

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

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

Instruction Student Services Administrative

Combination of areas: (Please list)

Contact Person: Patricia Spence, Professor, Speech Communication, Humanities Division, Richland College

Retention Best Practice Title: "Configuration of Engagements"

Retention Best Practice Area of Focus:

Math STEM Honors College Other Speech Communication

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

No one practice exists in RLC SPCH 1311 online as a focal retention strategy but rather a **configuration of engagements** that work together to keep the student connected to the class peer community, i.e., other students; to the broader community that supports them, families, friends and co-workers; and to the instructor.

First, it is important to note that students have 21 distinct assessments and assignments during the length of the course. It is my experience that when students receive a grade per week, they are more likely to persist in the course. Students are required to create a homepage that, via other assignments, they revisit throughout the semester; students interact one-to-one in partnered assignments; students interact one- to- group in an extended small group assignment; students must read all forum postings before adding their own, so they are repeatedly made aware of other students' perceptions.

For speeches, students either come to campus to serve as audiences for each other or they speak to audiences at their choice of location. Their "recruited" audience, family members, friends and/or co-workers, thus participate in their Speech Communication education and become part of the student's achievement of course objectives by providing such support.

I send out weekly emails directing students to the objectives for the week; respond to their emails and Discussion Board postings within 24 hours; give written feedback to all assignments except eCampus graded exams; and I have embedded three videos of myself in the course. The videos orient the students to the course; discuss with visual aids how to submit videos; and describe a particularly complex assignment. The videos are designed to help the student become more

familiar with me via my visual presence as well accommodate a student need for aural as well as read information.

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

To date the evaluation measures have been anecdotal, peer recognized and policy mandated:

Anecdotal- Students frequently comment on how my class is just like a "real" class because of the high interaction with others and often note a favorite technique: "I have enjoyed your class and liked getting to know the other students via the homepage," and "I think the thing that helped the most was that you require that we have an audience for our speeches we video tape. Even though it was my family, I felt more confident knowing that I could stand up in front of people and say what I needed to say without too many mistakes!"

Students compliment me repeatedly for getting back with them fast and for personalizing feedback about their assignments.

Peer recognized- I was a 2007 recipient of the RLC Featured Teaching Practice award for my online small group assignment; 2007 "Best Practices" presenter to the RLC Humanities division; 2006 National Communication Association Annual Conference presenter, "Teaching with Technology."

Policy mandated- My online class is compliant with the 2007 SACS policy guideline for DL classes: "Programs and courses provide for timely and appropriate interaction between students and faculty and among 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.

My retention rate for AY07-08 was 85.77%. The all RLC retention rate for the same period, excluding mine was 83.68%. My first AY 0809 class to end, SPCH 1311.8430/9472, had only 2 withdrawals; one in 8430; one in 9472.

I would also like to note with pride that because I am a member of the Humanities Division my retention rate is **not** remarkable but an extension of a team effort. Please note the following comparative retention rates and the percentages of students achieving the Core mandated and transfer preferred grade of C or better for AY0708 - Distance Learning Classes:

DCCCD DL (excluding RLC)

ABC % = 61.54%

Retention % = 81.13%

RLC All Divisions DL

ABC % = 68.32%

Retention % = 83.74%

RLC HUMA Division DL

ABC % = 70.25%

Retention % = 85.38%

P.S. Dr. Blackman, I feel it is important to articulate that I have been involved with distance learning/on line since the fall of 1999. I developed the first speech on-line course for the DCCCD. When we began this distance learning "experiment," I remember the initial retention rates across the District were abysmal – in the range of 40%. We have made, both as a college and as a district remarkable progress in retention our distance learning students. I know you are probably already aware of this, but I thought it important to underscore this important point. - Patricia Spence, Speech Instructor