



OREGON ADULT LEARNER OUTREACH TOOLKIT: MESSAGING FRAMEWORK

January, 2021

Background: TIE Partnership Grant

This outreach toolkit was created as part of a Talent, Innovation, and Equity (TIE) partnership grant awarded to The State of Oregon's Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC) by Lumina Foundation in 2018 to help eliminate disparities in postsecondary success rates between Oregon's overall student population and historically underrepresented students of color. The toolkit was created by Pyramid Communications, a contractor procured by the HECC in 2020, in consultation with HECC staff.

The grant supports a suite of state leadership activities aimed to improve postsecondary success in Oregon for African-American, Hispanic/Latinx, Native American/Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander learners, with a particular focus on adult learners from communities of color.

About This Toolkit

The goal of this toolkit is to help institutions improve outreach to adult learners from underrepresented communities of color by providing them with messaging and recommendations around decreasing barriers to enrollment and completion, changing narratives that discourage adult learners from applying, and improving strategies for retention.

The messaging below speaks to the strengths of potential students and what they have to gain and offer, while also addressing some of the barriers mentioned by adult learners from communities of color in a report commissioned by the HECC, "[Exploring Experiences of Postsecondary Education for Adult Learners from Communities of Color in Oregon](#)".

While messaging alone cannot remove systemic barriers, these messages aim to address some of the concerns expressed, help normalize non-linear pathways, and promote equitable outcomes. Institutions are encouraged to choose the messages that best suit their needs and audiences, and customize them to speak to their own offerings for adult learners from communities of color.

Overarching messaging

The below messages aim to address the overarching concerns expressed by adult learners from communities from color. Together, these six messages create a narrative. Use them together or on their own. Customize them to your institution and add your own call to action (contact your advisor, visit our website, apply today, etc.).

- **There is a college or training program ready for you.** No matter where you are in your life, there is a program that can help meet your needs. This could be anything from a career certificate to an apprenticeship to a two-year or four-year degree to a Ph.D.
- **A degree or certificate can boost your career and income.** The right college or training program can help you get a well-paying job, advance in your current work field, or start a new line of work.

- **College and training can fit into your life and your schedule.** Many Oregon community colleges and universities offer online courses, have locations across the state, and offer part-time or full-time programs to meet your needs.
- **Financial assistance can make your education affordable.** Scholarships and grants are available to help you afford tuition, books, and other costs.
- **College and training is here for you—whether you are restarting or just starting.** It's never too late to earn a degree or certificate, or complete a training program! Maybe you started, but didn't finish. Maybe you considered applying, but thought it wasn't for you. Whatever path you've taken, you have options.
- **There is no one way to be a college student. Find a path that works for you.** College staff can help you choose the best program for you, find financial aid options, figure out how past credits can transfer, and complete your degree or certificate.

COVID-19 Add-Ons

These messages are meant to address the new reality that COVID-19 has created for us all. They can be customized and added to the overarching messaging as appropriate.

- **Colleges are here to meet your needs during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond.** We offer a wide range of programs and opportunities, whether you want to earn your degree or develop skills to shift directions in your career.
- **Online and remote classes can make college more accessible.** As we work to adapt to our new normal, colleges and training programs are moving online. This means that with access to a computer and an internet connection you can complete your education or training.
- **Financial assistance is still available during and after this pandemic.** COVID-19 has created a lot of uncertainty in our world. But, you can still find scholarships, grants, and other financial assistance to complete college, certificate programs, or trainings—whether in-person or remote.

Cross-Audience Messaging

These messages speak across audiences and aim to speak to a sense of belonging. Choose the message that works best for you, customize it to your institution, and add your own call to action.

- There is no one way to be a college student. That's why we strive to create a culture of inclusivity where everyone feels like they belong and can succeed in college.
- You can succeed in college. You have talents to share, and there is a college or training program that can help you make the most of them.
- There is a college or training program ready for you. With a degree or certificate, you can get a better job and earn more money.
- You can succeed in college. We'll help you get there. With scholarships, tutoring, advising, and other student services like health care, you can get the supports you need to earn a degree or certificate.
- You'll inspire your kids, your family, and your community when you pursue a degree or certificate. With college or training you can do more and be more for them, and for you.

Messaging by Audience

These messages speak directly to concerns of specific audiences. Choose the message that works best for you, customize it to your institution, and add your own call to action.

For parents and guardians:

- Yes, you can be a parent or guardian *and* a student. Oregon's community colleges and public universities offer online or remote courses and training programs, have locations across the state, and offer part-time and full-time options to help you get your degree or credential.
- You know your children's education is important. Yours is too. You can lead the way by getting your college degree or certificate. Campus locations statewide and online courses make it possible to earn your credentials.
- You'll inspire your kids, your family, and your community when you pursue a degree or certificate. With college or training you can open up career opportunities that move you forward.

For students who have enrolled and left

These messages would be best if adapted and customized based on the institution's programs and offerings.

- Have some college credits but no degree? It's never too late to finish. Find out how your credits might transfer to an Oregon community college or public university.
- It's never too late to finish college! If you've taken college courses in the past, find out how your credits might transfer to an Oregon community college or public university.
- Looking to transfer? Make the most of your college credits! Find out how your credits might transfer to an Oregon public university and complete your degree or certificate.
- You can still finish your education. If you have past credits, you can use them toward a college degree or certificate that could lead to a higher paying job.
- Considering going back to school? College staff can help you navigate how your credits transfer, which courses to take, and how to access financial aid to support your education.

