



COMMISSION FOR ADULT LEARNERS

2004 - 2005 Annual Report

PENNSTATE



Division of Student Affairs

COMMISSION FOR ADULT LEARNERS

2004 – 2005

ANNUAL REPORT

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COMMISSION FOR ADULT LEARNERS

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I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Commission for Adult Learners was established in May 1998 under the sponsorship of four senior University officers. The Commission's five sponsors currently head the following University divisions: the Commonwealth College, Enrollment Management and Administration, Outreach, Student Affairs, and Undergraduate Education and International Programs.

Background

The twenty-four-member Commission includes administrators, staff, faculty, and graduate and undergraduate adult learners. Seven Commission members were from campuses other than University Park: one each from Altoona, Erie, DuBois, Shenango, Wilkes-Barre, Worthington Scranton, and York. Four of the eleven Executive Committee members were from campuses other than University Park.

The 2004-2005 Commission structure featured five committees; they were the Adult Learner Recruitment and Retention, Awards and Incentive Grant Programs, Data Collection and Institutional Infrastructure, Development, and Hendrick Best Practices for Adult Learners Conference committees. Committee members have included current and former Commission members and non-Commission members from across Penn State's campuses.

Accomplishments

The following three achievements were named as the Commission's most significant for 2004-05: prepared the Commission's *Status of the Undergraduate Adult Learner at Penn State* position paper, continued grounding the Commission's work in data analysis, and sponsored a successful sixth annual Hendrick Best Practices for Adult Learners Conference. Each will be discussed briefly in the following paragraphs.

Significant effort went into writing the Commission's first Position Paper *Status of the Undergraduate Adult Learner at Penn State*. At the urging of William W. Asbury, a previous Commission sponsor, Mary-Beth Krogh-Jespersen, now Commission past-chair, initiated the project at the September 2003 Commission Retreat and provided leadership for the paper's development. The Commission created a document that profiled the University's undergraduate adult learners and presented recommendations for sponsor consideration and action. Initially presented to the sponsors in July 2004 for feedback, the final document was transmitted to the sponsors in November 2004 and was distributed broadly in February 2005.

The Commission joined Outreach, Enrollment Management and Administration, and the Center for Adult Learner Services as a partner in the Adult Data Partnership initiative to learn more about Penn State's adult applicants and enrollees and Penn State's market share. In addition, the Commission and the Center collaborated on a survey of adults enrolled fall 2004 as nondegree undergraduate students at all University locations.

Finally, the sixth annual Hendrick Best Practices for Adult Learners Conference, held on May 9, 2005, featured a keynote address by Gerald Heeger, president of University of Maryland University College and the highest number (262) of conference participants.

Organization and Achievements

The entire Commission met eight times during 2004-2005. In addition to providing members with the opportunity to carry forth the Commission's work, the February meeting featured an adult-focused marketing discussion with several invited guests. This conversation resulted in a memo from the Commission to two of its sponsors on the subject of marketing to prospective adult learners.

Each member of the Commission contributed to the body's work as an active Commission member, and as a member of one or more committees, a committee co-chair, and/or as a member of the Executive Committee. Debora Cheney, Foster Communications Librarian and head of The Social Sciences Library and The News and Microforms Library, served as the Commission chair. Staff members in the Center for Adult Learner Services continued to provide extensive support to the Commission.

Since its committees do much of the Commission's work, several committee achievements are worth noting. The Data Collection and Institutional Infrastructure Committee co-conducted the study of fall 2004 adult nondegree undergraduate students. Committed to supporting the development and delivery of new programs and services to benefit adult learners, the Awards and Incentive Grant Programs Committee awarded seven Incentive Grants to six Penn State locations. The Hendrick Best Practices for Adult Learners Conference Committee coordinated the Commission's sixth annual conference, its signature event. The Adult Learner Recruitment and Retention Committee investigated the activation and interrelationships of the two adult indicators that appear on ISIS.

