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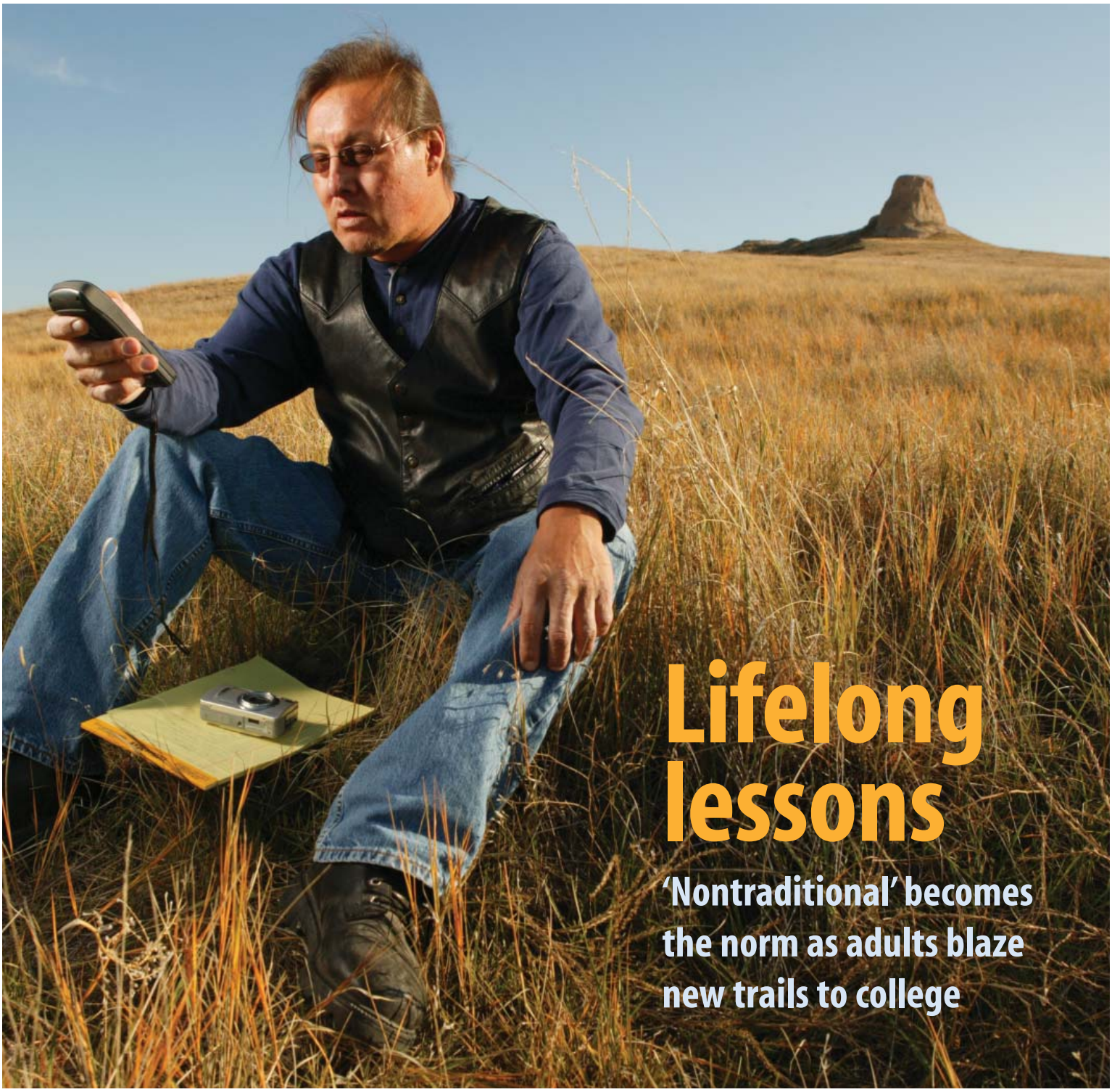
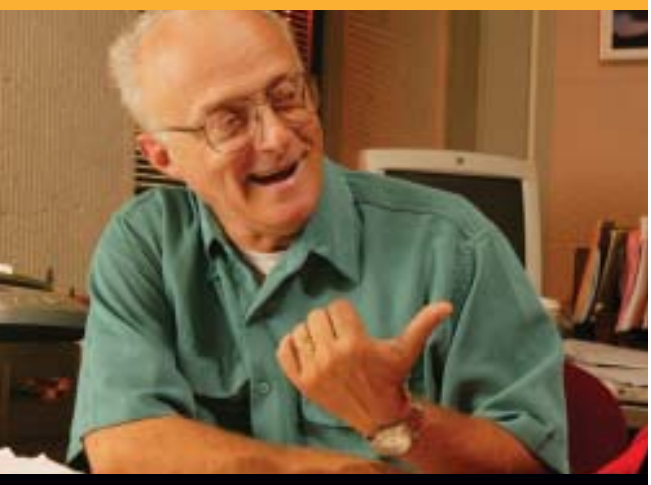


Lifelong lessons

'Nontraditional' becomes the norm as adults blaze new trails to college

INSIDE



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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

You're never too old to learn. We all know that's true — especially as we all grow older! However, what we're also discovering in this time of rapid technological and social change is that lifelong learning is more than merely possible; it's absolutely necessary.

Without continuous learning, possibilities dwindle, doors of opportunity fail to open, and individual and societal prosperity are threatened.

Americans know this, and they're responding. Adults in this country are seeking postsecondary education in growing numbers and for increasingly varied reasons. This issue of *Lumina Foundation Focus* takes a broad look at the trends in adult learning.

This issue, written by noted higher education author and editor Sally Reed, examines adult education from several angles. You'll read the story of Dennis Quebe, a successful Ohio businessman who began attending Sinclair Community College in part to inspire his daughter and is now on his way to a bachelor's degree at another institution. You'll learn about Charleen Eagle Elk and Gloria Eastman, busy mothers who are pursuing their degrees at Oglala Lakota College on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota. You'll read about Ray Salazar Jr., an Arizona bank manager who turned a job severance package to his own advantage, earned a master's degree at the University of Phoenix and followed his passion to become a high school teacher.

These real-life stories, supported by information and insights from noted researchers and adult learning experts across the nation, underscore the importance of lifelong learning — to individuals and to society as a whole. We also hope this issue of *Lumina Foundation Focus* serves to increase the understanding of the many barriers adult students face.

At Lumina Foundation, we are committed to breaking down these barriers. That's why many of our grants support organizations whose research and programs seek to aid adult learners — organizations such as the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL), the American Council on Education (ACE) and the Curry School of Education at the University of Virginia.

All of our efforts — including this magazine — have one aim: to increase student access and success in education beyond high school. I hope you'll join us as we pursue that mission. To that end, I welcome your feedback on this issue of *Lumina Foundation Focus* and on all of our work.

