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## Satellite Campus Enrollment: A Qualitative Investigation of Enrollment Preferences of the Post-Traditional Student

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Satellite Campus Enrollment: A Qualitative Investigation of Enrollment Preferences  
of the Post-Traditional Student

by

Alexis K. Wood

A Dissertation submitted to the Education Faculty of Lindenwood University

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

Degree of

Doctor of Education

School of Education

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of the Post-Traditional Student

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This dissertation has been approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the  
degree of  
Doctor of Education  
at Lindenwood University by the School of Education

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Declaration of Originality

I do hereby declare and attest to the fact that this is an original study based solely upon my own scholarly work here at Lindenwood University and that I have not submitted it for any other college or university course or degree here or elsewhere.

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## **Abstract**

For many, the “American Dream” involves earning a college degree. This degree promises a brighter professional and personal future and an improved overall quality of life. The steps taken to achieve this dream are graduating from high school, heading straight to college, graduating with that bachelor’s degree, and moving forward in the “perfect” career. While this step-by-step process seems natural to most, the reality is that in the fall of 2022, 69.2 percent of high school graduates entered the workforce, opting to pursue that degree much later in life ("College Enrollment," 2023). Researchers refer to this type of student as the post-traditional learner. Soares (2013) states that “post-traditional learners are individuals already in the workforce who lack a postsecondary credential yet are determined to pursue further knowledge and skills while balancing work, life, and education responsibilities” (p. 1).

More research must determine post-traditional students' priorities regarding admissions and enrollment practices, specifically at branch or satellite campus locations. Additionally, many obstacles, such as family life, work, and finances (Osam et al., 2017, p. 55), prevent post-traditional students from enrolling in higher education institutions with processes geared towards the traditional-aged college student. This qualitative study examines the relationship between the course offerings at a satellite campus and on-ground post-traditional student enrollment. This study aims to determine why post-traditional learners enroll at a satellite campus and whether course offerings influence on-ground enrollment. Research has indicated an increasing need for educational programs that adapt to the nontraditional adult learner.

This dissertation has four research questions that focus on the preferences and experiences of the adult learner enrolled at a satellite campus. Eleven survey participants and three interview participants provided data. Participants shared their experiences, which led to several emergent themes in the categories of affordability, influencers, academic and institutional support, and whether their entry term influenced their overall perception of the program they enrolled in. Study participants expressed the need for educational programs and support tailored to the adult learner, which includes a preference for on-ground courses in convenient locations close to work or home. This study shows that higher education institutions can do more to support their adult learner population and suggests enhancements for increased support and inclusion.

Keywords: adult learner, post-traditional learner, satellite campus enrollment, branch campus enrollment, higher education

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## **Chapter One: Introduction**

### **Introduction**

Many colleges and universities are doing as many things as possible to increase enrollment and the retention of students. Many campuses can observe new programs, enhanced facilities, and dining options to rival the local mall food court. These new and exciting features enhance the college experience; however, they still do not address the needs of one community of students found on campuses across the United States – the post-traditional student. Dr. Peter Stokes (2006), the Managing Director of Huron Education Practice, says that for many of us, the word college is synonymous with young students, ivy-covered buildings, dormitory life, and the final four. This stereotype only accounts for roughly 16% of higher education enrollments (Stokes, 2006). This research indicates that most college and university students are nontraditional.

The concept of adjusting an educational process to meet the needs of a nontraditional student is not new (Edwards & Person, 1997; Hagedorn, 2005). The concept of the nontraditional student dates to the late 19th and early 20th centuries. In the article *Rethinking the Nontraditional Student from a Historical Perspective*, author Christine Ogren detailed the analysis of the familiarity between students attending state schools at the turn of the 20th century and nontraditional students of this generation. At that time, researchers defined nontraditional students by race, gender, and socioeconomic class. In the early to mid-1900s, in higher education institutions of the 20th century, the enrollments at coeducational institutions were between 25% and 90% female (Ogren, 2003, p. 643). Admissibility to these institutions was also made increasingly available to minorities and those considered low-income. Many of these “nontraditional” students at

that time faced similar barriers that present-day nontraditional students experience, including financial and specific pathways to degree attainment.

The types of students considered to be nontraditional account for most of the student body population at educational institutions throughout the country. Ogren (2003) stated, “It is important for current administrators, as well as researchers, to simply understand that they are not pioneers in their efforts to welcome atypical students to college campuses” (p. 643). It is essential to understand and assess the needs of the post-traditional learner “since these nontraditional attributes tend to be more common among branch students compared with main campus students” (Jacquemin et al., 2019, p. 3). The results of this study may indicate the preferred modality of courses, recruitment efforts, etc.

Institutions design satellite campuses to meet the needs of nontraditional students. Typically, they are in convenient locations, offer flexible course schedules, and host other resources such as computer labs and internet access. A study by Hoyt and Howell (2012) found that most students attended the branch campus for convenience, including scheduling, class times, location, and smaller overall campus size. Further, the authors indicated that the most profound finding from their study on branch campuses had nothing to do with the purpose of the study, but the most important result is the need for more research on branch campuses. According to the Hoyt and Howell (2012):

Are educational institutions conducting internal studies but not publishing them?

If so, the larger community would benefit from more publication of the same. If

not, other campuses should conduct studies similar to this one. At a minimum,



best practice would require branch campus administrators to know their students and why they attend in order to better serve their needs. (p. 114)

Although assessment of research on branch campuses is limited in the United States, research is plentiful on international branch campuses (Healy, 2015; Hope, 2021; Rossi & Goglio, 2020; Yong, 2023). Research indicates that the needs of nontraditional students in higher education are understood but not prioritized, even with a steady enrollment trend. It is also understood that adult students are most often enrolled at satellite campuses. Still, satellite campus trends are difficult to assess.

As American society pushes the attainment of a degree, the increase of post-traditional learners has expanded into higher education institutions. Overall, the policies and procedures in higher education institutions are adapted to fit the traditional student. Hagedorn (2005) says, “Like the proverbial “square peg” that meets resistance when forced to go through a round hole, adult students often struggle as they try to progress through systems of higher education that have been shaped to accommodate traditionally aged students” (Serra Hagedorn, 2005, p. 22). The new tradition in higher education is that the student body consists of adult learners juggling jobs and families while earning their degrees. Kenner and Weinerman (2011) call on educators to replicate the success strategies in a non-academic environment in the classroom.

Adult learners generally have had some level of success in their non-academic lives and they can replicate this success in their academic endeavors if they understand the benefits of new strategies rather than seeing new material as an introductory hoop leading to their true goals.(Kenner & Weinerman, 2011, p. 94)

**Purpose of Study**

The purpose of this qualitative study is to examine the relationship between the course offerings at a satellite campus and on-ground post-traditional student enrollment. This study aims to determine why post-traditional learners enroll at a satellite campus and whether course offerings influence on-ground enrollment. Research has indicated an increasing need for educational programs that adapt to the nontraditional adult learner. (Hagedorn, 2005; Ogren, 2003; Soares, 2013) Research and processes focus on traditional, college-bound students. A traditional student is between the ages of 18 and 24, attends full-time, and commonly resides on campus. These studies apply to nontraditional students; however, they do not explain or address differences in the demographic shift in the student population. According to Dr. Anne Monroe (2006), these studies do not provide an understanding of the complexity and process by which students make meaning of their experiences at an institution. Furthermore, it is noted in the research that post-traditional students take classes at branch or satellite campuses more often than traditional-aged learners (Hoyt & Howell, 2012; Jacquemin et al., 2019). The current body of literature does not adequately address the needs of post-traditional learners enrolled in satellite campus locations.

This qualitative study will survey 25 to 30 post-traditional undergraduate students in addition to interviews with randomly selected participants. The survey will include questions utilizing the Likert scale, ranking, and opinion questions to capture all requested information. Statistics indicate that non-traditional students are attracted to distance education courses because of their convenience. Many students prefer face-to-

face course instruction; however, they will take a distance education course for flexibility and convenience (Aslanian, 2001).

### **Significance**

The experience of post-traditional learners at satellite campuses is not fully understood. Although limited, there are studies on adult learners and satellite or branch campuses, there are no studies on adult learners at satellite campuses. In this study, the researcher explores the needs and influences of post-traditional students in academia, the gaps in support and recommendations for remedies, and how this can impact the student experience at the satellite campus. The findings of this study hold significant implications for administrators tasked with supporting post-traditional learners, providing valuable insights to inform strategic decision-making and the development of targeted support initiatives. Additionally, college administrators can utilize the data and advocate for changes in campus offerings and support of adult learners, thereby fostering a more inclusive and supportive learning environment.

This study aims to assess and evaluate the relationship between the course offerings at a satellite campus and on-ground post-traditional student enrollment. The study will examine the following research questions:

### **Research Questions**

**Research Question 1:** What factors influence the educational needs of adult learners pursuing post-secondary education?

**Research Question 2:** What areas of support are most important to adult learners?

**Research Question 3:** What solutions would adult learners recommend for these problems?

**Research Question 4:** How do perceptions differ among adult learners based on entry term?

### **Research Objectives**

1. To identify what influences post-traditional learners to pursue post-secondary education.
2. To identify what educational supports are most influential to post-traditional students.
3. To investigate potential gaps in support for post-traditional students enrolled in courses at a satellite campus.
4. To investigate the relationship between the entry term into a program and the perception of the academic program.

This study uses three theories to support how post-traditional students learn and why they pursue post-secondary education. Adult learning theory, as first conceptualized by Malcolm Knowles in 1974, is derived from the organizational development field, where the primary goal of the theory is to provide employees with the resources needed to perform better in the workplace. According to Knowles, the four principles that characterize adult learners are: 1) They are self-directed and take responsibility for their own actions. 2) They have an extensive depth of experience serving as a foundation for their identity. 3) They are ready to actively engage in the learning process. 4) They are task motivated. Although this framework has been studied, one of the challenges for post-traditional students is overall integration into an academic environment (Knowles, 1974,

as cited by Kenner & Weinerman, 2011, p. 88). One study by Kenner and Weinerman (2011) suggests that educational institutions must understand and use that background to develop a curriculum that addresses the needs of adult students to include awareness of different learning styles, framing learning strategies in valuable ways, and utilizing competition and repetition to integrate adult learners into the collegiate environment (Kenner & Weinerman, 2011).

The second theory is Schlossberg's Transition Theory, which provides a framework for administrators looking for ways to best support the adult learner. As the composition of college populations continues to shift, universities and colleges must find ways to orient and retain students in all areas. Adult learners are of particular interest because studies show that enrollment will continue to increase for this specific population. Schlossberg's transition theory (2011) provides a foundation of support for student service professionals who want to support adult learners based on the barriers they face when enrolling and pursuing their degrees (Schlossberg, 2011). Continued implementation of the theory into practice for adult students will help to further the development of the theory and its integration with institution-based practices.

The third theory is the human capital theory (HCT), which is based on the premise that more education means higher lifetime income. Sidorkin (2007) posits that the theory considers education an investment where the costs are recouped at a profit by higher future earnings. The theory views education and training as investments that can increase productivity and earnings over time. Increased training and productivity can benefit both individuals and employers, leading to higher wages, better job opportunities, and a more productive and skilled workforce.

**Definition of Terms**

*Academic School* – of, relating to, or associated with an academy or school, especially of higher learning (Merriam-Webster, 2024). For the purpose of this project, some examples include the College of Business, College of Arts and Humanities, and College of Education and Human Services.

*Andragogy* – the art and science of teaching adults (Kiely et al., 2004).

*Branch Campus* - means a location of an educational institution that—

- (i) Is geographically apart from and operationally independent of the main campus of the educational institution;
- (ii) Has its own faculty, administration, and supervisory organization; and
- (iii) Offers courses in education programs leading to a degree, certificate, or other recognized education credential (Cornell Law School, 2024).

*Extension*—A location of an educational institution that is geographically apart from and operationally dependent on the main campus or a branch campus of the educational institution (Cornell Law School, 2024).

*International Branch Campus* - an entity that is owned, at least in part, by a foreign higher education provider; operated in the name of the foreign education provider; and provides an entire academic program, substantially on-site, leading to a degree awarded by the foreign education provider (C-BERT, 2023).

*Main Campus* - the location where an educational institution's primary teaching facilities are located. If an educational institution has only one teaching location, that location is its main campus. If it is unclear which of the educational institution's teaching

facilities is primary, the main campus is the location of the primary office of its Chief Executive Officer (Cornell Law School, 2024).

*Nontraditional Student* – a student who delays enrollment in postsecondary education by a year or more after high school or who attended part-time, most often over 24 years of age (NCES, 2024)

*Post-traditional Students* – individuals already in the workforce who lack a postsecondary credential yet are determined to pursue further knowledge and skills while balancing work, life, and education responsibilities (Soares, 2013)

*Satellite Campus* – The term describes a location of an institution that is geographically apart and independent of the main campus of the institution (Jacquemin et al., 2019)

### **Limitations**

This study had several limitations. There were 827 surveys distributed and 11 survey responses received. The response rate could mean the results may not accurately represent the larger population. Further, of the 11 responses received, 7 participants agreed to be contacted for an interview, but only three agreed to the discussion. Additionally, the sample was recruited from a single university and only included those enrolled in the Accelerated Degree Program, which could introduce bias. Lastly, the survey data was collected using self-report surveys, which could be unreliable if there is any lapse in memory from when the participant was enrolled in the program. Although the limitations have been identified, the study provides valuable insights into post-traditional learners and their learning experiences at satellite campuses. Future research should address the limitations of this study by using a more representative sample.

This dissertation is significant for several reasons. First, this study furthers the research on the post-traditional student and satellite campus enrollment preferences. Furthermore, the theories of adult learning and human capital provide a basis for understanding the motivations of adult learners. The study findings have critical implications for understanding adult learners at satellite campuses.

### **Summary**

This study investigated the relationship between the course offerings at a satellite campus and on-ground post-traditional student enrollment at one private university. Colleges or universities must consider the needs of adult learners when implementing academic programs, especially at satellite campus locations. The researcher believed that programs designed with the post-traditional student in mind are crucial to the success of this type of learner in a collegiate environment and can lessen attrition within academic programs. These topics were addressed in the next chapter within a review of the current literature.



## Chapter Two: Review of Literature

Despite the number of adult students pursuing a college degree and the research highlighting the areas of support most important to this type of student, little is known about satellite campuses, specifically the students who choose to attend these campuses. There is research that highlights certain aspects of this topic, but very few focus on this demographic alone. With this in mind, accessing data specific to satellite campuses is difficult. One common theme in the literature pertains to students' experiences at satellite or branch campuses and how their experience varies from those who attend at a main campus location (Jacquemin, 2019). Furthermore, post-traditional students are often the demographic that takes courses at a satellite campus. This population frequently experiences many barriers to academic success, including work, family life, and cost (Rabourn, 2018). Additionally, satellite campuses often have fewer resources and services available to students.

According to the National Association of Branch Campus Administrators (NABCA, 2024), a satellite campus is defined as a “location separate from their parent/main campus, often called a “branch,” “satellite,” “region,” or “center” (“About,” para. 1). Although a simple search online will yield many results about colleges and universities throughout the United States with branch and regional campuses to attend, there is limited research on this type of campus enrollment. “If you have ever tried to find information on branch campuses, you know there is relatively little in the literature ([NABCA, 2017, “History,” para. 6].)” Although satellite campuses can vary in size, course offering, and location, the challenges they face are universal: implementation of academic programs, campus safety and maintenance, and student success initiatives.

### **History of the Post-Traditional Learner in the US**

The composition of the college student body has changed from the traditional 18–22-year-old to a much more diverse population of students, otherwise known as post-traditional. Given the shift in student demographics, the research focus has also changed. Studies are now taking a closer look at who these post-traditional learners are, their motivation in pursuing postsecondary education, and what barriers prevent them from making these dreams a reality. In 2014, adult students accounted for 33% of total higher education enrollment (Bergman et al., 2014). The reason for enrollment can vary from professional to personal gain, and institutions face challenges to meet the demands of a rapidly changing student population. Post-traditional learners offer a theoretical history framed by community development, societal shifts, economic changes, and a genuine interest in studying why adults learn.

A shift in the composition of the student body of college campuses to consist of adult learners may feel like a new concept, but history tells us that the adult learner is not new. “The relationship between adult learning and community has roots in religious, scientific, philosophical, and social movement traditions” (2002, p. 10). Historical movements such as the Progressive Era led to community fellowship to counterbalance society’s values, all made possible through adult education. Hugo (2002) notes that adult education is an “instrumentality for improving oneself and the social order” (p. 11). Jane Hugo (2002) introduced three historical variations of learning in community: Autonomous Learning Groups, Community Development Groups, and Community Action Groups.

Autonomous Learning Groups voluntarily come together for the common good. These groups exclude subjects surrounding topics of religion or politics and encourage science and “useful knowledge” (Hugo, 2002, p. 12), leading to the development of museums and libraries. This type of group places value on community and connection to society. Examples can include model airplane clubs, investment groups, and book clubs. (Hugo, 2002)

Community Development Groups are the second type of community-based initiative designed by adult educators and implemented to invigorate communities. They tend to focus on specific issues community members identify and linked resources between home, school, and community. Through the community development theme, some critical arguments questioning the connection between adult learning and community indicate that the focus of the development theme is more on the worker or agency rather than the community (Hugo, p. 17). The end of World War II, the rise of human resource development, and the popularity of human capital theory in the 1960s all contributed to the popularity of community development groups — more on the human capital theory in a later section of this paper.

