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The Role of Community Colleges in an Aging Society

by

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In cooperation with the Association for Gerontology in Higher Education (and its Community College Task Force) and the American Association of Community Colleges

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The Role of Community Colleges in an Aging Society

Overview

America's community colleges stand poised to capitalize on an unprecedented age boom. For over 50 years, the U.S. has been preparing for an aging society, and there has been extensive research and conjecture concerning the financial and social implications of a burgeoning aging citizenry. Fortunately, the worst case scenario (mass retirements and the potentially overwhelming demand on health care systems of a rapidly increasing population of frail elderly) no longer seems to fit this evolving model of aging. Not only are Americans living longer, they are healthier and increasingly more secure economically.

A new set of life options is emerging for both older adults and society in general, and community colleges are uniquely positioned to respond to the societal changes and needs of this older population. This study looks at what community colleges are currently offering in three areas: (1) degree and certificate programs in gerontology, (2) personal enrichment and civic engagement programs for older learners, and (3) re-skilling and/or retraining for mid-life and older workers (including employer outreach).

This study was not intended to be comprehensive. The goal was to target those schools specifically known for programs associated with older adults. These colleges were identified through membership information supplied by the Association for Gerontology in Higher Education (AGHE) and the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC), by professional contacts of the principal project researchers, and through internet research. Representatives from 47 schools were contacted for information-gathering.

The largest pool of community college programs fell into the *Gerontology Degree and Certificate* category. Thirty-five schools were identified as having programs, and a survey document was distributed to their administrators. Eighteen respondents acknowledged active gerontology degree or certificate programs. Seventeen schools had discontinued or temporarily suspended their programs due to low enrollment.

Fourteen community colleges were identified that actively market *Civic Engagement and Life Enrichment* programs designated for older adults. A survey document was also circulated to representatives from these schools.

Only five community colleges were identified that had *Job/Career Training* programs specifically targeted to a 50+ student population. Three additional schools have programs in development.

This report presents summaries of the types of community college programs being offered around the country and describes models of programs with features that work particularly well. It is hoped that this information will help community college faculty and administrators who serve their local populations of older learners and those training people to work with older adults.

The Role of Community Colleges in an Aging Society

Executive Summary

With the aging of the U.S. population, community colleges can positively influence complex societal issues and in so doing significantly increase their share of the educational market. Many have already undertaken evaluating their roles and the opportunities and challenges that face them relative to the aging residents in their own communities. One community college representative likened the age wave sweeping America to a tsunami, musing that despite best intentions, most community colleges were ill-prepared to face its challenges.

Older adult education has been somewhat neglected in academia. Despite the existence of nearly 1,200 community colleges in the U.S. today, few formally promote or support senior-focused programs. With the exception of the Osher Lifelong Learning Institutes (begun in 1997), such emphasis is, for the most part, invisible on the university level.

For the community colleges surveyed in this research, the 50+ age group they serve clearly encompasses multiple, discrete demographic cohorts. Whether these programs truly represent their area's demographics or evolved as a result of strong, perhaps even single-minded leadership remains to be determined.

As might be expected, those schools in communities with an older aging population currently tend to offer more civic engagement and life enrichment programs. Conversely, community colleges that have identified an increasing Boomer student population have developed a variety of institute-like offerings targeted to that younger cohort, including professional or re-careering programs.

Community colleges in areas with large active aging populations can capitalize on an increased demand from this prospective student population for both leisure and employment-related programs. With a few bold exceptions, most schools have not yet realized such a potential.

On the other hand, some businesses and non-profit organizations recognize and have responded to the market demand of these new-older adults for career development or re-careering training opportunities and sophisticated leisure-time programs. Elderhostel, for example, is a successful model that, like its private sector counterparts, continues to reposition and reinvent itself to be relevant in a market capable of exponential growth. Another emerging trend in both sectors is the development of age-related professional certifications that are actively marketed to those seeking to work with older adults. In this study, it was found that community colleges that successfully sustain or develop programs share a broad-based commitment and long-term support from a variety of such community partners.

Traditional retirement may be gone forever. Are community colleges willing to explore new opportunities to serve the 50+ population knocking at their doors? Will they seize them?

The Role of Community Colleges in an Aging Society

Key Findings

Sixteen percent of the 11.5 million community college students are age 40 or older.

Gerontology Degree and Certificate Programs

- In spite of increased demand for training and certification from those who want to work with older adults, 17 of 35 community colleges that have developed gerontology certificate and degree programs have in recent years suspended or discontinued their programs.
- Since 2005, two community colleges have initiated gerontology training programs, and another was identified as set to launch.

Civic Engagement and Life Enrichment Programs

- Many community colleges with longstanding programs whose older learners are aging face declining enrollment.
- While community colleges with large active aging (Boomer) populations can benefit from the increased demand from this prospective student population for both leisure and employment-related programs, most have not yet capitalized on the potential.

Programs Targeted to Employment Needs of the 50+ Population

- The majority of Baby Boomers report they intend to delay retirement, opting instead to stay in the work force in their current positions, re-skill for current or future jobs, or pursue new employment opportunities. Only eight community colleges identified in this study have programs that specifically target employment needs of those 50+.
- In a study from Portland Community College on *Boomers Go to College* (see References and Resources, page 28), four out of five credit students aged 40+ were taking classes to upgrade their skills, reenter the work force, or to re-career.

Partnerships and Funding

Among community colleges that successfully developed and sustained programs, there is a broad-based commitment and long-term support from a variety of community partners. Key partners include municipal agencies, the faith community, non-profit organizations, and the private sector. Many of these same community colleges have also successfully diversified their funding sources to support their programs (see page 26 for specific examples).

The Role of Community Colleges In an Aging Society

History

Seventeen years ago, AARP and the League for Innovation in the Community College conducted a survey of all 1,224 community colleges in the U.S. to determine the extent and nature of programs designed for older adults 60+. In March 1991, they published the “status report,” *Community College Programs for Older Adults*.

