Adult Learner Recruitment and Retention Best Practices

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Saint Paul Campus • Minneapolis Campus • Midway Center • Brooklyn Park Site
Agenda

• What is an Adult Learner?

• Where do we start?

• What next?

• The Plan

• “Case Study” – A Non-Traditional Institution
What is an Adult Learner?

• Several Definitions

• For the purposes of this presentation…
  – Adult Leaners are defined as anyone who is not a first-time, full-time, straight out of high school, college student. This means that any student who identifies as one or more of the following categories is non-traditional:
    • Part-Time
    • Returning (Re-Entry)
    • Immigrant
    • Commuter
    • Veteran
    • Works Full-Time While Enrolled
    • Has Dependents Other Than A Spouse/Partner
    • Does Not Have A High School Diploma (Completed A GED Or Equivalent Or Did Not Finish High School)

• Why is it important to define what this means for your campus?
• What are the needs and motivations of an adult learner who comes to your college?

• What is the greatest anxiety of an adult learner who comes to your college?

• What is the greatest need of an adult learner to help them succeed and graduate from your college?
Where do we start?

- Is your campus read?
  - Evaluate your campus
  - Situational
    - Job
    - Health Problems
    - Financial Problems
    - Legal Problems
    - Personal or Family Problems
- Dispositional
  - Expectations
  - Self-esteem
  - Level of Family Support
  - Past Educational Experience
- Institutional
  - “Red Tape”
  - Program or Application Fees
  - Scheduling
  - Policy or Procedures
  - Enrollment Process
Where do we start?

• Adult participation is shaped by access to program information; recruitment should be viewed as multi-functional process of drawing people into programs.

• An institution must market programs effectively providing relevant and detailed information about programs.
  – Web-based
  – Printed
  – “Word-of-Mouth”
What next?

- Identify realistic measurable goals
- How you will measure success and accountability
- Develop a committee/leadership team
- Identify partners and key stakeholders
“Case Study”
A Non-Traditional university

• 97% Transfer Students & Adult Learners

• More than 2/3 transfer directly from Metro Area Community Colleges
Metropolitan State: a Unique Student Profile

% of Fall 2005 Entering Cohort

- FT/First-Time
- PT/First-Time
- FT/Transfer
- PT/Transfer
- High School
- Other

- Metropolitan State
- Other MnSCU State Universities
Metropolitan State Transfer Students Persisted at Higher Rates than Other MnSCU State Universities

Persistence Rates – Fall 2005 Cohorts

- Metro State Full-Time/Transfers
- Other MnSCU State U's FT/Tsf
- Metro State Part-Time/Transfers
- Other MnSCU State U's PT/Tsf
Metro Area Colleges Provided 73% of Metropolitan State’s Transfer Students in the Fall Term
Why is Degree Completion Important for Adults?

- Close the skills gap and meet the workforce needs of the US
- State allocation funding continues to shift toward outcomes
Twin Cities has a Substantial Market of Potential Bachelor’s Degree Completers

- **MSP Residents Not In School, Earned Some College, But No Degree**
- **% of Peer Age Group Holding Bachelor's Degree or In School**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Groups</th>
<th>Number of MSP Residents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18-24</td>
<td>30,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-34</td>
<td>100,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>35-44</td>
<td>140,000</td>
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<td>45-54</td>
<td>160,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55-64</td>
<td>160,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65+</td>
<td>150,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Recruitment

Process begins with program information…

• Promotional Information and communication that prompt participants contact

• Must be followed by prompt response, one study has shown that the most common reason for adults not to enroll was because of poor follow up (24 Hours)

• Items should be inexpensive and eye-catching, basic information that speaks to potential clients for example “It’s fun, it’s free, it’s local and there’s assistance with child care”

• Should stress the non-school nature of programs

• Develop and leverage partnership with organizations and groups that serve adult learners

• Choose.metrostate.edu…
Marketing

• Rooted in mission statement

• Develop measurable program objectives

• Identify discrete market segments

• Develop integrated marketing plans that mix numerous media outlets and specific programs for specific market segments

• Conduct promotional activities such as “Open Houses or Information Sessions” not only on your campus but at other locations as well, targeting specific demographics. Partner activities with larger events to attract a captive audience.

