

Adult Learners Meeting Summary

September 17, 2015

1. What are the benefits of engaging adults in post-secondary education?

- Raises tax base
- Increases quality of life
- Role models for the household and children
- Educated adults leads to educated children and children more likely to attend college
- Decreases need for social services
- Better the community
- Leads to more business and good for the economy
- Increases graduation rates
- Adult learners provide life experiences to the classroom which adds to discussion beyond the knowledge of traditional students thus adding to the educational experience for all students
- Improves work ethic of all students due to the more noticeable work ethic of the adult learners

2. How can we effectively explain to adults the need for post-secondary education?

- Stress the importance of how it can improve their quality of life and their families quality of life
- Explain how it benefits the whole community
- Appeal to the emotional side of the adult learner – example: make a better life for your children and set the example for your children
- Create a process and the right path to help adult learners choose where they want to go
- Organize the information in a way to help the adult learner choose the right fit for them
- Show them the path by removing barriers – find out where they are now and where they want to be to better themselves
- Sell the benefit of short term education experience for the gain of long term work experience – making a career
- Make classrooms more adult centered to add to their educational experience
- Give real world applications
- Higher paying jobs and opens door for more employment opportunities
- Employers role: explain the need for degreed employees, build relationships between employers and students, introduce students to employers, make students aware of job openings and the skills needed
- Employers need to commit to incentives to employees that seek education
- Shared benefits - improves likelihood of their children going to college, salaries, benefits, advancement at work
- May have to relocate to get the better job opportunities. Some adults do not want to leave their communities and drive 30 to 40 miles for better paying jobs.

3. What are the particular challenges related to enrolling adults (in contrast to students coming directly from high school)?

- Need for shorter courses and fast tracking
- Shorten the length of time of the remediation requirement course
- Financial – traditional students have more options than non-traditional students; provide budgeting and planning help
- Academic Challenge Scholarship – carve more money out for these students
- Communication – adult learners sometimes do not know the questions to ask, help them speak our language and show them how to navigate through our policies and procedures, help them articulate what they are looking for
- Need for adult learner support system - some students believe they cannot be successful and self-sabotage
- Get them on the campuses – meet faculty, tour campus, make them feel they can be successful
- Part-time students are limited to programs they can participate in because they are designed for full-time students
- Use faculty as advisors
- Limited classroom space for the increase in students and funding to institutions for this space
- Provide books in the library for those who cannot afford books, open resources, leadership programs
- Difficulty getting transcripts from other institutions because of debt owed - help provide partial waivers, deferments, etc. Old debt to an institution can prevent re-enrollment and default on student loans can prevent students from being eligible for financial aid.
- Awareness – finding the right program for the adult learner
- Balancing family and college
- Childcare needs
- Transportation-very few institutions have public transportation
- Location-adults have places to be and obligations - home, work, etc. - they do not have time for another place
- Employment - trouble juggling work and school especially with jobs that change the work schedule
- Institutions would like a way to receive credit/recognition for providing short term no-degree training that benefits the economy, community, etc.

4. Are our colleges and universities welcoming to adult students? In what ways are they or are they not?

- Marketing is targeted to the traditional students (18-22 year olds) not the adult learners - young people in advertisements, etc.
- Take a look at the financial structure – online students paying on campus fees, athletic fees, etc.
- Need for student support - support services are not open at night which prevents some students access
- Need for childcare – full-time and part-time, nights, drop-off availability, affordable
- Difficulty with technology issues – no internet access in their homes, online classes and assignments, blackboard, etc.
- Need for better balance between tech savvy and non-tech savvy students
- Some prefer the traditional classroom experience
- Difficulty in obtaining immunization records – a stumbling block for adult learners
- Demographics – look at where students are coming from
- Career Pathways Initiatives helpful
- Not enough varying services such as a homework center for the student’s children since the student is in class and can’t help his/her child
- Provide a central clearinghouse from beginning to end for adult learners, i.e. I live in this county, I want to do this and these are the programs that are available to me
- Adult Education Program availability – College and Career Access Program (CCAP) free program with class instruction preparing those who need to improve their compass scores. The mission of the program is to engage them, educate them and empower them.
- Also need to remember the adult learners that are not above 24 years old such as returning veterans and parents of small children

5. If you were building a college or university specifically for adults, what would it look like?

- Flexibility in scheduling classes
- Shorter courses
- Saturday and Sunday classes
- Drop-in daycares, night care options, older child/disabled child care, elder care
- Waiver of Arkansas law regarding immunization records for adult learners
- Public transportation
- Sense of security
- Career counseling before enrollment to avoid taking classes without a clear path
- Free mental health counseling on campus
- Experiential learning credit – get some consistency
- Take away money barriers - even the playing field - all pay the same

- Statewide program – first 12 to 15 hours subsidized by state
- Strengthen career development
- Support services available when students are on campus
- Change of culture – example: the El Dorado Promise scholarship in the K12 system
- Mixture of on-line and on campus classes
- Provide one academic advisor on campus to build relationship and provide assistance to barriers to retention with the adult learner - most students are one flat tire away from dropping out
- Prior learning assessments system flexibility – transfer of credits (out of state, too old)
- Transcripts - something other than official transcripts accepted when not available due to old debt, etc.
- Modify/Model after the military program - SOCAD (Servicemembers Opportunity Colleges Associates Degrees) that allows a student to begin the first 15 hours at one school with a clear plan of what courses/hours are needed, the courses/hours can be attained elsewhere and transferred to the original school for the awarding of the degree as long as all requirements are met. This provides flexibility for adult learners who relocate.
- Reinvent placement
- No college algebra - replace with applied mathematics
- Structure course selections by simplifying the process of choosing courses with a detailed degree plan – what classes are needed and when they will be offered
- Online classes to correspond to campus classes if work schedules change – example: Walmart workers schedules, factory workers, etc. Some schools video, stream live and archive campus classes for adult learners to access at a later time
- Centralize the workforce – one place for employers and students to make a match – share resources, employers post jobs and job descriptions, posts on where to get certain skills, link employers to schools that can provide the workers - example: “workforcematch.com” for college
- Faculty members who make a difference
- Offer badge so employer can see that student did something - welding, Microsoft, etc.
- Prior learner experience transfer of prior learner hours
- Repeal any state laws that have become irrelevant
- More than one start date in order to provide all needed assessments prior to enrollment
- Have a handbook specifically for non-traditional students that removes items that are exclusively for the traditional students

6. How can we reach Goal 2?

- Mentors - businesses send volunteers to mentor learners on site
- Captive audience in K-12 parents – go into schools and talk to parents about balancing family and college and opportunities at our institutions and colleges