



The 21st IAGG World Congress of Gerontology and Geriatrics
JULY 23-27, 2017

Global Aging and Health
Bridging Science, Policy, and Practice

Phyllis Cummins, Senior Research Scholar, Scripps Gerontology Center
The American Association of Community Colleges' Plus 50 Initiative: The Ohio Experience

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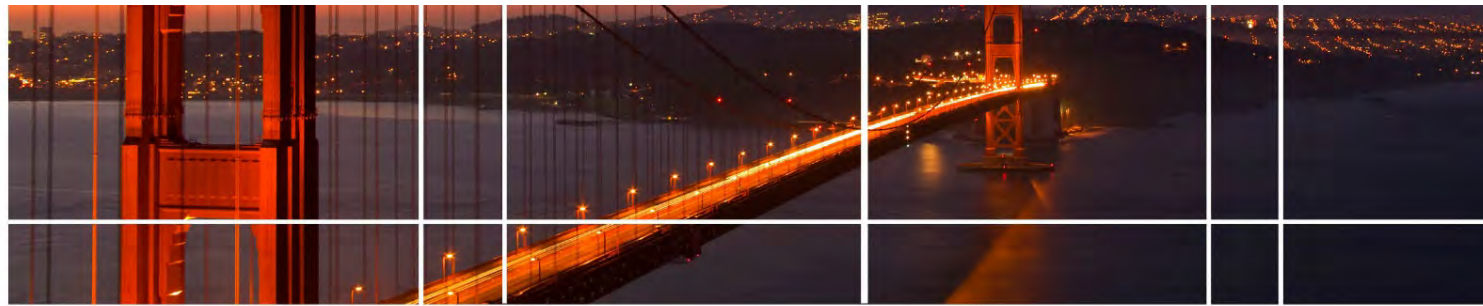
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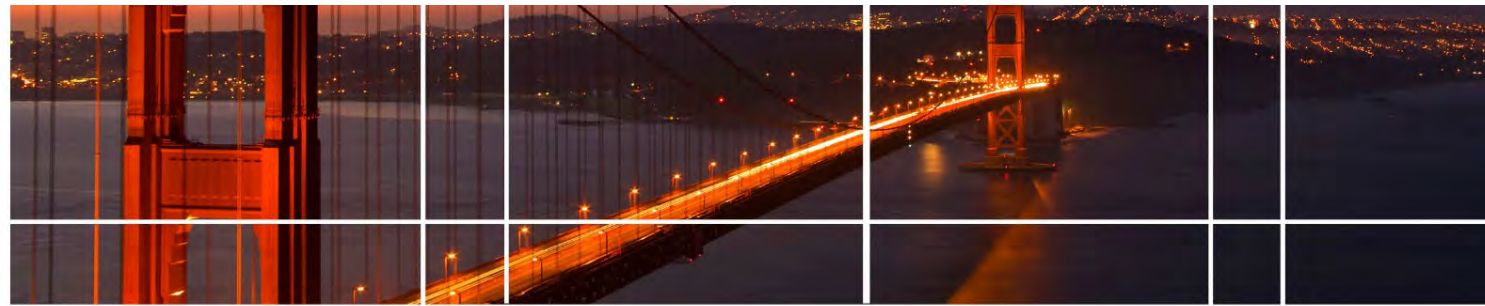
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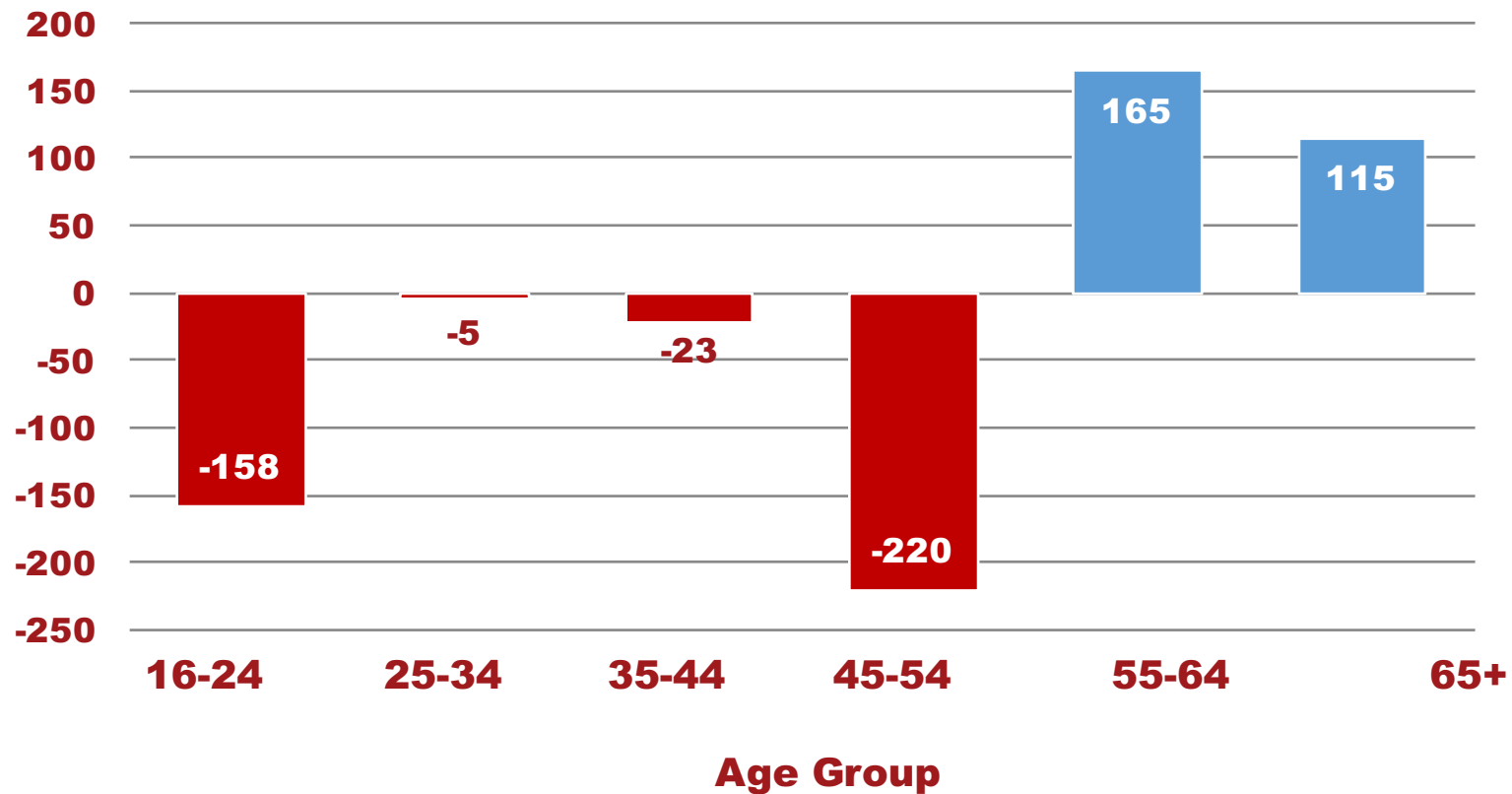


