



Returning to School - WIIFM

It's been years since you went to school. Just the thought of it may make you cringe, but the threat of recent layoffs has you wondering if you should get or finish your degree, or earn some continuing education credits. There is some good news for you.

What's in it for me? Today, the philosophy of just-in-time learning is becoming more and more prevalent. The amount of adult learners returning to school is growing, especially as more and more people are being laid off and need to gain new job skills or upgrade their existing ones. The time and money it takes to keep up with your skills or earn new ones can tax an already tight family budget. Following are a few ways that may help you cut back on the overall costs.

Professional development and continuing education courses can be considered non-credit, meaning they do not apply towards an academic degree. They may, however, provide appropriate continuing professional education units (CPE's/CEU's) required for you to get a raise, a pay upgrade or better positioning for an open position.

Some options available to you as an adult learner at a few schools in our area include:

- A program that will assess your prior learning and give you life/work credit in a 16 month accelerated adult degree program.
- Another option includes 8 week courses that are half the length of time as the traditional learning counterparts. If a student takes two courses per eight week session they would qualify for financial aid that is granted to full-time students.
- Credential programs at another school such as a Facility Management Credential. The programs are designed to help you stay abreast of emerging topics in certain selected fields, earn CEU's, and implement the information immediately.
- A "Fast Track" allowing students to complete their associate's degree in one-half of the standard time. Students have the option to complete the majority of transfer degree course requirements within a one-year time frame through intensive daytime courses
- Or another school offers two areas of study that allows you to finish a two year degree in 14 months.

Historically, as unemployment levels rise, so do enrollment levels in skill training and educational institutions. If you wish to improve your ability to compete in the ever tightening job market, investigate the training options that will save you time and money, especially in the high-growth areas of healthcare, manufacturing and logistics. You can't afford to let an advanced level of education slip away. The 2006 US Census reported that an employee with a bachelor's degree earns about \$13,000 more each year than someone with only some college or an associate's degree. Add a graduate degree and the difference is nearly \$30,000 a year.

Getting a degree can change your life, but it comes with a big price tag. Government benefits programs include grants, loans, scholarships and Federal Work-Study programs through the U.S. Department of Education and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Look into credit-by-exam tests or CLEP tests. By passing these examinations you can earn one-third or more of the credits you need for a college degree.

Were you in the military? The GI Bill is an education benefit earned by Active Duty, Selected Reserve and National Guard service members. The benefit is designed to help service members and eligible veterans

cover the costs associated with getting an education or training. Additionally, the Armed Forces offers soldiers, sailors, marines, guardsman, and airmen several programs to support their education goals including up to 100% Tuition Assistance for college courses taken during off-duty hours. Some schools even award credit for military experience.

How we can help – We can help determine if you are currently “underemployed”. This may help you qualify for funds under the Workforce Investment Act. Are you currently unemployed? You may be eligible for skill upgrades. The Employment and Training Representatives at [Kane County Department of Employment and Education](#) can help you assess your needs and point you in the right direction to the training you may need. Visit www.illinoisworknet.com and click on the EDUCATION link to find additional tips while you explore new job opportunities. Whether you're planning to change jobs, or trying to work your way up the ladder in your current occupation, there are lots of options for improving your education.

Four Offices to serve you:

Elgin – 30 DuPage Court	847-888-7900 x 230
N. Aurora – 2 Smoketree Plaza	630-844-6640 x 203
DeKalb – 1701 E. Lincoln Hwy.	815-756-4893 x 240
Yorkville – 811 W. John St.	630-553-8304

www.kcdee.org