Martha D. Lamkin
President and CEO
Lumina Foundation for Education

On the cover: Using global-positioning satellite technology, Charles Comes Killing maps resources and cultural sites on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota. Comes Killing, a former truck stop manager, is pursuing a bachelor's degree in natural resources at Oglala Lakota College.

Learning for life

In many ways and for myriad reasons, adults are heading back to class

By Sally Reed

Charles Comes Killing injured his back while managing a truck stop near Kyle, S.D., on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation. While recuperating, he entered college as a means to find a new occupation and, as he said, "I just kept going."

First, he earned an associate's degree in entrepreneurship from Oglala Lakota College on the reservation. But he didn't stop there. Comes Killing (right) is now completing a bachelor of science degree in natural resources "because I am concerned about our area here," he added. In fact, he now works at the tribal college's geographical lab, using satellite technology to map the entire reservation.

"It is a preservation program," he explained, "mapping and gathering information on resources and on cultural sites so that buffer zones can be established around them and they can be protected from development." Furthermore, he has entered a certificate program in television production and hopes to help establish a TV station on the reservation.

(continued)

"It kept snowballing," Comes Killing said of his postsecondary pursuit. "I gradually picked up more and more classes. I just keep pushing on. … No matter how tough it is, it's going to pay off in the end. And it has enriched my life."

Comes Killing is just one of a growing number of adults pursuing postsecondary education. They do it for a variety of reasons: to land new jobs, change careers, upgrade skills, gain personal satisfaction — even to serve as a role model for their children.

According to a September 2004 study by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), some 98 million Americans — 49 percent of the nation's adults — participated in some type of "formal" (that is, instructor-led) education in 2000-2001. Although a large majority of these students were enrolled in work-related courses and personal-interest courses rather than in college or university degree programs, the adult student population has long been increasing on campus — both in actual numbers and as a percentage of total enrollment.

In 1970, 2.4 million students age 25 and older were enrolled in degree-granting institutions, according to NCES. By 1980, that number had increased to 4.5 million and, by 1990, it was nearly 5.8 million. In 2000, it grew to almost 6 million — a number representing 39 percent of American undergraduates. And adult enrollment for this age group is projected to be more than 6.7 million by 2012. By that time, according to the American Council on Education, more than half the student population will be over 25.

"There are so many adults in higher education today that the nontraditional student is becoming traditional," said David O. Justice, vice president for lifelong learning at DePaul University in Chicago.

Historical perspective

Of course, adult students are nothing new. Immigrant adults have gone to school to learn English since the 1800s. In 1887, Sinclair Community College began classes for adult males working in the factories of Dayton, Ohio. After World War II, hundreds of thousands of adult veterans became first-time college students, thanks to the GI Bill. Law and business schools have long offered night programs for working adults.

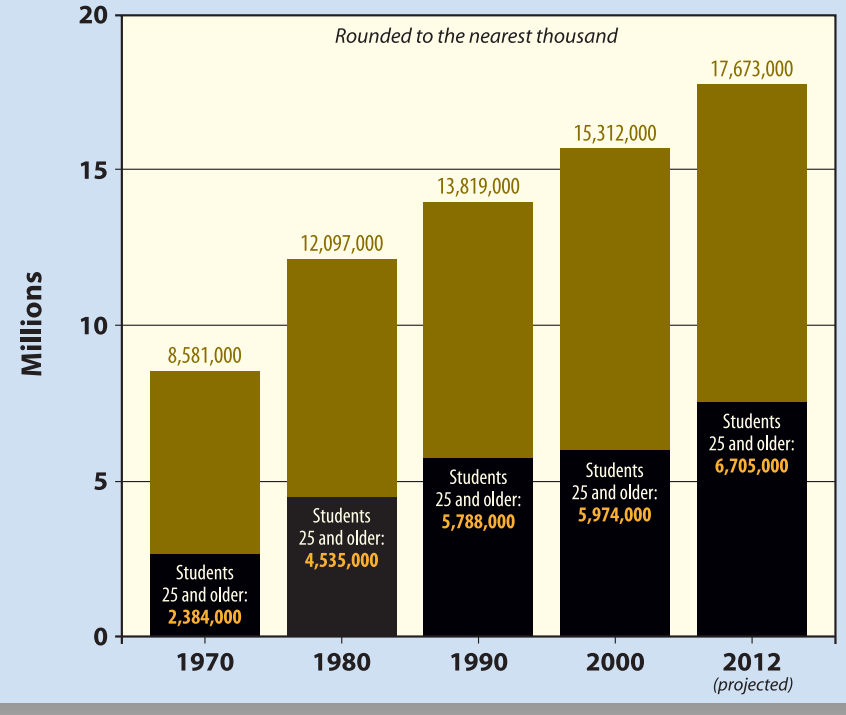
Many of the programs we know today, however, evolved in the 1970s at colleges and universities that saw adults' needs weren't being met. Many of the programs now in existence took shape then at institutions such as the School for New Learning at DePaul University in Chicago; Empire State College in Saratoga Springs, N.Y.; the School of New Resources at the College of New Rochelle in New York; and Alverno College in Milwaukee.

"Many of the adult programs started out as reform efforts to open up colleges and universities and increase access to a wider variety of students," said Catherine Marienau, a professor at DePaul's School for New Learning (SNL) and co-author of *Developing Adult Learners* (Jossey-Bass, 2000).

SNL began in 1971 and is regarded as a national model. Indeed, it helped define much of the language that now surrounds the education of adult learners. It operates what is called a "competency-based" interdisciplinary program where students receive credit for assessed prior learning. Students design their own majors and pursue bachelor's and master's degrees in liberal arts. Currently, SNL has about 3,200 students.

According to Dean Susanne Dumbleton, "about 90

Fall enrollment in degree-granting institutions, 1970-2012



Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics

Charles Comes Killing is a businessman as well as a student. He and his uncle, Cecil Cross (right), make and sell traditional Lakota drums — an enterprise they began after Comes Killing first earned an associate's degree in entrepreneurship at Oglala Lakota College on the Pine Ridge Reservation.

percent" of the adults on her campus are there "to advance, enhance or change their career. … Invariably, they are coming back to school for practical reasons," Dumbleton said, "but it also results in extraordinary personal satisfaction."

Adult programs are now found in diverse types of institutions, from business schools to community colleges. A growing number of degrees are offered online — proving that the traditional campus location isn't the only place you'll find today's adult students. "They are in many other settings, including the workplace," said Pamela Tate, who began working with adults in the 1970s at the State University of New York and is now president and CEO of the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL).

Tate points out that, in her long experience, "some things have definitely changed, and one is the recognition on the part of employers that workforce learning is critical to their success. That idea has made its way into senior levels of companies, and you see much more investment on the part of firms than you did 20 or 30 years ago."

