

## **Commission for Adult Learners** 2009-10 Annual Report

**Introduction:** As stated in its Bylaws, “the purpose of the Commission for Adult Learners (CAL) is to provide advice and consultation to the University on issues affecting adult learners.” Specifically, the CAL is charged to

- \*Help create a supportive climate for adult learners at Penn State;
- \*Monitor recruitment, retention, and satisfaction of adult learners;
- \*Recommend changes in areas that negatively impact adult learners;
- \*Improve coordination and exchange of information regarding programs and services for adult learners;
- \*Advocate for adult learners’ concerns.

**Monthly Meetings:** To work toward the above purpose and goals during the past year, Commission members hosted monthly meetings framed around the following topics:

October 14: *Developing Support for Adult Learners:* Mary Ann Amato and Spencer Lewis.

November 11: *Adult Learner Student Panel :* Sharon Nelson, UP; Nicole Stocks, World Campus; Justene Cieslak, Abington; Angela Wenttang, York.

December 9: *Campus Veterans’ Representatives Panel:* Tammie Durham, Schuylkill; Yolanda Beattie, York; Ted Timmerman, UP; Carolyn Julian, Harrisburg; and John Mills, World Campus.

February 10: *College Prep for Adults Pilot Program:* Shannon Wabby, Schuylkill; Ina Lubin, Northeast Region, Continuing Education.

March 17: *Adult Strategic Implementation Team Final Report:* Martha Jordan.

April 14: *Adult Enrollment Coordinator (AEC) Panel:* Bidy Brooks, Erie; Sharon Christ, York; Ellen Gregorio, Wilkes Barre; Steve Mostert, Abington; Shannon Wabby, Schuylkill.

**Standing Committees:** The three standing committees for the past year included the Faculty Engagement Committee, the Hendrick Best Practices for Adult Learners Conference Planning Committee, and the Prior Learning Assessment Committee. Following are brief overviews of Committee accomplishments for 2009-10.

***Faculty Engagement Committee:*** Committee Co-chairs Theodora Jankowski and Robert Farrell. Members: Lori Bechtel-Wherry, Karin Foley, Galen Grimes, Jacob Moore, Joel Rodney, and Laura Swinyer.

As its full name implies, the Faculty Engagement to Recruit and Retain Adult Learners Committee, since its initial charge and creation in 2007, has focused on encouraging and supporting faculty awareness, interest, and engagement with adult learner needs. The Committee has developed an Adult Learner Questionnaire for Penn State Faculty which will be administered across the University early in Fall 2010. The purpose of the questionnaire is “to collect information about faculty perspectives on undergraduate adult learners and the needs of this student group.”

The Committee has also prepared a Handbook Appendix for Faculty which addresses adult learner needs and issues. The Appendix is awaiting final approval for insertion into the online Faculty Handbook. A Handbook Appendix for Students has also been developed and is ready as well for insertion into the online Student Handbook.

***Hendrick Best Practices Conference Planning Committee:*** Committee Co-Chairs Leslie Laing and Sharon Christ. Members: Spencer Lewis, Martha Jordan, and Joann Olson.

The annual Hendrick Conference was held on May 10 at the Penn State with the theme, “Innovation 2010: Opportunities for the New Decade.” Keynote speaker, Brenda Harms, from Stamats, Judy Wertheim from the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL), and Eric Hoover from *The Chronicle of Higher Education* joined 225 registrants from 15 Penn State campuses for a day of inquiring, sharing, and learning about best practices for adult learners through 18 breakout sessions.

Additional conference highlights included Eric Hoover’s post-conference blog on the “Many Facets of Adult Students,” the presentation of the annual award for Superior Service to Adult Learners to April Kadyish, Penn State Fayette, and the Outstanding Adult Learner Recruitment and Retention Award to Penn State Altoona. We were also honored to have eight members of Shirley Hendrick’s family attend the luncheon and keynote address.

**Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) Committee:** Committee Chair Jane Owens. Members: Anna Griswold, Linda Higginson, Spencer Lewis, Michael Mahalik, Amy Pancoast, and Karen Schultz.

Newly formed in 2009, the PLA Committee is charged to monitor and assess the status of prior learning review at Penn State, identify issues related to the assessment of prior learning, and make recommendations for improvement. The committee has recommended information sessions on PLA for the following internal Penn State audiences: Enrollment Management, Fall 2010; Academic Advising, Fall 2010; Chancellors and ACUE dates are pending. The committee also worked extensively on PLA web page content with more improvements planned for 2010-11.

During the upcoming year, the committee will also conduct an audit of the academic units to identify courses eligible for credit by examination (Senate Policy 42-50) and credit by portfolio (Senate Policy 42-97). The outcomes of this audit will then be shared with advising units across the university that advise and work with adult learners. The committee will also oversee a 2011 pilot of PLA advising processes at Penn State Abington and UP.

**Additional Commission Highlights:** Commission members Martha Jordan, Leslie Laing, Linda Higginson, Laura Swinyer, and Keith Hillkirk represented the CAL at the annual Trustee Breakfast on January 23. We also welcomed the Faculty Senate Report on Enhancing the Educational Experience of Adult Learners. The Commission will be working during the coming year to support and further these recommendations, an example being the PLA Committee's ongoing work on the Senate Report Recommendation 3: Conduct a system-wide audit of the academic colleges and departments.

**Appreciation:** The work of the Commission would be impossible without the financial support of our four sponsors: Rob Pangborn, Vice President and Dean for Undergraduate Education; John Romano, Vice President for Commonwealth Campuses; Damon Sims, Vice President for Student Affairs; Craig Weidemann, Vice President for Outreach. Our sponsors ensure the quality of support that the Commission can bring to adult learner advocacy at Penn State through the annual Hendrick Conference, the Inventive Grants and Annual Awards, and other Commission initiatives.

Beyond our sponsors, the work of the committee chairs and members has helped to make 2009-10 a successful year for the CAL. In addition, Martha Jordan who serves as Outreach Liaison to the Commission and Judy Wills who provides staff support continue to do a truly exceptional job of keeping us all on track. Thanks to each of them and to each of the members of the Commission for their dedication to Penn State and their many contributions.

Keith Hillkirk, Chair, CAL, 2009-10