

# 2018 – 2019

## Annual Report



**UW flexible option**  
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN SYSTEM

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



The UW Flexible Option launched in 2014 as a pioneer in online competency-based higher education. Five years later, it remains as one of the largest competency-based education enterprises at a public, statewide university system.

The nine degrees and certificates that make up the UW Flexible Option are collaborations between UW Extended Campus, UW-Milwaukee, UW-Parkside, and UW-Madison. These programs are innovative avenues for adult learners to leverage their knowledge and experience to earn accredited University of Wisconsin degrees or certificates—all on their own schedule.

Well over 500 students have already graduated from a UW Flexible Option program since its inception. These are students who regularly tell us they would not have been able to achieve their degree or certificate if it weren't for this program.

This is the annual report for the 2018-2019 fiscal year. Throughout this report, you will find that the focus is on the stories of our students. These success stories are what power the UW Flexible Option, and the ones presented here are just a fraction of the nearly 1,000 unique students who enrolled in the UW Flexible Option throughout the 2018-2019 fiscal year.

These students are predominantly adult learners—the median age is 34—and the vast majority are balancing work, school, and family commitments. The UW Flexible Option is designed to allow these students to fit school into their life, rather than having to fit their life around school, making it a point of access for university credentials that most of these students would not have had otherwise.

I am proud of the accomplishments of this program and its students in the past year. The UW Flexible Option was a bold rethinking of higher education with its launch five years ago. Now, as it prepares to enter its next five years, I eagerly look forward to the exciting ways this program will continue to grow, serve its students, and be a national leader in competency-based education excellence.



Aaron Brower, Ph.D.

Executive Director of UW Extended Campus, &  
Senior Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs at UW System Administration



# Here's what makes UW Flexible Option programs unique and advantageous for you:

- » **Start when you want, at the beginning of any month.** You enroll for three-month subscription periods—the periods of time during which you're able to access learning materials, complete assessments, and receive academic support. Your progress is not limited by a traditional semester or term-based schedule, and you can take breaks in between subscription periods if and when you need to. If you have a vacation planned or know that a particular month is a busy time at work, you'll be able to take a break and jump right back into your program the next month.
- » **Tap into existing knowledge to save time and money.** You may draw upon knowledge you've previously gained through work experience or coursework to complete assessments and progress toward your degree or certificate more quickly.
- » **Enjoy flat-rate tuition.** Rather than being charged per credit, students pay a flat rate for one of two subscription period options. If you're highly motivated with lots of experience, consider an All-You-Can-Learn subscription to master as much material as you can in three months. Want to study at a slower pace? Try a Single Competency Set subscription. Please note, the Single Competency Set option is not available for all programs. Many of our programs are eligible to distribute Federal Financial Aid, and many students are able to use tuition reimbursement from their employers.
- » **Advance at your own pace.** Progress toward your degree or certificate is based on assessments of key competencies determined by UW System faculty, not seat time in a classroom. Take assessments whenever you are ready during your three-month subscription period. Pass one and move on to the next. No more waiting for professors to move through a syllabus schedule or sitting through lectures on material you already know.
- » **Receive personalized support.** A dedicated Academic Success Coach will work with you to create your learning plan and a timeline tailored to fit your goals, knowledge, and past experience.
- » **Learn skills employers value.** As each program is developed, distinguished UW System faculty draw upon the latest business and industry standards to identify the essential competencies required for graduation or program completion. This ensures that UW Flexible Option students are equipped with the knowledge and skills employers need.
- » **Earn a genuine University of Wisconsin credential.** The UW System is one of the largest, and most widely respected, public higher education institutions in the country. UW Flexible Option programs are created by the same faculty using the same rigorous standards as traditional UW programs. That means you'll earn the same high-quality, accredited degree or certificate as students who attend class on campus. These are degrees and certificates that employers will recognize and respect.

