

LIFELONG LEARNING

just a fact of life going

Undergrad diploma only first step

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In the past, earning an undergraduate degree was considered an end in itself. And landing a good job soon afterwards was a pretty good bet.

In the 21st century, however, a much more pragmatic approach to beefing up your career-enhancing credentials is a necessity — making an undergrad degree merely a first academic step.

“Lifelong learning is just a

fact of life going forward,” explains Linda Franklin, CEO of Colleges Ontario. “And with the retirement of the baby boomers and changes to our knowledge-based economy, employers are going to demand increasingly good professional credentials.”

Gervan Fearon, dean of the G. Raymond Chang School of Continuing Education at Toronto’s Ryerson University, not only agrees with Franklin’s assertion, but says his institution is dedicated to the new academic norm.

“What we do in this context, uniquely we believe, begins with having probably the largest number of courses available, with more than 1,000 certificates that can be earned by continuing education students,” Fearon explains.

“Many of those programs are specifically formatted for maximum flexibility,” he continues, “meaning that you can pursue them whether you’re doing it at night, in the summer, during the day, or online. And we have one of the best online distance education systems across Canada.”

“Additionally,” says Fearon, the Chang School “works in partnership with employers to identify employees who would like to add a particular certificate

or get their first degree. We work together to design short courses and workshops as well as full-fledged degree and certificate programs.”

Chang School student MyLy Pham is just one of an increasing number of Ontarians who faced the new facts of life squarely and recalibrated her academic strategy accordingly.



PHAM
G. Raymond
Chang School

With her sights initially set on a career in some facet of the fine arts, she enrolled in the Ontario College of Art & Design in 2002 and graduated four years later with a BSA in photography.

While studying at OCAD, Pham earned money working as a class assistant putting together projects for the IT department. While doing so, she says she had two realizations. One was that she wasn’t interested in commercial photography, where the likeliest job opportunities would be when she graduated.

The other epiphany, says Pham, was that “I really like organizing things and figuring out aspects having to do with project management, which involves

analysis of what’s needed and what resources you have, then putting it all together.”

Those insights — plus being hired by OCAD to continue the work she had performed before graduating — led Pham to “realize that I would need some broader skills, so I decided to study project management at the Chang School and get a PMP certificate.”

Currently finishing her final course, Pham has already seen firsthand the benefits of continuing education because she was recently promoted to the position of project co-ordinator in the development of a project management office at OCAD.

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DID YOU KNOW?

A 2009 report by the Canadian Council on Learning found that approximately two-thirds of all job openings now require some type of post-secondary credential, and that the most common reason for taking post-secondary classes for people aged 25 to 54 was to find or change jobs.