

2008-09 Commission for Adult Learners  
Annual Report

### **My Thanks**

A leader cannot be a leader without followers. A chairperson cannot be a chairperson without a commission. I need to thank the 2008-09 Commission for Adult Learner members for their active participation in the many discussions that ensued at our meetings, for remaining engaged after the meetings “ended,” and for being willing to lengthen the meetings to allow this high level of conversation to continue. The discussion of ideas is the prelude to action.

I want to thank the sponsors who support the Commission in every way but most importantly, provide the financial backing to allow our existence: Dr. Robert Pangborn, Vice President and Dean of Undergraduate Education; Dr. John Romano, Vice President for Commonwealth Campuses; Mr. Damon Sims, Vice President Office of Student Affairs; and Dr. Craig Weidemann, Vice President for Outreach;

I would have been totally disorganized and late for every deadline without the emails and phone calls from Ms. Martha Jordan, Director of Adult Learner Advocacy and Enrollment Services and Ms. Judy Wills, staff assistant. As two newbies to CAL, I’m not sure who learned more about process and procedures – Judy or me! My profuse thanks.

### **Membership**

Sharon Christ  
Penn State York

Sandra Gleason  
University Park

Michael Mahalik  
Penn State Worthington-Scranton

R. Keith Hillkirk  
Penn State Schuylkill

Galen Grimes  
Penn State Greater Allegheny

Joann Olson  
University Park

Biddy Brooks  
Penn State Eire

Anna Griswold  
University Park

Amy Pancoast  
University Park

Vicki Carter  
University Park

Linda Higginson  
University Park

Joel Rodney  
Penn State York

William Curley  
University Park

Theodora Jankowski  
Penn State Wilkes-Barre

Karen Schultz  
University Park

Roger Egolf  
Penn State Lehigh

Martha Jordan  
University Park

Gale Siegel  
Penn State Abington

Robert Farrell  
Penn State York

Leslie Laing  
University Park

Theodore Timmerman  
University Park

## Meeting Topics

### September, 2008

Get to know you, get to know CAL – set the stage for 2008-09: reviewed CAL history, documents on line, reviewed structure of adult learner services.

### October, 2008

Adult Enrollment Coordinators' role at the campuses – presentation by Biddy Brooks, Coordinator of student programs/Adult Learner Center, Penn State Erie.

### November, 2008

Guest speaker - Damon Sims, Vice President for Student Affairs

Student Life & Outreach Committees of the University Senate: informational report on adult learner issues, including barriers to success and what the University is doing to help with these issues.

### December, 2008

Key Barriers to Adult Learner Enrollment and Degree Attainment Report: administrative services, degree program, cost/financial aid, marketing, credit acquisition, and child care.

Veterans Report – Ted Timmerman, Coordinator of Veterans' Outreach, University Park.

### February, 2009

Going to the source – a student panel discussed the real issues for adult learners: first and foremost was the availability of financial aid.

Blended Learning - Annette Fetterolf, Program Manager/Outreach, University Park

### March, 2009

Prior Learning Assessment - Dr. Jane Owens, Senior Director, Continuing Education, Penn State Abington, and Betsy Esposito, Advising Services Coordinator, University Park discussed the various means available to assess prior learning. They shared a wheel-shaped diagram tool that they developed to help guide advisers in working with students to determine which type of assessment matches with each particular student's specific prior college-level learning.

Transfer Credit - Amy Pancoast gave an update on the Transfer Credit study report which contained survey on how 25 colleges in Penn State's service areas compare with Penn State in working with transfer credits.

April, 2009

Scholarships for adult learners-Jean McGrath, Senior Director of Adult Learner Services and World Campus Registrar/Bursar discussed campus scholarships that are available via e-Steward in addition to scholarships available via Continuing and Distance Education at University Park manages and awards through Outreach. Over \$320 thousand was awarded this year.

First Year Testing Consulting and Advising Program – Dr. Linda Higginson gave background on the FTCAP program back to its inception following World War II in the late 1940's to 2009. Members discussed how adult learners receive academic orientation at their campuses

### **Next Steps**

Key Barriers to Adult Learner Enrollment and Degree Attainment Report identified these barriers: administrative services, degree program, cost/financial aid, marketing, credit acquisition, and child care. Next steps would be to determine what issues over which Faculty Senate has appropriate jurisdiction to help overcome the barrier.

Prior Learning Assessment: Next steps would be to realize the full capability of the faculty/courses in prior learning assessment and better market PLAs availability as a recruitment feature for adult learners.

Credits for employees: Next step is to follow up with Billie Willits, Vice President, Office of Human Resources, to review limitations on the number of academic credits that can be taken each year by Policy HR-36 Educational Privileges for Faculty, Staff and Retirees (see <http://guru.psu.edu/policies/OHR/hr36.html> ).

e-Petition Project: Next step is to follow-up with Ron Rash.

