Academic & Student Affairs
Collaborations for Adult Success
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).
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<tr>
<th>Study</th>
<th>Design</th>
<th>Findings on barriers</th>
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<tr>
<td>Shepherd and Nelson (2012)</td>
<td>Qualitative</td>
<td>1. Childcare</td>
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<td>2. Work responsibilities</td>
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<td>3. Marriage</td>
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<td>4. Commute</td>
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<td>Flynn, Brown, Johnson, and Rodger (2011)</td>
<td>Qualitative</td>
<td>1. Family concerns</td>
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<td>2. Frequent moves</td>
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<td>2. Time demand</td>
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<td>5. Health problems</td>
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<td>Saar, Täht, and Roosalu (2014)</td>
<td>Quantitative</td>
<td>1. Financial</td>
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| Goto and Martin (2009)    | Qualitative| 1. Difficulty navigating the educational system  
2. Lack of clear institutional pathways |
| Kasworm (2010)            | Qualitative| 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| 1. Course scheduling conflicts  
2. Limited course offerings  
3. Problems with college resources, e.g., financial aid and enrollment services |
<p>| Saar, Täht, and Roosalu (2014) | Quantitative| 1. Inconvenient class schedules |</p>
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| Shepherd and Nelson (2012)        | Qualitative| 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| 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| 1. Perceived differences between adults and other students  
2. Feelings of exclusion from school environment |
| Kasworm (2010)                    | Qualitative| 1. Adult learners’ perceived lack of acceptance into the research culture of colleges  
2. Low self-esteem |
| Genco (2007)                      | Qualitative| 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?