

Adult Learner 360

CATALYST FOR SUCCESS

WINONA STATE UNIVERSITY

AL360 Survey Data Comparisons

June 2017

CAEL is pleased to present the results of the surveys that your institution and students recently participated in from the Adult Learning 360. These results are aligned to the Ten Principles for Effectively Serving Adult Learners.

Executive Summary

During the AL360 validation phase starting in April 2017, 95 (of 877 invited) adult learners at Winona State University (WSU) completed the *Adult Learning 360 Student Survey (Student Survey)* - an 11% response rate. This instrument measures the adult students' perceptions of WSU's services for adult learners.

During this same period, 9 of 38 invited (24% response rate) WSU faculty, staff and administration completed the *Adult Learning 360 Institutional Survey (Institution Survey)*, which when rolled up, provides a snapshot of their perspectives. The summary of the data comparison from these two surveys reveal which activities and practices are important to the institution's adult learners, as well as indicating the perspective of faculty, staff and administrators of the importance of those same activities and practices. The combination of these two surveys constitutes the *Adult Learner 360 (AL360)*.

The surveys are based on CAEL's Ten Essential Principles for Serving Adult Learners. These Principles, defined in Attachment A, are:

1. Outreach
2. Life and Career Planning
3. Financing
4. Assessment of Learning Outcomes
5. Teaching-Learning Process
6. Student Support Systems
7. Technology
8. Transitions

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9. Strategic Partnerships
 10. Adaptivity

WSU faculty and staff rankings of the importance and effectiveness for their adult student offerings in the *Institution Survey* are paired with students' ranking of importance and satisfaction of those services within the *Student Survey*. Following the administration of the surveys, WSU is able to view the results through the online *AL360* portal.

CAEL documents the aggregated data from both surveys, pairing them in order to identify strengths, challenges, and disconnects between the university and its adult students. This report also offers recommendations for next steps to assist your institution with strategic planning efforts.

Overall, WSU's *Student Survey* results reflect solid satisfaction by the respondents with WSU's practices relative to each of the ten Principles. The satisfaction scores ranged from 3.51 to 4.19 on a five-point Likert-type scale where one is "low" and five is "high."

Along with that, WSU's *Institution Survey* results suggest average satisfaction right now by respondents who are faculty, staff, or administrators. Scores by the respondents ranged from 2.65 to 3.75 on a five-point scale (i.e., no scores exceeded 4.0).

The Principles that were ranked high in satisfaction by both the institutional and adult student respondents were **Transitions** and **Technology**. On the other hand, **Life & Career Planning** was the Principle for which both sets of respondents expressed least satisfaction.

Overall, WSU's *Student Survey* reflect average satisfaction outcomes on nearly all of the ten Principles when compared with the mean scores for institutions comprising the validation sample. A review of the *Institution Survey* results suggest students at WSU are generally more satisfied with services at the University than the efficacy/quality ratings provided by faculty/staff/administrative respondents.

Regarding the importance of these Principles for adult learning practices at WSU, students attached greatest significance to the **Transitions**, **Assessment of Learning Outcomes**, and **Technology** Principles. Faculty/staff/administrators, on the other hand, attached greatest significance to the **Transitions**, **Technology**, and **Adaptivity** Principles. **Technology** and **Transitions** were considered to be important Principles to both groups of respondents.

At the same time, students attached least importance to the **Financing**, **Life & Career Planning**, and **Student Support Systems** Principles. Respondents who were faculty/staff/administrators at WSU ascribed least importance to **Assessment of Learning Outcomes**, **Life & Career Planning**, and **Teaching-Learning Process**



Principles. Life & Career Planning was considered an unimportant Principle to both groups of respondents.

