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Dal-ITI partnership causes concern over accessibility

The programs are better than nothing, Dal vice-president Scully says

BY SHELLEY ROBINSON

Two new graduate programs offered with a for-profit institution are raising questions about students shut out of high-priced programs because they can't afford the tuition.

The degrees — a Masters of Business Administration in Information Technology (MBAIT) and Masters in Information Technology Education (MITE) — are jointly offered with the Halifax-based Information Technology Institute (ITI).

Tuition for the two-year MBA (IT) is \$38,600, while tuition for the 12-month MITE is \$28,800.

Dr. Sam Scully, Dalhousie's vice-president academic and research says the programs were intended to fill student demands for courses Dal couldn't afford to offer on its own.

And while Scully says he recognizes the barriers of high tuition, he says the programs are better than nothing.

"The arrangement at least allows us to provide a program of quality to a substantial student audience that we wouldn't otherwise be able to provide," he said.

"It does shut some people out, but it does create a program others can take — I'd rather do that than no program at all."

Kelly Mackenzie, Dalhousie Student Union vice-president of student advocacy, also has reservations about hefty price tags limiting options for some students. And MacKenzie doesn't necessarily see the partnership with ITI as necessary.

"[Universities] should be able

to offer these programs within the public system," she said. "If a student doesn't have the money for this program but really wants to take it — how is it accessible to them? It's not.

"I couldn't take this program." The MBA (IT) is offered through the faculty of management, and the Masters of IT Education is offered by Henson College, Dal's continuing education affiliate.

Dal will receive \$7,200 for each student in the MITE program, and roughly \$15,000 for each student taking the MBA (IT).

Tuition for a normal full-time MBA is \$4975.

Each program is based on ITI's nine month Applied Information Technology certificate. The MBA (IT) also requires correspondence work with Dal's faculty of management — designed to be completed while the student is working — ideally at their new IT career. The MITE requires six weeks of adult education theory classes and a hundred hours of IT teaching experience.

Gerard McInnis is ITI's chief financial officer and project coordinator for both programs. He says the partnership is good for both ITI and Dal, but in different ways.

"Our way to get our program equivalent to a degree-granting program was through a partnership," he said.

"It allows us to differentiate ourselves from what is perceived as a low end market — the trade school.

"For Dalhousie it means access to thousands of students they wouldn't otherwise have access to."

McInnis says ITI is aware the programs are expensive, but given

their high job placement rates (hovering around 90 percent) it's an investment in students' futures.

To deal with the costs associated with their basic IT program (\$21,600 tuition) ITI has partnerships with some banks for special ITI loans, in-house student finance officers, and a subsidiary called ITI financial services which grants student loans to students who qualify.

But McInnis says that still leaves some people out of luck.

"We can't service all customers — in that regard we might be different from [Dalhousie], which has more fallback [like] bursaries."

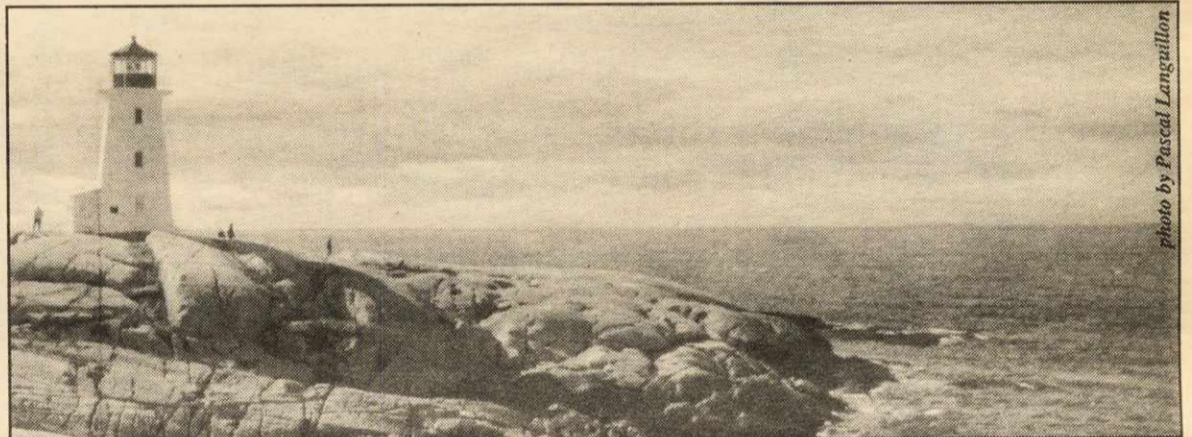
Students in the MBA (IT) and MITE will not be eligible for Dalhousie grants, scholarships, or bursaries.

