

Graduate! Philadelphia urges adults considering returning to explore options

Traditional college students may be streaming back to campus these days, but **Graduate! Philadelphia** wants to let adults thinking about a return to college know that it's not too late for them to get started in the fall semester, too.

There are many college options in the Delaware Valley that are still accepting new enrollments, especially for adult students, said Laticia Booker, a program advisor for Graduate! Philadelphia. In fact, many colleges have programs specifically designed for adults that have courses starting every few weeks, and they enroll new and returning students throughout the year.

"Going back to college is never the wrong decision, especially in these ongoing tough economic conditions. A college degree might give you that extra edge to help you land a job," said Booker, program advisor for Graduate! Philadelphia. "We realize going back to college is a big – and potentially frightening – step, but Graduate! Philadelphia is designed to make things easier for you. We really are here to help."

Graduate! Philadelphia is a program through which people who began but never finished their undergraduate degrees are provided with free support and services to continue and finish their degrees.

Free services include individual academic advising; guided searches to identify the best college fit; assistance in filing for financial aid and understanding academic credit transfer and transcripts; customized plans and one-on-one support for successful degree completion; waivers of application fees at partner colleges; and much more.

Graduate! Philadelphia's mission is to increase the number of adults in the regional area who hold college degrees by helping "Comebackers" – adults who have some college experience – finish their degrees. More than 70,000 Philadelphians 25-49 years old interrupted their education, not for lack of interest or poor performance, but due to *See "Graduate" page 4* non-academic challenges related to cost of tuition, the need to generate income, or the lack of childcare.

Graduate! Philadelphia was founded in 2005 in response to the critical shortage of adults with college degrees in the region's workforce. Statistics show that earning a college degree brings better job opportunities and about \$1 million more in wages over a person's career. In 2008, Graduate! Philadelphia began offering Philadelphians innovative college access and completion services, which guide prospective returning students – Comebackers – from

exploration of opportunities to graduation with a two or four-year college degree.

Graduate! Philadelphia has already helped more than 650 "Comebackers" re-enroll in college. G!P students have a 95 percent rate of persistence after they return to college. Twenty-four students have already graduated, and many more will graduate this spring. Another 1,300 are using Graduate! Philadelphia's assistance as they prepare to return to college.

Assistance is available at any one of the seven Graduate! Philadelphia service sites, online and by email, and by phone. More information is available at www.GraduatePhiladelphia.org.

The Graduate! Philadelphia higher education partnership includes 17 area colleges: Chestnut Hill College, Community College of Philadelphia, The Center for Urban Theological Studies of Geneva College, Drexel University, East Stroudsburg University, Holy Family University, LaSalle University, Neumann University, Peirce College, Penn State University, Philadelphia University, Rosemont College, Rutgers University-Camden, Saint Joseph's University, Temple University, Thomas Edison State College and Widener University. The Gallery



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“Returning to college gives you the opportunity to take control of your life. The reasons why you didn’t complete a college degree in the past are irrelevant now,” said Hadass Sheffer, Executive Director of Graduate! Philadelphia. “With Graduate! Philadelphia, you don’t need to go it alone. We understand that you’re taking a big step, but or free assistance is there for the asking.”