At that time, “Only a minority of community colleges offer programs and services for older adults despite the fact that these institutions are a logical vehicle for the lifelong learning needs of older adults” (p. i). Specifically, less than one-quarter of all schools had any programs and only 7% (91 of the colleges surveyed in late 1990) identified themselves as having a comprehensive array of programs and services for older adults.

By 2005, when the League conducted an updated study, the picture was brighter. Sixty-nine percent of 166 responding community college CEOs indicated that they had targeted programs for adults age 50 and over. The two most common were special noncredit programs (76% of respondents) and reduced or free tuition (73%). (Source: Civic Ventures report to Atlantic Philanthropies on “Community Colleges and Pathways to Significant Service for Post-Midlife Adults,” May 2006)

In 2006, Civic Ventures, whose mission is to help society achieve the greatest return on experience, looked at how community colleges can serve as pathways to help the Baby Boomer population move into work opportunities to serve the greater good. They noted that “Community colleges are particularly well-positioned to create these new pathways to significant service because they bring to the table a commitment to workforce development, community connections, learning options, and innovation” (p. 2).

Late in 2006, the AARP Office of Academic Affairs initiated an effort to identify what community colleges are currently doing relative to an aging society, and to gather the type of information that could spotlight models of programs that other community colleges could replicate.

While a relatively small sampling of schools (47) is represented in this study, data seem to indicate that little formal expansion has been realized overall in older adult programming at the nation’s community colleges, and that these programs are particularly susceptible to changes in institutional budgets. However, some programs have survived, are thriving, and offer ideas and resources for other community colleges looking at how to serve the aging population.

The Role of Community Colleges in an Aging Society

Gerontology Degree and Certificate Programs

As the population of the U.S. ages, demand has increased for trained personnel to provide services in traditional acute and long-term care facilities, as well as in a variety of independent and alternative service settings. Despite the current and projected need for increased skills training and credentialing, a surprising number of community colleges have either discontinued or suspended their gerontology programs due to low enrollment.

Other schools, meanwhile, have boldly established new programs. At least one community college recently created a new one-year certificate in gerontology, and several have developed short-term, category-specific, age-related certificates – a growing trend in both academia and business.

Many existing and new associate degree programs in gerontology are developed in line with the standards and guidelines issued by the Association for Gerontology in Higher Education. These degree programs require courses in the sociology of aging or social aspects of aging; psychology of aging or mental health aspects of aging; biology, physiology, or health aspects of aging; and health and human services programs and policies (with an emphasis on aging). A practicum with an accompanying seminar is also recommended. (Source: *Standards and Guidelines for Gerontology Programs*, p. 20)

In this study, 35 schools were identified as having gerontology programs and were contacted. Eighteen respondents currently acknowledge active degree or certificate programs (some have both). Seventeen schools have discontinued or temporarily suspended their programs. There are a number of reasons for this decline in programs, including:

- The retirement or departure of key faculty or program administrators;
- The lack of sufficient permanent faculty and courses;
- Lack of institutional support, particularly for a program that is not required for professional licensure;
- The transfer of gerontological content from a separate degree program into other, related degree programs;
- The perception that these degree and certificate programs are all “geriatric” rather than multidisciplinary gerontology programs applicable to a number of career interests; and
- Lack of acceptance of the reality of aging and the aging population.

A complete list of community colleges participating in this study can be found on page 24.

PROGRAM MODELS

**Gerontology
Degrees and
Certificates
Program Model #1**

**American River College
Sacramento, CA**
http://www.arc.losrios.edu/~gero/home_page.htm

One of the longest established gerontology programs in the U.S. is at American River College. In existence for 35 years, it received the Association for Gerontology in Higher Education's (AGHE) Program of Merit designation; it is the first community college in the nation to receive the honor, and one of only seven colleges and universities so designated in the country.

With 300 students, American River's gerontology program is also one of the largest. The school offers an Associate of Arts degree, a certificate in gerontology, and a variety of age-specialist certificates. Classes can be taken online and in person.

Comments from the college:

The (gerontology) programs that will be successful are those that meet the community and student needs for a clearly defined career ladder and are based on the AGHE standards and guidelines. Also, the discipline needs to be recognized as a profession, credentialed or licensed, in its own right.

We need to be working toward educating the public of the value of an educated workforce in the field of aging. Seniorhood is a distinct developmental stage with unique challenges and tasks. Gerontology education provides the knowledge to effectively create and administer programs that both meet the needs of this special population and create effective, efficient, and economical programs.

**Gerontology
Degrees and
Certificates
Program Model #2**

**Lansing Community College
Lansing, MI**
http://www.lcc.edu/health/human_services/

Lansing Community College received a Title I Higher Education Act grant from the Administration on Aging in the mid-1970s, which established the Michigan Aging and Retirement Consortium Project. The Center for Aging Education was established in 1975 and became an early AGHE member. The program offered two degree programs: an Associate degree in human services with a

specialization in gerontology and a Certificate of Achievement in Gerontology.

In the late 1990s, the Center of Aging Education was dismantled, and the gerontology program moved to the Human Services program, Mental Health and Aging Project. Currently students can pursue an Aging Studies Certificate of Completion, a Certificate of Achievement in Human Services, or an Associate Degree in Human Services with a specialty in gerontology.

Recently enrollment has been on the increase, perhaps due in part to the requirement that all human services students are required to take the introductory course on aging.

**Gerontology
Degrees and
Certificates
Program Model #3**

**Portland Community College
Portland, OR**

<http://www.pcc.edu/programs/gerontology/>

In existence for only eight years, the gerontology program at Portland Community College has already become one of the nation's largest with an average enrollment of 250. Students can choose from an Associate of Applied Science or a one-year certificate in gerontology. Also offered is a dual gerontology/fitness technology degree or certificate, as well as a growing number of vocationally-oriented, age-specialist certificates.

