AGELESS LEARNING

In the News

Plus 50 In the News

- “Encore Plus 50 Boot Camp,” Brookdale Community College (news release), July 28, 2014
- “PCC Launches Plus 50 Program to Train Older Workers for New Jobs in Health Care and Human Services,” Piedmont Community College (news release), July 22, 2014
- “‘Plus 50’ Students Receive Information and Inspiration at VGCC,” Vance-Granville Community College (news release), July 22, 2014
- “Round Two: Adults Over Age 50 are Returning to College for Advanced Education and Training,” Tulsa People, July 2014

What’s New
On July 22, 2014, President Obama signed the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act into law, which reauthorizes the Workforce Investment Act. The effect on workforce training programs will become clearer as regulatory action and guidance is developed to implement the law’s provisions.

Financial Aid: Testing Ideas That May Benefit Plus 50 Students
In an effort to graduate more nontraditional students faster, the U.S. Department of Education is “testing” the idea of awarding student financial aid based on something other than credit hours. The department announced in the Federal Register the application process and requirements for “experimental sites.” Community colleges taking part in the testing would be exempt from regulations and rules requiring aid be awarded for credit-hour programs and would be allowed to award aid for competency-based programs, prior-learning assessments, or programs that blend direct assessment and credit-hour coursework. These types of programs allow students to progress at their own pace and earn credit for
work experience, which make them appealing to nontraditional students, including plus 50 learners. Experiments 1 and 2 are of particular interest for plus 50 students. The objective of the first experiment is to determine if providing Pell Grant funding to support unemployed or underemployed persons enrolled in short-term vocational training programs offered by community colleges and postsecondary vocational institutions increases employment rates or wages of those persons. The objective of the second experiment is to determine if providing Pell Grants to low-income students who have earned a bachelor's degree but who are unemployed or underemployed improves the students' employment status. The experiment should also minimize the use of student loan funds to finance vocational/career education for such students. The results of these experiments may lead to positive change beneficial to plus 50 students.

Lessons from the Field: Colleges Offer Tips on Offering Learning Centered Programming
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 offering learner-centered programming, one of the Standards of Excellence for plus 50 programs. We will feature more tips in our next newsletter.

- The medical office program at Green River Community College in Washington underwent a major revision from a 2-year program to a 1-year program to allow students to complete in a timelier manner and rapidly return to employment.

- “Involving the right combination of Advisory Team members is essential. We included the academic dean, counseling, and the education department. Very quickly, this group developed a 33-hour classroom aid certificate program that will articulate to 31 more hours for an education AA degree—Associate of Applied Sciences in Teaching Assistant Degree. The college has a public university partner that offers the upper division courses on the community college campus. This partnership will enable place-bound students to finish a bachelor’s degree on the community college campus,” said Melody Field, Plus 50 Encore Completion coordinator, Hinds Community College.

- Middlesex Community College in Connecticut provides multiple options to earn credit for life experience to shorten the pathway to a degree. The college arranges for portfolio reviews, CLEP exams, offers credit to students who pass national certification exams for employment credentials, and offers testing for credit for students who can document work experience in a discipline.
Richland Community College in Illinois has received the Academic Standards Committee’s approval and is awaiting Illinois Community College Board approval for a 17-credit hour certificate program for a new curriculum for sign language education for early childhood educators. Richland hosted a luncheon for school district early childhood directors to gather input on the design and content for this certificate program. Following receipt of state approval, Richland plans to follow a similar process for a sign language education course for social/human service providers.

Oakton Community College in Illinois has designed a new course, Spanish for Health Care Workers, which includes medical terminology in Spanish, as well as cultural understanding instruction. A partner hospital markets the course to its plus 50 employees. The course is held once a week at the hospital to accommodate employee work schedules and eliminate transportation issues. The health care provider provides a conference room at the hospital for use as the classroom. A course called Spanish for Human Service Professionals is in the planning stage.

North Central Michigan College is designing an elder care certificate program. The elder care certificate has passed approval of the college’s curriculum committee. The college is awaiting approval from the state’s Higher Learning Commission and Department of Education.

St. Petersburg College in Florida has had an advanced technical certificate curriculum for health data management. It’s been approved by the college’s Curriculum and Instruction Committee. This six-course certificate program offers an additional option in the college’s health information management (HIM) program. The program is designed to meet the needs of HIM professionals who are working in the field, have years of experience with health care data, but have little opportunity for advancement. Upon completion of the certificate program, graduates will be eligible to complete the credentialing exam for certified health data analyst. The credential will provide the ability to move up the career ladder to the next level of employment in the HIM field.

