

University News Beat

by York's Department of Information and Publications

Emergency Services
Centre — 3333

Atkinson Conselling:

Full-time help for part-time undergrads

If you're having problems budgeting your time and money as a full-time day student, imagine trying to cope with courses, handle a full-time job, balance the family budget and be a spouse and parent at the same time.

This is a common situation for many students of Atkinson College — York's faculty for part-time, evening degree studies.

At an average age of 28, the typical Atkinson student is married with children, and has the full-time responsibility of a career or a household.

Fortunately, there is a qualified and energetic group of people in Atkinson's Counselling Services whose main concern is helping to solve the problems of the mature part-time student.

"The basic philosophy behind the Atkinson Counselling Services," says Counsellor Sylvia Campbell, "is that everything focuses on the needs of adult students — it affects everything we do, even staffing."

You won't find a counsellor under 25 years old at Atkinson, because the mature student is more willing to discuss his problems with a person closer to his own age.

Furthermore, the Atkinson counsellors must be available to the student who has a 9:00 to 5:00 job, or children to care for. Their hours, then, are flexible and include Saturdays and evenings.

Finances are a problem for many mature undergrads, (Atkinson bursaries are of help to only a small percentage of students) and the counsellors are often called upon to advise on how to work the cost of courses and books into the family budget.

In 1964, 20 per cent of Atkinson's students were women. Now the percentage is twice that. According to Mrs. Campbell, an all too common situation is the housewife trying to pay for a course out of her household money.

The Canadian government, unlike the U.S. government, doesn't offer

special financial programs to help women go back to school.

But money is just one of a list of difficulties facing the adult student.

Most have been away from academic work for at least ten years, have never had access to academic counselling services before, and have little knowledge of what courses would be suitable for them.

"We try to help people be realistic about their goals," explains Mrs. Campbell. Most Atkinson students have one of two goals in mind when they decide to enrol — to upgrade their present job, or to change or begin a career.

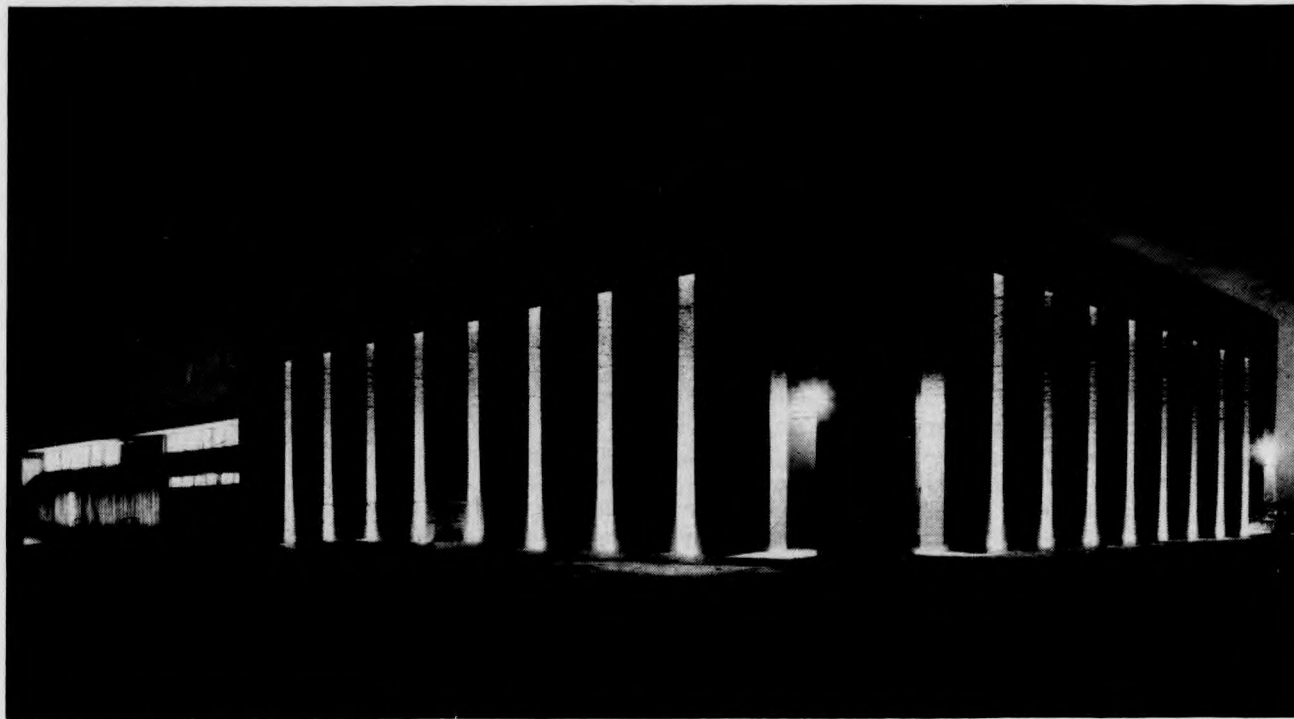
The Atkinson counsellors explain what career possibilities exist given the student's capabilities and background, and present reasonable alternatives.

