



Lake Area Technical Institute Student Retention Plan

4 August 2015

Preamble: This document outlines most of the retention related activities at Lake Area Technical Institute (LATI). However, because LATI views recruiting, retention, and teaching as inherent in every aspect of our institution, we do not normally cull out specific activities or designate retention as a specific person's responsibility. LATI prides itself on providing a friendly, nurturing learning environment where caring for its staff, faculty, and students is a hallmark. At LATI, retention is everyone's job everyday.

Specific activities contributing to LATI's retention success:

1. LATI Cares. LATI values its students, staff and faculty. In short, people first.
2. Advice and Counseling:
 - a. All students have an advisor assigned to them.
 - b. Advisors conduct student conferences periodically to discuss academic progress, attendance, concerns, etc.
 - c. We provide a retention coordinator that works with student to encourage success and provide options to the individual problem the student may be experiencing.
 - d. We provide counseling services on our campus - and also information as to where to find counseling services outside of LATI.
 - e. We provide information on financial assistance opportunities (fuel assistance, etc.) to our students.
3. Comprehensive and Quality Experience: We offer quality learning opportunities through a variety of media to enhance the student's learning experience through our MyPortal emphasis. Online programs, dual credit opportunities and articulation agreements provide tremendous opportunities for students to enter LATI and continue their education beyond LATI.
4. Multiple Avenues to Education: Offering "hybrid" online courses expands the opportunities for non-traditional and special population to participate in the training. Hybrid courses combine online content delivery with varying degrees of on campus lab demonstration. Web based programs for special population career technical students offer 24/7 access to multiple presentations (texts, video clips, powerpoints with voice overs, etc) of labs, classroom materials, handouts, schedules, feedback, and grades -- enhancing student understanding and success

5. Tutoring and Mentoring: Our Educational Services Center offers tutoring and study skills training for students. Peer tutors offer students an opportunity to help each other.
6. Addressing needs beyond the classroom:
 - a. We provide work study opportunities on our campus and a career center on our campus for students seeking employment in the community.
 - b. We offer a variety of clubs, campus activities and intramural sports to facilitate student involvement - which helps them feel connected and assists with retention.
 - c. They have free access to our Community Rec Center - which is a great wellness opportunity.
 - d. LATI Educare Center provides low cost childcare for students who attend LATI.
 - e. All students attend a yearly harassment/drug/alcohol wellness session while on campus. Additional resources are available for students in need of assistance in these areas.
 - f. An Emergency Loan Fund is available to students who are in need of a one-time loan to help offset any financial difficulties they may be experiencing. Students may pay this loan back with financial aid the following semester or by making other arraignments.
7. Setting clear expectations.
 - a. We have formal academic satisfactory progress standards and procedures (page 154-156 in our student handbook) to guide students.
 - b. Our programs have certain baseline admissions criteria that are in place to assure students have the foundation to succeed in their program.
8. Customer Service Orientation. Our customer service is second to none! The small student/teacher ratios and small campus atmosphere allow for very personalized service and establishment of good relationships - which assists in keeping our students here when they encounter bumps in the road.

Assessing and addressing low retention. Lake Area Technical Institute processes continually monitor, assess, and address retention. Through day-to-day operational practices, regular meetings of faculty and senior staff, and regular reporting, LATI detects and corrects ongoing retention issues, as well as other anomalies detected in retention.

1. Watching retention – the tools.
 - a. Departmental internal efforts. Departments monitor and assist students on a daily basis. Programs identify students having difficulty with academics or labs and provide assistance through a number of means. Monthly reporting includes individual program gains and losses.
 - b. Retention Coordinator efforts. Instructors notify the retention coordinator when they have concerns with a student. The retention coordinator tries to contact the student through a one on one meeting, email or a phone conversation. Retention notes are shared with key members of the retention team to improve communication.

- c. Measures and Standards reports. Annual reports, such as the measures and standards report, provide a formal means of documenting and tracking retention.
- d. Withdrawal Forms. When possible, departing students visit with an administrator and the reason for leaving is discussed. Key administrators are informed of each student drop.
- e. Classroom and course evaluations. Students provide classroom and course evaluations (online and anonymous) that are also key sources of information on retention. Issues with instructors, materials, or lab environments are often highlighted in these assessments.
- f. Student Satisfaction Surveys. Students are asked to complete an online anonymous Satisfaction Survey each spring that discuss a wide range of instructional, technical and campus support areas. Various issues are often highlighted in this Survey and students are asked to explain any answer that receives a “Disagree” or “Strongly Disagree” ranking.
- g. Department Meetings. Meetings between department leadership and administrator provide a forum to address overall retention trends, issues, and concerns from both the individual program and the institutional levels. Additionally, LATI administrators provide regional, state, and even national retention information that may be useful in clarifying problems or potential solutions.

2. Addressing retention – the tools.

- a. Analysis. Reasons for losing students vary greatly. Academic difficulty, motivation, expectations, and external forces all impact a student’s desire and ability to remain in school. For technical institutes, retention levels can be affected by economic changes (business forces pulling students into the labor force before they finish their program) just as readily as individual student factors. When assessing retention, one of the key pieces of information is whether a retention issue is a systemic problem for a program (continues across multiple years) or an anomaly (single spike). Additionally, assessing whether a retention issue is expected or unexpected is also important.
- b. Communications. As highlighted above, encouraging information exchanges on potential and actual retention issues and concerns is key to identifying and addressing problems early. LATI encourages and supports communications on a multitude of levels, including peer to peer, peer to instructor, peer to other professionals, and instructor to instructor, and instructors to supporting departmental and institutional staff.
- c. Direct Assistance. When students are having academic or laboratory difficulties, LATI offers assistance. Some specific programs include peer and professional tutoring, with the formal versions of these programs being run by our Educational services Center. Other issues are referred to the Retention Coordinator for follow up.
- d. Looking at Admissions. When retention seems to be connected with basic student capabilities, motivation, expectation, or desires LATI examines its admission process and standards. When needed, these processes and standards are adjusted to address specific items.

- e. Instructor training. Regular training on retention as well as individualized efforts are both part of keeping the instructor/student relationship working optimally. In-service and other continuing education efforts for instructors help to maintain high retention rates. Additionally, issues with difficult materials identify areas where instructors may need to modify their instructional approaches and material presentations.