Chapter 16
Partnerships between University and Adult Education Providers

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ABSTRACT

Lifelong learning can be enhanced through the establishment of academic and societal community partnerships. Adults face a multitude of challenges and roles that impact their ability to succeed in a teaching and learning environment. The motivation to pursue learning experiences will also vary and needs to be accounted for when working with the individual adult education learner. Post-secondary institutions can serve to bridge education, research, training, and service to the community. This chapter discusses current practices and advances within partnerships that have been established between university and adult education providers.

INTRODUCTION

Partnerships usually reflect a common purpose that combines resources, skills or abilities. These types of relationships become value-added and are based on the desires of the combining entities. The purpose may be to integrate approaches to develop short- or long-term strategies to meet the needs of an individual, business or community. This chapter will review the definition and context of partnerships as dynamics change within a system as partnerships evolve around individuals,

organizations, universities, communities, or businesses. Meaningful partnerships can be creative and should balance the needs of all partners.

Also addressed are strategies to improve educational programs of study and connect partners. The ultimate goal for universities and adult education providers relates to closing the achievement gaps between diverse learners and increasing individual competitiveness within the workplace and society. The learning process can be arranged in formal and informal environments so that the needs within the partnership are addressed. Initiatives can support the development of workforce competencies and further decrease employee's skills gap. The link

between higher education attainment and the U.S. economy is critical as increasing attainment will drive positive economic growth.

International and U.S. partnership practices are highlighted to demonstrate how lifelong learning can be enhanced through the establishment of academic and societal community partnerships. Future trends refer to partnerships that are bridging the gap between academic and businesses such as the use of an applied baccalaureate. This also includes a revised General Educational Development (GED) test that will identify student readiness for college and careers and the national charge of increasing higher education attainment rates.

The objectives of this chapter are to define partnerships; describe international and U.S. partnerships that are currently in practice; address future trends in community-university partnerships; and, identify economic forces that are encouraging relationships between university and adult education providers. The chapter is organized using the following sections: background, current practices, future trends, and conclusion.

PARTNERSHIPS

Partnerships can be defined as a relationship between two or more parties that cooperate with joint rights and responsibilities (Partnership, 2012). Partnerships may be arranged through different associations or perceptions. This may include the use of a business model or specific language to define the relationship. Relationships can be built if there is a foundation of trust and respect. Wagner and Muller (2009) identified eight elements of a powerful partnership which were complementary strengths, a common mission, fairness, trust, acceptance, forgiveness, communicating, and unselfishness. Educational partnerships can be established to set up a social practice and to bring stakeholders together in order to enhance student learning. Effective educational partnerships will focus on student learning and

may alter relationship practices. They can provide structures that encompass schools and universities and tap into available resources that include "…personal and professional; institutional; and the contribution of professional understandings via a shared language" (Selkrig & Keamy, 2009, p. 187). The result can assist in creating positive community processes and outcomes. Partnership initiatives can organize individuals, organizations, and communities to share expertise, resources and carry out common goals or generate community solutions (Strier, 2011).

A partnership refers to a contract between partners to achieve goals and to share the benefits and disadvantages of the relationship. It can be an agreement among a group in order to gather efforts towards a specific target. There is a purpose for the relationship, a mutual benefit to achieve common goals. Lindsay, McQuaid, and Dutton (2008) refer to the many features that make the partnership process important and effective. Working together allows achievement of better results than working individually and it also allows each partner to benefit. It is a shared commitment and clear recognition of the priorities set forth within the agreement. These types of arrangements reach for flexible solutions that are in response to policies or practices. They can encourage creative ideas and in turn, partners learn from the best practices.

Universities are serving as the partnership foundation for training and research functions and addressing social issues such as health, women, welfare, and access to technology. "New knowledge is being generated through interaction with the community, curricula are becoming relevant to the life of the people and many new learning avenues are being opened up" (Universities and the Future of Adult Learning, 1997, p. 7).

The role of universities in developing creative partnerships with educational entities is evolving. Creating environments in which expanded ideas and connections can be made is at the forefront of expanding a university's role within a community. Partnerships that are closely linked with the

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