In 2005-06, the combination of offering all coursework in person or as an online "blended" option, and the addition of a career development component, resulted in a three-fold increase in core gerontology enrollments and a tripling of the average graduation rate of the preceding five years.

Comments from the college:

We consider the most significant factors promoting the development of our gerontology program are:

- (1) a Career Management Model;*
- (2) a holistic perspective on Gerontology, transcending the geriatric model;*
- (3) strong and growing community and business partnerships; and*
- (4) strategic and supportive partnerships with programs and departments within the college, allowing us to infuse aging across the curriculum and to integrate age-awareness throughout the college.*

We would like to be able to add to this list of significant factors the formation of a National Network of Gerontology Programs of Excellence, particularly on the community college level, so that we can all exchange, learn, and grow as a force for change and innovation in the field of aging.

The Role of Community Colleges In an Aging Society

Civic Engagement and Life Enrichment Programs

Programs for older adult learners have existed for more than 30 years in the U.S. A wide range of models exists as to content, delivery methods, and venues of participation. In other words, there is no standardization reported among programs.

The fact that no clear patterns have emerged among the program offerings may speak to the classically independent nature of community colleges. It also seems to indicate that community colleges have both the capacity and the motivation to respond to their unique local demands.

The range of activities offered for older adult learners includes credit and non-credit courses (some of which are available at reduced or no cost), workshops, job skill training, grandparenting support, and leadership development. Learning experiences include intergenerational as well as peer experiences and one-on-one, small group, or even fair-like events.

Activities such as pre-retirement counseling and travel programs are commonly available on campuses nationwide. Community colleges have also developed television programs, offer distance education, and do outreach programming in a variety of community senior housing and care facilities. They have established networks of older learners and present lectures and workshops by academic professionals as well as by lay experts.

Many community colleges provide a variety of civic engagement opportunities for older adults. On campus, these include student mentoring or tutoring and support of college administrative work. Leadership skills development training is done at some schools, giving older adults the chance to share their experience to better the community at large. A few colleges provide clearinghouse services for community volunteer assignments either independently or in association with partner organizations like the Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP).

Schools whose communities represent an older aging population (70+) tend to offer more civic engagement and life enrichment programs than professional training or re-careering programs. On the other hand, community colleges that have identified an increasing Boomer student population have developed a variety of institute-like offerings targeted to that younger cohort.

A complete list of community colleges participating in this study can be found on page 24.

PROGRAM MODELS

**Civic Engagement
and Life Enrichment
Program Model #1**

**Central Florida Community College
Pathways to Living, Learning and Serving Program
Ocala, FL**
http://www.cf.edu/departments/pathways_site

Formally established in 1991, the school's pilot partnership with Civic Ventures' *Next Chapter Initiative* evolved into the college's *Pathways to Living, Learning & Serving*, described by the college as "a one-stop shop that offers connections and directions for adults age 50+."

Motivated by a commitment to create opportunities for their older residents to engage in activities that promote individual and community renewal, the school cites visionary leadership and numerous private sector partners (which include a local newspaper, major employers, and local retirement communities) as keys to program success.

In 2005-2006, Pathways programs served 1,523 residents age 50+ in Marion County, FL, a region with a larger than average older population 65+. The burgeoning ranks of retiring Boomers have influenced recent program offerings.

Key programs include:

Pathways to Living: Life Services

Life Coaching, Re-Careering, Wellness, Serving Health Insurance Needs of the Elderly

Pathways to Learning: Senior Institute

Called the granddaddy of its programs, the Senior Institute is the lifelong learning and social engagement arm of Pathways. It is not unusual to have over 100 members in a class, and, in 2005, there were 1,853 enrollments.

Pathways to Serving: Civic Engagement

Legacy Corps volunteers provide respite for caregivers.

Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) provides volunteers for 95 nonprofit agencies in Marion County.

The Pathways programs have received these awards:

- 2006 *Best Practices Award*, Florida Department of Elder Affairs
- 2005 *Exemplary Practices Award*, Florida Association of Community Colleges
- Semi-finalist recognition, National Council on the Aging *RespectAbility Initiative*

**Civic Engagement
and Life Enrichment
Program Model #2**

**Coastline Community College
Emeritus Institute of Lifelong Learning
Fountain Valley, CA
<http://www.coastline.edu/>**

The Emeritus Institute of Lifelong Learning has been a part of Coastline Community College since the school opened in 1976. Instruction at the college is offered at five main learning centers and approximately 50 neighborhood campuses throughout its district. Teaching sites include banks, senior centers, high schools, office buildings, and shopping malls.

The Emeritus Institute describes its purpose as “to meet the evolving lifelong learning needs of our community.” Over 32% of Coastline students are age 50+ (39.13% of the District’s adult population is 55+, and 11.36% of the district’s minorities are 60+). In the most recent semester, more than 2,000 students age 60+ enrolled in Emeritus courses, and six of those were 100+.

Credit and non-credit courses are offered for older adults of all abilities at a variety of locations, including sites that attract active elderly, as well as at skilled nursing facilities and residential care facilities. Faculty from the gerontology program is involved with the Emeritus Institute, and program outcomes were developed from student focus groups.

Volunteer opportunities for Emeritus students include participating in a lecture series, supporting the Foundation, serving on the Advisory Board, and helping with co-sponsored community events.

**Civic Engagement
and Life Enrichment
Program Model #3**

**Grand Rapids Community College
Older Learner Center
Grand Rapids, MI
<http://www.grcc.edu/olc>**

The Older Learner Center has been conducting peer-led and self-directed workshops and clubs since 1998; in 2005-06, it served approximately 500 students aged 55+. Among its part-time staff are two retired Gerontology/Sociology faculty, one retired MSW, and a retired college administrator.

Key programs:

- *Life History Club* provides a facilitated environment where individuals work at their own pace and choose personal topics for development from suggested themes.

