Educational Opportunities: Beyond the Classroom

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Educational Opportunities: Beyond the Classroom

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INDEX:

.01 Technology Enhanced
.02 Advantages to Distance Education
.03 Disadvantages
.04 Offerings of Distance Education

Recently several advertisements have aired on the radio for adults choosing to advance in their careers or to finish up on that college degree. I thought it was an interesting advertisement since education is becoming an increasing part of our lives. As most of us remember, school consisted of attending classes on a regular basis, studying in groups, and doing endless hours of homework. The commitment was tough especially for adults that were in marriages and had families. Priorities change and affect adjustments that are challenged by others in our realm creating friction and possibly a challenge to fulfill one’s goals.

However, it is apparent that the world is ever changing and individuals need to maintain up-to-date skills and acquire new skills to continue his or her earning power. In the past decade, higher education saw the need to deliver classes to non-traditional students in non-traditional settings. A professor from Winona State University, Dr. Jan Karjala, states, “Higher education has become aware of individuals who are placed-bound individuals due to job, family, etc. Simultaneously higher education has become aware of the fact that people driving on a daily basis to participate in consensus is prohibitive.”

Technology has made it possible for adult learners to learn new skills/applications through an
alternative method and allow the learners to continue with their busy lifestyles and schedule “classes” around their needs. According to the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, “Almost 75 percent of today’s undergraduate students are considered ‘non-traditional’ because of their age, financial status, or when they enrolled in college, according to a report released.”

I went online to check out the options with various schools in the country. Most of the sites I visited had the words “distance education” on their main page, therefore marketing the program to let people know that it is available to them. During my search, I found an article that stated, “Thirty-three percent of all higher education institutions offered distance education classes as of 1995 and more are being added yearly.”

.01 Technology Enhanced (return to index)

Don’t get the distance education classes confused with the correspondence classes that you see on TV where you send everything through the U.S. Postal Service. Although the concept is basically the same, technology has enhanced the offerings to the local or national known colleges. According to Dr. Jan Karjala from Winona State University, “The use of technology occurs on-line with web-based access combined with e-mail, telephone, interactive TV and chat rooms.” The uses of this type of technology allows you to receive information such as the syllabus, class notes, assignments, tests, or group discussion topics with other online students.

Technology is a fascinating tool; however, the basics of attending regular classes are still pertinent if not more important in distance education. The basics of attending a regular class are still relevant to distance education; however, the basics are truly tested because an individual needs to have determination, goals, and discipline in order to achieve success.

.02 Advantages to Distance Education (return to index)

Because we are in an age of increasing demands, distance education is beneficial for busy adults because you can schedule “class time” around your schedule. The idea of switching nights with family members or missing dinner is a thing of the past. Distance education is so flexible that you can manage it with everyday activities without feeling guilty about lack of attention to family members or your homework.

One major obstacle of going back to school is the inability to keep your current work schedule. With distance education, you can continue to work full-time and go to school. Enjoy the convenience of working on your degree either at home or at work. This is the greatest benefit because quitting a job is often the trade-off of going back to school.

Another advantage of distance education is that you can work at your own pace. Planning is the strategy to most things in life and that also pertains to distance education. Planning and making goals to complete so many chapters or homework allows you to work at your own pace. You won’t feel pressured when you need to review a chapter a couple of times to understand it or
take a little longer doing research for a project.

.03 Disadvantages (return to index)

One major disadvantage to distance education is the lack of instructor/student/peer contact. Instead of scheduling meeting times and appointments with your colleagues and/or instructor, communication is done either through e-mail or discussion groups over the Internet. While the contact with other students may be limited, the contact that you will have with your instructor is more one-on-one interaction and most likely very accessible. According to Dr. Karjala, “Instructors assign on-line ‘office hours’ to allow time for student contact.”

One of the biggest disadvantages to distance education is finding and committing time to the course of study. Studying at home may cause you to think of things that you need to do instead of doing homework. Like anything else, discipline plays an important factor when achieving success. If you are self-motivated and determined to make it work then you will have the strength to overcome any barriers that may arise in distance education.

While colleges offer different types of distance education programs, some colleges may not allow you to complete the entire program via distance education. This is where you need to check out the institutional offerings and what they accept from other colleges as well as from their own programs. It all depends on how the institution sees distance education, but there are plenty of colleges across the country that do offer complete degrees via distance education.

.04 Offerings of Distance Education (return to index)

There are several local, state, and national institutions that offer distance education; therefore, you can choose which program best suits your needs. Send an e-mail to that institution requesting the information on distance education and determine if they can meet your needs. Most institutions have contact information readily available on their website to attract/recruit new students. The availability and flexibility of distance education allows the students to tailor their programs and have the ability to take classes from a college within or in another state without stepping onto the campus.

Distance education is not for everyone. Once registering for the class, introduce yourself to the instructor by e-mail and let them know that you are registered for a particular class. They will contact you about the particulars of the class; for example, if the institution is using blackboard. They will let you know your ID and password. It’s quite a simple process, but making the first step can be hard especially if you are not accustomed to distance education. Once you have started the process, it should be relatively smooth for both you and the instructor.

In conclusion, make sure that you can make the commitment to distance education. Determination, goals and discipline all play a role to ensure success in the class.
2 THOUGHTS ON “EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES: BEYOND THE CLASSROOM”

Pablo Giza

on January 30, 2014 at 6:17 PM said:

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on February 4, 2014 at 10:38 AM said:

Hurrah, that may be what I was searching for, what a information! produce right here at this website, thanks admin of this website.