

# Federal funding fuels student support, institutional transformation and sustainable impact



<b>INSTITUTION:</b>	North Central Texas College
<b>ENROLLMENT:</b>	8,000 students across six campuses
<b>PROGRAM TYPE:</b>	Capacity Building
<b>FUNDING:</b>	Department of Education Title III Department of Labor Grants

## FROM TRANSACTIONAL ADVISING TO A CULTURE OF COACHING

When student support staff at North Central Texas College (NCTC) asked themselves what they could do to better support their students, Donna Uptergrove, Director of Grants, thought back to a conference session she attended where an InsideTrack presentation brought together coaches with students they had coached. With one coaching/student pair in particular, Donna was impressed that the coach wasn't telling the student what to do. Instead, the coach "helped her find her voice," showing the student that she had the knowledge and capacity to fulfill her own goals.

With that, the partnership between NCTC and InsideTrack took off. The idea was to transition the way that NCTC staff worked with student communities — moving from a transactional approach to a model that centered on truly understanding each student's education and career goals. In order to partner with InsideTrack to shift thinking at an institution-wide level, NCTC needed to secure funding.

## FUNDING STUDENT SUPPORT INNOVATION WITH FEDERAL GRANTS

To get the partnership off the ground, the school used a set of "braided funding sources" from institution funds,

Department of Education Title III funds, and Department of Labor grants. Needing to implement funding toward a sustainable, long-lasting support renovation, NCTC worked with InsideTrack to align grant requirements with institutional goals using elements from InsideTrack's coaching and capacity building programs.

## GOING BIG WITH INSTITUTIONAL IMPACT

InsideTrack and NCTC partnered to train staff and leadership in InsideTrack's proven coaching methodology, build capacity for NCTC's advising department, and spark an institution-wide mindset shift around student support. According to Bekah Sanchez, Student Services Grant Manager at NCTC, "Our initial intention was 'let's do more than advise and register students. Let's engage and develop them and truly coach them toward meeting their goals.' Since then, our goal has evolved into, 'Let's create a coaching culture throughout the institution.'"

And during this eight-plus year partnership, that's just what happened. First, all student-facing staff members adapted their roles using the coaching model. Then came additional training for the school's admissions, financial aid and business offices — departments that were, by nature, more transactional. Most recently, those in leadership roles were trained to use coaching. As Bekah explains, by creating an institution-wide coaching culture, NCTC has become a place where "any student who interacts with anyone in the institution will get the same type of support."

**"InsideTrack equipped us with a new skill set to serve our students at a whole new level."**

— BEKAH SANCHEZ

*Student Services Grant Manager,  
North Central Texas College*

## COACHING IS NOT WHAT YOU THINK

Bekah has observed that the trainees go through a “transition period” that begins with thinking they’ve heard it all before — and ends with an “aha” moment once they really start applying the methodology. “We do what we do,” she says, “because we want to support other people. And for a lot of us, for years that meant advising. Telling students what they should do. Giving them the answers. Now, with coaching, the best thing we can do to support them is to help them develop these skills so they can chart their own path, knowing they have a support team along the way.”

This shift to holistic coaching and helping the student chart their own path has been liberating for advisors to show students how to:

- Develop the problem-solving skills and linear processing to determine next steps
- Connect their time in school with their chosen career path
- Find their own answers for questions they were likely never asked before, like “Why are you pursuing this degree? What will it do for you? What’s your dream job? How will your life be different after you graduate and are working?”

### SEEING IS BELIEVING

Direct student survey results show that the transformation has made a major impact. When NCTC students were asked about the services that supported them the most during their time in school — everything from help with tuition or course materials to assistance with gas, groceries or childcare — Bekah said that their preference was clear. “Almost always, they said the key thing that benefitted them the most was coaching. Above the money, above all the other services we could provide for them, they said ‘it was the coaching that got me through.’”

## PUTTING COACHING SKILLS TO WORK IN THE COMMUNITY

Now, NCTC’s coaching mindset has expanded even further. Their “Rural Promise in a Box” program sends coach-trained staff to work alongside advising staff to promote a college-going culture in 14 of the rural high schools in the area. And through their Department of Labor TechHire Grant program, the school works proactively with incoming students on career coaching before they declare a major, setting students up for success with clear expectations and goals for why they’re in school.

## EXPANDING COACHING-POWERED TRANSFORMATION TO BUSINESS PARTNERS

The college is now expanding coaching into their work with area business partners, allowing the institution to better partner with employers to create stronger career pipelines. As Bekah sees it, “A coaching approach will provide each of us with a better understanding of the roles and goals of one another. It’s one thing to work on a project or two with a business... what we’re looking for are long-term partnerships that are meaningful for everyone, because that’s when our students win.”

**“The TechHire Grant program has been the turning point in reaching my educational goals. Not just through the monetary support, but the coaching, encouragement and resources provided helped me achieve not only the certifications I hoped to gain, but also finish my first official degree.”**

— RANI SMITH

*TechHire Grant participant*



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