# Bachelor of Science in Nursing (RN to BSN)



The UW Flexible Option Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) program is a convenient option for RN licensed nurses to earn their bachelor's degree. Offered through the UW-Milwaukee College of Nursing—a nursing college in the top 15% of the nation—this program helps nurses build on their work experience and their associates degree to more quickly earn their BSN. Students master a range of competencies that are in demand from hospitals and clinics, such as evidence-based practice, community health nursing, and chronic care management.

This year, the UW Flexible Option BSN program hit a major milestone: it now has over 100 graduates. With a strong retention rate of 84% and nearly 400 students this year, this program has a noticeable impact on the nursing industry in Wisconsin and is helping students meet workforce needs. A new competency set, Palliative Care, was also developed this past year as part of continual revision efforts to keep the program up to date with industry needs. While this program has historically only been able to admit students from Wisconsin and, more recently, Illinois, the BSN program can now begin admitting students from Indiana, Iowa, and nearly any state beyond.



**389**  
Students Enrolled  
in FY19



**84%**  
Retention



**113**  
Graduates



# Assistant Head Nurse Advances Her Career and ICU Through UW Flexible Option

With over 15 years of experience as a staff nurse, along with recently earning her Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN), one thing might surprise you about Tiffany Breeze – she dropped out of high school.

“When you’re younger and you think about what you’re going to do with your life, you don’t really expect to know how your future is going to pan out,” Tiffany said.

In her eyes, Tiffany’s career journey is a convoluted tale. Frustrated with 70-hour work weeks at three different jobs, Tiffany was dissatisfied with her future outlook and knew she needed to change her path. At 18, Tiffany completed her high school equivalency diploma. Then, at 21 she pursued an associate’s degree in nursing at Wisconsin Indianhead Technical College (WITC). Having always been drawn to science and looking for a career that would both challenge and motivate her, Tiffany saw nursing as a new and proactive role in which to apply herself. Admittedly, Tiffany knew very little about what she was getting into – no one in her family had obtained a medical science profession degree before – but she was determined to at least try.

Three years later, Tiffany graduated from WITC with an associate’s degree and passed the NCLEX exam. As a new registered nurse, Tiffany felt like she had made it. Next, she worked her way from registered nurse to assistant head nurse of the surgical intensive care unit (ICU) at Essentia Health in Duluth, MN. There, she influences decisions regarding unit improvements, speaks to the work of the nursing staff, and advocates for advancements in bedside care. However, once again, Tiffany knew she wanted to do more, and the next logical step was to obtain her BSN and reach her full potential as a nurse.

Lisa Mihlbauer, a clinical associate professor and the director of RN-to-BSN completion programs at UW-Milwaukee College of Nursing has taught many students during more than 35 years at the university. When Tiffany was in her genetics and capstone competency sets, however, her work instantly stood out to Professor Mihlbauer.

“I had never seen assessments so well done,” Professor Mihlbauer recalled. “I was shocked at her level of proficiency, so much so that when I first read her submission I reached out to Tiffany’s academic success coach right away and asked if she had a previous baccalaureate degree, because she appeared to be almost an expert writer on the subject.”

Tiffany attributes her success in the UW Flexible Option RN to BSN online degree program to her work experience as an ICU nurse.

“The program gave me a basis for what elements really make an impact on patient outcomes, because I was directly seeing them in my work,” Tiffany said. “As an assistant head nurse, I knew I wanted to focus my attention on developing a unit that spoke to the practice and the work that our nurses do every single day.”

For her capstone project, Tiffany drew on everything she learned in the online BSN program, and yielded positive results for the ICU at Essentia Health. Her team was dealing with a significant level of clostridium difficile (C.diff) bacteria infections among patients who were experiencing diarrhea, abdominal cramping, dehydration, and in more serious cases, inflammation of the colon. Tiffany saw her capstone project as an opportunity to contribute to her current patients’ health and decided to focus her capstone on decreasing the infection prevalence in her unit.

