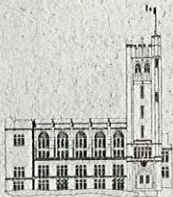


## UWO CONVOCATION

# Typical mature student usually

But for Sharron Zweig, 'there was just one too many people who asked me a question I couldn't answer' while working as a volunteer tour guide at an archeology museum.

By Rob Mason  
Free Press Reporter



Sharron Zweig didn't start out as the typical mature university student at Western.

The majority of those who return to school after many years away are looking to improve their qualifications in

their present job, or to find a new career.

Zweig, who was working as a volunteer tour guide at the museum of Indian archeology in London in the early 1980s, just wanted answers to a few questions about anthropology.

"There was just one too many people who asked me a question that I couldn't answer," said the 51-year-old artist, child counsellor and mother of three, of why she originally went back to school in 1984.

At that time, Zweig was planning to take one anthropology course. She ended up working part-time on a degree, but fell into the art therapy and play therapy programs.

She put anthropology aside to earn diplomas in the other two programs and it produced "a vocation."

She did finish what she started, though, and will receive her bachelor of arts degree in anthropology today, the final day of UWO's fall convocation.

"It was quite the life-changing experience," said Zweig, whose three children all attended Western. "It's a real personal challenge for a mature student going back to school. It requires a very quick integration into the environment, with vast amounts of material coming at you when you're not used to that.

**CONFIDENCE:** "There comes a point where you can suffer a crisis in confidence. You don't know whether you can do it. That is where the mature student counselling and the support of other students becomes very important. You get to realize you can do it."

When Zweig first returned to school, she was mostly known as Mrs. Zweig, recognized as the mother of former students. But by her third year of classes, she had become known as herself and had met many mature students.

"Most of them are part-time (students) and working," Zweig said. "The majority of the students I knew were looking at it in a professional manner, as a way to earn a living. It was a kind of life upgrade in that sense."

In 1994, there were 5,677 part-time students at UWO and its affiliated colleges out of a total of 25,734 undergraduate students.

A new career "or to augment the credits they've got,

**Award winner:** Ellis will receive the Angela Armit award today during convocation ceremonies for being the part-time student with the highest graduating average. "That was a pleasant surprise. . . . I knew there were awards, but I thought because I was part-time I wouldn't qualify for any. I'm very pleased."

**Job prospects:** Ellis is planning to incorporate her psychology training into her career as a lawyer. "I'm not interested in common law like most of my classmates here (at Osgoode Hall in Toronto). I want to concentrate on family law. I like working with children and the way family law affects children."

**What it cost:** Ellis estimates it cost \$9,000-\$10,000 to attend Western. Some of that was through a loan but, "I did have some help from my parents."

### JOB OUTLOOK

While other social sciences have had ups and downs in popularity, psychology has consistently drawn students. "It is intrinsically interesting, learning about yourself, learning about social behavior and the principles of human behavior," psychology department chairperson Clive Seligman says. "It teaches terrific life skills as well as job skills."

Seligman says anyone looking to become a psychologist in a medical setting will have to continue with graduate studies, but undergraduates can find jobs. As examples, he lists social work, parole officer, government agencies and consulting.

### UWO CONVOCATION

The University of Western Ontario's 265th convocation, which began on Wednesday, concludes today. The final 480 of about 1,500 graduates will receive degrees and diplomas today.

**Today's graduating classes:** Faculties of social science and part-time and continuing education.

### GRADUATE PROFILE

**Carmen Ellis**, bachelor of arts, psychology and French

**Age:** 23

**Home town:** Mississauga

**About her program:** "I loved it. I'm in law school now, but I really miss psychology. I started in sociology and French, but I took a psychology course and really liked it, so I made myself take the math courses I needed to be in psychology."

**Second love:** Psychology takes second place to ballet, which was Ellis's "lifelong dream," until she contracted Epstein-Barr virus while in high school. That led to chicken pox at a late age and mononucleosis, which ended any hope of a career as a dancer. "I tried it again a little bit, but I couldn't even point my toes."

The physical problems made Ellis attend university part-time. "By doing it part-time I could do it more thoroughly. It definitely did help. I get tired more often than other people and when I needed to sleep, I did."

# trying to improve career

that is certainly a reason" many mature students come back to school, said Mark Rayner of the UWO faculty of part-time and continuing education.

"From what I have seen and heard, there is certainly a trend to be more career focused."

**INTEREST:** Elaine Clark, the acting co-ordinator of diploma and certificate programs, said there is a "great degree of interest" in career-oriented studies. "But there is really a combination of people. We get people in all stages of their careers."

Rayner said there is also "a segment of students who do it out of a love for learning."

Zweig didn't really fit into either of those categories when she arrived at Western, but she eventually began to focus on a possible career move after learning of the art therapy program by accident: she was sent to mature student counselling, but when she arrived a woman there asked "You're here for art therapy?" and the seed was planted.

"When I walked through that door I had no idea what it was," Zweig said. "I was an artist and I had done some volunteer work with mental health patients, so eventually what happened was I got interested."

While at school, Zweig spent a "couple of years" working full-time as a child advocate in a crisis centre. She has since left that job to work in private practice.

"I really enjoy working in this field, with children," she said.



**Sharron Zweig of London is graduating from Western today with a bachelor of arts degree in anthropology.**