The third community of adult learners is Community Action Groups. The previous two learning communities focused on changing community behaviors and promoting the exchange of information. According to Hugo, these communities aim to identify root problems affecting specific geographic areas or social groups and take action to solve them based on new insights. In essence, these learning communities prioritize social transformation over restoring lost harmony. Notable examples of social

movements involving community action groups are the labor movements of the 1930s and 1940s and the civil rights movements of the 1950s and 1960s (Hugo, 2002, p. 18).

### **Learning Community Innovation Amid Post-WWII Expansion**

The learning communities base the categorical patterns on society's shifting needs and transitional patterns. Hugo (2002) states, "Organizations, professional educators, and formal and informal leaders meld learning and the experience of community in order to strengthen connections between people, facilitate ability to keep up with the rapid social change that comes with industrial and scientific change, and right social injustices" (p. 21). After the passage of the WWII G.I. Bill, the increase of students seeking post-secondary education was substantial and much more diverse (Fink & Inklas, 2015, p. 7). Learning communities took on an expansive role in higher education by creating more familiar learning spaces for students arranged by common interest areas.

Learning communities have become increasingly popular in higher education across the United States. According to Fink & Inklas (2015), there are over 500 learning communities in different forms. In fact, learning communities have their category rankings in the *U.S. News and World Report*. Hugo (2002) suggests studying the history of learning communities can help us understand how adults historically learned and under what conditions. The relationship between learning and community will continue to be necessary for the studies of post-traditional learners.

### **Financial Aid**

Access to postsecondary education has been a significant concern in the higher education industry since the Higher Education Act of 1965 was enacted over 50 years ago. President Lyndon Johnson made the U.S. Federal Government the primary source of

financial aid. Over the years, the U.S. Department of Education has reformed the financial aid system and now offers various types of aid to students. Financial assistance can come from the federal government, the state where a student lives, the college they will attend, or even private or nonprofit organizations. President Lyndon Johnson declared War on Poverty and signed the Higher Education Act of 1965 into law in August of that year. According to Hegji (2017):

The Higher Education Act of 1965 (HEA; P.L. 89-329), as amended, authorizes a broad array of federal student aid programs that assist students and their families with financing the cost of a postsecondary education, as well as programs that provide federal support to postsecondary institutions of higher education (IHEs). Programs authorized by the HEA provide support for higher education in several ways, including providing support to students in financing a postsecondary education, with additional support and services given to less-advantaged students; providing support to students pursuing international education and certain graduate and professional degrees; and providing support to IHEs in improving their capacity and ability to offer postsecondary education programs. (p. 5)

As part of the Higher Education Act of 1965, the Economic Opportunity Act was passed by Congress. This act created various options to assist low-income students in pursuing post-secondary education. The Educational Opportunity Grants were established to provide scholarships to students. The College Work Study program subsidizes part-time employment during the school year. Guaranteed student loans make it easier for students to afford the upfront costs of post-secondary education. These federal student aid programs aim to ensure educational opportunities for all. Financial aid assistance,

according to Coomes (2000), “was seen as a vehicle for removing cost as a barrier to higher education attendance” (p. 10).

In the 1970s, a new initiative was to help students pursue post-secondary education. It also aimed to provide financial assistance to middle-income students and the low-income demographic institutions already served. Congress passed the Education Amendments of 1972 to offer more options and accessibility to students. As a result, two significant programs were established: the Basic Educational Opportunity Grant (BEOG; now known as the Federal Pell Grant Program) and Guaranteed Student Loans. The BEOG grant was portable, meaning students could use it at any institution. This grant also served as the foundation of a student's financial aid package. The government provided the grant directly to the students, ensuring their institutional choice was guaranteed (Coomes, 2000, p. 10).

The expansion of the Guaranteed Student Loan program broadened the goal of access. Middle-income students could now participate in the loan program. The expansion of the loan program came at a time when middle-class voters expressed concern that tuition rates were rising faster than they could afford, and they were shut out of student aid programs. Coomes (2000) states, “No longer was aid simply intended to meet equal opportunity goals, now it was intended to meet the goals of access and institutional choice for students from a wide range of income levels” (p. 11).

Due to the increasing need for specialists in recruitment, financial aid, academic counseling, and other areas surrounding enrolling students, there is a need for an organizational function to support the growing demand for college choice and student persistence (Coomes, 2000, p. 10). Through this demand, enrollment management was

born. The addition of this area of organizational function within postsecondary education institutions would also influence changes in student aid programs. The Higher Education Act of 1965 was reauthorized under President Ronald Reagan's conservative administration in 1980. The expansion of the student aid program came to a halt, and a new trend of self-reliance for college students took precedence.

During the 1980s and 1990s, there was a significant increase in student loan funding, which led to a rise in student consumerism and public skepticism. These factors started affecting student aid policies and the direction of educational institutions. Grants were no longer the primary form of financial aid for students, while loan programs continued to expand, including options for students and their parents. This change in federal aid options also shifted the focus from student institutional choice to institutional behavior in response to available funding. As a result, colleges and universities may have been prompted to raise their tuition prices due to students' willingness to pay more for their education. The pricing structure of colleges became a more critical issue as a result.

In 2008, the Obama administration reauthorized the Higher Education Act of 1965 and enacted the Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008, which imposed regulations on institutions receiving federal funding. According to Stearns (2017):

In order to receive funding, the HEOA specifically requires colleges and universities to make disclosures or otherwise take action regarding a laundry-list of areas, including campus crime reporting, college costs, graduation data, peer-to-peer file sharing, teacher preparation, textbooks, veterans, emergency procedures, missing students, disciplinary proceedings, and many other matters.

(p. 307)

The act mentioned mandates institutions to comply with its regulations; failure to do so may result in the discontinuation of funds. Over time, federal aid policies have evolved to prioritize transparency and equal access to education, ensuring college attendance is affordable for all.

### **International Branch Campus**

It is known that research is limited regarding satellite campuses in the United States; however, international branch campuses are well-researched and written about. According to the Cross-Border Education Research Team (C-BERT), an international branch campus is defined as:

An entity that is owned, at least in part, by a foreign higher education provider; operated in the name of the foreign education provider; and provides an entire academic program, substantially on-site, leading to a degree awarded by the foreign education provider (Cross-Border Education Research Team, 2023).

C-BERT cites 333 international branch campuses worldwide in 39 home countries and 83 host countries (2023). According to researcher Nigel. Even while growth occurs, little is known about the challenges of managing international branch campuses (Healy, 2015).

Despite the lack of knowledge on managing an international branch campus, their conceptual framework proves to be very similar to those in the United States. Yang (2023) cites, “Econometric models, based on human capital theory and rational choice theory, posit that students are rational and seek to maximize their utility while minimizing risk” (p. 3) To further that thought, researchers Hope and Quinlan posit that mature adults’ access to higher education is becoming increasingly crucial to educational



and economic policy throughout Europe. Similarly to students in the United States, the researchers define mature students as those over 25 years of age with a host of potential barriers to higher education attainment, including family or work pressures, financial issues, childcare, and household responsibilities (Hope & Quinlan, 2021). Perhaps one of the most notable findings in a study conducted by Hope and Quinlan was they were able to determine that the proximity of the campus as a significant factor in participants' choices of university and that this is especially critical as it relates to student support (2021). Rossi and Goglio (2020) furthered the discussion and noted the importance of satellite campuses in rural areas throughout various countries, including Australia, Canada, Italy, China, and Botswana, all to meet the demand for higher education, improve the economy, and eliminate barriers preventing students from access to higher education. (Rossi & Goglio, 2020). According to Rossi and Goglio:

The evidence confirms the findings of other studies conducted on satellite campuses – i.e. that those who benefit the most from them are non-traditional students, who tend to be older, often work for a living and are not financially supported by their parents.

Although there is more literature regarding international branch campuses, similar struggles are still noted when comparing an international branch campus to a branch campus in the United States. Some similarities include student support, academic quality and curriculum, and understanding of the region in which the branch campus is located (Healy, 2015; Paniagua et al., 2022). The differences between international branch campuses and branch campuses located in the United States vary widely, which makes it very difficult to make comparisons overall.

### **Characteristics of Adult Learners at Satellite Campuses**

It is no surprise that with the push for higher education in American society, the increase of post-traditional learners has expanded into higher education institutions. A study by David Jenkins and John Fink (2016) found that only 14% of students who choose to start their education at a community college transfer to a four-year institution and complete their bachelor's degree within six years of entry. According to Jenkins and Fink (2016), "Among students who started at community college and successfully transferred, only forty-two percent completed a bachelor's degree. This is far below the 60 percent degree attainment rate of students who started at public four-year colleges" (para. 1).

Evidence points to the fact that the post-traditional learners are the undergraduates of the 21st century. To gain a better understanding of their needs, institutions must find out what characteristics best define who these students are. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, they define seven common attributes in the report

#### *Nontraditional Undergraduates:*

- Delays enrollment (does not enter postsecondary education in the same calendar year that they finished high school);
- Attends part-time for at least part of the academic year;
- Works full-time (35 hours or more per week) while enrolled;
- Is considered financially independent for purposes of determining eligibility for financial aid;
- Has dependents other than a spouse (usually children, but sometimes others);

- Is a single parent (either not married or married but separated and has dependents) or
- Does not have a high school diploma (completed high school with a GED or other high school completion certificate or did not finish high school) (Choy, 2002, p. 8).

With clearly defined characteristics, institutions should be able to determine how to best serve this ever-increasing demographic. Almost 8 million adults were enrolled at least part-time in a college degree program or university degree program, and nearly 60 million adults were engaged in work-related courses. With such high numbers, reliable data on these students has yet to be available. This hinders postsecondary institutions from efficiently targeting and reaching this group of students and prospective students like them (Stokes, 2006, p. 2). According to Stokes (2006), “Generating these data is an absolutely critical activity because higher education is a bridge to a career in the knowledge economy for vast numbers of working adults” (p. 2).

Adult students return to school for numerous reasons and are left to determine how to find a place for education within existing routines. These students often choose accessible programs with flexible course schedules that support preexisting commitments. Since these students seek accessibility, they tend to enroll in distance education programs. In the article *Square Pegs: Adult Students and Their “Fit” In Postsecondary Institutions*, author Linda Serra Hagedorn (2005) identifies the “four corners of friction” adult students face. The four corners are access, success, retention, and institutional accommodation.

Post-traditional learners unknowingly demand change within the current higher education market. Institutions must be willing to look beyond what is already established. Special Policy Advisor Louis Soares (2013) says that the needs of post-traditional learners and the economy's demand for academic and applied skills go well beyond the current expertise of America's traditional colleges and universities (p. 14). Although the challenges have been discussed for years, there has yet to be a sustained postsecondary education leadership effort to encourage and implement change. Soares says that postsecondary education leaders should take the initiative to bring public policymakers and business leaders into the conversation to place postsecondary education on the national agenda.

It is important to note that post-traditional students often have complex situations surrounding the decision to earn their degree. Many factors play into this decision, which validates research conducted in the past. Dr. Anne Monroe (2006), Dean for Student Services at Northwestern Michigan College, says past and current experiences, personal issues, institutional fit, and academic integration are essential influencers to nontraditional students (p. 39).

**Past experience and current expectations.** Often, post-traditional students have attended multiple institutions, and their experience has not been great. Perceptions and assumptions from previous institutions significantly influence expectations of what will happen at the new institution. Monroe conducted multiple interviews in her research and concluded that expectations are important to post-traditional learners. She noted that students feel as though they are playing games with schools through the transfer process (Monroe, 2006).

Numerous challenges often hinder adult students from completing their degree programs. However, research suggests that several strategies can help overcome these obstacles. Colleges and universities can play an active role by enhancing their admissions process. Enhancements may involve providing clear pathways to admission, along with personalized degree maps and financial aid counseling, which can increase transparency and assist adult students in making informed decisions.

Adult learners expect instant access to information and personalized attention like they may receive from other businesses. They may have questions about the degree program, such as transfer credit policies, program options, completion time, and costs. Thus, universities must tailor their academic options to suit adult learners' needs. By providing a clear roadmap from start to finish, universities can offer greater clarity on course selection, program length, and costs. Additionally, universities should provide easily accessible and clear guidance on academic progress, course selection, and how to obtain academic assistance to help adult learners complete their degree programs quickly. According to Steele and Erisman (2016), "If they are to complete a degree quickly, adults need easily accessible and clear guidance about course selection, academic progress, and how to obtain tutoring or other academic assistance" (p. 50).

**Personal Issues.** Post-traditional students bring with them life experience. This must be accounted for throughout the enrollment process and students' time in the program. According to Monroe (2006), "Students bring life experience with them, and responsibilities that pull them in numerous directions while attending school" (p. 40). This characteristic also affirms that outside support is crucial in weighing the pros and cons of attending school.

External factors, including affordability, access, or institutional challenges, can often be perceived as obstacles to success. Countless strategies and suggestions are available to address these barriers, which can vary depending on the state, institution, or even the non-traditional student pursuing a degree. Research suggests that students should view situational barriers as interruptions rather than insurmountable obstacles with a negative connotation. Colleges and universities are primarily responsible for providing ways to overcome these barriers, such as low-cost childcare on campus, stronger faculty relationships, and programs tailored to adult students (Osam et al., 2017).

The Lifelong Learning Accounts Act of 2008 urges adult students to work with their employers to allocate educational funds. Ritt (2008) believes continuous communication with local policymakers, state representatives, employers, and workforce development leaders is essential for meaningful higher education reform. By increasing awareness among policymakers and leaders in higher education, we can take direct action to address the challenges faced by adult learners (Ritt, 2008, p. 14). Even with implementing the best recommendations, limited gains will result without accurate and consistent data (Ritt, 2008); however, there has been significant progress in recent years.

According to Steele and Erisman's (2016) research, colleges and universities often unintentionally create obstacles for adult students to complete their education by implementing policies and practices that cater to traditional students. Higher education institutions must help post-traditional students as part of the broader equity agenda. Higher education offers lifelong opportunities for personal and professional growth, which can lead to economic gain, greater social mobility, better health and well-being, and overall self-improvement. As society's goals continue to encourage people to seek a

higher quality of life, more research is needed to determine how educational institutions can improve and implement processes that meet the needs of post-traditional learners.

It is not surprising that adult students face various challenges in their quest for educational attainment. Educational administrators and policymakers need to be aware of the needs of post-traditional learners and discuss affordability with them. Although there are many factors that institutions cannot control, there are many factors that they can control, which can affect the outcome for post-traditional students. Institutional trust is critical. Before discussing educational opportunities or institutional pathways, the student must have confidence in the information they receive. The issue of trust may create a psychological barrier that prevents the student from pursuing their educational goals. Goto and Martin's 2009 study states, "Providing program information is of limited use if potential learners are suspicious or distrustful of institutions" (p.17).

**Institutional Fit.** Students often feel misinformed. There are various "silos" of enrollment management, and representatives within each area are not informed of resources beyond their silo. Monroe noted one student's experience when contacting a financial aid counselor. Although the representative tried to point the student in the right direction, misinformation ultimately played a significant role in the student's decision to leave the university (Monroe, 2006).

Frequently, admissions counselors begin the process of showcasing institutional fit. They are the first point of contact for a post-traditional student and can be utilized as a reliable source into the first term of enrollment. The article "Retaining the Adult Student: The Role of Admission Counselors," written by Renee Edwards and Dawn Person (1997), states that "admission counselors can build a partnership with the faculty and

administration in order to provide essential feedback regarding the complexity and richness of the adult learner's background" (p. 20).

Admission counselors have significant responsibility for the integration of the post-traditional learner. Not only are they accountable for seeing the student through an institution's admissions and enrollment process, but they are also responsible for coming up with and creating effective measures to combat personal issues that a student may be facing. Edwards and Person (1997) stated that meeting with students can "ascertain whether prospective adult learners are coping with difficult home situations involving aging parents, abuse, or childcare issues which can ultimately hinder persistence" (p. 20).

**Academic Integration.** Following the points noted earlier, success (interpreted as grades) is paramount to the post-traditional student. Students spend most of their time with faculty members in the classroom. They may not know where to turn, so they ask their faculty member for further help. "Negative interactions distance students even further from the institution. Intellectual development and faculty interaction is most influential for persistence among the non-traditional students" (Monroe, 2006, p. 42). Students often drop courses at the first sign of alarm regarding grade point average. Monroe stated that fear of negative performance and lack of academic support drove the student to leave the institution.

As educational institutions are increasingly held responsible for removing obstacles that hinder non-traditional learners from achieving their degrees, it will be crucial for this accountability initiative to extend into the classroom setting. Non-traditional students frequently worry that they will be the oldest person in the class or may be unable to relate to their peers due to their practical experience. Additionally, non-



traditional students may be concerned that they lack the technical skills to keep up with the coursework. Donavant et al. (2013) argue that if accountability is to be more than just a catchphrase in higher education, the academy must move beyond anecdotal evidence and rhetoric toward a practical understanding of instructional methodologies that direct practice and align teaching styles with the needs of all students, rather than adhering to the outdated convention of the undergraduate classroom that so many unfortunately follow (p. 9).

