

STUDENT FEEDBACK

I'm Not Different! by Ann G.

One of the main things I learned from reading BIF Student Experience Lab is that my college experience has not been as different from that of a traditional student as I thought it was. I returned to school after a gap in my education of over 25 years, it was something I did out of necessity and I really didn't plan very well. USU Distance Education started a program in my hometown for parents with children which provided free childcare, that was a major need for me so I enrolled without even considering other options or what I would do when I got there. Like so many students who spoke in the lab I had little interaction with advisers and learned that hard way about financial aid. At the beginning I didn't even realize that I qualified for any but once I did I worried a lot about how much I borrowed to pay for school. I was relieved to read that 66% of students nowadays borrow to pay for school – guess I'm just one of them. Not only was I older than most students, I was the first generation of my family (not including my children) to attend college – and even if I hadn't been, I grew up in England where University opportunities were less widely available. I learned as I went, but even now in my senior year I realize there are a lot of resources and experiences that I have missed out on.

I consider myself fortunate that a lot of my life experiences made me capable of focusing and working hard- I didn't need any remedial help to study or write. I have worked as an Undergraduate Teaching fellow and had the opportunity to see work that other students have done and I realize

that for many of them finishing college will not be possible unless they get help with study skills, writing etc. When I attended the regional campus I felt very much alone and basically just went to class and studied by myself. If I had problems I just had to deal with them. I did OK but it wasn't fun. After I finished my Associates and generals I started going to class on the main campus. Here I learned the importance of relationships with my professors, peers and others, I realized that I missed out by not having these connections for my whole college time. I suppose at the end you always wish you could go back and do it differently. There are a lot of things that I would have chosen to do if I'd known about them.

I have been fortunate enough to stay at one school and I read that moving around was a big problem. I was speaking to a student this week who had done a bachelors at a private (for profit) university and was half way through his masters when they canned the project. He enrolled in USU and received no credit at all for what he has done. He is literally starting a zero with huge debt. I can only imagine how frustrating that would be.

I think that the experiences I read about in the lab would probably relate to all students, we all apparently have similar problems and issues. That is why it is important for us to address them in a way that might make secondary education more user friendly. I thought I was a lot different from everyone else but the problems would appear universal. I hope that I can be part of the solution.