

COMMISSION FOR ADULT LEARNERS



2005-2006 Annual Report

PENNSTATE



COMMISSION FOR ADULT LEARNERS

2005–2006

ANNUAL REPORT

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

I.	Executive Summary	1
II.	History and Mission	2
III.	Most Significant Achievements	3
IV.	Organization and Additional Achievements	4
V.	Human Resources	6
VI.	Commission Membership and Activities in Relation to Campuses	6
VII.	Future Work of the Commission	7

Appendices

- A. 2005–2006 Commission for Adult Learners' Sponsors, Members, and Staff
- B. 2005–2006 Commission for Adult Learners' Committee Members

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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 four sponsors currently head the following University divisions: the Commonwealth Campuses, Outreach, Student Affairs, and Undergraduate Education.

Background

The twenty-seven-member 2005—2006 commission included administrators, staff, faculty, and graduate and undergraduate adult learners. Eight commission members were from campuses other than University Park: one each from Delaware County, Erie, DuBois, Lehigh Valley, Shenango, Wilkes-Barre, Worthington Scranton, and York. Two of the six Executive Committee members were from campuses other than University Park.

The 2005-2006 commission structure featured five committees; they were the Adult Learner Recruitment and Retention; Awards and Incentive Grant Programs; Data Collection and Institutional Infrastructure; Development (ad hoc); 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. In addition to the above ad hoc and standing committees, the commission chair appointed the Adult Learner Code Committee and co-appointed the Nondegree Adult Enrollment Committee.

Accomplishments

The following three achievements were named as the commission's most significant for 2005-06: involvement in several initiatives to benefit nondegree students whose ranks disproportionately include adult learners; sponsorship of the seventh annual Hendrick Best Practices for Adult Learners Conference; and contributions to the University's ability to identify adult learners in the ISIS data structure. Each will be discussed briefly in the following paragraphs.

Several initiatives pertained to improving institutional support for nondegree adult learners which, in turn, benefited both adult and traditional-age nondegree students. First, the Nondegree Adult Undergraduate Student Survey, co-sponsored with the Center for Adult Learner Services, was concluded, and the report was widely distributed. The recommendations contained in this report lead to the appointment by the commission, the Center for Adult Learner Services, and the University Registrar of the Nondegree Adult Enrollment Committee. Also, several commission members served on a committee appointed in response to commission advocacy by the late Janis Jacobs, that developed legislation to provide academic advising to nondegree students. This legislation was passed by the Faculty Senate at its January 2006 meeting.

The seventh annual Hendrick Best Practices for Adult Learners Conference was held on May 8, 2006; it featured a keynote address by John Dirkx, Ph.D., professor of higher, adult, and lifelong education at Michigan State University, and attracted almost 250 attendees.

Two improvements to the ISIS data structure—one long underway and one current—occurred as a result of commission advocacy and effort. The Certificate Project Team, appointed as a result of long-term commission advocacy, succeeded in creating ISIS screens that identified the University's certificate programs and the students who are pursuing certificates, and in recording certificate completion on transcripts. The commission chair appointed an Adult Learner Code Committee whose members have worked to identify a coordinated and integrated effort to identify adult learners in ISIS.

Organization and Achievements

The entire commission met eight times during 2005-2006. At these meetings members met with commission sponsors and other University leaders; received updates from its standing, ad hoc, and specially appointed committees; and conducted commission business.

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. Eric R. White, executive director of the Division of Undergraduate Studies and associate dean for Advising, served as the commission chair. Staff members in the Center for Adult Learner Services continued to provide support to the commission.

Since its committees do much of the commission's work, several committee achievements are important to note. The Data Collection and Institutional Infrastructure Committee concluded the co-sponsored study of 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 nine Incentive Grants to eight Penn State campuses. The Hendrick Best Practices for Adult Learners Conference Committee coordinated the commission's seventh annual conference, its signature event. The Adult Learner Recruitment and Retention Committee sought to improve the University's efforts to advise adults of all methods of credit acquisition. Finally, the Development Committee initiated discussions with University and Outreach Development staff to explore collaborative and coordinated fund-raising efforts on behalf of adult learners.