She added: "There is more responsiveness from both two- and four-year colleges. If you look around for adult programs, there are many more of them. And there are many more for-profit providers competing for the adult learner than when I started."

What are they waiting for?

For many adult students, perhaps a fair question to ask is: "Why now? Why not earlier?" Why are they pursuing postsecondary education years — even decades — after high school? The reasons are many, and they're cited often by higher education researchers: insufficient academic preparation before college, disparate graduation rates among various ethnic groups, problems with retention once students enroll, poor career counseling, inadequate training in new technologies … the list goes on. In addition, some students have delayed or been forced to abandon their education for financial reasons. The rising cost of tuition (up more than 50 percent at public four-year institutions over the last 10 years) has profound effects, especially on students from low- and middle-income families.

Despite these impediments, however, a variety of social and economic forces are propelling adults into the classroom — some as returning students, others for their first postsecondary experience. Among those forces: changing workforce requirements, the dot-com bust, the economic downturn, the desire among aging baby boomers to lengthen their careers — even the 9/11 tragedy, which led some soul searchers to reinvent their lives.

Whatever their motivation, adults are heading to class in droves. And when they get there, they want schools and schedules that accommodate their busy lives, with flexible programs that give them credit for what they already know.

Sinclair Community College in Dayton, Ohio, is one such place.

Making experience count

Lee Jean Jordan had two years of pre-nursing training at the Kettering (Ohio) College of Medical Arts and worked as a fire department medic. She'd always wanted to get a college degree. "I was trying to get into emergency nursing," she said. "But somewhere along the line I got derailed."

What derailed her were life's experiences. Jordan was a single mother of two. But, after her son died and her daughter became ill, Jordan stopped her own schooling. She went to work at Kettering Medical Center near Dayton, where she's being encouraged to continue her schooling to enhance her skills. "I had on-the-job training," she said, "but no formal training"— at least not until the center's medical education director, Dr. Robert Smith, stepped in.

"The physician in charge of medical education sat down with me and went over the courses at Sinclair Community College and said, 'Oh, I'd love for you to take this, this and this,' " Jordan recalled. "It was exciting because they were courses I could *use*."

Working with Dr. Smith and administrators at Sinclair, Jordan designed her own degree, combining courses in communications, management and allied health in a program tailored specifically for her position at the medical center. Jordan is well on her way to earning a certificate in medical management and plans to complete a two-year degree. Jordan, who works full time, says: "I take one class at a time, but I don't mind that."

Indeed, Jordan is now the center's Continuing Medical Education Coordinator, a job in which she plans more than 240 conferences a year for more than 10,000 attendees. In addition, she's fulfilled her initial desire to support emergency medical teams. She worked as a volunteer assisting in New York City after the 9/11 attack and in 2004 was trained by an international team in critical incident stress management.

For Jordan, and for thousands like her in the health and safety professions, a community college such as Sinclair is the perfect place. In fact, according to one estimate, community colleges educate 65 percent of the country's allied health workers and 80 percent of firefighters. In 1999-2000, the nation's nearly 1,200 community colleges enrolled about 10.4 million students, 44 percent of all American undergraduates. Nationwide, the average age of these students was 29, and nearly two-thirds of them attended on a part-time basis.

Carolyn Mann, chairperson of Sinclair's Experience-based Education Department, was a Sinclair graduate 30 years ago. She later completed bachelor's and master's degrees in marketing from Wright State University and then reconnected with a former instructor at Sinclair who was looking into "cooperative" education. Their work centered on assessing what students had learned through formal education and experience before entering college. Today, Mann is widely credited with creating effective adult programs — programs that help returning students translate their prior learning into college credit.

Jerry L. Mathers was one student Mann assisted. He'd left high school early, received a General Educational Development (GED) credential and, as with approximately 250,000 people each year, enlisted in the military. Mathers was partially disabled while in the Army, and, after he left the service, the Veterans Administration offered to help him go back to school. At Sinclair, he was able to earn credits for his prior experiences and training. He began classes in 2002 and hopes to earn an associate's degree in lodging management.

In addition to credit for prior learning, students at

Sinclair Community College

- Named for its founder, David Ainslie Sinclair, a late-19th-century YMCA official in Dayton, Ohio, and an early advocate for workplace training.
- One of the largest community colleges in the nation, with 24,000 students on a single downtown campus.
- Offers programs in allied health and degrees and certificates in business technologies, engineering and industrial technologies, extended learning and human services, fine and performing arts and liberal arts and sciences.
- Average age of students is 31.
- More than 3,400 students are age 50 or older.
- Thirty-eight percent of students work full time; more than 60 percent work part time.

Jerry L. Mathers served in the military and raised three children but hadn't been able to make much progress in postsecondary education until enrolling at Sinclair Community College in Dayton, Ohio. At Sinclair, where he earned credits for prior experience and training, Mathers is working steadily toward an associate's degree in lodging management and plans to pursue a bachelor's degree.

Sinclair enjoy flexibility in scheduling their courses. "Students have jobs," noted Mann. "They are trying to make a living, take care of children and aging parents. They are in a juggling mode all the time. Here they can take courses on Saturday or over the Internet so they don't have to go to a particular setting, which makes schooling doable for many learners."

For many Sinclair students, this flexible approach is a must. Take Dennis Quebe, for example. "I've always believed in education and always wanted to get my degree," he said. But as the busy owner of two electrical contracting companies, daytime classes on campus were out of the question.

Quebe had tried correspondence courses 20 years ago. "That just doesn't work," he said. "But with today's technology, colleges can offer the service via video or Web-based classes."

Quebe hasn't taken all of his classes long-distance.

To practice what he was preaching, Dennis Quebe enrolled at Sinclair Community College at the same time as his daughter Holly.

He took English and communication on campus at night and completed a course on Saturdays. In June 2004, he received his associate's degree in technical studies and electrical technology. And now he's pursuing a bachelor's degree from Franklin University in Columbus, one of 30 institutions that accept Sinclair credits from transferring students.

Quebe's quest for learning, though personally gratifying, is more than merely personal. He also did it to set an example for his daughter Holly when she reached college age. "My daughter looked at me and said: 'You've been very successful without a degree, and you want me to go to college?' To reinforce what I was preaching to her, I decided to go back to school."

The lesson took. Holly is in her second year at Sinclair and plans to transfer to Wright State University in Dayton. "But I think she is comfortable with Sinclair," Quebe said, "and she keeps taking courses."

With encouragement from her supervisors at Kettering Medical Center, Lee Jean Jordan is pursuing a custom-designed medical management program at Sinclair. "It's exciting to have people helping you achieve your goals," says Jordan, pictured with Dr. Benjamin Schuster of the Kettering Cardiovascular Institute.

