



Tips for Returning to Learning

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. Explore the many options and resources available for financing your return to college

- a. Ask your employer about tuition assistance – many offer tuition reimbursement.
- b. Determine your eligibility for receiving financial aid by completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (www.fafsa.ed.gov)
- c. Speak with college financial aid officers about payment options and institutional based scholarships.
- e. Visit www.finaid.org for comprehensive information and resources such as 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 on a PA loan you still be able to get back on track. Please visit http://www.aessuccess.org/manage/cant_make_payment/default_rehab.shtml or call 1-800-233-0751 for further details.

2. Define your educational goals

Before you can begin researching colleges and programs, it's best to identify your motivations and interests. Knowing what you would like to achieve, including what your degree will be in, will make it easier to select the college and program that's right for you.

3. Understand your worth

Recognizing that adults are accomplished people with many achievements, most colleges offer college credit for learning that occurs outside the college classroom. At some colleges, students can "test out" of a course; at others, students develop a portfolio of evidence. But is a worthwhile exercise to start reflecting on, and listing, major life achievements and what you have learned from them.

4. Assess your schedule

Whether you are a first-time college student or one who is returning, it is important to establish how much time you will be able to devote to pursuing your degree. This will help you identify which college and program is right for you. It will also help you start planning how to balance your life, work, and college schedules.

5. Develop your support system

It is important to identify one or more support people in your life who respect your desire to return to college. Try to line up a network of supporters: from backup babysitters if you have children, to a colleague at work with whom you can talk about classes and stress levels, to a good friend who won't let you skip a class because it's cold and raining and the car's broken down.