Tiffany and the nursing staff’s main goal was focused on bedside nursing interventions that would lead to a significant risk reduction for their high-risk patient population, such as proper patient placement, preemptive isolation criteria, infection prevention education on the correct donning and doffing of personal protective equipment, standardized stocking processes to reduce cross contamination, effective hand washing, and more.

Tiffany presented her research-based project findings to the management teams at Essentia Health’s ICU. Managers implemented many of Tiffany’s recommendations.

“At the end of the day, we wound up with an 86 percent reduction in our C.diff infection rate, which is well beyond what’s expected in literature and other research,” Tiffany said. “The majority of the interventions that led to this success were nursing driven, because we were able to find the knowledge gaps that our nursing staff had. The project was a great indication of what you can accomplish when you apply the core concepts of your education.”

News of Tiffany and the nursing staff’s C.diff infection reduction success circulated, and they were recognized by Essentia Health’s CEO. Their work was also forwarded systemwide to improve other departments.

“If what we found has greatly impacted the care of the nurses we have – it’s exciting to think about how this positive outcome can help even larger populations,” Tiffany said.



**2014**  
Program  
launch date



**89%/11%**  
Ratio of female  
to male students



**34**  
Median age



## Bachelor of Science in Biomedical Sciences: Diagnostic Imaging



## Bachelor of Science in Biomedical Sciences: Health Sciences

The UW Flexible Option Bachelor of Science in Biomedical Sciences: Diagnostic Imaging, offered by UW-Milwaukee College of Health Sciences, is a degree completion program for medical imaging professionals. Building off of an active registry in the field, this degree prepares sonographers, radiologists, MRI technicians, and other imaging professionals to take their career to the next level. In the curriculum, students study a range of skills—such as healthcare leadership, client diversity, and human pathophysiology—which ensures students are staying on top of the in-demand skills that employers are looking for out of its future leaders. The UW Flexible Option Diagnostic Imaging program had over 100 unique students enrolled throughout this past year.

The UW Flexible Option partners with the UW-Milwaukee College of Health Sciences on a second degree completion program, a Bachelor of Science in Biomedical Sciences: Health Sciences. Students with an associates degree in any field are awarded a minimum of 60 credits toward this degree. This program is ideal for students who are looking to advance their career in a diverse range of opportunities including work in both clinical and non-clinical settings such as hospitals, general care facilities, public and private agencies, nonprofits, and other health-related organizations. This program can also provide the foundation required for entering into advanced degree programs such as physical or occupational therapy, physician's assistant, and more. The Health Sciences degree is one of the newest UW Flexible Option degrees, having launched in 2018, and is currently pursuing approval to offer federal financial aid.



**118**  
Students Enrolled  
in FY19



**64%**  
Retention



**35**  
Graduates



# Bachelor's Degree in Diagnostic Imaging Opens Doors for College Instructor

Krysti Reece is passionate about the medical imaging field.

"There's always a lot of change going on, advances in technology, and a greater role for me to play in my patient's diagnosis," she says. "There's never a dull moment. I love what I do."

Krysti has two jobs as a working sonographer and diagnostic medical sonography instructor at a local community college. With all her training and nearly a decade of work experience, Krysti is still missing the one credential she needs to achieve her career goals.

"I'm interested in advancing my role at the community college. But you definitely can't do that in higher education without at least a bachelor's degree."

That's why she's completing her Bachelor of Science in Biomedical Sciences: Diagnostic Imaging through the UW Flexible Option. Students with an active registry are awarded credits toward their bachelor's degree. This includes the following active registries:

- » ARDMS (American Registry for Diagnostic Medical Sonography)
- » ARMRT (American Registry of Magnetic Resonance Imaging Technologists)
- » ARRT (American Registry of Radiologic Technologists)
- » CCI (Cardiovascular Credentialing International) registry

"With my switch to a more active role in education and the encouragement from the college to complete my degree, I knew now was the best time to get started. My colleagues and my family—I have a husband and two kids—are all very supportive and encouraging," says Krysti.

