

# Adult Students



Why Do They Come and Why Do They  
Leave?

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# **Growth in Adult Education**

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- **Nationally, 43% of undergraduate students are over age 24**
- **At Indiana Wesleyan, 3/4 of students are in the College of Adult Studies**
  - **10,000 Adult students**
    - **70% increase in 5 years**



# Indiana Wesleyan University: Quality in Adult Programming

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- Adult First-Year Retention: 94.4%
  - **National average for adults: 68%\***
  
- Adult Graduation Rate: 80%
  - **National average for adults: 38%\***

\*National Center for Education Statistics, August 2003.



# How are Adult Students Different?

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## Student Attributes

- Race/ethnic diversity
- Prior negative college experiences
- Real world experience

## Student Goals

- Self development (esp.women)
- Career advancement
- Finish what was started years ago



# What Do Adults Want?

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- **Convenience**

- Ease in registration, acquiring books

- **Convenience**

- Fast degree completion

- **Convenience**

- Clear degree requirements



# How Do Adults Learn?\*

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- Need to know why they need to learn something.
- Come with a great reservoir of experiences upon which to build.
- Need immediate application of their knowledge.
- Performance-centered not subject-centered.

\*Knowles, M.S. (1980). The modern practice of adult education: From pedagogy to andragogy. 2nd edition. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Cambridge Adult Education.



# Why Do Adults Drop Out?

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- 31% Conflict with job
- 28% Family responsibilities
- 27% Personal conflicts with class schedule
- 16% Decided to change majors
- 14% Cost
- 14% Personal problems
- 13% Study group problems



# Who Are the Survivors?

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## The Connected

### Social Integration

- Close relationships with peers
- Good relationships with faculty

### Academic Integration

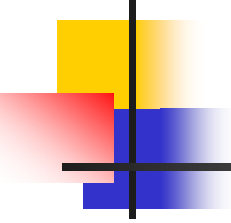
- Writing skills
- Study/computer skills



# Retention Strategies for Adults

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- Good orientation (know what to expect)
  - Attention to study skills/computer skills
- Close student/faculty relationships
- Establish cohesive support groups
- Careful design of the first three courses so they are sensitive to the needs of the returning adult student
- Online support for students with low skills



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*We don't have to make human beings smart. They're born smart. All we have to do is stop doing things that make them stupid.*

- John Holt