

Connect2Complete: A Conversation with Tim

Peer Advocate – Big Bend Community College, WA

After serving in the United States Air Force from 1987 to 1990, Tim Paulson worked construction for many years. It wasn't until his sister, who was enrolled in a nursing program, encouraged him to think about college that Tim started considering Big Bend Community College and decided to apply. At age 44, Tim is in his 3rd quarter at Big Bend and is earning a 3.9 GPA: "Now that I'm here I wish I did it sooner." Coming in as a nontraditional student was an added challenge, Tim explains: "I was eager to go and excited about being a college student, but I had a lot of apprehensions, being quite a bit older than everyone." To get acclimated, Tim was enrolled in a college survival skills course – which utilized a Peer Advocate through the Connect2Complete program. Within a few weeks, Tim was asked to consider becoming a Peer Advocate himself: "I did it not knowing what to expect. Now that I've done it, I would recommend it to anybody."

As a Peer Advocate, Tim was able to help students open up and connect with one another: "By the end of the quarter they were a phenomenal class. Better than I ever expected." Tim helped students connect to campus resources: "Most of the questions were 'Who should I talk to?' or 'Where should I go?'" And Connect2Complete has helped Tim, too: "I'm more open to working with other people and more giving of my time. It gave me something to offer." Through this work, Tim has come to understand the importance of peer advocacy: "I always thought it was the role of staff to teach and encourage students. After being a Peer Advocate," Tim explains, "I realized how important it was to have student leaders to help students in need." Tim continues to be a campus leader by supporting other Peer Advocates. Tim currently serves as a mentor to a student who became a Peer Advocate with his support: "I'm here to help him out. He has the potential to be a great Peer Advocate."



Campus Compact

Connect2Complete, a program of Campus Compact supported by The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, works with nine community colleges in Florida, Ohio and Washington to utilize peer mentoring and community-engaged learning as strategies for retention of low-income, developmental education students.