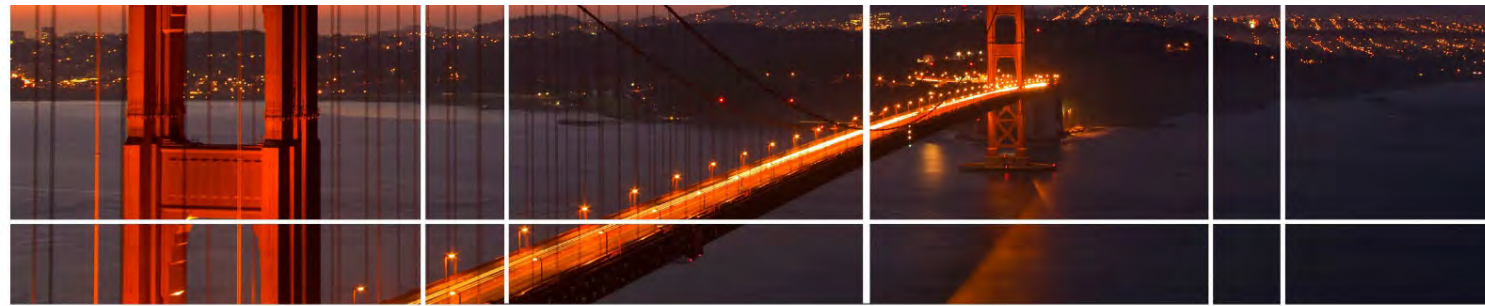
What is the American Association of Community College's (AACCE) Plus-50 Initiative?

