Masters Degree in Counseling

Posted by Jon Skor - 2013/01/21 11:55

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I have a question concerning finishing my Masters Degree in Counseling. I started it years ago and was almost finished (within one or two courses), but had to drop out due to health reasons.I was teaching in St.Paul, Mn. (also, asst. principal) and attended graduate school at the University of Wisc.--River Falls. Before, I could finish, we moved to Montana, making the commute way to far, obviously. I would like to finish this degree in order to have the MA or MS degree. I am not going to use the degree in a school setting, as I am 72 and am way too old for that. I am an author and would like to have this to maybe make my writings "'appear' at least'" more 'authentic' (prob. not the correct word). I have published one book and am working on others.

Do you have a recommendation of a college or university that would accept my credits and allow me to finish? I now live in Sacramento,Ca, work full time, and would like to finish online. I really don't want to use a 'Diploma Mill', as I have completed most of the work. I don't think that the U of W-RF will let me finish there.

Thank-you!

Jon

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Re:Masters Degree in Counseling

Posted by VickyPhillips - 2013/01/21 15:13

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Hi Jon,

Thanks for the great question.
You'd be surprised how many students drop our or stop out at the end of their master's or doctorate degree program.

In the old days moving meant you HAD to stop your studies.

Today, 2 major issues face you in your quest to complete your old master's degree online:

1) Credit Currency Limits -- Masters are very specialized. They are often focused on one narrow career / professional area. Yours was counseling -- maybe even educational
or school counseling, which is even more specialized to meet state educational licensing requirements for work in the public schools. You took your formal core "counseling" courses so very long ago that the default response from any college or grad school would be that the field of psychology/counseling has changed over the years and
so you would need to re-take and make "current" all your professional core courses.

I am not saying I agree with this assessment or thinking BUT in academia "currency" is always an issue in accepting the transfer of old credits toward a new degree.

2) Master's Credit Transfer Limits -- In the USA a master's degree usually requires 30-45 credits or 10 to 15 courses. Masters programs are so short they usually only allow a maximum of 3 courses or 9 credits be transferred in from another master's program. That's just the way the system is set up in the US.

So, if you tried to earn your master's now from some university other than the UW Wisconsin System, even if you did not have the currency issue, that new college would probably only accept 9-12 MAXIMUM of your old course credits.

There no such thing as an accredited life experience master's degree in the USA or a competency based master's degree either in the USA. If you want to "earn" one of these types of master's you'd be dealing with an unaccredited university --- and as you say, what's the point of that?

2 possible courses of action for online master's degree completion >>>>>>>

1) PETITION the University of Wisconsin System, the dean of your home campus, to let you complete your old degree now through online learning.

Whether they will let you complete THIS degree OR another master's with some credits can't be predicted. They will follow in-house procedures and the academic dean
over this or some related degree program will be the one who gets to decide based on university regulations that were in effect at the time of your matriculation.

Most schools are very strict about the petition process for completing a long-abandoned grad degree BUT some are not. Deans enjoy a lot of discretion.

NOTE: The University of Wisconsin statewide system now has an e-degree portal that
serves as the gateway for all their online degrees:
http://ecampus.wisconsin.edu/online-degree-programs/online-masters-degree.aspx

They do not offer a straight MS counseling degree BUT there may be other master's you'd like or which might somewhat match your old degree plan.

The problem is that master's courses are VERY specific to the type of master's so you'd likely need to start all over again with a new master's degree.

I would definitely go back to the U of Wisconsin system now that they have online degrees and throw myself on the mercy of any dean who'd give me a hearing.

2) Try a European / UK / Australian thesis or dissertation distance master's program ...
You will still need to read and write papers to complete some "learning modules", but as a writer the bulk of your studies would be at the end in writing a 25,000 or so word dissertation to show competency/mastery.

This is a complex route bcs it takes you into a very different type of education system. The European system is more research/writing intensive by nature and much less dependent on taking courses that someone else structures for you.

Try Monash University in Australia for a taste of this process:
http://www.monash.edu.au/

OR

The University of South Africa is the largest distance learning doctorate and master's university in the world and very well thought of.
http://www.unisa.ac.za

As a writer, you may enjoy reading/writing your way through a masters in the UNISA human services college. You will complete research modules and cannot actually transfer your old courses toward a UNISA degree -- but as a writer/researcher you could
very likely accelerate master's degree completion using your old courses/knowledge/competencies as a springboard.

Let us know what you think and decide to do.

All the best
Vicky Phillips

Jon Skor wrote:
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