a stronger “Student Experience” at Southeast Tech, which we will begin discussing at the March 2015 AQIP Strategy Forum.



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**Retention Process, Tools  
and Outcomes**

February 2015

**Toolkit**

- JumpStart Days
- Student Success
  - Center
  - Advisors
  - Seminar Course
- At-Risk Student
  - Identification
  - Internal Communications
- Retention Coordinators
- Academic Recovery
- Attendance Challenge
- Online Tutoring
- Pre-Academic Course Sequencing
- Emergency Loan Fund
- Attendance Monitoring

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## JumpStart Days

### Goals:

- Provides opportunity to connect new students with program faculty
- Sets the stage for the semester/year
- Accomplishes “tasks” prior to the start of classes
- Informs students of Southeast Tech services and processes

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## Student Success Center

Opened: July 2009

Provides one location for  
(most) student support

- Success advisors
- Registrar
- Student activities and student government
- Library
- Retention Coordinators
- Career Center



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- Every student is assigned a Success Advisor
- Meet with students to assist with non-academic needs
- Assist faculty in meeting student academic needs
- Provide “intrusive” advising and at-risk student support
- Teach the Student Success Seminar courses
- Encourage and support students in the completion of their program

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## **Student Success Seminar**

### **Goals:**

- Develop student academic/professional success skills
- Assist students in “connecting” to Southeast Tech
- Inform students of Southeast Tech services and processes
- Show students how to navigate STInet
- Link students to their Success Advisor

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## **Retention Coordinators**

- Through the TAACCCT I grant, Southeast hired two retention coordinators
  - 60/40 Split with Housing
- Instruct the Academic Recovery course
- Monitor Southeast Tech Cares system
  - Address alerts

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## **Academic Recovery Course**

- Required for all students placed on academic/financial aid warning
  - Provides additional support for students struggling academically
- 2 credit course – one hour lecture, two hours lab

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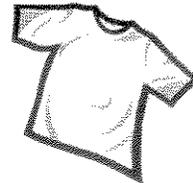
## Southeast Tech Cares

- Identifies at-risk students sooner and increases support
- Improves internal communications to better meet student needs
- Provides a more efficient early-alert system
- Integrates directly into Southeast Tech's Administrative software system

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## Additional Programs

- **JumpStart Days**
- **Attendance Challenge**
  - Over 50% of students met the 30-day attendance challenge in Fall 2012
- **Pre-Academic Sequencing**
  - Math 099/Math 101 & English 099/101
- **Emergency Loan Program**
- **Online Tutoring**



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## Results

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## Results (continued)

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