



# STRATEGIES FOR RECRUITING AND GRADUATING ADULT LEARNERS

Prepared for the Academic and Student Affairs Committee  
December 5, 2013

UNLV

**UNLV Response to Strategies for Recruiting and Graduating Adult Learners - REQUEST FOR REFERENCE MATERIAL dated 9/18/2013 from Vice Chancellor Abba**

**October 31, 2013**

UNLV is engaging adult learners in the following traditional ways.

- We recently surveyed all current students regarding their work commitments and habits with 1500 students responding.
- We instituted the Class Concierge Program. The UNLV class concierge assists students with processes regarding enrollment, course scheduling and graduation. Specifically, this position is designed to troubleshoot and document situations in which students need special assistance to continue taking classes and progress toward graduation. In addition, the class concierge assists UNLV transfer students with various impediments related to course scheduling and related difficulties that prevent forward academic movement at the university.
- We have created a Stop-Out Study Task Group who will be initiating a study of students who have stopped out and how to engage them.
- We began a pilot project last year "Don't Wait Graduate." A liaison was hired to contact past UNLV students who had applied to graduate in Fall 2010 - Fall 2012, but did not confer to determine why and engage these students and offer assistance to move them to graduation. The pilot ended in September 2013 and we are analyzing that data now.
- Credit by Exam is available to all students.
- We are exploring the creation of a UNLV Weekend College.

These are effective however; we will need to create a specific coordinated program to engage students who have competing work and school interests.

**UNLV Weekend College Proposal - To Better Serve Adult Learners and Non-traditional Students**

As a part of UNLV's ongoing retention, progression, completion (RPC) initiative several at-risk populations of students have been identified including "Adult Learners" who we define as students that are over the age of 23 who are no longer enrolled full-time or as a subset of this population, students who have stopped out. Adult learners are in a high risk category for not completing their degree programs. These individuals typically are employed full-time (40 hours per week minimum), may have a family or other obligations that result in time conflicts with classes, and their degree completion becomes a lower priority in scheduling their activities.

In an attempt to address this population of students UNLV is proposing to develop a "weekend college" that will allow adult learners to focus their studies in defined areas and to complete their course work in a way that can accommodate their busy schedules. Adult learners will be defined as students who have attained 90 credits or more, who are "non-traditional" (outside the typical 18-22 year old) and who are no longer full time students or who have stopped out.

These criteria are viewed as target metrics and are extremely flexible with regard to individual student situations. The intent of this program is to provide students who have or are at risk of dropping out of the university a mechanism to reengage or continue their education in a way that allows them to meet their work and family commitments.

The Office of the Provost along with the Academic Success Center have begun to identify students that fit the above defined criteria. A past program targeted similar students for completion and as such similar criteria will be used to identify adult learners for this program (Non-Traditional No More). Additionally, students will be identified through the use of surveys targeting part-time students with over 90 credits. The program will be marketed to this population of students. A recent student survey sent to all UNLV students has shown that this population is interested in the weekend college concept. Over 75% expressed an interest in this type of program and an equal number indicated that they would be willing to take classes on Friday and Saturday to facilitate their degree completion.

The weekend college will take advantage of the university's scheduling flexibility by: 1) offering courses on Friday and Saturday during the standard academic semester; 2) developing a winter semester to make use of university classrooms and facilities during the January recess; and 3) developing a 13 week summer semester with courses offered on Friday and Saturday. The weekend college will be administered through the Office of the Provost with all degree programs run out of the appropriate colleges. Financially, the weekend college will be funded as self-supporting budgets out of UNLV's Division of Educational Outreach.

Providing adult learners with scheduling options outside the typical 8 AM to 10 PM MW and/or TR time frame will allow this population to continue to work full time (4, 10 hour work shifts or other flexible shift schedules). They will focus their educational time commitments on Friday and Saturday classes without compromising minimal classroom time requirements established by the federal government and the NWCCU. Outside the traditional classroom scheduled courses, hybrid classes will be developed where material will be delivered on a Friday with web based online experiences available throughout the week as well as encouraging students to take appropriate fully online courses with weekend help sessions. When required intense winter semester courses will be offered to facilitate one-on-one student instructor interactions as part of milestone and culminating experiences to accommodate specific degree requirements.

The weekend college will be built out of four colleges initially; College of Hotel Administration, College of Education, Lee Business School and the College of Urban Affairs. These units encompass a broad area of interest for adult learners and provide successful entry points into the regional employment market. Working with college deans and chairs, defined degree paths will be identified into which these students will be advised to enter.

Colleges and departments will control the content, courses and rigor of all weekend college program offerings. The Office of the Provost (VPAA) will work with the identified program departments to develop appropriate degree program offerings to meet the unique needs of adult learners. Courses will be staffed by faculty employed by the Division of Educational Outreach. All weekend college faculty will be hired through the standard department based and college approved search processes to provide appropriate faculty oversight of personnel and to maintain the highest standard of instruction and quality control.

A partnership has been developed between the UNLV Academic Success Center (ASC) and the Office of the Executive Director of Academic Advising to aid these students in completing their course work and progressing through their degree programs to completion. Intense one-on-one

personal academic advising will be necessary to assure that this population is successful in their progression and graduation. Students will be assigned individual advisors who are schooled in the specific needs of adult learners. Academic advising will be mandatory on a semesterly basis for these students to assure appropriate course selection and progression. The ASC will provide individual one-on-one Student Success Coaching, remedial course preparation (where appropriate), course specific tutoring and supplemental instruction to augment instructor based course work. The ASC involvement will be critical to the success of this program. Students who have stopped out are typically out of date in specific areas of study and will need tutoring and supplemental instruction to be successful in their course work. Additionally, the ASC will provide coaching to aid students in time management skills, reintegration into the academic environment, and provide advice and direction to appropriate university facilities and services.

A detailed operational budget and estimated student throughput will be developed by the Vice Provost for Academic Affairs and the Vice Provost for Educational Outreach. This will include specific degree plans, identification of required courses, enrollment estimates, minimum course sizes, and the integration of both online and hybrid courses into the curriculum.

