Returning Adult Students: What you need to know!
There are 36 M individuals in the US with some credit but no degree.

*We call them Comebackers.*

**Vision**

Every adult who aspires to earn a college degree has access to the resources and supports they require to start and complete.

**Mission**

We believe everyone should have an equitable chance to achieve the education and career they desire. The Graduate! Network collaborates with a range of stakeholders to build, nurture, and assess structures and systems that support adults to attend college and complete their degrees.

**Approach**

We work with civic leadership; partners in higher education, economic and community development, the corporate community, organized labor, and workforce development; and Comebackers toward a future where there are established and sustainable services in every community that support all adults to and through college.
Equity is at the heart of The Graduate! Model

... 90 percent of Comebackers earn <$42K and half earn <$24K.
... 70 percent are women.
... Most are the first in their families to attend college.
... 70 percent are Black; in Albuquerque and San Antonio, most are Latinx.
Data That Move Us Reports

September 2020

The Comeback Story
How Adults Return to School to Complete their Degrees

Hadas Sheffer, Iris Palmer, & Annette B. Mattei

Center on Education, Labor, & Skills
Last edited on August 27, 2020 at 5:33 p.m. EDT
The Comeback Story:
Graduate! Network’s annual research report on Comebackers

Top Findings for Comebackers who graduated:

- 69% continuously enrolled
- 1 in 5 had starts and stops - instead of persistence, think: Perseverance!
- 1 in 10 faced an administrative hurdle
- Motivations are deeply personal
- Supportive institutional faculty and staff are key
We need to tell a new story, not one of persistence, but one of... 

PERSEVERANCE

We need to tell a new story, not one of failure or shortcomings, but one of... 

UNTAPPED POTENTIAL
The majority of Comebackers who engaged with the Network and went on to graduate stayed continuously enrolled the whole time (69 percent).
But continuous enrollment was not the journey of every graduating Comebacker—one in five (20 percent) stopped out at least once.
FINDING #1

We need to tell a new story, not one of *persistence*, but one of...

PERSEVERANCE
Of comebackers who engaged with the network, close to half (44 percent) were potential completers, meaning during their first try they had completed at least 2 years of academic progress.
Of all potential completers who engaged with the Network, three in five (61 percent) already had close to or more than 4 years’ academic progress under their belt.
FINDING #2

We need to tell a new story, not one of failure or shortcomings, but one of...

UNTAPPED POTENTIAL
Graduate! Network Ambassador Program

What is a Graduate! Network Ambassador? What do they do?

Someone who commits to having intentional conversations with potential Comebackers in their networks.

They encourage potential Comebackers to persevere and share with them about available resources.

Qualifications of a Graduate! Network Ambassador

Are NOT required to be experts in the fields of adult education or higher education.

Are catalysts who open the door to conversation.
Peer Marketing Works

- 33% of consumers trust paid advertisements; 92% trust peer recommendations.
- Consumers pay more attention to their friends than advertisements.
- Word of mouth is 5 times more effective than traditional advertising, paid search, email, etc.
- Word of mouth is the most impactful and trusted marketing (Association of National Advertisers).

Source: Nielsen, 2019
Ambassador Ripple Effect

Kentucky AARP Ambassadors:

Eight Ambassadors

Almost 500 conversations with potential Comebackers!