Future Work of the Commission

Members of the 2004-2005 Commission take pride in developing a position paper that provides insight into the status of Penn State's undergraduate adult learners. Findings from the Adult Data Partnership, surveys co-sponsored by the Commission with the Center for Adult Learner Services, and other sources provided the basis for this report. Recommendations put forth in the position paper will help set the agenda of the 2005-06 Commission and its committees. Through committee activity, members will address issues of adult learner recruitment and retention, respond to needs of nondegree students, share best practices for adult learners through Incentive Grant awards and offerings at the Hendrick Conference, partner in efforts to learn more about adult applicants and enrollees, explore development opportunities to benefit adult learners, and increase visibility of Penn State's adult learners and of those who work on their behalf.

II. HISTORY AND MISSION

During spring semester 1998, four senior University officers – William W. Asbury, Vice President for Student Affairs; John J. Cahir, Vice Provost and Dean for Undergraduate Education; John J. Romano, Vice Provost and Dean for Enrollment Management and Administration; and James H. Ryan, Vice President for Outreach and Cooperative Extension – established the Commission for Adult Learners.

Several factors prompted the co-sponsors' appointment of the Commission. They included the formation of the Commonwealth College, with its focus on serving adult Pennsylvanians; declining adult enrollment in the University at a time of growth nationwide in adult enrollment; and increased competition for the adult market from other educational providers.

They appointed twenty-four inaugural members to the Commission, eight of whom came from campuses other than University Park. Shirley S. Hendrick, the late associate dean for Continuing and Distance Education in the Smeal College of Business Administration, served as the first Commission chair. The remaining appointees included graduate and undergraduate adult learners, faculty members, staff, and administrators. The first Commission for Adult Learners meeting was held on May 6, 1998.

In their invitation to persons being asked to serve on the Commission for Adult Learners, the four co-sponsors indicated that they saw the Commission as a means to:

- Provide a visible University-wide body whose primary purpose is to contribute to a supportive academic climate for adult learners;
- Monitor the recruitment, retention, customer satisfaction, and status of adult learners;
- Recommend changes in policy, practice, and procedures that negatively impact adult learners;
- Foster coordination and information exchange regarding programs and services which attract and retain adult learners; and
- Advocate for adult learners' concerns by providing advice and consultation or conducting special studies where appropriate.

Since the Commission's formation, Dr. Diane M. Disney, Dean of the Commonwealth College, has become a sponsor. Following the retirement of three of the original sponsors, their successors Drs. Janis E. Jacobs, Vicky L. Triponey, and Craig D. Weidemann have continued as Commission sponsors.

III. MOST SIGNIFICANT ACHIEVEMENTS

The three most significant achievements of the 2004-05 Commission are the following: prepared the Commission's position paper, continued grounding the Commission's work in data analysis, and sponsored a successful sixth annual Hendrick Best Practices for Adult Learners Conference.

1. Prepared the Commission's *Status of the Undergraduate Adult Learner at Penn State* Position Paper.

In year two of Commission activity, our sponsors challenged the Data Collection Committee to assemble existent information available on the University's adult learners, synthesize it, and create an adult learner profile. Committee efforts ultimately determined that minimal data existed. Further, what was available lacked breadth, depth and cohesion. Over the next three years, the Commission conducted focus groups at three Penn State campuses, co-sponsored two *Pulse* surveys and a *Spring 2003 Adult Applicant Survey*, and became a partner in the Adult Data Partnership established in 2003. These efforts caused Mr. Asbury to advise the Commission to prepare a status report on the Penn State undergraduate adult learner. Beginning her year as 2003-04 Commission chair, Mary-Beth Krogh-Jespersen initiated the Position Paper effort.

A year-and-a-half-long effort by Commission members, which was spearheaded initially by the Data Collection and Institutional Infrastructure Committee whose 2003-04 chair was Debora Cheney (2004-05 Commission chair), resulted in the July 2004 distribution of the *Status of the Undergraduate Adult Learner at Penn State* Position Paper to Commission sponsors. At their urging, the position paper drafting committee continued its work into November 2004. In February 2005, Debora Cheney and Craig Weidemann, designated in December 2004 by the Provost as the University's chief advocate for adult learners, distributed the report widely. In addition to providing a profile of Penn State's adult learners, the Position Paper addressed institutional myths and assumptions regarding its adult learners, highlighted the University's strengths in terms of positioning to increase adult learner

enrollment, identified strategic issues, and contained both structural and procedural recommendations.

