Working with Non-Traditional Students: Tips for navigating conversations and advocating for non-traditional students

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Brief Biography
Learning Objectives

- Attendees will learn who is considered non-traditional.
- Attendees will become aware of the unique needs of non-traditional students.
- Attendees will learn how to collaborate with other departments in order to meet the needs of non-traditional students.
- Attendees will learn resources for working with non-traditional students.
- Attendees will learn how to best advocate for non-traditional students.
Resources on Campus

• Child Care Center
  • Children ages 3-10 (students, staff, and faculty can use)
• University Housing Services
  • Family, Graduate, & Transfer Housing
• Student Organizations
  • Single mothers, international students associations, etc.
• Nontraditional Student Services (Dean of Students Office)
  • Provides programs and services on campus
  • Helps students meet departments and staff
  • Community contacts
• Orientation Services & Veterans & Military Services
  • Transfer Day Orientations
  • Orientation services specifically for Veterans
• Transfer Mentor Program (Dean of Students Office & University College)
  • Assists transfer students with their transition to ISU
• Julia N. Visor Academic Center
  • Provides time management tips, resources, guides
  • Tutoring
• International Studies and Programs
  • I-House (Lounge, TLLC floor in the residence halls)
• Women’s Mentoring Network (University College)
  • Provides support & mentorship for women after an interruption to their formal education.
Defining the term “non-traditional” can be difficult. Typically the #1 determining factor for classifying someone as a non-traditional student is the students age. Not all “non-traditional” students want to be referred to as “non-traditional”

For the purpose of this presentation we will define non-traditional students as:

- Any student over 25 years of age
- Any student that has a dependent(s)
- Any married student or students that are in domestic partnerships
- Commuter Students
- Student Veterans
- International Students
- Transfer Students
- Adult Learners

“Of more than 14 million students in the nation’s colleges, about 40% are over age 24” (Schindley, pg. 11)
Common Concerns: Are we asking the important questions?

- Orientation
  - “Providing specialized orientations, as a complement to a comprehensive program, allows for unique perspectives and needs to be addressed” (Zhang, et. al., pg. 297).
  - Do we have separate orientations that will make each students experience unique?
- Parking and Transportation
  - Costs of parking permits, can students afford parking passes?
  - Are there enough commuter parking spots on campus?
  - How often does the bus run to the apartments on and off campus?
- Drivers License, Employment Paperwork, & Legal Documents
  - Where do you go to get these?
  - How do you get there?
  - What documents do you need? (birth certificate, comparable drivers license, ID card, etc.)
- Housing On and Off Campus
  - Is furniture provided or do students have to furnish their apartments themselves?
  - Do you have adequate space to house the non-traditional student population on your campus?
  - What times do you reach out to students?
    - House Calls Program
- Child Care Services
  - Does your campus have a child care service?
  - If so, how old do the children have to be to receive services?
  - Is there an application process?
  - Where is this facility located?
• Do you have baby changing stations in your bathrooms?
• Do you have secluded spaces for nursing?
• Do you have space on campus designated as being a space for non-traditional students?
• Do you have the same resources in the residence halls as you do in the apartments?
  • Adequate Staffing
  • Cable
  • Wifi
  • Furniture
  • Etc.

• Recreation Center—Places that are not child friendly -- Dining Center? Where is this listed? Do you have to call each place? A list of family friendly locations on campus?

• Others?

**Facility Concerns**
• Classroom structure- Adult learners needs in the classroom are typically the same as many other students.
  • Fear of group work
  • Fear of looking stupid
  • Aggravated with students that don’t value education.

• Common Requests
  • Online classes during the fall and spring semesters.
  • Night and weekend classes as options.
  • Babysitter list or posting for students to apply.

Academic Challenges
• Academics
  • Transfer Students- first time at ISU. Comparing this to previous university.
  • International Students- Group work (lecture vs conversation) Tests vs papers
  • Adult Learners
  • Parents
  • Worry that they have forgotten how to study or that they will appear stupid in front of a class of preppies (Schindley, 2004).

• Campus Culture
  • Transfer Student
  • International Students
  • Adult Learners
  • Parents

• Culture
  • International Students- Shy. Not knowing what to expect.

• Assumptions
  • Term- It is important not to assume that each student will want to be referred to as a “non-traditional” student. Some students may identify this way, but not all.
  • Differences- Do not assume that each student will have the same struggles or experience. Remember that each student is unique and comes with their unique needs and challenges.
  • Many students (not all) within the non-traditional student population struggle financially.

• Feeling Different or “Abnormal”
  • Many non-traditional students express feeling abnormal or that they do not belong.
  • By collaborating with others and expressing ideas to others, we can improve the experience of non-traditional students on campus.

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**Adjusting**
• Don’t assume
  • Not all ideas that work for traditional students will work when brainstorming ideas for non-traditional college students
  • Think outside the box & Make it Fun!
• Collaborate
  • Branch out to other departments
  • Build a committee encompassing members from various departments on campus that all work with non-traditional students.
• Marketing & Communication- outreach/ preferred communication
• Evaluate
  • Ask what students liked or did not like about a program. Take feedback into consideration when planning the next program.
• Ask the students!
  • When students enroll, hand out a survey to each student. Ask questions about their interests and their availability for the academic year.

• Collaborate with others
  • Look into large-scale campus programming efforts and see if they are family-friendly. If so, encourage students to go to these programs.

• Food & Cooking
  • For many students, living in the campus apartments means cooking. Having a program on cooking a few simple meals early in the semester can really help non-traditional students.
  • If having a program and if your budget allows, try to provide a snack or meal. This is not just a way to encourage attendance, but it may help the student be able to study more, not having to worry about cooking or cleaning up after a meal.

• Would you attend this program if you were a non-traditional student?
  • Ask yourself and your staff this question with each program that you plan.
Did you know…

• The first week of November is Non-Traditional Student Recognition Week.

ANTSHE: Association of Non-Traditional Students in Higher Education

• National Organization
• National Conference
• Scholarships, Awards

What’s Out There
At ISU:
• Veterans at Illinois State (VIS)
• Others?

At Other Places:
• Students with Families
• Commuter Students
• Full-Time Employed
• Adult Learners

RSOs
• Nontraditional Student Day/Week
• Family-friendly activities
• Social Activities
• Recognition Ceremonies
• Breakfassts/Luncheons
• Scholarships

What’s Out There
• Games & Contests
• Concerts
• Presenters/Speakers
  • Stress Management
  • Balancing Work, School, Family, Social Life, etc
  • Resume Writing
• Panel Discussions
• Veteran-Themed Events

What’s Out There
• Help form RSOs for current populations
  • (And figure how to make them work)
• Develop relationships with campus offices that specifically work with these students
  • Create & Share Resources
  • Resources: Scholarships, emergency funds, community resources
• Campus Education
• Get students in touch with the right people
Collaborations

- Educate the Campus Community
  - Student Panel
  - Research Opportunities
  - Presentations & Conferences
Activity

• Working with someone next to you, try to come up with:
  • Something your office can do to assist Non-Traditional Students (that it doesn’t already do)
  • An idea for a program or initiative
