MAKING COLLEGE MORE ACCESSIBLE FOR WORKING ADULTS
What would you do?

After high school, while working full time, you took some college classes. You did very poorly, having to drop several times. Supporting yourself was a bigger priority, and no one in your family went to college, so you didn’t have any encouragement. You had a child, and going to college seemed impossible, so you quit. Years later, you tried getting a promotion, but you couldn’t get it without a degree, so you began thinking about how you wanted to get a degree. **What would encourage you to pursue college again and what could be possible barriers you may face?**
Working Adult Degree Program

City College of San Francisco
THE WADP TEAM

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WADP’S MISSION

Support working adult students pursuing a degree in the Liberal Arts by making their college experience more accessible and attainable.
In order to support our students, we need to know who they are.

Who are WADP students?
They are full-time employees working 40 hours a week.
They are parents

Many are single mothers and fathers
They are first generation college students. No family members for guidance.
They are from diverse ethnicities.

Many are multiracial and multicultural.
They are an average age of 40 to 50 years young.

the youngest being 19 and oldest 65.
WADP’s Structure

★ Accessible, designated curriculum
  (evenings, weekends, and online)
★ WADP students earn one or more Liberal Arts Degrees:
  ○ AS in Social Behavioral Sciences
  ○ AA in Arts and Humanities
  ○ AA-T in Social Justice, with emphasis on Ethnic Studies
  ○ General education requirements
  ○ CSU and UC transfer requirements
Our retention rate is 65%

WADP gained a total of 134 students

Our course success rate is 68%

Our retention rate is 65%

Our first graduating cohort of 10 students this past Spring 19
Onboarding
★ Matriculation
★ Accessing their student portal and CCSF tools
★ Class Registration through their student portal
★ Required forms

Triaging Their Needs
★ Warm handoff to different departments
★ Resource referral (bookloan, librarians, and different groups on campus)

Retention
★ Proactive Check-in
★ Resource referral
★ Zoom meetings
★ Community building: through meetups
★ Workshops
★ Dedicated tutors
★ Faculty check-ins
Goals

★ Extending hours for services
  ○ Academic counseling (this Fall 19)
  ○ Financial Aid
  ○ Childcare
  ○ Career Coaching

★ Building Connections for the next phase
  ○ Transferring opportunities
  ○ Mentorship connections

★ Priming Workshops before the semester starts
  ○ Impostor Syndrome
  ○ Computer literacy
  ○ English and math preparation
  ○ Faculty workshops (equity, trauma informed and strengths-based approach, de-escalation, cultural humility/implicit bias, etc)
“It always seems impossible until it’s done.”

—Nelson Mandela

Best Practices for Teaching Working Adult Students

By Dr. Ardel Thomas
1. **Build community first**, before trying to impart information, skills, or knowledge.

2. Working **students come to class with a great deal of lived experience**. Tap into it and relate the topics you’re covering with their past, present, and future. They will be more engaged, and deeper connections will form with you, their classmates, and the material.

3. Be **as flexible as possible** with class structure, content, timing, deadlines, etc., in order to meet students where they are.

4. **Watch out for any assumptions or biases** you may create unconsciously about who students are or where they are coming from. Remember that students, like us, have rich and complex identities and stories.

5. It’s not about what **you** teach, it’s about what **they** learn. Better to go in depth on key points or topics to make sure they are clear than cover everything so quickly that students don’t truly grasp anything.
Tips for Engaging Working Students

1. **Begin the first class by getting everyone to introduce themselves** - in a big circle, in pairs, or however it works best for you - to find out who they are, what kind of work they do, and why they wanted to take your class.

2. **Ask students “Who is terrified to be here today?”** to normalize the fear that many students have about coming to college, or coming back to college.

3. **Share who you are** to build empathy, understanding, and trust.

4. **Hold your office hours at times and location(s) that are accessible to working students**, i.e., before or after class, or via Zoom or another online platform.

5. **Rather than launching straight into a new topic, build connections between the content and knowledge or concepts that students already have.**

6. **Reach out, again and again** - sometimes it may take ten attempts to connect with a student in order for them to feel comfortable responding.
1. **Introduce yourself as a co-learner** rather than an expert/authority figure.
2. **Keep your syllabus as bare-bones** as possible to allow for later adjustments to assignments, deadlines, etc.
3. **Scaffold assignments and content** rather than having many separate tasks and topics.
4. **Use Open Educational Resources (OER)** to reduce costs.
5. **For online classes, have your first meeting in person** (at an accessible time and location, so you can meet students face-to-face and walk them through how you will be using Canvas and any other technical tools).
6. **Revisit your syllabus and assignments** frequently to make sure everything is explained clearly (free of jargon and technical terms) and that all assignments are truly necessary, related directly to student learning outcomes.
7. **Make quick videos** to show your students how to do something new, or just to introduce a new topic. (There are many free online tools to help with this!)
Student Panel:

Working Adult Students and Their Journey

WADP Students:

Cassandra James
Adrienne Williams
Shawn Aguilar
Q&A

Please share your questions or comments!

Thank You
Very Much