

## **Lower Columbia College Retention Program Overview**

### ▪ **PROGRAM HISTORY:**

The Lower Columbia College Retention Program was implemented in 1996 in an effort to increase retention and success of first-year students. The program targets new, degree or certificate seeking students attending either part-time or full-time.

Retention Program callers are employed to make a series of four scripted phone calls to all new students throughout their first quarter of enrollment. These phone calls provide specific information about the college, including student services, academic resources, advising, registration procedures, as well as important events taking place on campus.

Retention Program callers continually encourage contact between students and instructors, between students and advisors, and they encourage the use of campus services.

In addition to providing valuable information, the phone calls serve as a personal connection between the student and the college. Retention Program callers often establish professional relationships with the students that they call. Students feel comfortable asking questions and relating concerns. Retention Program callers are trained and equipped to provide appropriate information and referrals.

Students receive targeted information in each call. Calls typically take just a few minutes and are very well received. Retention callers end each call by asking permission to call again. Despite being given a choice to “opt-out”, the overwhelming majority of students state that they enjoy and appreciate the contact and many students ask to continue receiving calls, even beyond their first term.

Students report that they value the personal attention that the Retention Program provides. They appreciate that the college cares about each student’s individual success.

Through information and referrals, students develop positive associations with many facets of the campus community, which helps them to participate actively in the learning process and helps to ensure the successful completion of their educational goals.

The 2004-2005 academic year marked the first year that the Retention Program employed STAR (Student Tracking and Retention). STAR is a computer application that has been designed to facilitate calling activity. STAR has significantly increased efficiency, reduced paperwork, and provided consistency and reliability in record keeping and calling protocol.

During the three years prior to the retention program’s activities, fall to winter retention of new, degree-seeking, full-time students averaged 73 percent. During the first year of the retention program, the 1996-97 year, fall to winter retention was 81 percent. The second year, retention of the target group was 82 percent. The average since that time has been 85%.

### ▪ **PROGRAM OPERATION:**

**Budget:**

Annual Operational Budget of \$8000

Retention Program callers are Student Help workers and earn an hourly rate of \$7.63

**Staffing:**

Student Help workers are hired late summer to begin calls when fall quarter begins.

Three callers are hired for fall, two or one for winter, and one for spring.

Callers work Monday – Thursday from 5:00 to 7:00 pm

Callers are supervised by Retention Program Specialist and by advising staff.

**Training Topics and Materials:**

Commitment and Confidentiality

Resource Notebook

Scripts

Mock Calling

STAR Procedures (and back-up)

**Record Keeping:**

Callers track the number of calls attempted and the number of students reached.

Callers track referrals they make in the areas of:

Advising

Counseling

Financial Aid

Instructors

Learning Center

Tutoring

Activities/Clubs/Events

**Reporting:**

Daily and weekly calling activity is monitored by the Retention Program Specialist.

Retention Program reports are compiled quarterly and annually. Reports include statistics on calling outcomes and referrals made, as well as retention rates from quarter to quarter.