• Separate marketing strategies for segments, including differential marketing channels and offers.

• Never make assumptions about your audience always be informed.

• Help cultivate career and educational goals from the beginning. In-depth interactive goal-setting activities will help students gain confidence, motivation, and will help students identify what areas that want to pursue.
What Mattered for Student Retention at Metropolitan State?

1 - Prior College Credits
2 - Initial Credit Load
3 - First Term Academic Progress
Prior College Credits & First Term Credit Load were Early Indicators of Persistence Rates

Transferring Over 20 Credits
+ Full-Time Enrollment
= Higher Persistence and Lower Time-to-Degree
Number of Prior College Credits & First Term Credit Load Made a Big Difference

**Six-Year Persistence Rates - Fall 2003/05 Cohorts**

Persistence Rate to 6th Spring

**Mean Time-To-Completion - Graduates from Fall 2003/05 Cohorts**

Mean Years to Graduation

Number of Prior College Credits

[Graphs showing persistence rates and mean time-to-completion for different numbers of prior college credits.]
First Term Academic Performance & Next Term Enrollment Status Subsequently Indicate Persistence Odds

1 First Term Grade Point Average Mattered
2 Changes in Enrollment Status Mattered
Enrollment Status from 1st Term to 2nd Term

- 67% of the Students Kept the Same Enrollment Status from the First Term
- 15% of the Students Switched Enrollment Status
- 18% Did Not Attend the 2nd Term
Changes in Enrollment Status Mattered for Persistence Rates

Students Who Maintained Enrollment Status
Persistence Rates: Fall 2003/07 Cohorts

Students Who Changed Enrollment Status
Persistence Rates: Fall 2003/07 Cohorts

First Term Grade Point Average

- Under 2.0
- 2.0 to 2.99
- 3.0 to 3.49
- 3.50+

4th Fall Persistence Rate

- Stayed Full-Time
- Stayed Part-Time
- Changed Part-Time to Full-Time
- Changed Full-Time to Part-Time
First Term Academic Performance Affected Subsequent Enrollments

Students NOT Enrolling 2nd Term: Fall 2003/07 Cohorts

- Full-Time 1st Term
- Part-Time 1st Term
- % Stop-outs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Full-Time 1st Term</th>
<th>Part-Time 1st Term</th>
<th>% Stop-outs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&lt;2.0</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-2.99</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-3.49</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5+</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
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% of Students Not Enrolling 2nd Term: 50%
Stop-out Activity was Frequent

25% of the Students had 1 or More Stop-Out Terms

Distinguishing Stop-outs from Drop-outs is Important
Retention

• Retention is not separate from recruitment!!
• Academic Affairs
  – Faculty Training
  – Curriculum and Pedagogy adjustments (Competency and Adult Learner Theory)
  – Class Offerings
    • When do you offer classes?
    • How do you offer classes?
  – Intrusive Advising
  – Student Tracking and Communication - CRM
  – Partnership Programs
  – Career Exploration (Experiential Learning)
Retention

• Initial educational planning and life assessment
• Written two/four year degree plan with individualized degree option
• Credit for Prior learning assessments
• Accelerated courses with one class meeting per week
Retention

- Student Support
  - Support Services
    - Diverse Offerings
    - When do you close?
  - Communication Campaigns
  - Intrusive Advising
  - Orientation
    - Online Orientation/GAR
  - Student Ambassador Program
  - Student Senate
  - Child Care
  - Case Manager
Retention

- Shared Services
- Application Process
- First Term Programming (Metro 101, Student Success Day)
- Financial Aid (Aid for Part-time Students, Scholarships)
- Designate Admissions Counselors
What Seemed to Matter for Retention, But Really Didn’t

1 Race/Ethnicity
2 Age
3 Family Income
Apparent Achievement Gap Based on Race/Ethnicity Disappears

Gap Existed for First Term Academic Performance
But Had No Effect on Persistence Rates When Other Factors Were Considered
First Term Academic Progress Gap
Based on Race/Ethnicity

