



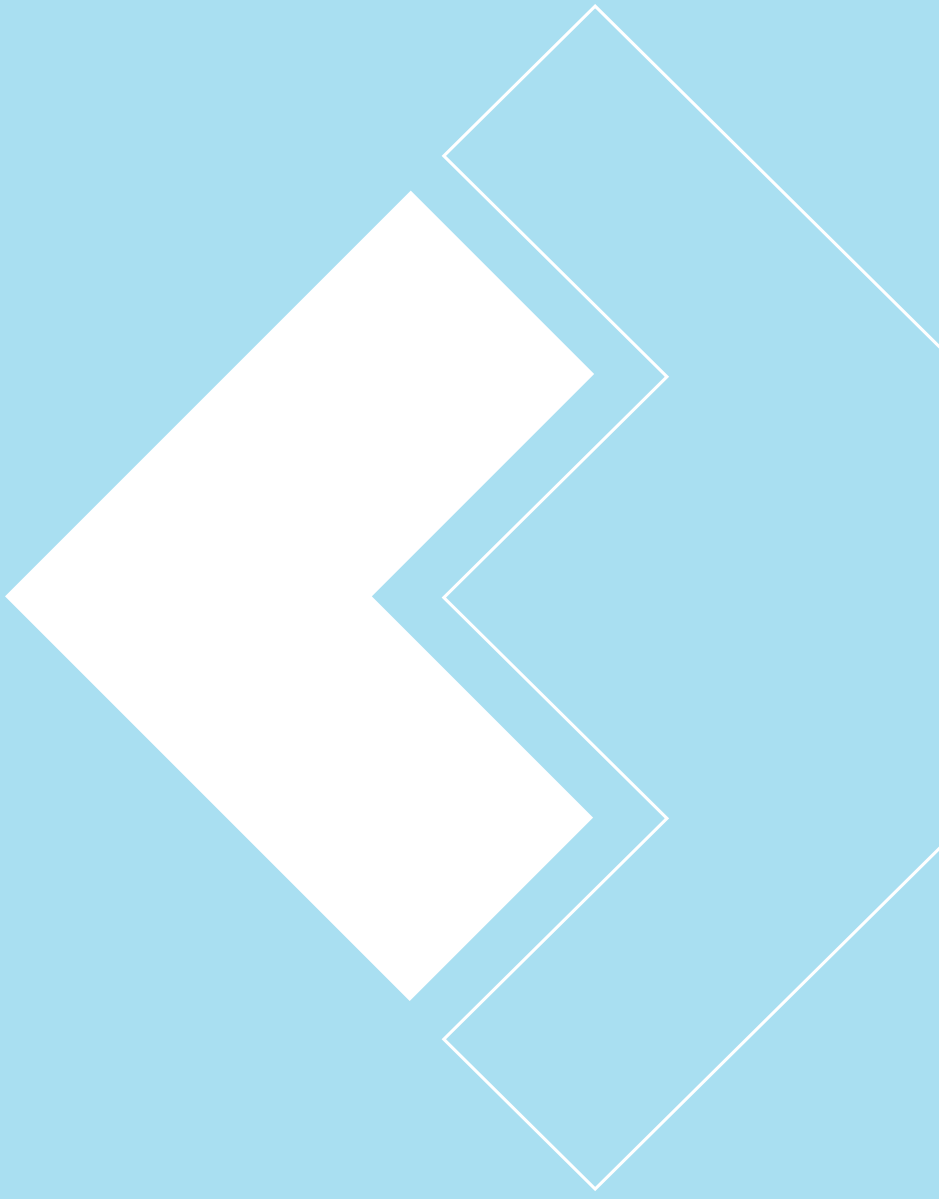
CAEL
Linking Learning and Work

ADEPT AT ADAPTING

*Adult Learner 360 Case Studies on
How Institutions Listen to Students,
Faculty, and Staff to Redesign Services
for Adult Learners*

July 2018





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INTRODUCTION



Adult learners (students aged 25 and older) constituted approximately 38% of all undergraduate students in 2015 (Kena et al, 2015). What makes adult learners different is not just their age. They also often face multiple challenges to earning a degree or credential: caregiving and household obligations, a full-time job, unexpected life disruptions (such as medical bills), and so on.

