

## Your Question:

You asked for insight on postsecondary institutions that successfully recruit and serve adult learners.

## Our Response:

Education Commission of the States has not done research on specific institutions. However, we have information on state policies and initiatives specifically aimed at enrolling and retaining adult learners. Below are a few state examples actively targeting adult learners.

In 2015, the **Indiana** General Assembly enacted [Act 1001](#) and [SEA 509](#) which created the Return and Complete project and expanded part-time financial aid programs to meet the needs of returning adults. The Indiana Commission for Higher Education then launched the [You Can. Go Back](#) campaign aimed to help the 750,000+ adults with some college but no degree finish a credential. The campaign incorporated multiple avenues to reach near-completers including direct mail, email, phone calls and additional promotional materials. A [college match website](#) allows students to identify the best institution and program for them to return and finish their degree. They are matched per their desired field of study, degree, learning style and travel distance. Campuses now offer incentives for returning adults including flexible/online class schedules, course credit for work or military experience and grade-/debt-forgiveness.

**Mississippi** launched the [Complete 2 Compete](#) program in 2016 to reach out to former students who earned some credits but did not complete a degree. The state estimates there are around 300,000 adults who have some credit but no degree or credential. The Mississippi Institutions of Higher Learning and the Mississippi Community College Board [partnered](#) to identify student target groups, implement adult learner services and re-engage adult students. Initially the program identified former students who attended public institutions in the past 15 years. After removing holds, currently enrolled students and FERPA flags initiated by students, Mississippi had approximately 160,000 near-completers eligible for the program. The program uses an [interactive website](#) and a marketing firm sending out postcards and emails with personalized URLs.

In 2017, **Tennessee** Gov. Haslam pushed for the expansion of last-dollar scholarships for adult students to attend a community college tuition-free; a move sure to impact the near-completer population and in line with Education Commission of the States recommendation to consider focusing [free community college](#) policy on adults. The legislature enacted the [Tennessee Reconnect Act](#) in response to the governor's call and to continue the work of the [Drive to 55](#) initiative. State leaders understand that focusing on high school graduates alone does not reach the attainment goal. With more than 900,000 adults in the state who earned some college but no degree, the governor and legislature acted to expand adult financial support in postsecondary education. The Tennessee Reconnect Act builds on previous higher education funding sources including the [Tennessee Promise](#) and the [TCAT Reconnect scholarship](#).

## **Additional Resources**

Education Commission of the States released a [brief](#) highlighting state innovations for near completers

[Prior learning assessments](#) can provide acceleration for adult learners in postsecondary education

Several Education Commission of the States blogs highlight this important student population ([1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#), [6](#))

[50-State Comparison](#) and companion [brief](#) regarding adult inclusion in state financial aid policies

Florida enacted [H.B. 5201](#) in 2012 which included the Degree Completion Pilot Program to recruit, recover and retain adult learners. The pilot program branched out into [Complete Florida](#) providing opportunities for adults across the state to re-enter postsecondary education and complete a credential. This bill also established the Florida Virtual Campus to provide access to online student and library support services. It also serves as a statewide resource and clearinghouse for postsecondary education distance learning courses and degree programs. This provides the flexibility for adult students to utilize these resources at any time of day.