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Message from Complete Florida

Welcome! As we move into spring, Complete Florida continues to strengthen relationships with partner institutions and organizations that share our mission to help adult learners finish their college degrees. With our continued focus on making it easier, we have established a working group to explore prior learning assessment options. Our goal is to bring awareness and share ideas about

alternative, affordable, and accelerated methods of degree completion at the state and national level. We also continue to participate in the national conversation about degree attainment for adults. This year, Complete Florida will host a session, Finding the Finish Line, during the [Florida College Access Network Summit](#) May 7 and 8 in Orlando. Please join us as we learn from Complete Florida graduates who will share their perspectives on the unique support required to help students return to college, persist, and graduate. We look forward to seeing you there!

*Michelle Horton, Ed.D.
Director of Complete Florida*



New Group Delves into PLA Issues

Students at all Complete Florida partner colleges and universities can explore Prior Learning

Assessment options such as credit by exam, credit for military or professional training, and credit based on portfolio assessment. To make it easier for faculty advisors and administrators to implement or expand PLA choices, Complete Florida recently established a working group to share ideas, challenges and solutions.

"Research indicates that institutions offering these opportunities are likely to increase adult-student enrollment," said Monica Vandenberg, a senior grant specialist for the Division of Research and Strategic Innovation at the University of West Florida. "We want to provide support so that everyone can learn from each other. Pooling resources just makes sense."

Representatives from Florida State College at Jacksonville, Indian River State College, St. Petersburg College, Miami Dade College and Polk State College meet virtually each month. They have discussed fostering faculty involvement in the portfolio review process, understanding processes for granting credit for industry certification, increasing awareness about PLA procedures across departments, and navigating accreditation guidelines.

"I wear many other hats besides PLA coordinator, so hearing the updates from everyone makes keeping the students informed much easier," said Matina Wagner, coordinator for internships and experiential learning at Polk State College. "It's a huge help."

If you or someone you know is interested in joining Complete Florida's PLA group, send us an [email](#). The next meeting is at 10 A.M. EST March 19.



Coach Connects with Students

As an in-take coach for Complete Florida, Janae Miller serves as the first point of contact for adults who inquire about how to return to school to finish what they started. It's a critical role.

"Listening is important, and so is asking questions," Janae said. "There are a lot of pathways to graduation, and we are here to highlight the best one. That has to be based on students' past experiences and goals for the future."

Students' main concerns are often about how much time it will take to complete a degree and how much it will cost. Janae begins to answer this by reviewing unofficial transcripts to see which credits they have already earned.

"There are accelerated options, including credit by exam and prior learning assessment," Janae said. "To explore these, I have to know what the student's ultimate goal is. Do they want to continue on their current career path and pursue options for advancement, or do they want an entirely new career?"

After collecting all relevant background information from the student and reviewing transcripts, Janae coordinates with advisors at Complete Florida's 15 partner institutions around the state. They work together to create a specific step-by-step plan.

"Returning adult students have unique time constraints because they are working full time and taking care of families," Janae said. "We need to be the resource that tells them exactly what they have to do and exactly how to overcome any obstacles they encounter. Having a clear picture of what it will take to complete the journey gives people the motivation to start along the path. We don't want them to lose momentum. They have to know that we will be with them every step of the way. It is an honor to be in a position to help people."



Student Spotlight: A Mother Sets Excellent Example by Pursuing Bachelor's Degree

Mercedes works full time as a discipline clerk at a high school

in Orlando and raises her 10-year-old daughter, Armoni, while earning a four-year degree at Polk State College.

"With the help of a coach at Complete Florida, I was able to obtain my AA after many years of hard work," Mercedes said. "That success makes me able to accomplish my long-term goal of continuing to work toward a B.S. in criminal justice to become a juvenile probation officer. The fact that my daughter mirrors everything I do makes me determined to obtain a higher education for myself."

Time management is the key to meeting all her obligations.

"From 7:45 a.m. to 4:15 p.m., I am at work," Mercedes said. "From 5 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. it's time for my daughter's homework, and then after dinner, I start my studies. I cut out all social media. Facebook has been gone since I started my AA. I can have no distractions, and none of that stuff is going to help me get what I need."

Mercedes enjoys the challenge of her classes.

"Grades mean so much to me," Mercedes said. "I like watching my progress as I go, and I learn from constructive criticism. At Polk, professors are always available, and the information in class is very interesting and related to what I want to do. There is a lot for a civilian to learn about law enforcement. I am especially looking forward to finding out about interrogation techniques and profiling."

She said setting an example for Armoni keeps her motivated at all times.

"I want her to see that regardless of how hard it is to get an education, you can keep going," Mercedes said. "It's important to me that she learns that if you want something, you have to go and get it. You can't give up. Look at me. I started with an associate degree, and I am well on my way to finishing something that will make it possible for me to do so much more."

What We're Reading

- [Updated Degree Attainment Profiles Released for All 67 Florida Counties](#)
- [College for Older Students: New Guidebook Can Help You Figure Out How to Make it Work](#)

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

15 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



Students Work Through College

Of today's college students 64 percent of students work, and 40 percent of them work full time.

~ Lumina Foundation

What Students are Saying

"Complete Florida has given me the opportunity to fulfill a lifelong dream after a long hiatus where I had to place family ahead of my personal goals."

~ Aidee, Miami Dade College

"An adult student with career experience in a field can leverage that expertise in his or her academic pursuits."

~ Jasen, Hodges University

"Now that I have received my associate degree and been accepted into the bachelor's program for financial services, I know there is no stopping me."

~ Taracya, Florida State College at Jacksonville

"Complete Florida matched me with a school that will allow me to translate my real world experience as a member of management into credits."

~ Heather, St. Thomas University

"As the industry shrinks, my career has taken a backward turn, and I now want to finish my degree in an effort to change careers."

~ Russell, Florida International University

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