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editorial

This is the annual editorial on how de-humanizing the University of Alberta's registration procedure is.

But this year is different because this year we can do more than simply vent our impotent rage and have a few beers.

The advance registration proposal is an eminently sane alternative to the frantic chasing from building to building to building just in time to stand in yet another line while registration clerks leave for leisurely lunches, a situation which characterizes the present system.

Arguments in opposition to the plan were dealt with by the committees involved as though surmounting them were conquering Everest; they are in fact ant hills:

1. The proposed system does not provide enough time to allow for advance planning of staff, section and book requirements by departments and faculties.

A close relative of this argument is that 30-35% of each year's enrollment are first-year students who cannot even be admitted until departmental results are known in mid-summer.

One is tempted to suggest that ANY advance notice is better than none. Had the English department had even a few more days' notice of the disastrously malapportioned first-year courses introduced last year, surely necessary changes could have been made more easily.

As for first-year students, the point would be more cogent if that 30 or 35% unknown entity were to be uniformly distributed through all courses offered at the university. But given upper level prerequisites and rigid first-year programmes in many faculties, the courses affected by this factor could, with some application of intelligence, be fairly accurately forecast. And the implementation of the Worth Commission recommendation to scrap Grade 12 departmentals would completely eliminate the need to consider first-year students differently from any other pre-registrants.

2. The proposal would cost too much to implement. Of the \$70,000 total estimated for initial implementation costs, \$58,000 is allocated for the financing of 48 man-months (4 men working a year each) for analyst and programmer time.

This might be a reasonable expectation if Alberta were a pioneer in this field of computer programming. The survey of other Canadian universities made it clear that we are not at the frontiers of knowledge in this field. If Waterloo University, with equivalent computer facilities to those of the U of A, can adapt a programme first developed at Purdue University in the U S, surely the U of A need not invent the wheel from scratch.

3. The proposed system will cost too much to maintain. Once again, the estimate presented to the committee of the additional cost per year of using this system is impressive: \$20,000. But in calculating the cost of the present system, planners have failed to add to their figures the value of the slave labour extorted from the 17,000 unorganized workers who make the present system go: the students.

If we each demanded only minimum wage for the day of work we put in to get ourselves registered, the university would have to pay out an additional \$224,400. At that rate, \$20,000 is a bargain. Obviously we'll never collect, but that kind of calculation makes the "intangibles" which registrars so lament a little more tangible and in terms they understand: dollars and cents.

4. "Freedom of choice" is denied under an advance registration system. This argument will be most obviously ludicrous to those poor souls who are registering on Friday of this week, facing section after closed section of courses in which spaces were supposedly saved. They are, of course, free to choose from those sections still open.

But beyond the inequities inherent in any system, the claim that advance registrations remove freedom of choice is patently false. Even without the addition of new sections which was still planned, Western Ontario had assigned 95% of their registrants into their first-choice courses; the rate for optional sections was 75-80%, again without planned section additions. Of 3,300 advance registrants in Sir George Williams' day programme, 3,100 had been assigned all the courses they had requested.

It's a cold, hard fact that planners never have to register. Their band-aid work is hardly going to be effective if they don't even know where it hurts.

The GFC has given students time to comment on the pre-registration report. Any later attempt to reconsider the matter will require the inevitable two-year study, and we will all have endured our three or four required fall nightmares before anything can be done. Now, while the mind-mangling experience is fresh in your mind, phone your representative on the GFC registration procedures committee Charlie Starko (432-7072), or any member of the SU executive (432-4236), and voice your support for pre-registration.

One can hope that this is the last annual editorial on registration procedures.

Terri Jackson

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wade

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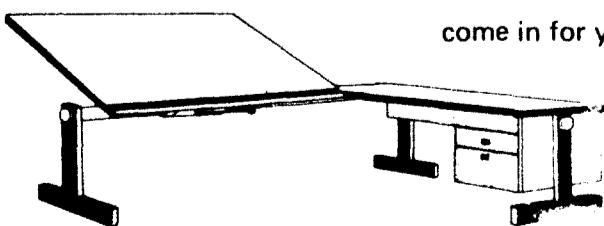
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