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shine

Adult learner learns at her own pace
Biology professor and GreenFaith fellow
Promise to Grandfather to earn degree fulfilled
Convenience of online program real advantage
Economics is a tool for understanding life
Corrections officer to earn Criminal Justice degree

It's your time to SHINE!

Saint Leo University is on a mission – to educate and prepare our students to make better lives for themselves and their communities. As part of our mission as a university serving community and student needs, Saint Leo University offers undergraduate online degree programs including:

BACHELOR'S PROGRAMS:

Accounting

Business Administration –
Logistics Specialization

Business Administration –
Management Specialization

Business Administration –
Marketing Specialization

Business Administration –
Project Management
Specialization

Computer Information
Systems

Computer Science –
Information Assurance

Criminal Justice

Criminal Justice –
Criminalistics Specialization

Criminal Justice –
Homeland Security
Specialization

Cybersecurity
Program pending SACSCOC approval

Health Care Management

Human Resource
Management

Liberal Studies

Psychology –
Clinical/Counseling
Specialization

Psychology –
Developmental
Specialization

Psychology –
Experimental
Specialization

Psychology – General
Specialization

Religion

Sociology

Sociology – Applied &
Clinical Specialization

Sociology – Diversity &
Inequality Specialization

ASSOCIATE PROGRAMS:

Business Administration

Criminal Justice

Information Technology

Liberal Arts

Each of these programs is designed to assist professionals in meeting challenging career goals and to prepare them for the rapidly changing professional world in which they live and work.

Saint Leo University has a strong commitment to principles of equal employment opportunity and equal access to education. Saint Leo University does not discriminate on the basis of age, color, disability, ethnic origin, genetic information, gender, nationality, race, religion, or veteran status, or any other category protected by federal, state, or local law in its educational programs, admissions policies, financial aid, employment, or other school administered programs.

2023 Chris deMaagd portfolio sample.
For portfolio purposes ONLY.

IGNITE your ASCENT

LOOK INSIDE TO LEARN IF ONE OF SAINT LEO
UNIVERSITY'S ONLINE UNDERGRADUATE
PROGRAMS IS A GOOD FIT FOR YOU.



At Saint Leo University, we are humbled by our students' deep commitment to advance their careers, gain real-world experience, and enhance their lives through higher education. We have highlighted success stories from a few of our students and are proud to share them with you in this issue of Shine. When will you take that first step to embark upon, or finally complete what you started? When will it be your time to **shine**?

The commitment we have to our online learning community mirrors the devotion to our students and their success across the entire university, transcending place and mode of participation. Our convenient degree programs are instructed by accomplished faculty and encompass a variety of in-demand fields. These programs are backed by a network of accessible, supporting professionals with many years of experience in delivering education online.

However, Shine only scratches the surface of the supportive learning environment we provide to our students. Once you get to know the people behind our story, the history of our innovative, 125-year-old private, not-for-profit institution, I am certain that you will see yourself here.

Seize your opportunity to **shine** at Saint Leo University. Please contact us at 888-875-8265 and speak with an enrollment counselor or interact with us by visiting our website at online.saintleo.edu. We are here to support you and your educational goals. It's your time to break through and **SHINE!**



Jeff Walsh
Associate Vice President
Enrollment & Support Services

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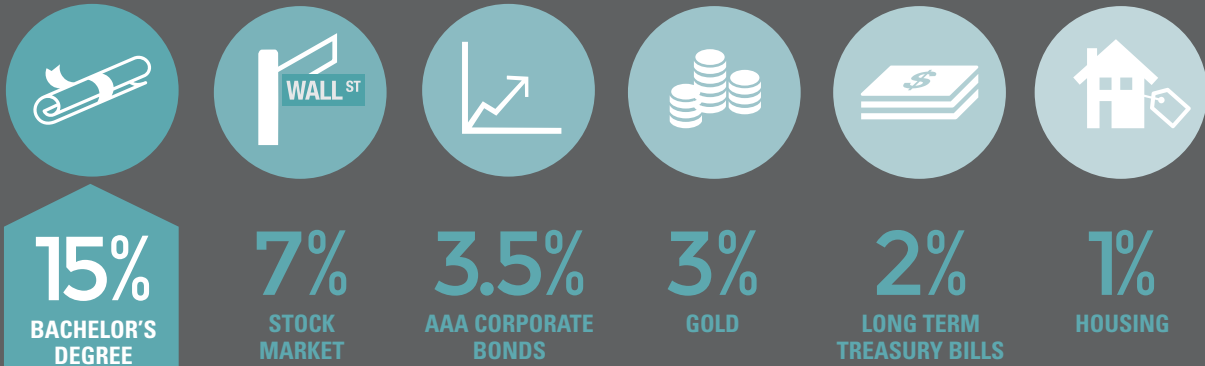
Saint Leo University is a Catholic, liberal arts-based university serving people of all faiths. Rooted in the 1,500-year-old Benedictine tradition, the university seeks balanced growth in mind, body, and spirit for all members of its community. On its home campus and many education centers, Saint Leo University offers a practical, effective model for life and leadership in a challenging world, a model based on steadfast moral consciousness that recognizes the dignity, value, and gifts of all people.

To accomplish its mission, the university community creates a student-centered environment in which love of learning is of prime importance. Members of the community are expected to examine and express their own values, listen and respectfully respond to the opinions of others, serve the community in which they live, welcome others into their lives, and care for all of God's creations.

We look forward to helping you take the next steps in achieving your goals. Contact an enrollment counselor today at onlineenrollment@saintleo.edu or (888) 875-8265.

WHAT'S THE VALUE OF A COLLEGE DEGREE?

