Understanding the Mindset of Adult Learners & Key Market Trends

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Joining You Today…
Meet Your EAB Team

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Your Imperatives Determine Ours

INSTITUTIONAL STRATEGY
Prepare Your Institution for the Future
Executive guidance rooted in research to support your strategic priorities

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Achieve Your Enrollment and Growth Goals
Tailored partnerships powered by a recruitment ecosystem with unrivaled reach to enroll your future classes

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Build a Student-Centric Campus
Technology trusted by 850 schools to retain, graduate, and empower more students

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Advance DEI on Campus and in Your Community
Technology, research, and bold initiatives to strengthen your DEI strategy and eliminate equity gaps

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We partner with 2,500+ institutions to accelerate progress and enable lasting change.

95%+ of our partners return to us year after year because of results we achieve, together.
Key Graduate Market Trends
How Big is the Adult and Grad Ed Market?

Adult Learners Make Up 42% of Total Higher Ed Tuition Revenue

Estimated Higher Ed Gross Annual Revenue\(^1\), 2021

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Revenue</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adult and Grad Ed</td>
<td>$84B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traditional Undergrad</td>
<td>$118B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Tuition Revenue</td>
<td>$203B</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

25+ Undergrad Students Account for Half of All Adult Ed Revenue

Estimated Total Gross Annual Revenue from Adult (25+) Bachelor’s, Post-Bac Certificates, and Graduate Enrollment, 20-21

- Master’s Degrees: 38%
- Professional Doctorate: 26%
- All Grad Certificates (Post-Bacc and Post-Master’s): 4%
- Other Adult Bachelor’s: 23%
- Adult Degree Completer: 9%


1) Tuition discounts not included in analysis
2) Includes first-time adult students, second bachelor’s students, and non-degree seekers

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Master’s Market

Short-Term Expectations Variable, But Evening Out

1) The graph includes a ‘year 0’ for each projection. These ‘year 0s’ (2013, 2019, and 2021) are actual figures, not projections.

Source: NCES Digest of Education Statistics Table 318.10, EAB interviews and analysis.
Long-Term Picture Shows Durable, Slower Growth

Master’s Market

Master’s Degree Conferrals and Projections, 1990-2031

1.1%
Projected Annual Growth, 2021 - 2031

3.2%
Actual Avg. Annual Growth, 1990 - 2021

1) The graph includes a ‘year 0’ for each projection. These ‘year 0s’ (2013, 2019, and 2021) are actual figures, not projections.

Source: NCES Digest of Education Statistics Table 318.10, EAB interviews and analysis.
Completers Provide Enrollment Opportunity

Population Grows But Institutions Will Face Enrollment Challenges

Only 4% of Some-College, No Credential Students Enrolled in 2021

20.3M
25-65-year-olds with some college, but no credential (SCNC) in AY 2022

691K
SCNC students re-enrolled in AY 2022

45K
SCNC students completed first credential in AY21

And of Those Re-Enrolling, Many Resume Their Journey at 2-Years
Institution choices of 691K degree completion students, 2021/2022

51% Community Colleges
15% Primarily Online
13% Public 4-Yr
11% Primarily Associate’s 4-Yr
8% Private 4-Yr
2% For-Profits
Your Own Stop-Outs Prove Easiest to Re-Recruit

Institutions attended by 744K degree completion students before and after re-enrollment in AY21

Where a Student Stops Out

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community College</th>
<th>Public 4Yr</th>
<th>Primarily Assoc. 4Yr</th>
<th>Private Non-Profit 4Yr</th>
<th>POI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Often Predicts Where They Re-Enroll

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community College</th>
<th>227K Go to Same Community College</th>
<th>136K Go to New Community College</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>54%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

38% Of all adult degree completers re-enroll at the same institution they stopped out from.
Certificates Market

Fast Growth, But Small Market at Graduate Level

Graduate Certificates a Tiny Slice of Overall For-Credit Market
n= 1,105,547 certificate conferrals, 2021

Pre-baccalaureate certificates (92%)

Graduate certificates (8%) (includes post-bacc and post-master’s)

Total Conferrals by Type, 2021

- 1.0M
- 89K
- 64K
- 28K
- 25K

Hype Over Fast, Sustained Growth Masks Small Market Size
Annual Graduate Certificate Conferrals, 2003-2021

- 2003: 28K
- 2006: 41K
- 2009: 55K
- 2012: 71K
- 2015: 82K
- 2018: 89K
- 2021: 1,247 conferring institutions, 2021
- 12,492 programs, 2021

