

THE ADULT LEARNER

Different Highway - Same Destination

Why Continue My Education?

- **Professional Development**
About 90% of adult learners returning to school do so for career reasons. Higher education can lead to job satisfaction, better paying jobs, career advancement and opportunity.
- **Self-Improvement**
Self-esteem and confidence are built through knowledge and experience. With knowledge comes empowerment and an increased awareness of yourself and the world.
- **Coping with Transitions**
Many adults return to school to help cope with life transitions: job loss, divorce, kids moving out or graduating, death in the family, a need to take on new challenges or fill a void of some type.
- **Desire to Keep up With the Times**
Some adults recognize the importance of computer and other technological advances and want to keep up with current trends.
- **Gain New Skills**
Many adults return to school to pursue hobbies such as art, photography, music, languages, massage, sign language, wood-working, dance and others.
- **Love of Learning**
As good a reason as any for going to school.

ADULTS SEEKING POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES

Anyone who wants to go to college can do so— age doesn't count. Educational background doesn't matter either; no one cares how or when you got your high school diploma, GED or adult high school diploma. You can start at almost any level, including remedial work, go as far as you want and take as long as you want. The cost is low and there are aid resources that can be used to cover it. The only thing common about adult learners is that they are adults. There are nearly 5 million adult learners in the United States; approximately 70% of them are studying for degrees with half attending classes during the day and half in the evening. Some study on a full-time basis, but the majority attend part-time. Most adult learners are mature, motivated and successful in college, often because they have clear reasons for wanting an education.

GETTING STARTED

For whatever reason, you are the one who must decide to go to college. From that point on, picking a college is much the same as it is for anyone else. You have to start with yourself and what you want. Referring to **Getting Admitted** in the **College Road Map** will help, but adult learners must often consider other factors such as age, family circumstances, employment and time available. What is your current educational background? Will this be a degree program or not? Are you close enough to attend the college of your choice or is a distance learning program necessary?

LIFELONG LEARNING

Maine's 126 local Adult Education Programs offer a variety of academic enrichment, vocational, and community education courses in nearly every school district in Maine designed to assist adults in returning to formal education. Local adult education is a friendly low-cost entry point for:

- Basic skills and english for speakers of other languages
- GED and Adult High School Diploma
- Individual pre-requisite and brush-up courses in writing, reading, math, or sciences
- Guidance services and some formal college transition programs

Adult Education programs work closely with the **Maine Community Colleges** and the **University of Maine System** to make the transition into a degree program simple. For a list of programs see the Maine Adult Education Association website at www.maineadulted.org or call **207-875-2722**.

Additional information can also be found on the Center for Adult Learning and Literacy website at www.umaine.edu/call/ which lists programs by county. Also, get in touch with your local Maine Community College; their business is to take you from where you are now to where you want to go.

COLLEGE-LEVEL EXAMINATION PROGRAM® (CLEP)

The **College-Level Examination Program (CLEP)**, sponsored by the College Board, provides students of any age the opportunity to demonstrate college-level achievement through a program of exams in undergraduate college courses. There are 2,900 colleges that grant credit and/or advanced standing for **CLEP** exams.

DISTANCE LEARNING

Consider obtaining an undergraduate or graduate degree through a distance or external degree program offered by many colleges and universities.

Students can study right from home using the Internet, video and text-based materials or take classes at a satellite campus. For the adult student, distance learning offers substantial advantages:

- **Accessibility** – Provides people who might not otherwise pursue postsecondary education with access to higher education. Great way for people living in rural areas who are unable to commute to a traditional college environment to obtain a degree.
- **Flexibility** – Flexible schedule for people working full-time jobs or juggling other work/family responsibilities.
- **Time** – Study at your own pace, any time. Often, you don't have a formal class time scheduled; you don't have to worry about enrollment limits. You can speed up your own program– get more work done at your own pace and reach your educational objective faster.
- **Low Cost Advantage** – Along with the time advantage, which can save you money, tuition and fees are usually lower, and the indirect costs such as housing, food and transportation usually do not apply. If you are a degree candidate you may also be eligible for financial aid.

Along with the advantages, there are some other things to think about:

- **Discipline** – Students must be motivated and self-directed.
- **Isolation** – Although many programs offer ways to communicate with fellow students, some may miss the educational and social benefits of a classroom setting.
- **Accreditation** – Don't assume that all external degree programs are fully accredited– make sure to ask before enrolling. Courses taken at non-accredited programs are usually not transferable, and may not be eligible for financial aid.

If you are an adult going back to college, or going for the first time, you are not alone. About 40% of all undergraduates are now over the age of 25.

RESOURCES

College Level Examination Program (CLEP)

www.collegeboard.com/testing

Distance learning programs

www.kaplancollege.com

www.petersons.com

www.theonlinedegree.com

www.usdla.org

Adult/Lifelong learning programs

www.ed.gov

www.elderhostel.org

www.maineadulted.org

www.maineareercenter.com

www.umaine.edu/call

<http://meoc.maine.edu>