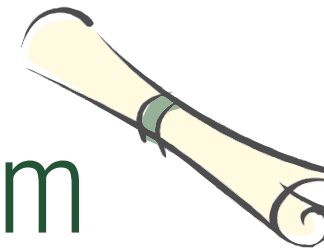


Choosing an Online Degree Program

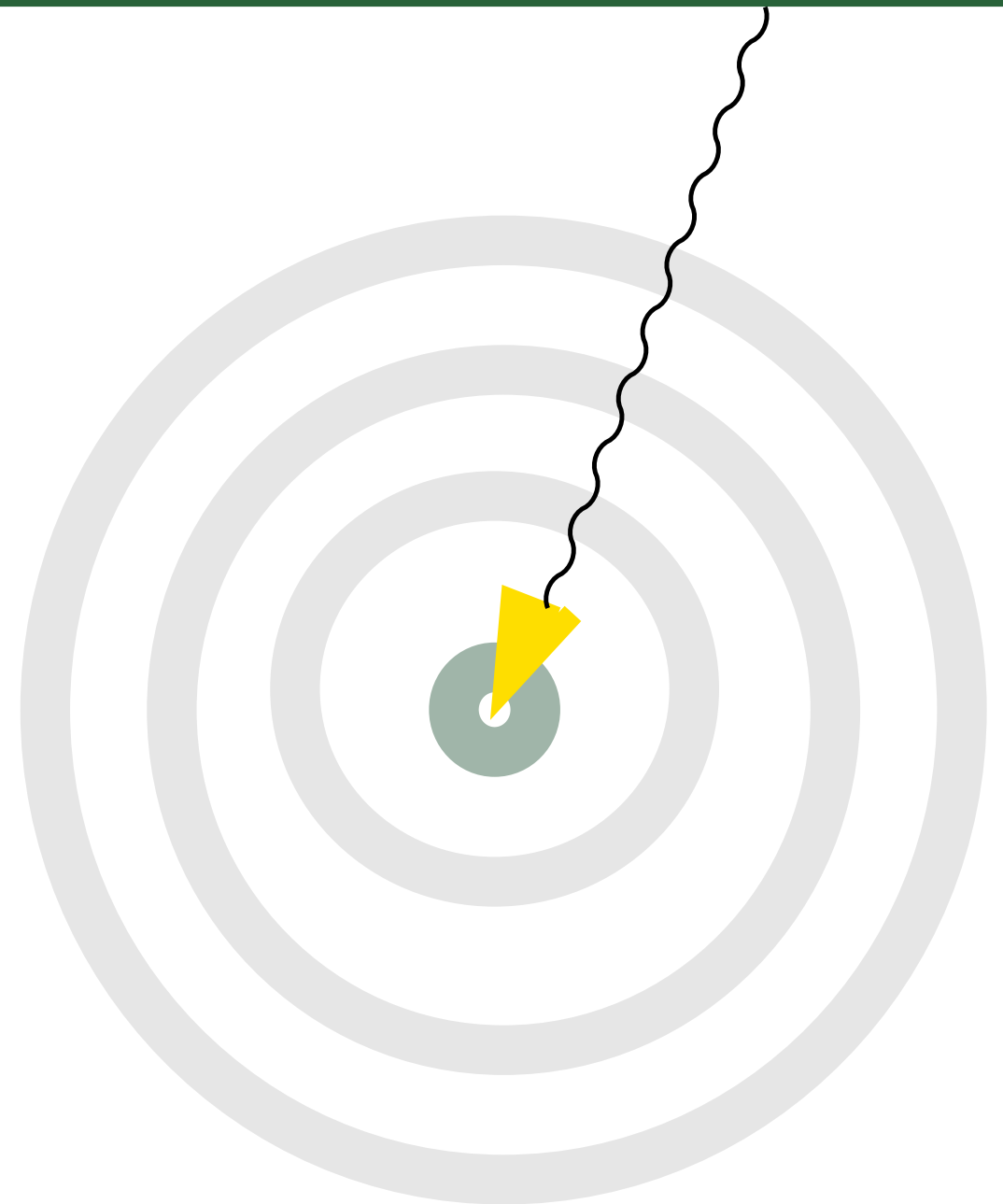


Tips for finding
the right online program



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Introduction: The Time is Now

*"There is no passion to be found playing small –
in settling for a life that is less than
the one you are capable of living."*

– Nelson Mandela

LIFE HAPPENS

Maybe you started college years ago. Maybe you've attended multiple colleges. Or maybe, for whatever reason, you never started.

