

completion degree. Thus, for students facing the kinds of obstacles listed above, another pathway to completing a solid degree is needed.

Many returning students face similar challenges. They may have amassed dozens of credits but cannot find a major that is appropriate for them, or their previous coursework does not transfer or apply well to an existing L&S major. The flexibility of the proposed degree requirements would allow students to apply more coursework and transfer credits and will allow them to focus on completing the upper-division courses in L&S that meet their needs and interests.

UW-Milwaukee Online shows there is demand nationally for completion degrees, especially when the degree can be completed online. The proposed degree will serve students seeking a completion degree with greater flexibility. Furthermore, the structure of the program is unique in that students seeking specific professional skills will be able to complete existing certificates or minors, or potential minor credentials and then apply earned credits and learning to the B.A. in General Studies degree requirements. Thus students can complete credential that provide them immediate value in the workforce, while pursuing their bachelor's degree. Credentials include the following: Quantitative Data Analysis, Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages, Health Investigation, Digital Arts and Culture, Spanish for Health Professionals, or Geographic Information Sciences.

Need as Suggested by Market Demand

Providing a route for students to complete a bachelor's degree who otherwise would not have been able to obtain one will have a significant positive affect on their financial future. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reports on earnings and unemployment rates by education attainment. As of the reporting in 2021, median weekly earnings for those with an associate degree were \$963, whereas weekly median earnings for those with a bachelor's degree were \$1,334, a 39% boost. The unemployment rate for those with a bachelor's degree was 3.0%, compared with 4.6% for those with an associate degree. According to the Association of Public Land-grant Universities (APLU), bachelor's degree holders are half as likely to be unemployed as their peers who only have a high school degree and they make \$1.2 million in additional earnings on average over their lifetime.⁴

⁴ APLU. How does a college degree improve graduate' employment and earning potential? Retrieved from <https://www.aplu.org/our-work/4-policy-and-advocacy/publicvalues/employment-earnings/>