A typical case in point is the housewife who wants to go back to school and then get a job. The counsellors try to point out career alternatives to the traditional secretary, nurse, teacher roles, that a mature woman may never have considered.

Room 268 in Atkinson serves as a resource centre with informative volumes on various professions and careers as well as books on essay writing and library use, and a catalogue of complete course descriptions. The students can browse through the literature and then see a counsellor for further assistance.

An average Atkinson course takes about ten hours a week including reading and study time (most students take 2 or 3 a year). Yet many enthusiastic adults, anxious to get their degrees, register for more courses than they can handle. The counsellors help to point the way to a more reasonable workload.

Occasionally, a counsellor recognizes that a student, such as a new Canadian, is not academically ready for a university course. Then, he or she will suggest alternatives such as the Centre for Continuing Education



The lights stay on for evening students at Atkinson College.

or community colleges.

Mrs. Campbell finds that the most determined students are dropouts who have come back and are sure that this time they want to complete their degree. They have much more at stake now because they have a family and job dependent on the outcome of their studies. They can't afford the luxury of experimentation. The anxiety that this responsibility arouses is a common problem that the counsellors encounter.

Even the faculty at Atkinson is geared toward the adult student. There are the more mature professors who conduct their courses in a traditional manner (a comfort to the older student who is used to a very structured curriculum), and there are the younger teachers who prefer to teach in an open, flexible tutorial situation.

This diversity is paralleled in Atkinson's course options. Courses tend to be topical to fulfill the need of most mature students to relate their studies to their lives. A grass roots course such as Poverty and Social Change is held downtown for those who want to get involved with the problem of poverty and not just talk about it. General education courses are conducted in the usual lecture-tutorial-essay manner.

One characteristic is common to all Atkinson courses — they all have some structure. The mature student is accustomed to and functions better in an organized atmosphere.

While most problems of the Atkinson student are academic (how should I approach an essay; what should I choose as a major; I can't seem to finish all my reading assignments) many are emotional.

One significant obstacle, according to Paul Blythe, that he, as a counsellor, faces is the reluctance of a mature student to discuss his

emotional problems. It is typical of a person of 18 or 20 to suffer an identity crisis or to feel unsure of himself, but society expects a mature individual to know his own mind.

Therefore, there is a degree of embarrassment felt by the older student when he seeks help from the Counselling Services. After the ice is broken, the problem is often alleviated quickly and the student, feeling more confident, is ready to help himself.

Some students talk about personal problems involving their marriages or family relationships. As Blythe points out, education results in personal change. There is often the problem in a marriage of one partner (the Atkinson student) expanding his intellectual horizons and outgrowing his spouse.

Also common is the ideological change problem. An individual enters Atkinson with many preconceived prejudices and emerges with more liberal, mature attitudes — but his spouse has not undergone the same transformation.

Because Atkinson students are busy people, and because school is only one of their many concerns, Blythe is working on programs to develop a sense of community among Atkinson undergraduates.

He is planning to initiate a Debating Society, a Single Parents Club and a Philosophy Club to bring people with common interests together. As an honorary member of the Atkinson Students Association, he acts as a consultant to them suggesting extra-curricular possibilities.