- *Senior Health Club* and *Senior Health Education Series* offer a variety of physical fitness courses. Staffed by a Master's-prepared, wellness instructor/certified personal trainer, the club helps members develop personalized exercise strategies.
- *Grandparents Raising Grandchildren* is an educational support group conducted by a social worker and a gerontologist. It offers caregiving grandparents the opportunity to share common experiences, better understand their own needs and the needs of their grandchildren, locate resources, and gain valuable information from community professionals.
- *Life Learning Network* is a continuing education and professional development partnership effort designed to support Boomers with personal and professional development.
- *Senior Leadership Grand Rapids* program provides older adults with opportunities for leadership skills development and connection to civic engagement/volunteerism opportunities within the community.

**Civic Engagement
and Life Enrichment
Program Model #4**

***Kingsborough Community College
My Turn Program
Brooklyn, NY
<http://www.kbcc.cuny.edu/myturn/>***

My Turn was created in 1981 to serve the academic needs of older adult learners 60+ in an intergenerational setting. In its first year, 70 students enrolled; in 2005-2006, the My Turn program had nearly 2,000 enrollments.

A part of the City University of New York, the program offers a college education to all state residents 60+ and features

- no tuition and registration fee of \$80.00;
- no previous educational requirements;
- more than 400 courses;
- class attendance with traditional students; and
- campus facilities such as library, gym, pool, tennis courts, and private beach.

Each year, 10 to 15 My Turn students receive an Associate degree. Some students take advantage of the CUNY Baccalaureate Degree

Program and complete a four-year degree. An exceptional few have gone on to receive law degrees and doctorates.

My Turn Outreach, a new program begun in fall 2006, enlisted a cohort of professors to deliver academic programs to residents in the community's senior housing and care facilities.

My Turn students volunteer as mentors and have sponsored intergenerational art exhibits, fashion shows, and choral events.

The My Turn Program has received these awards:

- 2006 *Mind Alert Award*, the American Society on Aging and MetLife
- 1994 *National Model Program* (US and Canada), the Association for Continuing Higher Education

**Civic Engagement
and Life Enrichment
Program Model #5**

**Richland College
Emeritus Program
Dallas, TX**

www.richlandcollege.edu/emeritus

Begun in 1989, in academic year 2005-2006 the Emeritus Program had 2,300 credit enrollments and 1,400 non-credit enrollments. Students range in age from 55 to 90 years old; those 65+ who have lived in Texas for a year and are Dallas County residents can enroll for six credit hours a semester tuition-free. An example of the program's popularity is that enrollment in computer classes in 2000-2001 was 88, and in 2005-06, it reached 1,444.

Offering a span of older learning and civic engagement options, the college's current programs include the following:

- A distance-learning creative writing class developed for seniors
- *Partners in Education* currently offers courses at five facilities including independent living retirement communities and churches. Courses are open to the public, and physical fitness and computer courses are available free of charge in these locations.
- *Conversation Partners* provides an opportunity for volunteers to help foreign-born students improve their language skills. In 1995, this program received the *Innovation of the Year* award at Richland. In academic year 2005-06, 438 volunteers contributed 4,030 service hours.
- *Tutor/Mentor Program* pairs senior volunteers with traditional

college students to assist them in core subjects.

- *Reading Assistance Program* (RAP) helps Hispanic students.
- Computer classes designed for seniors only are presented through the college's Business Office Systems & Support division. They include *Word*; *Windows XP*; *Excel*; *Photoshop Elements*; *PowerPoint*; *Publisher*; and a new program the college was asked to pilot, *Family History on DVD*. As technology changes, so do the offerings. In spring 2007, the school offered 56 computer credit classes.

The Emeritus Program has received these awards:

- In its "Best of Dallas" issue, the *Dallas Observer* named Richland College Emeritus Program as the *Critics' Pick* for the *Best Brain Food for Seniors* in the Dallas metroplex.

***Civic Engagement and
Life Enrichment
Program Model #6***

Yavapai College

Center for Successful Aging

Yavapai County, AZ

<http://www2.yc.edu/content/centerforsuccessfulaging/>

In Yavapai County, 34% of the population is 55 and older, and 22% is 65 and older. Yavapai College's Center for Successful Aging programs serve 5,000 adult students annually.

Key programs include:

The *Osher Lifelong Learning Institute* is a membership organization within Yavapai College, created to meet the needs and interests of local retirement-age people. The Institute is self-governed, is peer-directed, and sets its own curriculum. The school is one of only three community colleges to receive endowments from the Bernard Osher Foundation.

Yavapai College offers close to 200 programs per year, making it among the largest Elderhostel programs in the world.

In 2006, the college introduced *Community Education*, which offers a variety of non-credit, short-term classes that address subjects related to leisure, lifestyle, and a broad range of special interest topics.

Yavapai is developing an *Advanced Leadership Collaborative* to tap into the intellectual capital of its retired population. Its mission is to provide a meaningful outlet for retired adults seeking to share their knowledge and skills to better the community.

The Role of Community Colleges in an Aging Society

Programs Targeted to Employment Needs of the 50+ Population

With mounting evidence that an overwhelming majority of Boomers plan to extend their work lives, a surprising research finding of this study is how few community colleges have programs targeted specifically to the job/career training needs of the 50+ population. A sign that this gap represents great opportunity is that a handful of forward-looking schools have such programs in the planning phase or prepared to launch. Of particular interest is that most of those schools with current age-specific employment-related programs acknowledge a variety of key community partners that are in some way involved with them (for examples, see page 26).

Nearly all community colleges offer a variety of courses for students of all ages that appeal to (and perhaps actually target) older job seekers and/or career changers. Identifying this information is not so easy, however, as most schools do not always segment these courses into employment-related categories in their catalogs. For the most part, such listings are embedded in the community education section.

