



A WOMEN'S GUIDE TO GOING BACK TO SCHOOL **CHOOSING AN EDUCATION TO FURTHER YOUR GOALS**

I'm too busy. I'm working full-time. I'll be the only "grown-up" in class. I can't afford it. I have children to think about. There are countless reasons you may be delaying the pursuit of your college degree, and while they may all be valid, they don't have to be roadblocks. If you are a woman who has been out of high school or college for some time and you are thinking about returning to school, full- or part-time, this guide is for you. Read on to discover how you can pursue your college degree and work toward achieving your goals.



ARE YOU IN?

EDUCATION YOUR WAY

The face of college students has changed. While many students enter college immediately following high school, a growing number are returning as adult learners, or non-traditional students. According to the American Council on Education, adult learners comprise nearly 40% of the college population. These students come from diverse backgrounds, from military veterans and GED holders to experienced professionals in the midst of a career transition.

Universities are adapting to the increase in non-traditional students by providing flexible educational options, often delivered online using innovative learning technology or a mix of both online learning and classroom learning at a campus location. The government is stepping in too, introducing new initiatives aimed at specifically supporting non-traditional students with resources and tools they need to succeed in college.

While these changes in higher education can be of benefit to everyone, an increasing number of female non-traditional students are taking advantage of returning to school. From 1970-2000, the proportion of female undergraduates rose from 42% to 56%. The increase in female enrollment in graduate programs similarly increased from 39% to 58% in the same time period. In today's virtual classroom, you may encounter a variety of women including stay-at-home mothers and military spouses.

REWARDS OF A COLLEGE EDUCATION

A degree is a lifetime achievement that cannot be taken away. Alumni are proud to assure current and aspiring students that, despite the challenges of completing a degree program with an already busy life, the rewards of having a diploma are innumerable. Visit CTU's YouTube to see what female graduates have to say about their time as students:

www.youtube.com/ctuniversity.

Here are other benefits that are potentially available to women who earn their degree:

- ▶ **Personal growth.** A college education provides more than increased knowledge in a specific area of study. Many students cite increased self-confidence and self-esteem as they overcome challenging obstacles to achieve academic success.

“ A degree will enable me to say to future employers that I am serious about a career at this point in my life, and [it] will make me more prepared and marketable for employment.”

–Sharee Walls,
CTU Graduate and Military Spouse

Learn more about Sharee

www.coloradotech.edu/resources/blogs/june-2014/ww-spouse-scholarship-winner-sharee-walls

- ▶ **Start a new Career.** A degree may be able to help women who are ready to chart a new career path. As you explore and learn more about your new career field, you may gain essential knowledge that can help jumpstart your growth.
- ▶ **Advance your career.** If you are already in a field you enjoy, a degree may be able to help further your career trajectory. A degree may also enhance your ability to be seen as an authority in your field, which may lead to new career opportunities that were not available without a degree.
- ▶ **Increased financial reward.** For many women, a college degree is the first step toward financial independence. A degree doesn't guarantee your financial success, but it can help. According to a recent Bureau of Labor Statistics report, individuals with a Bachelor's degree earn an average of \$23,764 more per year than their counterparts who hold just a high school diploma, and are also 3.5% less likely to be unemployed.¹
- ▶ **Serve as a role model.** The rigor of a college degree program offers intellectual challenges, but it also allows women to serve as role models to their children and family. As others see you rise to success in your education and career, it can inspire them to do the same.

¹ <http://www.bls.gov/>
See last page for more information.

TACKLING THE CHALLENGES OF RETURNING TO SCHOOL

Despite the benefits of a college education, there are some very real and difficult challenges that many women experience. Few of these obstacles are insurmountable. Below you'll find the most common "what if" challenges women face along with some tips for overcoming them.

WHAT IF I'M NOT READY TO DEAL WITH THE STRESS OF COURSEWORK?

Juggling your daily life, job and family keeps you busy, and most likely causes stress. There may never be the "right" time to decide to go back to school. You may feel the need to put the goals of others before your own - waiting until your children are in school or until your spouse is settled in his or her career to pursue your education.

"Earning a degree shows my daughter that I can excel," said CTU graduate and military service member Toni Rogers. By pursuing her education, Toni set a good example for her daughter and took a step toward a potentially better future so that one day she will have more free time to be with her family.

At most universities, you must meet minimum grade guidelines to earn your degree, which requires a certain level of commitment. At CTU, you are able to decelerate your pace if the workload becomes too much, and you are able to access most degree programs through technology online and on your mobile phone. Coursework is done on your time—on breaks from work, while your children are at school, or at night after your family has gone to bed. CTU's Virtual Classroom allows you to listen to live chats, read eBooks, and access tutoring anytime and anywhere you have an internet connection.

WHAT IF I DON'T HAVE TIME TO GO BACK TO SCHOOL?

