

CHAPTER 3

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR NONTRADITIONAL STUDENTS

The term “nontraditional student” is generally used to refer to students who are 25 years of age and over and who return to school full or part time while maintaining responsibilities such as employment, family, and other demands of adult life.ⁱ These students may also be referred to as “adult students,” “re-entry students,” “returning students,” or “adult learners” by scholarship sources.ⁱⁱ

This section offers a few of the resources that are available distinctly to nontraditional students. It is meant as a *starting place* for your search. This section is organized into three parts; (1) *financial aid* tips and resources which gives websites and books that are geared specifically toward nontraditional students’ financial aid concerns, (2) *general resources* for nontraditional students which discusses motivations for going back to school, how to handle the additional stress, how to make the transition; and (3) *organizations and honor societies* for nontraditional students to find support and recognition for your studies.

1. FINANCIAL AID RESOURCE TIPS FOR NONTRADITIONAL STUDENTS

- Fill out a FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) form. The FAFSA is the federal document that calculates how much a student is expected to contribute, how much federal aid a student qualifies for, or how much a student family is estimated to contribute. All federal scholarships, grants, and loans require this form. Many scholarships, both public and private, require a copy of the FAFSA with your application.
- Search for scholarships, grants, and loans that apply to traditional and nontraditional students to get the most financial aid. Many of the resources that traditional students use do not have age requirements so apply for these as well.
- Consider other financial resources that are available only to nontraditional students. These include: tax credits for lifelong learning, tuition reimbursement programs offered by employers, and low interest home equity loans. Research city, county or state “retraining” programs that cover many nontraditional students, or ask community or professional organizations if they have resources for nontraditional students (or if they might be willing to help you in other ways such as with daycare or the costs of textbooks).
- Be creative when looking for resources and don’t be afraid to ask for help!

2. FINANCIAL AID WEBSITES FOR NONTRADITIONAL STUDENTS

➤ Fresch

www.freschinfo.com

Fresch has a step-by-step guide to the process of finding financial aid, choosing a school, tax credits available for education, and uncovering community resources.

➤ **Back to College**

www.back2college.com

Back to College has links to information about admissions, financial aid, career planning, credit options, and degree programs. The “Frequently Asked Question” section is a good starting place this site.

➤ **Educational Resources Information Center’s “Financial Aid for Lifelong Learning”**

www.ericacve.org/docgen.asp?tbl=digests&ID=109

This website provides concise but detailed resources for finding financial aid for “lifelong” learning.

➤ **The Foundation Center Learning Lab for Nontraditional Students**

www.fdncenter.org/learn/html/nontraditional/html

The Foundation Center has a list of grants given to individuals that varies by state and location. Search this listing for foundations that support individuals and education.

➤ **College Board’s “Paying for College: A Financial Guide for Adults Returning to School” Brochure**

www.collegeboard.com/finaid/html/CUPayforCollBro.pdf

This brochure about financial aid for adults can be downloaded easily. Its strengths include its discussion of federal aid and tax incentives for nontraditional students.

3. FINANCIAL AID BOOKS FOR NONTRADITIONAL STUDENTS

➤ **Petersons. 1999. *Peterson’s Scholarships and Loans for Adult Students: The Only Guide to College Financing for Students 25 and Over*. Peterson’s Guides.**

This book is filled with very useful information for nontraditional students and how to find the best financial aid for individual situations.

➤ **Finney, David F. 1997. *Financing Your College Degree: A Guide for Adult Students*. College Board.**

This step-by-step guide will help you figure out college costs, how much aid you may receive as a student, and how to find necessary resources to finance educational goals.

4. GENERAL WEBSITES FOR NONTRADITIONAL STUDENTS

The transition back to school, whether you are returning to college or starting for the first time, can be difficult. Yet, there are many websites and books that help ease you back into the classroom. These resources cover such considerations for nontraditional students as how to study while working and raising a family, which classes to take, how to get life credit, and managing the additional time and stress that comes with college.

➤ **Adult Student Center**

www.adultstudentcenter.com

The site describes itself as a place for adult students to get support, share ideas and experiences, ask questions, and get information.

