Going back to school was a longtime goal for Apple Inc. Senior Manager of Logistics Strategic Planning Gary Jensen, who earned his bachelor’s in Marketing Business at San Diego State in 1981.

The manager of strategic and tactical planning had already graduated from Dale Carnegie, but when his children went to college, he decided it was time to get his MBA.

“My boss encouraged me to take the time [Friday afternoons and Saturday mornings] and even helped pay for the program,” Jensen said.

Timing was important to this coaching assistant. Sacramento State’s College of Business Administration Executive MBA program allowed Jensen to fast-track his degree by cramming an entire master’s program into 15 months with a new semester every four weeks.

If all goes as planned, Jensen will walk across the stage to accept his MBA diploma the same time as his step-daughter accepts her Communications bachelor’s in the Spring. “We compete for quiet space in the house, but we can also relate to the education experience,” Jensen said.

Jensen is encouraging his step-daughter to go back right away for her MBA instead of waiting until she is out of the studying groove.

Despite the jarring studying schedule, Jensen found being a returning student in a working executive program very rewarding. “The variety of people I have met in the class has been inspiring. Everyone is there to learn,” Jensen said. “Unlike when we were undergrads, this time it isn’t just about a piece of paper.”

The experience has resulted in other nice surprises. Since Jensen uses accounting every day, he thought the finance aspects would be easy, but he really found the in-depth concepts taught by real-world working professors eye-opening – and challenging. “Both the academic professors and the adjuncts brought relevant, relatable experience to the lessons,” Jensen said. Professors even adjusted the case studies in some of the classes to ensure they were relevant to the industries the students knew.

The experience is already paying off. “People are coming to me for answers,” Jensen said. “That feels good.”

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— Gary Jensen