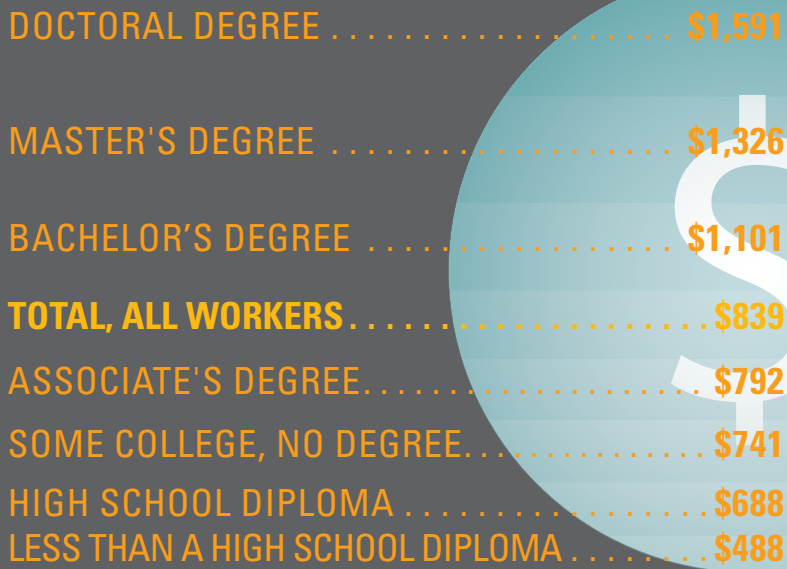
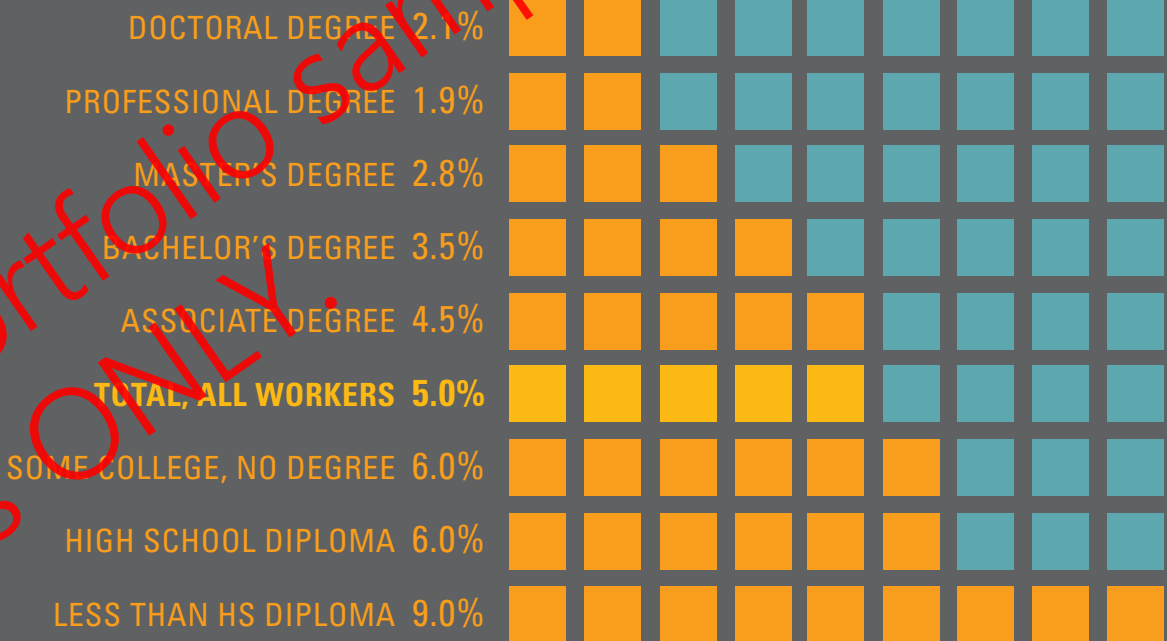
A college degree is a SMART INVESTMENT



College Compared to Alternative Investments The benefits of a four-year college degree are equivalent to an investment that returns 15.2 percent per year; more than double for stock market investments and more than five times for bonds, gold, or real estate.

Increase your chances of EMPLOYMENT

Unemployment rate by educational attainment in 2014



NOTE: Data are for persons age 25 and over.

Boost your SALARY

Median weekly earnings by educational attainment in 2014

Work-life EARNINGS

The typical college graduate earns an estimated \$650,000 more than the typical high school graduate over the course of a 40-year work life.



