

# The Atkinson Centre for Mature and Part-time Students NEWSLETTER

With the impending arrival of spring, it seems logical that the theme for this issue of the ACMAPS Newsletter is growth. Reminiscent of the positive energy associated with the first shoots of spring, during the past academic year our office has experienced a significant increase in activity. In addition to the expanded Student Success series, we have more people in the office. Scott Pope, from Counselling and Disability Services, is in the ACMAPS office one afternoon each week. To learn more about Scott, see the article inside this Newsletter. We also are thrilled to have a peer mentor in the office each day: our six volunteers are available to meet with students and to share their knowledge of the university, courses, time management, and anything else that might be helpful.

In addition to expanding our services at York, we continue to reach out to others who are committed to improving the post-secondary

experience for adult learners. In January, Brian Poser and I were invited to be panellists at the Mature Student Success Forum held at Ryerson University. The packed house of more than 130 mature students confirmed that there is a need to provide networking opportunities and to hear the concerns expressed by adult learners who face the challenges of juggling school, jobs, and families. Brian and I currently are involved in the early stages of a collaborative research project with the University of Guelph. This research will explore the overall health of adult learners, so that we can work to ensure that the proper supports are available to help mature students maintain a healthy lifestyle. As we move into longer days, I hope that you will all take time to enjoy some fresh air and sunshine!

All the best,  
Norma Sue

#### Office Hours:

Mon	8:30 am - 7:00 pm
Tue	8:30 am - 4:30 pm
Weds	8:30 am - 7:00 pm
Thurs	8:30 am - 4:30 pm
Fri	8:30 am - 4:30 pm
Sat	See ACMAPS website
Sun	Closed

**Address:** ACMAPS 111 Central Square York University  
4700 Keele Street Toronto, Ontario Canada M3J 1P3

**Phone:** (416) 736-5770 Fax: (416) 736-5787

**Email:** [acmaps@yorku.ca](mailto:acmaps@yorku.ca)

**Website:** [www.yorku.ca/acmaps](http://www.yorku.ca/acmaps)

#### ACMAPS Listserv

ACMAPS has a listserv that will be used for a monthly newsletter, event listings and announcements relevant to mature and part-time students. If you would like to be added to the ACMAPS listserv, please e-mail [acmaps@yorku.ca](mailto:acmaps@yorku.ca). If you are a Facebook user, please look up our profile on the York University Canada network and feel free to add us to your friends to receive regular status and event updates (our profile name is Atkinson Centre).

#### ACMAPS on the Web

For all the latest about the Atkinson Centre for Mature and Part-time Students, check [www.yorku.ca/acmaps](http://www.yorku.ca/acmaps). The website includes up-to-the-minute event listings for mature students, staff bios, FAQs for mature students, and links to important academic and student services at York.

ACCESS

SUPPORT

ADVOCACY

RESEARCH

## Making Student Parents More Visible

-Brian Poser, Associate Director, ACMAPS

It is part of the ACMAPS mandate to continually learn about the needs of our students. While we have accurate data on the numbers of mature and part-time learners enrolled at York – more than 8500 students aged 25 or older were enrolled as of November 1, 2009 and some 7200 students of all ages were registered on a part-time basis – we don't have an easy way to capture data on how many of our students are balancing their student roles with parenting duties.

Certainly, we do get to know *some* of the student-moms and student-dads through our ACMAPS Orientations (and sometimes their children too!), but the demands of their multiple roles often means student parents don't have the same opportunity to be engaged in student life outside the classroom as other students. Student parents have important, sometimes unmet, needs for accessible and flexible child-care on campus, enhanced financial supports and access to resources that support completion of their degrees.

Recently we invited Tricia van Rhijn (University of Guelph) to give a session at Glendon Campus called "Invisible Students: Succeeding as a Student Parent in Post-Secondary Study" as part of our ACMAPS Speakers Series. The session looked at enrolment trends among mature learners with children, examined the impacts of being a student with children, and looked at barriers to success, enablers of success and resources available to support student parents in their quest for academic success. Turnout was strong and participants were asked for their recommendations in the areas of child care, financial support, institutional accessibility, and strategies for success.

Among their suggestions:

- \*Adapt OSAP to better suit needs of mature students and add greater transparency to rules and eligibility for support.