In an effort to prioritize the results, CAEL suggests a sequence of specific activities to WSU that are related to the most significant strengths and challenges identified by the surveys:

1. Continue relatively strong efforts for the Principle of **Technology**.
2. Continues relatively strong efforts for the Principle of **Transitions**.
3. Improve practices relative to the Principle of **Life & Career Planning**.
4. Investigate and discern the basis for the differing perceptions associated with the institution's effectiveness relative to the Principles of **Outreach, Strategic Partnerships, and Teaching-Learning Process**.

Sample Characteristics

Of the 95 adults comprising the student respondents 48% (46) of the adults comprising the student sample were 25-34 years old, 29% (28) aged 35-44, 12% (11) were aged 45-54, 6%(6) were aged 55-64, and 4%(4) were 65 and older. The sample was predominantly white (83% or 78 respondents), only 13% (12) were military veterans, and 32% (30) were first generation college students. Nearly one-half of the sample were married (49% or 47 students), with 9% (9) divorced, and 32% (30) single and never married.

22% (21) of the respondents reported that they were caregivers for middle school or high school children, 16% (15) reported that they were caregivers for college students or other dependents under the age of 25, and 3% (3) reported that they were caregivers for elderly/disabled adults.

The majority (94% or 89 students) of the respondents reported that immediate educational goal was obtaining a bachelor's degree. Most of the students were funding their own educations (68% or 65 students) and utilizing loans (61% or 58 students). Many respondents reported frequently working 31-40 hours per week (25% or 24 students) or more than 40 hours per week (18% or 17 students).

The internal institutional sample was comprised of a cross section of work units, including Faculty, Adult Education, Student Services, Provost's Office, Continuing Education, Assessment, and Academic Services. Faculty represented a large number of the respondents.

Internal Comparisons

The two surveys' datasets provide valuable information about how adult learners' perceptions, as indicated on our *Student Survey*, compare to the responses from the *Institutional Survey*. These results are consistent with the underlying concept of the *AL360*: perceptions=reality.



In addition to ranking the Principles on the two surveys, comparisons are made to the other institutions that are taking part in the AL360 validation process. These comparisons are based on a small number of participating institutions (six) and therefore are not fully statistically valid. They are included within this report as an opportunity to reflect on the similarities and differences between the institutions when examined through the common lens of the Ten Principles.

It is important to remember that no campus is “the best performer” on every Principle and that, in most of the summaries, *Student Survey Importance* data are compared to *Student Survey Satisfaction* data, while *Institutional Survey Importance* data are compared to *Institutional Efficacy/Quality* data. The bulk of this analysis examines the data from an internal perspective.

By comparing the WSU institutional viewpoint with the viewpoint of the students, CAEL identifies points of agreement and divergence and, in turn, helps the WSU identify and implement specific strategies to capitalize on strengths and address challenges.

The rankings of the Principles detailed in the Table below are derived from a comparison of students’ satisfaction scores (*Student Survey*) on items within each Principle against the efficacy/quality scores reported by WSU’s faculty/ staff/administration (*Institutional Survey*).

Ranking	<i>Institutional Rank</i> (Faculty, Staff, Admin)	<i>Adult Student Rank</i> (Students)
1	Technology	Technology
2	Transitions	Teaching-Learning Process
3	Strategic Partnerships	Transitions
4	Adaptivity	Outreach
5	Student Support Systems	Student Support Systems
6	Financing	Assessment of Learning Outcomes
7	Assessment of Learning	Adaptivity
8	Outcomes	Financing
9	Teaching-Learning Process	Strategic Partnerships
10	Life & Career Planning	Life & Career Planning

Strengths

Based upon the survey results, WSU evidences numerous strengths in supporting adult learners. Comparing the performance ranking on each of the Principle scales reveals



agreement from the *Institutional* and *Student Survey* perspectives on two common factors among the top four ranked Principles for the respective surveys:

Technology (1st for both groups of respondents)

Transitions (2nd for faculty/staff/administrators and 3rd for students)

The Principle of **Technology** is defined as, “uses technology to provide relevant and timely information and to enhance the learning experience.” Students gave WSU their highest marks for the following items: consistently receiving communications from WSU via technological means (Technology, Q3), needed services are accessible online or through other technological means (Technology, Q4), and WSU uses technology that is current with the real world and the students’ field of study (Technology, Q8). The scores of faculty/staff/administrators mirrored the students’ scores for those items. This group also rated highly the technological support that WSU makes available to adult learners (Technology, Q2).

