About CAEL

• CAEL is the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning

• A 501(c)3 non-profit, international organization founded in 1974

• Headquartered in Chicago, IL with offices in Philadelphia, PA; Denver, CO; New York, NY; Norwalk, CT
CAEL’s Mission

• CAEL works to advance lifelong learning in partnership with educational institutions, employers, labor organizations, government, and communities

• CAEL works to expand lifelong learning opportunities for adults, regardless of age
CAEL Connects:

CAEL’s Lifelong Learning Work

Colleges and Universities

Adult Learners

Employers and Unions

Government and Community

CAEL’s Workforce Development Work

CAEL’s Public Policy Work
The Need for Lifelong Learning

Skills gap

- 42% of occupational categories with projected new job growth in the next decade will require a college degree or other post secondary award, compared to 29% in 2000.


- 85% of jobs are classified as “skilled” or require education beyond high school.

The Need for Lifelong Learning

• At the same time, a slowing in the growth of educational attainment.

• A 2003 Aspen Institute Study estimates that there was a 19 percent increase in the share of workers with post-high school education over the last 20 years. That will drop to 4 percent in the next 20 years.

The Adult Learner

- Family
- Work
- School
Who is the ‘Adult Learner’?

- Generally, 25 years or older
- Working FT; with kids; with other identities/roles
- 45% of U.S. undergrads are over 25 years old
- 75% have at least one ‘non-traditional’ attribute
- Increasing numbers of younger students (18-24) have the characteristics of adult learners—working, family responsibilities, etc.
The Reality of Adulthood

• How many of you:
  – are parents of children under 22?
  – have a fulltime job?
  – have aging parents?
  – do volunteer work at church or elsewhere?
  – are taking classes?
  – other???
How are Adult Learners Distinct from Others?

- Fulfilling more roles concurrently
- Richer and more varied experiences to serve as the context for new learning
- Considerable expertise and/or college level learning
- Strong consumer stance toward education
- Committed to learning that is relevant to life
Adult Learner Barriers

Dispositional
Adult Learner’s personal concerns, beliefs or attitudes

• “I can’t do it”
  - reluctance to return to formal education
  - based on past educational experiences
Adult Learner Barriers

Situational
Adult Learner’s life situation or circumstances

• jobs that require travel
• small children to care for
Adult Learner Barriers

Institutional Policies and Practices that Impede and Discourage Adult Learners

- offices that close at 5:00
- few classes at night or on weekends
- No financial aid for less than half-time students
Questions?
Increase in Adult Students in Higher Education

Since 1970...

– Adult participation increased from 28 to 45 percent of total undergraduate population

– Number of women aged 35 and older increased by 500 percent
## A Vision for Adult Learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OLD VIEW</th>
<th>NEW VIEW</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Education is</td>
<td>Courses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Based on</td>
<td>‘Seat time’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acquired</td>
<td>On Campus</td>
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<tr>
<td>During One’s</td>
<td>Youth</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Factors in Decision to Enroll – In Order of Importance to Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Convenient time and place for classes</td>
<td>6.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Flexible pacing for completing program</td>
<td>6.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Ability to transfer credits</td>
<td>6.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Reputation of institution</td>
<td>6.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>(tie) Ability to design my own program</td>
<td>6.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>(tie) Cost</td>
<td>6.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Requirement for current or future job</td>
<td>6.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Credit for learning gained from life/work experiences</td>
<td>6.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Availability of online courses</td>
<td>6.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Availability of financial assistance</td>
<td>5.97</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ewell, Flint and Low, 2003
Factors in Decision to Enroll – In Order of Importance to Students (continued)

11. (tie) Tuition reimbursement from employer (5.96)
12. (tie) Distance from campus (5.96)
13. Program accreditation by professional organization or trade group (5.47)
14. Encouragement/incentive from supervisor (4.70)
15. Courses held at employment site (3.96)
16. Availability of child care (3.67)
17. Labor union support/endorsement (3.52)
How Adults Learn

1. Adults need to know *why* they need to learn something
2. Adults need to learn experientially
3. Adults approach learning as problem-solving
4. Adults learn best when the topic is of immediate value
ALFI (Adult Learning Focused Institution) Project Origins

• CAEL’s 1999 Benchmarking Study of six high-performing, adult-serving colleges and universities

