Breaking Down Barriers and Building Opportunities for Nontraditional Students

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Presentation Overview

I. **Part One: General Information**
   - Define nontraditional student populations
   - Identify continuum of nontraditional students based on characteristics
   - Review enrollment patterns
   - Examination postsecondary persistence and attainment

II. **Part Two: Barriers**
   - Identify situational, institutional, and dispositional barriers
   - Review associated risk factors with each barrier

III. **Part Three: Strategies**
   - Obtain strategies to remove situational, institutional, and dispositional barriers
     - Policies: federal, state, and institutional
     - Strategies: prevalent theories and best practices

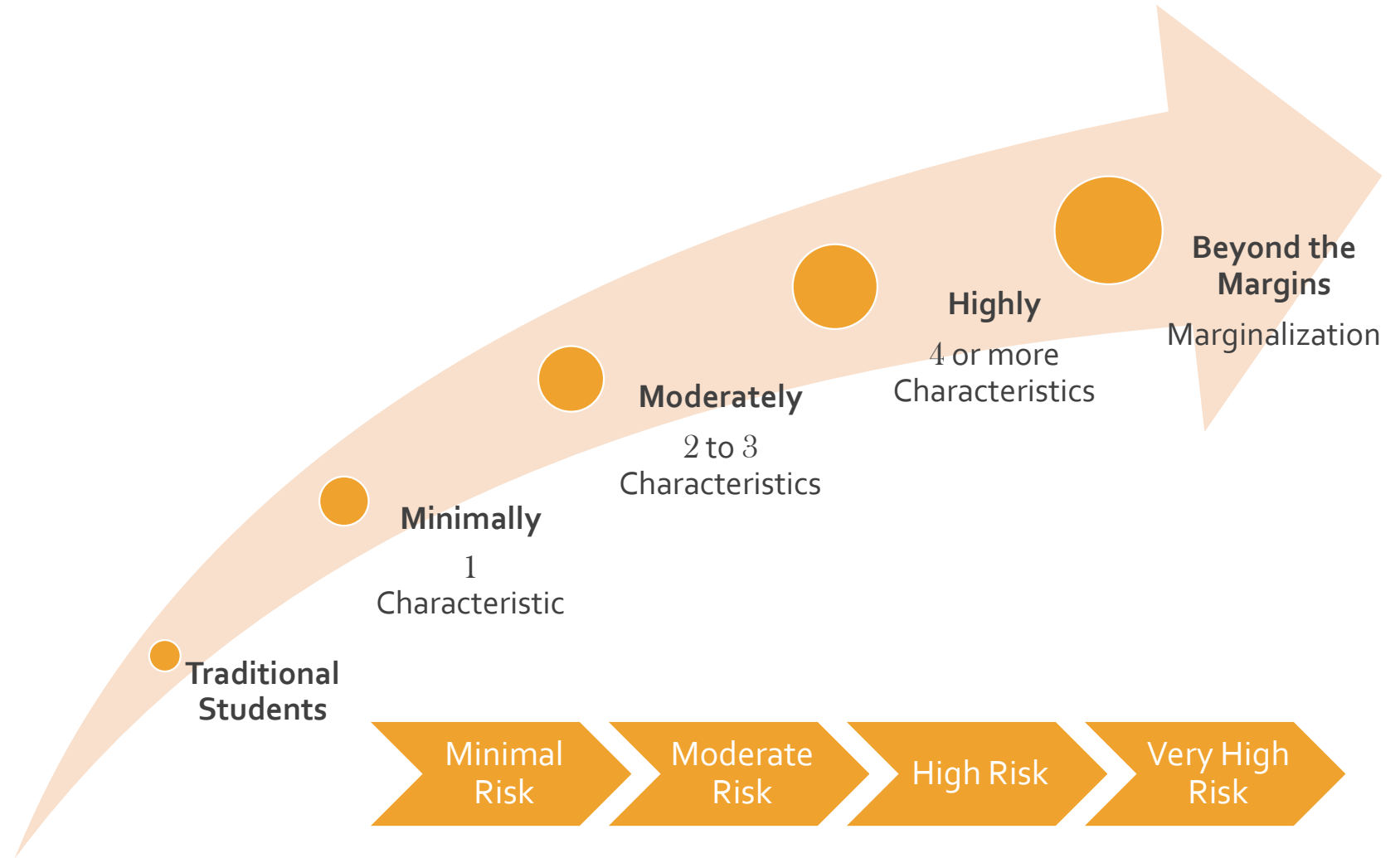# Who may be classified as a nontraditional student?

- Veterans
- Adult Leaners
- Students with Disabilities
- Low-Income Students
- Single Parents
- Married Students
- Full-Time Students
- Part-Time Students
- High School Drop Outs (GED Students)
- Transfer Students
- Displaced Homemakers

- Homeless Students
- Underrepresented Minorities
- Distance Learners
- Commuters
- English as a Second Language (ESL) Students
- Undocumented Students
- Students from Foster Care
- Financially Independent Students
- First-Generation College Students
- Students with Financial Dependents
- Reentry students

Definition

- **Typically over the age of 25**

- **Presence of one or more of the following seven characteristics:**
  1. Beyond a year of high school completion upon first enrolling in a postsecondary institution
  2. Long term postsecondary part-time enrollment
  3. Full-time employment while enrolled (35 or more hours)
  4. Classified as financially independent for financial aid purposes
  5. Financially supporting dependents other than spouse
  6. Single parent status
  7. Lacking a traditional high school diploma (earned GED)