- \*Provide greater access to childcare spaces and subsidies and provide childcare at mature student events.

- \*Seek institutional accommodations for exams and priority placement in courses when required for family reasons.

- \*Don't let yourself be invisible: reach out for help and get involved on campus

Look for stories on these themes in upcoming newsletters.

## ACMAPS Welcomes Scott Pope

ACMAPS is pleased to introduce Scott Pope who serves as a Liaison for the Atkinson Centre for Mature and Part-time Students.

Scott has more than 30 years of experience working with mature students and knows the campus and its resources well. He is here to discuss non-academic concerns about campus life, provide referrals and help students connect with other students on campus. Scott gladly offers orientation to the campus and supports students in their transition to the student experience. He knows how to maximize the best that the campus has to offer and assists students in learning how to access the resources of the campus and community effectively.

Scott is available on Tuesday afternoons from 1:00 pm – 4:00 pm. Drop in to speak with him or schedule an appointment by contacting ACMAPS at [acmaps@yorku.ca](mailto:acmaps@yorku.ca) or 416-736-5770.

**\*Reminder: For academic advising issues, please arrange a meeting with our Student Advisor, Karen Tait.**

**Karen's Office Hours:**

**Mondays & Wednesdays 11:00 am – 7:00 pm**

**Tuesdays, Thursdays & Fridays 8:30 am – 4:30 pm**

**Alternate Saturdays**

*Guest contributor Latoya Dickenson, organizer of the recent Mature Student Forum at Ryerson University, offers her views on the event ...*

### **Mature Student Forum @ Ryerson**

-Latoya Dickenson, Ryerson University

On Thursday January 21<sup>st</sup>, 2010, the Mature Students at Ryerson (MSAR) hosted the first ever Mature Students Success Forum at Ryerson University. It was born out of the need to create a sense of inclusion and connectedness among mature students. The theme for the event was "Ensuring Success: to motivate, inspire, engage and connect mature students". More than 100 mature students from various colleges and universities were onsite including: York, U of T, Ryerson, Lakehead, Laurentian, U of Guelph, Seneca College and OCAD; the Mature Students Society from Mount Allison University in New Brunswick joined us via Skype.

Five panelists were invited to speak on various topics related to the theme. Dr. Norma Sue Fisher-Stitt, Director of the Atkinson Centre for Mature and Part-time Students (ACMAPS), spoke about her own experiences as a mature student as well as institutional advocacy, Brian Poser, Associate Director of ACPAPS, spoke about the programs and services that ACPAPS offers, Jeff Rybak, a current mature student and writer, spoke about the importance to get engaged, Dr. Barbara Rose, professor at U of T's Woodsworth College, shared some anecdotes about her own experiences as a mature student and Jeremy O'Kafka, Business Development Manager for BizLaunch, spoke about networking for career success. All of the speakers were very insightful and the feedback received from the event was overwhelmingly positive. Judging by the number of attendees and the distances traveled by some, it reinforces the fact that more events specifically for mature students are desperately in need.

Following the event, Jeff Rybak wrote an article for Maclean's OnCampus entitled *Mature students want to be understood* (<http://oncampus.macleans.ca/education/2010/01/23/mature-students-want-to-be-understood/>) in the article he alluded to 'ACMAPS envy'. This term came about due to the fact that many non-York students, including myself, expressed desire in seeing a similar centre at their own university. At Ryerson for example, very little exists in terms of resources specifically available for mature students; resources that do exist (e.g., <http://www.ryerson.ca/maturestudent/> created by the Centre for Student Development & Counselling) are updated infrequently and reflect only seasonal offerings. It would certainly come as a welcome change to see more in the way of ongoing resources that reflect our ongoing needs.

The Mature Students Association at Ryerson (<http://atwood.ryerson.ca/~mature/forum/>) regularly receives emails from prospective mature students wishing to clarify the admission process. Having an office similar to ACPAPS at Ryerson would greatly assist both prospective and current mature students on campus. I am currently in the process of writing a proposal to submit to the Office of Vice-Provost Students to provide feedback about how Ryerson can improve their resources and services to better serve the needs of the growing mature student contingent at Ryerson. Perhaps the four pillars of ACPAPS -- access, support, advocacy and research -- can provide a foundation for ensuring the success of mature students at Ryerson as well.