2. Continued grounding the Commission's work in data analysis.

In the summer of 2004, representatives of the Commission's Data Collection Committee and the Center for Adult Learner Services began meeting on a project to learn more about Penn State's adult undergraduates who were enrolled as nondegree students. Their collaboration culminated in a study conducted during spring 2005 of fall 2004 adult undergraduate nondegree learners.

In June 2003, the director of the Center brought together representatives from Enrollment Management and Administration, Outreach, and the Commission to form an Adult Data Partnership. The partners funded the employment of C. Dan Stoicescu to continue efforts initiated by Drs. Harrison, Randall C. Deike, and Stoicescu to learn more about the University's adult applicants and enrollees. During 2004-2005, the Commission continued as a partner in these efforts, which were expanded to learn more about Penn State's adult learner market share. This partnership enabled Debora Cheney to participate in the Office of Planning and Institutional Assessment's November 19, 2004 program "Planning Issues: Attracting and Retaining Undergraduates." In response to her participation on this panel, Debora Cheney authored the article "Best Practices for Attracting and Retaining Undergraduate Adult Learners" in the Office of Planning and Institutional Assessment's January/February 2005 online newsletter.

3. Sponsored the sixth annual Hendrick Best Practices for Adult Learners Conference which experienced record attendance.

The conference continues to grow and evolve. Boasting 262 attendees, the sixth annual Hendrick Best Practices for Adult Learners Conference was described as having high and positive energy, visible sponsor involvement, a strong and varied slate of breakout sessions, and a diverse audience of administrators, faculty, staff, and students. Proactively responding to budget constraints at campus college locations, travel grants were continued for the second year in an effort to help registrants from Penn State's campuses with their conference travel expenses. Gerald Heeger, president of the University of Maryland University College, presented the conference keynote. He challenged Penn State to be bolder in its initiatives regarding adult learners (i.e., rethinking the 21st century university so it can be a center for continuous learning) and offered some strategies for pursuing change. Commission sponsor Craig Weidemann held a well attended pre-conference coffee. The conference included presentation of the Commission's 2005 Outstanding Adult Learner Recruitment and Retention Program Award and its 2005 Superior Service to Adult Learners Award.

IV. ORGANIZATION AND ADDITIONAL ACHIEVEMENTS

The full Commission met eight times in 2004-2005 (September – December and February – May). Please refer to Appendix A for a listing of 2004-2005 Commission sponsors, Commission members, Executive Committee members, and support staff from the Center for Adult Learner Services. Debora Cheney, Foster Communications Librarian, served as Commission chair and Eric White, executive director of the Division of Undergraduate Studies, was chair-elect. Mary-Beth Krogh-Jespersen, CEO of Worthington Scranton campus and immediate past-chair, continued to serve as both a Commission and Executive Committee member. Please refer to Appendix B for a listing of committees and their members.

During 2004-2005, the Commission's work was addressed via Commission meetings, Executive Committee meetings, and meetings of the other five committees. In addition to providing members with the opportunity to do the work of the Commission, meetings of the Commission featured

presentations by members and invited guests. Donald Leslie, chair of the Task Force on Continuing Education, and Gary Miller, associate vice president of Outreach, were invited to the October 20, 2004 meeting to discuss the Task Force on Continuing Education Report and implementation of its recommendations.

The following persons were invited to meet with the Commission on February 9, 2005 for a discussion regarding University-wide marketing efforts directed toward adult learners:

- Tracey Huston, executive director of Outreach Marketing and Communication, and Christopher Walsh, marketing manager in Outreach Marketing
- Cynthia Hall, director of University Marketing and Advertising
- Cynthia Hiltibrand, director of Marketing and Recruitment for the Commonwealth College

In the “Most Significant Achievements” section of this report, several accomplishments and achievements of Commission committees were identified. Further achievements and accomplishments of these committees are listed below.

