

## **DCCCD Retention Best Practice Submission Form**

Across the district there are many successful practices that contribute to the retention of students. As the district begins to develop a greater emphasis on its retention strategy, all locations are asked to identify and submit information about successful retention programs and activities. Please complete the following information on selected practices.

College/Location: **Richland College, School of Humanities, Fine and Performing Arts**

The Retention Best Practice is primarily supported by what college/location area:

Instruction   X   Student Services        Administrative       

Combination of areas: (Please list)

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Retention Best Practice Title: **The On-line Discussion Board as Philosophy Class**

Retention Best Practice Area of Focus:

Math        STEM        Honors College        Other        Music       

**Retention Best Practice Executive Summary: approximately 50 words (Please use additional pages for a detailed description)**

For obvious reasons, one of the great difficulties in online education is attempting to build community in the distance learning course. Using the model of the on campus philosophy classroom as the approach to online virtual philosophy classrooms leads to higher retention in the online environment. By using the very same community building activities applied in the classroom by excellent teachers, online teachers can build and foster community. So, for example, the Discussion Board as Philosophy Class facilitates such things as personal introductions with “getting to know you” questions, collaboration on classroom exercises related to philosophical problems, and extensive dialogue engaging students in discussions of philosophical problems and issues. The primary goal of this approach is to have students complete a course in online philosophy being able to say, “this seemed almost like a class taken in the classroom!”

**Please describe the evaluation measures utilized to support this initiative as a best practice.**

Using naturalistic research techniques, students are asked to make evaluative comments about the class. Over a period of three years, the themes that emerge in these evaluations are considered. Student feedback has consistently supported the notion that this approach builds community and retains students.

**Provide a summary of the results, including data (such as trend lines over time) to show how it impacted retention and is a best practice.**

Current anecdotal evidence indicates that this highly interactive approach in online education has been successful in retaining students. In addition, the retention statistics for these classes has been compared to retention statistics for online classes across the nation. We are currently assessing the retention numbers for online philosophy classes across the District, so that they can be compared to these courses.

**What would be needed to replicate the practice at other DCCCD colleges?**

A significant time commitment to engage students in consistent and meaningful on-line communication.

**Cost to implement this practice (financial and human):**

The costs of implementation are minimal.