The forum left many motivated to go back to their schools and lead similar initiatives as described above. That is exactly what events such as this do; they motivate and inspire change.

A tentative date of October 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2010 has been set for a follow-up event to be held.

## **Mature Student Success Program Winter 2010**

ACMAPS again offered its Mature Student Success Programs this winter semester. Sessions were offered in the Student Life stream and the Research & Writing stream.

These workshops are geared towards mature students who are interested in having success in the classroom via writing, research, study strategies, time and stress management and looking ahead toward the next steps in completing their degree requirements.

The Student Life workshops aims at enhancing personal and academic skills of students and the Research & Writing workshops enhances the student's ability to improve in the writing process.

Our series resumes in Fall, 2010. If you are interested in registering for any of the workshops listed below, visit our online registration in late August at:  
[www.yorku.ca/acmaps/events/workshops.html](http://www.yorku.ca/acmaps/events/workshops.html)

### **Student Life Stream**

#### **Time and Stress Management**

Making the transition to university can present some serious time and stress issues for even the best-prepared students. This session will provide an overview of time and stress management concepts and provide tools you can use right now to maximize your experience at York.

#### **Basic Computing Skills**

Looking to review some basic computing skills as a foundation to your academic work? This session will provide an overview of MS Word, Internet, and e-mail to kick-start your academic year.

#### **Exam Preparation and Study Strategies**

Anxious about exams? Worried you might forget what you've learned? This session will offer practical strategies for maximizing your performance in tests and exams. Topics include understanding the goals of the course, detecting

themes in readings and lectures, memory strategies, and tips for exam day.

### **Looking Ahead to Graduate and Professional School**

Perhaps you're nearing the end of your degree and are starting to think about what comes next. For many students, the idea of earning an advanced degree, either through graduate school or professional school, is not only alluring, but realistic. If you're considering graduate school or professional school, then this session is for you. This interactive session will provide essential information on what steps you can take – even before your final year – to prepare a successful application to graduate and professional programs and associated scholarships.

### **What's Next in My Degree? Drop-in Advising**

If you're looking ahead to your next academic session, this drop-in advising opportunity can provide you with general input on degree regulations, program requirements, course enrollment and useful strategies to help you stay on track in your degree program.

### **Research & Writing Stream**

#### **An Overview of the Writing Process**

Either as a solid introduction to university writing or as a refresher session, this session will describe the writing process, including elements of thinking through the topic, researching, beginning to write and revising.

#### **Analyzing the Assignment and Pre-writing Strategies**

How do I start my essay? This session will offer insights into how to make to most of your early phases of the writing process. We'll discuss the importance of understanding the terms of the assignment, getting clear on the instructor's criteria for success, thinking about the assignment in the context of the course and developing the questions that will effectively guide your research and writing.

### Research Strategies, Reading and Note-taking

Essay writing will be a lot easier and more interesting if you are working with relevant resources. In this session, you'll learn the ins and outs of using the Library's online research tools and documenting it using the RefWorks bibliographic management tool. Additionally, we'll talk about using specialized reading techniques to locate relevant information, making useful research notes and thinking critically about your research process.

### Come with your Writing Questions

In the midst of writing an essay? Seeking some feedback on how to proceed? This interactive session invites you to bring your specific writing questions for a workshop-style question and answer period.

### A Word from YUMSO

-Hilary Moore, VP Community, YUMSO

YUMSO is the York University Mature Student Organization. We are the social club component at York for mature students and provide an office space in Vanier College where mature students can meet each other, hang out or have a quiet study space.

We've had a variety of events thus far this year such as an Open House at both the beginning of the fall and winter terms, a games night get together with mature students from U of T and Ryerson, and casual pub nights at the Absinthe. In January YUMSO members participated in a Mature Student Success Forum hosted by Ryerson that included a panel of speakers addressing various issues pertaining to the mature student experience and that was attended by mature students from universities province wide.

YUMSO will be seeking to instate a new executive for the 2010/2011 school year and will be holding elections in March. The executive positions are open to all YUMSO members so if you think you would be interested in running for a position please forward a letter of introduction to yumso@yorku.ca.

