

# Mid-Continent brings business degree to Mt. Vernon Airport

**BY REANNE PALMER**  
SENTINEL NEWS STAFF

**MT. VERNON** — Non-traditional students will have another option when it comes to going back to school to start or complete a higher education degree starting July 19 at the Mt. Vernon Outland Airport. Mid-Continent University is teaming up with the Airport to offer a Bachelor of Science in business management degree through their Advantage program over then next 18 months.

The program will be offered every Thursday night for 18 months from 6 p.m. until 10 p.m.

"The program is very popular with our adult accelerated degree students," said Tina Penrod, Corporate Development Representative at Mid-Continent. "That is, ideally, someone 24 years or older who has an associate degree or a minimum of 45 college credits. This program targets adults with families and jobs, because they need to keep their full-time jobs and spend time with their family, so it's hard for them to take classes."

The 18 month program will change subjects and professors every five weeks, giving students three credit hours every five weeks. The subjects will cover business-related topics, such as ethics, marketing, human relations, policy, finance, accounting, and economics, among others.

"Students are going to be in the same location the whole time. We try to bring everything to our students, so they never have to go anywhere to register for classes, purchase books, meet with financial aid representatives, or communicate with counselors," said Penrod. "We found that to be our number one obstacle — that students don't want to jump through all of the hoops;

they just want to be ready to go. They can't take a day off work to do these things, so we found a way to accommodate busy people. It's much more economical for them."

The average age of students in the Advantage program is in the upper-30s, but Penrod said they've had students in their 20s all the way to their 60s. Classes are taught in small groups, ranging from 17 to 25 students.

"Those students really bond, and by the end of the first few weeks, they know each other really well," she said. "They're a very supportive and cohesive group and they encourage each other to stick it out."

Retention rates from the Advantage program is nearly 90 percent, added Penrod, and graduation rates are also high for these specific programs.

According to a news release from Mid-Continent University, the Advantage program currently has approximately 2,000 adults enrolled in 28 cities and



**Chris Collins**

towns across Southern Illinois, Kentucky, and online.

"Mid-Continent University's Advantage removes the barriers to getting [a] college degree by bringing everything to students including classes, registration, advising, and financial aid assistance; we even deliver [the] books. Mid-Continent University is a private, non-profit, Southern Baptist affiliated organization, and is regionally accredited and headquartered in Mayfield, Ky.," said the release.

Airport Manager Chris Collins informed the Airport Board of Commissioners Tuesday night of the new event scheduled later this month. He said he has been working with Mid-Continent for nearly two years.

"We're just excited that we can host something like this," said Collins. "Anytime we can help the community, we do — that's what we're here for. It's really exciting to see it materialize."

Those interested in signing up for this program at the Mt. Vernon Airport should contact Stephani Borders, Southern Illinois Admissions Representative for the Advantage program at (270) 970-8629, or visit Mid-Continent University's website.

[rpalmer@morningsentinel.com](mailto:rpalmer@morningsentinel.com)