Ivy Tech Community College has incorporated a new community health worker training into the college’s patient access specialist certification program. Completers are prepared to take the national Certified Healthcare Access Associate (CHAA) examination for certification and can earn the State of Indiana Insurance Navigator certification.
Hinds Community College in Mississippi has a 16-week Certificate of Health Care Assistant program to qualify for employment as nurse assistant, long-term care aide, home health aide, personal care sitter, and phlebotomists. The college markets its program as “the first step to a career in nursing.”

**Webinar on Increasing Credential Completion: Adult Learners, PLA, and the Public Workforce System**

The National Association of Workforce Boards, the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL), and the Adult College Completion Network are presenting a webinar on August 6, 2014, at 3:00 p.m. (ET) focused on how the workforce system can take advantage of prior learning assessment (PLA) to improve outcomes. The webinar is free and open to all, but registration is required. Due to the wide range of participants, the webinar will include a brief background on what, exactly, PLA is before looking more closely at the experiences using it in Tennessee and Indiana.

**Resources to Support Your Plus 50 Program**

**COMPLETION**

*Some College, No Degree: A National View of Students with Some College Enrollment, but No Completion*

In its most recent report, the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center found that 31 million students who enrolled in college during the past 20 years left without receiving a degree or certificate. The study focused on the cohort of students who had at least one enrollment record at U.S. colleges and universities after January 1, 1993, with no enrollment records between August 13, 2012, and December 31, 2013, and no degree or certificate through December 31, 2013. The report includes some data on plus 50 learners. About 11% of the research pool (more than 3.3 million students) were age 50 and over. Approximately 143,519 of those who did not finish a degree or certificate at age 50 or more were rated as “potential completers” by the researchers (meaning that they had completed the equivalent of at least two or more years of academic work).

**LEARNING**

“Psychologist: Better Ways to Achieve Brain Function as We Age”

This newspaper article offers tips from a psychologist on how to maintain brain fitness as we age. Research increasingly indicates that individuals can influence their brain fitness as they age. To stay mentally active, the psychologist recommended people work for as long as they can, or volunteer. Diet plays a vital role in brain fitness, as does staying socially active.
TRAINING & RE-TRAINING

*What Works in Job Training: A Synthesis of the Evidence*
Vice President Joe Biden led a government-wide review of federal programs in the workforce and training system to ensure they are designed to equip the nation's workers with skills matching the needs of employers looking to hire. This document, prepared by the secretaries of Labor, Commerce, Education and Health and Human Services, with input from several other federal agencies and staff, presents the results. The report includes a “job-driven training checklist” to ensure quality programs offer a pathway to available jobs. The review culminated in an action plan of what can be undertaken to ensure Federal programs invest in effective practices. A summary fact sheet is also available.

PLUS 50 TRENDS

*Registered Nurses Are Delaying Retirement, a Shift That Has Contributed to Recent Growth in the Nurse Workforce*
Nurses over the age of 50 are delaying retirement and staying in the workforce longer. The size of the registered nurse (RN) workforce has surpassed forecasts from a decade ago, growing to 2.7 million in 2012 instead of peaking at 2.2 million, according to a study published in July 2014 in Health Affairs. Much of the difference is the result of a surge in new nursing graduates. However, the size of the RN workforce is particularly sensitive to changes in retirement age, given the large number of baby-boomer RNs now in the workforce. The researchers found that in the period 1969–90, for a given number of RNs working at age 50, 47% were still working at age 62 and 9% were working at age 69. In contrast, in the period 1991–2012 the proportions were 74% at age 62, and 24% percent at age 69. This trend, which largely predates the recent recession, extended nursing careers by 2.5 years after age 50 and increased the 2012 RN workforce by 136,000 people. Because many RNs tend to shift out of hospital settings as they age, employers seeking RNs for nonhospital roles may welcome (and seek to capitalize on) the growing numbers of experienced RNs potentially able to fill these positions.

The American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) is the primary advocacy organization for the nation's community colleges. The association represents nearly 1,200 two-year, associate degree-granting institutions and more than 13 million students. AACC promotes community colleges through five strategic action areas: recognition and advocacy for community colleges; student access, learning, and success; community college leadership development; economic and workforce development; and global and intercultural education. Information about AACC and community colleges may be found at www.aacc.nche.edu.