UNR



## Report on Adult Learners from the University of Nevada, Reno to the Academic & Student Affairs Committee of the Board of Regents

October 28, 2013

### **Overview**

In fall, 2013, 18% (2,759) of enrolled undergraduates (15,310) are 24 years of age and older. Of that population (2,759) the average age is 30 years old evenly split by gender. These students span a range of backgrounds and experiences from Iraq and Afghanistan war veterans to professionals and skilled workers in career transition. The average age of veterans enrolled at UNR is 26.

### **Strategies to Recruit, Retain and Graduate Adult Learners**

Adult learner recruitment efforts in the Reno-Sparks area are based on three components: 1) specific academic programs (i.e., nursing, business, and marketing); 2) receipt of credit for prior learning; and 3) flexibility in pursuing their academic program. We attract adult learners to the University with a community-wide mailing by Extended Studies. In addition, our Veteran's Services Office regularly conducts recruitment information sessions at area military bases including participating in a series of discharge workshops. All inquiries are followed up with information on specific academic programs. Follow-up is provided by the Office for Prospective Students, individual academic programs, and Extended Studies. Those who express interest but are undecided on a course of study receive assistance from the University's Career Studio, Office for Prospective Students, and Academic Advisement.

Outreach to students who left the University before finishing their degree is focused on providing them with an individual road map to complete their degree. This is supplied by academic advising. The NSHE-wide effort that began in 2008 to reach out to this population proved to be very successful. We had our best success with students who were close to graduation and had been away from the University only a year or two. Often they just needed a little guidance and assistance figuring out how to get over a road block.

### ***Academic Programs***

Adult learners at the University can be found across all colleges and in a wide variety of majors. The greatest number (nearly 30%) are in the College of Liberal Arts followed by the College of Business, the College of Health Sciences, and the College of Engineering. With expanded studies and curriculum choices after 4 p.m., adult learners are increasingly attracted to the majors of Business, Criminal Justice, Psychology, General Studies and Political Science. The University's faculty development program includes programs on effectively teaching adult learners in the classroom. By seeking to provide a learning environment in which adults can expand their knowledge and skills, faculty are taught the

principles of adult learning which include being told the value of what they are learning; an expectation that they will be active participants in their learning; a recognition that they are motivated by intrinsic needs or desires; the need to address a desire for competency-based learning; and the effectiveness of a less traditional classroom environment.

The Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI) at the University is a robust member-directed organization of adults aged 50 and older that promotes personal development through intellectually stimulating programs and provides a community in which to get acquainted and socialize. In 2012-2013 year OLLI had 1,467 members. In that fall 2012 semester the institute offered 313 classes with an attendance of 9,349; In the spring the institute offered 395 classes, tours or events, with 11,301 total attendees. Since 2006 this program has grown from 500 members to the 1,467 and is on track to have more than 1,550 members by the end of 2013-2014. Many OLLI classes are taught by University and community college professors.

### ***Credit for Prior Learning***

UNR offers opportunities for adult learners to demonstrate college-level learning through prior learning assessment (PLA). PLA's motivate adult learners to return, persist, and graduate. We use a range of prior learning methods such as evaluation of workplace training and credit by exam. A distinct and well-organized effort that gives credit for workplace training is the RN to BSN program offered by the Orvis School of Nursing. The College-level examination program (CLEP) is available for general areas such as composition, mathematics, natural and social sciences as well as humanities. Exams are also available for over 40 courses ranging from Principles of Management to Chemistry, Foreign Languages to Political Science. Veterans are granted credit for military experience, training, and course work per the American Council on Education (ACE) guidelines. In instances when a student requests credit for military experience, we work with the academic discipline to find a class that most matches the experience. The academic department then makes the determination.

### ***Flexibility***

The University's Evening Studies classes and evening degrees are marketed to adult learners and offered through Extended Studies. With expanded studies and core curriculum choices that begin at 4 p.m., new and returning students can earn a bachelor's degree. Late afternoon, evening, on-line, and weekend classes are offered to allow degree completion. Majors range from Art, Business, and Criminal Justice to English, Political Science and Psychology. **365 Learning** is designed with adult learners in mind since it offers "late start" (weeks after the semester starts) and weekend classes to fit adult learner schedules. Its mission is to provide students the opportunity to take quality courses via individualized methods of learning that are not bound by time or place. **365 Learning** provides access to classes 365 days a year. Students have access to high-quality, university-level courses year round in a variety of diverse program including Summer Session and Wintermester.



**365 Learning**, in collaboration with academic departments, also offers full graduate programs online for adults. These degrees include the Executive MBA, Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP), and two Masters of Education degrees: one in Equity and Diversity in Education and the other in Literacy Studies. **365 Learning** also offers an online graduate certificate in Renewable Energy.

### ***Services for Veterans***

The Veteran's Services office works to attract, retain and graduate more than 450 students each year through transactional assistance, and personal support services that began with the transition to university life. Peer mentors as well as on-campus professionals from the VA Health Care system, and the Reno Vet Center provide a variety of effective programs and one-on-one assistance to retain and graduate vets enrolled at UNR. In addition to their current space in the Fitzgerald Student Services Building, veteran students will have a lounge and services space in the new Pennington Student Achievement Center.

### ***Family Housing***

The current construction of family apartments on campus will provide enrolled students with affordable and convenient housing. Typically such students are older and with a lifestyle that is different from most undergraduates. This housing project is designed to offer adult learners opportunities for engagement and success that are offered to younger students in the residence halls.