Examples from current online community education catalogs support this finding:

Course titles with appeal to probably as many (or more) older as younger students, workers, and job seekers:

- *Career Management*
- *Meaningful Work*

Courses with greater age emphasis:

- *Career Transitions for Women 35+*
- *Small Business Training Program Designed for Mature Adults 50+*

Programs and services that in all probability attract as many (or more) older as younger students, workers, and job seekers:

- *The Workforce Development Institute*
- *Adult Re-Entry Services*

About the same time that this research project was started at AARP, Civic Ventures—a San Francisco-based think tank and incubator helping society achieve the greatest return on experience—was initiating a project to support innovative community colleges that are creating new ways for adults 50+ to transition to "encore careers" in education, healthcare and social services - all sectors facing critical labor shortages. With support from the MetLife Foundation, Community College Encore Career grants of \$25,000 each were awarded to 10 community colleges who open doors for boomers who want their next chapter, or encore, to include a "purpose-driven job." The awardees and their programs are:

- **Baltimore City Community College** (Baltimore, MD) will use an executive outplacement model to help African-American women over age 50 develop individual plans to transition into encore careers.
- **Broward Community College** (Ft. Lauderdale, FL) will do extensive marketing — including free seminars and career counseling — to inform boomers about local encore career and service opportunities.
- **Central Piedmont Community College** (Charlotte, NC) will design and deliver a leadership training program to support boomers interested in transitioning from careers in the for-profit to the non-profit sector.
- **Coastline Community College** (Fountain Valley, CA) will develop and offer online and classroom courses for those over 50 preparing for careers in gerontology and elder-care.
- **Collin County Community College** (Allen, TX) will train boomers who have been laid off from engineering and technology careers — and other boomers interested in teaching — to become certified high school math teachers in one year.
- **GateWay Community College** (Phoenix, AZ) will join forces with local employers to help boomers transition to careers as caregivers. Employers will provide instructors, tuition support and flexible jobs.
- **Owensboro Community and Technical College** (Owensboro, KY) will train retiring nurses to become adjunct nursing faculty at the community college level. (The national nursing shortage can be traced, in part, to a shortage of nursing faculty.)
- **Portland Community College** (Portland, OR) will establish a peer mentoring program for students over 50 enrolled in the college's gerontology certificate or degree program to improve support for older students and to boost retention.
- **Virginia Community College System** (Richmond, VA) will launch a statewide recruitment effort to attract more boomers with college degrees to their existing statewide, fast-track teacher licensure programs. Partners include the state's 23 community colleges, the Virginia Dept. of Education and K-12 schools.
- **Washtenaw Community College** (Ann Arbor, MI) will develop outreach and support programs for mid-career professionals who want to use their training and business experience to help solve societal problems.

(See <http://www.civicventures.org/communitycolleges> for more information.)

PROGRAM MODELS

From information gathered for this study, it appears that Central Florida, Prince George's, and Westchester Community Colleges have the longest-running programs targeted to career-changing or re-entry older workers.

**Employment Needs of
50+ Population
Program Model #1**

**Central Florida Community College
Pathways New Work Opportunities
Ocala, FL
<http://pathways.cf.edu/services.htm>**

Current programs include *Your Move into the World of Work* Seminar, *The Pathways Job Club*, and *Life Coaching*. Because of its location in a region with a larger-than-average and growing older adult population, this college is considering programs geared more specifically to new-old (Boomer) career changers and job seekers.

One of the ways the college has tried to position itself to meet 21st century challenges is through developing community partnerships which the school cites as solidly contributing to its program's successful outcomes. Local sponsorship includes support from representatives of financial, health care, and housing industries and the media.

**Employment Needs of
50+ Population
Program Model #2**

**Prince George's Community College
SAGE Program
Largo, MD
http://www.pgcc.edu/schedules/2007/spring/noncredit/SPRNCR07txt_web.pdf**

Seasoned Adults Growing Educationally (SAGE) members constitute a large percentage of the Workforce Development and Continuing Education population at Prince George's Community College (PGCC). Targeted programs include *STEP (Senior Training and Employment Program)* and *Job Skills Seminar for the 50+ Worker*.

Prince George's Community College serves an amazingly diverse population which spans multiple generations and includes personnel from Andrews Air Force Base. It is located in the greater Washington, D.C., area which boasts a disproportionate percentage of government employees. As many as 50% of the area's federal employees are already at or near retirement age, and by most accounts, a majority of them plan to continue working. With a variety of continuing education courses and programs specifically oriented to career and re-careering, the school is well positioned to support mature learners in their transition to new-to-them careers.

**Employment Needs of
50+ Population
Program Model #3**

**Westchester Community College
Mainstream Program
Valhalla, NY**

http://www.sunywcc.edu/continuing_ed/mainstream/mainstream.htm
http://www.sunywcc.edu/downloads/spring_2007/mainstream/main_mature_spr07.pdf

Westchester started serving older job seekers in the mid-1980s when IBM, one of its major community employers, began a series of reorganizations which included early retirement packages for long-term (older) employees. Current programs include *Small Business Training Program* designed for adults 50+ and *Workplace Training* (includes job search and computer training). Representatives from the Mainstream Program conduct extensive employer outreach. In the planning stages is an early childhood training program designed for adults 50+.

In the past two years, Central Piedmont and Grand Rapids Community Colleges have introduced new programs targeted to their 50+ community population.

**Employment Needs
of 50+ Population
Program Model #4**

**Central Piedmont Community College
Lifetime Learning Institute
Charlotte, NC**

<http://www1.cpcc.edu/lifetimelearning/faq>

In early 2006, the school launched its Lifetime Learning Institute (designed to meet the needs of its 50+ population and their employers) to coincide with the first Boomers turning 60. Programs include *Career Transitions at Midlife*, and under development is a program to help Boomers re-career from the private sector into employment in the non-profit arena.