Life has a way of scooping us up and leaving our best intentions behind.

Whatever your educational experience has been, if you're serious about pursuing an online degree program, your timing couldn't be better.



Experts say there could be as many as 55 million job openings in the economy through 2020, including 24 million newly created jobs– and 65 percent of all those jobs will require postsecondary education.



According to the U.S. Department of Labor, college graduates earn 39 percent more annually than those with only a high school diploma.

So if you're wondering if pursuing a college degree later in life is worth the investment, the answer is a rock-solid yes.

The following tips – about turning your dreams into goals, focusing on accreditation and asking the right questions – are essential to finding the path that's right for you.



Turn Your Dreams into Goals

*"A person is the product of their dreams.
So make sure to dream great dreams.
And then try to live your dreams."*

– Maya Angelou

TIME FOR SOUL SEARCHING

What's your dream for your life? To go into business for yourself? To make a difference in society? To help your children achieve their dreams?

Dreams make life worth living. They inspire us to rise above the average, the mundane and the expected. As a result, we aspire to be and do more.

But to live our dreams – to turn them into reality – we need to act. And that's why goals are necessary.

Dreams are beautiful and inspiring. Goals wear work boots. They are practical and actionable – and the means by which we achieve our dreams.

ONLINE PROGRAMS – YOUR MEANS TO AN END

Given the challenges of balancing family and work responsibilities with education, the flexibility of online degree programs makes them ideal for busy adults. But before you plunge in, you must answer this question first: What is your goal?

Is it to advance in your current career to the next level?

Is it to change career fields and move in a new direction?

Of course, some people pursue a college degree for personal reasons. It's something they've always dreamed of, or they simply want to broaden their knowledge or be a role model for their children.

All are great reasons to earn a degree. What's yours?



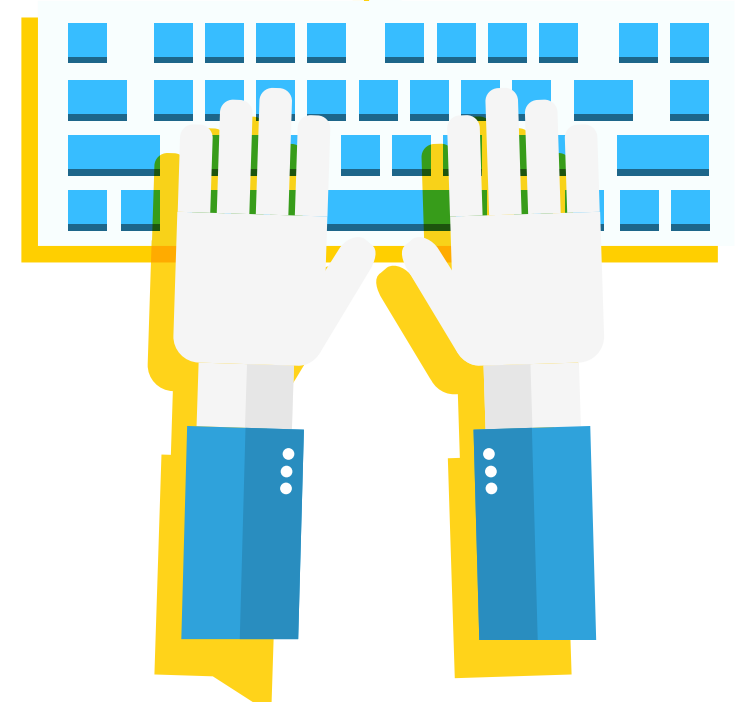
Turn Your Dreams into Goals

"Who says you cannot hold the moon in your hand?"

— Vera Nazarian

TAKE ACTION

- 1 Start with your dream. What's your vision for yourself? What's your ideal job?
- 2 Investigate the job market in your area. Is it growing? Stagnant?
- 3 Factor in reality. Would you relocate? Are you mobile?
- 4 Write your goal. The act of putting pen to paper brings focus and clarity.
- 5 Share your goal. Discuss it with a friend or family member. Talking about it makes it real and telling someone you're going to do it makes you accountable.
- 6 What's the first step you need to take to reach your goal? A college degree? Then finding the right degree program that will help you achieve your goal is your first step.