The MBA (IT), set to begin in Feb. of 1999 will also eventually be offering Dal degrees to students at ITI's other Canadian campuses: Vancouver, Toronto, Moncton and

Ottawa.

ITI, the first Canadian education company to be publicly traded on the stock market, also has a licensing agreement with the American InterContinental University. Based in Atlanta, the for-profit American institution has schools across the US, in the UK and the United Arab Emirates.

From November 1997 to June 1998 ITI had revenues of \$18.5-million with a net income of \$870,000.



The waves of Peggy's Cove, NS, will never wash Pierre Berton from the rocks... because he's not likely to go there anytime soon. See story page 13.

photo by Pascal Langouillon

Screening process 'bigoted', critics say

BY SHELLEY ROBINSON AND TRISTAN STEWART-ROBERTSON

The blood may have been flowing two weeks ago but the debate over how it is screened is growing as some say donor questionnaires are homophobic and racist.

On Oct. 5, a blood donor clinic in the McInnes Room coincided with the Canadian Blood Services (CBS) takeover from the Red Cross. The new blood services agency was formed after recommendations of the Krever Inquiry into the Red Cross' tainted blood supply.

And on Oct. 5, like at any other blood clinic, donors were asked to fill out questionnaires about their risk factors for blood-borne diseases and insufficiencies.

The controversial questions ask if a male donor has ever had sex with a man, even once since 1977, or if since 1977 the donor was born in, has lived in, or had sex with a person from one of several African countries.

The countries include Chad, Nigeria and Cameroon.

Wilson Hodder, chair of the AIDS Coalition of Nova Scotia, says the questions are prejudiced and unnecessary given that all blood is tested before entering the blood supply.

"These questions are quite simply stupid," he said.

"[They're] clearly and extremely homophobic, bigoted, and extremely racist."

The International Students' Centre could not be reached for comment.

Ian Murray, assistant collections manager of the Nova Scotia branch of the CBS, says the organization recognizes the questions could be offensive, but says they are also necessary.

"There's no question it's insulting, but it's our policy to err on the side of caution — even if it is insulting or discriminatory. We feel it's justifiable discrimination."

Murray says the questions focus on gay men and people from the specified African countries because they are high risk groups.

"The purpose of the questions... really isn't to zero-in on the homosexual or gay community in as much as it is to respond to the presented fact that over seventy percent of the cases of HIV in Canada are known to be within homosexual men."

Murray also says the high incidence of HIV in the African countries listed in the questionnaire make it irresponsible to accept blood from people who have lived in or had sex with people in those countries.

"Why play with fire? Why put the threat out there?" he asked. "It's still really insulting, but unfortunately that's the world we live in."

The questions are asked by a registered nurse before a donor gives blood. And although being a gay man or having lived in certain parts of Africa automatically rules out some people giving blood, Murray says not all the questions are so cut and dried.

"Even if the donor answers yes to [some] questions," he said, "it doesn't necessarily mean that they won't be able to donate. What it does is it opens up a dialogue... to help us explore whether it's safe for us to accept the donation from them."

"If people can demonstrate that they have practiced safe sex, then that gets them closer to actually donating," he said.

The AIDS Coalition's Hodder asks how CBS can define "what is safe and what is sex," adding the questionnaires are not fool-proof given that "people lie about their sexual habits."

Hodder also says excluding certain groups from donating blood creates "an insulting false sense of security" about the remaining blood supply.

In 1996 the Red Cross cancelled a blood drive at McGill University because of negative reaction expected from protesters.

The University of Western Ontario and Memorial University of Newfoundland have also both held protests about the

Day of Action?

Awareness of student needs increases

BY JENNIFER CALDWELL

Amy Morris is in her first year of university at King's college. Wearing a "hello, my name is" sticker, she crossed off the "name", added "debt", filled in "\$5610", then along with over a hundred other students marched downtown in support of a tuition freeze.

The march was a part of the Canadian Federation of Students' (CFS) ongoing campaign against government cutbacks to education.

Penny McCall Howard, the Nova Scotia Chair of CFS, says the march is only the tip of the iceberg when it comes to CFS's fight.

"The key thing about a march is that it doesn't happen in isolation, it is incorporated into a campaign including lectures, the handing out of information leaflets, and meeting with key government officials," she

said.

"CFS is working for a system of quality education for all Canadians."

The rally began in the King's quad, and though the protestors marched through Dal's campus, the march was not endorsed or sponsored by Dalhousie.

Unlike the King's Student Union, Dalhousie's student union is a member of the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations (CASA).

And Kelly MacKenzie, the Dalhousie Student Union (DSU) vice-president of student advocacy, says "the Dalhousie Student Union doesn't want to get involved with CFS."

The march itself was reminiscent of a high school pep

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