- **Started in 2008 and concluded in late 2015**
- **Small grants were awarded to 138 community colleges**
- **Funders included The Atlantic Philanthropies, Lumina Foundation, and Deerbrook Charitable Trust**
- **Purpose was to create or expand campus programs that engage the Plus-50 student population**
- **Focused on workforce training and preparing older adults for new careers**
- **Seven of Ohio's 23 community colleges participated and each received \$10,000 - \$15,000 over three year period**



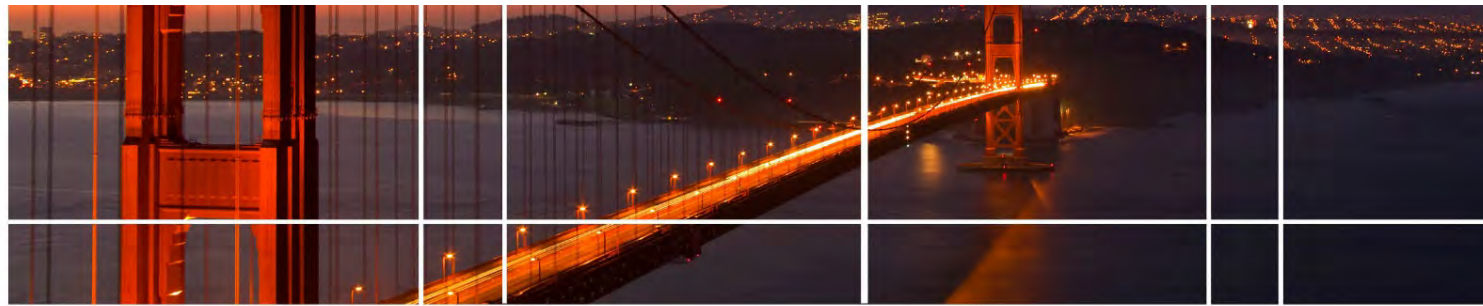
Ohio's Projected Change in Labor Force by Age Group: 2012 – 2022 (in thousands)