(Horn & Carroll, 1996; Choy, 2002)

Nontraditional Continuum

(Horn & Carroll, 1996; Choy, 2002; Levin, 2007)

Beyond the Margins
Marginalization

Highly
4 or more Characteristics

Moderately
2 to 3 Characteristics

Minimally
1 Characteristic

Traditional Students

Minimal Risk

Moderate Risk

High Risk

Very High Risk

National Enrollment Patterns

(Aud et al., 2013)

Fall 2011 Full-Time Enrollment

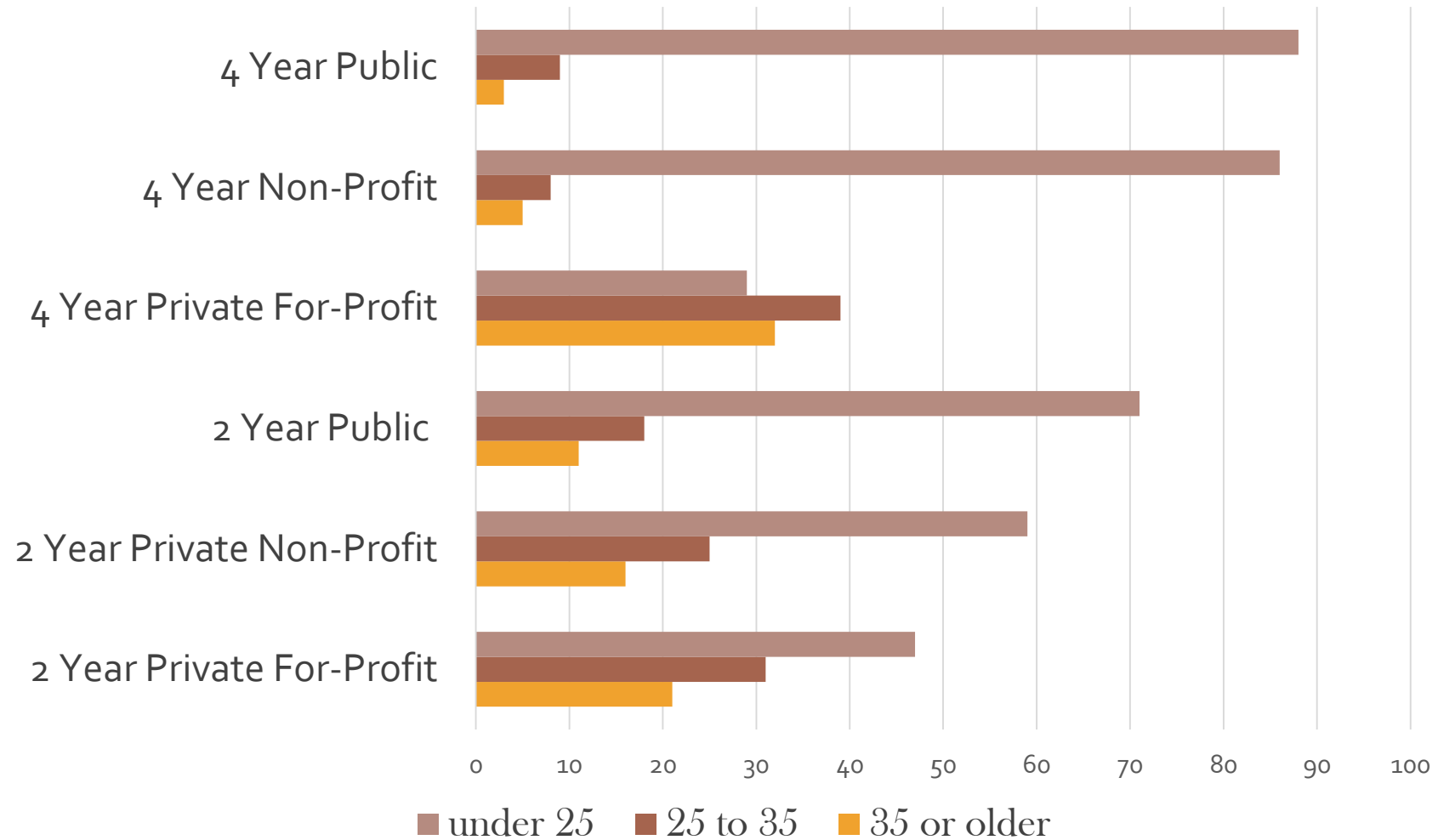**under 25** **25 to 35** **35 or older**

Table 1.1 Characteristics of Postsecondary Students Adapted from The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), 2013, Condition of Education, U.S. Department of Education, Washington, DC.

