

**Graduating Students through a Finish Line Program**  
**NACADA Outstanding Advising Program Award Abstract**

The Finish Line Program is a degree completion program at the University of Memphis that was launched following a decline in non-traditional student enrollment which became evident following the abrupt changes in federal financial aid regulations in 2012. The program re-recruits students in good academic standing with 90 or more earned credit hours who stopped attending the university just shy of graduation. The primary reason for withdrawal is exhausted financial aid and related external situations, such as needing to work full-time to support a family. In some cases, “life” simply gets in the way. Academic advisors work closely with students as “completion concierges” to evaluate all previously earned credit toward the original major as well as any other degree pathways that might expedite the student’s graduation. Finish Line also offers innovative and low/no cost degree completion strategies such as credit for prior learning and the use of open educational resources. Since cost is often the main hindrance in returning to school, scholarships are available for students who qualify for additional financial need.

To date, 305 students have graduated through the program generating 3,211 additional credit hours and almost \$600,000 in tuition and fees for the institution. The average cost of completion for the students is just under \$1,800 due to Credit for Prior Learning and low cost alternatives offered through the program.