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Fast-Track degree-completion programs offered in Macomb County help working adults finish fast

Nakisha Scruggs is bringing up her five-year-old daughter in Mount Clemens — the same place where she was born and raised. The single mother has worked on the assembly line at Fiat Chrysler LLC's Jefferson North Assembly Plant for five years. Professionally, she wanted to move to a corporate position.

"There are a lot of career opportunities with my current employer," says Scruggs. "But to be considered, I knew I needed to finish my degree — and preferably one with a respected name. I also realized that as a working adult, I needed to do it at a faster pace."

Scruggs learned about OU's accelerated courses offered at the OU Anton/Frankel Center in Mount Clemens. The general management major explains these accelerated courses are perfect for a student like herself who's beyond the "campus" stage of life.

Scruggs says, "The accelerated courses meant I could fit more classes into a semester than I could before. Prior to the accelerated courses being offered, I could take one — maybe two — classes in a semester. I'm taking three accelerated courses this semester. And getting my degree finished more quickly."

Today's competitive job market has made higher education a necessity for a successful career. However, Macomb County demographics show more than 60 percent of residents over the age of 25 have taken some college courses or earned an associate degree but haven't completed a bachelor's degree. This fall, Oakland will offer Fast-Track degree-completion programs in general management, marketing, human resources management and information technology at the OU Anton/Frankel Center in Mount Clemens. Designed with a busy, working adult's schedule in mind, the eight-week courses combine classroom work with online assignments.

"Delivering these bachelor's degree programs in an accelerated format accommodates our students' busy personal and professional schedules," explains OU's senior vice president for Academic Affairs and provost, James Lentini, DMA. "As a result, they can accomplish learning outcomes in a flexible, time-saving and convenient manner."

Accelerated courses also freed more time for Scruggs to spend with her daughter, Blake.

"More time with my daughter is a wonderful thing. As a single mother working full-time, any 'free time' is a bonus," she says. "I had more time to help Blake with her schoolwork and family activities. These accelerated courses were a godsend."

Julie Dichtel, executive director of OU Macomb County Outreach, says, "About 41 percent of OU's students began their journey as a transfer student. Our new Fast-Track programs will allow students with transfer credits from a community college or other academic institution the opportunity to finish their bachelor's degree in about two years." Dichtel adds, "OU academic advisers work with students to map a fast-track degree-completion plan that suits their life."

Dichtel emphasizes that increasing bachelor's degree attainment is important, so working adults who live in Macomb County are employable, marketable and workforce-ready.

"We want our students to compete for the best jobs and be on a path to realizing their career ambitions like getting a raise, receiving a promotion with more authority or achieving the personal satisfaction that comes from attaining this higher education credential."

With the online course component, students can submit homework, take quizzes and participate in class discussions and forums while at work or wherever they are.

"This alternative delivery format provides more flexibility to balance students' life commitments so they can finish their education more quickly and advance their careers," says Kim Serota, faculty member in the School of Business Administration's Department of Management and Marketing and one of Scruggs' instructors.

Serota adds, "Students ask if these courses deliver the same content and value as a traditional course. Without a doubt. But, I advise them that these courses require more commitment on their part. The materials are equivalent, the methods fit the format, and most importantly, the outcome is consistent."



Nakisha Scruggs learned about OU's accelerated courses being offered at the OU Anton/Frankel Center in Mount Clemens and found them to be a perfect fit for her

“He told us it was the same amount of course material as in a semester course — only covered in a condensed eight weeks. He also told us course would challenge us. I knew I’d need to apply myself to achieve the same learning outcomes in a shorter amount of time.”

Her daughter Blake inspired her to see and make it to the finish line.

“I wanted to be an example to Blake and show her that if you want something bad enough and apply yourself, you can do anything,” Scrugc says. “I wanted to prove to myself that it’s never too late, especially to those who said I wouldn’t be able to do it.”

She adds, “My education has been a long time coming. But, I did it.”

OU is holding a Fast-Track Open House on April 19 from 5:30 – 7 p.m. at the OU Anton/Frankel Center in Mount Clemens. For more information and to RSVP, visit <https://oakland.edu/macomb/events/2018/041918-fast-track-open-house>