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Message from Complete Florida

Greetings!

We recently returned from the [Florida College Access Network](#) Annual Summit where we had the opportunity to create connections to reach more students. Various organizations from around the state shared their best practices for college readiness, retention and degree completion. We look forward to furthering these connections and strengthening our

partnerships that benefit postsecondary students and their progress toward degree attainment. Our next stop is at the [Florida College System](#) June meeting where we will highlight our partnerships with state colleges and explore opportunities to expand our efforts to reach the returning adult population. We'd like to hear from you. Let us know about your successes and challenges so we can collaborate. Send me an email at Michelle@completeflorida.org.

Michelle Horton
Complete Florida Director



Complete Florida Partner Highlight

The Innovation Institute, at The University of West Florida, recently launched its newest massive open online course, "[Cross-Cultural Competency](#)." It is structured around the concepts of awareness, acceptance and respect.

This free course takes a conversational approach to sometimes sensitive subjects and aims to help those who enroll in the course understand and respect one another and function in diverse environments in the classroom, the workplace or in social settings.

Dr. Kim LeDuff, UWF's chief diversity officer and vice president for academic engagement, directed the effort to offer the course, and she teaches the introductory module.

"What we're trying to do is offer people tools and skills that help them communicate across differences. When we watch the news, we hear about politics; we hear about issues of immigration; we hear about difference and opposing sides," Dr. LeDuff said. "Sometimes... people want to discuss those issues but don't always know the best way to go about it."

UWF faculty and staff members teach five modules in the eight-to-10 hour course. They are titled "Overview," "Global Village," "Religious Diversity," "Gender and Sexuality" and "disAbility." The modules include panels called "Perspectives" that highlight in-depth discussions on each topic. These segments allow community members to share their stories and experiences on the topic of each module.

"Offering this course is the first step to a future, deeper exploration of cross-culturalism," said Hadley Higginson, creative director of the Story Lab at UWF's Innovation Institute. "It's an easy, approachable way to open the door and give people a way to feel comfortable with these issues."

Participants in the free course can earn badges, which are sharable across several platforms. For more information about the course or to register, visit uwf.edu/crosscultural. If you are interested in using this course for your group, we would love to know. Send an email to [Hadley Higginson](mailto:Hadley.Higginson).



Continuing the Conversation

Michelle Horton, director of Complete Florida, will participate in a webinar in June presented by Complete College America. The session, "A Better Deal for Returning Adults," will highlight best practices and share strategies for reaching students with some college credit and no degree. Other participants include Liz Walker and Tracy Robinson. Liz is policy and planning program manager for the Indiana Commission for Higher Education. She manages the You Can Go Back adult re-engagement campaign for the state. Tracy, who is director of innovative academic initiatives at University of Memphis, coordinates the Finish Line program, a degree completion initiative that recruits students who have 90 or more credit hours but left the university before earning a degree. Look for highlights from the webinar on the [Complete College America](#) website during the second week in June.

Student Spotlight

Cheryl graduated from high school in 1987. She married two years later and has spent the last 20 years raising her three sons. In addition to her family responsibilities, Cheryl established a career with the Florida Department of Health in Miami Dade County.



"I always knew I was going to finish my bachelor's degree," Cheryl said. "But my primary focus was on my family, so I just took classes here and there whenever I could."

After a major change in her life several years ago, Cheryl decided to complete her education. She began with an associate degree in Public Administration from Miami Dade College, which she earned in the summer of 2017. With no break she enrolled at Florida International University in the fall of the same year to pursue a bachelor's in the same area.

"Once I had momentum, I didn't want to stop," Cheryl said. "A degree gives me a more secure future with options if I want to branch out. No one can take it away from me."

While transitioning from [Miami Dade College](#) to [FIU](#), she got in touch with Complete Florida. Matt Smith, her coach, helped Cheryl explore her interest and goals as he helped her through the transfer process.

"The single most valuable thing a coach does for me is related to time and money," Cheryl said. "Whenever an issue comes up, I can ask my coach to look into it for me. I don't have to make a lot of phone calls or send a lot of emails. He collects information for me, and then I can weigh options. I would say relevant information in a timely manner is the most powerfully important tool a student can get."

Though her main motivation for completing her degree is personal, Cheryl also sees the value in serving as a good example for her sons.

"I am a role model for what happens if you continue to work hard and have a lot of determination," she said.

With her ultimate goal in mind, Cheryl has decided to take four classes during the summer. She said such a course load is doable because FIU offers staggered starting dates for accelerated mini-terms, so she can take several classes successively instead of taking them all at the same time.

"Once I put everything onto a spreadsheet, I could see the end of the rainbow. Instead of taking two classes, I can take four at a time for my remaining credits and get to my goal of graduating next summer. I am happy that I will be able to finish everything before turning 50. Exciting, right?"

What We're Reading

- [Five Factors Impacting Adult Learners' Persistence at Your Institution](#)
- [Single Moms in College Spend Nine Hours a Day on Care and Housework](#)
- [Race and Gender Biases Appear in Online Education](#)



Who Is Complete Florida Military?

Complete Florida Military is a high-tech, low-hassle, online program for active-duty, retired military, veterans and their families to start or finish their college degree and land their dream job. We provide free concierge coaching services for students returning to college.

CompleteFlorida.org/cf-military

Hear from Our Students

Hear from some of our Complete Florida students, in their own words, about the importance of returning to college and what finishing their degree means to them.



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

What Students are Saying

"Finishing my degree will help me move up and grow in my profession."

~Thelma

"I am a first-generation-in-college student. Completing my degree in business administration will allow me to build a solid financial foundation for myself and my family."

~Priscilla

"The Complete Florida scholarship reduces the financial pressure on me and keeps things from getting in the way of achieving my goal."

~William

"If you desire to finish your degree, just make time for yourself and do it. With work commitments and children, waiting for the right time may never happen. Instead, you have to make it happen."

~Wilson

"I have a son, and I would like to finish my degree to be an example of how to complete what you start."

~Rosa

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