Shanda Robb only has one regret about attending Black Hawk College: "I wish I had done it sooner."

She is looking forward to graduating this spring with an Associate in Applied Science (AAS) degree in computer information technology, application developer tract.

Robb also is earning web developer and PC application programmer certificates.

Journey to Black Hawk College

The Davenport (IA) West High School graduate and mother of four wanted to go to college for a long time, but the timing was never quite right.

"I had always wanted to go back to school," Robb said, "but because I was making good money and had a family to support, obviously you're not going to leave a guarantee for a 'what-if.'"

She worked in the dental industry as a dental technician for 13 years, then in a sales and systems specialist role for several years.

Robb sold equipment and CAD software and trained doctors and lab owners on its use. She would sometimes have to adjust coding, and that's when her interest in programming took off.

"It just amazed me that one line of code could make all these changes, and I wanted to know how and how it all worked behind the scenes," Robb said.

She left the dental industry to take some time off work after her mother died, and she decided to start at Black Hawk College in June 2017 instead of returning to the industry.

Making the most of college

Robb didn't hesitate to get involved on campus. Her first semester, she served as president of BITS – Black Hawk College IT Society.

"I wanted to make the most of being back at school," she said.

Now, Robb is president of two honor societies, Phi Theta Kappa and Sigma Kappa Delta, and a member of Alpha Beta Gamma honor society.

She highly recommends that students get involved with clubs or organizations to improve their college experience. Perks include leadership opportunities, personal growth and making new friends.

"I've gotten to meet a lot of students that I don't think I would have met otherwise, especially being an older student," she said.

One of her favorite parts about college is helping with the honor society induction ceremonies.

"I like the induction ceremonies, doing those, because I remember when it was my induction ceremony and how exciting it was," she said.

She'll always remember lighting a candle and reciting the Phi Theta Kappa membership oath.

When she's not in class or busy with an honor society, Robb can be found working. She balances her schoolwork with being a student worker in Perkins Career Program Support Services and interning at Twin State Technical Services in Davenport.

What's next?

Robb plans on keeping a busy schedule after graduation, because learning at Black Hawk College has made her want to keep pursuing higher education.

"This degree makes me want to go for my bachelor's degree," she said.

She will continue working at Twin State Technical Services, and plans on eventually attending St. Ambrose University to earn a bachelor's degree in network administration or web development.

Robb encourages prospective students to not wait and take the plunge to get started at Black Hawk College.

"The faculty and the people at Black Hawk are so kind and helpful," she said. "I think there are a lot of great opportunities here, both in programs and campus activities."

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