### **Data on Alumni**

University records indicate that 13,175 students have graduated in the last five years. Of that number, 67% (8,821) currently live in Nevada. We do not keep current information on students who take at least one course and are no longer enrolled. We only have graduates in our alumni data base. The Registrar identified 6,561 undergraduates in the last five years that were degree seeking, are no longer enrolled, and had a Nevada home or mailing address on file. We do not know if they still reside in Nevada. The University's Institutional Analysis Office conducted an alumni survey of graduation cohorts 2001 through 2011. The report profiled employment statistics of UNR students and their assessment of the contribution of the UNR educational experience to employment-related skills. The survey was administered one year after graduation with a 43% response rate (12,334 of 28,526 degrees conferred). Surveyed students were evenly distributed across colleges.

### **Key findings:**

- Almost 90 percent of graduates are employed, in graduate school, or in the military
- Over 75 percent are employed in Nevada, the majority in the Reno-Carson area
- Over 70 percent of graduates are employed in their field of training
- About 74 percent of employed graduates found employment within 3 months of graduation
- Almost 90 percent would choose UNR again, if they would have to start over again

Submitted by Shannon Ellis, Vice President of Student Services, University of Nevada, Reno.

NSC



NEVADA STATE  
COLLEGE

## **Strategies for Recruiting and Graduating Adult Learners October 28, 2013**

At Nevada State College, approximately half of our student population is comprised of non-traditional adult learners. A majority of these students face a host of important non-academic obligations, including work and parenting responsibilities, and many of them are trying to adjust to a new college environment as they transfer from other institutions. Guided by a commitment to their success, we have developed a constellation of support services that address the unique needs of these students.

### **Recruiting**

**Better educational pathways for adult learners through strong partnerships with the College of Southern Nevada campuses.** Results of student surveys suggest that transfer students come to NSC with uncertainty regarding the requirements they have left to obtain a bachelor's degree. To help alleviate this problem, NSC and CSN are building a new partnership to provide NSC advising support to students at CSN who are interested in transferring to NSC on the CSN campus. The partnership is designed to assist adult learners earlier in the transition process (e.g., by consistently providing them with detailed information regarding system-wide degree requirements) to help them achieve their educational goals in a timely and more cost-effective manner.

**Recruit Back Campaigns.** Adult students often leave college prematurely because they lack the knowledge and skills needed to resolve competing priorities. For example, their time management skills may not be sufficient to balance family and work obligations, or they may lack the knowledge of financial aid needed to pay for college on a low income salary. To address this problem, dedicated professional advisors at Nevada State College reach out to adult learners who are no longer enrolled to assist them with information that can aid them in returning to college to finish off their degree. In these recruit back conversations, our advisors work with adult learners to assess the obstacles they face in to completing their degree, provide new information and resources to clarify misperceptions, and offer detailed advice about the steps that can be taken to return to college and complete a degree. This work began as part of the Non-Traditional No More project that was funded for NSHE by the Lumina Foundation, but has continued as part of our regular efforts to serve adult students.

### **Retention and Graduation**

**Flexible Course Schedules.** NSC offers flexible course schedules that provide a number of options for adult and working students. Approximately forty percent of NSC's courses are offered online and many of those courses are offered in an accelerated format. In addition, NSC offers a host of evening and weekend courses that serve our adult and working student population. In some instances (e.g., Teacher Preparation), NSC offers courses at locations in the

community that allow adult students to complete their coursework at their place of business (e.g., schools within the CCSD).

**Assistance with individual academic planning.** Academic advisors with detailed knowledge of the student's major are assigned to each adult learner at NSC. These advisors work diligently to help students align their career and post-baccalaureate aspirations with specific degree programs and campus resources. This system provides adult learners with a single point of contact for advising support, and our students are encouraged to capitalize on this resource by holding periodic appointments with their advisors. To facilitate this level of contact, academic advisors are available via in person, phone, email, and webcam. Advising sessions often draw on the student's personal history and motivations to forge a strong connection between student interests and their major and career goals. To bolster their skills in this capacity, the institution routinely sends academic advisors to professional development conferences that emphasize best practices in the service of an adult population.

**Targeted Outreach.** Our experience at NSC reflects a key finding in the relevant literature – adult students tend to avoid seeking help. To address this, advisors consistently reach out to adult students via newsletters, emails, and phone calls. Once rapport is established, advisors use motivational interviewing techniques to continue to develop comfort and trust with adult students, making it easier for advisors to provide necessary support to help their advisees succeed.

**SALT-Online Financial Literacy Service.** A substantial proportion of adult students face financial concerns while trying to attain their academic goals. To help students deal with this concern, NSC has partnered with SALT, an online financial literacy service that advises students on fiscal issues such as budgeting, lowering credit card debt, and the pursuit of scholarships.

**Online Advising Course.** Many adult learners are unable to receive adequate advising information because other obligations prevent them from spending as much time on campus as would be desirable. To assist these students, the NSC advising center has created an online advising course equipped with asynchronous information such as degree maps, registration “how to” videos, and academic study tools that can be accessed 24 hours a day from any location .

**Strengthened articulation agreements and pathways for adult learners with an Associates of Applied Science (AAS) to obtain a bachelor's degree.** NSC has established strong articulation agreements with the community colleges to provide a seamless transfer between the AAS degree and our Bachelor of Applied Science degrees to ensure that adult learners are able to earn a baccalaureate in a timely manner.

**Assistance with Individual Career Planning.** The new Career Center is available to adult learners to assist them in identifying career and life goals and to build pertinent skills to be successful in achieving them. Services include mock interviews, assistance with resume writing help, opportunities to connect with prospective employers, and assessment tools that match skills and interests to career opportunities.

**Mentoring from Faculty.** Academic faculty at NSC play an instrumental role in inspiring adult learners to explore post-baccalaureate options. Students are assigned to individual faculty advisors/mentors when they enter their junior year. As models of success who often share

important traits with our adult learners (e.g., they were first-generation students as well), these mentors can act as a credible and trusted guide in the pursuit of a baccalaureate degree and post-graduate success.

**Improve the use of technology through technology support.** Nevada State College has expanded access to a baccalaureate degree for adults by increasing its online class offerings. For some adult students, however, technical limitations can prove to be problematic for online courses. To address this, the tutoring center enlists technology tutors who support adult students in basic technology skills such as navigating webcampus, attaching and downloading files, and discussion postings.

