



News From Around the Colleges

Plus 50 Initiative Grantees Get Media Coverage

Several of our grantee colleges have been in the news media recently with their Plus 50 Initiative programs. Here are a few examples:

[Community News](#) (Luzerne County Community College), *Citizens Voice*, Sept. 5, 2009

[Tax Preparer Course for Seniors at CFCC Ocala](#), *Citrus Daily*, Sept. 8, 2009

[Taking the Next Step, The face of the classroom is changing as the sour economy prompts more older adults to return to school](#) (Cape Cod Community College), *Boston Globe*, Sept. 13, 2009

Student Profile

A Housewife Becomes a Pharmacy Technician & Finds Fulfillment

Gunnel Lowegard has always enjoyed working in the medical industry. For years she worked as a lab technician in her native Sweden, but that changed when her husband accepted a two-year contract with a company in the United States. Two years turned into almost 19, with no immediate plans to head "home."

The Dallas, Texas, resident loves living in the United States, but found transferring her experience and training difficult. "None of my medical schooling or experience transferred when we moved here," said Lowegard. "I had a lot of experience but not here in the States."

Initially, Lowegard was content taking care of two small children and a home in a new country. But with both children eventually away at college and a husband keeping long hours at work, she found herself searching for a way to enrich her life.

"All through the years I've always taken some kind of class or another," said Lowegard. "I've studied my whole time over here to keep my brain working, but once both kids were in college, I really needed something more. Something to work toward."

While taking courses at a local community college, Lowegard heard about the 50+ program offered at Richland College.

"I heard about this program they were doing for baby boomers over at Richland and I was very interested. I got on the Internet and started learning more about it."

At first Lowegard thought she might want to return to the laboratory or go to nursing school, but then she learned about Richland College's Pharmacy Technician program and she was sold.

"Health care is a great place to get a job. It's always going to be there – people will always need health care," said Lowegard. "I especially liked the pharmacy program because it only took a year to complete. I'm 54 and I didn't want to be in school for a long time -- I'm ready to go back to work now!"

And back to work Lowegard is. She finished the certification program in August and is now employed by Methodist Richardson Medical. "I am very excited that I got this job because it's so difficult to get a job right now. I'm very excited about this opportunity."

So what was it like going back to school after being out of the classroom and the

workforce for almost 20 years? "It was a lot of fun," said Lowegard. "I worried that I'd be the 'old' person in the class but once I started I didn't even think about that. I met so many new people of different ages from different cultures. It was such a good experience for me."

Lowegard admits that in the beginning there was a learning curve she had to overcome. "Talking in front of people was kind of tough at first," said Lowegard. "In Sweden we don't have to stand up in front of people and present yourself like you do over here. "It was difficult in the beginning to do presentations, but I knew I had to overcome it, so I did."

Lowegard says the best thing she's gained from her Richland College experience is how she feels about herself. "Going back to school has given me a lot of self-confidence," said Lowegard. "At first I felt like I couldn't do it. That I didn't have the study habits, or it would be too hard for me, but it wasn't. I did it. It has given me a good start."

She sees a productive and fulfilling future ahead. "I have at least 10 to 15 more years to work if I continue to have good health. I used to be afraid that after not working for 20 years if I did get a job I wouldn't be able to make it – to do it. Learning a new skill at 50-plus lets me know I can do it. It is never too late to learn new things," said Lowegard.

So what advice does Lowegard have for someone who might be contemplating a return to school? "Don't hesitate. You can absolutely do it if you put your mind to it. You might be a little scared, but it will be alright."

"I have a richer life because I went back to school," adds Lowegard. "I have more friends than just my Swedish friends and my husband's friends. I also feel great that I'm doing something. It's nice to do something besides cook and clean and watch TV. It would have been a shame to not do this because I was afraid. I think you stay young by doing stuff, rather than sitting at home waiting for life to go by."

What's New

MetLife Foundation Community College Excellence Award Applications Due Oct. 2

Colleges that are effective in helping students from underserved populations succeed may be recognized by the MetLife Foundation. Applications are due Oct. 2, 2009, for the [MetLife Foundation Community College Excellence Award](#). "This award program recognizes the important roles community colleges play in their communities," said Dennis White, president and CEO of the MetLife Foundation. "We encourage community colleges across the nation to define, document, and share their success." The awards were created in 2002 and are awarded biennially to exemplary community colleges helping less advantaged youth and adults meet their education and career goals. Colleges may nominate themselves with this year's streamlined online application process. [Get more information](#).

Healthcare Scholarships Available for Students: Apply by Oct. 15

Like the student profiled in this edition, many plus 50 students pursue training programs in healthcare, and a new scholarship is now available to help. Students pursuing associate degrees in registered nursing, respiratory care or emergency medical services may apply for the Frank Lanza Memorial Scholarships, offered by Phi Theta Kappa in cooperation with AACC for the first time this year. Up to 25 scholarships of \$1,000 each may be awarded based on academic and leadership accomplishments of students who demonstrate financial need. [More information and applications are available on their Web site](#).

