

Conestoga College offers unique program

When sports fans crowded around their televisions this summer to watch the World Cup of Soccer, they probably took the clear pictures and crisp sound for granted; a broadcast technologist in The Sports Network's Rome studio will not. The technologist, on assignment from TSN's Toronto studios, is the person who ensures that the action on the field reaches the tens of thousands of televisions in Canada.

This technologist was just one of many Canadian trained graduates working throughout the world in the rapidly growing field of radio and television broadcast technology.

Conestoga College in Kitchener, in response to industry demand for skilled technologists, has approved a co-operative program in Radio and TV Broadcast Technology, only the second program of its kind in Canada. The Broadcast Systems program enjoys a unique feature; it virtually guarantees graduates interesting, well paying jobs.

"The response from industry has been overwhelming," said John Tibbits, President of Conestoga College. "We knew that there was strong industry demand for broadcast technologists, but the response from our survey of prospective employers surpassed even our most optimistic estimates. The program will be a winner!"

One of the most enthusiastic proponents of the program is Canada's all sports station, The Sports Network. At present TSN recruits 75 per cent of its electronic technologists from the South Alberta Institute of Technology in Calgary. The network regularly competes head-to-head with other broadcasters each year for the best graduates from S.A.I.T. and, in fact, sends recruiters out to Calgary to interview potential new technologists.

"Ontario needs a college to produce the highly skilled technologists that our industry needs and demands, said T.S.N. Vice President Terry Snazel. "The program prepared by Conestoga College is impressive and I feel confident that TSN and other broadcasters will be busting down their doors to hire their graduates."

"We have a vested interest in the success of this program," added Snazel. "We not only get a local source of technologists, but also we are able to accept co-op work-term placements which will be a tremendous asset to the sophisticated broadcaster like The Sports Network."

"Graduates from this program will undoubtedly be rewarded with interesting careers. In fact, one of our technologists is presently in Italy at the World Cup of Soccer, while another of our technologists was recently named Vice President, Satellites, for the Turner Broadcasting System in Atlanta. The sky is the limit for these graduates. This field is growing extremely quickly."

Paul Scott, Program Manager at Kitchener's CFCA FM, echoed Snazel's enthusiasm for the Conestoga College program. "There is a critical shortage of broadcast technologists across Canada," stated Scott.

"Broadcasting is changing very quickly and you have to stay on top of the technological changes," Scott added. "Today's technologists must be proficient in everything from satellites to Digital Audio Broadcasting. The skill base required can only be developed from an intensive training program like the one being offered by Conestoga College."

The Co-op Broadcast Systems course is one of four co-op programs to be offered by Conestoga College in 1990-91. The other programs include: Robotics and Automation Technology, Food and Beverage Management and the popular Woodworking Technician program. The Co-op program was initiated by the College in response to growing demand on the part of industry for not only trained, but experienced graduates. Co-op has also been a popular educational option for many students, in particular mature students, re-

entering the education system after years in the work force.

Bonnie Heide is a quiet success story who is presently awaiting the fall to resume her education. A single mother, Bonnie has been living on her own since age 18 when she dropped out of high school, one credit short of graduating. Through the Independent Learning Centre she not only picked up the course she needed to qualify for college, but also became aware of the Broadcast Systems co-op program.

"I was looking for a challenging, non-traditional job," said Heide. "I've always been good with my

hands and I was told that I had a natural aptitude for a technologist position.

"Going to college after being out of school for the past few years is going to be tough," added Heide. "I'm presently taking an upgrading course in Math to prepare for my full-time studies. I felt that the co-op option was less intimidating than the regular program."

"I'm excited about going to Conestoga College in September. I want to do something with my life and make a good life for my daughter. The Broadcast Systems program will allow me to achieve

these goals."

The Engineering Technology Department at Conestoga College has devoted a tremendous amount of time and energy over the past year preparing for this program. Fraser Cooper, an engineering technology instructor, is confident that the broadcast systems program should not be anything less.

"Today's employers require hands on experience. One of the beauties of the co-op program is that our students graduate with both intensive classroom training and relevant workplace experience. As our graduates will be responsible for the maintenance

of, and the day-to-day operation of all electronic equipment in the broadcast industry, workplace experience is crucial."

The first year of the Radio and TV Broadcast Technology program has been developed with the goal of providing students with solid electronics fundamentals. Courses include Introduction to Microprocessors, Digital Fundamentals, Technical Operations and Program Solving and Design. After two introductory semesters at the Doon Campus, students will be placed in work-term assignments commencing in the summer of 1991

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