Many postsecondary institutions already recognize that adults comprise a significant portion of their student body – or they may be starting to recognize the potential for serving more adults as they face declining enrollments from their traditional student pipelines. These institutions realize that they should have programs and services in place that break down barriers and help their adult learners succeed. However, it is not always clear to these institutions how to effectively serve adult learners, whether they are already meeting the needs of these students, or how to prioritize future investments to serve them.

This report examines the experiences of three institutions that used data to guide their decisions on building programs and services for their current and prospective adult students. Atlanta Metropolitan State College, Northwestern State University in Louisiana, and Shasta College in California all developed new approaches for their adult students by learning

from the results of the Adult Learner 360, data tools designed by and offered through the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL).

WHAT IS THE DEFINITION OF AN ADULT LEARNER?

The adult learner is often defined by age (25 years or older) as an easy way to distinguish this group from students who head to college straight out of high school. But age is insufficient as a defining factor. The growing popularity of other terms like nontraditional student – and more recently, terms like post-traditional student or today’s student – indicate that who we are talking about is any student not enrolled full time, not coming straight from high school, and/or not free of dependents or financial obligations.

CAEL'S ADULT LEARNER 360



CAEL developed the Adult Learner 360 to provide institutions with a method to assess the perceived quality and effectiveness of an institution's programs, services, and policies for adult learners. Originally developed in 2003 and known for many years as the Adult Learning Focused Institution (ALFI) Toolkit, the newly revamped Adult Learner 360 consists of two surveys: one for institutional administrators and faculty, and the other for the institution's adult students.

The purpose of the Adult Learner 360, as it was with the ALFI Toolkit, is to provide data that can guide an institution's decisions about where to focus improvement efforts. In the surveys, students rate various programs and services in terms of their satisfaction with current offerings as well as rating the importance of these offerings; institutional representatives rate those same programs and services in terms of perceived effectiveness and importance. Programs and services rated highly by both groups are identified as institutional strengths; those rated lower in terms of satisfaction, effectiveness, or importance

point to possible areas for improvement. Areas where there is misalignment between the students and institutional responses are identified as possibly requiring additional engagement with students or institutional representatives to understand why there might be disagreement.

CAEL uses all of the results to inform customized recommendations for future action based on CAEL's Ten Principles for Effectively Serving Adult Learners. The Adult Learner 360 process contains powerful comparison tools that allow participating institutions to benchmark the quality and effectiveness of their services against peer institutions. Participating institutions use this information to improve practices, set goals for improvement, and create new programs that impact adult learners' enrollment, persistence, and success.

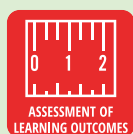
The questions in the Adult Learner 360, also based on CAEL's Ten Principles for Effectively Serving Adults, provide a framework for institutions to develop programs and policies that help adults reach their educational goals (see page 3).

TEN PRINCIPLES FOR EFFECTIVELY SERVING ADULTS



Adaptivity

Adjusts to shifting external market forces and is able to adapt to the changing expectations of internal stakeholders, students, and employers – understanding the needs of those they serve by developing creative academic solutions.



Assessment of Learning Outcomes

Defines and assesses the knowledge, skills, and competencies acquired by adult learners – both from the curriculum and from life and work experience – in order to assign credit and confer degrees with rigor.



Financing

Promotes choice using an array of payment options for adult learners in order to expand equity and financial flexibility.



Life & Career Planning

Addresses adult learners' life and career goals before or at the onset of enrollment in order to assess and align its capacities to help learners reach their goals.



Outreach

Conducts its outreach to adult learners by overcoming barriers in time, place, and tradition in order to create lifelong access to educational opportunities.



Strategic Partnerships

Engages in strategic relationships, partnerships, and collaborations with employers and other organizations in order to develop and improve educational opportunities for adult learners.



Student Support Systems

Assists adult learners using comprehensive academic and student support systems in order to enhance students' capacities to become self-directed, lifelong learners.



Teaching Learning Process

Faculty uses multiple methods of instruction (including experiential and problem-based methods) for adult learners in order to connect curricular concepts to useful knowledge and skills.



Technology

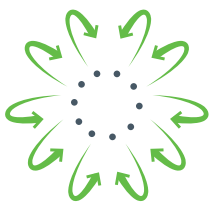
Uses technology to provide relevant and timely information and to enhance the learning experience.



Transitions

Supports guided pathways that lead into and from the institution's programs and services in order to ensure that students' learning will apply usefully to achieving their educational and career goals.

