



# UW flexible option

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN SYSTEM

[flex.wisconsin.edu](http://flex.wisconsin.edu)

# WELCOME TO The University of Wisconsin **FLEXIBLE OPTION**

The University of Wisconsin Flexible Option, launched in January 2014, focuses on the mastery of knowledge and skills, rather than time spent in class. Students progress toward their degrees by completing assessments designed to demonstrate mastery of skills, abilities, and knowledge.

UW Flexible Option builds on the UW System's reputation for quality and innovation, its foundation in the Wisconsin Idea, and its ongoing commitment to provide affordable and accessible education to more Wisconsin residents.

Our model involves close collaboration between UW-Extension and the System's degree-granting institutions. UW faculty work collaboratively to determine the structure of the curriculum as a whole, the levels of competencies, and the assessments that best measure mastery. Continuing Education, Outreach and E-Learning in UW-Extension provides the administrative and operational support for each academic program.

Today's students have a variety of responsibilities—they have families, they care for aging parents, and they work. Therefore, they need highly personalized coaching, mentoring, and other supports tailored to their individual needs and learning goals. Our academic success coaches work with students to create a learning plan and timeline customized to fit students' goals and existing knowledge.

UW Flexible Option draws upon the expertise of the University of Wisconsin faculty to offer a personalized, convenient, and affordable way for working adults and other nontraditional students to earn University of Wisconsin degrees or certificates.

## UW FLEXIBLE OPTION Academic Programs

### DEGREE PROGRAMS

Associate of Arts and Science (UW Colleges)

Bachelor of Science in Nursing, RN to BSN completion (UW-Milwaukee)

Bachelor of Science in Biomedical Sciences Diagnostic Imaging degree completion (UW-Milwaukee)

Bachelor of Science in Information Science and Technology (UW-Milwaukee)

### CERTIFICATE PROGRAMS

Business and Technical Communications (UW-Milwaukee)

Global Skills (UW-Parkside)

Sales (UW-Parkside)

### PROGRAMS CURRENTLY IN DEVELOPMENT

Master of Science in Geodesign and Geographic Information Systems (GIS) Technologies (UW-Stevens Point)

Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse (AODA) Counselor Certificate program (UW-Madison)

# The UW Flexible Option Works for Wisconsin

## FULFILLING THE NEED FOR RESIDENTS WITH BACHELOR'S DEGREES

**1 in 5** Working-Age Adult Wisconsin Residents



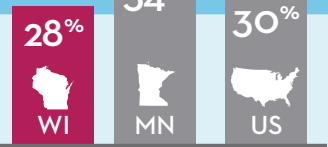
HAS SOME HIGHER EDUCATION CREDITS BUT NO DEGREE

More Than **80%** of Wisconsin Residents



WHO ATTEND A UW INSTITUTION REMAIN IN WISCONSIN AFTER THEY GRADUATE

Wisconsin Trails the United States & Minnesota in Citizens Holding Bachelor's Degrees or Higher



*Individuals 25 years and older (U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2011)  
UW System Accountability Report 2013-2014  
American Community Survey 2013, 1-year estimate*

### The UW Flexible Option allows students to earn a degree while:



Earning credit for what they know (no matter where they learned it)



Advancing at their own pace



Starting and stopping their studies when they want



Assessing their knowledge when they are ready



Graduating with the skills employers value

# UW Flexible Option

## STUDENTS REACHING FOR SUCCESS

UW Flexible Option students have different needs and goals, and many choose the Flexible Option over other online programs because of its:

**Flexibility**—being able to sign up, start classes, and learn on each students' own schedule

**Affordability**—different “pay-as-you-go” options let students choose the best fit for their lives—and their wallets

**Student Support**—knowing that a UW Flexible Option academic success coach is always available to answer questions, troubleshoot issues, and encourage students.

Learn more about three UW Flexible Option students and how they are meeting their educational goals through this innovative, competency-based model.

