Integrating Learning with Life and Work for Non-Traditional Students

EMPOWERING NON-TRADITIONAL STUDENTS
WHO ARE NON-TRADITIONAL STUDENTS?

- Doesn’t go directly from high school to college in the same calendar year
- Is age 24 or older
- Goes to college less than fulltime for at least part of the academic year
- May attend college one or two courses at a time
- Attends college while also working a fulltime job (35 hours or more a week)
- Meets the federal financial aid definition of “financially independent”
- Has dependents other than a spouse (usually children, but sometimes others)
- Is a single parent
- May have a GED instead of a regular high school diploma
NON-TRADITIONAL ANGST

- Concerns about quality and expense of childcare and/or eldercare
- Feelings of responsibility for maintaining their role within the family unit
- Making compromises in careers due to family considerations
- Minimal individual free time (time management)
- Perceived lack of credibility when returning to college
- Insufficient support from family for returning to school
- Expense
- Expense
- Expense
- Expense
ULTIMATE GOALS FOR STUDENTS

- To help non-traditionals get from feeling anxious and apprehensive about being a student to enjoying and appreciating the experience.
- To help non-traditionals further grow and develop as successful students by involving them in the process of solving practical problems that ultimately increase their work opportunities, meet organizational needs, and to become further involved in community and societal issues.
- In essence, integrating learning with life and work for nontraditional students.
NON-TRADITIONALS ARE A DIFFERENT TYPE OF STUDENT

- Non-traditionals must be involved in their own learning
- Non-traditionals often bring life experience and want to utilize and build upon it
- Non-traditionals want to have some choice in the direction of their own learning
- Non-traditionals want to be able to apply what they are learning to real life situations
GENERAL SERVICES FOR NON-TRADITIONALS

- Develop a non-traditional handbook that includes student service hours and contact information
- Publish a non-traditional newsletter
- Encourage the student newspaper to include stories related to non-traditional students
- Have extended hours for the administrative offices, learning resources, counseling center, faculty, and staff on weekends and the evenings
- If the budget limits extended hours, open the offices later one or two days per week and some weekends
GENERAL SERVICES (CONTINUED)

- Extend the hours of the cafeteria.
- Locate vending machines near classrooms used by evening and weekend classes.
- Offer weekend and evening medical services.
- Create a non-traditional student group.
- Encourage student government and other groups to hold meetings on the weekends or in the evenings.
ACCOMMODATING NON-TRADITIONALS

- **Problem:** Not enough time and the amount of time to complete a program
  **Solution:** Accept credit for previous work experience and combine their work and classroom experience for credit.

- **Problem:** Cost barriers relative to non-traditional students
  **Solution:** Financial aid counseling specific to non-traditional students, discounted tuition, and the offering of interest free payment plans

- **Problem:** Child responsibility barriers related to single parent households
  **Solution:** Low cost daycare provided by the daycare

- **Problem:** Employment barriers related often to non-traditional students who work fulltime
  **Solution:** Extended counseling and advising office hours, convenient locations
THE FACULTY VS. THE NON-TRADITIONAL

- Faculty needs to offer higher quality instruction that addresses both instructional and student objectives
- Train faculty members to work with non-traditional learners
- Involve non-traditional students in program governance
- Offer courses at expanded times and days
- Expand locations for programs offerings
- Accept credit for prior learning
- Use admissions policies that have been adapted for non-traditional students
- Offer no hassle advising, scheduling, and registration during extended hours
- Have career planning and placement geared for non-traditional students
CREDIT FOR PRIOR LEARNING

Five Most Common Assessment Methods:

- Advanced Standing and Advanced Placement
- College Level Examination Program (CLEP)
- Portfolio Review
- American Council of Education Guidelines for Corporate/Certificate Training
- Military Credits and Training
ASSESSMENT PROCESS FOR NON-TRADITIONALS

- The Advance Standing exam is often the final examination (or another exam selected by the academic department) from the specific course for which the student wants to obtain credit.
- The Advanced Placement credit is by courses offered through high school that are considered advanced beyond those normally considered honors level for high school students,
- College Level Examination Program (CLEP) is a type of standardized test that assesses previous learning. CLEP exams consist of general and specific subject areas.
- Portfolio Review is utilized by approximately 46% of public institutions according to the Council for Adult and Experimental Learning.
- The American Council on Education Guidelines for Corporate/Certificate Training offers guidance to institutions as to whether prior training may replace a required course, can be applied as a general elective, or applied to waive a prerequisite.
- Military credits and training can be found typically on the back of a soldier’s official DD214, or on each branch’s respective official military transcript.
PERSISTENCE AND ATTAINMENT OF NON-TRADITIONAL STUDENTS

A consistent finding in current research concerning nontraditional students is that they do not persist in postsecondary education as well as their traditional counterparts. One in three non-traditional students leave school without a certificate or degree, compared to one in five traditional students. Non-traditional students typically leave during their first year of postsecondary education, but studies done through NCES also indicate that the further a non-traditional student continues into his or her second year the more narrow that attrition gap becomes between non-traditional and traditional students.

It seems crucial then, that we as college personnel, continue to develop those program aimed at reducing non-traditional attrition rates and that they be implemented from the very start of a student’s enrollment in postsecondary education.
Questions?

Thank you for your time and attention today.

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