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Dickinson State University

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DSU's Extended Learning Program Meets Adult Learner Needs

Dickinson State University is committed to meeting the needs of today's busy workforce

by providing distance education and degree program through the Office of Extended Learning. Programs are available to students on-site at Bismarck State College in Bismarck, N.D., and Williston State College in Williston, N.D.; by distance delivery through the Interactive Television Network; and online.

"Accessibility, flexibility, quality and commitment are the hallmarks of our program," said Marty Odermann-Gardner, director of the Office of Extended Learning. "We serve adult learners wherever they are, be it next door or on the other side of the world."

The number of students taking advantage of DSU's Extended Learning programs has grown dramatically since 1999 when three students began taking classes at the Bismarck site. Today, more than 750 students are enrolled in over 15 areas of study.

"DSU is very committed to public access. We seek to be responsive to the educational needs throughout the region. We use multiple delivery methods that are coordinated to provide flexible learning opportunities for our students," said Dr. Richard McCallum, President of Dickinson State University.

DSU's Extended Learning degree programs, while open to all students, are especially designed to meet the needs of adult learners: military personnel and veterans, professionals who want to advance in their careers, individuals who had a break in their education because "life happens," Odermann-Gardner said.

Many adult learners bring with them a variety of education and training, for which they can get up to 30 credits. To do this, students must go through a portfolio process in which their training and educational credits are validated and then applied to their DSU degree.

"We help them package the education they bring to the table as a way to enable them to complete their degree." Odermann-Gardner said.

Valerie Jundt of Bismarck, N.D., is a director in the unclaimed Property Group of the National Tax & Accounting Firm at Thomson Reuters. Jundt was recommended for a promotion in 2007; however,

the minimum education requirement was a bachelor's degree—Jundt had an associate's degree. She turned to DSU's Office of Extended Learning to develop an action plan that would put her on track for the promotion.

"DSU does not take a 'cookie cutter—one size fits all approach' to education,"

said Jundt. "When I contacted the Extended Learning staff, they built a program of study for me and I was able to meet my goal of graduating by May 2008."

Jundt is one of more than 500 students who have graduated from DSU through the Office of Extended Learning since 2001.

Odermann-Gardner credits the success of Extending Learning to "impeccable customer service." Indeed, the slogan for Extended Learning is, "We Do Everything But

Your Homework." And they mean it. Professional advisors work closely with students to determine their needs, help them get registered and assist with technical issues.

"It's been a wonderful 11 years for us and the students we serve," she said. **P&P**

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— Valerie Jundt, student