**Employment Needs
of 50+ Population
Program Model #5**

**Grand Rapids Community College
Project Mature Worker
Grand Rapids, MI**

<http://www.grcc.edu/matureworker>

To fill a documented gap in delivery of employment-related services to the area's 55+ population, Project Mature Worker began as a model demonstration project in June 2006. A job training/employment assistance program specifically designed to provide mature workers with job training and employment assistance, it was developed in partnership with the Job Training Program of Michigan Technical Education Center (M-TEC) with support from the Grand Rapids Community Foundation.

Grand Rapids is one of only two college systems nationally that were identified as having programs in all three areas studied in this research and is the only school that was identified as having an outreach program targeted exclusively to employers.

Developing Models

Maricopa and Portland Community Colleges are representative of those schools currently engaged in strategic planning to develop programs focused on the challenges posed by the aging of the local work force.

Maricopa Community College System

Phoenix, AZ

At **GateWay Community College**, mature workers in need of financial assistance can receive funding for tuition and books to attend certain courses. In the planning stages is a Workforce Transition Center intended to serve the needs of both Boomers and employers.
<http://www.gatewaycc.edu/>

In fall 2007, **Rio Salado College** (in partnership with AARP) will offer four workshops for the 50+ worker and local employers.

<http://www.rio.maricopa.edu/services/community/aarp/#>

Portland Community College

Portland, OR

Portland Community College has formalized an *Aging Workforce Initiative* to develop programs that focus on the challenges posed by the aging of the work force. Targeted to work with area employers to manage the retirement of their most skilled and experienced workers are the *Center for Business and Industry* and *Customized and Workplace Training*.
<http://www.pcc.edu/business/workplace-training/>
<http://www.pcc.edu/business/>

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Hybrid Programs

In this research project, two community colleges stood out as having programs in all three areas of this study: gerontology degrees and certificates, programs for older learners, and career programs for people 50+.

Hybrid Programs Program Model #1	Grand Rapids Community College Grand Rapids, MI http://www.grcc.edu/olc
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Under the auspices of the Older Learner Center, this one-campus, one-community, college offers a Gerontology Certificate Program; a Mature Worker program that helps retrain older workers and educates area employers that hire them; and extensive lifelong learning events, conferences, and programs, including the development of the *Successful Aging* video series.

Hybrid Programs Program Model #2	Maricopa Community College Maricopa County, AZ http://www.cgc.maricopa.edu
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With significant diversity and an above (national) average aging population, the ten community colleges, two skill centers, and multiple education centers in the Maricopa system specifically target programming to their own resident mixes.

Programs at these campuses include an AAS in Gerontology, a diverse array of lifelong learning options, a center for civic engagement, and an emerging focus on 50+ employment issues.

The Role of Community Colleges in an Aging Society

Conclusions

While only a snapshot, this research uncovered two common concerns: 1) The pattern of declining enrollment in both credit and continuing education programs specifically related to an aging society, and 2) How little programming is currently underway, or under development, related to the emerging trends and needs of an aging population.

A more positive finding was that there are community colleges whose long-term programs flourish, or that have developed (or are developing) programs in touch with, and responsive to, America's aging society. These schools have in common creative program development and marketing, interaction with and support from various community partners, and diversified funding sources.

Among the key findings of this report, none stands out more starkly than the fact that of those community colleges identified as having gerontology degree or certificate programs, *nearly 50% have discontinued or suspended them due to low enrollment*. This statistic belies not only the population-driven demand for increased age-related academic certifications, but also the ground swell of interest from individuals seeking careers that involve working with older adults. Reasons for this decline are thought to include the retirement or departure of key faculty or program administrators; lack of sufficient permanent faculty and courses; lack of institutional support, the move of gerontological content into other degree programs; the perception that these degree and certificate programs are all "geriatric" rather than multidisciplinary gerontology programs applicable to a number of career interests; and lack of acceptance of the reality of aging and the aging population.

Another surprising finding of this research is how little is being done by community colleges to specifically address employment needs of the 50+ population. National surveys done by AARP and others consistently report that Boomers intend to extend their work lives beyond traditional retirement age. As reported in *Boomers go to College*, in all probability most of the 40 to 60-year-old credit students currently on campuses are there to upgrade their skills or for (re)career training opportunities.

In both gerontological career training and re-training of older workers, the business sector early recognized and has successfully positioned itself to respond. Community colleges are challenged to adopt similar market-driven offerings yet few have. It is worth noting that American River College has created targeted allied health certificates within its gerontology program, and Westchester Community College has developed a small business training program for entrepreneurs.

Community colleges have long been at the forefront of lifelong learning and civic engagement opportunities for older learners, yet at many schools with long-term programs, a dwindling participant base (who tend to be age 80+) and dated programming have contributed to declining enrollment. Schools can (re)kindle their community presence by developing innovative new programs to quench the celebrated thirst for lifelong learning of the Boomers (touted as the best educated demographic cohort in American history). A few schools, as

noted previously, have developed a variety of offerings targeted to this younger cohort but most have not begun to develop this potential.

Community colleges clearly stand at a major crossroads. The reinvention necessary to emerge as competitive 21st century academic institutions capable of addressing complex societal needs can only be realized with commitment and buy-in from all stakeholders.

