

Adult Learners Council

December 15, 2009

Vision

Through the efforts of the North Dakota Adult Learners Council and its partners, the educational attainment of North Dakota's workforce will be at the level of the highest performing countries in the world.

Mission

The mission of the Adult Learners Council is threefold:

- To identify, develop, and market learning opportunities for adults.
- To partner with business, government, industry, education, and the military to serve the educational and training needs of adults.
- To insure that every North Dakotan has access to the quality life-long learning opportunities they need to be personally and professionally successful.

Values

As the North Dakota Adult Learners Council:

- We are committed to continuous improvement in our service to adults through the development, implementation and sharing of adult education best practices.
- We are committed to being ethical and responsible stewards of resources.
- We value life long learning.
- We value service that is flexible, responsive, personal, affordable and accessible for all.
- We value diversity, respecting the differences between groups and individuals.

Goals

The goals of the North Dakota Adult Learners Council are to:

1. Improve education accessibility and affordability for non-traditional age student populations.
2. Improve public and policy maker awareness of the relationship between education and economic viability.

3. Improve collaboration among public and private institutions in the state, including Tribal Colleges.
4. Provide access to the post-secondary education and/or training needed to enable every North Dakotan to be personally and professionally successful.

Possible Initiatives

1. Establish a Website for marketing purposes that serves as a portal for adult educational and training opportunities;

With eleven providers of adult education and training opportunities, a Web portal will serve as a single "front door" for the perspective adult learner. The Website will be easy to navigate and will provide quick access to available programs, application information, financial aid, advising assistance, and other essential links for the adult learner.

2. Simplify and streamline the application process for adult students; and

With a single application for the NDUS, the adult learner will not have to duplicate the application process for each institution allowing the adult learner to take courses from multiple institutions during the same term. This simplification will also be reflected in all aspects for the adult learner such as financial aid, tutoring services, developmental education, etc.

3. Expand financial aid opportunities for non-traditional students.

The federal financial aid package contains restrictions that make it difficult, if not impossible, for a working adult learner to receive financial assistance, especially if classified as a part-time student. Additionally, working adults are often first generation college students with significant workplace based prior learning experiences, but who are intimidated by the "ivory tower" reputation of formal postsecondary education. These students would benefit from a state financial aid program designed to meet the needs of working adults and incentivize adult student engagement by reducing the initial costs of the application, prior learning assessment, developmental course and program entry costs. These costs together represent a significant barrier to adult student degree completion. Finally, a state financial

aid program that incentivizes adult student enrollment by matching employer tuition assistance contributions to adult residents attending system institutions should also be considered.