Focus on Accreditation

*"If you don't know where you're going,
you'll end up someplace else."*

– Yogi Berra



• ACCREDITATION MATTERS

• It would be a nightmare to invest months or years of
• irreplaceable time – and money – to find out that the
• online courses you took will not transfer to another
• school, or the online degree you earned is
• meaningless in the eyes of a potential employer.

• When researching online degree programs, you
• need to be concerned about the quality and rigor of
• the education the school provides to ensure it will
• prepare you properly for your chosen field.

• That's what accreditation is all about.

• CHOOSE REGIONALLY ACCREDITED SCHOOLS

• Regional accreditation is considered the “gold standard”
• of accreditation. Most traditional academic programs
• and nonprofit, brick-and-mortar schools, such as private
• liberal arts universities, are regionally accredited.

• Schools offering online degree programs that are
• regionally accredited are subject to the same review
• process as brick-and-mortar schools and must meet
• the same standards.

• While accreditation does not guarantee employment, if
• you attend a regionally accredited school, you shouldn't
• have to worry about your degree being accepted by
• employers or graduate schools.

• NATIONAL ACCREDITATION

• While regional accreditation is the highest form of
• institutional accreditation a college or university can
• obtain, national accrediting agencies evaluate specific
• types of schools and colleges that have a common
• theme – nontraditional colleges such as trade and
• career schools and certain online colleges.

• Keep in mind that it can be difficult to transfer from a
• nationally accredited school to a regionally accredited
• school. Regionally accredited schools usually do not
• accept credits from a nationally accredited school.

Focus on Accreditation

"We choose to go to the moon in this decade and do the other things, not because they are easy, but because they are hard."

– John F. Kennedy

• HOW TO VERIFY ACCREDITATION

It takes no time at all to research the schools or programs you're interested in. Go to either of these websites:

@ **U.S. Department of Education**

@ **Council for Higher Education Accreditation**



BUYER BEWARE

Avoid fraudulent programs and diploma mills. Begin your search for a legitimate online program by identifying a few fundamental traits about the school.

- ✓ Carefully examine the name.
- ✓ Does the university have a website?
- ✓ Where is it located?
- ✓ Avoid universities that use P.O. boxes or apartment numbers.
- ✓ Legitimate schools should list phone numbers, campus directories, and .edu website extensions.
- ✓ Beware of any school promising a degree in a short period of time for a flat fee.
- ✓ Diploma mills may not require course work. Some award it just for life experience.

Ask the Right Questions

*"It's the little details that are vital.
Little things make big things happen."*

