

A Second Chance at Woodsworth College

By Anne McDonagh

Woodsworth College's Academic Bridging Program, at the University of Toronto, gives people a second chance at a university education. The Bridging Program enables mature students to take one (or two) university courses over a year; if they pass, they gain automatic acceptance to continue in a degree program at U of T.

David Nimmo, the program director, says, "Those who pass and continue on to university turn their lives around. They may have dropped out of high school in grade 11 and been pumping gas, or doing some other minimum wage job, ever since. However, after successfully completing the Academic Bridging Program, many have gone on to graduate from university and into good jobs. Others have gone on to do post graduate work. In fact, twenty to thirty percent of Woodsworth staff members are graduates of the Bridging Program."

Begun in 1967, the program was non-credit until the year 2000. Now the university course that students take in the program is counted as a credit towards a degree in the Faculty of Arts and Science. The students choose a course in one of the following areas: history, Canadian society, mathematics or literature. They must achieve a B average in that course to become a full time student and a C average to attend the university part time. They must also be at least 20 years old to be accepted into the program. Information sessions are held before each semester.

Every effort has been made to accommodate an older student clientele who may have found 'book learning' difficult the first time round. Classes are small so that students get individual attention and support from their instructors. And classes are offered morning, afternoon and evening so that those who are working can still get their feet wet in academia and find out if they have the 'right stuff.' Approximately 800 students take this program annually. For more information about the Academic Bridging Program and the Information Sessions, phone 416-978-7487.

Woodsworth College was founded in 1974. According to its mission statement it was established "to provide the best educational experience for a diverse student body that includes a large number of

part-time and non-traditional students." It still fulfills this function although the majority of students are full-time.

One of the special aspects of Woodsworth is the number of grants available for its students. Grants are non repayable and are designed to assist students of the College who have explored all other avenues of financial assistance and still have unmet financial needs. Many of these students would find it difficult to continue their studies without a grant. The Alumnae works very hard to recruit donors for the grants program.

For more information about Woodsworth College, go to its web site, www.wdw.utoronto.ca.

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