TYPICAL COLLEGE GRADUATE
\$1,420,000



TYPICAL HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATE
\$770,000

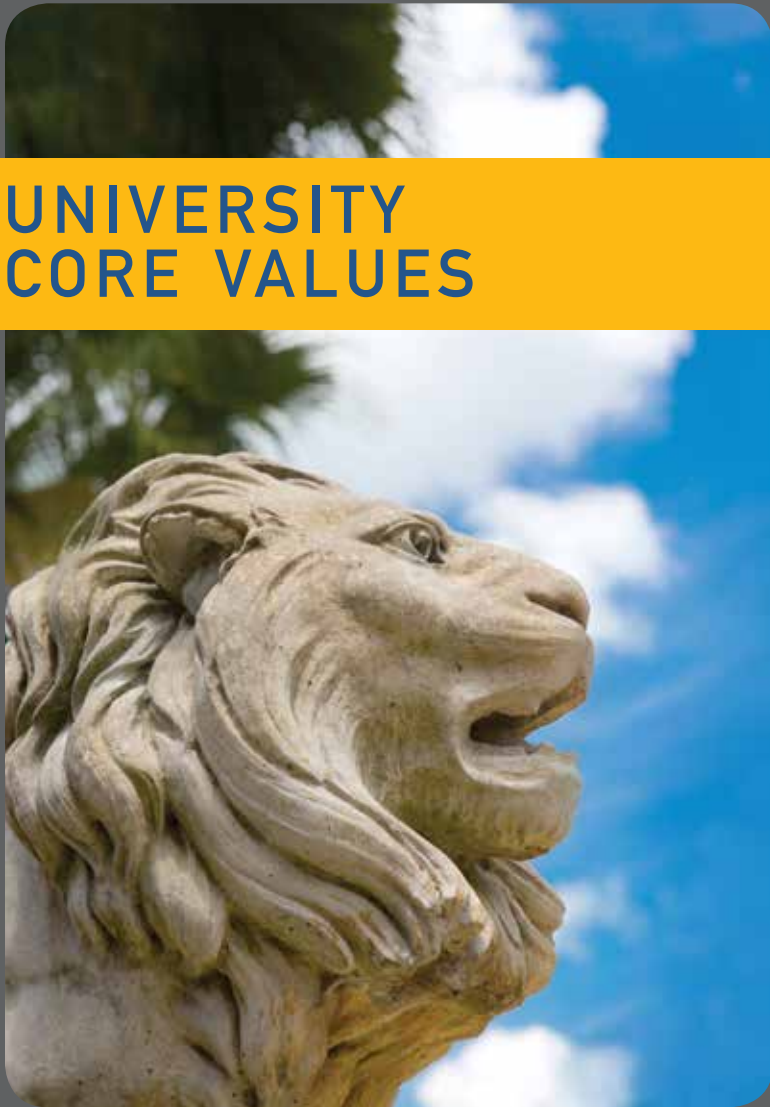
MAJORS BY SALARY POTENTIAL

Starting Salary and Mid-Career Salary



ACCOUNTING \$45,300 – \$74,900	CRIMINAL JUSTICE \$35,300 – \$58,400	PSYCHOLOGY \$36,300 – \$60,700
BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION \$43,500 – \$71,000	HUMAN RESOURCES \$38,800 – \$63,900	RELIGIOUS STUDIES \$34,900 – \$57,900
COMPUTER INFORMATION SYSTEMS \$50,800 – \$87,400	LIBERAL ARTS \$36,600 – \$60,500	SOCIOLOGY \$37,400 – \$58,800

Sources: Bureau of Labor Statistics; 2013-2014 PayScale College Salary Report; Education Pays 2013, College Board; Lifetime Earnings of College Graduates, Pew Research Center.



UNIVERSITY
CORE VALUES

EXCELLENCE Saint Leo University is an educational enterprise. All of us, individually and collectively, work hard to ensure that our students develop the character, learn the skills, and assimilate the knowledge essential to become morally responsible leaders. The success of our university depends upon a conscientious commitment to our mission, vision, and goals.

COMMUNITY Saint Leo University develops hospitable Christian learning communities everywhere we serve. We foster a spirit of belonging, unity, and interdependence based on mutual trust and respect to create socially responsible environments that challenge all of us to listen, to learn, to change, and to serve.

RESPECT Animated in the spirit of Jesus Christ, we value all individuals’ unique talents, respect their dignity, and strive to foster their commitment to excellence in our work. Our community’s strength depends on the unity and diversity of our people, on the free exchange of ideas, and on learning, living, and working harmoniously.

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT Saint Leo University stresses the development of every person’s mind, spirit, and body for a balanced life. All members of the Saint Leo University community must demonstrate their commitment to personal development to help strengthen the character of our community.

RESPONSIBLE STEWARDSHIP Our Creator blesses us with an abundance of resources. We foster a spirit of service to employ our resources to university and community development. We must be resourceful. We must optimize and apply all of the resources of our community to fulfill Saint Leo University’s mission and goals.

INTEGRITY The commitment of Saint Leo University to excellence demands that its members live its mission and deliver on its promise. The faculty, staff, and students pledge to be honest, just, and consistent in word and deed.

Lydia Orr knows a thing or two about getting a package from point A to point B. As an integrated logistics analyst at NASA, it’s her job to get supplies from Earth to astronauts on the International Space Station (ISS). “The astronauts may need water, or an air filter, or the filter that processes water from urine – that’s all hardware that I have to send into space,” she says. “There’s lots of planning involved because there’s only one way to bring the hardware up or down.”

Saint Leo’s online bachelor’s program in business management does for Orr what she does for NASA: gets her what she needs when she needs it.

As a married mother of five with a full-time career, Orr likes the flexibility Saint Leo offers. When looking for online degree programs as an adult learner, Orr wanted one that would give her the same quality of education online as enjoyed by the school’s traditional, campus-based students.

“I wanted to share the same experiences as a student in a brick-and-mortar building, so that if we had the same book then we could both relate and help each other. I got that at Saint Leo.” In pursuit of her degree, Orr came to value the online community she found. “I had online boards and classes where my classmates were on the other side of the world, but we could still have conversations. Walking across a campus is the only thing I missed – but I can’t say that I missed carrying 10 pounds of books.”

Orr’s job at NASA is equal parts logistics, project management and human resources. Getting food and materials from earth to space is a team effort. “It’s more than just me: there’s a team of engineers and shipping people, and we work together to move hardware from the ground to the ISS. I also have to manage schedules and costs, and maintain deadlines using the funds I’ve been allocated.”

Orr’s classes in business management and human resources (her major and minor, respectively), have expanded her awareness of the different ways to do her job. “I’ve learned about different cultures and personalities and perspectives on how to do business. Learning HR is learning, from a business sense, the best way to handle any situation.”

Orr relies on the program’s flexibility, both day-to-day and over the long term. “Being married with five kids and a full-time job puts a lot of stress on things. If I had a family member in the hospital or someone sick that day, I could log on at 10 at night and not miss anything.” And when she did miss something, Orr said that her Saint Leo professors were very understanding. “It can be overwhelming to work full-time, go to school and raise a family. Sometimes school had to take a back seat. Saint Leo was really great about that. My advisors let me reschedule, and they were very supportive.”

Orr found Saint Leo’s professors in her online classes were very aware of their adult learners’ scheduling needs, and willing to accommodate those needs. “They gave us deadlines up front, so if I knew something was coming up I could plan my schedule around it. I knew that if I had to miss a semester because of travel or extra hours at work that would be okay.”

Orr is currently making the final push to graduate next spring with a bachelor’s degree in business management and a minor in human resources. “I started in 2008 and I’m just now going to finish next year. It’s been about five-and-a-half years, with a big break in the middle of it due to my kids.”

Orr explained that it was easy to re-enter whenever she had to spend time away because it wasn’t like entirely starting over. She was already familiar with the tools and routines, so it was easy to jump back in as if she’d never left.

The bottom line for Orr is that Saint Leo has stuck with her over the long haul of her educational journey, and she says, “That’s why I’ve never had any desire to go any place else.”

