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Adult & Higher Education (AHE) Closing the Loop Report 2022-2023
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Section 1: Program Assessment Plan Transition Point Assessments

In the Fall quarter 2022, there were 40 students enrolled in AHE out of a total of 47 “active” students in the program (inclusive of Spring quarter 2022). By “active” we mean those students attending three academic quarters in a single year and planning to take future courses. This was a noticeable decline from the previous year when fall enrollments were at 52 and, unfortunately the lowest in ten years. The main reason for this loss was that those students who entered AHE during the pandemic had graduated (many WWU employees taking two courses a quarter), 12 of them in the spring and another 5 in the summer of 2022, totaling 17. At that time AHE had already stopped operating as an online program, returning to a hybrid model, as the rest of the university had fully changed back to in-person learning. In a decision to attract more students, it was decided to promote the program schedule change on the website in the Fall of 2022 to Saturday residentials, which may have accounted for additional new students that brought AHE’s enrollments up in the last part of the year; in the Fall of 2022 (when the deadline for applying to AHE was June 1), there were only 6 new entering students while in the Spring of 2023 (with an application deadline of Feb 1), there were 12, which is higher than average at that time. This uptick in Spring enrollments was likely due to the program schedule changing to a Saturday residential and hybrid model but time will tell. The decline in enrollments by 2022 was also noticeable at the graduate school where there was an uptick in enrollments during WWU’s online pandemic period, but after, a decline. Most of the AHE students were using tuition waivers, 83%, (27 state waivers plus 12 WWU employees), like the previous year, who were working in community colleges and universities around Washington state. And, like 2021/22, there were only 8 revenue students who were working in non-profits and other human and social service sector jobs. Yet the number of prospective students, mainly those in the Higher Education field, had found their way into AHE, a trend that appears likely to continue. Eighteen (18) students were accepted and admitted from 24 applicants (of the 6, one was denied, and five withdrew mostly due to financial/funding issues).

The make-up of the AHE program this year shows that more students of color were enrolled in AHE (30%), which increased even from the previous year (19%) and demonstrates a slow and steady improvement in diversity within AHE’s population. Furthermore, 20% of students identified as 1st Generation. Like previous years, the gender breakdown was consistent, with 13 males and 34 females. The age breakdown also shows that younger students are entering AHE since 2015/16, after the program adopted (and then modified) the former Student Affairs program. In 22/23, 36% of students were under 30 years old (17) which was the same for the previous year, while the majority were over 30 years old (30), composing 64% of the student population. The continuing trend of increasingly younger students in AHE is likely due to the program attracting those state 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 Washington state workers from southern regions to apply to AHE, and they steadily represent larger groups over the last several years. This geographic diversity has stayed consistent or increased over the last several years. Out of 47 students, in 22/23, 11 came from King County and this number has held relatively steady, as has other counties outside of Whatcom, and this year, like last year, approximately 42% of students also came from: Pierce County (3) Snohomish County (3), Franklin (1), but less so Skagit County (2, down from 6). The decline in Skagit enrollments was likely a result of an overall decline in enrollment in AHE. And, like many years previously, most students (27) resided in Whatcom County, working at WWU or in the community college system surrounding Bellingham. By 2022 more prospective students were coming to the Information Sessions, 9/24 applicants attending one of AHE's bi-quarterly Zoom sessions, with 7 of them hearing about the program through word-of-mouth, which is typical of our prospective student profile, even those from outside of Whatcom County.

Admission	<p>There was no minimum MAT score for acceptance. In 2019 a decision was made to drop the MAT to eliminate application 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> <tr> <td>Number of Applicants:</td><td>24</td></tr> <tr> <td>Number of Accepted/Admits:</td><td>18</td></tr> <tr> <td>Number of Matriculated:</td><td>18</td></tr> </table> <p><u>GPA Data</u></p> <table> <tr> <td>Average GPA of Applicants:</td><td>3.48</td></tr> <tr> <td>Average GPA of Accept/Admits:</td><td>3.48</td></tr> <tr> <td>Average GPA of Matrices:</td><td>3.41</td></tr> </table> <p>This year and several years back demonstrate a profile of students that are attracted to, and entering the program with good academic backgrounds who are well-prepared to learn. The GPA at the time of application and admission shows a similar profile to previous years, with a slight improvement from last year (3.37)</p>	Number of Applicants:	24	Number of Accepted/Admits:	18	Number of Matriculated:	18	Average GPA of Applicants:	3.48	Average GPA of Accept/Admits:	3.48	Average GPA of Matrices:	3.41
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Retention	<p>The average GPA of students in AHE in 2023 was 3.41 at matriculation, slightly below the GPA at the application period and not far off from the 3.37 GPA of the previous year. While we would like to see higher GPAs, much of this was likely due to unpredictable pandemic conditions operating in the lives of students even though there was a return to 'normal.' Nonetheless the GPA level shows that students are performing well in their academic course work. The Graduate School tracks quarterly GPA (3.00) and the Director notifies those students if their grades dip below this requirement. Also faculty notify the director early on if a student looks to be struggling with their studies. The faculty and Director discuss the student's issues, and the Director may contact them directly especially if they appear to struggle with attending sessions or haven't submitted their work.</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 metacognitive (in both 2015, 2019 and again in 2023). AHE has no formal internship. However, students take a mandatory AHE 592 "Field Experience" course due to the noticeable pattern of younger students entering</p>												