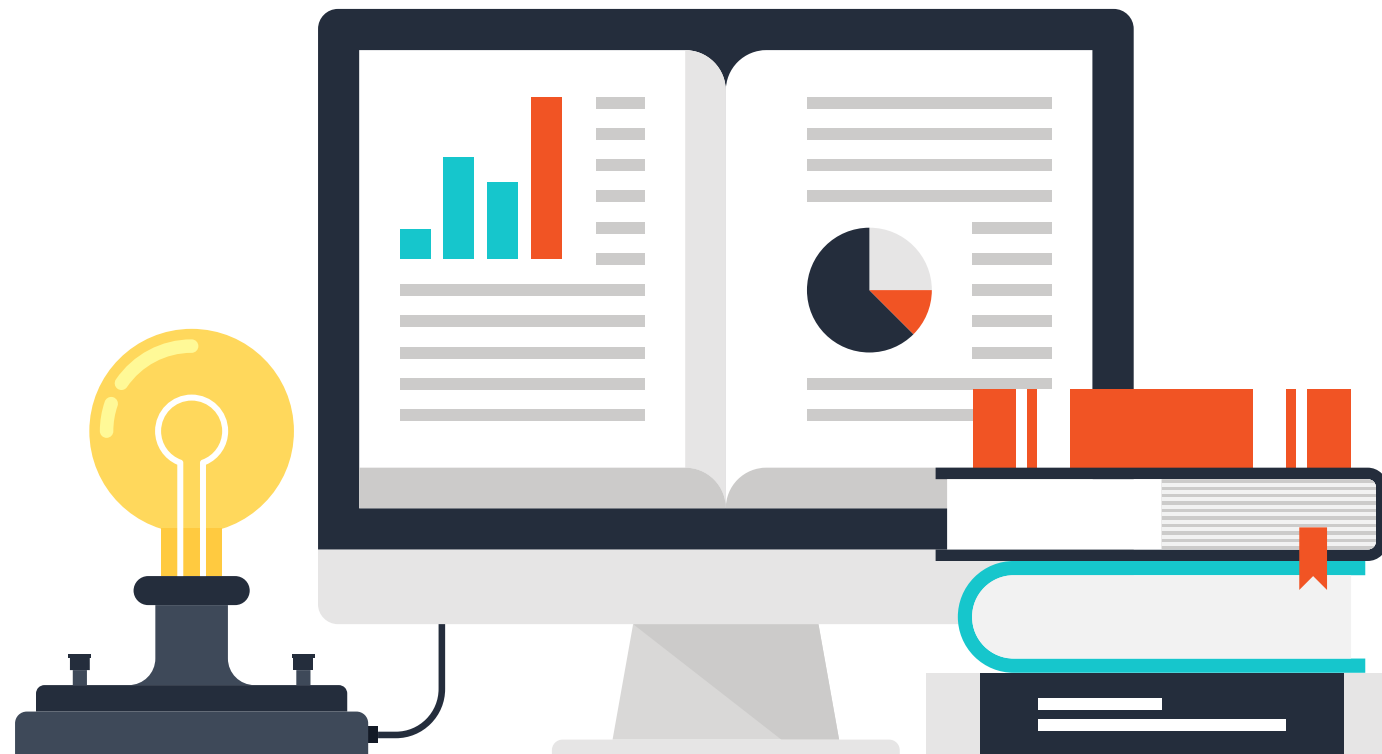
— John Wooden

DO YOUR HOMEWORK

Clearly, online degree programs are a great alternative for adult learners, but as you're probably realizing after the last chapter's discussion about accreditation, not all programs are created equal.

Some simply don't make the grade.

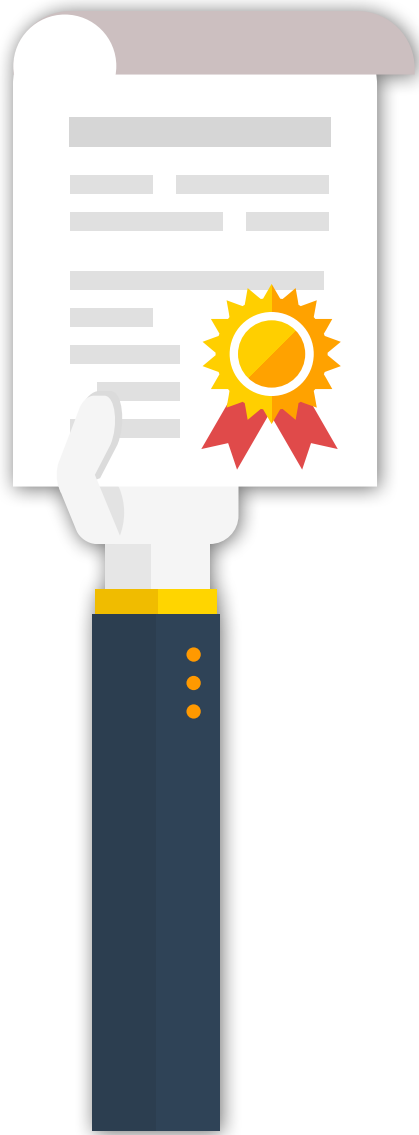
So what should you look for as you scour websites and what should you be asking as you speak with enrollment counselors?



Ask the Right Questions

"It's time to start living the life you have imagined."

– Henry James



HERE ARE SOME CRITERIA TO HELP YOU EVALUATE PROGRAMS:

Accreditation: Is the college you're considering regionally accredited?

Mission & Values: Will the school's mission and values help you meet your goals?

Ranking & Reputation: Is the online degree program offered through a well-established school? How does the school rank among its peers?

