



**Back to College for Working Adults:  
*Researchers at Drexel University find online degree programs just as rigorous as on-campus programs, but less stressful for adult students***

**Researchers Offer Advice to Adults Considering Online Degrees**

**Philadelphia, PA - August 23, 2006** - Researchers at Drexel University in Philadelphia conducted the first comparison study between adult students earning their degree on-campus (traditional) and adult students earning their degree through distance education (online) to compare the level of intellectual rigor and the impact that both delivery methods had on family and work-life issues. Major findings from the study (available at: [www.drexel.com](http://www.drexel.com)) include:

- When traditional and online students were asked about the impact of their degree delivery program had on their work and family life, the data revealed:
  - Traditional students were statistically **more likely** to report that pursuing their degree program had a “significant negative impact” on their time/activities with their spouse/ significant other, when compared to online students.
  - Traditional students were statistically **more likely** to indicate that pursuing their degree program had a “negative impact” on their work schedule.
  - Online students were statistically **less likely** to report that pursuing their degree program had a “significant negative impact” on their stress level when compared to traditional program students
  - Statistically, there was **no difference** between online and traditional students with respect to the impact of degree delivery on: time/activities with their children, athletic activities, housework, personal time, and career progress/promotional opportunities.
- More than 80% of all online **and** traditional students had high expectation regarding the intellectual rigor for their program. Nearly 75 percent found their actual experience to be as expected or more difficult than they expected, regardless of program.
- When asked to indicate their level of agreement with the following statement, *The program I selected fits well with my personal and professional work schedule*, online students were nearly twice as likely to “strongly agree” with the statement when compared to Traditional students. Online students were statistically **more** likely to say they were “very satisfied” with their program than were traditional students.
- When asked to indicate how satisfied they were with the degree delivery they selected, a majority of students indicated they were satisfied with their degree program, **regardless** of the type of program. Over 90% of students indicated that they are “very satisfied” or “somewhat satisfied” with their degree program.

- When traditional and online students were asked if they could go back and change when they began their degree program, the majority of **both** groups of students **would not** change the timing of the start of their degree program relative to encountering significant life events, e.g., getting established in a career, having children, getting married, buying a home.

#### **RECORD GROWTH FOR ONLINE LEARNING**

“This is the first study of its type to compare the expectations and actual experiences of both on-campus and online adult learners, the results of which suggests the quality of on-line verses on-campus learning is indistinguishable”, states Dr. Kenneth Hartman, director of academic affairs at Drexel University Online and adjunct associate professor of education. “Quality of instruction is what matters the most to online students; therefore, it behooves all institutions offering on-line degrees to internally examine the experience and opinions of their online students.”

#### **ADVICE FOR PROSPECTIVE ONLINE ADULT STUDENTS**

- **Assess Yourself:** If you’re a good independent learner, very well organized, and very self-motivated, you’ll likely do well in an online degree program. You’ll also need a few basic technical skills, like using a computer, knowing how to access information Online, and how to use basic computer applications, e.g. Microsoft Office.
- **Secure the Support of Family, Friends, and Colleagues:** Those close to you at home and at work need to know your commitment to your degree is no different than having a part-time job. They’ll likely be more supportive, if they realize the importance of your academics. However, don’t forget that your family is also making sacrifices (time, money, travel) while you’re pursuing your academic goals.
- **Assess Prospective Colleges:** Are they accredited, and by whom? What is their reputation within the academic and professional world? Does the faculty teach on-campus, as well as on-line? Do they offer 24/7 technical support? What percentage of their on-line students graduate?
- **Budget Your Time and Money:** Use an electronic calendar (e.g., Outlook) to block-out 6-9 hours per course/per week to write papers, read, and communicate with your instructor and fellow classmates. At the same time, develop a strategy for paying costs (employer tuition assistance, student loans, deferments) that covers the entire time it will take to complete your degree.
- More advice for adults can be found at: <http://www.drexel.com/podcast/>

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