

Research: Adults Show Increasing Interest in Returning to School and Exhibit Friendlier Attitudes Toward Online Learning

Recent EducationDynamics Research Identifies Preferences Among Adult Learners as They Pertain to Continuing Education

Hoboken, New Jersey (February 13, 2008)—An increasing number of adults nationwide are recognizing the importance of continuing education as it relates to professional growth, financial stability, job placement and personal enrichment. In fact, more than half of those surveyed by the Enrollment & Retention Services Division of EducationDynamics say they are considering a return to school for degrees or certifications to remain professionally competitive. This public opinion research was conducted last month by an independent firm on behalf of EducationDynamics.

The premier marketing resource for higher education institutions, EducationDynamics sought to identify current market trends in adult continuing education and elicit preferences about online programs offered by colleges and universities. Thirty-five focus group participants, all of whom are current or former students at online and/or traditional higher education institutions, were surveyed in four separate sessions split between New Jersey/Metropolitan New York and Metropolitan Denver.

The primary motivator for adults to return to school is economics—prospective students simply want better paying jobs. When asked what kind of institution they would consider, nearly half of the participants indicated interest in pursuing a degree online, citing variety and flexibility as attractive qualities. Others preferred a combination of online and traditional courses.

“When we looked at the number of schools to which prospective students applied, an interesting pattern emerged,” says Peter Tomassi, vice president of product development for the Enrollment & Retention Services Division of EducationDynamics. “None of the adult learners in our focus groups applied to more than four schools. Several, in fact, considered only one school. In contrast, traditional students have been known to apply to 10 schools or more.”

While all information gleaned from the focus groups will prove to be invaluable for managing the higher education student lifecycle, the following results may be of particular importance to prospecting, enrollment and retention departments nationwide:

- **Location, not curriculum, is the driving force behind school choice.** Although some participants decided to attend a school based on a specific program, the majority of participants reported that curriculum was less important than location, price and flexibility.
- **Cost and personal circumstances are the common reasons participants decided against attending a school.** Many participants found the final cost of a program to be higher than expected. Others cited life events, such as securing a good job, getting married and starting a family.
- **Support, motivation and interaction with teachers are the primary factors for completing degree or certificate programs.** School-sponsored programs, such as online tutoring, online mentoring programs, online writing labs and webinars, were valued by participants.

- **Work commitments and teaching techniques are common barriers to completing higher education.** According to focus group participants, the primary barrier to completing programs was learning which teaching method works best with their learning style. The work-life balance was also noted as a common barrier.
- **The Internet is the most popular source for school information.** Participants highly value comprehensive university websites that reach out to students through common Internet activities such as online chat rooms, message boards or online communities.

For more information about the focus groups or to inquire about EducationDynamics' enrollment or retention products and services, visit <http://www.educationdynamics.com>, or contact Tracy Howe at 201.377.3318 or tracy@goalquest.com.

About EducationDynamics

EducationDynamics, a portfolio company of Halyard Capital, is the leading marketing and information services company dedicated to helping higher education institutions find, enroll and retain students. Its content-rich and highly visible education websites, including EarnMyDegree.com, eLearners.com, GradSchools.com, StudyAbroad.com, and its more than 50 special interest microsites, make EducationDynamics the premier provider of qualified prospective students for colleges and universities. In addition, the company offers a full suite of web-delivered services proven to drive enrollment growth and reduce student attrition. For more information, visit <http://www.educationdynamics.com>.