

New collaboration offers increased access to four-year degree

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<http://www.uwosh.edu/today/960/new-collaboration-offers-increased-access-to-four-year-degree/>

Fond du Lac residents will soon find that the dream of earning a bachelor's degree could be closer than ever. Beginning this fall, the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh and Moraine Park Technical College will partner to allow residents of Fond du Lac and its surrounding counties the opportunity to earn a bachelor's degree without traveling far from home.

This collaboration offers a degree program that allows Moraine Park graduates to use their Associate of Applied Science (AAS) degree credits toward a Bachelor of Applied Studies (BAS) degree from UW Oshkosh. The program will be delivered at Moraine Park's Fond du Lac campus beginning this fall.

"The average age of our college's program student is 29, so this program is a perfect fit for those adult learners who wish to earn their bachelor's degree through the UW System," said Moraine Park President Gayle Hytrek. "Offering this program on our Fond du Lac Campus is another way to make a bachelor's degree more accessible to the Moraine Park graduates living within our district and the surrounding areas."

The program, which is designed for adult learners, will allow students to transfer a block of up to 45 credits, plus all applicable general education credits on a course-by-course basis.

As the third-largest university in the UW System, UW Oshkosh has been a leader in making higher education more accessible for Wisconsin residents. Adult learners often cannot attend classes on the traditional university schedule. With online and distance-learning, UW Oshkosh offers students courses that do not require drastic sacrifices regarding their work or family lives—or the quality of the education they receive.

"Adult learners are very important to the university," said Charles Hill, director of the UW Oshkosh Center for New Learning, which administers the BAS degree at Moraine Park. "One in five students at UW Oshkosh is more than 23 years old."

Within Wisconsin, there is a need for an educated workforce. According to findings released in 2006 by the Committee on Baccalaureate Expansion (COBE), a joint committee of the UW System and the Wisconsin Technical College System, Wisconsin is well below the national average in the number of four-year college graduates. The UW System would have to matriculate 72,000 more graduates by 2010 in order to make up this difference.

In addition to the personal benefits in earning a degree, these graduates also improve the state's economy by earning higher wages.

"Area employers want employees with strong communication skills, effective problem-solving and critical-thinking abilities, and agility when it comes to change and continuous improvement," said Hill.

“Adult learners, whose lives are already filled with work and family responsibilities, face obstacles traditional students do not. This program helps them overcome some of those obstacles.”

The program is also open to students who earned their associate’s degree at other Wisconsin technical colleges. Applications are now being accepted to the program. For more information, call (800) INFO-UWO or (920) 424-0234, or visit www.uwosh.edu/newlearning/.