This report of adult learners at Penn State University enables the reader to discern enrollment
trends of undergraduate adult students, while providing a basis upon which to design programs
and services for this student clientele.

An adult learner at Penn State University is defined as a student who has been away from formal
education for four or more years, or is a veteran of the United State Armed Services, or is at least
24 years of age, or a person of any age who assumes multiple adult roles (parent, employee,
spouse/partner, and student).

The data in this report reflect ONLY the numbers of undergraduate students who are 24 years of
age or older and who are enrolled as resident instruction or continuing education students.

The authors are grateful to Budget and Resource Analysis for supplying enrollment information.

Statistics are provided for the enrollment levels of undergraduate adults by campus, gender,
degree, and full- or part-time status. Summary statements follow:

**2004 Enrollment and Age Frequency**  (Statements derived using Tables 1 and 2)

- Adult learners comprise 13% of total fall 2004 undergraduate enrollment at Penn State
  University, which remains the same as 2003. However, between 1995 and 2004, the
  percentage of adult undergraduates at Penn State has fallen from 18% to 13%. Further,
  the fall 2004 data reflect a University-wide decline of 114 adult learners from 2003; the
  locations comprising the Commonwealth College lost 124 adults.
Adult learners represent more than 35% of enrollment at five Penn State locations. These campuses are Shenango (56%, a 4% increase from 2003), Fayette (44%, a 4% increase from 2003), York (42%, even with 2003), Harrisburg (40%, a 2% decrease from 2003), and DuBois (38%, even with 2003).

The number of adult learners at University Park declined from 1,669 in 2003 to 1,635 in 2004, a loss of 34 students. Adult learners comprise 5% of the undergraduate population at University Park, the same as 2003. At all other University locations, adult enrollment declined 80 from 2003 to 2004 while total undergraduate enrollment declined by 871 students.

From fall 2003 to fall 2004, the number of undergraduate adult learners decreased system-wide by 114 while the total undergraduate enrollment decreased by 1,049.

Adult learners 24 to 30 years of age comprise 6% of Penn State’s undergraduate enrollment. The 31 to 45 age group comprises 4% of the total. Adults between 24 and 45 years of age represent 10% of the total undergraduate student population.

2004 Gender Analysis (Statements derived using Table 3)

- Across the Penn State system, 51% of fall 2004 undergraduate adult learners are female and 49% are male.
- At University Park, 39% are female and 61% are male
- At other Penn State locations, combined, the larger enrollment of adult females (54%) than adult males (46%) is more representative of the national adult enrollment picture.

2004 Full- and Part-time Status (Statements derived using Table 4)

- 54% of Penn State adult learners attend classes on a part-time basis while 46% study full time.
- At University Park, 62% of the adult learners are full-time students. In contrast, 42% of adult learners are enrolled full time at other University locations.
- Six other campuses have full-time adult enrollment above 50%. Those campuses are Behrend (60%), Altoona (59%), Hazleton (57%), Fayette (55%), McKeesport (53%), and DuBois (51%).
- Most of the other campuses have part-time adult enrollment above 60%. At Abington, Berks, Mont Alto, and Wilkes-Barre, the percentage ranges from 60-69%. Lehigh Valley, New Kensington, and York have part-time adult student percentages ranging from 70-79%.
2004 Degree Level  (Statements derived using Table 5)

- 56% of fall 2004 adult learners are enrolled in a baccalaureate program, 22% are in associate degree programs, 3% have provisional status, and 18% are enrolled in courses as nondegree students. Historically, there has been a decrease in adult learners in nondegree status. (Please see Graph 2).

![Graph 2](image)

Adult Students in Nondegree Status

- 78% of adult learners at Penn State University are enrolled in an associate degree or baccalaureate degree program, which is comparable to the national picture as provided in Adult Students Today (2001) by Aslanian.

- The campuses with the highest percentages of adults enrolled in baccalaureate degree programs are Harrisburg (84%), University Park (76%), Behrend (74%), Delaware County (71%), and McKeesport (67%).

- The campuses with the highest percentage of adult learners enrolled in associate degree programs are Fayette (56%), DuBois (55%), and Mont Alto (51%).

- The campuses with the highest percentage of adult learners enrolled in provisional status are Schuylkill (13%), Shenango (9%), Worthington Scranton (8%), and Lehigh Valley (6%).

Summary

Penn State University’s adult undergraduate population once again decreased in fall 2004; the greatest decline was experienced at locations comprising the Commonwealth College. More adult students are enrolled as baccalaureate degree candidates, for the twelfth consecutive year, than in any other undergraduate status. The number of adults enrolled as nondegree students continued to decline. More women than men are enrolled as undergraduates, and more undergraduates attend on a part-time basis except for those who attend Altoona, Behrend, DuBois, Fayette, Hazleton, McKeesport, and University Park.