

"Headhunters" out to find new president for York

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excilibur november 27, 1991

by Doug Saunders

The university has hired a private consulting firm to look off campus for a potential York president.

At a Nov. 13 public forum, members of the Presidential Search Committee announced they had hired Landmark Consulting, a 'headhunting' firm, to seek applicants from other campuses.

However, most students and faculty told the committee they want a president who is familiar with the York community.

"We need somebody who is internal," said Michelle Hughes, president of the York Federation of Students. "We need somebody who is sensitive to the diversity of York and knows York."

Harry Arthurs, the current president, announced in May he would step down at the end of this academic year and resume teaching at Osgoode Hall law school.

The 11-member Search Committee — which contains six representatives from the Board of Governors and five from the University Senate — will produce a shortlist of candidates in January, to be voted on by the Senate and ratified by the Board.

Sherry Rowley, the sole student on the search committee and the coordinator of women's affairs for the Graduate Student Association, said she was the only member to vote against hiring Landmark Consulting. The committee decided to look off campus because it was a "good political move" which could help with private-sector fundraising, Rowley said.

"A batch of letters went out to major corporations. The reason why a lot of applications were done from outside the university was because they were more of a political move."

But Nancy Accinelli, coordinator of the York Advising Centre and a Senate representative on the com-

mittee, said Landmark was hired to provide "free access to all potential candidates."

"They are one of the better firms that does academic searches in Canada," Accinelli said. "Their role is comfortable for us. Landmark isn't going to make any choices for us."

Rowley said the committee already has "probably 75 names" on its list of potential candidates. However, "not all of them know their name is on the list."

George Eton, an Atkinson Economics professor with 27 years of experience at York, said he doubts the consulting firm will produce appropriate candidates.

"To say you have to twist the arm of a person to get them to go to you — I don't think that's a good idea," Eton said.

"I don't think we should go seeking outside candidates."

The public forum, which was attended by eight students and approxi-

mately 20 faculty and staff members, revealed a wide and often contradictory range of opinions on the qualities of an ideal president.

Donald Wallace, a policy analyst for the York administration, told the forum the university needs an "established professor" with an international academic reputation.

But several other individuals called for a politically active president who would be more sensitive to the needs of students and faculty.

"In the next ten years I think you will see increasingly polarized debate on campus around feminism, race, gender and class issues, and we need somebody who understands these issues," Chet Singh, director of York's Centre for Race and Ethnic Relations, told the forum.

YFS President Michelle Hughes said the committee should choose a president who would lobby the government alongside student governments and the Ontario Federation of Students.

She said she was disappointed with Arthurs' 1990 promotion of a Council of Ontario Universities plan which included a 40 per cent tuition increase, and hoped a future president would be more "compassionate to students."

Hughes also called for a president who would be "committed to the diversity of our campus" through affirmative action hiring, and who would "support any actions to eliminate racism, both on and off campus."

Hana El-Alfy, the recently-elected coordinator of the York Women's Centre, said the president should provide "more accessibility to students" by opening up the decision-making process to student input. Presidents should also promote "an emphasis on teaching as opposed to research."

El-Alfy said she doubts the forum will have much impact on the committee's decision.

"From what I can tell, it's a very closed process and I think our input is coming fairly late in the day."

George Eton said the university needs a president who is an effective political leader rather than a bureaucrat.

"This university was born out of a revulsion with the University of Toronto and I think we're in danger of York's success creating a similar environment," Eton told the forum. "York is in danger of being smothered by success and becoming the horror story of bureaucracy of the twentieth century."

Students complain at General meeting

by Jeannine Amber

It was a sad day for the executive of the York Federation of Students. On Sept. 10, the YFS held their first-ever General Meeting. Although the meeting was open to all students only a handful showed up.

YFS President Michelle Hughes was disappointed by the turnout. "There weren't as many people as I would have expected," she said.

The meeting was to encourage students to raise issues they would like to see addressed by the YFS.

Several of the students complained that they did not know what the role of the YFS is and had no idea of its mandate.

"Students don't know the objectives of the YFS, they don't know how seriously to take the YFS, they don't know how much power you actually have," complained one student.

"People think you have no power," said another.

The YFS executive sat quietly while the students raised concerns over such issues as curriculum, parking, student representation on

academic boards, and student metropasses.