Source: Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), National Center for Education Statistics, accessed April 4, 2023, EAB interviews and analysis.
Unfettered Certificate Program Proliferation

Launches of New For-Credit Graduate Certificate Programs Far Outpace Conferrals

Many Programs Fail to Take Off (but Also Fail to Close)

44%
For-credit graduate certificate programs reporting zero completions in 2021

5
Median number of annual for-credit graduate certificate conferrals per program, excluding those with zero conferrals, in 2021

Source: Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), National Center for Education Statistics, accessed April 4, 2023; EAB interviews and analysis.
Assessing the Mindset of Adult Learners
Navigating the Complexity of Engaging Prospective Adult Learners

Engaging Prospects at Scale When Path to Enrollment Is Rarely Linear

Key Questions Plague Prospects—and the Answers Determine How They Engage with Your Funnel

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What options do I have?</th>
<th>If I enroll, will it be worth it?</th>
<th>How should I spend my time?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9 out of 10</td>
<td>7 out of 10</td>
<td>6 out of 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know which school to attend when they initiate their journey</td>
<td>Cite outcomes-driven motivations for earning their degree</td>
<td>Applying to fewer schools now than before</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Adult Learners Are Highly Pragmatic

40.9% Applied to two or fewer schools

69.3% Said an application or admissions requirement deterred them from applying

"Which application and admissions requirements (if any) influenced your decision not to apply to a specific school or program?"

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Requirement</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Application fee</td>
<td>24.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GPA prerequisite</td>
<td>19.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degree prerequisite</td>
<td>18.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certain application requirements</td>
<td>17.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Credits prerequisite</td>
<td>14.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essay question(s)</td>
<td>10.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Admissions Requirements
4 Key Principles

Accuracy
Do you have enough to make a good decision in most cases?

Speed
Can you respond very quickly to most candidates?

Clarity
Can you communicate your admissions criteria easily?

Access
Have you eliminated unnecessary hurdles?

1) Students Aged 26 and Older, Winter 2020 Survey
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Prospective Students Prioritize 3 Things

- Affordability
- Pricing & Financial Aid
- Credit Count and Prerequisites
- Customization, Electives, and "Stackability"
- Delivery Mode and Scheduling
- Speed to Completion
- Flexibility
- Personal Payoff
- Affordability and Return on Investment
- Pricing & Financial Aid

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### Getting Beyond “Working Professionals”

#### Develop Targeted Programs Across a Prospect’s Career Lifecycle

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Audience</th>
<th>Upskilling in Place</th>
<th>Seeking Promotion</th>
<th>Facing Replacement</th>
<th>Returning to Workforce</th>
<th>Preparing for a Switch</th>
<th>Pursuing a Passion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Customer Journey</td>
<td>&quot;I need new skills to keep up with job expectations.&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;I need to build new skills for my next step.&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;My career doesn’t exist anymore.&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;I haven’t worked in a long time.&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;I want a better job.&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;I’m looking for a career with meaning.&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Value Added by Education

- **Value is typically from skills learned quickly (not credential’s authority).**
- **Skills often outweigh credential, except in industries with prescribed career ladders.**
- **New skills offer greatest benefit, but may require credential to change industry.**
- **Credential communicates readiness for today’s job, and updated skills ensure performance.**
- **Credential signals preparation, but fields (e.g., tech) may seek primarily skill growth.**
- **Skills learned for new role matter most, if entry level degree requirements are met.**

#### Goal

- **Keep up**
- **Advance**
- **Secure a new job**

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.
It’s All in the Delivery

Format Increasingly Essential for Program Success

A Tour of Emerging Program Design Options

- **Accelerated**
  - Shorter than a typical academic program
  - Microcredentials
  - Mini-MBA
  - Second Bachelor’s
  - Bootcamps

- **Modular**
  - Short modules that combine into credentials
  - DIY Programs
  - Modular Master’s
  - Tiered Content Portfolio

- **Experiential**
  - Integrated opportunities to build skills
  - Client-Based Projects
  - Team Capstone Projects
  - Virtual Internships

- **Demonstrated Mastery**
  - Progress based on assessment of competencies
  - Project Based Master’s
  - MOOC to Master’s
  - Course to Assessment
  - Competency-Based Education

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.
Mega Stealth Shopping is Here
Mega-Stealth Shopping Is Here