The Atkinson Counselling Services, under the directorship of Dr. Jack Brown, exists to help part-time students cope with courses and a career. One point that all the counsellors agree on is the choice of a first course is crucial, because it gives that first impression of university.

For this reason, registration times are peak periods. The help of a friendly, concerned counsellor is invaluable to the mature student in understanding the calendar and making the right first choice.

Sugden, honorary grad

Fall convocation

About 474 men and women will be receiving degrees tomorrow night at the Fall Convocation. The awarding of degrees to all faculties and colleges (excluding McKenzie) will be held in the Tait McKenzie Physical Education Centre at 8:00 p.m.

An honorary Doctor of Science degree will be awarded to Professor Theodore Morris Sugden. Professor Sugden is no stranger to York, having first visited here three years ago and having given the first lecture in the 1973-74 Distinguished Science Speakers Series yesterday at Curtis Lecture Hall. Professor Sugden is Director of the Thornton Research Centre, Shell Research Limited, Chester, England and a Fellow of the Royal Society of London. Among his many outstanding contributions to science in his work on flames and combustion.

Of the 474 students graduating 252 are from the Faculty of Arts; fifteen from the Faculty of Fine Arts; twenty-two are from Glendon; thirteen from the Faculty of Science; twelve from Osgoode Law School; and 157 from the Faculty of Graduate Studies.

FFA to publish new journal

Canada is one of the few active theatre countries in the world which does not have a serious journal aimed at documenting, analyzing and contributing to its professional theatrical activities. In answer to this need, the *Canadian Theatre Review*, a professional quarterly journal will be published by York's Faculty of Fine Arts in January.

CTR will be edited by theatre prof. Don Rubin, who was chosen for the job according to Dean Joseph Green, "because of his extensive knowledge of and clear commitment to theatre in Canada".

Each issue will be at least 100 pages in length and will include major essays relating to Canadian theatre as it exists today, historical documentation relating to the Canadian theatre as it existed in the past, and regional essays by leading members of the theatrical community.

Featuring a previously unpublished, full-length Canadian script (early issues will include scripts by George Ryga, John Herbert and Michael Cook), the *Canadian Theatre Review* will also contain reference material and reviews of important new theatre books.

A national publication, CTR has on its editorial advisory board critics, playwrights and professors from almost every province in the country.

Single copies of CTR will be sold on newsstands for \$1.50, and one-year (\$4.50) or two-year (\$8.00) subscriptions will also be available.

For more information about this new magazine drop in to the CTR office in Room 222, Administrative Studies Building.

Easing the transition

The average Atkinson undergrad has never written an essay. In fact, he has been away from the discipline of academic studies for several years.

To ease the transition into university, the Atkinson Counselling Services offers workshops in all aspects of academic work.

A combination of programs offered by such help agencies as the Writing Workshop and the Counselling and Development Centre, Atkinson's Workshops are conducted evenings and Saturdays to accommodate the part-time student body.

Study Skills Workshops offer help in techniques of exam writing, and lecture note-taking, while Writing Workshops concentrate on researching, organizing and writing essays.

Of special interest to new Canadians is the writing Workshop for students

whose second language is English.

In addition, workshops in seminar participation and reading improvement are offered.

More out of the ordinary, is the Thinking in Education Workshop which is intended to help students think more expansively in relation to their courses. In essence, the emphasis here is on better utilization of existing mental capacity.

To supplement the workshops, Counselling Services publishes booklets on such topics as "Thinking Through Your Essay" and "Suggestions for Effective Studies". These guides are so valuable that Atkinson receives requests for copies from community colleges and other education centres.

Many workshops are conducted by former Atkinson students who are sensitive to the needs and insecurities of the mature, part-time student.

Fortnightly Forum

The second lecture in the President's Fortnightly Forum series is today at 4:00 p.m. in the eighth floor faculty lounge of the Ross Bldg.

Professor Robert Haynes, biology, will speak on "Repair of Damaged Genes".

The Forum was initiated by Dr. Yolton to provide an opportunity for faculty members to talk about their current research projects to the members of the community, and to present topics arising out of their research.