

# THE CHARLOTTE W. NEWCOMBE FOUNDATION

2010 Conference Notes – Scholarships for Mature Women Students – October 28-29, 2010

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## Introductions and CWNF update

After participant introductions, CWNF Executive Director Tom Wilfrid welcomed and thanked everyone for setting aside time to gather with colleagues from other institutions who share an interest in the success of mature women students.

Tom then reviewed the contents of the conference folder and updated the attendees on some highlights from the past year from the Foundation's perspective, with the aid of a PowerPoint presentation.

Folder contents included data summarizing the Foundation's record of the history of each participant's institution in the Newcombe Scholarships for Mature Women Students (MWS) program: CWNF funding, scholarships awarded, and growth of the Newcombe-endowed fund. Also included were the conference agenda, a list of participants, the current Foundation policy for the program, a *Fact Sheet - October 2010* that highlights overall data about the Newcombe Foundation and the MWS program, and a synopsis of a recent report titled *What Student Letters Tell Us: The Impact of 2009-10 Newcombe Scholarships on Mature Women Students and Students with Disabilities*. For the full report, see [http://www.newcombefoundation.org/current\\_mws.html](http://www.newcombefoundation.org/current_mws.html).

The key slides from Tom's PowerPoint presentation are attached in pdf format. Two main points:

- Thanks to a 98.6% increase in institutional matching for annual Newcombe grants during 2009-10, mature women students received 11% more dollars in Newcombe Scholarships than in 2008-09 despite a 10.1% decline in annual grants from the Newcombe Foundation.
  - While the MWS program has received 30.6% of all of the Newcombe Foundation's charitable giving over thirty years of grantmaking, it received 46.6% of all CWNF grants for 2010-11. This affirms that the current and continuing commitment of the Foundation's Trustees to the program is very strong.
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## Small group discussions

Each day's attendees divided themselves into small groups according to area of primary professional responsibility: *Development*, *Financial Aid* (10/29 only) or other *Student Services* that support MW students. CWNF staff members prepared the summaries that follow, with input from each session's moderator. Except for Financial Aid, which met only on 10/29, each summary attempts to blend together the discussion topics and points from both days. Special thanks to the session moderators:

Thursday 10/28 –	Renée Zehel, Marywood University, <i>Development</i> KayMarie Platt, Widener University, <i>Student Services</i>
Friday 10/29 -	Geannine Callaghan, Towson University, <i>Development</i> Stacy Salinas, Bloomfield College, <i>Financial Aid</i> Cira Vernazza, Fordham University, <i>Student Services</i>

### **Small groups – Student Services**

#### Financial literacy

- Financial literacy was raised as a growing problem for mature women students, even at institutions where they are eligible for discounted tuition. Many do not know or understand the extent of their debt and recklessly take out loans. While there is a need for education about debt management, when such opportunities are offered they tend to be sparsely attended.
  - Some institutions use the free online resource offered by The National Endowment for Financial Education ([www.nefe.org](http://www.nefe.org)) to help students plan for funding higher education and to manage debt after graduation.

#### Shifts in adult student population

- Several participants mentioned that the average age of mature adult students is getting younger.
- Others reported a growing number of mature women students who are enrolled full-time and attributed it to the high unemployment rate.
- Others expressed concern that some adult students are taking heavy course loads to qualify for larger loans. As a result, more students are failing or not completing courses.
- Others voiced concern about an apparent increase in the numbers of students with serious mental health issues. Some women have a history of enrolling at an institution, leaving when their illness becomes acute, and enrolling elsewhere.
  - Access to psychiatric clinics and counseling services for students vary. At one institution where returning students receive tuition discounts, they are referred to community resources for psychiatric treatment and are not served through university resources.
  - Schools participating in the Yellow Ribbon program are serving larger numbers of veterans (mostly men to date) and expect to serve some with PTSD and traumatic brain injury.

