National Survey Finds Women Choose Price Over Prestige When Considering College

Survey Also Finds Personal Achievement is the Number One Reason Women Seek Degree

TEMPE, AZ (September 9, 2013). Women overwhelmingly chose price over prestige when choosing a college, as affordability is their biggest barrier to achieving a college degree, according to a new national survey by Western International University® (West). The survey also found by a margin of more than three-to-one that women see online degrees as more achievable than traditional on ground programs.

In addition, women aren't just pursuing degrees to make more money, but rather as a badge of personal achievement. When given reasons for continuing their education, 97 percent chose accomplishing a personal goal as very or somewhat important while 89 percent noted it would be very or somewhat important to earn more money in their field.

The West Start SmartSM Study, which was conducted in July, surveyed women age 22-50 with an interest in continuing education, to gather insight into their thoughts about higher education and the motivators and barriers they face to earning a degree. Currently only about one-third of U.S. adults over the age of 25 have a college degree. (Source: http://www.census.gov/prod/2012pubs/p20-566.pdf )

The Lure of a College Degree Remains Strong

While the survey found that tuition costs and a lack of time are two main barriers for women wanting to earn a college degree, a majority of those surveyed have a desire to go back to school because they see the overall value of a college education. Interesting results include:

- 94 percent believe attaining a college degree would positively impact their lives.
• 83 percent believe a college degree is important to being a good role model.
• 88 percent are very or somewhat likely to attain a college degree in the next 5-10 years.

“Women of all ages are incredibly motivated to earn a degree; however, many have been unable to find a program that is flexible, affordable, manageable and that fits with their lifestyle,” said Tracy Lorenz, president of Western International University. “We’ve spent the past year at West developing a new online course format that specifically meets the needs of adult students, so that they can achieve their goals and be successful.”

**Women See Online Education as Beneficial and Attainable**

The survey found that women are very receptive to online colleges and universities because they see them as affordable, flexible in allowing them to choose when to complete their courses, and offering the same options as traditional higher education programs. The survey also found that the respondents believe online universities offer specialized degree programs (79 percent), will advance their career (79 percent), and have professors who are experts in their fields (71 percent).

The survey, which focused on women who have an interest in going back to school, also found that when considering college, women want part-time options, no set class schedule, and the ability to complete courses online rather than in person. In addition, respondents indicated that they are open to newer forms of course delivery, including video lectures and other online teaching methods.

“In developing our programs, we spent a lot of time researching the gaps in the higher education system and formulating methods that would fill those gaps,” Lorenz said. “We are extremely proud of our innovative online delivery that not only fits a variety of lifestyles, but also is incredibly effective in helping our students learn.”

West’s new online course model features 8-week courses that begin each month. Each course follows a weekly schedule that allows students to review short videos and reading assignments; complete interactive exercises and assignments to reinforce their knowledge; and engage with instructors and fellow students to put the learning into practical context. This method has been proven to help students better absorb and utilize new information.
West also provides complimentary additional resources to support students, including tutoring and a writing center, career coaching and resume assistance, and student assistance programs that range from financial planning to health and wellness support. West offers degrees in Accounting, Business, Information Technology and Behavioral Science. Consumer information about West programs is available at http://www.west.edu/online-degree-programs.

College a “Smart” Choice
While the women surveyed see a college education as a key driver of personal and professional success, it also has a positive impact on their state of mind. In fact, two-thirds of women say having a college degree makes or would make them feel smarter.

West held a series of Start Smart Tour events throughout the country to empower women to reach for their goals by looking smart, working smart and being smart in every aspect of their lives. West also is inviting students to Start Smart℠ by taking their first two 3-credit required courses for $200 each.

To learn more about West's program offerings, visit west.edu.

Survey Methodology
KRC Research conducted an online survey of 1,000 women age 22-50 who are very or somewhat interested in pursing a degree or certificate program through any type of college or university in the next 1-3 years. The survey was conducted July 24-28, 2013. Click here to view the complete survey report.

About Western International University
Western International University (West), founded in 1978, is a wholly owned subsidiary of Apollo Global, Inc. Apollo Global, Inc., a consolidated subsidiary of Apollo Education Group, Inc. (NASDAQ: APOL), is a U.S. based leader in world education with institutions in South America, Mexico, India and the UK. Apollo Global institutions provide academic programs serving the business needs of leading companies and online education that best prepares working professionals with the information they need to remain competitive in the workforce. Visit the web at west.edu for additional information.

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