AGELESS LEARNING

Plus 50 In the News

- “Plus 50 Encore Completion Program Grant,” The Daily Herald, March 7, 2013
- “Salt Lake College Joins Program Training Boomers for Jobs,” eMissourian, March 1, 2013
- “NCC Offers New Career Options for Adults,” The Hour, February 23, 2013

Pell Grant Eligibility Expansion Under Consideration, Higher Education Institutions Sought for Experiment

A new experimental initiative by the U.S. Department of Education is examining the potential expansion of the Pell Grant program, with two of the planned experiments potentially impacting plus 50 students returning to college to re-train for new careers. One option being considered would expand Pell grant eligibility to students with bachelor’s degrees who enroll in vocational or career programs. Another option would expand eligibility to students who enroll in certain short-term training programs. Higher education institutions and especially community, career, and technical colleges were asked to indicate their interest in participating during the 2013–2014 award year in one of these experiments by April 30, 2013.

AARP Foundation Women’s Scholarship Program: Applications Due March 30

The AARP Foundation Women’s Scholarship Program is helping win back opportunity for low-income, 50-plus women by funding education, training, and skills upgrades that can lead to better employment and increased financial security for women and their families. Applicants must be a woman who is age 50-plus by March 30, low-income, pursuing a technical or vocational education, an associate degree, or a bachelor's degree, and enrolled in a U.S. Department of Education accredited school or technical program within 6 months of the scholarship award date. Applications are accepted through March 30, 2013.
The Occupational Outlook Handbook: Now Available in Spanish
Got students seeking new career paths? The Spanish language version of *The Occupational Outlook Handbook* is now available from the U.S. Department of Labor. The handbook covers hundreds of occupations and describes what people working in these jobs do. It also discusses what types of training and education are needed and employment projections from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, so students can include these factors in their decision-making.

Understanding Labor Market & Workforce Statistics: Free Podcasts
The U.S. Employment and Training Administration has issued a new series of podcast instruction guides to help you identify and use labor market and workforce statistics. The presentations are written simply, and presume no previous subject matter or statistical knowledge. They should prove helpful for a broad variety of audiences and purposes, including grant applications; targeting growing industries and occupations; pinpointing labor market hardship; state and regional planning; and assessing program effectiveness. Each is comprised of a 10-minute podcast and a 2–3 page transcript. Some provide an overview of a topic (like unemployment data), while others explain in a step-by-step manner how to obtain a specific type of data or to use a specific data tool. Each topical presentation includes basic definitions, a brief historical background, links to the most important sources (especially for state and local data), and practical tips on how to interpret and use the data and avoid common mistakes. The tool- and data-specific presentations are designed to enable you to obtain useful data by the end of the lesson.

“Jobs Market is Improving, But the Long-Term Unemployed Still Can’t Catch a Break”
The economy added 236,000 jobs and unemployment fell to 7.7% last month, down from 7.9% in January, according to the Labor Department's latest monthly jobs report. But the percentage of Americans who have been out of work for 27 weeks or more has remained near record highs, says this article by *National Journal*. The number of long-term unemployed people grew to 4.8 million in February from 4.7 million in January. The author reports on a study that found that “the long-term unemployed were more likely than those who were out of work for brief periods to have sought professional help for emotional issues, and to report decreased self-respect. Being out of work for six months or longer took a toll, in other words, and not just on pocketbooks.”

AARP’s New Workforce Profiles Tool Shines a Light on Workers in Your State
The new AARP Workforce Profiles tool enables anyone to access all sorts of data specific to workers age 40+ in their state with the click of a button. You can compare states and regions, look at national figures, learn what types of industries are hiring older workers, and learn about work transportation, gender, income, health insurance, and other data.
Free April 10 Webinar on Portfolio Assessment
The Council for Adult and Experiential Education will offer a free webinar on April 10, 2013, at 1:00 p.m. (CT). This webinar explains portfolio assessment—a way to show that what an employee learned is college-level, and therefore has competencies that qualify him or her for a particular position. The webinar will cover what types of learning can be evaluated for college credit, how to document this learning in an online portfolio, who is qualified to assess the learning and determine whether it is college-level, and how the credits can be accepted at colleges, including public, private and for-profit colleges. Registration is required and available online.

Resources to Support Your Plus 50 Program

COMPLETION

“Marketing in the Era of College Completion”
College completion efforts are impacting how colleges market their programs to both internal and external audiences. Efforts at Joliet Junior College, Moraine Valley Community College, and Kankakee Community College are highlighted in this Community College Times article.

LEARNING

Regulating Online Postsecondary Education: State Issues and Options
Online courses and programs have become a much more prominent part of postsecondary education in the United States in recent years. Today, more than 90% of public 2- and 4-year institutions offer distance learning opportunities to their students, an increase of 10 percentage points from a decade ago. This report from the National Governors Association recommends Governors consider calling for a review of current state laws and regulations surrounding authorization of online postsecondary education programs. The authors encourage governors to ask questions in three key areas; (1) purpose: what is the state trying to accomplish through the authorization process? (2) requirements: what is required of institutions seeking authorization? How do the requirements relate to the purpose(s) of authorization? And, (3) capacity and cost: does the state have a sustainable model for authorization, assuming that the number of online institutions and programs seeking authorization will continue to grow? Could economies of scale be realized by joining with other states to authorize online institutions and programs?
A Guide for Using Labor Market Data to Improve Student Success
This blog posting highlights an Aspen Institute guide offering concrete examples of how five community colleges have used labor market data to assess educational programs, better align them with employment opportunities, and inform students. In addition, the guide describes six specific data sources that colleges can access today to understand relevant labor market demands as well as the employment/earning outcomes of their graduates. In the months and years ahead, ever increasing amounts of employment and earnings data will add to what we know about the value of a college education. The authors hope that this guide will help colleges understand this data and assess and improve the quality of education they are providing students.