Adult Learner Recruitment and Retention Committee

- ◆ **Faculty development.** The Commission, the Schreyer Institute for Teaching Excellence, and Abington College agreed to co-sponsor a follow-up to the spring 2003 faculty development program regarding adult learners in the classroom. An October 21, 2004 diversity luncheon was held at Penn State Abington and involved faculty and staff members who work with adult learners.
- ◆ **Researched two separate adult indicators in ISIS.** The committee sought to learn more about how they were activated, how they were used in other programs, and how they related with each other. The committee learned that the two separate adult indicators are not maintained in a consistent manner across the various applications that use them and that the indicators may or may not be updated at the same time. Committee members agreed that the adult indicator is useful; the question is whether to fix the existing programming or to build a new program.

Awards and Incentive Grant Programs Committee

- ◆ **Commission for Adult Learners awards** – The committee solicited nominations for and presented the two Commission awards. The Superior Service to Adult Learners Award was presented to Jane Trainor at Penn State Harrisburg; and the Outstanding Adult Learner Recruitment and Retention Program Award was presented to the Penn State DuBois Outreach Center in St. Marys.
- ◆ **Incentive Grant awards** – For 2004-05, 25 proposals were received; and seven programs were selected for funding. The Commission awarded \$1,585.00 in grant monies to programs that also received \$2,233.31 in campus support; these programs impacted 530 students and faculty. Last year, the Incentive Grant Committee developed a booklet that described all grant-funded programs from 2000 through 2004. This year, the booklet’s contents were posted on the Commission’s Web site.

Data Collection and Institutional Infrastructure Committee

- ◆ **Institutional collaboration.** Long involved in learning more about Penn State's adult applicants and enrollees, the Commission continues membership in the Adult Data Partnership which was begun in 2003-04. Committee leadership joined with leadership in Enrollment Management and Administration, Outreach, and the Center for Adult Learner Services to continue C. Dan Stoicescu's employment. With the assistance of Randall Deike and Vincent Timbers of Undergraduate Admission and others, Dr. Stoicescu's work contributed greatly to institutional understanding of adult applicants and enrollees, to content of the Position Paper, and to understanding of Penn State's adult market share. Members of the committee also collaborated with leadership of the Commission's Development Committee on possible content of a survey of alumni who were adult learners as undergraduates.
- ◆ **Survey of adult undergraduate nondegree students.** In spring semester 2005, the Commission and the Center for Adult Learner Services co-conducted a survey of adult undergraduate nondegree students enrolled fall 2004 at all University locations. The survey reached 1,815 adults and 816, or 45%, completed and returned surveys.

Development Committee

- ◆ **Alumni survey.** Members of the committee drafted a survey whose purpose would be to connect with Penn State graduates who had been adult learners as undergraduates and to learn who would like to be involved in an alumni interest group, what events they would like to attend, and more. The draft survey was shared with Alumni Association staff.
- ◆ **Identification of survey recipients.** Members of the committee worked with Development staff and others to identify possible recipients of the survey.

Hendrick Best Practices for Adult Learners Conference Committee

- ◆ **Hendrick Best Practices for Adult Learners Conference.** Committee members were thrilled when Gerald Heeger, president of University of Maryland University College, accepted the invitation to be the conference keynoter. Given budget challenges at many campus college locations, the committee continued its travel grant program, which was piloted last year, to support and encourage group travel from the Commonwealth campuses. Ten campuses availed themselves of travel grants which contributed to conference participation of faculty, staff, and students from 23 Penn State locations, an all-time high, and lead to a record high 262 attendees.

Commission as a Whole

- ◆ **Continued the sponsor/member dinner tradition.** In March 2003, the Commission held its first sponsor/member dinner meeting at the Nittany Lion Inn. The dinner has occurred annually with March 2005's dinner featuring the participation of four sponsors and most Commission members. The agenda included discussion about the most crucial initiatives and subsequent collaborations and partnerships that need to occur if Penn State is to increase its ability to recruit, enroll, and retain adult learners.

- ◆ **Attended the Board of Trustees diversity breakfast meeting for the third year.** Along with representatives from three other University commissions, six Commission members attended the annual Board of Trustees diversity breakfast meeting in January 2005.
- ◆ **Revised its Web site.** Working with a consultant, new graphics and a new navigation system for the Commission's and the Hendrick Conference sites were introduced.

