

The Retention Risk Your Budget Models Don't See Coming

Three Regulatory Channels. One Convergence Point.

Three independent accountability pressures are arriving at the same institutional moment — and they all run through your online programs' ability to retain and graduate students.

- **Earnings Premium.** STATS Earnings Accountability creates a program-level federal earnings metric tied to Title IV eligibility. Programs whose graduates don't hit the threshold get flagged. Students who withdraw before graduating don't count as completers — but they still weigh on the measures around it.
- **50% Administrative-Capability Standard.** At least half of an institution's Title IV recipients and Title IV dollars must sit in programs not classified as low-earning, so a single program's earnings outcomes can put the whole institution's standing at risk. Not new — but widely underweighted in institutional planning.
- **Accreditation Overhaul.** Accreditors are independently shifting toward outcomes-based review. Completion rates, retention rates, and time-to-degree are now the primary evidence set reviewers examine — and they want the operational trail behind the numbers.

The convergence date for active institutional risk: July 1, 2026.

18–20%

of all identified online dropout factors trace to technology access issues — consistently a top-five category across 110 peer-reviewed studies (Rahmani et al., International Journal of Educational Technology in Higher Education, 2024)

The Hidden Cost of Silent Withdrawal

The student who quietly stops logging in doesn't raise their hand. They miss assignments, disappear from the LMS, and withdraw before anyone intervenes. By the time that pattern is visible in your retention data, the student is already gone.

What that student costs is not just tuition revenue. It is the R2T4 return calculation on their financial aid, the advisor time spent on retrospective documentation, the accreditation exposure from a completion rate that moved the wrong direction, and the program-level earnings metric that now reflects one fewer graduate.

What TechReady Does — and What It Produces

TechReady is a browser-based readiness scan deployed at student sign-on. No software installed on student devices. No PII collected or stored. The scan tests each student's device against your institution's own documented technical requirements — not a vendor benchmark — and produces a dated, student-level record of technical readiness at the moment of enrollment.

Across 19 partner institutions and 131,418 scans over 8.5 years, 47,445 students — 36% of the lifetime dataset — presented with two or more fixable technical issues at sign-on. That is the population the scan surfaces, before the first course session, before the first missed assignment, before the intervention window closes.

"For the first time, your program — not just your school — has a federal number attached to it. The student who withdraws is invisible to that number. They are visible to almost everything else."

The Executive Case in Four Sentences

Technology barriers are among the preventable factors most often cited in online-dropout research — and they are the most preventable category, because the problem is fixable before the semester starts. TechReady surfaces that population before day one, with a dated record the institution owns. The resulting audit trail is what an accreditor, a regulator, or a board member can look at and confirm: this institution had a documented intervention protocol in place before the cohort started. That is the difference between a retention strategy and a retention record.

"As we grew CBD College from 600 to more than 1,550 students, protecting retention was non-negotiable, and that meant removing the avoidable friction that costs students before they ever really start. We folded TechReady into every cohort intake and tied it to our student records, so a fixable device problem got solved on day zero instead of discovered in week one. It's one of the operational pieces behind keeping our retention above our accreditors' thresholds while we scaled."

— **Randall Sansom, Chief Business Strategy Officer, CBD College**

Three Institutional Value Streams

TechReady speaks to three distinct institutional priorities simultaneously. For IT leadership, it is a ticket-mitigation tool — the scan catches the fixable device problem before it becomes a help desk call, deflecting first-week volume at the moment it is most costly. For online learning and student success leadership, it is a retention resource — the earliest documented intervention in the student lifecycle, before behavioral data exists, before any early-alert platform has a signal to act on. For enrollment leadership, it is a differentiator — an institution that tells a prospective adult learner "run this scan and we will make sure your device is ready before your first class" is doing something no competitor is doing. Three buyers, three budget lines, one scan.

How TechReady Sits Alongside Navigate, Starfish, and Early-Alert Platforms

Every early-alert and retention platform on the market is behavioral and lagging — EAB Navigate, Starfish, Civitas Learning, and their peers mine LMS engagement, grades, and persistence data. All require the student to already be active in the system. A student who cannot get their browser or webcam working before day one has generated no behavioral data; none of these platforms can see that student. TechReady runs at sign-on, before the student has generated any behavioral data. It is the step in front of your retention platform — not a replacement for it, and not a competitor to it. For roughly one-tenth the annual cost of an early-alert platform, TechReady addresses the moment your early-alert platform cannot see, and feeds the pre-behavioral signal directly into your existing stack via an included API integration.

30-Day Readiness Audit — No Cost

We can run a 500-scan operational-readiness audit on one incoming cohort at no cost. The output is your institutional data — what your students are arriving with, what the at-risk profile looks like, and what the closed-loop evidence record looks like for accreditation and regulatory purposes.

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