Future Work of the Commission

Through commission and committee activity, members will address issues of adult learner recruitment and retention; 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; advocate for improvements to the ISIS structure; determine progress on the commission's Position Paper on the Status of the Undergraduate Adult Learner at Penn State; support improvements to benefit nondegree students; 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, then 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
- advocate for adult learners' concerns by providing advice and consultation or conducting special studies where appropriate

Following the retirement of three of the original sponsors—their successors Drs. Robert N. Pangborn, Vicky L. Triponey, and Craig D. Weidemann—have continued as commission sponsors. Dr. John J. Romano, now vice president for Commonwealth Campuses, continues as a sponsor.

III. MOST SIGNIFICANT ACHIEVEMENTS

The three most significant achievements of the 2005-06 commission are the following: involvement in several initiatives to benefit nondegree students whose ranks disproportionately include adult learners; sponsorship of the seventh annual Hendrick Best Practices for Adult Learners Conference; and contributions to the University's ability to identify adult learners in the ISIS data structure.

1. Involvement in several initiatives to benefit nondegree students whose ranks disproportionately include adult learners:

The commission was involved in several initiatives to improve institutional support for nondegree adult learners which, in turn can improve the environment for all nondegree students, both adult and traditional age. First, the Nondegree Adult Undergraduate Student Survey, co-sponsored with the Center for Adult Learner Services, was concluded. The findings underscored the need to improve communication with nondegree students, provide them with academic advising, and recruit them to degree status.

In response to this study's recommendations, the Nondegree Adult Enrollment Committee was appointed by the commission, the Center for Adult Learner Services, and the University Registrar. The committee's work will result in improved communication and customer service to the University's nondegree students, regardless of enrollment on-campus or at an off-campus site. Process implementation is planned to be effective fall 2006. An information packet has been developed, and distributed to all campus registrars. The packets will include a new letter developed for campus registrar use, acknowledging the student's enrollment at the campus and encouraging them to connect with an adviser; a checklist template to be customized by each campus; and a mid-semester letter to be sent to the nondegree student encouraging their continued enrollment. The committee also plans to improve the process for new students to obtain their Access Account at off-campus locations and at times other than Monday through Friday, from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Also, several commission members served on a committee appointed in response to commission advocacy by the late Janis Jacobs. The committee developed legislation to provide academic advising to nondegree students; it was passed by the Faculty Senate at its January 2006 meeting.

2. Sponsorship of the seventh annual Hendrick Best Practices for Adult Learners Conference:

The seventh annual Hendrick Conference was held at The Penn Stater Conference Center Hotel on Monday, May 8, 2006. Dr. John M. Dirkx, professor of higher, adult, and lifelong education and director of the Michigan Center for Career and Technical Education at Michigan State University,

served as the conference keynoter. Subsequently, Dr. Dirkx was interviewed at Penn State Public Broadcasting for WPSU's *Pennsylvania Inside Out* program. A new feature of this conference was the use of Centra Web casting technology to offer to all locations with this capability, except University Park, both the keynote presentation and Drs. John Romano and Craig Weidemann's preconference discussion. Proactively responding to budget constraints at the campuses, travel grants were continued for the third year in an effort to help registrants from Penn State's campuses with their conference travel expenses. As a result, the conference attracted almost 250 attendees. The conference included presentation of the commission's 2006 Outstanding Adult Learner Recruitment and Retention Program Award and its 2006 Superior Service to Adult Learners Award. The breakout sessions featured the most eclectic selection of presenters and content of any Hendrick Conference and were overwhelmingly rated as being on-target and worthwhile.

3. Contributions to the University's ability to identify adult learners in the ISIS data structure:

Two improvements to the ISIS data structure, one long underway and one current, occurred as a result of commission advocacy and effort. The Certificate Project Team, a team co-appointed by Drs. John Romano and James Ryan in response to recommendations from the commission's Ad Hoc Committee on Nondegree Certificate Students, succeeded in adding to ISIS two screens which will identify certificate programs, students pursuing certificates, and students who have completed certificate programs.

The commission chair appointed the Adult Learner Code Committee, whose members have worked to devise a way to identify adult learners in ISIS. Members include representatives from Undergraduate Admissions, the University Registrar's Office, Student Aid, and Outreach. Agreement has been reached on the data elements to be captured and the data structure that is to be created. The next step is establishing an agreed-upon workplan.