## BUSY NURSE CHOOSES THE TRULY “FLEXIBLE” OPTION



Carla Lundeen had the drive to go back to school. She just needed to find a program with enough flexibility for her hectic life. She found it in the UW Flexible Option Nursing (RN to BSN) program.

“When you’re working full time and have a family, life is busy and unpredictable,” Lundeen says.

“Flex gives me the ability to get home from work, and get the family settled. Then I can focus on my school. I appreciate having the independence to create the structure that I need in order to be successful in my courses.”

Through her competency-based RN to BSN program, Lundeen says she’s improved her skills and knowledge in just a short time. She credits a structure that allows her to test her current knowledge to determine what else she needs to learn.

“One of the great things when you earn your nursing degree is that you acquire great clinical abstract knowledge, and the practical application pieces come from experience,” Lundeen says. “I’ve gained a lot of knowledge on the job. That’s valuable because Flex lets me earn credit for what I

know. It doesn't matter where, when, or how I learned it. As long as I can prove it and use it to complete the assessments, I can use it to move ahead."



## UW FLEXIBLE OPTION DELIVERS RETURN ON INVESTMENT FOR STUDENT



Hard work and commitment are two qualities that have served Craig Kilgo well as he completes his Information Science and Technology degree through the UW Flexible Option.

Craig started his educational journey at Cornell University, but the high cost of an Ivy League education soon took a

toll. He took a job as a student assistant in a Cornell-run research institute to help with expenses, and, "as time went on, I found myself transitioning from being a student worker to a full-time Cornell employee," Kilgo says. "Things were going well, so I didn't think too much about the fact that I hadn't completed my college degree."

Years later, even with a successful career analyzing healthcare data and managing healthcare applications in the military health system, and serving as a project controller for the Department of Defense, Kilgo found himself considering the importance of earning his degree.

"In the back of my mind, I had thought about going back to school to finish my degree, but I never found the right program. I didn't have time to attend classes in person and honestly, I didn't want to pay for the 'extras' I didn't need—such as dorms and campus fees. Flex is one option that helps make a degree affordable, especially if you go with the 'all-you-can-learn' model. The more you work, the more you get. You're paying for what you need, nothing more."

As Kilgo continues to work toward his degree, he says he's excited about the challenges of each new competency and the knowledge he will acquire. He says he is even more eager to see the rewards that will come when he graduates.

"I'm hoping this degree will help me get the positions that I know I'm qualified to do, but have been held back from because of my lack of a degree."



## FROM ONE DRIVER'S SEAT TO ANOTHER WITH HELP ALONG THE WAY



Norman Ramdohr likes to be in the driver's seat of his future. After years of fine-tuning vehicles for others, this Audi technician decided to make a change and put his skills to use at a more advanced level. Now, he's using the UW Flexible Option to jump-start the future he wants by earning his associate degree.

"I've been waiting for this opportunity. Education has been going online for a while, but I've been waiting for the bigger schools to put the right program and format online," Ramdohr says. "Flex fits what I need right now."

The married father of two says flexibility, affordability, and control over his academic schedule all played key roles in his decision to pursue his degree through Flex.

"It's nice to be able to carve out two hours of study time whenever I want, instead of having to attend a webinar in the middle of the day. With the Flexible Option, I can find the pockets of time that are convenient for me. This allows me to be really efficient at work, and really efficient in my studies. Most importantly, I don't have to miss any of the kids' soccer games, and you can't put a price on that."

And while Ramdohr is independent and enjoys the ability to set his own study schedule, having the support of an academic success coach is a benefit he hadn't anticipated.

"I love having the coaches as a reference. I feel like that's support I might not receive in a traditional setting," Ramdohr says. "Having someone that I can contact at any time makes a huge difference. The dedication of everyone, from the coaches to the staff, to faculty, is amazing. It means a lot to students."

"I have more to give," Ramdohr says. "So often these days, you really need to have something to show as far as a degree is concerned. It's not just enough to have skills."

