AGELESS LEARNING

In the News

Plus 50 In the News

- "'Plus 50' Workers Can Receive Training and Guidance at Cuyahoga Community College," Cleveland Plain Dealer, January 30, 2015
- "SC Offers Addiction Therapy Program Open House for Plus 50 Program," Northern Wyoming Community College District, January 22, 2015
- "Plus 50 Programs in Practice: How AACC's Plus 50 Initiative is Helping Community Colleges Transform Programs and Services for Adults Age 50 and Over," Lumina Foundation, January 16, 2015
**Plus 50 Programs in Practice**

This *American Association of Community Colleges* publication tells the story of the Plus 50 Initiative from 2008 to 2014 and examines how the program has evolved over time. Evaluators discuss in the publication how the initiative has impacted how community colleges serve students age 50 and over, how participating in the program has changed the lives of baby boomers, and how the initiative has sought to refine and replicate its learnings. One of the more interesting elements in the publication is how the program nimbly repositioned itself during its early years. As the Great Recession led thousands of older workers to seek job training at community colleges, the Plus 50 Initiative retooled from a broader approach to focusing heavily on workforce training. That commitment to supporting plus 50 adults seeking job skills and training stuck with the initiative as it focused in its later years on certificate and degree completion. Community college program managers, leaders, and faculty will find this publication to be a useful resource for understanding the initiative and will be inspired by the program highlights and quotes from students who participated.

**Generations United Photography Contest Accepting Submissions through March 30**

Generations United is accepting submissions for its *intergenerational photography contest*. The 2015 theme is "Generations Unleashed Equal Value Unleashed." Photographs must depict youth and older community members engaging in activities together. Submissions should illustrate the contest's theme with creativity and insight. The contest is open to both amateur and professional photographers of all ages. The closing date for submissions is March 30, 2015.

**Tax Time is Here: Make Sure Students Know about the American Opportunity Tax Credit**

The *American Opportunity Tax Credit (AOTC)* modifies the existing Hope Credit available to a broader range of taxpayers, including many with higher incomes and those who owe no tax. It also adds required course materials to the list of qualifying expenses and allows the credit to be claimed for four post-secondary education years instead of two. The AOTC provides up to $2,500 of assistance annually and is currently claimed by more than 11 million individuals each year.
Myth-Busters: De-bunking Seven Common Myths about Financial Aid
The U.S. Department of Education recently issued a blog post de-bunking seven commonly held myths about federal financial aid. Many potential students or current students may not realize that they can apply for financial aid before their taxes are filed or that their grades may be maintainable at a level that qualifies them for financial aid. Many discover that the FAFSA application is not as difficult to fill out as they think.

Webinar: Aligning Innovations to Promote Learning and Quality Credentials
Two new papers examining credit for prior learning and competency-based education will be discussed at a February 20, 2015, webinar being hosted by the Adult College Completion Network. Both papers explore the real-time emergence of practices and systems designed to measure learning over seat time. Registration for the event is free and available online.

Webinar: Plus 50: A Unique Workforce Training Solution for Mature Adults
The National Council for Continuing Education and Training (NCCET) will hold a webinar February 19 discussing the process of creating “Plus 50: Bridge to College & Careers,” a workforce training program at the Community & Technical College at the University of Alaska Anchorage. The webinar will discuss expectations in the initial process and outcomes that influenced the direction of future program development. The webinar is free to NCCET members and costs $79 for non-members.

Mapping America’s Future: Interactive Data Map Helps Communities Plan Ahead
This interactive map and article illustrates how data can be used to anticipate community characteristics and needs over the next 15 years. To help visualize the future, the Urban Institute developed a tool that projects local-level population trends out to 2030. Pick low, average, or high rates for birth, death, and migration—the three drivers of population change—and the map changes in response. The rates are all reasonable assumptions, based on historical trends. With the tool, people can explore several possible “what-if” scenarios—possible futures—and see how they’ll play out across the country. Check out the trends for the 50–64 age group in your area.

Pennsylvania Community Colleges Launch Statewide Prior Learning Assessment Initiative
Pennsylvania’s 14 community colleges recently announced the launch of a statewide Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) initiative, called College Credit FastTrack. The initiative allows adult learners at the state’s colleges
to earn credit for learning through training and work experiences and establishes common standards for awarding these credits across the state. This is the first statewide PLA initiative that encompasses every college in a given sector. A new website and e-portfolio platform provide a single point of entry for adult learners in Pennsylvania to access prior learning credits at all of the state’s community colleges. Students will be shepherded through the process by connecting with a PLA advisor at one of the colleges through the website and developing and submitting a portfolio for review for college credits. The portfolio is evaluated by college faculty to determine which credits will be awarded.

**Resources to Support Your Plus 50 Program**

**COMPLETION**

“Prior Learning and STEM: Ingredients for Student Success”
This article published by the League for Innovation in the Community College discusses using prior learning assessment to help student veterans be successful in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) fields. The author discusses College Level Examination Program (CLEP) data from student veterans attending North Lake College and taking introductory level STEM classes. The writer aims to motivate readers to apply prior learning assessment to their college programs assisting student veterans.

**LEARNING**

“Why Do Some States Bar Older Students from Receiving Financial Aid?”
PBS NewsHour recently published a story on the challenges nontraditional students face in accessing financial aid. About a half dozen states bar older students from accessing state funded financial aid programs for higher education, and many others restrict access based on age. “From a workforce development perspective, it was penny-wise and pound-foolish,” said Peter Ruark, senior policy analyst for the Michigan League for Public Policy, which produced a report on the topic. “It saves money today but leaves workers unskilled for tomorrow.” The story also offers suggestions to improve state policies.

**TRAINING & RE-TRAINING**

*A Resource Guide to Engaging Employers*
Published by Jobs for the Future last month, this resource guide presents working models of successful employer engagement and lessons for securing and sustaining partnerships with employers. It was written to help education and training providers fully realize the value of strategic,
long-term, and intensive partnerships with employers. The resource, with a particular focus on partnerships between community colleges and employers, leads readers through a continuum of activities supporting these partnerships, with each level involving deeper engagement and integration of employers into the work of advising, capacity-building, co-designing, convening, and leading. The continuum is flexible and adaptable, and suggests how productive relationships with employers might evolve, with activities at one level helping build trust, momentum, and leverage for more intensive activities. The guide was developed for Accelerating Opportunity, an initiative to help students with low basic skills earn valued occupational credentials and rewarding careers, through the integration of Adult Basic Education and career and technical training.

PLUS 50 TRENDS

“Baby Boomers Flock to Entrepreneurship”

This article discusses why baby boomers are becoming entrepreneurial after leaving traditional jobs. Adults over the age of 50 comprise one of the fastest growing groups of entrepreneurs in the United States, according to a new Gallup study. Among those people who don't currently own a business, baby boomers are twice as likely as millennials to say they plan to start a business in the next year. The researchers note that even though many baby boomers have years of experience working for established organizations, business owners over the age of 50 face many of the same challenges younger entrepreneurs face. More than half of those surveyed said information relevant to growing a business and entrepreneurial training and education are not readily available in their communities.