

Course guide idea dropped again

by Keith Krause

A Students' Union plan to re-establish student evaluation of professors has been dropped for this year.

The course guide, first published in 1968, was intended to assist students in course selection. It was cancelled in 1972, due to mounting costs.

Efforts to revive it have continued for the past three years with little success.

"There is no long term implementation plan for the guide," said Chanchal Bhattacharya, SU vp academic. "It's an on-again-off-again proposal."

"We're doing as much work as possible this year on the guide to ensure that when it is re-implemented it is permanent," said Bhattacharya.

Last year's executive also made similar statements, citing inadequate planning as the reason for postponing the guide.

The estimated cost of the guide, if sold to students for \$1.50, would be at least \$21,000. This year's budget allotted \$10,000 for the guide, but the money

will now be used to support other student services.

Past course guides have also run into opposition from some faculties and departments who did not want professors evaluated by students.

"In some departments there is resistance to evaluation," said Dean Olmstead, SU president.

But Bhattacharya disagreed.

"Up till now there has been no opposition to the idea," he said. "In fact, a number of departments have reacted favorably to the idea."

A recent report of the U of A General Faculties Council (GFC) Committee for the Improvement of Teaching and Learning concluded that a system of student evaluation of instruction should be established.

The report also recommended the establishment of an Instructional Development Center for professors who wished to sharpen their teaching skills. However, no concrete steps have yet been taken in this

direction.

"There was some staff opposition in GFC towards the proposal that had come forward at that time," said Bhattacharya.

Students' Union efforts will now be concentrated towards the

establishment of compulsory student evaluation, perhaps by the university itself.

"A lot of departments are doing evaluations now on their own," said Olmstead. "Our intention is to work for com-

pulsory student evaluation, and from there to the course guide."

Bhattacharya concurs with this saying, "I'm positive eventually this university will move towards universal student evaluation of instruction."

SU sends aid to Cambodia

Students' Union agreed to donate \$500 to the Red Cross to be used for civilian aid in Cambodia at their December Students' Union (SU) meeting.

After a presentation by a group of graduate students, council examined various ways of getting aid through to the Cambodian people. The final decision - to send \$500 through the Red Cross, which is providing medical and food relief in the region.

It was also decided that any funds remaining after the Students' Union had met its commitments to the Indo-Chinese refugees it is sponsoring would be used for Cambodian aid.



It won't hurt a bit...The Red Cross is holding its annual January blood donor clinic at the U of A this week. The clinic, sponsored by the engineers, is open in Room 142, SUB, each day between 10 a.m. and 2:00 p.m. Better hurry, though, the clinic ends Friday.

CUP solves its problems

Delegates from over fifty university and college papers met in Toronto over the Christmas break at the forty-second annual Canadian University Press conference.

At the conference, an idea long discussed in the organization was finalized. Next year, CUP will be publishing a magazine, to be inserted in those papers who decide they want it. The magazine will be written and edited by students, and is expected to appear monthly.

CUP also considered the continued membership of several of its members. *The Grad Post*, newspaper of the graduate students at the University of Toronto, was expelled, because other members decided it is not run democratically, and is dominated by the grad student union.

The *NAIT Nugget*, on the other hand, will continue as a CUP member. Its membership was originally under review because of lack of participation in the organization, and because of sexist copy in the paper. However, the editor attended the conference and expressed commitment to change at the paper.

A variety of advertising boycotts were considered, in-

cluding Carling O'Keefe, because of its South African involvement, the major banks, for the same reason, and the RCMP and military. However, after lengthy and acrimonious debate, no decision to boycott these or any other companies was made.

The organization also elected a new executive at the

conference. Mike Balagus of the

Projector, Red River Community College, was elected president.

Cathy Smith, at present CUP's bureau chief in Quebec, will be running the news exchange next year, and Mike McEvoy of the *Uniter* at the University of Winnipeg will be the vice president and features writer.

What's CUP and why does the Gateway belong?

Canadian University Press (CUP) is a cooperative made up of newspapers at post-secondary institutions in Canada. Papers pay a fee based on their ability to do so - *Gateway* paid approximately \$8500 for this academic year.

Papers in CUP have the option of belonging to a national advertising network, Youthstream, which provides

Gateway with approximately \$18,000 worth of advertising.

Papers also participate in a news exchange, in which stories are received weekly in a news

package, and more immediate stories are sent by telex. A features package is also prepared weekly, and there are occasional CUP reviews sent to members.

The organization also sets standards for members. In order to belong, papers are required to print no sexist or racist copy, and are required to be run by their staffs collectively.

An important aspect of CUP is the opportunity it provides for students involved in journalism across Canada to meet together at national and regional conferences to exchange ideas.

Oh God...here they come!

Six days of cutting loose and blowing off excess steam ... Engineering Week is here again!

The forty-third annual Engineering Week is scheduled at the U of A January 14-19. Events this year will include

toboggan and keg races in Quad, rallies, skit night, boat races, and the traditional pub crawl.

