



## Adult Learners

October 2003

### Purpose

This survey focused on adult learners newly enrolled at 20 Penn State locations in order to learn more about their decision to attend, their educational objectives and their satisfaction since enrolling.

### Implications/Highlights

Employment considerations motivated many of the newly enrolled adult learners to seek higher education. Most were in quest of a baccalaureate or associate degree. Their decision to attend a Penn State campus was influenced by the programs offered, location, and the University reputation. A majority applied only to PSU.

### Participation Rate

This survey was conducted online.

Overall N = 451    University Park N = 73 (30%)  
 Other PSU Locations N = 378 (27%)

### Findings

The educational goal of most adult learners was a baccalaureate or associate degree.

**Educational Objective**

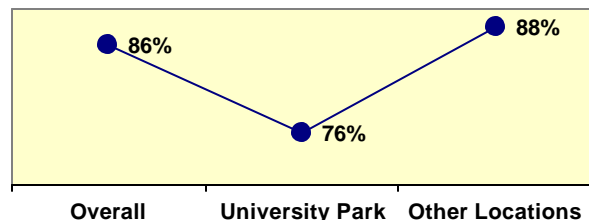


Figure 1. Most newly enrolled adult learners were seeking to earn baccalaureate or associate degrees

**Other Educational Objectives Cited**

	Overall	University Park	Other Locations
Penn State certificate	5%	15%	3%
take courses and then transfer elsewhere	4%	< 1%	5%
take courses for enjoyment	-	-	-
take courses for job skill development	2%	4%	1%
take courses before deciding on program	2%	4%	2%

\*Statistically significant at the .05 level

Adult learners shared the reasons that motivated them to seek higher education or resume their college studies.

Individuals stated that they were motivated by:

- always regretted not continuing my education
- financial assistance provided
- constantly changing job market
- self esteem
- fulfill dream
- looking to be challenged
- enjoy learning
- being a role model for family

Students indicated that multiple personal and employment factors motivated them to enroll in college.

**Motivating Reasons Part A**

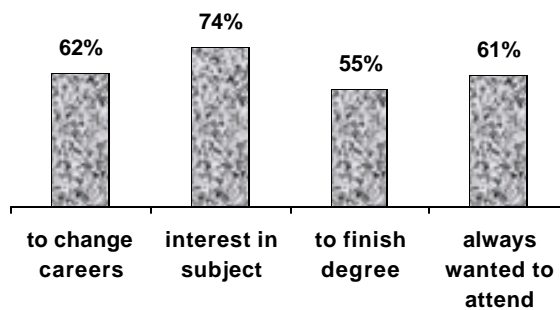


Figure 2. Reasons which motivated adult learners to enroll

**Motivating Reasons Part B**

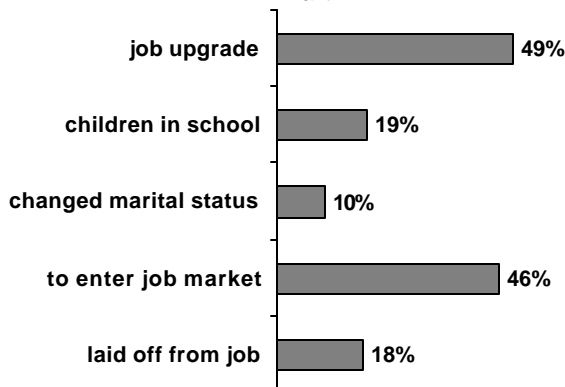


Figure 3. Other reasons which motivated adult learners to enroll in college

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U.Ed. STA 04-129



Division of Student Affairs

Adult learners were asked about their decision to attend Penn State.

Most cited location, programs offered, and Penn State reputation. Others noted campus atmosphere, chance to use previous PSU credits, affordability, and the option of attending classes evenings or weekends.

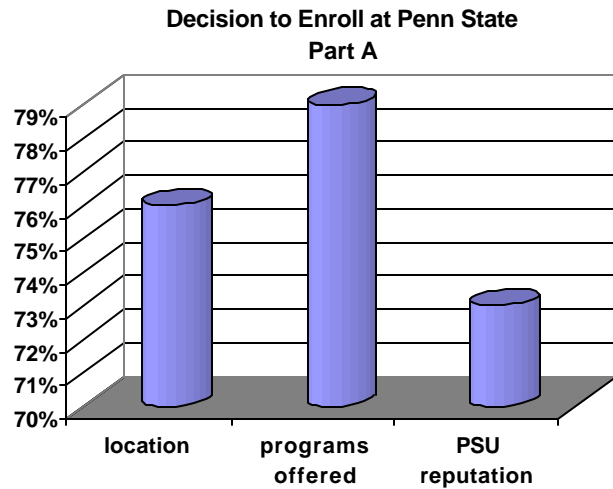


Figure 4. Students cited location, programs offered and PSU reputation as reasons to enroll at Penn State