### On Mentoring

-Mora Ouellette, ACMAPS Student Mentor

I am grateful for the opportunity to mentor mature students returning to the University or, as I was, entering for the first time. Any new student is just that, new, and therefore unaware of the routines, subjects, and the overwhelmingly unfamiliar environment. There are so many new disciplines to master—classes, tutorials, professors, TAs, course options, high finance, bus schedules, parking, libraries, computer access, luggage handling, printing access, locating brain-feeding food outlets, and, where is the best pub. Just to find your way around in those early back-to-school days can bewilder the best of us. I also found it lonely, sitting in a huge lecture hall with much younger students who I was sure were not interested in talking to an older person.

Mentoring is a way of helping fellow students to shortcut the process of dealing with all of these factors, as well as the emotions surrounding them. I learned that a student is a student; worried about keeping up, fretting over essays, challenged to be present and on time, and / or shy to speak out in class or with a professor. I enjoy passing that learning on to new students. I can offer suggestions or encouragement about communicating with their professors or TAs. I can offer friendly advice and perspectives about interacting and getting involved. I can identify and gain contact information for financial assistance or personal counseling. I can even demonstrate how to navigate the computer system for student account information or for library research. By helping students who face the steep learning curve of those first few weeks of school, I feel that I am giving back to the community, the richness that I have discovered in University life. A helping hand can really shortcut that "new" period, and thereby free the mind for the study and the friendships that make for a great life experience.

Mentoring, for me, has been a way to develop friendships within the University. I feel more

connected when I participate with fellow mentors and within ACMAPS and I enjoy each of the people with whom I share life and experiences. As a mentor, I also have a reason to speak out in classes when someone is looking for assistance. It is an additional connection that enhances friendship and participation, not only with fellow students, but also with professors who appreciate the demonstration of commitment. I feel privileged to participate in this program and hope that many more new students (and old) will take advantage of it.

### **Giving Back**

-Demaris Smith, ACMAPS Student Mentor

I started at York in September of 2007, full of both excitement and trepidation. Luckily for me, this was the inaugural year of ACMAPS, and I have gratefully benefited from their expertise and support on numerous occasions over the last three years. Therefore, when I was approached to assist them with a newly created mature student mentoring program, I jumped at the opportunity to give back in some way. I also imagined how much I would have appreciated a mature student mentor when I started, and I hoped I would be able to provide insights and encouragement to my peers.

To date, my experiences as a mature student mentor have been extremely enjoyable, rewarding, and often inspiring. Each student that I have met has left me feeling very positive and encouraged by my role here, and it has been my sincere pleasure to help those I have encountered. I think there is a natural kind of bond between mature students; we understand the unique challenges, sacrifices, and gratifications we share in both life and studies. As such, I have been enriched by my interactions as much, or more, as I have assisted. I look forward to establishing more connections and friendships as the term progresses, and I strongly encourage my fellow mature students to drop by ACMAPS and visit with a mentor. I promise that a cheerful, friendly and understanding peer awaits!

### **The Home Stretch to Graduation**

-Eugenia Marino, ACMAPS Student Mentor

I will celebrate my 49<sup>th</sup> birthday this coming June and will also graduate from York University with a Bachelor of Arts Honours degree and a Bachelor of Education degree. I can hardly believe that almost five years have passed since I started my studies at York.

I remember feeling both exhilarated and terrified on my first day of classes. I was overwhelmed in this world of academia and quickly sought resources at York where I could get help, signing up at the Academic Writing Centre and finding my way to YUMSO (York University Mature Student Organization). I became a board member at YUMSO, volunteering in the office and at special events. In my role, I helped other mature students and, as a result, grew as a learner in the York community. I met new people, built lasting friendships and became a part of a support network.

This year I am volunteering at ACMAPS as a student mentor, sharing my experiences and knowledge with mature and part-time students to help them succeed in their studies. My personal growth and rewards from these experiences far outweigh my investment of time. I hope that you will take advantage of the services offered by YUMSO and ACMAPS and consider volunteering to maximize your experience at York.

### **Are You Graduating in 2010?**

If you're planning to graduate in June or October 2010, ACMAPS is interested in hearing from you! We're planning a reception in honour of our volunteers and graduating Mature Students to take place early this summer. Contact us at [acmaps@yorku.ca](mailto:acmaps@yorku.ca) for more details!