#### Creating community among mature women students and connecting them with the institution

- One participant stated, “It’s hard to get adults together, period.”
- Some institutions celebrate non-traditional student week and advocate for offices such as the career center to remain open late. Others combine adult undergraduate and graduate student populations into one student organization as a unified cohort.
- At the University of Scranton, initial advising sessions are scheduled for at least one hour to allow time to review all the information a student will need for an auspicious start.
- Rider University holds workshops that offer help on writing scholarship essays. (See Rider’s June 2009 Spotlight feature on the Newcombe website for a detailed description.)
- Through its Mary I. Bunting Program, Rutgers/Douglass offers current mature women peer advisors, a spring forum series, their own special lounge, and a vital alumnae organization. (See Rutgers’s April 2009 Spotlight feature on the website for a detailed description.)
- Elizabethtown College offered “Career Boot Camps” to returning adult students for the first time last year. As a result, the career center staff is more responsive to the needs of this population.
- To prevent student academic crises, some institutions use early warning systems, learning contracts, and “intrusive” advising.
- Fordham University holds a mandatory career workshop on a Friday evening for current Newcombe Scholars, encouraging participants to create informal community. (See Fordham’s May 2009 Spotlight feature on the website for a detailed description.)
- The New School hosts a well-attended Scholarship Breakfast annually. Several generate good annual attendance at other times: e.g., Kean University on Sunday afternoon and Rider on a spring evening.
- Columbia University will hold a reception for current and alumni Newcombe Scholars this spring.
- Some institutions offer credit courses that address specific needs of returning students.
- Other ideas: institution-specific Facebook pages for Newcombe Scholars, Newcombe alumnae mentoring current Scholars electronically or in person.

#### Services for adult students taking courses online

- The New School is noticing a growing online population. Many of these individuals take classes on campus as well, and enroll in online classes in order to obtain additional credits. The writing center, the counseling center, and crisis management will soon be available to online community.
  - Elizabethtown College contracts with SMARTHINKING.com for online tutoring.
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## Small group – Financial Aid

### Student need

- There was general agreement that the need for aid among mature women students has not lessened. Instances in which students reach allowable loan limits appear to be increasing.

### Various institutional approaches to awarding Newcombe Scholarships

- At some institutions, the award of scholarships is fully integrated with Financial Aid, with the FA staff identifying aid applicants who are most appropriate for Newcombe Scholarships (and others).
- At some institutions, the scholarship selection process is completely separate from Financial Aid. Students apply separately for scholarship consideration and are reviewed by a scholarship committee in relation to the criteria of each potentially applicable scholarship.
- At many others, a scholarship application is required but Financial Aid has a significant role in the screening and selection process.
- Some institutions award all Newcombe Scholarship funds in a single process for the coming academic year, while others reserve some funds for spring awards to new students or students whose circumstances have changed.
- Some institutions award equal size scholarships to all recipients. Others award one equal amount to FT recipients and a different equal amount to PT recipients. Some institutions determine awards student-by-student on the basis of individual financial need assessment.

### Encouraging scholarship applications

- Those present from institutions that use scholarship applications reported on their practices for ensuring the largest possible volume of applications from mature women students. The following practices were reported as being somewhat effective:
  - Notify eligible students via letter or email, with application
  - Email blast to all students
  - Advertising
  - A scholarship catalog
  - Giveaways, such as bookmarks
  - Making application easy, such as online

### Evaluating scholarship candidates

- Those present generally agreed that the Expected Family Contribution (EFC) has limited value in assessing the true financial situation of adult students; a look at individual circumstances often evidences a greater level of need than the FAFSA numbers do.
- Some institutions find it valuable to use an interview as part of the scholarship selection process, although it is at times very difficult to rank-order students who face different sets of challenges in their pursuit of a degree.

### Student thank-you letters

- Student thank-you letters were discussed at some length. Some institutions consider it consistent with their institutional mission to require that each scholarship recipient write a thank-you letter to each scholarship donor. Others suggest or encourage them but don't require them.
  - The Newcombe Foundation asks institutions to encourage students to write, but considers it very important that letters be authentic expressions in the student's own voice.
- Different institutions provide different degrees of guidance and assistance for the writing process.

### CWNF reporting

- There was general agreement that the Newcombe Foundation's annual request for individual student GPAs is consistent with FERPA, as the recipients are not identified. However, some institutions require that scholarship recipients convey in writing their authorization to the institution to share such information with the scholarship donor.
  - There was also general agreement that the Newcombe Foundation's requests for reports have become increasingly user-friendly in recent years. [Suggestions for improvement are always welcomed.]
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## **Small groups - Development**

### CWNF institutional match

- There was general agreement that the Newcombe Trustees' requirement for institutions to match their Newcombe endowment challenge grants has helped elevate the Newcombe Scholarship program among development priorities. Development staff resources are focused on achieving the match, and the challenge helps to infuse a sense of urgency into the case for giving to this purpose.