### **Accomplishments**

#### **Adult Enrollment Coordinator Committee**

1. Linked the "It Shows" web site with each campus' site.
2. Reviewed the three year Strategic Plan
3. Highlighted best campus practices
4. Maintained communication flow in the absence of a coordinator

## **Awards and Incentive Grants Committee**

We were again very pleased with the Incentive Grant applications from campuses that had an adult learner initiative requiring additional financial support to improve and/or extend additional services. To demonstrate internal support for the proposal, each applicant's campus was asked to match with \$1 every \$2 of grant funding (e.g., Incentive Grant = \$1,000; the campus match = \$500).

A total of seven proposals were funded this year:

1. Abington will be using the grant to advertise two information sessions to recruit students into the RN to BSN degree – which involves a partnership with the Frankford Hospital, School of Nursing, World Campus, and Penn State Abington.
2. Altoona will be creating and promoting computer skills training sessions for adult learners.
3. Brandywine will be using the grant to advertise a Writing Certificate program that is targeted to working adults.
4. Erie will be using the grant to produce an academic reference tool decal that lists web addresses/descriptions of ANGEL, E-Lion, and Webmail as a handy reference tool.
5. Harrisburg will be using the grant to purchase a pen tablet and computer that will be used to develop synchronous math tutoring for adult learners at a distance.
6. Lehigh Valley will be using the grant to develop a system that will track the career and educational trajectories of adult learners post graduation.
7. York will be using the grant for the development of a “Bridge to New Opportunities” program that will provide instructors and materials for an ESL course, refresher Math course and a college orientation program for adult learners.

My thanks to the members of the Commission's AEC (Adult Enrollment Coordinator) committee for evaluating this year's applications. We also showcased four of last year's grant programs during this year's Hendricks Best Practices for Adult Learners Conference and will encourage this year's awardees to also participate and share their information.

We solicited nominations for the Commission's annual Superior Service to Adult Learners and named Dr. Jennifer Talwar, from Lehigh Valley, as this year's award winner. She is the advisor and program coordinator for the Organizational Leadership (OLEAD) program, hosting receptions and social events in her home to ensure a support system among the adult learners. Her award was presented at the 2009 Hendricks Best Practices for Adult Learners Conference, where she presented a session along with five members of the OLEAD program who attested to her role in guiding and motivating them to achieve success.

## **Faculty Engagement Committee**

1. Faculty Questionnaire – will be reviewed with Blannie Bowen as necessary so as to finalize publication and distribution in 2009-10.
2. Faculty Handbook Appendix—will be reviewed with Blannie Bowen as necessary so as to finalize publication in 2009-10. The material will be shared at faculty orientation to make them aware of issues they might encounter with adult learners.
3. Status of Student Handbook Appendix—will be based on Faculty Handbook copy but rewritten to address student issues. The material will be shared at adult learner orientation.
4. Follow-up on Panel of Faculty who were Adult Learners at Hendricks Conference—will follow-up with faculty panel members given that they had a good sense of adult student issues. More discussion with adult students is needed. It was also suggested that the Commission recruit University Park faculty from departments that characteristically have large numbers of undergraduate adult learners. We will also request the roster of attendees in the break-out session sponsored by M. Jordan because of the engaging conversation between the faculty present in that session and the student panelists.

## **Hendricks Conference Committee**

### The Changing Face of Our Campuses

The Hendricks planning committee had several accomplishments this year as new territory was explored in using a condensed format (9:00-3:00) and inviting students to participate as panelists in lieu of the traditional sponsor or administrator panel. A variety of breakout sessions were offered: Student Panel of Experts discussing challenges and changes, a panel of Penn State faculty who were adult learners, the technology of ePortfolio and Second Life, their influence and impact on adult learning, and Serving Those Who Serve, providing military-friendly counseling were a few of the 18 sessions offered. The Keynote speaker presented during the luncheon which was a new element to the conference.

The Penn State Federal Credit Union generously donated padfolios as the conference take-away, Outreach donated the folders for conference materials and the Bookstore provided seven gift cards for our outstanding student panelists. Dave Lykens was awarded a certificate of appreciation and invited to lunch this year for his continued support and donation of projectors and AV equipment for all the breakout sessions.

We arranged for Debbie Benedetti, Staff Writer to provide post conference news item and photo of Gwendolyn Dungy's keynote address that was posted on Outreach Live at <http://live.psu.edu/story/39859>.

The present economic situation may not have yielded a record number of participants but a record-breaking number of participants stayed throughout the program. The conference yielded 188 attendees. There was much camaraderie witnessed during a variety of 18 breakout sessions and the awards presentations. We have received several accolades and notes of appreciation.

The keynote speaker, Dr. Gwendolyn Dungy indicated that the sessions were varied and interesting. She admitted to being inspired to learn more about adult learners and advocate nationally and legislatively for our population. During her presentation, she encouraged us ... “to be on the road sharing what [we] know about adult learners, because other colleges and universities haven't gotten it yet.”

Continuing challenges:

- additional levels of sponsorship are needed to cover the rising cost of the Penn State fees
- someone is needed to specifically compile conference evaluations and data
- ways to broaden campus participation are needed
- AECs are needed to attend this annual event or to send a representative
- incentive grants and awards need to be a part of the conference responsibilities
- additional marketing for Incentive grants and two awards is needed

Respectfully submitted by Dr. Sharon E. Christ

Chair 2008-09, Commission for Adult Learners