



UNIVERSITY OF
SOUTHERN MAINE
College of Education and
Human Development

Adult Education Program Alumni Career Stories

Carolyn May

Seven years ago, fortunate to have survived yet another bank merger as a trust officer, Carolyn May needed a “Plan B”. Having narrowed her interests within education to two options - teaching junior high or teaching adults, Carolyn spent a week as a counselor at a summer camp for teenagers. At the end of that week, sleep deprived and exhausted, she says, “I chose the adult education master’s program and took the Miller Analogy Test!” Carolyn was nervous about applying to the program and wondered whether she would be accepted due to her low GPA as an undergraduate. Now she says, “Because of my success in this graduate program, I’ve forgiven myself.”

In her original application essay for the master’s program, Carolyn thought that she wanted to help corporate people who were unemployed or under employed. Her idea for this work came from seeing so many people lose their jobs during bank consolidations and restructuring. “I wanted to help people survive and thrive under these difficult circumstances.”

It was during the field study part of the master’s degree program that Carolyn’s view of her future work changed. Carolyn chose a 300 hour internship at Women, Work and Community (WWC), an organization committed to improving the economic lives of Maine people and their families. About this experience she shares,



Carolyn May, top row, second from left, with group of graduates.

“My comfort level with my own facilitation skills as an adult educator grew. The internship broadened the world for me.”

Today at WWC, Carolyn enjoys the variety of her work. She offers programs that includes Workplace Communication, Basic Personal Finance and Career Exploration, meets with people individually, and coordinates work with other community agencies. The book *If You Want to Write* by Brenda Ueland guides everything she does. “This book taught me that everyone has a story to share and everyone is interesting.”

Carolyn credits the adult education program with giving her the courage to create new programs. She is offering a new program entitled “Financing Your Future for New Mainers”. In this course people unfamiliar with U.S. financial systems learn about banking, saving, service, interest, and credit. Carolyn worked with others

across the state to develop the curriculum for a program called “Creating Your Future”. This unique curriculum blends life planning with financial planning and was mentioned in *Unrealized Gains: How Workforce Organizations Can Put Money in the Pockets of Low-Wage Workers* a recent publication by Public/Private Ventures.

The master’s program also helped Carolyn think about different learning styles and to be flexible in her teaching. “Sometimes I take an extreme diversion during a class because it is needed. The adult education program helped me know when this is the right thing to do and to feel comfortable doing it.”

Carolyn hopes people will be open about different career options while they are in the program. She encourages people to attend the Adult Education Graduate Society’s (AEGS) “Careers in Progress” night in the fall, the student presentations at the annual spring Capstone dinner and other opportunities for field visits, interviews and career exploration. She says, “I know many people who started the program with one idea of what they wanted to do and by graduation chose something very different. “

Telephone calls to Women, Work and Community often begin with “Someone told me to call WWC. I’m not sure what you do.” Later in the conversation, the caller often says to Carolyn, “Now I know why my friend suggested that I call you.” We hope you can imagine why too!

For more information about the USM Adult Education program please contact Graduate Admission in Gorham at (207) 780-5306 or visit www.usm.maine.edu/cehd/adult-education/