IV. ORGANIZATION AND ADDITIONAL ACHIEVEMENTS

The full commission met eight times in 2005-2006 (September through December 2005 and February through May 2006). Please refer to Appendix A for a listing of 2005-2006 commission sponsors, commission members, Executive Committee members, and support staff from the Center for Adult Learner Services. Eric R. White, executive director of the Division of Undergraduate Studies and associate dean for Advising, served as commission chair; and Anita McDonald, chancellor of DuBois campus, was chair-elect. Debora Cheney, Foster Communications Librarian 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 2005-2006, the commission's work was addressed via commission meetings, Executive Committee meetings, and meetings of the five ad hoc and standing committees. In addition to providing members with the opportunity to do the work of the commission, meetings of the commission featured presentations by sponsors, invited guests, and members. The sponsors met with commission members according to the following schedule: Dr. Weidemann in November, Dr. Romano in December, Dr. Pangborn in March, and Dr. Triponey in April. The Faculty Senate leadership met with members in February 2006, and members delivered presentations on the Study of Nondegree Students, the work of the Nondegree Adult Learner Enrollment Committee, and the Adult Learner Code Committee in October, March, and April respectively.

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

- ◆ **Alternate means of credit acquisition:** Members sought to improve the University's efforts to advise adults of alternate means of credit acquisition. They reviewed analyses of undergraduate adult enrollees' patterns of credit acquisition; began updating content of an out-of-print *Prior Learning Experiences* brochure; and delivered and/or encouraged informational sessions on credit acquisition by alternate means at the Division of Undergraduate Studies, Undergraduate Admissions, and Hendrick Best Practices for Adult Learners conferences.
- ◆ **Web site analysis:** Members reviewed Web traffic analyses of the commission's and the Center for Adult Learner Services' Web sites as part of an initiative to recommend improvements to the University's efforts to market and recruit to adult learners.

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 Cathy Watson, staff assistant in Adult Education at University Park; the Outstanding Adult Learner Recruitment and Retention Program Award was presented to the World Campus Student Fund.
- ◆ **Incentive Grant awards:** The committee solicited and reviewed program proposals for the 2005-2006 Incentive Grant awards. Twenty-six proposals were submitted, nine proposals from eight campuses were funded initially, and seven proposals funded for \$2,482 were completed as of May 2006.

Data Collection and Institutional Infrastructure Committee

- ◆ **Institutional collaboration:** Long involved in learning more about Penn State's current and prospective adult learners, the commission continues membership in the Adult Data Partnership that was begun in 2003-04. Commission/committee leadership joined with leadership in Enrollment Management and Administration and Outreach to continue C. Dan Stoicescu's employment. With the assistance of Randall Deike and Vincent Timbers, of Undergraduate Admissions, and others, Dr. Stoicescu's work contributed greatly to institutional understanding of adult applicants and enrollees.
- ◆ **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 in fall 2004 at all University locations. The survey reached 1,815 adults, and 816, or 45% of them, completed and returned surveys. Data analysis and a report summarizing the study were completed in early fall 2005. In response to the study's recommendations, the commission's chair, the Registrar, and the Center for Adult Learner Services' director appointed a Nondegree Adult Learner Enrollment Committee to implement improvements in communicating with and providing technology access to nondegree students.

Development Committee

- ◆ **Scholarship templates:** The committee created greater awareness of the need for more adult-friendly language in scholarship templates that will increase the numbers of adults considered for, and awarded, scholarships.
- ◆ **A need for fund-raising for adults:** In addition to fact finding, the committee sought to identify effective means to educate and inform campus and college leaders on the importance of raising funds for scholarships and other initiatives to benefit adult learners.

Hendrick Best Practices for Adult Learners Conference Committee

- ◆ **Hendrick Best Practices for Adult Learners Conference:** Committee members conducted the seventh annual Hendrick Best Practices for Adult Learners Conference with assistance from Conferences and Institutes. The conference featured Dr. John M. Dirkx as the keynote presenter. New conference features included Centra Web casting, the ability of conference participants to purchase select adult learner books from the Penn State Bookstore at a ten percent discount, and the award of three Barnes & Noble \$100 gift certificates to adults at the Altoona, Worthington Scranton, and York campuses. The Hendrick family connection to the conference was revitalized by inviting the family of the late Dr. Shirley Hendrick to attend the conference luncheon.