### Strategies for finding matching funds and building Newcombe-endowed funds

- Appeal to former Newcombe Scholars. Most former Newcombe recipients are not major gift prospects, as they enter service professions and are burdened with debt and family responsibilities. Several institutional solicitations have generated high participation rates at modest giving levels.
  - La Salle University has created a Women's Giving Circle that reaches out to recipients from 30 years.
  - The University of Pennsylvania, among others, attempts to form strong connections among past and present Newcombe recipients and others through special events.
  - A survey to collect information and reconnect with former recipients could be useful. CWNF staff will work on developing a survey to address the interests of both the Foundation and institutional partners.
- Develop a "leadership council" of alumni and parents that asks for an annual gift commitment for the Newcombe program. At Saint Joseph's University, this has led to several multi-year gifts.
- Tap non-Newcombe alumnae who are successful and interested in supporting other women.
- Include the Newcombe challenge grant in the institution's comprehensive capital campaign.
- Develop a cohort of women in business who are in a position of influence at local companies and who, after hearing the stories of Newcombe Scholars and the program that supports them, are attracted to the idea of educating and empowering mature women. One company has fifteen women whose checks to Rider University's Newcombe Endowed Fund were matched by the company. Mentoring is an outgrowth of this effort, with successful women helping mature women students focus on academic success and/or a career path.
- Identify the "Top Women Under..." in specific regional areas (Top 20 under 20, Top 30 under 30, Top 40 under 40, etc.) Often these women support the general cause of women and have the capacity to give, as well as the inclination.
- Create a video based upon a story of a woman's/family's success, as is being done at Misericordia to promote their Women with Children program.
- Encourage senior citizens who audit courses on campus to donate to the Newcombe program. At The New School, life-long learners have found the Newcombe program appealing.
- Use the Newcombe website and the CASE award video to promote the value of the Newcombe Scholarship programs. Invite Newcombe Foundation staff to meet with potential donors.
- Tap a local community foundation for scholarship support. There may be donor-directed funds that may be interested in meeting the match, especially when presented as a challenge.
- Tell a local business, such as a bank, about the Newcombe scholarship program. Gannon University has been very successful with one supportive bank whose contact person is a woman.
- Speak to local vendors. Since the Newcombe program supports many local women who patronize them, appeal for support from local businesses.
- Invite women faculty members to support Newcombe Scholars. This has met with some success but not as much as anticipated.
- Begin a Mother's Day campaign. Hunter has a very successful program asking for donations in honor of a mother or loved one.
- Take advantage of an already-planned fundraising event by asking that the Newcombe matching challenge be included as a beneficiary.

Issues related to fundraising strategy

- While geographic dispersal of former Newcombe scholars makes it difficult to maintain contact, newsletters, events, etc. can help.
- Cumulative private debt of recipients is often more than the recorded academic debt and should be recognized as a hindrance to giving.
- At West Chester University and elsewhere, the pursuit of Newcombe matching funds is seen as competition by others within the institution who seek similar donors to support women generally.
- Funds for scholarships are often secondary priorities for capital campaigns. Although scholarship funds resonate with many donors, institutions tend to look first to funding construction, renovation and operating expenses.
- Fewer institutions are relying on special events (galas, golf outings, etc.) because of the amount of work they require and the limited return they provide.

Creating a community of Newcombe Scholars (see also the notes on the Student Services discussions)

- The University of Scranton holds a luncheon for Newcombe scholars during a quiet time of the year to build a sense of community, offering advice and information about services that are available to mature women (from help with parking to counseling).
- Misericordia University and other institutions have developed a mentoring component that matches current Newcombe recipients with past recipients or external/community mentors.
- Rider University invites current Newcombe scholars, faculty, and administrators to an annual reception to recognize scholars and to encourage faculty and administrators to advocate for Newcombe students. Each scholar speaks for a few minutes about her experience.

Building the case for giving: recommendation

- Development professionals can become more effective by deepening their understanding of what data are available that demonstrate the impact of the Newcombe Scholarship program. This can help make a stronger case for support from potential donors.
- The relationship between Development and Student Services should be explored further, as should the processes necessary to collect pertinent data.

