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**Educational Session**

**2370 - Engaging the Some College No Degree Population: What is Working and Lessons Learned**
Transition Programs and Services, Special Populations

This session will examine the "some college no degree" (SCND) challenge to higher education. Participate in a discussion of the issues involved and lessons learned - what works and what doesn't - from the institution, system and statewide perspectives. The NSC Research Center 2019 report numbers this population at 35.5+ million nationally. This population reflects all student demographics, the most prominent being socio-economic status with students - primarily transfer - being from all educational sectors.

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University of Illinois System

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Engaging the ‘Some College, No Degree’ Population: What is Working and Lessons Learned (Session ID# 2370)

Presenters
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Shelley Lemons | Executive Director, Office of Student Transitions
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Introductions…

Who we are, in relation to the work
The scope of the issue at hand
Our approach to this presentation

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Food for thought for discussion…

Where is your institution on the continuum for re-engaging adult learners with some college, no degree?

- We’re interested and need a starting point
- Gathering data for program development
- My institution participates in a national program
- My institution participates in a state program
- We have a program unique to our institution
- Assessing our program(s) for future needs
- I do not know this information and would like to find out
Food for thought for discussion…

What reasons are you aware of for why students stopped-out?

- Could no longer afford college
- Personal reasons (health, childcare, etc.)
- The college didn’t have the program the student needed
- One or more of these reasons
- Our institution does not know this information

How can your program help address these issues?
Food for thought for discussion…

Where is your institution/state in terms of institutional debt-forgiveness for the SCND population?

☐ No debt forgiveness policy

☐ Some grants/loans available

☐ Have debt-forgiveness policy

☐ Using HERF III funding

☐ Transcripts withheld for certain types/amounts of debt

Have you considered these policies when building a re-entry program for the SCND population?
Common stranded credit scenarios

Transcripts are often withheld to collect:

- Fees: Parking tickets, Library fines, Testing, etc.
- Housing costs
- Tuition balances:
  - Reducing enrollment (intending to lessen costs) a student can fall below financial aid threshold, resulting in increased debt
  - Drop/withdraw from courses past the deadline to receive a full refund
  - Stop-out with intent to earn $ and go back

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Stranded credit, by the numbers…

- 98% of 410 colleges/universities surveyed in 2016 (by National Assoc. of College & University Business Officers) maintain policies to withhold transcripts in debt collection efforts.
- 64% withhold with debts of $25 or less.
- Issue is most extensive at community colleges with an estimated 3 million former students having stranded credit.
- Approx. 8.3 million students nationwide had unpaid balances in FY 2018. (Note: Pre-COVID numbers!)
- 1.4 million had accounts in collections.
- Estimates indicate approx. 6.6 million students have stranded credits.
- Records indicate the total amount owed as of FY 2018 was approx. $6.5 billion.

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Legislative Remedies

- CA law AB-1313 effect Jan 2020
  - Schools cannot refuse to provide a transcript because of a debt or charge a higher fee.
- LA ACT 334 (HB-767) effect Aug 2020
  - Prohibits transcript withholding or other records due to debt or loan default
- Ohio Revised Code Section 3345.027
- WA HB-2513 effect Jun 2020
  - Prohibits transcript withholding in some cases and limits registration holds as debt collection practice
- Being considered in NY (SB-S5924A)
  - Has passed the Senate and is in the Assembly
- Being considered in MA (Bill S821)
  - Referred to Joint Committee on HE
- Illinois considered such a Bill in 2016
  - Did not pass
  - Included in another IL Bill (yet filed) limiting dollar amount threshold.
  - IL Rep recently sent letters to several IL higher ed institutions and out-of-state colleges/universities to investigate current practices.
- HERF III, American Rescue Plan
  - Many institutions using HERF III to reduce/relieve outstanding student debt, including 20+ HBCU/MIs

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Some Gap Loan and Grant Initiatives

- MI “Complete 2 Compete”
- MD “One Step Away”
- WA “College & Career Compass”
- LA “CompleteLA”
- TN “Reconnect”
- Detroit Drives Degrees
- Many, many others

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Debt Forgiveness Programs

- NE Ohio 8 college/university pilot program
- CUNY, Comeback
- MI Detroit Area Chamber and institutional partnership
  - Covers up to $1,500 in debt to a 4-year institution, half of the total debt to a 2-year, and participating schools agree to release transcripts for students who owe – provided they agree to a payment plan.
- MO, Finish Line Scholarship
- City Colleges of Chicago, Fresh Start
  - Launched in 2020, program allows students to “learn off” their debt
  - Focusses on Financial Empowerment support
  - Higher retention rates from fall to spring than comparable “Stop-in” students
  - $318,000 debt waived as of last fall
  - 86% completers are Black or LatinX; 64% are women; 62% are 25-39 years of age
Supporting Transfer of Adult Learners

What We Have Learned
Illinois 60 by 25 Initiative

- 8/10 Illinois employers say they need employees with some form of post-secondary education
- In 2009, less than 45% of the states adult population had attained a post-secondary credential (certificate or higher)
- Goal: Have 60% of the states adult population educated with a college/career credential by 2025
2009 - 43.7% of adults in Illinois had a post-secondary credential
2019 – 51.8% of adults in Illinois had a post-secondary credential
Female students make up the largest number of adult learners at 2,810 (68%)

LatinX students make up the largest number of adult learners at 1,689 (41%)

39% of adult learners enrolled at CCC are in a transfer related degree program (AA, AS, AES, AFA)
Adult Learners Make Up Over 40% of Our Graduate Population

- AY19: 2462 (2254 Traditional Age, 277 Adult Learner, 27 Unknown)
- AY20: 2254 (1536 Traditional Age, 18 Adult Learner, 27 Unknown)
Adult Learners Transfer to 4-Year Institutions at Lower Rates than Traditional Aged Students

- Traditional Aged graduates transfer at 45% and 41% for AY19 and AY20 respectively.
- Adult Learners transfer at a 37% and 31% for AY19 and AY20 respectively.
Adult Learners. What’s the Big Deal?

