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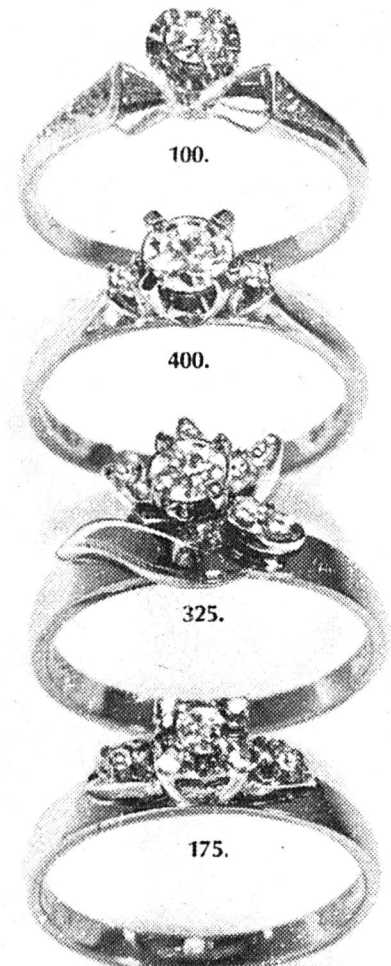
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Coping with the system

by Terri Jackson

The first week you spend making sure you know how to find the nearest john in all the buildings where you have classes.

The second week you worry about finding a half-decent place to eat on campus. You will continue to worry about this for the rest of the year.

But now, starting the third week, the more esoteric questions like "how did this place get to be so god-awful ugly?" and "Can you really call this 'education' when the lecture hall is crammed with 307 barely-breathing bodies?" begin to plague you.

To start you on your way to doing something about these questions (which will still be around to plague you next year if you don't do something about them now) is the first of a three-part practical guide to the things the calendar never tells you.

The profs

The university hierarchy begins (after students) with the beings we lump together as profs. Actually, they come in a wide range of styles and sizes: at the bottom are teaching and lab assistants.

These are usually grad students, nearly always very poor, and invariably terrified that if they're not cooperative with the supervising prof, they won't pass their comprehensive exams. Be nice to them; they're almost totally powerless and the Grad Student Association usually stands solid with the undergrads.

Next up the scale are lecturers or "sessionals". These come in two varieties: unemployed new Ph. D's and wives of profs with full appointments whom departments thus figure they can hire at bargain basement prices. Male profs may skip the sessional stage in their academic careers; women seldom do.

These differ from regular profs in that they are hired from year to year with no prospect of qualifying for tenure (quasi-permanent appointment). They are very insecure.

The scale continues upward through assistant professors, associate professors and full professors. (You can check which yours is by getting a copy of the faculty calendar.) Obviously their levels of security and income go up as they progress up the scale, and unfortunately so do their levels of inflexibility and unwillingness to meet students half-way.

Their position in this hierarchy is determined at yearly tenure and promotion meetings within the departments. Students aren't allowed at these sessions, of course.

There's some noise in a few departments about taking a prof's teaching ability into account in these decisions, but more often publication (or lack of it) and how well he/she fits into the department's buddy system have more to do with whether incompetents are promoted or good teachers denied tenure.

In general, profs are better off than students in that they get paid (can comfortably) for what they do here, while we have to pay to do our thing. Also, the time they spend on campus political activities (university committees, GFC, etc.) are considered part of what they're paid to do, while students must take time away from their expensive education to do the same.

That said, it's smart to realize however, that individual profs are pretty powerless and may despise the impossibly big classes, short library hours and bookstore screwups as much as you do. They're small game in the university jungle.

The administration

But on to bigger game. Within each department there is some kind of administrative apparatus headed by a department chairman. They are chosen in one of several different ways (none of which involve students) and have varying degrees of power and authority in departmental matters—usually varying from "a lot" to "still more".

On top of them (quite literally) you have the hierarchy of the faculty—science, arts, education, engineering, etc. This is the lair of the rule-makers—the place where it is decreed that to get your degree you must take a lab science or do so many of this or that kind of course. They also handle "drop and add" which you should be looking into pretty soon if you suspect you're in a lemon of a course.

Faculties are headed by Deans (except "schools" like the School of Library Science, which are headed by directors) and usually a couple of assistant and associate deans.

These men, and almost without exception—unless you're in a "female" faculty like nursing—they are men, see their sole calling in life as enforcers and priests of the hallowed RULES—damn unique cases, damn individual circumstances, damn the students. Best to stay out of their grasp.

Unfortunately, these rule-bound minds have the ear of the next level of the hierarchy—the one we usually think of as THE administration. This level includes investment officers, registrars, vice presidents, presidents; in short, the people you find in the Administration Building and University Hall (the old SUB—next to the Phys. Ed. building.)

The whole muddle of the administrative structure becomes a bit clearer when you realize that it's divided according to which of the three vice-presidents is responsible for what.

For example, the Academic v-p (of the University—the Students' Union also has a position they call Academic v-p) deals with (strangely enough) academic matters: faculty regulations, the academic staff, the libraries, etc.

The v-p for Planning and Development you may blame for the ugliness of the campus. His responsibilities include construction of new buildings, landscaping (specializing in the destruction of trees and placing skating rinks in the arts quad), and cozying the Board of Governors which gets off on buildings.

The v-p for finance and administration is chief bookkeeper. He has responsibility for the personnel office, the non-academic starr, food service—nearly every "non-academic" and "non-construction" expenditure of the university.

Because he controls a lot of information, projects (like the continuation of Student Health) can be authoritatively pronounced to be "financially unwise" pretty much at his discretion. And the Board of Governors, which holds the purse strings, listens.

At the top of the administrative pyramid is the president. Here you can have one of two types of men—and the individual inclinations of the holder of the office probably have more to do with how he performs his job than do the formal calendar descriptions.

First, you can have an "internal" president who sees his job as primarily peacemaker among all of the various factions in the university community. He has acquired the habit of talking softly, of defusing conflict, which is good or bad depending on how much conflict you think is necessary to get things changed around here.

But those very instincts as peacemaker make the "internal" president a pushover for the Province's Department of Advanced Education, which is increasingly taking away the university's autonomy—with no resultant good things being done for students.

The second type is the "external" president who is made-to-order to do battle with Advanced Education. But to do that effectively, he needs a tight ship from which to fire his big guns—and that means increasing emphasis on authority rather than discussion and dissent in internal university policy making. Choose your poison.

To be continued

Whew! we've slugged our way through the "lower" echelons of the university hierarchy. Next issue we take a look at the GFC (General Faculties Council), the Senate, the Board of Governors and—the Department of Advanced Education—the Biggies, and the final article in the series will tackle what we "little-ies" can do about this whole mind-crippling institution.

