

## A Day in the Life of an Adult Learner

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I am a twenty-nine-year-old divorced parent of a twenty-month old child and a new student at Penn State Mont Alto. I have been on my own since I was seventeen and did not have the resources to attend college right out of high school. Now, I am determined to fulfill my dream of a college education.

My daily routine differs greatly from the average college student's. At 4:30 a.m. I wake up my daughter and take her to the babysitter's.

I work from 5 a.m. – 3 p.m. Then I pick my daughter up and go home to spend time with her. We read, play, walk, or go to the park. I make dinner, and we watch a little television. I give her a bath and have her in bed by 7:15 p.m.

I then spend anywhere from one to four hours an evening playing catch-up from home. When I am not working, I am studying. I normally get to bed around midnight.

On Tuesdays and Thursdays, I leave work at 9:15. I arrive at class by 9:30, I return to work by 12:30 p.m.

On Wednesdays I have to arrange for a babysitter at home so that I can attend class from 6:00 to 8:30.

On weekends I do my grocery shopping, cleaning, laundry, and general errands. Most importantly, I spend quality time with my daughter.

I am solely responsible for my household and its expenses. I am solely responsible for rent, utilities, car payment, insurance, and student loans. I am solely responsible for doctors' appointments and unexpected emergencies.

Why do I do it?

I do it for myself and for my daughter. I want her to see that you can accomplish anything in life if you're willing to work for it. I am proud to say I am the only person in my family to attend college. It feels great! As busy as I am, and as much as I miss having time for a personal life, I love the experience.

## Where Does Tuition Money Go?

Since Mont Alto doesn't have near the operating expenses that UP has, where is your tuition money going? I haven't a clue – and apparently, neither does anyone else.

Ken Gill, Director of Finance at Mont Alto, was not able to give a breakdown of exactly where the tuition money of a single student goes. The most detailed explanation of tuition dispersion he has ever seen was for the Commonwealth Colleges as a whole and was unable to say where any of Mont Alto's tuition money goes.

Penn State is comprised of twenty-four campuses across Pennsylvania. Tuition from each campus is pooled together

and unequally disbursed to each campus, as decided by the ruling class at UP. The campus that can show the most need for money gets the money. Part of the technology fee we pay each semester goes to UP, because all of the networking equipment is there.

The students at Penn State Mont Alto help to support the students at every other Penn State campus, and vice versa. Your money may go to the Hershey Medical Center, while mine goes to help build the Classroom Building at Penn State Altoona.

The Fourth Wall will continue its investigation into where our tuition money is going.

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Studies (HDFS) programs by adding an the Early Childhood Option to the associate degree.

Bachelor programs are also under consideration in this master plan. HDFS may soon be expanding its education option into a degree in Elementary Education with a Multicultural focus. A four-year degree in Arboriculture or Natural Resources Management is also being considered as a compliment to our already excellent forestry program. These forestry programs would also allow students to complete four years at Mont Alto and even allow for the change of assigned students from University Park.

Many sections of the Program Statement focus on the campus growth of adult and non-traditional students. The campus has recently established a four year English program, satisfying the requests of many non-traditional students seeking a Liberal Arts degree. Finally, the Bachelor of Arts in Business has already been added to Mont Alto's portfolio. This program is flexible enough be satisfied through traditional class work or an integration of traditional, online, and independent study.

The addition of more four-year programs will require a different approach to student services and an increase in student space. The campus community is finding growth in under-represented populations. As Mont Alto takes on new endeavors and refines its mission, it will also have to consider the changing dynamic of the campus community. Several recommendations have been made to strengthen the student support services including additional resources for student internships and cooperative education, the addition of a multicultural coordinator, and continued support of student governance. The campus is also exploring a partnership with Head Start to

provide an on campus childcare service.

Athletics are also an important part of student life. The campus currently provides for ten varsity sports as well as intramural and club sports. Mont Alto's athletic facilities mainly consist of the Multipurpose Activity Center, outdoor facilities, and natural landscape. The master plan focuses on strengthening the current facilities and programs, and the addition of varsity sports. Much feedback was made for the reinstatement of varsity baseball. The campus is currently finding resources to add a free weight gym as well. All improvements to athletics will become important as more sports are moved to four year eligibility and teams are considered for NCAA Division III athletics.

Student space is an ever-growing issue on campus. The Program Statement analyzed available space and needs and prioritized the use and future acquisition of the land.

Academic spaces were generally identified as outdated. The current Chemistry, Physics, PT, OT, Biology, and other labs were all considered inadequate due to aged technology, shortage of resources and space, and limitability of any expansions in faculty and student research. Dr. David Gnage, campus C.E.O., remarked at the spring town meeting, "Our equipment is state of the art, for 1975" and focused on the importance of updating these facilities as part of our focus of academic excellence in teaching and in research.

The growth of student spaces is another focus of the Program Statement. This past year the students of Mont Alto were left without a game room and meeting area through the creation of the enrollment management suit. Fortunately the renovations to Wiestling Hall took place over the summer and now allow

students to meet and relax. The campus envisions many more cozy and comfortable spaces for students to relax all around Mont Alto in the future.

The Mont Alto library is another major focus of the master plan. The Program Statement says that the facility is currently unsuited for the technological needs and activities of a modern library. The building itself is uninviting and more like a "storage facility." The committee has recommended an addition to the library containing a computer lab, exhibit space, wireless laptop teaching lab, a cyber-café for 24/7 use, and major technology upgrades.

Now that the Program Statement is complete, the real fun of master planning can begin. Over the next several months the committee will continue to meet and decide what will best accommodate all of the campus's recommendations. These objectives will require a large amount of space and we can assume the addition of at least one new classroom building. Several programs will be added and facilities will be upgraded. The committee will also look at synergistic relationships between programs, facilities, and community relationships to make the best use of available resources. At the conclusion of the process the plans will be sent to the PSU Board of Trustees for final approval.

As a member of the master planning committee this past year I would like to proudly report that all of the group's work was made with our community in mind. Mont Alto has made a wonderful home for many students for over a hundred years and this master plan will allow us to embrace our traditions, build on our strengths, and boldly become our region's leader in a profession education.