The 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 the March 2006 dinner featuring the participation of three sponsors and most commission members. The agenda included remarks from two currently enrolled adult learners, Daniel McKee (Liberal Arts) and Jacqueline Vaux (Crime, Law, and Justice and Health Policy and Administration), and discussion about their experiences and recommendations.
- ◆ **Attended the Board of Trustees diversity breakfast meeting for the fourth year:** Along with representatives from three other University commissions, six members of our commission attended the annual Board of Trustees diversity breakfast meeting in January 2006.

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 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 the center's 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 3 Keller Building at University Park.

VI. COMMISSION MEMBERSHIP AND ACTIVITIES IN RELATION TO CAMPUSES

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

During 2005-2006 much of the commission's work took place in its five ad hoc and standing committees. Current and former commission members and volunteers, who served on these committees, came from across the University. Eleven committee members were from eleven Penn State campuses in addition to University Park: one each from Abington, Delaware County, DuBois, Erie, Lehigh Valley, Harrisburg, Mont Alto, Shenango, Wilkes-Barre, Worthington Scranton, and York. The Nondegree Adult Enrollment Committee, co-appointed with the Center for Adult Learner Services and the University Registrar, had representatives from the DuBois and York campuses.

Nine Incentive Grants for \$3,182 were awarded to eight Penn State campuses to support new programs. The campuses receiving Incentive Grants included: Beaver, Berks, DuBois, Erie, Hazleton, Lehigh Valley, Mont Alto, and York. Two grants were returned because the program was not held. The seven completed programs, funded in the amount of \$2,482, impacted 144 students. Since the 1999-2000 academic year, seventy grant programs from eighteen Penn State campuses have been funded in the amount of \$14,315 and completed. In turn, campuses have supported these programs in the amount of \$23,264, with 9,214 participants being impacted.

VII. FUTURE WORK OF THE COMMISSION

Through the work of its committees, these are among the issues to be addressed by the 2006-07 commission:

- Solicit and review proposals and select recipients for the Incentive Grant Program.
- Increase the visibility of Penn State's adult learners and of those who work on their behalf.
- Plan, coordinate, and present the eighth annual Hendrick Best Practices for Adult Learners Conference in May 2007, which will support continued sharing of best practices for adult learners.
- Continue as a member of the Adult Data Partnership in conjunction with Outreach and Enrollment Management. These initiatives lead to greater understanding of the University's adult applicants and enrollees.
- Monitor progress on the Adult Code Committee's work
- Address issues of adult learner recruitment and retention.
- Engage in activities that support fund-raising and establishment of scholarships and other financial aid opportunities for adults.
- Determine progress on the commission's Position Paper on the Status of the Undergraduate Adult Learner at Penn State.
- Support efforts to improve services to nondegree students.

Members of the 2005-2006 commission feel pride in the commission's growth and development and look forward to an equally vigorous future.

Appendix A

2005–2006 Adult Learner Commission Sponsors, Members, and Staff



Commission Sponsors

Robert N. Pangborn, Vice President and Dean for Undergraduate Education
John J. Romano, Vice President for Commonwealth Campuses
Vicky L. Triponey, Vice President for Student Affairs
Craig D. Weidemann, Vice President for Outreach

2005–2006 Commission Members

Sandra L. Ball, Undergraduate Student/Staff Assistant, University Libraries
Biddy A. Brooks, Program Specialist, Division of Undergraduate Studies, Penn State Erie, The

Behrend College

Esther A. Cali, Manager for Business Services, Bryce Jordan Center

**Debora L. Cheney, Past-chair, Foster Communications Librarian and Head, Social Sciences and News & Microforms Libraries

Sharon E. Christ, Director, Student Affairs, York Campus

**Brian C. Clark, Director, Office of Veterans Programs

Janet S. Conner, Analysis and Planning Associate, Outreach Planning and Administration

William M. Farnsworth, Director, Office of Communication, Undergraduate Education

Mary-Kate Fox, Graduate Student, Higher Education

Sandra E. Gleason, Associate Dean for Faculty and Research, Commonwealth Campuses

