Kingsborough Community College Student Presents Research
Plus 50 student Michael Todd-Hall is a veteran who began attending Kingsborough Community College last fall. He has excelled in his classes within the Chemical Dependency and Substance Abuse Counseling Program. Todd-Hall presented his research paper, *How Christian Values Impact Ethical Issues in the Treatment of Addiction*, at the Kingsborough Honors Symposium for outstanding student work. His paper is being considered for publication in the student journal, *Distinctions*, which recognizes the highest quality of student writing each year at the college.

AACC’s Plus 50 Initiative Featured in AARP Bulletin
The Plus 50 Initiative at the American Association of Community Colleges was recently mentioned in “99 Great Ways to Save” in *AARP Bulletin*’s June issue. Check out item #91 under the work category.

Workshops: A Powerful Recruitment Tool When Students See How College Meets Their Needs
Workshops can be a powerful recruiting tool to encourage plus 50 adults to enroll in college credit or certificate programs. It all boils down to helping potential students see how the college can meet their needs and
assist them in reaching their goals, says Heather Ellison at St. Louis Community College (STLCC). Ellison has been involved with the plus 50 program since 2008.

At STLCC, the workshops are used to recruit new plus 50 students. Ellison says the college continues to use two workshops to reach out to plus 50 adults. The transitional workshop invites potential students to talk about their goals and skill sets within the context of life coaching and support. “If it doesn’t lead to credit enrollment, they will often look at old credits and transfer into a certificate course or degree program,” said Ellison. “It’s personally focused.”

The college has also found success with employment-based workshops. Typically 7–10 people attend the workshops, which focus on improving resumes, tweaking interview skills, and getting into the job market. Ellison says many of the workshop attendees have signed up for coursework and training to update their skills, such as computer skills or software training. Ellison says the key to success in connecting with plus 50 adults, is talking with them about their life goals and helping them chart a course toward reaching those goals. Workshops can get potential students on campus, but instructors, program staff, and student counselors must go an extra step to work with plus 50 adults and help them see how the college can be part of the future.

Need a Resource? It’s all in C-PAD
Grantees for the Plus 50 Encore Completion Program can find a wealth of resources in C-PAD, the online tool that indexes resources for many aspects of plus 50 program development. The system is organized by readiness, needs assessment, program development, implementation and planning, and continuous improvement. C-PAD’s indexing system aids colleges and spares them from squandering valuable time “re-inventing the wheel” or hunting online for unverified resources. As a college builds out its plus 50 program, the college can locate through C-PAD additional resources to help. If you need help accessing C-PAD or understanding the resources available, talk with your mentor college or Mary Sue Vickers at AACC.

Colleges Use Video to Recruit New Plus 50 Students
Video can be a very effective tool for recruiting plus 50 students. Video helps overcome entrenched ideas of “what” a student should look like. It even inspires potential students to see themselves on campus and think about what going to college could really be like. Several colleges have used video recently to share the stories of plus 50 students and invite others to enroll. Here are a few examples:

In this video, Patrick Henry Community College invites plus 50 students to come back and train for the careers they have always wanted. A group of
plus 50 students is shown at the close of the video, saying, “It’s now!”

This recruitment video from Blue Ridge Community College features a plus 50 student named Desiree White, who just completed a certificate in aging in place. She had worked previously in health care. Navy veteran Dale Moyer talks about his studies for a human services degree with a specialization in applied sciences and how helpful the staff at the college have been. “For an older student coming back to school….everybody here was geared to helping me,” said White. “They have a lot of things that are geared to helping you to succeed here.”

Jackson State Community College features a plus 50 student in this recruitment video. Student Laquita Brown felt it “made sense” for her to go to college after her son went away to college, and she is majoring in social work. As an empty nester, Brown evaluated where she was at with her career and her life. She appreciates the small class sizes and attention at the college.

Resource: “Working Together to Upskill Employees”
This article from AACC’s 21st Century Learning Center profiles an employer, Masterbrands Cabinets, which offers tuition reimbursement for business operations certificate programs at Lake Land College in Illinois. Masterbrand provides tuition reimbursement if students maintained a “C” or better in classes relevant to the company’s business operation. The students participating in the program offer each other peer support and encouragement to complete their studies.

Resource: “The Financial Help that Older College Students Need”
This opinion piece in Governing argues for improving financial aid for non-traditional college students over the age of 25. The author notes that more than 40% of American undergraduate college students are adults over the age of 25, many of whom are holding down jobs while working toward a degree. Yet the deck is stacked against them in many states as a result of limitations to financial aid. The author supports using financial aid resources to leverage ways to help older students complete their studies efficiently, arguing for using more competency-based education and prior learning assessment to assist them.

Resources to Support Your Plus 50 Program

COMPLETION

“To Knock Down Barriers for Returning Adult Learners, Rhode Island Tries Something New”
In May 2015, the Rhode Island Council on Postsecondary Education voted to welcome College Unbound as a degree-granting postsecondary option. This article in the New England Journal of Higher Education
spotlights this adult learning initiative, College Unbound, that is trying to help 110,000 adults within Rhode Island who have taken some college courses but not completed degrees. College Unbound combines several interventions within a carefully designed program that has been tested and proven successful with underrepresented, low-income, and returning adult learners over the last 6 years.

LEARNING

“While U.S. Struggles, Sweden Pushes Older Adults Back to College”
According to this article in The Hechinger Report, 66% of Swedes ages 25 to 64 are in college or some other type of “non-formal” education—including online courses, private lessons, or seminars—one of the highest percentages in the world. A quarter of people graduating from college in Sweden do so when they’re 25 or older. It’s a sobering contrast to the United States, where policymakers are struggling to drive more older learners into higher education as part of an effort to increase the proportion of the population with degrees. Yet unlike countries such as Sweden, the U.S. offers few supports for adults age 25 and older who want to go to college. To qualify for federal financial aid in the U.S., for instance, students have to take at least two courses a semester, but few companies provide time off. Learners over age 24 are not eligible for many state financial aid programs.

TRAINING & RE-TRAINING

A Business Case for Workers Age 50+: A Look at the Value of Experience 2015
This new research study by AARP evaluates the business case for the recruitment, retention, and engagement of older workers. The findings reveal that the business case for workers age 50 and up has strengthened since AARP’s original report on the topic was published in 2005.

The number of plus 50 Americans who are working or looking for work has grown significantly over the past decade, and is expected to continue to increase. In fact, 35% of U.S. labor force participants will be plus 50 adults in 2022. This compares to just 25% in 2002.

The plus 50 segment of the workforce continues to be the most engaged age cohort across all generations. Sixty-five percent of employees age 55 and over are considered engaged based on survey data, while younger employee engagement averages 58% to 60%. The level of employee engagement has implications for both retention and business results. It takes only a 5% increase in engagement to achieve 3% incremental revenue growth.
Contrary to common perception, plus 50 workers do not cost significantly more than younger workers. Shifting trends in reward and benefit programs have created a more age-neutral distribution of labor costs, meaning that adding more plus 50 talent to a workforce results in only minimal increases in total labor costs. Furthermore, the incremental costs of plus 50 workers may be far outweighed by the value that they add.

PLUS 50 TRENDS

“7 Reasons Why Marketing to Baby Boomers Is Unique”
This article in Forbes reminds marketers not to count baby boomers out and shares sage advice on selling to the plus 50 population. If you think aged, senior, and elderly are effective buzzwords for baby boomers, think again. They don’t want to be reminded of their age. Instead, talk about their accomplishments and bright futures.