HOW DOES SURVEY DATA LEAD TO CHANGES THAT BENEFIT THE ADULT LEARNER?



Adult Learner 360 CATALYST FOR SUCCESS

Over the last 10 years, more than 280 postsecondary institutions have engaged with the Adult Learner 360 (new version) or ALFI (original version) survey tools and the CAEL recommendations that were informed by the survey results. In the following pages, we tell the stories of three of the institutions: Atlanta Metropolitan State College, Northwestern State University in Louisiana, and Shasta College in California. These case studies examine why each of these institutions chose the Adult Learner 360, what they learned from the data, what they changed in response to what they learned, and what difference those changes have made at the institutions.

EXPANDING EFFORTS TO SERVE ADULT LEARNERS: THE STORY OF ATLANTA METROPOLITAN STATE COLLEGE

Background

Atlanta Metropolitan State College (AMSC) is part of the University System of Georgia. Formerly a two-year institution, today AMSC offers baccalaureate, associate, and certificate programs in biological science, criminal justice, applied mathematics, digital media and entertainment design, business administration, and organizational leadership. Students can also earn a Bachelor's Degree in Teacher Education offered in partnership with Kennesaw State University.

There are many special initiatives and academic options available to students that make AMSC more accessible to adult learners. For example, there are multiple start times each semester, and there are many online and hybrid programs available. A broad array of programs, flexible delivery methods, and convenient times for course offerings are all designed to meet the diverse scheduling needs of current and prospective adult students from the Atlanta metropolitan area.

In 2009, AMSC joined the University System of Georgia's Adult Learning Consortium, a group of institutions working individually and collaboratively to improve services and programs for adults pursuing a one-year certificate, associate degree, or bachelor's degree. Another goal of the consortium is to provide a seamless transfer process from 2-year institutions to 4-year universities. The consortium implements programs that are aligned with strategic workforce needs, tests models of learning, and shares results and resources to achieve a set of prescribed goals and objectives (<http://www.completegeorgia.org/adult-learning-consortium>).

Dr. Kokila Ravi, Director of Online Learning and Specialized Programs and the point of contact for the University System of Georgia's GoBackMoveAhead initiative for adult learners at AMSC, explained that the consortium is a natural fit for AMSC. She notes, "We are in an urban setting, and we've always had about 40% adult learners of the total student body.

Approximately 85% of our students are first generation college students. [Prior to becoming a four-year institution] we were the only two-year institution in the City of Atlanta."

Insights from the Survey Results

As a member of the Adult Learning Consortium, AMSC received funding to conduct the ALFI survey toolkit. AMSC participated in the ALFI in 2009 and again in 2014, which allowed the college to measure change over time in adult students' satisfaction with AMSC. According to Dr. Ravi, the surveys identified several areas on which the college could focus and improve its efforts:

- availability of required courses at convenient times for working adult learners,
- faculty engagement with adult students, and
- information about available support services.

Addressing the Gaps in Serving the Adult Learner

After learning about the gaps in how AMSC was meeting adult learners' needs, the college proceeded to address each point.

Expanding Course Availability

For both 2009 and 2014, one of AMSC's top challenges identified by the Adult Learner 360 survey was the availability of course offerings required by students' programs. In direct response to the results, and with funding assistance from the consortium, AMSC began to develop the Online Adult Learner-Focused Program, selecting dedicated faculty members to teach the online courses designed for and marketed to adults. In the Spring 2014 academic term, AMSC piloted online adult learner friendly core curriculum courses. According to Dr. Ravi, these courses have the same rigor and content as other courses but use a pedagogical approach that is suited to adult learners (the distinction is described in more detail in the next



section). Initially, only about 8 courses (10 sections), including developmental math and English, were selected to be offered in this adult learner friendly format. Gradually, about 10 courses and more sections were added to the program as faculty were interested in revising their courses to the new format. Additional course offerings in this format now include math and English (college level); history; political science; business administration; and “First Year Experience” – part of the general education requirements for all majors at AMSC.

Helping Faculty Understand and Engage the Adult Learner

Another insight from the survey was that the adult students did not feel the faculty fully understood their

needs as adult learners. AMSC used a small grant to invite Dr. Talmadge Guy, an adult education theory expert from the University of Georgia, to conduct a one-day workshop for about 20 faculty members. The workshop focused on ways to engage adult students in their courses, with tips and strategies to facilitate learning. According to Dr. Ravi, this workshop was both “critical and instrumental” in helping improve adult students’ course and program performance.

