

# Strategic Plan for the Center for Adult Learners and Veterans

2016-2022



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**CENTER FOR ADULT  
LEARNERS AND VETERANS**

## Center for Adult Learners and Veterans

The Center for Adult Learners and Veterans (CALV) at the University of West Georgia (UWG) is open to all adult learners and military-connected students. Established in 2014, the CALV is part of the division of Student Affairs and Enrollment Management and shares the divisional values of caring, collaboration, and growth and development.

Located on the third floor of the University Community Center (UCC) in room 311, the CALV offers a modern study lounge, conference room, and private meeting space with computers, Wi-Fi access, and a knowledgeable staff. The CALV also processes enrollment certification for educational benefits to the Department of Veteran Affairs for military-connected students.

## Mission

The CALV facilitates students' transition to the University of West Georgia by providing assistance with technology and helping them navigate processes, connects students to resources to help them thrive while attending UWG, and prepares students for future success by supporting their transition to whatever comes after their time at UWG.

## Definitions

### Adult Learner

UWG's definition for adult learners includes any undergraduate student who is age 25 or older at the time of first matriculation and has never completed a bachelor's degree.

### Military-Connected Student

Military-connected students are those who are active duty, Guard or Reserve, or veterans and their dependents and spouses.

### Non-Traditional Student

A non-traditional student is a student who has been out of high school at least five years and whose high school class graduated at least five years ago. If the student has earned fewer than 30 transferable semester credit hours, the student is a non-traditional freshman. If the student has earned 30 or more transferable semester credit hours, the student is a non-traditional transfer.

### Post-Traditional Student

Soares (2013) describes post-traditional learners as a diverse group. He notes, "The term encompasses individuals with a range of education needs from high school graduates to high school dropouts and those with limited literacy and English language skills. Post-traditional learners also encompass many life stages and identities; they are

single mothers, immigrants, veterans, and at-risk younger people looking for a second chance” (p.2).

## Initiative 1

### Facilitate Students' Transition to the University of West Georgia

Our purpose is to create a campus that is welcoming to adult learners and military-connected students while acting as a concierge for our new students to steer them through the procedures to apply and enroll at UWG. We know the decision to enroll in college courses is a big undertaking that requires navigating sometimes challenging processes, completing complicated forms, and understanding how past learning experiences fit into the ultimate objective of graduation. Fulfilling our purpose means working with campus partners to help them understand the unique needs of our students and being a reliable point of contact whenever our students need help.

#### **Tactic 1: Understand What Students Need as They Enter UWG**

To ensure UWG provides adult learners and military-connected students with what they need, the CALV must engage in active evaluation. This entails staying current on adult learning theory, regulations from the US Department of Veterans Affairs, and university policies and procedures. It also involves conducting detailed assessment to measure the need for and impact of CALV programming.

#### **Tactic 2: Foster Relationships with Campus Partners**

The CALV can only provide the concierge service that students need by building a bond with other departments at UWG. Meeting the needs of our students will require guidance or action from other areas, whether it is Undergraduate Admissions, Financial Aid, or an academic department. Adult learners and military-connected students must be able to rely on the CALV to be a first point of contact, and the CALV must be able to rely on the help of the other professionals at UWG.

#### **Tactic 3: Encourage a Welcoming Culture**

The CALV takes its responsibility to educate the campus about the needs of adult learners and military-connected students seriously. From efforts to promote assessment of prior learning to increasing awareness about the contributions and impact of the students we serve, the CALV strives to provide its students with a campus that understands them and welcomes them. When the campus values the unique perspectives CALV students bring, the entire student body benefits.

#### **Tactic 4: Promote Access**

If the CALV understands what students need and fosters relationships with campus partners to encourage a welcoming culture, our students should find the decision to

attend UWG easy because we offer what they need when they need it. Students need their school commitments to fit into a busy life to be able to work on a degree while holding a job and taking care of a family. In order to be successful, our students need courses offered at a time that fits their schedules, offices on campus to be open when they have time to visit, and support for returning to the classroom for the first time in years.

## Initiative 2

### Connect Students to Resources

To help our students be successful, the CALV must connect them to the resources they need. But more than simply pointing the way to existing services, the CALV must ensure the resources on campus meet the needs of adult learners and military-connected students. When services are easy and convenient to access, using them becomes a way of life for CALV students.

#### **Tactic 1: Provide a First-Class Facility and Resource Center**

Giving CALV students what they need starts in our own Center. We provide a quiet space with access to computers, wireless internet, and printing to help students get their work done and socialize with other adult learners and military-connected students. More than the equipment, the CALV provides access to professional staff with 30 years of experience in higher education to offer advice and a friendly, listening ear. Finally, the CALV is a great place to find out about opportunities for involvement all over campus.

#### **Tactic 2: Collaborate with Other UWG Units to Deliver Service to the Students**

Our students are busy, so they need someone to help them line up the services they need with their hectic schedules. Once the CALV identifies a service one of its student needs, the next step is to ensure the delivery of that service works for the student. The CALV works with other units on campus to explain the unique needs of its students. Whether it is being willing to call a student back after 5pm or sending a tutor to our quiet space, we try to minimize the runaround.

#### **Tactic 3: Make Student Engagement the Norm**

Attending the University of West Georgia means a considerable time commitment for adult learners and military-connected students, and the CALV knows that student involvement contributes to student success. Whether it is attending sporting events or guest lecturers, using the gym or tutoring services, or joining a student organization or intramural team, the CALV likes to see its students engaged on campus. We are here to help match our students with involvement opportunities that best fit their needs and their schedules.

## Initiative 3

### Prepare Students for Future Success

Just as we try to ease the transition into UWG, we want to support our adult learners and military-connected students as they move on to the next step in their lives after they complete their studies. Our alumni become our legacy, and we expect nothing less than a legacy of success. The tasks for CALV are to remain knowledgeable about what students need to succeed in the workforce and their personal lives, to establish alliances to address those needs, and to serve as navigators on a course set by our students.

#### **Tactic 1: Understand What Students Need as They Leave UWG**

To help adult learners and military-connected students succeed when they leave UWG, the CALV must understand the workforce and the challenges facing college graduates. That means paying attention to what skills employers need and which job sectors are expecting growth. It also means helping students acquire life skills such as financial literacy and apply the critical thinking and problem-solving skills they gain in the classroom.

#### **Tactic 2: Cultivate Partnerships That Benefit Our Students**

The CALV has an obligation to build and develop partnerships that will give our students the advantage when they leave UWG. Our focus is on three areas. Career Services provides workforce preparation for adult learners and veterans. Campus employers provide income that helps current students pay for college while imparting valuable transferrable skills for a career at UWG or beyond. Local businesses offer essential feedback about what employers want and have practicum experience, internships, and jobs to help UWG graduates launch their careers.

#### **Tactic 3: Focus on Where Students Want to Go**

At UWG, students are the authors of their journey. It is one of the best parts about making the decision to Go West! The CALV supports students who are coming back to school to launch a new career or enhance an existing one. We see students who are approaching retirement and want to pursue the degree they always wished they had gotten. The point is that the students set the course, and our job is to prepare them for what comes next.