



## *News Release*

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## **Baby Boomers Turn to Community Colleges to Jump Start Work Lives**

Community colleges such as Century College in White Bear Lake play a central role in the lives of Baby Boomers, age 50 plus, who are going back to school in record numbers, former St. Paul Mayor George Latimer told two-year college leaders at a conference on Feb. 3 in Minneapolis.

“The idea of having a second chance is what every American believes in, and it’s what community colleges are all about,” said Latimer, speaking to the Plus 50 conference organized by the Metro Alliance of Customized & Continuing Education. “Anyone who has ever been to a two-year college graduation has heard the shouts of ‘Way to go, Mom!’ That tells you everything.”

Latimer said community colleges need to do a better job of reaching out to Baby Boomers and letting them know that they can find what they need on two-year college campuses. He urged college leaders to

make that information available where people shop and congregate, including local grocery stores and gas stations.

Mary Sue Vickers, director of the American Association of Community Colleges Plus 50 Initiative, told the group that the 78 million people who are entering their retirement years will transform our country. “Baby Boomers can expect to spend three decades in retirement,” said Vickers. “They do not feel old and they don’t want to be elderly. They believe they have something to contribute.”

Vickers said community colleges’ focus should be on workforce training, not enrichment. Baby Boomers are looking for computer application programs, business math, resume writing tips, nursing education and green construction education. They want their instruction to be pragmatic, short-term, condensed and marketable.

Russ Polansky, one of the Plus 50 student panelists who addressed the group, said he has found volunteering at Century College rewarding. Century volunteers help students with a variety of activities, including Welcome Week, tutoring and mentoring. Polansky retired from the St. Paul Fire Department at age 55. “Don’t forget the fun factor,” said Jim Wadsworth, another panelist. “It is so rewarding to go to class and hear the stories of the others. There is a sense of community there. We understand each other so well.”