



Council for Christian
Colleges & Universities

Center for Research in Adult Learning

INDIANA
WESLEYAN
UNIVERSITY

Mission: *The CCCU Center for Research in Adult Learning will serve Christian institutions by facilitating and encouraging research, which will enhance the quality of Christ-centered adult programs.*

When it comes to adult education, how do we know if “good” is “good enough”?

Your faculty, students and alumni all tell you your program is “good.” But how does it measure up to programs at other schools? Is your non-traditional programming “good enough” to produce the same learning outcomes as your traditional program? Is your online programming “good enough” to carry your college name? These are some of the nagging questions that prompted Indiana Wesleyan to partner with the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities to establish a Center for Research in Adult Learning. The Center is a product of three years of talks between IWU and CCCU. In 2006 Indiana Wesleyan began discussions with CCCU

about the need for a greater understanding of growing programs in adult education at Christian colleges. In February, 2007 CCCU invited some Adult Program Leaders to a Consultation to discuss and set a research agenda. They were overwhelmed with the response. Representatives from 38 CCCU Schools traveled through a foot of snow and sub-zero temperatures to meet in Marion, Indiana. It was clear that there was a demand for collaborative work. Four Task Forces came out of that Consultation. As a result Dr. Paul Corts, president of CCCU issued a Request for Proposals for a CCCU Center for Research in Adult Learning which was circulated to the



Presidents of all CCCU schools. Indiana Wesleyan, under the leadership of President Henry Smith, submitted a proposal which was accepted by CCCU in late 2007. In November, after a national search, Dr. Cynthia Tweedell was appointed the first Executive Director. She comes to the Center with ten years of experience doing assessment and program development research in adult higher education. Her first order of business was to develop a steering committee of adult education professionals from CCCU institutions (see page 2) to guide the course of the Center.

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Cynthia Tweedell, Ph.D.
Executive Director
Jennifer Vermilion
Administrative Assistant

Research Agenda

- Learning outcomes assessment for adults
- Benchmarking
- Retention of adult students
- Spiritual transformation of adults
- Best practices in online learning
- Teaching diverse learners
- Alumni surveys

Strategic Goals

- Sponsor at least one conference per year.
- Publish at least one monograph per year.
- Provide benchmarking data on adult education.
- Assist in student learning outcomes assessment
- Serve as a resource for research in adult programs.
- Coordinate projects at the request of institutions

What are We Learning?

We are in the second year of our Adult Student Learning Outcomes study. Several schools are collecting essays from beginning and graduating students on a common prompt. A task force has developed a scoring rubric on Written Communication, Critical Thinking, and Christian Worldview. We are collecting the student essays and distributing them to CCCU faculty for scoring. The Center sends each school a report, benchmarking them with the sample as a whole. Here's what we are learning:

- There is a significant difference between the beginning and graduating student scores on critical thinking and written communication. This is good news—students have positive learning outcomes in these areas.
- We are not doing well communicating the Christian worldview to our adult students. The mean scores were below 2.0 (on a 5 point scale). There was not a significant difference between the beginning and graduating students on these scores. While some schools are doing better than others, we could all stand to improve in this area.
- One school discovered their beginning students were significantly lower on critical thinking and written communication than students at other schools. They are working on providing more student helps in these areas.

For details about this project and to participate next year, see: <http://www.indwes.edu/cral/current-research.htm>



Steering Committee

Richard Ellis– John Brown University, AK
Don Finn– Regent University, VA
Steve Holtrop– Huntington University, IN
Lori Jass– Bethel University, MN
Audrey Kelleher– Belhaven University, MS
Toni Pauls– Warner Pacific University, OR
Shirley Roddy– Mid-America Christian Univ., OK
Bradford Sample– Indiana Wesleyan Univ., IN
Anita Underwood– Nyack College, NY
Linda Wellborn– Evangel University, MO
Cameron Wold– Colorado Christian Univ., CO
Deborah Wright– Montreat College, NC
Mimi Barnard– CCCU
Cynthia Tweedell– Center for Research

Inaugural Conference Set for May 11-13

Please consider attending our first conference which will be held just south of Indianapolis at the Greenwood Education Center. The conference will feature a keynote by Mimi Barnard, Vice President of Professional Development and Research for the Council of Christian Colleges and Universities. There are many presentations planned on a variety of topics. For details and a conference agenda see:

www.indwes.edu/cral/conferences.

On May 11 we will sponsor a Pre-conference which will be a research project on Best Practices in Teaching Adult and Online Students. We will be using the World Café format to enable participants to gather information about what works in adult and online education. After a keynote address by Cheryl Fleming,

Asst. Dean for Teaching and Learning from Indiana Wesleyan, we will spend the afternoon gathering strategies for integrating faith with adult and online education. This project will result in a monograph on Best Practices in Teaching Adult and Online Students.

Conference proceedings will be available online at the conclusion of the event.