

**Adult & Higher Education (AHE) Closing the Loop Report 2019-20**  
**Sondra Cuban, Director, AHE**

Section 1: Program Assessment Plan Transition Point Assessments

For Fall 2019, there were 49 AHE students registered out of 53 active students in the program (active” meaning those students attending three academic quarters in a single year and planning to take future courses). This figure is a marked decrease from the previous year (of 63 active students), as well as years before that. Since Spring of 2018, there was a noticeable decline in new student applications and intakes than normal. At the same time, students were continuing to graduate therefore lowering overall enrollment figures. 11 students graduated during this academic year, plus 1 (graduating student) over the summer and which shows a stable completion rate pattern from the previous years. This 19/20 decline appears to be an anomaly since Fall 2020 showed a normal and healthy application and enrollment uptick.

The make-up of the AHE program in the Fall 2019, is part of a larger pattern over the last few years, of small but steady increases of students of color, approximately 22-23% with rises especially of Latinx populations. This is largely due to the program marketing over the last three years to counties other than Whatcom. 2019/20 shows that more students than ever, over 40% of the AHE population, are coming from non-Whatcom counties. This year, more students came to AHE from Skagit (7), King (9), Snohomish (4) and Pierce (2) counties than last year. In Fall 2019, there were 35 female students and 14 male students which has been more or less the same since previous years. Almost all AHE students are employed, attending the program on a part-time basis. 41 students receive tuition waivers (77%) with higher numbers of employee waiver students now coming from WWU (18 this year) and with increasingly smaller numbers of revenue students over the last couple years which is now only 23%. There is a continued pattern, too, of younger students (in their 20s) who have entered the program since 2015 (constituting 30% of the program), when AHE began to focus more on higher education. A majority of students however are over 30.

Admission	<p>There was no minimum MAT score for acceptance. Internal policies are that if MAT scores were low, applicants were interviewed. In 2019 a decision was made and approved to drop the MAT to eliminate applicant barriers. The minimum GPA for admission is 3.00 and if students score slightly below this they may be provisionally admitted to AHE. In a case-by-case basis, some students are given a chance to non-matriculate to improve their grades.</p> <p><u>Admission Data</u></p> <table> <tr> <td>Number of Applicants:</td> <td align="right">21</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Number of Accepted/Admits:</td> <td align="right">21</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Number of Matriculated:</td> <td align="right">15</td> </tr> </table> <p><u>GPA Data</u></p>	Number of Applicants:	21	Number of Accepted/Admits:	21	Number of Matriculated:	15
Number of Applicants:	21						
Number of Accepted/Admits:	21						
Number of Matriculated:	15						

	<p>Average GPA of Applicants: 3.24  Average GPA of Accept/Admits: 3.24  Average GPA of Matrics: 3.20</p> <p><u>MAT Test Data</u>  Average MAT of Applicants: 412  Average MAT of Accept/Admits: 412  Average MAT of Matrics: 411</p> <p>The admissions data for 2019/20 shows a noticeable decrease in the amount of students applying to AHE. In 2018, there were 32 applicants and this year, 21. This appeared to be similar across WWU graduate programs and was probably due to the economy and labor market changing. It is an anomaly because for Fall, 2020 there were more student applications. The GPAs in all categories were slightly lower this year than the previous year. MAT scores were nearly exactly the same as the previous year. Overall, there was a notable decrease in applications in both Spring 2018 and Fall 2019. Historically there has been a range of quality among students applying to and admitted to AHE. This year and several years back, though, demonstrate a profile of students that are attracted to, and entering the program with good academic backgrounds who are well-prepared to learn.</p>
Retention	<p>The average GPA of students in AHE in 2019/20 was 3.20 which demonstrates that students are performing well in their academic course work, although this is a slight decrease from the previous year. The Graduate school tracks quarterly GPA (3.00) and notifies those students and the Director, if their grades dip below this requirement.</p>
Entry to Fulltime Internship or Culminating Project	<p>Students must complete and pass all core courses before entering the culminating project course, AHE 588 Portfolio and Applied Research, which was made more rigorous (in both 2015 and in 2019) and which the director taught for the first time (in academic year, 19/20). AHE has no formal internship. However students take a mandatory “Field Experience” AHE 592 course (which was a new program requirement, as of Fall 2015) due to the noticeable pattern of younger students entering AHE with less career experience. The Field Experience course was changed to once a year (during the summertime) to encourage more students to progress their studies on a rolling basis.</p>
Completion	<p>AHE 588 is the culminating project for the AHE program and entails portfolio assessment and which fulfills the program’s Learning Outcomes and Learning Objectives. It was updated in 2015 to be more rigorous, and since 2019, the assignments were further revised and only the director and the other TT faculty are teaching it. More than one faculty member may grade and assess student projects and presentations. In academic year 11 students completed/passed the AHE 588 course, which shows stability with the year before that. AHE students, on average, take 12 terms to complete the program due to many students using waivers and the fact that most students in AHE are employed while studying.</p>
Post Completion	<p>Career services data is not available (for 19/20) but from previous year data sets, it is clear that most AHE students are employed within the education sector while they are studying or they are working in a field related to their studies.</p>

