

Academic & Student Affairs

Collaborations for Adult Success



PennState

Hendrick Best Practices for
Adult Learners Conference

May 9, 2018

Session Overview

- Research – Barriers to Adult Learner Success
- Best Practices
- PSU Scranton – Examples
- Assessment (plans)
- Future Plans
- Questions



Partnership Model

- **Student success takes in account**
 - Academic performance, relationships, identify development, health & wellness, cultural awareness, social responsibility, and more
- **No single department can foster student success in ALL these areas**
- **Thus, student success is only achievable through:**
 - Developing strategic, intentional, cross unit partnerships
 - These partnerships – in turn – create a campus environment conducive to holistic student success
- **To be effective, the model must operate from a foundation of shared institutional unselfishness**



Campus Culture/Needs Assessment

- *Adult Learners:* Sandy F & Matt N
- *Disability Issues:* Eileen G & Jill T
- *First Generation:* Terri C & Michele N
- *Interfaith:* Karin M. & Allison B
- *International Students:* Martin L & Julie B
- *LGBTQIA:* Mike E & Doug S
- *Socioeconomic:* Stacy S & Emily G
- *Military Families & Veterans:* Jon T & Fred A
- *Race & Ethnic Diversity:* Julie G & Renae M
- *Women:* Caressa O & Meg H



Adult Learners

These characteristics include

- entry to college delayed by at least one year following high school,
- having dependents,
- being a single parent,
- being employed full time,
- being financially independent,
- attending part time, and
- not having a high school diploma.
- What else...

• (Osam, et al., 2017)



Adults are assumed to...

- prefer self-direction in learning,
 - bring a vast reservoir of experience that should be considered in planning learning experience,
 - exhibit a readiness to learn that is based on a need to know something or do something,
 - exhibit an orientation to learning that is task- or problem-centered rather than subject-centered, and
 - exhibit a relatively high degree of internal motivation.
- (Osam, et al., 2017)



Situational Barriers

- **Finances, family life, health, work conflict, and transportation**
 - (Flynn, Brown, Johnson, & Rodger, 2011; Goto & Martin, 2009; Hostetler, Sweet, & Moen, 2007)
- **Received the most attention are family life and finances**
 - (Deutsch & Schmertz, 2011; Elman & O’Rand, 2007; Hostetler et al., 2007)
- **Male and female participants reported that being engaged in several roles at home served as barriers to re-entry.** (Genco, 2007)
 - In many households, women tend to assume many responsibilities, including paying bills and providing care to children (Home & Hinds, 2000)
- **May be a heavier factor hindering women’s return to college**
 - (Deutsch & Schmertz, 2011; Home & Hinds, 2000)

Financial Barriers

- **The most glaring constraints to returning to college is the availability of financial resources**
 - (Deutsch & Schmertz, 2011; Goto & Martin, 2009)
- **Financial barriers to college return impacts females more than males**
 - (Home & Hinds, 2000).

The greater financial impact is explained via the conflicting demand of the multiple roles women play.



Institutional Barriers

***Policies and procedures* within universities that prevent adult learners from participating in educational based activities, as well as affect degree completion among adult learners** (Bergman et al., 2014)

Policies & Procedures such as:

- **Availability of faculty**
- **Lack of night/weekend/online courses**
- **Difficulty in dealing with admissions and advising staff**
 - (Hardin, 2008; Kasworm, 2010)



Dispositional Barriers

- **Person-specific characteristics including fear of failure, attitude toward intellectual activity, as well as perceptions about ability to succeed**
 - Need to be resolved by the individual alone (Ekstrom, 1972; Cross, 1981)
- **Often done through sheer determination and self-reliance**
 - (Goto & Martin, 2009; Kasworm, 2010)
- **Returning to school as an adult learner can be a daunting prospect. The longer an adult learner waits to go to college, the more challenging the adaptation**
 - (Crozier & Garbert-Jones, 1996).



