

Commission for Adult Learners Annual Report 2012-2013

The 2012-2013 year was a busy time for the Commission for Adult Learners as we attempted to move several major agenda items forward. The goal in implementing the Faculty Senate recommendations and moving the Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) cause forward were major initiatives of the Commission for the year.

The Commission, represented equally by representatives from the Campuses and University Park, worked to expand its charge thus affecting the vision for the Commission. The Commission voted to add the following:

“serve as a repository and facilitating body for all adult learner-focused initiatives University-wide.”

Our commission continued to monitor and implement recommendations from the *University Faculty Senate Advisory and Consultative Report, Recommendation for Enhancing the Educational Experience of Adult Learners*. While continuing our activities related to PLA, as per the report, the Adult Learner Advocacy Office created and filled the PLA Coordinator position in 2012 and the Adult Financial Literacy Coordinator position in 2013.

Results from the 2011 Faculty Survey regarding perceptions of adult learners were used as a basis for a pilot workshop with the School of Nursing and a faculty training module with the Schreyer Institute for Teaching Excellence. Also related to the results of the survey, a Quality Advocates Session entitled: *Here Comes Generation A* brought together over a hundred colleagues in the session presented by Martha Jordan, Pat Shope, Martha Aynardi, Karen Pollack, and Jane Owens.

The Commission voted to re-purpose and re-focus the former Incentive Grant Program toward targeted strategic initiative in alignment with the University’s Mission and Core Council Recommendations. Rather than seeking smaller grants that might affect a single campus, the Commission sought to look for a collaborative project that had the potential to improve educational opportunities at all the campuses of the University. The Commission chose to focus on a pilot PLA project with the campuses of the east (Worthington-Scranton, Wilkes Barre, Hazleton, Schuylkill, Berks, and Lehigh Valley) to look at credit by exam opportunities for students in the BSB and IST programs. At this point in time each group (by degree) have looked at coursework from their program to ascertain which courses they would recommend for consideration for PLA credit by exam. The next step is for the groups to consult with the larger discipline committees prior to writing exams and piloting them.

The Commission frequently had guest presenters at their monthly meetings. Topics included a presentation on the Philadelphia Education Opportunity Center, Graduate Philadelphia!, an analysis of adult learner financial aid and scholarships, Governmental Affairs and the Landscape of Higher Education Post Election, and a discussion of the charge for the new University PLA Task Force.

The Awards and Recognition committee chaired by Paula Pierce continued to work toward raising visibility for the Shirley Hendrick Award, which yielded higher caliber nominees. The group worked with some new collaboration tools and developed a selection rubric for evaluating nominees. This year's winner, Leslie Laing, presented at our annual conference in May. The committee also hosted a panel of select Annual Recognition recipients at the conference. The panel shared successful programs which can be replicated at other locations. In addition, a slideshow highlighted all winners during the annual luncheon portion of the conference.

The Hendrick Conference Planning Committee headed by Judy Wills worked the entire year in putting together this year's conference which was held for the first time at a campus location. The conference in Harrisburg was a success with over 190 registrants.

The PLA/Faculty Engagement Committee chaired by Pat Shope focused their efforts on spreading the word about PLA opportunities and looking for ways to implement those opportunities. Pat made numerous presentations to groups explaining PLA and the interaction of the national conversation related to MOOCs. The group is also looking at MOOCs and is considering how badges and competencies may best be part of a PLA strategy. The PLA group is also working on a self-led introduction to adult learners offered to faculty who teach online for the World Campus.

In summary, the Commission for Adult Learners continues to gain momentum in its advocacy and services related to the recruitment and retention of adult learners at Penn State University.

Respectfully submitted,



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