

Exams mandatory by '84; Ramifications for U of A

# Dave King reinstates comprehensive exams



photo Martin Beales

Education minister Dave King addresses Senate.

by Allison Annesley

Alberta Education Minister Dave King, explained to University Senate Friday morning his reasons for reinstating comprehensive exams for grade twelve students.

The Minister's speech came shortly after his announcement of a five percent grant increase for school boards.

The exams, which will be written optionally, at the end of anuary, will become mandatory by 1984.

University President Myer Horowitz said the exams could be valuable as admissions data for the University, but stressed that such exams will never be the only term of academic reference. Teacher's evaluations of their students' abilities, Horowitz says, will never be ignored.

Though concern was expressed in Senate that high school teachers may feel threatened by external examinations, Horowitz insisted the implication was insulting. A former teacher and ex-

Dean of Education, Horowitz said that Alberta teachers would be prepared to have their work monitored.

Departmental exams were withdrawn from the Alberta Education System in 1973. Concern amongst universities about the resulting mark inflation affecting quota faculties arose in 1975, though it was soon determined that student ranking was not affected.

King claims a report on Student Achievement commissioned after public concern over the withdrawal of departmental exams indicated a strong need for government involvement in external summative testing.

Students who do not write the comprehensives will not receive a high school diploma, though they will still be able to obtain transcripts. A comprehensive certificate will also be awarded to exceptional students. The exams will test various areas of the high school program with emphasis on

students' ability to relate concepts practicum.

Iris Evans, President of the Alberta School Trustees' Association, said ASTA is generally in agreement with reinstatement of the comprehensive exams but asked that they be put through a trial run before becoming policy.

Bernie Keelor, Executive Secretary of the Alberta Teachers Association complained that the provincial executive of the ATA knew very little about the exams

and that he had not even heard some details himself until Friday's Senate meeting. Keelor also pointed out that development of the exams would be very costly, reminding Senate of Education's five percent grant increase announced in the interest of restraint. Keelor supports giving over comprehensive exam funds to research for students with academic disabilities and placement programs for students who choose not to attend university.

Dean George Baldwin, University Vice-President Academic, expressed a need for comprehensive student evaluation, but also stressed the University's want of evaluations of writing competence. The U of A's present writing competence exams, now administered in some faculties, may become mandatory for University entrance. This proposal will be raised in the next meeting of General Faculties Council.

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