

Retention Strategies for Online Adult Learners (and Career Changers)
Talbott, K. (2021)

Program Retention Strategies for Online Adult Learners

“Online services and programs must be intentionally created and evaluated with the online student in mind.”

-Katelyn Talbott

1. One-on-one Appointments
 - a. Phone
 - b. Video Conferencing
 - c. In-Person
2. Timely Responses
When staff and faculty are working, responding to student inquiries must be a priority.
3. On-Demand Resources
 - a. Record Content: Recordings of live workshops and panels
 - b. Online Content: Websites, newsletters, and videos
4. Orientation
 - a. Mandatory
 - b. Introduction to program, peers, faculty, and staff
 - c. Begin acclimation to online graduate program
5. Opportunities for Connection
 - a. Peer-to-peer/Faculty/Staff: Student initiative and staff supported
 - b. Alumni Involvement: Panels, mentoring, experiential learning
6. Program/Service Evaluation
Regular evaluation of programs/services to ensure needs are being met.
Can Include:
 - Demographics
 - Exhaustive lists of services/programs
 - Current needs
 - Interview/focus groups

Why Implement these strategies?

1. **Prioritize Communications**: When staff and faculty can put communication needs of students at the forefront of their daily activities, students who are unable to schedule in-person meetings can quickly get their individually needs met.
2. **Robust Program Resources**: On-demand resources allow online students to watch, learn, and interact with content while balancing other responsibilities – particularly when there is a mismatch between student and staff/faculty availability.
3. **Connections**: Online students seek opportunities to create connections throughout the entirety of their program. Connecting with peers, faculty, staff, and alumni allows online students to share challenges and successes.
4. **Efficiency**: Evaluating services and programs at regular intervals will determine what services are being used and are still needed. Having better knowledge regarding usage allows for better alignment of staff and faculty time and resources.