

Token remedial math program running on low

by John Roggeveen

The math department at the U of A is proposing to expand their remedial math program in the upcoming fall term.

According to Dr. Ivan Baggs, a member of the department, the proposed program will be "larger and more comprehensive" than the current remedial program.

"In the last four years we have had a token remedial program running... we haven't had the resources to run anything more than that," says Baggs.

The proposed program will be able to offer remediation for more students. The PLATO computer may also be used as a teaching aid for the program.

The program was initiated four years ago in response to a decrease in the ability of math students.

"We got into it... because people (in the math department) were saying that the caliber of math students was going down," says Baggs.

"People here (in the math department) think the situation (mathematical preparedness) has gone down since the departmental exams were dropped," says Baggs. "We want to give them (the students) a fair chance to have the math background."

The math competency exam is given in early September and involves "strictly high school mathematics... algebra and trigonometry."

"On the basis of the results of the exam, we advise that people

who get six out of 25 or less take it," says Baggs.

About one third of the approximately 600 people who took introductory calculus in 1980-81 did not attend any remedial sessions. Thirty six per cent of these non-attenders passed the course. Fifty two and one half per cent of those who attended one or more remedial sessions passed introductory calculus.

"The number of people who should attend should be approximately doubled in the new program. We are looking at about 100 students that need to go," says Baggs.

"Our problem now is that we have so many students and we don't even have resources to teach those who have the background for calculus courses," he adds. "If we had smaller classes I think it would help."

Baggs feels that the problem must be solved at the high school level.

"We can only put a band-aid on the problem at the University," he says.

The U of A Math department has had meetings with Math teachers in the Edmonton area. There are also members of the Math department who are on the provincial curriculum committee and on the provincial comprehensive exam committee.

"We have talked to (educators) about the problem and have pointed out the things that need to be done," he says.

The U of A is not the only university that has to deal with the

decrease in math competency.

"The problems we are seeing are not unique to the University of Alberta... it seems to be a widespread problem," says Baggs.

Baggs is not certain the proposal will be approved.

"The senior administration at the University may not want to get into another remedial program (since they already have a remedial English program)," says Baggs.

"One way to get around this is to have a comprehensive exam administered by the government," says Baggs.

At the present time, the province administers a comprehensive exam to grade 12 students on a voluntary basis. Baggs suggests that the university "could make it compulsory" and use the exam as an entrance requirement.

"An entrance exam is one

possibility... but entrance exams have problems," says Baggs.

The proposed program has been approved in detail by the math department, but it also must be approved by the U of A Academic Development Committee, and the Planning and Priorities Committee. Either committee may send the proposal to the General Faculties Council (GFC) for approval, as well.

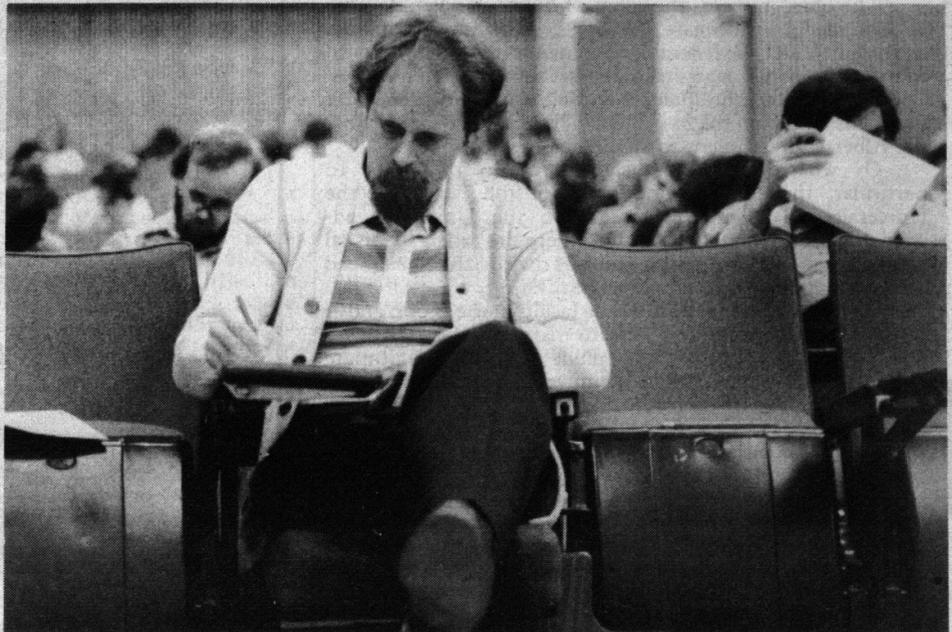


photo Bill Ingler

Let's see. If Jane has twelve apples and gives three to Dick, how long will it take to get to Blackfalds.