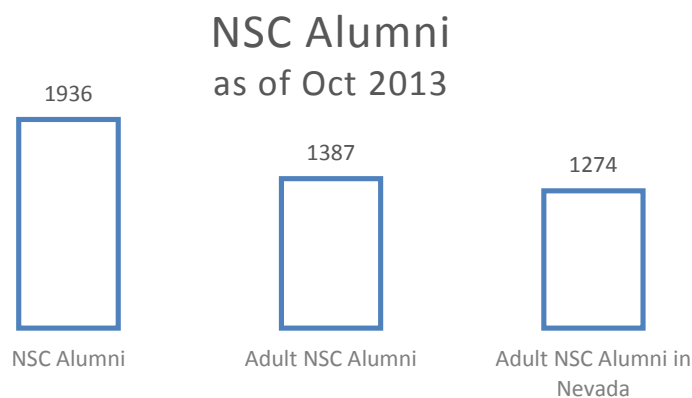
**Individual, group tutoring, and supplemental instruction.** Free tutoring is an important key to retaining adult learners. The tutoring center offers one-on-one tutoring, group tutoring, supplemental instruction, and 24-hour online tutoring to meet the needs of our student population.

### Opportunities for Prior Learning Assessments

Nevada State College has adopted several assessment practices that allow adult learners to earn college credits for course competency and knowledge gained through work, occupational training and other non-academic experiences. These assessments include CLEP, DSST, Excelsior College Examinations, and ACE (Military credits) that allow for credit in a number of areas including composition, mathematics, natural sciences, social sciences and the humanities. The RN-BSN program has a well-established process for granting credit for prior workplace training and the college also may grant other non-traditional credits on a case-to-case basis.

### Data

*As of October 2013 Nevada State College has 1936 alumni. Out of those, 1387 (71.6%) were 25 or older at the time of their graduation. Out of 1387 adult graduates, 1274 had their most recent reported address in Nevada.*



*As of October 2013 NSC has enrolled 2668 unique adult learners since fall 2008 who are currently not enrolled, have not graduated from NSC, had their most recent cumulative GPA over 2.0, and have their most recent reported address in Nevada.*

CSN

## Strategies for Recruiting and Graduating Adult Learners

### College of Southern Nevada

The College of Southern Nevada is a diverse postsecondary institution not only in ethnic diversity, but also age diversity. For purposes of this report, the adult learner at CSN is defined as that student age 25 years and higher.

#### ENROLLMENT DATA:

#### FALL 2013

Enrollment by Age	Academic Headcount	Percentage	Academic FTE	Percentage
25 to 29	5,386	(15% of total)	2,611.8	(14% of total)
30 to 34	3,448	(9% of total)	1,568.4	(8% of total)
35 to 39	2,288	(6% of total)	971.9	(5% of total)
40 to 49	2,998	(8% of total)	1,211.9	(6% of total)
50 to 61	1,649	(5% of total)	657.9	(3% of total)
62 & over	235	(1% of total)	74.9	(0% of total)
<b>Total</b>	<b>16,004</b>			

#### Fall 2012

Enrollment by Age	Academic Headcount	Percentage	Academic FTE	Percentage
25 to 29	5,721	(15% of total)	2,742.3	(14% of total)
30 to 34	3,621	(10% of total)	1,672.8	(9% of total)
35 to 39	2,344	(6% of total)	1,004.1	(5% of total)
40 to 49	3,141	(8% of total)	1,280.8	(7% of total)
50 to 61	1,514	(4% of total)	573.8	(3% of total)
62 & over	237	(0.6% of total)	6.5	(0.4% of total)
<b>Total</b>	<b>16,578</b>			

#### Fall 2011

Enrollment by Age	Academic Headcount	Percentage	Academic FTE	Percentage
25 to 29	5,842	(15% of total)	2,920.2	(14% of total)
30 to 34	3,815	(10% of total)	1,749.2	(9% of total)
35 to 39	2,522	(7% of total)	1,101.5	(5% of total)
40 to 49	3,370	(9% of total)	1,359.9	(7% of total)
50 to 61	1,568	(4% of total)	570.9	(3% of total)
62 & over	295	(0.8% of total)	91.1	(0.4% of total)
<b>Total</b>	<b>17,212</b>			



**GRADUATES BY AGE:****Academic Year 10-11**

<b>Graduates by Age</b>	<b>Academic Headcount</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
25 to 29	505	(24% of total)
30 to 34	288	(14% of total)
35 to 39	188	(9% of total)
40 to 49	198	(9% of total)
50 to 61	81	(4% of total)
62 & over	12	(1% of total)
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,272</b>	<b>(61% of total)</b>

**Academic Year 11-12**

<b>Graduates by Age</b>	<b>Academic Headcount</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
25 to 29	492	(23% of total)
30 to 34	298	(14% of total)
35 to 39	178	(8% of total)
40 to 49	201	(9% of total)
50 to 61	88	(4% of total)
62 & over	9	(0% of total)
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,266</b>	<b>(58% of total)</b>

**Academic Year 12-13**

<b>Graduates by Age</b>	<b>Academic Headcount</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
25 to 29	597	(24% of total)
30 to 34	344	(14% of total)
35 to 39	217	(9% of total)
40 to 49	270	(11% of total)
50 to 61	123	(5% of total)
62 & over	10	(0% of total)
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,561</b>	<b>(63% of total)</b>

CSN is not able to provide data on the number of graduates who are living in Nevada.

