Non-traditional No More: Policy Solutions for Adult Learners

WICHE-facilitated Meeting
Colorado Department of Higher Education
May 4, 2009
Non-traditional No More: Policy Solutions for Adult Learners

- Lumina Foundation for Education
- Two-year project
- Funded through September 2009
Project Goals

- To increase access and success for the adult learner population in postsecondary education

- To stimulate and guide policy and practice changes that will make it easier for “ready adults” – those who are just shy of having enough credits to obtain a degree but haven’t yet returned to college – to earn their diplomas.
Working Groups – Year 2

Year 1 Format
• Data
• Academic Affairs
• Communications
• Financing and Financial Aid
• Student Services

Year 2 Format
• Combining Financing/Financial Aid with Student Services
Pilot Projects

• Funded through Making Opportunity Affordable
• Three projects seek to put NTNM work into practice
  – Adams State
  – CU-Boulder
  – Metro State
Project Timeline

• WICHE-facilitated meeting (today)
• Third intrastate meeting by **July 31, 2009**
• Team leader meeting **September 16-17, 2009**
State Project Goal

- To stimulate systematic and purposeful discussion, identify barriers, and craft changes to policy and practice in postsecondary education to increase the adult learners’ access to higher education, persistence, and degree completion.
Goals of the Day

Moving from Planning to Policy and Practice

• Review national and state environment for non-traditional students.

• Review and address state- and institution-level barriers identified during year one of the NTNM project.

• Examine institutions’ efforts to implement ready-adult programs and develop a plan to use lessons learned for improving state environment for adult learners.
Goals of the Day (cont’d)

Moving from Planning to Policy and Practice

• Develop a plan to sustain efforts to serve non-traditional students.

• Establish plans for translating lessons learned during project into improved state and institutional policies and practices.

• Facilitate an exchange of knowledge between NTNM project participants and CDHE-funded pilot projects.
Barriers and Challenges

DATA

• Many “ready adults” not in SURDS
• Need non-SURDS information (financial aid, employment, etc)
• Lack of information and data on reasons students leave
FINANCING/FINANCIAL AID

- System designed for traditional students
- Lack of information and counseling
- Loans not always viewed as a viable strategy
- Employer plans not fully effective
- Financial “holds” from years ago
- Credit caps on financial aid
- Lack of financial incentives for success
STUDENT SERVICES

- Fiscal constraints = no new services
- Child, elder care
- Transportation
- Accessibility of services (hours and locations)
- Special needs of returning military
- Lack of adult-specific retention strategies
- For first-generation students, lack of “how-to” knowledge
Barriers and Challenges (cont’d)

ACADEMIC AFFAIRS

- Inconsistent/non-transparent valuation of prior learning
- Inconsistent transfer of credits
- Lack of centralized tool for transcript analysis
- Low previous GPAs may prevent students from reenrolling
- Age of credits
- 30-hour residency requirement for graduation
- Course scheduling
Barriers and Challenges (cont’d)

COMMUNICATIONS

• Adults not included in “College in Colorado” (changing soon)
• COF marketing not geared to ready adults
• Services and programs must be in place before marketing
• Unclear whether efforts should be centralized, localized, or both
• Many candidates for these programs are not captured in the data efforts
Project Challenges

GAPS IDENTIFIED IN YEAR ONE:

• Lack of information about current institutional policies and practices
  – Need for policy/program audits to see how target population is currently served
• Lack of market research to target communications efforts
• Undecided between collaboration and decentralization
• Services and programs must be in place before new marketing campaigns take place
• Cannot currently identify “ready adults” not in SURDS
Web Resources: Coming Soon!

- Non-Traditional No More website:
  - Group discussions
  - Question forum
  - News and research relating to non-traditional students.
  - Sites for each state

www2.wiche.edu/group/ntnm
Project Contacts

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