



Degrees@Work
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Video transcript

Brian Wagner Testimonial

(My) name is Brian K. Wagner. I'm currently a flat rate technician at a Chrysler dealership right outside of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. The degree that I went for was an information technology degree at the associate degree level that I just finished in June.

How I heard about Degrees@Work program is actually through my general manager. About – oh wow, five years ago, we had a merger between a dealership I was working at and this dealership that I'm currently working at, and we interviewed to come down here. I've had some college classes and then when the program became rolled out, he wondered if I'd be interested in going back and finishing out my information technology degree and I told him yeah.

Long term, it's hard to tell, I mean, if I can get a job in IT that would be awesome. You know if I can't physically work on cars, but I can work on computers and I have that background and that knowledge to – if I had to change paths because of a physical disability or not being able to do physical work on a car. It would open up possibilities from my background of working here and my degree to – it would open up other avenues and other jobs with having the associate degree.

I have taken some online classes before, so the idea of how to do it, how hard it was, or the difficulty level wasn't a factor for that. It was just more wanting to finish my degree after getting contacted by the personnel that run the Degrees@Work program – getting enrolled, getting your classes started, seeing where you had to start from, and the whole process was smooth. The people were really nice.

There's times where we had to work overtime or work late and you know, and I just, you know, talked to them about my schedule and what time—what days of the week I actually do my homework and stuff. They worked their schedule around me. When I graduated they just had a cake and the owner and the general manager (and) his wife sat me down and told me how much they appreciate me and congratulated me on finishing my degree.

I didn't have to pay anything. I mean you have to, at the beginning, pick between a hardback book and then an actual computer download you can do for the book, but the last two years they changed it to where you just get to downloads so you can just read it right off your computer, but there was no cost for anything. Not at all. Nothing.

I guess the biggest impact on my life when getting a degree was a better understanding of a lot of different things. You could watch TV shows or talk to people or listen to people have a conversation about religion or culture or science and before I never knew half the stuff they were talking about but didn't understand what it was. Now. I understand what that stuff is. I went through the classes for world cultures in science and even

the computer stuff. So it's taught me – I'm better now at time management. I speak a little bit better than I did before because I know a lot more different words. I'm better at being a shop foreman now. I'm better at communicating with my guys—trying to get across to them something that they need to learn or how they I need to teach it to them. So that preparedness that I've learned with school goes hand-in-hand with working in the shop and talking to my guys and being organized and trying to help them guys out. It's helped a lot.

Yeah, if anybody was thinking about starting the Degrees@Work program, I would encourage it, you know, find something you like on the basis of what programs are out there. I forget how many different degrees that are open. The program itself—working with the people, the resources—is real easy.