



News

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Reach Higher Program for Working Adults Offered at SWOSU

Southwestern Oklahoma State University (SWOSU) continues to offer the Reach Higher: FlexFinish program, designed for working adults that have already completed an Associate's degree or have at least 60 hours of previous college credit with hopes of earning a Bachelor's degree.

SWOSU's program allows the student to complete all their coursework online and provides courses in a mixture of 8- and 16-week formats.

Dr. Todd Wiggen, who is coordinator of the SWOSU program, said the university offers a Bachelor of Science degree in Organizational Leadership with a focus in Business. The Reach Higher: FlexFinish curriculum is approved by the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education.

One of SWOSU's Reach Higher students is Debra Valerio of Altus.



She restarted her educational journey in 2009, nearly 24 years after graduating from high school. Valerio was a “nontraditional” student in every sense of the word and truly felt out of place in the classrooms filled with teenagers. Once she finished her associate degree at Western Oklahoma State College, Valerio found it hard to transition to a four-year university, so she stopped. It was nearly six years before she garnered enough courage to drive to Weatherford and inquire about what it would take to finish her degree.

Being a mother and a wife were her biggest priorities. In addition, she had two elderly parents who needed time and attention. She volunteered over 10 hours each week and worked a part-time job. Not to mention, she lived an hour and a half from the SWOSU campus. She thought that perhaps she would be able to take a class here and there and one day would have the honor of walking that stage and receiving a diploma.

She never dreamed on that summer afternoon when she visited SWOSU that she would find herself making plans to be a full-time student who would graduate in two years.

“The Reach Higher Program seemed designed for me specifically,” Valerio said. “My class schedule is carefully selected, and Reach Higher students are given priority for class enrollment. All the classes I need are available to me online, so I can do the coursework in the evenings and on the weekends as my schedule allows.”

Valerio, who recently received a scholarship from the SWOSU Foundation, Inc., said the instructors have all been engaging and encouraging and it has made the online classes feel a little more like a structured classroom.

Valerio plans to be a member of the 2019 graduating class at Southwestern Oklahoma State University with a degree in Organizational Leadership.

“This is truly my dream come true, and it would not have been possible if not for the Reach Higher program,” Valerio said.

For more information about the SWOSU Reach Higher: FlexFinish program, contact Wiggen at 580.774.3052 or todd.wiggen@swosu.edu. His office is located in Room 348 of the Stafford Center on the Weatherford campus.

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