For Krysti, returning to school was a matter of finding the right fit.

"With two jobs and two kids, plus the occasional 70-hour work week, getting to campus and sitting in a classroom just wasn't going to happen."

UW Flexible Option puts adult students in control of their schedules. Students enroll in three-month subscription periods and complete the work at their own pace.

"The best part about UW Flexible Option is the ability to do my homework on my own schedule. I budget my time however I need, plan around my work schedule, and I can take a break if necessary."

Krysti is applying the knowledge gained in her degree program to both of her positions, transforming what she's learning into new insights on improved patient care.

"Even though I'm with my patients for only a short time, I'm making great strides in their diagnosis. Through my coursework, I'm learning how interrelated communication is to healthcare and how to improve my communication skills. I'm also being introduced to broader healthcare concepts such as ethical issues in patient care and how to think more critically about every patient and provider interaction."

Krysti shares her enthusiasm for learning with her students at Triton College, where she is a full-time instructor and clinical coordinator in the Diagnostic Medical Sonography department.

"Medical imaging is an in-demand field," says Krysti. "Most of my associate degree students have jobs lined up or are actively interviewing prior to graduation."

What's next for Krysti? After graduating in 2018, she hopes to further her career in higher education, and continue on for her master's degree. She foresees enormous advances in the imaging field, with technology continuing to evolve and the opportunity for technologists to have an unprecedented impact on healthcare.

"The future of diagnostic imaging is wide open. For ultrasound specifically, the new imaging techniques and the number of specializations is constantly growing. Every day, there is more to learn," Krysti shares.

Her advice for prospective students?

"I recommend UW Flexible Option for anyone who is pursuing a management or educator role. It's affordable, provides a good value, and it truly is flexible."



**2014** Diagnostic Imaging  
**2018** Health Sciences  
Program  
launch dates



**81%/19%**  
Ratio of female  
to male students



**33**  
Median age



# Bachelor of Science in Information Science & Technology



The UW Flexible Option Bachelor of Science in Information Science & Technology (IST) program, offered by UW-Milwaukee's School of Information Studies, prepares students to be IT leaders in this increasingly digital economy. This curriculum emphasizes core IT skills like front-end web design, HCI and database management, information architecture, human-computer interaction, information organization, storage and retrieval, and applications of the Internet. This program is specifically designed for industry professionals with at least one year of IT experience, making it the competency-based environment ideal for these professionals to leverage their experience to more quickly progress toward their degree.

Throughout this year, over 200 UW Flexible Option students enrolled in the IST program, and the program is nearing 100 graduates since its launch. A unique opportunity within this degree program is that students have the option to use some of their elective credits to earn the Business & Technical Communications certificate, also through the UW Flexible Option. This offers an additional competitive advantage to students in the workplace because effective technical communications is a high-demand skillset. Overall, the UW Flexible Option Information Science & Technology is the only IT program of its type in the UW System, and it continues to be a convenient option for adult learners to earn their degree.



**210**  
Students Enrolled  
in FY19



**78%**  
Retention



**98**  
Graduates



# Network Engineer Earns IT Degree by Completing 51 Credits in 9 Months

Tyler Coady earned his Information Science and Technology (IST) bachelor's degree in only nine months. What made the UW Flexible Option so right for him? Here are ways the unique format of UW Flexible Option fit Tyler's life.

For many adult students who are balancing work, family, hobbies, or other priorities, a traditional, face-to-face college experience isn't an option. With UW Flexible Option, the online format meant no commuting to campus and no sitting in class.

Tyler said, "At first, I wasn't sure how I would be able to fit a degree into my life. My wife and I moved every year. But then I did some research and found UW Flexible Option and knew I could finally earn my degree online."

