

## News

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# Trio Benefits from SWOSU's Reach Higher Program



Southwestern Oklahoma State University students (from left) Laney Stover of Binger and Dee Downs of Weatherford and Justin Nelson (not pictured) of Hinton each recently received a \$1,000 “Reach Higher” scholarship from the SWOSU Foundation, Inc, on the Weatherford campus. With the students is Dr. Todd Wigger, coordinator of the SWOSU Reach Higher Program.

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Southwestern Oklahoma State University students Dee Downs of Weatherford, Justin Nelson of Hinton and Laney Stover of Binger each have received a \$1,000 "Reach Higher" scholarship from the SWOSU Foundation, Inc, on the Weatherford campus.

Reach Higher is a program for adults who have successfully completed some college coursework but have not yet finished a college degree. Students can still be admitted to the upcoming spring semester at SWOSU.

Todd Wiggen, coordinator of the SWOSU program, said the Reach Higher adult-friendly degree completion options available through the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education encourage adults who have earned some college credit to successfully complete their degrees.

Downs said she enjoys the pleasure of learning from motivated instructors with a wide range of experience, resources, advice, knowledge and insight into industry networks to help her realize her own potential.

"Completing my degree will benefit me in the form of personal gratification because my education has been a lifetime goal that has required an immense amount of effort, dedication, sacrifice and determination," Downs said.

Nelson, who is 43 years old, said he has spent the last 25 years failing to finish his education through traditional classes and environments.

"Thanks to the Reach Higher program, I am on track to finally graduate with my Bachelor's in the fall of 2021," Nelson said. "It means so much to have a clear path to graduation set out in front of me. I know without a doubt that I would not be committed to graduating next year if it were not for the Reach Higher program."

Nelson said he has missed out on many great career advancements over the past 25 years, simply because he could not check the box of having a degree.

"I avoided trying to go back to college for many years because I was afraid of failing again," Stover said. "I was to the point of quitting college again the semester before I discovered the Reach Higher Program. This program means success for me and it will forever be a reminder to me that although I failed and sometimes struggled, I got back up and came out better in the end."

Stover said the degree will hopefully benefit her daughters.

"I hope that me leading by example and continuing my education and being able to show that it pays off and helps in the long run will be something they take note of," Stover said.

Reach Higher provides two distinct degree completion program strands for adult learners. Reach Higher: FlexFinish offers flexible enrollment and online options to working adults who wish to pursue an associate degree in enterprise development or a bachelor's degree in organizational leadership. Reach Higher: DirectComplete offers adult students the opportunity to complete a degree program connected with workforce development needs that align with Oklahoma's *100 Critical Occupations* list.

Additional information is available by contacting Wiggen at [todd.wiggen@swosu.edu](mailto:todd.wiggen@swosu.edu).