• The Equity Imperative:
  • Ending generational poverty
  • Baccalaureate degree completion rates lower than traditional aged students

• Adult Learners Have Multiple Conflicting Priorities
  • They want an education, but may not know how to make it happen

• What the Pandemic highlights:
  • The upskilling/reskilling of a generation
  • Historically, black workers have faced unemployment rates twice as high as those of their white counterparts (Gould & Wilson, 2020) The pandemic only exacerbated this
Grants to Support the Adult Learner in Transfer

American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) Equity Transfer Initiative

• Partnership with Northeastern Illinois University to support adult learners
• Transfer pathway development
• Transfer ambassador roles
• Specific designed orientations

Partnership for Adult Learner Success (PALS)

• Partnership with University of Illinois at Chicago to support adult learners
• New grant still in development phase
• Considerations of additional supports needed for adult learners based on survey results
Programs to Support the Adult Learner in Transfer

Veterans Transfer Partnership

- Partnership with National Louis University to support adult learners
- For veterans and military affiliated students
- Financial support to transfer
- Required advising check-ins
- Early access to veteran center at NLU
What We Are Learning

**With Students**
- Flexibility is key!
  - In programming
  - In when services are available to the student
  - In course offerings
- Sense of Belonging Can Make All the Difference

**With Universities**
- The Data Sharing Factor
- Goal alignment between the CC and the 4-year
Citations/Resources


• www.ccc.edu/transfer
Contact Me

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Tennessee needs **871,000 degrees** to reach the goal of 55% by 2025.

**645,000 high school students** in Tennessee are expected to graduate between 2014 and 2022.

In Tennessee, **900,000 adults have some college but no degree** and are considered prospective adult learners.

Without reaching adults, Tennessee won’t meet the goals of the Drive to 55.
Tennessee Reconnect (TNR) provides a last-dollar scholarship for adults to earn an associate degree or technical certificate. The financial grant is administered by the Tennessee Student Assistance Corporation (TSAC). Tennessee’s Higher Education Corporation (THEC) manages the program. THEC partnered with the University of Tennessee System (UTSA) to create and provide relevant information through a web site (TNReconnect.gov) for the program.
In its first year of implementation, 41,832 individuals applied for the Tennessee Reconnect Grant. Of these applicants, 18,217 enrolled in an eligible institution and received Tennessee Reconnect grant funding.

71% of Reconnectors were women.

Tennessee Reconnect applications were received from every Tennessee county with the largest number of applications coming from urban areas.

Reconnectors overwhelmingly identified finances as their number one anticipated challenge in pursuing a degree or credential. Significantly ranked lower were family responsibilities, work demands, time management, and academic challenges.
• More than half (58%) of Reconnect grant recipients reported having dependents.

• Black students make up a larger share of both Tennessee Reconnect applications and recipients when compared to adult population of Tennessee (15.4%). 21% of Reconnectors were Black. 4% of Reconnectors were Hispanic.

• 95.4% of grant recipients already had some college experience. Most of these students had prior experience with Tennessee community colleges.

• The first year of the program saw a success rate of 61%, with over 2,000 students completing a certificate or degree, 248 of whom maintained enrollment in pursuit of another credential.
“Looking back at **2021 by the numbers**, Tennessee continues to be a leader in the space of increasing student access. Even with the difficulties of the last year, the fact that over **30,000 students** engaged in higher education through **TN Promise and TN Reconnect** really speaks to the tremendous dedication of students. ”

Dr. Emily House, THEC Executive Director
“If anyone you know wants to take the leap and go to college, YOU can do it!!! Granted, I still have a ways to go, but that is ok. It will all be worth it in the end.”

- Laura Kaye
TN Reconnect Student
Volunteer State Community College
Partnerships

State agencies, industry, and community-based organizations are vital to encourage adults to enroll in an eligible program and support through to completion.

- More than 1,000 individuals trained as Tennessee Ambassadors
- Navigate Reconnect provides one-on-one institution neutral services from Reconnect Navigators to help enroll in and complete a postsecondary program
- Reverse Transfer as a foundation for Reconnect Partnerships: Building Transfer Student Pathways for College and Career Success (Chapter 2).
Staying in Touch

- Central Website for Information
  TNReconnect.gov

- Robust Data Collection
  THEC Annual Reconnect Report
  Call for Proposals: Adult Learner Research: Building the Policy Framework for Tennessee
So, you know, I show up to biology. I take the notes, I do the homework and yeah, I may bomb on a test here or there. But you know, you do the homework, you show up, you know, make the college effort. Every morning, I get up at 6:30, I take a shower, I get dressed, I anticipate traffic, I anticipate road conditions, all the things that you would do if you had a job, if you had to go to work every day. So, when I treated school like a job, even though I wasn’t getting paid for it, still treated it like a job. And that’s what helped me get through it.
Change, Assessment, & Sustainability

• Robust Data Collection
• Flexible Contracts
• Adaptable Technology
• Dedicated Staff
• Regular SWOT Analysis
• Document Processes
• Tennessee Reconnect COVID-19 Resources
"The most beautiful thing about learning is that no one can take it away." – B.B. King

How will you support an adult learner(s) at your institution or in your community?
References

