



# Supporting the Adult Learner in a Post-Covid 19 World

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# Overview:

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# Introductions

Presenter: Dr. Kamilah L. Williams, Ed.D

Dean College and Career Readiness-Illinois Central College

Seasoned Educational Professional

Presenter: Alice Tchangoue

Student at Illinois Central College

# Adult Education at Illinois Central College

- ICC Peoria, IL
- Adult Education:
- Serving 456 students with 12 plus hours of attendance
- 241 ABE/ASE
- 215 ESL
- Saw a 64% increase in AEL enrollment in FY'24



# Profile of the Adult Learner

# Profile of the Adult Learner

“Diversity among those entering or returning to college: veterans, students of color, an increase of adult learners/ post-traditional learners”(Easley & Williams Shealey, 2023)

- 20 Million Adult learners receiving, pursuing GED, four-year degree, advanced micro-credential” ( EAB, 2023)
- Age 25 and older
- Prior Life Experience
- Work Experience
- Family/Children

(~ESG Adult Learner Ready Playbook, 2021)

# Diverse and Multifaceted

- Skill Seeking
- GED Holders
- Degree or Certificate Holder
- Some College and No degree
- Veterans
- Immigrants
- Justice-Impacted
- Parents
- Disabilities
- Diverse in race, ethnicity



# Why Adult Learners



# Why Adult Learner

- Due to the demographic cliff decrease in the 18-year-old population enrolling in college.
- Post COVID Increase enrollment of Adult Learner population( Community Colleges\*, four year institutions)
- Post-traditional /Adult learners are more crucial to the workforce.
- Prioritize the Adult learner- very likely to become the dominant population in the workforce/college
- “Nearly Universal desire to strive for themselves and their families” (ESG Adult Ready Playbook, 2021)

# Why Adult Learner

- Impact on workforce( increase urgency to obtain credential for upskilling opportunities) all sectors
- Population under age 25 declined in 61% of US countries 2001-2011 (*EMSI labor market analytics 2021*)

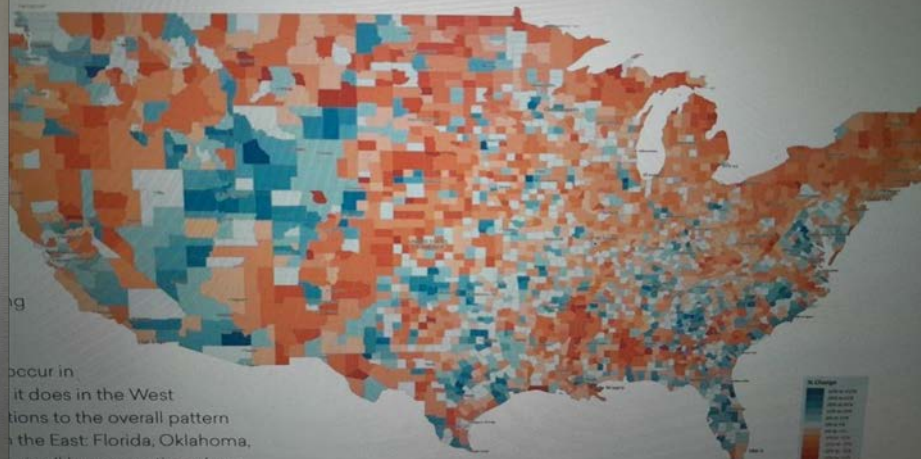
## Undergraduate enrollment was mixed across age groups

Year-over-year percentage change in undergraduate enrollment by age group

■ Fall 2022 ■ Fall 2023



Chart: Natalie Schwartz/Higher Ed Dive • Source: National Student Clearinghouse Research Center • Get the data • Created with Datawrapper



# Adult Learner: Alice Tchangoue

**What barriers have you  
experienced?**

# Barriers

- Adult learners with Disabilities\*
- ELL
- Food Insecurity
- Housing Security
- Childcare
- Transportation
- Mental Health (PTSD, Depression, Anxiety etc)\*
- Financial Literacy (scholarships, grants etc)
- Lack of knowledge of wrap-around services (Williams, 2023)

# Intersectionality Racism, Classism Barriers

- Impacted by the effects of systemic racism, income inequality, and cycles of poverty.
- Biased hiring processes and procedures that exclude certain populations from high-paying careers
- Systemic and structural barriers created and upheld by the higher education system that most significantly impact those at or over the age of 25 (e.g. financial aid systems that favor traditional students,
- Exclusionary college recruitment and admissions practices,
- Course structures that prohibit an individual's ability to hold a full-time job and/or have a family.

~(ESG Adult Ready Playbook, 2021)

# Adult Learner: Alice Tchangoue

What kind of support helps you succeed?



# Practical Support

## \*Prioritizing for the Adult Ready Transformation-Equity at Center\*

- Accessibility
- Program Change
- Operational Change
- Data
- Partnerships
- Knowledge is key\*
- Rapport\*
- Advocacy for equity in policy, procedures, grant writing, and funding.



## Accessibility

Post-traditional learners effectively access and move through postsecondary programs. Strategies to achieve this priority are:

- Ensure institutional and state aid works for post-traditional learners;
- Use financial levers to increase postsecondary engagement and progression for key post-traditional populations; and
- Conduct comprehensive outreach to all post-traditional learners.



## Program Change

Post-traditional learners thrive and feel engaged within postsecondary classrooms. Strategies to achieve this priority are:

- Deliver program content in adult friendly ways;
- Design programs for flexibility and convenience; and
- Develop pathways that leverage and support all skill and preparation levels.

# Priorities for Adult-Ready Transformation



## Operational Change

Post-traditional learners easily navigate postsecondary advising and administrative systems. Strategies to achieve this priority are:

- Create a one-stop student experience; and
- Develop efficient systems for tailored student advising.



## Data

Post-traditional learners are authentically measured through data and used as a subject for ongoing improvement. Strategies to achieve this priority are:

- Strengthen data measurement and collection systems to better monitor and evaluate adult learner outcomes.



## Partnerships

Post-traditional learners seamlessly interface between higher education systems and trusted community/industry partners. Strategies to achieve this priority are:

- Engage employer and workforce systems to promote relevance; and
- Partner to provide critical wrap-around supports.