For WestJet First Officer Steve Kurzbock, BMOS’03, becoming a commercial pilot was a lifelong dream. But in 1999, as high school graduation loomed, Kurzbock believed he would have to forgo his dream to get a university degree.

As fate would have it, a chance meeting with representatives from the then brand-new Commercial Aviation Management (CAM) program at an aviation trade show that spring set him on a path to achieve both a pilot’s license and a university degree.

“I wanted to become a commercial pilot all my life,” says Kurzbock. “When I stumbled upon this program, I realized it was the perfect fit — and it has worked out very well for me.”

Kurzbock is a member of the first graduating class of the CAM program, which combines a bachelor’s degree in Management and Organizational Studies (BMOS) with specialized courses in aviation and professional flight training. It is the only program of its kind in Canada.

In the 15 years since the launch of the program, the approximately 300 graduates have seen and done it all in the field of flight — from flying tourists to Cancun to piloting Canada’s Prime Minister on CanForce01.

And what makes the program particularly unique, says Kurzbock, is it sets graduates up not only to pilot an aircraft, but also to work with an airline from a managerial perspective.

“As a pilot you benefit from understanding business operations, marketing and economics, as well as how to work in a team,” says Kurzbock, who pilots a Boeing 737 across North America and to the Caribbean with WestJet. “Western offers all that through this program.”

For Capt. Conor Murphy, BMOS’07, who currently flies a Hercules tactical air transport aircraft for the Royal Canadian Air Force, the program taught him time management, prioritization and the skills to perform in spite of challenges.

“The curriculum at Western is top-notch,” says Murphy. “A lot of what I learned is still applicable in my job today.”

It’s also opened up a world of unparalleled experiences – such as dropping paratroopers during air missions, delivering mail cargo and Christmas presents to troops in Kuwait and flying members of the Royal Family to their destinations.

“Thanks to the program, I have a very interesting job that allows for unique opportunities, variety and challenges.”

Welcome to our new Social Science Dean

On July 1, Bob Andersen joined the Faculty of Social Science serving as Dean for a five-year term. He succeeds Brian Timney, who has served as Dean since July 2002 — possibly the longest time anyone has served in the Dean’s Office.

Andersen, BA’91, Dpl’92, MA’94, arrived from the University of Toronto where he was a Distinguished Professor of Social Science and chair of the Department of Sociology. Prior to these positions, he held various academic and administrative posts at Brock, Oxford, Western and McMaster. Andersen was an assistant professor at Western from 2002-03.

He holds three degrees from Western — an undergraduate degree (Political Science), honours diploma (Sociology), as well as an MA in Sociology — and a PhD from McMaster.

His teaching and research interests are in political sociology, social stratification and applied statistics. He is also a social statistician with expertise in survey research methods.
For 35 third- and fourth-year DAN students, it was an unforgettable experience. In June, they spent two weeks in Hong Kong completing the required capstone strategy course, and getting an insider’s view of a new business culture, thanks to a group of Western alumni. “The enthusiasm was just extraordinary,” says Professor Raymond Leduc who helped develop the program. “Students were excited about seeing a part of the world many of them had not visited before, and they liked the blend of theory and relevant cases.”

The program consisted of four hours of classes a day, plus additional prep and group work. Most students also lived and socialized together in residence. “It was an intense experience,” says Leduc. “There was a lot of bonding.”

At the end of the course, students were divided into groups and given less than 24 hours to analyze a business case, and produce a written report and presentation. The groups made presentations to a judging panel of alumni and the top two teams received cash prizes.

The learning extended far beyond the classroom. Leduc and colleague Ruth Ann Strickland developed a unique mentorship program that matched each student with an alumni mentor who lived and worked in Hong Kong. In all, 15 alumni were involved. “The alumni group in Hong Kong is very passionate and enthusiastic,” says Leduc. “They provided a great range of experience, and were very generous with their time.”

William Annab, one of the students who took the course, agrees. “It was incredible to hear such a variety of perspectives, ultimately providing clarity with respect to my own goals and ideal future,” he wrote.

Annab says his experience in Hong Kong has made him a more well-rounded and culturally aware person. “I have been able to take away a great deal of knowledge and perspective on a culture that is radically different from my own, both in everyday life and in the business world. I really believe being able to live in such a different world has taught me more than I would ever have learned otherwise.” Annab received financial support through a Global Opportunities Award funded by generous donor support to attend the course.

Leduc hopes the experience may encourage some students to consider launching their careers in Hong Kong. “The job opportunities are tremendous and the interest from employers in students like ours is high,” he says. Plans are under way for next year’s program.
Alumni mentors share expertise

Jennifer Callegaro, HBA’03, BA’04, Director of Brand Marketing at Expedia Canada, is happy to be paying it forward by mentoring DAN students in the DAN Career Connect Program.

“Jenn is a great woman, so kind and very, very helpful,” says Kira Ashwin, BMOS ’15. “She took the time to get to know exactly what I was interested in, helped me develop my skills, and connected me with people in my industry. I ended up with my dream job – and I couldn’t have done it without Jenn’s support.”