In addition to the adult learners served in academic, for credit coursework, the College of Southern Nevada served the following numbers of adult learners in Adult Education and Family Literacy for the 2012-2013 year:

**Academic Year 2012-2013**

<b>Age Served</b>	<b>Academic Headcount</b>
25 to 44	854
45 to 59	343
60 and over	41
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,238</b>

**Strategies for Recruiting Adult Learners:**

- Recruiters regularly attend mall, church, festival and community events that draw critical masses from the community; i.e. Fiestas Patricas, MLK Parade, Cinco de Mayo, Chinese New Year
- Supply the adult education centers with CSN Informational packages – approximately 60 adult learner graduate every month
- Frequently meet with local employee groups at employer location; i.e. Metro Police Department, Sunrise Hospital, Transportation Security Administration, Bureau of Water Reclamation Department, Hotel/Hospitality/Retail educational fairs
- Recruit from English as a Second Language program completers
- Recruit from Adult Literacy GED program completers

**Strategies for Retaining and Graduating Adult Learners:**

- Once enrolled, adult learners are assigned an academic counselor based on declared major
- Adult learners have unlimited access to tutorial services, including the Math Resource Centers
- Adult learners will be included in the Achieving the Dream pilot project initiated fall 2013 which includes:
  - Mandatory assessment of English and Math in first semester for placement
  - Mandatory orientation
  - Mandatory appointment with academic advisor before registration in spring 2014
  - Provision of a guided pathway for those students declaring the Associate of General Studies degree
  - Re-Entry program works with adult learners in non-traditional and Career and Technical education programs. Single parents, displaced homemakers, and English language learners who are pursuing gender based non-traditional educational programs who meet special eligibility criteria and would benefit from services such as tuition assistance,

transportation assistance, textbook, uniform, equipment and tool assistance are provided these supportive services from Re-Entry.

### **Opportunities for Prior Learning Assessment:**

- Non-Traditional Education policy allows for credit based on work or life experience; including but not limited to military training, apprenticeship, correspondence courses, certificate training, service member opportunity college, extension courses, work experience, and post-secondary proprietary institutions including business colleges. The non-traditional education credits can be applied to a Certificate of Achievement, Associate of General Studies or Associate of Applied Science degrees.
- Military veterans are encouraged to have military experiences/trainings evaluated for awarding of academic credit. Army veterans have credits recorded through the American Council on Education, Air Force through the Community College of the Air Force, Navy/Marines credits are recorded through SMART Sailor-Marine ACE and the Coast Guard Institute. These credits are then transcribed on the CSN transcript. Students are counseled through this process by the Office of Veteran's Affairs and the Registrar.
- Adult learners are deeply embedded into the fabric of the College of Southern Nevada. These adult learners are given the same student support services as other students as we strive to accomplish our mission of "creating opportunities and changing lives through access to quality teaching, services, and experiences that enrich our diverse community".

**GBC**

## **Great Basin College Report for the Board of Regents' December, 2013 Academic and Student Affairs (ASA) Meeting**

During the September 5<sup>th</sup> Academic and Student Affairs (ASA) meeting, Chair Geddes requested a presentation for the December ASA meeting on institutional implementation plans for meeting our Complete College America goals with a focus on strategies for recruiting, retaining, and graduating adult learners.

### **Overall to meet Complete College America goals:**

Great Basin College (GBC) has provided guided pathway programs for many years. This has resulted in high degree completion rates as compared to peers throughout the United States. There are seven specific practices that have led to this success:

- 1) GBC redesigned its General Education program in anticipation of Bachelor's degree programs; it specifically limited the number of classes which could be offered by disciplines for General Education fulfillment. This limitation of choices funnels more students into fewer classes.
- 2) The degree requirements for a number of GBC bachelor's degree programs fulfill associate degree requirements (2+2); students awarded associate degrees and continue on to earn bachelor degrees.
- 3) Seven of GBC's 12 Associate of Applied Science (AAS) degree programs are offered only as cohort programs. Students admitted to these programs are required to proceed together through a set schedule of courses without choice.
- 4) Five GBC Career & Technical Education programs are offered on a 48-week compressed block schedule. Students may receive Certificates of Achievement, AAS degrees or both in these programs. Students in these programs are highly trained for employment in high demand jobs in less than one year.
- 5) GBC ladders AAS programs. The AAS programs are structured for students to be able to complete a Certificate of Achievement or lesser certificates as steps to completing the AAS degree. This laddering allows students to be employable while further advancing their education.
- 6) GBC was the first college in Nevada to create the Bachelor of Applied Science (BAS) degree. Completion of any AAS degree assures admission to the BAS program. This provides pathways for technical students to move into supervisory positions in the workplace or into graduate school.
- 7) Published long-term committed schedules of courses for completing general education and program requirements are available to students and advisors four years in advance. Planning for time and mode of delivery allows students to complete their degrees in concert with employment and other obligations.

### **Strategies to recruit, retain, and graduate adult learners:**

GBC, as well as all of the Nevada System of Higher Education (NSHE) institutions, participated in the *Non-Traditional No More: Policy Solutions for Adult Learners* project that was funded by the Lumina Foundation for Education. The Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE) worked with six states (Arkansas, Colorado, Nevada, New Jersey, North Dakota, and South Dakota). The purpose of the project was to identify students that had earned substantial college credits, but had left college without a degree. Barriers were identified: financial aid concerns, complexity in navigating the re-enrollment process, class scheduling and alternative delivery modes, possible transcripts from multiple institutions with some courses no longer acceptable for certain degrees, anxiety/fear of returning to college, and prior learning assessment of college-level learning gained from work, life, and volunteer experiences. Hence, each NSHE institution named a Non-Traditional or Ready Adult Concierge as a single point of contact. At GBC, the Director of the Admission Advising and Career Center (AACC) was named the Non-Traditional Concierge. We immediately reached out to about 300 former students; a number of whom have since completed their degree. This is an on-going process. The availability of on-line courses has helped greatly. With family and job obligations, including rotating shifts, regular class schedules, at times, do not work well. Also, marketing the value of a college education and working directly with businesses to provide an educated workforce has also been key to recruiting the adult learner. The *Great Basin College Year 7 Accreditation Report, March 4, 2013, Prepared for the Northwest Commission on Colleges and*

*Universities* indicates that 49% of the total student headcount is 25 years and older. Not all of these students, of course, would be considered returning adults.

