

Supporting Adult Learners: Enrollment Strategies from a Pennsylvania Community of Practice

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2025 SHEEO Higher Education Policy Conference

Agenda

Presentations:

- **PA Adult Learner Re-Engagement Community of Practice**
- **PA Department of Education:** role in Community of Practice and policy implications
- **Lehigh Carbon Community College:** outreach to adult learners and local workforce investments
- **Pittsburgh Scholar House:** support for parenting students and community partnerships

Panelist Q&A

Re-Engaging Adult Learners in Pennsylvania: A Statewide Community of Practice

- Goal: Build a collaborative learning network to re-enroll students with some college, no credential (SCNC)
- Why? 1 million+ individuals in PA with SCNC
- Launched December 2024 by Ithaka S+R and the Pennsylvania Department of Education
- Includes community colleges, universities, training providers, community organizations
- Multidisciplinary representation: academic affairs, admissions, advising, financial aid, senior leadership

Guiding Framework and Structure

The initiative centers on 4 student-centered focus areas:

- **Assess and Identify** – Who are the learners we want to re-engage?
- **Connect and Engage** – How to reach and support them effectively?
- **Enroll and Retain** – Are processes and offerings learner-friendly?
- **Support and Graduate** – What helps returning learners persist?

Four virtual meetings to share practices, refine strategies, and address shared challenges; culminating convening on November 5, 2025

Emphasis on goal refinement and alignment with institutional capacity and student need

From Goal-Setting to Action

Assess and Identify: A small university built a multi-channel plan targeting 15–30 learners per program.

Connect and Engage: A two-year college used student surveys to improve its adult learner web presence, making resources more visible and relevant.

Enroll and Retain: A university redesigned programs into 8-week asynchronous formats to better serve working adults.

Support and Graduate: Institutions are coordinating across departments to streamline credit transfer and offer wraparound services.

Building Momentum for Systemic Change

- Institutions are already refining strategies and launching solutions
- Stronger focus on infrastructure, interdepartmental collaboration, and student-centric design
- As the Community of Practice continues: sharing tools and resources, November convening, publishing a playbook this fall
- Supported by Lumina Foundation and The Kresge Foundation, this initiative builds on national re-engagement work and sets the stage for durable, scalable impact in Pennsylvania



ITHAKA S+R

Thank you!

Liz Looker

Ithaka S+R

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Overall Agenda



PA Higher Ed Context & PDE's Role



Community of Practice Benefits



Policy Opportunities & Next Steps



**1.1
Million**

1.1 million
adults in
Pennsylvania
have some
college and
no degree.

↓7%

The percentage of
recent high school
graduates choosing
to attend college has
dropped 7% from
2017 to 2022.

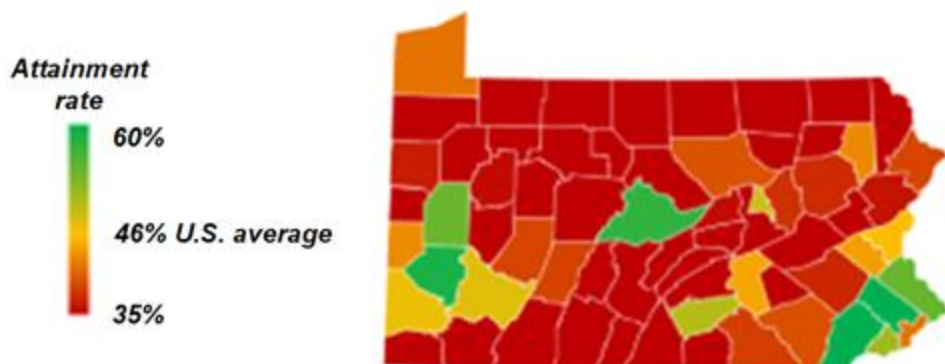
38%

Nationally,
38% of high school
graduates who have
not earned a college
degree or credential
stated that cost and
debt contributed
significantly.