Ashwin is talking about Jennifer Callegaro, HBA’03, BA’04, who mentored her in the new DAN Career Connect program. The program, which launched in 2014, matches second- and third-year students with alumni who volunteer to share their experience and perspectives. During 2014-15, 18 DAN students were matched, and another 18 are starting the program this September.

The mentors and mentees communicate by email and phone and meet in person over the course of the academic year. “The nature of the relationship is driven by the mentor’s availability and the student’s needs,” says Sarah Dawson, the Western Alumni Career Coach who developed the program in partnership with DAN alumni. “Each student has different goals, and the role of the mentor is to help them meet those goals.” She estimates the time commitment at one to two hours per month.

The program is working. Survey results show that student participants increased their ability to connect with people who could help with their careers and their practical knowledge and awareness of what it takes to succeed in their chosen field. Above all, the program led to more confidence about future success.

For alumni mentors, the program is an opportunity to give back in a meaningful way. That’s certainly true for Callegaro, Director of Brand Marketing at Expedia Canada. She says Western alumni helped her when she was starting out, so she’s happy to do the same for today’s students. “Kira and I set some very clear goals at the outset and this helped us get the most out of the relationship,” says Callegaro. “It was really inspiring to work with a young person at the onset of her career – someone who was eager and excited about figuring out her path.”

Dawson says the program will continue as long as alumni are prepared to help. “The more mentors step forward, the more students we’ll be able to accommodate.”

The gift of flight

The late Tom C.R. Lawson helped launch the Commercial Aviation Management (CAM) program at Western. His memory is being honoured through the establishment of a student award thanks to a gift from The Lawson Foundation.

In 1999, the Commercial Aviation Management Program (CAM) took flight at Western due, in large part, to the personal commitment and dedication of the late Tom C. R. Lawson.

Mr. Lawson, a veteran and honorary member and chairman of the Snowbirds 431 Air Demonstration Squadron, envisioned an academic program that combined courses in aviation management with professional flight training.

He worked side-by-side with university officials and personally invested – including building a flight centre and purchasing aircraft.

Today, Western’s CAM program is receiving another boost – this time in memory of its benevolent founder.

The Lawson Foundation has donated $156,000 to the program to establish an annual $6,000 scholarship in Lawson’s honour. The Thomas C.R. Lawson Award in Commercial Aviation Management (Flight Training) will be awarded to a full-time student enrolled in the third or fourth year of the program who maintains a 70 per cent average and demonstrates an aptitude for aviation.

“The Lawson Foundation is pleased to establish this award to honour Tom and celebrate his tremendous professional and philanthropic contributions to the London community,” says Marcel Lauzière, Executive Director of the Lawson Foundation.

According to Capt. Brian Morris, director, Flight Operations and Industry Liaison at Western, the scholarship is the largest of its kind for students in the program. “It’s really wonderful that Tom’s name lives on in this award and that through this generous gift we can educate the students as to Tom’s role in establishing the program.”

Interested in mentoring a DAN student?

Contact Sarah Dawson, Alumni Career Coach sdawson4@uwo.ca
Beginning in 2016, DAN students will have access to a new program that will give them a jumpstart on becoming Chartered Professional Accountants (CPAs). CPA is the new name for all accountants in Ontario, replacing the previous CA, CMA and CGA designations.

The Graduate Diploma in Accounting will take place over an intense 13-week period from May to July 2016. To be eligible, students must have completed a set of prerequisite courses in their undergraduate program (DAN Management students graduating with a specialization or honours specialization in accounting will have all the necessary courses). The diploma program consists of seven courses, of which students must complete five, based on a review of their undergraduate courses. The seven courses are as follows: Advanced Audit; Performance Management; Advanced Corporate Financial Reporting; Advanced Finance and Corporate Financial Reporting; Advanced Taxation; An Integrated Approach to the Competencies; and Applied Research Methods in Accounting and Finance.

CPA Ontario has accredited the combination of the BMOS accounting stream and the new graduate diploma. Students who complete the graduate diploma will enter the CPA Professional Education Program at the ‘Capstone One’ module.

That’s a big advantage, says Professor Ann Bigelow. “Without this program, DAN graduates have to take equivalent courses through CPA at the same time as they’re starting their careers. They often have to travel to another community to do it. It can be overwhelming.”

Bigelow adds that the graduate diploma is tailored to the specific knowledge needs of DAN students. It is taught by professors who are familiar with and to them, in a familiar campus environment. “This is a convenient, efficient way to get this part of the training completed,” she says.

Seventy to 80 students are expected to enrol in the inaugural session. Bigelow believes demand will grow in coming years.

Chase your passions with a CPA designation

The Chartered Professional Accountant (CPA) designation prepares you to work in a variety of accounting positions and industries. Whether you decide to climb the corporate ladder or go into business alone, you’ll have the background to pursue new opportunities with confidence.

To learn more about the CPA program, please visit www.gocpaontario.ca