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Message from Complete Florida

Welcome! At Complete Florida, we know that returning adult learners have limited time to research their options regarding degree completion. By collecting stories and talking to our students, we are gaining valuable first-hand knowledge about what it takes to support adults returning to college. The most important thing we've learned is there is not one single effort that best meets the needs of the Complete Florida

student. With that in mind, we are undergoing a review of our internal processes to learn how to make the most of our students' time and to effectively manage time and workload for our coaches and support teams.

Unlike typical first-time-in college students, returning adults are not easy to reach. Some of the strategies we have found to be successful are communication toolkits designed with relevant content for distribution through partnerships and networks, welcome phone calls to applicants that provide guidance on next steps, and timely and concise email campaigns. We look forward to continuing to share our experience with you. We would like to learn more about what works and what doesn't. Please offer your insight about supporting returning adults and the teams who serve them. Please feel free to contact me at michelle@completeflorida.org.

Michelle Horton
Complete Florida Director



Join Us

Participate in a conversation that includes stakeholders throughout the state and the nation. Complete Florida will host a convening during the [Florida College Access](#)

[Network Annual Summit](#) on May 10 and 11 in Orlando. Complete Florida invites partner institutions to participate in a discussion called "Coaching to Completion: Improving Degree Attainment for Returning Adults." Representatives from [Complete College America](#) and [The Graduate Network](#) will share information on national efforts about this topic.

Question? Email Michelle Horton.



Complete Florida Partner Highlight

Returning adult students often manage full-time professional obligations and

family responsibilities in addition to their college coursework. Anything an institution can do to optimize these students' time helps them persist and excel on the way to graduation.

At [Florida State College at Jacksonville](#), adults who go back to finish their degrees are guided through the entire process by a dedicated team headed by Dr. Peter Shapiro, Director of Creative Learning Services, and two Complete Florida Project Coordinators: Yvonne Martel and Barbara Schaefer.

"No two students are alike," Shapiro said. "So attention to detail has to be paid. We serve as advocates who can assist them if they run into barriers. We can call or send emails on their behalf even knock on doors to follow up with whatever issues arise."

Shapiro said currently 226 students are enrolled in Spring session as part of the FSCJ-Complete Florida Program, and 209 in summer classes. Since the partnership's inception in 2015, 46 students have crossed the graduation finish line.

"Obviously, we want to teach folks how to fish so that they can navigate on their own," Shapiro said. "Every little victory moves us toward that."

One key to the FSCJ-Complete Florida Program's success is Martel and Schaefer's years of experience in diverse aspects of college administration and their ability to forge working relationships across campus.

"We have gone to as many trainings with as many different departments as possible," Schaefer said. "Student Information Systems, Financial Aid, Student Records, Advising ... we are nurturing these connections so we can understand their needs. We are advocating for both the college and the student, so that when an issue comes up, we can help solve it or do leg work and collect and package necessary information to help everyone get to a solution faster."

Besides timely, practical help with issues ranging from assessing transfer credits and choosing which degree to pursue to applying for financial aid, Shapiro, Martel and Schaefer serve another important role in the lives of students.

"We are here to listen, to be a sounding board," Martel said. "Students need to know that they can break things down into manageable steps. They need to know they are not the only one going through whatever it is they are going through. We remind them this is a journey and they can succeed."

Student Spotlight

Emily Howell, 46, will study Interdisciplinary Studies at Florida International University when Summer A session begins May 14.

Emily, a mother of three, runs a pre-employment screening business with her husband in Tampa. She started college for the first time more than 20 years ago.

"I always wanted to finish my degree," she said. "But life got in the way. Getting my bachelor's is about personal fulfillment. I love going to school. I love learning. I have a thirst for knowledge."



Emily said finishing her degree sets an important first step for her children in their lives. Now that her children are older and she is self-employed with a flexible schedule, it is a good time to go back to school.

"I can't just keep waiting," she said. "I am focused, and I have support."

Talking to a Complete Florida coach and working with an advisor at FIU gave Emily a clear understanding of exactly what it would take to complete her degree.

"They told me about general education credits, electives and core curriculum courses," Emily said. "I understood options about how to CLEP courses now. That is something I was never aware of before."

Howell said she plans to graduate by 2020.

"I am an organized person and a planner," Emily said. "I like to know what's next and what is coming up, so being able to see a clear path has definitely helped me decide that I can make the commitment to finishing my education. I am so excited about everything."

What We're Reading

- [Building Desire Paths: An Online Calendar Smooths the Way for Student Success](#)
- [What Adult Learners Really Need \(Hint: It's Not Just Job Skills\)](#)
- [States Use Direct Mail, Money to Get More of Their Residents Back to College](#)
- [The Future of College Looks Like the Future of Retail](#)



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 Number of partner schools in the state

130+ Number of degree programs available through Complete Florida

6,100+ Number of students working with a Complete Florida Coach

\$630,000+ Amount awarded in scholarships from Complete Florida

758 Number of graduates



College is Good for Business

Companies that offer employees education benefits see an 87% increase in employee morale.

~The Conference Board

What Students are Saying

"Taking online classes while working has been challenging at times; it has also been rewarding."

~Craig

"With the help of Complete Florida, I have almost finished my degree, which will allow me to impact more children's lives."

~Christy

"After a year and a half of returning to school, I have proven to myself that with determination and focus, my dream will come true."

~Felisha

"I almost forgot how good it feels to be back in a classroom with teachers and students who, just like me, wish to expand their horizons."

~Shayona

"Going back to college means respecting the privilege of education and pursuing my true life passion."

~Amanda

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