The Role of Community Colleges in an Aging Society

Research Participants *

School	Contact	Email	Degree Certificate	Lifelong Learning	Older Workers
American River College	Barbara Gillogly	gillogb@arc.losrios.edu	X		
Anne Arundel CC	Mara Kent-Skruch	mkentskruch@aacc.edu	X		
Central Florida CC	Jerone Gamble	gamblej@cf.edu		X	X
Central Piedmont CC	Lyndall Hare	Lyndall.hare@cpcc.edu		X	X
Chaffey CC	Karen Lyman	Karen.Lyman@chaffey.edu	X		
Coastline CC	Debra Secord	dsecord@coastline.edu	X	X	
College of DuPage	Marget Hamilton	Hamilton@cdnet.cod.edu		X	
Cuyahoga CC	Valerie Brown	Valerie.Brown@tri-c.edu	X	X	
Flathead Valley CC	Kathy Hughes	khughes@fvcc.edu	X		
Genesee CC	Connie Boyd	CJBoyd@genesee.edu	X		
Grand Rapids CC	Mike Faber	mfaber@grcc.edu	X	X	X
Harrisburg CC	Barbara Grandia	bbgrandi@hacc.edu	X		
Hostos CC	Diane Penner	dpenner@hostos.cuny.edu	X		
Kapiolani CC	Cullen Hayashida	cullen@hawaii.edu		X	
Kingsborough CC	Barbara Ginsberg	Bginsberg1@kingsborough.edu		X	
L.A. Mission College	Sandi Lampert	lampersm@lamission.edu	X		
Lansing CC	Chris Hennessey	hennesc@lcc.edu	X		
Maricopa GateWay	Karen Poole	karen.poole@domail.maricopa.edu			X
Maricopa Mesa CC	Barbara Thelander	thelander@mail.mc.maricopa.edu		X	
Maricopa Phoenix	Veronique Parker	Veronique.parker@pcmail.maricopa.edu	X		
Maricopa Rio Salado CC	Karen Poole	karen.poole@domail.maricopa.edu			X
Monroe County CC	Gail Odneal	godneal@monroeccc.edu	X		
Portland CC	Jan Abushakrah Neal Naigus	jabushak@pcc.edu nnaigus@pcc.edu	X		X
Prince George's CC	Camille Crawford	crawfoca@pgcc.edu		X	X
Richland College	Mitzi Werther	Mitzi@dccd.edu		X	
Sierra College	Jennifer Mackey	Jmackey@sierracollege.edu		X	
Spokane Falls CC	Polly McMahon	PollyM@spokanefalls.edu	X		
Wayne County CC	Shawna Forbes	sforbes1@wcccd.edu	X		
Westchester CC	Shelley Garnet	mainstream@sunywcc.edu		X	X
Yavapai CC	Dennis Garvey	DennisGarvey@yc.edu	X	X	

* Seventeen additional schools were contacted, but are not included in this list as their gerontology degree/certificate programs have been discontinued or are temporarily suspended due to low enrollment.

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Websites of Research Participants

School	Website
American River College	http://www.arc.losrios.edu/~gero/home_page.htm
Anne Arundel CC	http://www.aacc.edu
Central Florida CC	http://pathways.cf.edu/
Central Piedmont CC	http://www1.cpcc.edu/lifetimelearning
Chaffey CC	http://www.chaffey.edu/gero/index.shtml
Coastline CC	http://coastline.edu/page.asp?LinkID=535
College of DuPage	http://www.cod.edu/conted/oai/
Cuyahoga CC	http://www.tri-c.edu/home/default.htm
East Central CC	http://www.eccc.cc.ms.us/PROGRAMS/VOTECH/gerontology.htm
Flathead Valley CC	http://www.fvcc.edu/academics/catalog/2005/GerontologyOneYearCertificate.shtml
Genesee CC	http://www.genesee.edu/academics/programs/Human/Gerontology/
Grand Rapids CC	http://www.grcc.edu/olc
Harrisburg CC	http://www.hacc.edu/index.cfm?fuseaction=healthCareers.Programs%20Offered&id=895
Hostos CC	http://www.hostos.cuny.edu/ooa/programs/gerontology.html
Kapiolani CC	http://kapiolani.hawaii.edu/page/home
Kingsborough CC	http://www.kbcc.cuny.edu/myturn/
L.A. Mission College	http://www.lamission.edu/fcs/gerontology.html
Lansing CC	http://www.lcc.edu/health/human_services/career/
Maricopa CC GateWay	http://www.gatewaycc.edu
Maricopa CC Mesa	http://www.mc.maricopa.edu/community/communityed/crs_mlo.htm
Maricopa CC Phoenix	http://www.pc.maricopa.edu/index.php?page=29&subpage=651&sublink=10825
Maricopa CC Rio Salado	http://www.rio.maricopa.edu/services/community/aarp/
Monroe County CC	http://www.monroeccc.edu/health_sciences/index.htm
Northern Virginia CC	http://nvcc.edu/catalog/cat96/curr/ger.htm
Portland CC	http://www.pcc.edu/programs/gerontology/ http://www.pcc.edu/resources/senior-studies/
Prince George's CC	http://www.pgcc.edu/schedules/2007/spring/credit/Spring2007SAGE.pdf
Richland College	www.richlandcollege.edu/emeritus
Sierra College	www.sierracollege.edu/olli
Spokane Falls CC	http://www.spokanefalls.edu/TechProf/HumanServices/GerontologyHome.aspx
Wayne County CC	http://www.wcccd.edu/academic_programs/view_program.asp?id=50
Westchester CC	http://www.sunywcc.edu/continuing_ed/mainstream/mainstream.htm
Yavapai CC	http://www2.yc.edu/content/centerforsuccessfulaging/ http://www2.yc.edu/content/LIFELONGLEARNERS/pdf/GeronCertFlyer.pdf

Examples of Community College Partners and Funding Sources

Community Partners

AARP
Area Agency on Aging
Civic Organizations
Elderhostel
Elected Officials
Employers
Employment Assistance
and Job Training
Programs: One-Stop
Career Centers,
SCSEP Title V Senior
Employment
Faith Communities
Financial Institutions
Four-year Colleges &
Universities
Hospitals and Medical
Centers
Hospice Programs
Libraries
Long-Term Care
Providers
Meal Programs
Media
Mental Health Providers
Museums
Parks and Recreation
Professional Associations
RSVP
Retirement Communities
Senior Advocacy Groups
Senior Centers
Social Security
Administration
Veterans Administration

Internal College Partners

Administration
Alumni Office
Career Development
Communications Office
Computer Labs
Continuing Education
Distance Learning
Faculty
Fitness Technology
Foundation
Grants Department
Guidance and Counseling
Print Services
Special Events
Retiree Association
Workforce Development

