

Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture Retention Plan

Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture is committed to providing a learning environment and support system to help students achieve their educational goals. Whether a student is engaged in a single course or a full program of study, NCTA is dedicated to student learning, retention and successful completion of degree and certificate programs. Key components to achieving these goals are:

- NCTA will establish guidelines for collecting and analyzing information/data on student retention and completion that are practical for the college's mission and meets accreditation requirements.
- NCTA will utilize information/data collected to establish ambitious and attainable goals for retention and program completion.
- NCTA will utilize information/data collected to develop effective strategies for achieving goals for retention and program completion.

NCTA Key Characteristics to Guide Planning

- NCTA is an open admissions institution with the sole requirement for admission being completion of a high school degree or equivalent.
- NCTA's mission is preparing students for successful careers in agriculture, veterinary technology and related industries. The college provides open access to innovative technical education resulting in associate degrees and certificates.
- NCTA will foster a student-centered learning environment with a national reputation for producing graduates who are in high demand by agriculture and related industries.
- NCTA Values
 - Dedication to student development
 - Demonstration of personal integrity and responsibility
 - Practical and applied educational activities
 - Student engagement in the learning process
 - Commitment to seek and teach the most recent and accurate academic information
 - Educational activities that lead to student lifelong learning and gainful employment
 - Respect for the contributions, perspectives and personal worth of all members of the college community

Definitions

As described in the college's mission statement above, NCTA offers programs that can result in either a certificate or degree. Most certificates are programs that can be completed within two full-time semesters with an excellent career opportunity available immediately after completion. Therefore, graduation and retention rate data will reflect this important distinction.

- **Retention rate** – proportion of full-time, first-time degree seeking students that return as full-time degree seeking students.
 - As an institution providing associate degrees and certificates, retention rates will be evaluated for fall semester students returning the succeeding spring semester (will include degree and certificate seeking students); and fall semester students returning the following fall semester (will exclude students completing certificate programs)

- **Graduation rate** – proportion of full-time, first-time students that complete an academic program at NCTA within 150% of normal completion time.
 - Graduation rates will be reported with the following distinctions:
 - Degree seeker completing degree
 - Certificate seeker completing certificate
 - Degree seeker completing certificate

Retention and Graduation Rate Reporting

Academic units will assume primary reporting responsibilities for retention and graduation rates under the oversight of NCTA's retention committee. Units are uniquely positioned to provide the details of reporting outlined in this retention plan, which will greatly assist NCTA in developing effective strategies for improving student retention and graduate rates. Retention and graduation rates will be reported with each annual division assessment report due July 15. The retention committee will review and summarize these data.

Retention and Graduation Rate Goals

Retention and graduation data from recent years are summarized in Appendices I and II. NCTA's retention rates (fall enrolled full-time, first-time degree seeking students returning the following fall) has averaged about 64% the last five years, which is slightly below the average for peer institutions established by IPEDS. NCTA's graduation rate (150% of normal time) averaged about 52% from 2004 to 2013, which exceeded IPEDS peer institutions. Based on these data and the key characteristics of NCTA described previously, NCTA establishes the following retention and graduation rate goals:

- Achieve and sustain a 70% retention rate in 5 years.
- Achieve and sustain a 60% graduation rate in 5 years.

The graduation rate will consider a student that successfully completes a Certificate program as successfully graduating.

Strategies to Improve Retention

Roadmap to Success Checklist

NCTA's efforts to improve student retention begin as soon as the student has committed to attend by providing the student the "Roadmap to Success Checklist." The checklist clearly describes all the steps to complete prior to moving to campus and beginning their education. It also serves as a guiding document for when the student attends the "New Student Enrollment Day" as the majority of the tasks can be completed at that time if not already accomplished. These details are fully described on the college's web site (<https://ncta.unl.edu/welcome-ncta>) and the form is available for downloading.

New Student Orientation

New students are provided an extensive orientation weekend after moving to campus where students experience a variety of activities to prepare for a successful college experience. Orientation is a structured program led by staff, faculty, student leaders, community leaders, and other invited guests covering all topics related to the transitions encountered by new college students. A detailed list of learning outcomes for new student orientation is provided in Appendix III.

