

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **Florida educational leaders meet to advance competency-based degree programs, encourage adults to return to college**

**Tallahassee, Fla. – May 19, 2016** – The University of West Florida Innovation Institute recently hosted educational leaders from across the state for a two-day workshop to advance Florida’s competency-based degree programs. The new approach will make degrees more meaningful to students and more marketable to employers by providing academic credit for work experience. The proposal is part of Complete Florida, a statewide initiative to help adults with some college credit return to college to earn their degree.

“Competency-based education makes sense for students, especially for adults returning to college,” said Dr. Pam Northrup, senior associate provost and chief executive officer of the UWF Innovation Institute. “With competency-based education, students can earn credit for the knowledge and skills they’ve gained on the job. That will save time and money toward a degree.”

Competency-based education requires students to demonstrate specific knowledge and clearly defined skills. Courses are not based on credit hours or the traditional academic calendar. Instead, students learn at their own pace, spending as much time as necessary to master the requirements of the degree program. Self-directed study, practical projects and real-world experience replace classroom lectures. Content can be delivered in a variety of formats, including online. Faculty members serve as coaches, mentors and advisors.

“Adults returning to school don’t need to take courses for skills they’ve already learned in the workforce,” said Northrup. “By recognizing the knowledge they already have, college becomes more relevant because they are filling the gaps in their skill set.”

The workshop addressed opportunities and challenges such as admissions processes, funding and financial aid, which are tailored toward credit-based degree programs offered on the traditional academic calendar year. The team worked on building prototypes for how competency-based education could work in Florida. While the topic warrants further discussion, the workshop provided a valuable launching pad for efforts toward competency-based education.

For more information, visit [completeflorida.org](http://completeflorida.org).

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**About the [University of West Florida](#):** Founded in 1963, the University of West Florida is a vibrant, distinctive institution of higher learning with undergraduate, graduate and targeted research programs. With multiple locations in Northwest Florida, the University serves a student population of more than 12,000. Dedicated to helping students realize their full potential, UWF favors small class sizes with quality teacher-scholars who deliver personalized, innovative, hands-on learning and leadership opportunities.

**About the [UWF Innovation Institute](#):** The Innovation Institute is a division of the University of West Florida. The Innovation team, founded around the principles of extreme collaboration, high energy, deep research and innovative thinking are focused on solving significant educational challenges. One of the cornerstones of the Institute is its focus on being a “Thought Leader” in education -- creating and implementing innovative tools, programs and resources to the advancement of education and learning.

**About [Complete Florida](#):** Complete Florida is a state of Florida initiative to recruit and retain the state's 2.8 million adults who have some college but no degree. Partnering with public and private higher education institutions in Florida, Complete Florida provides one-on-one planning, support and coaching for students with adult responsibilities. Dedicated coaches work alongside students as personal advocates, counselors and advisors while participants complete college courses 100 percent online.