The Principle of **Transitions** is defined as, “supports guided pathways that lead into and from the institution's programs and services in order to ensure that students' learning will apply usefully to achieving their educational and career goals.” Student respondents gave WSU their highest marks for the following items associated with this Principle: providing students with information so they know what they need to do to successfully complete the program (Transitions, Q2), the opportunity to check academic records and compare them with transfer requirements at other institutions, and (Transitions, Q9), and provision of clear graduation requirements (Transitions, Q1). Faculty/staff/administrators concurred with the students’ ratings for these items (i.e., the provided correspondingly high scores) while also praising WSU’s policy in assessing academic credit earned elsewhere toward WSU degrees/certificates (Transitions, Q5).

Challenges

Respondents for both the *Institutional* and *Student Surveys* agreed that they were least satisfied with WSU’s performance relative to the Principle of **Life & Career Planning**.

The Principle of **Life & Career Planning** is defined as, “addresses adult learners’ life and career goals before or at the onset of enrollment in order to assess and align its capacities to help learners reach their goals.” Respondents to the *Student Survey* were least satisfied with WSU’s practices relative to the following items associated with this Principle: the extent to which WSU identifies and trains mentors to aid adult students in reaching their goals (Life & Career Planning, Q4), the extent to which WSU works with each adult student as to how their life and work learning experiences qualify for college credit (Life & Career Planning, Q9), and the extent to which adult students receive learning plans that incorporate work, life, and family commitments (Life & Career Planning, Q8).



Respondents who were faculty/staff/administrators concurred with the students' ratings for these items while also being critical of practices relative to these items: encouraging students to engage with career services early in their programs (Life & Career Planning, Q12), providing a process to establish whether students' life and work experience quality for college credit (Life & Career Planning, Q9), and the extent to which career advisors provide students with information on the salary and job prospects available to them when they complete their degrees at WSU (Life & Career Planning, Q11).

Additional Examination

Typically, throughout the *AL360* process, institutions find that how they rank the Principles differs from students' perceptions. Where there is a major diversion from the responses on the *Institutional Survey* and the *Student Survey*, disconnects can be found. Three examples in this at WSU have to do with the Principles of **Outreach**, **Strategic Partnerships**, and **Teaching-Learning Process**.

Students rated **Outreach** as the fourth highest Principle in terms of their satisfaction, whereas faculty/staff/administrator respondents rated it as the lowest Principle in terms of efficacy/quality. Students rated **Strategic Partnerships** ninth among the 10 Principles in terms of their satisfaction, whereas faculty/staff/administrator respondents rated it third among the ten Principles. Students rated the **Teaching-Learning Process** as the third highest Principle in terms of their satisfaction, whereas faculty/staff/administrator respondents rated it as the third lowest (i.e., eighth out of ten) Principle in terms of efficacy/quality.

Outreach is defined as, "conducts its outreach to adult learners by overcoming barriers in time, place, and tradition in order to create lifelong access to educational opportunities." Student respondents expressed satisfaction for WSU's practices relative to this Principle by offering scores ranging from 3.62 to 4.37 on the five-point scale for the items associated with this Principle. Faculty/staff/administrator respondents, however, were much more critical of WSU's practices relative to this Principle, offering a negatively-skewed set of scores that ranged from 1.86 to 3.47 (i.e., their highest score for any one item was *lower* than the lowest score assigned to any one item by the students).