The Plus 50 Initiative at AACC's Convention: Have You Submitted a Proposal?

Colleges serving plus 50 students are innovating new strategies, developing best practices for serving plus 50 students, and reaching out to help the unemployed. The 2010 Call for AACC Convention Presentations is now open and we hope you'll consider sharing what you've learned by presenting. Not sure you want to do all the heavy-lifting of a poster presentation alone? Consider asking another college to partner with you! The deadline to submit a forum, roundtable, poster

session, or presentation for the Innovations Showcase is **Oct. 12, 2009**. The deadline to submit a business meeting or social event is Nov. 30, 2009. [Get more information and make a submission online.](#)

AARP Announces 2009 Best Employers for Workers Over Age 50

For the second year in a row, Cornell University has placed first in the [AARP Best Employers for Workers Over 50 program](#). Cornell, located in Ithaca, New York, topped an impressive list of 50 honorees announced this month by AARP. The diverse group of honorees this year also includes First Horizon National Corporation, a major financial services company based in Memphis (#2), the National Institutes of Health (#3), and computer giant Intel Corporation (#44). More than 200 employers applied for Best Employers honors, the highest total in the nine-year history of the program, designed to highlight exemplary policies toward age 50 and over workers. Cornell offers a variety of progressive policies toward age 50 and over employees, including a formal phased retirement program for faculty and staff, telecommuting and compressed work weeks, a retiree health and prescription drug plan heavily subsidized by the university, paid time off for care giving, and access for retirees to continued university education at no charge. [Read the press release](#) and learn more about the [AARP Best Employers for Workers Over 50 program](#).

GAO Study on Pensions Says Alternatives Could Address Retirement Risks but Offer Trade-offs

Even before the current economic recession eroded retirement accounts, research indicated that pension benefits are likely to be inadequate for many Americans, according to a study issued in July 2009 by the Government Accountability Office. [Private Pensions: Alternative Approaches Could Address Retirement Risks Faced by Workers but Pose Trade-offs](#) offers Social Security Administration data that provides enlightening information on the sources of income for households age 65 and older. Social security and employment earning contribute the largest income sources, and here is the breakdown:

Sources of Income for Households Age 65 and Older, 2006:

- Social Security: 37%;
- Employment earnings: 27%;
- Pension income: 18%;
- Income from assets: 15%;
- Cash public assistance: 1%;
- Other: 2%.

Source: U.S. Social Security Administration, Office of Retirement and Disability Policy Income of the Population 55 or Older, 2006.

The report examines the key risks faced by U.S. workers in accumulating and preserving pension benefits. The authors examine approaches used in other countries that could address these risks and the trade-offs they present. Key proposals for alternative plan designs in the U.S. suggest mitigating risks faced by workers and the trade-offs they entail.

The need for older American to continue to work was further illustrated in the report with information from national survey data indicating that about half of the workforce was not covered by a pension plan in 2008. [Read the report.](#)

[Resources to Support Your Plus 50 Program](#)

LEARNING

A Learning Library is Born: Plus 50 Initiative Webinars Begin Populating Online Archive

The beginnings of an online learning library for community colleges supporting plus 50 learners have begun to emerge on the Plus 50 Initiative Web site, with the [arrival of the first program of our webinar series](#) earlier this month. The first session, "The Plus 50 Initiative: What's In it for You?" can be watched online as video files or downloaded. The PowerPoint presentation used for the session is also available. Future webinars will be added to the Web site, allowing college administrators and program managers to drop in and watch webinar sessions, even if they missed the first broadcast, or if they simply want a refresher. [Visit the](#)

[webinar page](#). In response to college needs identified in the national survey of community college plus 50 programs, the next webinar is titled "Tools to Assess the Needs of Your Plus 50 Population." It will be held Oct.8, 2009, and seats are available on a first-come, first-served basis. To request an invitation for the next webinar session, send an e-mail to mvickers@aacc.nche.edu.

TRAINING and RE-TRAINING

The End of Retirement? Millions are Working at Ages 70, 80, Even 90

Money worries are a prime motivator keeping many on the workforce well into their retirement years, says this article by AARP. The Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that between 2000 and 2008, the number of workers 65 to 69 rose 25 percent. Even greater increases were cited for those ages 70 to 74 (32 percent), 75 to 79 (38 percent) and 80 and over (67 percent, to 500,000). [Read personal stories of these hard-working plus 50 adults and get more information.](#)

VOLUNTEERING and SERVICE

Apply by Oct. 29 for Recognition of Your College's Community Service Program

Is the community service program at your community college top-notch? The Corporation for National and Community Service is now accepting applications for the 2009 President's Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll to recognize exemplary, innovative, and effective community service and service learning programs at higher education institutions. Applications are due Oct. 29, 2009. For more information and to watch a short video on the Honor Roll, [visit their Web site.](#)

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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