



# Minding the Gap!

Coaching to Close the Achievement Gap at  
Ivy Tech Community College

CASE STUDY

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# Improving success for Indiana's 21<sup>st</sup> Century Scholars & strengthening student support capabilities

A STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP DESIGNED FOR LONG-TERM  
STUDENT AND INSTITUTIONAL IMPACT

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## The Institution

Ivy Tech Community College — a network of 32 campuses serving a total of 160,000 students each year throughout the state of Indiana.



## The Challenge

To cost-effectively improve persistence and on-time completion of 21st Century Scholars, who, despite significant efforts to prepare them for college and award them a full scholarship, were dropping after their freshman year at alarming rates.



## The Solution

A partnership with InsideTrack to deliver professional coaching to all incoming freshmen 21st Century Scholars, including tailored process improvement, professional development and training for student support personnel.





## Coaching Ivy Tech's 21st Century Scholars

InsideTrack tailored coaching to address the root causes of attrition among first-generation, low-income students who often juggle additional work and family commitments outside of school, as well as the unique requirements to maintain scholarship eligibility.

Coaches paid particular attention to the following:

- Helping students articulate and connect to their internal motivation for being in school
- Setting realistic expectations and contingency planning
- Cultivating a sense of belonging, commitment to graduation and self-advocacy
- Driving students to engage with other campus support resources and coaching them to communicate with faculty and staff effectively
- Ensuring students understood various campus communications and scholarship eligibility criteria, and strategizing with them to achieve the necessary academic progress
- Coordinating student escalations and cross-functional communication to optimize timely resolution
- Documenting student trends and feedback to identify policies and processes that may unnecessarily hinder student success

**"There's always more that can be done, but are the things you're doing the right things? Our partnership with InsideTrack helped us focus on the things that make the biggest difference and complement our other efforts."**

— Tom Coley, Chancellor, Northwest and North Central regions





## IMPROVING STUDENT FINANCIAL LITERACY

### Turning insights into action just in time

During the first term of coaching at Ivy Tech, InsideTrack coaches noticed that many 21st Century Scholars were confused about the requirements to maintain their scholarships.

They identified two main causes:

1. Informational materials about the scholarship were unclear and difficult to understand
2. There was confusion about policies regarding funding for summer classes, which many Scholars needed to take in order to complete the necessary 30 credits per year to keep their scholarship

Ivy Tech worked quickly to produce short videos explaining the financial aid policies more clearly, directly addressing specific points of confusion. They also updated information packets about the scholarship to distribute to financial aid offices throughout the state.



As a result, 21st Century Scholars received more accurate, easier-to-understand information and were better able to make informed decisions and maximize the opportunities afforded by the scholarship program before it was too late.

## Technology and multichannel communication engage busy students where they're at

In the second year of the program, coaches expanded their use of various communication modalities to engage students via phone, email, SMS, Facebook, mobile app and face-to-face meetings on campus.

- More than **91 PERCENT OF 21ST CENTURY SCHOLARS ENGAGED WITH COACHING**
- More than **77 PERCENT OF STUDENTS ENGAGED WITH THEIR COACH VIA TEXT MESSAGE**—more than any other modality
- More than **65 PERCENT ENGAGED WITH THEIR COACH FIVE OR MORE TIMES** throughout the year
- Scholars who met with their coach five or more times were **20 PERCENT MORE LIKELY TO MAINTAIN GOOD ACADEMIC STANDING** (67 percent compared to 56 percent)

More than 100 Scholars downloaded the InsideTrack coaching technology and analytics platform, which enabled multichannel engagement. The coaching platform combined convenient two-way messaging, scheduling and self-service content tailored to the needs of 21st Century Scholars. Eighty percent became “repeat users” and turned to the platform to stay on track through personalized information and timely reminders.

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### MOVING THE NEEDLE IN INDIANA

## Results from the 2014 cohort

**FIRST-YEAR RETENTION IMPROVED** by more than eight percentage points—**A 24% INCREASE** compared to a three-year historic average.

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### BUILDING ON SUCCESS

## Results from the 2015 cohort

First-year retention improved by more than 12 percentage points – a **33% INCREASE** compared to three-year historic average and over 7% improvement on the previous year's results

Students also made significantly more academic progress with a **46% INCREASE IN COMPLETION OF CREDITS** attempted resulting in an average of 61% more credits completed than the previous cohort

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### A SUSTAINABLE SOLUTION

“Before launching our coaching program with InsideTrack, we modeled the potential financial risk and ROI. The model incorporated revenue from tuition and fees, as well as state performance funding tied to enhanced student outcomes. Based on the results from the first cohort, it looks like our anticipated ROI and break-even point are even better than projected.”

— Chris Ruhl, Ivy Tech CFO



As a result of coaching, 225 additional Scholars persisted into their second year at Ivy Tech.