Some of the items that faculty/staff/administrator respondents were particularly dissatisfied included: the extent to which modular course formats of varying lengths of time are available (Outreach, Q16), the extent to which WSU routinely offers classes at times that are convenient for adult students (Outreach, Q6), the extent to which several course delivery methods (e.g., online, face-to-face, hybrid) are available for students to select from (Outreach, Q7), and the extent to which individualized or self-paced instructional formats are available (Outreach, Q17).

Strategic Partnerships is defined as, "engages in strategic relationships, partnerships, and collaborations with employers and other organizations in order to develop and



improve educational opportunities for adult learners.” Student respondents offered average satisfaction for WSU’s practices relative to this Principle by offering scores with a decided central tendency ranging from 3.26 to 3.87 on the five-point scale.

Faculty/staff/administrator respondents, however, were more satisfied with WSU’s practices relative to this Principle, in comparison with the ratings they offered to the other nine Principles. For the items associated with this Principle, these respondents scores that were mid-range or higher, varying from a low of 3.00 to a high of 4.13. Examples of items where differing perceptions existed between student and faculty/staff/administrator respondents (i.e., students were more satisfied than their institutional counterparts) included: (the extent to which employers work with WSU to provide tuition or financial assistance (Strategic Partnerships, Q9), the extent to which WSU’s faculty seek out and work directly with transfer for graduate institutions to map requirements and align standards for adult learning (Strategic Partnerships, Q11), the extent to which WSU builds opportunities for employers to interact with adult students in its programs (Strategic Partnerships, Q13), and the extent to which WSU works with local employers (e.g., private, community) to encourage the offering of tuition assistance or other support to their employees (Strategic Partnerships, Q16).

Teaching-Learning Process is defined as, “uses multiple methods of instruction (including experiential and problem-based methods) for adult learners in order to connect curricular concepts to useful knowledge and skills.” Student respondents offered a positively skewed set of scores for the items associated with this Principle ranging from 3.66 to 4.41. On the other hand, faculty/staff/administrator respondents offered a negatively skewed set of scores ranging from 2.10 to 3.70. Examples of disconnects included items such as: clear expectations in each class regarding what is to be learned (Teaching-Learning Process, Q2), achievable learning goals for each class (Teaching-Learning Process, Q3), and use of multiple ways of teaching (Teaching-Learning Process, Q7).

Faculty/staff/administrator respondents were particularly critical of WSU’s practices relative to: offering an orientation program for new faculty and regular professional development for all faculty that address adult learning principles (Teaching-Learning Process, Q19), effectively using accelerated formats for adult learners (Teaching-Learning Process, Q17), and assigning instruction of adult-focused courses to faculty trained in teaching adult learners (i.e., andragogy) (Teaching-Learning Process, Q20).

External Comparison

WSU compares favorably on the *AL360* in comparison to other institutions that participated in this validation sample. Compared with the average benchmark, on the *Student Survey*, WSU’s students, on average, were about as satisfied as students from the benchmark institutions (WSU student average satisfaction = 3.86 versus the benchmark group’s average satisfaction = 3.95). WSU’s students rated the Principles as being slightly more important (i.e., a gap of 16 one-hundredths of a point) than did



students at the benchmark institutions (WSU student importance = 4.49 versus the benchmark group's average importance = 4.43).

No significant differences were noted for any of Principles or for the satisfaction or importance perspective between the perspectives of WSU's students and the students at the benchmark institutions. In nearly every instance, the perspectives of WSU's students mirrored the perspectives of the students at the benchmark institutions (i.e., no gaps of a half-point or more were observed between the perspectives of WSU's students and the students at the benchmark institutions).