The UW Flexible Option IST degree is offered through the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee School of Information Studies. Tyler transferred into the school with an associate degree from Northeast Wisconsin Technical College and was able to begin any month he chose without waiting for the next semester.

Tyler, who already had seven years of IT work experience, didn't want to spend time or money sitting through lectures on topics he already knew. Through the self-paced, competency-based format of UW Flexible Option, he was able to leverage the knowledge he gained on-the-job to demonstrate mastery of many competencies without having to sit through entire classes or semesters re-learning the material.

UW Flexible Option students sign up for three-month subscription periods and can choose from a single competency set or an "All You Can Learn" option. Tyler chose the "All You Can Learn" option and earned 51 credits in nine months.

The day before Tyler started his courses, he began a new job as a network engineer at Baker Tilly, a top accounting and advisory firm. Since UW Flexible Option was designed for busy, working adults, the new job didn't prevent him from getting started on his degree. In between designing and maintaining the IT infrastructure—servers, switchers, and routers—and planning the data center for a company with 2,700 employees, Tyler fit in his education.

"I cannot think of a better way for someone with a full-time job to complete coursework at their own pace than through UW Flexible Option."

From day one, students are paired with an Academic Success Coach. Tyler's coach was Danielle Stertz.

"None of this would have been possible without the help of my Academic Success Coach, Danielle."

For adult students, returning to college can be intimidating. Your Academic Success Coach is there to help motivate you, help you plan your schedule, offer study tips, navigate the learning system, and more. They'll also periodically check in just to see how you're doing.

"Danielle was excellent at helping me plan my degree. She was always available when I sent her emails and was incredibly helpful in dealing with any issues that came my way."

Tyler graduated from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee School of Information Studies with a Bachelor of Science in Information Science and Technology in July 2017. Earning his degree led Tyler to opportunities to advance his career in information technology at Baker Tilly.

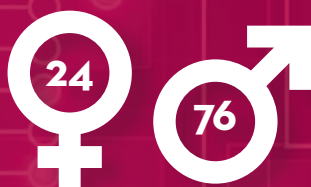
"My bachelor's degree in Information Science and Technology has opened the doors to software and web development projects I would have otherwise not qualified for."

He was able to apply what he was learning right away at work. As a result his growing skills, Tyler was often selected to work on cross-functional projects.

"I'm already looking at master's programs that will help me advance in my career to security engineer. I'm very happy with the UW Flexible Option experience. If UW Flexible Option had a graduate program, I would sign up today!"



**2014**  
Program  
launch date



**24%/76%**  
Ratio of female  
to male students



**36**  
Median age



# Bachelor of Science in Business Administration



The first UW Flexible Option bachelor's degree offered in partnership with UW-Parkside, the Bachelor of Science in Business Administration (BSBA) provides students a well-rounded management education. In this program, students master 20 competency areas that are essential to successful business administration, including business communication, supply chain management, marketing, information systems, and more. Instead of enrolling in traditional classes, students in this program enroll in projects. These projects are designed to mimic actual scenarios that students face in day-to-day environments; For example, to demonstrate marketing skills, students enroll in a project called "Marketing Plan" and will develop a mock marketing plan for a new product— using learning resources curated by faculty—instead of sitting for a traditional exam.

This past year held several milestones for the Business Administration degree. While it originally launched in 2016 as a degree offered by UW-Extension, this program was successfully re-launched in March, 2019, offered by UW-Parkside's College of Business, Economics, and Computing. The UW Flexible Option business administration degree is the first and only degree of its kind in an AACSB-accredited business school, assuring students of its high quality. In addition, the BSBA degree had its first graduate at the end of this year, and was ranked as the third most affordable online bachelor's degree in business in the country.\*



**57**  
Students Enrolled  
in FY19



**65%**  
Retention



**1**  
Graduate



# A Classical Musician Takes Business into Her Own Hands with the UW Flexible Option

What makes a gifted pianist switch careers and become a marketer? We asked concert pianist Qinghua Lao, who is currently completing her Bachelor of Science in Business Administration (BSBA) through the UW Flexible Option, to share her journey from musician to business executive.

