



Commission for **Adult Learners**

December 19, 2018
10:30 a.m.-12:00 p.m.
404 Old Main
Agenda with Zoom videoconferencing available*
Minutes

Attendees: L. Wright, A. Adams, A. Adolph, J. Campbell, G. Chinn, , J. Edmondson, W. Fritz, D. Gruendler, D. Hochstetler, L. Laing, A. Maxson, E. McFeely, H. McGarry, B. Redmond, M. Rice, D. Rodgers, H. Sankey, B. Seymour, E. Shumac, D. Smith, T. Spevak, P. Staskiel, R. Thornton-Roop, K. Wolgast, J. Wills, C. Anderson

Guests/Sponsors: President E. Barron, R. Engel, R. Pangborn, D. Sims, M. Whitehurst

Unable to attend:, M. Corby, M. Hanes, R. Hart, C. Horner

Conversation with President Barron

Topic: One Penn State 2025. Overview. Discussed 1,2, and 3 need to be nimble. 4, your university for life.

This helps from any situation, if you are residential or veteran. Have more time to spend on education

Questions:

How do you see lifelong learning fitting needs of adult learners? Portal and interest in One Stop shop. Need to be aware of transaction time involved. Sends signal that we are all about the building blocks of career. Build and go at own pace—level of coherence makes difference.

Noted that good to hear that considering someone starting later and not coming back again after going traditional path. If made easy and there is coherence; and were conscious of types of needs employers care about and can build on that—would it be a differentiator for an adult learner.

We want to enable AL to do what is next. This is important to show what comes next, especially to first generation.

Concerned about first generation in a mountain of debt and cannot see what comes next. What can we do now, within the first five years? Concerned that we will lose them for many, many years because they will be unable to pay.

Think of a cultural shift regarding how higher education is going to be viewed. Approach is ahead of the curve. We have delivery system that is far ahead.

The Board brought in outside agency to look at benchmarking—brand, stability, strong philanthropy, established cost controls, strong online environment.

CAL is looking at how we can help students persist. Updates from committee chairs:

Charting the Course Task Force—See report. Looking at what is advocacy. Ease of transaction is an important step, but really about substance behind it. How to help embark on the right path at outset—understand what that will look like. How advocacy would work for needs: flex pathways, how to understand career goals, transfer credits/costs and time to degree. Recently really good conversation with Col. McFeely about the needs of military students and how to get ahead of them.

Have not yet settled on who to benchmark against. Does not fit neatly into a box.

Response: first thing, level of education and how to make a path through and second thing connectivity to institution that allows us to be good mentors and good partners. Noted almost all open doors, students has spoken with have been spotted by someone and moved along in the process. Adult learners in danger of failing silently and slipping away without being noticed—could be huge challenge. Second part: Most coherent around the university takes it to another level while maintaining enthusiasm for the student. Helps with the entire spectrum. Spend time to design many aspects. (2 years or so...) third part: Tell People it is your long life University. Supports your notion and offering what people need and want. You build on the programs and making PSU phenomenally open. Can do more when you need to do more and ready to do a lot of the technology. Trying to reduce the cost, which helps the students. This is a way to have many students but enabling and giving access and it is an access and affordability game.

Questions/ Remarks:

Passions for long time learning. Many adult learners are older going to school and have other responsibilities.

Made it easier, different building blocks, and go at your own pace. The Coherence makes a difference.

PSU is a family and is going to be here forever which takes the time and helps someone rather than just another number.

Adult learners are trying to come into school to advance their career.

Making it easier to take a class from WC or come to class. Ease of service.

What comes next? We are here to help with a career.

Worried about the current generation. They are in so much debt, what is next for them in the next 5 years of trying to get out of debt?

They may have to wait and they might not come back because of the time that has past. Culture shift and becoming ahead of the curb. Choosing to be online education at 18 because of the expense. Many factors and we need to do some bench marketing. PSU has the brand, loyalty, familiarity, and strong Online. We are not just talking numbers we are talking family.

