

Only the news you need, when you have time to read
news sports business entertainment style

metro 57 editions worldwide



boston.com News

your connection to The B

Home **News** A&E Business Sports Travel Your Life Cars Jobs Personals Real Estate

Sign In |

Today's Globe Opinion Magazine **Education** Science NECN Special reports Obituaries

Continuing Education



THE KNOWLEDGE CONNECTION

▶ Click here for a full directory of schools detailed in this section

> RETURN TO THE FULL LIST OF STORIES

Learning Improves with Age The upside of college as an adult

Susan M. Ifill was 34 when she went back to school. She already had an undergraduate degree in biology, earned at UMass-Dartmouth, but her career had taken her in a different direction. After a decade in positions at Bank of America, she enrolled at Cambridge College, where she earned a master's in management and certification in negotiation and conflict resolution. Today, Ifill is senior vice president at Bank of America, where she is market manager for premier banking and investments.

"Cambridge College's program is designed for working adults," says Ifill. "Faculty recognize work commitments and personal schedules. There was zero difficulty making the courses fit into my life.



CHOOSE A FAMILY FRIENDLY COLLEGE

New England's working parents have many options when it comes to family friendly colleges. Competitive schools realize they need to cater to busy adults. UMass-Boston is one school that understands flexibility is crucial for students with work and family commitments. "As a critical ingredient to success, lifelong learning requires juggling work, school, and family," says Dirk Messelaar, dean of UMass-Boston's division of Corporate, Continuing, and Distance Education (CCDE). "We created CCDE six years ago to provide creative, alternative delivery models to help make the 'juggling' easier."

Serving 18,000 students a year, CCDE offers 200 courses, which students can choose to take online, on campus, or at one of 13 off-campus locations, Friday evenings or Saturdays, during the academic year or at summer school.

The best thing about [graduate school] was having lots of time pressure that gave me the gift of flawless execution within tight time frames. The difficulty was simply a lack of sleep."

Not many of us know what we want to be when we're 17. It often takes years of work experience, and maturity, to find a career we enjoy. In fact, adults today, on average, change careers three times during their lifetime. As a result, students over the age of 21 tend to be highly motivated and focused. Ifill was already well versed in financial services but had observed that while the most technically sound, or highest achieving, individuals were promoted to management, they didn't always make the best managers. A master's degree in management would prepare her better for the future.

Struggling novelists study creative writing to become published authors. Professionals take business courses to leave large firms and become their own bosses. Sales executives learn Spanish to keep up with changes in the marketplace. The reasons adults return to school are as varied as the courses offered.

"The experience of being a working adult acts as an anchor for new learning," says Mahesh Sharma, president of Cambridge College, where the average age of undergraduates is 35, for graduate students it's 39. "It provides a way to receive and conceptualize the information. Working professionals bring to class a host of questions that arise in their own workdays. They can use the information right away, applying it in professional, personal, family, and community settings, which means they feel empowered. It makes them better students."

Mark Sciegaj, Lasell College's director of graduate programs, agrees: "It is these life experiences that give the students a richness that enhances their contributions to the learning process." The majority of graduate students at Newton-based Lasell are mid-career, says Sciegaj, many of them drawn to the college's master's degrees in elder care management and elder care marketing.

Undergraduates in their 20s and beyond often enroll despite many hurdles, adds Sharma. "They may have placed limitations on themselves based on past experience or their station in life. They are still asking, 'Is higher education for me? Am I worth it? How will I manage to fit academics in with the rest of my life?'" Academic and financial aid counselors are available to help.

Catherine Leahy Brine Educational Consultants offers a variety of educational advancement programs for educators, including Department of Education-approved professional licensure programs in early childhood, elementary education, and 11 secondary education content areas. Students' ages range from the mid-20s to mid-50s.

"Our underlying philosophy is that we all learn from each other, instructors and students, experienced and new, engaged together as members of a true learning community," says President Catherine Leahy Brine. "Our faculty members are all currently or recently employed as school practitioners. Their work experience is therefore authentic. This strikes a chord with our students."

Authentic experience that's immediately applicable: If that strikes a chord with you, don't let your age keep you from going back to school.

**Manager
Planning**

Boston, M.
AccountSc

**Printing ;
Professio**
Boston, M.
Allied Prin
Inc

Warehou
Woburn, M
Business I

BMW Ser
Shrewsbu
Wagner Bl
Shrewsbu

**Manager
Accountin
Reportin**
Boston, M.
The Bosto

[See all Top](#)

SPONSORED LINKS



[Graduate and Professional Programs](#)



[What are you doing tonight?](#)



[Free Project Management Seminar](#)

[feedback form](#) | [help](#) | [site index](#) | [globe archives](#) | [rss](#)

© 20 The New York Times Company