At the home of Gloria Eastman, Mom is just as likely to have homework as are her two teenage boys. Eastman, a single mother, worked as a practical nurse before enrolling at Oglala Lakota College, where she is studying business administration.

Education on the reservation

Some 1,200 miles west of Dayton, Ohio, south of Badlands National Park in southwestern South Dakota, the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation stretches across 3 million acres of rugged Western plain. It encompasses two of the poorest counties in the United States. But here, in the tiny town of Kyle (population 970), there's a rich center of learning: Oglala Lakota College. It's a place where programs have been designed for adults, a place that integrates Native American culture with traditional academic subjects. This tribal college — which uses modern technology and distance learning to provide associate's, bachelor's and graduate degrees — is transforming the lives of adult students and their families.

Charleen Eagle Elk wanted to prove to herself that she could get a college degree to set an example for her son and daughter. "I wanted to emphasize that you are never too old to learn and prove to them that just because people may label us as 'uneducated,' we are as smart as the next person. We have a strong will to overcome the haunting barriers we've had for years. I wanted the satisfaction (of knowing) that I did something positive and that others see that it is possible. We don't have to live a life of poverty; we can make an impact on future generations."

Eagle Elk is pursuing a bachelor's degree in business at Oglala Lakota and plans to go on to earn a master's degree in health administration. She had her own role model of an adult returning to school. Her mother was in her 40s when she received her college degree and today is an accountant. She then encouraged her older children to go back to school. "She is still encouraging me," said Eagle Elk.

Meanwhile, Eagle Elk's own children "see that Mom is still plugging away, not giving up"— even though

Charleen Eagle Elk, here studying in the Oglala Lakota College library, is working toward her bachelor's degree in business and plans to earn her master's. Inspired by her mother, who was in her 40s when she earned a college degree, Eagle Elk hopes her own son and daughter follow the family example.

going back to school hasn't been easy. "The main problem is finding the time," Eagle Elk said. "I am working full time and trying to take care of kids and run my own business. It is hard to work everything in."

One thing Eagle Elk likes in particular about Oglala Lakota is that the faculty members "work a lot of the Lakota culture into the courses and look at subjects from the Lakota perspective," she said.

It was this desire to integrate the Lakota culture into adult courses that drew C. Kim Winkelman back to the Pine Ridge Reservation and its tribal college. Winkelman, Oglala Lakota on his mother's side, is a retired Army officer who earned a doctorate in adult education from Walden University in 1999. He became vice president for instruction at Oglala Lakota College in 2002, creating new academic programs for the students and developing "multiple tools to engage learners in different ways," he said.

Oglala Lakota enrolls approximately 1,500 students with an average age of 31. Adult students are required to take courses in the Lakota Studies Department, which offers community workshops, collects materials on tribal history and culture, and provides classes on the Lakota language. Students take traditional on-campus classes, but Winkelman also developed distance-learning programs for adult students living throughout the reservation and, increasingly, elsewhere in the world.

Winkelman, who is Abnaki/Comanche on his father's side, is now moving on to become president of Comanche Nation College in Lawton, Okla., where he expects to employ many of the same principles and techniques he's used to engage adult students at Oglala Lakota.

Tribal colleges 'increasingly essential'

Oglala Lakota College is one of 34 tribal colleges, institutions created during the last 35 years to meet the higher education needs of Native Americans. These institutions are located mainly in the Upper Midwest and Southwest and enroll more than 30,000 full- and part-time students from some 250 tribes. They offer two-year associate's degrees in 200 disciplines and also provide vocational certificate programs. Some also offer baccalaureate and master's programs.

Tribal colleges are generally found in geographically isolated areas and have become "increasingly essential to educational opportunity for American Indian students," according to the American Indian Higher Education Consortium. This is particularly true for adults on or near reservations who would have no other means of gaining access to postsecondary education. Without Oglala Lakota, for example, residents of Kyle would have to travel nearly 60 miles and cross the Nebraska state line to attend the nearest four-year institution (Chadron State College). The nearest in-state four-year college (the South Dakota School of Mines and Technology) is in Rapid City, 90 miles to the northwest. And Black Hills State University in Spearfish is even more distant — about 140 miles northwest of Kyle, near the Wyoming line.

As engines of economic opportunity, the tribal colleges are remarkably successful. According to the American Indian College Fund, 91 percent of the nation's tribal college students are either working or pursuing a higher degree one year after graduating. About 78 percent of Oglala Lakota College's graduates have found jobs in the area — either on the reservation or in nearby towns. And that's no accident. According to Marilyn Kockrow, chair of the department of applied science and technology, the college makes a concerted effort to link its programs to local economic development. That effort suits Oglala Lakota students perfectly because, as Winkelman pointed out, the major reason adult students attend the college is quite simple: "They want a job. They are often single mothers and primarily study business, education or social services," he said.

Indeed, for Gloria Eastman, returning to school was a matter of survival. At age 46, she was a single mom with two sons, 12 and 14 years old. She was only able to find temporary employment, and she had student loan obligations from a stint at computer school in the 1970s. She attended a vocational school in Rapid City and worked as a practical nurse, but soon reached a salary plateau and could barely make it financially. She is now studying business administration at Oglala Lakota and hopes to earn a bachelor's degree in accounting. Now, in addition to going to school, she works as a peer mentor in student support services — a job that not only helps her financially, but allows her to aid others who are trying to improve their chances of success.

Dedicated adult student Charles Comes Killing is convinced that postsecondary education is the key to such improvement. He sees college, not only as a means of personal empowerment, but also as the engine of community economic development — a vital weapon in the ongoing battle with poverty on the reservation.

He has one piece of advice for other adults who are attending or thinking of enrolling: "Just keep going."

Oglala Lakota College

- One of the nation's largest tribal colleges, offering two-year programs, four-year degrees and a master's degree.
- Enrolls more than 1,000 students, two-thirds of them age 24 or older.
- Offers professional degrees, degrees in teacher education, social services, allied health, nursing, accounting and graduate degrees in 11 departments.
- Has an ongoing grant from the National Science Foundation as a Model Institution for Excellence — a comprehensive, nationwide effort to upgrade the quality of science, engineering and mathematics education.
- Main campus and administrative center in the southwest South Dakota city of Kyle. Also has a campus in Rapid City, about 90 miles to the northwest.

C. Kim Winkelman was recently named president of Comanche Nation College in Lawton, Okla.

THE CASE – AND A PLACE – FOR LIFELONG LEARNING

Sally Heppner had owned her own graphic arts business for 25 years near Portland, Ore., but she'd always regretted not finishing college. She'd taken classes at a community college after high school, but then began traveling, worked full time, married and had a family. When her oldest daughter started college, she thought: "I want to do that, too."

What she wanted was a liberal arts degree so she could "broaden her base of knowledge," she said. She enrolled at Marylhurst University just south of Portland and, after two and a half years, is working toward two degrees: an interdisciplinary bachelor of arts degree in cultural and historical studies *and* a bachelor's degree in art.