Online Degree Programs: Does the school offer a degree program that is relevant to your professional goals? Do faculty understand real-world demands?

Tuition: Does the school offer quarter credits or semester credits? How many credits are needed for your degree program?

Admissions & Enrollment: Is the enrollment counselor concerned with you and your educational and career goals? Does the school offer convenient start dates?

Degree Completion: Can you transfer credits from a previous school? Can you apply previous work, service or learning experiences toward academic credit?

Academic Support Services: Will you have a dedicated student advisor? Is tutoring available? Will you have full access to library and research resources?

Financial Aid Services: Is the school's tuition affordable? Are financial aid counseling services available?

Military Support: Do instructors understand – and degree programs accommodate – the mobile lifestyle of military personnel? Is the school recognized as military friendly?

Student Support Services: Are there opportunities to connect to other online students and faculty through social networks, clubs and associations?

Career Services: Is personalized career counseling available for online students? Are career services tools such as webinars and job-search resources available?

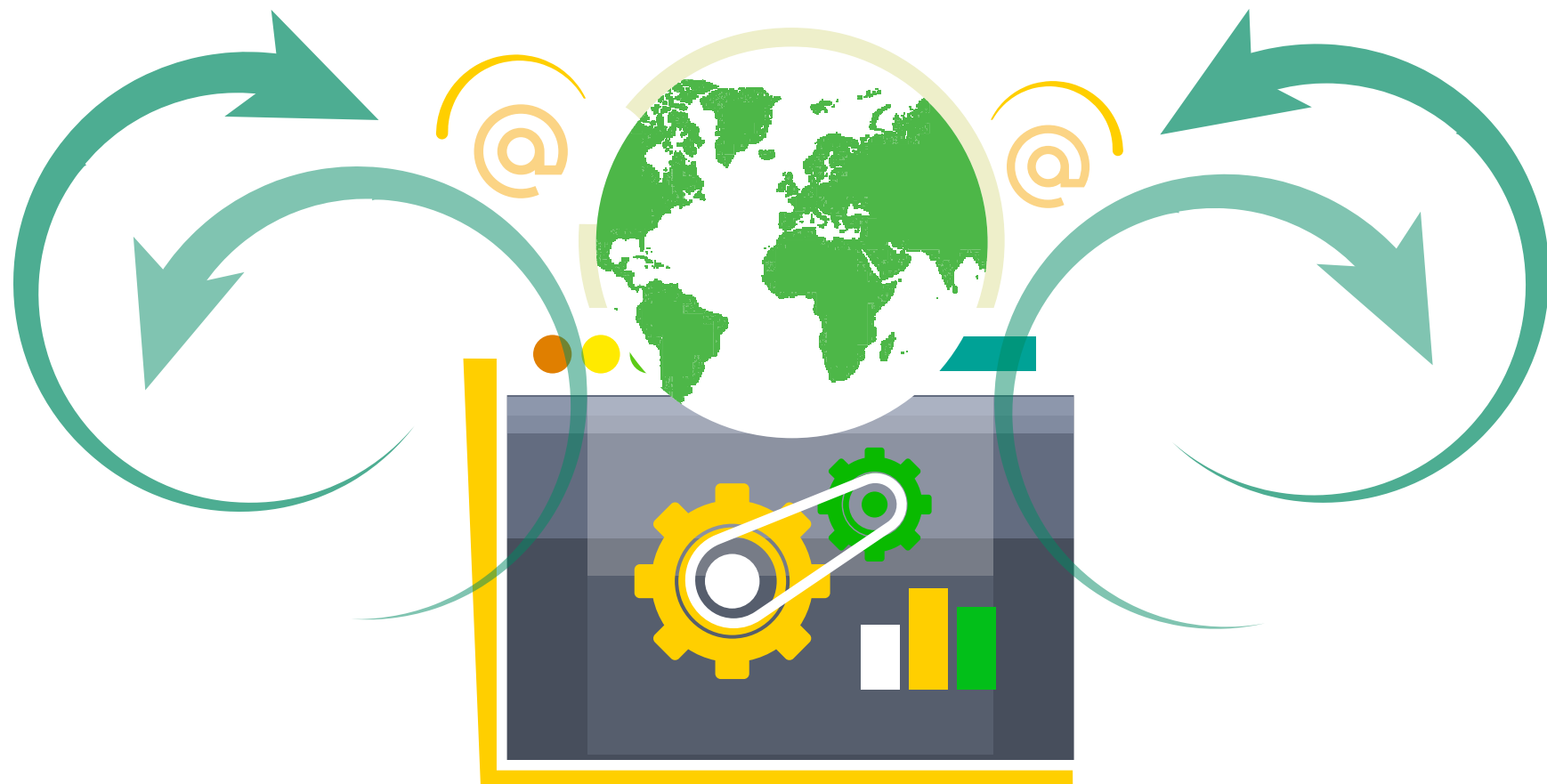
Faculty: How accessible are faculty? Do they hold the highest degrees possible in their fields? What is the student-faculty ratio?

