

265th CONVOCATION

Graduates take different paths to success

Each of the 1,500 graduates at Autumn Convocation charted a different path to success.

Among the graduates last week were a new mother who is also a former Miss Canada and a 51-year-old woman who is the first among her 13 brothers and sisters to earn a university degree.

Nicole Dunsdon, 25, has two things to be proud of this year. She received her Master of Arts in Journalism at Convocation October 25 after 16 months of hard work and she received it in front of her seven-month old son, Spencer. She gave birth to Spencer on March 13 — 11 months into the year-long MA program at the Graduate School of Journalism. The demands of motherhood made it impossible for her to complete the program in the spring, so Dunsdon spent the summer finishing her research and balancing the responsibilities of family and school.

Originally from British Columbia, Dunsdon was Miss Canada in 1992 and chose to pursue a career in journalism because of her exposure to the media and her work as a spokesperson during that year. She says that her classmates were very supportive during the program and it was sometimes "like having 42 husbands" to care for her. Dunsdon was joined at the ceremony by



A Busy Time for Family Photographers

There were smiles and plenty of cameras per square foot in Alumni Hall during Autumn Convocation, October 25 - 27. And why not? Convocation is a major milestone for the graduates, their families and friends, and the University. "We are proud of you," said Chancellor Reva Gerstein. "May the future provide an opportunity for you to make a significant use of your unique talents and knowledge."

Spencer's father, her parents and her sister.

Laura Reid's education in computer science has taken her around the world. The 31-year-old Londoner had an eye-opening experience teaching the discipline to university women in the United Arab Emirates from 1991 to 1994. There were amazing computer facilities in the oil rich nation, she says.

Reid, who graduated October 25 with a Master of Science degree in Computer Science, is currently considering another international offer — a three-year teaching post and an opportunity to study for a PhD at Flinders University in Adelaide, Australia. Reid read about the position on the internet and used the new video conferencing facilities at

Western's Student Employment Services to do the interview and land the job offer.

Kathleen Ann Barnard graduated with a Master's degree in Education October 25. She was also the recipient of the W. A. Townshend Award of the Faculty of Graduate Studies.

At the Convocation ceremony on October 26, Anne O'Neill blazed a trail — one that was very different from the one her siblings and her sons have followed. The 51-year-old mother of three graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in Women's Studies 23 years after starting university.

One of 14 children, she is the first among her brothers and sisters to finish university. Her sister currently is enrolled at Western.

O'Neill says she's also

different from her sons. Although all three have postsecondary education, she says that she was the type of student they hated. She asked questions in class and didn't mind staying late. As a mature student, O'Neill says she thought about university in very different terms — every course was a delight and the experience opened up the world for her. She is a strong believer in the need for lifelong learning. O'Neill teaches personal skills management at Fanshawe College.

Carmen Ellis, 23, knows the value of tempo and pacing. The former ballet dancer was stricken with the Epstein-Barr virus in her final years of high school. Suffering from both mononucleosis and chicken pox, she was forced to take life more slowly.

Ellis gave herself an extra year to complete her Bachelor of Arts degree in Psychology and French at Western. That allowed her to learn things more thoroughly, she says. She graduated on the final day of Western's Autumn Convocation October 27 and was the winner of the Angela Armit Award for the part-time student with the highest graduating average.

A native of Mississauga, Ellis hopes the discipline she learned in ballet will carry her through the next step in her life. She currently is attending Osgoode Hall law school and hopes to find a career that will allow her to combine law and psychology.

For several years, Sharron Zweig was better known on campus as Mrs. Zweig. The 50-year-old mother sent all three of

her children to Western before enrolling herself in 1984. Sitting in classes her daughters had taken only a few years before, professors respectfully referred to her as Mrs. Zweig. Walking across campus, she'd hear "Hello, Mrs. Zweig" called out by her children's friends. After 11 years of study, Zweig says "it's finally because of me" that she's noticed.

Zweig graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in Anthropology at Convocation on October 27. She completed a diploma in art therapy in 1993. Gathering the confidence to go to university as an adult is a challenge, she says, but there's a lot of support available and it doesn't have to be intimidating. Zweig has applied to Althouse College where she hopes to study for a master's degree in education.