



GETTING OVER GOING BACK

We debunk the 7 biggest fears of adult learners



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Table of Contents

“I can’t fit this into my busy schedule.”	3
“I can’t afford it.”	4
“I don’t know where to start.”	5
“I don’t have enough support to pull this off.”	6
“I don’t remember how to be a student.”	7
“At my age, will this be worth it?”	8
“I don’t even know what I would study.”	8
Ready to take action?	9

For adults, the decision to go back to school may not be an easy one. You have other responsibilities to take into account, a full-time job, perhaps a family or young children. You may have concerns about finances, how you can make it work, and if the sacrifice will even pay off. Sound familiar?

There are lots of misconceptions around adult learners, which can hold you back from reaching your professional goals. The following are the ones KU sees most often, and the keys to overcoming them, in order to achieve – and even surpass – your career aspirations.

“I can’t fit this into my busy schedule.”

Many working professionals maintain busy lives, leading to concerns about the ability to balance college classes on top of their existing responsibilities. If you’re concerned about having enough hours in the day, you can choose an online program, allowing you more flexibility and saving you travel time, or a part-time plan of study, in which you would take fewer classes per semester and earn your degree over a longer period of time.

Here are some other quick time management tips for working adults:

- For each course, enter all upcoming homework and assignments into your calendar. As you complete each one, track how much time it takes you, so you can plan your time accordingly in the future.
- Determine whether you’re a morning person or an evening person to help you schedule your study time when you’ll be most productive.
- Reserve 2-3 hours of study time per credit hour each week (most courses are 3 credit hours). Academic success coach Jenny Parr recommends this to all of her students and finds it helps with balancing time on the front end of planning for your week.

Nearly all of KU Edwards Campus (KUEC) students are working adults. Most KU Edwards Campus classes take place once a week in the afternoon and evening to accommodate working professionals with day jobs. Online courses feature both synchronous and asynchronous learning, meaning that while some live instruction will be required, there will also be components that can be done on one’s own time. As long as students maintain open communication regarding scheduling issues or deadlines, many professors will even record lectures for students to watch later. KU’s [academic success coaches](#) can work with you to develop a plan that offers extra fluidity based on individual circumstance.





“I can’t afford it.”

There are many avenues for assistance with tuition costs for [undergraduate](#) and [graduate](#) programs, including financial aid through the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) or automatic scholarships, such as the KU Edwards Campus Financial Aid and Scholarships Transfer Student Scholarship and more. For those who live or work in Johnson County, scholarships may also be available through the Johnson County Education Research Triangle, or JCERT. If you live in the Kansas City metropolitan area, you can take advantage of the MetroKC rate, offering in-state tuition rates to Missouri residents who meet the simple criteria.

Check to see if your employer offers tuition reimbursement. Many employers will support employee career development by covering a portion of the tuition. Occasionally, even employers without standard policies will invest in the education of their employees – just ask.

You don’t have to worry about covering all costs at once. [Payment plans are available](#), which allow you to make monthly payments toward your education.

Alex Terwilliger, associate director of student services, advises taking advantage of low student loan interest rates and viewing that as an investment, similar to a 401k.

“I think affording it is a factor of priorities. You can find solutions,” said Terwilliger. “With a student loan, you can effectively say, ‘I am investing now for the earning potential I am going to get in the future.’”

Set up an [appointment](#) with KU’s financial advisors to discuss which financial options will allow you to fulfill your educational and professional goals without breaking the bank.

“I don’t know where to start.”

Many other prospective students had the same apprehensions as you. Perhaps you started your degree many years ago and now you need to complete it to move forward in your career, or you need additional credentials or a certificate in a certain area to make a pivot. Wherever you are in your career, KUEC has students who have been in your shoes.

Begin by defining [why](#) you’re exploring your options. Once you know where you’re looking to end up, call one of KU’s success navigators at 913-897-8530 to have a conversation about your needs and next steps. Their job is to help you form an actionable plan for how to reach your goal.

After that, you’ll want to get an early start on submitting your admissions application. Applying early ensures you have enough time to meet deadlines for financial assistance, such as the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) or scholarships. At minimum, you owe it to yourself to see if you are qualified for admission and your financial aid eligibility.

Once you complete your enrollment, you’ll be able to focus on setting academic and professional goals, discussing post-graduate opportunities with an advisor and seeking out hands-on learning opportunities, such as an internship or practicum, that will help you gain real-world experience outside of the classroom.

