

Commission for Adult Learners Annual Report 2013-2014

The Commission for Adult Learners had another busy year this year. I believe we accomplished a great many initiatives and have laid the groundwork for some important work to occur next year.

One of our major accomplishments this year was the establishment of the Committee on Military Support Services. Chaired by Sueann Doran, this committee began to establish baseline data on issues of importance to our veteran population. The Committee created and distributed a survey to all Certifying Officials in the Penn State System. The survey content included questions about services and programs available to veterans and asked for suggestions on how to improve services. The data from this survey are available on our website and was shared with the Shirley Hendrick conference attendees. While Penn State prides itself on the services it provides to veterans, there is more than can be done from an institutional level to provide consistent services to veterans across all campuses. The kinds of enhancements the Certifying Officers suggested for the veterans include their own space, a veterans club, more focus on vets at the campus and a full-time veteran's representative.

This committee will be working with the university office conducting the student satisfaction survey since there will be questions specific to veterans on that survey which will further inform us about the needs of veterans. Next year that committee plans to look at ways we can standardize information and services across the university.

A second major accomplishment was the completion of the BSB credit by examination process which was started under Past President Dr. Gary Lawler's leadership. This work was completed by the Prior Learning Assessment Committee chaired by Dr. Pat Shope. Pat and her committee worked with faculty at several of the campuses to develop and refine an examination that can be used to assess prior learning for several BSB courses. This exam will be launched in the summer of 2014. Following on the success of this initiative, the committee engaged the IST faculty to develop a series of exams to assess prior learning in that domain. They plan to launch their first IST PLA exam in the fall of 2014.

The PLA task force continues to work tirelessly in finding ways we can provide appropriate access for adult learners based on their prior learning. Other activities that the PLA Committee has engaged in this year have included a review of military credits, participation on the development of an on-line course on approaches for teaching adult learners and development of a series of webinars on PLA. Their work is important to our competitive future at Penn State.

Our Awards and Recognitions Committee, led by Paula Pierce, has worked to develop new approaches to expand our recognition of best practices in adult learning both during the year and at the Shirley Hendrick Conference. Each year, the Commission selects one Shirley Hendrick Award Recipient. This year, it was Dr. Ann Williams, Chancellor at Penn State Lehigh Valley, who has been a long-time supporter of adult learners providing educational opportunities to adult learners in accessible and affordable formats. In order to recognize a greater number of people who are creating wonderful initiatives for adult learners at Penn State, the Awards and Recognition Committee solicited nominations for the Commission for Adult Learner Annual

Recognitions. The purpose of the Annual Recognitions is to acknowledge successful efforts and to encourage replication of effective strategies. Leaders of recognized projects, practices or singular successes for adult learners were highlighted at the Hendrick Best Practices Conference in May and may be included on the Commission's website repository for adult-focused initiatives University-wide. One of the Commission's goals for this year has been to share best practices related to adult learners with the Penn State community and these awards have helped us to shine a light on innovative ideas related to adult learners.

We had a very successful Shirley Hendrick Conference on May 15th on the University Park campus. Our Shirley Hendrick Conference Planning Committee is co-chaired by Judy Wills and Apryl Kadish. They do an incredible job each year of innovating in this conference and giving us the best possible experience focused on adult learners. Last year, for the first time, the Planning Committee offered a first timer session which was very well received by the attendees. That was successfully repeated this year. Our keynote speaker for this conference was Dr. Roxanne Gonzales, President of Granite State College in New Hampshire. Our conference continues to grow each year in both size and the quality of the programing.

As a Commission, keeping the relevant administrative decision makers informed of the importance of the adult learner population is critical. The data about adult learned will tell the story of the importance of this population to our university. To provide regular updates to the President's Council, we developed a one page fact sheet on adult learner population at Penn State. This document will be distributed quarterly providing the relevant facts and figures about the adult learner keeping information about this population current.

In summary, this has been an incredibly productive year. We have addressed all of our goals that we set out at the beginning of the year and took on a few more over the course of this year. Our adult learner population is growing... in 2012 representing only 15% of all Penn State students but now representing almost 20% of all enrollments. As the population of our resident instruction programs change and as we move to increasing our World Campus enrollments to 45,000, the number of adult learners is sure to increase, making the work of the Commission for Adult Learners even more important as we look to the future.

Respectfully submitted,



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