

# Mary Bertram

Mary began her higher education journey in the community college setting at the age of 58. While attending a few 2-year colleges and pursuing different majors, she always had the goal to obtain a 4 year degree. Mary had apprehensions about the university setting, and felt that she wasn't smart enough to attend. However, those apprehensions turned into motivation when she lost her job, and something inside of her told her to try again. Mary came to UNC Charlotte with the desire to pursue a degree in English, which had always been her greatest interest – and she went all in for it!

Mary reflected on her experience as an Adult Student at UNC Charlotte by discussing some challenges and surprises. At first, she was hesitant about being around younger students in the classroom and on campus, wondering if she would fit in. *At UNC Charlotte, 1 in 5 undergraduate students are adult or non-traditional, although it is sometimes difficult to physically distinguish this population of students.* Mary surprisingly found that she enjoyed being around the younger students and listening to them, as it was “interesting to learn what they thought about life and school”.



Financially and academically, Mary was candid about her experience upon her return. Mary admitted that it was challenging at times to even have enough money to pay for gas and bills, a realistic challenge that adult students may face in higher education. *While there are approximately 5,000 adult, undergraduate students on campus, OASES has found through conversations and statistics that many of them often juggle families, employment, finances, career changes, and more when pursuing a degree in higher education. This populations' needs are vastly different than traditional students, and at the University we understand and work to cater to that difference.*

Despite these added expectations and demands, Mary continually looked at the greater picture and her goal of completing her degree, all while consistently keeping up with her studies. Aside from finances, academic challenges she faced in Math and Spanish were also an adjustment that she persevered through and successfully continued on. Mary remains grateful and reflective for her opportunities in the classroom, as she felt her studies have “helped [her] be a better writer and have the courage to step out and try new things”. Mary hopes to obtain a better job with her degree, and is looking forward to finding out what opportunities there are for her on the horizon after graduation this May.

Mary shared inspiring words of advice for adult students enrolled or seeking to come back to school as an adult transfer student:

“I would tell [adult students] that it is never too late to pursue one's dreams of more education. I was 58 when I started and am now almost 62. I still have a lot of life yet to go. I would say don't be afraid, there are teachers there to help you along the way, and the young people are friendly and encouraging. Don't let anything stand in your way. *It is worth the cost you might have to pay and the effort to realize a dream come true.*”

After graduating on May 14, 2016 with her Bachelor's in English and minor in Psychology, Mary plans on starting a blog. She is also interested in working on a plethora of writing projects she has had in mind for a long time. Mary's other goals are to obtain a better job than she ever had before, earning enough to travel, and to eventually writing about those journeys too!

OASES sends our congratulations to Mary for her journey to graduation at UNC Charlotte as an adult transfer student. Best of luck in your future endeavors in writing and travel, Mary!



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We hope you feel inspired and have enjoyed reading more about one of our many talented adult students. If you are interested in sharing your journey or success story with us, please visit: <http://oases.uncc.edu/student-information/student-success-stories> to learn how.

To learn more about [North Carolina Community College's \(NCCC\) Pathways to Degrees](#) and the [admissions process as a transfer student](#), consider [reading more here](#) about how you can complete your degree from UNC Charlotte today.