Investigating the results of the *AL360* reveals a "gap analysis" which WSU can use to identify areas of opportunity for greater improvement. Items on the *AL360* are measured on a Likert scale from 1 to 5; a score of 5 indicates high importance, quality/effectiveness, and satisfaction, and a score of 1 indicates low importance, quality/effectiveness, and satisfaction. This report closely examines any gaps between importance and satisfaction on the *Student Survey*, importance and quality/effectiveness on the *Institution Survey*, and/or between the *Institution Survey* and the *Student Survey* results on any item or Principle. In general, a wider gap between any of these categories indicates areas where focused attention on improvement can drive adult learner satisfaction and also positively impact enrollment, persistence, and completion.

Compared with the average benchmark, on the *Institutional Survey*, WSU's faculty/staff/administrator, on average, rated efficacy/quality slightly lower (i.e., a gap of two-tenths of a point) than faculty/staff/administrators from the benchmark institutions (WSU faculty/staff/administrators average quality = 3.19 versus the benchmark group's average quality = 3.49). Faculty/staff/administrators at WSU rated the Principles as being less important (i.e., a gap in excess of a half-point) than did faculty/staff/administrators at the benchmark institutions (WSU faculty/staff/administrator's importance = 3.90 versus the benchmark group's average importance = 4.43).

Gaps approaching or exceeding a half-point were observed between the satisfaction scores assigned by WSU faculty/staff/administrators and their peers at the benchmark institutions for the following Principles: a gap of 0.98 for **Outreach** (WSU faculty/staff/administrators average quality = 2.65 versus the benchmark group's average quality = 3.63), a gap of 0.47 for **Life & Career Planning** (faculty/staff/administrators average quality = 2.78 versus the benchmark group's average quality = 3.25), a gap of 0.48 for **Financing** (faculty/staff/administrators average quality = 3.02 versus the benchmark group's average quality = 3.50), a gap of 0.61 for **Assessment of Learning Outcomes** (faculty/staff/administrators average quality = 2.98 versus the benchmark group's average quality = 3.59), and finally, a gap of 0.71 for **Teaching-Learning Systems** (faculty/staff/administrators average quality = 2.95 versus the benchmark group's average quality = 3.66).

Gaps approaching or exceeding a half-point were observed between the importance scores assigned by WSU faculty/staff/administrators and their peers at the benchmark institutions for the following Principles: a gap of 0.61 for **Outreach** (WSU faculty/staff/administrators average importance = 3.84 versus the benchmark group's average importance = 4.45), (2) a gap of 0.70 for **Life & Career Planning** (faculty/staff/administrators average importance = 3.64 versus the benchmark group's average importance = 4.34), (3) a gap of 0.72 for **Financing** (faculty/staff/administrators average importance = 3.81 versus the benchmark group's average importance = 4.53), (4) a gap of 0.82 for **Assessment of Learning Outcomes** (faculty/staff/administrators average importance = 3.61 versus the benchmark group's average importance = 4.43), and (5) a gap of 0.88 for **Teaching-Learning Systems** (faculty/staff/administrators average importance = 3.67 versus the benchmark group's average importance = 4.55).

Summary

Based upon the results, CAEL offers the following recommendations as a basis for reflection, discussion, and consideration at Winona State University:

1. Continue its relatively strong efforts for the Principle of **Technology**.
Specifically, WSU can leverage its capabilities in these areas by:
 - a. Ensuring that communications from WSU are consistently relayed via technological means.
 - b. Providing needed services via online or other technological means.
 - c. Using technology that is current with the real world and the students' field of study.
 - d. Continuing to provide technological support to adult learners.
2. Continues its relatively strong efforts for the Principle of **Transitions**.
Specifically, WSU can leverage its capabilities relative to:
 - a. Providing students with information so they know how to successfully complete their programs.
 - b. Offering students the opportunity to check their academic records and compare them with transfer requirements at other institutions.
 - c. Providing clear graduation requirements.
 - d. Assessing academic credit earned elsewhere toward WSU degrees/certificates.
3. Improve its practices relative to the Principle of **Life & Career Planning**.
Specifically, WSU can identify way to do better relative to these practices:
 - a. Identifying and training mentors to aid adult students in reaching their goals.
 - b. Working with each adult student to identify how their life and work learning experiences can be assessed for college credit.