➤ **Mapping Your Future**

www.mapping-your-future.org/adult

Mapping your future is a useful step-by-step guide to the process of going back to school or changing careers. This site is sponsored by a loan company, so loans are discussed.

5. GENERAL BOOKS FOR NONTRADITIONAL STUDENTS

➤ **Phillips, Vicky. 2000. *Never Too Late to Learn: The Adult Student's Guide to College*. Princeton Review.**

This is a how-to guide for understanding the logistics of going to college. This book covers the application process, choosing a school, dealing with transcripts and life credits, and distance learning options.

➤ **Schindley, Wanda. 2002. *Adults in College: A Survival Guide for Nontraditional Students*. Dallas Publishing Company.**

Schindley provides practical advice for adult students completing a degree. Chapters cover topics such as how to deal with stress caused by jobs, kids and school, being surrounded by traditional-aged students, paperwork in going back to school, how to study, write research papers effectively.

➤ **Simon, Linda. 1998. *New Beginnings: A Guide for Adult Learners and Returning Students*. Prentice Hall.**

This book is a general transition resource for adults who are trying to get into “student” mode with chapters on how to assess learning needs, using college resources effectively, managing time and stress, developing note-taking and study skills, and strategies for research, reading, and writing.

➤ **Bruno, Frank J. 1998. *Arco Going Back to School: College Survival Strategies for Adult Students*. Arco Publishing.**

Bruno offers simple strategies for approaching studying, time management, writing, and the transition back to school.

6. STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS AND HONOR SOCIETIES FOR NONTRADITIONAL STUDENTS

There are organizations and honor societies specifically for nontraditional students. These can be very useful for support, information, access to additional resources, and recognition.

➤ **Omicron-Psi Honor society**

www.mwsc.edu/orgs/omicronpsi

Omicron-Psi Honor Society is a national honor society established for nontraditional students.

➤ **Alpha Sigma Lambda National Honor Society**

www.alphasigmalambda.org

Alpha Sigma Lambda calls itself the “premier national honor society for nontraditional adult students”.

Tennessee Chapters:

- East Tennessee State University Zeta Tau
Karen Sullivan, Assistant Director at the Center for Adult Programs & Services
Box 70604, Johnson City, TN 37614-0604
(423) 439-5641 or email at sullivan@etsu.edu

- Maryville College Zeta Phi
Martha Craig, Associate Dean
502 East Lamar Alexander Parkway, Maryville, TN 37804-5907
(865) 981-8167 or email at craig@maryvillecollege.edu

- Northeast State Technical Nu Sigma Chi
Jennifer Starling, Director at the Student Information & Advising Center
2425 Highway 75, PO Box 246, Blountville, TN 37617
(423) 323-0229 or email at jgstarling@nstcc.cc.tn.us

- Tennessee State University Iota Mu
June Donnell Adams, Academic Adviser
Academic Enrichment, Advisement & Orientation
3500 John A. Merritt Blvd., P.O. Box 9555, Nashville, TN 37209-1561
(615) 963-5565 or email at jadams@tnstate.edu

- Union University Delta Beta
Sam Myatt, Coordinator, Adult Studies
1050 Union University Drive, Campus Box 1835, Jackson, TN 38305
(731) 661-5370 or email at smyatt@uu.edu

➤ **Older Wiser Learners (OWLs) at Middle Tennessee State University**

www.mtsu.edu/~owls/owls.htm

OWLs is a student organization at MTSU which provides support and advocacy services for students who have primary responsibilities outside of the University such as a job, family, or other commitments.

➤ **Association for Nontraditional Students in Higher Education**

www.antshe.org

They describe themselves as an international partnership of students, academic professionals, institutions, and organizations whose mission is to encourage and coordinate support, education, and advocacy for the adult learning community.

ⁱ Cross, K. P. 1980. “Our changing students and their impact on colleges: Prospects for a true learning society” *Phi Delta Kappan*.

ⁱⁱ Benschoff, James and Henry Lewis. 1992. “Nontraditional College Students. ERIC Digest.
<http://ericae.net/edo/ED347483.htm>