“Succeeding in college is often more challenging for low-income students, especially those who are the first in their families to pursue higher education,” said Jeff Fanter, Senior Vice President of Student Experience at Ivy Tech. “Ivy Tech is committed to expanding opportunity for all individuals, irrespective of their socio-economic background and through scholarships and coaching, we’ve been able to level the playing field and effectively eliminate persistence gaps.”

— Jeff Fanter, senior vice president of student experience





## REIMAGINING WHAT'S POSSIBLE

### Professional development and capacity building for sustainable results

Year two of the partnership combined InsideTrack Coaching with a series of training initiatives designed to build the skills of Ivy Tech student support personnel. Dozens of Ivy Tech faculty and staff engaged in more than 60 hours of professional development with InsideTrack throughout the year.

Training topics included:

- Coaching fundamentals
- Building student knowledge, skills, attitudes and beliefs that lead to success
- Career coaching
- Coaching students on specific focus areas linked to attrition, such as effectiveness and managing commitments
- Managing a student support team and quality assurance

"I was the ultimate skeptic about outsourcing anything related to student support, but I now understand the value of partnering with a third party like InsideTrack. Seeing the results firsthand changed our people and the culture of our institution. It's created a sense of momentum. Our faculty and staff are increasingly engaged and motivated to be part of this success. We're incorporating some of the training and professional development InsideTrack offers to enhance our entire operation for years to come."





## IN THEIR OWN WORDS

### Ivy Tech students talk about InsideTrack coaching

"Just thought I'd send a quick text and let you know that I was approved for the appeal, and I want to say 'thank you' for all the help you've given me recently. It means a lot."

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"Yes! I'm glad I got in early and registered. I really like the hours and the days that I was able to get with classes. Thank you so much for all of your help this year. I don't know what I would have done without you!"

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"I just want to say thank you so much for listening/helping. I feel so much better. You really don't know how much you've helped me."

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"I don't know how to word it, but you're the person I talk to the most outside of my fiancé. Honestly, talking to you makes my whole day a heck of a lot better ... talking to you gets me motivated for anything I have to do."









InsideTrack is a mission-driven nonprofit that fuels positive change by empowering and advancing all learners to achieve their educational and career goals through the transformative power of coaching. We help people get the education they need to enhance well-being, create opportunity and secure meaningful employment — ultimately facilitating economic and social mobility. Since 2001, we have served over 3.1 million learners, partnering with more than 350 institutions and organizations to directly improve enrollment, retention, completion, and career advancement — tailoring our coaching outcomes to fit the needs of our partners and the learners they support. Our coaching methodology is evidence-based and research-confirmed, supporting all types of learners at every stage of their journey — especially those who face systemic barriers to postsecondary success. We are a catalyst for transformational impact, ultimately empowering learners and the organizations who serve them.



# Ivy Tech Coaching Program Insights and Results:

Coaching improves student outcomes — even for  
students who don't receive coaching

**CASE STUDY UPDATE**

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## Ivy Tech Coaching Program Insights and Results

### Coaching improves student outcomes — even for students who don't receive coaching

InsideTrack partnered with Indiana's Ivy Tech Community College starting in 2014 to provide professional coaching to first-generation and low-income freshmen.

#### RESULTS FOR FIRST-GENERATION AND LOW-INCOME STUDENTS



**+34%**  
IMPROVEMENT  
IN FIRST-YEAR  
PERSISTENCE



**+77%**  
IMPROVEMENT  
IN TWO-YEAR  
COMPLETION RATES



#### STUDENT STORY

##### Building resilience, one text at a time

Daniel\* had a strong GPA and seemed highly motivated to persist at Ivy Tech. When he found out he wasn't accepted to a particular program at the institution, he asked his InsideTrack Coach Lauren for help — just not the help Lauren expected. Daniel asked for guidance on taking a year off. But through phone meetings and a steady stream of text exchanges, Lauren helped Daniel realize the benefit of staying in school and reapplying for the program. Daniel decided to persist despite his setback and enrolled for the new year.

\*Student name has been changed.

Texting was a particularly effective coaching strategy

**More than 77%**  
of students engaged with  
coaches via text

Students texted with  
coaches approximately  
**86,000 times**  
for an average of  
**17 text**  
exchanges per student

## Coaching generated insights into the student experience that informed changes to the student support program.



After coaches realized students were confused by scholarship policies, Ivy Tech created short explanatory videos and updated information packets that they distributed throughout the state.



When coaches learned of an issue requiring escalation, they helped coordinate cross-functional communication to offer the student a quicker resolution.

## Once improvements like these took hold, completion rates rose for coached and non-coached students alike.

### TWO-YEAR COMPLETION RATE AMONG ALL IVY TECH STUDENTS



**+45%**

**IMPROVEMENT IN TWO-YEAR  
COMPLETION RATES**

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— Tom Coley, Chancellor, Ivy Tech, Northwest and North Central regions

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