Funding Sources

Bequests
College General Funds
Community Organizations
Fees for Service
Foundations
Fundraising
Grants
In-Kind Donations
National Organizations
Older Americans Act
(AoA)
Scholarships
Tutoring
United Way
Workforce Investment Act
(WIA)

Community College Fact Sheet

American Association of Community Colleges, January 2007(reproduced with permission)

Number and Type of Colleges

Total—1,202
Public—991
Independent—180
Tribal—31

Enrollment

Total—11.6 million
Credit—6.6 million
Noncredit—5 million
Enrolled full-time—40%
Enrolled part-time—60%

Demographics

Average age—29
21 or younger—43%
22–39—42%
40 or older—16%
Women—59%
Men—41%
Minorities—34%
Black—13%
Hispanic—14%
Asian/Pacific Islander—6%
Native American—1%
First generation to attend college—39%
Single parents—17%
Non-U.S. citizens—8%

Community college students constitute the following

% of undergraduates:

All U.S. undergraduates—46%
First-time freshmen—45%
Hispanic—55% Black—47%
Asian/Pacific Islander—47% Native American—57%

Employment Status

Full-time students working full-time—27%
Full-time students working part-time—50%
Part-time students working full-time—50%
Part-time students working part-time—33%

% of Students Receiving Financial Aid

Any aid—47%
Federal grants—23%
Federal loans—11%
State aid—12 %

% of Federal Aid Received by

Community Colleges

Pell Grants—32%
Campus-based aid—9%

Average Annual Tuition and Fees

Community colleges (public)—\$2,272
4-year colleges (public)—\$5,836

Degrees and Certificates Awarded Annually

Associate degrees—550,000
Certificates—270,000

Revenue Sources (Public Colleges)

State funds—38%
Tuition and fees—20%
Local funds—19%
Federal funds—7%
Other—16%

On-Campus Housing

Provided at 240 public and 70 independent colleges

Community Colleges at the Forefront

- Health care: 50% of new nurses and the majority of other new health-care workers are educated at community colleges.
- International programs: Close to 100,000 international students attend community colleges—about 39% of all international undergraduate students in the United States.
- Work force training: 95% of businesses and organizations that employ community college graduates recommend community college work force education and training programs.
- Homeland security: Close to 80% of firefighters, law enforcement officers, and EMTs are credentialed at community colleges.
- Five hottest community college programs: registered nursing, law enforcement, licensed practical nursing, radiology, and computer technologies.
- Earnings: The average expected lifetime earnings for a graduate with an Associate degree are \$1.6 million—about \$.4 million more than a high school graduate earns.

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Aging is an Asset: The importance of retirees to higher education

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by Elizabeth Olson

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by David Bank, Civic Ventures

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The Chronicle of Higher Education, November 25, 2005

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November 2004, Volume 17, Number 11

What Economic Developers Should Know About Workforce Development and Community Colleges

by Mary Crabbe Gershwin, Ph.D.

Economic Development America, Fall 2005

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Marc Freedman

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Ronald J. Manheimer, Denise D. Snodgrass, and Diane Moskow-McKenzie

Greenwood Press, 1995

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Community Colleges as Pathways to Significant Service for Post-Midlife Adults

Civic Ventures, May 31, 2006

Community College Programs for Older Adults

AARP and League for Innovation in the Community College

March 1991

New face of Work Survey: Documenting the Desire for Good Work in the Second Half of Life

MetLife Foundation/Civic Ventures

June 2005

Older Adult Education in the United States: Trends and Predictions

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North Carolina Center for Creative Retirement

University of North Carolina at Asheville

2002

Standards and Guidelines for Gerontology Programs (4th ed.)

Association for Gerontology in Higher Education

2005

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includes "Checklist for Considering Community College and Community Nonprofit Partnerships"

Public/Private Ventures

January 2002 (pp. 38-39)

Walking the Talk: Community Colleges Where Everyone Wins
Jobs for the Future
2005

Organizations

AARP Office of Academic Affairs
<http://www.aarp.org/research/academic>

American Association of Community Colleges (AACC)
<http://www.aacc.nche.edu/>

American Association for Adult and Continuing Education (AAACE)
www.aaace.org

American Council on Education (ACE)
<http://www.acenet.edu>

American Society on Aging, Lifetime Education and Renewal Network (*LEARN*)
www.asaging.org/learn

Association for Continuing Higher Education (ACHE)
www.acheinc.org

Association for Gerontology in Higher Education (AGHE)
www.aghe.org

Association of Learning in Retirement Organizations of the West (*ALIROW*)
www.alirow.org

Center for Community College Policy
<http://www.communitycollegepolicy.org/>

Civic Ventures
<http://www.civicventures.org>

Community College National Center for Community Engagement
<http://www.mc.maricopa.edu/other/engagement/>

Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL)
<http://www.cael.org/>

League for Innovation in the Community College
http://www.league.org/league/membership/alli_innov.htm

Learning Resources Network (*LERN*)
<http://www.lern.org/>

National Council for Continuing Education and Training
www.nccet.org

National Council for Workforce Education
<http://www.ncwe.org/>

OASIS (Older Adult Services and Information Systems) Institute
<http://www.oasisnet.org/>

Osher Lifelong Learning Institutes
<http://www.osherfoundation.org/index.php?olli>

University Continuing Education Association (*UCEA*)
www.ucea.edu

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Endnotes

The Role of Community Colleges in an Aging Society was prepared by Linda Weiner (linda@businessandaging.com), Founder and Principal of the Wiener Training and Consulting Group in Portland, OR; faculty member in the gerontology program at Portland Community College; and Age Issues expert for Monster.com.

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Report reviewers include Michael Faber, Grand Rapids Community College and chair of the Community College Task Force of the Association for Gerontology in Higher Education; Andrew Achenbaum, University of Houston; and Norma Kent, American Association of Community Colleges. Editorial assistance was provided by Terry Abrams Communications.

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