

# Single Mom – College Student

By Nancy A. Cavanaugh

When I graduated from high school 21 years ago, college wasn't on the radar.

I didn't know what I wanted to do and I didn't have a way to pay for it. The fear that I hadn't been prepared for college and would fail sealed the deal.

After I graduated, I opted for a career in childcare as a nanny. From there I moved to data entry, graphic design, reporter, editor, freelance writer and Web design.

I learned on the job, or on personal projects at home, and college was still something I didn't need.

In late 2009, I started going to therapy. I was in a rut so my therapist encouraged me to explore the idea of going to college for a degree in psychology, something I'd been interested in since I was a teen.

She suggested Walden University because

it was an online school and one of the few accredited to give degrees in psychology.

I went home and read up about the school and the psychology program. I talked to my daughter and a few friends about it, and the consensus was for me to give it a shot.

When I went to my next counseling appointment, I handed my therapist the conditional acceptance letter. She was overjoyed.

The enrollment process was simple: Fill out the application and write a short essay on why you want to attend the school. I'd never written a college entrance essay and had my daughter proof it for me.

I also had to request my transcript from my high school. While we waited for my transcripts to arrive, I was directed to the federal student aid website ([www.fafsa.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov)) to apply for financial aid.

The forms were easy to fill out. I needed my tax documents from the previous year so they could determine my need.

When everything was filled out and the required quiz about the loans and grant was passed, I pressed the submit button. Within a few days I got an email telling me what I qualified for.

I was approved for a loan as well as money from the Pell Grant program, which doesn't have to be paid back.

Then I waited on pins and needles for everything to fall into place. Everything was rushed as classes started about three weeks from when I sent in the application.

About a week after I sent in the application, I received my official acceptance letter. I logged onto the school's website and clicked a button to acknowledge that I had received the letter and agreed to go to the school.

I was a college student.

Being in college has been great. I'm being a good role model for my daughter by going to college and getting great grades, which are things I expect her to do. The classes have also given my daughter and me something to talk about.

I'm on the path to a career that will provide a livable wage, as well as being challenging and rewarding.

And, best of all, I feel better about myself and am getting more confident as I complete each assignment, get great grades, and receive compliments on my work from my teachers and classmates.

If you're in a rut, like I was, or looking

## Available College Assistance:

Non-traditional students need all the help they can get when they are heading back to school. Thankfully, those in New Hampshire have several choices for scholarships:

**The Monsignor Philip Kenney Scholarship** is for minority residents of New Hampshire.

Students can be any age and attending a technical school, two-year or four-year program, and is based on financial need and merit. Awards are \$500-\$2,000.

**The Adult Student Aid Program** is for students 24 years or older returning to school to upgrade their skills, for career advancement or begin a new career.

To qualify, you must be an independent student and a resident of New Hampshire. Preference is given to previous recipients, students with the least amount of continued education and single parents. Awards are \$100-\$500 per term.

**The Medallion Fund Scholarship Program** is for students of any age attending vocational or technical programs to improve their skills for work purposes. Preference is given to students applying for manufacturing trades. Awards vary.

**The New Hampshire Order of Women Legislators Scholarship** is given to residents of New Hampshire who are non-traditional students pursuing a degree for public service.

Students must have been in the workforce or never have been enrolled in a post-secondary school. Award is \$500 per student.

For more information on these scholarships, contact your financial aid office.

for a new career challenge, or just wanting to finish what you started, look into the local colleges or an online schools.

If you're hesitant about going to college, there are adult enrichment classes offered locally. In Keene, you can find out more at [www.commed.keene.k12.nh.us](http://www.commed.keene.k12.nh.us).

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