AGELESS LEARNING

In the News

Plus 50 in the News

- “Number of Nontraditional Students Increases,” The Crier, May 15, 2012
- "STLCC Named Plus 50 Champion College by AACC," The St. Louis American, May 14, 2012

Grant Possibilities for Community Colleges and Unemployed Veterans

AACC's Plus 50 Encore Completion Program: Grant Funding Available

Does your community college have a workforce training program for plus 50 adults in education, social services, or healthcare? If yes, then you’ll want to pay attention to this grant opportunity. The American Association of Community Colleges seeks proposals from community colleges committed to enhancing or expanding their existing workforce training programs for students 50 years of age and older. Participating colleges will help plus 50 students obtain the degrees, certificates, and not-for-credit credentials sought by employers in the high-demand fields of education, social service, and healthcare. Approximately 100 colleges will be selected to be part of the Plus 50 Encore Completion Program. Selected colleges will receive grant funding through September 2014, support from the Plus 50
Champion Colleges, and access to a wealth of resources and materials developed through the Plus 50 Initiative. Responses to the Request for Proposals (RFP) are due by 5:00 p.m. (ET) on June 18, 2012.

**New Job Training Program for Unemployed Veterans Ages 35-60 Begins July 1**
A joint U.S. Departments of Labor and Veterans Affairs program will focus on retraining veterans for high-demand jobs. Help from community colleges is being sought to make military veterans aware of the new job training benefits available to them.

With an unemployment rate of about 10% among post-9/11 military veterans, Congress last November passed the VOW to Hire Heroes Act, which includes the Veterans Retraining Assistance Program (VRAP) for unemployed veterans ages 35–60. Scheduled to start July 1, VRAP offers training assistance in high-demand occupations to 99,000 unemployed veterans over two years—45,000 from July 1 to September 30, 2012, and 54,000 next year. Available slots are filled on a first-come, first-served basis. The department will begin accepting applications May 15. Eligible participants will receive up to 12 months of training assistance at the full-time payment rate under the Montgomery GI Bill–Active Duty program (currently $1,473 per month). The Department of Labor will offer employment assistance to all veterans who participate or apply to VRAP.

**Older Worker Unemployment and the Recession**

*Unemployed Older Workers: Many Experience Challenges Regaining Employment and Face Reduced Retirement Security*
This new report from the Government Accountability Office examines unemployment among workers age 55 and up and how it impacts their futures. In December 2011, the unemployment rate for older workers was 6%, up from 3.1% at the start of the recession, but down from its peak of 7.6% in February 2010. In particular, long-term unemployment rose substantially, and at a greater rate for older than younger workers. By 2011, 55% of unemployed older workers had been actively seeking a job for more than half a year (27 weeks or more). Meanwhile, the long-term trend of rising labor force participation rates among older workers has continued, with the recession possibly amplifying this trend. Long-term unemployment can substantially diminish an older worker’s future retirement income. Experts interviewed for this report selected various policies that have been proposed to help address unemployed older workers’ reemployment challenges.

Workforce professionals interviewed for the study said that many older workers lack up-to-date skills with computers and other technology, and this puts them at a disadvantage in becoming reemployed. Some experts
said that employers might hesitate to hire and retrain older workers because they assume that older workers will not want to work much longer, so the employer would not get a good return on the training investment. Some workforce professionals also said that, according to their observations, employers have increased the number of skills they require applicants to possess, even for low-level positions. For example, a workforce professional told of one job posting for a receptionist which stated that the applicant needed to be able to manage the employer's website in addition to completing more typical administrative duties.

Workforce professionals interviewed for the study said older workers need services that help them:

- Learn how to present their skills and experiences to potential employers in a way that does not draw attention to their age, extensive years of experience, and past high-level positions.
- Develop interview responses that can diffuse employer concerns about hiring older workers, such as whether the job seeker would be a good fit, be willing to work for less pay, or be okay with reporting to a younger manager.
- Understand how to adjust their physical appearance to make a better impression on prospective employers.
- Develop skills, including technological skills, that employers currently expect their employees to possess.
- Complete and submit online job applications.

A podcast and a video are also available summarizing the report.

**Resources to Support Your Plus 50 Program**

**COMPLETION**

**Time is the Enemy**

This report by Complete College America summarizes some of the serious challenges facing higher education leaders as they confront the challenge to raise college graduation rates. Seventy-five percent of all students today are juggling a combination of family, school, work and other responsibilities. Four of every 10 public college students are able to attend only part-time. Yet, education policymakers often don't factor student needs into decision-making, say the authors. This report shares examples from state efforts to improve completion rates and makes policy recommendations.
LEARNING

Education in an Aging Society: Students Over 40 in the Classroom
Americans are remaining in the workforce longer and many are changing or advancing their careers well past age 40. The Brown School decided to study the experiences of their students who came to get their master’s degree in social work after the age of 40. The video discussing their survey of age 40 and up social work students focuses on pathways to graduate school, their experiences in the classroom, and work after completing their masters program. The survey revealed that more than half of the 40 and over students returning to school were switching from other career fields into the social work field.

TRAINING & RE-TRAINING

Career Pathways Toolkit
This toolkit from the U.S. Department of Labor’s Division of Employment and Training Administration provides a clear sequence of steps to take to enter or advance within a career field. Regardless of a person’s skill-set at the point of entry, the toolkit provides the necessary information and steps to take to attain an industry-recognized degree or credential, and is designed to meet the needs of adult learners and other non-traditional students.

VOLUNTEERING & SERVICE

Volunteering May Reduce Heart Attacks in Older Americans
Research from several studies shows that older Americans who volunteer live longer and report having a higher quality of life compared to those who do not, says this blog post from AARP. Studies in the Journal of Psychology and Aging and Journal of Social Science and Medicine report that volunteering regularly reduces depression which negatively impacts the course of multiple cardiovascular conditions and increases overall satisfaction in life for older adults. It’s important to note that most of the research does focus on older adults who volunteer at least 100 hours a year, which is about one day a month.

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.