

ADULT LEARNING

Free college classes available for those 60 and older

EMMA RITZ | SPECIAL TO THE CJN



Frys

Due to an Ohio law, incoming college students will find themselves in class with members of a very different demographic – senior citizens. Luckily for many older individuals, legislation is in place that guarantees those 60 and older can take classes at any state university or college free of charge.

Cleveland State University enrolls several hundred seniors in its Project 60 program. Erin Dahl, student services specialist at CSU, said that seniors can enroll in almost any class offered at her school, with the exception of nursing and a few others.

These classes are taken on an audit basis. Seniors cannot obtain a degree and are not required to complete course-work, although some choose to put in extra effort. “If they want they can take all the tests and do all the homework. Or they can be passive observers,” Dahl said.

“Most people take one class; however, they are not limited. There are a fair number who take anywhere from 2-4 classes,” she said, and they may continue their use of the program. “Every year, we always see familiar faces.

“A lot of seniors like to take swimming classes, but it does vary. Some take history, art, or law. They can just choose based on their interest. Some have college degrees while others don’t have any education after high school, we take everyone.”

She said these classes add to seniors’ general well being. “They get to interact socially and intellectually in a stimulating environment. It keeps their minds and bodies active,” Dahl said.

Not only do seniors benefit, the younger students do as well. “Especially in liberal arts or business, seniors have a lot to bring to the table. If the other students are willing to listen, the seniors have something to offer;”

Dahl said.

Mark Frys, director at the Eastern campus enrollment center at Tri-C, agrees.

“Having a diverse population in the classroom enhances the learning experience,” he said by email. “Both age groups have different life experiences that they can share.”

He reported that 1,110 students enrolled in Cuyahoga Community College’s Program 60. Many enrolled in physical education, art, or music.

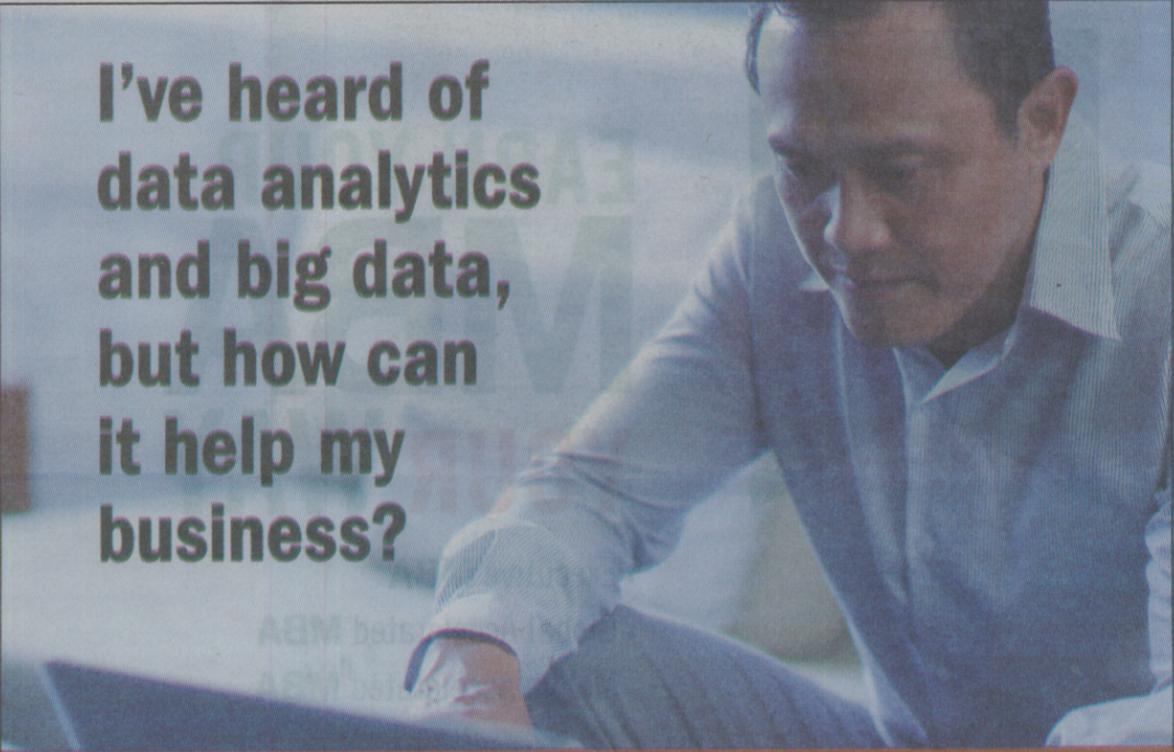
Many enroll alone, but Frys said that “on registration

day, the seniors show up together and try to get into the same classes.”

Due to the nature of the program, seniors can only enroll in classes that aren’t already filled by students on a degree track. Fortunately, that’s a rare problem.

“They are usually able to get in the courses they choose. Some of the art classes fill up quickly though,” he said.

Emma Ritz will be a senior this fall at Hawken School in Chester Township.



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