The previously mentioned factors can pull the post-traditional student in many different directions. While these factors are essential in the overall path to educational attainment, additional studies have concluded that some elements may weigh more heavily than others. Taking a more in-depth look at the various stressors that impact adult learners, it has been determined that work stressors may have more of an impact than personal and school stressors. According to a study by Dr. Jennifer Kohler Giancola, Dr. Matthew Grawitch, and Dana Borchert of St. Louis University, work stressors were the only variable that directly correlated with general well-being. Giancola et al.'s (2009) study found the following:

Multiple stressors must be examined if researchers, faculty, and institutions want to understand stress and its impact on the adult learner. This further supports the “life-world environment” contribution to the adult student’s academic experience and may provide more depth to this concept. (p. 258)

There are three primary areas of stress for the post-traditional student: personal, work, and school. Students feel they have the least control over their work stressors. It is much easier to sacrifice family and social life. Adult students can often hire a babysitter

to care for the children and forgo certain social activities. However, they do not feel they have the same options regarding work responsibilities. Even still, family and social obligations should not be ignored.

### **Adult Learning Theory**

The organizational development field is credited with much of the development of adult learning theory. In the 1950s and 1960s, organizational development practitioners formed new learning models for the workplace training environment (Kenner & Weinerman, 2011, p. 88). Employees needed better tools to perform at higher levels in the workplace, and “traditional higher education pedagogical models did not translate well into the workplace training environment” (Kenner & Weinerman, 2011, p. 88). Deriving from traditional pedagogical study, practitioners coined the term *andragogy* to observe the needs of this clearly defined learning population.

The concept of andragogy became especially popular in the 1980s when Dr. Malcom Knowles popularized a set of assumptions about the adult learner. As noted in the TEAL Fact Sheet, No. 11 (Corley, 2011) adults prefer the practical application of a skill and learn by doing. They need to know why they are learning something and learn best when the subject matter is used immediately. Dr. Knowles identified the following assumptions regarding adult learners:

- Moves from dependency to increasing self-directedness as they mature and can direct their own learning;
- Draws on her/his accumulated reservoir of life experiences to aid learning;
- Is ready to learn when they assume new social or life roles
- Is problem-centered and wants to apply new learning immediately; and

- Is motivated to learn by internal rather than external factors (Corley, 2011, p. 1).

Adult learners have likely experienced some level of success in their non-academic lives. If they can mirror that success into their academic aspirations, they are likelier to experience that same success (Kenner & Weirnerman, p. 94).

One of the assumptions inherent in andragogy is self-directed learning (Bass, 2012, p. 388), which is also commonly attributed to Dr. Malcolm Knowles. Self-directed learning allows the student to take responsibility for their learning outcomes. Essential tasks include goal setting, identifying resources, planning, evaluating outcomes, making decisions on content, and timeliness. (Corley, 2011, p. 2) The process is informal, and most learning occurs outside the classroom. For adults with low-level literacy skills, who may be returning to school after an extended period of time, or who may lack motivation, self-directed learning can be complex. “Some models are designed to give instructors tools to use to promote self-directed learning in the formal setting, and some describe self-directedness as an attribute of the learner” (Bass, 2012, p. 388). The research suggests that there are conflicting viewpoints on self-directed learning as a theory but that it can be implemented successfully in a learning environment that ultimately transforms adult learners into lifelong learners.

Adults seeking education are entering into learning with a prior knowledge base. To understand the new knowledge they desire, they must be able to transform their current understanding, also known as “transformational learning” (Bass, 2012, p. 388). It is noted that environmental factors are critical regarding transformational learning. “Transformative learning is often described as learning that changes the way individuals

think about themselves and their world, and that involves a shift of consciousness” (Corley, 2011, p. 2). Researchers note that for transformative learning to occur, an environment free from bias and complete with trust, acceptance, and empathy is encouraged (Corley, 2011).

Understanding the various theories impacting how and why adults learn is complex and evolving. Cheren (2002) states,

Recognition that adult learning is more than cognitive processing, that it is a multidimensional phenomenon, and that it takes place in various contexts has not only enhanced our understanding of how adults learn but expanded our thinking as to which instructional strategies might be employed to foster adult learning. (p. 97)

Researchers have looked at how community learning styles (Hugo), the development of andragogy (Kenner & Weinerman, 2011), and other theories such as self-directed and transformational learning (Bass (2012), Corley (2011) all aid in the overall adult learning theory concept. With a growing understanding of the research, we will continue to recognize the value of incorporating the research into practice.

### **Transition Theory**

The diversification of the college student population has led to a change in the demographic makeup of students. According to research and statistics by Hussar and Bailey (2019), traditional 18-22-year-old students who live and work on campus are no longer the only ones in the classroom. Adult learners are becoming more prevalent on campus, and higher education institutions must find ways to accommodate and assist this type of student through unique challenges. One way to support adult learners is by

applying student development theory, which encourages positive student growth. However, it can be challenging for student affairs practitioners to find development theories exclusively applicable to adults. Schlossberg's (2011) theory of transition, which is grounded in adult development literature, offers some practical applications of the theory for administrators to consider.

Schlossberg's (2011) research on transition leads to a model that practitioners can implement into daily work. "The Transition Model includes (a) understanding transitions, (b) coping with transitions, and (c) applying the model to work-life transitions" (Schlossberg, 2011, p. 159). Dealing with change requires understanding the different types of transitions that can occur and that every person experiences under various life circumstances.

Schlossberg (2011) defines the types of transitions as the following:

- Anticipated transitions are major life events we usually expect, such as graduating from high school or college, marrying, becoming a parent, starting a first job, changing careers, or retiring.
- Unanticipated transitions include the often-disruptive events that occur unexpectedly, such as major surgery, a serious car accident or illness, or a surprise promotion or factory closing.
- Nonevent transitions are the expected events that fail to occur, such as not getting married, not receiving the promotion you expected, and not being able to afford to retire. (p. 159)

A further explanation for these defined transitions indicates that the context of one's relationship with the transition is essential. "Context refers to an individual's

relationship to the transition (one's own or someone else's) and to the setting in which the transition occurs (work, personal relationships, and so forth)" (Patton et al., 2016, p. 37). Additionally, the impact of the transition is essential as well. Patton et al. (2016) cite that "impact is determined by the degree to which a transition alters daily life" (p. 37). Even desired changes can be upsetting when they impact daily routines, change relationships, and affect one's assumptions about life and self. Schlossberg (2011) indicates that the transition process can take time and that one's reaction to transition can change while the transition is occurring (Schlossberg, 2011). A particular area of difficulty is between the old and new roles, separating from the past and moving toward the new role. "For some, the process happens easily and quickly; however, there are many people floundering, looking for the right niche, even after years" (Schlossberg, 2011, p. 160).

In order to make it easier to deal with change and identify similarities between different transitions, Schlossberg (2011) developed a systematic approach that categorizes the features. This approach includes four main categories: situation, self, supports, and strategies. This system is known as "The 4 Ss System for Coping With Transitions" (Schlossberg, 2011, p.160). Each category is vital in determining how to cope with a transition.

The situation category determines the specific circumstances surrounding the transition and if any additional stresses are present. The self category focuses on an individual's ability to cope with the situation. The support category considers the support network available during the transition. Finally, the strategies category involves those who try to change or reframe the situation (Schlossberg, 2011).

The Transition Model is a tool that provides structure and perspective to people going through a transition period. The analytical component of the model helps to identify the type of transition occurring and the extent of alteration to one's life. Furthermore, the model can help to determine where the individual is in the transition process, whether they are considering a change, beginning the change, or two years after the change. This information can help the individual identify the available resources and support to help make the transition a success. According to Schlossberg (2011), understanding that transitions take time and that today's circumstances are not permanent can provide the necessary perspective. The Transition Model can help demystify the change process and alleviate some associated difficulties.

Considering the appropriate action when applying a model to real-life transitions is crucial. Student service professionals can assist students in determining if they are in the stage of “moving in, moving through, or moving out” (Schlossberg, 2011, p. 161). The moving-in phase is relevant when a person needs help integrating into a new environment, such as a new workplace where they learn the formal and informal environment. The stage of moving through is applicable when someone needs to re-energize to find satisfaction in their current situation. For some, moving out is necessary, meaning leaving the existing situation voluntarily or involuntarily. This position can signal the end of the transition. It is important to note that while some transitions can lead to growth, decline is also a possible outcome, depending on how the individual is experiencing the transition.

A significant advantage of the study of transition theory as applied to higher education practice is that the study focuses solely on adults. Many applications of

practice in post-secondary education institutions focus on the needs of the traditional-aged college student. Evidence of this statement exists in Astin's (1999) Student Involvement Theory. Astin (1999) asserts that "a highly motivated student is one who devotes considerable energy to studying, spends much time on campus, participates actively in student organizations, and interacts frequently with faculty members and other students" (p. 518). Research indicates that many variables affect the ability of an adult student to pursue post-secondary education and degree completion, and many of these variables are considered external factors that are out of the institution's control. Examples of variable types include external finances, family influences, work influences, and significant life events, and all can impact the time physically spent on campus or learning but may not influence motivation (Bergman et al., 2014). Relating to the complex needs of adult learners, Schaefer's (2010) study found the following:

Degree completion can be hampered by the difficulties that adult students experience during the transitions they must navigate. For example, all female participants with children delayed their return to college to accommodate needs of their children. Likewise, all male participants with children cited a lack of work-school-family balance as a reason for stepping out or delaying return. All participants mentioned a need to restrict family socialization or to limit time for personal relationships to meet school demands. Some of the participants also had situations where they had to delay returning to school while their spouse attended. (p. 81)

From a student support perspective, the research provides insight into how to support older adult learners in the post-secondary education environment. Understanding



that traditional-aged students often familiarize themselves with the respective educational environment through various first-year experience programs, similar workshops or orientation sessions can be arranged for older adult students with specific information related to the transition into college (Schaefer, 2010). Career-relevant testing, advising, and exploration through internships for adult learners can also lead to a broader understanding for those seeking new career opportunities. Overall, there is a need for a structured experience as adult learners transition into the college environment and anticipate learning new skills.

Regarding applying transition theory to practice, Shaefer (2010) noted an important implication in the research when discussing the importance of adult-friendly higher education environments. One suggestion is an informal mentoring opportunity that enables older adult learners to give and receive support centered on mutual career interests. Shaefer (2010) suggests that an intergenerational model may be best. “Work-seasoned older adult students could be role models for traditional-age students while younger students could coach older students about the access and use of technology-based learning resources” (Schaefer, 2010, p. 87). The effort would be theme-based to increase solidarity among adult learners.

### **Human Capital Theory**

From an economic standpoint, one of the fundamental objectives of education is to prepare students to meet the needs of the economy and labor force. Dating back to the 1960s, studies transcribe the relationship between education and employment and pay close attention to employment after graduation, often citing the first job after graduation as the specific point of observation. However, these studies did not include the transition

from education to employment until the 1990s. During this transition of the focus of these studies, graduates' career success is now used to measure the quality of education that institutions provide (Cai, 2012, p. 1). This information is vital to all higher education stakeholders.

Now that research focuses on the kinds of jobs students obtain post-graduation, students and institutions are paying much closer attention to how employers view the education students receive. Likewise, employers significantly influence what higher education institutions should provide (Cai, 2012, p. 1). The shift in focus also creates a challenge since the needs of employers and the constant variation in the labor market demands are ever-changing. These changes make data collection and tracking very challenging. Regarding research, Cai (2012) states, “The inconsistency of these empirical findings is arguably due to a lack of appropriate conceptual or theoretical frameworks, within which different empirical observations can be embraced” (Cai, 2012, p. 1).

In addition to the various theories impacting adult learning theory, human capital theory also impacts the educational practice surrounding the post-traditional learner. Human capital refers to intangible resources acquired by individuals or groups. These resources can include knowledge, skills, and attitudes that are given appraisal for their potential to produce economic value. As it applies to higher education, the human capital theory implies that individuals base the decision to invest in higher education explicitly on the expected benefits and costs associated with the investment (Chen & Hossler, 2016, p. 4). The human capital theory also assumes that the costs and benefits are the same for all, the college decisions are the same for all, and students have access to funding, eliminating financial barriers for all. According to Chen and Hossler (2016),

these assumptions and limitations regarding the human capital theory fail to hold because it does not explain how financial factors impact student college decisions (p. 4).

Several researchers, including Baptiste (2001), Cai, (2012), and Sidorkin (2007), oppose the human capital theory when applied to higher education. Baptiste (2001) closely examines and explains why the theory should be eliminated from higher educational practice. He scrutinizes several assumptions of the theory, including education and economic performance. He even discusses the nature of economic behavior, ultimately arguing the implications offered by previous theorists, such as Becker, that “educational investment is a surefire route to socioeconomic mobility” (Baptiste, 2001, p. 7). Baptiste goes on to state that:

Human capital theorists treat people as *homo economica*: radically isolated, pleasure-seeking materialists who are born free of social constraints or responsibility, who possess no intrinsic sociability, and who are driven, ultimately, by the desire for material happiness and bodily security. They assume that these desires are fundamentally the same for all people across space and time (stable preferences), and they believe that each individual will at all times attempt to maximally fulfill those hedonistic desires (maximizing behavior) (p. 12).

Cai (2012) also opposes implementing the human capital theory as it is currently implied into practice, indicating that earning an education and acquiring additional skills does not guarantee success in the job market. (2012, p. 7) He goes on to say that universities often neglect this thought because employers’ consideration of employability is neglected.

Sidorkin (2007) concludes that theorists misunderstand student work and the private cost of schooling. He goes so far as to say that students work in an educational program while factoring in the cost to attend, which is the equivalent of forgone earnings in an entry-level, manual labor job (p. 1). Much like other critiques of the human capital theory, he took a close look at the theory's history. Based on his interpretations, he was able to offer his implications.

Sidorkin (2007) offers his alteration of the human capital theory and how it applies to current practice. He follows a free-market ideology suggesting that an education fund should be implemented. The United States has the capabilities via various technology platforms to track employment trends and the need for skills within the market, and he even suggests that the Bureau of Labor Statistics is already tracking this information, laying the foundation for his suggestion. Based upon the skills needs of various industries, he proposes that the employer and the employee be taxed for using this skill and that money will be used to fill the fund. Additionally, individuals can complete exams to demonstrate further that they possess the skill, which will allow for further compensation for the labor put into developing it (Sidorkin, 2007, p. 11).

Sidorkin's (2007) proposal says that if the government (national or local) finds that a particular skill, knowledge, or disposition is needed, it can fund the appropriate educational fund, ultimately providing monetary incentives to learn. Sidorkin states:

This proposal is rooted in the belief that self-regulated market-like systems are more efficient than centrally controlled ones. So, even though it is more radical and looks somewhat utopian, it may have a better chance of success in the political realm. It is clearly rooted in free-market ideology and thus may be more

appealing to the ever-stronger political muscle of conservative politicians.

Education is the last remnant of the preindustrial nonmarket economy; it will benefit from joining the rest of the economy (2007, p. 12).

With the combination of taxing and additional government control likely to be resisted, Cai (2012) suggests that employers and educational institutions should continue to foster proactive interaction by shaping curriculum and more realistic outcomes for graduates. This process will offer shared norms for higher education institutions and employers, as opposed to general assumptions recommending, “an enhanced partnership or enhanced dialogue between higher education providers and employers, especially in terms of informing the nature of the higher education qualifications offered and shaping the legitimate expectations of employers” (p. 7).

Baptiste (2001) calls for educational leaders to branch out from the theory, ultimately indicating that the human capital theory is “socially bankrupt” (p. 15). He asks several questions in educational practice, including

What are the specific manifestations of human capital theory in adult education theory and practice? In what ways are pedagogical practices apolitical, adaptive, and individualistic? What impact do adult education programs that are wedded to human capital theory have on social inequities? Do they exacerbate or alleviate inequalities? (p. 15).

He leaves the reader with the call to find other ways to mitigate social disparities.

For many years, economic and educational practices used the human capital theory. It was not until recently that theorists within the higher education industry started to examine the idea more closely. They find that it may not fit the overall landscape of

higher education, particularly with the post-traditional population. The rapid economic and educational growth after the two world wars created a new historical era. This growth catapulted newfound relationships between community and adult learning. As research progresses and we continue to piece theories of learning, society, and economy together, some argue that we need to continue to evaluate these theories through a critical lens.

Applying the theories surrounding post-traditional learners helps to enrich educational experiences and explain the demand for further education and training of adult students driven by economic forces. Researchers Allen and Withy (2017) call attention to the merging of these theories in what is known as “the student customer phenomenon.” The growing market of post-traditional students has created a billion-dollar industry in the United States, with some defining education as a service, commodity, and, ultimately, a corporation. (Allen & Withy, 2017) According to Allen and Withy (2017):

A current debate suggests higher education is consistent with the classic definition of service considering delivery of a product and assignment of value by the customer. Higher education is a process that produces a relatively intangible product, providing environments for concurrent consumption of knowledge, and teaching engages consumers in the purchase process to gain the most value. (p. 51)

With this definition in mind, post-secondary institutions must offer degree programs to fulfill student or customer needs to meet the economy's demands, ensuring that students have the knowledge and skills necessary to contribute to society (Allen & Withy, 2017). As noted by the authors, the growing phenomenon of students as customers suggests a

shift in educational culture to ensure the best outcomes for post-traditional students and their contributions to society.

