

Older Adult Program

WASC Student Focus Group

I. Communication

1. How do you get news and information about the Older Adult_program?
 - Mt Sac schedule of classes
 - City community centers and senior centers
 - Marquee on Temple and Grand
 - Mt. Sac website
 - Flyers from senior centers
 - Word of mouth from senior centers (networking)
 - Mt. Sac instructors.
2. What are some other ways you would like to get news and information about the Older Adult Program?

Email updates would be helpful. Having brochures mailed to the home would also be helpful. Delivering some catalogs to the different centers would be desirable.
3. Do you have a chance to share your own ideas or to make suggestions about the Older Adult Program?

Yes 10 # No 1 (more young people are taking over class and Older pop. Less willing to offer ideas – intimidated)

 - If yes, what are some ways that you pass along your own ideas?

Ideas are given to Mary openly. Can approach instructors about different ideas at any time. Instructors share ideas with students too.
4. What are some new or additional ways we can hear about your ideas or your feedback about our program? (Formal)

Generic email suggestion box. Have drop box suggestion box if confidentiality is necessary. There is sometimes a language barrier.

Summary:

The greatest source of communication for students in Older Adult Program classes is networking with others in an informal setting. Additionally, traditional communication through flyers and the schedule of classes books provided through the community and senior centers is appreciated. Many older adult students use technology as a primary source of communication and desire an ability to receive information through email contact, such as a list serve. Although there is a current OAP list serve, only two participants were aware of this.

Instructors provide an important point of contact for program updates. Students appreciate the instructors' approachability and feel they are able to give suggestions about the OAP program and class needs. The OAP program Coordinator, Mary Lange, is also available for student suggestions and is extremely well respected. Although there is sometimes a language barrier with communication, students expressed that they help one another to overcome this and make sure that all can express their ideas. A suggestion for a generic email box or drop box for comments was raised as a way to communicate confidentially.

II. Student Support Services

1. Did your teacher give you an overview of your class at the beginning of the semester? (Class Orientation) – Hand out class syllabus, talk about class content?

Yes 11 # No

- If yes, how did it help you?

Helpful because it answered all her questions and put the student at ease. She went over calendar of the entire semester and what will be covered. She helped the “late starters” extra help, one-on-one assistance. More students than the class can handle

- Did you get any specific information regarding attendance? Explain.

Made clear that you need to show up and attend otherwise, spot will be given to someone else. Instructor asks the students to not sign up if the student will not be able to attend all (most) classes. Long waiting lists. Instructor is very accommodating.

2. Do you know that Mt. SAC has academic counselors and advisors that can see you?

Yes 2 # No 9

- If yes, how did you first find out about them?

Heard about it...general knowledge. Not well known...assumed.

3. Have you used a Mt. SAC counselor or advisor?

Yes 0 # No 11

4. Who at Mt. SAC has helped you to make good choices about your classes?

Instructors are very knowledgeable and helpful in recommending classes and alternate locations. Peers make suggestions and students use the catalog. Not enough classes being offered...options are limited. Easier for seniors to take classes at centers not Mt Sac due to parking challenges.

5. Prior to first attending Mt. SAC OAP classes, how did you learn about the registration process?

Took year and half to get into computer class. Timeline for registration wasn't clear. Once you're in the class for the first day, you receive card to re-register. Needed someone at the front desk to announce the date and time of registration. Instructor is the key person to verbally tell students of registration dates. **Communication of dates is the major issue.** (Show up and register for class...no prior knowledge. Sign-up on the spot.)

- What do you wish you had known about registration that would have been helpful as a brand new student?

Need to know about the new location to register for classes – was not told (from Bldg 4 to Bldg 40). **Getting info about student ID's and benefits, student discounts would be helpful.**

- What was most confusing (if anything) about the registration process (Example start dates/end dates)

Lack of clear info regarding registration dates and deadlines.

Summary:

All students were given an orientation upon entrance to an Older Adult class. The orientation included information about the syllabus, calendar for the term, and attendance. Classes are full and many have wait lists. There is a culture of commitment to attendance. Students stressed that the classroom environment is very accommodating, with “late starters” provided with extra help and one-on-one assistance if needed. Many students were not aware of the benefits of student ID’s, discounts, and campus services that are available to them. A suggestion was made to create a flyer with this information.

Although students were not specifically familiar with the availability of counselors/advisors, there was general knowledge that, as a college, Mt. SAC provides this service. None of the students have felt a need to use a counselor or advisor. Instructors are the main point of contact for class recommendations, with peers and the schedule of classes also used as resources.

Students are most comfortable taking classes at locations in the community and cite concerns about Mt. SAC parking as a main deterrent for not taking courses on campus. Some students expressed the desire to take more advanced computer classes. Although OAP students are aware that these advanced classes are offered through credit, they are intimidated by the younger student culture. The greatest challenge to class registration is communication of registration dates. First time students find it difficult to get accurate information about the “registration windows”. However, once in the class, instructors make certain to announce important registration information and dates. It would be helpful to have folks at the community and senior centers be more knowledgeable about OAP registration dates and deadlines.

III. Learning Resources

1. Do you use any kind of technology in your classes?

Yes 1

No

- If yes, what kinds of technology do you use?

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- How were you trained to use this technology or software?

Yes, in computer classes.

2. Do you use any online resources that Mt. SAC has helped you discover or access?

Yes 1

No

- If yes, what kinds of online resources are they?

Mt. Sac website - Use newsletter from Mary (Older Adult newsletter)

- How have these helped you to learn?

Website is easy to use and map is easy to follow.

3. Are there online resources that you have discovered (i.e. that Mt. SAC didn't tell you about) that have helped you with your learning?

No, none

Summary:

Students in vocational and computer classes use technology as part of their daily course of study. Training in the use of the technology and software is a focus of instruction. Few students were knowledgeable about the OAP website and its resources. Those who have accessed the website find it user-friendly. It was suggested that the website URL be provided to all students in a flyer format at the beginning of the term.

IV. Advisory Group

1. I understand you have agreed to be part of the Older Adult Advisory Group. What do you hope to contribute to the Older Adult Program? (In other words, why did you say “yes”)
 - Best program for older adults...got them off the couch. Makes seniors feel important and worthwhile...part of society. Helps them stay healthy physically and mentally.
 - Socialization...people need to get out and talk to others. Have made life-long friends.
 - Helps seniors stay up with the times electronically.
 - Appreciate the program and want it to continue.
 - Lost corporate job and started taking classes to help start her own business. Given her the ability to recover after the loss of her job.
 - Fear that the program may not be funded in the future.

2. What are your expectations of the Older Adult Advisory Group?
 - Listen to their comments and concerns and follow through with them. Need the program to continue.

Mary is very respected and appreciated by all!

Summary:

There is a strong consensus that the Mt. SAC Older Adult Program is a critical educational resource in the community. Classes help seniors to learn critical 20th century technology skills, maintain mental fitness, support good health, and create opportunities for supplemental income in retirement. Beyond the curriculum, students benefit from social engagement and participation in the community. Students had a strong desire to “give back” to Mt. SAC through participation in the OAP Advisory Group. They hope that sharing their experiences and ideas will benefit the program as a whole and contribute to its continuance through these difficult economic times.