Initial Academic Advising

Developing an appropriate academic plan is essential for successful student retention and completion. NCTA is an open admissions institution with the sole requirement for admission being completion of a

high school degree or equivalent. However, NCTA does require the student to complete a national admissions examination such as ACT, SAT, Accuplacer, or Asset to assist in developing academic plans. Specific standards are in place for math and English courses (see [Academic Advising Policy](#)), which may require the student to enroll in a math or English developmental course. Scores are also utilized by academic advisors during new student enrollment days to assist in developing a timeline and initial semester course load that leads to successful completion.

Individual Education Program (IEP) and 504 accommodation plans are managed through the office of Student Services. Students, instructors, and the Student Services Advisor implement these accommodations to assist in the academic success of students with learning disabilities.

Early Alert Process

Instructors will notify the Student Services Advisor and academic advisor regarding students who are performing in a less than satisfactory manner in class (examples: poor attendance, low scores in assignments/tests). Students and advisors are contacted by the Student Services Advisor who will discuss possible corrective measures with the student (eliminate absences, tutoring, study halls, Writing and Math Centers and other guidance counseling provided by Student Services).

Faculty Commitment to Instructional Efforts

The instructors play an important role in student retention and program completion by providing an effective and engaging classroom learning environment. Faculty are required to complete student learning outcome assessment reports after the completion of each course. These reports provide data driven strategies to improve student learning. Instructors are also critical to initiating the Early Alert Process and encouraging students to seek additional help, if needed. Peer tutors are available in many subject areas. To further help with retention purposes, educators should participate in workshops and training sessions that focus on developing strategies for greater student success.

Probationary/Suspension Students

Students are placed on Academic Probation when a semester or cumulative GPA is below 2.0 and notified in writing by the Student Services Advisor. The Student Services Advisor works collaboratively with faculty advisors to develop a corrective plan of action which may include:

- Regular advising meetings
- Changes in courses selected and/or reduction in credit hour load
- Utilization of tutors or study halls
- Limit extra-curricular activities
- Balance of work load outside of school

Student Success Centers/Peer Tutoring

Peer tutoring, controlled study environment, proctoring site for make-up tests; computers for use for class assignments, and other services are available to help students succeed in the classroom, and therefore, return each semester. For those students who request a tutor, students should expect a tutor who has been highly recommended by an instructor in the appropriate subject area, trained to be an effective helper, and has received the help in a timely manner for the time needed.

Student Life

There's more to college than just sitting in a classroom. Success and retention of the students also involves the quality of the "outside of the class" environment. NCTA strives to provide fun, informative, meaningful, and well planned activities for the variety of students who enroll in classes at our college.

NCTA requires all first-year traditional students to reside on campus. Successful retention requires providing the necessary structure and guidance in the residence halls, including satisfaction with roommates and the condition of the living quarters. Early alerts are managed through effective communication among student residents, student RA's, and the Residence Life Manager. NCTA will regularly conduct surveys to obtain student feedback and direction for future planning of activities and student life policies.

Student Organizations/Teams

NCTA provides a great diversity of organizations and competition teams to enhance the educational experiences and professional development of students. These provide students many opportunities throughout the year "to be involved" and to develop relationships with their peers and faculty/staff mentors. Involvement in these organizations can be a key component to successful student retention. Faculty advisors are also highly encouraged to monitor student involvement in these organizations to ensure that the student is achieving the proper balance between academics and activities. Advisors bear responsibility for restricting student involvement when students are not achieving standards of performance both in and outside of the classroom.

International Students

An orientation is provided for first-time international students enrolled at NCTA. The topics cover all aspects of college life. Mid-term and end-of-term contact and follow up is provided.

Career Services

NCTA provides assistance to students in choosing, finding, and obtaining successful careers through a coordinated effort among faculty, academic divisions, and Student Services. Job boards are maintained on the college's web site and division offices. NCTA hosts an annual career fair every November. Cover letter and resume writing assistance is available, as well as help with interview skills. Job placement assistance for full/part-time students needing employment while in school is provided as well as assistance upon the completion of their program of study.

Performance Indicators and Monitoring

Besides the overall retention and graduation rate data discussed previously, other indicators of the success of the Retention Plan at NCTA include:

- Improved retention rates and grade point averages of students in developmental classes.
- Successful completion rates after receiving help from the tutoring program.
- Improved retention rates and grade point averages for students with accommodation plans.
- Successful course completion of those students who received an Early Alert and took advantage of the "help" suggestions that were provided to the students.
- Analysis of all aspects of academics and student life through the Graduate Opinion Survey.
- Utilizing a "Check-Out" form for soliciting feedback from non-retained students.