Adult Learners helping to assist and earn

How do we bench marking – we do not fit in a box.

Two major things the level education and how

Second mentors and partners for the University.

Not managing their time and was spotted.

Trying to be in support of our students we have the opportunity to be ahead of the curb.

How do we back up to the Higher Education as they are more informed. Adults set the range of the complexity.

Noted that so much thoughtfulness is involved in CAL's work and expressed appreciation of efforts.

Task Force: Mid-Year Reports.

21 Century Access: Have great foundation when it comes to providing students, especially WC and veterans. How to expand upon what those two entities are doing. Veterans peer resource available as touch points from point of application throughout. WC works with Inside Track to work throughout application process and then have coaching contact for student to connect with in whatever way students need.

EB response: Recalls being on student outings in some professional capacity, but all questions went to juniors or seniors. They want to hear from someone who has had the experience. Might be benefit if can do in large numbers without adding another layer of busyness.

The 21st Century Access Committee has been charged reviewing factors that impede persistence and retention among adult learners, with the goal of suggesting new practices to implement at the University. The committee has completed its initial review of common causes which hinder persistence and retention of the adult learner, and has offered preliminary recommendations to assist adult learners as they access a Penn State education and continue on the path to completion of a degree. Considerations include:

- Provision of an updated Adult Learner Handbook, including resources and frequently asked questions, should be created with the goal of making it available to adult learners upon acceptance to the University.
- Construction of a Canvas dashboard for the adult learners to share information and best practices, answer questions, and hold discussions.
- Implementation of a peer resource network for all adult learner applicants. Peer resources will answer questions, offer checklist of items to be completed, provide encouragement from a fellow adult learner. Students will be trained and given a script for guidance when making calls. This service will provided to applicants at all campuses.
- Offer coaching for prospective students and those that are matriculating, similar to that provided to World Campus students. Can be designed to help applicants by providing information/explanation and answering questions related to Penn State; will support matriculating students with navigation coaching as they progress through their studies.

The committee will continue to investigate ways to improve contact and interaction with adult students from the start of the application process through degree completion. The continued contact will support persistence and retention of the adult learners. The committee will present its final recommendations at the conclusion of the year.

Charting the Course Task Force: We have been charged with benchmarking current Penn State practices related to adult learners against programs offered at other colleges and Universities in order to ensure that Penn State offers robust support to this growing group of students. Preliminary results from benchmarking suggests that Penn State has a more defined structure and set of practices for this group of students than peers in the Big Ten. While other Big Ten schools may not have adult learners as a specific area for defined advocacy, they do often have well developed, intentional programs for supporting and providing advocacy for various sub-populations in general, especially as they attempt to advance strategic goals at their respective institution. The Task Force hopes to think about these models and consider whether they provide any insight for Penn State. Within the context of the Penn State 2025 vision, the ability to create an environment that supports learning across a broader life cycle for our students will be critical. Through benchmarking, consultation with organizations like the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL), and research in scholarly literature on adult learners, the Taskforce is attempting to create a framework for Penn State to consider as it ensures that it is best positioned to enhance the learning environment for adult students. Additionally, the Taskforce wants to ensure that any considerations for adult learner enhancement at Penn State also needs to include ongoing engagement with faculty and staff to develop effective strategies for reaching the goals of the initiative.

To best ensure that a learning environment conducive to the needs of adult learners continues to grow across Penn State, a structure to provide the following components will be necessary:

- Flexible curricular pathways that develop required competencies and maintain the integrity of degree programs
- Broad student support that meet the needs of adult learners to assess educational versus career goals and ensure that barriers are minimized along the way
- Ease of transferring credits and receiving meaningful credit for prior learning
- Transparency about cost and time to degree
- Programming that supports the transition from residential- to online-based learning opportunities as students move along the continuum of life-long learning
- Better integration adult learners in all aspects of the Penn State experience

The committee will present its final findings at the 2019 Hendrick Conference, and will recommend how Penn State can continue to provide effective advocacy for adult learners.

