

Making Opportunity Affordable- Tennessee Adult Strategies Group

Evidence of Need: *Addressing the adult imperative is a pressing issue in Tennessee.*

- Adults are today's workforce and will fuel economic development. Tennessee is progressing from an agricultural and mechanical economy to a technology based knowledge economy, but still lags behind others (ranked 38th) according to the 2008 State New Economy Index.
- Adults are the majority of the population and most remain without a college credential. In 2006, 21.7 percent of Tennesseans aged 25 and older held a college degree compared to the national average of 27.0 percent. By not tapping into this large potential population, the state misses the positive public and private benefits that degrees impart.
- Traditional age students cannot meet current needs. The pipeline of traditional age students cannot meet Tennessee's workforce needs or reach competitiveness with other states. Furthermore, the number of high school graduates is expected to peak in 2008-09, so the state will become more dependent on alternative populations.
- Adult student enrollment has declined steadily in Tennessee public higher education. Despite gains in higher education across the country, Tennessee's adult student enrollment peaked in 1992.

Approaches in Other States: *Adult initiatives have proven successful in other states.*

- The "Go Higher Kentucky" campaign, through statewide public information and marketing as well as local-community based efforts, increased the number of GEDs earned by 57 percent and helped produce record high enrollment in adult education.
- North Carolina created a comprehensive college access website, for which over 300,000 accounts are created annually and over 100,000 college admissions applications are submitted.
- Louisiana's CALL (Continuum for All Louisiana Learners) program included a survey of student needs, marketing campaign, and made it easier for adults to begin or complete a degree. The program produced an average of 16 inquiries a day.
- Illinois was the first state to create Lifelong Learning Accounts (LilAs) for adult students to help finance their education, even on a part-time, intermittent basis. The accounts provide a match to student contributions from state funds.

Action Agenda: *Several initiatives can address the adult imperative in Tennessee.*

- Convene a taskforce of stakeholders from across the state to discuss course redesign, online degree programs, transfer and articulation, credit for experiential learning, economic development, and business partnerships.