For those who are worried about time, success is a matter of choosing priorities. If school is a priority, you can make time for it. That may mean moving other priorities or removing them altogether. At first this may seem like an impossible task especially since many women struggle with the desire to "have it all." You can have it all, you just have to prioritize. Completing a degree can take as little as 18 months at CTU.

WHAT IF I CAN'T ATTEND CLASS IN PERSON?

Getting to class can be a challenge. The good news is many quality universities offer degree programs online, allowing you to take classes when, where and how it best fits into your busy lifestyle. This is particularly important for women who are usually juggling family, work and other priorities. Having the flexibility to access coursework anywhere and anytime allows you to attend class and manage your life.

WHAT IF THE COST OF EARNING MY DEGREE DOESN'T PAY OFF?

A college degree does not guarantee your financial security or your job satisfaction, although it can enhance these areas in your life. To determine the potential rewards of a degree, it's worthwhile to do career research. Start by searching online for specific job postings, paying particular attention to educational requirements. For some positions a degree is desirable, but not required. You can conduct informational interviews to gain better insight on degree requirements for a career path. Look to your professional network and reach out to individuals who are in (or know someone in) the field you plan to pursue. Sit down with that person to gather first-hand insight into how a degree might increase your ability to reach your goals. If a two year Associate degree sounds more attainable than a Bachelor's or graduate degree, start with that first. Any amount of education may be beneficial to your career in the long run.

WHAT IF I CAN'T AFFORD COLLEGE?

While the flexibility and condensed format of an online degree may result in higher tuition, you may be able to defer a portion of college tuition through financial aid, scholarship opportunities and, at CTU, by demonstrating prior knowledge with Fast Track™.² To determine what you may qualify to receive, start by completing a Free Application for Federal Student Aid, also known as the FAFSA. Also get in touch with the university you plan to attend to learn more about discounts, scholarships and potential work opportunities that can reduce the cost of your education.

Did You Know?

CTU offers special tuition rates and grants for military and veteran students. Their spouses may qualify too.

Learn more

coloradotech.edu/admissions/military/military-education-benefits

² The ability to reduce time in school and/or reduce tuition depends on the number of Fast Track™ tests successfully passed. Fast Track™ program credits are unlikely to transfer. Not all programs are eligible for possible 30% reduction in time and money. Courses eligible subject to change. See last page for more information.

SINGLE MOST IMPORTANT SUCCESS FACTOR FOR WOMEN

There are many factors that can contribute to your college success, but on the top of the list is having realistic expectations. That means knowing what you want to get out of college and having a clear picture of how you'll plan to achieve your college goals alongside other priorities. Armed with the facts about what college has in store for you can go a long way in reducing your anxiety. Don't let challenges that come up with family or work knock you off track. Stay true to your commitment to yourself to achieve your degree.

Don't be afraid to ask for help either—ask your spouse or family to watch your kids or complete household task so you can make time for school work.

► **Conduct independent research**

Go online to research degree options, explore university websites and discover potential career paths. Learn more about CTU's degree programs at www.coloradotech.edu/degrees.

► **Decide on a career path**

Do a bit of self-exploration to identify your existing skills, knowledge and passion. Then, choose a career path that provides the rewards you want.

► **Reach out and make direct contact**

The best way to develop realistic expectations is to talk to people who have had similar circumstances. Take time to attend orientations and open house events hosted by the university you plan to attend. Contact an admissions advisor to learn more about your degree program of interest and enrollment. By following CTU on Facebook and LinkedIn, you may be able to connect with other women who are also juggling family, work and school and share stories or advice.

► **Develop a strategy and plan**

If time and finances are a concern, take time to create an action plan that tackles those challenges head on. Prepare a timeline so that you're focused and clear about resources needed to move forward in your plan.

► **Breathe**

A college experience is a priceless investment in you and your future. If you're like many women, it may be one of the few times you've put yourself first. Step back and honor the value of pursuing your education and how in doing so, you're also benefiting those around you.

GET STARTED: CONNECT WITH US

If a college degree is part of your future goals, contact us to learn more about CTU's 100+ degree programs and concentrations in Business and Management, Engineering and Computer Science, Healthcare, Information Systems and Technology, and Security Studies—ranging from Associate, Bachelor's, Master's and Doctoral degrees. You can choose to study on campus, online or both. That's what makes CTU unique—you can fit your education around your life, and that means having the flexibility to choose when, where and how to earn your degree.

If you have questions along the way, we're here to help. Call or visit us online to learn more.

Call: 855.230.0555

Visit: coloradotech.edu

¹ <http://www.bls.gov/>

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CTU cannot guarantee employment or salary. Not all programs available to residents of all states. Financial aid is available to those who qualify. Success will depend largely on the effort put into studies, job search efforts, experience and attitude. 4435 North Chestnut Street, Colorado Springs, CO 80907. 852-1234567 0873937 03/14