AA: engagement: unique circumstances adult learners and the opportunities. Building a resume and the experience and if education online and how to engage with an online

An awareness of earning and letter of recommendation by supervisor. More of the students would need to be advocacy thinking of the learning not having to ask and work a line.

LW: many funding and graduate research. Universal will make a difference.

So many details and thoughtfulness throughout the university. If the rubber doesn't hit the road it doesn't happen.

ALEC: Focused on synthesized on how adults engage in “premier” opportunities across Penn State and what pathways they take. Data received has been qualitative despite AL indicator. Not specifically tracked. Areas of focus: Student Engagement Network and Study Abroad. Obtained data, but needed to add back AL indicator. Recommend tracking at outset. Adult Learners are finding ways to engage, but may be working around processes not within them. Many adults studying abroad are utilizing embedded programs.

In spring will be looking at what can glean from new data surveys and will focus on how adults utilize career services. How adult learners are engaging in undergraduate research. For opportunities: make sure they are aware, make processes easy, and encourage participation.

EB response: We know that if there is engagement, is beneficial and important. For adult online learners, retention rate could be lower. Good to consider type of student that no one else is. Asked, if have opinion that if grants were available, how many adults go for it? Adams noted that encouragement is also big piece. Challenges forming deep enough relationships to ask for recommendations. Hope would be that everyone would think this way so that adult learners are at the table at the outset. EB-Do we have faculty thinking about reaching out to offer to make recommendations to students who are doing well. If engagement network is conscious could make huge difference.

Over the course of the semester, this committee has been focused on how adult learners engage across the university.

“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.”-From Student Engagement Network Website, 2018

Types of Student Engagement

- Undergraduate research
- Professional experiences
- Study abroad/study away
- Community-based learning
- Creative accomplishments
- Courses with out-of-class component
- Organizational experiences
- Peer mentoring
- Self-directed student engagement

- Volunteerism

This semester we have explored:

Adult Learners & the Student Engagement Network

“My SEN grant story starts with a “Thank You” to the Student Engagement Network for giving me the opportunity to attend a professional development conference by awarding me grant money. I honestly never thought that I would be awarded any grant money when I applied and the fact that I did gives me confidence to try for things that I assume are out of reach to an adult learner like myself.”

Adult Learners and Study Abroad:

59 students who were labeled as undergraduates and could be classified as Adult Learners studied abroad in the 2017-18 academic year (2.1% out of 2789 total Ed abroad students)

Broken out by term, by far the most utilized modality of education abroad were **Embedded** programs on which 48 of the 59 students studied (81%); 9 students studied on Semester-long programs (15%); and only 3 students (4%) were on free-standing summer programs.

Lessons Learned/ Advocacy Areas:

We have discovered that many data gathering instruments across the university do not delineate adult learners from other student populations. We encourage the inclusion of the adult learner indicator in data collection across the university.

Adult Learners are actively engaging in traditional engagement opportunities throughout the university; however, there is a need to more intentionally promote these opportunities to these students and raise awareness of existing pathways for their engagement.

The opportunities lie for stakeholders to be mindful of messaging and program requirements across programs to ensure that it is inclusive of adult learners

Spring 2019:

Meeting with Adam Christiansen- Director of Assessment in January to see what we can glean about adult learners from the New Student Survey and Change of Campus Student Survey

Explore how Adult Learners utilize career services

Explore how Adult Learners engage in undergraduate research

Items to be placed on the Commission and/or Executive Committee Meeting Agendas:

Potential Questions for Dr. Barron:

Under the Transforming Education section of the strategic plan, there is a subsection called, “Prepare our students for success in their careers and in life”, here there is a commitment to provide co-curricular opportunities and career preparation services. How do you envision adult students are served in these areas?

In your presentations of One Penn State 2025 we’ve heard you talk about “Life Long Learning” how do you see adult learners fitting into this theme?

Hendrick Committee:

Charge: To recognize exemplary contributions to the success of our adult learner population through the selection of the Shirley Hendrick Award and to plan the annual Hendrick Best Practices for Adult Learners conference, which showcases best practices from adult learner practitioners across the Penn State community.

