Memorial considers pegging enrolment

By JOAN SULLIVAN

A sudden upsurge in applications for first year admission at Memorial University has prompted administrators to consider pegging enrollment at 3000 students.

Ward Neale, Memorial vice-president academic, said no official decisions have been made but the university could barely accommodate the students enrolled last year.

Classrooms will be even more overcrowded if the university accepts the 25 per cent more students who have applied.

"We have a frozen budget. We have no more space. Even with 3000 students, standards would deteriorate, faculty would be overworked and labs would be overused," Neale said.

"That number will really stretch us to the limit."

Registrar Glenn Collins said the university is experiencing an influx of first year applications because the first class of students from grade 12, which was instituted last year, are now graduating from high school. Until two years ago, Newfoundland's high schools ended at grade 11.

"It seems that an extra year in high school made more students realize what university could do for their social and emotional development."

Collins said 3100 students have applied but no one as yet has been rejected. The university is counting on a five per cent no-show rate, he said.

"We haven't refused admission to anyone yet."

The university is open to high school graduates with a 60 per cent average and admission is on a first-come, first-served basis. Collins said he has no idea if the university will impose stiffer academic standards.
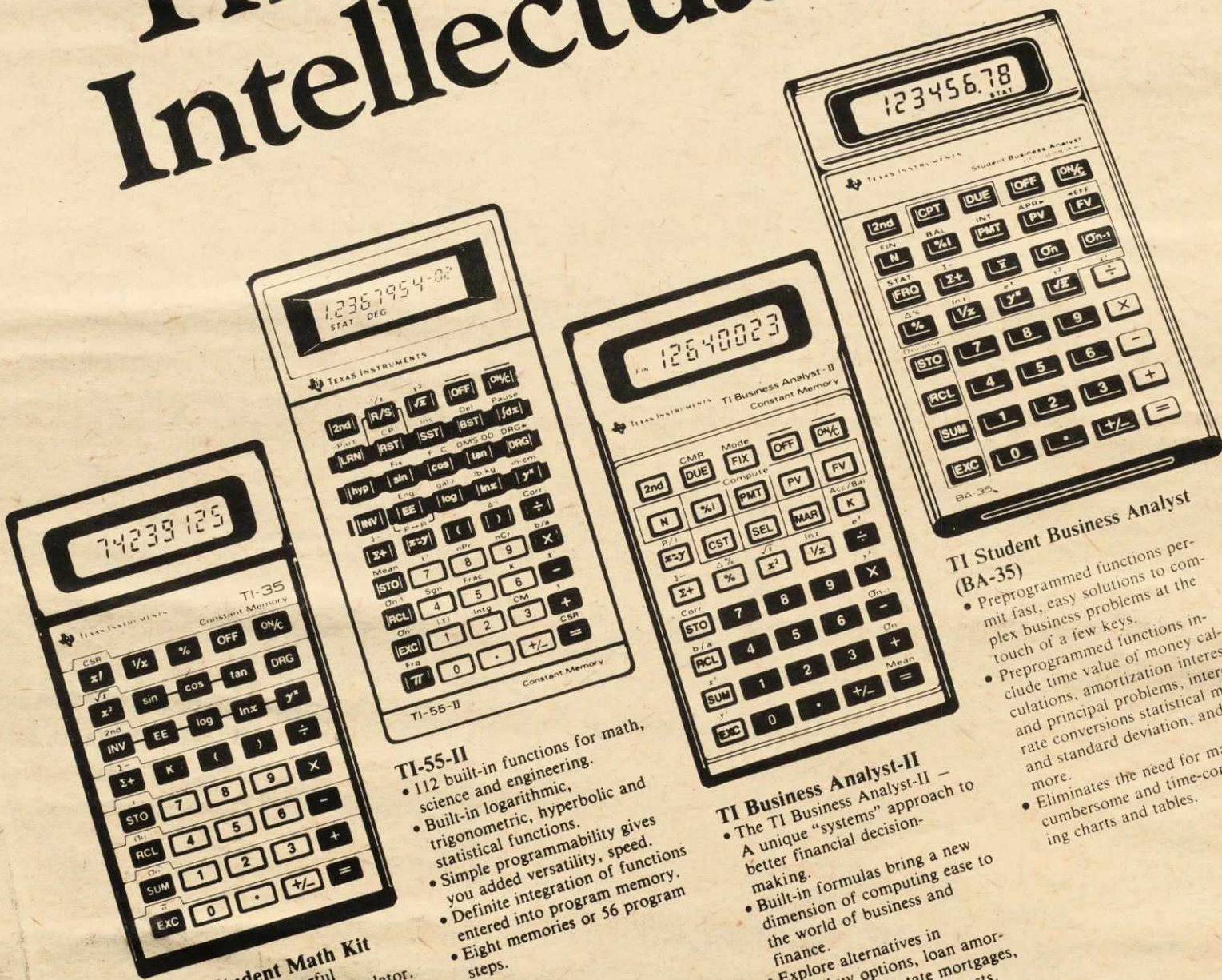
Student union president Ed Byrne said the council opposes limited enrolment. "We'll do everything we can to stop it."

Byrne said the university has not rejected any student yet because they have already accepted nearly every applicant.

"They got caught with their pants down, so to speak."

Memorial is one of the growing number of universities across the country to consider limited enrolment as a means of coping with inadequate government funding and increases in first year applications.