Qinghua's passion for piano took her to the Indiana University Jacobs School of Music, where she studied with distinguished professors while earning her Bachelor of Music in Piano Performance. Qinghua discovered that the classical music field is a highly competitive one in a shrinking market. Needing to pay the bills while she pursued her love for music, Qinghua took a job in the Madison, Wisconsin area. There, she got her first taste of marketing while working as a retention specialist at West Corporation, providing business and communications solutions to global companies.

"West serves a lot of Fortune 100 clients, including American Express, so I gained exposure to the financial market," said Qinghua. "The experience opened my eyes to all the possibilities in business! Our team worked closely with the American Express marketing team and that got me interested in marketing strategy."

Soon after she started in a marketing role, Qinghua earned a promotion to a supervisory role. At that time, she knew she needed a stronger foundation in business to grow her career and to help other musicians grow theirs. She realized that professional musicians need more than talent to make it in the music business: they need savvy marketing skills.

Qinghua explored many business degree programs before discovering the UW Flexible Option.

"I considered returning to Indiana University to attend the Kelley School of Business, but the thought of uprooting my family didn't seem like a realistic option. I looked at online options, too, such as the one offered by Penn State's World Campus.

"Then I came across the UW Flexible Option. The competency-based model made the decision an easy one."

The UW Flexible Option Bachelor of Science in Business Administration curriculum is project based. The projects incorporate 20 competency areas integral to business administration practices including economics, IT, communication and supply chain management.

"A lot of the projects are centered around the application of the business knowledge I learned in the textbooks and materials, whereas in a traditional,

on-campus program, students might not get the opportunity to apply what they've learned to a realistic situation."

Qinghua chooses to take five projects per subscription period.

"Yes, I do dedicate a lot of time to my studies. I would say I'm almost a full-time student! I balance my studies with my marketing internship at Engaging Results Communications. It's a 40-hour a week position, but fortunately it's virtual, so I don't have to commute to an office, giving me more time and flexibility."

Qinghua says going back to school takes a lot of dedication, but her previous career helped prepare her for success in her education.

"The work ethic and self-discipline that I've developed through years of studying music have led to my success in the UW Flexible Option. You have to be self-motivated to be sure you read the materials, take initiative to find answers when you're stuck, and keep pace to meet the goals you set for yourself."

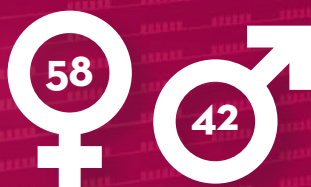
With the UW Flexible Option, Qinghua isn't on her own. An Academic Success Coach (ASC) is available to guide her every step of the way whenever Qinghua wants. Ariel Powers-Schaub is Qinghua's dedicated ASC. Ariel works to understand Qinghua's goals, personalize her learning plans, and direct her to the learning resources she needs to complete the Business Administration program.

"Ariel is extremely helpful. She gives me insights on course load before I register and advice on what projects I should take and when. She is truly like a concierge. The ASC is very important. I recommend newcomers build a great relationship with their ASC."

Qinghua's life experience has taught her that business skills are needed for classical musicians to sustain themselves. She hopes to eventually return to her roots but in a new capacity by marketing classical music.



**2019**  
Program  
launch date  
(UW-Parkside)



**58%/42%**  
Ratio of female  
to male students



**34**  
Median age



# Associate of Arts & Science



The Associate of Arts & Science (AAS) is a liberal arts degree that builds a foundation for its graduates. AAS students demonstrate essential skills in critical thinking, communication, as well as a breadth of content-specific knowledge in social sciences, humanities, natural sciences, mathematics, the arts, and language. Now offered by the UW-Milwaukee College of General Studies, all UW System institutions accept this AAS degree to satisfy the university-wide general education breadth requirements. This degree can be applied to over 200 bachelor's degree majors, which makes this program an excellent choice for adults who are looking to go back to school and make progress toward a bachelor's degree, but don't quite yet know what bachelor's degree they wish to pursue.