The workshop led AMSC to also reconsider the design of the online courses to better address adult learner needs. Several important changes were made to engage adult students and help them succeed, such as:

- adding modules designed to address technological barriers,
- creating course assessments that incorporate a case study format, providing adults the opportunity to incorporate their personal experiences into their assignments, and
- standardizing online courses to have a uniform look and feel so students will not have to spend a lot of time navigating the learning environment.

To standardize the online courses, AMSC turned to Quality Matters, an international program focused on quality assurance for online learning. The program features online course design standards; a peer-based course review process; and the Quality Matters Rubric, which is a set of 40 standards that addresses key quality factors (<https://www.qualitymatters.org/>).

Providing More Effective Outreach and Information about Support Services

The survey results further indicated that even though AMSC offered robust support services, adult students did not know about them. According to Dr. Ravi, “We had academic support, we had counseling and disability services, but a lot of adult students didn’t know about any of it. They come in the evening, attend class, and go home without knowing the resources exist.” The survey data prompted AMSC to make important changes in how the college communicates with students about the services and assistance available to them. Today, every course includes links to a resource page, and AMSC actively encourages adults to use the resources.

Continuing the Momentum

Between 2009 and 2014, AMSC made several changes based on a consolidation of efforts targeted toward adult learners. In 2014, AMSC used the ALFI surveys to measure the impact of the changes. The results of the 2014 survey showed that students had strong positive identification with two statements in particular:

- *I receive the help I need to develop my academic skills, including reading, writing, and math.*
- *This institution uses technology on a regular basis to communicate with me.*

The high ratings of these statements suggested that AMSC had successfully addressed at least some of the key challenges identified by students in the 2009 survey.

Today, AMSC continues to innovate in its methods to support adult students. In particular, it has piloted several new online resources to assist adult learners. In the 2016-17 school year, AMSC leveraged its new strength in the **Technology Principle** (from CAEL's Ten Principles for Effectively Serving Adult Learners) to expand chat capabilities that allow students to connect with their instructors for "real time" feedback. Another

"The ALFI survey tool helped us modify or develop our services to meet the needs of adult learners."

new feature is an e-Librarian embedded into the online adult friendly courses, which provides students with the ability to access support without having to come to campus.

According to Dr. Ravi, the ALFI survey tool gave the college important information about what its adult learners needed and the opportunity to modify or develop services to meet these needs. Further, by administering the survey tools twice, the college was able to measure change over time and assess the impact of the changes informed by the initial analysis. AMSC continues to use the ALFI survey to improve course offerings and nurture healthy interactions with the college's faculty, staff, and adult learners.



WELCOMING NONTRADITIONAL STUDENTS AT A TRADITIONAL INSTITUTION: NORTHWESTERN STATE UNIVERSITY OF LOUISIANA



Background

Northwestern State University (NSU) was established in 1884 in Natchitoches, Louisiana. In 1921, NSU evolved from a 2-year college for teachers to a 4-year college. Today, with satellite campuses in Shreveport, Alexandria, and Fort Polk, NSU offers a full range of undergraduate and graduate degrees as well as eNSU, Louisiana's first and largest electronic campus.

In 2008, the State of Louisiana began to focus on adult learners. Adult students have historically been well represented in NSU's undergraduate headcount, and the university has also prioritized adult student retention. The statewide interest sparked NSU to intentionally reevaluate its programs and policies with the adult learner in mind.

Dr. Darlene Williams, Vice President for Technology, Innovation, and Economic Development, recalls that

the ALFI survey tools were first used simply to gauge whether the university was, in fact, adult learner focused. "We had undergone so many changes in policies and practices because of the statewide interest in adult learners that we just wanted to check the pulse of our efforts. We were not hoping to solve a problem, and we were not focused on any particular area. We were mainly interested in the feedback." Dr. Williams noted that the institution always had a robust nontraditional population and strived to be considered an adult student friendly university. NSU was open to discovering its own strengths and weaknesses, and it was committed to implementing necessary changes to improve the success of adult learners.

