

**West Chester University
University Forum Initiatives
Grant Project Final Report**

1) Project Information

Project Title: Teaching the Adult Urban Learner

Project Applicants: Casey Bohrman, Christina Chiarelli-Helmeniak, Lisa Calvano

Amount of Grant: \$2,048

Project start to completion date: Fall 2018-Spring 2019

2) Outcome/Benefits of the Project

Goals and Objectives:

The goal of our project was to provide professional development and create a dialogue among faculty and staff on Philadelphia and main campuses that resulted in greater sensitivity to the needs of adult urban learners and ultimately bolsters student success and retention. At the end of our project, we aimed to achieve the following objectives:

- Faculty and staff will be more adept at identifying and addressing the distinct challenges and opportunities of teaching and assisting adult urban learners.
- Data about the needs of and strategies of success for adult urban learners will be collected and disseminated at WCU and at regional conferences.
- Faculty and staff on main campus will have a greater understanding of the Philadelphia campus and the commonalities that exist among nontraditional students on both campuses.

Please describe to what extent the goals and objectives of the project were met and how this is demonstrated:

We were successful in providing all of the programming laid out in our proposal including an introductory discussion about the needs of urban adult students, a workshop on writing and academic success, a book discussion group, and a final lecture on adult urban learners from a national expert on the topic. We were able to include people from multiple campuses by using zoom. Many, though not all, of the faculty who attended teach in Philadelphia and West Chester, and through our discussions at these events we were able to explore some of the similarities between adult learners on both campuses. While the proposal was developed by three faculty members, we could not have implemented any of this programming without the assistance of Ben Morgan and Marcie Cohen, Associate Directors of the Philadelphia campus.

We were able to share our findings from this experience as well as our overall experience working on the Philadelphia campus for the past five years through a conference

presentation at West Chester University's 3rd annual Scholarship of Teaching, Learning and Assessment regional conference. Approximately 10 colleagues from WCU and other regional universities attended the presentation. Additionally, we wrote an article based on the presentation titled "Creating a Supportive Learning Community for Adult Students from Admissions to Graduation", which was accepted with minor revisions by the Journal of Access, Retention and Inclusion in Higher Education.

If you were to do this project again, what, if anything, would you do differently?

In writing our proposal, we based ideas for workshops on the academic literature and on our experiences. One way we could have made the workshops more relevant to working with West Chester students would have been to solicit ideas from adult urban learners from our university. We could have asked them about areas where we could work on strengthening our teaching and services. We selected the book for the discussion group based on the recommendation of a colleague who had recently seen the author speak. If we could do this project over again, we would have first read the book ourselves and then we probably would have selected a different book that was more engaging and focused more on adult learners. Finally, we would have selected the final speaker earlier in the spring semester so that we could better publicize the event. We were fortunate to find a national expert to and could have had greater attendance had we done more work publicizing the event in advance.

3) Number of Participants (who facilitated/implemented the project)

4) Number of Participants (who attended)

Introductory Discussion

Faculty & Staff: 21

Writing Workshop

Faculty & Staff: 20

Students: 1

Book Discussion

Faculty & Staff: 20

Lecture

Students: 3

Faculty & Staff: 7

5) Summary of Project Activities

- Introductory Discussion (September 17, 2018) - Jared Brown from the Office of New Student Programs and Kenneth Jones from the Admissions office facilitated a discussion

with faculty and staff focused on the needs of adult urban learners. Topics covered included systems of access, enrollment trends, navigating technologies in supporting adult learners, the research of UPENN's Dr. Laura Perna, the importance of flexibility, and transfer population challenges. The event took place at the Philadelphia campus and main campus colleagues participated through videoconferencing.

- Writing Workshop (October 22, 2018) - Michael Burns from WCU's English Department led a workshop on writing and academic success for the adult urban learners. The event took place at the Philadelphia campus and main campus colleagues participated through videoconferencing. The discussion worked from John Bean's text *Engaging Ideas* and covered various topics including writing-as-ideation, writing assessment, and feedback strategies for supporting the languaging of adult learners.
- Book Discussion Group (February 19 & March 21, 2019) - Faculty and staff met to discuss the first three chapters of *Completing College: Rethinking Institutional Action* by Dr. Vincent Tinto. The group met again on March 21 to discuss the remaining four chapters. Some of the key ideas from the discussions focused on adapting and unifying our campus systems of support, whether through group-advising, alternative workshop models and syllabus design, or expanding our peer-mentorship program. Faculty who participated in the discussion received a copy of the book.
- Lecture (April 16, 2019) - The workshop series culminated with a lecture and discussion titled [what was the title] by Dr. Sara Goldrick-Rab, author of *Paying the Price: College Costs, Financial Aid and the Betrayal of the American Dream*. Dr. Goldrick-Rab shared about the importance of creating a "culture of caring" learned through her teaching experiences at Temple University, as well as understanding the connection between challenges in the classroom and policy work at the macro level. Participants received a copy of the book.

6) Evaluation Results

Faculty and staff at the Philadelphia campus found the discussions worthwhile and helpful. While the grant focused primarily on the Philadelphia campus, it inspired a wider conversation throughout the campus community about the needs of adult learners. For example, the project led to discussions with adult learners from the newly formed BS in Management program at Delaware County Community College regarding their needs. The project also inspired the College of Business and Public Management to sponsor a faculty and staff development workshop on teaching adult learners that was facilitated by Dr. John Craig. Finally, this project, along with student, staff and faculty "Chat and Chews" developed by Dr. Mia Ocean, led to the Philadelphia Student and Community Engagement Committee taking on an effort to create more opportunities for dialogue between these various stakeholders during the 2019-2020 AY.

7) Final Budget

	Requested UF Grant Amount	Departmental / College Contribution	Other Funding Sources (Specify)	Totals
1. PERSONNEL				
Office of New Student Programs workshop facilitator		\$400 (in-kind)		\$400
Student Success Center workshop facilitators		\$1,200 (in-kind)		\$1,200
Subtotal (Personnel)		\$1,600 (in-kind)		\$1,600
2. Operating Expenses				
Books for faculty discussion group	\$852.42			\$852.42
Speaker Honorarium				
Photo Copying & Printing		\$250		\$250
Local Travel for Speaker				
Refreshments for lecture		\$250		\$250
Purchase of reference books	\$597.63			\$597.63
Subtotal (Operating Expenses)	\$1,450.05	\$500		\$1,950.05
Total Project Amount	\$1,450.05	\$2,100		\$3,550.05