One first year student spoke adamantly about the need for the YFS to address first year students to "let them know who represents them. I really don't know what you guys stand for," he said.

When asked what the YFS could do for the students, Hughes responded the YFS "doesn't have all the answers."

"We are five people and we are voted in by ten per cent of the population at York. What's the big deal? We're powerless unless we have people behind us. People need to get involved in the decision making."

A student then wanted to know why the YFS didn't take the opportunity during the first few weeks of school to try and mobilize students.

"Why did it take so long for you to organize (this meeting)? It's the middle of November already. I think personally you took too long."

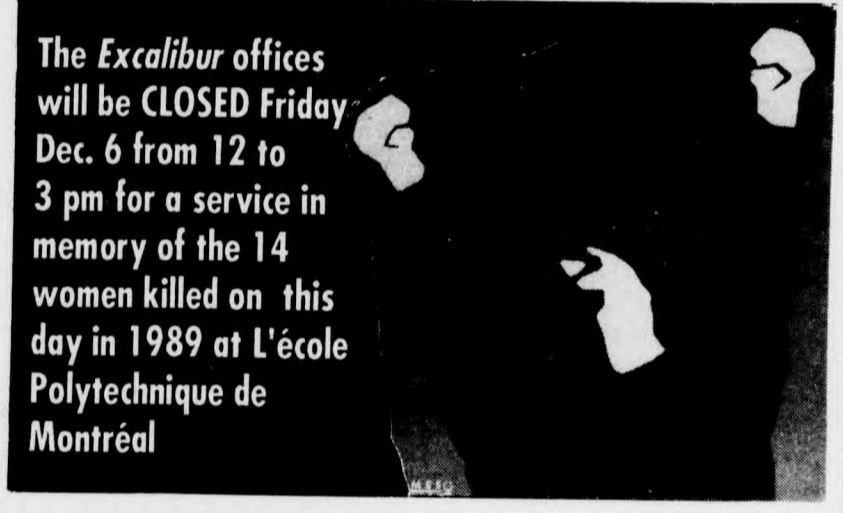
Many of the students left the meeting after the first hour when the discussion turned toward helping the YFS come up with strategies to better publicize their activities.

Rob Centa, external vice president of the Federation, said the meeting made him realize the YFS has to re-evaluate the way they are communicating with students.

"Traditional methods of communication that we have relied on are not reaching students. They are not reading Excalibur, handbooks or posters. The other really useful thing (about the meeting) is that it reaffirmed that we are on the right track with the issues we are planning to address."

Nikki Gershain, internal vice president, said she was pleased with the meeting. "What came out of the meeting will inform what the YFS does for the remainder of the year."

The YFS executive is planning to meet to discuss the issues raised at the meeting sometime in the coming weeks.



The Excalibur offices will be CLOSED Friday Dec. 6 from 12 to 3 pm for a service in memory of the 14 women killed on this day in 1989 at L'école Polytechnique de Montréal

empowering families an issue

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MacDonald, midwifery co-ordinator for Ontario's Ministry of Health. The legislation will likely take effect in late 1992.

One of the main bones of contention over the certification of midwives is safety standards of home births. The government body developing the Midwifery Act is supporting home birth.

Though native midwives say it's perfectly safe in low-risk births — the majority of cases — some doctors say midwives should only be allowed to practice in a hospital setting.

"I think our society has always supported midwives, but only as part of an integrated medical team," said Dr. Andre Lalonde, executive vice-president of the Society of Obstetricians and Gynecologists of Canada.

Lalonde said providing greater access to home birth will result in more infant deaths, particularly in isolated areas.

"You don't find one per cent of the doctors willing to do home birth even though they could do it. That's got to tell you something."

However, it is the very isolation of many reserves that makes it essential to allow home birth, said Iroquois midwife Katsi Cook. Too many women are being forced to leave their families — traditionally present during birth — and go to hospitals because they're not given an option, she said.

"Empowering the family is what midwifery is all about, and that's what makes it so appealing to native people, who've been disempowered by every white institution in the land."

Cook — who has delivered about 60 babies herself — supports the idea of training native midwives in mainstream medical practice, but insists that they must also be instructed in the cultural side of the practice.

"There are quite a few peculiarities in native birth rituals. It's far more than just a physical event."

Currently, there are roughly 60 practicing midwives in Ontario, according to the Ministry of Health. There is no official estimate of the number of native midwives.

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