

# Dal competes for new federal research funds

BY JOSEPH LAMBERT

Research at Dalhousie, and throughout Canada, may increase dramatically due to a new federal foundation funnelling millions of dollars in research funding to

universities. The Canadian Foundation for Innovation (CFI) is a recently introduced federal initiative with an \$800-million budget to be distributed over the next five years. Under the program, universities

across Canada compete to win research funding.

Dalhousie president Tom Traves said the university should do well. "Dalhousie, Nova Scotia's only research intensive university, should compete successfully in this program," he said.

Dalhousie will be among many universities submitting its strongest research proposals to gain funding. The school will compete for funding with other universities, or networks of universities in this area.

Traves says he recognizes the importance and scope of this project.

"[The CFI] is a very welcome initiative," he said. "The equipment and physical infrastructure for research in Canada has been starved for funding support...you can't have first class work without first class facilities...this initiative is an important signal about the importance of research and [the Canadian government's]

commitment to finance it over a period of time."

Each proposal must contain two important elements. First, proposals are considered for their academic merits, and second, applicants need to demonstrate how their academic purpose are linked to the funding of the project, and the scope of connections to other interests in the university.

Funding will be directed to those faculties that require high-end facilities for research.

"The mandate is to provide infrastructure grants in science, engineering and medicine," Traves said.

The CFI is also considering accepting proposals from the social sciences.

In order to ensure Dalhousie is competitive for CFI funding, the university will rank all proposals, weed out the weaker ones, before sending the strongest to Ottawa.

"Proposals will be ranked according to the university's long term research projects...looking

for proposals that include multiple groups of faculty members who are either working on common projects or projects that could share common equipment or faculties."

The funding provided by the CFI would be matched 40-50 per cent of the proposed cost of the project. The remainder of the funding would have to come from the private sector.

"It is up to the people who submit the proposal to secure the other 60 per cent...from those companies interested in our research activities."

The process of securing funds is dictated in part by the Joint Economic Diversification Agreement sponsored by federal and provincial governments.

The CFI funds will not be granted until the end of 1998. A preliminary proposal deadline has been set for February 1998.

Dalhousie has already been slated to receive a provincial research grant, estimated at \$15-million, from the Ministry of Education and Culture.

## Grad House woes



EERIE SILENCE - It's usually hard to find a seat in the Grad House at noon, but the building sat empty last Thursday following the resignation of seven Dalhousie Association of Graduate Students councillors. (Photo by Ryan Lash.)

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counsellors, university academics and chief executive officers from across Canada.

In addition to its ranking, Maclean's looked at other trends across Canadian campuses. Forty-four per cent of universities reported a drop in their operating budgets. In addition, 56 per cent of schools have seen class sizes increase across the board, 49 per cent reported that they have fewer first year classes taught

by tenured faculty, and students are taking longer to graduate.

On a positive note, 84 per cent of universities have upped their scholarship and bursary figures, and 70 per cent are allocating a larger proportion of their budget to student services. At the same time, the average student is graduating with \$25,000 in debts after an undergraduate degree and campuses are increasingly being influenced by corporations.

## Arts and Social Sciences building

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itself comes out stronger than planned, it may mean that more funds can be pumped directly into facilities.

Regardless, obstacles remain for the building, as recent additions to the project have further complicated the situation.

A \$1-million computer lab has suddenly appeared on the building's list of expenses, and concerns have been raised about the \$1.75-million set aside for the construction of a parking lot.

Michael Bradfield, chair of the Senate Physical Planning Committee, says that if funds being redirected to the construction of the building itself, 10,000 more square

feet could be created. To overcome the present funding dilemma, it has been suggested that the FASS Building be completed in two stages, but Bradfield downplays this option.

"Nobody is actually talking about having the money to expand in the future," he said.

As well, more departments in the FASS recently asked for office space in the new complex.

Higgins would like to see a "reunification of the humanities departments" in one location, explaining that the present department houses are somewhat rundown, and inaccessible to those with mobility challenges. But she admits that in the case of a smaller building, departments will be the first to lose space.

She insists though, on the need for lecture halls.

"The classrooms will be there. We have a crying need for new classroom spaces, especially large classrooms."

Higgins says the building will also be "fully wired to accommodate new technologies."

Now that the final decisions are being reached regarding one of Dalhousie's first new buildings in more than a decade, the steering committee feels progress is "very positive".

Adams wants to ensure the new building, planned for the Rebecca Cohn parking lot, not be seen as a similar "monstrosity" to other modern buildings on campus.

"My role is to see the money is spent the best way possible in regards to total university interests," he said.

Higgins agrees. "What we do we will do properly. We will not sacrifice quality to [the] budget."

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