## Section 2: Use of Data for Improvements of Programs and/or Operations

**Admission:** The AHE Coordinator continues to collect and analyze “lifecyle” data on prospective students (from hearing about the program to the Information Sessions to applying and becoming admitted to AHE). An analysis of the 21 applicants in 19/20 showed that only 6 attended the Information sessions, which comprises less than half of all applications, which is unusual from previous years and is probably due to the overall decrease in applications and more energy spent emailing individual prospective students who showed an interest in the program and answering their questions. Of those who attended the Info sessions, almost all (5) heard about the program through word-of-mouth (from colleagues) which is a typical pattern for the waiver students, many of whom work in the community college system and at WWU. The “revenue” based students almost always rely first on the website for basic information about the program. The AHE Coordinator has continued this year to schedule two quarterly Information Sessions for the faculty, coordinator and GA, to meet and greet prospective students, helping also with information for career faire presentations. Due to COVID-19 in Spring, the Face-to-Face Info which capture more WWU graduating students, especially in Human Services were discontinued and conducted online. Human Services students were recruited through an emailing campaign to address senior cohort students and interest them in AHE. The Info sessions this past year showed a decline in attendance, although we continued to have them. We have continued to reduce the number of non-matriculated students in the program by vetting them from the beginning application stages, with the new internal policy (implemented Fall 2015), which is another way to ensure a capable and committed applicant and admission profile. The new policy has encouraged WWU employees to apply to the program to receive a master’s degree rather than take individual courses for the purpose of their continuing professional development.

**Retention:** During 2019-20, the AHE Coordinator continued to track those students who ‘stop out’ and systematically contacts them as to whether or not they plan to return the quarter that they leave, with the director emailing them directly to offer support and encouragement to persist in the program. During the Fall of 2019, the advisors continued to contact each of their advisees through a Canvas system that was developed the previous year and appears to be useful to students, particularly receiving information and applying it to their studies. The Orientation of 2019 was only slightly changed from the previous years because the evaluations received in Spring of 2019 were positive and the GA from the previous year stayed on and was familiar with the process of inducting students. The spring Orientation 2020 was online for the first time due to COVID WWU policies. It collapsed the basic topics and focused on on-boarding the new students and answering all of their questions so that they could begin their studies smoothly. The new student policy was changed to require them to attend the face-to-face Orientation in the future which is 3-hours long and has a panel and more information and allows for social networking. The on-boarding session was successful with feedback that it was productive and helpful and was used again in the Fall 2020 year,. The AHE Student retreat in the spring of 2020 was cancelled due to COVID-19 policies at WWU and the fact that a ‘live’ retreat would be more beneficial. The focus for the retreat was developed by AHE students in GSAC and the AHE 578 program development course, and it was about predatory financial aid loans and student debt with workshops and speakers. In particular racial justice was emphasized and which intersected with the BLM movement and BIPOC student movement work at WWU. The plan was to change it to go online in Spring 2021 if it is appropriate. Normally there is an annual student satisfaction survey in May but due to all of the changes with COVID WWU policies, the director decided to call every student in AHE and discuss with them their individual needs and interests with the program and asked them how they were doing and how AHE could help in any way. The personal contact from the director directly to each student was appreciated, according to students, the GA and other faculty and it was an opportunity to learn and plan for a continuing

year of possible COVID-related issues. A newsletter was planned around that topic and students submitted pieces (that was sent out Fall 2020). The AHE program continued to use the “Action Plan” in the Graduate School Council Review, to monitor advising and student engagement especially the information that came out of the direct phone calls, and individual emails from students to the director. Some students and their families during Spring 2020 were deeply affected by the pandemic, and those students temporarily left the program, almost all of them communicating with the director, their instructor, and coordinator about their situation and plans. This also affected summer planning and enrollment for remote, rather than hybrid instruction. Frequent emails by the director to faculty in the Spring of 2020 were clear about dropping any punitive guidelines or criteria for attendance and submissions for spring and summer and introduce the NP/P system from the graduate school.

**Completion:** This year there was more pressure from above to drop courses that were under-enrolled through new criteria (at least 6 students per course) and a few courses were indeed dropped. Those students who needed elective credits were given independent study opportunities (by the director). Also, one of the TT faculty in Spring 2020 went on medical leave and a new substitute NTT was given his courses, which worked out very well with the director and her communicating frequently and helping when needed. Students are required to articulate in both oral and written forms and in electronic and face-to-face formats the objectives of AHE in the capstone course, AHE 588, through graded discussions, presentations, and academic papers. All of the learning objectives for AHE are encapsulated in this culminating course, which demonstrates students’ comprehensive knowledge of the field of Adult & Higher Education. Students cannot graduate from the AHE program until they fulfill the requirements in this capstone course. Projects are evaluated by at least one faculty and sometimes two, if needed. In 2019, 588 became more rigorous and streamlined to make it more accessible to graduating students. It was upgraded by the director and faculty to have a seamless sequence between assignments in Spring 2020. Only TT faculty teach this course and Sondra changed the course additionally in the Spring of 2020 to make assignments more accessible, with options, and changes in timelines. Feedback from that course showed that these alternatives made it a successful experience for graduating students.

**Post-completion:** Most students are employed both during and after their tenure in AHE and take courses on a part-time basis. The Coordinator keeps updated contact information for alumni along with Career Services data, when it is available, to learn about the employment rates of AHE graduates. In addition, a quarterly program newsletter (prepared by the Graduate Assistant) that goes to alumni and current students profiles soon-to-be graduating students and discusses their experiences and aspirations. The retreat is also another way to learn about alumni experiences who come regularly to the annual AHE retreat. The Career Services Center does not have employment data for AHE students in 19/20, only from 18/19 and earlier.