Plus 50 Initiative News

Colleges Discuss New Programs, Standards of Excellence

Both new and seasoned member colleges of a popular national initiative designed to serve learners age 50 and older are starting to focus on how to sustain their efforts when the 3-year grant that helps to fund their programs expires at the end of the year. At the third annual Plus 50 Initiative conference in Washington, DC, this week, colleges just joining the national program—which is managed by AACC and funded by the Atlantic Philanthropies—discussed their reasons for joining the initiative and how they hope to leverage it.

- **Shoreline Community College** in Washington joined, in part, because its service area has a high unemployment rate, particularly among older residents, said David Cunningham, who directs the program at the college. Shoreline has historically trained workers for the auto industry, which requires significant partner-building, Cunningham said. The fact that the “power of good partnerships” is a pillar of Plus 50 made the initiative attractive, he said. The college—which hopes to partially focus the program on the emerging alternative energy industry—also liked that Plus 50 has helped to establish programs to help older workers attain training for new careers and are not just “abstract and academic,” he said.

- The other colleges just starting their Plus 50 program also expressed a focus on helping older workers find jobs by introducing them to growing industries or skills required across industries. **Pasco-Hernando Community College** in Florida, for example, will zero in on providing computer skills in its Plus 50 program. “That’s where the growth is, and they need jobs now,” said Debby Duncan, the college’s program director. Other colleges, such as **St. Louis Community College** in Missouri, **Century College** in Minnesota,
and Clark College in Washington state, are focusing on another high-growth industry: health care.

- Several college officials noted that, especially in the current economic climate, older learners who seek to work want more one-on-one and real-life experiences. At Luzerne County Community College in Pennsylvania, students in Plus 50 programs want hands-on class experience, such as job camps, and want to leave with a better resume to find jobs, said its program director, Christine Donnolo. In addition to its large-class career workshops, Santa Fe College in Florida expanded its open houses, tours of facilities, and chats with instructors when its Plus 50 students said they wanted more personal connections, according to Betsy Albury, the college’s program associate.

- St. Louis Community College is encouraging displaced workers to consider volunteering as they look to start another career. The college’s Volunteer Between Careers program provides opportunities to network, keep job skills current, gain transferable skills, explore career options, and receive on-the-job training, according to a brochure from the college’s employment and training center.

Preparing for the Future...

Many of the colleges already in the program are now focusing on sustaining their efforts once funding expires. Most colleges have worked to integrate Plus 50 efforts into other aspects of the college, such as workforce development, academic advising, and career counseling, to ensure the program’s efforts continue. Some colleges are even including a Plus 50 component in many of their funding applications. “I don’t care what funding we get, Plus 50 is always a part of it,” said program director Mabel Edwards of Clover Park Technical College in Washington.

Several of the programs have also established partnerships with local organizations that they hope will help continue their efforts. The Community Colleges of Spokane in Washington, for example, has developed close ties with AARP, which asked the college to develop an Internet-based job-preparation tool that it hopes could serve as a national model, said Sharon Niblock, a program associate at Spokane. They have also tapped state funds to pay for part of its efforts. Its 50 Plus program is generating state full-time enrollments—this year, the program had 138 full-time Plus 50 students—so the college is adding state funds to pay for faculty and support costs of the program.
Expanding a network of such partnerships is critical to sustain the programs, said Bridget Backman, a program associate at Century College. “That is your safety blanket,” she said.

**What’s New**

**Plus 50 Initiative Program Directors: Interviews on YouTube**
Interviews with three program directors for Plus 50 Initiative programs at community colleges are available online through AACC’s [YouTube](#) channel. The directors speak candidly about their programs and plans for the future. Watch the interviews with Jerone Gamble from the College of Central Florida, Heather Ellison from St. Louis Community College, and David Cunningham from Shoreline Community College.

**Plus 50 Initiative in the News**

- “Richland College Staff Contribute to National Standards at Conference,” Richland College, July 15, 2010.
- “Back to School with Diabetes,” Value Medical, July 2010.
- “Richland Reaches Out to Other Texas Colleges to Join the Plus 50 Initiative,” Thunderbridge, July 2010.

