

NEWS

Commission looks into the quality of university education

by Jennifer Lim

"The educational mission of Canadian universities needs to be revitalized," said George Pederson, chair of the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC) and president of the University of Western Ontario.

AUCC launched a commission looking into the quality and rele-

vance of Canadian university education this past August.

In a press release, Pederson explained the commission's goal was to decide how to renew and adapt the current post-secondary school system to serve "a Canada that is more than ever dependent on the education of its citizens."

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York students to decide on OFS membership

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the two lobby groups, Ghomeshi said.

YFS vice-president (finance) Brad Abrams said the YFS has set aside up to \$3000 for the referendum which will cover the cost of publicizing the referendum and its issues, as well as running the polling stations.

However, OFS chair Tim Jackson said that the OFS has only \$3500 to spend on three different referenda in which it will be involved this year. He said the OFS will also support a pro-OFS/CFS coalition that has been formed at York by providing printing services and campaign expertise.

OFS and CFS representatives are planning to visit York over the next few weeks to answer questions students may have regarding the two groups.

The OFS also has a field worker who will be working with the pro-OFS/CFS group and will distribute information on behalf of both the CFS and OFS.

According to Jackson, this will be the fourth time York students will be asked to decide on membership in the OFS, the last time being in 1986 when they voted to retain membership.

The referendum campaign officially started yesterday, and the YFS will be taking an official stand at its meeting next Wednesday.

Ghomeshi feels the council will support a pro-OFS/CFS motion unanimously.

However, last year's vice-president (external) Peter Merrick said he feels that a pro-OFS/CFS stand by council will be bad for York students.

"It's not right for the council to take a position," Merrick said. "If they do, only one side of the issue will be presented to the York students and this will not enable them to properly evaluate whether OFS is beneficial or not."

Winters, MacLaughlin, and Vanier College councils have all "unconditionally" supported the emerging pro-OFS/CFS coalition, Vanier representative and coalition member Kate Collins said.

The pro-OFS/CFS coalition is calling itself the Yes Coalition and its members include Ghomeshi, Collins, Student Centre Corporation chair Chia-Yi Chua, and YFS vice-president (external) Mitchell Blass.

"We think that York has got a lot to offer," Collins said. "We can add our weight to OFS and CFS and in turn they can help us with

our on-campus problems."

A coherent anti-OFS/CFS coalition has not yet emerged. Collins said that she is not worried that the lack of clear financial backing might stifle effective anti-OFS/CFS sentiment.

The YFS' predecessor pulled out of the OFS in 1987-1988 led by former president Drew McCreadie and vice-president (external) Tammy Hasselfeldt. They said the lobbying group was ineffective and a waste of money.

At the time, council maintained that it had the right to pull out of OFS without a referendum as required by OFS by-laws because of a special arrangement with the OFS where council itself paid the membership dues to OFS.

At all other member universities, OFS receives its fees directly from the students through direct levy.

Starting next year, York will have a direct levy system for student governments and lobby groups, but currently, fees go through Student Affairs before reaching student governments.

The YFS' predecessor maintained that York students were not members of the OFS for the last two years and withheld membership fees totalling \$60,000.

Last June, OFS and YFS reached an agreement whereby OFS waived the outstanding debts in exchange for a referendum and payment of this year's fees.

Hasselfeldt, who succeeded McCreadie as president for 1988-1989, continued the battle with the OFS by withholding payment of membership fees.

Hasselfeldt refused to comment on the issue. She is currently the YFS executive researcher.

YFS has already been an active member in OFS this year. Ghomeshi is the current chair of the OFS' race and ethnic relations committee and Blass is a member of its environmental committee.

The OFS, founded in 1972 by York students and seven other student federations, currently has 34 member constituencies from various student unions (graduate and undergraduate) at universities and colleges across the province.

CFS currently has 66 student associations as members, according to deputy chair Christoph Sicking, although large undergraduate populations at York, UofT, the Universities of British Columbia, Alberta and Manitoba are not CFS members.

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