National Enrollment Patterns

(Aud et al., 2013)
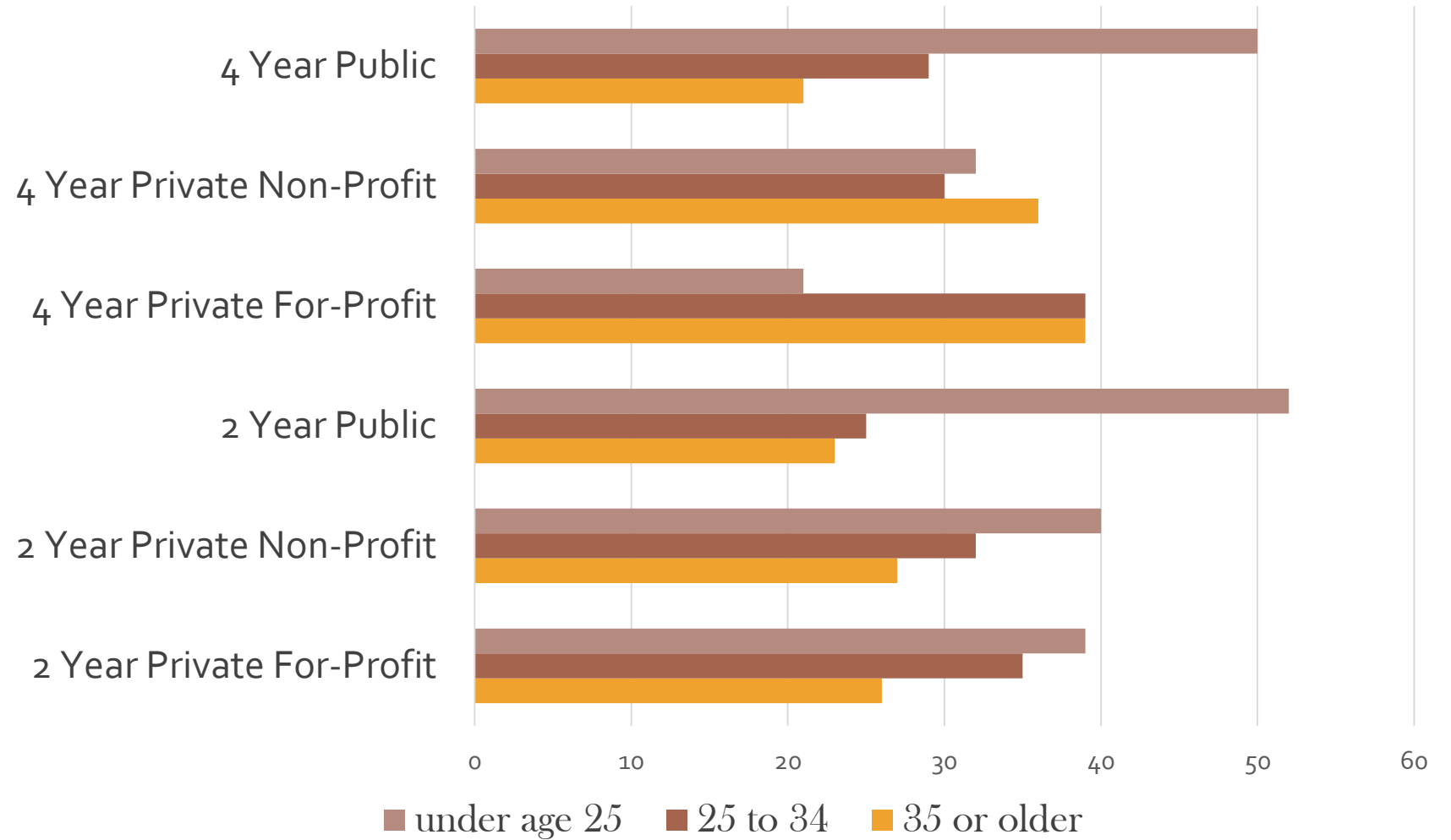
Fall 2011 Part-Time Enrollment

Table 1.2 Characteristics of Postsecondary Students Adapted from The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), 2013, Condition of Education, U.S. Department of Education, Washington, DC.