Going back to college has been demanding, Heppner admits. Her graphics arts business has suffered. And with a large family — two children in college, two in high school, and a 15-year-old foster child — she finds it hard to juggle work, school and home. Some of the dense reading "takes a lot of mental concentration and focus," she said. "But it is the best thing I've ever done. School doesn't feel like work at all."

Founded in 1893 as a Roman Catholic college, Marylhurst University was the Pacific Northwest's first liberal arts college for women. Since 1974, however, it has been a private, coeducational institution devoted to adult and lifelong learning. In fact, Marylhurst was one of the nation's first liberal arts colleges to be designated as a college for lifelong learning.

Marylhurst University

- Located between Lake Oswego and West Linn, Ore.
- Campus features 63 acres of lawns, walking paths and wooded ravines on the bank of the Willamette River.
- Nationally recognized as a leader in serving adult learners.
- One of six institutions selected in 1999 for CAEL's benchmarking study on high-performing colleges and universities.
- Enrolls about 1,200 students, 90 percent of whom are seeking a degree. The remaining 10 percent are enrolled for professional development or personal growth.
- Known for academic excellence, seminar-style classes and flexible scheduling options. Courses are offered days, evenings, weekends and online.
- Recognized by the *U.S. News & World Report College Rankings for 2005* as No. 1 in the Pacific Northwest for small class sizes.

The university offers bachelor's degrees in the humanities, science and mathematics, the social sciences, business and the arts. It offers master's degree programs in business and management, art therapy and interdisciplinary studies. Marylhurst also features a music department, a literature department and a writing department. And "because of our heritage, we have a strong religion program," said Simeon Dreyfuss, director of an interdisciplinary studies program called the Liberal Arts Core. "We are different from a lot of schools with an adult population in that we are a full-service liberal arts university."

The Liberal Arts Core is a required part of all undergraduate degrees. As at Sinclair, Marylhurst students can construct a degree around their own interests. To assess the prior learning of students returning to school, Marylhurst created an Academic Portfolio, now a Web-based interactive program that helps students reflect on their existing knowledge and skills as they plan their degrees.

"It is not a general studies degree, which is a random selection of courses," explained Dreyfuss. "It is around a theme and learning goals. Students go through a degree-design process, articulate the focus of the degree, write learning outcomes for that goal, and then find the courses that will deliver that learning."

Much of that learning is delivered in an "integrated" way, with Marylhurst's instructors taking a team-taught, interdisciplinary approach that emphasizes the importance

Sally Heppner is pursuing two degrees at Marylhurst University in Oregon, one of them a bachelor's degree in art. "I fell in love with fine art," said Heppner, who does her own painting in a cordoned-off section of her son's bedroom.

of problem-solving and helps students integrate theory and practice.

For example, Tabitha Dunn is an adult student who took three classes at once — one in politics, one in biology and one in communications. Each of the three professors taught his or her class with an overall theme of "genetics." The content of the classes overlapped, as did some of the assignments. Projects were designed as joint efforts so genetics and its related issues could be considered from several perspectives: how they are covered in the media and how politics and policy affect and are affected by genetic issues such as cloning and bioengineering.

Online classes a complement, not a cure-all

Most instructors at Marylhurst teach part-time and are practitioners in the field they are teaching. About 33 percent of Marylhurst students are taking a class online. "But the majority of those students are also taking face-to-face classes," said Dreyfuss.

Tabitha Dunn has done both. She decided to go back to school around the time she turned 30. "I never had the opportunity to go to college earlier, for various reasons," she said. "But at age 30, I wanted to go back to a school that would take advantage of everything I had learned."

Dunn is working on a business leadership degree and hopes to finish in about three years. "I usually average two classes per quarter, and I go year-round. I've taken a couple of breaks in the last few years, including one when I had my daughter."

Initially, Dunn took her classes on campus. But once her daughter was born, she enrolled in Marylhurst's online program to take math, principles of marketing and business strategy. "Now that my schedule is terribly hectic, I can't give up blocks of my evening time or weekend time for classes without feeling guilty about what I'm sacrificing," she said. "With online classes, I'm able to squeeze in short periods of time with more frequency. I don't have to sit for three hours at a block."

Dunn is proud of what she's achieved so far, and she's looking ahead with confidence. "When I'm finished, I will feel a strong sense of accomplishment," she said. "It has been a goal for a long, long time. And it will be important in my career development."

Tabitha Dunn — a year-round, part-time student — appreciates the flexibility offered by Marylhurst University's online courses. Here, as Dunn "attends class," husband Shawn and daughter Samantha enjoy some playtime.

Gail Knight already had two degrees when she enrolled at the University of Phoenix campus in Arizona. "Sometimes people have the attitude: 'Well, I already have a degree; I don't need to get any more,' " Knight said. "I am not of that philosophy."

Propelled by the profit motive

In the mid-1970s, John Sperling was solidly in the academic mainstream. He'd been a humanities professor at San Jose State University since 1961. Before that, he had been a faculty member at the University of Maryland, Ohio State University and Northern Illinois University.

While at San Jose State, however, Sperling and several associates researched the state of adult education and concluded that the needs of adult students — in particular, working adults — were all but ignored on the traditional college campus. Sperling, a Cambridge-educated economist, then turned from academician to entrepreneur. In 1976, he founded the University of Phoenix with the idea of providing a postsecondary experience specifically designed for working adults.