How Mega-Stealth Shopping Manifests Throughout Recruitment Funnel

Pre-Awareness
Prospective students seek information from websites and platforms like TikTok (where most institutions lack an official presence)

Awareness
Stealth shoppers often choose not to engage with marketing outreach, admissions counselors, or recruiters

Application
Institutions find they don’t encounter many students until they apply, making it hard to predict yield

Decision
Even admitted students wait longer to put down a deposit; nonconsumption a likely draw

Changing Privacy Behaviors and Preferences

• Consumers eager to protect their identities online as a response to “doxxing” and other threats
• Greater adoption of encrypted messaging apps (e.g., Signal) and private chats (e.g., Discord servers)
• Slow phaseout of third-party cookies; Apple now prompts users to opt into data-sharing with apps

What Qualifies as Mega-Stealth Shopping?

Stealth Shopping Rates for PCO¹ Units²

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Units</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2022</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


¹ Professional, continuing, and online education
² Based on research interviews conducted by EAB.
Generational Takeover Swift for Adult Ed

Millennials Dominate the Market Today, Gen Z Right Around the Corner

Real and projected composition of adult learners by generation, 2012-2031

1) * Projected

Source: EAB analysis of the 2000-2021 American Communities Survey; EAB interviews and analysis.
A Study in Prospect-Centric Design: U of Aberdeen

MBA Program Webpage Centers Key Info and Student Stories

Even Beyond the Program Page, Aberdeen’s Website is Optimized for Prospect Audiences

- Prospects can access adult education in one click from homepage
- Visitors can easily browse programs using an extensive range of filters
- Clickable contact details on all webpages make asking questions easy

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Source: The University of Aberdeen, "MBA, Postgraduate Taught"; EAB interviews and analysis.

Easy navigation without scrolling or using drop-down menus

Key details in one location at top of page

Design and branding aligns with main university webpage

Chatbot appeals to prospects and allows visitors to access key information fast

Student testimonial attests to the program’s quality
Summary of Key Trends

1. Master’s market shows durable, stable, and slower growth even with short-term variable shocks. Growth in the market is linked to the job market outlook for degree holders.

2. Adult Degree Completion Market shows significant opportunity in terms of size, but myriad challenges to enroll students. Community Colleges gaining the most significant share of the market. The greatest opportunity in degree completion remains in your own stop-out students.

3. Certificates market sees fast growth but remains relatively small – program launches outpace student demand. Most institutions are seeing lower revenue than projected, and many don’t know ROI. Program launches typically more expensive than expected even for ‘low-lift’ certificates.

4. Adult learners prioritize speed to completion, flexibility, and affordability. With the Mega-Stealth Shopping phenomenon, crucial to make it easy for adult learner prospect to access key program info self-service. In just eight years, Gen Z expected to make up 60% of adult market.

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Summary of EAB Professional & Adult Education Advisory Services Partnership Benefits

Our areas of expertise - partnering with units that serve adult learners and working professionals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organizationa l Design</th>
<th>✓ Organizational models ✓ Budget and planning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Marketing and Recruiting</td>
<td>✓ Brand and awareness-building ✓ Audience identification ✓ Lead generation ✓ Channel strategy ✓ Lifelong learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Design</td>
<td>✓ Market intelligence ✓ Portfolio optimization ✓ Online strategy ✓ Industry futures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Market Innovation</td>
<td>✓ Emerging credentials ✓ Education technology ✓ Alternative providers ✓ Employer partnerships ✓ Policy landscape</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Offering unparalleled insight, educational support, and practical guidance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Executive Roundtables</th>
<th>Summits focused on latest best practice and strategy research, with discussion and peer networking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Market Insights</td>
<td>Customized data to inform program content, launch, and marketing or to identify offerings that serve local demand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership Summits</td>
<td>Sessions for members of the marketing leadership team to support implementation and build consensus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benchmarking Surveys</td>
<td>Data collection and customized reports to compare internal operations to similar institutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Briefings and Working Sessions</td>
<td>Facilitated sessions to educate your team, kick-start taskforce initiatives, and build consensus among campus leaders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategy Reports</td>
<td>Detailed studies featuring hundreds of innovative ideas addressing leaders’ most pressing challenges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expert Consultations</td>
<td>Phone and email consultations with researchers to discuss your strategy, provide advice, and offer implementation guidance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Best Practice and Resource Library</td>
<td>EAB.com contains all past studies, recorded webconferences, toolkits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategic Leader</td>
<td>Thought partner and single point of contact to provide insight and guidance throughout the partnership</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Connect our library to your current initiatives

