



Fact Sheet

Celebrating Penn State's Adult Learners

An adult learner can be 24 years of age or older; a veteran of the armed services or active-duty military; returning to school after four or more years of employment, homemaking, or other activity; and/or someone who assumes multiple adult roles, such as parent, spouse/partner, and employee. The Commission for Adult Learners (CAL) is proud of these students and pleased to share their achievements.



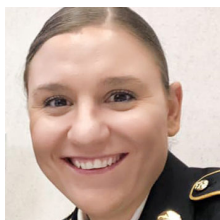
Rebecca Foust | Human Development and Family Studies, Penn State World Campus

"I started my Penn State experience in the fall of 2019. I spent the last 18 years running a state-licensed family daycare out of my home. I am a wife, mother of three, and a bonus mom of two. My oldest daughter has special needs, and that led me to pursue my degree in human development and family studies. I decided to close my daycare and become a full-time adult learner. At first, I was very overwhelmed with the idea of going back to college and computer work, but Penn State made every step of the way easy. My professors, advisers, classmates, and the HelpDesk have been there for me any time I am in need of support or encouragement."



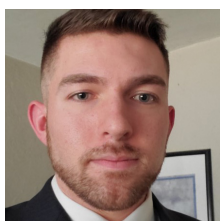
Scott Sinclair | Communications, Penn State New Kensington

"I feel like I was given a second life at Penn State. I was able to be involved in many out-of-class activities, which helped me grow and gain confidence. These activities included working as an orientation leader, student success coach, Lion Ambassador, and editor of the student news, as well as participating in THON. My crowning achievement, however, was building a multimedia news studio on campus and then using it for the student news. In short, I was able to thrive and discover a whole new person at Penn State."



Tabitha Johnson | Criminal Justice, Penn State World Campus

"Earning my bachelor's degree as an adult learner at Penn State World Campus has presented many struggles; however, these struggles have led to exciting new career paths. Working full-time, taking classes, and serving our country isn't for the faint of heart, but as Marcel Proust once said, 'The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes, but in having new eyes.'"



Robert Mastropole | Administration of Justice, Penn State Wilkes-Barre

"With my transition out of the military, I knew I was ready for the next chapter in my life. Since a young age, I've always wanted to be a Nittany Lion, so Penn State was the obvious choice for me. The welcoming faculty and staff on campus have given me the tools necessary to be successful as an adult learner."



Penn State Adult Learners at a Glance

72% of adult learners receive financial aid.

37% of adult learners receive Pell grants — 45% of adult learners at residential campuses and 34% of World Campus adult learners.

\$37,596 is the average loan debt for undergraduate adult learners who go on to graduate, compared to \$38,416 average loan debt for all undergraduate graduates.

\$28,832 is the median income of adult learners who applied for aid, compared to \$82,001 median income of all undergraduate aid recipients.

2018–19 data prepared by Penn State Office of Student Aid.



15,897

undergraduate adult learners represent 19% of the total Penn State undergraduate student population.

2019–20 data prepared by Penn State Outreach Analytics and Reporting.

2019–20 Successes and Highlights

- › The Student Persistence, Experience, and Completion Committee researched new practices that will enhance the adult learner's education experience, support persistence, and enable completion. Their work resulted in the collection of data on the effects of prior learning on time to degree, retention, and graduation; the documentation of adult learner support practices across the University; and the coordination of a student panel presentation at the November CAL meeting.
- › The One Penn State Moving Forward Committee reviewed current Penn State practices regarding how information is shared with adult learners. This work has resulted in recommendations to create a Penn State central resource for adult learners, develop concrete pathways to gather more input from adult learners, and create a University-wide standard glossary of terms for adult learners.
- › The Adult Learner Engagement Committee studied opportunities for leveraging and supporting University partner groups working with Penn State's adult learners, specifically supporting the Adult Experience Coordinators (AEC). The committee is developing new ways to promote successful partnerships at the campus level to encourage more opportunities for adult learner engagement.
- › The Hendrick Award and Conference Planning Committee coordinated efforts related to the selection of this year's Shirley Hendrick Award recipient and planned the annual Hendrick Best Practices for Adult Learners Conference. The conference was set to address topics such as student veterans, fostering intrapreneurship, student success, surveying and using data, and engagement strategies. However, in keeping with University and state guidelines regarding the Covid-19 pandemic, the conference was canceled. It will return in 2021.