The GBC Retention Coordinator works with faculty throughout the service area to encourage them, as early as the first three weeks, to send an alert on any student that is experiencing difficulty, shows signs of becoming at-risk, or is in immediate danger of failing. After these “Early Alerts” are received, the Retention Coordinator works closely with students to identify behaviors and obstacles that contribute to failing grades and poor academic performance. Then, necessary steps are taken to provide the student with information, resources, tutoring, and an individualized plan of action to improve academic performance, as necessary. The Retention Coordinator also works closely with the Academic Success Center for tutoring as well as developing and coordinating free student success workshops, aimed at preventing failing grades and poor academic performance before it becomes a problem. These workshops are offered via interactive video and have also been video-streamed for on-line students. Tutoring is also available in Battle Mountain, Elko, Ely, Pahrump, Winnemucca as well as on-line. Through the first Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College & Career Training (TAACCCT) grant, a Career Technical Recruitment/Retention Specialist was hired to recruit and then to provide support to students in CTE programs. Currently, collaborative discussions are also underway to have a Veterans Services Officer on campus, which will be of benefit to many returning veterans.

As part of a Nevada Consortium between GBC, TMCC, and WNC, GBC wrote and received another TAACCCT grant. GBC received \$4,009,331.00, of the \$8,778,829.00 grant. This grant will provide “additional capacity in welding and millwright technology (instructed in accelerated formats)...create infrastructure, processes and content to support innovative technology-enabled learning formats... provide intensive support and advising by an Adult Learner Concierge, encouraging adult learners to complete their program by illustrating the value of stackable credentials and by providing assistance with prior-learning assessment.” The grant also provides for a Pathway Specialist who will work with industry leaders to identify and develop less than 30 credit skill certificates designed to prepare completers to take state, national and/or industry recognized certification or licensing examinations. We are currently in discussions with Department of Employment, Training, and Rehabilitation (DETR) to have a JobConnect expert located in the AACC.

### **Opportunities for Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) and Policy:**

GBC has awarded Prior Learning Assessment credit. The current policy for associate’s or bachelor’s degrees states that up to 30 credits may be awarded immediately through various examination sources (CLEP, AP, Challenge exams) plus an additional 15-credits through non-traditional credit (**P**ea**C**e **O**fficers **S**tandard **T**raining), military training (**A**merican **C**ollege on **E**ducation) as well as a wide variety of past experience approved through the specific department and Academic Standards Committee/Faculty Senate. For the non-traditional credit, policy states that students must complete 15 college credits prior to the assessment taking place. Possibly, with an Adult Learner Concierge, whose time is completely dedicated to working up front with students and assessing their prior learning, this requirement may change. This would provide the non-traditional or adult learner the advantage of knowing ahead of time whether or not their prior learning would be credit-bearing. There are no other specific policies that would address adult learners. GBC is working on more prescriptive advising, etc. These “Guided Pathways to Success” are for all students.

### **DATA**

We cannot conclusively determine, by the Student Information System (PeopleSoft), if or when alumni are no longer enrolled at GBC whether or not they live in the State of Nevada. However, through the newly established Alumni Association, a recent survey sent to former graduates (2009-2013) indicated that 1,480 alumni out of 1,558 alumni identified that they were still living in Nevada. It is important to note that from 2007 to 2012, 57% of GBC graduates (certificates to associates to bachelors) continue their studies at GBC. A number of alumni also continue to take Contract Training and Continuing Education non-college level classes. For Great Basin College, “growing our own” is a strategy to provide a trained workforce for rural Nevada in jobs for which it is otherwise difficult to recruit and retain quality professionals.

**TMCC**



# Strategies for Recruiting and Graduating Adult Learners

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## **I. Adult Learners and TMCC**

Truckee Meadows Community College values adult learners and has a long-standing commitment to serving them. Forty-two percent per cent of our enrollment is comprised of age 25 and older students. This is congruent with national trends. According to the American Council on Education (ACE), adult learners, defined as learners over the age of 25, comprise close to 40 percent of the national college-going population, and span a range of backgrounds and experiences, from Iraq and Afghanistan war veterans and GED credential holders to 55-year-old professionals and skilled workers in career transition.

These adult students are critical to the Nevada workforce, typically are more mature and motivated, and are looking to attain certificate and degree completion. As reported by the Nevada Department of Employment, Training and Rehabilitation (DETR), three-fourths of the current state labor force (more than 900,000 workers) either already have some college credit and/or want to pursue a certificate or degree. In addition, a survey of Nevada state workers in 2008 indicated eighty-six percent wanted to pursue/complete a higher degree. TMCC's class offerings are flexible and designed to meet the scheduling needs of these working adults. In addition, we have greatly expanded online course and degree offerings to provide even greater accessibility for Nevada's nontraditional students.

## **II. Responses to Questions**

### **1. What strategies does your institution pursue for recruiting, retaining and graduating adult learners**

TMCC participated in the NSHE WICHE/Lumina Foundation Grant: Nontraditional No More (2008-2011) and learned from NSHE institutional interactions, as well as working with five other states engaged in the same grant. The grant experience was significant for TMCC and reshaped its approach to nontraditional student recruitment, retention and completion. Specifically, we have adopted four key strategies:

#### **STRATEGY #1: READY ADULT LEARNER**

##### **o Focus on the "Ready Adult Learner" who is most likely to complete**

This type of Adult Learner is defined as an individual who has earned a significant number of prior college credits before leaving postsecondary education without earning a credential. Again, based on the DETR data for Nevada's workforce, we know we have a significant number of adult learners – not just with some college credit – but rather, with a substantial number of college credits. TMCC's strategy of focusing on this group of students validates the credits earned and leads the student to a completed certificate or degree.

