

Press Release

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Non-traditional No More; Arkansas Selected as one of Three States to Partner With WICHE to Help Adults Complete Their Education

LITTLE ROCK, Ark. (March 4, 2008) — The Arkansas Department of Higher Education (ADHE) has announced a grant from the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE) to assist the state in helping adult learners close to a degree in completing their education. The program; Non-traditional No More: Policy Solutions for Adult Learners, will provide \$65,000 in funding to the state over two years to stimulate and guide policy and practice changes that will make it easier for adults just shy of completing their degrees to finish school.

“This is great news for Arkansas,” said ADHE Director Jim Purcell. “One of the most underutilized resources we have in the state are those adults who have completed 90 or more hours toward a degree, but whose lives and responsibilities have encroached on their ability to finish school.”

Dr. Purcell said in his experience, most adults who have not completed their studies to obtain a degree in their chosen field left school due to financial reasons.

“Let’s face it, sometimes real life gets in the way,” he said. “People get married, they have children, they have financial responsibilities, and the cost of continuing their education coupled with all the rest of their responsibilities can become overwhelming. Unfortunately, what we know is that the cost of not completing a degree is even greater, not only to the individual, but to the state as well.”

Arkansas was invited through a competitive process along with two other states, Colorado and Nevada, to participate with WICHE through a grant from the Lumina Foundation intended to help increase degree attainment. The first step will be to identify the state’s ready adult population, after which the project will assist in creating a navigable path to college success through a focus on academic policies, financial aid, student support services, and communications.

Additionally, WICHE will assist in the creation and sustainment of new policies and practices intended to ensure that adults striving to earn their degrees are able to overcome the barriers to success.

“What this does is offer hope to those adults who were working hard on their degrees, but thought they had to set that dream aside in favor of more pressing realities in life,” said Dr. Purcell. “The outcome we hope to see is for those adults to pick up their dreams, continue their education, get a degree, and begin living the life they’ve always dreamed of. The American Dream is out there for the taking, and we want these people to have a chance at it too, a second chance.”

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Governor Mike Beebe said he is pleased with the news that Arkansas was selected by the organization to assist in finding ways to raise the level of educational attainment.

“Helping students finish their degrees is essential to building a competitive and dynamic workforce,” Governor Beebe said. “Providing assistance to our non-traditional students will help Arkansas unlock unrealized potential that will move our state forward toward a more productive economy.”