GET TO KNOW Lydia Orr

CURRENT RESIDENCE: Houston, TX

CURRENT PROFESSION: Integrated Logistics Analyst at NASA

FAMILY: Married mother of five

FAVORITE QUOTE: “[If] my people who are called by My name humble themselves, pray and seek My face, and turn from their evil ways, then I will hear from heaven, forgive their sin, and heal their land.” – 2nd Chronicles 7:14 (Holman)

BUSINESS MANAGEMENT PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

- Requires 120 credits
- Transform your entrepreneurial vision into a comprehensive business plan. With Saint Leo’s Management degree, you’re well positioned to climb the ladder to the top.

LEARN MORE

At online.saintleo.edu or call an enrollment counselor today at (888) 875-8265.

SAINT LEO FACT

Multiple undergraduate business degrees are offered in your field of study.

online
~ on ~
HER TIME

Adult Learner Learns At Her Own Pace, In Final Countdown For Degree

2023 Chris deMaagd portfolio sample. For portfolio purposes ONLY.



LYDIA ORR AT ROCKET PARK IN HOUSTON, TX ▶

SAINT LEO FACT

Saint Leo is the third largest Catholic university in the nation and welcomes those of all faiths.

A MATCH MADE IN HEAVEN

Doc Robin Rocks Biology

If you live in Virginia, chances are you've heard of The Doc Robin Band. The group gathers regularly in watering holes throughout the state to play a mix of classic rock and blues and feature regularly on the local NPR affiliate. If you know The Doc Robin Band, you also know that the keyboardist is spectacular – he's classically trained and has been playing since he was four years old. He is the heart and soul of the band which carries his name. But that's just in his free time. By day, he's a professor of biology at Saint Leo University.

DR. VAN TINE AT HARWOOD'S MILL RESERVOIR IN NEWPORT NEWS, VA

In 1981, Robin van Tine was earning the doctorate that would become the Doc in Doc Robin. He was a new father who spent his days taking care of a baby boy and completing his dissertation in marine science. Never one to sit still, he answered an ad for an adjunct professor at Saint Leo University.

"I showed up for the interview wearing my son in a baby sling," says van Tine. "I've been teaching at Saint Leo ever since. And that little baby who slept through the interview is now an adjunct professor at Saint Leo. He teaches business and criminal law."

Dr. van Tine began his career at Saint Leo at the Langley Education Center on Langley Air Force Base. Since then, he has taught in various Saint Leo Education Centers throughout Virginia. Today, he teaches online and on-ground at the Fort Eustis Education Center. Dr. van Tine enjoys being able to teach a wide variety of students, from active duty, to retired military, to members of the broader community.

Saint Leo students are required to take a set of general education courses titled University Explorations. Since five of these courses are science-focused, Dr. van Tine's classes are popular ones. He developed a minor in environmental studies and created a 100-level University Explorations course titled Human Ecology. It's the only such course offered online anywhere and one of his favorites focusing on environmental sustainability, social and environmental justice, and equity.

"Human Ecology is an interdisciplinary course, a blend of ecological science, sociology and psychology, economics, ethics," he says. "We look at the science of a situation, as well as the ethics of a situation. For example, areas with the worst industrial pollution tend to also be areas where the poorest people in the world live."

Students discuss political, sociological and moral questions using real-world situations as examples. "With China, you have the most rapid industrialization in the history of the world, as well as the most rapid industrial pollution as a result of that growth. On the other hand, China is working rapidly to create sustainable technologies like solar and wind, and buildings that are energy neutral. In environmental history, what has happened is that until you have a middle class whose basic needs can be met, you don't have pressure from the people for clean water and clean air. When people are struggling to put a roof over their heads and feed their families, they don't have political power."

"I believe in supporting and nurturing students. I don't know how they juggle everything today."

Dr. van Tine has deepened and reinforced his knowledge by completing the GreenFaith Fellowship, an 18-month program for religious professionals. The interfaith program includes teachings from Jewish, Catholic, Protestant, Hindu, Buddhist and other faiths to promote living on Earth sustainably, and to advocate for social justice. "Most religions include a deep respect for what Catholics would call God's creation," says van Tine. "It's a powerful way to underscore what students are learning; that the world's religions say it's morally wrong to destroy ecology for reasons of greed and overconsumption."

During his 33-year career with Saint Leo, Dr. van Tine has had a front-row seat to the rise of online learning. In the 1990s, Dr. van Tine started teaching online in addition to his on-ground courses. "Back then, I used a floppy disk to access a blank classroom that all the students had access to," he says. "At first I thought online courses would be challenging – not as effective as teaching in person. But I've found that even though I'm not in the presence of the students, I learn their personalities by reading their comments and reviewing their work."

In many ways, online courses can be more rigorous, he says. Students must complete several assignments every week and be experienced time-managers. Dr. van Tine appreciates the many demands on today's students, and recalls when he was a young father, completing his dissertation and interviewing for jobs. "I believe in supporting and nurturing students. I don't know how they juggle everything today. In the Center for Online Learning, we have students deployed in Iraq, and students juggling families, work and school. It's a lot."

In addition to teaching and performing, Dr. van Tine is a regular contributor to Human Ecology Review, the bi-annual journal of the Society of Human Ecology. He recently reviewed Pope Francis' book, *The Garden of God: Toward a Human Ecology*, and a forthcoming review of Pope Benedict's climate change encyclical, *Laudato Si*. He also will be presenting a paper on the online Human Ecology course he designed for Saint Leo at the Society for Human Ecology's 10th International Conference.

Students lucky enough to be in one of Dr. van Tine's classes should expect in-depth and lively discussion of current environmental topics, and perhaps a chance to hear some really great music. 🌱

GET TO KNOW Dr. Robin van Tine

CURRENT RESIDENCE: Tidewater, VA

TITLE: Professor of Biology

FAMILY: Wife, Lucy (elementary teacher); son, Tristan (Adjunct Professor of law at Saint Leo); daughter, Ada (actor and yoga instructor); son, Skye (sophomore at Roanoke College, studying computer science)

EDUCATION: B.S. Zoology, University of Florida; M.S. Botany (Aquatic Systems), University of Florida; Ph.D. Marine Science (Marine Ecology), College of William & Mary

BIGGEST INFLUENCE: H.T. Odum, Thomas Berry

CAN'T LIVE WITHOUT: Wilderness

LEARN MORE

At online.saintleo.edu or call an enrollment counselor today at (888) 875-8265.