### **Challenges Faced by Adult Learners at Satellite Campuses**

Beyond the desire for an adult student to want to earn a degree, considerable attention is given to the cost of a degree. The issue of affordability is a top concern within higher education today. While the dream of degree attainment may be there, the reality of the overall cost of earning that degree is a barrier to achieving the dream. Explicitly assessing the needs of the post-traditional learner, the thought of accruing more debt and considering the overall return on investment often deter this demographic from enrolling in postsecondary educational institutions.

Research points to several barriers that post-traditional learners face, but affordability is one of the most common. Osam, Bergman, and Cumberland (2017) note that the availability of financial resources is one of the most glaring constraints for adult learners returning to college. Amongst various responsibilities, including raising children, aging parents, and home upkeep, the financial burden of returning to school can substantially reduce the financial resources needed to maintain these responsibilities (Osam et al., 2017, p. 54). Colleges and universities must consider affordability as they assess the needs of all prospective students, especially their post-traditional students. According to Dougherty and Woodland (2009), “Educators need to research the scope of financial aid for undergraduate (and in some cases graduate) students in the U.S.” (p. 1). Federal financial aid programs and employee tuition reimbursement programs should be the focus of the research, as stated by Dougherty and Woodland (Dougherty & Woodland, 2009, p. 1).

As institutions look for ways to ensure affordability, federal policymakers should continue to invest in financial aid programs such as Pell Grants to ensure that financial gaps can be funded. According to Gagliardi and Soares (2017):

Pell Grants help over 7.5 million students continue their education after high school, most of whom come from families making \$40,000 or less. However, the program faces potential problems this year in both the House and Senate.

While the bill approved by the Senate Appropriations Committee for FY 2018 would increase the maximum Pell Grant award from \$5,920 to \$6,020, it also proposes rescinding \$2.6 billion from Pell Grant reserve funds. The House budget resolution for FY 2018 proposes a cut of nearly \$3.3 billion from the surplus, and the Trump administration's budget for FY 2018 proposes a \$3.9 billion cut.

Taking funds from the reserves could put the future of the program at risk and harm students down the road—the students most in need. (para. 17)

Gagliardi and Soares (2017) also cite the Federal Work-Study program and unemployment insurance as other opportunities to map public policy better to meet the needs of the post-traditional learner. The authors also note how institutions can benefit from making post-traditional learners a focal point, especially considering that the number of high school graduates will plateau over the next decade. The availability of federal financial assistance to post-traditional students is of benefit to students and institutions alike (Gagliardi & Soares, 2017).

The sticker price of a college education alone can be enough to deter students from continuing the pursuit of education. In recent years, various news sources, such as *The New York Times*, *US News & World Report*, and *USA Today* have all released



articles indicating the high cost of attending college. Naturally, this has caused a shift in the view of the value of education, with many graduates wondering if earning a degree was worth their time and money. Selingo (2015) states, “The answer to the simple question of whether a college degree is worth it is certainly more nuanced today than it was in the 1980s” (para. 15). With that said, research still points to the need for education showcasing increased earnings and employability over time. According to Weston (2015), “For a nation that needs more college graduates, we seem oddly hellbent on discouraging as many people as possible from getting degrees” (para. 1).

It is common for society to equate the value of higher education to monetary terms. As the media continues to report on the potential for a student loan crisis, it is imperative to look at the research. Akers and Chingos (2014) have analyzed two decades of research regarding the financial well-being of American households. They determined that education debt had increased from 14% in 1989 to 35% in 2010, and the median debt per person had grown from \$3,517 to \$8,500 in 2010. The increase is because more Americans pursue higher education (Akers & Chingos, 2014, p. 2).

Additionally, Akers and Chingos (2014) analyzed borrowers' monthly payments to see how much of a financial burden loan repayment is for American households. They determined that the monthly income to monthly payment ratio has been flat over the last two decades. Monthly payments range between three and four percent of monthly earnings through 2010. The authors indicate that the result is declining interest rates and longer repayment terms (Akers & Chingos, 2014, p. 2). They conclude that the hardship of loan repayment is no more significant for today's workers than it was two decades ago, and if anything, the burden of loan repayment has lessened (Akers & Chingos, 2014, p. 2)

Aside from debt, employability is another huge factor when considering the affordability of a college degree. According to Carnevale, Rose, and Cheah (2011):

There is a sizeable economic return to going to college and earning at least a two- or four-year degree. The 33 percent of bachelor's degree holders that continue to graduate and professional schools have even more prosperous futures ahead.

Moreover, the difference in earnings between those who go to college and those who don't is growing — meaning that postsecondary education is more important than ever. (p. 20)

For the year 2017, the U.S. Department of Labor reported that unemployment for those with a high school diploma was 4.6%; for those with a bachelor's degree, it was 2.5%; for those with a master's degree, it was 2.2%; and for those with a Doctoral degree, the unemployment rate was at 1.5%. The overall unemployment rate is at 3.6%, indicating that anyone who has earned a college degree falls below that average. These statistics are essential to post-traditional students and institutions when considering the value of educational attainment.

Regarding post-traditional students and their feelings toward support and resources when enrolled in a post-secondary institution, one study (Markle, 2015) found numerous suggestions about school-related stress. Markle (2015) states:

Expand course offerings, improve student advising, and increase access to faculty members. Women wanted affordable on-campus child care, and men wanted more night courses. Many felt disadvantaged compared to traditional students and believed accommodations should be made. They proposed exemptions from

attendance policies, course credit for work experience, specialized degree programs, and opportunities to “complete courses in their own time. (p. 279)

Women, in particular, felt professors should be more receptive to their family-related needs. Men were more likely to request financial assistance such as reduced tuition, scholarships, or work-study programs.

Another study related to the support post-traditional learners experience when pursuing a post-secondary education indicates that of three primary stressors, including personal, work, and school, work is a more substantial source of stress due to its integral role in an adult student's life (Giancola, et al., 2009). The authors state, “Though students can forego certain social activities or find someone to take care of a child or other personal responsibilities, they may not have the same level of control regarding their job tasks” (Giancola et al., 2009, p. 258). For the adult student, garnering support from family, friends, and work colleagues has been shown to alleviate the negative connotations associated with this type of stressor (Giancola et al., 2009).

Further research by Edwards and Person (1997) indicates that support should be provided from the time of admission, noting that the role of admission counselors should “go beyond the traditional and include teacher, researcher, student advocate, evaluator and consultant is crucial to serving the adult learner” (p. 4). The support of admission counselors can provide valuable insights to the challenges and concerns that post-traditional students face which can be a tremendous asset to curriculum design, and first-year support programs. As indicated by Edwards and Person (1997), the supportive approach to admission through a thoughtful and tailored admission and enrollment

process plays a pivotal role in retaining post-traditional students by fostering solid connections to the institution from the start (p. 3).

Mentorships or first-year programs specific to the adult learner “always help connect students to the institution by creating a synergy between the institution and the individuals who make up its population” (Edwards & Person, 1997, p. 3). These programs are even more critical for students enrolled at a satellite campus. According to Jacquemin, Junker, and Doll (2019), satellite campuses are an essential educational gateway for many students. Furthermore, their study revealed that satellite campus or branch campus students experienced a difference in graduation outcomes compared to main campus students. Their study also noted a discrepancy between campuses in terms of resources to support student retention, indicating that the branch campus offered a writing tutor but offered no other areas of support in comparison to the main campus, which had expansive writing and tutoring centers (Jacquemin et al., 2019, p. 9). The researchers recommend familiarizing faculty and staff with traits associated with andragogy, which can lead to post-traditional student persistence. Also, introducing satellite campus students to main campus resources early in their academic careers can lead to greater support and connection to the main campus and its expansive resources (Jacquemin et al., 2019). “Enhancing our understanding of multiple campus dynamics will allow us to better serve our students and evaluate when paradigm shifts are needed to address the changing environments of higher education” (Jacquemin et al., 2019, p. 10).

In another study on student engagement and campus connectivity, the researchers indicate that although post-traditional learners often feel less engaged and less supported, this should not always raise concerns. “At first glance, these findings could indicate

concerns about the educational quality of these students' experiences. Upon closer inspection, however, the engagement needs of these students may differ and should be viewed differently in relation to their traditional peers" (Rabourn et al., 2018, p. 12). Post-traditional students already have opportunities for collaboration with peers at work, may not need mentorship since their goals may be more clearly defined, and may ultimately define institutional support differently than their traditional undergraduate counterparts.

As indicated in various studies (Rabourn et al.), the post-traditional population has been a steady demographic in college enrollment trends. Despite knowing this trend, institutions still overlook post-traditional student enrollees and fail to understand the basic educational needs of their adult students. Studies show that students enrolling at satellite campuses are post-traditional, Pell-eligible, and frequently considered high-risk (Jacquemin, et al., 2019). The same study recommended that "variations observed in the effect of campus enrollment suggest additional work be conducted on this portion of the public higher education sector to better understand these relationships on a broader scale" (p. 1), indicating that further research is needed to recognize and understand this type of student. Another study by Hoyt and Howell (2012) sought to find out why students choose the branch campus of a large university and ultimately concluded that very little is known about branch campuses, including why students choose to attend them and why educational institutions create them. The researchers indicated that the most critical finding of the study had nothing to do with the purpose of the study but more so that there is a need for "much more research concerning branch campuses" (p. 119) A third study examining the satisfaction levels of satellite campus students concluded that this type of

student experiences fewer resources and fewer faculty. However, additional research is needed to determine the factors involved in their overall satisfaction (Burke, 2017).

### **Strategies to Support Adult Learners at Satellite Campuses**

Regarding scheduling and course delivery options for adult learners enrolling at satellite campus locations, the research points to the educational philosophy surrounding post-traditional learners. Dr. Qi Sun says nontraditional learners bring life skills, work experiences, and prior learning to the classroom. “Helping them take ownership of their learning may require the conscious application of andragogical, experiential, and reflective learning principles to class instruction, assignment design, and evaluation of learning outcomes” (Sun, 2019, p. 89). Further research calls for using learning style inventories and personality tests to aid in the development of learning style identification and instructional strategies that build on learning strengths and weaknesses. (Kiely et al., 2004, p. 21). Another study determined why students attend a satellite campus to decide what courses to offer and when. The most common reasons in the study included class times, class size, offerings per week, and convenience of location. (Hoyt & Howell, 2012).

Courses, certificates, and degrees designed to be completed in an accelerated format, either in course duration or contact hours, are more appealing to post-traditional learners’ lives, as Ross-Gordon (2011) noted. “Reentry adults’ multiple roles and commitments increase the likelihood they will look for degree and certificate programs that provide them flexibility in time and locations for both course completion and access to key student services” (Ross-Gordon, 2011, p. 27). In addition to accelerated course formats, distance learning, including online, hybrid, or other distance learning formats,

has become increasingly popular among degree-granting institutions. Ross-Gordon (2011) cited that the primary reason for the decision to offer distance education courses and programs is to meet the post-traditional student demand for flexible schedules (p. 27). Additionally, Ross-Gordon notes the use of prior learning assessments such as CLEP, Advanced Placement credits, and corporate or military training demonstrating prior college-level learning. Regarding the use of Prior Learning Assessments, Ross-Gordon points to his study, indicating that 58% of PLA students successfully achieved their bachelor's degree compared to 27% of non-PLA students (p. 27).

Another strategy to support the needs of post-traditional students at satellite campuses is to evaluate the processes surrounding tuition and financial aid. Ranging from tuition costs alone to the support offered to students, this is a key area of concern for post-traditional students. In a study by Markle (2015) attempting to find critical factors influencing persistence, the researcher determined that finances are a crucial concern for post-traditional students, with one respondent noting that age intensified the concern. Hart (2003) notes that adult students often have complex circumstances surrounding their educational journey. Unlike post-traditional students, the financial aid system was designed for traditional students with other support opportunities. According to Hart (2003):

The additional financial responsibilities of older students and their necessarily more varied academic attendance patterns mean that they often are not well-served by a system predicated on that original model.

With the added complexity of students interested in distance education options, this further justifies system reformation. Another study by Dougherty and Woodland

(2009) supports reforming the financial aid model for adult students, indicating that an entirely separate methodology and analysis is needed. As stated by Dougherty and Woodland:

Significant challenges remain for non-traditional students who need to support their education without assistance from their employers and with personal income, which could ultimately reduce their eligibility for financial assistance outside of loans (2009, p. 183).

Additional areas of financial support for post-traditional students include tuition reimbursement programs through their respective employers. Dougherty and (2009) note that tuition reimbursement programs offer the greatest return on investment from an employer's standpoint. An organization's support of the growth and development of its workforce directly impacts how an employee views their employer and increases employee retention and satisfaction.

In a study by Hart (2003), the researcher recommends linking academic advising with financial aid advising to develop a better in-person service model. Implementing satellite academic advising offices allows for greater access to student resources and expanded knowledge for the advisors supporting the students. According to Hart (2003):

This staff interaction led to the development of a financial aid conference for academic advisers, which is now in its fourth year. Any topic concerning the intersection of finances and studies is considered. Sessions on financial aid basics and federal satisfactory academic progress rules have become standard. Sessions about how much work is too much work and how much borrowing is too much borrowing have been added. Indeed, an unintended but welcome consequence of



the conference has been a better understanding and support of the financial aid staff by academic advisers. (p. 105)

The overlap of financial aid advising and academic advising is a welcomed shift, as academic advising is also deemed one of the top priorities of adult learners. According to Dr. Qi Sun (2009), advising is a bridge between program requirements, institutional procedures, and the students. Sun (2019) notes that it is critically important for advisors to understand and effectively work with nontraditional learners. Post-traditional advisees find value in advisors who are committed to their success, understand their values, and are available outside of regular work hours to provide routine support, mitigate the unexpected, and proactively offer assistance. Furthermore, Sun (2019) asserts that nontraditional learner-friendly environments “must be established that truly empowers each learner to succeed” (p. 90).

### **Summary**

A plethora of research has identified and established the needs of post-traditional learners in a higher-education setting. There is little known about post-traditional students in a satellite campus environment. There is a disconnect between the main campus and the satellite campus locations, which can be attributed to the lack of resources provided at these campus locations. Even still, post-traditional students continue to succeed in these environments known for smaller class sizes, individualized attention from instructors or professors, and proximity to work or home. A review of the literature underscores the need for further research and understanding of the post-traditional, satellite campus student. The articles focused on this area of study vary in topics. Overall, the data specific to satellite campus students is not readily available as colleges and universities report

their data in aggregate, making the analysis of the student experience difficult. Although satellite campus students are often considered post-traditional, colleges and universities do not consider this when assessing student needs and providing adequate support services for varying conditions. Research indicates that satellite campus students experience different challenges and have fewer services overall when enrolled through these locations. Even still, they often report high satisfaction with their educational experience.

A preliminary review of the literature indicates that several factors draw a post-traditional student to enroll in classes at a satellite campus location. Those factors include building relationships with faculty and staff, small class sizes, and a campus location close to work or home (Sun, 2019). Another study found that most students attend satellite campuses for reasons related to convenience, such as scheduling, class times, and location (Hoyt & Howell, 2012). Limited research and resources exist currently, and further exploration is needed.

### **Chapter Three: Research Method and Design**

#### **Introduction**

Post-traditional learners value a college degree and choose to enroll in college courses. However, when it comes to their preferences and priorities pursuant to a college degree, they are often overlooked on college campuses. Juggling the complexities of managing work, family responsibilities, and their educational journey is a delicate balance. To better support the post-traditional learner, it is essential to understand what they value and prioritize most regarding their post-secondary educational pursuits. Better informed decisions can lead to better outcomes for the diverse and dynamic cohort.

The literature review highlighted studies on post-traditional learners and student preferences at satellite campuses. This qualitative study aimed to examine the relationship between the course offerings at a satellite campus and on-ground post-traditional student enrollment. In addition, this study examines the common themes of the experiences of adult learners enrolled in courses at satellite campuses. While limited, studies have been presented on post-traditional learners and satellite campuses. However, more is needed to know about post-traditional students enrolled in courses at satellite campuses. This study aims to fill the gaps in research surrounding post-traditional students enrolled in programs via branch campuses.

The researcher created a survey instrument incorporating Likert scales, rankings, and open-ended questions to collect qualitative data from post-traditional students enrolled at satellite campuses between the 2019 and 2021 academic years. Following the data collection, the researcher developed themes to inform administrators through data analysis and coding.

### **Qualitative Research Design**

As stated by Kellam and Cirell (2018), a qualitative study has power and usefulness over other types of research inquiry because of its ability to explain processes and reveal complexity (p. 355). This study enabled the researcher to examine surveys of adult students who had previously enrolled in courses at a satellite campus to determine their preferences regarding online or on-ground courses and how their perceptions could differ based on the entry term. Also, this type of study allowed the researcher to determine what areas of support are most important to post-traditional learners and what recommendations for solutions they would give the institution. The data collected could change how the institution views and supports its adult learner population. Additionally, the data collected allowed the researcher to establish themes and patterns within the data set.

