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John Gros

GRADUATION YEAR
2023

MAJOR
General Studies

HOMETOWN
Luling

John Gros was living the dream.

He'd settled down with his high school sweetheart, Mallory, in his hometown of Luling, Louisiana, raising their two young children, ages 5 and 3.

But something kept gnawing at him.

Gros enrolled in college after he graduated high school in 2004, but he hadn't completed his degree.

"I was 17 years old, so I was very young," he says. "My perspective about school then was that it was irrelevant; I didn't care at all."

That all changed in Summer 2023 when Gros, now 36, earned his **Bachelor of General Studies**, gaining a new perspective on himself and education.



"I just feel I grew as a person taking online classes. It's a really good feeling for me," he says. "I feel like I accomplished something, and I've actually applied to get my MBA."

Third Time's the Charm

The University of Louisiana at Lafayette wasn't Gros' first stop on the way to his bachelor's degree.

After his initial stint at a four-year university after high school, he re-enrolled but found school had become harder to fit into his life.

"I had a new job, and Mallory was pregnant with our first child," he says. "We had a lot going on, and it didn't really work out."

Mallory, as it happens, is a UL Lafayette alumna. So, when her husband started revisiting the idea of earning his bachelor's degree online, she encouraged him to look at her alma mater.

"I talked to an advisor at UL Lafayette, and she told me about the **Compete LA** program, where if you are over a certain age and you're out of school a certain time, you get a discounted tuition rate," Gros says. "So I went that route, and it was all uphill from there. I realized that UL Lafayette really cared about their students."

And that support continued as Gros enrolled in his online courses.

"I didn't run into a single instructor that wasn't willing to help me," says Gros. "They were very understanding about my situation — about working and having kids or being sick. Actually, our house was messed up during Hurricane Ida, and every single one of them helped me out."

New Perspective, Endless Possibility

The University offers **five online undergraduate degree programs**. For Gros, the Bachelor of General Studies was the right fit to leverage his applicable credits to finish his degree and to build a curriculum that aligned with his interests.

"I enjoyed it because I could take classes I was interested in. I didn't have a certain curriculum I had to follow to the T," he says. "Health always interested in me, so I took a lot of health and psychology classes."

While Gros relished his online courses in child psychology and even statistics, staying on top of coursework alongside his other priorities was an ongoing challenge.

“It was tough trying to balance everything – being a husband, father, worker, son,” says Gros. “I remember my first math test. I had to work the day shift, my daughter had her first dance recital that night, and I think the test was due at 10 p.m. So as soon as I got home from the recital, I had to run upstairs and take the test.”

Working shift work in his role with Shell Norco — 12-hour, rotating shifts — meant Gros was able to create blocks of focused time on his days off to tackle coursework. But while that worked well for him as an online student, he’s imagining a new future for himself as a dad.

“I just want to have a better life for my children,” he says. “I just don’t want to have that discussion with my kids when they get older why I wasn’t there for the state championship baseball game or, you know, my daughter’s dance recital. I want to be there for them, and I want to be present in their lives.”

And with his bachelor’s degree in hand and his MBA applications wrapped up, Gros feels prepared to take the steps to make that happen.

“There’s so many different routes I can take — human resources, management, analytics,” says Gros. “The opportunities are endless.”

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