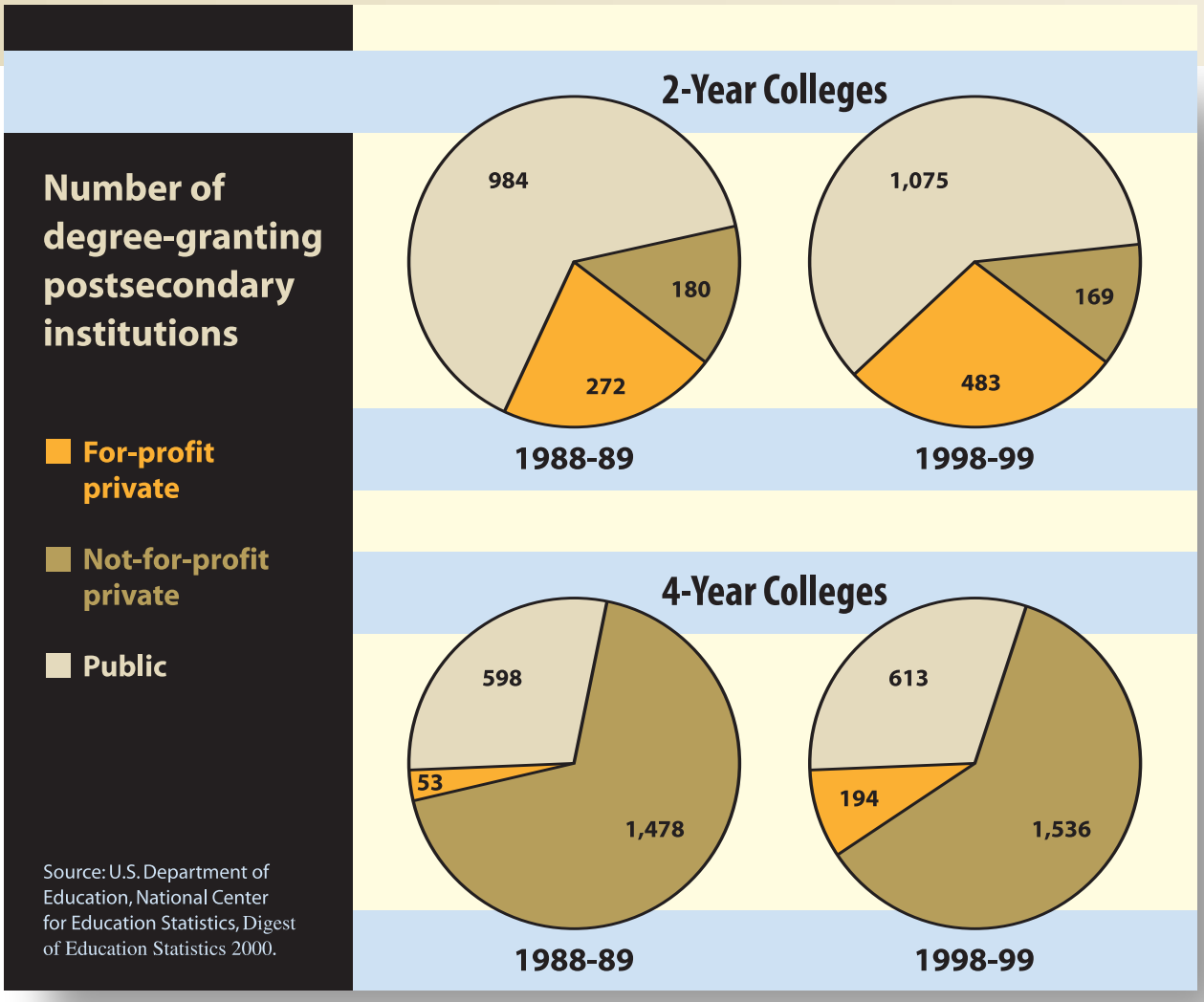
"Today, it may not sound as unique as when it first started," said Terri Bishop, a University of Phoenix senior vice president based in Berkeley, Calif. "But back in the 1970s, there really were no options for adults. You could take night classes, but you probably couldn't complete a full degree without quitting your job because there were certain courses you couldn't get at night. It took a very long time."

Clearly, Sperling's idea worked. Today, the University of Phoenix is the largest private postsecondary institution in the United States. It enrolls more than 250,000 adult students

Proprietary proliferation

The University of Phoenix is the largest and best-known of the for-profit postsecondary schools, but it's by no means the only one. Here are just a few of the larger competitors in this rapidly growing market:

- Career Education Corp.
- Corinthian Colleges Inc.
- DeVry University
- Education Management Corp.
- ITT Educational Services Inc.
- Strayer Education Inc.
- Sylvan Learning Systems Inc.



and operates 158 campuses and learning centers in 33 states.

It's working financially, too. Unlike traditional institutions of higher learning, which are not-for-profit entities, the University of Phoenix is a for-profit enterprise, a subsidiary of a corporate entity called the Apollo Group. In 2004, the Apollo Group recorded revenue of more than $1.8 billion (nearly triple the $610 million it recorded in 2000). The Apollo Group's stock has split seven times since 1995.

The numbers clearly show that this type of program is popular, particularly among working adults. Such students, if able to pay for postsecondary education, seem more and more willing to do so — at the University of Phoenix and at scores of other proprietary institutions that have sprung up in recent years to serve the adult student market.

According to an industry executive quoted in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* in late 2003, for-profit institutions constitute 46 percent of all postsecondary institutions and enroll some 1.3 million students annually. Federal data confirm the growing importance of proprietary institutions. Not only are such schools growing in number (see pie charts above), their total enrollment is increasing rapidly. NCES figures show that enrollment jumped 59 percent at private, for-profit schools during the 1990s — a period during which enrollments increased just 10 percent at nonprofit private schools and only 6 percent for public institutions.

Despite their popularity, these for-profit institutions are not without their critics. In fact, an official with the House Committee on Education and the Workforce confirmed in early February that the committee was planning to conduct hearings into alleged fraud in some proprietary schools' admissions and financial aid practices.

In the fall of 2004, U.S. Department of Education investigators accused the University of Phoenix of violating the Higher Education Act with a high-pressure sales culture — a culture in which salaries of recruiters were based on enrollments. Though it admitted no guilt, the university paid a $9.8 million penalty, and the controversy had a predictable effect on Apollo Group's stock, which plunged 36 percent by early November. A month later, however, the stock was on the upswing; and, as Apollo Group CEO Todd S. Nelson was quoted in the Jan. 31 issue of *Business Week*: "The next five to 10 years look very, very promising."

Clearly, whether traditional higher education officials like it or not, the University of Phoenix and other proprietary institutions are a powerful and growing reality. In fact, their proliferation is challenging traditional colleges and universities.

Classroom peers with real-world experience

Gail Knight has attended both types of schools, and she's a believer in the University of Phoenix model. In fact, she's earned undergraduate and a master's degrees at the university's main campus in Phoenix, Ariz., and is thinking of enrolling in its doctoral program. When she first enrolled, Knight had already earned bachelor's and master's degrees in public administration from Howard University in Washington, D.C. She was working in Phoenix as a regional representative for a national nonprofit organization and became interested in pursuing a more focused study of community development and the organizational development of nonprofit entities.

She enrolled in a baccalaureate program in management at the University of Phoenix, choosing it over other public or private institutions in Arizona. "Basically, being an adult learner, I was looking for a setting with peers in the room like myself," Knight recalled. She said she was looking for "experienced individuals who had some background and could relate to where I was coming from in classroom discussions." Knight also was impressed with the quality of her teachers. "The instructors were former CEOs who had run different organizations or individuals who had taught others — not only in the university setting, but also the workplace," she said. "They came with a tremendous knowledge and had innovative ways of teaching."

At first, Knight attended on-campus classes designed for adult learners. However, when her class schedule began to conflict with her work and travel schedules, she switched to the University of Phoenix's online program. It took work, of course, and there were technical and logistical problems to overcome, but Knight persevered and succeeded.

