

# MEDIA, INFORMATION AND TECHNOCULTURE

## 'A program whose time has come'

By Reg Fendick

Western News

Western is set to introduce a bachelor's program that is unique in Canada, one that explores the social, academic and technical issues of technoculture.

The Faculty of Communications and Open Learning recently received Senate approval for the program in Media, Information and Technoculture (MIT), a program the administration believes will show students that Western is on the cutting edge.

"People recognize it's a program whose time has come," said Provost and Vice-President (Academic) Greg Moran. "The feedback I'm getting from leaders all across the country and in the United States is that this is an important, timely and appropriate initiative. They believe Western is at the leading edge of these developments."

The program will be the subject of a public information session today (March 6) in Middlesex College, Room 105B, at 4 pm and again at 5 pm. A similar meeting will be held March 11 at the same place and times.

MIT is one of two new programs created from the merger of six faculties and graduate schools, and ready for introduction in September. The Bachelor of Health Sciences degree (Faculty of Health Sciences), recently approved by Senate, also is unique in Canada.

The MIT degree brings together academic thought from several disciplines. Dr. Catherine Ross, Acting Dean of Communications and Open Learning, said there is need for a program that critically evaluates new converging technologies and the way they affect our lives.

"If you open the *Globe and Mail* or any other paper, you'll see that these things are having an impact on almost every aspect of our lives: the way we bank, the way we do business, the way we communicate, the way we teach, the way we read," she said.

"On the one side, you get a lot of hype; on the other side, you get a lot of doomsaying. In our program, we will critique a number of the claims that are being made about the impact of technologies on their lives."

Ross said Western's program is unlike communications programs at other universities. What makes it unique is the multidisciplinary nature of the course work.

There will be a strong tie to Western's law school which will explore the legal foundations of information and communications law. Professors will be drawn from several other faculties and a joint faculty position has been advertised.

"An enormous strength is the multidisciplinary aspect. We're not reliant simply on the strengths within our own faculty; we're able to draw on enormous resources from right across the campus," Ross said.

The degree will be offered as a general three-year and four-year Bachelor of Arts. An honors program is under development. MIT also will be offered as part of a combined honors program with 19 other programs, ranging from anthropology to women's studies.

"We see this as a cluster of skills which combine nicely with a whole range of other things and offer students opportunities to explore various aspects of the media and information world," she said.

For instance, a student who wanted to specialize in multi-media could put the MIT curriculum together with computer programming, a visual arts course and the English course on writing and reading in an electronic environment.

A computer science student could use the MIT combined honors to become better rounded for employers.

"We need students who not only program and know what the system needs are, but also know the human side of it; how to communicate," she said.

Enrollment will be limited to 125 students.