Financial Aid Assistance Based on Enrollment

NCES 2007-2008 Financial Aid Data

12,708 Part-Time Students 8,220 Full-Time Students

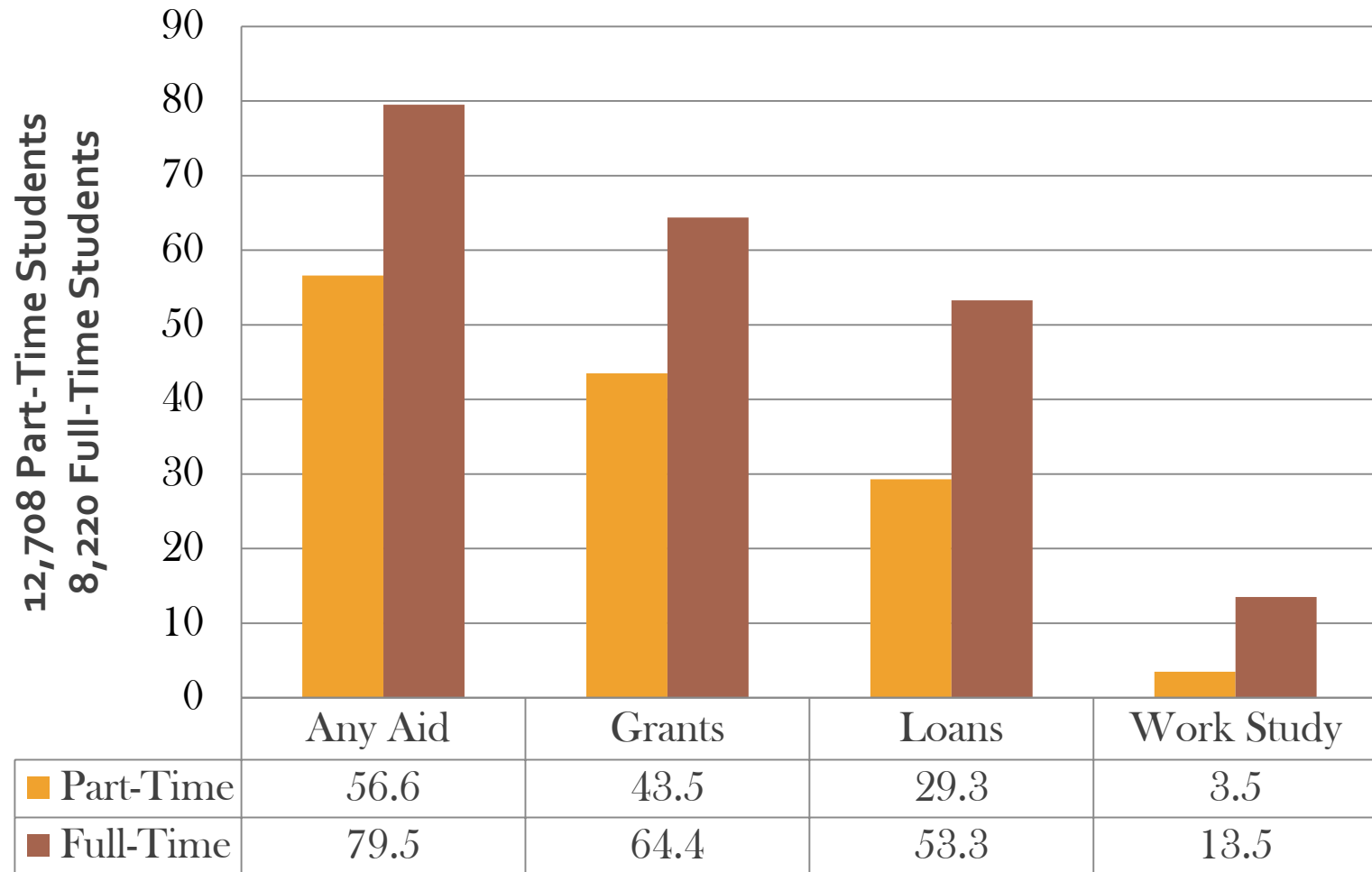|	Any Aid	Grants	Loans	Work Study
■ Part-Time	56.6	43.5	29.3	3.5
■ Full-Time	79.5	64.4	53.3	13.5

Table 1.3 2007-2008 National Postsecondary Student Aid Study Adapted from The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), 2008, Student Financial Aid Estimates , U.S. Department of Education, Washington, DC.

Persistence and Attainment

Persistence after 3 Years – No Longer Enrolled
- 50% highly nontraditional for any 4-year degree
- 62% highly nontraditional for any 2-year degree

Attainment After 4 - 5 Years
- 31.3% Nontraditional students overall
  - 42.4% Minimally
  - 16.9% Moderately
  - 11.2% Highly

U.S. Census Bureau (2012) shows gap in degree attainment for 25 to 29 year old Black and Hispanic underrepresented minorities
- 40% White
- 23% Black
- 15% Hispanic
- 60% Asians/Pacific Islanders

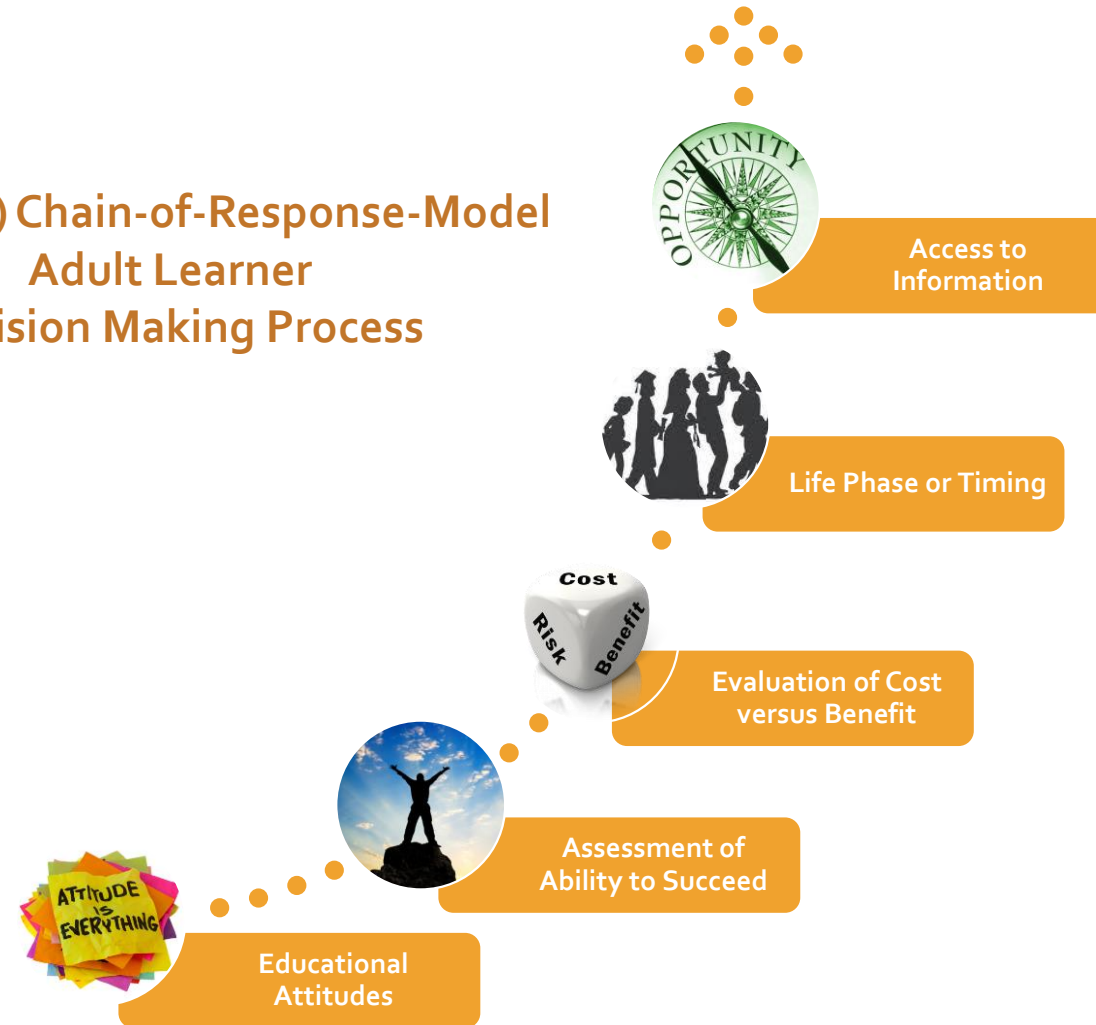**Each nontraditional characteristic negatively affects persistence and attainment directly or indirectly**
- Most at risk for dropping out in 1st year at 2 or 4-year institution