First Term Academic Progress

% with Satisfactory Academic Progress

- White Students
- Students-of-Color

Timeline: Fall 2003 to Fall 2011
Gap Narrows Considerably for 2nd Fall Persistence

2nd Fall Persistence Rates

% Persisting 2nd Fall

Fall 2003  Fall 2004  Fall 2005  Fall 2006  Fall 2007  Fall 2008  Fall 2009  Fall 2010

White Students  Students-of-Color
Students-of-Color Narrowed the Gap Because They Persisted at Higher Rates Regardless of 1st Term Academic Progress
The Remaining Achievement Gap in 2\textsuperscript{nd} Fall Term May Be Explained by the Complex Effects of Family Income

A. Students-of-Color P/C Rates Based on Income

B. Low Income Students P/C Rates Based on Race/Ethnicity

C. White Students P/C Rates Based on Income

D. Higher Income Students P/C Rates Based on Race/Ethnicity
An Apparent Achievement Gap in Graduation Rates Was Largely Due to Differences in Prior College Credits
Persistence Rates Based on Age Groups

• Related to Differences in Prior College Credits, Not Age
• Few Students Under Age of 20 Enrolled at Metropolitan State. From 2003/05 Cohorts:
  • Only 6% of the Students were 20 or Younger
  • Only 23% of Them Transferred 20+ Credits, Compared to 90% of Older Students
  • Only 35% of Them Persisted to 6th Spring, compared to 63% of 20-25 Age Group
  • More of Them Transferred to Other Universities than Older Students (38% of Students Under 20 Transferred Out Compared to Less than 20% of Older Students)
Family Income Mattered in Earlier Years, But Not in Recent Years

2nd Fall Persistence Rates by Income Level

- Higher Income
- Low Income (Pell Recipient)
What Did Not Matter for Student Retention at Metropolitan State?

Two Characteristics that Showed No Relationship to Retention (Despite National Trends):

- Gender
- Parental Education
Metropolitan State Misrepresented by its Official Graduation Rate

Although Few Students Enroll as First-Time Students, they are used for the official graduation rate measurement.
Persistence Rates for Students Included in “Official” Measure of Graduation Rates

- Metro State FT/First-Time
- Other MnSCU State Universities FT/First-Time
Things to think about:
Why the “Official” Graduation Rate is Problematic

- Widely Publicized Metric
  - Included in President’s College Scorecard

- Accounts for Less than 5% of Metropolitan State’s students
  - Accounts for Majority of Students Attending Traditional Universities

- Fails to Ask About Student’s Prior College Experience
  - Although First-Time Students may not be a Good Fit at Metropolitan State, Transfer Students are a Good Fit. Yet, no Success Rates for Transfer Students are Published.
What Mattered for Student Retention at Metropolitan State University

• What Mattered the Most
  – Prior College Experience
  – Initial Credit Load & Subsequent Changes
  – First Term Grade Point Average

• What Seemed to Matter, But Didn’t Matter Much
  – Race/Ethnicity
  – Age
  – Family Income

• What Clearly Did Not Matter
  – Gender
  – Parental Education
Vision Statement
Metropolitan State University, a member of the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system, will be the premier urban, public, comprehensive system university in the Twin Cities metropolitan area and will provide high quality, affordable educational programs and services in a student-centered environment. The faculty, staff and students of Metropolitan State will reflect the area’s rich diversity, build a culturally competent and anti-racist learning community, and demonstrate an unwavering commitment to civic engagement.

Mission Statement
Metropolitan State University is a comprehensive urban university committed to meeting the higher education needs of the Twin Cities and greater metropolitan population. The university will provide accessible, high quality liberal arts, professional, and graduate education to the citizens and communities of the metropolitan area, with continued emphasis on underserved groups, including adults and communities of color. Within the context of lifelong learning, the university will build on its national reputation for innovative student-centered programs that enable students from diverse backgrounds to achieve their educational goals. The university is committed to academic excellence and community partnerships through curriculum, teaching, scholarship and services designed to support an urban mission.

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