Technical Support: Is there 24-hour help desk support? How do you connect when you have a technical problem?

Alumni: How large and active is the school's alumni association? What types of services are available to alumni?

How Saint Leo Compares.....

If you'd like to know how Saint Leo University stacks up, [click here](#) to download our "Online Degree Programs Comparison Guide". It's a helpful tool to use when you're doing research and want to compare programs.



Are You Ready?

*“What you get by achieving your goals
is not as important as what you
become by achieving your goals.”*

– Henry David Thoreau

Regardless of the program you choose, if you want to earn your college degree online you need to:



MAKE THE TIME

While online programs offer increased flexibility over traditional campus-based programs, they are at least as – and sometimes more – academically challenging. One reason why is that online terms are typically shorter than on-campus semesters and more intense. Students generally spend 9-12 hours per week on each course.



BE SELF MOTIVATED

Online learning puts more responsibility on you, the student. Will you be able to stay on top of assignments without the structure of a traditional classroom to guide you, creating study habits and a study calendar, or example, and then sticking with them?



BE ORGANIZED

Being organized is imperative. It enables you to do your best work and complete assignments on time and helps eliminate stress when your days are exceptionally busy. With only 24 hours in a day, being organized helps you manage your time and get more done each day.



BE COMFORTABLE WITH TECHNOLOGY

You do not need to be a technology expert to be successful in an online program and you do not need sophisticated hardware. You do need a relatively up-to-date computer and a reliable, high-speed internet connection. You should also possess basic technical skills and be comfortable navigating online.



HAVE STRONG READING AND WRITING SKILLS

Strong reading and writing skills are essential. Textbooks may be used in online courses, but you will also be reading a large amount of material online, which is quite different from textbook reading. Additionally, most communication occurs through writing, including classroom discussions.

“Don’t let the noise of other’s opinions drown out your inner voice. Have the courage to follow your heart and intuition. They somehow already know what you truly want to become. Everything else is secondary.”

– Steve Jobs

Let Saint Leo Help



At Saint Leo, quite simply, our goal is your goal.

We want to help you achieve a college degree from a well-respected university – a university that is regionally accredited and offers a proud Catholic heritage and deep commitment to core values.

Saint Leo University.

Saint Leo University is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges to award the associate, bachelor’s, master’s, specialist, and doctoral degrees. Contact the Commission on Colleges at 1866 Southern Lane, Decatur, Georgia 30033-4097 or call (404) 679-4500 for questions about the accreditation of Saint Leo University.



