

# Does Academic Coaching Work?

GTC leaders look closer at the program's impact and find new ways to get students the support they need.

## Background:

Greenville Technical College (GTC) was founded in 1960 and is one of the largest public two-year institutions in South Carolina, primarily serving the citizens and residents of Greenville County. The College provides high-quality, financially attainable learning opportunities at four distinct campuses throughout the County. Staff and advisors work with employers to deliver relevant skills, giving students the resources and support they need to flourish well beyond the graduation stage and into their careers.

## Problem:

GTC's strategic plan focused heavily on completion and student engagement, but they did not have an easy or efficient way to measure the effectiveness of their current programs or understand how those programs were supporting their goals. They also needed to address the day-to-day items that end up derailing students in their academic journey, encompassing more holistic advising support and communication. They had plenty of data and insights, but required a more specific breakdown of information to form a cohesive story.

One of the areas they were especially interested in was evaluating their Academic Coaching program. Academic Coaching is offered to all students, free of charge, and focuses on improving the process of learning. Students worked one-on-one with their coach to examine their learning styles, study habits, technology challenges, and more. The academic coach continues to meet with students throughout the semester to support them as they identify academic goals and provide personalized recommendations to improve performance.

A growing number of students began to be referred by other areas on campus. Facing increased demand for the academic coaching program, GTC leaders needed to understand its effectiveness and make informed decisions about how to best invest in the program.

## Solution:

The GTC team took a step back and reviewed the students who had used the program over the last two semesters. The profile of the participant varied greatly – from the motivated student who walked in voluntarily to improve their work, to the student who was referred and required to attend due to financial aid SAP appeal status.

GTC needed a way to understand the larger picture of both how this program was improving student success and the benefit for students who could meet with an academic coach, but had not yet made the time for one reason or another. To do this, they looked at outcomes of students who participated in Academic Coaching versus a dynamically created group of similar students who did not participate. This means students were matched on two levels – their likelihood to participate in the Academic Coaching program and their persistence prediction, or risk score. GTC leaders leveraged Civitas Learning to understand what works best for their students, control for bias, and increase clarity of program impact for actionable next steps.

This automated control group process allowed for the measurement of far more services, interventions, and actions. The methodology is comparable to a random control trial, but without the expense to organize the test or the time spent to interpret and evaluate the results.



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## What Does the Data Tell Us?

Within hours, GTC uploaded their data and completed an initiative analysis using the Civitas Learning Platform. They submitted data from 1,030 participants (scheduling a meeting one or more times) over three terms, and measured participating student persistence rates to those of comparable students. The numbers spoke for themselves. Academic Coaching improved student persistence by **8.5 percentage points**.

### Uncovering Opportunities to Support the Students Who Need It Most

Civitas Learning empowered GTC to drill-down beneath the results to analyze the impact of this intervention on particular student groups. This helped teams better understand whether the intervention worked, and who benefited the most, allowing them to prioritize engagement for the students in greatest need (lower persistence rates).

GTC first uncovered that students with 1-3 terms completed benefitted more:

- **+10.40 percentage point lift** for incoming students (0 terms completed)
- **+13.05 percentage point lift** for those who have completed 1-3 terms

The GTC team reflected on these numbers and admitted that the data around incoming students was not surprising; however, the students who were underway in their academic journey (one to three terms) were not expected to see such a high lift. They next analyzed full vs part-time students and found that both populations benefited from Academic Coaching, with part-time students experiencing a slightly higher lift. Specifically, full-time students surfaced a 7.87 percentage point lift in persistence, while the lift for part-time students was slightly higher at 8.71 percentage points. When leaders at GTC looked closer at the students with high predicted vulnerability or risk, they found an opportunity to better serve the students who needed prioritized care and were also less likely to participate in the program. Students within this subpopulation saw nearly double the benefit, with a 15.11 percentage point lift, from Academic Coaching.

This rapid learning cycle – breaking down results, evaluating, and refining communication – is the foundation to building successful initiatives. GTC is committed to this approach and it shows in their work with students each day. They continue to learn from each intervention, and understand that one size fits all does not apply to student success.

## Taking Action – What Happens Next?

The GTC team began to use this information to design and implement a series of nudges, or targeted communications to prompt certain behaviors such as reaching out for a coaching appointment or attending an event. They segmented students by their progress towards completion and academic concentration, sent a message within the application, and evaluated the effectiveness of their communication.

This process prompted a quick and personalized message to students who need more than a check-in email from the Dean of Students or a referral to a resource across campus. This pocket of students who would otherwise have left school or taken a break to attend to other obligations would now receive personalized attention and support. Risk could fluctuate with even the smallest changes in behavior, and GTC was able to assess their actions on a regular cadence and provide proactive student care.

With the ability to precisely measure impact for Academic Coaching, they are using data to refine the delivery of the program, and scaling to help advisors and staff take better care of students throughout their academic journey. These insights allow everyone to better prioritize their day and actions. GTC now has a clear picture of which students in their classroom or caseload need support, what kind, and the factors behind it, facilitating more purposeful interactions with the people that matter most – their students.

## About Civitas Learning:

We help colleges and universities harness the power of their student data to improve student success. We embed actionable insights and applied analytics into connected workflow applications to support the student journey. Equipped with our platform, leaders, advisors and faculty have the tools they need to measurably and sustainably improve enrollment, course success, persistence, graduation and equity.

Today, we support more than 400 colleges and universities, reaching nearly 9 million students. Together with our growing community of customers, we are making the most of the world's learning data to help a million more students graduate.

Learn more about Civitas Learning's solution at [www.civitaslearning.com](http://www.civitaslearning.com).

### OVERALL IMPACT:

**+8.5% Lift**  
**Percentage Point Lift**  
**from Academic Coaching**

### SUBPOPULATION IMPACT:

**+10.40**  
**Percentage Point Lift**  
**for incoming students (0 terms completed)**

**+13.05**  
**Percentage Point Lift**  
**for those who have 1-3 terms completed**

**+7.87**  
**Percentage Point Lift**  
**for full-time students**

**+8.71**  
**Percentage Point Lift**  
**for part-time students**

**+15.11**  
**Percentage Point Lift**  
**for students predicted to need additional support**