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- c. Offer learning plans to adult students that incorporate work, life, and family commitments.
 - d. Encouraging students to engage with career services early in their programs.
 - e. Ensuring that career advisors provide students with information on the salary and available job prospects that connect to their degrees.

4. Investigate and discern the basis for the differing perceptions associated with the institution's effectiveness relative to the Principle of **Outreach**. Specifically, WSU can identify ways in which to address these issues:

- a. Offering modular course formats of varying lengths of time.
- b. Offering classes at convenient times for adult students.
- c. Offering several course delivery methods for students.
- d. Offering individualized or self-paced instructional formats.

5. Investigate and discern the basis for the differing perceptions associated with the institution's effectiveness relative to the Principle of **Strategic Partnerships**. Specifically, WSU can identify ways in which to address these issues:

- a. Examining the extent to which employers work with WSU to provide tuition or financial assistance.
- b. Examining the extent to which WSU's faculty map requirements and align standards for adult learning when transferring to graduate institutions.
- c. Examining the extent to which WSU builds opportunities for employers to interact with adult students in its programs.
- d. Examining the extent to which WSU works with employers to encourage them to offer tuition assistance or other financial support to their employees.

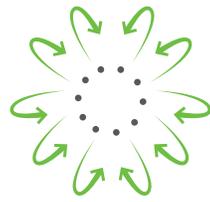
6. Investigate and discern the basis for the differing perceptions associated with the institution's effectiveness relative to the Principle of **Teaching-Learning Process**. Specifically, WSU can identify ways in which to address these issues:

- a. Providing students with clear learning expectations in each class.
- b. Providing achievable learning goals for each class.
- c. Using multiple ways of teaching.
- d. Offering an orientation program for new faculty, and regular professional development for all faculty that address adult learning principles.
- e. Effectively using accelerated formats for adult learners.
- f. Assigning instruction of adult-focused courses to faculty trained in teaching adult learners.



Conclusion

This AL360 has yielded important information for WSU and its services to adult learners. Often, improving one item in the AL360 toolkit will improve student satisfaction with several principles. WSU would be well-served to engage the individuals who were the participants in this survey in carefully considering the responses on the Institutional and Adult Student Surveys in order to continue to attract, retain, and graduate adult students. We hope that WSU will use these results to identify points of agreement and divergence and employ these to create specific strategies that capitalize on its strengths and address its challenges in working with adult students.



Ten Principles for Effectively Serving Adults



Outreach

Conducts its outreach to adult learners by overcoming barriers in time, place, and tradition in order to create lifelong access to educational opportunities.



Life & Career Planning

Addresses adult learners' life and career goals before or at the onset of enrollment in order to assess and align its capacities to help learners reach their goals.



Financing

Promotes choice using an array of payment options for adult learners in order to expand equity and financial flexibility.



Assessment of Learning Outcomes

Defines and assesses the knowledge, skills, and competencies acquired by adult learners – both from the curriculum and from life and work experience – in order to assign credit and confer degrees with rigor.



Teaching Learning Process

Faculty uses multiple methods of instruction (including experiential and problem-based methods) for adult learners in order to connect curricular concepts to useful knowledge and skills.



Technology

Uses technology to provide relevant and timely information and to enhance the learning experience.



Strategic Partnerships

Engages in strategic relationships, partnerships, and collaborations with employers and other organizations in order to develop and improve educational opportunities for adult learners.



Transitions

Supports guided pathways that lead into and from the institution's programs and services in order to ensure that students' learning will apply usefully to achieving their educational and career goals.



Adaptivity

Adjusts to shifting external market forces and is able to adapt to the changing expectations of internal stakeholders, students, and employers – understanding the needs of those they serve by developing creative academic solutions.