- **Monitoring nontraditional students who “stop out” for one or more semesters**

TMCC has adapted the Lumina Foundation national criteria and regularly gather data from our own enrolled student history. We search for potential adult students based on the following criteria: Students who 1) enrolled during the past five years, 2) have earned a significant number of credits – at least 30 – through transfer and taking classes at TMCC, 3) are in good standing (GPA), 4) have no holds on their account, and 5) have a declared degree. Our most recent data was obtained in June 2013 and produced 1,846 students meeting these criteria. We are currently focusing on 476 students who have already earned at least 60 credits, but will reach out to all of these 1846 students.

- **Development and adoption of a an adult learner single point for re-entry or “concierge” model to assist adult learners to navigate through the higher education journey and to serve as a campus resource and advocate for adult learners**

Students who have stopped out rarely know what they need to do to return to college. Most of these students are also self-advised and intimidated by the policies and procedures of the college. Under the prior grant, Nevada institutions developed the “concierge model” which establishes a single contact for returning nontraditional students. The concierge works with the student to determine the best pathway to completion. In addition, the concierge serves as a campus advocate for adult learners and promotes greater flexibility for requirements such as catalog year, appropriate waivers, and course substitutions.

- **Reverse Transfer** Per Board of Regents policy, TMCC works with UNR to identify students who qualify for reverse transfer status. Students enrolled at UNR that have completed the requirements for an associate’s degree are given the opportunity to receive that degree.

## **STRATEGY #2: TRANSFER CREDIT**

TMCC accepts up to 45 transfer credits from regionally accredited institutions. Within those transfer credits, TMCC accepts up to 15 ACE-certified credits, particularly important for veterans. Transfer credits can greatly reduce the time needed to complete a certificate or degree and validate the academic work the student has already completed elsewhere. TMCC has recently streamlined the transfer request and review process to improve response time in service to students.

## **STRATEGY #3: ADULT-FRIENDLY SERVICES AND IMPROVED ACCESS TO HIGHER EDUCATION**

In additional to the concierge model, TMCC has a number of programs which work to make re-entry easier for students.

- Established successful support programs to prepare new adult students, such as Veterans' Upward Bound Program
- Re-Entry and Job Prep Center
- New Skills Centers for Mathematics and English to provide preparatory support for returning nontraditional students
- New Veterans Center with services and a gathering space for student veterans
- An extensive set of online course offerings and degrees (19 degree options)
- New Skills Certificates which offer a quicker track into the workplace for adults

#### **STRATEGY #4: GRANT ACTIVITIES IN SUPPORT OF ADULT LEARNERS**

Key to the college's success in working with adults have been a number of externally-funded grants.

- The aforementioned Nontraditional No More Grant from the Lumina Foundation
- Establishment of NSHE's first fully online accelerated program (FastTrack) with four AAS degree options – and a 2+2 partnership with NSC for a BAS in Management. The FastTrack program was designed specifically to support nontraditional students in the Nevada workforce. Funded by the USDOE, the initial student cohort attained a 94% retention rate.
- The Displaced Homemakers and Educational Partnerships grants provide advising, assessment, and job preparation as well as assistance in identifying barriers to success and finding resources to address the barriers.
- TAACCCT3 grant – a recently-funded three-year consortium grant (TMCC, GBC and WNC) focuses on nontraditional students, workforce development and placement. Of particular importance, each campus is funded for a full-time Pathways Specialist and an Adult Learner Concierge – the two positions will work in tandem to recruit, advise, and support nontraditional students to certificate completion in Manufacturing and other high need fields.
- Workforce Development (Business and Industry) provides non-credit training and recurring training opportunities for nontraditional students in support of new skills development, promotion, and career migration opportunities.

#### **2. What opportunities are available for adult learners for Prior Learning Assessment (PLA)?**

**PRIOR LEARNING ASSESSMENT OPTIONS** Adult Learners have several options at TMCC for confirming previous education or work-related experience. Assessment options are of special importance to adult learners as this is a proven method for expediting the time needed to certificate or degree completion. Some of the options utilized by TMCC include:

- College-Level Examination Program (CLEP)

- Challenge Exams administered by individual departments
- CAPE (Foreign Language) Test
- ACCUPLACER for Math, English and Reading credit and placement
- College Board Advanced Placement Examination (AP)
- ACE Military Credit
- ACE Corporate Credit
- International Baccalaureate (IB) credit

**3. Are there any policy recommendations beyond the current policy or credit by examination to support adult learners (be specific)?**

TMCC has adopted several institution-level policy changes to improve service to adult learners. Based on our experience of the past five years, at the system level, there are several revised policies that would assist nontraditional students. Recommendations include:

- Grant more flexibility to individual institutions in determining:
  - Appropriate catalog year for graduation
  - Appropriate expansion of class substitutions and waivers when learning outcomes can be guaranteed
  - More relaxed institutional residency requirements to count other NSHE credits for residency
  - Explicit strategies related to institutional ability to accept credits earned elsewhere, such as through MOOCS, when examinations are in place
- Make Adult Learners a priority for NSHE

**4. Requested Data**

TMCC's Alumni Office and Office of Institutional Research, Analysis and Effectiveness are working together to reach out to graduating students and alumni in a coordinated fashion. TMCC annually conducts a Graduate Outcomes Survey, as well as Graduate Follow-up survey administered one year after graduation. These surveys are great mechanisms to solicit students' feedback immediately upon graduation; however, they are not adequate tools for long-term tracking of graduates. Plans are underway to find a way to collect better data going forward and to investigate the institution gaining access to the DETR database.

Currently, we know that TMCC graduates from 2009 – 2013 total 4,788. Of that number 4,496 indicate Nevada contact addresses in our database (94 percent). 1,401 of these enrolled in at least one class post-graduate at TMCC. Based on the Economic Impact Study conducted for TMCC in 2011, 95 percent of TMCC graduates remain in Nevada.

As indicated earlier in the report, we have been able to identify 1,846 recent “drop outs” who did not graduate and are being contacted to offer services to return and complete certificates or degrees.

