

## The Role of Transition Programs for Adult Learners Returning or Entering Higher Education

Transition programs are powerful recruitment vehicles. They allow students to feel connected to the institution without having to make a financial commitment. They also help students to foster relationships with peers. Relationships are integral to both recruitment and retention (Tinto, 1993). Moreover, students with a positive experience in a transition program offered by the institution, may increase a student's' commitment to that institution.

As a recruitment tool, transition courses may improve the institutional image among adult learners. Providing a free course may create an image that the institution is philanthropic and truly cares about the success of its students, which may increase interest in the institution. A student belief in institutional commitment to the well-being of students can positively impact student retention (Braxton & Hirshy, 2004).

In terms of recruitment and retention, transition programs can help students to overcome dispositional barriers that would hinder their enrollment and/or ongoing success. Typically adult students must overcome dispositional barriers (Schlossberg et al., 1989). Helping to remove such barriers can help to improve student self-perception. The foundational academic and study skills developed in transition programs may help students to better perform once enrolled. Academic performance is directly tied to retention (Tinto, 1993). Furthermore, allowing students to participate in the transition program before deciding to apply for enrollment may help students to self-select whether or not higher education is in their best interest.

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