

MARKETPLACE

MORNING REPORT

MONEY

TECH REPORT

MID-DAY UPDATE

browse

listen

browse

listen

browse

listen

browse

listen

browse

listen

HOME | BUSINESS | WORLD | ECONOMY | TECH | SUSTAINABILITY | YOUR MONEY | WEALTH & POVERTY

SHOWS

DONATE

CONTACT | ABOUT
REGISTER | SIGN IN

LATEST STORIES | SONGS | PODCASTS | ELECTIONS 2012 | VIDEO: IPAD FACTORY

SEARCH MARKETPLACE

EDUCATION

Like 22

25

Like

15384
likes.
Cinn



Some college, but no degree

3

SIGN UP FOR OUR NEWSLETTER.

Email

Subscribe



Emily Hanford

The center for Graduate! Philadelphia, a city-supported program that helps school dropouts come back.

Subscribe to podcast | Embed player | Audio player assistance | Pop-Up

Support Marketplace

by Emily Hanford
Marketplace for Thursday, January 19, 2012

TRANSCRIPT



Emily Hanford
John McGee finished an associate's degree in less than a year online and quickly got two promotions.

Kai Ryssdal: However students get their textbooks -- on an iPad or the old-fashioned way -- those books don't do any good unless they're actually used.

There are 37 million people in this country who've started college, who have some credits -- but never finished. When they do that, when they drop out, there are costs -- to them, and to the rest of us, in the billions of dollars, in wasted loans and grants and lost opportunities. Those costs are one reason college dropouts are starting to get more attention from the Obama administration on down.

But finding ways for people to finish their degrees might mean rethinking the way Americans go to college. Emily Hanford of American RadioWorks reports.

Emily Hanford: For a long time, no one paid much attention to how many people were dropping out of college.

LATEST STORIES | COMMENTS

1. [Americans, employment and the 'Optimism Gap'](#)
2. [Whole Foods bans red-rated fish from its stores](#)
3. [As France runs out of cash to borrow, politics could shift](#)
4. [Creative, but feasible steps towards sustainable prosperity](#)
5. [Greenpeace says Apple and Amazon have dirty clouds](#)

[View complete list »](#)

YOU MIGHT ALSO LIKE...

Explore Stories that share this feature's tags

[Education, college](#)

1. [Top universities join forces online](#)
2. [Letters: Taxes!](#)
3. [When women are the breadwinners](#)

[Lumina Foundation's state-by-state breakdown on higher education](#)
[American Radioworks: Going back to college](#)

Hadass Sheffer is executive director of a Philadelphia program that helps former students come back. She says the attitude was:

Hadass Sheffer: You dropped out, it's your fault. And we're saying no. We have so many people who are not finishing college. To me that's a systems failure, it's not the failure of the individuals.

4. [The high cost of the other American Dream, education](#)

5. [A new way to measure college graduation rates](#)

[View Complete List »](#)

Stan Jones of Complete College America agrees.

Stan Jones: The colleges that we have now were really designed for traditional students that came out of good college prep high schools, lived in the dormitory, went full-time.

Today's college students don't fit that profile. Most of them commute to campus and nearly a third have full-time jobs. Finishing a degree is tough.

Marilyn Johnson Jackson: Between leaving work and getting out to the college, there was no dinner fixed, there was nothing done. My world was crazy.

Marilyn Johnson Jackson could only manage the stress of night classes, two jobs and life as a single mom for so long. She gave up on the idea of ever getting her degree -- and then discovered a new online program. At first, she was skeptical.

Jackson: How can you take a class online? I just didn't get the concept.

But once she started...

Jackson: Hmm, I like this. I can get out of the bed and walk right in here to my computer, do my homework, and I'm through for the day.

Getting students like Jackson to come back by offering flexible and convenient programs was once a market owned mostly by for-profit colleges, but traditional schools are catching on. Jackson finished her degree online through a community college.

John McGee did too. Online, he could move at his own pace and didn't have to sit through a typical 16-week semester.

McGee: Learning became interesting, because I felt like, man, I'm finally accomplishing something, finally accomplishing something.

As a working professional with seven years of military service, McGee didn't like taking classes with 18-year-olds. The online program allowed him to get credit for his experience. McGee finished an associate's degree in less than a year and quickly got two promotions. Seems straightforward, but for people figuring out how to get back to school, finding the right program can be a daunting task.

Julia Capece: I didn't know where to start, who to contact. I didn't have a clue.



Julia Capece quit college five years ago when juggling work and school got the best of her. She's now a city clerk, but without a degree, she isn't eligible for promotion. Desperate to finish but not knowing how, she finally found [Graduate! Philadelphia](#), a city-supported program that helps dropouts come back.

Counselor: Hey Julia.

Capece: Hi Mr. Mac.

Counselor: Come on back.

