



Accelerated SNHU Program Ideal for Working Adults

Southern New Hampshire University (SNHU) has created a program where students aren't forced to decide between earning a living or a degree.

Duet, a nonprofit that partners closely with SNHU, helps working adults earn college degrees more quickly and affordably than they could otherwise, without having to cut back at work.

"Most people attending college today are doing so to earn a better job as a result but can't stop working or cut back while they earn their degree," says Khaleel Shreet, senior coach and director of Duet's New Hampshire program. "The way typical colleges are designed can make it challenging for a working adult to earn their degree in a timely fashion and there is often a lack of support to translate that degree into a better job."

Here's how it works: Students enroll, choose an accredited

degree from SNHU and begin an "on-demand" college model, allowing them to complete as many credits per semester as they want. The more work completed, the sooner the student graduates and the less he or she pays. Meanwhile, coaches work with the participant from enrollment to financial aid to academics.

"We pair this with wraparound coaching services from enrollment to job attainment and other student support services like childcare and transportation support that we know are instrumental in helping working adults earn their degrees quickly," Shreet says.

Duet was founded in partnership with SNHU in early 2014, and it's doubled in size every year since. The Manchester program was launched in early 2018. Since then, 10 Manchester students have graduated, and 40 students are

currently enrolled. More than 200 students have earned associate and bachelor's degrees from SNHU through Duet.

Shreet, who moved from Syria to the U.S. six years ago, worked for SNHU for four years before joining the program. He was part of the team that first worked to create the competency-based degrees.

"Duet coaches work one-on-one with students to support them at every stage of their journey from applying for financial aid and enrolling at SNHU to supporting them as they complete their coursework and helping them acquire higher quality jobs while they are enrolled and after they graduate," he says.

"As the director of our New Hampshire program, I'm also working to grow our work in Manchester through partnerships with community leaders who realize the critical role of higher education as a gateway to economic mobility and advancement.



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"Our work with Manchester Mayor Joyce Craig, the YWCA and the Greater Manchester Chamber are exciting indications about the commitment to creating more opportunities for working adults in the community."

Duet offers access to several SNHU associate and bachelor's degrees that are in high demand and give a competitive advantage in the market. Degrees in business, communications and health care management are offered.

It's also set apart from the traditional college experience because Duet is a competency-based program based around skills that are workplace-relevant. We asked Shreet to tell us about some of the elements that make Duet a unique and advantageous choice for greater Manchester working adults.

Who is Duet for?

Shreet: "SNHU's Duet program is open to all greater Manchester residents who want to earn a college degree and who have a

high school diploma or GED or an associate degree and want to pursue a bachelor's. Duet and SNHU are a great fit for anyone who wants a more affordable college option, wants to earn their degree quickly or will be going to school while working."

What makes a competency-based program different?

Shreet: "Our programs are competency-based (CBE) and are innovatively designed by SNHU to ensure our graduates are fully prepared to tackle future employment opportunities. CBE means students are only judged by their ability to demonstrate learning outcomes, not by how much time they spend learning. This eliminates "failure" as students can flexibly continue to revise their work, utilizing Duet support and SNHU professors' guidance, until they meet their class expectations. Above all the advantages, these programs still have the same high-level accreditation as the rest of SNHU

programs, and award graduates the same nationally recognized SNHU diplomas. In our experience, students are learning even more because they are held to the same high standard of "mastering" work but are given the flexibility to do it in the time frame and on the schedule that works in their life."

Who are the coaches and what do they do?

Shreet: "Duet Academic Coaches are success experts who regularly meet with students one-on-one, remotely and in-person, to motivate and guide them throughout their academic journey. Coaches hold students accountable for their success and partner with them to strategize goals, preview courses, facilitate access to learning resources, and help prevent and solve any barriers that may potentially disrupt their progress.

"Duet Career Coaches are professional and employment experts who personalize their services to help students find a meaningful next job opportunity, decode confusing job descriptions, and understand how to leverage their unique set of experiences to compete effectively in the job market. They also utilize Duet's growing network of employers to help students find the "right fit" during enrollment and after graduation."





Photo Courtesy of Southern New Hampshire University

students pay in all the ways they would any other school including federal financial aid, loans, tuition reimbursement, etc. Students also benefit because there is no limit to how many credits they can earn each term meaning that a motivated student can finish their degree sooner and pay less by completing more work each term they are enrolled."

How does this align with SNHU's philosophy?

Shreet: "According to Paul LeBlanc, president of SNHU, 'The higher ed system that we have today is not built for the challenges we're facing. The majority of college students we need to serve are non-traditional students who don't live on a residential campus with the classic, stereotypical college experience.' SNHU's innovation stems from the urgency to design programs that work for the modern college student. While SNHU currently enrolls over 135,000 students around the world, its mission remains to get closer to local communities in many channels including the work we do at Duet. We know there are many hardworking adults in New Hampshire that would benefit from a college degree but need a more flexible way of earning it; that's why we, at Duet, find our partnership with SNHU in the Manchester Area highly promising. We are committed to making this an exceptional opportunity to offer our Manchester community a reliable path to college education and economic advancement." ■

Lunch and dinner is included?

Shreet: "Like the rest of our services, lunch and dinner during our coaching sessions is not need-based and is available to all students. These services help our busy students make time in their lives to come and meet with us and get work done, whether that means providing a Lyft, childcare, food, coffee, laptop or just a supportive working space."

When do students begin to benefit from Duet?

Shreet: "Duet services start even before enrollment, where interested individuals have access to one-on-one info sessions, academic and financial consultation, free financial aid and SNHU application supports, and two weeks to try the curriculum at no cost before they are

committed. Upon enrollment, Duet students have access to all other services, including in-person academic and career coaching (anytime, anywhere), free resources for classes, 24/7 unlimited online tutoring and writing support, along with convenient access to our center and SNHU campus library. We enroll new students every two months throughout the year."

Can financial aid be applied to Duet? Is it handled differently than traditional enrollment?

Shreet: "Students are enrolled with SNHU and benefit from the low-cost nature of these degrees. At only \$7,000 per year (all inclusive – no books or other charges!) it is the most affordable way of going to college. SNHU is an accredited, private, liberal arts college and so



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