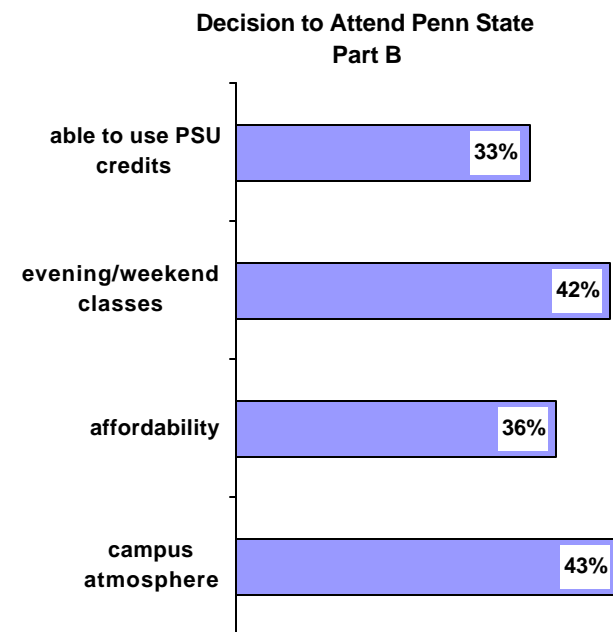


Figure 5. Other factors that influenced decision to attend Penn State

Other explanations given by individual respondents included:

- 10% chance to start with a new GPA
- 13% option to take classes online
- 13% able to take classes before declaring a major
- 36% attaining specific certificate or degree
- 28% special encouragement from family or friends

Respondents were asked what information sources they had used when making their decision about which college to attend.

43%	met with campus staff person
41%	information from Web site
26%	telephone inquiry
20%	tour of campus
16%	email inquiry

Other sources of information noted by individuals included:

- their employer
- ad in local newspaper
- family member PSU grad
- office of vocational rehab
- professionals in area of career interest
- information packet
- transfer program handout
- job fair
- co-workers
- current students

A majority of respondents applied only to Penn State.

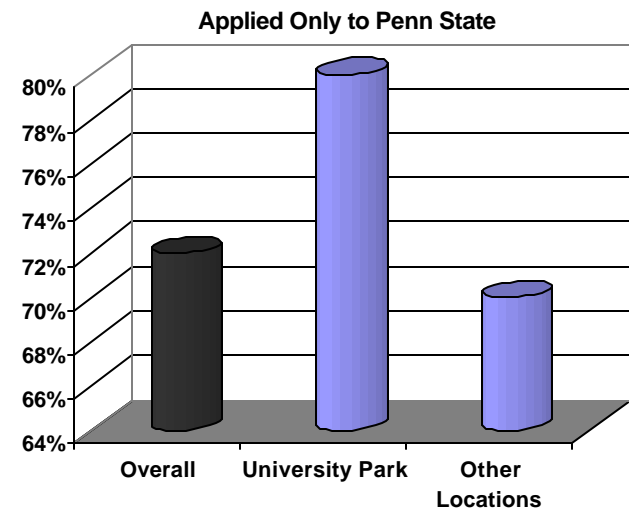


Figure 6. A majority of students applied only to Penn State

Adult learners enrolled at PSU locations other than University Park were more likely to have applied to colleges in addition to Penn State.

# other colleges	Overall	University Park	Other Locations
none	72%	80%	70%
one	18%	13%	18%
two	6%	3%	7%
three	2%	3%	2%
four	1%	1%	1%
five or more	<1%	-	<1%

\*Statistically significant at the .05 level.

Those who did apply to other colleges were asked what factors influenced their decision to consider non-PSU programs.