Attainment Varies by Region

Pennsylvania Associate's and Bachelors' degree attainment rate by county



Only 11 Pennsylvanian counties have a higher attainment rate than the national average of 46%

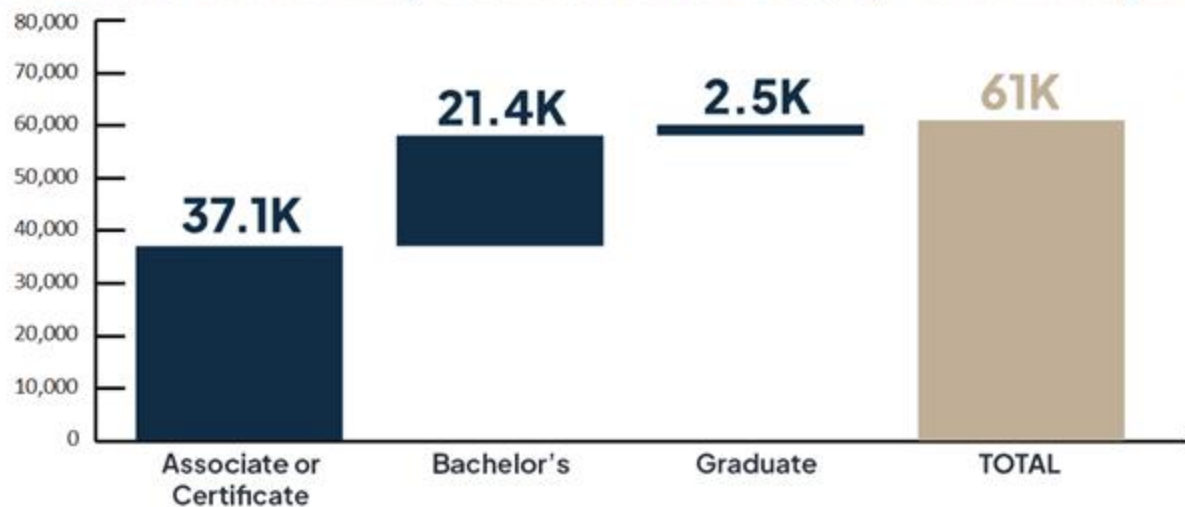
Four-Year Graduation Rate
(all 4-year Sectors, 2013 cohort):
51.8%

Two-Year Graduation Rate, Community Colleges (2017 cohort):
11%

2023 Statewide Workforce Credential Gap

Statewide, Pennsylvania postsecondary institutions' annual credential supply fell short of employer's demands, resulting in a workforce credential gap of 61K in 2023

2023 Annual Postsecondary Credential Workforce Gap by Postsecondary Credential Type in Pennsylvania¹



Workforce Credential Gap

- Workforce Credential Gap represents the difference between demand for workers with postsecondary-level skills and the supply of credentials from PA postsecondary institutions adjusted for reenrollment and out-migration assumptions².

¹ Gap represents the difference between demand for workers with postsecondary-level skills and credentials and the credential production from PA postsecondary institutions. Job Demand from Center for Workforce Information and Analysis Short-Term 2022-2024 Forecast, Credential Supply: 2022 IPEDS credential award data for higher ed institutions forecast to 2023 and adjusted for reenrollment and outmigration. Totals may not tie due to rounding.

² Re-enrollment assumption: 22.5% of Associates/Certificate earners and 25% of Bachelor's earners enroll in an additional postsecondary degree after award (US Census & NCES). Out-migration assumption: 40% of Associate/Certificates, 50% of Bachelor's, and 65% of Graduate credential earners do not stay in the state after graduation (Lightcast)

Source: U.S. Department of Education; National Center for Education Statistics; CIP to SOC Crosswalk, Pennsylvania Department of Labor & Industry; Center for Workforce Information and Analysis, U.S. Department of Education; Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), Baker Tilly Analysis

Community of Practice Benefits

- Expertise & capacity for an under-resourced department
- Centralize strategy amidst de-centralized landscape
- Gather data across low-information ecosystem
- Organize campus buy-in across sectors



Collective Needs, Goals & Strategy for Adult learners with Some College No Credential

PA EmpowerU

EmpowerU - Resources for Students

Find the resources you need to succeed.

EmpowerU Resources for Institutions & Administrators →



Mental
Health



Financial Aid



Military
Students



Adult
Students



Housing &
Transport



Food
Resources



Digital
Access



Safety &
Belonging



A Clearinghouse of resources for students via basic needs tenets, and/or by institutional offerings.

&

A Professional network for on-going learning, resource and best practice sharing in support of PA students' essential needs.

Parent Pathways Grant Program

Annual State Grant Program:

funding to institutions to directly support the persistence of parenting students in the form of tuition assistance, emergency funding, and wrap-around service supports.

GOALS OF THE PROJECT

- Inform stakeholders and state policymakers of the most significant barriers parenting students face to staying enrolled and completing their postsecondary education.
- Recommend state policy changes to support parenting students.
- Educate state policymakers and institutions on the need for collecting better data on parenting students and the challenges they face.
- For member schools to learn about and address the unique needs of parenting students and establish strategies to communicate the benefits and programs available to them at their institution and in the surrounding community.

