Engaging Adult Learners: Gaps and Opportunities for Engaging Adults in Co-Curricular Experiences
Agenda

• Learning Outcomes
• Define engagement
• Importance
• High impact engagement experiences
• Current engagement
• Study Abroad
  • Honors College
  • Student Engagement Network
  • University Wide Student Engagement Survey
• Campus Profiles
  • Mont Alto
  • World Campus
• Challenges in collecting data
• Best practices in creating pathways
• Questions
Learning Outcomes

• Participants can expect to learn how the university defines student engagement and the "high impact" engagement opportunities that exist for students.

• Participants will learn how adult learners are currently engaging in some of the premier student engagement opportunities.

• Participants will learn the power and importance of student engagement in retaining students (particularly adults).

• Participants will learn the gaps that exist in collecting data about adult student engagement.

• Participants will learn best practices in creating pathways to usher adult learners into student engagement.
Defining Engagement

• “At Penn State, engagement includes student activities and both curricular and co-curricular activities. Student engagement contributes to intellectual, personal, and social development, and fosters integration into University life, adding distinction and value to undergraduate experiences. Furthermore, student engagement leads to the success of students as citizens and leaders—locally, nationally, and globally.”
Why is Adult Learner Engagement Important?

• “The findings from 20 years of research on undergraduate education have been unequivocal: The more actively engaged students are — with college faculty and staff, with other students, and with the subject matter they study — the more likely they are to learn, to stick with their studies, and to attain their academic goals.” (McClenney, Marti, and Adkins, 2006)

• "Engagement can be particularly important for those who start college with two or more “risk” factors, such as being academically underprepared, first in the family to go to college, or from low-income backgrounds" (Kuh, 2008a)
Why is Adult Learner Engagement Important?

Personal reasons for engagement:

- Involvement
- Inclusion
- Application of classroom knowledge
- Classroom engagement/interest

Success reasons for engagement:

- Networking
- Resume builder
High Impact Student Engagement Opportunities

- Study Abroad
- Study Away
- Undergraduate Research
- Honors College Engagement
- Internships
- Alternative Breaks
- Student Leadership Programs
- Political Advocacy
How Students Are Currently Engaging

Study Abroad (2017/2018 data)

• 2,789 total study abroad students
• 59 (2.1%) adult learners studied abroad
• 48 of 59 adults participated in embedded programs abroad
How Students Are Currently Engaging

Schreyer Honors College

• 20 identified
  • 10 at UP, 10 across the commonwealth
• 6 received grants (travel, research, internship)
• 4 received awards (Smart Award, Smith family Trustee, Louis Balmer)

• Involvement:
  • Fraternity
  • Astronomy Club
  • Health Science Club
  • Minority Association
How Students Are Currently Engaging

• Student Engagement Network Experiences
  • Undergraduate research
  • Study abroad/away
  • Community-based learning
  • Creative accomplishments
  • Volunteerism

• 1,143 total proposals
• 297 students received funding of proposals
• $400,000 total awarded in grant money, $1,330 average award
How Students Are Currently Engaging

• Student Experience Survey
  • Penn State Student Affairs Research and Assessment
• Data from 2017, repeated every 3 years
• Does not include World Campus students
• Adult defined as:
  • 24 or older
  • Active/retired military
  • Dependents
• Adult N = 713
How Students Are Currently Engaging

• Student Experience Survey

## Sense of Belonging

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sense</th>
<th>Non-Adult</th>
<th>Adult</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Belong at Penn State</td>
<td>83.4%</td>
<td>78.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Felt welcome on campus</td>
<td>86.4%</td>
<td>85.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others like them on campus</td>
<td>78.6%</td>
<td>72.1%</td>
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</table>
How Students Are Currently Engaging

- Student Experience Survey

### Campus Experience

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experiences</th>
<th>Non-Adult</th>
<th>Adult</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hands-on in their field</td>
<td>59.4%</td>
<td>64.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Club or organization</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>63.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSU-Sponsored internship</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>17.1%</td>
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</table>
How Students Are Currently Engaging
• Student Experience Survey

Work, Volunteering, and Relationships with Faculty

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experience</th>
<th>Non-Adult</th>
<th>Adult</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Work for pay off campus (hours)</td>
<td>39.7% (21 hours)</td>
<td>63% (29 hours)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteering/community service</td>
<td>43.3%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Know four or more faculty they could ask for recommendation</td>
<td>21.5%</td>
<td>31.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Campus Profiles

- Mont Alto: 863 Students, 17% Adult Learners
- ASB Montreal 2019
- Veterans Center
  - Converted Spring House 2014
  - Recreational and Work Space
  - Serving 33 Veterans (FA18)
Campus Profiles

World Campus Student Advisory Board
World Campus Student Leadership Conference
World Campus Student Government Association
Challenges

Inconsistent use of existing adult learner definition

Inconsistent tracking of adult learner engagement

Multiple “stakeholders” identifying adult learners
  • Admissions
  • Self Identification
  • Advocates/ Advisor

Visibility of adult learners
Best Practices in Creating Pathways

Increase Communication & Marketing
  Create Listserv
  Regular engagement in Canvas
  Timelines for engagement

Collecting stories and highlighting student successful engagement journey