The committee received five nominations for the 2019 Shirley Hendrick Award, which recognizes a University employee whose visionary accomplishments have contributed significantly to foster and increase Penn State’s efforts to serve our adult learners and the nomination window closes December 21. The strong pool of nominees represents both University Park and Commonwealth campus locations. The award will be presented at the Faculty/Staff Awards reception on 4/2/19, and the awardee honored during the Hendrick Conference, which will take place on Wednesday, May 8, at the Nittany Lion Inn.

The keynote speaker for the conference will be Goldie Blumenstyk, Senior Writer for *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, and author of *The Adult Student: The Population Colleges - and the Nation - Can’t Afford to Ignore*.

Our breakout sessions will include best practices for working with adult learners regarding transfer and Prior Learning Assessment (PLA), understanding the needs of military students, adult students with disabilities, a Chancellor’s Panel, the retention of adult students, and more. During lunch, a panel of adult learners will discuss their Penn State experiences as they juggle multiple roles as student, spouse, parent, and employee, as well as the best practices they have encountered.

Additionally, President Barron and Provost Jones have been invited to give opening remarks for the conference, while members of the Hendrick family will offer remarks during lunch. Our closing session will be from the Commission’s Charting the Course Taskforce reporting their findings from benchmarking current Penn State practices against programs offered at other colleges and Universities, and their recommendations for Penn State to continue to provide effective advocacy for adult learners.

1. Announcements and Updates

- a. Approve minutes from November 14, 2018 JC/E. Seymour. Approved.
- b. Announcements-R Engel thanked Wright for hosting the November meeting.
J. Campbell shared details of START Essay contest, which has monetary award. Information is on Smeal site about START conference link.
Military update of approval from Michelle Agreements on the Community College and then bring them in PSU.

Jamie: Student having awards for any under graduate student can participate and present to conference and read the essay in March

2. Liaison and Committee reports

- a. 21st Century Access:
- b. Charting the Course:
- c. Adult Learner Engagement Committee (ALEC)
- d. AEC Liaisons/Sharing adult learner initiatives at campuses-No updates. Noted that interested in Dr. Barron's interest in reducing transactional time. Will work on survey to AECs with who they are and what they are doing as well as specifically what they do in the role of AEC. Anticipate having report by end of year.
- e. Hendrick Award and Conference Planning— Received 5 nominations for 2019 Shirley Hendrick Award and selection committee will form soon.
Conference sessions moving forward and Spevak has been in contact: Commonwealth retention group; Disabilities resources office and work with adults; ALEC, 21st Century Access, Military, Chancellors Panel, keynote session, transfer credits. Student panel over lunch: have 9 recommendations to date, and Charting the Course will do closing session. Keynoter will be Goldie Blumensyk from Chronicle of Higher Education. Dr. Barron and Dr. Jones will offer opening remarks.
- f. Faculty Senate Liaison- Revision to military credits passed Faculty Senate. Michele Rice noted that faculty reviewed 93% of syllabi received summer to fall. 3 committees: Education, ?, ARISSA—deep dive around PLA 4280 and 4290 policies. Members asked to look at and give feedback by mid-January.
- g. Military and Veterans Affairs Liaison-No updates.

Sponsors response:

Sims noted that work is critically important and creativity and passion show through.

Engel noted that work is strategic level and wondered if should be looking at proposal—think about how can tie to strategic efforts (Transforming Education, Organizational Processes, or others.) Think some initiative-scan address those areas.

Whitehurst commended on being forward thinking group and presenting solutions with work.

Sims commented that we are stepping up the game this year. Energy and Pasion is showing more and more.

Engel: Strategic Work and looking at proposals. Cycle 5 and 6 that will be in effect in 2019. Other committees and wide variety of areas that could be addressed in the strategic areas.

Whitehurst: Put in solutions and resolutions to the concerns.

Meeting Adjourned: 11:38 a.m.