

## How AUCC spends your money

# You can write a lot of letters for \$400,000

By Kevin Peterson  
Canadian University Press

OTTAWA (CUP) — Take 59 university presidents who want a national organization to "speak for Canadian universities." Add \$1.75 for each Canadian university student.

With that, rent two floors of office space, buy the services of scores of academic and secretaries, hold an annual general meeting, write a lot of letters, and sponsor a bunch of studies about higher education.

The result is called the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada, the academic equivalent of serving baked beans in a fondue pot. The trappings are pleasant, the rhetoric sounds convincing; but investigation shows the fare to be plain and conducive to bureaucratic belches.

First, the rhetoric. Geoffrey Andrew, AUCC executive director, explains how the association came to exist and develop: "Any society strung along 5,000 miles of geography, divided into 10 political divisions and five regions, with two major languages, has a basic problem of communication.

"There is no national press, and national television and radio have little time for matters concerning higher education. As a consequence, universities and colleges tend to become isolated from the mainstream of thought and change.

"The universities came together to exchange information and views as Canadian universities with different problems from universities of other countries.

"After about 40 years of exchanging views they decided they needed a secretariat to study these problems and to make representations to government based on studies and not opinion."

Andrew's talk of "thought", "change" and "study" occurs again in the themes of AUCC conferences — this year's was "The Nature of the Contemporary University" — and some of the research AUCC watches over, such as the Duff-Berdahl report on university government.

But the contents of the rhetorical fondue pot are pretty stale. Membership in AUCC is open to any institution with degree-granting powers and over 200 students. Of 61 Canadian institutions eligible for membership, only two, College Ste. Anne in New Brunswick and Christ the King seminary in British Columbia, aren't members. The \$1.75 per student levy provides AUCC with an annual operating budget of over \$400,000.

What is the money used for? It supports five divisions of AUCC staff, each with its own responsibilities:

The domestic programs division engages mainly in membership matters, examining the credentials of new institutions applying for membership and so on. The division also convenes meetings of various associations, such as The Association of Canadian Medical Colleges, which are affiliated with AUCC. The domestic programs division is also responsible for such things as the placing of Czechoslovakian refugees in Canadian universities.

The international programs division handles liaison with groups such as Canadian University Students Overseas and UNESCO. It examines, for example, how Canada can be most effective in aiding foreign students and universities. The association staff keeps in touch with foreign students who want to come to Canada or are in Canada. The staff also is responsible for Canadian representation at international conferences on various aspects of higher education.

The awards division handles scholarships and fellowships established by industry and governments and given to AUCC to administer. In 1968 the divi-

sion handled over 50 programs involving more than \$3 million. Awards has the biggest staff and handles more bureaucratic work than any other AUCC division. The division answered over 6,000 letters concerning awards available at Canadian universities last year.

The research division looks after AUCC interests in various studies of higher education which the association is involved in — studies such as the relations between universities and government, accessibility to higher education and so on. Since all studies are financed through government or foundation grants, the research division takes the smallest bite of AUCC resources, less than 10 per cent of the total budget, and has only four people involved in its administrative work.

The information division is responsible for AUCC publications such as University Affairs, a monthly bulletin, and various tracts of information on Canadian universities. The division also handles press relations for AUCC and is responsible for the association's library. The information division also handles requests for information on Canadian universities — over 3,000 letters were answered last year.

A quick look at the five divisions shows that only research, the smallest of the five, is concerned with such things as "change" in Canadian universities. The other four are engaged in writing letters, "administering" and perpetuating bureaucracy.

AUCC officials are quick to point out that one reason for the immense bureaucracy is the lack of a federal office of higher education. Until an office is created, AUCC inherits by default such things as administering awards programs, answering letters, and looking after foreign students.

Despite the bureaucracy, however, AUCC has a most powerful position in matters concerning higher education — mainly through its research division.

It seems axiomatic that before change can occur in Canadian universities "studies" must be done on questions and concepts. The cost of studies on such things as student aid, university government or university costs is prohibitive, however, unless they are foundation or government financed.

In recent history, AUCC has been a sponsor or co-sponsor of every major study concerning Canadian higher education — Duff-Berdahl, the Bladen commission, commission on relations between universities and government, and so on. The precedent does exist that AUCC is involved in studies of this nature and when some other group goes with hat in hand to a foundation or the government the question of why AUCC is not involved will be raised. In short, it is conceivable that no study of a question in Canadian higher education can be done without AUCC involvement — a most powerful position for any group to hold.

Both Andrew and AUCC research director D.G. Fish deny this situation exists, although they spend more time asking whether it is conceivable that any-

one would have a study that AUCC wouldn't be interested in co-sponsoring, or would not want AUCC involved.

Andrew, however, says: "I would like to see AUCC in that position (of being involved in all studies of higher education) because it represents more and more, the total university community."

Andrew cites the fact that 25 of 600 delegates to this year's annual meeting were students to back up his contention that AUCC is representative. To label AUCC as the administrators' version of the Canadian Union of Students is, he says inaccurate.

The danger of having all studies done through AUCC can be seen in examining those now in progress, which Fish says are fairly typical. The five now being done are: university-government relations, costs of university programs and departments, student housing, accessibility to higher education, and how Canadian resources may best be used in aiding foreign universities.

As CUS field worker Ted Richmond puts it, "The studies are hardly concerned with basic questions of Canadian universities — the questions which both students and faculty very much want answered. AUCC seems interested only in toying with the present situation."

Andrew says the subject of the reports does not indicate a desire to merely tinker with the status quo: "The first subjects that have been studied are the ones which have seemed most important and urgent. Studies of curriculum and a changing concept of the university in society are just as urgent, but somewhat less important right now than studies of university costs and university-government relations."

In fact, Andrew claims, the Duff-Berdahl report started initiating change in Canadian universities.

"This antedated the student protest", he adds. "The persons now interested in reform should unify forces to articulate and detail reforms. Ultimatums can only delay reform and create backlashes — discussion is necessary."

Andrew's words are pretty far away from writing letters about what courses and awards are available at Canadian universities — something which AUCC seems to devote far more resources to than concepts of change.

Andrew says AUCC has not deployed its resources in bureaucratic concerns but in subjects of reform and questions of a different role for the university: "I'd be very happy to put our record of concern and productivity up for examination to anyone — in our studies, publications and conferences."

Students at the University of Western Ontario decided to do just that recently. They intend to investigate what AUCC does and how it spends the \$1.75 per student it receives.


If the association does "represent, more and more, the total university community", as Andrew says it does, maybe a few more students should follow UWO's lead and find out just what is happening.

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