IDEAL Associate Dean At Bridgeport Sees Range Of Student Success

BRIDGEPORT, Conn. -- Yvrose Romulus has seen both sides of student success in her 16 years of working in the University of Bridgeport’s IDEAL Program, an adult degree completion program.

She has seen students come in ambitious and excited to start, only to be derailed from their goal by life circumstances. She has also seen students who came in to the program beset with challenges who have worked hard and earned their degree. Romulus, the Associate Dean and Director of Academic Advising for the IDEAL Program, celebrates the success stories and anguishes over those who are forced to drop out.

“Sometimes the student will come in very eager to start but life will get in the way,” Romulus said. “Something will happen, like an illness or some other setback. Some students use it as motivation to persist. Other times they are so eager to start and they overbook. They realize they’re doing too much and it’s more than they can handle. Sometimes I’m able to intervene, sometimes I can’t.”

Bridgeport’s IDEAL Program offers evening, weekend and online classes. Romulus said even with all of the scheduling creativity and flexibility, students still need to make sacrifices.

“I have seen students who come in and think they might not succeed because of the responsibilities they have,” Romulus said. “Then they’ll get a good grade, and feel like they can do this. Students have to be prepared to make sacrifices. You’re not going to be able to socialize as much as you used to. It’s a life change when you have to make arrangements to focus on school. When they listen, they’ll graduate. If they don’t get that support from their friends and their family, they won’t.”

Romulus said she believes most students who have the motivation to earn a degree eventually get there. “It’s disappointing when they stop, especially because you know that person has what it takes,” she said. “Often times they will take time off. It may be two or three or five or 10 years, but they will come back. The adult learners are very resilient. They will work through whatever challenges they have.”

Romulus focuses on retention and advising select students, and also supervises academic advisors who assist students at UB’s three locations in Bridgeport, Stamford and Waterbury.

“The goal here is to help students and retain them from beginning to end,” she said. “We work with students doing social events and have email and phone conferences. A lot of times if a student feels as if they have somebody in their corner, they’ll succeed.”

As adult learners, Romulus feels the IDEAL students have qualities that differentiate them from typical college students. “The students are very ambitious” she said. “They want to accomplish a dream, and that’s graduation. They’re special in that their needs are very different from typical students. But they’re motivated and looking to finish as quickly and as efficiently as possible.”

Romulus calls graduation day, "A day of pride."