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Message from Complete Florida

We are finalizing plans for the [Florida College Access Network Summit](#), which will be here soon! On May 7 and 8 at the Rosen Centre in Orlando, more than 400 attendees will meet to discuss ideas that affect student success. Don't miss Complete Florida's session, "Finding the Finish Line: What Returning Adult Students Want You to Know." It features a panel of students and recent graduates who will offer their

perspective on the unique support necessary to help adults return to school, persist, and graduate. We'll talk about seeing the entire process, from initial interest to commencement, through the eyes of students. This includes communicating with them where they are, connecting the workplace to academia, helping them overcome common obstacles, informing them of accelerated and alternative credit options and providing information about online resources and other technological support. Do you have other topics you would like to see addressed? If so, email me at michelle@completeflorida.org. We look forward to seeing you there!

Michelle Horton, Ed.D
Director of Complete Florida



Partner Spotlight: Connection Between Company and Higher-Ed Results in More Adult Students Finishing Undergraduate Degrees

Education and employment go hand in hand, so it makes sense to create alliances. Administrators at University of South Florida believe this. In an effort to provide options to non-traditional students, USF participates in a partnership with TECO Energy, an Emera Company in Tampa with more than 3,000 employees. TECO describes itself as a "learning organization," and has the program to prove it.

This unique opportunity began in 2007 when about 40 linemen and electricians started taking classes to earn an associate degree taught by Hillsborough Community College professors at the TECO headquarters.

By 2012, St. Leo University joined to offer a bachelor's in business administration. In 2014, University of South Florida came on as a partner, too. USF offers TECO employees a bachelor's degree in leadership studies and public administration with an emphasis in change management.

Wade Prevatt works in underground field construction at TECO and was promoted to a supervisory position after he graduated with his bachelor's from USF in 2015.

"This opportunity is the perfect combination of skills and knowledge, and the outcome has tangible benefits," he said. "Not only do I have a new perspective, I can teach my entire family about the importance of education."

Since the program's inception, more than 250 people have completed an associate, and more than 100 people have completed a bachelor's. Such an arrangement overcomes common obstacles for returning to school as an adult: balancing professional and personal obligations with work commitments. All parties benefit.

"We get an educated workforce, and we have the unexpected positive side effects of employees from different departments coming together," said Bruce Napier, the TECO senior administrator who oversees the tuition assistance program, which includes tuition assistance. "It has certainly boosted morale and improved communications throughout the company."

Beth Taylor, an assistant director in the USF undergraduate studies department who helps coordinate the offerings at TECO, said USF is delighted with the results.

"Working adults are already accomplished, and institutions have to deliver capable people into the workforce," she said. "This is a best-of-the-best combination. These students have proven they are capable of many things, and they just need a degree to get to the next level and have more opportunities."

Administrators at TECO and USF think the success of these partnerships can inspire similar collaborations between other businesses and higher-education institutions.

Amber Alonso, a senior administrative specialist in the office of assessment and organizational development at TECO, certainly believes in the strength of the program. She completed her associate degree and is now working on the USF bachelor's.

"I think it's important to realize the strength that comes from the support of your fellow co-workers and students," she said. "We are always helping each other and cheering each other on. We are peers, and we hold each other accountable, so even if you are intimidated by the process, there is always someone to ask, and this is crucial for everyone's success."



Joining the National Conversation: Complete Florida, JFF Collaborate

Complete Florida played a significant role in the recent ASUGSV X Summit in San Diego. The meeting, often described as the "world's leading education and workforce innovation summit," is a catalyst for promoting ideas and action related to strengthening learning and career outcomes.

Director Dr. Michelle Horton presented Complete Florida's proposal to integrate workplace training with academic programming as part of the Jobs for the Future (JFF) \$1 Billion Dollar Wage Gain Challenge. JFF was a sponsor at the summit, bringing its 35-year history of programmatic and policy work across education and workforce systems. The JFF challenge addressed wage stagnation, calling on innovators to share ideas that would raise the annual wages of at least 100,000 workers by \$10,000 or more before the end of 2021, a total impact of \$1 billion.

