

'I needed to prove to myself that I was worthy'  
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## HIGHER EDUCATION

At area universities, older students mark new milestones in life

Not all college graduates are fresh-faced and headed for their first jobs. Some wearing the cap and gown this weekend at area universities decided later in life to follow a dream, like 73-year-old Burlyce Logan of Denton, who found a far different atmosphere at the University of North Texas than in the late 1950s, when she first attended. Barry Grubbs, a longtime factory worker, decided he needed a degree to further his career. And neurologist Mark Adams is picking up his third advanced degree, symbolizing the credo of lifetime learning. Here are their stories.

### Proving something

Burlyce Logan graduated from Dallas' Lincoln High School in 1956 with plans to attend UNT, which was accepting African-American students under integration efforts. Though she and other African-Americans could legally attend, Logan said they weren't welcome. "It was bad," she said. "They didn't want us - the student body and some of the teachers." Logan's parents stressed the importance of education, but she was unable to succeed as a music major in such a hostile setting. "I left after two years," she said. "I just couldn't take it." Logan eventually moved to Southern California, where she worked in the aviation industry. But she always had a nagging feeling that something was unfinished. "I needed to prove to myself that I was worthy," she said. In 2005, back in Texas for about eight years, Logan reapplied to UNT. It wasn't the same campus. She attended classes with students of every race. At age 73, she didn't feel like an outsider anymore - even though she's not part of a generation that sports tattoos and wears shorts to class. "UNT is thoroughly integrated," Logan said. "Everybody respects everybody." Logan is graduating this weekend from the College of Public Affairs and Community Service with a degree in applied arts and sciences. She plans to continue in the fall towards a master's degree in history. "I had to start all over," she said. "I finally finished."

### Lifetime learner

When it came time to defend his thesis in math, Q. Mark Adams brought along a surprise for his professors at the University of Texas at Arlington: one of his patients. Adams isn't a typical graduate student. He's a 55-year-old neurologist from Grapevine whose love of learning keeps bringing him back to the classroom. On Thursday, he walked across the stage at the UT Arlington College of Science commencement to receive a master's degree in applied math. His decision to pursue the degree grew out of a love of teaching.

"Teaching has always been something I wanted to do, and I have always liked math," Adams said

For his thesis, Adams proved how the mathematics model he studied in class could be applied to deep brain stimulation in patients with Parkinson's disease. Understanding how the electrical field behaves helps customize the setting for deep brain stimulation.

"The math degree can be applied to virtually any area of biology," he said. "I know I will be applying it to other patients in the future."

It's not the first advanced degree for Adams, who makes time for studying despite a hectic schedule that includes his family (he's the father of triplets), teaching at North Lake College and a private practice in Colleyville.

After earning his bachelor's in chemical engineering from UT Austin in 1978, he earned his medical degree from UT Medical School in San Antonio in 1985, then received an MBA from Texas Christian University in 2000.

Adams plans to continue practicing medicine but hopes to teach at night. Medicine, engineering, business and math can all be used to help a student better understand a concept, he said.

"If they don't get it through math, I can apply any number of ways to help them," he said.

#### Career move

Barry Grubbs labored for more than 20 years for North Texas aviation firms, working his way up from factory worker to flight line mechanic to systems engineer.

He was a hard worker, often praised for his performance. But when it came time for promotions, he was passed over for lack of a college degree. Today, the 46-year-old will receive one from Texas Wesleyan University.

"I will be walking the stage," Grubbs said. "It's a checkpoint for me and I can mark it off my list."

Grubbs is getting a Bachelor of Science in mass communications at commencement at the Fort Worth Convention Center.

With his wife's support, Grubbs decided to leave the workforce in 2008 and go to school full time, taking classes first at Weatherford College and then at Texas Wesleyan in Fort Worth. Making the move was "the toughest decision I've ever made."

Even though the university has many nontraditional college students, campus life took some adjusting to, he said.

"It was a very strange feeling to be twice as old as many of the students," Grubbs said.

Still, he found a place at the campus newspaper, The Rambler, where he was an opinion editor.

And he adapted to technologies and resources now available to students.

"We didn't have computers when I graduated from high school," he said.

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