Ramdohr says he hopes his associate degree through Flex will help him transfer into another UW program eventually. He is considering engineering, architecture, or even anthropology. But no matter which path he chooses, he is confident he is building the foundation through Flex to open doors both professionally and personally.

"This is about creating a path for some new options. It's about learning new skills and expanding my current ones," Ramdohr says. "It brings me closer to choosing a new field that I can specialize in through a four-year degree down the road. I'm committed to this program."

"Going back to school was about combining my love of learning and wanting to do more with my abilities."





# UW Flexible Option

## INSPIRING CURIOSITY AND IMAGINATION

The UW Flexible Option is in demand from Wisconsin companies like Aurora Health Care in Milwaukee.

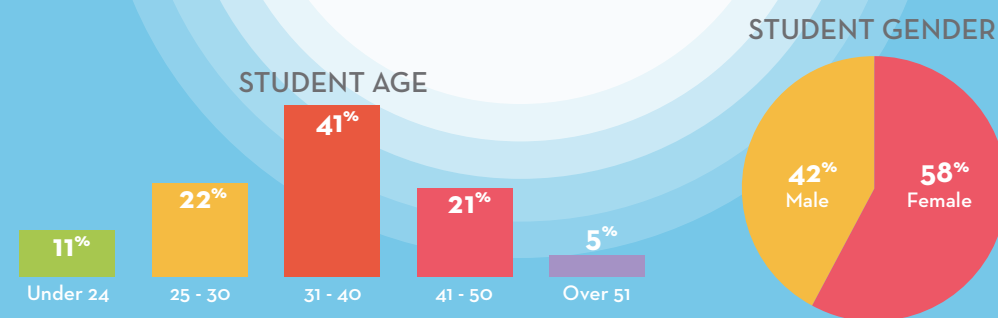
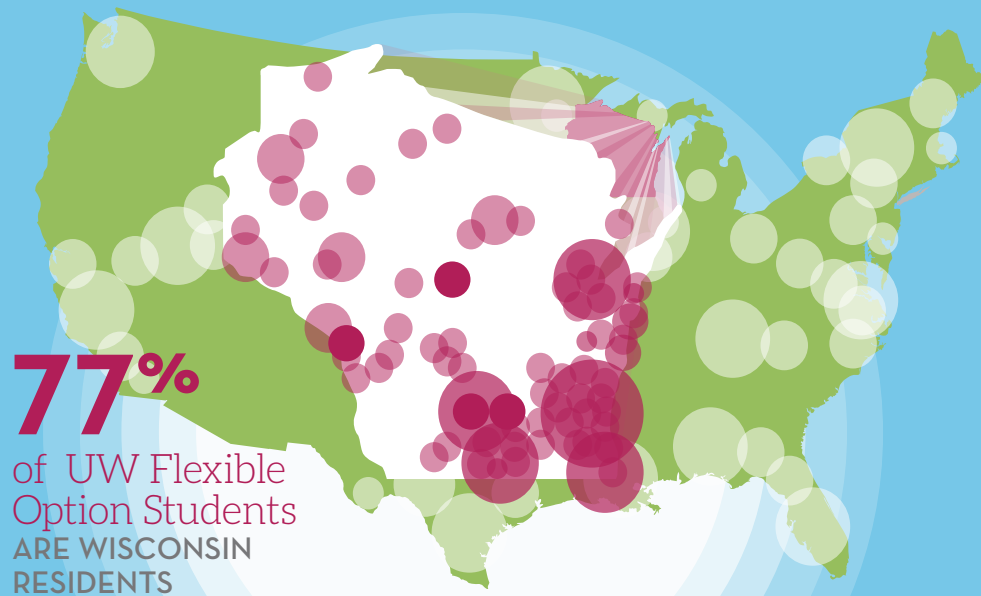
Aurora encourages everyone on its nursing staff without a BSN to go back to school, citing research that clearly demonstrates better patient outcomes when staff members hold bachelor's degrees. UW Flexible Option makes it possible for nurses to earn their BSN on their own time and with their own nursing knowledge and skills, without attending brick-and-mortar classes.