Students can observe toboggan and keg races in Quad during noon hour Monday, Tuesday and Thursday, and a rally will be held Wednesday at

noon in CAB.

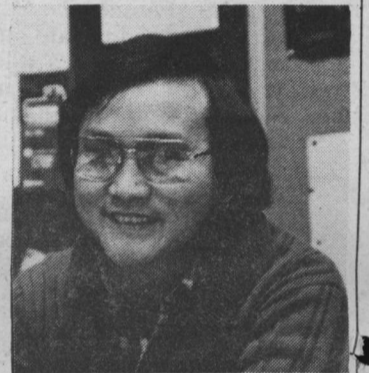
The various engineering clubs will also visit classrooms with their princesses, vying for the Club of the Year trophy.

Events will terminate with the Saturday night Queen's Ball.

Advocate

by

Colin Wong



Colin Wong is the recently appointed Student Advocate, an office operated by the Students' Union. His column will be a regular feature in *The Gateway* for the rest of the year, and Colin will outline the nature of his position and discuss some of the academic problems that students can encounter.

Have you ever felt that you have put more than a reasonable effort in a course, but you still have difficulties keeping up?

There can be many reasons for this, but the common one is the allegation that the professor is incompetent in his/her field of teaching.

In the past two years, the office of the student advocate has handled more than fifteen complaints in this area. Some of these complaints were frivolous, evidencing a student's attempt to project his failure on his professor. Others were legitimate, and when they could not be properly resolved, indicated the inadequacy of the present system to resolve these grievances.

In most cases, all the student advocate can do is gather evidence of incompetence, present it to the department chairman, and hope that he is diligent in keeping his staff on their toes.

In cases where evidence is strong, departments usually cooperate to alleviate the problems. For example, two years ago 29 of the 50 students in a math class signed a petition alleging that the instructor was impervious to their needs, because he refused to slow down and speak clearly so his strong accent would be better understood. When the petition was presented to the department, a Teaching Aids Committee was formed and the instructor was observed and advised by its members. In addition the class was moved to a larger room. As a result, most students were able to satisfactorily complete the course.

The most difficult problem facing students is gathering evidence to support their claims. In cases where the quality of teaching is not markedly bad, it is likely the consequences of the teaching are felt only by a handful of students. In such a case, the seriousness with which their complaints are heard depends entirely on the goodwill of the department concerned.

The problem of teaching quality is too complex to explore completely in this limited space. However, the two reasons most frequently cited by the university for not placing more emphasis on teaching competence are the lack of reliable means to measure "competence" and the belief that a more prominent aim of this university is to stress research rather than teaching.

The Students' Union is planning to reintroduce course evaluation and the university has set up a committee to study the quality of teaching. In the mean time, if a student feels that he is victimized by his professor's teaching, he should let his grievance be known, by contacting the Student Advocate, or more preferably, the concerned department. Some departments will allow students to switch sections, even after the deadline, if their grievances are legitimate.

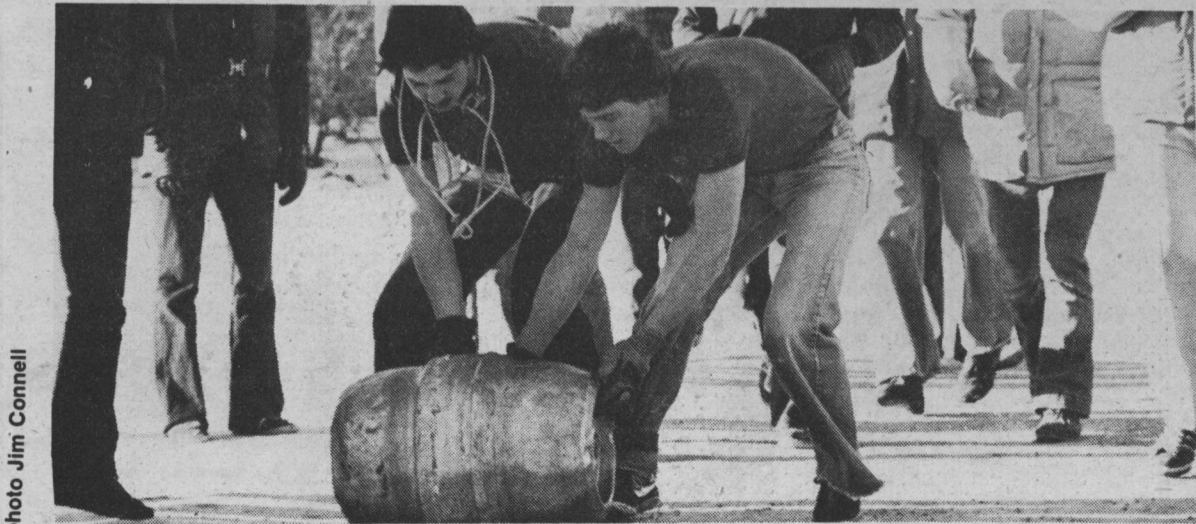


Photo Jim Connell

Hijinks at last year's engineering week. Hopes are that the fun will be repeated.