RESPECTING HER ELDERS

A GRANDDAUGHTER KEEPS HER PROMISE

Patricia Bernard-Fingal has spent her life caring for others. You might say it's in her blood. As an 18-year old college freshman, Bernard-Fingal met and fell in love with the man who would become her husband. Shortly afterward, they started a family. Since Bernard-Fingal's husband had a well-paying job, they decided that she would stay at home full-time and care for their three children, putting her dream of earning a college degree on hold.

SAINT LEO FACT

Saint Leo University was founded in 1889 and first offered online education in 1998.

GET TO KNOW

Patricia Bernard-Fingal

CURRENT RESIDENCE:
Elkridge, MD

FAMILY: Sons Tobari and Torrey, daughter Tamara; granddaughters London, Tori and Alyssa

BIGGEST INFLUENCE: My grandfather, the late Reverend Albert Maxwell

CAN'T LIVE WITHOUT:
My family

ADVICE FOR PEOPLE JUST STARTING AN ONLINE DEGREE: It's easier than you think. Stay connected to your instructor and student advisor and do not procrastinate!

HEALTH CARE MANAGEMENT PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

- Requires 120 credits
- The courses explore strategic management of health care systems, health care financial management, health care policy analysis, and legal and ethical challenges facing the industry.

LEARN MORE

At online.saintleo.edu or call an enrollment counselor today at (888) 875-8265.

“Saint Leo gave me the ability to work at my own pace.”



◀ PATRICIA BERNARD-FINGAL AT CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL IN CAPITOL HEIGHTS, MD

Bernard-Fingal had emigrated from Jamaica at eight years of age. Coming from a close-knit family, she maintained a strong relationship with her Jamaican relatives, who placed a premium on education. “As a child, growing up in Jamaica, my grandfather taught me that being educated is one of the most important achievements in life,” she says. “I promised him that I would one day go back and earn my degree.”

Bernard-Fingal and her husband settled in Mitchellville, MD and, for the next 14 years, she owned a hair salon where she served her clients with compassion and a sense of humor. When her youngest child entered middle school, she decided to enroll in university courses to complete her degree. Around the same time, however, she developed a blood clot and suffered life-threatening complications.

“It was scary,” she says. “I flat lined. I saw the light at the end of the tunnel. I can tell you it is a very real thing.” With care and support from her family, she got back on her feet and with a renewed determination, began her studies online at Saint Leo University.

“I want to help people as they age,” she says. “That’s my ultimate goal. I learned so much from my grandparents. I promised my grandfather again before he died that I would complete my degree and I do this now in his honor.”

It has not been an easy journey. Halfway through her degree, Bernard-Fingal’s husband became ill and underwent bypass surgery. She continued to operate the salon, seeing clients and handling bookkeeping tasks while taking care of her family and studying. She credits her clients, her family, and her academic advisor with keeping her going. “They were my cheering section.”

She is especially grateful to her advisor, Scott Albert. “Scott was so supportive. He touched base with me often and when he saw that I dropped a class like I did when I was sick, he called to see if I was okay. Some days I would say, ‘I’m tired. I can’t do this’. He would say, ‘Take this course now, save this one for later.’ He gave great advice and what he suggested worked.”

When it came time to do an internship as part of her degree requirements, Bernard-Fingal did not let time or distance deter her. She had always wanted to live in Charlotte, NC, so she approached Novant Health Charlotte Orthopedic Hospital, and convinced them to accept an adult learner. The hospital had not previously admitted adult learners but something about Bernard-Fingal made them change their minds. She was admitted and immediately started packing for the nine-week program.

“I felt like I was going away to college,” she says. “I drove down to Charlotte, got an extended stay hotel, and flew back every two weeks to see my family, service my clients and make sure all was well with the salon. It was busy but it was very successful.”

Bernard-Fingal made such an impression on hospital administrators that she was asked to return to Charlotte to direct a team building retreat she had organized for hospital leadership. And she may have paved the way for other Saint Leo students to intern at Novant Health Charlotte Orthopedic Hospital. At the completion of her internship, the hospital CEO remarked that he was so impressed with Bernard-Fingal’s performance, he would consider other adult learners, especially those from Saint Leo.

Bernard-Fingal completed her studies and graduated in May 2015 with a bachelor’s degree in healthcare management. “Saint Leo gave me the ability to work at my own pace. I always knew when I had deadlines, and I was able to work around those by doing schoolwork in the evenings. I didn’t know how exhausted I was until I stopped!”

And she’s not stopping any time soon. Bernard-Fingal plans to complete a Master’s degree in healthcare management also through Saint Leo. Along with her children, all three of whom are college graduates, she hopes to own a chain of assisted living homes.

For now, she is working in the administrative offices of Central High School, a member of Prince George’s County Public Schools, where she cares deeply for the students. “This is high school, so we have pregnant girls and kids with difficult conditions at home. They just need somebody to care. I think I can offer something in that arena. I have a lot of love.”

For others considering earning degrees online, Bernard-Fingal has a word of advice. “It has taken me 34 years and three previous schools to earn this degree. I have to say, the online program worked best. For others thinking about online education, I would say don’t allow anything, any challenge or circumstance, to stop you. It’s better to have truly tried than never tried at all. Try one class. Fulfill your dreams. Age doesn’t matter; there were people older than I was graduating. If you’re driven, you can do it.”



MEET Nancy Check Career Services Advisor

Nancy Check has an important job. As Career Services Advisor for undergraduates in online education at Saint Leo University, she assists students with professional development, industry research, and finding job leads in their chosen fields.

Cheek comes naturally to the role of educator, having taught courses in design at a Florida-based design and technology academy.

