

Recruitment Reception for GCC's Academy for Lifelong Learning [Team Summary](#)

Offering Lifelong Learning opportunities to senior citizens is nothing new to the Maricopa Community College District. Many colleges work diligently to create and promote exciting new programs for seniors in our communities. What **IS** new at Glendale Community College is an innovative way to recruit seniors into these classes. Informing seniors of classes and motivating them to register are always the challenges. At the "Recruitment Reception for the Academy for Lifelong Learning" GCC discovered a great way to do both.

The newly created Academy for Lifelong Learning (classes for seniors) at GCC originally started out as simply a program of basic computer classes designed for seniors who wanted to use a home computer or acquire some job skills. The developers of these courses, John Gibson and Sheryl Benavides were having trouble filling these classes. They had a stroke of genius when they invited other departments that offered (or wanted to offer) senior classes to join them in planning a reception event to promote such an Academy that included more than just computer classes. Departments who joined the plan were Business and Information Technology, Physical Sciences, Communications, Library Resources, Fitness and Wellness, and Community Education (noncredit classes). They worked together to offer classes--credit and noncredit-- especially tailored for lifelong learners.

Then they came up with the innovative piece--the creative "recruitment reception" that would be an information and enrollment event. The planning sessions yielded creative ideas and assessments of classes that already seemed to appeal to seniors and others classes just waiting to be "designed." Department representatives would staff the event, providing information about the classes and registering people on the spot. There was a great deal of enthusiasm in the planning of this event and good collaboration. Planners did not limit the definition of a "senior" to students over 60. A lifelong learner could be an adult of any age who desired to learn at a slower pace, in a relaxed atmosphere, with peers.

The recruitment reception is the central component of this innovation to fill the classes in the Academy for Lifelong Learners. Attractive, personal invitations were sent out to seniors already participating in the GCC Silver Sneakers (Exercise) Program (approximately 600 students.) Other department databases provided addresses for community centers and senior centers. Press releases, generating newspaper and radio coverage, proved to be a crucial element in the success of the event and significantly contributed to the number of guests that attended the reception. Over 100 phone calls were generated by newspaper coverage during the final two days before the event.



The GCC Physical Sciences lobby was chosen as the reception site for its spaciousness and attractiveness as well as for the copious parking on three sides of the building. The lovely building was built with money from the last bond election, which was a nice point to make to the seniors who attended the reception. Another advantage of choosing this building was the fact that is conveniently located near the two High Tech Centers in case any attendees wished to have a look at where their classes would probably be held.

The reception was held on a weekday in the mid-afternoon (2-4 p.m.) which meant that the involved faculty were largely finished with classes and could assist with the event, meet students face-to-face, and promote their own programs. Each guest (potential student) filled out a registration form—each form was given

several chances to win one of many donated door prizes. Students were registered on the spot and wait lists were formed when classes filled.



This was not “just another open house.” This reception event was an innovative convenience for potential senior students. It promoted credit and noncredit classes in one location, at one event. It brought departments to a round table discussion to plan tailored classes and programs for our growing senior population. It served to let community seniors know that GCC is working hard to design and supply classes tailored to their needs and wants.

It included refreshments, always a nice touch and particularly appreciated by seniors. Most importantly, it was an amazingly successful collaborative event that brought together many campus departments and resources in an efficient and innovative way. Enrollment services staffed one computer at the event for on-the-spot registration. Due to the number of guests who chose to register during the reception, a lesson was learned and the Academy for Lifelong Learning committee is planning five or six computers staffed to register people for their next reception.



This event can be easily replicated at other campuses. For campuses wanting to introduce new courses to seniors, it is an incredible way to do just that. For campuses that already have a large senior program, it can be a very nice way to meet and thank your senior students and survey them for additional classes they may want or need.

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In addition to being an excellent example of campus collaboration, this event was also successful when it came to numbers. From the time the articles appeared in the press to the end of the reception itself, there were 1,524 enrollments of students 45 and older (this is enrollments, not headcount—if a student registered for three classes it counted three times). This was an increase of almost 40% over the spring 2003 enrollments. Additionally, 77 students enrolled at the reception in new credit and noncredit computer classes alone, and wait lists were formed until extra sections could be opened. That has since been done and 75 more students have enrolled since the reception. Planning stages have already begun for the next reception. As a result of the information received from the guests of the reception, additional short-term classes for lifelong learners are currently being developed

that will be offered during the desired time frames and start dates suggested by the guests.