"Although Complete Florida was not chosen as a challenge winner, the experience of attending the summit was unparalleled," Horton said. "We are extremely grateful for the opportunity to present and to meet thought leaders who are advancing the education and success of adult learners nationwide."

The ASUGSV Summit, which started in 2010 with a collaboration between Arizona State University and Global Silicon Valley, drew nearly 5,000 CEOs, investors, school, district and university leaders, media, foundation leaders and entrepreneurs this year. Speakers at the event included Tony Blair, Cindy McCain, and Andre Agassi.

Complete Florida looks forward to continuing to promote the alignment of professional development in the workplace and academia. To become involved in these efforts, contact [Dr. Michelle Horton](#).

Student Spotlight: Four-year Degree Will Open Doors



Jamie, 29, lives in Navarre with her husband and their 2-year-old daughter. She attends the University of West Florida and is on track to earn her bachelor's in clinical laboratory sciences. The degree is called the medical laboratory technician to medical laboratory scientist, or MLT to MLS program.

After graduating from high school, Jamie started her post-secondary educational journey when she joined the Army Reserves. She had an intense interest in science, so she chose to earn an associate degree in medical laboratory technology. When she completed her military service, Jamie took a civilian job as a phlebotomist at Irwin Army Community Hospital in Kansas. Soon, a laboratory technician position became available, and Jamie eagerly applied and was accepted.

"I love everything about behind-the-scenes patient care," Jamie said. "It's so fulfilling."

When her husband, who is on active duty with the Army, was transferred to Florida, Jamie visited the education center at Hurlburt Field to explore opportunities for finishing a bachelor's degree. She browsed a brochure about offerings at UWF and visited the website to do some more research. There, she discovered information about the online MLT to MLS degree, which is offered through Complete Florida. The program started in August of 2018 and is the first of its kind in Florida.

"I was so thrilled to find out I could build on my existing education and my professional work history," Jamie said. "I have been telling lots of other former co-workers and colleagues about it."

Jamie looks forward to the various opportunities she can explore when she completes her bachelor's degree and has recently discussed them with one of her professors.

"There are so many possibilities beyond hospital labs and doctors' offices," Jamie said. "There are specializations and areas that involve high-complexity testing: microbiology, molecular biology, immunohematology, research. It's all so fascinating."

What We're Reading

- [Making Sense of the Rising Completion Rates Across Postsecondary Institutions](#)
- [Eight Strategies to Help Universities Stay Relevant and Shrink Skills Gaps](#)

Who Are We?

Complete Florida is a high-tech, low-hassle, online program for busy adults to finish their college degree and land their dream job. We provide free concierge coaching services for students returning to college.

[CompleteFlorida.org](#)

By the Numbers

- 14** Partner schools
- 130+** Degree programs
- 8,900+** Students working with a Complete Florida Coach
- \$1 million+** Awarded in scholarships from Complete Florida
- 1,086** Graduates



In His Own Voice

It helps students to know they are not alone on their journey back to college. Hear from Yayson about the support and guidance his Complete Florida experience provided.

What Students are Saying

"The path to achieving a college degree is no longer a dream. It has manifested itself into a reality. In the near future, I will be able to apply for employment for which I did not fulfill educational requirements in the past. I cannot thank the Complete Florida staff enough."

~Raymond, Hodges University

"Investments are what drive our economy, and as an individual, my personal investment is my education in nursing."

~Kristen, Polk State College

"I asked myself, 'What do I have to do to get a management position?' The answer is get the education I need. Complete Florida can help me meet my goals."

~Juffure, Florida International University

"I share my success with my family and hope that my children and grandchildren know that you are never too old to learn."

~Kathryn, Florida State College at Jacksonville

"No one can ever take away the skills and knowledge you get from completing your education. They are with you for the rest of your life."

~Wade, University of South Florida



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