Insights from the Survey Results

All of the academic departments on campus participated in the ALFI survey tool as well as staff from the student support services department. Each department designated a leader, and the leaders, collectively, formed a leadership team. By coming together to discuss the university's response to the ALFI survey, the leadership team discovered that many departments had already made changes to serve adults; however, these changes were not communicated institution wide. Recalls Williams, "There are so many moving parts on a campus and things change quickly. We discovered that we needed to be more open and transparent with each other."

The results of the ALFI surveys also identified specific areas needing improvement, particularly:

- the need for enhanced services in the financial aid and registrar's offices, particularly in terms of hours of accessibility and the ability to receive transcripts in a timely manner when requested from other institutions, and
- the need to expand prior learning assessment options.

Each academic department was responsible for analyzing its own survey responses and developing strategies for change. The leadership team was also preparing for an accreditation visit, giving additional incentive to improve services throughout the university. Embarking on the ALFI survey, Dr. Williams recalls, “We wanted validation for the things we were doing right, to identify areas of strength, and be proud of the things we were doing, but also work on areas we needed to improve.”

Addressing the Gaps in Serving the Adult Learner

The ALFI survey results did not suggest that major changes or significant new initiatives were needed for NSU. However, Dr. Williams felt compelled to make improvements by leveraging the university’s identified strengths and enhancing the following areas: communication, availability of support services, and prior learning assessment offerings.

Increasing Communication to Adult Students

Historically, marketing efforts were focused on the traditional student aged 18-24. After gaining a different perspective from the ALFI survey tools, NSU turned its attention to presenting information directly to adult students and modifying the language used on NSU’s website to more clearly connect with the adult learner audience.

Availability of Services for Adult Students

Dr. Williams and her colleagues realized that to positively affect change in adult student retention and enrollment, they needed to make some of the administrative and support services more accessible to working adults. This objective involved expanding hours of availability as well as changing the language and messaging procedures used. Williams recalls that the improvement process encompassed a lot of questions, such as: “Are [the services] provided during recruitment? Are they embedded? Are they available to adults on their schedules?” NSU wanted to be sure that adult students received the attention and support they needed from enrollment through graduation. To address the identified challenges

WHAT IS PRIOR LEARNING ASSESSMENT?

Prior learning assessment (PLA) is a term used to describe the process by which an individual’s experiential learning is assessed and evaluated for purposes of granting college credit, certification, or advanced standing toward further education or training.

There are four generally accepted approaches to PLA and, when properly conducted, all ensure academic quality:

1. **National standardized exams** in specified disciplines, e.g., Advanced Placement (AP) exams, College Level Examination Program (CLEP) tests, Excelsior College Exams (UExcel), DANTES Subject Standardized Tests (DSST);
2. **Challenge exams** for institutional courses;
3. **Individualized assessments, particularly portfolio-based assessments** such as those conducted by colleges and CAEL’s LearningCounts national online portfolio assessment service; and
4. **Evaluated non-college programs**, e.g., the National College Credit Recommendation Service (NCCRS), the American Council on Education’s ACECREDIT service to evaluate corporate and military training, and college-provided evaluations of non-college training and non-credit courses.

in the **Financing and Student Support Systems Principles**, the university hired a dedicated adult recruiter and a dedicated adult financial aid advisor. As Williams noted, “It was an investment.”

Prior Learning Assessment

Given the heightened focus on adult learners, NSU also invested in and expanded its prior learning assessment program. Using guidance from CAEL, NSU restructured university policy related to PLA, specifically in portfolio assessment. More than 50 faculty members were trained and certified in portfolio assessment, and the institution launched a new set of offerings, including an intensive portfolio development course.

Evaluating the Effort

As part of the ongoing effort to attract and enroll more adult students, and to make changes and modifications to policies and practices on campus, NSU readministered the ALFI survey tools in 2012. It also administered the new Adult Learner 360 in 2017.

According to the latest survey results, the university has three key strengths in its overall approach to adult learners:

1. *Technology.* While not an area that had needed improvement, NSU’s technology stood out for students as a strength of the institution in general. Students reported that they could access needed services online or through other technological means and that the institution excels in using technology to increase the

accessibility of support services. In other words, between the first and second surveys, the university responded to student-identified needs by noticeably enhancing access to support services.

2. *Transitions.* Adult students reported the greatest satisfaction with NSU’s ability to empower students by providing easy access to the tools and information necessary for them to achieve their own academic and career goals.
3. *Outreach.* Students reported that NSU is effectively serving adult students and excelling at increasing access to education by helping adult learners overcome the typical barriers facing them. This outcome may have emerged as a strength due to the institution’s efforts to provide better communication about available services and make more services accessible to working students.

