

**An Action Research Project with
Undergraduate Adult Business
Students**

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Background

- 94% of institutions have a first-year seminar or orientation course (National Survey of First-Year Academic Practices)
 - Adult students make up more than 40% of the total U.S. undergraduate population (U.S. Bureau of the Census).
 - Adult students have different needs than traditional-aged students (Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner).
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Allison's Story





Research Questions

- **How can we best meet the needs of adult business students?**
 - What is the relationship between personal development and adjustment for adult returning business students as they complete a first-year seminar course?
 - What are the reasons for the adult business student deciding to attend or return to an undergraduate program?
 - How do adult business students experience university life, their identities, and work as they return to an undergraduate business school?
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Findings – Fear, Self-Efficacy, and Doubt

- **Fear**

- “When I first came in, I was extremely nervous. Then again, I have never been on a campus this big. My first year on this campus and there are buildings everywhere and I don’t know where to go and I have no idea what to do. When I got there, a gazillion kids were outside in the parking lot.” – Clifford
- “I am very excited about [University name deleted], but that excitement is accompanied with fear. I am very nervous about starting the fall semester. I am going to be in a new setting with what I imagine will be very different teaching styles and expectations. I hope I will adjust smoothly and succeed here at the University.” - Tiff

Findings – Fear, Self-Efficacy, and Doubt

- **Self-Efficacy and Doubt**

- “I will have a better relationship with myself because I don’t have a lot of respect, confidence, and self esteem for myself and I know in the end I will have more respect, confidence, and self esteem. I have been putting myself down for a few years now and it is time for me to stop. I am better than that.” – Sarah
- “Looking back over the last 14 years since I left school and comparing them to the most recent summer semester that I took classes at HACC and [University name removed], I have realized how narrow minded and lackadaisical I have become with my thinking.” - Clifford

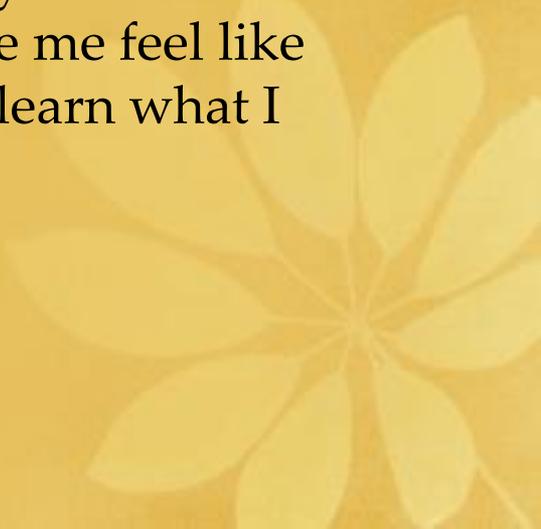


Findings – Belonging and Support

- **Group Relationship and Learning**

“ It was very nice because they were going through the same things that I am. I know someone who will be in the class I’m going to be in [during the fall semester].” – Sarah

– “I thought this class was very beneficial for learning the ways of the college. I liked the idea that we got to discuss the syllabus and what would be more beneficial for us as a group. It made me feel like more of a participant in the classroom and I got to learn what I really cared to know about.” – Danielle

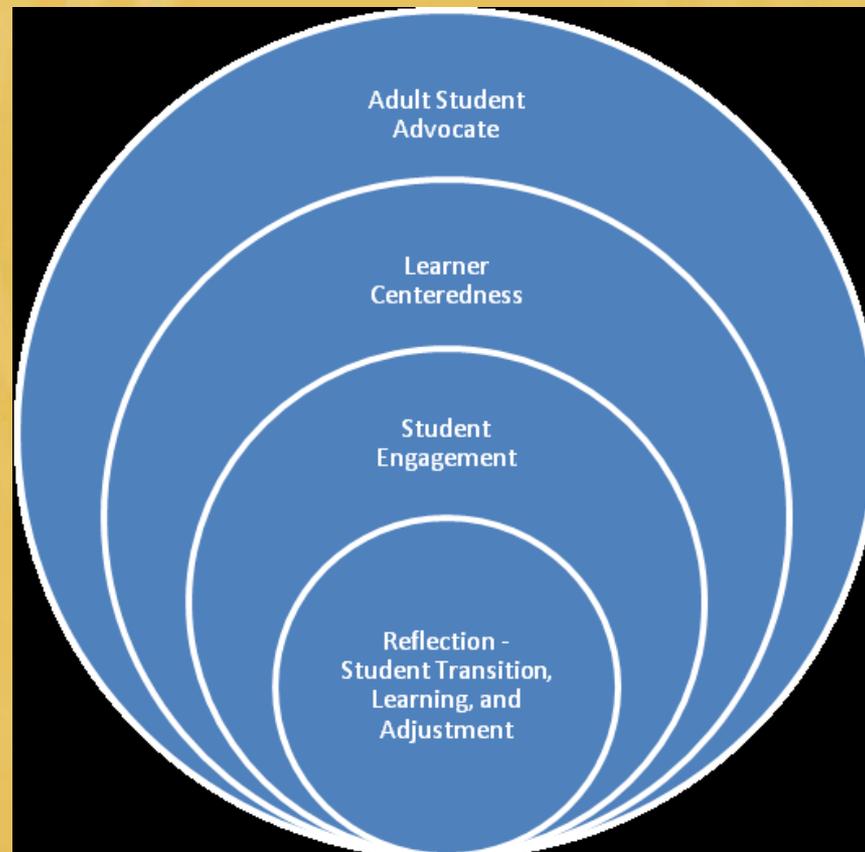




Findings – Belonging and Support

- **Valuing Experience Through the Action Research Process**
 - “Honestly, coming back to school I felt like the only adult student in the whole world, but I know that’s not the case.” -Clifford
 - **First-Year Seminar Course**
 - “The experience in this course helped my progression by finding out what college life is going to be like and what it feels like to know that I am not alone on returning to college life.” – Sarah
 - **Campus Adult Student Advocate**
 - “I almost feel that they need to have one advisor for the adult students that understand what they are going through, understands them on a personal level. Like you! Exactly, like what you did there knowing what we are dealing with in the background versus we aren’t chained up in a dorm. We aren’t spending our weekends drinking. We spend our weekends cleaning our homes and taking care of our kids and grocery shopping, things like that. So I think that is something that would be very helpful.... One who understands limitations and how difficult it can be to be an adult student, especially here. To not treat you as the same.... Not that we should get preferential treatment, but just an understanding. “ - Amy

Adult Students' Transition to University Life Through a First-Year Seminar Course





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