Pennsylvania Department of Human Services

PA PARENT PATHWAYS LEARNING NETWORK

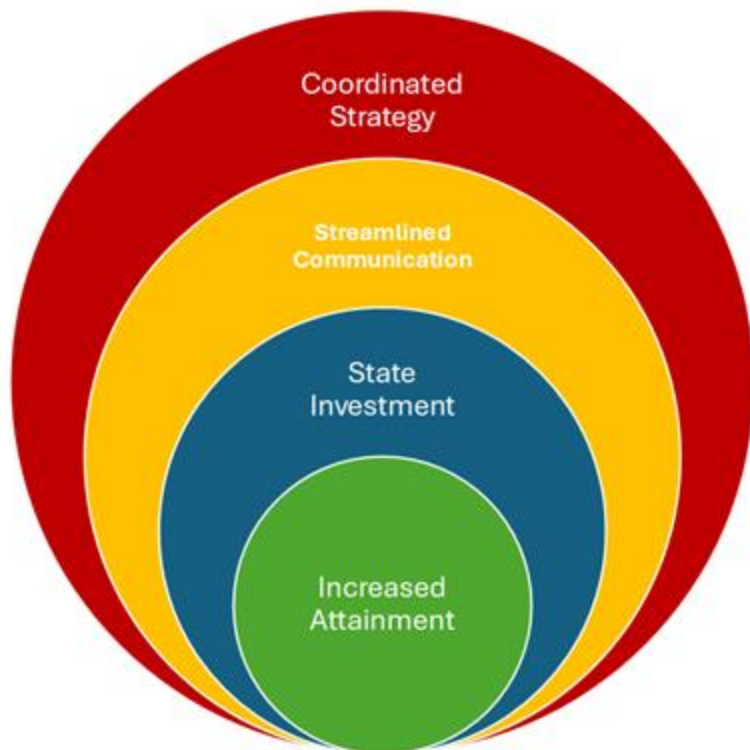
POLICY REPORT

The Pennsylvania Parent Pathways Learning Network (PPLN) policy report is the culmination of more than a year's work of parenting students, postsecondary institution staff, subject matter experts, multiple state agencies, and community leaders.





Policy Opportunities





SBHE Mission



Pennsylvania
State Board of Higher Education

To provide direction, coordination, and support to ensure that institutions of higher education fully meet the workforce and economic development needs of this Commonwealth and ensure that all residents of this Commonwealth have access to affordable, world-class postsecondary education.



Pennsylvania State Board of Higher Education

From the Pennsylvania Department of Community & Economic Development's Strategic Plan:

Realign Pennsylvania's Higher Education System to Meet Our Workforce Needs

- Build the Foundation for a Strong, Effective, and Efficient System of Higher Education
- Responsibly and effectively re-invest in higher education
- Make college more affordable for all Pennsylvanians.





Lehigh Carbon
COMMUNITY COLLEGE

- One of 15 Community Colleges in Eastern Pennsylvania
- Service Counties - Lehigh, Carbon, and Schuylkill
- 9,000+ credit students FY24
- Associate Degrees, Certificates, and Specialized Diplomas
- Hispanic Serving Institution - 30%
- 37% FT and 73% PT
- 64% Female and 36% Male
- 51% White, 30% Hispanic, 7% African American/Black



Lehigh Carbon
COMMUNITY COLLEGE

**RE
UP**

PARTNERSHIP LAUNCHED
DECEMBER 2020

Cumulative Results



1,458

Students Enrolled



1,464

In Pipeline*



329K

Activities with students



221

Students Graduated

CareerLink Workforce Board Partnership

- Sector Showcases (Healthcare, Trades, Technology, Computer Science, Education)
- Staff at the Centers
- College Presentation at the Workshops
- State-Wide Grants - Department of Labor



Focused Support & Information Sessions

- Dedicated Admission Staff to support Adult Students
- Some Credit No Degree - Your Next Chapter
- Veterans Organizations



Thank you for your time!