(Horn & Carroll, 1996; Choy, 2002)

Theoretical Framework

**Cross (1981) Chain-of-Response-Model
Adult Learner
Decision Making Process**

Access to Information

Life Phase or Timing

Evaluation of Cost versus Benefit

Assessment of Ability to Succeed

Educational Attitudes
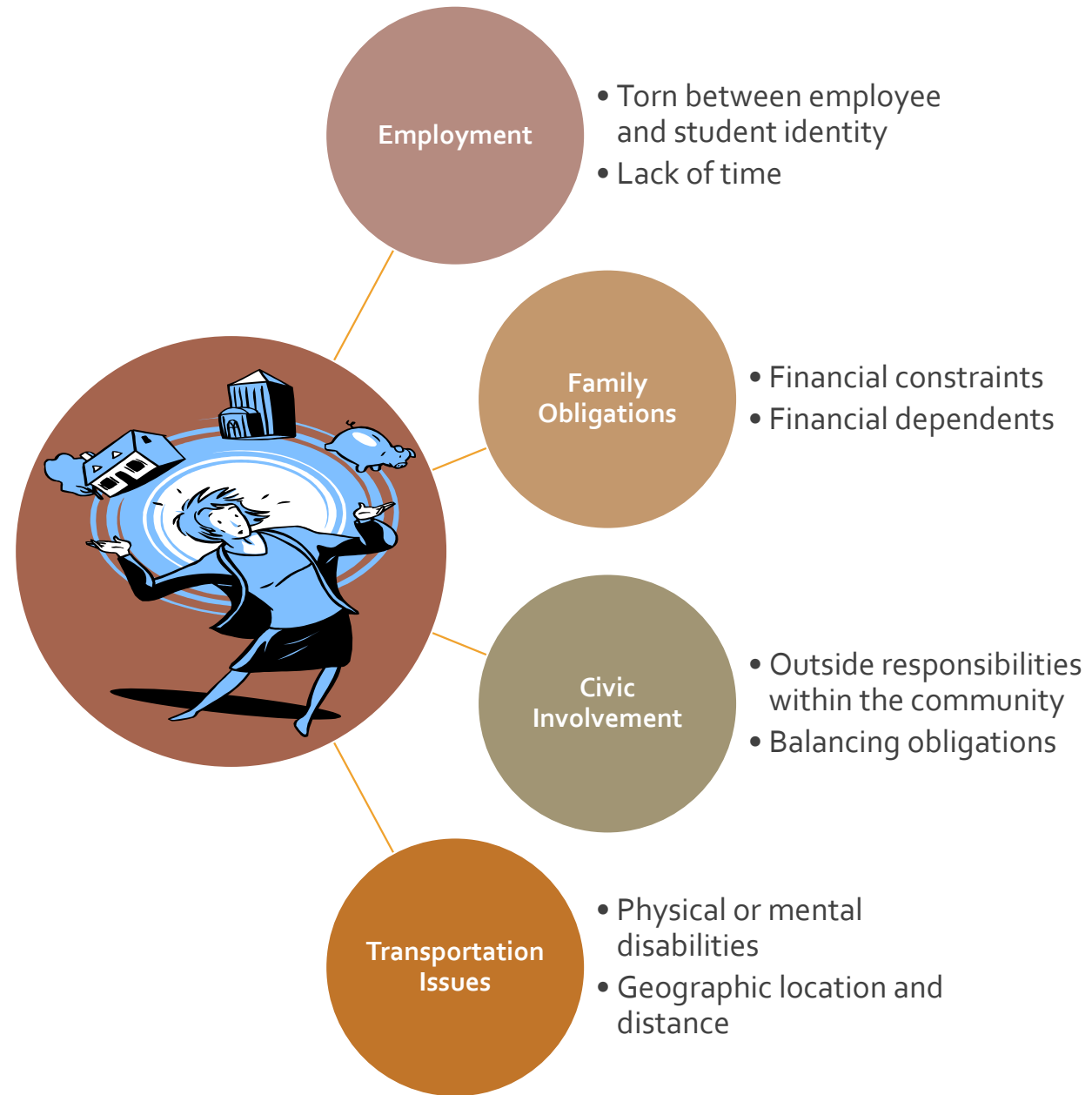
(Stein, Wanstreet, & Trinko, 2011)