	AHE with less career experience. This course gives them an opportunity to assess gaps in their learning and an opportunity to experiment with a project in a new setting or a new unit within their workplace
Completion	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 22/23, only one student is preparing to graduate in Spring 2023 after completing AHE 588. AHE students, on average, take 12 terms to complete the program (and one course a quarter) due to many students using waivers and the fact that most students in AHE are employed while studying, desiring promotions and leadership positions within their own organizations or others.
Post Completion	Employment data shows that most AHE students are employed within the education sector while they are studying or they are working in fields related to their studies, and that they're making on par with many WWU colleges and the same within Woodring.

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 24 applicants showed that 9 attended the Information sessions. Of those who attended the Information sessions, 7 heard about the program through word-of-mouth (from colleagues) with only 2 hearing about AHE through the website. Collegial word-of-mouth recruitment is common among AHE students. 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 an internal policy (implemented Fall 2015), which is another way to ensure a capable and committed applicant and admission profile. In a few cases where applicants' GPAs are significantly below the Graduate School required level, but where the applicants show promise, we rely on the “provisional admit” status with the requirement that they receive passing grades. In 2019 the MAT test was eliminated to reduce barriers to admission especially for 1st Generation applicants.

Retention: Social workshops were held during the year to build community in AHE for a commuter student population. During the pandemic, the online learning culminated in isolation and students wanted more opportunities to meet in person and build community. Both curricular and structural changes were made in AHE in 22/23. AHE focused on ‘socials’ to bring students together. The curricular changes involved the capstone course being made more challenging and consistent in terms of learning. Students drew on former papers to write papers in AHE588, and they were collected by the Director who then compared them to the students' present work. It was also possible to examine progress in both critical thinking and knowledge of the field. AHE 590 was changed to a case study approach and AHE 577 was made more intellectually explorative by the new faculty member teaching it. A new requirement was also brought in, to have a clearer focus on research, AHE 581 Readings in AHE. This course aims to improve learning about research practices and is foundational to the other research courses, AHE 501 and AHE 571. With this new requirement, an elective was dropped to maintain the same program credit load. Another course, AHE 518, was developed as a ‘nursery’ elective with no maximum requirement, and this offers students more choices in their elective take up. Each AHE 518 course would have a different and relevant topic and be offered each quarter. The schedule

change to the Saturday residential model and hybrid format was aimed to build a sense of community within this commuter population and stemmed from a decision the previous year to change AHE to a “hybrid” program at WWU. A stable and streamlined schedule was created to ensure that more students were distributed across fewer, but more focused courses, and pathways towards graduation were devised by the Director which when matched with Degree Works, could assist students to persist. Also, these new pathways would be a tool that both the Director and coordinator could use to guide students through towards graduation. Normally, the Program Director announces to all students that it is advising time every quarter and encourages them to seek advising with her. The advising sessions last between 15-30 minutes, through which both students and the Director discuss their progress towards graduation through the Degree Works system. The pathway model, along with the new stable schedule assists the Director in this process and enforces it with the program coordinator and the student, who can all now be on ‘the same page’ with the study plan.

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 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. In 22/23 two additional improvements were made: 1) students were requested to submit former work as an appendix to their current work and 2) students were required to discuss “how” they did their research and wrote their five papers. This was an effort to avoid plagiarism and misinformation (due to ChatGPT being widely available) and to focus their attention on their metacognitive processes.

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 and Director) that goes to alumni and current students, has profiles of soon-to-be graduating students. These students discuss their experiences and aspirations. Additionally, AHE conferences are posted with any other important information.