**Charlene H. Harrison, Ex-officio Member, Director, Center for Adult Learner Services

Priscilla A. Johnson, Division of Undergraduate Studies Program Coordinator, Lehigh Valley Campus

Judith A. Kolb, Associate Professor of Education, Learning and Performance Systems

Jane K. Kone, Assistant Director, Federal and State Programs, Office of Student Aid

Fredric M. Leeds, Chancellor, Shenango Campus

**Ina K. Lubin, Director, Continuing Education, Wilkes-Barre Campus

Michael P. Mahalik, Director, Academic Affairs, Worthington Scranton Campus

**Anita D. McDonald, Chair-elect, Chancellor, DuBois Campus

Kevin R. Musick, Associate Director of Stewardship, Office of Donor Relations and Special Events

Ro Nwanski, Academic Adviser, College of Health and Human Development

Karen I. Pollack, Associate Director, Inter-campus Relationships, World Campus

Anne L. Rohrbach, Director, Admissions Services and Evaluation, Undergraduate Admissions

J. Paul Rutter III, Graduate Student/Marketing Research, Outreach

Melody M. Thompson, Assistant Professor of Education, Learning & Performance Systems,
Education

J. James Wager, Assistant Vice-President for Undergraduate Education and University Registrar

Sophia T. Wisniewska, Chancellor, Delaware County Campus

**Eric R. White, Chair, Executive Director of the Division of Undergraduate Studies and Associate
Dean for Advising

Staff Support

Betsy Esposito, Assistant Director, Center for Adult Learner Services

Julie A. Horton, Staff Assistant, Center for Adult Learner Services

Buffy Holt, Staff Assistant, Center for Adult Learner Services

C. Dan Stoicescu, Research Associate, Center for Adult Learner Services

**Denotes 2005-2006 Commission for Adult Learners Executive Committee

Appendix B 2005—2006 Commission for Adult Learners' Committee Members

Adult Learner Recruitment and Retention Committee

Esther Cali, University Park
Sharon Christ, York
Betsy Esposito, University Park**
Jane Harris, University Park**
Priscilla A. Johnson, Lehigh Valley
Michael Mahalik, Worthington Scranton

Anita McDonald, DuBois

Lynell Morris, Abington**
Karen Pollack, University Park

Awards and Incentive Grant Program Committee

Sandra Ball, University Park
Biddy Brooks, Erie
Judith Kolb, University Park
Jane Kone, University Park
Melody Thompson, University Park

Data Collection and Institutional Infrastructure Committee

Brian Clark, University Park
Karen Duncan, University Park
William Farnsworth, University Park
Charlene Harrison, University Park
Fredric Leeds, Shenango
Anne Rohrbach, University Park
C. Dan Stoicescu, University Park**
James Wager, University Park

Nondegree Adult Enrollment Committee ++

Sharon Christ, York
Karen Duncan, University Park
Betsy Esposito, University Park
Jeanne Hunter, DuBois
Diane Leos, University Park
Karen Lesch, University Park
Ro Nwanski, University Park

Development Committee

Debora Cheney, University Park
Sandy Gleason, University Park
Spencer Lewis, University Park**
Kevin Musick, University Park
Paul Rutter, University Park
Sophia Wisniewska, Delaware County

Hendrick Best Practices Conference Committee

James Campbell, University Park**
Janet Conner, University Park
Julie Horton, University Park**
Tammy Irion, University Park**
Martha Jordan, University Park**
Ina Lubin, Wilkes-Barre
Debra Novitsky, University Park**
Ro Nwanski, University Park
Alice Royer, Mont Alto**
Anita Sather, University Park**
Karen Sones, University Park**
Ronda Stump, Harrisburg**
Sharon Youtzy, University Park**

Public Relations Committee

This committee was inactive during
2005-06.

Adult Learner Code Committee

Brian Clark, University Park
Alberto Gutierrez, University Park**
Shari Howell, University Park**
Marty Smith, University Park**
Rod Smith, University Park**
Dan Stoicescu, University Park**
Rachel Stover, University Park**
Vince Timbers, University Park**
James Wager, University Park

**Bold type denotes a committee chair or
co-chair**

** denotes a Commission committee
volunteer

++ denotes a co-sponsored committee with
the Registrar's Office and the Center for
Adult Learner Services

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