Barriers

Cross (1981) identified three barriers to participation that prevented adult learners from fully integrating into higher education settings:

I.   Situational

II.   Institutional

III. Dispositional
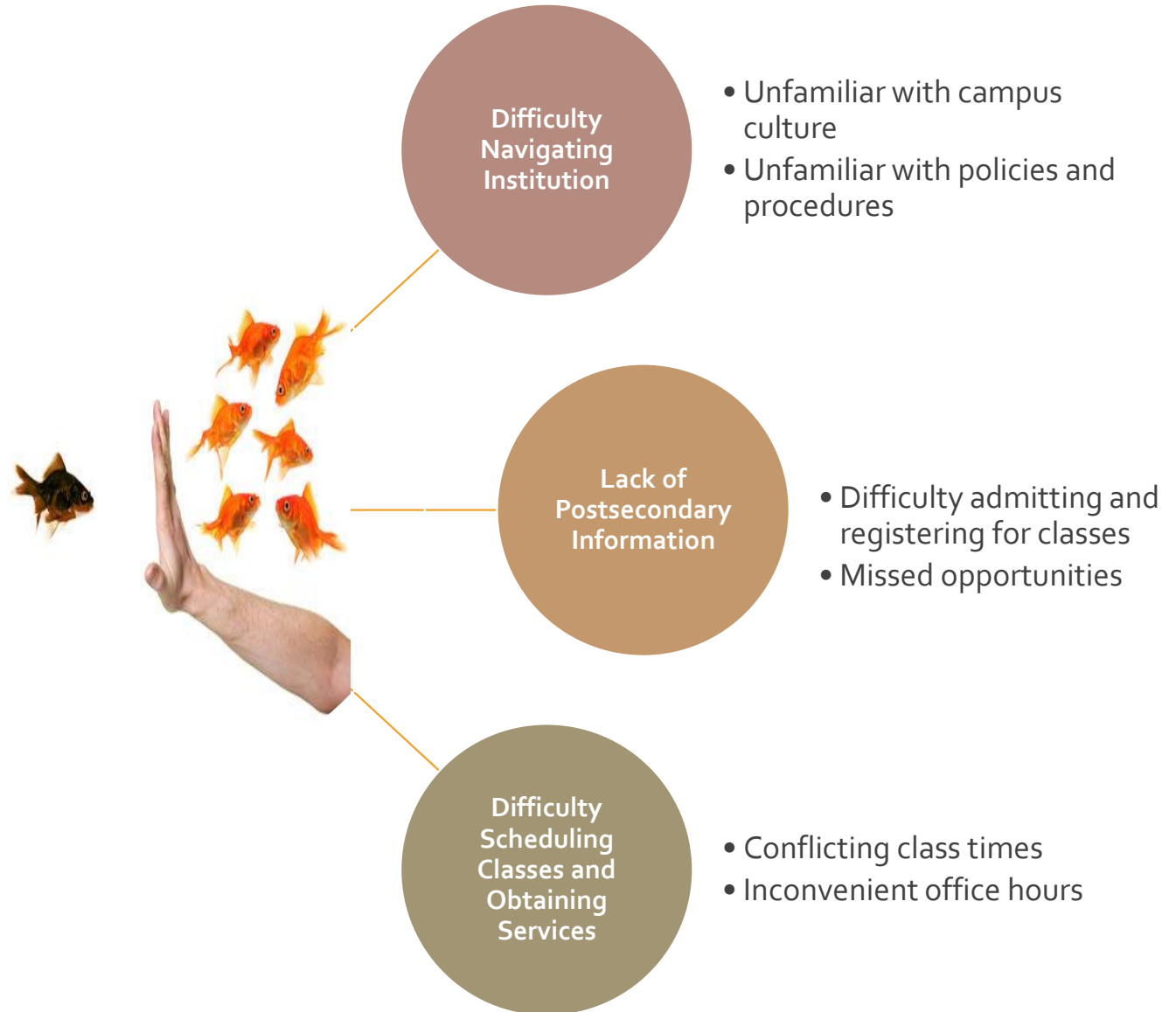
Situational Barriers

(Keith, 2007)

Employment
- Torn between employee and student identity
- Lack of time

Family Obligations
- Financial constraints
- Financial dependents

Civic Involvement
- Outside responsibilities within the community
- Balancing obligations

Transportation Issues
- Physical or mental disabilities
- Geographic location and distance

Institutional Barriers

(Keith, 2007)

Difficulty Navigating Institution
- Unfamiliar with campus culture
- Unfamiliar with policies and procedures

Lack of Postsecondary Information
- Difficulty admitting and registering for classes
- Missed opportunities

Difficulty Scheduling Classes and Obtaining Services
- Conflicting class times
- Inconvenient office hours

Dispositional Barriers

(Keith, 2007)

