



Case Study: Lorain County Community College and Adult Learner 360

BACKGROUND

To help postsecondary institutions better understand and meet the needs of adult learners, CAEL developed Adult Learner 360™. Adult Learner 360's parallel surveys, rooted in more than 25 years of practice, focus on multiple areas of the student experience through the adult learner lens. In addition to students, Adult Learner 360 surveys faculty and staff, providing unparalleled insight into both the student and institutional experience and perspectives. CAEL offers raw and comparison survey data, a gap analysis of the results, an assessment relative to national median scores, and a comprehensive written analysis. CAEL's deliverables include specific recommendations aligned with CAEL's 10 Principles for Effectively Serving Adults and the Framework for Creating Adult Learner Leaders for Institutional Effectiveness (ALLIES). Throughout its history, more than 200 institutions have completed Adult Learner 360, providing meaningful, applicable data of national trends in student needs, objectives, and expectations.

Lorain County Community College (LCCC), located in Elyria, Ohio, enrolls more than 9,100 students, of which more than 2,200 are adult learners. The college offers a host of credentials, including short-term programs, workforce training, and associate and bachelor's degrees. One in four Lorain County residents have taken classes at LCCC, with more than 43,000 having earned a degree. The first community college in Ohio to offer bachelor's degrees, LCCC partners with more than 700 employers and offers 170 industry-recognized credentials.

CHALLENGE

LCCC's strategic plan calls for the college to confer 10,000 work-relevant degrees or credentials by 2025 that increase earning potential, support career advancement, and enable economic mobility, among other key outcomes. LCCC recognized that meeting this goal would entail engaging more working-age adults and helping them complete credentials necessary to succeed in rewarding occupations within growth industries.

Learn more at cael.org



Lorain County
Community College

900

Fast-Track credential completions
in academic year 2022-23

9.6%

Peak improvement in student
satisfaction scores, with a 5%
average increase across all areas

\$2.14 million

Title III funding secured with
the aid of Adult Learner 360 data

“The survey is very helpful as a topic of conversation on campus to help drive change and in this case, also be able to show, ‘Look at the work you’ve done and how the students are responding as a result,’ so you know you’re making a difference.”

Jonathan Dryden
Provost/Vice President for
Academic Affairs and University
Partnership

RISKS

As employers, workforce developers, and policymakers adapted to post-COVID-19 trends in the labor market and greater scrutiny of postsecondary outcomes, attention and resources shifted toward adult learners. Institutions unable to reframe the college experience to be inclusive of them would face additional disadvantages amid an already difficult and highly competitive recruiting environment.

APPROACH

LCCC partnered with CAEL to initiate Adult Learner 360 surveys to benchmark their impact across student populations. CAEL completed Adult Learner 360 cycles in 2019 and 2022. LCCC entered the survey process with a focus on the significance of understanding shared language, definitions, and expectations and creating a culture of student feedback.

SOLUTION

LCCC established a three-year Adult Learner 360 survey cycle, which is serving as the foundation of a conscious and continual effort to get a pulse of adult learner experiences, including the elevation of student feedback to drive focus groups and other research.

SUCCESS

- **Grant funding:** LCCC leveraged Adult Learner 360 results to obtain a Title III grant that supports employer connections to its academic programs, bolstering its capacity to recruit, retain, and graduate adult learners. Adult learners can gain employment in fields relevant to their area of study rather than having to sustain themselves with labor that does not further their career and academic goals.
- **Evidence-enhanced change management:** LCCC has placed adult learners at the forefront of its survey process, using results to drive data-backed change management, with findings serving as grist for constructive, student-centric conversations among faculty and staff.
- **Establishment of a student-survey culture:** LCCC's experience with Adult Learner 360 inspired a robust welcome survey that accounts for common characteristics present for adult students such as their employment status or responsibilities to any dependents. Adult Learner 360 findings around the priority of financing led to the inception of a financial wellness survey that helps identify possible financial strains for students. LCCC also used survey findings to enhance its Fast-Track programs, which students can complete in 16 weeks at little or no cost to them. Each Fast-Track certification qualifies students for high-growth occupations.

“The research was there, the support to students building the employer readiness and then the short-term programs were already created so we can plug in and get them working and backfill with those gaps.”

Cindy Kushner

Director of School and
Community Partnerships



Recognizing that adult learners are the backbone of the U.S. economy, CAEL helps forge a clear, viable connection between education and career success, providing solutions that promote sustainable and equitable economic growth. CAEL opens doors to opportunity in collaboration with workforce and economic developers; postsecondary educators; employers and industry groups; and foundations and other mission-aligned organizations. By engaging with these stakeholders, we foster a culture of innovative, lifelong learning that helps individuals and their communities thrive. A membership organization established in 1974, CAEL is Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Workplace™ certified and is a part of Strada Collaborative, a mission-driven nonprofit. Learn more at cael.org and stradacollaborative.org.