AGELESS LEARNING

In the News

Plus 50 In the News

- “Programs for Baby Boomer Job Seekers,” Evolllution, June 30, 2014
- “Education Initiative Helps Baby Boomers Find Alternatives to Retirement,” Wilmington Biz, June 25, 2014
- “CFCC to Offer More Courses for Baby Boomers,” Port City Daily, June 24, 2014
- “Computer Boot Camps Help Plus 50 Students,” Community College Spotlight, June 24, 2014
Reflecting on the Plus 50 Initiative
As we distribute our 150th Plus 50 Initiative e-newsletter today, we want to pause and take stock of how far we have come in the last 6 years. When we started the Plus 50 Initiative in June 2008, we worked with 15 pilot community colleges to create a road map that would help other colleges offer educational programs to meet the needs of plus 50 adults. We learned what worked—and what didn’t. We retooled our entire initiative and its focus when the Great Recession brought unemployed baby boomers to community colleges seeking to update their skills and train for new jobs. We wrote and piloted a host of materials and refined our mentor/mentee model to assist colleges in developing their programs. We created the Standards of Excellence to highlight essential elements we found in successful plus 50 college programs, and we rapidly published a host of toolkits and marketing materials to help community colleges grow and improve their programs for nontraditional students over the age of 50. We collected resources for an online resource library for other colleges to also use. We built a YouTube channel filled with student stories and tips, and we evaluated our programs rigorously. The last 6 years have been incredible, and we’ve seen remarkable growth in our programs and the colleges we have worked with. The 18 colleges participating in the Plus 50 Completion Strategy met their completion goals 2 years early, and we rejoiced in their success. We announced in 2012 plans to triple in size to 100 additional colleges. Today, those 100 community colleges are working to train 10,000 baby boomers for new jobs in health care, education, and social services, while helping them complete certificates or degrees. Eighty-nine percent of students participating in AACC’s Plus 50 Initiative told an independent evaluator that college workforce training helped them acquire new job skills, and 72% attributed landing a job to such training. Congratulations on 6 years, Plus 50 Community Colleges!

Lessons from the Field: Colleges Offer Tips on Conducting Needs Assessment and Ongoing Evaluation
Community colleges in the Plus 50 Encore Completion Program recently submitted their latest progress reports to AACC. A tradition of the Plus 50 program is sharing tips and great ideas among colleagues. Below are some comments and approaches from community colleges in the program for conducting needs assessment and ongoing evaluation, which is a Standard of Excellence for plus 50 programs. We will feature more tips in our next newsletter.
At Tulsa Community College in Oklahoma, plus 50 organizers conducted a needs assessment and learned from plus 50 students in its health care programs helpful information. They provided answers to the question, “What would have made your education experience easier when you first entered or returned to college?” The highest ranked responses were “test taking strategies” and “assistance in choosing classes.” “Other” comments/responses filled in by survey responders were “more flexible class schedules” and “better guidance in course sequencing.”

At Arapahoe Community College in Colorado, plus 50 program leaders looked for differences in needs assessment responses. They examined the expectations of plus 50 students who had previous college experience and those with no college experience at all. They found that special attention needed to be provided new students with no college experience when they are going through enrollment and financial aid processes.

South Arkansas Community College found it was important to review the age and income of plus 50 adults within the college’s service area and to see what their needs are. The assessment found that females age 50–64 and 65–74 in income levels of $25,000–$29,000 and $35,000–$39,000 are interested in courses and career services. The assessment also revealed that females in the age group 50–64 with income levels of $60,000–$74,999 are interested in taking courses that can help them find employment, or change or advance their career. The male respondents in the area, age 50–64 with income levels between $45,000–$49,000, are interested in taking courses that can help them find employment, or change or advance their career, while the male respondents in other income levels, both higher and lower, and in all other age ranges are not interested in courses/career services or training for employment. “It helps me as a program director to know where we should focus our efforts so that they are more efficient,” said Tara Anglin.

To get more resources to help your plus 50 program, plus 50 grantees should check C-PAD within phase 2.

**The Economist-Lumina Foundation Challenge: Bridge the Gap Between the Workforce & Higher Education**

The Economist and the Lumina Foundation have issued a challenge for ideas on bridging the gap between the workforce and higher education. They are seeking ideas to create a product or service that will facilitate communication between employers and higher education about teaching workplace-relevant skills. This is an Ideation Challenge with a guaranteed award for at least one submitted solution. Submissions to this challenge must be received by 11:59 p.m. (ET) on July 25, 2014.
Resources to Support Your Plus 50 Program

COMPLETION

“Personalized Learning: A Piece of the Puzzle to College Completion”
The Postsecondary Success Strategy at the Bill and Melinda Gates foundation has invested in courseware and other innovative online and blended learning approaches to help higher education institutions enable more students to acquire affordable, high-value credentials. In this blog post, the author discusses a new focus on courseware for the foundation so resources to support personalized learning can be improved. The foundation has invited more than 100 leading courseware and multimedia innovators and institutions into a courseware challenge, which will take on the task of developing and advancing courseware in 100- and 200-level college courses. The goal is to help students achieve greater success in these core, high-enrollment gateway courses, as well to give faculty superior digital resources.

LEARNING

“What Color Is Your Online Adult Course?”
This New York Times article examines the technology and evaluation practices used for Massive Online Open Courses (MOOCs). A MOOC is a mostly free, open course that nearly anyone can apply for and “attend” online. While there may be readings and lectures, students are generally not graded in the way they would be in a traditional college course. Completion rates for MOOCs can be low, and experts theorize that this may be because of the high percentage of adult students with life obligations who participate.

TRAINING & RE-TRAINING

Closing the Skills Gap: Companies and Colleges Collaborating for Change
This publication from The Economist explores the role of partnerships between U.S. industry and higher education in preparing students and employees for the modern workforce. It considers how their cooperation can address the current “skills gap”—a growing gulf between the skills workers possess today and the skills businesses say they need—and investigates what U.S. companies are willing to do to work with higher education to narrow that gap. Seventy-one percent of executives
surveyed say that increased employee loyalty and higher retention rates are a top incentive for investing in postsecondary education and training programs for employees. They also told researchers that concern about return on investment is a key obstacle to making investments in education.

PLUS 50 TRENDS

Work in Retirement: Myths and Motivations
Seventy-two percent of pre-retirees over the age of 50 responding to this study say their ideal retirement will include working, often in new, more flexible and fulfilling ways. This comprehensive study explores and challenges commonly held beliefs about work during retirement—a phenomenon driven by longer life expectancy, the elimination of most employee pensions, financial need, and the reimagining of later life. When working retirees were asked to share their best advice for people who want to work during retirement, more than anything they said “be open to trying something new” (76%) and “be willing to earn less to do something you truly enjoy” (73%). Other tips to help prepare for a successful retirement career include keeping up with technology—with seven times as many working retirees citing the importance of this instead of trying to appear younger as a means of improving their ability to work in retirement.