To Mary Beth Kingston, executive vice president and chief nursing officer at Aurora, there are other benefits.

"The other thing that I think is great about the (UW Flexible Option) program from an employer's viewpoint is that, when we have people who go back to school, they bring a vibrancy to the workplace, and that's an intangible that's very real," said Kingston. "So you have individuals who are learning things in school that have now sparked their curiosity and imagination, and they bring that back to the work setting."



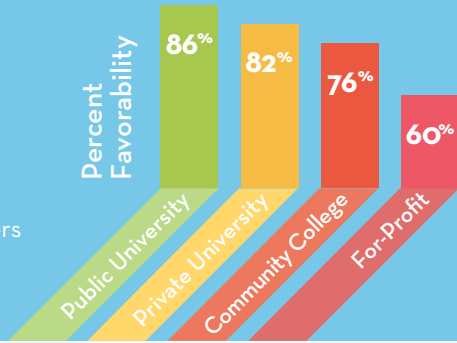
## The UW Flexible Option Is Serving NONTRADITIONAL STUDENTS



# Hiring Managers PREFER PUBLIC UNIVERSITY DEGREES

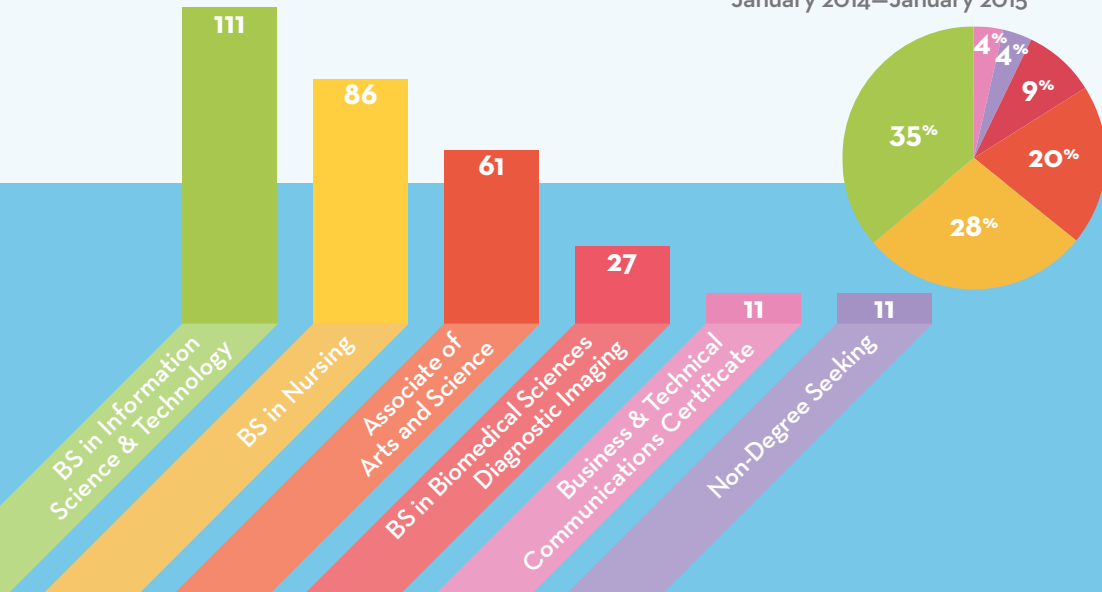
When asked which of the four major higher education options they prefer, hiring managers ranked public universities highest.

*Brand Perceptions in Higher Education, ipsos OTX, commissioned by Google, Fall 2011*



# We anticipated 150 students in the first year, but MORE THAN **300** STUDENTS ENROLLED

January 2014—January 2015



# Competency-Based Online Education FOR WISCONSIN



Continuing Education, Outreach & E-Learning

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