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Targeting a promotion, alumna goes even further with GSU degree



Lacking the finances and focus needed for higher education after a short-lived college experience, Laurie Crosby ('19) decided to enter the workforce instead.

Decades later, Crosby counts herself among the many successful graduates who completed a bachelor's degree through the [Interdisciplinary Studies](#) (IDDS) program at [Governors State University](#).

The degree allowed her to advance in her career to become executive director of the South Suburban Division of Franciscan Health Foundation, the philanthropic arm of the Olympia Fields-based hospital.

"I would recommend the Interdisciplinary Studies program to everyone. If I can do it, with a 4.0 GPA, anyone can. It was so worth it," Crosby said. "It has inspired me to think about continuing my education — As much as I enjoyed getting my bachelor's, how hard could it be to keep going?"

Before earning her degree in 2019, Crosby focused on caring for her three children — now adults. "By the time my oldest was in kindergarten I realized, 'I can't work anymore, so I took a break, a hiatus, what I called 'temporary retirement,'" Crosby said.

She settled into life as a stay-at-home mom, volunteering as a coach in her children's sports and getting active in their school's Parent Teacher Association.

As her children grew and became more independent, Crosby re-entered the work force with a part-time job as an administrative assistant with Franciscan Health Foundation. When a full-time opportunity with the foundation arose, she felt the moment was right.

She worked in that position for a few years, then discovered an opportunity that gave her a chance to advance to development director. However, the job required a bachelor's degree, something Crosby lacked.

Her supervisor proposed a deal. If she would pursue a bachelor's degree, they would give her an interim title of development associate. The title would change to "director" if she completed the degree.

"I said, 'There's no way. I'm not a good student. I did terribly the first time in college,'" Crosby said. "But they told me 'Check it out, it's the only way to move up.'"

That led to Crosby's to GSU's [Academic Advising department](#), where an adviser listened to her background and career plans. He recommended she start with some basic courses at South Suburban College (SSC), a university [Dual Degree Program](#) partner, then return to GSU where she would be a good candidate for the university's IDDS program.

After the meeting, Crosby said she felt less intimidated at the thought of trying college again. Steeling her resolve, she enrolled in one course at SSC.

"I remember the first day in class, sitting there with all these young kids," she said. "But my fear dissipated as the class went on. I got an A in the class, and thought, 'Hm, that wasn't so hard. Maybe I'll try two classes next semester.'"

After earning an associate degree — earning a perfect grade average — Crosby transferred to GSU with everything in place to start pursuing her bachelor's degree. The Interdisciplinary Studies program enabled her to take a variety of classes, including meteorology, marketing, and women in media.

"I started taking classes I would have never taken in my life. It was so eclectic," Crosby said. "I knew I needed to really step out of my comfort zone, so I took advanced public speaking. It ended up being so impactful."

Crosby said the public speaking professor convinced her that she had the capacity for confident professional discourse, and helped her refine the skills. That classroom experience gave her the confidence to speak to groups without fear or worry, a strength she relies on every day.

"All the professors were really supportive," Crosby said. "I took an online systems class that I really struggled with. I called the professor to tell her I was getting off track, and she said, 'Don't worry. Come see me and we're going to walk through it. Take a deep breath.'"

Just as Crosby completed her bachelor's degree, the previous director announced she was retiring, clearing the way for Crosby to move into the executive director position. Because of her determination and the degree she earned at GSU, Crosby leap-frogged the promotion she originally wanted. She's now head of the foundation's entire south suburban division!