



Rick Rokosz, assistant professor and director of the Master of Science in Organization Leadership program at Regis University's School of Management, says the faculty's job "is to help students be successful."

SJ PROFILE

THAT MASTER'S DEGREE ISN'T OUT OF REACH

BY PAM HOSKINS ■ SPECIAL TO SPRINGSJOBS.COM
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The idea of going back to school to obtain an advanced degree can be daunting — especially if you've been out of college for a number of years, have a full-time career, family and other obligations. It can be daunting, but it isn't impossible. And it may even be easier than you think.

In less than two years, you can get a master's degree that will prepare you for a leadership role in any number of fields. Regis University's School of Management offers an accelerated program for its Master of Science in Organization Leadership. The program is designed to fit the lifestyles of busy working adults, with a degree that focuses on developing better leaders, enhancing their skills to help them advance in their fields to a leadership role and exposing them to things managers need to know in the work-a-day world.

Companies are facing a significant turnover of experienced people in the workforce, says Rick Rokosz, assistant professor and MSOL program director at Regis University. "Junior level people need to be prepared to move up. This program is perfect for preparing people to do just that."

The MSOL program at Regis University offers a managerial decision-making approach that is more holistic and collaborative than other such programs. It supports individuals from many different educational backgrounds, allowing them to draw from their work and life experiences.

The program attracts people changing careers, people wanting to move up in their industry, and/or people who may have been

out of the business world for a while but want to return. It also attracts people from all types of organizations: nonprofit, for profit, government, police and fire departments, sales, health care, military, pharmacy, human resources, the service sector and more.

The teachers, called facilitators, come from various walks of life, levels of career experience and backgrounds. But they all "have to have the subject matter expertise and pass a rigorous assessment process in order to be certified to facilitate," Rokosz says.

They are called facilitators because they relate their work life experiences with the students and help the students build a peer-sharing environment. Their focus is to help people look at an issue from multiple perspectives in order to find the best, most robust answer solution. "Our job as faculty is to help students be successful," says Rokosz.

The facilitators are approachable and accessible, Rokosz says, often giving students their home phone numbers so they can be reached at almost any time in order to assist them with any issues or concerns they may be trying to resolve.

Having a view toward their next goal or objective is key to a successful graduate level experience for the student. To this end, the program's faculty advisors work hard to make sure they put the right student with the right program. "We want to make sure our students get the kind of educational experience that will make them more valuable to their organizations and/or marketable in this ever changing job market," Rokosz says.

With smaller class sizes than other programs and facilitators who orchestrate the learning of the individual, Regis University provides a well-rounded values-based education. Unlike an MBA, which is a well-recognized but more narrowly focused degree, the Master of Science in Organization Leadership is a "horizontally based or cross-cut degree covering a variety of leadership focused topics," says Rokosz.

The program helps students improve processes, lead teams, understand the structure and culture of an organization and become more responsible as they step up in their respective career fields. They also come to know how the theories they are learning in the classroom are applied in the real world.

Rokosz speaks from experience. He's not just the program's director, he's also a graduate of the Master of Science in Organization Leadership program. He received his Bachelor degree

from Regis University in 1968. When he decided to get his Master degree 23 years later, he checked out adult graduate programs at other Universities. Much to his chagrin, he discovered that at that time, most took five to seven years to complete and even the so-called accelerated programs took several more years than Rokosz wanted to dedicate.

So Rokosz went back to Regis University and received his Master of Science in Management (now called the Master of Science in Organization Leadership). "I'm very passionate about this program," Rokosz says. "I attribute a lot of what I've accomplished my career at Lockheed Martin to (the program)."

The MSOL degree takes a little less than two years to complete, requiring about a 20-30 hour a week commitment, says Rokosz. While that may seem like a lot, students in the program are motivated to complete the degree, he says, and are already adept at balancing family, job and other activities.

Each class cycle is eight weeks, with ground-based classes meeting one night a week for four hours. Classes can be taken online or in a classroom. Students can sign up for an online class during one eight-week session, then take the next eight-week class in an actual classroom on a campus near them. The online classes work well for people who travel a lot for work.

Rokosz shares a story of a student who was feverishly taking notes in class one night. When asked why, the student said it was so he could apply what they were learning that night the next day at his job. "It's a real-world, reality-based education," says Rokosz, "focused on what is happening in the work place."

Regis University has seven Colorado campuses, including one at 7450 Campus Drive in Colorado Springs, and two locations in Nevada. Identified as a Catholic Jesuit Institution, the University focuses on value-based learning. The faculty doesn't push its values on you, says Rokosz. Rather they explore with you your values, challenging you to examine your beliefs and guiding you into a realm of critical thinking in order to make a sound ethical decision.

Regis University will celebrate the 20th anniversary of the Master of Science in Organization Leadership program this year and the 10th anniversary of it being offered online.

For more information on Regis University and its Master of Science in Organization Leadership program, visit www.regis.edu or call the enrollment assistance team at 800-944-7667.

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