As part of the overall UW System restructure, a major initiative this past year was moving the institution granting this degree from the former UW Colleges to the College of General Studies at UW-Milwaukee. This significant move has streamlined the student experience, as students in UW Flexible Option programs at UW-Milwaukee no longer need to dually enroll across institutions to complete their general education competency sets. Also this past year, the AAS degree participated in a systemwide initiative to update the math curriculum (launching Fall 2019).



**73**  
Students Enrolled  
in FY19



**67%**  
Retention



**25**  
Graduates



# UW Flexible Option Grad Sets Out to Become the Educator She's Always Dreamed to Be

After graduating from one of the top 20 high schools in Illinois and being accepted to all of the colleges she applied for, Victoria started her undergraduate career at a prestigious liberal arts college. At 18, she knew what came next: four years of straight A's before landing a great job. She was raised to believe that there was no time to waste. Today, when she reflects on that period of her life, she knows that she would've been better off taking a gap year.

College was an awful experience for Victoria, as she dealt with personal challenges and received little support while on campus. She transferred to a few other colleges and eventually came to a decision.

"I finally knew that I needed a break," Victoria said. "I wasn't getting anywhere, and if I didn't take care of myself nothing was going to get better."

Once Victoria chose to put her well-being first, life unfolded in a new way. She met her husband, got married, and had a daughter. At that point, she knew she was ready to go back to school.

There were things Victoria still wanted to do with her life. She had the goal of becoming a math teacher and knew she could begin by working a flexible schedule as a substitute teacher. But first, she needed her associate degree.

"That's when I found the wonderful University of Wisconsin Flexible Option, which worked great with the fact that I had a child, two step kids, and a husband with a crazy work schedule," Victoria said. "I was always smart and excelled in school, so it was never a question of if I could go back to college. The biggest question was if the program was the right fit for me and my life. And UW Flexible Option fit perfectly."

The self-paced program allows motivated, disciplined students to start at the beginning of any month. Progress is not limited by a traditional semester or term-based calendar, and the structure provides the freedom to successfully balance work and personal responsibilities all while working toward a desired degree. Students complete assessments when it's most convenient for them with no required seat time in a classroom.

Victoria completed coursework and readings in 15-to-30-minute sprints while her daughter was occupied and created longer study sessions after putting her to bed. True to its name, the flexibility of UW Flexible Option allowed Victoria to balance parenting and studying.

"There was a class or two that I needed to extend to a second term because life got a little hectic," Victoria said. "But guess what? I always had another chance to finish those classes. And, I didn't have to repeat those courses from the beginning, which was a huge stress relief. The online structure and

flexibility were exactly what I needed, and it wouldn't have been the same if I'd went to a brick-and-mortar university."

Remembering the challenging experiences she had as an on-campus undergrad student, support throughout the UW Flexible Option program was imperative to Victoria. The encouragement she received from Ariel, her Academic Success Coach, and other faculty members was everything she could've hoped for.

"Ariel was fantastic, and she became my advocate throughout the entire program," Victoria said. "Any time I had a question, she was right there and got back to me within a day or two. I was never on my own, and that meant so much to me."

Victoria also credits the support she received from outstanding faculty members. In particular, she recognizes her religion professor, James K. Powell II, a senior lecturer at UW-Milwaukee. Through his self-made YouTube videos, Victoria felt connected and part of Powell's classes, and if there was ever a concern or question about an assignment, he was quick to get back to her.

"You can tell that he loves what he is teaching and he truly wants to be there for you," Victoria said. "He genuinely cares about his students and wants them to succeed. And to be completely honest, I truly think that I succeeded with UW Flexible Option because of all of the support, and I cannot speak highly enough about those who were there for me."