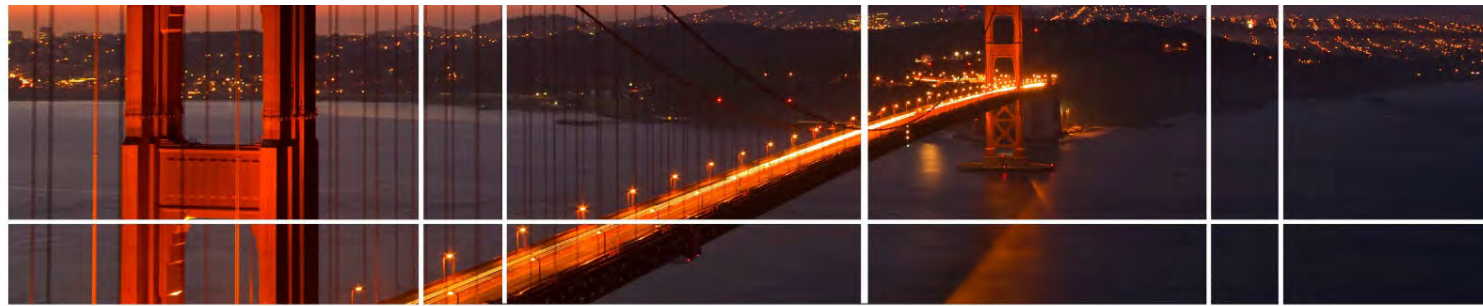
Our Research

- **Mixed methods research project funded by the U.S. Department of Education**
- **Qualitative research focuses on three case study colleges and key informant interviews at other community colleges**
- **Insights were gained by focusing specifically on the AACC Plus-50 Initiative**
- **Focus groups of age 50-plus students and interviews with program administrators**



Findings: Program Administrators

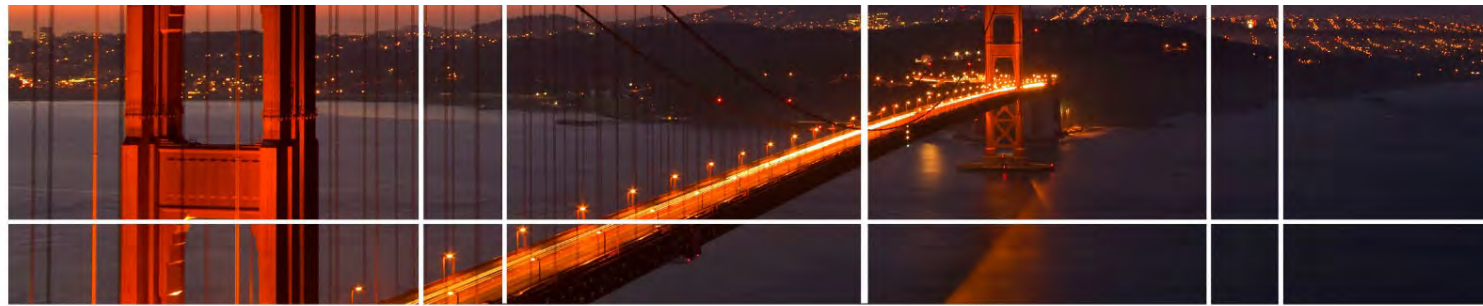
- **Grant energized colleges to focus on older students**
- **Support from top administrators important**
- **Colleges were provided with resources to better serve age 50+ students**
- **Advisory Committees guided program to focus on employer relationships and existing services that could be made more friendly to the 50+ population**
 - **Employers/industry participants**
 - **College staff providing support services**
 - **Representatives of Ohio Department of Job and Family Services**
 - **Student representatives**



Findings: Program Administrators

College specific programs:

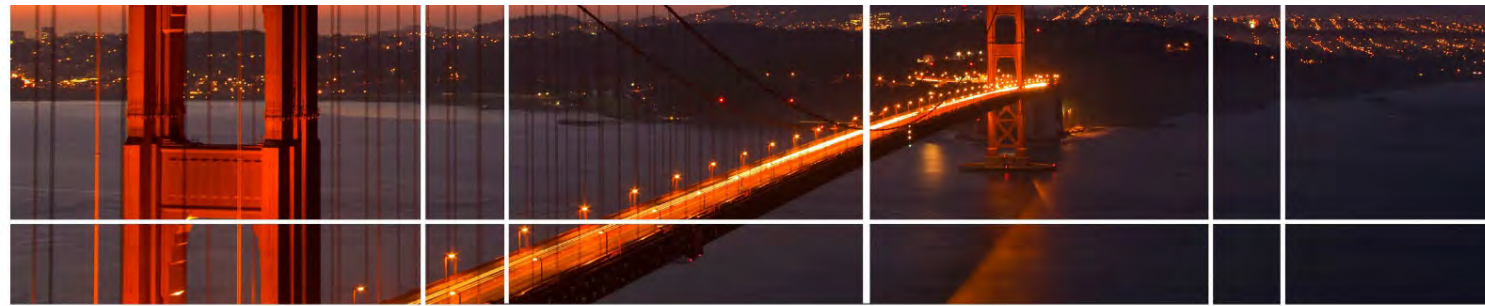
- **Leveraged AACCC grant to obtain an additional \$90,000 in funding**
 - **Funds used for computer classes and short term training**
- **Targeted recently unemployed by obtaining names from the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services**
- **Tuition free enrollment for one credit class per semester for age 50+ group**
- **Pedagogy training for faculty so they could better serve older students provided**
- **Quick Start program**