"As I say to all of my friends, 'If you are an independent, motivated individual, this works for you. If you are one who has got to be constantly told what to do, it doesn't.'"

Terri Bishop feels the hallmark of the University of Phoenix is "the nature of our classes," in particular their purposely small size — an average of 15 students in traditional classrooms and nine for online classes. "The reason the classes are kept small is that the quality of the classroom is very interactive," Bishop said. With too many students, she added, "not everyone has an equal chance to participate. And it is really more than just providing a chance. Interacting is part of the grade."

Also, "the detail of the curriculum is uniform," Bishop said. "But the way it is taught is not uniform. The faculty brings its own expertise. But for every class and program there is a standard curriculum that has been collectively developed by the faculty with learning outcomes and objectives specified."

Bishop said that the university's standardized curriculum has prompted both praise and criticism from the academic community. Critics find fault with what they consider an unimaginative, cookie-cutter approach to the content or its delivery. But supporters appreciate the system's practical applications. "When you can standardize your learning outcomes and objectives, you can ensure quality," Bishop explained. "One of the things that we have been able to do that most other places can't do is comprehensively measure the learning outcomes."

Kathy Alexander, a vice president who directs the university's operations in Arizona, adds that another key to the school's success has been its ability to tailor the way it provides services — for example, course registration, textbook purchases, access to research materials and tuition payment options — specifically to the needs of working adults.

Also, according to Alexander, the university is uniquely positioned to help adults make a mid-career change. Right now, she said, the trend among adult students is to move away from business and technology into "helping professions" such as teaching, counseling and human services — perhaps in response to the 9/11 tragedy or the recent burst of the dot-com bubble.

University of Phoenix

- Offers undergraduate and graduate degree and certificate programs in business, management, technology, education, counseling and nursing.
- A member of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools (NCA), a regional association of nearly 1,300 institutions in 19 states.
- Accredited by NCA's Higher Learning Commission.
- One of four for-profit subsidiaries of the Apollo Group. (The other three are the Institute for Professional Development, the College for Financial Planning and Western International University.)
- Traded on the NASDAQ exchange (APOL).

"I got into teaching because I wanted the rest of my life to have meaning."

— Ray Salazar Jr.

Finding – and following – a passion for teaching

University of Phoenix graduate Ray Salazar Jr. exemplifies this mid-career shift. Salazar, the son of a Mexican immigrant, was picking cotton by age 10 in the fields near Casa Grande, Ariz., about an hour south of Phoenix. After graduating from Casa Grande High School, he went to work at a bank and began to see his colleagues moving up the corporate ladder with bachelor's degrees from the University of Phoenix. So, while working at the First Interstate Bank, Salazar also worked on his bachelor's degree in business administration from the University of Phoenix. He earned that degree in 1986 and went on to become a bank manager. But when his bank merged with another bank, he was offered a severance package and decided to make a career change.

With thoughts of becoming a corporate trainer, Salazar went back to the University of Phoenix to seek a post-baccalaureate degree and teaching certificate. As part of that program, he did his student teaching at Casa Grande, his old high school. There, he fell in love with the work and developed a close bond with the students. He was hired as a full-time teacher immediately following his student teaching. He went on to earn a master's degree from the University of Phoenix and has continued taking education classes beyond his master's. In 2002, Salazar was selected from among 70 finalists to be *Hispanic Magazine's* National Teacher of the Year.

Ray Salazar Jr. earned two degrees at the University of Phoenix and made a mid-career change from bank manager to high school teacher. Salazar (far left) is shown with two of his students at Casa Grande High School, Julian Rodriguez (seated) and Michael Davila.

Holly Acereto, 27, has a child and works full-time in human resources at a downtown Phoenix office tower. She hopes the MBA degree she is pursuing at the University of Phoenix will help advance her in her position. "I am serious," she said. "I know what I want to do with my life."

Salazar has taken all of his classes at the University of Phoenix's "ground" campus. "I want to be in the classroom," he said, "I want to see a professor. I don't care for the online; I am a hands-on type of guy."

In fact, about 50 percent of the adult students at the University of Phoenix take classes on the "ground." Most of the degrees offered are in the professional fields — a variety of business programs, computer information systems (graduate and undergraduate), marriage and family counseling programs, child therapy, a range of teacher education degree programs, health sciences, nursing and criminal justice. There are liberal arts courses, but the university doesn't offer degree programs in these areas.

Despite the recent rise in popularity of helping professions, business and business-related programs continue to be the most popular. Holly Acereto, a 27-year-old Phoenix resident, has been working on a master's degree in business administration through the university's online program since 2002. She also is the mother of a 2-year-old and works full time in the human resources department of AIG insurance company in Phoenix. Hoping an MBA degree will advance her in her career, she picked the University of Phoenix because she wanted a degree program she could pursue on her own time.

Acereto earned her undergraduate degree at the University of Arizona. "I can't compare the two universities because I am in a different mindset," she said. "At the University of Arizona, I was a college student; I partied; I had a good time. Now I am serious. I know what I want to do with my life. I am a mom. I have different priorities. It's hard, but it is worth it. My daughter goes to bed at 8 p.m., and then I can do my homework."

After she finishes, her husband plans to attend college. Meanwhile, Acereto has still more incentive to get that degree. Her father is serving in Iraq, and when he left last March, he told her that "he fully expects to see his little girl walking at graduation for her degree," she said.

"That's another motivator. "I have to be finished by April 6, 2005, because my dad is coming home."

Barriers remain, especially financial ones

Unfortunately, no matter how well adults may be motivated, they often are unable to realize their dreams of going back to school. According to the American Council on Education, 60 percent of American workers lacked a college degree in 2000.

Although there are many success stories, including the ones featured here, the barriers for adult students are pervasive, persistent and, for far too many adults, insurmountable. The underlying reason for those barriers is clear: Many of the "rules" that govern postsecondary education were established decades ago and were designed to accommodate students who then represented the vast majority of college-goers — full-time, residential students in their late teens and early 20s. Today, however, only one in six undergraduates is a "typical" student who enrolls at age 18 and earns a baccalaureate degree in four years. Adult students are quickly becoming the majority on the nation's college campuses, yet the system still works against them in many cases.

Many colleges still have no programs designed for working adults — even though federal statistics show that 82 percent of undergraduate students over age 24 are employed while going to school.

"I believe we need a whole new campaign to get colleges truly to be adult-learning-oriented, and that means in all respects."

— CAEL's Pamela Tate

A college "may have older students or have a few courses at night, and they call that the adult program," said Pamela Tate of the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL). "In fact, it isn't. There is an enormous amount that still needs to be done if colleges want to serve adult learners."

The first step in that direction, experts say, would be for schools to provide more flexibility in course scheduling. Adult students would benefit from more evening and weekend courses, more and better online courses, and more opportunities for "accelerated-learning"— intensive classes that are specially designed for students to cover a full semester's worth of material in five or six weeks rather than 16. Arranging child care also can be a significant problem, particularly for women, who constitute the majority of adult students.