“I provide a very individualized service,” she says. “Part of my job is to prepare and present information to students related to their individual programs of study, such as HR or logistics. The presentation looks at what the specific program translates to in terms of career: what does it look like starting out, what types of jobs are available, what certifications are needed, what expectations should be around starting salary? It helps students equate their program selection to career or advancement opportunities while they’re still in school.”

Best of all, Cheek’s career services are free. “A lot of schools don’t offer as comprehensive a program as Saint Leo does. For the duration of their studies at Saint Leo, as well as after graduation, we provide career counseling free of charge,” she says.

When she’s not developing program-specific presentations, Cheek provides advice on professional development topics such as writing cover letters, creating a LinkedIn profile, creating a resume, and interviewing for a job.

Cheek urges all of her students to think of career services as a four-year process rather than something to be addressed at graduation. “Your job search should really be an individualized career path that you develop in steps as you grow professionally,” she says. “It’s not something that happens overnight or in the term before graduation.”

Cheek has developed a program which breaks the career development process into five tasks per year for each of the four years of study. The process is designed to teach students what they like or don’t like, the importance of networking, and the power of research, so that they learn what to expect in terms of salary and industry outlook.

“Access to this information enables students to make intelligent decisions about where they want to go next and have realistic expectations about what they’ll encounter after graduation,” says Cheek.

And of course, the best part of her job is receiving emails with the subject line, “HIRED!”



MEET Renelda Merzius

Student Advisor

Renelda Merzius not only talks the talk, she has walked the walk. As an advisor for students in online education at Saint Leo University, Merzius knows firsthand what students experience on a daily basis because she has been in their shoes.

Not long ago, Merzius held a full-time job while earning a master's degree in business online from Saint Leo. "I can totally relate," she says. She remembers reading her textbook in the car, doing homework during her lunch break, and studying after work and on the weekends. "I did all the things that my students are doing today. I tell them, you have to learn self-management before you can even get to time management."

It was her own student advisor at Saint Leo who suggested that she consider working for the university after graduation. "When I looked into it, it seemed like something I would really enjoy." When she's not advising students, Merzius does volunteer work and enjoys spending time with friends.

Merzius specializes in assisting students working toward Bachelor's degrees in accounting and associate's degrees in business. Each term, she works closely with her students; checking in regularly to make sure things are running smoothly, answering questions, and offering tutoring services when needed.

"Some students are really independent and don't need a lot of academic advising assistance," she says. "Others share more about their experiences. Since we interact online, quite a few students will come to visit in person after they graduate. It's always fun to put a name with a face."

As the first person in her family to earn a degree, Merzius feels a personal connection to her students. "It means a lot to me to hear my students' stories. I counsel them to do what's best for them but also keep a goal in mind," she says. "It's been really rewarding for me to be there from the beginning to the end of their educational journey."



Distance learner stays connected, graduates from online to on-campus

SAINT LEO FACT
Student advisors provide guidance and support to all online students via email, phone, and live chat.

The three-word phrase, "location, location, location" is most commonly utilized in the real estate industry to demonstrate value. For Miles Surdi, three important locations are his laptop computer, his home in Spring Hill, FL, and the Saint Leo campus; an hour and twenty minutes to the south. Surdi graduated summa cum laude with a bachelor's degree in accounting, which he earned online, and he'll continue his matriculation on the Saint Leo University campus where he'll begin a master's program in 2016.

Surdi relied on the convenience of an online college program, as it enabled him to work toward his bachelor's degree while also staying home to take care of his partially disabled mother, Kalisa. The program's built-in flexibility allowed Surdi to work towards his degree at his convenience – a bonus he took advantage of just once. "I took one two-month summer break, but decided that it wasn't worth it to delay. I wanted to get my degree as quickly as possible." When he returned to his classes, he challenged himself to stick with it until graduation. "It wasn't always easy. During my last two classes, I was working 60 hours per week and going to school for 20." But he made it through with the help of his mother, whom he credits with really pushing him to earn his undergraduate degree. Surdi was the first person in his family to do so.

“
Saint Leo was meaningful to my grandfather because of his deep faith and great respect for the Benedictine tradition that Saint Leo had integrated into its curriculum.

Surdi's selection of Saint Leo was almost foreordained thanks to a relative's appreciation for the university. His grandfather never went to college, but he had hoped his daughters would attend and graduate from Saint Leo. He died before that dream could become reality, but Surdi's mother brought the dream forward to him. "Saint Leo was meaningful to my grandfather because of his deep faith

and great respect for the Benedictine tradition that Saint Leo had integrated into its curriculum. And my mother has always inspired me to go to school and get ahead."

Saint Leo joins outstanding quality with the flexibility of an online degree program. Earning a degree the way he did allowed Surdi to meet other students attracted to this unique combination. "An online learning environment in eight-week terms offers a lot of flexibility for people with active lives. I studied with a lot of professionals and members of the military." Surdi got to know his fellow long-distance classmates and found a surprisingly strong online community comprised of a wide variety of personalities, particularly in his chosen subject. "I corresponded with many students outside of the classroom through the accounting club. For over a year we communicated via text, voice, and email. Additionally, online courses were very engaging in terms of getting to know other students, especially when you had a professor who emphasized group projects. There was a nice social element to the online learning environment."

Surdi's choice of Saint Leo reaped dividends far beyond fulfilling his grandfather's dreams. Like a lot of the university's students, he can't possibly winnow a list of his favorite professors and instructors down to a few favorites. Saint Leo's educators are well-known for helping students beyond the scope of their classes and subjects. "I had many professors that I would consider to be my favorite," Surdi explains. "Russell Jacques replied to my emails with answers that went beyond accounting." His art and writing classes were also particularly memorable. "In my art class, we used technology for visual media. In my writing class, our instructor taught us that writing is a process of constant revision. He really encouraged us to work, and by the end I felt that I'd become a better writer. In my profession being a good communicator is extremely important because accounting is wizardry to a lot of people and you have to be able to communicate clearly."

