

**Serving Older Adults in the Community College**

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Much has been said in the last few years about the "graying of America," and about the ways in which society must adjust to accommodate the growing numbers of older adults among us. In response to those demographic changes, community colleges nationwide have begun to develop an array of services and programs catering to the over-55 population. From noncredit courses on health and finances to job training and travel programs, two-year colleges today offer many options for the older adults in their communities.

The following citations reflect the current literature on community college services and programs for older adults. ERIC documents can be viewed on microfiche at over 800 libraries worldwide. In addition, most may be ordered on microfiche or in paper copy from the ERIC Document Reproduction Service by calling 800/443-ERIC. For an EDRS order form, or for more information on our products and services, please contact the ERIC Clearinghouse for Junior Colleges at 310/825-3931.

Charles, Richard F., and Bartunek, Carol (Eds.). *Community College Programs for the Older Adult Learner*. Laguna Hills, CA: League for Innovation in the Community College, 1989. 50 pp. (ED 322 977)

In 1989 the League for Innovation in the Community College, in conjunction with the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP), conducted a survey of League member institutions in an effort to identify innovations developed for senior adult services and programs. The survey results included the following: (1) 50% of the League schools say they have a special program and/or center for older adults at their college; (2) the majority of older adult programs come under what is called Community Services, Adult Education, or Short Courses; (3) several colleges allow "audits" of regular courses with fees waived for those over 60; (4) League schools involved in older adult education employ many more part-time than full-time staff, with more than 80% of those teaching classes for the older adult learner being part-timers; (5) 75% of the colleges surveyed

offer noncredit classes to seniors; and (6) full-term courses are often taught to seniors for credit at off-campus sites. This report includes a summary of survey findings, individual descriptions of the adult centers and programs offered at 16 member institutions, and profiles of 13 special program offerings, including older adult seminars and curriculum.

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*Resourceful Aging: Today and Tomorrow. Conference Proceedings (Arlington, Virginia, October 9-10, 1990). Volume V. Lifelong Education.* Washington, DC: American Association of Retired Persons, 1990. 140 pp. (ED 344 041)

This document contains 20 papers on lifelong education presented at a conference on aging. The papers, grouped into themes of trends and implications, resourceful roles (students and learners, teachers and mentors), and an agenda for the future, include the following: "Demographic Potential and the Quiet Revolution" (Opening Remarks by Robert A. Harootyan); "Education: Key to America's Future (Keynote Address by Robert Maxwell); "Lifelong Education: The Challenge of Change" (Executive Summary and Commentary by Nina S. Feldman); "Older Americans and Federal Vocational and Adult Education Opportunities" (Timothy Halnon); "An Overview of Lifelong Education (James C. Fisher); "Adult Learning and Life Transitions" (Carol B. Aslanian); "Community Colleges in an Aging Society" (Catherine Ventura-Merkel); "Lifespan Development and Lifelong Learning" (Eileen Feuerbach); "The OASIS (Older Adult Services and Information System) Program" (Donna Pedace); "Project LEEP (Literacy Education for the Elderly Project)" (Bella Jacobs); "Computers for Seniors (Francisca Middleton); "Alternative Certification for Older Teachers" (C. Emily Feistritz); "Self-Directed Learning for Older Adults" (Roger Hiemstra); and "Mentoring and the Roles of Older Citizens" (Michael G. Zey). A directory of 30 programs and resources is included.

Craig, Ford M. "An Assessment of Course Needs for Older Adults at McCook Community College." Ed.D. Practicum, Nova University, 1990. 39 pp. (ED 319 428)

This study was conducted to assess the educational needs of older adults residing in McCook Community College's

service area. A questionnaire focusing on respondents' interest in courses on financial management skills, employment needs, health and health care, social interaction, and self-esteem was administered to 150 older adults. Study findings, based on an 87% response rate, included the following: (1) at least 33% of the respondents expressed an interest in courses on wills, probate, and trusts; exercise and nutrition; selection and usage of health care providers; pensions and social security benefits; coping with Alzheimer's victims; and housing choices for retirement; (2) 39.7% were interested in trips and 34.3% in support groups and (3) slightly over 22% were interested in training as in-home care providers for the aged. Over 65% of the respondents expressed no interest in any financial management course, besides the wills, probate, and trusts course; and 75% were not interested in any of the employment needs courses nor any of the self-esteem courses. Recommendations and the survey instrument are included.

Craig, Ford M. "Older Adults: Community College Students of the 1990s." Ed.D. Practicum, Nova University, 1990. 15 pp. (ED 315 106)

With a declining pool of youth to draw from, community colleges need to be concerned about what can be done to serve the needs of a burgeoning older adult population. Recent research on the educational needs of older adults reveals that they are interested in (1) information on such personal business and financial topics as social security programs, pensions, consumer problems, and legal assistance; (2) full- or part-time employment in the fast food industry, computer technology, child day care services, telephone solicitations, and other areas; (3) remaining physically fit, mobile, and independent; (4) opportunities for social interaction; and (5) maintaining positive self-esteem and having a sense of purpose and meaning in life. The literature indicates that many community colleges are currently involved in meeting these needs directly and indirectly. Courses and workshops in retirement planning, housing choices, and financial security are common; job training programs especially designed for older adults are available at several community colleges; and efforts have been made to expand the traditional physical education curriculum and to attract older adults to dance exercise, swim therapy, and other courses that are suited to their

needs.