There is always room for improvement, however. The most recent Adult Learner 360 identified some new areas for attention and investment at NSU, including information and guidance on financial aid, a more robust and integrated approach to career services, and further expansion of PLA offerings.

Always the optimist, and showing a strong spirit of adaptivity, Dr. Williams views this feedback as an opportunity to make more changes. “We do not want to become stagnant and satisfied. We are in a constant state of assessment. We make changes based on feedback. It’s a living, breathing process.”

WHY PRIOR LEARNING ASSESSMENT?

PLA is a way to help students save time and money because it can reduce the number of courses students need to take to earn their degrees. CAEL research has found that PLA is a process that is validating for the student. In addition, research by CAEL and others shows that students with PLA credit are more likely to persist and complete their degrees compared to students without PLA credit.

INCREASING DEGREE ATTAINMENT OF AN UNDEFINED POPULATION: DISCOVERING ADULT LEARNERS AT SHASTA COLLEGE



Background

Shasta College (Shasta) is part of the California Community College system, which is the largest system of higher education in the world, with 114 colleges organized into 72 districts. The college has articulation agreements to facilitate transfer to the University of California and California State University systems as well as to many private college campuses. Shasta has a large service area of more than 10,000 square miles, much of it rural. In addition to providing a wide range of programs and services to its students, Shasta has extensive offerings on the Internet and through Interactive Television (ITV).

In 2015, Shasta was selected as one of the cohorts to participate in Lumina Foundation’s Community Partnership for Attainment, an initiative that works to deepen the impact of cross-sector, place-based efforts to increase higher education attainment in communities and cities across the country. Launched in 2013, the initiative supported Lumina’s Goal 2025 “to increase the proportion of Americans with high-quality postsecondary degrees and credentials to 60%

by the year 2025.” Through this work with Lumina, Shasta had an opportunity to analyze regional data and consider how the region’s demographics could affect the college’s student enrollment and attainment goals. The region had a high percentage of adults with some college but no degree. Shasta wanted to move the needle on attainment; but to do that, the institution knew it needed to make significant changes to increase the enrollment of adult students and keep them engaged toward success.

Defining the Population

As Shasta began ALFI’s institutional survey in 2016, it faced an important question: how to define adult learners. The team at Shasta, which included deans, administrators, heads of departments, and student services staff, conducted a series of meetings to tackle the basics. To increase adult student enrollment and attainment, they needed to understand the target population first and then attempt to serve them. After the fifth meeting, they nailed down a definition: adult students are 25 years old or older or any student who

qualifies as “independent” for the purposes of federal financial aid. Dr. Kate Mahar, Dean of Institutional Effectiveness, remembers the process. “We were not adequately serving adult learners because we didn’t know who they were, and we didn’t understand their needs.”

Insights from the Survey Results

Once the team at Shasta had a clear definition of the target population, they realized that they may have been too focused on providing adult learners “extra things” the college couldn’t afford to offer - like child care or transportation. Shasta had a lot of what Dean Mahar refers to as “false narratives,” and the ALFI survey results helped them clear up the assumptions while highlighting areas for change.

The ALFI survey revealed that the following challenges needed to be addressed:

- the availability and frequency of required courses offered at times that work for nontraditional students,
- the accessibility of services to accommodate adult students who work full-time jobs, and
- the availability of prior learning assessment options.

Addressing the Gaps in Serving the Adult Learner

Dean Mahar gathered deans from every department to pour over the ALFI survey results and prepare strategies to address the challenges. Once the survey results were in front of them, Dean Mahar notes, “We cleaned things up quickly.”

Making Classes More Available for Adult Students

One of the areas identified for improvement was the availability of courses at times that worked with the students’ schedules – an important part of the **Teaching and Learning Principle**. This information was important because it led them to question some of the prevailing assumptions that Shasta had made about students’ needs.

Shasta had cut a number of its evening classes in the last economic downturn when budgets were tight. Shortly thereafter, the college’s staff noticed a rise in

“We were not adequately serving adult learners because we didn’t know who they were, and we didn’t understand their needs.”

enrollment in online courses and assumed that adult learners, therefore, preferred online classes. The survey revealed that students wanted more courses offered face-to-face and scheduled outside of normal work hours, not necessarily more online courses. Adult students may have only turned to online learning because Shasta had cut the inventory of evening classes. A majority of the adult learners still wanted evening classes.

