Taking a Leap: Making a Comeback
Kathy Zandona is Senior Vice President of Network Engagement with The Graduate! Network. She focuses on engaging the business community and providing technical assistance to new member communities.

Bridgett Strickler is Vice President of Network Engagement/Lead Bridging The Talent Gap. Her portfolio includes employer services and supporting the development of new Network communities.
Session Objectives

1) Understand how a grassroots approach can work in your community, state or region;

2) Understand how effective outreach can bring well-prepared adults to your doors;

3) Learn how The Graduate! Network coaching model can provide the returning adult with the confidence and skills they need to go back to and through college.
Taking a Leap: Making a Comeback
Systemic Disconnects

● Systems still focused on 18 year olds and traditional college structures.

● Traditionally colleges are unprepared, little connection between workforce and employers and colleges regarding adults.

● No clear pathway back for people with defaulted loans, institutional debt, low GPAs, services that were designed for traditional students.

● Adults need preparation before making a college and degree choice and they need support through college – preferably from within the college but also from an independent resource outside it.
Community by community, The Graduate! Network is leading a growing national movement to increase college completion among adults.
Strategy For Increasing Adult Degree Attainment

We are:
National Network of 30 communities serving more than 30,000 adults nationwide

We know:
There is a need for Talent - and to reach local, regional and state goals -- adults are key

We do:
Serve adults through a hybrid approach of technology and a proven advising model to and through education

We show:
Return On Investment
What Have We Learned?

- Coordination along the educational continuum and among partners is essential: no single organization can solve all problems
- Comebackers need navigational assistance and motivational support from a trusted source
- Comebackers need to see the connection between postsecondary credentials and their goals
What Have We Learned?

- Financial aid, maximization of credits earned/transfered, minimize time to degree, flexible courses
  
  $\Rightarrow$ 79% of comebacks graduate within 5 years, or are on track to graduate (5 year study of 1,452 Comebackers)
  
  $\Rightarrow$ 62% of all re-enrolled students enroll consistently (year over year)

- Employers that provide educational benefits are important partners
- Employers want partnerships with postsecondary education providers but don’t know where to start, especially small and mid-sized employers
The Graduate! Network Mission

To increase the number of adults going back to and through college.
Innovative, Replicable Practices for Serving Comebackers

• Dr. Kevin Akin, Faith-based Communities partnering with Graduate! Philadelphia

• Laura Ward, Middle Tennessee Reconnect, “Sorting In” adults at the Reconnect Cafe at Nashville State Community College

• Jodi Strote, Greater Minds and Greater Spokane Incorporated, fueling the nursing pipeline and growing your own teachers
Graduate! Network Advising Principles and the Lifecycle Model
Lifecycle Model

• The Lifecycle model for tracking Comebacker progress
• Markers of progress and advising tasks by Lifecycle Role
The Graduate! Network Lifecycle Model

**INQUIRY**
- Fill out the Inquiry Form
- Schedule a meeting with Advisor
- Meet with Advisor
- Complete follow up materials

**PRE-ENROLLMENT**
- Explore
  - Consider colleges, programs and areas of study
  - Consider options for Prior Learning Assessment
- Prep
  - Collect and review paperwork (including transcripts and financial information)
- Go
  - Apply to college

Goal: Quick discovery of potential for success (immediate action)

Goal: Nudges to re-enrollment (2-6mos.)

**PERSISTENCE**
- Acceptance to First day of class
  - Register with the college
  - Connect with a college advisor
  - Select Courses
  - Plan for first semester logistics and purchase books
  - Attend the first day of class
- PERSISTENCE
  - Attend classes
  - Continue to connect to college advisors and Graduate! Network advisors
  - Enroll in Graduate! Network workshops.
  - Pay attention to financial aid deadlines and college institution deadlines.

Goal: Graduate!

**CONCURRENT**
- Embark on a job search
- Consider career placement advancement
- Continued Studies and lifelong learning
- Share your story with others.