V. HUMAN RESOURCES

Each member of the Commission contributed to the body's work as an active Commission member, and as a member of one or more committees, a committee co-chair, and/or a member of the Executive Committee. In addition, staff members in the Center for Adult Learner Services provided extensive support to the Commission in the form of collecting and summarizing data, budget management, arranging meetings, preparing minutes and agendas, drafting reports, and more. Without this allocation of Center staff resources, the Commission would be unable to function at its current level. These staff members are housed in the Center, which is located in 323 Boucke Building at University Park.

VI. COMMISSION MEMBERSHIP AND ACTIVITIES IN RELATION TO CAMPUSES

Seven Commission members were from Penn State campuses other than University Park: one each from Altoona, Erie, DuBois, Shenango, Wilkes-Barre, Worthington Scranton, and York. The remaining members are located at University Park. Members from the DuBois, Erie, Shenango, and Worthington Scranton campuses served on the Executive Committee.

During 2004-2005 much of the Commission's work took place in the five committees. Current and former Commission members and volunteers, who served on these committees, came from across the University. Twelve committee members were from eleven Penn State campuses in addition to University Park: one each from Abington, Berks, DuBois, Erie, Harrisburg, Mont Alto, Shenango, Wilkes-Barre, Worthington Scranton, and York; and two from Altoona.

Seven Incentive Grants for \$1,585.00 were awarded to six Penn State campuses to support new programs. Campuses receiving Incentive Grants were: Berks, DuBois, Hazleton, Lehigh Valley, Mont Alto (2), and New Kensington. Final reports submitted by the grant recipients indicate that campus budgets contributed \$2,233.31 in matching funds to support Incentive Grant-funded programs with 530 adult learners, faculty, staff, and others benefiting. One grant was returned because the program was not held. Since the 1999-2000 academic year, 63 grant programs from eighteen Penn State campuses have been funded in the amount of \$11,833.00. In turn, campuses have supported these programs in the amount of \$21,017.66 with 9,057 participants being impacted to some degree.

VII. FUTURE WORK OF THE COMMISSION

The Commission's Position Paper will provide the basis for much of the Commission's 2005-06 activity. Through the work of its committees, these are among the issues to be addressed by the 2005-06 Commission:

- Advocate to and with our sponsors for implementation of the recommendations contained in the Commission's Position Paper.
- Identify the most important financial and transfer student issues from the Commission's Position Paper and work toward a solution.

- Work with others as appropriate to improve advising for adult learners. Of concern are advising nondegree adults, advising regarding alternate means of credit acquisition, and advising the re-enrolling adult.
- Continue efforts to learn more about the interests of alumni, who were adult learners.
- Engage in activities that support fundraising and establishment of scholarships and other financial aid opportunities for adults.
- Solicit and review proposals and select recipients for the Incentive Grant Program with priority given to those programs that support recommendations contained in the Commission's position paper.
- Plan, coordinate, and present the 7th Annual Hendrick Best Practices for Adult Learners Conference in May 2006.
- Continue as a member of the Adult Data Partnership in conjunction with Outreach, Enrollment Management, and the Center for Adult Learner Services.
- Develop, recommend, and disseminate models/plans for University data systems, including the adult indicator, to support the recruitment and retention of adult learners that are consistent across all University locations.

Members of the 2004-2005 Commission feel pride in the Commission's growth and development and look forward to an equally vigorous future.

Appendix A

2004-2005 Commission for Adult Learners Sponsors, Members, and Staff



Commission Sponsors

Janis E. Jacobs, Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education and International Programs
Diane M. Disney, Dean of the Commonwealth College
John J. Romano, Vice Provost and Dean for Enrollment Management and Administration
Vicky L. Triponey, Vice President for Student Affairs
Craig D. Weidemann, Vice President for Outreach

