

CONNECTED18

Improving Adult Learner Engagement
by Focusing on Career Alignment





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1 Understanding Adult Learners

2 Diagnostic

3 Discussion



Non-Traditional is the New Traditional

The Changing Face of College



**No Longer 18
Year-Olds**

38%

Over 25
years of age



**Take Longer
to Graduate**

47%

Enroll part-time
at some point



**Need to Pay
the Bills**

70%

Work while
enrolled



**Have Families
of Their Own**

25%

Raise children

Adult is Nearly Synonymous With Independent Student

DEFINITION

Federal financial aid deems undergrads *independent* if:

53%

of financial aid
recipients are
independent

- Over age 24
- Married
- Independent of parents
- Military service
- Homeless
- Have dependent children

Other *adult learner* characteristics:

- Lack traditional HS diploma
- Work full-time

Not a Small Part of Your Student Body But Struggling to Thrive

Few Colleges Meet Adults' Needs:

- Limited after-hours class schedules and services
- Penalties for absences
- Little basic needs support
- Programs lack milestone credentials
- Minimal credit for past experiences

Adults Contribute Value to Classrooms

Having Their Voices on Campus Fills a Need and Supports Their Goals

Adult learners are:



Motivated

They enroll on their own volition, want to be there and are driven



Experienced

Past experiences contribute richly to classroom discussions

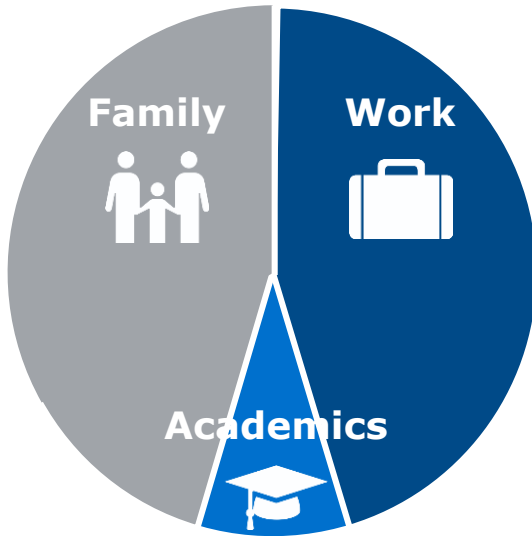


Independent

Believe that responsibility for their success is their own, not the institution's

Complex Lives Crowd Time for Academics

Success of Low-Income, Adult Students a Precarious Balance



! Spouse has a medical emergency

! Shift change at work

! Loss of childcare

! Car breaks down

! Food insecurity

! Job loss

Serve Adult Learners By Providing Allies

Combine Holistic Advising with Institutional Support

In their Own Words: What Contributes to Adult Learner Student Success?



**Academic, Personal &
Professional Balance**



**Integration of
Current Career**



**Connection to
College Faculty, Staff**



**Curricular
Guidance**



**Preparation for
Future Career**



**Connection
to Peers**



Career Motivations Vary

College Education and Credentials Prepare Them for New Opportunities

Upskilling to Seek Promotion



"I need to build skills for my next step."

Facing Replacement



"My career doesn't exist anymore."

Returning to Workforce



"I haven't worked in a long time."

Preparing for a Switch



"I want a better job in a different field."

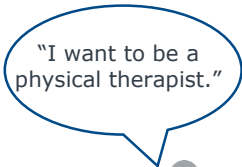
Student Experience



Understanding Program Choice and Requirements

Advise Students Early About the Missing Pieces

Take what students know



Advisors fill in missing information

Critical Processes and Outcomes

- Degrees needed for career
- Time to degree
- Exam requirements
- Prior learning credit
- Salary predictions
- Industry demand

▶ Student Insight

Adult learners need **early advising** to set **realistic expectations** for time to degree, metrics for success, and intended outcomes

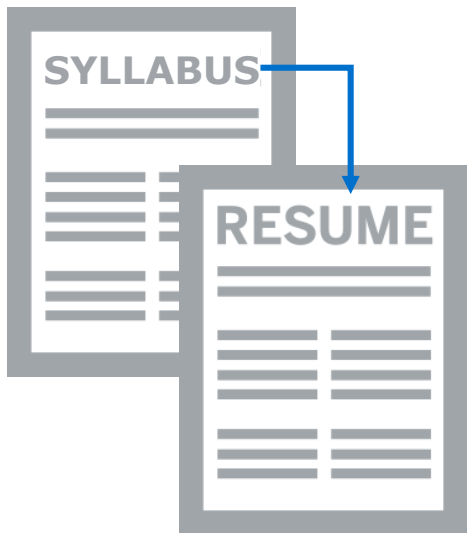


Student Experience



Connecting Classroom to Career

Reinforce Student Motivations Across the Curriculum



- 1 **Articulate Professional Competencies**
- 2 **Reinforce Connections in Course Material**
- 3 **Offer Work-based Assignment Options**

▶ Student Insight

Integration of **career relevance** allows adult learners to understand how the **curriculum aligns with their goals**



Student Experience



Adults Need Work-Based Learning, Too

Colleges Offer Career Development

Career and resume workshops



Limited time on campus

Internships



Unable to afford unpaid internships

Employer-based co-curriculars



Competing work obligations

How Schools Can Improve Adult Access

- Offer virtual opportunities
- Remove unnecessary barriers to activities
- Partner with employers to offer paid internships

▶ Student Insight

Adults need career preparation activities that allow them to **stay in their current job** or get paid for new professional experiences



1

Adult Learner Career Motivations

2

Diagnostic

3

Discussion

Independent Activity



Complete only Part I of the diagnostic

Finish the remainder upon return to campus

Interactive Group Activity



Discuss top concerns about implementing the practices identified

1

Adult Learner Career Motivations

2

Diagnostic

3

Discussion

Summary of Insights From Adult Students



- 1 Adult learners need **early advising** to set **realistic expectations** for time to degree, metrics for success, and intended outcomes
- 2 Integration of **career relevance** allows adult learners to understand how the **curriculum aligns with their goals**
- 3 Adults need career preparation activities that allow them to **stay in their current job** or get paid for new professional experiences



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