

PROMISING PRACTICES

Promising Practices is an initiative sponsored by the Postsecondary Education Research Center (PERC) at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. The series highlights evidence-based practices promoting student success inclusive of access, persistence, retention, and postgraduate success.

Chattanooga State Community College's "Focus on Completion" Sees Results - April 2018

Implemented in fall 2015, Chattanooga State Community College's "Focus on Completion" (FOC) project focuses on each student's "first year experience." According to FOC Director, Julius Dodds, "If we can engage with a student early and often in their time with us, the likelihood of their staying with us grows exponentially with each passing day." To do this, FOC incorporates high impact practices to improve student engagement and persistence. The practices include mandatory new student orientation programs, college success courses, proactive advising, experiential learning, career assessment, and ePortfolio reflection.

The College Success courses connect students with faculty and services relevant to their field of interest by building a cohort of students with similar program and career interests. Through these courses, students are matched with a support network of academic completion specialists, student success coaches, and peer mentors that assist them through every step of the academic journey. By using a proactive advising model, academic completion specialists and student success coaches develop lasting relationships with freshmen who often feel overwhelmed with the transition to college. The College Success course also assists students to meet some of their community service requirements.

Chattanooga State's FOC initiative and as an adopter of the Achieving the Dream (ATD) college reform effort, the college has strengthened the campus-wide focus on engagement by scaling the high-impact practices on campus to meet Governor Haslam's Drive to 55 Initiative.

Trends in Graduation Rates of Full-Time, First-Time Freshmen Cohorts



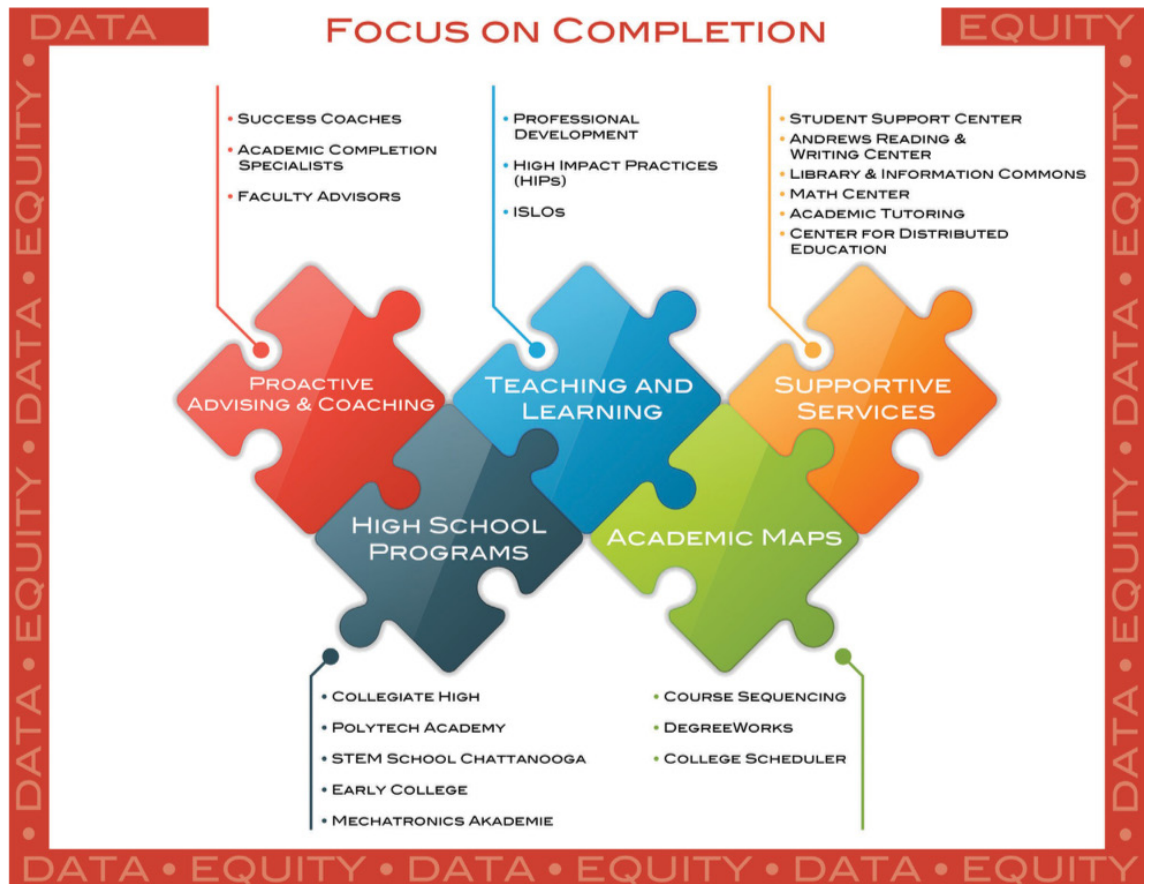
Fall 2015 TN Promise Cohort = 1,081



FOC has Five Strategic Areas: Proactive Advising and Coaching, Teaching and Learning, Support Services, High School Programs, and Academic Maps. To support the “Teaching and Learning,” and the “Proactive Advising and Coaching” areas, Chattanooga State received a 2017 Tennessee Promise Forward grant. It is intended to address the gaps in interventions or needed areas of improvement in academic support for students receiving

the Tennessee Promise scholarship. With an emphasis on community service requirements, a Service Learning Coordinator was hired to provide a critical link between community placement sites and TN Promise students in need of meaningful community service opportunities that align with their field of study. The Coordinator assists community partners, High Impact Practices (HIPs) faculty, and students to develop mutually beneficial community service partnerships.

Meanwhile, a Tennessee Promise Transfer Coordinator is creating a seamless bridge for TN Promise students desiring to progress to a four-year degree program. By providing transfer outreach to students and college partners it ensures effective services to TN Promise students as they prepare to transfer. Programs and activities are being organized that lead TN Promise students into four-year college and university placement. Additionally, a “Promise



Source: Chattanooga State Community College

Milestones” program being developed will mark various academic milestones acknowledging key academic achievements of TN Promise students. This program celebrates the completion of 15, 30, and 45 credit hours with various gift cards, campus announcements, and displays, as well as celebratory events. The capstone of this program is a special “Tennessee Promise Cord” at graduation.

For more information about Chattanooga State’s Focus on Completion program please contact Julius Dodds, Director of Academic Retention, at julius.dodds@chattanoogastate.edu.

If you would like us to feature your institution or program as a promising practice, please contact PERC at PERC@utk.edu or (865) 974-3972.