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GED college grads from Kent State want to reach out to peers Thursday, October 3, 2002

By SUSAN R. SCHELL Repository education writer

JACKSON TWP. — Kimberly Patterson hopes to become a mentor.

At 46, she plans to graduate this year from Kent State University with bachelor's degrees in psychology and sociology.

She started college seven years ago, with a General Educational Development diploma instead of a traditional high school diploma.

That makes her an ideal mentor for a new program launched this year by Kent State University's main and Stark County campuses.

Called the GED Scholars Initiative, it will provide scholarships and support to new students — of any age — who enter with GEDs.

"People who come from a GED background may feel that they are at a disadvantage when they come to a college campus," said William Kist, assistant professor of education at the Stark campus. "They might really benefit the most from being paired with another undergraduate who comes from a (similar) background."

Kist said potential undergraduate students will pair with mentors for two days in February and March next year.

The program also will offer scholarships. This fall, awards range from \$300 to \$600.

Kist said the initiative eventually will offer computer training, support groups, career counseling and help with academic and college life skills.

"Some of our GED scholars have indicated they would also even like some assistance in how to talk to a professor," he said.

The aim is to help students complete their degrees, said Sandra Golden, project director for the initiative, which is administered by the Ohio Literacy Resource Center at the main campus.

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“We found that a number of students who have their GED come to colleges and then withdraw,” she said.

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About 100 students who hold GEDs attend Kent Stark, Nist said.

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Patterson hopes to help at least some of them.

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“Adults feel sometimes like they’re just thrown in, and they don’t know how to work through the system,” she said.

For more information, call (330) 244-3292.

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