Qualitative studies [ . . . ] aim to map out the qualitatively different patterns observed in a data-set rather than to quantify magnitudes. [ . . . ]. The main goal [ . . . ] is to ensure that the sample size is small enough to manage the material and large enough to provide “a new and richly textured understanding of experience,” and this is always a matter of subjective judgment, i.e., guided by researcher experience and assessing the data as it is analyzed in relation to the goals of the research. (Fugard & Potts, 2015, pp. 670-671)

This qualitative study produced feedback from the post-traditional students regarding their enrollment choices and overall satisfaction with their program and the institution. The researcher hoped that changes needed to attract and retain adult students could occur constructively and efficiently through the input of adult students.

Currently, there are limited studies on adult learners enrolled at satellite campuses, so this study aimed to address the needs of post-traditional students enrolled in undergraduate programs at satellite campuses and gauge the students' perceptions of the offerings of courses and areas of support. By examining other studies on adult students and satellite campuses (Burke, 2017; Hoyt & Howell, 2012; Kiely et al., 2004), the researcher could learn about potential research gaps and move forward with a study based on those recommendations. Through this examination, universities could learn about adult students and their enrollment preferences and choose to implement changes to course offerings and how they support adult learners.

### **Research Questions**

The researcher investigated the post-traditional learner preferences of those enrolled at satellite campuses. The researcher analyzed the survey results aligned to the following five research questions to determine common themes that describe and explain post-traditional learner preferences and recommendations in a satellite campus environment at a mid-sized private Midwestern university in the United States.

**Research Question 1:** What factors influence the educational needs of adult learners pursuing post-secondary education?

**Research Question 2:** What areas of support are most important to adult learners?

**Research Question 3:** What solutions would adult learners recommend for these problems?

**Research Question 4:** How do perceptions differ among adult learners based on entry term?

### **Research Site and Study Population**

The satellite campus locations or centers that served as an extension of the main campus were all located within a fifty-mile radius of the mid-sized university campus in the Midwestern United States. All campuses were strategically placed within a 40-mile radius of the main campus to meet the needs of post-traditional students, with some campuses positioned to serve students in bordering counties and even states.

- Campus A is a few blocks from the main campus and is the hub for the program. Primary amenities include classrooms, faculty offices, academic advising, and a 600-seat auditorium. Two other campuses are within a 13-mile radius of this location.
- Campus B is 12 miles from the main campus and 17.5 miles from the regional metropolitan area. It is between the metro and the main campus. Two other satellite campuses are within a 13-mile radius of this location.
- Campus C is in the downtown metropolitan area. This center is 24 miles from the main campus and is in an area to meet the needs of downtown residents and workforce commuters. Two additional satellite campuses are within a 17-mile radius of this campus location.
- Campus D is 24 miles from the main campus and is in a suburban, residential area off a major highway. The center serves students living or working in the area or those commuting downtown or to a more rural location. Two satellite campuses are within a 16-mile radius of Campus D's location.
- Campus E is 20 miles west of the main campus and serves students residing in bordering counties and those commuting closer to work or home. At 41 miles, it is

the furthest away from the campus in the metro but within a 26-mile radius of another satellite campus.

- Campus F is 10 miles southeast of the main campus and off a major highway. It is located between the metro and suburban areas and is convenient for students commuting to or from the metro area. Two other satellite campus locations are within a 16-mile radius of Campus F.
- Campus G is considered a full-service campus and provides other programs and services besides an academic program for post-traditional students. Additionally, the campus is across the river and caters to those who may commute to or from the metro area for work. It is 15 miles from the metro area and within a 26-mile radius of two other satellite campus locations.

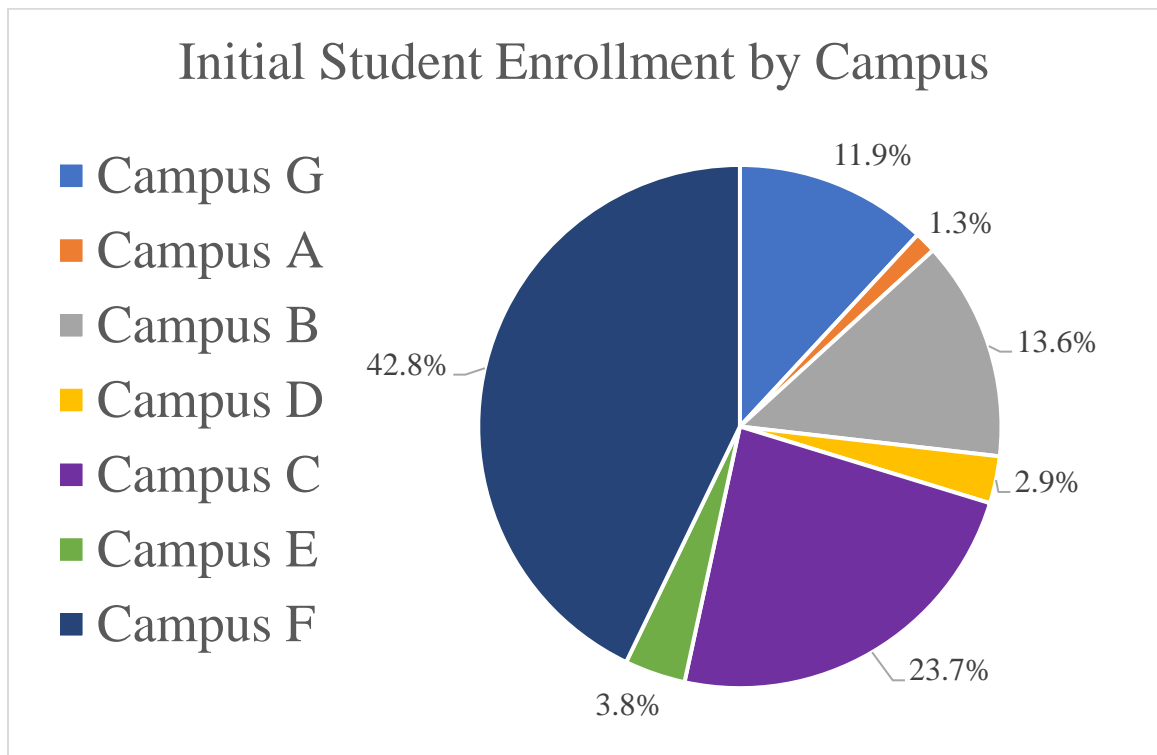
The target student population at the learning center locations was considered non-traditional. The university where this study took place defined the program's history and noted that “our school has a rich history focused on helping adult students attain their educational goals while managing jobs, families, and community service obligations” (Lindenwood University, p. 7, para 2). With this information, the program was designed to enable adult students to progress towards a degree without sacrificing personal obligations, such as work or family. Students can take up to 36 credit hours per year, with classes offered quarterly. According to the program’s course catalog:

Many adults who might not pursue higher education in a traditional setting find that the school’s educational philosophy and flexible program provide an ideal learning environment in which to earn a degree or to pursue studies appropriate to personal learning goals. Since its inception, the evening format has maintained a

deep commitment to meeting the intellectual and professional needs of adult learners with employment experience. (Lindenwood University, p. 7, para. 4)

The participants in this study were considered post-traditional and had to be enrolled in at least one on-ground course or cluster at one of the satellite campuses. According to the program’s academic catalog, students typically enroll in one cluster per quarter, earning nine credit hours in that same quarter. The following provides a breakdown of where the participants in this study first enrolled in the program.

**Figure 1**



**Full-Time Accelerated Pace**

Participants of this study were enrolled in a program of study that is separate from the traditional semester-based program in a traditional college setting. The evening-based program was accelerated, offering four 12-week terms and 13 cluster meetings per term. Students typically enrolled in one cluster of classes per 12-week term or quarter. Per the



academic catalog, “The accelerated format employing clusters is based on the assumption that highly motivated students are entirely focused on the content of their clusters during the quarter” (p. 16, para 3). A cluster was the equivalent of 9 credit hours, also considered full-time enrollment. Through this system, students could earn 36 credit hours in one year.

### **Participant Recruitment**

The researcher recruited participants for the study by email through the institution's email service. The email to participants provided a link to the survey using *Qualtrics*, a secure platform used to collect the survey responses. The survey's first question included the informed consent form outlining the purpose of the study and explaining to participants that their participation was voluntary and that they could discontinue the survey at any time by exiting the survey and ultimately opting out of the research study. Additionally, the informed consent form explained to participants that they could contact the researcher directly to opt out of the study after completing the survey.

The participants had a three-week window to complete the study, and weekly reminder emails were sent to those who did not participate or had started a survey but did not complete the study. Participants self-elected to complete the study. The researcher developed the original survey and then built it in *Qualtrics*. If the students completed the survey, the last question asked if they would be willing to participate in an additional seven-question interview. The interview could occur via phone, video conference, or in person at the participants' convenience. Those who agreed to participate in the additional

interview would be contacted again via email to arrange the meeting and schedule at a time agreed upon by the researcher and the participant.

Although 30 participants agreed to the informed consent, 11 completed the study. Seven participants agreed to participate in the qualitative interview, were contacted via email, and asked to respond with their availability. Three participants responded with their availability and were sent a meeting request via Zoom or phone. Interviews were recorded and transcribed.

### **Data Collection**

This study is a mix of survey and exploratory questions and qualitative interviews from post-traditional students enrolled in the 2019-2021 academic year. The survey was built in *Qualtrics* and shared via email. Eleven students agreed to participate in the survey. Of those participants, three agreed to proceed with interviews. The interview questions investigated the experiences of post-traditional students enrolled in courses at a satellite campus, focusing on their enrollment preferences and overall satisfaction. The questionnaire combined a mix of Likert rating scale and open-ended questions to have participants share their experiences in their own words so the researcher could understand the overall needs of the adult learner. According to Tenny et al. (2022):

Phenomena such as experiences, attitudes, and behaviors can be difficult to accurately capture quantitatively, whereas a qualitative approach allows participants themselves to explain how, why, or what they were thinking, feeling, and experiencing at a certain time or during an event of interest. (para. 2)

Before sending the survey to participants, the researcher aligned the research questions to those asked in both the survey and interview, as shown in Tables 1 and 2 below.

**Table 1**

*Survey Question Alignment to Research Questions*

Survey Question #s	Alignment to Research Questions
1	RQ2
2	RQ 1
3	RQ 1
4	RQ 1, RQ 3
5	RQ 2
6	RQ 1, RQ 3
7	RQ 1, RQ 3
8	RQ 3, RQ 4
9	RQ 4
10	RQ 1
11	RQ 1, RQ 3

**Table 2**

*Interview Question Alignment to Research Questions*

Interview Question #s	Alignment to Research Questions
1	RQ 1
2	RQ 2
3	RQ 3, RQ 4
4	RQ 1, RQ 3, RQ 4
5	RQ 2
6	RQ1, RQ 2
7	RQ 1, RQ 2, RQ 3, RQ 4

The researcher created the survey in *Qualtrics* and emailed it to potential participants, former post-secondary students of the program, to describe the purpose of the study in detail. The survey allowed participants to share their experiences and

perspectives as adult learners pursuing a degree while enrolled at a satellite campus. The results of this study will be available to assist college administrators in course planning, supporting, and advocating for the needs of post-traditional students enrolled at their institution. Additionally, administrators and stakeholders can use the data to suggest changes and influence decisions supporting post-traditional students.

### **Reliability and Measurement**

To ensure a safe and secure collection method, the researcher created the survey tool in *Qualtrics*. The researcher aligned the survey to the research questions for the study and used research-based data collection tools in addition to developing specific questions regarding the adult learner experience at a satellite campus. The survey consisted of a rating scale, a Likert scale, and open-ended questions. The ratings and Likert scale questions allowed the researcher to quantify the participants' perceptions. The researcher used open-ended questions to allow participants to freely write about their preferences and experiences. The researcher performed a thematic analysis of the responses to the open-ended questions, in addition to the interview transcripts.

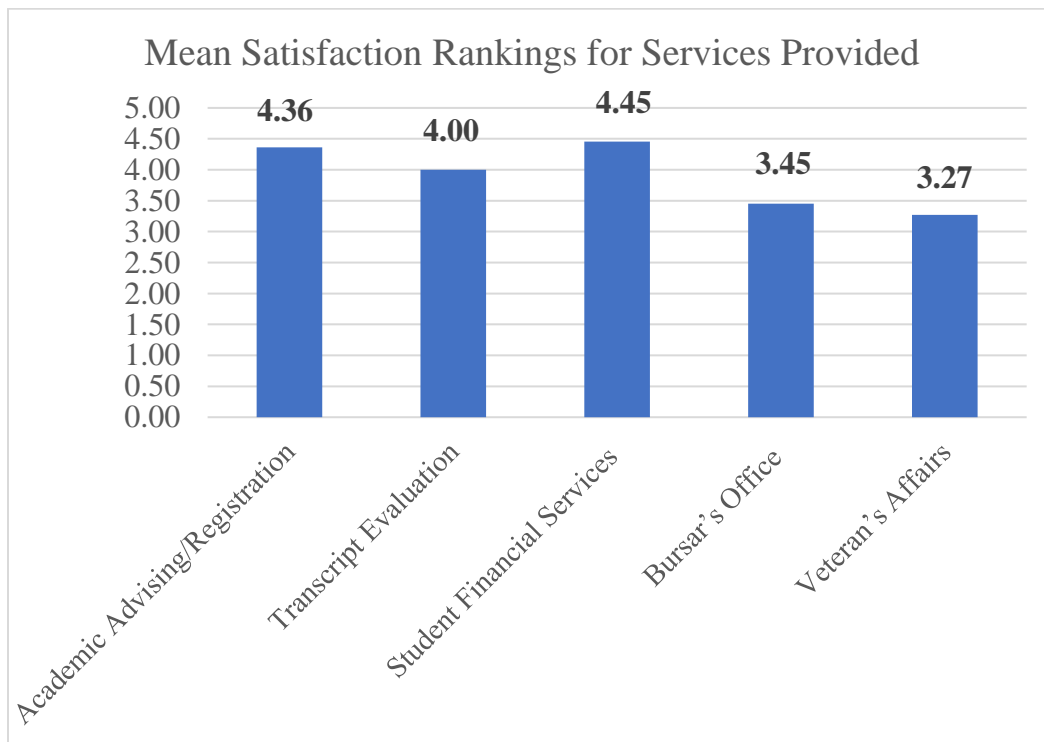
### **Data Analysis Procedures**

Once all data was collected, it was reviewed and transcribed for key themes and patterns. The researcher imported all open-ended survey responses and interview transcriptions into an Excel spreadsheet. From there, the researcher reviewed the data for common words or responses to group into themes by color-coding. "A theme captures something important about the data in relation to the research question and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set" (Braun & Clark, 2006, p. 10). The color-coding method allowed the researcher to identify similarities in the

responses. The researcher found similar words or phrases described in the data and highlighted all similar words and phrases with the same color. After reviewing the color-coded data responses, the researcher provided a thematic analysis coding by identifying the themes in the data. The researcher used thematic analysis coding to better understand the qualitative data. The data revealed that some responses aligned to multiple research questions, so the researcher used sound judgment to determine which answer best aligned with each research question.

After color-coding the open-ended questions and interview responses, the researcher calculated the Likert scale and ranking questions by finding the average of the rankings of influential importance. Once the calculations were made based on the rankings, the researcher used those numbers to form and influence the themes the color-coded open-ended responses provided.

**Figure 2**



Note. Figure 2 is a researcher-created table that shows the mean satisfaction scores for services provided to students enrolled at satellite campuses. Five are extremely satisfied, four are somewhat satisfied, three are no opinion/not applicable, two are somewhat dissatisfied, and one is extremely dissatisfied.

### **Summary**

The university housed a program specific to non-traditional adult learners, which offered courses in the evenings and with course availability at the university's satellite campuses. The researcher contacted former students of the program for this research and to better understand the needs of this type of learner in the higher education setting. Feedback was collected via a qualitative approach utilizing both electronic surveys and interviews. This method allowed the researcher to analyze the survey responses and interview feedback. The next chapter explains the results received from this qualitative study.

### Chapter Four: Analysis

This study aimed to examine the relationship between course offerings at a satellite campus and on-ground post-traditional student enrollment. This study also examined preferences and influencers of the decision-making process of post-traditional students when choosing a post-secondary degree program. The researcher used exploratory questions via surveys and interviews collected from post-traditional students enrolled in the 2019-2021 academic year at a satellite campus to answer these research questions. Eleven study participants completed a web-based survey through *Qualtrics*; three completed 30-minute interviews via the online video conferencing tool Zoom or by phone. After the online survey closed, the researcher downloaded the results, removed identifying data, and coded the participants using letters A through K. The researcher coded the three interview participants numerically.

