

# RITA Midterm Report North Central Texas College

November 2016



## EVALUATION QUESTIONS


1. To what degree is RITA reaching its enrollment goal?
2. What capacity is being built to sustain the RITA model beyond the grant period?
3. Is the program being implemented according to the original plan?
4. With what level of quality is the program being implemented?


## RITA Model Components

- Communications
- New or enhanced curriculum
- New technology infrastructure
- Student support
- Student employment
- Industry partner engagement


For Year 3 of the TAACCCT grant, the RITA consortium underwent a midterm evaluation to document their progress in implementing their grant programs. Each school in the consortium participated in the evaluation. The Improve Group captured information from staff and faculty interviews and a student focus group to determine successes and challenges at North Central Texas College. Ten staff and faculty were interviewed and 10 students participated in a focus group.

### Successes

 **Innovative coaching has had positive outcomes.** The RITA coaching model has focused on supporting students to persevere and follow through with graduation. RITA interviewees have noticed improvements in students' soft skills as a result of working with coaches. For instance, they have noticed students are more confident and sociable. Coaches attribute many of their coaching tactics to the InsideTrack program, which is being implemented college wide. They explain this program has increased their awareness of how students' past experiences impact their academic success.

 **Professional development has strengthened programming and curricula.** Interviewees explain the professional development opportunities they have accessed through RITA have brought lasting benefits to the college. Key examples of the benefits from professional development are:

- The InsideTrack coaching model has helped to focus coaching staff's development and the delivery of their role
- Some staff learned about new software through gaming program professional development, and were able to purchase it and incorporate it into the classroom
- Staff who attended the online learning conference introduced college leadership to new software

 **Technology infrastructure has created new opportunities.** The new lab space developed through RITA funding has created a platform for tutoring, peer engagement, and testing. The lab has not only increased opportunities for students to gain credentials through testing, it is also available to community members who want to add credentials to their resumes. Interviewees believe the lab has brought a number of benefits, such as an increase in students taking certification exams, more collaboration between students, and additional exposure to the community.



## Sustainability

1. NCTC has acquired several new grants, including a Title III grant, allowing them to make coaching a more consistent practice within the college. The InsideTrack methodology, which RITA coaches learned through RITA-funded professional development, is being implemented across the college.
2. Hybridization of RITA courses will serve as an example for other departments.
3. The grant has helped NCTC establish and strengthen external relationships. One example of this is its expansion of the articulation agreements with UNT.
4. The testing center will continue to provide the community with access to its resources and the school, serving as a strong marketing mechanism for NCTC.
5. Rejuvenated programs and newly developed programs will remain. This assists with getting more students in the door.
6. Faculty positions will be sustained in courses and programs with adequate enrollment.



**New programs have been developed, and courses are being approved through Quality Matters.** New programs include database, cybersecurity, networking and gaming.

Interviewees say that students are particularly excited about the cybersecurity programs. In addition to developing new curriculum, RITA staff have ensured that courses are approved through Quality Matters. Interviewees explain this practice has contributed to creating new expectations for courses across the college.

## Challenges



**Sustaining quality faculty, infrastructure, and curriculum will require financial investments.**

Market rates for faculty who are qualified to teach cutting edge IT courses are high enough that it is difficult for colleges compete. Not having experts on staff at the college impacts NCTC's ability incorporate expert advice into course design. Additionally, interviewees voice that the college will need to invest time into keeping the courses approved in Quality Matters, and will have to remain adaptive in order to respond to changing technology.



**There is a perceived need for more consistent communication across the college.**

Expectations related to the RITA grant are not clearly stated in faculty's job descriptions. As such, faculty are not as equally invested in coordinating with coaches and moving courses towards hybridization as other grant staff. Some interviewees voice that these expectations are unclear due to faculty reporting to multiple administrators. Also related to communication, a few staff felt that clearer communications about the RITA goals and actions would increase motivation and productivity. Finally, interviewees voice that as RITA comes to an end, students and staff will need clear communication around what types of services will remain and who will be responsible for implementing those services.



**RITA**

RURAL  
INFORMATION  
TECHNOLOGY  
ALLIANCE

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