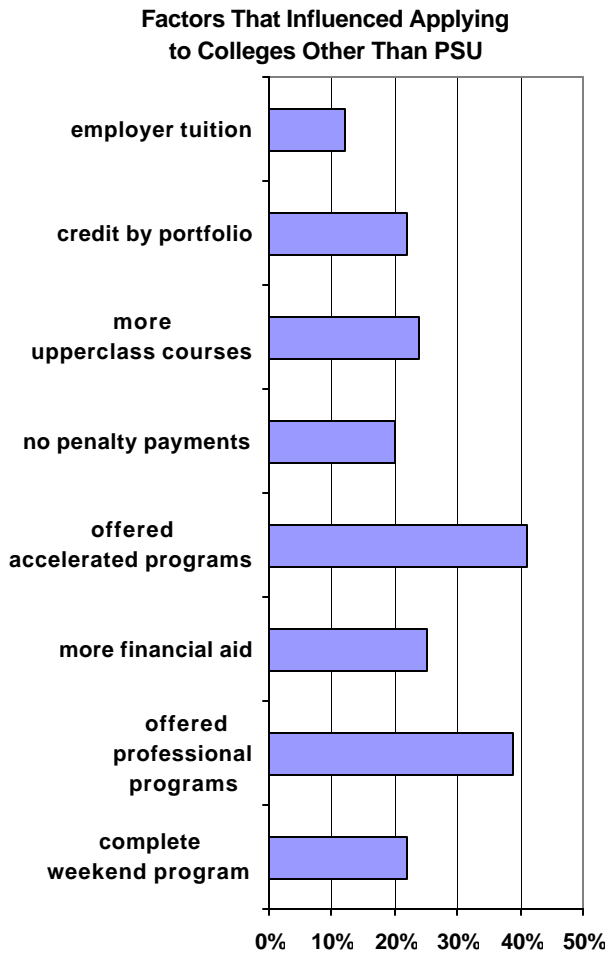


Figure 7. Factors that influenced adult learners to apply to colleges other than Penn State

Other factors cited by individuals included: diversity of student body, lower costs, more courses offered online, and credit evaluations completed more quickly

A majority were satisfied with their Penn State experience.

**Overall Satisfaction**

	Overall	University Park	Other Locations
access to financial aid	64%	56%	66%
class registration process	65%	58%	66%
classes that fit their schedule	56%	51%	57%
ability to access academic advising	64%	67%	64%
helpfulness of academic advising	63%	59%	64%
spaces available in classes desired	59%	46%	61%
ease of accessing eLion	74%	69%	74%

Nearly three-fourths (73%) of respondents said that they had applied for financial aid from Penn State. Of those who had applied, most did so at the same time they submitted their admissions application.

**When Applied for Financial Aid**

- 41% applied at same time sent in admissions material
- 26% applied after being notified of acceptance
- 18% applied after submitting admissions material
- 15% applied before submitting admissions material

All respondents were asked how they were currently financing their college education.

**Sources of Financing Education**

student loans	68%	family assistance	12%
current income	44%	Non-PSU employee benefits	11%
scholarships	43%	Veterans' benefits	11%
personal savings	24%	PSU employee benefits	8%

**Non-Degree Respondents**

Those who identified themselves as non-degree (N = 28) were asked a series of additional questions. Most had submitted their non-degree forms a month or more before classes began.

The non-degree respondents were asked the extent to which specific factors might impact their decision to remain enrolled at Penn State.

**Factors Influencing Decision to Remain Enrolled for Non-Degree Respondents**

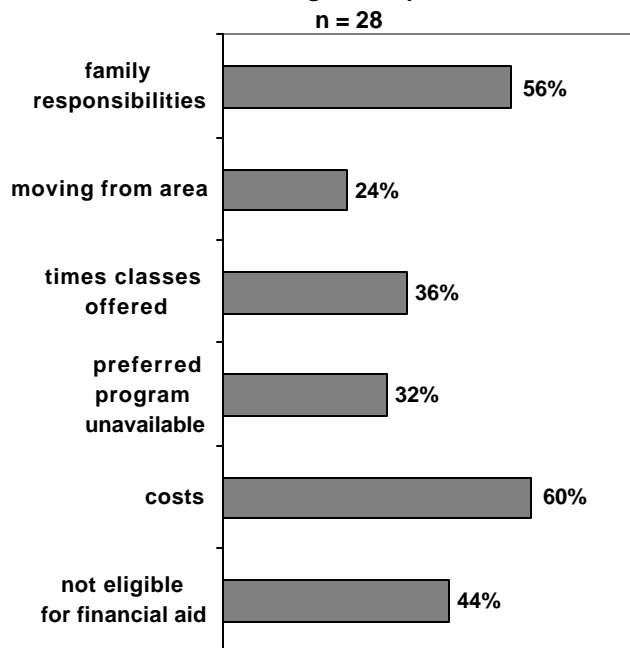


Figure 8. Non-degree students indicated specific factors that might influence their decision to remain enrolled

\*Statistically significant at the .05 level.