It is important to note two significant external influences that could have impacted the results of this study. The first is the reorganization of the academic program in which the participants of this study were enrolled. The study focused on interview and survey responses from post-traditional students enrolled in the 2019-2021 academic year. The institution where the participants were enrolled announced that in January 2020, the name of the academic program would change in addition to course scheduling and modality. The original program offered a fully on-ground, quarterly approach with groupings of three courses taught by one instructor with a required meeting time of one evening per week. The newly revised program offered courses in an 8-week term format embedded within the 16-week semester during the fall and spring and a 12-week semester during the summer. Courses would be offered individually in both online and evening formats,

where students would select their format on a course-by-course basis depending on learner preference and course availability. Students could choose multiple courses in an eight-week term, but on-ground classes would meet one night per week per course, which could ultimately require students to meet in the classroom multiple nights per week.

Additionally, in the spring of 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic forced the program's transition to take place at an accelerated pace. The institution, among others across the nation, was forced to pivot all on-ground course offerings to online as the public health measures were quickly enacted, requiring lockdowns and social distancing protocols. As course offerings were expeditiously migrated to online platforms, students had to adapt their learning style to stay on track to degree completion. Even though the safety and well-being of students, faculty, and staff were of primary importance, there was little time to prepare for such a significant shift in educational offerings. The pandemic served as an abrupt catalyst for change to an already changing environment for adult learners at the institution, which may have left students, faculty, and staff alike feeling unprepared for such adaptation.

### **Research Questions**

The researcher investigated the following questions:

**Research Question 1:** What factors influence the educational needs of adult learners pursuing post-secondary education?

**Research Question 2:** What areas of support are most important to adult learners?

**Research Question 3:** What solutions would adult learners recommend for these problems?



**Research Question 4:** How do perceptions differ among adult learners based on entry term?

## **Results**

**Research Question 1:** *What factors influence the educational needs of adult learners pursuing post-secondary education?*

The data collected to answer this research question consisted of a multifarious approach, including quantitative and qualitative methodologies, to understand the research question better. Surveys were administered to 11 participants, seeking their input and perspectives through a series of ranking and open-ended questions. The quantitative approach to the data collection process facilitated the assessment of tendencies and preferences, offering valuable insight into the attitudes and priorities of the adult learner. Additionally, interviews were conducted with three participants, allowing for a deeper investigation of individual experiences and perspectives. By synthesizing the survey rankings, open-ended responses, and interview transcripts, three notable themes emerged in clarification and response to research question one.

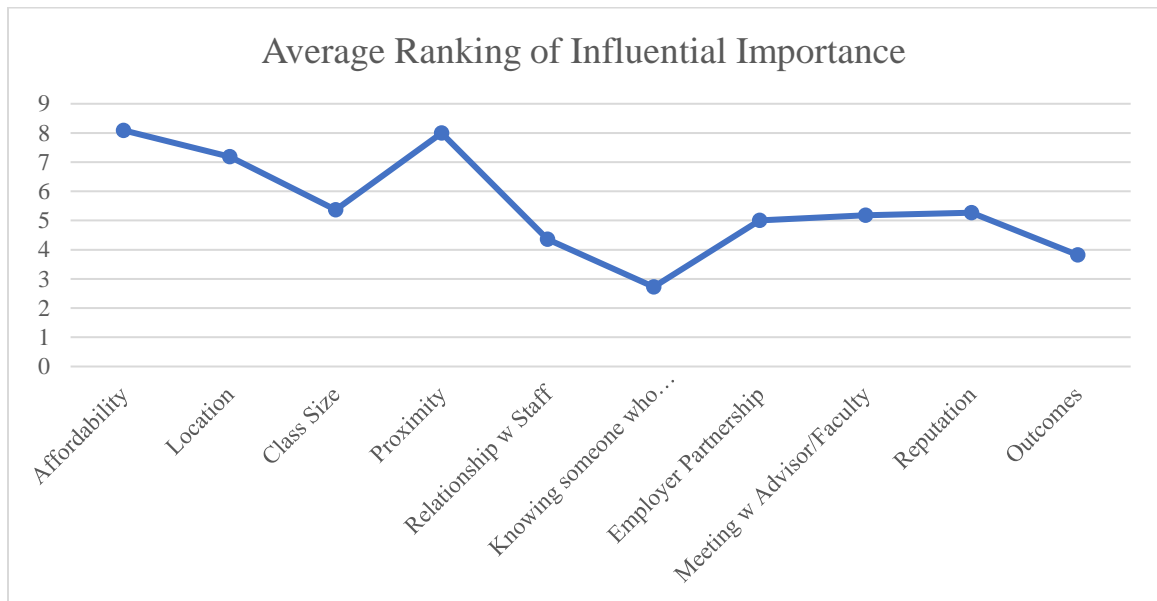
### **Theme One: Adult learners want an affordable option close to work or home.**

Understanding the needs and preferences of adult learners enrolling in college programs is paramount in facilitating their academic success and fostering a supportive learning environment. Research question one intends to delve into the multifaceted landscape of adult students pursuing post-secondary education. Insight into these determinants provides a greater understanding of the underlying motivations, challenges, and aspirations that influence adult students throughout their educational journey. Furthermore, a deep understanding of adult learner needs and preferences enhances

institutions’ academic support mechanisms and creates a more inclusive and responsive educational ecosystem.

The survey results revealed the significant factors influencing the decision-making process of adult students when selecting an institution for their educational pursuits. Notably, affordability emerged as the primary concern for many respondents, with 46% ranking it as their top influencer. Following closely behind, the proximity to work or home and the location of the satellite campus ranked second and third, respectively, based on the averages of the participants’ responses. These findings highlight the pivotal role that financial considerations and geographic accessibility play in shaping adult learners’ choices related to higher education.

**Figure 3**



Furthermore, the open-ended questions allowed survey participants to express additional factors driving their decision-making process. The top written responses were “convenience” and “proximity to home,” along with “reputation,” which highlights the

multifaceted nature of the considerations given beyond affordability and geographic proximity.

Two of the three interview participants highlighted the learning center location as a primary reason for enrolling at a satellite campus. Interview Participant 2 stated, “I was working all the way downtown, so not having to go all the way out to [location] was valuable from a time perspective.” The responses reinforce the impact of the satellite campus location on students’ practical considerations and planning, influencing their educational choices. Interview Participant 3 stated their decision-making process and said,

Convenience. So, the campus I thought I was going to be attending, which I never did, was the one on [location] there in [town]. And it’s just right up the road from where I work, so I thought this is right there on my way home from work. You know, leave work, go to classes, like go home from there. (Participant 3)

The survey and interview responses highlight the importance of affordability and campus location as critical factors when selecting a post-secondary educational program.

**Theme Two: Adult learners are least concerned with knowing someone who has attended or graduated from the institution.**

Gaining insight into the diverse preferences of different student populations, including adult learners, necessitates a thorough understanding of the specific factors and influences shaping their decisions. Campus administrators and senior leaders should also take the time to understand adult learner preferences, as they are pivotal in shaping institutional policies, programs, and support services. By prioritizing adult-learner priorities, administrators can gain deeper insights into the unique challenges, aspirations,

and motivations driving this demographic. A commitment to adult learners on campus can strengthen and foster a more vibrant, equitable, and thriving learning community.

The survey data shows that the average influential ranking for the category, “I know someone who attended/graduated,” was the lowest, with 73% of respondents ranking this as their last or second-to-last influential choice. Although the data from the ranking portion of the survey shows this influencer as the least important, two of 11 respondents indicated that family members were the number one deciding factor when choosing an institution via the open-ended survey question. The discrepancy between the qualitative and quantitative data shows that overarching trends may not always capture a complete understanding of experiences and preferences. While understanding the factors that influence student populations is crucial, the survey data reveals deeper insights that underscore the complexity of the decision-making process among adult learners.

**Theme Three: The reputation of the institution influences adult learners’ preferences.**

In the ranking portion of the survey, reputation emerged as a noteworthy consideration for adult learners, occupying the middle position in the rankings. Upon further exploration through open-ended questions, the significance of reputation emerged as a top response alongside convenience and proximity. This discovery reveals a distinct perspective, indicating that reputation may not have initially surfaced as a top-ranking factor in the structured survey format. The prominence of the institutional reputation is evident through the responses from the survey participants’ feedback on the open-ended questions.

Survey participants were asked to answer the open-ended question, “What was the number one deciding factor that led you to choose this institution?” Thirty percent of respondents provided several different reasons, but directly cited the institution's reputation as a deciding factor. Survey Participant C stated, “Reputation and convenience.” Survey Participant H stated, “Discount from my employer and reputation of school,” and Survey Participant J stated, “It’s a very nice and reputable place.” The reference to the institution's reputation was listed more than any other response on the open-ended survey questions. This trend underscores the crucial role that institutional reputation plays in shaping the perception and decision-making processes of adult learners within the realm of post-secondary education.

**Research Question 2:** *What areas of support are most important to adult learners?*

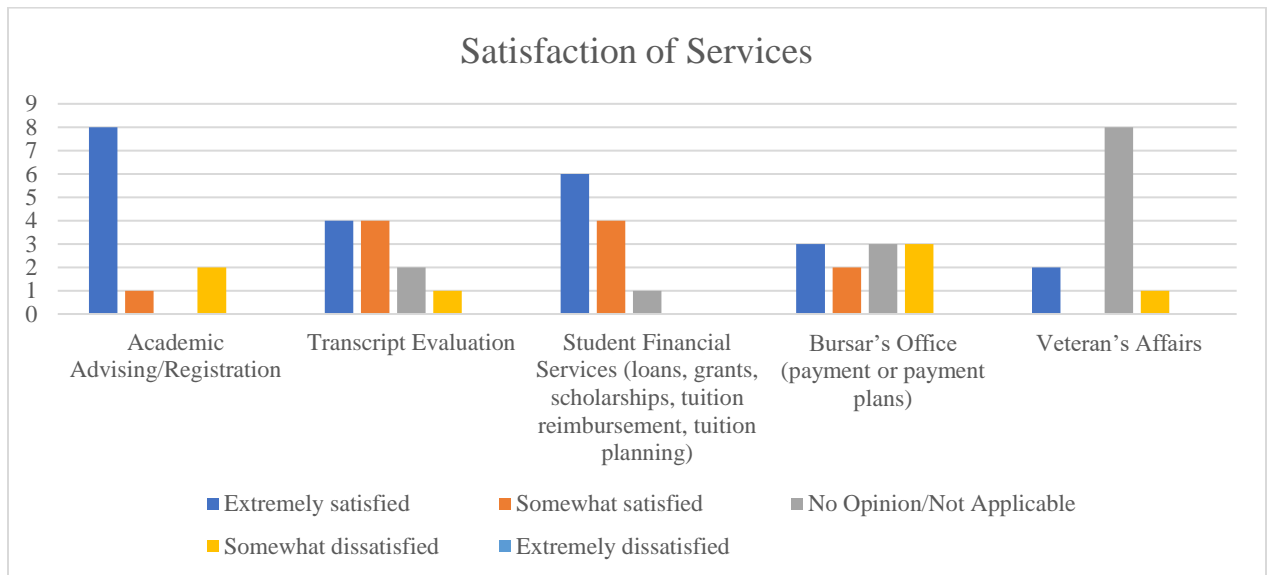
Data collected to answer the third research question involved multiple methodologies, including open-ended survey question responses, survey rankings, and interview questions and answers. Theme one was informed by open-ended survey responses, survey rankings, and interview questions and answers. Theme two was also informed by open-ended survey responses, survey rankings, and interview questions and answers. The perceptions generated valuable insights into adult learner experiences in higher education.

**Theme One: The support of an academic advisor is the most important to adult learners.**

Participants were given the opportunity to respond in an open-ended format when asked about the most critical area of support for adult learners. Among various responses, the survey participants' top response indicated that an academic advisor's support is the

most important to adult learners. This feedback was also substantiated by the interview responses received via questions and answers, as well as the Likert Scale responses. The combined perspectives from the respondents emphasize the significance of academic advisor support as a cornerstone of effective adult learner assistance within the educational landscape.

**Figure 4**



Interview participants had the opportunity to share their thoughts and experiences as adult learners enrolled in degree programs. One hundred percent of interview participants mentioned the support of an academic advisor being critical to their overall experience in the program, but in varying capacities. Interview Participant 1 shared their educational experience and expressed:

One of my professors was not understanding of my medical issues and basically flunked me; told me I couldn't withdraw from the class. The two other professors, there was just no type of response, so I flunked those classes, and then the only one that was understanding was my actual counselor, which happened to be one

of my professors. I mean, he just put it in as incomplete, because he knew that I was in the hospital and that I was working. Which me working, overworking myself, and going to school is one of the reasons why I had to go to the emergency room.

The above mentioned experience highlights the importance of communication between students, instructors, and advisors. Ultimately, the academic advisor's response significantly impacted the student's outcome, experience in the program, and overall path to degree completion.

When discussing the enrollment process for adult students, Interview Participant 2 shared insights into their research process regarding program selection and enrollment. After taking a break from college for several years, they found that having an advisor to connect with was most valuable to the process. Interview Participant 2 stated,

I did go online and look at a number of schools to decide whether or not I wanted to continue with [Institution] or wanted to, to make a switch. Having a person that I can talk to is, I find, very valuable.

This supports the vital role that academic advisors play throughout the educational journey of the adult learner, starting with enrollment.

Furthermore, Interview Participant 3 further validated this by discussing their experience meeting with an academic advisor for course advisement. Academic advisors play an integral role in the educational journey, so to eliminate confusion surrounding the course enrollment process, Interview Participant 3 stated,

I think that when you walk away from that counselor, they should give you a roadmap that says if you stick with this road map, you will get this degree if you take these classes—end of story. No confusion.

Based on the survey questions asking students to rank their satisfaction with their academic advisor, 73% of respondents indicated that they were "extremely satisfied" with their academic advisor. Survey Respondent F noted that their counselor was excellent when responding to Survey Question 7, which asks respondents to identify what their institution is doing well to support their educational journey.

**Theme Two: Other areas of support are important to adult learners.**

Question 6 of the survey asked about the most critical area of support to adult learners and allowed for open-ended responses. Including an open-ended format within this question proved instrumental, eliciting diverse responses and shedding light on additional areas of importance beyond the initial considerations. The responses received created four additional areas of significance for adult learners: instructor support, course modality, finances, and access to tutors. The multifaceted nature of adult learners' educational needs became apparent as respondents underscored the pivotal role of these areas in their academic journey.

***Instructor Support***

Particularly noteworthy was the emphasis placed on instructor support, with one survey respondent explicitly stating that "the instructor's ability to explain the subject with clear understanding" was the most critical area of support to their educational journey. Several other participants echoed the importance of instructor support in navigating their coursework and the learning environment in general.



Survey question 7 asked participants what their institution did well to support their educational journey, and instructors or professors were referenced several times. Survey Respondent G found that their professor's flexibility and understanding of life outside of the classroom helped them to succeed in the academic program, stating, "They always let me come in early and leave early when needed." The knowledge and experience of the instructor were highlighted as a strength of the institution, with Survey Respondent K stating that "providing instructors with first-hand knowledge of the subject" is an area that the institution is doing well to support their educational journey. Survey question 8 asked about areas for improvement regarding support. Survey Respondent B shared that they need "professors to realize that the working class of people that go to school online should not be overloaded with homework and 17-page papers; this causes high level stress." In addition, Survey Respondent E expressed that "classes led by the professor instead of instructional videos" are an area for improvement in terms of feeling supported at the institution. Adult learners respond to knowledgeable instructors who are familiar with their teaching subject matter. Adult learners also want recognition of the challenges they face outside of the classroom that can impact their time in the classroom. Some of these challenges can include work, family life (children or aging parents), and their overall health.

### ***Course Modality***

Another common response to areas of support that are important to adult learners is the course or program modality, with many respondents indicating that they oppose online courses. When asked about the most important support area, Survey Respondent E stated, "In Person course. Some of the courses, I feel, require actual discussion instead of

peer-led discussion boards. I would have preferred an Institution that is taught by professors instead of videos.” Survey Respondent A remarked that they did not like virtual learning when asked about areas for improvement to support adult learners better. Interview question 7 asked interview participants to provide feedback on what they would like the institution to consider regarding adult learners. Interview Participant 2 stated, “I have a personal bias against all of the online classes. I think that they should, from my narrow perspective, at least offer some of the classes in person or give, you know, some opportunities.” Contrary to this feedback, one survey participant found that the ability to complete their courses online was something the institution did well to support their educational journey. The ability to learn from their instructor in a classroom setting while asking for help and communicating with others helps adult learners feel supported on their academic journey.

### ***Financial***

Another area of support that was repeatedly mentioned was “financial.” Survey Respondent B noted that financial aid issues became an obstacle for them when searching for a college to attend. Survey Respondent D said that “financial was most important” when responding to Survey question 6: “What area of support is most important to you?” Interview Participant 1 mentioned financial issues requiring them to work more to afford tuition, ultimately impacting their grades. Despite these references, 50% of survey respondents indicated they were extremely satisfied with the support they received when looking at the satisfaction scores of the Bursar’s Office and Student Financial Services combined. Feeling supported financially can mean different things to adult learners, from tuition assistance from an employer to being able to connect with a representative to help

the student understand their financial aid options. Finances are essential to adult learners; their support and satisfaction can help them feel supported.