Poor Learning Perception

- Fear over learning abilities
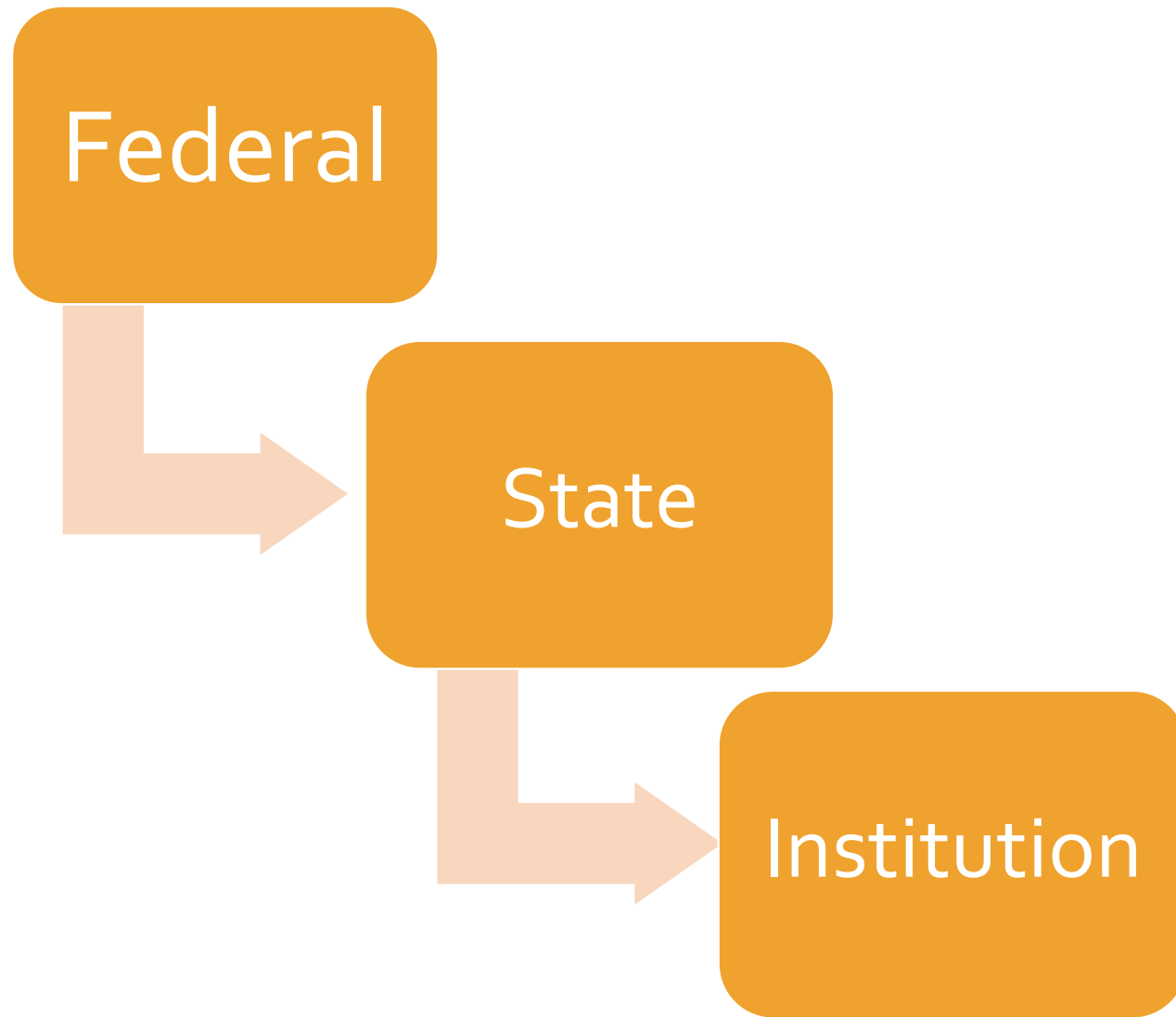- Low self-confidence

Age Concerns

- Anxiety over fitting in with younger students
- Difficulty adjusting

Negative Past Educational Experiences

- Feel hopeless about future educational success
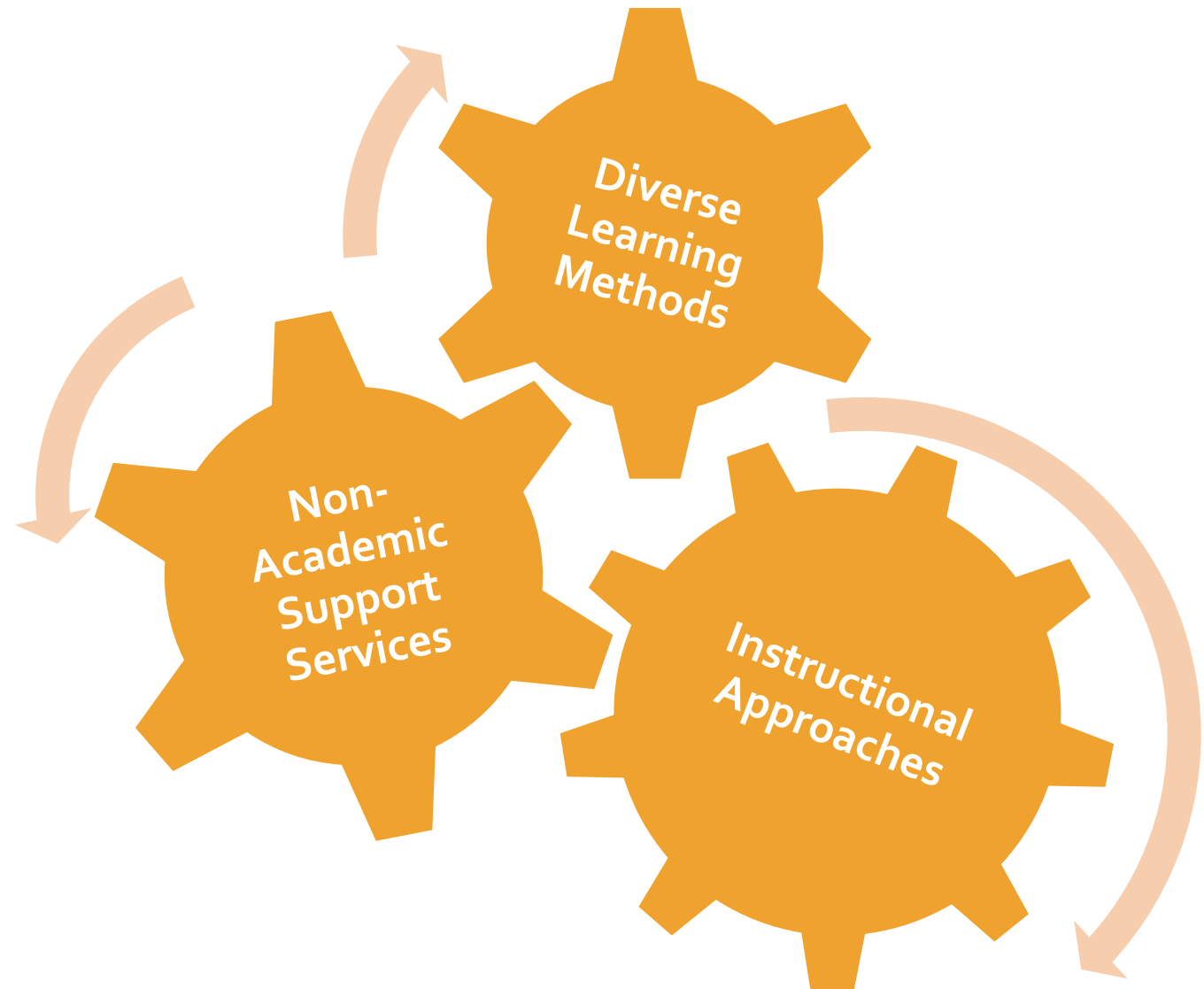- Fear of failure