Engage with experts and network with peers

Access turnkey resources to support implementation
A Moment of Opportunity and Threat for PCO Leaders
PCO Education More Essential, and More Competitive, Than Ever Before

**Anticipate the Next Wave of Competition**
- Evaluate strength of organizational structure against competitors and peers
- Examine shifts in market concentration and innovative emerging models for PCO programs
- Reassess your portfolio mix and strategy
- Prepare for downstream impacts of fewer undergraduate enrollments

**Embed AI Skills Across Programs and Curricula**
- Examine what adult learners need to reskill/upskill for how AI is changing the workplace
- Explore how to build AI into existing programs and curricula across disciplines

**Implement a Financially Viable Microcredential Portfolio**
- Develop proposal and evaluation practices that support financially sound microcredentials
- Build for stackability from the start
- Enhance prior learning assessment and admissions policies to better support microcredential offerings

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1) Professional, continuing, and online
Activate Data-Informed Growth Decisions: EAB Market Insights

Custom Analysis and Consultation to Strengthen Program and Portfolio Growth Strategy

EAB Supports Partners at Every Stage of Growth

Generate Ideas

Validate Need

Refresh Programs

Review Portfolio

Rich Data Inputs and Expert Analysis Comprise Every Answer

Lightcast

We partner with industry-leader Lightcast for real-time labor market intelligence and add analysis of:

- Enrollment and conferral trends
- Competitor program positioning
- Prospect-facing website and inquiry process audits
- BLS projections and Census data
- Peer program curricula
- Industry trends and literature

How You Can Partner with EAB in 2024

1. Surface regional market-aligned program ideas with a Market Opportunity Scan
2. Find your market-aligned existing programs with a Portfolio Health Check
3. Refresh existing programs with a 360° Program Assessment
Customizing Your EAB.com Experience

Create an Account & Subscribe to Key Emails and Topics

Getting Started With EAB's Website

A partnership with EAB provides colleges and universities with research, insights, and actionable advice in EAB's expert terrains. EAB works closely with leaders within each division and across campus to inform thinking, build consensus, and execute strategy that's right for each campus. In addition, all staff across campus have access to EAB's website and can access any practice, tool, or webinar available within their institution's membership.

Step-by-Step Guide for Your First Log-in

The site is protected for members-only access. Use these instructions to obtain your unique password:
1. Go to the EAB's website, located at www.eab.com
2. Select the "Login" link in the upper right-hand corner above the search bar. Select "Create an account."
3. Use the drop-down menus to select the Country, City, and State where you are located. This is typically where the institution is headquartered.
4. Choose your Organization Name from the drop-down menu. Select "Go!"
5. Enter your Name and Contact Information. Select "Register Now."
6. You will receive an email to your institutional email address. Click the link in the email to confirm your account.

Note: It is important to use your institution's e-mail address when requesting a site. Gmail, Yahoo, and personal email domains will not work.

What You’ll Find

Executive Roundtable & Team Summit
Logistics and Materials
Toolkits and Diagnostics
Studies, Whitepapers, and Webinars

Thinking of launching a certificate program? Avoid these 3 mistakes.

The certificate market can be tricky to navigate given data limitations. However, avoiding these three mistakes can better inform decision-making on certificate programming—and counter risky assumptions.

AVOID THESE MISTAKES:

1. Not tracking program effectiveness.
2. Not considering industry trends.
3. Not aligning program with market demand.

How 104 advancement teams have weathered a bleak start to FY2021

We asked our partners to share how big of a performance change they saw from the start of their fiscal years through December 31, compared to the same period during the previous year.

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Subscribe to the PAE Blog here
PAE Resource Hub: Your One-Stop Shop for What’s Going on at EAB

Visit the [PAE Resource Hub](#) for an introduction to some of our most popular content, the latest events, key resources, and impactful partner services.

### Getting Started

EAB provides in-depth research and services for professional and adult education leaders to meet their most pressing challenges. We’ve surfaced best practices to help support your organizational strategy, market innovation, program design, and recruitment.

Three ways to get the most out of your EAB partnership:

1. **Register for an event** to get the latest insights from our research and connect with peers.
2. **Sign up for an audit or diagnostic**—our team will assess current policies or practices and give you custom recommendations.
3. **Browse our related research**, which includes in-depth studies and toolkits, to implement changes on your campus.