**Student Story: A Factory Mechanic Aims to Be a Writer**
George Below is no stranger to the classroom. The former mechanic is now aiming to earn his living as a writer and is attending classes at Luzerne County Community College in Pennsylvania. Unfortunately, Below is also no stranger to job insecurity. [Read more of his story.](#)

**New Grants for Colleges Help Boomers Break Into Health, Education**
Civic Ventures and MetLife teamed up to award seven new “Encore Career” grants to community colleges helping experienced adults get on the fast track to careers in health and education, including becoming teachers, adjunct college instructors, caregivers, and clinical nursing instructors. The new grantees are

- **Community College of the District of Columbia** (Washington, DC), which will offer an 8-week program training older adults as “community living support professionals” who work with adults with physical, developmental, or age-related disabilities in a variety of settings. Classroom instruction will be augmented with hands-on learning, networking, and an employer job fair.

- **Florida State College at Jacksonville**, which will adapt existing programs to provide fast-track certification, customized support, and job placement assistance suited to the needs of older adults who want to become home-based and community-based health-care assistants.

- **Middlesex Community College** (MA), which will offer a semester-long certificate program to train people for adjunct teaching jobs in developmental English, math, and clinical nursing at Massachusetts community colleges.

- **Northampton Community College** (PA), which will train older adults to become home health aides, nurse’s aides, and home care aides by providing a 100-hour training course designed to help boomers learn more about technology, ergonomic safety, and customer service.

- **Oklahoma State University-Oklahoma City**, which will train 40 retiring business professionals as developmental studies instructors, helping students who are underprepared for college improve their reading, writing, or math skills. Instruction for the adult educators will include courses on working with a range of diverse students, learning classroom management skills, and using social networking.

- **Polk State College** (FL), which will help people over 50 with bachelor’s degrees become teachers by adding individual mentoring, computer training, peer support programs, and math instruction to an existing K–12 alternative teacher certification program.

- **Westchester Community College** (NY), which will offer a 60-hour curriculum for primary care nurses who want to become clinical nursing instructors. The pilot “Nursing Encore Career Center” program will train veteran nurses to supervise students in a wide range of health-care settings.
Read about all 25 colleges that have received $25,000 grants as part of the Encore College Initiative.

Reminder!

**Media Reminder: Don’t Forget to Distribute Your Fill-in-the-Blank Conference News Release**

If you attended the third annual conference for the Plus 50 Initiative in Washington, DC, you should have received via e-mail a fill-in-the-blank news release about your attendance. Don’t forget to fill in the blanks and send out the news release to your local media, with the assistance of your college’s public information officer.

**Resources to Support Your Plus 50 Program**

**LEARNING**

**Student Aid: Income-Based Repayment**

Income-based repayment is a new way to make federal student loan payments more manageable. If you’re a teacher or work in government or at a nonprofit organization, you might qualify for a new type of public service loan forgiveness after 10 years of eligible payments and employment. This Web site offers tips and advice for students trying to determine whether they qualify for student loan forgiveness.

**TRAINING & RE-TRAINING**

**Going Green: The Vital Role of Community Colleges in Building a Sustainable Future and Green Workforce**

As the U.S. economy transforms itself into a green economy, community colleges—with their ability to turn on a dime to meet changing market conditions—will become increasingly important to educate technicians whose skills can cross industry lines. Those technicians will be community college graduates who have learned new skills as technologies evolved. With the support of their local business partners, as well as state and federal governments, this report concludes that community colleges are well-suited to meet the demands of the green economy.

**VOLUNTEERING & SERVICE**

**Baby Boomers and Volunteering: An Analysis of the Current Population Survey**

How many plus 50 adults volunteer? And how often do they volunteer to help organizations and charities? One third of baby boomers volunteer, and they have the highest volunteer rate of any age group, according to this issue brief commissioned by the Corporation for National Service. The

The American Association of Community Colleges is a national association representing close to 1,200 community, junior and technical colleges nationwide. Community colleges are the largest and fastest-growing sector of higher education, serving close to 12 million students each year. AACC is headquartered in Washington, D.C. See www.aacc.nche.edu.

The Atlantic Philanthropies are dedicated to bringing about lasting changes in the lives of disadvantaged and vulnerable people. Atlantic focuses on four critical social problems: aging, disadvantaged children and youth, population health, and reconciliation and human rights. Programs funded by Atlantic operate in Australia, Bermuda, Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland, South Africa, the United States and Viet Nam. To learn more, please visit www.atlanticphilanthropies.org.

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