Now as a UW Flexible Option AAS graduate, Victoria is proud of completing her goal and finishing what she started.

"I know that a lot of people go through what I've experienced: failing at college, struggling in a class, or having trouble at work, and it wears you down. It can really hurt your spirit," she said. "But finally being able to get a degree—it can restore you."

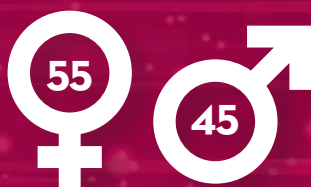
Victoria is looking forward to submitting her substitute teacher paperwork and getting back into the classroom, but this time in a new role. She is no stranger to feeling overwhelmed in school, and she hopes to help her future students find their own confidence.

Reflecting on her journey, Victoria is thoughtful and genuine with her advice for prospective AAS students who might be unsure of how to fit going back to school into their complicated lives:

"UW Flexible Option won't be like any college experience you've had before, and that's a good thing!" she said. "You have nothing to lose. Don't be scared to take your shot."



**2014**  
Program  
launch date



**55%/45%**  
Ratio of female  
to male students



**31**  
Median age



# Business & Technical Communications Certificate



In today's economy, it is more important than ever for workers to be multi-skilled and flexible in their professional areas. The Business and Technical Communications Certificate combines an innovative approach with practical skills in writing, research, communication, and technologies that will enable students to improve their skills for working in a broad range of contexts. Over the course of 6 competency sets (18 credits), students master skills in strategic writing, technical communications, project management, and information design. This certificate can either be taken alone, to supplement a different bachelor's degree, or to satisfy elective requirements in other UW Flexible Option programs.

# Project Management Certificate



This 12-credit certificate is focused on the knowledge and skills necessary to be a competent project manager in the modern workplace. Project management skills are essential in nearly every industry, and they increase the value of employees regardless of their formal title. The curriculum covers both the technical and interpersonal skills managing projects and project teams. Now that the Bachelor of Science in Business Administration is offered by UW-Parkside, students in that program are able to use this certificate to satisfy elective credits for the BSBA degree and graduate with an additional market-valued credential.

# Substance Use Disorders Counselor Certificate



In partnership with UW-Madison's Division of Continuing Studies, this non-credit certificate is specifically designed for practitioners in Wisconsin looking to become certified as Substance Abuse Counselors-In Training (SAC-IT), Substance Abuse Counselors (SAC), or Clinical Substance Abuse Counselors (CSAC). This program is the only online, competency-based program that has been pre-approved by the state of Wisconsin to satisfy the 360 specialized education hours required for licensure. Human service professionals with a bachelor's degree in a behavioral health related field are able to leverage this program to meet state licensure requirements more efficiently. It is projected that the demand for these professionals will grow by 23% over the course of the next 8 years, meaning that these professionals will be in the field meeting the needs of their community more quickly. In the past three years, there have been over 250 graduates from this program, and it continues to grow.



# Ready to Learn More?

Here's how you get in touch.

Interested in pursuing a program?

Call **608-262-2011**  
or email **[flex@uwex.edu](mailto:flex@uwex.edu)**  
to speak to an adviser.

Interested in partnering with us?

Email **[flex@uwex.edu](mailto:flex@uwex.edu)**

100% online, competency-based education from  
the University of Wisconsin—you're in control by choosing  
where, when and how you learn with support along the way



**UW flexible option**  
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN SYSTEM





608-262-2011 | [flex.wisconsin.edu](http://flex.wisconsin.edu) | [flex@uwex.edu](mailto:flex@uwex.edu)

University of Wisconsin Extended Campus  
5602 Research Park Blvd., Suite 303  
Madison, WI 53719

98% of Flex graduates  
recommend their  
program\*



\*2019 Survey of Flex Graduates, UW Survey Center

© 2019 Board of Regents of the University of Wisconsin System. All rights reserved.