Capece is meeting with her counselor at the "comebackers center" located in a downtown mall. Photos of smiling graduates hang from the ceiling.

Counselor: OK, so all the other paperwork that had to get over to the admissions office you've gotten it there?

Capece: Yes, mailed out my transcripts on Monday.

Capece is applying to an associate's program in business. She'd hoped to finish the science degree she started, but the classes weren't offered online or at night. So she's pretty much starting over. Her goal is to eventually transfer for a bachelor's.

Capece: Yeah, we're looking at a five-year plan. So by the time I'm 30, 31, I'll be in good shape.

Capece says she wishes she'd finished her degree the first time around, but plan B is better than no plan at all.

I'm Emily Hanford for Marketplace.

Ryssdal: For more about getting dropouts back to college, check out the American RadioWorks documentary, "[Some College, No Degree.](#)"

About the author
Emily Hanford is education correspondent for American Radioworks.
[Read More »](#)

Like 22 2 GOOGLE +1 25

3 COMMENTS

[Log In To Post Comments](#)

 Dwayne73 - Jan 20, 2012

Today the opportunity to finish your college is much greater with the Internet. After graduating from high school in 1980 I tried going to night school, earned some credits with the Community College of the Air Force, I took some tele-courses, and I even attended a class during the day one semester. When I started working shift work in 1985 I gave up all hope of earning my degree. When my son was applying for college I started looking for an online program. I enrolled in one program and it just did

not work out and I dropped out right away. I enrolled into a second program and earn college credit for the 3000 hours of technical training and for my professional licenses that I earned over the years. It still took me two years to finish my degree 29 years after I started but I did finished.

Online programs are more expansive but they work for people who work a rotating shift schedule. Also stick with an online program that has a brick & mortar campus somewhere. Go Saints.
<http://www.sienaheights.edu/>

or to post comments



Radar121 - Jan 20, 2012

I am an Air Force Veteran living out of my truck, trying to go back to college. I was laid off in July, but I did not have any savings. I left active duty in 2000 and reserve duty in 2003, so I just missed the new GI Bill, and my Old GI Bill benefits timed out. I applied for federal aid, but I have to go through a special appeals process because I have 47 credits from Air Force Technical schools and military training, and those credits put me past the limit of 90 credits for federal aid at a community college. I had this semesters classes paid for by a program for low income students in California, but I don't have money for books, so I may have to drop out again. Plus, there is a catch 22, I have to be enrolled in at least one class to activate the appeals process, and the appeals process can take a few weeks. I really want to stay in school, and use my electronics and computer networking background in the renewable energy field. Hopefully, a job or something will come my way soon. To round out my new year, my unemployment benefits were just cut in half in my extension. Try living on 200 a week. One book I need costs 125.00.

or to post comments



twilkin - Jan 19, 2012

There are alternatives for the working adult who cannot complete their degree through a traditional college setting. One of the best examples is Western Governors University, an online not-for-profit institution that provides an affordable, in depth learning experience through a innovative business model. It's worth a look--www.wgu.edu

or to post comments

GET IT HERE: [Newsletters](#) [Mobile Devices](#) [Facebook](#) [Twitter](#) [Podcasts](#) [RSS](#)

- HOME
- BUSINESS
- WORLD
- ECONOMY
- TECH
- SUSTAINABILITY
- YOUR MONEY
- LIFE
- SHOWS
- ELECTIONS
- WEALTH & POVERTY

- MARKETPLACE PROGRAMS**
- Marketplace
 - Marketplace Morning Report
 - Marketplace Money
 - Marketplace Tech Report
 - Marketplace Index

- MARKETPLACE DESKS**
- Economy 4.0
 - Education
 - Health Care

- OTHER SECTIONS**
- Chinopoly
 - The Big Book
 - Easy Street
 - Freakonomics
 - Radio
 - Getting Personal
 - Makin' Money
 - The Whiteboard

AMERICAN PUBLIC MEDIA
261 S. Figueroa Street, Los Angeles, CA 90012



PROGRAMS

[American RadioWorks](#)
[Composers Datebook](#)
[Marketplace Morning Report](#)
[Pipedreams](#)
[The Splendid Table](#)
[The Writer's Almanac](#)

[American Routes](#)
[Marketplace](#)
[Marketplace Tech Report](#)
[A Prairie Home Companion](#)
[The Story](#)
[More...](#)

[Being](#)
[Marketplace Money](#)
[Performance Today](#)
[Saint Paul Sunday](#)
[SymphonyCast](#)

SUPPORT AMERICAN PUBLIC MEDIA

American Public Media's online services are supported by users like you. [Contribute now...](#)

MORE FROM AMERICAN PUBLIC MEDIA

[APM Podcasts/RSS Feeds](#)
[APM Newsletters](#)
[iTunes U](#)
[Public Radio Tuner](#)
[APM Careers](#)
[About APM](#)