

Message from Complete Florida



Director of Complete Florida

Greetings! Commencement season is a special time, and we would like to congratulate all of the Complete Florida students who graduated this spring from our 20 partner institutions around the state. Finishing a post-secondary degree enhances personal and professional opportunities both now and in the future -- not only for the graduates -- but for their families and their communities. It is truly a time for new beginnings and new opportunities, and we couldn't be more thrilled to play a part in supporting returning adult learners on this important journey. We congratulate them for this extremely important accomplishment and for setting such high expectations and standards for others. Complete Florida wishes them the best with all of their future endeavors.

Michelle Horton, Ed.D.

Student Spotlight: IT Professional Expands Possibilities for Career Advancement



Brian, 49, of Alva graduated May 14 with a bachelor's degree in information technology from Hodges University. Brian is the infrastructure and operations manager for the Lee County Clerk of Courts.

"I have a solid career with about 20 years of experience and several professional certifications," Brian said. "But I would like to move up to the executive level where critical decisions are made to have more of an impact in the next stage of my career, and that is something I would not be able to do without a bachelor's degree. I simply wouldn't have been able to compete, and now I can."

Brian found out about Complete Florida, from his wife Simone, who graduated in 2019 from the University of West Florida with a bachelor's degree in workforce and program development. She was doing research on the internet about earning an online degree and got in touch with a Complete Florida coach who helped her

understand how to transfer credits she had earned at a community. She told her husband about the positive experience, and he decided to call a coach, too.

"Complete Florida couldn't be a more perfect name for the program," Brian said. "I can say that without a doubt, I would not have completed my degree if it weren't for it. I weighed the decision and made up my mind that I was too close to retirement to invest the time and money needed to finish a degree. If it hadn't been for the support of Complete Florida,

and especially the opportunities for scholarships my coach introduced me to, I had already decided it wasn't worth it to finish school. Complete Florida was a game-changer."

Brian said that for people like him who work full time jobs, the flexibility of an online degree made getting to graduation a real possibility.

"It wasn't easy, and there were a lot of sacrifices along the way, especially spending less time with my aging parents, but nothing good in life comes easy, and I can say that it was well worth it. I picked up something useful in every class I took. Technology and security are ever evolving fields, so there is always more to learn."

Find more student success stories at CompleteFlorida.org/Student-Stories

Complete Florida Coach Receives High Honor for Service to Returning Adult Learners

The University of West Florida recently honored Matt Smith, a lead success coach for Complete Florida, with the prestigious 2020 Nautilus Excellence Award. A committee selects recipients based on outstanding job performance, professionalism and excellence of service. Matt was recognized especially for his work with returning adult learners and is described as someone whose "adaptable spirit and rigor always puts students first."



To commemorate the honor, Matt shared his top three tips for those who guide students.

- **Listen:** The student's tone and mindset provide the best guidance for the coaching process.
- **Glean:** Getting the most detailed information as possible from students allows you to guide them in the best and most specific direction.
- **Keep in touch:** Consistent contact is of utmost importance. The more engaged students are the most successful students. If I am updated on a situation, I can guide students toward the next steps.

What Our Students Are Saying

"My Complete Florida coach was a great help in getting things rolling when I didn't think I would be able to get into the University."

Jeremiah

University of South Florida

"Getting this degree means a lot to me because I will be the first one in my family to finish college."

Kellie

Polk State College

"As an educated member of society, I will certainly have a greater chance to contribute to my community."

LaTonya

Florida State College at Jacksonville

"My educational and career vision is to one day help a hospital team provide safe, appropriate and affordable healthcare in the United States."

Thomas

Indian River State College

"With the aid of Complete Florida, I intend to do more than succeed, I intend to blaze a trail and raise the bar for those who dare to dream."

Bianca

Florida International University

What We're Reading



[Preparing Students for a Lifelong Disruptive Future: The 60-year Curriculum](#)