Situational Barriers

Study	Design	Findings on barriers
Shepherd and Nelson (2012)	Qualitative	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Childcare 2. Work responsibilities 3. Marriage 4. Commute
Flynn, Brown, Johnson, and Rodger (2011)	Qualitative	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Family concerns 2. Frequent moves 3. Financial
Deutsch and Schmertz (2011)	Qualitative	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Childcare 2. Family responsibilities 3. Financial
Genco (2007)	Qualitative	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Multiple roles (family, work) 2. Time demand
Goto and Martin (2009)	Quantitative	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Financial 2. Transportation 3. Work conflicts 4. Childcare 5. Health problems
Saar, Täht, and Roosalu (2014)	Quantitative	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Financial 2. Transportation
Hostetler, Sweet, and Moen (2007)	Quantitative	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Childcare and work responsibilities^a



Study	Design	Findings on barriers
Goto and Martin (2009)	Qualitative	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Difficulty navigating the educational system 2. Lack of clear institutional pathways
Kasworm (2010)	Qualitative	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Admissions and advisement staff directed primarily toward younger students 2. Policies, procedures, websites 3. Curricular scheduling 4. Having to locate one's own resources for remediation/to get up to speed with college work
Genco (2007)	Qualitative	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Course scheduling conflicts 2. Limited course offerings 3. Problems with college resources, e.g., financial aid and enrollment services
Saar, Täht, and Roosalu (2014)	Quantitative	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Inconvenient class schedules



Study	Design	Findings on barriers
Shepherd and Nelson (2012)	Qualitative	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Lack of confidence due to perceived faculty perception about adult learners' low academic skills 2. Insecurities about ability to succeed in college
Goto and Martin (2009)	Qualitative	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Anxiety/fear of the unknown about returning to school 2. Low self-efficacy stemming from anxiety, low performance from previous schools, and low self-esteem
Flynn, Brown, Johnson, and Rodger (2011)	Qualitative	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Perceived differences between adults and other students 2. Feelings of exclusion from school environment
Kasworm (2010)	Qualitative	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Adult learners' perceived lack of acceptance into the research culture of colleges 2. Low self-esteem
Genco (2007)	Qualitative	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Feeling out of place 2. Anxiety about succeeding academically



Recommendations from literature

- **Encourage faculty relationships** (Shepherd & Nelson, 2012).
- **Encourage adult learners to serve on committees to increase their sense of belonging** (Fairchild, 2003).
- **Offer programs specifically tailored to adult learners to assist them in dealing with the stress associated with navigating their return to school** (Compton et al., 2006)
- **Provide opportunities for adult learners to interact one-on-one with faculty and staff by using technology to build academic support connections** (Carney-Crompton & Tan, 2002; Osam, et al., 2017)



Best Practices Pre-Matriculation

- Strategic, coordinated outreach throughout the admissions and pre-matriculation process
- Dedicated admissions or advising counselors to navigate the Prior Learning Assessment and transfer credit process
- Transparency in admissions and PLA/transfer process
- Dedicated sessions at New Student orientation, or
- dedicated NSO session, led by adult student peers from planning through assessment



Best Practices Post-Matriculation

- Create an “adult learner receptive” culture on campus through a partnership model between cross-campus units
- Enhance social integration through adult peer networking beginning at NSO and continuing through graduation (“adult ambassadors”)
- Strategic, proactive, dedicated academic advising that takes into account unique challenges of being an adult learner
- If an adult learner adviser is not possible or workable, EACH academic adviser should be provided with training & resources for assisting adult learners



PSU Scranton Campus Action

- Task Force
- Recommendations
- Focus Groups

Changes – Fall 2018

- Babysitting (not childcare)
- Adult Peer Mentors (guidance & advocacy)
- Departmental Unified Hour Adjustments
- Targeted Transition Workshops (online & in person)
- Professional Development Workshops (on campus)
- Adult Learner Programs (led/chosen by them)
- What else? – *Program Level Conversations*



Assessment — *see ya next year!*

- Assess strategic partnerships across units
- Revamp organizational structure to fill gaps (and allow for future change)
- Develop a baseline of data collection
- Compare data from 17-18 with 18-19 as 1 form of assessment

Future Plans



Questions?

