



# NEWS

FROM **WATERLOO LUTHERAN UNIVERSITY**

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## WLU Business and Economics Students

### Now Talk To Computers

Students in Waterloo Lutheran University's School of Business and Economics are learning a new language these days -- how to talk to a computer.

Hooked into a giant, IBM computer in Toronto through a typewriter-like terminal, students in the school have the advantage of dealing with the most sophisticated equipment as they learn how to utilize computer knowledge in their studies.

"We are not training our students in computer science as such," explained James E. Kitchen, assistant professor of economics. "Rather, we see the computer as an adjunct to any professionally oriented course in business and economics."

Waterloo Lutheran's School of Business and Economics, a key faculty in the limited-enrolment institution, is the first in the province to install a computer console for full use in a wide diversity of courses at the undergraduate level.

And while the purpose is a serious one, since a knowledge of computer science is becoming a necessity in today's business world, there is a lot of fun involved as students grapple with computers and their operations.

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For example, one exercise used to demonstrate the use of the computer, determines where a baseball would strike the ground after being batted out. Involved are such factors as velocity and height from the ground.

One student typed out a velocity for the thrown ball of 400 feet a second. The computer gulped, then typed out this message: "Come on, thats over 100 miles an hour."

And when the student typed in a lower speed, the computer said the ball would strike the ground 7.07 feet out, then added: "Put a little muscle behind it."

while these "conversations" with the computer help the student to grasp the methods of utilization, there are a host of practical applications in the field of business and economics.

The computer does analysis computations in seconds that would take more than 100 hours on a desk calculator, which means that more time can be spent on the interpretation and meaning of the analysis.

Students can program a subroutine decision to establish production levels and raw material orders for a manufacturing process with known costs and unknown demand. It takes the exercise out of the realm of arithmetic and makes it a real learning experience in the management of a process.

Prof. Paul Albright, for a final example, will use the computer in his quantitative analysis lectures, where student understanding of statistical techniques is sometimes clouded by the immense number of calculations necessary to use them. The computer can facilitate understanding by eliminating computational errors.

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Prof. Glenn Carroll, director of WLU's School of Business and Economics, said the "hands on" experience that students will receive actually working with the computer and its card punching equipment will be invaluable to them.

"Every student in business and economics need this understanding if he is to be properly prepared for the demanding roles in business and industry just ahead," Prof. Carroll said. "Prospective employers are making this increasingly clear."

He added that WLU's new installation will provide students with the best possible type of experience, since they can work directly on the keyboard and not simply prepare the material and pick up the results a day later.

"Students type out the program they want answered in the correct form, have the material checked by the machine, they actually discuss it with the machine, then get answers back. This is impact."

He added that the university was not training its students to become computer operators but giving them the background they will need as they enter upon careers as executives in business.

"The computer is a tool of business, with limitations and strengths," Prof. Carroll said. "We are striving to keep the school in the forefront by providing increased understanding of business concepts through use of new techniques."