Surdi will be seeing some of those professors and students face to face when he starts graduate studies in cybersecurity at Saint Leo in January. "The university has extended me a wonderful offer: I have the opportunity to get my master's degree and serve as a graduate assistant." Earning his bachelor's degree last spring and preparing to start on his master's motivated Surdi to come see his alma mater with own eyes – and he's excited. "I took a trial run on campus for graduation. It's beautiful. I look forward to living there and being a graduate assistant while working toward my degree." 🌟

GET TO KNOW Miles Surdi

CURRENT RESIDENCE: Spring Hill, FL

CURRENT PROFESSION: Tax Compliance at PricewaterhouseCoopers

BIGGEST INFLUENCE: My mother, Kalisa. She has always supported me in my academic aspirations.

ACCOUNTING PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

- Requires 120 credits
- Prepares students for careers in fields like tax accounting, auditing, and financial accounting
- Offers ability to earn bachelor's and master's degrees in accounting in only five years

LEARN MORE At online.saintleo.edu or call an enrollment counselor at (888) 875-8265.

SAINT LEO FACT

Saint Leo University's online programs are identical to courses at our traditional Florida campus.

ECONOMICS: a Tool for Understanding Life

Lucia Farriss, instructor of economics at Saint Leo University, was five years old when she and her family immigrated to the United States from El Salvador. Many of her family members still live in the capital city of San Salvador, and she travels back often to visit them. Perhaps it's not surprising that Farriss grew up to be an economist, interested especially in international trade and development. "The world is increasingly interrelated, and to be successful in this global economy, we have to understand how the connections work," she says.

Farriss began teaching online courses at Saint Leo in 2001. Today, she is a full-time instructor at University Campus primarily teaching Principles of Macro and Microeconomics, Environmental Economics, Money and Banking, and International Economics.

"Most people either love or hate macroeconomics; they aren't indifferent to it. For me, I love it," she says. "It deals with issues related to policy, unemployment and inflation things that affect all of us in one way or another. In order to be a good citizen, it's important that we understand the implications of government policy. Microeconomics, on the other hand, deals more with the individual or the firm. It's focused on individual decision making, things like pricing or output decisions."

Saint Leo offers a major in economics on campus and many courses are also offered online. Principles of Macroeconomics and Microeconomics are required with any Saint Leo business degree. "Together they provide a good foundation in decision-making for future business leaders," says Farriss. Economics for Life, an introductory economics course, which is part of University Explorations, is also offered online.

Economics is an indispensable tool for understanding life, says Farriss. "It helps you make rational decisions with the information you have before you, and I think you can apply that to all aspects of your life."

As someone who teaches both online and on-ground courses, Farriss is uniquely positioned to see the dynamics shaping both groups of students. "I like being able to teach a combination of online and on ground courses," she says. "I get a general picture of the overall society of learners today by being able to teach both."

At Saint Leo, on-ground courses are traditionally populated by college-age students who live on campus. According to Farriss, Saint Leo's traditional college-age, campus-based students have a thirst for going out and changing the world. "They see opportunity in everything," she says.

"Online students, however, come from a more diverse range of backgrounds, many returning to college after several years in the labor force. Their life experiences make the online classroom very fulfilling and enriching," she says. "We tend to become more practical with experience and the way we see opportunity changes. It's wonderful to be able to teach both types of students."

Perhaps because she started teaching in the online program, the online courses are close to Farriss' heart. Every semester she reads the biographies that students post to introduce themselves to the rest of the class. She is always impressed by the numerous demands her students juggle: families, jobs, spouses, and children. "They value education so much that they're willing to do work at night to earn their degrees."

She once did the same. As the mother of two small children, she balanced a job and a family while working toward her undergraduate and graduate degrees. Travelling to and from campus was a given, as online learning was not yet offered. "The rise of the online learning platform is an incredible opportunity for people to go back and get their degrees when they have tremendous demands pulling them in other directions," she says.

There are some moments, especially with students on active duty, that she will not soon forget. "When the United States was actively in Iraq and Afghanistan, I was often left speechless to discover many students in my classes were deployed on a ship or in a camp somewhere in Iraq, and yet they were still submitting work regularly. One student, in particular, said he could hear bombs in the background as he was taking his test. It really puts into perspective how much these students value their education."

"For me as an educator, it is an honor to be a part of their lives." 🌟

◀ PROFESSOR FARRISS ON THE SAINT LEO UNIVERSITY CAMPUS



MEET David Becan Enrollment Counselor

David Becan, enrollment counselor at Saint Leo University, is warm and engaging on the telephone—just the kind of person you'd want to talk to about making your dreams come true.

Becan is the second son of Jamaican immigrants who came to the United States during the tumultuous 1960s and '70s. While his parents had to repeat high school in the United States, both would eventually earn master's degrees. The example they set inspires Becan today.

As an enrollment counselor in Saint Leo's Center for Online Learning, Becan talks to prospective students ranging from 18 to 80 years of age. "The demographic is astounding," he says. "We talk to people in the military, to single parents, grandparents, people without transportation but with computers at home. You wouldn't find this diverse a group on a physical campus."

Becan is a student himself in the Center for Online Learning, working toward a degree in project management. He takes courses online in the evenings when his two sons are in bed. "Saint Leo is the golden nugget of online education," he says. "If it weren't for online courses, there would be no way that I could do it. The online experience has been great."

Becan's personal experience carries over into his conversations with students considering Saint Leo. "As a student myself, I appreciate that the enrollment process is very student centered," he says. "We don't do a fast-food enrollment process here; we're more like a sit-down dinner. We want to hear about your past, your present, and your future. We want to make sure it's a mutually agreeable fit, a win-win for both parties. I'm not here to influence anyone if it's not the right choice for them."

For example, Becan recently took a call from a woman in her 70s. "She is someone who is comfortable with computers. She gets on Facebook. Sometimes she watches her grandkids. She was interested in studying psychology. I was really impressed that she wanted to continue to learn new things at this stage in life. I talk to a lot of people in their 50s who say, 'I'm too old for that'. But then I think about her. She wanted to complete her degree for her own personal benefit and now she's studying for her bachelor's. She reminds me that it's never too late to recreate yourself."

