



Kay Wais, Student Master of Science in Project Management Program

One Class at a Time

Student Focuses on Applying What She Learns

When Kay Wais completed her Project Management Professional certification through the Project Management Institute (PMI), she became energized to continue learning more about the field. She participated in many professional seminars and workshops, but eventually decided a structured program was what she really needed.

She began her search for a graduate school program by reviewing schools affiliated or endorsed by PMI. (UW-Platteville is a Project Management Institute Registered Education Provider.) She exchanged extensive emails with the head of UWP's Project Management Program and ultimately decided that it was the best program for her.

Wais chose an online program because it provides her with the flexibility to study when she wishes, while also letting her take the courses at her own pace. She has chosen to take one course per semester to allow herself time to absorb the material.

"I'm not plowing through the program just to get a degree," Wais explains. "I really work to internalize the learning. To do this, I need time to integrate all of the new material I learn into my work and practice."

The manageable pace has allowed Wais time to apply what she's learned in her professional life.

"I can sincerely say that I have improved many processes at my work due to what I have learned in the UWP program," she notes. "When I took Quality Management, I brought some Six Sigma processes into my projects. When I took Marketing Management, I expanded the research techniques we base our marketing projects on. I make it a part of the value I offer my customers and co-workers on the job."

Wais lives in Minnesota and works in Wisconsin, a climate that she says lends itself to reading and working indoors in the winter. In the other three seasons, however, she prefers to spend her free time outdoors.

Wais is the owner of Successful Projects, a busy project management contracting and training business. In 2002, she formed the LaCrosse PMI chapter, which now has 52 members and many actively attending non-members. She highly recommends PMI membership to anyone who is interested in the field.

"PMI is the world's leading professional association for project management, so it is really the organization to join," says Wais. "The programs provide discussion on the very latest trends and problems in the industry--many of which have not yet hit the textbooks. Also, talking with other project managers provides a realistic view of day-to-day challenges for project managers in different industries and settings."

Wais reminds other students who may feel the pressure of conflicting demands to "remember that you started this program for a reason, and you owe it to yourself to complete your goals." For herself, Wais is committed to earning her degree.

With conviction, Wais declares, "I don't consider quitting as an option."

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