



Tuesday, July 18, 2006

About Graduate! Philadelphia

Graduate! Philadelphia is a joint campaign of the Philadelphia Workforce Investment Board (PWIB) and the Pennsylvania Economy League (PEL)—leading a citywide effort to ensure that Philadelphia can compete effectively in the global economy by helping 80,000 Philadelphians who already have some college credit to finish their degree.

“Growing Our Own” in Philadelphia

Graduate! Philadelphia delivers provocative ideas and concrete models for community leaders seeking to create an educated and highly skilled talent base in Philadelphia.

Back to College. Ahead in Life.

Thinking about going back to college? **Graduate! Philadelphia** offers advice on how to overcome the most common barriers that keep adults from getting back to college and ahead in life:

1. There are many options and resources when considering how to finance a return to college.

- a. Ask your employer about tuition assistance – many offer tuition reimbursement.
- b. Fill out a Free Application for Federal Student Aid www.fafsa.ed.gov.
- c. Apply for PA state grants and loans: www.furtheryoureducation.com.
- d. Talk to college admissions officers about payment options and your eligibility for the PA WAGE program (lists of participating colleges and eligible fields of study: www.pheaa.org/specialprograms/wage.shtml.)

- e. See www.finaid.org for advice on commercial loans, repayment calculators, needs analysis, information about commercial savings tools including Section 529 plans (which can be used by adults for themselves and their children) and search tools for scholarships.
 - f. If you have defaulted PA State loans you can still get back on track. Call 800-233-0751 or read www.aessuccess.org/manage/cant_make_payment/default_rehab.shtml.
2. **Find the program that's right for you.** It may not be the college or course of study you started years ago, but there are programs available that are as flexible as your interests are diverse. Colleges have changed too, and now offer many options for working adults, including accelerated programs, evening and weekend courses, and online and distance courses. Visit www.graduatephiladelphia.org or the **Graduate! Philadelphia** booth on Unity Day, Sunday, August 20, for a free list of area colleges, the degrees they offer, and contact information of admissions officers, as well as times and locations of the **Returning to Learning College Fairs for Working Adults** in November 2006, where you can talk to 30+ area colleges who specialize in programs for working adults.
 3. **Minimize your investment of time (and money) by maximizing the number of credits you transfer – ask your college admissions officer how.** Also, ask about credit for work and other life experience. See www.furtheryoureducation.com and www.back2college.com/assesstool.htm for good advice, and **talk** to your college before spending money on testing services.
 4. **Prioritize, organize, focus, and ask for help.** It's not easy to fit college into your busy life, but you *should* do it! You *can* do it! Prioritize your time, stay organized, and focus on the big picture: your efforts now will earn big dividends by increasing your earnings potential, and with a college degree you will be better situated to help your children navigate their way to and through college. Ask for help: tell friends and family that completing your degree is a priority and ask for their help with transportation, childcare, household upkeep... After graduating, you'll be better positioned to help your supporters. And surround yourself with cheerleaders – tell critics to hold off.
 5. **Have fun.** As an adult learner, in classes with other adult learners, you'll exchange ideas, and "life wisdom." Most students recognize this as an enriching and rewarding experience which sparks and feeds a "fire in the soul."

--Written by Hadass Sheffer, director of **Graduate! Philadelphia** – helping Philadelphians get back to college and ahead in life.