Fact Sheet

Adult Learner—may be 24 years of age or older; a veteran of the armed services or active-duty; returning to school after four or more years of employment, homemaking, or other activity; a person who assumes multiple adult roles, such as parent, spouse/partner, and employee.

This issue of the Adult Learner Fact sheet highlights some of our typical adult learners who completed their degree or successfully completed the semester. We are proud of their achievements.

America Rojas | Human Development and Family Studies, Penn State Altoona
“I believe that as an adult student I have much to offer. I find myself improving as I strive for excellence in what I do and being motivated by the fact that this will be my opportunity to achieve my new beginning and my personal transition. I feel engaged, inspired, and prepared. I am Penn State.”

Laura Ruane | Human Development and Family Studies, Penn State DuBois
“I had so many fears that came with going back to school and giving it one more try. There have definitely been some rough patches along my journey, but my grades have been a success so far. I never thought I could get A’s in college. I am street smart, and now I am proving I can be book smart too.”

Michelle Stroud | Doctor of Nursing Practice, Penn State Altoona and Penn State World Campus
“I started as an adult learner by attaining my associate degree in nursing in 1995 when I was 22, then earning a bachelor of science in nursing in 2002 when I was 30. I will graduate from the Doctor of Nursing Practice program in 2020 at 47 years old. I share that to demonstrate that it is okay to take baby steps.”

Joshua Berkey | Occupational Therapy Assistant, Penn State Shenango
“I taught elementary general music in public and private schools in grades K–8. I was not happy or feeling fulfilled, so I decided to go back to school. Since returning to school, I have participated in Alternative Spring Break in Belize, have been accepted into Penn State Study Abroad, London Calling: Ordering the World, and have successfully gotten over my fear of being too old to go back to school.”

Scott Carl Schival | English, Penn State Wilkes-Barre
“I have had three notable successes since returning to school—making the Dean’s List for fall 2018, keeping up with school while my infant son was undergoing surgeries, and being honored at a Penn State hockey game during a military appreciation event. My goal when I graduate is to become a published author and be a sports writer covering Philadelphia teams.”

Savannah L. McCloskey-Reigh | Pre-vet/Animal Science, Penn State Hazleton
“There have been some challenges returning to school, including the cost and trying to balance school and work, but my husband has been a positive influence and a source of motivation for me. There have also been some successes for me, including maintaining a high grade-point average, getting scholarships, and actually just doing this! My ultimate goal is to become a veterinarian.”
69% of adult students receive financial aid.

36% of adult students receive Pell grants; 42% of adult learners at Commonwealth Campuses receive Pell grants, and 33% of World Campus adult learners receive them as well.

$37,102 is the average loan debt for undergraduate adult learners who go on to graduate, compared to $37,036 average load debt for all undergraduate graduates.

$28,657 is the median income of adult students who applied for aid, compared to $78,709 median income of all undergraduate aid recipients.

17,016 the number of undergraduate adult learners in the 2017–18 academic year, which is 19% of the total Penn State student population.

Additional information is available on the CAL website at: cal.psu.edu