

Adult Learners Identify Areas of Strength and Challenge in 2006 Report

The *2006 National Adult Learners Satisfaction-Priorities Report* is now available. This study conducted by CAEL and Noel-Levitz highlights adult students' priorities for their learning experience. The data are based on more than 28,000 students from 70 institutions who have completed the Adult Learner Inventory, which along with the Institutional Self-Assessment Survey, are tools in the CAEL Adult Learning Focused Institutions (ALFI) Toolkit. The report also summarizes the perceptions of 10,000 adult students at community colleges based on the 2005-2006 pilot study with 25 two-year institutions.

The survey scales follow the *Principles of Effectiveness for Serving Adult Learners*, as defined by CAEL. Based on the 2006 results, students place a high priority on the areas of Outreach, Life and Career Planning and the Teaching-Learning Process, as well as on Financing. Students at community colleges then indicate the new Transitions scale as their next priority, followed by Technology, Student Support Systems and Assessment of Learning Outcomes as the least important. Adult learners at primarily four-year institutions rank the bottom three scales as Student Support Systems, Technology and Assessment of Learning Outcomes.

The Adult Learner Inventory asks students to indicate a level of importance along with a level of satisfaction on approximately forty items. Areas which are rated with both high importance and high satisfaction are defined as institutional strengths. Areas which are rated with high importance, but low satisfaction, are defined as institutional challenges. These are the areas which should demand the college or university's top attention.

In the 2006 report, the following strengths are among those identified by adult learners:

- I have a clear understanding of what I'm expected to learn in my courses.
- Processes and procedures for enrolling here are convenient.
- My instructors respect student opinions and ideas that differ from their own.
- Technology enables me to get the services I need when I need them.

The following challenges are among those identified by adult learners in the 2006 report:

- Sufficient course offerings within my program of study are available each term.
- I receive the help I need to make decisions about courses and programs that interest me.
- Information is available online to help me understand what I need to do next in my program of study.
- This institution provides students with the help they need to develop a plan of study before enrolling.

"By administering the Adult Learner Inventory (ALI) to their own students," said Julie Bryant, Senior Director of Retention Solutions with Noel-Levitz, "campus leaders can identify their top areas of strength and top areas of priority for intervention to improve the college experience for their students." Bryant indicated that these data are critical elements for strategic planning, enrollment and retention initiatives and benchmarking for accreditation. The results of the ALI identify issues on the individual campus and compare satisfaction levels with adult learners nationally. With the addition

administration of the Institutional Self-Assessment Survey (ISAS), campus leaders can also document the perceptions of faculty, administration and staff and compare these perceptions with their students.

To view the complete *2006 National Adult Learners Satisfaction-Priorities Report* and to learn more about the Adult Learner Inventory visit: www.noellevitz.com/ALI . Information on the ALFI Toolkit is also available at www.cael.org .