2004-05 Commission Members

**Biddy A. Brooks, Program Specialist, Division of Undergraduate Studies, Erie—The Behrend College
Esther Cali, Fee Assessor, Office of the Bursar
**Debora L. Cheney, Head, Social Sciences & News and Microforms Libraries and Foster Communications Librarian
**Brian C. Clark, Director, Office of Veterans Programs
Janet Conner, Strategic Analyst, Outreach Marketing and Communications
Erica Dean, Student Aid Coordinator, Office of Student Aid
Cora Dzubak, Director, The Learning Center, York Campus
William Farnsworth, Director, Office of Communication
Sandra Gleason, Associate Dean, Faculty and Research, Commonwealth College
**Charlene H. Harrison, Ex-officio Member, Director, Center for Adult Learner Services
Ina Lubin, Director, Continuing Education, Wilkes Barre Campus
Earlene A. Kaschalk, Undergraduate Student, Human Development and Family Studies
Judith A. Kolb, Associate Professor of Education, Learning and Performance Systems
**Mary-Beth Krogh-Jespersen, CEO, Worthington Scranton Campus
**David M. Kuskowski, Director of Recruitment and Admissions, Penn State Campuses/
Undergraduate Admissions
**Fredric M. Leeds, CEO, Shenango Campus
**Anita D. McDonald, CEO, DuBois Campus
Jacqueline S. Mowery, Student/Staff Assistant, Altoona Campus
Karen Pollack, Program Manager, World Campus
**Elaine F. Rhodes, Director of Planned Giving and Endowments
**Anita D. Sather, Graduate Student/Student Aid Coordinator, Office of Student Aid
Melody M. Thompson, Director, Quality and Planning of Distance Education/World Campus
J. James Wager, Assistant Vice-Provost and University Registrar, Enrollment Management and Administration
**Eric R. White, Executive Director, Division of Undergraduate Studies

Staff Support

Betsy Esposito, Assistant Director, Center for Adult Learner Services
Julie Horton, Staff Assistant, Center for Adult Learner Services
Dee Mattern, Staff Assistant, Center for Adult Learner Services
C. Dan Stoicescu, Research Associate, Center for Adult Learner Services

**Denotes 2004-2005 Commission for Adult Learners Executive Committee

Appendix B

2004 - 2005 Commission for Adult Learners' Committee Members

Adult Learner Recruitment and Retention Committee

Ms. Esther Cali, University Park
Ms. Janet Conner, University Park
Dr. Cora Dzubak, York
Ms. Betsy Esposito, University Park**
Mr. David Kuskowski, University Park
Dr. Anita McDonald, DuBois
Ms. Lynell Morris, Abington**
Ms. Karen Pollack, University Park
Mr. Richard Shaffer, Altoona**
Mr. J. James Wager, University Park

Awards and Incentive Grant Program Committee

Ms. Biddy Brooks, Erie
Dr. Judith Kolb, University Park
Ms. Jacqueline Mowery, Altoona
Ms. Anita Sather, University Park
Dr. Melody Thompson, University Park

Data Collection and Institutional Infrastructure Committee

Dr. Brian Clark, University Park
Dr. William Farnsworth, University Park
Dr. Charlene Harrison, University Park
Ms. Earlene Kaschalk, University Park
Dr. Fredric Leeds, Shenango
Dr. C. Dan Stoicescu, University Park**

Development Committee

Ms. Erica Dean, University Park
Dr. Sandy Gleason, University Park
Ms. Cheryl Markley, University Park**
Mr. Kevin Musick, University Park**
Ms. Elaine Rhodes, University Park

Hendrick Best Practices Conference Committee

Mr. James Campbell, University Park**
Ms. Julie Horton, University Park**
Ms. Ina Lubin, Wilkes-Barre
Ms. Deborah Guy, Berks**
Ms. Ro Nwranski, University Park**
Ms. Alice Royer, Mont Alto**
Ms. Anita Sather, University Park
Ms. Karen Sones, University Park**
Ms. Ronda Stump, Harrisburg**
Ms. Sharon Youtzy, University Park**

Public Relations Committee

This committee was inactive during 2004-05.

Position Paper Drafting Committee

**Dr. Mary-Beth Krogh-Jespersen,
Worthington Scranton**
Ms. Debora Cheney, University Park
Dr. Eric White, University Park
Ms. Betsy Esposito, University Park**
Dr. Charlene Harrison, University Park
Ms. Karen Pollack, University Park
Mr. David Kuskowski, University Park
Dr. Brian Clark, University Park

Bold type denotes a committee chair or co-chair

** denotes a Commission committee volunteer

This publication is available in alternative media on request.

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