

Engaging Adult Learners: Gaps and Opportunities for Engaging Adults in Co-Curricular Experiences



Agenda

- Learning Outcomes
- Define engagement
- Importance
- High impact engagement experiences
- Current engagement
- Study Abroad
 - Honors College
 - Student Engagement Network
 - University Wide Student Engagement Survey
- Campus Profiles
 - Mont Alto
 - World Campus
- Challenges in collecting data
- Best practices in creating pathways
- Questions



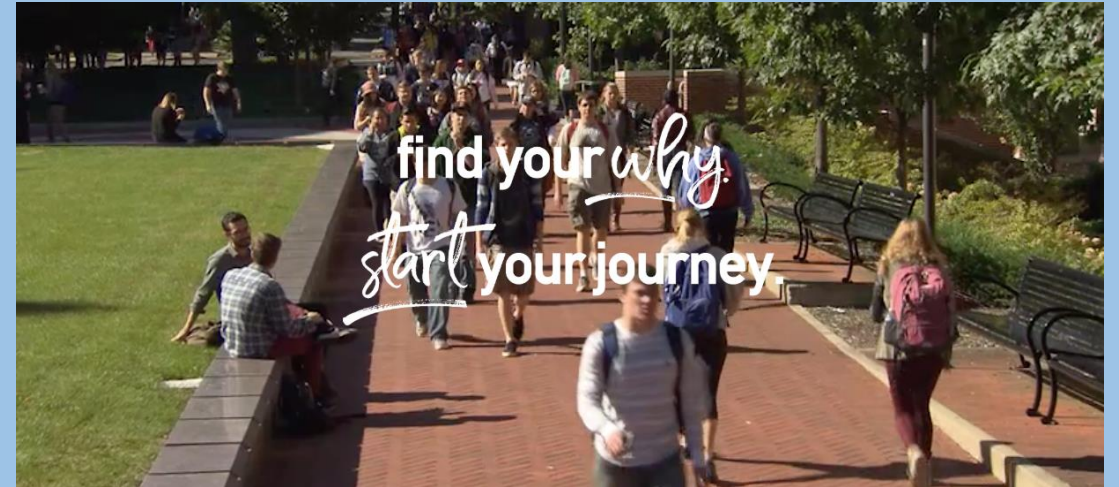
Learning Outcomes

- Participants can expect to learn how the university defines student engagement and the "high impact" engagement opportunities that exist for students.
- Participants will learn how adult learners are currently engaging in some of the premier student engagement opportunities.
- Participants will learn the power and importance of student engagement in retaining students (particularly adults).
- Participants will learn the gaps that exist in collecting data about adult student engagement.
- Participants will learn best practices in creating pathways to usher adult learners into student engagement.



Defining Engagement

- “At Penn State, engagement includes student activities and both curricular and co-curricular activities. Student engagement contributes to intellectual, personal, and social development, and fosters integration into University life, adding distinction and value to undergraduate experiences. Furthermore, student engagement leads to the success of students as citizens and leaders—locally, nationally, and globally.”



Why is Adult Learner Engagement Important?

"As a distance learner, being able to participate in a student organization, like World Campus Sustainability Club, helped me feel more connected to the university and my peers. I was able to interact with other students outside of the classroom and form lasting bonds that we will carry with us past the completion of our degree programs." - Alicia Peck, ESPBS student, World Campus Sustainability Club President

- “The findings from 20 years of research on undergraduate education have been unequivocal: The more actively engaged students are — with college faculty and staff, with other students, and with the subject matter they study — the more likely they are to learn, to stick with their studies, and to attain their academic goals.” (McClenney, Marti, and Adkins, 2006)
- "Engagement can be particularly important for those who start college with two or more “risk” factors, such as being academically underprepared, first in the family to go to college, or from low-income backgrounds" (Kuh, 2008a)

Why is Adult Learner Engagement Important?

Personal reasons for engagement:

- Involvement
- Inclusion
- Application of classroom knowledge
- Classroom engagement/interest

Success reasons for engagement:

- Networking
- Resume builder



The screenshot shows a Penn State website page for the Energy and Sustainability Policy Program Office. The article, titled "Students in Action," features a photo of Sean Gray, an ESP student, sitting in front of a banner for "The Climate Reality Project." The banner includes a globe and the project's logo. The text describes Gray's participation in a leadership training program in Atlanta, Georgia, and highlights the skills he gained, such as networking and public speaking, which led to the formation of a local climate reality chapter in southwest Florida. The article also includes a credit to Sean Gray and a link to the Climate Reality Project website for more information.



High Impact Student Engagement Opportunities

- Study Abroad
- Study Away
- Undergraduate Research
- Honors College Engagement
- Internships
- Alternative Breaks
- Student Leadership Programs
- Political Advocacy



How Students Are Currently Engaging

Study Abroad (2017/2018 data)

- 2,789 total study abroad students
- 59 (2.1%) adult learners studied abroad
- 48 of 59 adults participated in embedded programs abroad



How Students Are Currently Engaging

Schreyer Honors College

- 20 identified
 - 10 at UP, 10 across the commonwealth
- 6 received grants (travel, research, internship)
- 4 received awards (Smart Award, Smith family Trustee, Louis Balmer)
- Involvement:
 - Fraternity
 - Astronomy Club
 - Health Science Club
 - Minority Association



How Students Are Currently Engaging

- Student Engagement Network Experiences
 - Undergraduate research
 - Study abroad/away
 - Community-based learning
 - Creative accomplishments
 - Volunteerism
- 1,143 total proposals
- 297 students received funding of proposals
- \$400,000 total awarded in grant money, \$1,330 average award



How Students Are Currently Engaging

- Student Experience Survey
 - Penn State Student Affairs Research and Assessment
- Data from 2017, repeated every 3 years
- Does not include World Campus students
- Adult defined as:
 - 24 or older
 - Active/retired military
 - Dependents
- Adult N = 713



How Students Are Currently Engaging

- Student Experience Survey

Sense of Belonging

Sense	Non-Adult	Adult
Belong at Penn State	83.4%	78.3%
Felt welcome on campus	86.4%	85.4%
Others like them on campus	78.6%	72.1%



How Students Are Currently Engaging

- Student Experience Survey

Campus Experience

Experiences	Non-Adult	Adult
Hands-on in their field	59.4%	64.5%
Club or organization	88%	63.5%
PSU-Sponsored internship	14%	17.1%

How Students Are Currently Engaging

- Student Experience Survey

Work, Volunteering, and Relationships with Faculty

Experience	Non-Adult	Adult
Work for pay off campus (hours)	39.7% (21 hours)	63% (29 hours)
Volunteering/community service	43.3%	37%
Know four or more faculty they could ask for recommendation	21.5%	31.7%

Campus Profiles

- Mont Alto: 863 Students, 17% Adult Learners
- ASB Montreal 2019
- Veterans Center
 - Converted Spring House 2014
 - Recreational and Work Space
 - Serving 33 Veterans (FA18)



Campus Profiles

World Campus Student Advisory Board
World Campus Student Leadership
Conference
World Campus Student Government
Association



PennState

Hendrick Best Practices for
Adult Learners Conference

May 8, 2019

Challenges

Inconsistent use of existing adult learner definition

Inconsistent tracking of adult learner engagement

Multiple “stakeholders” identifying adult learners

- Admissions
- Self Identification
- Advocates/ Advisor

Visibility of adult learners



Best Practices in Creating Pathways

Increase Communication & Marketing

- Create Listservs

- Regular engagement in Canvas

- Timelines for engagement

Collecting stories and highlighting student successful engagement journey