Polices Decreasing Barriers

(Advisory Committee, 2012)

Federal

State

Institution

3 Areas of Focus
Strategies

Situational
Institutional
Dispositional

Diverse Learning Methods

Non-Academic Support Services

Instructional Approaches

Decreasing Situational Barriers

Prevalent Theories	Strategies
Bean and Metzner (1985) ▪ Proposed that: (a) educational performance, (b) intrinsic factors, (c) demographic characteristics, and (d) external factors all influenced student outcomes **Braxton, Hirschy, & McClendon (2004)** ▪ Asserted that although employment and family can influence student persistence nontraditional students who feel their institutions are committed to looking after their well-being are more likely to persist	1. Assist nontraditional students with degree audit mapping/plans of study 2. Develop early warning systems to identify at-risk students 3. Offer workshops to help students with stress and time management, organization, and resource identification 4. Connect nontraditional students with financial aid information 5. Offer onsite daycare or transportation services 6. Offer flexible degree programs (block scheduling, virtual learning, mixed mode, video streaming…etc.)

(Pelling, 2001; Schuetze & Slowey, 2002; Hart, 2003; Ritt, 2008; Monroe, 2006; Wyatt, 2011,)

Decreasing Institutional Barriers

"I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel."
- Maya Angelou

Prevalent Theories	Strategies
Bourdieu (1999) ▪ Asserted that social capital networks can be used to enhance knowledge and cultural capital (skills, education, prior knowledge ...etc.) can be used to access opportunities **Pascarella (1989)** ▪ Successful academic assimilation, demonstrated in GPA, psychosocial development, and interaction with faculty are most influential for persistence **Astin (1993)** ▪ Three areas of involvement that impacted students the most were faculty, academic, and peer group connections	1. Increase opportunities for nontraditional students to connect with faculty and staff 2. Create bridge or mentoring programs for transfer students 3. Strengthen and centralize student support services 4. Offer transfer student success workshops during the evening 5. Help nontraditional students identify on campus resources and opportunities 6. Develop a strong advising program with varied advising hours (Pelling, 2001; Brown, 2002; Fowler & Boylan, 2010; Wyatt, 2011; Karp, 2011)

Decreasing Dispositional Barriers

Prevalent Theories	Strategies
Knowles Andragogy Model (1980) 1. Preference for self-directed learning 2. Contains extensive experience 3. Displays learning readiness based on need and applicability 4. Approaches learning in a task- or problem-centered manner rather than subject-centered manner 5. Possesses high internal motivation **Chao and Good (2004)** ▪ Hope positively affects well being and resiliency to overcome obstacles in five areas: support systems, life transitions, career development, financial investment, and motivation	1. Enhance faculty and staff knowledge over nontraditional students perspectives, complex lives, and needs 2. Mix andragogy teaching methods with pedagogy methods 3. Increase practical and applied learning modalities used in the classroom 4. Strengthen vocational and career counseling services 5. Develop programs offering cohort student learning communities 6. Offer opportunities for families to become involved (Brown, 2002; Murray, 2007 ; McGrath, 2009; Sandoval-Lucero, Maes, &Chopra, 2011; Wyatt, 2011 ,)

Final Thoughts

❖ **Advocacy**
  • For marginalized nontraditional students

❖ **Awareness**
  • Over nontraditional student barriers and strategies

❖ **Attention**
  • Towards improving and creating federal, state, and institutional policies that support nontraditional student populations

❖ **Comprehensive Change**
  • Focused on strengthening non-academic support services, increasing diverse learning methods, and enhancing instructional approaches

Questions or Feedback

Thank you for attending my session.

I would like your feedback!

Please send your feedback or any additional questions to
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