Consider the Possibilities at Wisconsin Indianhead Technical College

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Abstract

Life doesn’t always go as planned. This paper uses personal experience, data from a financial aid advisor, and information from various colleges and universities to examine how getting an education can turn a life challenge into a victory. It identifies four attributes of enrollment at Wisconsin Indianhead Technical College: accessibility, affordability, individualism, and future prospects.
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Two years ago, life as I knew it was turned upside down when I was served with divorce papers. I had been a farm wife and stay-at-home mom. Suddenly, I was forced to move out of my comfort zone, the home I’d lived in for 30 years. I had depended on my husband for everything. I had never paid a bill or even really had a clue what the bills on the farm were. I moved into a little apartment in town. My youngest son had just left for college in Madison, and there I was alone, in a new place, and out of my routine. I was ready to give up on life.

The first day I walked through the front doors I knew at that moment that I had made the right choice. I thought about going back to school many times but kept recalling that voice of 30 years saying; “I was not good enough or smart enough, I’d never make it in college.” I believed that! A friend of mine who works at Wisconsin Indianhead Technical College (WITC) kept trying to persuade me to go back to school. I didn’t believe I could do it, but her encouragement finally paid off. Going back to school sure wasn’t easy, but it was so well worth it. I now have self-confidence and I believe in myself for the first time in my life. Reflecting on my success at WITC, four attributes pushed me forward: accessibility, affordability, individualism, and prospects for the future. I encourage you, the same way that my friend encouraged me, to explore enrollment at WITC and to invest in yourself.

Accessibility

Students who work full time, are stay-at-home parents, or who don’t have transportation can still enroll at WITC because of its accessibility. They can take classes in several different ways. First, there are the traditional on-campus classes that meet face-to-face on Monday through Friday during the day and on certain evenings. Another option is My Choice, which allows them to come to class if you’re able to do so, or you can stay home in your jammies all day and join in via BlueJeans. BlueJeans allows you to interact with the class on your computer.
With BlueJeans, the teacher is in a central location recording a lecture that you can watch at your convenience. Many students enroll in online classes, which you take on a computer from home, a library, or anywhere with Internet access. You can work at a speed you are comfortable with, or you can follow the class assignment schedule. I started with online classes, and I liked learning that way. There are ITV classes as well. They link four WITC campuses and two WITC outreach centers through a high-definition video conferencing connection. Teachers and students are together at the same time, interacting by using cameras and push-to-talk microphones.

**Affordability**

Tuition for students at WITC is affordable. Tuition costs at WITC are about half the cost of a four-year university. The average tuition cost for two full-time semesters at WITC is $4,440 (Pich, 2019), while UW-Eau Claire is $8,900 (University Wisconsin-Eau Claire, 2019). Financial aid is available to about 75 percent of WITC students. Financial aid could include grants, which students do not have to pay back. Loans which must be paid back, but sometimes loans are interest-free until you graduate. A federal work-study program allows you to work for the college while you are in school. Scholarships are available to students of all income and academic achievement levels. They do not have to be paid back. WITC in 2018 awarded more than $250,000 in scholarships (Wisconsin Indianhead Technical College, 2019).

**Individualism**

From the time you apply for admission right through graduation day, WITC staff treat every student as an individual. No two people learn the same. They take each student’s specific situation into consideration and provide that student with the tailored support that is needed for and works best for them.

WITC offers open admissions. Students with high school credentials can enroll. Many other colleges and universities require students to score at a specific level on admission tests.
Classes at WITC are much smaller than at a university, so instructors take the time to help you with whatever you may be struggling with, whether it is math, English, or a certain assignment. The student-teacher ratio is 10 to 1 (Wisconsin Indianhead Technical College, 2019). The teachers care about the success of every student, and that comes through in every single one of their personalities. You can go to the Learning Commons (LRC, which includes the LRC, Academic Support Center, and Educational Technology Center), and there will always be a teacher, a counselor, a tutor, or even a student there willing to lend you a helping hand. You have to learn to ask for help though. No one knows you are struggling if you don’t say something. I learned that early on. It was either ask for help right away or start to fall behind and take the chance of failing the class.

Last semester I was failing in math. I asked my teacher whether I would pass. He told me I was right on the edge of passing or failing. When I asked what I could do for extra credit, he asked me whether I’d been working with a math tutor. I’d seen the flyers about tutors, but I was either in class or at work when a tutor was available. My math teacher took me to the LRC and introduced me to the math tutor. The tutor and I figured out times that worked for both of us, and he spent hours with me outside of his regularly scheduled times. He was right by my side until the day I found out that I had passed the class. Where else can you find that kind of dedication and one-on-one instruction? You are not just a number at WITC. Your teachers and counselors all know you by name. I will never forget the first time I ran into one of the Academic Support Center Staff members at Wal-Mart. It was right after I started school, and I wasn’t sure whether I should greet her. I decided not to. A minute later she spotted me and went out of her way to come over to say hi. She even called me by name. This also happened in Eau Claire one day. I ran into the same Academic Support Coach, she came over, and we chatted. I was awestruck!
had a friend with me and she asked, “Who was that?” When I told her, she couldn’t believe that even the academic support staff knew my name. The teachers want you to succeed just as much as you want to succeed.

**Future Prospects**

The Wisconsin Technical College promises “Your Future Starts Here” (Wisconsin Technical College System, 2019). The percentage of WITC graduates who are employed within six months after graduation is 93 percent (Wisconsin Indianhead Technical College, 2019). Their average annual starting salary is about $37,818, and 54 percent report a salary increase within five years (Wisconsin Indianhead Technical College, 2019).

Students also have the option of continuing to study after completing a program at WITC. They can enroll in another WITC program or transfer your WITC credits to a four-year university. All 16 of the Wisconsin technical colleges have agreements with four-year universities and colleges. Admissions advisors are on hand to help students know which credits will transfer.

I have chosen the path to start searching for a job. From the accessibility along with the individualism that I have accomplished at WITC, I was able to do it all at an affordable rate. I will be using the creativity that I have developed to do a resume and cover letter. My prospects for the future are to get a job in the Health Office Professional field. I’m eager to get a job to put everything I’ve learned to use. I will be graduating this coming May. Make it happen, I did!
References


