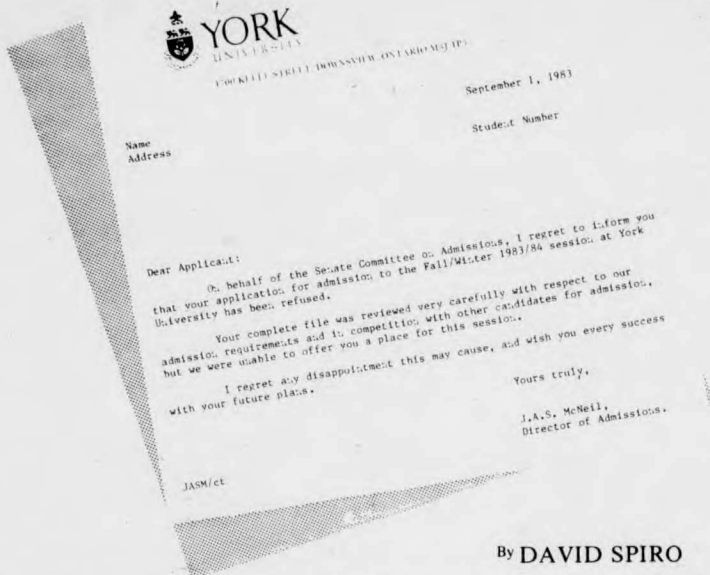


1,400 denied entry



By DAVID SPIRO

Objectivism

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The lack of government funds has made it impossible for York University to admit 1,400 qualified applicants to first year programs this fall.

A grade 13 average of 60% guaranteed acceptance in previous years. This year, however, the minimums have been raised to 63% for admission into the Faculty of Arts, 65% for Science (75% for the computer science program) and 66% to attend classes at Glendon.

The combined effect of raising the minimum entrance requirements and, for the first time in York's history, eliminating the discretionary application period (i.e. places held open for those who applied late in the summer) have kept freshman enrollment at last year's level of 4,900.

York is not the only institution which has found itself having to freeze its enrollment at last year's levels. Most Ontario universities, including Brock and Trent (who have traditionally welcomed anyone with 60% in grade 13) reached capacity early and were forced to

turn away qualified students.

The only Ontario schools still inviting applications for the coming year are Lakehead in Thunder Bay and Laurentian in Sudbury.

York isn't the only place with problems comments Dr. William Found, York's Vice-President in charge of Academic Affairs.

The administration felt that it was necessary to freeze the enrollment because there was simply not enough money to support any additional students. According to the Dean of the Faculty of Arts, Thomas Traves, "We've cut back in a hundred and one different ways and tried to make ourselves as efficient as possible. It's reached the point where we can't cut away any further - we've cut away the fat and are into the bone."

Professor Janice Newson, Chairman of the York University Faculty Association, agrees. "The Ministry has to come forward with the funding." She points out that York's "Administrative structure" has grown immensely during the same period of time as we've been facing underfunding and budget cuts.

The provincial funding formula for universities is at the heart of the whole issue. Education grants are calculated using the number of students enrolled between 1974-1977 as a base figure.

Institutions such as York which have grown tremendously since that time do not receive as much money per capita as the older schools, which had relatively larger enrollments in the mid-1970s. The amount which York receives to support a student in a three-year arts program is \$500 less than the Ontario average and \$700 less than the amount which the University of Toronto receives for

the same student.

"It's an enormous financial penalty for universities which have grown. We had reason to believe that the new formula (to be introduced at the end of this month) was to be even worse than the existing one," says Found.

Traves stresses that the 1,400 applicants had not been denied admission as a political move - it was not an attempt to pressure the Ministry of Colleges and Universities into adopting a more favorable funding formula.

"They had been turned away in the context of existing funding," he says. "We haven't changed enrollment procedures or policies one bit."

The recent debate about public support of post-secondary education revolves around the issues of quality of education and accessibility to university programs. According to Ray Pillar, Student Programmes Officer in the Faculty of Fine Arts, "To let a few more people in is to jeopardize everyone's education. To overcrowd is not doing anyone a favor."

Found would like York to be known as an institution prepared to have limits on enrollment growth, "to protect quality."

However, Professor Newson contends that it is a red herring to sacrifice accessibility to maintain quality. "With underfunding, those who argue about quality may be well-intentioned but are providing a cover-up to limiting full educational opportunities for disadvantaged, underprivileged, and minority groups."

Most educators would agree with Traves when he says that there is no contradiction between accessibility and quality. "They can go hand in

hand but only if adequate funds are available," he says.

The fact that the Ministry of Colleges and Universities has thus far failed to announce its revised funding formula has angered many within the university.

"Public policy requires full debate in the legislature, no off-the-cuff remarks justifying government underfunding and inaction," says Ian Nelmes, Chairperson of the Canadian Federation of Students.

Martin Zarnett, a student representative on the Board of Governors, encourages Queen's Park to "come out and tell the people what you want to do." Newson agrees. "If the government is in a position to review its long term commitment to accessibility then they need to make it an election issue."

"It's not a question of our not wanting them to come" Traves explains. "We've been forced to close the door because we no longer have the room. It's impossible for us to grow without further financing on a significant scale. It's a question of government policy - don't complain to us, complain to the government!"

Both Found and Newson agree that it was unwise for the Ministry of Colleges and Universities to reject a recommendation for a new funding formula put forward by the Council of Ontario Universities. That document carried considerable weight since it was based on a consensus agreement of the often independently-minded university administrations.

When contacted, a spokesperson for the Ministry of Colleges and Universities and the Hon. Dr. Bette Stephenson, denied the request for an interview saying "There is not much value in talking at this time."

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