About Saint Leo University

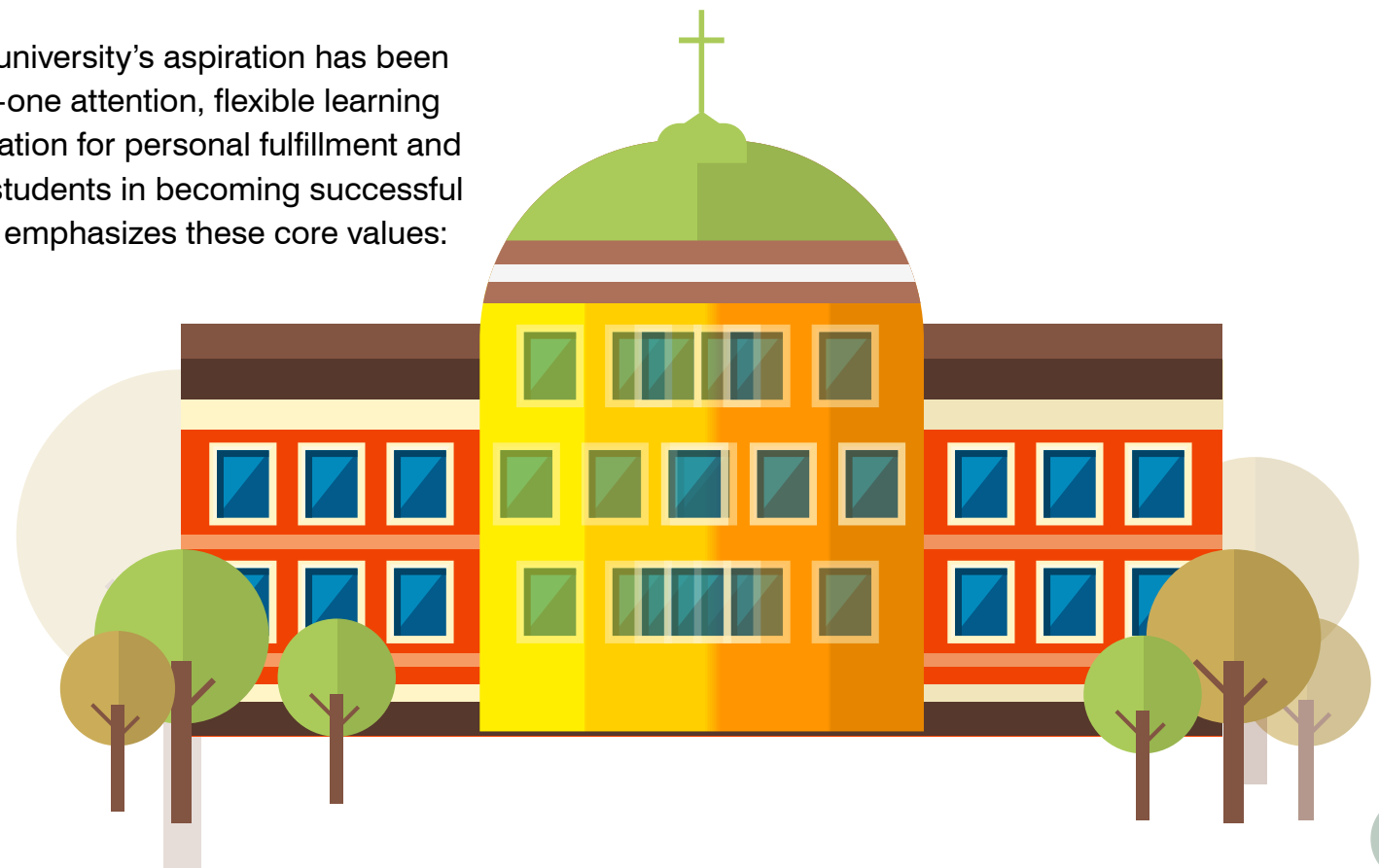
- In 1889, Saint Leo University was founded by the Order of Saint Benedict and chartered by the State of Florida. Since then it has remained one of the nation's premier Catholic, coeducational, liberal arts universities, serving people of all faiths and backgrounds.

Our scenic, 150-acre University Campus is located in the heart of Florida, just 30 miles north of Tampa and 90 miles west of Orlando. We enroll more than 16,000 students across our traditional campus, online degree programs, and more than 40 teaching locations, including 14 on military bases in six states.

CORE VALUES

Since Saint Leo's founding, the university's aspiration has been to provide students with one-on-one attention, flexible learning opportunities, and a solid foundation for personal fulfillment and career advancement. To assist students in becoming successful scholars and citizens, Saint Leo emphasizes these core values:

- Responsible Stewardship
- Personal Development
- Community
- Excellence
- Respect
- Integrity



Online Degree Programs at Saint Leo

- Since 1998, Saint Leo University has been a leading provider of online education to working adults and is a major global provider of education to the military. The university provides innovative, rigorous and engaging undergraduate degree programs that address current and emerging issues in a variety of fields.