For those who have never enrolled:

- There are tons of options for training and education, from apprenticeships to career certificates to two- and four-year college degrees to PhDs. Find the right program to help you get the career you want.
- There is a college or training program for you. Prepare for the career you want, with options ranging from apprenticeships to career certificates to two- and four-year college degrees to doctorates.
- Your degree might be closer than you think. With financial aid, flexible schedules, and a range of certificate and degree options, you could be on your way to the career you want.
- You can get college credit for what you already know. By earning credit for prior learning, your certificate or degree is closer than ever.
- College courses should challenge you! Applying to college shouldn't. We make it easy to start and support you throughout your college journey so you can complete your education and earn your certificate or degree.

Undocumented students:

- There are financial aid options for undocumented and DACA students. In Oregon, you may be considered for state financial aid programs. [Explore your options](#), including submitting the [Oregon Student Aid Application \(ORSAA\)](#).

Messaging by topic

These messages dive deeper into some of the major barriers and concerns expressed by adult learners from communities of color. Each topic has a few different options so you can pick the message that works best for you, customize it to your institution, and add your own call to action.

Work/school relationship:

- Looking to advance in your career while you're working? The right training, certificate, or college program can help you get where you want to be. Flexible options mean you can learn online or go to school part-time so that you can keep working.
- The right training or education can help you get a better paying job—whether it is a college degree or a 10-week certificate program.
- Interested in moving up faster in your job? The right certificate or degree program can help. Flexible options mean you can learn online or go to school part-time, so that you can keep working.
- Earning a college degree or certificate can lead to better pay, lower your risk of unemployment, and give you greater economic mobility. A degree or certificate can help you get a well-paying career and help you, your family, and community succeed.

Financial concerns:

- Worried about affording college? You have options to make it possible. Scholarships and grants can help you pay for your education or training so that you can get a better paying job.
- Financial aid is available to help you get your college degree or certificate. [Find out what options are available](#) to help you afford your education.
- Before making a final decision about college or a training program, take time to learn about the total cost of program attendance. Check out [Oregon's financial aid options](#) and make a plan to tackle total program costs and reach your education goals.
- Take advantage of the many forms of financial assistance available! You have options to help you afford college.
 - Each year, the State of Oregon awards over \$100 million in grants to students and manages more than 600 private scholarships. Find and apply to state grants and scholarships that you qualify for at [OregonStudentAid.gov](#).
 - Don't miss out on federal and state aid. Complete your Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) or Oregon Student Aid Application (ORSAA).
 - Talk to the financial aid office at the school or program that interests you.

Family obligations:

- You work hard to support your family. With a degree or certificate, you can get a better paying job and find a path forward for your family.
- Online or remote courses, locations near you, and part-time programs mean you can earn a degree or certificate that will help you get a better paying job, while still having time to care for your family.

Accessibility/flexibility:

- Oregon has hundreds of opportunities for your higher education. Whether you are seeking to improve through career training, earn a certificate, complete a bachelor's degree, or pursue graduate and professional study, a wide variety of programs await you.
- Thousands of students transfer to and between Oregon colleges and universities each year. Find out how your courses will transfer to make the most out of your credits and avoid spending time and money on courses that won't transfer.
- Four-year college is not your only option for higher education. There is a broad range of education and training options, from apprenticeships to career certificates to two- and four-year degrees to PhDs.
- Everyone's educational path looks different. Talk to us to about what courses to take, how to get financial aid, and any other questions you may have. We are here to help you achieve your educational dreams.

Fill-in-the-blank institutional messaging by subject

These messages aim to address concerns that are particular to the individual institution and cannot be adequately addressed by general or universal messaging. They provide an outline for how to speak to these concerns, and are meant to be adapted and customized based on the institution's programs and offerings.

Financial concerns:

- Affording college is within your reach. We offer financial assistance for tuition, books, and other expenses. To learn about our financial assistance programs, [visit X/contact Y](#).
- We can help you afford your education or training. We offer financial assistance programs that can help you afford tuition, books, and other expenses. To learn about our financial assistance programs, [visit X/contact Y](#).
- More than [XX percent](#) of our students receive some form of financial assistance. To learn about our financial assistance programs, [visit X/contact Y](#).

Mentorship/advising:

- Applying for college or a training program can feel intimidating. But, help is here. We can guide you through transferring credits, applying for financial aid, and deciding which program will help you with your career. [Talk to/contact X today](#).
- We're here to guide you through your college journey. We'll help ensure that you complete your program and earn your certificate or degree. [Talk to/contact X today!](#)
- Not sure what program is right for you? Wondering if your credits transfer? We're here to help. [Contact X](#) or [visit Y](#) to learn more.
- Your advisor is here to help you make the most of your college education. Contact your advisor today to get support with [X concern](#), [Y concern](#), and [Z concern](#).

Accessibility/flexibility:

- Working full-time? Juggling school with child care? Have family obligations? We offer flexible learning options, including [X option and Y option](#), so that you can fit your [education/training](#) into your schedule.
- If you're an English language learner or a multilingual student, you can get support in [X languages](#).

Student needs:

- We know that students who are also parents or guardians need affordable child care and flexible course schedules in order to complete their education. That's why we offer X program.
- Access to academic advising, tutoring, and support are critical for students to succeed. All students at X institution have access to Y services.
- Access to health care and mental health services are critical for students to succeed. All students at X institution have access to Y services.

Culturally-specific programming:

- We know that people with different backgrounds have different needs when going to school. That is why we offer A programs for students of Y background/race/ethnicity.
- We have a diverse faculty and staff across our departments. X percent of our staff and faculty identify as Black, Indigenous, and People of Color.
- We strive to create a campus culture of inclusivity. We do that by X.