In the News

Plus 50 In the News

- “John Wood Community College Hosts Open House for Adults 50+,” WGEM, September 3, 2014
- “Grays Harbor College Launches ‘Plus 50’ Program with Free Computer Workshop,” KBKW, September 2, 2014
- “Grays Harbor College Program Caters to Older Workers Changing Careers,” The Olympian, September 1, 2014
- “Plus 50 Kicks off at GHC,” The Daily World, August 28, 2014
- “PHCC Launches PLUS 50,” Martinsville Bulletin, August 26, 2014

Lessons from the Field: Colleges Offer Tips on Providing Learner Support Services

Community colleges in the Plus 50 Encore Completion Program submitted their 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 providing learning support services, one of the Standards of Excellence for plus 50 programs. We will feature more tips in our next newsletter.
• Virginia Western Community College provides plus 50 learners workshops to prepare them for the Virginia Placement Test. Faculty members provide tips and individual diagnostic support in basic and advanced math, as well as English.

• Plans are underway at North Carolina’s Edgecombe Community College (ECC) that academic advising will review individual graduation plans with plus 50 students. Advisors will help students map out classes for future semesters, discuss the importance of enrolling in appropriate courses, and explain the steps to reaching a certificate or degree in their program of study. Career counseling services for plus 50 students at ECC will involve completion of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, an interest profiler, a basic skills survey, a transferrable skills checklist, a work values sorter, and career key.

• Middlesex Community College provides intensive workshops in math and English for college readiness to review math, reading, and writing skills before plus 50 students enroll in classes. At the beginning of the workshops, students take a basic skills assessment test to determine their skill level. After completing the 2-week workshops, students retake the test. This opportunity allows the student to place directly into college-level classes without having to enroll in a developmental class to refresh their skills.

• Patrick Henry Community College has started a Plus 50 Peer Group. The group provides networking opportunities for plus 50 students and functions as an ongoing focus group for the Plus 50 program. Through input from the group, the college has picked up tips on things to make the campus a more inviting place for plus 50 learners. Suggestions have included developing an acronym guide, campus tour groups for new plus 50 students, enhancing the clarity of audiovisual technology used on campus, changing approaches used in the math and English labs, and a short, focused course on patient/customer service skills for the students in health care training programs.

• St. Petersburg College has hired a plus 50 student as a program assistant. Located in the Health Education Center, he provides tutoring, mentors fellow plus 50 students, guides them toward needed resources, and personally takes them to individuals or departments to assist them in acclimating to the campus.
South Arkansas Community College provides an 8-hour basic computer course. The first course had a full enrollment only 3 days after registration opened. Sensitive to “free” being perceived as lower in value, the student fee for the course was $60, but the course was made available at no cost to those over age 50. This approach kept a level of value attached to the course. Often when free programs are offered, students will not attend at the last minute. The course also served as an effective vehicle to collect responses to the college’s Plus 50 Needs Assessment survey. The participants age 50 and older, feeling a sense of obligation for the free course, completed the survey while there.

Video: A Plus 50 Student at Seminole State College of Florida Discusses Pharmacy Technology
“I was looking for something that would please me in the long haul, not just something that was short-term,” said Sera D’Ascano, when talking about her decision to pursue a career in pharmacy technology through Seminole State College of Florida. D’Ascano found a lot of support from her instructors, noting that “they truly want to see every student succeed.” She found there were many avenues for jobs that she could pursue with her pharmacy management degree. While D’Ascano had some anxiety about walking into a classroom and feeling “old” before she started back to college, she found an accepting and welcoming environment at the college where people of all ages helped each other learn. Watch the video.

AACC Grantees: Check Out the C-PAD Enhancements!
C-PAD is an online system that helps AACC Plus 50 Encore Completion grantee colleges gauge their progress and program growth. There is a new tab on the menu bar, “Promising Practices,” that provides links to the work of fellow Plus 50 Encore Completion Colleges. You are able to see examples of how they are using the implementing process to develop their programs. The word cloud highlights those items accessed most frequently and appears in larger print. This will help AACC program staff know the areas of greatest interest, so they can search for and upload additional, related examples. The number of examples also increases as colleges are adding more things to C-PAD for their Plus 50 Champion college’s review while moving through the program implementation process.
Webinars: AACC’s 21st Century Learning Center Offers Convenient Online Training
AACC’s new webinar series is focused on the seven recommendations of the 21st-Century Commission on the Future of Community Colleges. Several webinars will be led by affiliated councils with expertise in research, student success, and institutional transformation. Upcoming webinars discuss closing the skills gap through workforce training programs, investing in collaborative support structures, and more. See the list of upcoming webinars.

Grants: SNAP Employment and Training Programs
The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) recently announced up to $200 million in competitive grants will be available for state Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) agencies to design and conduct employment and training pilot projects to help SNAP participants find jobs and increase their earnings. Community colleges may want to consider partnering with a SNAP training program to offer workforce training. Authorized by the 2014 Farm Bill, the grants will fund up to 10 pilot projects to test methods designed to enhance employability, increase the earnings of SNAP work registrants, and help people transition from the program. USDA intends to test a wide array of approaches, including those focused on education and training, rehabilitative services for individuals with barriers to employment, rapid attachment to work, and other strategies. USDA is particularly interested in pilots that target hard-to-serve populations, and test job-driven training strategies that include work-based learning or career pathway approaches or utilize strong public-private partnerships. Read the grant announcement and see links to state SNAP training programs.

Resources to Support Your Plus 50 Program

COMPLETION

“Strategies to Improve Student Retention, Success”
In this excerpt from an article in Community College Journal, Bill Law, president of St. Petersburg College, discusses the practical steps his institution took to improve student retention and success. They expanded out of class support, integrated career and academic advising, improved student orientation, set up an early alert system for students in trouble and a coaching program, and improved student planning for education and career goals.
LEARNING

“Back to School: Older Students on the Rise in College Classrooms”
Older students are increasingly heading to college. In 2009, students age 25 and older accounted for roughly 40% of all college and graduate students, according to the National Center for Education Statistics. That figure is expected to rise to 43% by 2020 as 9.6 million older students head to campus. This NBC news story examines the phenomena and offers information on why older Americans are going to college.

TRAINING & RE-TRAINING

“In the Workplace, Generational Warfare is Bad for Business”
The author of this article for Crain’s Detroit Business points out that baby boomers are doing better in the workforce environment relative to their younger counterparts. One reason is experience. Employers are looking for skilled workers who can be more productive and understand how to navigate the workplace. Regardless, when it comes to the hiring game, competitive firms will need to assess their workforce environment to attract these younger workers, too. No one is winning the generational war in the workplace, and if anyone is hurt by it, it is businesses. This threatens jobs and regional prosperity—two good reasons to mend the fences between boomers and millennials.