MAKING CONNECTIONS

GET TO KNOW Lucia Farriss

CURRENT RESIDENCE: Tampa, FL

TITLE: Instructor of Economics

FAMILY: Husband, Scott; son John Paul and daughter Kayla

EDUCATION: B. A. and M.A. Economics from the University of South Florida

BIGGEST INFLUENCE: My parents, for their love and support of me personally and professionally

CAN'T LIVE WITHOUT: My faith, my family

LEARN MORE

At online.saintleo.edu or call an enrollment counselor today at (888) 875-8265.

SAINT LEO FACT
Participation in the Criminal Justice Association allows students to network with one another and faculty.

"HARDEST JOB EVER" Inspires Degree in Criminal Justice

Melinda Griffin Berryman could be a motivational speaker. She is warm and engaging, intelligent and thoughtful. She laughs easily and often, and the things she says are poignant and inspiring. Which is why it is so difficult to imagine her as a corrections officer in a medium-security men's prison.

While it was the hardest job she'd ever had, it ended up being the spark that ignited a career in criminal justice. "I worked with 900 inmates over six years," she says. "It was the most difficult thing I ever did, but it led me to my true calling."

A single mother of three little boys, Berryman put in long hours to provide for her family. Since elementary school she had dreamed of pursuing her education, but those plans were put on the back burner until the boys were grown and on their own. Her job was exhausting, but coming home to her sons made it worthwhile.

"Being in the prison was like another world—mentally, it was the toughest environment imaginable," she says. "I couldn't eat while I was there because of things I'd seen. It was intimidating."

Berryman felt especially vulnerable given her gender. "Going in as a female, you have to establish yourself from day one — the inmates automatically think you're a weak link. And when they're in lock-down, you're in lock-down. Literally."

But the longer she worked at the prison, the more curious she became. "I would talk to the inmates from time to time to try to find out why they were in prison," she says. "When I started looking at the files and talking to them, I was intrigued. You have

so many people from varying demographics; poor as well as wealthy families. I wanted to know what exactly had gone on. I wanted to learn more about the law that got these inmates where they were. At the time, I had no idea that this job would be the foundation for what I wanted to study."

Berryman completed an associate's degree in criminal justice technology/latent evidence at a local community college in Sanford, NC. It was a start, but she wanted more. As the years passed and her two older boys moved out, Berryman began researching university programs. She knew what she wanted, but it was difficult to find just the right fit.

"One of my friends knew I was looking and she called me and said, 'You have to check out Saint Leo University. They have exactly what you want.' When I looked myself, I said, 'Yes, yes, yes! This is it!'"

Berryman admits that she had to talk herself into online education. "I'm old-school," she says. "Saint Leo was my first time ever being an online student. Not being able to raise my hand to ask a question felt weird to me at first. But then I got into the curriculum and learned that the teachers are always just an email or a phone call away. Within the first week, I knew I could do it."

Berryman's favorite classes were the labs, especially the fingerprinting classes. "They were interactive and I learned so much from each one."

When she completed her degree last May, Berryman emailed her instructor. "I thanked him for helping to feed a hungry mind," she says. "Every instructor I had went above and beyond. They were there not only to teach but to encourage me. That really inspired me and motivated me to succeed."

Berryman compares her progress toward a degree to planting a garden. "I wanted to plant a seed to inspire my children and grandchildren to follow their dreams," she says. "Others came along and watered that seed and it has blossomed into something beautiful."

One of her proudest memories from the journey is that while studying, working and caring for her family, her grades were top-notch, earning her a consistent place on the Dean's List.

Berryman is the first to admit that she wanted nothing more than succeed. "The question is not 'What do you want?' but, 'How badly do you want it?'" she says. "I wanted that education badly. Ninety-nine percent would never do. You have to give 100 percent of yourself. My laptop was glued to my hip. It was like my twin!"

In January 2016, Berryman will once again begin her studies, this time in forensic science. "I'm in the master's program at Saint Leo," she says. "My dream is to have a master's degree at minimum. This is a lifelong dream for me. I'm really interested in crime scene investigation or in becoming an instructor myself. I thank Saint Leo for being there to help me achieve this goal."

Berryman hopes that her example will inspire others to pursue their own education. "I'm 42 years old," she says. "It's never too late." ✨

GET TO KNOW Melinda Berryman

CURRENT RESIDENCE: Sanford, NC

PROFESSION: Full-time student

FAMILY: Sons Odell, Antoine, and Marquell; grandson Eli; and my boyfriend and support system, Charles

FAVORITE SAINT LEO COURSE: Body Fluids as Evidence, taught by Dr. Waugh

GUIDING PRINCIPLE: To set an example and show others that dreams really can come true

APPROACH TO WORK-SCHOOL-LIFE BALANCE: I use a calendar to mark when assignments are due, and I estimate how many hours I will put into each class every day

CRIMINAL JUSTICE PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

- Requires 120 credits
- Enhances the effectiveness of working professionals, provides a foundation for advancement to administrative positions, and prepares students for graduate study in criminal justice and related fields such as the study of law
- Choose from two specializations:
 - Criminalistics
 - Homeland Security

LEARN MORE At online.saintleo.edu or call an enrollment counselor today at (888) 875-8265.



FINANCIAL AID

WHAT YOU'LL NEED TO KNOW

Financial aid is a renewable process, and a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) must be completed each year to receive aid. Apply each year after January 1 when you have tax information available for the prior year. Below are steps to take to file your FAFSA:

Get a four-digit PIN number issued by the Department of Education online at www.fafsa.ed.gov.



Complete the "FAFSA on the Web" worksheet to gather the financial information you'll need to complete the formal FAFSA. Utilize the IRS tax return data retrieval tool if it is available.



File your FAFSA, listing Saint Leo University's federal school code, 001526, in the school release section.



Check the status of your FAFSA online or use the Federal Student Aid Information Center automated hotline 800.433.3243.



In addition to the FAFSA, we recommend you visit www.studentloans.gov to complete entrance counseling.

If you have financial aid questions, please contact a Saint Leo financial aid liaison at 800.240.7658 or visit www.saintleo.edu/finaid.