

# Courses and Programs

## High-tech moms

By Ruth Carlson

Children in Silicon Valley, Calif., are nagging their parents to do their homework. Adults who already possess university degrees are returning to their local community college for specialized programs. West Valley Community College in Saratoga, Calif., has a number of parents enrolled in the Digital Media/Internet Services program.

"More than half of our students are mothers of young children," says Jean McIntosh, chair of the Digital Media/Internet Services department. Many of these students moved to Silicon Valley on a spousal visa, which doesn't allow them to work. "It's the same way I got here," laughs McIntosh, who moved from Canada to the County of Santa Clara, Calif., for her husband's career.

While their husbands work the long hours demanded by high-tech firms, the wives, and occasionally a stay-at-home dad or two, prepare for new careers in the digital media field.

According to instructor Jeff Rascov, the returning students often pursue a career that allows for creativity. The large number of jobs available in the digital media field is also appealing, since the South Bay, Calif., economy is still suffering from the high-tech bust of the 1990s.

Chwen Lim, from Singapore, enrolled at West Valley for all of these reasons. She had only a

spousal visa, so she couldn't work. Her husband encouraged her to learn Web skills in case he was laid-off from his high-tech job. "I had a degree in graphic design," says Lim, "but that wasn't enough. I needed exposure to Web design and I heard West Valley had a good program." She says the flexible hours allowed her to take classes in Macromedia Flash, Adobe Photoshop and Illustrator, and Web design while taking care of her two young children. "I met many mothers in the classes and we had a lot in common, so I didn't feel left out. I still keep in touch with them and the teachers. The experience was wonderful. I made a lot of good contacts through the [West Valley] Design Group and started my own company when I graduated." To see her designs, go to [www.chwen.net](http://www.chwen.net).

Students enrolled in the Digital Media/Internet Services program learn Web design, video and animation skills, and HTML editing. Because of student demand, the majority of classes are held in the early morning and finish by two o'clock in the afternoon, which ensures that moms can pick up their children from elementary school. The program also offers online classes so students can pursue their studies anywhere, anytime.

The Digital Media/Internet Services program requires a myriad of skills, including the ability to problem solve, work independently and collaborate on creative teams. "Moms excel in these



**Students working on Web design**

classes because they are focused," says McIntosh. "Accustomed to juggling a lot of demands, moms appear to be more organized," she observes. "Moms also work well with others and we find that students can often learn as much from their peers as the instructor," she adds.

The West Valley Design Group, a business run by the students, gives moms a better understanding of the pressures they will encounter on the job. Start-up companies and non-profits hire the Group for various jobs that range from starting Web sites to creating labels for wine bottles. Clients pay for the jobs based on a sliding scale and the fees are used to buy equipment for the program. Students benefit by developing professional portfolios for job interviews. Miyuki Bridgewater, for example, is a mother of three who learned how to create

a professional Web site ([www.studiobi.com](http://www.studiobi.com)) at West Valley. This practical experience gave her an edge when competing for jobs; she's now a Web designer at the Sunnyvale, Calif., office of Fujitsu, an international technology corporation.

The Digital Media/Internet Services program takes two to three years to complete and students obtain either a certificate or an AA degree. Fees are USD\$26.00 per unit, one of the lowest tuitions in the state. "Private colleges are charging thousands of dollars for these same classes," says Rascov, who helped create the department five years ago.

Because the Internet field is so new, instructors are under pressure to stay current. "Technology is always changing, so we make sure to attend conferences and create projects on our breaks," says McIntosh.

It seems that lifelong learning at West Valley applies to both students and instructors, and this sets a great example for kids living in Silicon Valley. For more information, please visit: [www.digital-media.westvalley.edu](http://www.digital-media.westvalley.edu).

### **High-tech MBA**



As today's technology is constantly evolving, it's no surprise that engineering professionals must keep up with the changes to remain competitive in their respective careers. Still, many professionals decide to transition into the technology management sector, but until now there have been few MBA programs in which to acquire the expert skills needed to succeed in this field.

Enter Walden University in Minneapolis, Minn. A leading distance education institution, Walden and its NTU School of Engineering and Applied Science are offering a high-tech MBA program to students. Intended to teach students the necessary business strategies and technological know-how to become successful members of the tech management community, not only does the curriculum incorporate technology, but the basic structure of the program is high-tech too: it's delivered online.

The foundation of the program is built upon six courses that address important technology-management issues through real-world case studies. The courses address several topics that are often lacking in engineering and technology programs, such as organizational behaviour, technology and operations, and negotiation and strategy. Students can also choose to specialize their MBA studies by pursuing areas such as Technology Creation and Distribution, Emerging Technologies, and Information Strategies. As the program was created with the experience of technology professionals in mind, it is possible to complete it in two years.

The high-tech MBA is intended to help technical professionals meet the many challenges they face when developing technology today. With NTU's impressive faculty from various institutions across North America, students will learn about the relationship between technology and management and how they can be integrated for mutual benefit.

Having recently merged with National Technological University, Walden, an accredited university, has expanded its technological expertise and

course offerings. It was through this merger that the NTU School was formed.

For more information about the NTU School, Walden's online courses and the high-tech MBA program, go to [www.waldenu.edu](http://www.waldenu.edu).

### **Mental Disability Law Online**



Since the fall of 2000, New York Law School (NYLS) has turned to technology to help educate professionals about mental disability law. The Online Education Certificate Program in Mental Disability Law offers busy professionals who work with, or represent, persons with mental disabilities an innovative learning environment to develop the needed expertise to practice in this line of employment.

At present, the program offers several courses: Survey of Mental Disability Law, The Americans with Disabilities Act: Law, Policy and Practice and International Human Rights and Mental Disability Law, which is to be offered in the 2005-06 school year. Three other courses are currently in the works; six others are planning to run during the 2006-07 school year.

Each online course is organized as a 14-week unit offering the latest information and interpretation of mental disability law. Courses are delivered with innovative distance learning technologies: lectures are videotaped and participants watch via CD. Each week, students take part in a mandatory online chat room discussion, where questions about lecture material and various topics can be hashed out. Though classroom banter, in the traditional