Fraser, David A.S. "Seniors' Outreach Project: Sabbatical Report for the Year 1989-1990." Peterborough, Ontario: Sir Sanford Fleming College, 1991. 53 pp. (ED 330 418)

As part of a sabbatical leave project undertaken during the 1989-90 academic year, a faculty member at Sir Sanford Fleming College in Peterborough, Ontario visited 13 two- and four-year colleges in the United States to gather information on services, courses, and programs available for older adults. This report provides a profile of the Seniors' Outreach Project at Sir Sanford Fleming College and programs at each of the visited sites. Each profile includes a brief description of the college and its history and service area, the major activities and services of the centers, and information on program funding.

Heinrich, June Sark. "With Eyes of Equality: Older and Younger Students Learn in a Community College Senior Program." Paper presented at the 17th Annual Meeting of the Association for Gerontology in Higher Education, Pittsburgh, PA, February 28-March 3, 1991. 16 pp. (ED 336 151)

The senior program at Triton College (TC), Illinois, aims to bring together younger and older students in both noncredit and credit courses without neglecting the need and desire of many older adults to learn in their own age group. The TC program offers a wide variety of courses especially but not exclusively for older students; regular credit courses are most successful at attracting both older and younger students. Among those offered in recent terms are Practical Psychology, Music Appreciation, Floral Design, and World Religions, with the last most successful in bringing together equal numbers of older and younger students. Near the completion of Fall 1990, a questionnaire was administered to the 16 students who enrolled in World Religions to obtain their reactions to the mixed-age class. Four of 13 students responding were in the 17-25 age bracket, while eight of the students were over 60. While the younger students felt that they were treated somewhat condescendingly, all students strongly supported mixed-age classes as beneficial to learning. Appendixes contain a paper entitled "Why Does Triton Have a Special Program for Older Adults?"; a brochure on Triton's "Lifelong Learner

Program in the Liberal Arts"; a publicity sheet for a certificate program designed to encourage older students to take more challenging courses; and an article on TC's "Education Center on Aging."

Johnson, Janice E. Sims. "A Study of the Educational Needs and Academic Aspirations of the Older Adult Community College Student as Perceived by the Older Adult Student." Ed.D. Dissertation, Vanderbilt University, 1989. 231 pp. (ED 309 291)

This study identifies the educational needs, problems, and aspirations of older adults enrolled in traditional degree programs on community college campuses. It focuses exclusively on male and female community college students, aged 55 and above, who are enrolled in degree programs of study. Fifteen individuals with majors representing five academic divisions were interviewed by means of an interview guide sheet and educational needs checklist. The questions covered such areas as education and employment backgrounds, family situations and interactions, positive and negative experiences on campus, reasons for pursuing a degree, and future plans. Findings indicate that, once acclimated to the college environment, the older adult students became active participants in campus activities bringing professional and practical expertise into the classroom environment. No need was revealed for a vast number of special programs and services on the community college campus for older adult students in traditional programs. Study participants were quite willing and able to adjust, participate, and function in traditional classrooms with students and teachers of all ages with positive results.

McKinnon, Norma M., and McKinnon, Ivan D. *An Assessment of the Learning Needs of Mature Adults in Northern Maine Technical College's Service Area*. Presque Isle, ME: Northern Maine Technical College, 1991. 61 pp. (ED 338 271)

In 1991, Northern Maine Technical College conducted a survey of 122 individuals over the age of 55 to determine their educational interests, preferences regarding course delivery methods, and demographic characteristics. The survey asked respondents to state their interest in specific subjects under the categories of health and health care, financial management skills, socializing, purposeful living,

self-esteem, and employment needs. Study findings, based on a 74% response rate, included the following: (1) the average age of the respondents was 68.5 years, 76% were high school graduates, and 36% had some college education; (2) the major reasons for pursuing higher education were for self-enrichment and socializing; (3) the youngest respondents were interested in the largest number of courses, and the oldest interested in the fewest courses; (4) the greatest interest was expressed in health and health care related subjects, followed closely by financial management skills and socializing; courses focusing on self-esteem and employment needs received the lowest interest ratings; (5) under health and health-care subjects, greatest interest was expressed in the areas of exercise, nutrition, health care providers, and support groups; (6) under financial management subjects, greatest interest was expressed in the areas of benefits, wills, probates, trusts, and taxes; and (7) respondents expressed a preference for one-day workshops and mini-courses as a means for course delivery. A literature review, a 42-item bibliography, and the survey instrument are included.

Usura, John J., and Martin, Jack W. *Assessment of Services for Retired and Senior Citizens in Labette County (A Pilot Study)*. Parsons, KS: Labette Center for Mental Health Services, Inc., and Labette Community College, 1989. 32 pp. (ED 305 115)

In November 1988, a study was conducted to identify factors contributing to the quality of life of retired persons in south east Kansas. A random sample of 366 Labette County residents over 59 years of age was surveyed by mail regarding their social life, housing, income, health, and the social and economic environment in Kansas. Study findings, based on a 36.6% response rate, included the following: (1) the average age of the respondents was 71 years; (2) 76.5% were female, and 90.9% were retired; (3) 18.5% worked part time, 3.1% worked full time, and 20.8% were interested in finding part- or full-time employment; (4) 97.5% believed that Labette Community College was doing an adequate job of meeting the needs of retired citizens; (5) respondents expressed the most interest in retirement seminars, exercises classes, and art appreciation classes; (6) about half of the respondents who lived in their own residence were concerned about maintaining it, citing

finances, home repairs, and/or yard work as problems; and (7) among the concerns identified in the survey were needs for Senior Citizens' Centers in each town, adequate transportation, low-cost housing, convenient shopping, and more activities for the elderly. The survey instrument is included.

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