**WNC**

## **Western Nevada College Response to Request for Information on Strategies for Recruiting and Graduating Adult Learners**

Student success is the number one priority at Western Nevada College. We have a wide array of initiatives to promote degree completion among our adult learners. We award credit for work experience for 1-6 credits, depending on the hours. Our technology faculty places them at an industry site and they earn credit in the area of study. The students can also challenge a class for credit based on their experiences. The instructor gives them a final exam along with required skill application assignments. If the student passes both of those then they can gain credit for specific technology classes.

The college has put considerable time and effort into insuring the access and success of all our adult learners, but has devoted special attention to our student-veterans. Recognizing the unique needs and life circumstances of these men and women, WNC has entered into a partnership with the Veterans Administration through the V.I.T.A.L. grant. This grant aims to promote the successful integration of veterans into higher education. As a result of this collaborative, cooperative partnership, the college has been able to create a Veterans Resource Center housed in the Cedar Building, a central location on the Carson City campus.

### **1. WNC Veterans Resource Center:**

The Veterans Resource Center is a “green zone” or safe place for our student-veterans to congregate. Staffed entirely by Veterans Administration student workers and coordinated by a retired Marine officer who teaches at the college, the center offers a variety of services to help veterans integrate into civilian life generally, and integrate into the college specifically. A key component of the military-civilian and academic transition process is the establishment of a peer-to-peer mentorship program. Peer mentors are student veterans who have successfully negotiated the first year transition to college, and who then share their experiences with new student veterans from both the military-civilian and academic perspectives. The center is coordinated by a retired Marine Corps Major (and adjunct professor at the college) who has volunteered his time and boundless energy to serve as the point person for the “Veterans Resource Center.” He has guided and directed the development of the center and training of the four work-study veteran students. Major Burns has developed the trust and confidence of the academic faculty and can thus interact with them on behalf of student-veterans in a helpful manner. He has reached out to the American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars, Marine Corps League, and Vietnam Veterans Association local chapters, and has received their enthusiastic support.

### **2. Veterans Orientation:**

The volunteer Veterans Resource Center coordinator has worked with the college Director of Counseling Services to design and implement a Veterans Orientation. All new veterans are required to attend this orientation prior to registering for their first semester of classes. This program has been so successful that it was recently mentioned by President Obama as an example of the type of support he expects colleges to provide to veterans. Another component that is integral to the success of student veterans has been the decision to identify one counselor to assist all student veterans. This decision allows a student veteran to develop a relationship with this counselor for their time at WNC. It also enables the counselor to get to know student veterans individually while tracking their progress. Additionally, it allows Major Burns and Ms. Stevens to develop a team advisement approach, ensuring that WNC is operating at maximum efficiency to ensure the student veteran’s success.

### **3. Veterans Cohort:**

The program has been modeled after the college’s successful Latino Student Cohorts, which rely heavily on partnerships. Major Burns has worked with our College Success faculty to create a section of EPY 150, “College Success” that is specifically tailored to veterans. Major Burns team-teaches this course with Susan Priest, our lead EPY 150 instructor. They have collectively created a “College Success for Veterans” course that serves as a weekly progress check for the new veteran students. A majority of the students in the class are also in Major Burns’ developmental English class, a six credit course, so three-quarters of the credits in their first semester are supervised closely to maximize both student success and the military-civilian transition, while allowing for immediate intervention should the need arise.

### **4. Center Staffing:**

- a. Four Veterans Administration-funded work-study students representing the United States Army, Navy, Air Force and Marine Corps provide a minimum of 40 hours per week of coverage in the center. They have been trained as peer mentors and help other student-veterans with problems and concerns they may have in

navigating the higher education experience. Additionally, they have been trained through the offices of Financial Assistance and Admissions and Records so they can to provide assistance to veterans having difficulty with these student services processes.

b. A Veterans Administration-funded social worker provides up to 16 hours per week of on-site personal and crisis counseling to our student-veterans. Veterans may make an appointment with her through our counseling office, or simply drop in at the center. Additionally, the social worker has actively participated in collaborative outreach efforts hosted by the V.I.T.A.L. grant and the college. Several campus barbecues have served to introduce veterans to the V.A. and college staff, and have helped to break down barriers between these groups.

c. Liaison with the Financial Assistance Office. The Veterans Certifying Official is now directly connected to the Veterans Resource Center. Two-way communication is open and timely, and any issues are resolved quickly. Starting with the Spring 2014 semester, student veterans will first report to the Veteran’s Resource Center to initiate their paperwork. Trained student workers will review the applications before they are submitted to the Financial Assistance Office. This reduces waiting time and allows the Financial Assistance Office to focus on certifying the student veterans.

As a result of these diverse efforts, Western Nevada College is listed as a “military friendly institution” and has developed an excellent reputation among student veterans. Comment cards are available in the Financial Assistance Office and in the Veterans Resource Center. Their feedback indicates that the college is providing an overwhelmingly positive experience to this population.

**Data on Adult Learners and Nevadans**

1. Number of alumni who have graduated from your institution in the last 5 years and are living in Nevada

**WNC Certificates and Degrees Awarded by Fiscal Year**

	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Total Degrees Awarded	388	474	494	495	522
Total Awarded to Nevadans	339	441	461	475	494
Total Awarded to Adult Learners	232	280	287	288	289
Percent Awarded to Nevadans	87%	93%	93%	96%	95%
Percent Awarded to Adult Learners	60%	59%	58%	58%	55%

Notes: 'Nevadans' are defined on the basis of the most currently available address which may represent the time of graduation or later enrollment and correspondence. 'Adult Learners' are defined as students who graduated at age 25 or older.

In five years, 2094 students have graduated with certificates and degrees from WNC. Of those, 1937 (93%) had a Nevada address as the most current address on record.

2. Number of alumni who took at least one course in the last 5 years and are no longer enrolled in your institution, but are living in Nevada

A total of 18,334 students have enrolled in at least one credit class at WNC during the last five years, but are not currently enrolled in classes as of fall 2013. Of those, 17,627 or 96% had Nevada addresses as the most current address on record.