NON TRADITIONAL STUDENTS
THE NEW TRADITIONAL
WHO ARE THEY?

- Coming off active duty
- Work part-time or full-time
- Aiming for first career
- High school drop-out
- 28 or 75
- Parent
- Home-schooler
- Business owner
- Stay-at-home parent
- Caregiver
- Victim of a lay-off
- Recently divorced
- First generation student
“Anybody who didn’t follow the ‘set path’ right out of high school, or has experienced delays in their education.”

--Nadine Whitehead, UCA nontraditional student
NONTRADITIONAL STUDENT

- Delayed enrollment into postsecondary education;
- Attends college part-time;
- Works full-time (35 hours+ per week while enrolled);
- Financially independent for purposes of determining eligibility for financial aid;
- Has dependents other than a spouse (usually children, may also be caregivers of sick or elderly);
- A single parent (not married or married but separated and has dependents);
- And/or does not have a high school diploma (Has GED, high school completion certificate, or didn’t finish).

NATIONAL CENTER FOR EDUCATION STATISTICS
NONTRADITIONAL STUDENT

ONE WHO HAS STARTED A DEGREE BUT FAILED TO GRADUATE
In 2012 8 million *entire* student enrollment in 4 year public colleges/universities

In 2012 10 million *former* higher education students between the ages of 25-34

http://er.educause.edu/articles/2014/9/using-technology-to-engage-the-nontraditional-student
SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION
WHY RETURN?

• Career advancement… better job, higher salary, better quality of life
• Increase knowledge
• Increase literacy
• Civic education
• Increase technology knowledge
• Leisure
• Community based social-action initiatives
HOW THEY CHALLENGE EDUCATION

• They request flexibility
• They expect to be accommodated
• They desire online degree programs
• They bring rich life experiences and diversity
• They request relevant course - work and degree programs
CHALLENGES

• **SITUATIONAL** – Access, finances, childcare, transportation, time

• **INSTITUTIONAL** - Scheduling, transportation, course material, bureaucratic issues, course requirements, excessive admission fees

• **DISPOSITIONAL** – Student perceptions of their ability to access and complete learning activities. Anxiety, fear, negativity, peer perception, lack of interest.
STUDENTS’ REMARKS

• Technology is a big barrier, learning how to navigate through blackboard and portals (i.e. My UCA)

• Desks are uncomfortable and whoever is making the purchases should have to sit in one

• Knowing the resources available on campus for nontraditional students

• Reading schedules and knowing how to find the proper class that is on the schedule, it’s confusing

• I do not feel a sense of belonging on campus when on campus. There’s a disconnect in the classroom with the traditional students; it’s almost like we have ‘nontraditional’ or ‘old’ written on our forehead
UCA NONTRADITIONAL STUDENTS’ NEEDS

• Nontraditional Student Office with lounge area, lockers, computer outlets
• Fulltime employee to operate Nontraditional Student Office, access and empathy
• Line item in UCA budget
• Affordable and accessible childcare
• Affordable *family* housing
• Reasonable seating in classrooms
• **Empathy**
HIGHER EDUCATION ACTION

• Special nontraditional cohorts for group support (orientation, re-entry seminars, study skills)

• Single point of campus contact that connects the student to library, tutor, tech support, financial aid, and other services

• Shorter class terms, hybrid learning experiences, less rigid attendance requirements

• A degree audit – course required, time estimate to finish, cost estimate
“We have to find a way to create the conditions where students can stay focused, on task, and be able to complete their credential in a reasonable amount of time so that they can benefit from actually having that credential.”

Jamie Merisotis, Lumina foundation for education
HIGHER EDUCATION ACTION

• Extend student services hours or provide a 24/7 hotline/online link, integrate services into courses
• Mentor and life coaches to help overcome dispositional barriers
• Flexible entry and exit points
• Recognize previous higher education credits (transfer) and life’s experiences (Prior Learning Assessment)
APPLICATION

• Reflect on today’s information and conversations

• Identify personal biases and/or challenges when working with nontraditional students

• Ask yourself...how can I impact those in my ‘circle of influence’ with regard to the nontraditional population?

• Work to ensure students are respected and valued as individuals
ACADEMIC SUCCESS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

• Gain in economic and personal benefits
• Social, political, and economic benefits for a broader society
• Stronger America