### ***Tutors***

The open-ended survey questions underscored the significance of tutoring support for adult learners. When asked about the most important support area, Survey Respondent G said, “The help I received from the tutors you provided.” This statement highlights the tangible impact of tutoring services in facilitating academic success and addressing adult learners’ needs. Contrary to that statement, the same respondent also indicated that “more tutor availability during the week” is an area of improvement for the institution. While the availability of tutoring services is valued and appreciated, there remains a concurrent need for increased accessibility and flexibility to accommodate diverse schedules and learning preferences.

**Research Question 3:** *What solutions would adult learners recommend for these problems?*

### **Theme One: Adult learners prefer courses on campus.**

Navigating the intricate balance between work, family, and educational responsibilities presents a daunting challenge for adult learners. With competing demands vying for their time and attention, adult students often find themselves navigating a complex maze of obligations. Many institutions recognize the unique needs of adult learners and intend to cater to them through specialized academic programs; however, there is a significant gap in comprehending the most effective means of providing support. Delving into the intricacies of this demographic’s educational journey can reveal

valuable insights that inform the development of more tailored and effective support mechanisms.

Questions 8 and 9 of the survey explored crucial aspects regarding the improvement of support for adult learners at the institution, eliciting a robust response from participants. The responses expressed a preference for in-person classes as a means of better catering to the needs and preferences of adult learners. Survey Respondent I stated, “For me in person classes were more enjoyable and made for better retention of subject matter. Keep in-person classes [as] an option.” This viewpoint also resonated with the other respondents, highlighting the perceived benefits of face-to-face interaction, active engagement, and immersive learning experiences that in-person classes afford. To further the support of in-person learning, Interview Participant 2 shared similar experiences, stating:

So, evenings always made it possible to attend class. Never really loved the online learning. So, I started with [College Degree Program]. I can't even remember the name of it. And I really liked the structure of that, where you're taking three related courses at a time. The classroom time was there, but it was compressed. I liked the classroom time. I liked having the engagement in person. Online learning for me, I do a lot of online learning through, you know, things like you to me and just YouTube videos and stuff that the software and things that I use provide, and I didn't really want college to feel like that.

Interview Participant 3 shared a similar viewpoint, highlighting the classroom time as being a primary deciding factor when choosing a program, stating, “I prefer the evenings because I work 40 hours a week, and when I signed up for classes at

[Institution], I signed up for the accelerated program on campus. I wanted the social interaction, you know?” In-person course options are preferred by adult learners who are busy juggling work and life obligations. As individuals balancing numerous responsibilities, the opportunity to meet with instructors and peers in a physical classroom setting not only enhances learning outcomes but also fosters a sense of connection and community.

**Theme Two: Adult learners want clear communication and support from professors and instructors.**

When interview participants were asked if there was anything else the institution should consider regarding adult learners, communication and understanding of the adult learner were pivotal areas of focus. Interview Participant 3 shared that their overall experience was good but that getting in touch with their advisor could be “tricky” at times, so enhanced communication is a suggestion from their perspective. Interview Participant 2 shared their insights when addressing the same question, stating,

I think it's important to understand and that they probably do, but I think it's important to understand that. We're all coming to it for slightly different reasons and from different backgrounds and things, and that sometimes can. Can sometimes be a little weird in the classroom.

This refers to adult learners pursuing a degree. Interview Participant 1 combined thoughts regarding adult students in the classroom and life obligations outside of school, stating,

I mean, we're trying, you know. I work in law enforcement, so I work my job as well as multiple part-time jobs at one time, and you know, you just gotta consider people who have lives outside of school, and it applies to work, too. As long as

the communication is there, you know there should be some type of understanding.

Adult learners advocate for more than just communication; they emphasize the need for timely and transparent communication, coupled with genuine responsiveness to their needs and concerns. Being responsive to needs and concerns demonstrates an understanding of what they balance in their lives outside the classroom. Institutions must recognize that adult learners have different backgrounds and diverse life obligations outside school, including work, family obligations, and personal commitments. Improved communication and understanding demonstrate a higher level of understanding and support for adult learners pursuing a degree and foster an environment of inclusivity and accommodation. Ultimately, enhanced communication and understanding serve as tangible manifestations of an institution's commitment to meeting the distinctive needs of adult learners, thereby fostering a climate of empowerment and success within the educational landscape.

**Research Question 4:** *How do perceptions differ among adult learners based on entry term?*

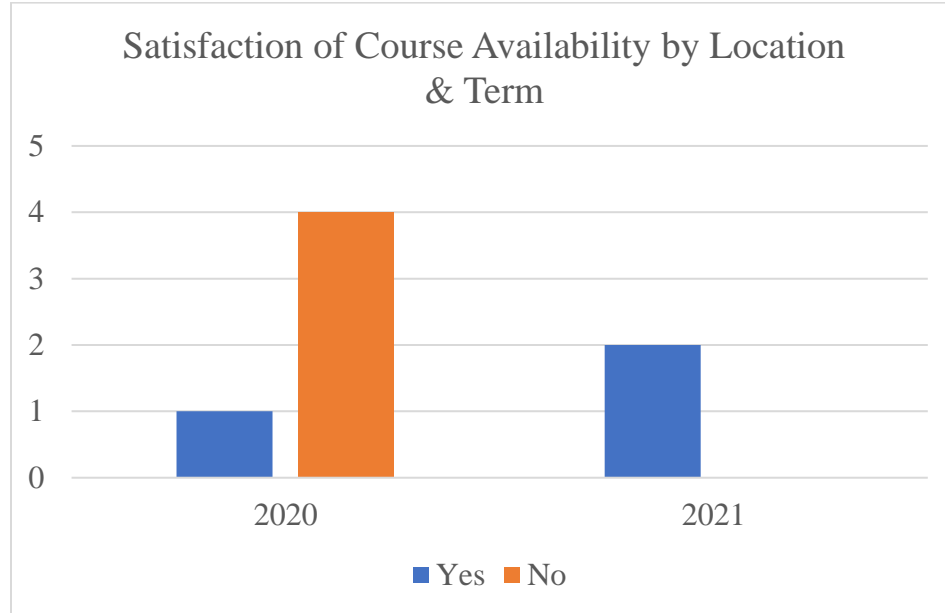
Given the imminent cessation and subsequent restructuring of the adult learner program at the institution, it becomes paramount to investigate the variations in perceptions regarding the program and course offerings. Moreover, the cohort of students enrolled during this transitional phase encountered the disruptive influence of the COVID-19 pandemic, underscoring the critical necessity to identify the potential ramifications of these notable extraneous factors on the adult student experience.

**Theme One: Perceptions differ based on entry term, with those closest to program changes and the COVID-19 pandemic least satisfied with course availability based on location and entry term.**

In the cohort of students enrolled in 2020, 80% of respondents conveyed dissatisfaction, citing unmet course availability at their favored location and discontent with the overall course offerings for their respective enrollment term. When asked about course availability, Survey Respondent H, who was enrolled in the spring of 2020, said, “They were not available at my preferred location. I was scheduled to take the classes at the [Campus] location until Covid hit, and it went 100% online.” Furthermore, Survey Respondent J, enrolled in the summer of 2020, expressed,

I wish there were more options at the [Campus location]. I took the night classes at [Campus location] and had to drive 45 min. With working full time and having a young baby, the drive made the semester a bit more stressful.

For the participants enrolled in 2021, 100% of survey respondents indicated that the classes needed were available at their preferred location and were satisfied with the course offerings for the term they were enrolling.

**Figure 5****Summary**

Forty-six percent of respondents ranked affordability as their top influencer when choosing a post-secondary education institution. Satellite campus location and proximity to work or home ranked second and third among respondents. The interviews reinforced these findings, with 66% of respondents indicating that the satellite campus location was a primary reason for enrolling in a program, due to its proximity to work or home.

Seventy-three percent of respondents indicated that they are not influenced by someone who previously attended or graduated from the institution; however, when given the opportunity to articulate their influences via open-ended survey questions, 18% of respondents directly credited family members as being a primary influencer for choosing the institution. The discrepancies in the qualitative and quantitative data reveal the complexity of the decision-making process for adult learners and highlight that overarching trends may not always be suitable when attempting to understand the adult learner population.



A parallel discovery emerged regarding the significant influence of the institution's reputation on adult learners. Although it ranked in the middle of the survey when participants were asked to rank various categories from most important to least important, "reputation" emerged as a top response via the open-ended survey questions.

Furthermore, adult learners find the support of an academic advisor to be the most important in their educational pursuits. When given the chance to respond via open-ended survey questions, advisor support emerged numerous times. It was underscored by 100% of interview respondents speaking to this level of support as well, but in varying capacities from course enrollment to the students' connection with the institution and their responsiveness during trying times. Timely and transparent communication also emerged as a recommendation from survey participants to demonstrate understanding and support of adult learners in the post-secondary educational environment.

It was revealed that the perception of course offerings at satellite campuses differed among entry terms. Those most significantly impacted by program changes and a global pandemic were enrolled in 2020, and that coincides with the dissatisfaction expressed in the survey rankings and open-ended responses. Eighty percent cited unmet course availability at their preferred campus and overall dissatisfaction with course offerings during their enrollment term. Survey respondents became more satisfied in later years, post-program change and post-pandemic.

## Chapter Five: Discussion

### Introduction

Adult learners should be welcomed on college campuses for various reasons. As with any population on campus that desires to be supported and understood, there are six assumptions, as identified by Dr. Malcom Knowles (1970, 1980), and as cited by Kiely et al. (2004):

1. In terms of their self-concept, adults tend to see themselves as more responsible, self-directed, and independent.
2. They have a larger, more diverse stock of knowledge and experience to draw from.
3. Their readiness to learn is based on developmental and real-life responsibilities.
4. Their orientation to learning is most often problem-centered and relevant to their current life situation.
5. They have a stronger need to know the reasons for learning something.
6. They tend to be more internally motivated. (Kiely et al., 2004)

This research study used surveys and interview responses to answer four research questions related to adult students' preferences and experiences related to post-secondary education, including the factors that influence their decision-making process, the areas of support that are most critical, the solutions they would provide the institution to address any gaps, and how their perceptions of their educational experience can differ, based on when they decided to enroll. The findings showed that the most critical factor impacting their decision to enroll is an affordable institution geographically close to their work or home. Sixty-six percent of interview respondents indicated that the satellite campus

location was their primary reason for enrolling at the campus. Additionally, adult learners are influenced by the reputation of the institution in which they are enrolling and find the support of their academic advisor to be the most important, once they have started their academic program. Overall, timely and transparent communication from the institution, including professors and support staff, emerged as a top consideration when supporting adult learners.

Additional findings revealed that adult learners prioritize other areas of support when pursuing a degree. Several of these areas are impactful outside of the classroom and include the support of tutors, financial (inclusive of navigating the financial aid process and affordability), and overall instructor support related directly to the learning environment and the ability to explain the subject matter thoroughly. Furthermore, course modality had an impact on adult learner experience, with several respondents indicating that they were opposed to online learning as a whole. To further expand on learner preferences, the survey respondents shared varying viewpoints of online versus on-campus learning, with many expressing that they prefer courses that meet in person, which was also a deciding factor towards their reason for enrolling in the first place. Overall, there was a difference in perceptions according to the students' entry term, with those who were impacted by program and modality changes the least satisfied with the offerings that the institution provided. The COVID-19 pandemic fueled the dissatisfaction, as well. The responses swayed more favorably as the enrollment terms moved further away from these occurrences.

**Research Question 1:****What factors influence the educational needs of adult learners pursuing post-secondary education?**

When it comes to recruitment, retention, and graduation rates, college administrators have a vested interest in the numbers surrounding these categories, as they often indicate the institution's overall health. College students are frequently thought of in the more traditional sense as being under 25 years of age, enrolling directly after high school, and with minimal responsibilities outside of school. An overlooked but common demographic on college campuses is the adult learner – defined as over 25 years of age, delayed enrollment, financially independent, and responsible for a host of external factors outside of school; including work and family life. Higher education has struggled to meet the needs of these learners, who are often unknowingly left to fill in the enrollment gaps. To better understand how to meet the needs of adult learners on college campuses, it is important to understand what brings them there in the first place.

Study participants shared their thoughts on what factors drive their decisions when it comes to the selection of a post-secondary institution. Top responses on the open-ended survey questions included “convenience” and “proximity to home,” as well as “reputation.” Interview Participant 3 went on to say that they specifically chose a satellite campus location because of its location between work and home. Because of factors in their personal life, the convenience of the campus location eased the burden of adding one more life factor to hold in the balance. The survey and interview responses provide insight into the adult learner's preferences and should be considered by campus administrators and decision-makers.

The survey feedback provided additional insight into the factors influencing adult learners' decisions and showed a level of complexity in the decision-making process. The survey responses indicated that this population is the least concerned with knowing someone who attended or graduated from the institution. Still, contrary to that, when asked via the open-ended survey questions, respondents indicated that they are influenced by family members, citing family as the number one reason for choosing the institution. Adult learners are not easily persuaded at the surface level, but it is clear that having a trusted connection plays an influential role in the decision-making process. This finding further highlights the importance of taking the time to understand how to best reach the adult learner and that a successful experience can generate loyalty in the long run. Furthermore, institutional reputation was an influential factor for adult learners and was the most commonly written response to open-ended survey questions. Having an established reputation in the community and a reputation for understanding and supporting adult learners has the greatest impact on how adults decide on what institution to attend to pursue their degree and refer family members to.

**Research Question 2:****What areas of support are most important to adult learners?**

Adult learners on college campuses have long been discussed but have yet to be a primary area of focus for campus administrators. To be able to serve these students, we must first understand their needs and provide the support needed to be successful. Survey respondents had the opportunity to share what areas are the most critical when pursuing a program. The support of an academic advisor was revealed to be the most impactful, with 100% of interview respondents citing an experience where they leaned into that support

to ultimately achieve success within their program. The capacity for support can vary from course enrollment advice to general responsiveness related to questions about navigating the institution.

Additionally, other support areas emerged beyond the scope of traditional academic assistance. Various categories were revealed, from tutoring, instructor support, and financial support to course modality. These additional categories extend beyond course content, instead focusing on establishing a comprehensive framework of resources designed to facilitate navigation and ensure success in the classroom. Recognizing the multifaceted demands faced by adult learners means acknowledging that their educational journey is influenced by external factors, underscoring the importance of strengthening the various support structures to help ensure success in the classroom.

**Research Question 3:**

**What solutions would adult learners recommend for these problems?**

Taking the time to understand what is most important to adult learners in an academic setting helps to lay the foundation to understand what things are going well and what things are not going well, as it relates to this demographic. When asked for solutions to problems faced in their academic program, the survey responses indicated a strong preference for in-person learning. When juggling work, family, and life responsibilities, adult learners want a dedicated time and space to connect with instructors and learn alongside their peers. According to the survey participants, the learning environment fosters enhanced collaboration and more significant learning outcomes. An added benefit is the sense of connection and community for an often overlooked population on campus.

Timely and transparent communication is another area for improvement. It is understood that adult learners face a plethora of obligations outside of the classroom, which, in some instances, can affect their ability to learn in the classroom. Fostering an environment where instructors demonstrate proactive responsiveness to feedback and genuine attentiveness to students' diverse needs and concerns serves to underscore the institution's dedication to supporting the advancement of adult learners within the academic community. By prioritizing effective communication, educators affirm their commitment to inclusivity and accessibility and cultivate an atmosphere conducive to empowerment and triumph for all learners.

#### **Research Question 4:**

#### **How do perceptions differ among adult learners based on entry term?**

It was imperative to determine the potential influence of the entry term on student satisfaction, particularly given the significant transitions within the institution's program offerings and the disruptive impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Both occurrences coincided with the survey respondents' enrollment period. There was a noticeable shift in satisfaction scores, with the least satisfaction occurring in the year 2020, which was the same year as the program shift and the onset of the pandemic. The overall satisfaction with the modality and course offerings increased for those enrolled in later years, although they were not offered in the same way as those enrolled in 2020.

#### **Research Objectives and Implications**

As discussed in Chapter Two, despite the number of adult students pursuing a college degree and the research highlighting the support needed for this type of student, little is known about satellite campuses and the students who choose to attend these

campuses. While we may not have data on the students pursuing a post-secondary credential at a satellite campus, we do know that most often, it is the adult learner who attends based on the data that we do have. The National Center for Education Statistics has defined the nontraditional undergraduate student by utilizing seven common characteristics (Choy, 2002, p. 8): delays enrollment, attends part-time, is financially independent, has dependents, is a single parent, does not have a high school diploma. These characteristics are not all-encompassing, but they are supported by the research in this study, as well as others discussed in previous chapters.

**Research Objective 1: To identify what influences post-traditional learners to pursue post-secondary education.**

As adult learners juggle life obligations outside of the classroom, they seek an affordable, convenient, flexible, and adaptable program to their lifestyle. Being financially responsible for themselves, and often others, further emphasized the importance of affordability and practicality as it relates to program offerings. Respondents of this study indicated that they decided upon their chosen program because of the convenience of the satellite campus and opted to continue with the program even though the courses they needed may or may not have been available, because of the opportunity to meet in person and at convenient times in the evening. These findings further validate the research regarding post-traditional learners in terms of their characteristics and reasons for enrolling. Still, they are also unique because the data in this study shows that post-traditional learners enrolling at satellite campuses are more willing to go where the in-person classes are offered, citing “when I can find in-person courses, I’m highly motivated” as a reason for enrolling in the first place.