ONLINE BACHELOR'S PROGRAMS

- Accounting
- Business Administration-Accounting Specialization
- Business Administration-Logistics Specialization
- Business Administration-Management Specialization
- Business Administration-Marketing Specialization
- Business Administration-Project Management Specialization
- Computer Information Systems
- Criminal Justice
- Criminal Justice - Criminalistics Specialization
- Criminal Justice - Homeland Security Specialization
- Health Care Management
- Human Resources Management
- Liberal Studies
- Psychology
- Religion
- Sociology

ONLINE ASSOCIATE PROGRAMS

- Business Administration
- Criminal Justice
- Information Technology
- Liberal Arts



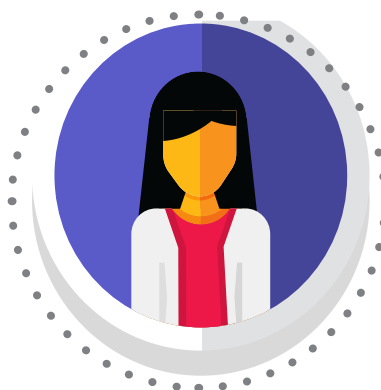
Online Degree Programs at Saint Leo

ONLINE MASTER'S PROGRAMS



School of Business

- Master of Accounting
- M.B.A.
- M.B.A. – Accounting
- M.B.A. – Health Care Management
- M.B.A. – Human Resource Management
- M.B.A. – Information Security Management
- M.B.A. – Marketing
- M.B.A. – Marketing Research and Social Media Analytics
- M.B.A. – Project Management
- M.B.A. – Sport Business
- School of Arts & Sciences
- Master of Arts in Theology



School of Education & Social Services

- M.Ed. – Educational Leadership
- M.Ed. – Exceptional Student Education
- M.Ed. – Instructional Leadership
- M.Ed. – Reading
- M.S. Criminal Justice
- M.S. Criminal Justice – Corrections
- M.S. Criminal Justice – Critical Incident Management
- M.S. Criminal Justice – Forensic Science

- M.S. Criminal Justice – Legal Studies
- M.S. Critical Incident Management
- M.S. Cybersecurity
- M.S. Instructional Design
- Master of Social Work – Advanced Clinical Practice
- Master of Social Work – Advanced Standing Program
- Teaching Exceptional Children (recertification)

Doctoral Program

- D.B.A.

Online Graduate Certificates

- Accounting
- Criminal Justice Management
- Health Care Management
- Human Resource Management
- Information Security Management
- Instructional Design
- Marketing
- Marketing Research and Social Media Analytics
- Reading
- Theology

Sources

"It's time to start living the life you have imagined."

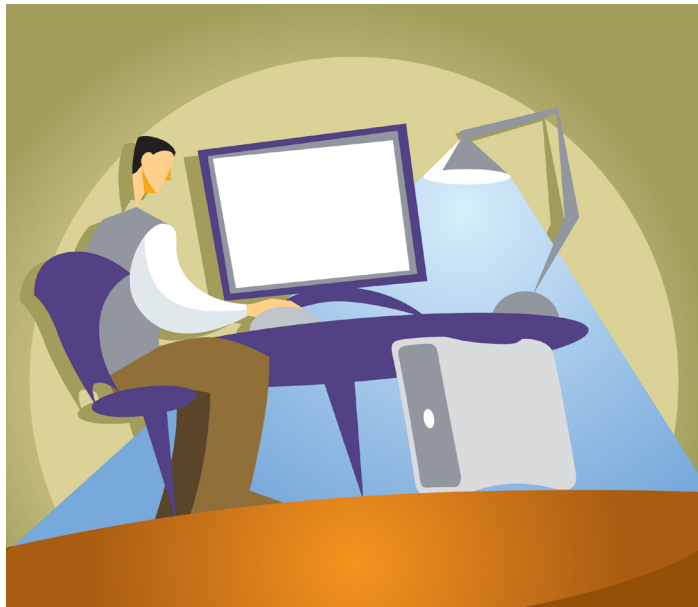
– Henry James

Recovery: Job Growth and Education Requirements through 2020,
Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce.

United States Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics,
Employment Projections.



Learn More



CONTACT SAINT LEO



For more information about Saint Leo's online degree programs, you can visit us at online.saintleo.edu.



You can also call to speak with one of our enrollment counselors at 888.875.8265 (*undergraduate*) or 800.707.8846 (*graduate*).