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## Message from Complete Florida

Hello! We were thrilled to hear that Governor Ron DeSantis signed House Bill 7071 (HB 7071) earlier this week. It is designed to strengthen the state's talent pipeline through attainment of credentials and degrees. The bill establishes the SAIL to 60 Initiative. SAIL stands for "Strengthening Alignment between Industry and Learning," and its goal is to increase the percentage of working age Floridians with

post-secondary training, certificates and degrees to 60 percent by 2030. Complete Florida and all its partners know development of the pipeline is instrumental for growth and prosperity. We look forward to collaborating with various stakeholders as we all continue the important work we have been doing - and will continue to do - in this area that is so vital to the well-being of everyone in Florida.

Sincerely,

*Michelle Horton, Ed.D.*

*Director of Complete Florida*



## Coaches consider both educational, career goals when helping students choose college pathways

Through its personalized coaching model, Complete Florida assists adults who have some college credit but no degree return to school to finish what they started.

"This is important work for many reasons," said Bridget Busby, a Complete Florida coach. "Talent development, including completion of a certificate, associate or bachelor's degree, not only results in more professional opportunities for students, it also strengthens our workforce and enhances economic stability for the entire state."

All of the more than 200 online programs available at Complete Florida's partner institutions are aligned with in-demand industry clusters and job sectors identified by the state. Broad categories include business, healthcare, education and information technology. Coaches are familiar with completion requirements and can recommend affordable, accelerated options.

"When we talk to students for the first time, we want to find out what their goals are," said Akilah Lewis, another Complete Florida coach. "We need to know if they have skills, training and knowledge in a certain career field they plan to pursue. If so, maybe they already have some relevant experience that could result in credit through nontraditional methods such as prior learning assessment, which we can help them explore. Others are looking to do something entirely different and new."

Short-term options for those who want to master a few specific skills include industry certifications. These certifications can incorporate courses that count for credit toward an A.A. or an A.S. degree and could ultimately result in a bachelor's degree.

Complete Florida coaches also use resources such as the My Career Shines website to help potential students understand the forecast of demand for jobs in certain fields. Plus, the site includes quick and simple assessments to determine interests and strengths.

"Our adult students are busy working and raising families, so we want them to know which option is the fastest, least expensive path to their goal, whether that is to acquire a new skill, earn a promotion or change careers," Bridget said. "We need to ask a lot of questions, but we need to listen a lot, too, to offer the best guidance."



## Join the Conversation: Explore Open Educational Resources

Gather information and ask questions at the next Complete Florida Networking Group meeting. The topic for the virtual event is Open Educational Resources. Guest speaker Rebel Cummings-Sauls will lead the discussion about solutions to reduce the cost of textbooks and other materials that help students access tools for academic success. Cummings-Sauls is Director of Digital Services and Open Educational Resources for the Florida Academic Library Services Cooperative (FALSC). She has more than a decade of experience in higher education. Her topics include clarifying the definition of "open," and efforts to create review standards and a state-approved OER database. She will also talk about the formation of OPEN FL, an online community at <https://falsc.libguides.com/openfl>. Its purpose is to share knowledge, learn best practices and collaborate with peers. Subjects range from public domain and fair use to Creative Commons licensing. To sign up for the Complete Florida Networking Group meeting, July 24 at 11 AM EST, [register online](#). We will send you a WebEx invite 48 hours prior to the event.

## Student Spotlight: Certificate enhances professional knowledge

Erik is a computer systems engineer who lives in Gulf Breeze with his wife and son. He has worked at the University of West Florida since 2001.

"I started out as a student lab tech helping people print and such," he said. "Over the years, I developed a broad focus that includes network operations, information security, systems engineering and other areas, allowing me to more easily interface with various departments across campus."



Complete Florida recently helped Erik enhance his well-established skill set and knowledge base by providing a scholarship to assist with the cost of an industry certification course offered through UWF.

Though Erik has a bachelor's degree in information technology and is working on a master's degree in cyber security, he thinks it's still vital to earn industry certifications. The one that Complete Florida helped him with is called the Systems Security Certified Practitioner (SSCP). His Complete Florida coach guided him through the process to make sure he understood all registration requirements as well as the post-course testing procedure.

"I eventually want to move into a leadership role, and certifications show that I am committed and motivated to keep up with the latest skills and information," he said. "Sure, I might be familiar with the material, but taking the course solidifies my comprehension and helps me understand the "why" behind policies and theories."

Erik's tips for those who want to earn an IT certification:

- **Do some homework.** Some certifications require a minimum number of hours of a specific kind of work experience as a prerequisite.
- **Remember the maintenance:** To keep a certificate current and valid, you must earn a certain amount of continuing education units (CEUS) each year.
- **Make a commitment.** Know that completing a certification course will be the equivalent of taking a regular 3-credit college course as far as time goes.

Erik said the self-paced SSCP course adequately prepared him for the certification exam, and its structure was flexible enough to fit into his already busy schedule. He studied during lunch breaks at work or after his wife and son went to bed.

"In-depth readings and practice questions provided a solid foundation for what to expect," he said. "I was nervous going into the exam, but by the time I walked out, I knew I had aced it."

The next certification course Erik plans to take is Certified Information Systems Security Professional (CISSP).

"I have never gone through a prep course and a certification exam and not learned something," he said. "It is definitely worth it because I always find myself saying at some point, 'Oh, I didn't know that.'"

## What We're Reading

- [How States are Planning to Boost Attainment Rates](#)
- [The Pulse: Future Learning Platforms](#)

## 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](http://CompleteFlorida.org).

## By the Numbers

**15** Partner schools

**200+** Degree programs

**8,900+** Students

working with a Complete Florida Coach

**\$1 million+**

Awarded in scholarships from Complete Florida

**1,086** Graduates



## College is Good for Business

By 2025, almost [42 percent](#) of the country's student body will be made up of returning adult learners.

~National Center for Educational Statistics

## Connecting Education and the Workforce

"In the financial sector, there is a lot of competition and also there is a vast amount of emerging technology. Continuing your education is definitely a way to keep on top of things and set yourself apart."

~Yayson, Mortgage company operations manager; St. Petersburg College

"I absolutely love my job, but I am interested in pursuing a higher level of education so that I can become a part of leadership within nursing."

~Candice, Registered nurse; University of Central Florida

"I can apply theories I learned in class to different aspects of my job. Going to school has changed my way of thinking. I see things from different angles, now. It's truly validating."

~Anthony, Managed health-care company supervisor; Miami Dade College

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

~Russell, Journalist studying to become a teacher; Florida International University

"One of the many things I learned in my IT classes that is directly applicable to my work is how important it is on every project to understand who the stakeholders are and to make sure to meet their needs."

~Lawrence, Software analyst; University of West Florida

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