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For information on all Faculty of Fine Arts Interdisciplinary Studies courses, contact Evy Strong (736-7342).

TAMPUS MCBRIDE CONTINUES SV ZENA MCBRIDE SV ZENA MCBRIDE SV ZENA MCBRIDE

Visual arts facilities fall into disrepair

by Casey Mahood

Western visual arts students say the university has allowed their department's buildings and facilities to fall into disrepair.

Among the students' complaints are problems with poor ventilation, inconsistent heating, mice, a leaking roof, and lack of space. They say visual arts is being neglected while other programs receive necessary funding.

Hilary Inwood, head curator of the Hillary Gallery Association and student representative said, "We're paying the same fees as business and science students and we're not getting the same quality of facilities."

John Capitano, a fourth year visual arts student, said, "All this university wants is business and law."

William Dale, chairman of the visual arts department said they had very good faculty and an excellent slide library but said, "Our facilities are among the worst in Ontario."

He attributed the poor conditions to a lack of funding in the past due the low priority the department has been given by administration. A new visual arts building is not

included in the university's five-year capital plan. Dale said many in the university have seen the department as merely a frill.

Western's VP-academic Tom Collins said he and President George Pedersen had toured the building and were examining means of correcting the situation.

Collins said there was "no question that it is a problem that has to be addressed.'

Both students and department officials said the greatest problem in the building is the poor ventilation. Inwood said the lack of proper ventilation was a health hazard, especially in the sculpture and forge rooms. She said when the forge is being used, smoke fills the room and spills out to fill the hallway.

Capitano said the ventilation room, a small room in which students can work with materials with dangerous fumes, was not effective and too small. Given the lack of space and number of students, one student admitted to working with dangerous materials in an unventilated room simply to meet deadlines.

Dale said his department was very conscious of health hazards and last year had to stop teaching silkscreen printing due to insufficient ventilation. Silkscreen printing was very popular, Dale said, but a lack of funds prevented the department from installing a proper system.

He said the main difficulty with ventilation is that the building was never designed for studio work. Originally designed for classrooms, the building's air-system circulation simply spreads the fumes.

Added to these problems, the building also has been inundated with mice and has leaks in the roof. Chris Baulk, a third year visual arts student said, "When it rains there are garbage pails everywhere."

Baulk said a new bilding was needed and it was silly to keep patching up the present one. Inwood said the university's work on the building was ad-hoc. "It's Band-Aids, it's not fixing the real problem." She said with the lack of funding, the university might eventually lose the visual arts program.

Baulk said even a local London high school, H.B. Beal, has better facilities than Western.

Inwood said, "I feel really bad for the kids who have another four years

Dale is hopeful the department will have a new building in the near future. He said, however, it's doubtful the funding will all come from the university. Instead, a private sector donation may be needed.

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Incredibly important staff meeting today at 4 p.m. to discuss amendments to Excalibur's constitution regarding election procedures.