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Career advisor at WLU helps
mature people make wise choices

Neil Gibson is the mature student career advisor at Wilfrid Laurier University and he's on hand days and three nights a week to help students and prospective students make sound career choices.

"I don't attempt to tell people what career they should follow but I do try to help them identify the options that are open to them," he said in a recent interview.

He is backed by all the resources of the Laurier placement and career services office, which takes up a floor on the centrally-located Student Services Centre. It is open until 8:30 p.m. four nights a week.

In addition to a large library of information about careers, the centre offers an ongoing series of workshops on subjects ranging from resume writing and job search to career exploration and gaining interview skills.

In general all mature people who come to the university and are unsure of their career goals are referred to Gibson. He also talks to graduates of Laurier who are facing career decisions.

"Many of the people I see are between 30 and 35 and are in dead-end jobs and know it. Some simply don't like what they are doing and want to make a change.

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"Many adult students have definite career goals and come to university to prepare themselves for that goal," he added. "The ones I see are those who know what they don't want but are unsure about what they might accomplish."

Another group he sees are women with school aged children who are interested in entering or re-entering the job market. Many see further education as a necessity if they hope to get a satisfying job.

"And I often talk with people who are being passed over for promotion at their place of work. More education is a solution for some and I've talked to bookkeepers, for example, who want to become accountants and aren't sure how to begin."

He added that many people in the Twin Cities don't realize that Wilfrid Laurier operates courses in the evenings, late afternoons, Saturdays and weekends, so that people can prepare for better jobs while continuing the ones they have.

In fact, almost half those graduating at the university's twice-yearly convocations earned their degrees or diplomas as part-time students.

Gibson said many people have a desire to make a change but are concerned that their educational level may make it impossible to enter university.

"They don't realize that our doors are open to all with grade 12 and at least two years of work experience. If they are over 21, the only requirement is two years in the work force."

When it comes to dealing with those wanting to make a career change the Laurier advisor feels right at home: he made a career change himself and is delighted he did.

A graduate of the University of Toronto with a teaching certificate, Gibson taught high school but wanted to make the change to career counselling at a university. He started at Wilfrid Laurier University in his new career in September of 1981.

"It may have been easier when I made a change but I am convinced that anyone can do it if they have the motivation," he said. "It paid off for me and I am seeing it do the same for those who come through my office door here at Laurier."