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Message from Complete Florida

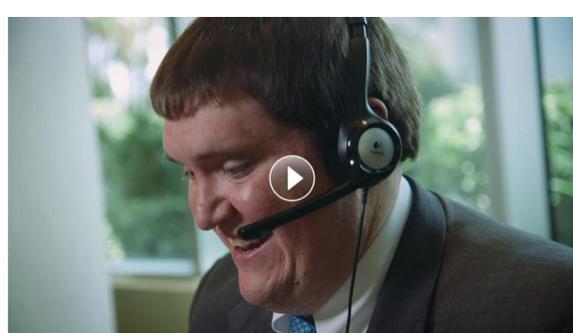
Sharing best practices is a key component of Complete Florida's work. We value the opportunity to learn from others and share our students' perspective because it enhances all efforts to help returning adult students. We will be presenting and collaborating at several conferences this fall to highlight strategies that address accessible, affordable, and accelerated degree completion options.

Look for me at [The Graduate! Network's LearnX](#), [The College Board National Forum](#), [CAEL's 2018 International Conference](#), and [Complete College America's Annual Convening](#). We will discuss the use of CLEP as an inexpensive alternative credit option, the success of The University of Memphis Finish Line Program as an institutional example of helping former students return and graduate, and Complete Florida's approach to a statewide adult learner degree completion initiative.

If you are interested in working with Complete Florida to share best practices leading to increasing degree attainment, please [contact me](#).

Michelle Horton, Ed. D.

Complete Florida Director



Get to Graduation: Advisors' Advice

Complete Florida coach Matt Smith was among 100 advisors from 24 communities in 17 states who attended the recent Graduate! Network Summit in Louisville, KY.

Experts presented and lead group discussions on topics ranging from overcoming financial issues and providing emotional support to using data to improve work. Session titles included "The Advising Lifecycle: Engagement, Recruitment, Inquiry, Pre-Enrollment," "Connecting Completion and Careers," "Persistence To and Through Degree Completion," and "Being Intentional about Equity and Inclusion."

Matt said concepts highlighted at the conference will help him enhance interactions with his students, and he took away three main ideas.

- **See the whole picture:** When reviewing a student's record, do not form an impression based solely on data provided. It's good to know a student's background, but advisors gain valuable insight by listening to each student's personal story.
- **Focus on the future:** Ask questions that encourage the student to remain goal-oriented. Examples: How will a degree improve your current situation? What steps have you taken to move toward the finish line?
- **Avoid shortcuts:** Though data about the student is helpful, relying exclusively on it prevents a full understanding of exactly what a student needs, and those needs evolve as he or she moves from enrollment to graduation.

The [Graduate! Network](#) is a national organization that focuses on relationships between workforce demands and needs of potential "Comebackers," who are adults with some college credit but no degree. The Graduate! Network supports this population by bringing together resources from higher education, employment, government, and social sectors.



Florida Degree Attainment Rates Rise

Recently reported [Census](#) data for [2017-2018](#) indicate the biggest gain in

the proportion of working-age adults with a credential or degree beyond high school in more than a decade. Here is a by-the-numbers breakdown of what these numbers mean.

- **48.3 percent:** The rate of credential or degree attainment for adults ages 25 to 64 in Florida. This is higher than the national average, which is 47.6 percent.
- **1.4 percent:** The rate of improvement for Florida certificate and degree attainment as compared to last year. This is the eighth highest year-to-year gain in the United States.
- **240,000:** Number of credentials and degrees awarded in Florida during 2017-2018.

Complete Florida continues to focus on attainment rates for returning adults by collaborating with statewide organizations such as the [Florida College Access Network](#) and the [Higher Education Coordinating Council](#). If you have ideas about partnerships that will strengthen efforts to serve this population, send them to Dr. Michelle Horton, director of Complete Florida at michelle@completeflorida.org.

Student Spotlight: Setting an Example

Complete Florida student Keturah, 35, recently graduated from [Florida International University](#) with a bachelor's degree in communication arts. She lives with her husband and six children in Apopka and works at Florida Virtual School.

To celebrate, Keturah's entire family traveled to Miami for the commencement ceremony.

"This has truly been a family effort," Keturah said. "My supportive husband did a lot of the cooking, and took care of the children while I was on the back porch with my laptop doing school work."

Keturah always earned good grades and enjoyed taking classes, but raising her children and working made it hard to find time to attend school. Still, she never lost the desire to finish her degree.

"I believe that the things you focus on in life are the things that become your reality, so last year my focus on going back was stronger than ever," Keturah said. "It was an arduous road, with a lot of busy nights and weekends, but I did it."

After doing some research online, Keturah learned about Complete Florida, and she worked with coach, Matt Smith, to figure out the best way to use the numerous credits she had earned. "He provided me with that last push I needed, and I was on my way," she said.

Keturah discovered that FIU would accept more than 80 of her credits, which included an associate degree from Valencia Community College.

The newly earned bachelor's degree allows Keturah the ability to qualify for a range of higher level positions at her current job, but that was not her main motivation for earning a degree.

"I want my children to know that education is important and that if you put your mind to something, you can accomplish it," she said.

Though she plans to take the next few months off school, Keturah is considering returning in January for a master's degree in management and leadership.

"I have made it this far," she said. "I figure why not keep going."



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 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



Play Now

In Their Own Voice

Our students have a variety of reasons for returning to college and completing their degree, including being a role model for their family. Hear from Kevin about why he returned to college with Complete Florida.

What Students are Saying

"Returning to school as an adult has not been easy, but I have the desire and drive to finish what I have started with the help of the Complete Florida program. Having a bachelor's degree will open the door to other opportunities within my field."

~Simone

"I want to thank Matt, the coach, for guiding me through this entire process. I was researching online but never followed through, however Matt kept reaching out and changed my mind, so here I am."

~Monica

"I came to the United States in 2007 from Nigeria. I had no idea of what to do to go to college. After meeting with a coach, I learned strategies that help students accomplish a higher education."

~Adeniyi

"I have been working with my Complete Florida advisor, Bridget, to answer any questions throughout the semester. The further I push to complete all of my classes, the more accomplished I feel about my decision to continue with college."

~Aaron

"Completing my four-year degree will enable me to receive a promotion at my current job, which will give me the financial stability I need. A Complete Florida scholarship makes reaching all of these goals possible."

~Jessica

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What We're Reading

- [Strategically Planning for the Future of Higher Education: The Importance of Non-Traditional Markets](#)
- [\\$100 Increase in Maximum Pell Grant](#)

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