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## Full group discussions

Small group discussion summaries

Each small group moderator gave a brief summary for the larger group of topics discussed and some discussion highlights. [See previous sections.] Some of the later discussion (below) was stimulated by these reports.

CWNF report about student thank-you letters

Tom Wilfrid encouraged everyone to read the one-page summary of the recent report analyzing 377 thank-you letters the Foundation received from Newcombe Scholars during 2009-10, and to download the full report via [http://www.newcombefoundation.org/current\\_mws.html](http://www.newcombefoundation.org/current_mws.html). It is titled *What Student Letters Tell Us: The Impact of 2009-10 Newcombe Scholarships on Mature Women Students and Students with Disabilities*. Diane Wilfrid provided additional detail about the project and highlighted its findings.

Newcombe website updates

Tom projected real-time website images to highlight several recent innovations:

- Throughout the website, all data have been updated to reflect 2009-10 final reports from institutions and 2010-11 grant awards by the Foundation.
- A ribbon on the **Home Page** now highlights the Foundation's 2010 receipt of the *James L. Fisher Award for Distinguished Service to Education* from CASE. A link on that ribbon leads to a description of the award and the video that was used to introduce the Foundation at the July 19 CASE awards luncheon in NYC.
- Within the **About** section, a subsection on **Recognitions** contains articles focusing on the two major awards that the Foundation received since last year's conference: the November 2009 *Outstanding Foundation of the Year* award from the Greater Philadelphia Chapter of the Association of Fundraising Professionals, and the July 2010 CASE Award.
- Also within the **About** section, a new subsection called **Donate** invites browsers to consider donating to the Newcombe-endowed fund at any institution that administers one. This subsection will eventually contain links

to the appropriate page within each funded institution's website. There is also a low-key solicitation of inquiries aimed at any donor who might wish to make a significant gift to the Newcombe Foundation itself.

- Within the **Scholarships** section's subsection on **Mature Women Students**, the left-hand bar has an entry titled **Information for Currently Funded Institutions**. This links users to a page listing key upcoming dates in the program's calendar and to a list of Newcombe-related documents to download in pdf format. Already posted on that page are the Mature Women Students program policy of the Newcombe Trustees, the previously distributed *Conference Notes* from 2008 and 2009, these *2010 Conference Notes*, and scholarship application forms from several institutions that require that students submit them.
- Institutional feature articles are added each month to the **Spotlight** section. All involved with Newcombe Scholarships programs are encouraged to read each installment, including those pertaining to programs for students with disabilities. Additional features are always welcomed, both from institutions that are not yet represented on the site and from any that would like to highlight a second area of service to mature women students.

#### Interim report and reapplication

- Catherine Thomas reminded each of those who serve as an institution's principal Newcombe liaison that the 2010-11 Interim Report and the 2011-12 Reapplication are due on December 3. She pointed out that the Foundation was asking for more information in narrative format this year, particularly in the Reapplication. Rather than simply specifying an amount of funding requested for 2011-12, institutions are asked to make the case in writing for whatever level they seek. She invited anyone with further questions about either the Interim Report or Reapplication to contact her at the Foundation office.

#### Distribution of scholarship awards

- Several institutions select Newcombe Scholars at the start of each year, allocating all available funds. Others reserve some funds for spring awards that are decided in mid-year. Among the former institutions, some will make special awards if funds become available unexpectedly during the year (e.g., if a recipient does not return for spring).

#### Newcombe Scholarships and community college transfer

- A participant questioned whether community college transfer students who arrive with sixty credits or more are eligible to be considered for a Newcombe Scholarship, and whether a 2.5 or higher GPA from the community college was sufficient to meet the Foundation's selection criterion. Tom Wilfrid answered yes to both parts of this question on behalf of the Foundation. He commented further that, as a high proportion of community college graduates have financial need, the Foundation sees them as an ideal target audience for Newcombe Scholarships. In particular, the Foundation would have no objection if a Newcombe Scholarship were used to persuade a Newcombe-qualified community college graduate to enroll at a Newcombe-funded institution – if that best fits the needs of students at that institution.

#### Student thank-you letters

- The discussion (see page 3) from the small group of Financial Aid professionals was cited as an example of a topic in which people from Development and Student Services also have interest. Tom offered to post a link to UMBC's guidelines for student letters on the **Information for Currently Funded Institutions page** on the CWNF website.
- Anita Miller (Gannon University) commented that the Association of Donor Professionals would love to see the Foundation's report, and offered to put them in touch with Diane.