Check out KU’s guides on setting yourself up for success when starting an [undergraduate](#) or [graduate](#) program for more tips.





“I don’t have enough support to pull this off.”

Know that you don’t have to go it alone. KUEC [success coaches](#) will help you problem-solve and break down any barriers you may be concerned about.

“The experience is very personalized,” says Jenny Parr, academic success coach. “I always say, ‘I am your person. I am here, no matter what.’ I have night hours. I even meet with students on Sundays.”

Success coaches are your advocates, connectors to resources, and partners in your educational pursuit.

“I do not think I would have gotten this far without the support of an advisor,” said Ariana Englehart, 2021 [Bachelor of Business Administration](#) graduate. “My advisor took into consideration what I have going on in my personal life. I can’t thank her enough for her guidance.”

The classroom experience, whether it’s virtual or in-person, offers the opportunity to expand your network and build a community with other students. Faculty are another excellent resource, with many students taking advantage of the office hours, accessibility and experience they provide.

Many of [our students](#) are also parents, leading to concerns about how children will adapt to a change in routine. Our success navigators suggest having family homework nights with school-aged children and teenagers, which also allow you to set a good example for your kids.

KUEC offers [student services](#) such as mental health resources, writing assistance, a career network and many more resources to assist with the everyday struggles you may encounter.

“I don’t remember how to be a student.”

As an adult, it may be daunting to consider returning to the classroom, doing homework and taking tests, whether virtually or in-person. Strong [study habits](#) will be vital in helping you make the most of your limited time. Start by making a [schedule](#), accepting the fact that you may have to turn down other plans to fit in your studies. Find someplace on campus or in your home where you can silence your phone and focus for a chunk of time. When taking notes, focus on the big picture rather than trying to capture every word.

For some, technology can be a concern. There are lots of available resources at KUEC to help, from front desk student workers and IT staff to program tutorials and workshops.

Your past doesn’t define your future. Even if you weren’t the best student in the past, now is your chance to prove your competence.

“You have a lot of life experience. You know what it takes to be successful and you can apply that in any situation,” said Renee Williams, student services program assistant.

Alex Terwilliger, associate director of student services, says that it’s often the students who have a history of poor academic performance who feel motivated to prove themselves and graduate with a 4.0 GPA. 2021 [Bachelor of Science in Molecular Biosciences](#) graduate Brendan Postle was one such student.

“When I went back to school, I was faced with the reality that I would need to get straight A’s to be a competitive candidate for medical school – a grade I received maybe once or twice in the past,” said Postle. “Thanks to incredible professors, fellow students, an incredible support group and my unstoppable drive to become a physician, I have been able to achieve and maintain a 4.0 GPA throughout my three years at KU Edwards Campus.”





“At my age, will this be worth it?”

No matter your age, your educational pursuits can significantly influence your salary, job potential and career satisfaction. At the KU Edwards Campus, students of all ages and backgrounds work toward a common goal of furthering their education.

KUEC is known for catering to working adult professionals, or “nontraditional” students, but in fact, nontraditional is the new traditional.

According to the [National Center for Education Statistics](#) (NCES), 73% of higher education students fit under the nontraditional college student umbrella. The growing presence of adult learners has shifted the face of the average college student.

“I get to be a Jayhawk while being around adults who have some similar life experiences,” said Ashley Kalatusha, 2021 [literature, language and writing graduate](#).

Another factor to consider is that your earning potential will likely increase with the completion of an advanced degree. Academic success coach Jenny Parr suggests plugging your information into the [U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics Occupational Outlook Handbook](#) to get an idea of how much your degree could impact your salary.

“I don’t even know what I would study.”

Finding the career that feels enjoyable and [meaningful](#) to you will require some research, but with more than 75 degree and certificate options offered at the KU Edwards Campus, there is a path for you!

Review the numerous [degrees and certificates](#) available, taking note of characteristics like their career paths, online and on-campus formats, curriculum and admissions criteria.

Our success navigators suggest looking at postings for the jobs you want and work backwards to determine what qualifications you’re missing. For assistance with this process, give them a call at 913-897-8530.

Ready to take action?

Learn more about KUEC [programs](#), set up an appointment with a [program advisor](#) or call a success navigator at 913-897-8530 to discuss your goals and how to reach them.