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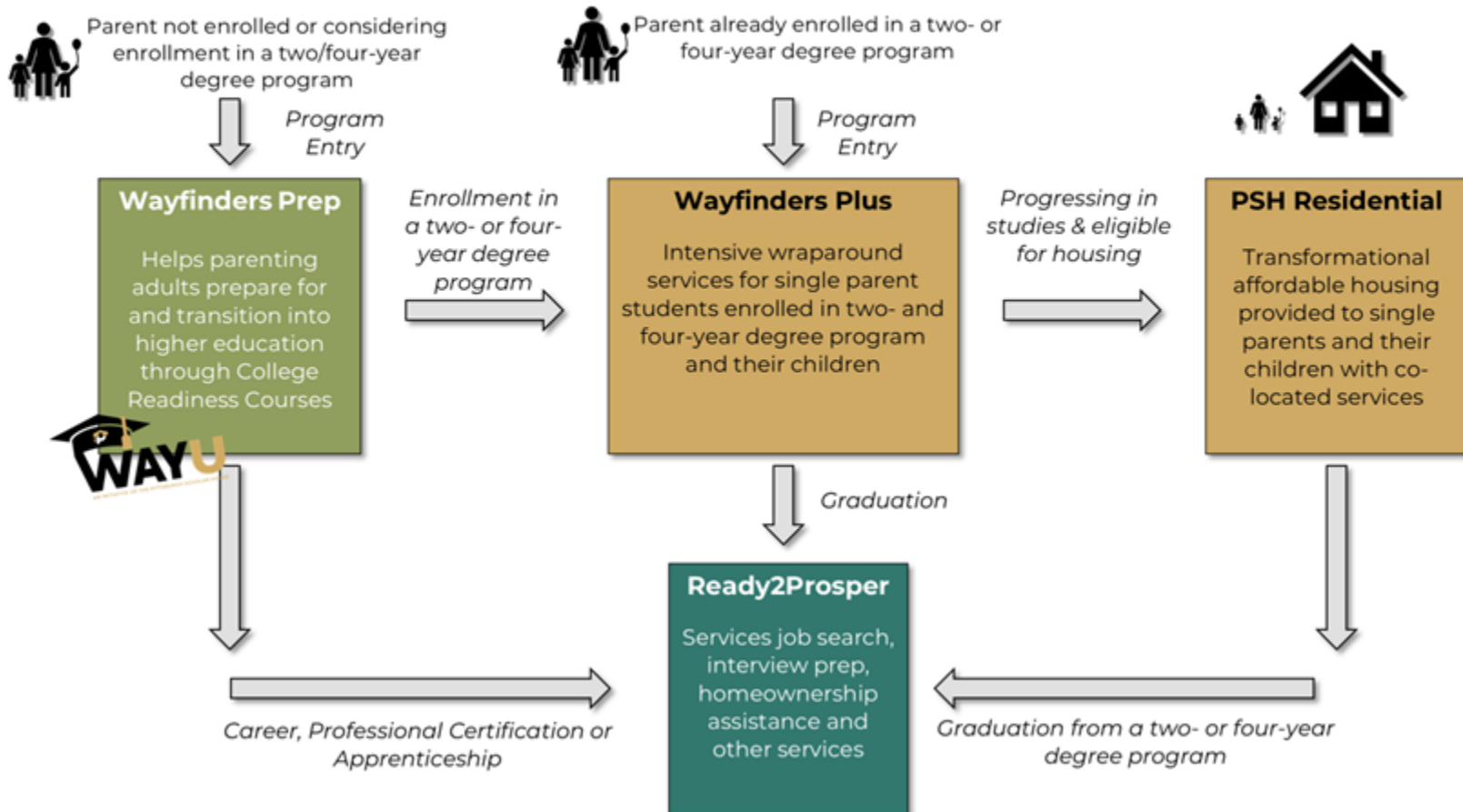


Pittsburgh Scholar House

Transformed by Education



The Scholar's Journey at PSH



College Readiness Program



CONNECTING WITH HIGHER ED PARTNERS

CARLOW
UNIVERSITY



LA ROCHE
UNIVERSITY



chatham
UNIVERSITY



University of
Pittsburgh



DUQUESNE
UNIVERSITY

**POINT
PARK**
UNIVERSITY



**Carnegie
Mellon
University**





Residential Housing

601 N. Beatty St.
Naomi's Place
Residential Pilot



HG1-LYTLE –
Hazelwood Green .



120 Cecil Way as viewed from Ft. Duquesne Blvd.



NextGen

A PITTSBURGH SCHOLAR HOUSE
2-GENERATIONAL INITIATIVE



Financial Literacy

Parenting Leadership

Mental & Physical Wellbeing

Social Emotional Learning

Early Literacy

STEM



Connect with Us!



PSH
Website



Community
Connection
Form



Facebook



Instagram



LinkedIn



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**PITTSBURGH
SCHOLAR HOUSE**
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Panelists



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