Findings: Program Administrators

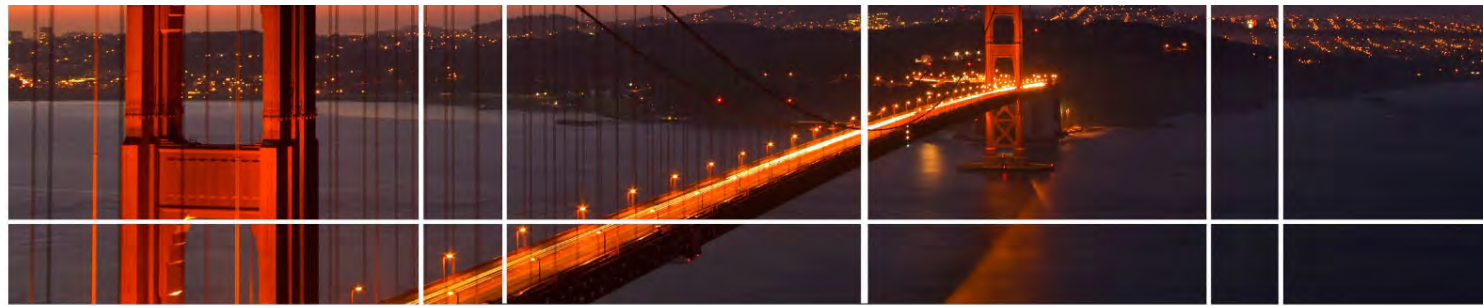
Program Concerns:

- **AACC reporting requirements considered by some to be onerous for a small grant**
- **Funds were not available for scholarships**
- **Lack of clarity on program objectives**
 - **Short-term training vs degree completion**
- **Sustainability**



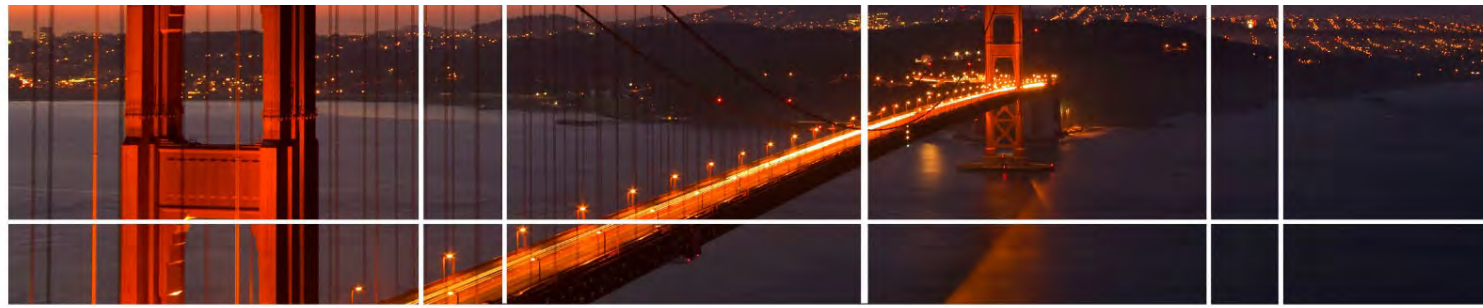
Findings: Student Focus Groups

- **Two focus groups each at two Plus 50 colleges**
- **N=24 students ages 50-73**
 - **Variety of prior education: high school through master's degrees**
- **Little awareness of Plus 50 initiative**
- **Minimal awareness of other age-targeted efforts**
- **Social and health events that precipitate enrollment often persist during enrollment and are major challenges**
- **Gap years have significant effect on academic preparedness**
 - **Math in particular emerges as a deal-breaker in academic options**
- **Gap years (since last schooling) somewhat compensated for by maturity and adaptive strategies**