Feedback Loop

A yearly report from the Student Success and Retention Task Force will indicate NCTA's progress toward these performance indicators and future retention strategies. The report will be distributed to the Division Chairs and the Dean for analysis and recommendations. The report may also be placed on the college's web site.

Appendix I – Retention and Graduation Data: Peer Comparisons

IPEDS Data Feedback Reports (2015 to 2018)

- Peer group institutions change each year for this data analysis.

Table 1. Associate Degree Graduation Rates (based on 150% of normal time to program completion)

	NCTA	Peer Group Average
2014 Cohort	49%	41%
2013 Cohort	43%	35%
2012 Cohort	53%	33%
2011 Cohort	44%	35%

Table 2. Retention Rates for full-time, first-time degree/certificate seeking students (from fall of first enrollment to the following fall).

	NCTA	Peer Group Average
2016 Cohort	61%	73%
2015 Cohort	64%	71%
2014 Cohort	65%	70%
2013 Cohort	66%	60%

NOTE – retention rates do not reflect 1-year certificate completers or 1 year transfers to Bachelor’s programs.

Nebraska Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education Reports

Graduation and Retention Rates for Nebraska Colleges and University with Agriculture Programs

	2015 Cohort		2004 to 2013
	Retention	Graduation	Graduation
NCTA	64%	42.9%	51.2%
University of Nebraska - Lincoln	82%	59.5%	64.4%
Chadron State	64%	43.2%	42.9%
Central Community College	68%	37.7%	31.6%
Northeast Community College	70%	53.0%	47.9%
Southeast Community College	63%	30.6%	30.3%

Source: Nebraska Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education - 2018 Progress Report (IPEDS)

Appendix II – Retention Data: Internal Division Analysis

- These retention data were generated by the NCTA Retention committee analyzing 6-day count student enrollments. NOTE – retention to fall year 2 were adjusted for irrigation technician certificate completers.

2015 Fall Class	Spring Semester	Fall Year 2
Vet Tech	78.3%	52.2%
Ag Business	50.0%	25.0%
Agronomy	82.6%	76.2%
ASI/Ag Ed	85.4%	63.4%
NCTA	80.7%	59.8%

2016 Fall Class	Spring Semester	Fall Year 2
Vet Tech	80.7%	59.6%
Ag Business	66.7%	66.7%
Agronomy	85.3%	71.9%
ASI/Ag Ed	86.8%	63.2%
NCTA	83.3%	63.8%

2017 Fall Class	Spring Semester	Fall Year 2
Vet Tech	78.3%	58.3%
Ag Business	71.4%	57.1%
Agronomy	94.7%	72.2%
ASI/Ag Ed	87.5%	70.8%
NCTA	83.6%	64.7%

Appendix III – New Student Orientation Outcomes

Academic Preparation

- Meet with their advisor to establish a connection within their chosen academic discipline
- Possess a hard copy and electronic copy of a degree plan
- Possess a hard copy and an electronic copy of a semester schedule
- Possess materials and supplies to start classes on Monday
 - Books, vet tech supplies, etc.
- Be registered for classes
- Have an NCard
- Be able to use the academic support resources available to them
 - Degree Audit - uAchieve sign-on
 - Wi-Fi sign-in
- Identify characteristics of students who succeed academically. Realize the importance of demonstrating the characteristics students who succeed academically.
- Have completed and submitted necessary forms to the correct offices
 - Health forms
 - FERPA
 - Transcripts from other colleges if needed
 - Permission to release information form
 - Image release form

Student Personal Attainment

- Establish a connection with one or more other students.
- Recognize the importance of getting involved in the campus community.
- Be knowledgeable in the co-curricular and wellbeing resources available to them.
 - Frontier Co Sherriff Office
 - Residence Life Manager, RA's, Title IX, Conduct Officer
 - Ambiance Counseling and DASAS
 - safety information around campus and in each dorm room
 - medical clinic
- Understand the transitional issues (social and academic) they may encounter during their first year and how to manage them, including:
 - time management
 - physical health
 - spiritual health
 - conflict resolution skills
 - appropriate interpersonal relationships and sexual misconduct
 - identify threats to college success: alcohol, weapons, poor driving, bullying
- Navigate the campus and identify the main buildings.
- Demonstrate a positive attitude towards the start of classes in the upcoming semester.
- Develop a sense of school spirit and identity with the campus culture.

Resident Life Preparation

- Establish a positive relationship with roommate and other members of the residence hall community
- Secure parking pass if needed; secure appropriate meal plan