

20 years, 3 kids and degree

Prodded into going back to school, mother graduates

By Pat Crone
of The Free Press

Twenty years and three children later, Gail Konanur walked away from the University of Western Ontario, degree in hand.

Mrs. Konanur, 38, received her arts degree Wednesday. And she was one happy lady. "It's really great to finally get the degree," she said. "I think I'm going to frame it and hang it up in the family room."

Mrs. Konanur completed one year at Western in 1958 when financial difficulties forced her to quit and take a job.

"Money was really tight in those days and we didn't have students' loans like today."

In 1962, she went to teachers' college and taught for three years before getting married. But the idea of receiving her degree was never far from her thoughts.

"I never really forgave myself for quitting when I was young and single and should have got it," she said.

Personal desire to have the degree plus an encouraging husband and mother prodded her to hit the books once again.

At first, with a busy home life, Mrs. Konanur took a course occasionally to fit in with her schedule. In 1976, she took two

courses, and finished last year with three.

"I didn't have to take all three courses last year," she said. "But it's like the horse heading home after the milk route — the closer you get to the stable, the faster you go."

Her husband, Kumar, who teaches mathematics at Fanshawe College, said he is "very happy" for his wife.

"It means a lot to her," he said. "She's the only daughter in her family that has a degree."

He said he had to babysit and take the children out to supper sometimes, but the family didn't suffer too much.

Universities advised help yourselves, the people

By Dove Daughinee
of The Free Press

Universities are failing to use part-time education to help the disadvantaged and take up the slack during a time of falling enrolments and reduced funding, says a Carleton University study released by the ministry of colleges and universities.

"If part-time studies are to take up some of the excess capacity with which the university will find itself, new approaches to prospective part-time students with diverse interests will have to be found," say sociologists Elizabeth Humphreys and John Porter. (Porter is the author of *The Vertical Mosaic*).

The report says universities lack motivation in attracting a large market of students wishing to upgrade job opportunities or seeking "personal enrichment." Particularly, "that would be true for the disadvantaged group who probably constitute the largest source of recruits."

"But perhaps neither the universities nor the government would look favorably on the institutional changes necessary to make universities more accessible through, for example, a more vigorous approach to the mature matriculant," it says.

"The universities may continue to feel that the higher learning is fundamentally elitist and the government may have other social policy priorities to serve the disadvantaged."

The researchers say part-time education should be seen as a method for helping persons denied opportunities, because of sex or social-economic class, to get into higher occupations from lower ones.

"In some highly credentialled occupations such as teaching, the opportunity for part-time studies is essential to maintain a position in the profession, particularly for females and persons from lower socio-economic

backgrounds who generally have inferior qualifications. "In other occupations, such as housewife, part-time studies represent an opportunity for people to prepare themselves to enter the labor force."

Humphreys and Porter said universities must "not only create the educational opportunity and institutional arrangements, but instill the requisite educational motivations."

In addition, they charge that in a variety of ways, persons from "lower origins" don't make it to university because higher classes are favored in access to university education — even in the current part-time educational programs.

Within the part-time programs, students receive limited access to higher education because of "institutional decisions made by default rather than design" in areas such as residency, time scheduling, course rotation and hours of operation of facilities.

"The consequence is that part-time students are able to participate to a much lesser extent than full-time students in directing their educational experience."

Over-all, the study determined the majority of part-time students are from middle and upper-middle class origins and more than half were drawn from managerial, administrative and professional occupation categories. They already tend to have more education than the average Canadian.

Although many said they were looking for a job or income improvement, the majority indicated "personal enrichment" was their first reason for taking part-time courses. The average age for a part-time student is 31 years, compared to 21 years for full-time students. Most began studies after beginning work and more than half have been married.

"As long as university funding remains enrolment based, the expanding population of potential part-time students may be viewed by the universities as a recruit ing ground to maintain income levels."