#### What should be required of Newcombe Scholars?

- Someone asked if it might be appropriate to impose a community service requirement on Newcombe Scholars. Misericordia University requires it of those in its Women With Children program, who live on campus. Most seemed to think that for most Newcombe Scholars, the struggle to pay proper attention to studies, family and work renders requirements like community service unrealistic.
- Other institutions would like to require Newcombe Scholars to attend career workshops, orientation or advisement sessions or other gatherings, but do not want to overwhelm them.

#### Changing student characteristics

- Misericordia has observed an increase in multigenerational housing arrangements. There are more now than at any other time since the collapse of the coal industry.

### The GPA requirement

- Representatives from UM College Park and other institutions asked if the Foundation could be more flexible on its requirement that all Newcombe Scholars maintain at least a 2.50 GPA. Tom Wilfrid affirmed that the Newcombe Trustees were quite intentional about that provision of their policy. They want Newcombe Scholars to be seen by their peers and faculty members as high-performing students. As they are acutely aware of the limited nature of the Foundation's resources, they insist that their partner institutions find other resources to meet other students' needs.

### Encouraging community among Newcombe Scholars

- West Chester University provides free child care for those attending programs at which the institution desires their participation. Liability concerns will prevent this from working at institutions that do not have a licensed childcare provider on site.
- UM College Park suggests co-scheduling "Kids on Campus" events with those for mature women. This can make it much easier for those who are parents to attend.

### Use of Newcombe funds

- A question was raised as to whether the Newcombe Foundation might be amenable to having a portion of an institution's grant be applied to program expenses that would benefit mature women students (e.g., providing child care or a speaker's fee for a program of interest to them). Alternatively, could funds raised and applied to such programs be considered part of an institution's match to a Newcombe grant? Tom Wilfrid answered that the policy of the Newcombe Trustees is quite clear on these points: all grant funds and all recognized matches must go to student scholarships or a Newcombe-endowed scholarship fund. Among the assumptions behind the Trustees' policy is that the Newcombe Foundation should not be the only source of resources that support mature women students.

### Assessment of services for mature women students

- Art King of Towson University expressed interest in hearing colleagues' views on what success looks like in serving mature women students, and what kinds of assessment might be done.
  - Tom Wilfrid reminded/advised everyone attending that the Foundation encourages each institution to conduct assessments of the success of its Newcombe Scholars and to share the results of those assessments with the Foundation. Several institutions have done such assessments, most recently Widener University. Tom offered to post a sample survey instrument on the Foundation's website in the coming months.
  - Beverly Greenfeig of UMCP suggested that assessments start with straightforward measures such as retention and graduation, e.g., ask "How many who received a Newcombe Scholarship graduate, in how long?" and compare with other mature women students who have completed 60 credits.
  - Fred Foley of La Salle University reported that in the last year, LaSalle has been pulling together graduation/retention data on thirty years of Newcombe Scholars. Results so far show a very high graduation rate among hundreds of students, but there has been no comparison with other cohorts.

### Value of conference / Future conferences

- Tom Wilfrid encouraged all attendees to provide feedback to the Foundation (either immediately or at any later time via email or telephone) about the value of the conference to individuals and institutions, and any ideas/suggestions about future conferences. Among the comments received were:
    - A first-time attendee was very pleased to meet, chat with and learn from a counterpart at a similar institution.
    - Several indicated that they had found the experiment with small-group breakout sessions to be very helpful. Others felt that the cross-fertilization of ideas among colleagues who work in different institutional "silos" also has value and should not be abandoned.
    - One attendee suggested that future breakout groups be given a more specific focus or goal.
    - Tom Malloy of Widener University commented that it is important not to compartmentalize financial aid professionals and other specialists attending such conferences. Rather, it is very important that all involved work together and exchange information and perspectives. Many others agreed.
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### Photos – Day One

*Top: Part of the full group (22). Middle: Development group discussion. Bottom: Student Services group discussion.*





## Photos – Day Two

*Top: Part of the full group (42). Bottom: Development group discussion.*

*Next page, top: Student Services group discussion. Next page, bottom: Financial Aid discussion.*