But perhaps the most stubborn and imposing barriers facing adult students are financial ones. By some estimates, 40 percent of adult students have annual incomes of less than $25,000 — a total that won't even cover the cost of full-time attendance at many institutions these days. Of course, most adults don't attend full time, and tuition rates do vary from school to school, ranging from comparatively low-cost tribal and community colleges up to the most expensive private universities and for-profit institutions. Still, adult students often have difficulty affording higher education because, unlike their younger counterparts, they often fail to qualify for financial aid.

In an April 2002 report titled *Held Back: How Student Aid Programs Fail Working Adults*, (FutureWorks), Brian Bosworth and Victoria Choitz pointed out that fewer than 8 percent of working adults who were enrolled less than half time during the 1999-2000 school year received any form of federal, state or institutional financial aid. This was true despite the fact that 28 percent of these students earned less than $35,000 annually.

Again, most aid programs were developed decades ago to serve the 18- to 22-year-old, full-time student. For example, to be eligible for federally subsidized loans, a student generally must attend at least six credit hours per semester in an academically credentialed program. That attendance pattern is rare among adult students, who often have work and family obligations that make it difficult for them to attend even one three-hour course.

More financial help is needed

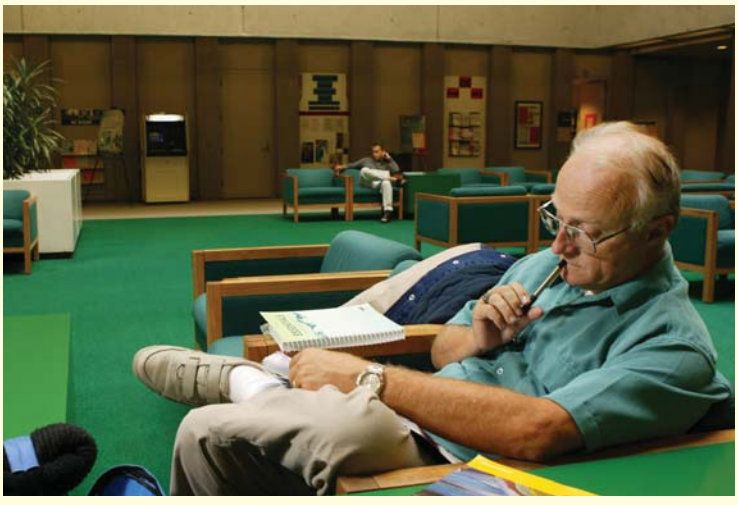
Many adults can only go to school because their employers pay. According to NCES estimates, 68 percent of employed adult students receive some

type of employer support. They also tend to be white adults, employed in a professional or managerial occupation and working for a large employer.

But counting on a tuition reimbursement can be a slippery slope. One employer in Dayton, Ohio, recently stopped providing tuition reimbursement, and Sinclair Community College lost 300 students.

Although the number of firms that pay for tuition has increased nationally, "they have become more restrictive in what they will pay for," said David O. Justice of DePaul University. Most restrict the total amount spent per year per employee, and many require that the classes be work-related or that students earn a grade of B or better, Justice said. Still, even workers with a restrictive tuition-assistance program are better off than those without this important benefit.

"Most employers are smaller or mid-size, and they don't cover tuition," adds CAEL's Tate. "You don't have tuition assistance in place in the vast majority of small and midsize firms, so people have to pay the tuition themselves." And, again, if such students fail to qualify for financial aid, costs can mount up quickly. Many administrators worry about the huge debts some adults pile up in seeking their degrees, particularly single women with children. "For some, it will take a lifetime to pay them back," said the adult-program administrator at one college.



Sinclair Community College student Jerry L. Mathers is living proof that postsecondary education is changing to serve Americans of all ages.

"I believe we need a whole new campaign to get colleges truly to be adult-learning-oriented, and that means in all respects," said Tate. For instance, she said, community college students need more help in making the transition from noncredit and GED programs to for-credit courses that lead to degrees and certificates. "Low-income learners especially need a pathway," Tate added. "They start out in an English-as a-second-language (ESL) class and then get dead-ended there. They are not picked up by the colleges. There is no financing for the learner — no financial aid, and so the people who are most in need of higher education can't afford to get it."

Researchers argue that the states and the federal government need to provide more and larger tax incentives to students and employers and to authorize more funding for adult literacy and ESL classes. In their *Held Back* report, Bosworth and Choitz urge policy-makers to make more money available to adult students through the Hope Scholarship and Lifetime Learning Tax Credit programs.

In their 2003 report *The Adult Learning Gap* (Education Commission of the States), Alice Anne Bailey and James R. Mingle also suggest a greater use of savings accounts designed for adult students. Such accounts — often called Lifetime Learning Accounts (LiLAs) or Individual Development Accounts (IDAs) — work much the same way as a 401(k) retirement plan: Money is set aside (from the employer, the worker, and sometimes from third-party organizations) for the worker to use later to pay expenses related to education, retraining and career change.

Such innovations as LiLAs and IDAs demonstrate a growing recognition of the importance of lifelong learning. Increasingly, economists, policy-makers, education experts and workers themselves realize that, in a rapidly changing world, one can never "age out" of the need for education.

That realization is comparatively new, however, when one considers the long history of American higher education. In the past few decades, adult learners have added diversity and vitality to college campuses. In many cases, they've helped institutions survive the demographic dip in the number of traditional-aged students. And as the landscape changes even more dramatically — as the working world requires adults to pursue continuous and increasingly complex learning — higher education will need to further hone its ability to serve the adult learner.

When David Sinclair established his college for adults in Dayton, Ohio, in 1887, he had one simple motto which Sinclair Community College still uses today: "Find the need and endeavor to meet it." It is a motto that should drive adult education for decades to come.

Sally Reed, a Chicago-based higher education writer and consultant, is chief operating officer of the award-winning newsletter *College Bound: Issues & Trends for the College Admissions Advisor.* Reed has written for a variety of publications and has served as a senior consultant at the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and as an associate vice president at Loyola University in Chicago.

Lumina Foundation for Education, an Indianapolis-based, private, independent foundation, strives to help people achieve their potential by expanding access and success in education beyond high school. Through grants for research, innovation, communication and evaluation, as well as policy education and leadership development, Lumina Foundation addresses issues that affect access and educational attainment among all students, particularly underserved student groups, including adult learners. The Foundation bases its mission on the belief that postsecondary education remains one of the most beneficial investments that individuals can make in themselves and that society can make in its people.

On the back cover: While pursuing her degree at Oglala Lakota College, Gloria Eastman (left) also works as a peer mentor in the college's student support services department, helping other students such as Stevanna Charging Eagle.

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