Goal: Tie education to a purpose
Key Components of Advising Model

Theories that inform Graduate! Advising

- Fixed vs. Growth Mindset
- Behavioral Economics Insights
- Appreciative Advising
- Active Listening
- Nudge
Fixed vs. Growth Mindset

**Fixed**
- Believe ability to succeed is hardwired & unchangeable.
- Believe in accomplishment and less in the process.
- Need external validation.
- Judging own self.
- Can lead to cheating, fear of failure, procrastination, choosing low achieving peer groups, & blaming.

**Growth**
- Believe in the process that leads to success.
- “Grit”, perseverance.
- Take on challenges.
- Ask how can I do better.
- Can take and learn from criticism.
- Ask for help & use resources and strategies for improvement.
Behavioral Economics Insights

- Explores how we make choices and what influences us
- Decisions influenced by impulses and “shortcuts” in our thinking
- Decisions are influenced by “hassle factors”
- Choice paralysis
Appreciative Advising

Six “D’s” of Appreciative Advising

- Disarm
- Discover
- Dream
- Design
- Deliver
- Don’t Settle
Active Listening

5 ways to listen better

● Take just 3 minutes each day to sit in silence.
● In a noisy environment listen for the number of sound ‘channels’ you can hear.
● Listen to any mundane sound, like a coffee grinder, and pay attention to the sounds it makes.
● Do a personal check in and pay attention to whether you are listening more actively or passively.
● Use the acronym RASA to improve your listening.
Repeating small touches, or nudges, to help people make decisions and meet their goals.

- Deadlines
- Notifications
- Moments of encouragement
- Reminders
Nudges should be:

- Focused and short (one action per nudge)
- Timely
- Personalized
- Motivational
- Outline an action
- Include a deadline
Who are Comebackers?

**RACE/ETHNICITY**
53% are non-white (change from > 70% before mid 2015)

**AGE**
Range is evenly distributed except for slight bump 31 – 40

**FAMILY ANNUAL INCOME**
43% earn less than $24K, 32% earn between $24K and $56K, 10% earn between $56K and $75K, and 3% earn between $75K and $100K

**WORK**
77% work: 39% <40 hrs, 38% 40+ hours/week
Who are Comebackers?

**EDUCATION LEVEL AT INTAKE**
- 2/3 have earned credit but no degree
- 22% have earned a degree or post-secondary certificate

**DRIVE**
- 53% say employment or career oriented (better job, increased earning potential, career change); another 42% are motivated by personal goals

**READY**
- 48% say they’re ready to start right away. 36% say in 3-6 months
Who are Comebackers?

30% of CBs have defaulted student loans or are unsure of their financial standing with their school/lender of prior enrollment.

WHAT’S KEEPING YOU FROM RETURNING?
- Finances: 36%
- Logistical challenges: 27% (work schedule, transportation, childcare)
- Needed guidance: 20% (lack of ad. support sys., unsure of career goals)
- Life challenges: 11% (fear of failure, disability, “I don’t know”)
- Academics and learning: 6%

ACADEMIC UNCERTAINTY 1/5 are “undecided”
## What leads to success? *(Predictive Model)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VARIABLE</th>
<th>PREDICTIVE VALUE/CORRELATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HIGH TOUCH CONTACTS</td>
<td>Positive correlation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGE AT INTAKE</td>
<td>36 is “peak age” for greatest likelihood to enroll</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WHEN DO YOU WANT TO START?</td>
<td>Today or within 3-6 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HOW DID YOU HEAR ABOUT US?</td>
<td>Most predictive: Flyer, College Advisor, Poster or Billboard, Referral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Least predictive: Television</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEFAULTED STUDENT LOANS?</td>
<td>Answering question was predictive of enrollment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EMPLOYMENT STATUS AT INTAKE</td>
<td>Employed up to 40 hours</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*THE GRADUATE NETWORK!*

*DATA THAT MOVE US*
Join The Movement!
Professional Development Opportunities

- Weekly action idea newsletter, the Lightbulb
- Twice monthly professional development webinars and sharing
  - Cross Country Conversations for navigators
  - Solution Sessions for directors
- Quarterly coaching calls with Network staff
- Annual Advising Summit
- Annual Learning Exchange
- Data That Move Us
- Bridging The Talent Gap
Questions?

Kathy.Zandona@Graduate-Network.org
Bridgett.Strickler@Graduate-Network.org

Thank you!