Day departmentals dropped, U of A profs started screaming

by Wes Oginski

University professors are showing a growing concern over the decrease in abilities of students entering post-secondary institutions from high schools.

"Complaints about the level of preparedness of students has been coming over the years," says Dr. George Baldwin, U of A v.p. Academic.

These complaints have resulted in an English Competency and Remediation program at Alberta universities, and a push for a Math Competency and Remediation program at the U of A.

At one time, all grade 12 students had to write provincial departmental exams for final marks. About ten years ago they

were dropped from the high school curriculum.

"The day they (departmentals) went out we (University professors) started screaming," says Dr. J. Macki, chairman of the Department of Mathematics.

Baldwin says that the Alberta Teachers Association (ATA) strongly opposes the re-introduction of departmental exams. ATA spokesperson, Dr. Ken Bride, was not available for comment.

"Now it is impossible for us to evaluate students," Macki adds.

Macki explains that students no longer follow a strict Math syllabus. He says that the existing program at the high school level is too long; the teachers begin at either the beginning or the end of

the program, but are unable to finish their syllabus.

Dr. L. McKill, head of the U of A English Remediation program says the high school English program faces a similar problem.

But McKill also stresses that those same students are not incompetent.

"The students lack the kinds of skills in writing expected of students to do in university work," he says.

Baldwin says that the Un-

iversity must take its share of the blame.

"We don't blame everything on schools... we have our own responsibility," he says. "We train the teachers who train the students."

In the recent past, the province has offered comprehensive exams on an optional basis to grade twelve students. The marks are not used as a basis for a final mark.

Baldwin questions the use of these exams and a proposal to

have them be used towards an entrance requirement for university.

"We (the University) don't feel our interests are being given appropriate weight in the design (of the exams)," he explains. "We fear we may not find them useful for the screening of competency."

Baldwin also stresses that the recent concern has brought about some positive results.

"A more cooperative effort with the school system (has developed) since we sounded the alarm," he says.



March 1

Dear Diary:

Well, March certainly came in like a lion this year didn't it? That's what I told Petey at breakfast this morning but he was grumpy again and asked how I knew what a lion comes like anyway. Somedays I don't know what he's muttering about.

I just don't understand why people are so grumpy when it snows like this. Sure it's annoying to phone the engineering department before 7:00 so they'll clear your driveway by 7:30. But all you have to do is treat yourself to a little nap in the afternoon (I like mine just before General Hospital) and everything works out fine.

Or anyway it would have. I was quite pleasantly sound asleep (and I was having that dream again, diary, the one about a unicorn smoking a cigar) when the doorbell rang. Oh by the way diary, Petey finally installed that new doorbell we got for Christmas, the one that plays 30 different tunes. It plays all sorts of seasonal tunes like Jingle Bells, Auld Lang Syne, Happy Birthday and five national anthems. Right now I've got it set to the Chimes of Big Ben; it adds such class to our house.

Well Big Ben woke me up and I went to the door. This woman asked if she could come in and tracked dirty snow all over my brand new rubber door mat. Then she asks me to sign a petition to stop the Newfoundland seal hunt. She went on and on about endangered species and brutal murders and showed me pictures of sad faced baby seals covered in ketchup or something.

So, I stopped her right there. I can't stand it

when these bleeding heart do-gooders can't even bother to get their facts straight. First off I told her that the seals were not endangered. After all, they're only killing the babies; and not the mothers, right? And no matter what, there are plenty of seals in zoos all over the world and they're a lot better off where they can get three square meals a day instead of being a navigation hazard and driving oil tankers into sandbars.

Furthermore, I told her, the seal hunt is vitally important to Newfoundland fishermen. They can't work in the winter and if they can't earn extra money on the seal hunt they'll all go on welfare and beat their wives and children or come to Alberta to rob 7-11 stores. The woman was agog; I guess no one had ever bothered to talk some sense into her before.

Then I hit her with the clincher. I told her that killing seals was no worse than killing cows for beef and that she was pretty hypocritical to be complaining about my seal skin boots when she was wearing a leather coat. When she told me it was naugahyde I really had her, after all there are a lot more seals left in the world than there are naugas.

She was fully convinced after that, I'm sure. She apologized for taking up my time and when I asked her if she was going on with that petition she said no, she couldn't wait to get back to her office and tell everyone about me. I really felt quite proud.

But I'm afraid that it all took so long that I entirely missed General Hospital. Oh, well sometimes a public servant just has to make that kind of sacrifice.

BAZ

par SKEET at Niskey