• *Best Practices in Adult Learning*, a CAEL book released in 1999

• Study findings distilled into eight *Principles of Effectiveness*
ALFI Principle 1

Outreach:

“The institution conducts its outreach to adult learners by overcoming barriers in time, place, and tradition in order to create lifelong access to educational opportunities.”
The Outreach Principle in Action:

- Workplace-based recruiting & supports for employed adult students
- Off-campus & ‘off-hours’ instructional opportunities
Life & Career Planning:

“The institution 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.”
The *Life/Career Planning* Principle In Action:

- Prior Learning Assessment helps identify life & career goals
- Advising on managing time and multiple life roles
- Adult student orientation sessions
ALFI Principle 3

Financing:

“The institution promotes choice using an array of payment options for adult learners in order to expand equity and financial flexibility.”
The Financing Principle in Action:

• Institution-funded ‘gift aid’ for part-time and adult learners

• Deferred balances/payments for tuition reimbursement students

• ‘Off-hours’ (non-daytime) advising & transaction processing
ALFI Principle 4

Assessment of Learning Outcomes:

“The institution defines and assesses the knowledge, skills & competencies acquired by adult learners both from the curriculum and from life / work experience in order to assign credit and confer degrees with rigor.”
The Assessment Principle in Action:

- Multiple techniques used to assess learning outcomes
- Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) for course credit
Questions?
ALFI Principle 5

Teaching/Learning Process:

“The institution’s faculty use multiple methods of instruction (including experiential and problem-based methods) for adult learners in order to connect curricular concepts to useful knowledge and skills.”
The *Teaching/Learning* Principle In Action:

- Student-led credit-bearing learning opportunities
- Adult student internships and service learning
ALFI Principle 6

Student Support Systems:

“The institution assists adult learners using comprehensive academic and student support systems in order to enhance students’ capacities to become self-directed, lifelong learners.”
The **Student Support** Principle In Action:

- Services for adults with dependents (such as child care)

- Off-hours (non-daytime) student services office hours or options
ALFI Principle 7

Technology:

“The institution uses information technology to provide relevant and timely information and to enhance the learning experience.”
The Technology Principle In Action:

- Web-enabled self-service options providing ‘24/7’ data & processes
- Online courses and programs
ALFI Principle 8

Strategic Partnerships:

“The institution engages in strategic relationships, partnerships, and collaborations with employers and other organizations in order to develop and improve educational opportunities for adult learners.”
The Strategic Partnerships Principle In Action:

- Discounted tuition rates for companies, unions or community-based organizations with multiple employees/members

- On-site workplace delivery of courses and support services
Two ALFI Assessment Tools

• *Institutional Self-Assessment Survey* (CAEL) is for administrators and faculty

• *Adult Learner Inventory* (Noel-Levitz & CAEL) adult student survey based on ALFI

• Development of both tools supported by Lumina Foundation for Education

• Piloted in 2002-2003 and released in 2004
Institutional Self-Assessment Survey

- Available both in institutional and unit-level versions to accommodate free-standing colleges, or colleges/divisions within universities, with adult missions

- Completed by an institutional team across the broad range of functions: marketing, admissions, financing, instruction, to name a few
Adult Learner Inventory

- Web based
- 40 items rating importance and satisfaction
- 10 customized items for institution
- Demographic items with 2 open items
ALI Scores

Importance scores
• How important is it for your program to meet this expectation?

Satisfaction scores
• How satisfied are you that your program is meeting this expectation?

Performance gap scores
• The discrepancy between the expectation (importance score) and the reality (satisfaction score).
ALI Scores

• Scores are entered into CAEL’s national ALFI database

• Institutions can compare their scores to other like institutions—aggregate numbers

• All data is confidential and used only by the institution
How Institutions have used the Tools:

• Facilitated rich discussion & debate
• Targeted areas that need attention
• Focused attention on adult learner needs and issues
• Helped with accreditation, market niche reporting, planning, & evaluation
• Significant correlation between colleges doing well on ALFI assessments and retention of adult students
2004 – ALFI Coalition Launched

• Colleges who want to use ALFI Assessment Tools for continuous improvement
For further information

Pamela Tate
(312) 499-2680
ptate@cael.org
www.cael.org