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## Message from Complete Florida

Telling the story of returning adult learners gives us an opportunity to understand how to better identify and address their needs. Complete Florida students recently shared personal perspectives on the challenges and triumphs of finishing their degrees with [Complete College America](#). CCA will highlight these inspirational, instructive student narratives at a [convening in Chicago](#) on December 4-6 where

the Florida Alliance team, led by Complete Florida, will come together to address strategies that help students across the nation finish what they started in an affordable, accessible and accelerated manner.

Here is the [story of a few Complete Florida students](#). We look forward to continuing our work with CCA and other organizations as we seek to transform the way returning adult students access degree completion pathways.

*Michelle Horton, Ed.D.*

*Director of Complete Florida*



## Coach Eases Back-To-School Transition for Students

Complete Florida coaches help navigate issues related to returning to school, and their expertise comes from professional and personal experience. Sal Liuzzi, 40, lives in Navarre with his wife and two children. He retired after 20 years in the U.S. Air Force and is now

an intake coach at Complete Florida. While Sal was in the service, he completed an online bachelor's degree in social psychology at Park University.

"I understand the challenges of being an active duty military member and a college student, and I look forward to helping others make the transition to civilian life," Sal said.

Often when Sal talks to students, he finds the thing they need most is encouragement.

"They know what they have to do, but they need someone to tell them that it's possible," Sal said. "I can empathize because I know what the struggles are: being out of town for work and trying to raise a family, doing 24-hour shifts and trying not to fall behind in schoolwork. I had those exact same concerns."

When students feel overwhelmed, Sal suggests they take a small step and enroll in one class.

"If you are trying to make a change in your life to find a different or higher paying job but you can't leave the job you have, it might seem like you will never finish. But the truth is, you eventually do. There is no better time than right now to start chipping away at it," Sal said.

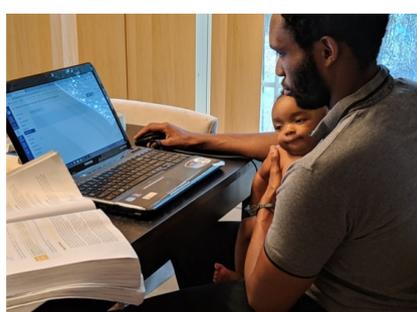
Here are other tips Sal offers students:

**Determine your ultimate goal:** Do you want a degree that goes along with the work you already do? Or, do you want to learn something new and change careers?

**Overcome financial hurdles:** Fill out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid, which opens up possibilities. There might be tuition assistance from an employer or scholarships that make everything more manageable.

**You are not starting at zero:** Complete Florida looks at transcripts from all previous college classes and helps you find a degree path that accepts the most credits. Also, you might have credits from a professional certificate you earned or because of training on a military transcript.

**Support exists:** People have a lot of questions, and that makes them hesitant to start, but that is why the Complete Florida coaches are here. We can help resolve all kinds of issues.



## Student Spotlight: Degree Ensures Career Opportunities

Kwahme, 28, is an Army National Guard veteran who now works as a systems administrator for General Dynamics Information Technology at Saufley Field in Pensacola. He lives in Pensacola with his wife and their two children, a 3-year-old and a 5-month-old.

He is also a Complete Florida student who studies Network Systems Operations online at University of West Florida. He takes three classes per semester and is on track to graduate with a bachelor's degree in summer 2020.

"Let me just say, I don't get a lot of sleep," Kwahme said with a laugh. "First I come in to work early, and then I go home to be Dad and Husband, and after everyone goes to sleep, I do homework. I try to get all my discussion boards done on the weekends for the coming week."

Even with such a packed schedule, Kwahme thinks returning to school is worth the time and sacrifice.

"The field of technology is always changing, and you want to make yourself more marketable," Kwahme said. "Without a degree, there is always going to be a cap on what I can make, even with my work experience and military background. Now that I have kids, I work to start thinking about long-term options. After years of putting it off, I decided I wanted to make more of my career. I am very thankful for Complete Florida's coaching and scholarships so that I may finish my degree."

One immediate advantage of continuing his education is that Kwahme's classes complement his professional life.

"I find myself nodding yes in class a lot," he said. "I say to myself 'This happens. This is really useful, especially when it comes to security related things.' Plus, I am taking a business class for non-business majors, and it's interesting to learn how all those concepts intertwine with IT."

## What We're Reading

- [Six Ways Colleges Can Think Differently to Meet Workforce Needs in America](#)
- [Stackable Credentials: Defining Their Value](#)
- [Four Ed Tech Trends Colleges Should be Ready for](#)

## 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



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## Real People, Real Degrees, Real Easy!

Complete Florida is here to help real people earn real degrees from institutions throughout the state of Florida. Hear from [Complete Florida students and graduates](#) about earning a degree and pursuing their dreams.

## What Students are Saying

*"I will be the first in my family to get a college degree, and this education will help me stay competitive and open doors."*

*~Rhonda, Polk State College*

*"Employers want experienced accredited professionals, and because of Complete Florida, I can achieve that."*

*~Armando, Hodges University*

*"Going back to college as an adult means respecting the privilege of education and pursuing my true passion in life."*

*~Amanda, University of West Florida*

*"Complete Florida allows me to further my educational studies and obtain my goal of achieving higher management roles within my current workplace."*

*~Brian, St. Petersburg College*

*"My experience in the military has served me very well as I return to school, and I am able to excel because I put God first, and I know the value of opportunities."*

*~Shemiah, Florida State College at Jacksonville*

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