Another false narrative was that access to transportation was the reason for lower adult enrollment when, in fact, the survey results suggested that Shasta was not offering classes at times conducive to the schedules of working adults. In most cases, adult students had adequate transportation, but the courses were offered during their work hours.

Availability of Services for Adult Students

Before the ALFI survey results, Shasta offered limited face-to-face hours outside of the standard workday - Shasta’s financial aid office, for example, closed at 5:00 p.m. most days. CAEL recommended that the college expand administrative office hours (such as one longer day per week and one Saturday per month) and centralize services for its adult learners. Shasta began to modify and extend its service hours to accommodate working adults. According to Dean Mahar, “We were overthinking it. For a majority of our students, we didn’t need to offer childcare or transportation; we just needed to make our services and classes more accessible to adults.”

Developing a Prior Learning Assessment Program

The ALFI survey results also identified a challenge in the **Assessment of Learning Outcomes Principle**. Adult students felt that their existing knowledge, skills,

and competencies were not adequately recognized and valued. Dean Mahar recalls, “We wanted to step toward and figure out competency-based education and prior learning assessment. We didn’t have an institutional understanding of those. We wanted to create a formal program for PLA.”

Recently, Shasta was selected to be part of Lumina Foundation’s North State Together Talent Hub, a network of cities that are significantly accelerating efforts to help residents earn college degrees, workforce certificates, and other high-level credentials (<https://www.luminafoundation.org/talent-hubs/#ShastaCounty>). With support from the Talent Hub Network and technical assistance from CAEL, Shasta has begun to explore a formal prior learning assessment program and a competency-based education (CBE) program.

Building on the Momentum of ALFI

A final recommendation from CAEL was for Shasta to examine how similar institutions are incorporating competency-based curriculum design as a way to address the **Teaching-Learning Principle**. Features that a CBE program can offer – such as offering students the classes they need, when they need them, and on a flexible academic calendar – is a way to attract adult students and keep them engaged - exactly what Dean Mahar had initially wanted to pursue.

In response, Shasta developed the Accelerated College Education (ACE) program. The ACE program is designed for college-ready working adults who want to pursue full-time studies and desire a predictable schedule. The program features compressed classes (8 weeks in length) offered in two formats: hybrid (in-person plus online instruction) and fully online. Through ACE, adult students can take a full course load while working full time, focusing on two accelerated classes at a time. This structure allows a student to complete a certificate in 9 months or an associate degree in 24 months or less, even more quickly if they have completed some college coursework already. The utilization of a cohort model and a designated case manager have also aided in student success. Even at this early stage, the ACE program has already outperformed the traditional program in both retention and course success. According to Dean Mahar, while the

ACE program was developed with the adult working student in mind, the next step for Shasta is to expand ACE to reach other populations, including veterans and other adults in its community.

The ALFI survey helped Shasta gain a deeper understanding of adult learners. Dr. Mahar believes that because of ALFI, Shasta has embraced a culture of innovating education practices to better serve adults through PLA, accelerated programs, and competency-based education. “We now have doubled our ACE program in the evenings. Ten years ago, we wouldn’t have had enough freedom to make changes. The ALFI survey helped us focus, and it started the ball rolling.” Shasta College just received an Innovation Award from the State of California Governor’s Office for programs that decrease time to degree, which will allow Shasta to further expand the ACE model.





Decisions about how to improve services to adults cannot happen in a vacuum. New approaches and improvements should be considered in the context of how current programs measure up against adult learners' actual needs and expectations. Institutions that understand the complex needs of their adult students have made informed changes that demonstrably impacted their adult students' enrollment, persistence, and success. As was described in the above case studies, the solutions are not always the same from institution to institution. Solutions are contingent upon the demands of each institution's unique adult student population; some are quick fixes, while others require long-term investment. Each step toward enhancing services and programs for adults supports a culture of continuous adaptivity in response to the changing demographics of higher education.



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CAEL

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We advocate and innovate on behalf of adult learners to increase access to education and economic security. We provide adults with career guidance and help them earn college credit for what they already know. We equip colleges and universities to attract, retain, and graduate more adult students. We provide employers with smart strategies for employee development. We build workforce organizations' capacity to connect worker skills to employer demands.

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