

Adult & Higher Education (AHE) Closing the Loop Report 2020-2021
Sondra Cuban, Director, AHE

Section 1: Program Assessment Plan Transition Point Assessments

In the Fall quarter 2020, there were 45 students enrolled in AHE out of a total of 65 “active” students in the program (inclusive of Spring quarter 2021). By “active” we mean those students attending three academic quarters in a single year and planning to take future courses. The disparity in student numbers between Fall and Spring can be explained as such: 15 new students were admitted in the Fall quarter of 2020, with only 4 students graduating (end of Fall 2020). 14 students were then admitted Spring quarter, 2021, which is a larger than expected amount (usually around 10 students or less), and no students graduated winter of 2021. Nearly all of these new students (Fall 2020 and Spring 2021) were on state waivers in the field of Higher Education. For these 29 new students, 22 were state waivers. A majority of them were working from home during the pandemic as administrators in higher education. During this time the AHE program was also fully online so it may have fit much better with their work circumstances. This influx of state waivers into the program made up for a decline in 2019 (where only 53 students were identified as active). It isn’t clear whether the uptick in student application and enrollment during 20/21 is temporary or permanent, given the changes brought on by the pandemic and the 21/22 and 22/23 enrollment data may give a more reliable long-term picture. It is clear however, that AHE has been steadily attracting more students who work in the Higher Education field and are using state waivers. While there was a majority of state waivers already in the program by 2018 (given AHE’s solid reputation as a Higher Education provider in the State) a noticeable amount of Western employees were students by 2020/21 (19/65). The rest of these students were using state waivers, and coming either from the community colleges or universities across Washington (29/65), leaving only 17 students (26%) as revenue students, coming from Adult Education settings. This means that 48/65 or approximately 74% of all AHE’s students are in the Higher Education field and are on state waivers.

The make-up of the AHE program for the Fall 2020 data for 45 students has been stable for gender, with 10 males to 35 females, which is similar to previous years. However the racial and ethnic composition for the first time in a number of years has shown a decrease in students of color with approximately 13% (6) non-white students in AHE; whereas before, there had been a slow and steady increase of students of color. This decline could be a temporary phenomenon and perhaps a result of the pandemic conditions, whereby a majority of white administrators, especially through WWU, entered AHE as an online program (from March 2020-Winter/Spring 2022). The age breakdown also shows that younger students are entering AHE since 2016. In 20/21, 22 or 34% of students were under 30 years old while the majority (43) were over 30 and composing 66% of the student population. The continuing trend of increasingly younger students is likely due to the program attracting those workers in the field of Higher Education. Almost all AHE students are employed, attending the program on a part-time basis.

Program marketing especially, on the website, encourages WA state workers from southern regions to apply to the program, and they steadily represent larger groups of students in AHE over the last several years. This geographic diversity over the last several years has stayed

consistent or increased. 13 students in 20/21 came from King County alone (whereas in 2019, 9 did). A similar amount of students came from Skagit (6) and 3 from Pierce County as well as Snohomish County (2) and Chelan County (2). Overall however, 38 students resided in Whatcom county, a good proportion of these students either representing WWU employees or the community college system surrounding Bellingham.

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.</p> <p><u>Admission Data</u></p> <table data-bbox="488 615 1089 720"> <tr> <td>Number of Applicants:</td> <td>35</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Number of Accepted/Admits:</td> <td>35</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Number of Matriculated:</td> <td>30</td> </tr> </table> <p><u>GPA Data</u></p> <table data-bbox="488 835 1089 940"> <tr> <td>Average GPA of Applicants:</td> <td>3.37</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Average GPA of Accept/Admits:</td> <td>3.37</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Average GPA of Matrics:</td> <td>3.36</td> </tr> </table> <p>The admissions data showed that more people applied and were admitted in 20/21 than in 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>	Number of Applicants:	35	Number of Accepted/Admits:	35	Number of Matriculated:	30	Average GPA of Applicants:	3.37	Average GPA of Accept/Admits:	3.37	Average GPA of Matrics:	3.36
Number of Applicants:	35												
Number of Accepted/Admits:	35												
Number of Matriculated:	30												
Average GPA of Applicants:	3.37												
Average GPA of Accept/Admits:	3.37												
Average GPA of Matrics:	3.36												
Retention	<p>The average GPA of students in AHE in 2019/20 was 3.20 while in 20/21, it had increased, demonstrating that students are performing well in their academic course work, and/or that the program had temporarily reduced measures to enable students to persist. 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). AHE has no formal internship. However students take a mandatory “Field Experience” AHE 592 course due to the noticeable pattern of younger students entering AHE with less career experience.</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. In the 20/21 academic year 11 students completed/passed the AHE 588 course (including summertime), similar to 2019/20 data which shows stability. 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	Career services data is not available (for 20/21) but from previous data sets, it is clear that most AHE students are employed within the education sector while they are studying or they are working in fields related to their studies.
-----------------	--

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

Admission: The AHE Coordinator continues to collect and analyze “lifecycle” data on prospective students (from hearing about the program to the Information Sessions to applying and becoming admitted to AHE). An analysis of 35 applicants showed that about half attended the Information sessions. Of those who attended the Info sessions, 12 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. 4 students heard about AHE from the website. 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. We have begun to eliminate 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. In a number of cases where students’ GPA’s are significantly below the Graduate School GPA level, but where the applicants shows promise, we rely on the “provisional admit” status with the requirement that they receive passing grades.

Retention: During the Fall of 2020, the director reached out to all students via phone and email, as she did in the Spring of 2020, to check in with them and see how they were doing and if they needed extra support or had questions or comments about AHE during the pandemic. This also became an opportunity for continued online advising through phone, email, the Canvas system (that was developed in 2018), and Zoom appointments. The Orientation of 2020 (Fall and Spring) was conducted online with good evaluations. In the Spring of 2021, a new aspect was added to the Orientation, whereby the Graduate School coordinator conducted a Degree Works session which allowed new students to learn about and devise their Plan of Study. There was an online student retreat in 2021, organized by AHE students, which compensated for the cancelled retreat in 2020 due to COVID. During the 2020/21 year, the director was on sabbatical and an interim director took over and ran the program smoothly. The program went online from March of 2020 to December 2021, with both synchronous and asynchronous engagement.

Completion:

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. Only TT faculty teach this course and the director changed the course additionally in the Fall 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 was paused in 2021 due to COVID. The retreat is also another way to learn about alumni experiences who come regularly to the annual AHE retreat.