As previously mentioned, the institution's reputation was a top influencer for the participants of this study. This is an important addition to the findings in that although adult learners prioritize attributes, such as flexibility, affordability, and convenience, among other identified characteristics, they also value the experiences and outcomes of their peers. Post-traditional learners are reluctant to sacrifice the quality of the academic experience as a whole and seek a comparable return on investment, based on the experience of others in similar circumstances.

**Research Objective 2: To identify what educational supports are most influential to post-traditional students.**

The findings of this study shed light on crucial educational support mechanisms vital to the academic journey of post-traditional learners. The most important area of support identified was an academic advisor. The advisor is essential for various reasons, including their ability to provide course guidance and enrollment advice, course mapping to degree completion, and a general link to the institution and its resources. The other supports revealed include course modality, tutoring, support through financial processes, and instructor support regarding communication. Despite the availability of these supports in traditional college settings, their accessibility often falls short of meeting the unique needs of adult learners. To foster inclusivity and support for all students, including those enrolled at satellite campuses, institutions must prioritize tailored support systems that accommodate the diverse needs of adult learners.

**Research Objective 3: To investigate potential gaps in support for post-traditional students enrolled in courses at a satellite campus.**

To address any gaps in support for post-traditional students enrolled at satellite campuses, survey respondents had the opportunity to provide feedback on what the institution can do better to support their educational journey. Two primary areas of support emerged: continued on-ground course offerings and timely and clear communication from instructors. As mentioned in Research Objective 1, students who are enrolling at satellite campuses have a vested interest in on-ground courses and are more willing to enroll where on-ground courses are being offered. This aligns with the recommendations provided by survey respondents for the institution to continue to provide on-ground learning opportunities, as noted by Survey Respondent H, who stated, “For me, in-person classes were more enjoyable and made for better retention of subject matter. Keep in-person classes an option.”

Moreover, while emphasizing the importance of self-motivation among adult learners, it’s essential to acknowledge the role instructors play in facilitating effective communication. The results of this study suggest that adult learners may find it challenging to reach instructors via email, potentially hindering their academic progress. A solution to a perceived lapse in communication is to “be more understanding of individuals that have real life going on while trying to further their education,” as stated by Survey Respondent K. Adult learners are seeking a program and institution that is understanding of their unique and specific needs both within and beyond the classroom. Demonstrating sensitivity to adult learners' unique circumstances fosters an environment conducive to their success.

**Research Objective 4: To investigate the relationship between the entry term into a program and the perception of the academic program.**

With the targeted respondents for this study to be enrolled between the 2019-2021 academic years, it was essential to understand how respondents viewed their program and academic experience based on when they were enrolling. Additionally, two disruptions occurred within this timeframe, including the cessation of the academic program designed for adult learners at the satellite campuses and the COVID-19 pandemic in the spring of 2020. Responses were received via the survey, and both occurrences were referenced. Survey Respondent D stated, “I was disappointed to see that [Institution] ended the accelerated program for adult learners just as I was finishing. The design of the program was a major factor in my selecting [Institution]. Survey Respondent H shared their experience in the wake of COVID, citing, “I was scheduled to take the classes at the [Campus Name] location until COVID hit, and it went 100% online.” Additionally, those directly impacted by COVID and the program changes indicated they were not satisfied with the course offerings at the time of enrollment, and those who enrolled in later terms were more satisfied. These extenuating circumstances significantly impacted the student experience and were unexpected; however, they are not common to the adult student experience.

**Recommendations for Practice**

Institutions should continue to lead the way and shift the conversation as it relates to equitable opportunities for all. Demonstrating inclusivity of all campus community members is paramount in this endeavor and can directly reflect the communities in which the institution is positioned to serve. Post-traditional learners on college campuses can

often be left feeling overlooked and underserved. This is no exception for adult students enrolled at an institution's satellite campus. A satellite campus is an extension of the main campus in terms of its culture and reputation.

Positioned within its community separate from the main campus, it is a unique opportunity for the institution to lean into the individual communities it may serve by offering opportunities to students who may not otherwise have them. This presents an opportunity to help strengthen a community through educational attainment, particularly benefiting an independent yet potentially vulnerable demographic: adult learners. Adult learners are often already positioned within a career path. They are looking for the next opportunity to grow within their career or even delve into a new one. Adult learners are often established within their community, and the most effective way an institution can support adult learners is by providing educational opportunities by meeting them where they are and within their communities.

Providing programs tailored to adult learners at satellite campuses goes beyond merely offering degree programs; it encompasses the provision of comprehensive support mechanisms. By extending main campus services such as tutoring, financial aid, and opportunities to meet with an advisor at a time conducive to the adult learner, satellite campuses can cultivate an environment characterized by equity and inclusivity. This underscores a commitment to the endeavors of adult learners and contributes to the overall strengthening of the community in which the institution positions the satellite campus. Through these efforts, the institution demonstrates its dedication to empowering adult learners to achieve their academic and professional goals, thereby fortifying the fabric of the local community.

**Limitations**

The survey was distributed to 827 individuals, garnering 11 responses. Of these responses, seven participants indicated they would be willing to participate in an interview, and only three ultimately agreed to the interview. The results of the survey and interview responses may not fully encapsulate the broader population. The sample was recruited and selected from a single institution and only included those enrolled in a specific program at the institution, potentially introducing inherent biases. The survey data was self-reported, which could be unreliable since the participants must rely on their memory to formulate responses.

Working with this data presents another challenge due to the shift in the program offered starting in spring 2020. The institution discontinued the evening, accelerated program tailored for adult learners. The transition will occur gradually throughout the catalog year. Still, the COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the transition as it impacted all programs and institutions nationwide, forcing the shift to online learning. This sudden transition could have influenced responses since students may have anticipated only online options amidst the pandemic. Consequently, they may not have considered other possibilities, including courses no longer offered on-site or at a satellite campus near their work or home.

Despite its limitations, the study provides valuable insights into post-traditional learner influences and preferences at satellite campuses. Diversifying the sample and employing more robust data collection methodologies could yield more conclusive and representative results in future research.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

The participants who agreed to this study provided valuable insights into the post-traditional student experience when enrolling at satellite campuses; however, participants only represented a small sample of the entire population. Identifying that adult learners are juggling multiple responsibilities alongside their schoolwork. Broadening the sample size for this study by including a wider range of institutions and longer enrollment periods would be beneficial. As noted in this study, these participants were directly affected by a major program shift and the global pandemic. To strengthen this study, hearing from other adult students enrolled before and after these occurrences could enhance the data. Additionally, hearing from adult students previously enrolled in programs through satellite campuses at other institutions could provide a holistic view of the post-traditional student experience at satellite campuses.

Additionally, this study examined the historical experiences of post-traditional students enrolled in a program at a satellite campus. There is potential for future research to augment this study by actively surveying and interviewing present enrollees. Researchers could gain valuable insights into post-traditional learners' challenges, motivations, and satisfaction levels by directly engaging with students navigating their academic journey. This approach would enable a comparative analysis between the experiences of actively engaged students and those who have already completed their academic journey. This comparison could offer a more nuanced understanding of the post-traditional learner experience, highlighting how perceptions may evolve throughout an academic program. It could also unveil areas for improvement or optimization in

support mechanisms and educational offerings tailored to the unique needs of post-traditional learners.

### **Summary**

In an era characterized by evolving educational landscapes and diverse learner demographics, understanding the experiences of post-traditional learners enrolled at satellite campus locations emerges as a critical endeavor for higher education institutions. As an extension of the main campus, satellite campuses serve as vital hubs for educational accessibility and outreach, particularly for adult learners navigating complex life responsibilities while pursuing post-secondary education. This study reveals the multifaceted dynamics shaping the academic endeavors of adult learners within the satellite campus framework. By exploring these experiences, this research provides greater insight into the various initiatives and support mechanisms that can be tailored to this demographic, ultimately enhancing educational equity and inclusivity within higher education.

This dissertation study explored the experiences of post-traditional learners enrolled at satellite campus locations as an extension of the main campus. Additionally, this study examined adult learners' influences and preferences when enrolling in a postsecondary degree program. This dissertation had four research questions that focused on the following topics: factors influencing the needs of adult learners pursuing post-secondary education, the most important areas of support for adult learners, solutions to problems experienced by adult learners, and how perceptions differ among adult learners based on entry term. This study provides a foundation for understanding and enhancing support mechanisms tailored to the unique needs of adult learners.

The study collected data from 11 survey participants and three interview participants. Participants indicated an overall preference for affordable programs with on-ground course offerings at convenient locations close to work or home. They find great value in the support of an academic advisor, as well as timely and transparent communication from the institution (including instructors, support offices, etc.). Adult learners prefer on-ground courses; however, students enrolled post-pandemic were less concerned with on-ground course offerings. These students have the motivation and experience to succeed within academia but benefit from the institution supporting them in a way conducive to their unique needs as adult learners.

This dissertation outlines several practical implications for colleges and universities seeking to enhance support for adult learners. The opportunities for transformative change include (a) the expansion of on-ground course offerings at satellite campuses to better accommodate the diverse needs of adult learners, (b) the implementation of specialized academic advising services tailored to the unique challenges and aspirations of adult students, including the provision of comprehensive training and resources for advisors, and (c) the establishment of flexible office hours and institutional communication channels designed to align with the scheduling constraints often faced by adult learners. By shedding light on the existing gaps in support for adult learners at satellite campuses, this study underscores the urgent need for higher education institutions to prioritize proactive measures to foster inclusivity and equitable access to educational opportunities for all members of their student body.



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## **Appendix A**

### **Survey Research Consent Form**

You are asked to participate in a survey being conducted by Alexis Wood under the guidance of Dr. Roger “Mitch” Nasser at Lindenwood University. We are doing this study to examine the relationship between course offerings at a satellite campus and on-ground post-traditional student enrollment. You will be asked a series of 11 questions related to your institution and enrollment preferences. It will take about 15 minutes to complete this survey.

Answering this survey is voluntary. We will be asking about 30 other people to answer these questions.

At the end of the survey, you will be asked if you are interested in participating in an additional interview in the modality most convenient to you – in person or video conference, by telephone, or by email. We will review a series of seven questions related to your personal experience regarding your institutional and enrollment preferences. The interview will take no longer than 30 minutes to complete.

#### **What are the risks of this study?**

We do not anticipate any risks related to your participation other than those encountered in daily life. You do not need to answer any questions that make you uncomfortable or you can stop taking the survey at any time.

We are collecting data that could identify you, such as name, email address, phone number, and address. Every effort will be made to keep your information secure and confidential. Only members of the research team will be able to see your data. We do not

intend to include any information that could identify you in any publication or presentation.

**Will anyone know my identity?**

We will do everything we can to protect your privacy. We do not intend to include information that could identify you in any publication or presentation. Any information we collect will be stored by the researcher in a secure location. The only people who will be able to see your data are members of the research team, qualified staff of Lindenwood University, and representatives of state or federal agencies.

**What are the benefits of this study?**

You will receive no direct benefits for completing this survey. We hope what we learn may benefit other people in the future.

If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in this research or concerns about the study, or if you feel under any pressure to enroll or to continue to participate in this study, you may contact the Lindenwood University Institutional Review Board at (636) 949-4155 or [irb@lindenwood.edu](mailto:irb@lindenwood.edu). You can contact the researcher, Alexis Wood, directly at 217-430-8297 or [AKW228@lindenwood.edu](mailto:AKW228@lindenwood.edu). You may also contact Dr. Roger “Mitch” Nasser at [RNasser@lindenwood.edu](mailto:RNasser@lindenwood.edu).

By clicking the link below, I confirm that I have read this form and decided that I will participate in the project described above. I understand the purpose of the study, what I will be required to do, and the risks involved. I understand that I can discontinue participation at any time by closing the survey browser. My consent also indicates that I am at least 18 years of age.

You can withdraw from this study at any time by simply closing the browser window.

Please feel free to print a copy of this consent form.

[https://lindenwood.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_0lm4LixyVLLzbg2](https://lindenwood.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_0lm4LixyVLLzbg2)

**Appendix B**  
**Participant Email**

Hello,

My name is Alexis Wood, and I am a doctoral student at Lindenwood University. I am conducting a research study examining the relationship between the course offerings at a satellite campus (learning center) and on-ground post-traditional student enrollment, and you are invited to participate in the study. If you agree, please follow the link to the survey below. The survey is anticipated to take no more than 15 minutes.

Survey Link: [https://lindenwood.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_0lm4LixyVLLzbg2](https://lindenwood.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_0lm4LixyVLLzbg2)

Thank you for your participation!

**ALEXIS WOOD**

## Appendix C

### Survey Questions

1. When was the last term you were enrolled at a learning center?
2. Describe your motivation for enrolling in courses.
3. What was the number one deciding factor that led you to choose this institution?
4. Did you face any obstacles during the college search process? If so, please describe.
5. When you registered for classes, were the classes you needed available at your preferred location? Were you satisfied with the course offering for the term you were enrolling?
6. What area of support is most important to you?
7. What is your institution doing well, if anything, to support your educational journey?
8. What areas need improvement, if any, to better support adult learners at your institution?
9. What advice, if any, would you give your institution as it relates to the support provided to adult learners?
10. On a scale of 1 to 10, rate the importance of these different factors in terms of how they influenced you to choose your institution over other colleges and universities.
  - a. Affordability
  - b. The school and/or learning center location
  - c. Class size
  - d. Proximity to work or home
  - e. Relationship with a staff member
  - f. I know someone who attended/graduated
  - g. My employer partners with my institution
  - h. Meeting with an academic advisor or faculty member
  - i. The reputation of the school
  - j. Graduation outcomes

**11. Please indicate your level of satisfaction with services provided by the following offices or departments located at your institution.**

- a. Academic Advising/Registration
  - Very Dissatisfied
  - Dissatisfied
  - No Opinion/Not Applicable
  - Satisfied
  - Very Satisfied
- b. Transcript Evaluation
  - Very Dissatisfied
  - Dissatisfied
  - No Opinion/Not Applicable
  - Satisfied
  - Very Satisfied
- c. Student Financial Services – loans, grants, scholarships, tuition reimbursement, tuition planning
  - Very Dissatisfied
  - Dissatisfied
  - No Opinion/Not Applicable
  - Satisfied
  - Very Satisfied
- d. Bursar's Office – payment or payment plans
  - Very Dissatisfied
  - Dissatisfied
  - No Opinion/Not Applicable
  - Satisfied
  - Very Satisfied
- e. Veteran's Affairs
  - Very Dissatisfied
  - Dissatisfied
  - No Opinion/Not Applicable
  - Satisfied
  - Very Satisfied

## Appendix D

### Interview Questions

- 1. When do you prefer to take your courses?**
  - a. Daytime
  - b. During work hours
  - c. In the evenings
  - d. Weekends
  - e. I prefer courses that meet in class and online
  - f. I prefer fully online courses
  
- 2. How many times per week do you prefer to meet for class?**
  - a. Once per week
  - b. 2-3 times per week
  - c. I prefer classes that are fully online with no required meeting time
  - d. I prefer classes that offer flexibility where I can choose when I want to attend in person
  
- 3. If applicable, what's the most significant change your institution can address to make the entire college enrollment process manageable and the least confusing?**
  
- 4. If applicable, how do you think your institution can make the financial aid process easier to understand for prospective students? Give them some ideas.**
  
- 5. What was your reason for enrolling at a satellite campus:**
  
- 6. On a scale of 1-10, 1 being "not at all" and 10 being "very," indicate your level of satisfaction with your experience at the learning center where you prefer to take most of your classes.**
  - a. Variety of course offerings in my degree program
  
  - b. Day of the week my course is offered
  
  - c. Geographical location of the campus
  
  - d. Ease of parking
  
  - e. Appearance of facilities/classroom
  
  - f. Access to computer classroom/technology
  
  - g. Reliability of WiFi/Internet access



h. Courtesy/helpfulness of campus staff

**7. Is there anything else you would like your institution to consider regarding adult students at your institution?**

**Vitae****Alexis K. Wood****Colleges and Universities****Lindenwood University**

Ed.D. Instructional Leadership with emphasis in Higher Education Administration  
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Master of Business Administration with an emphasis in Marketing

**Stephens College**

B.S. Integrated Media

**John Wood Community College**

A.A. Liberal Arts

**Employment History****Talent Advisor, Centene Corporation**

St. Louis, MO — June 2022 – Present

**Director of Graduate Admissions, Lindenwood University**

St. Charles, MO — January 2021 – May 2022

**Senior Site Director, Lindenwood University**

St. Louis, MO — January 2018 – January 2021

**Site Director, Lindenwood University**

St. Louis, MO — August 2017 – January 2018

**Admissions Counselor, Lindenwood University**

St. Charles, MO — September 2014 – August 2017

**Admissions Representative, John Wood Community College**

Quincy, IL — July 2012- September 2014