

# NEWS RELEASE

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## **Northwest Iowa Community College Receives 2016 Lee Noel and Randi Levitz Retention Excellence Award**

Northwest Iowa Community College (NCC) in Sheldon, Iowa, recently received special recognition for helping its students to successfully complete their first year of college and to return for their second year during a national conference on college student recruitment and retention held in Dallas, Texas.

Ruffalo Noel Levitz (RNL), a leading provider of technology-enabled services and consulting for assisting colleges to manage their student enrollments, awarded NCC with one of its three “2016 Lee Noel and Randi Levitz Retention Excellence Awards.” This award recognizes innovative student retention programs that increase student success and completion.

Over the past three years, NCC has systematically worked to improve the rate at which its first year students persist into their second year. NCC already had high retention and graduation rates compared with other community colleges in Iowa and across the nation, and so this proved to be a challenging endeavor.

“At NCC, student success is our story and our mission. We are committed to ensuring access, success, and equity for all students through quality education. College faculty and staff know students by name, and they recognize that ‘individuals’ graduate and those individuals need appropriate support services in order to be successful. They facilitate and continuously improve processes so every student can realize his or her full potential through learning. We are grateful for this national recognition of our very important work,” said Dr. Alethea Stubbe, NCC President.

NCC formed a Retention Committee to lead in this college-wide effort. The committee named its retention program “Retention Initiatives for Student Educational Success,” or “R.I.S.E.S.” This committee creates a pervasive, student-centered culture that encourages students to attain their educational goals and to graduate on time.

The “R.I.S.E.S.” program has impacted the College in numerous ways. NCC modified its existing advising structure to provide intensive weekly interventions, designated a dedicated advisor for each academic program of study, utilized block scheduling, and updated and extended its learning communities. In the future, NCC will provide dedicated online academic support also.

The retention award recognized these efforts and also the results of the R.I.S.E.S. program. These are some of the results: NCC achieved an overall retention rate of 66 percent for new full and part-time freshmen intending to obtain an associate degree by those students who entered the College in the Fall of 2013. NCC students who entered the College in the Fall of 2013 with a high school GPA of 2.3 or less demonstrated a 50 percent retention rate. Students who demonstrated financial need by being Pell Grant eligible demonstrated a retention rate of 61 percent.

This award “shows that NCC does value the student and that students are #1 with all areas on campus. This care is reflected in our retention numbers and enrollment growth. It is an outsider’s applause for a job well done,” said the chair of the R.I.S.E.S. group, Susan Schmidt, who also directs the College’s Learning Center.

“Northwest Iowa Community College opens its doors to everyone, and everyone means everyone. Period. It’s who we are; it’s why we exist. As an open-access institution with college-transfer instruction being one of our essential purposes, the 66 percent retention rate was remarkable,” observed John Hartog, NCC Vice President of Student and Academic Services. “This rate reflects the hard work of our students, the leadership of R.I.S.E.S., and the culture of our College. Receiving the award on behalf of our College in front of 1200 of our peers was affirming, but seeing our students receive their degrees during our graduation ceremonies is even more exhilarating. NCC serves all of our students, and as a result, hard-working students succeed at NCC!”

The Retention Excellence Awards Program was established in 1989 to honor outstanding achievements in student retention by colleges and universities throughout the United States and Canada. Winners are selected by leading campus-based retention practitioners through a “blind” reader-panel, third-party assessment process. Case studies from these award-winning institutions will be available at [www.RuffaloNL.com/Awards](http://www.RuffaloNL.com/Awards).

Accepting the award on behalf of Northwest Iowa Community College at the Ruffalo Noel Levitz conference in Dallas, TX.

**Photo L-R: Steve Meyer, CEO, Ruffalo Noel Levitz; Susan Schmidt, Director – Learning Center & Alternative High School/Accommodations Coordinator, Northwest Iowa Community College; Kevin Crockett, President, Enrollment Management, Ruffalo Noel Levitz.**