

# Nontraditional students find a place at UNL

By Jill O'Brien  
Staff Reporter

The difference between part-time nontraditional students and full-time students is day and night, according to Bob Mathiasen, an academic advisor at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

Many part-time adult students older than 25 take one or two evening classes, while the majority of full-time adult students attend day classes, Mathiasen said.

"For evening students the university is a small aspect of their life and they spend about six or eight hours a week on campus. They either aren't interested or don't have the time. People enrolled during the day are probably a little more involved in campus life. That's the main thing I see," he said.

In more ways than one, Mathiasen represents the typical nontraditional

nocturnal student.

At the age of 22, after acquiring his Bachelors of Arts degrees in Sociology and Psychology, he was finished with school, he said.

"...or so I thought," he said. "Once I got working in the field, I soon realized if I'm going to advance anywhere, I need a master's, so I started back to school when I was 30."

He attended the University of Nebraska at Omaha part-time for six years before he received his master's degree. Now, at 41, he assists nearly 900 students in the part-time evening program at the Division of Continuing Education and helps adults wade through the process of re-entering school, he said.

Reasons why an adult re-enters college or decides to build on a high school education vary, Mathiasen said.

"Sometimes, people have either been working in a specific field and are pretty maxed-out and may need

more education to get beyond that field or they are wanting to make a career change that would involve a re-education," he said.

The "Handbook for the Adult Part-time Student," lists those reasons and others that trigger a return to school. The book, available from the Division of Continuing Education, was compiled by Sue M. Scott, Lynnette Cottrell and Deanna Eversoll, director of Evening Programs and Lifelong Learning Services.

The authors covered many of the concerns shared by full-time and part-time nontraditional students.

For instance, how can students balance an education with work, personal development, and family life?

"I'd say 90 percent of our students in the evening programs are married with families," Mathiasen said.

Although single when he returned to school, Mathiasen wasn't exempt from stress. Like many adult students, he held down a full-time job while attending classes.

"Time was a big deal," he said. "Working full-time was a matter of separating personal time from working and school. A lot was trying to find some balance there."

Adult students seeking a balance can turn to advisors or refer to the adult student handbook. Other re-

sources, in the form of videotapes are available from the Nontraditional Student Resource Center, Mathiasen said.

"Plus, every spring and fall the Division of Continuing Studies has workshops aimed at adults thinking about coming back to the university. We have a one-stop shopping center here where adults can visit with representatives from all over campus."

The workshops inform adults about the System of Interactive Guidance Admission or SIGI Plus, a computerized program. SIGI assesses an individual's skills, and accesses information relevant to careers a student may be interested in, he said.

Still, handbooks and videos don't always provide answers to problems new adult students face.

James Buckley, Coordinator of Campus Programs encourages nontraditional students to link up with the Adult Student Network, which meets every Friday, beginning August 26, at the Nebraska Union from 12:15 to 1:15 p.m.

"It's an opportunity to meet others going through similar experiences—juggling a spouse, kids, a job... things younger undergrads haven't dealt with," Buckley said. "Besides...it's a nice change of pace for older students to sit in a room with people substantially closer in age."

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## Student income taxed

By Sam Kepfield  
Staff Reporter

If you're on your own now, away from your parents for the first time, that may mean many things — including paying taxes. So, how do federal tax laws affect students anyway?

According to IRS Publication No.4, Student's Guide to Federal Income Tax, the answer is that they operate pretty much the same as on other citizens, with a few differences.

To begin with, if you work for someone else, delivering pizzas, federal income tax is withheld from your check, along with state tax. If you happen to be an enterprising sort, and open your own pizza place or crib sheet service, then you need to make estimated tax payments on your income.

You must do this if you expect to owe \$500 when you file your returns — which are due four times a year, in April, June, September, and January 15. This is done on a 1040ES form.

Is there any way to get out of paying taxes? There is, surprisingly enough. If you have a part-time job, but don't think you'll make enough to pay any tax, then you can ask your employer not to withhold your taxes. However, you have to meet three conditions — you didn't pay any tax last year, you don't expect to pay any this year, and you make more than \$600 and cannot be claimed as a dependent by anyone. That \$600 line is the magic number for determining whether you need to file a return or not. If you make less than \$600, then you don't need to file a 1040 form.

How do you know if you're a dependent? Ask. If your parents, or someone else, provides more than half your support for the year, they can generally claim you as a dependent. This support includes food, clothing, payments on your dorm room or apartment, tuition, medical care, transportation or recreation.

You may have a scholarship or fellowship to help pay those tuition bills. You may also have to use it to pay taxes on the scholarship itself. That's right — the part of the scholarship that you do NOT use for tuition or other educational expenses is subject to being counted as income.

This does not apply to certain types of grants, such as ROTC assistance benefits, Pell grants, or Fulbright Scholarships, or scholarships won in a contest.

When the taxes are due in April and it comes time to fill out the forms, you can take certain deductions. If you are a dependent, you can make the standard deduction of \$600, or if you are not a dependent, then the amount is \$3700.

Chances are you can use the 1040EZ form. If you have any investment income, over \$400 of taxable interest income, or fan self-employment income, then you have to do the longer 1040 or 1040A form, with the appropriate schedules. After you fill these out, it's a good idea to keep a copy of the return and your W-2 forms for at least three years after you filed the return, or two years after you paid the tax, whichever is later.

You should get all your W-2 forms by the end of January. Although the forms are due April 15, it's a good idea to send them in as soon as possible. Taking the ten or fifteen minutes to fill out your 1040EZ form on February 1 will mean that you get that refund before most people are even thinking about filling out their forms.

If you have any more questions, you can pick up IRS publications to answer your questions. IRS publication No. 4, No. 505, and No. 919 are especially helpful, and they are written in plain English.

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