Findings: Student Focus Groups

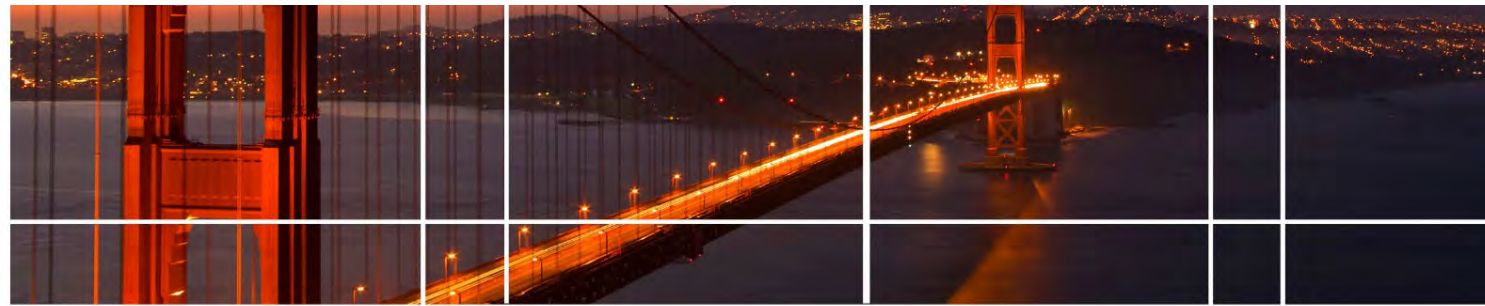
- **Issues of career fit with life stage and health status are reflected in a struggle to find solid academic pathways**
- **Sense of urgency impacts selection of academic programs**
- **Although many barriers to success are universal (cross age groups), functional age and life-stage challenges require age-related accommodations**
 - **Faculty and staff can be trained to respond to challenges**
 - **Age-specific programs (e.g. Plus 50) have important place**
- **Student-identified challenges call for student-centered programming**
 - **Advising services**
 - **Student success course vs one-time orientation**



We Need to Keep Learning!

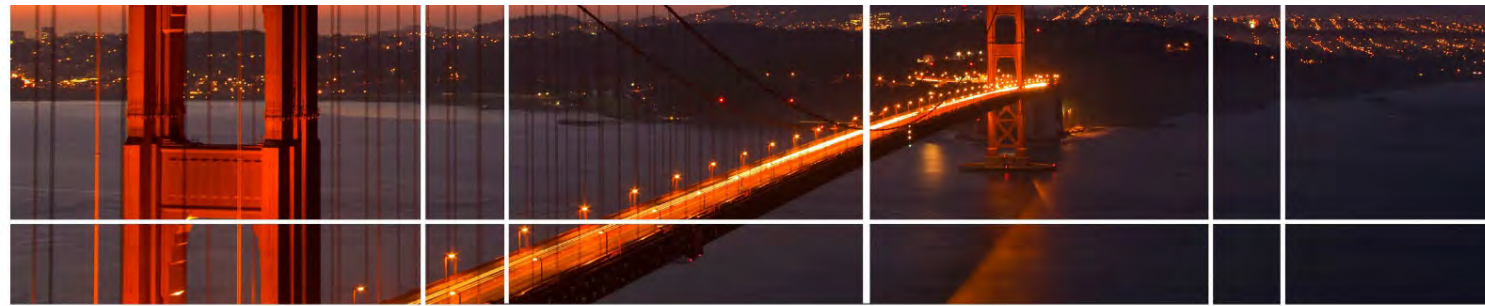


Source: The Economist, January 14, 2017



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Consultant:

None

Discussion of Off-Label, Investigational, or Experimental Drug Use:

None



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