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Mark.hebert@louisville.edu**Four local colleges join forces to boost college readiness***New center will help adult learners; partner organizations plan to formalize consortium*

LOUISVILLE, Ky. – Four Louisville-based colleges have announced that they will jointly launch the Signature Partnership Education Access Center, a facility to help adult learners work toward a college degree. The center will open Feb. 1 in Parrish Hall, Simmons College of Kentucky, 1015 S. Eighth St.

The center was partially funded by Kentucky's Council on Postsecondary Education and its partners are Jefferson Community and Technical College, Simmons College, Spalding University and the University of Louisville. It will target underserved populations, primarily in West Louisville, by offering adult learners assistance with diagnostic testing and advising, choosing a college, applying for financial aid and preparing for college-level classwork.

UofL Provost Shirley Willihnganz said the center complements ongoing programs such as the city's goal to boost the number of adults with a college degree through the [55,000 Degrees](#) initiative.

“By leveraging the resources of four colleges, plus several community organizations, we can make a huge impact on bringing adult learners back to the classroom,” Willihnganz said.

Many Louisville-area adult learners begin their educational journey at JCTC and the college's president and chief executive officer, Tony Newberry, said the partnership “makes sense.” JCTC enrolls more than 1,700 from West Louisville.

“We are reminded every day about the importance of higher education as we see our students working to transform their lives,” Newberry said. “This important partnership with our fellow urban colleges and universities will help all of us strengthen our support and services to a community eager for these opportunities.”

Spalding University President Tori Murden McClure said her institution stands ready to help get the center and its initiatives off the ground.

“In support of the 55,000 Degrees initiative and as neighbors in the ‘education corridor,’ Spalding is poised to assist Simmons College in any way we can,” McClure said.

Organizers say they selected Simmons College to host the center because of its location. Simmons College is already a part of UofL's Signature Partnership Initiative, a multifaceted program to enhance the quality of life and economic opportunity for residents of West Louisville.

Simmons College President Kevin Cosby said the center will give adult learners all the resources they need under one roof.

“When someone hasn’t sat in a classroom for many years, it can be pretty intimidating to figure out all of the steps necessary to get a college degree,” Cosby said.

The Signature Partnership Education Access Center is the first project to come out of a recently established, four-college partnership known as the College Connection Initiative. The partners intend to formalize their relationship into a consortium. The initiative’s primary goal is to improve college readiness and, ultimately, increase the number of college-educated workers in the Louisville metropolitan area.

Adult learners who want to further their education can contact the center at 502-436-3245 or learn more at www.louisville.edu/speac.

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