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Editorial

A time to talk

Things are not going very well at York University.

The Dean of Fine Arts has decided to resign from his position one year early because of his frustration with the administration's fiscal policies. The Dean of Arts has come out strongly against York's budgeting procedures. And the Atkinson College Council has expressed to the Board of Governors its "profound dissatisfaction with the financial administration of the university."

These are not statements that can be lightly dismissed. The President of the university, in his 102-word official response, merely stated that a sub-committee of the Policy Committee is investigating "improved and possibly different budgetary procedures."

The deans, the Council and the York community deserve better. One of the primary frustrations with the current administration is the lack of information made available to the community. Without detailed information, intelligent input and criticism are impossible. One begins to suspect that the administration is willing to curtail one in order to possibly eliminate the other.

But all the details do not remain hidden. Either through long overdue financial statements or through other, less official sources, budgetary decisions become known. The \$1.4 million surplus from the previous fiscal year was announced by the administration several weeks after it was discovered. The \$232,150 allocated by Pres. Macdonald between June 26 and Sept. 19 was revealed in an article in this paper on Oct. 4. It would have otherwise become known in a quarterly report published several months after the fact.

What is particularly disturbing in these cases is not the amount of surplus money - it could be argued that this is smart budgeting and efficient management - but that the recovered funds were subsequently allocated by the President with minimal discussion. As Dean of Arts Harold Kaplan said at the time: "Money at York tends to be allocated in a vacuum."

Unfortunately, these incidents would appear to be the rule rather than the exception. In a recent speech, Dean Green stated that "this university has been run by a series of autonomous faculties with funding dependent on a dean's eloquence and fleet-footedness." The idea of our various faculties competing with each other for an ever dwindling supply of money is not a very attractive one - and yet it is the reality here at York.

Whether the university should be forcing these drastic cuts upon itself through overly cautious budgeting is another matter. Dean Kaplan argues persuasively that we should not, noting that the end-of-the-year surpluses "cannot compensate us for the people terminated four months earlier and cannot repair the damage inflicted on academic programmes through these cuts."

The criticisms of the Atkinson College Council are somewhat less specific, especially with regard to the alleged "mismanagement of BIU funding." When did this mismanagement occur? How much was lost? They do not tell us. It was somewhat irresponsible for the Council to criticize the administration without supporting their claims.

What might be legitimately investigated, is whether the university should have been more aggressive in arguing its claims and asking for increased non-formula funds, especially for part-time students.

Now that we are going off the formula, we can try not to repeat the errors of the past and hopefully obtain the funding this university is entitled to. The way to curtail criticism is not to withhold information but to let the budgetary process be as open and rational as it can be made.

Board Rep Reports

I'm sure that you've noticed the bright yellow sheets posted on every bulletin board and wall. The caption reads: Support the Graduate Assistants Association. The list of their demands are mainly of a non-monetary nature. The color of the poster is appropriate for what I would expect might be the reaction of most students; too often there is the fear of supporting something which lies outside the realm of one's everyday classroom schedule. The point that is overlooked is that the university was designed not only as a place of learning; in order to prevent a concept from becoming static, there is the need for constant re-evaluation and "research."

Graduate students are in the process of research, and tutoring is their prime means of supporting a full year's work. Anybody who plans to do graduate work should consider the plight of the TAs at York, the demands of the GAA and decide who is being unfair. Talk to your tutorial leader. The GAA will be meeting with a representative from the Labor Board on Thursday and we should know by next week whether or not there will be a strike.

To turn to something a shade brighter, there has been a great deal of discussion among various groups of the York community with regard to the academic future of York University. Several resolutions were adopted by the Senate at its meetings of Oct. 25 and Nov. 8, one of which requested that "each faculty and each administrative unit of the University begin to prepare a 5-year plan that would enable the University to remain a distinctive viable vigorous institution in the 1980's." On Nov. 28, student representatives of the various campus student organizations shall be meeting with Vice-President Found and President Macdonald to discuss academic life at York. If any student has any ideas, criticisms, etc. to share, please let me know by sending me a note care of the CYSF office or Bethune College. Such concepts as the Tutorial program for first-year students, the College system and the general education system are ideas up for debate.

As a final note, I think that a certain amount of credit should be extended to Options and the student volunteers on campus who provided assistance to the recent crisis in Mississauga. When the University is able to provide some real help to the outside world we move further away from the misnomer of the "University as an isolated ivory tower."

Andrea Doucet



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