

National

# 'Pornogate' at Simon Fraser U

## Student leaders dismissed for downloading porn

PAM MURRAY, *The Peak*  
SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

After seven months of controversy, Simon Fraser Student Society president, Kristjan Arnason, and treasurer, Frank Karabotos, were impeached by student vote last Wednesday for downloading pornography.

The two executive members became the first in the society's history to be impeached, as 880 SFU students braved unusually cold weather to attend last Wednesday's special general meeting in the SFU campus' outdoor concourse. 748 students voted to impeach Arnason; 725 for Karabotos.

The 'Pornogate' incident became public in April 1996 when former society president Lee-Ann Clarke discovered pornographic images on two executive computers, and the issue has continued to attract attention through months of controversy.

Forum voted to suspend Arnason and Karabotos indefinitely, with pay. However, the two were reinstated when the society's lawyers questioned the legality of the suspension.

Following their reinstatement, students started a petition that eventually had 600 signatures demanding a referendum to allow students to decide if the two should be impeached.

In August, the society hired chief electoral officer Guy Letts to investigate the original charges and to verify the signatures on the petition.

Letts and the electoral standing committee that he organized found that although there was no evidence linking

the pornographic images on the computers directly to either Arnason or Karabotos, they were guilty by their own admission.

The committee's report recommended a referendum that would allow as many students as possible to decide whether Arnason and Karabotos should be impeached. However, on October 10, Forum voted instead to hold a special general meeting.

The electoral standing committee prepared to hold a referendum despite Forum's decision. "We thought, at the time, that Forum's decision to have a special general meeting was a deliberate move to prevent students from exercising their democratic rights," said Letts. However, he says that when the society's executive threatened to seize their budget, the committee decided that a special general meeting was the only option.

Letts' major concern about a special general meeting was that the 550 students required in the society's constitution for quorum would not be able to make the meeting.

It looked like Letts' fear was well founded. After half an hour, Scott Newman, economics forum representative, protested that the meeting had not achieved quorum. At one point, he mounted the stage and said "I'd just like to point out to everyone that this meeting is over and it is not constitutional."

Amidst cries of "bullshit" from the crowd, the meeting continued with speeches from Arnason and Karabotos.

Boredom was the main reason that both cited in speeches that they made

in their defence. Karabotos said that the attraction of pornography on the Web is over-rated. "After about a week, the novelty of the World Wide Web wore off," he said.

"If you unite all the masturbators on campus, you're sure to win this thing," said Karabotos.

"I wish this many people came out in a day of action," said Arnason. "Actually we did more advertising for the day of action than the general meeting, but students just care more about porn than social spending."

"In the end, the students of SFU who came out and said that they didn't want me to be their President anymore. You can't argue with that," said Arnason.

Karabotos said that he was also dealt with fairly, with the exception of people who left before he spoke to defend himself.

Neither Arnason nor Karabotos say that their political lives are over. Arnason jokingly said that the two plan to run for re-election in the society's annual general meeting on a special platform: the Progress Oriented Representation Now! party.

Karabotos launched a suit against Vancouver's local television news, UTV, for defamation of character; he says that the UTV broadcast influenced student voting at the meeting because of charges of downloading of rape, child pornography, and bestiality, which he says the electoral standing committee's investigation disproved.

<http://fas.sfu.ca/cs/research/projects/Peak>

# U of T creates suicide studies chair

## Psychiatry chair first of its kind in North America

LORI TURNBULL, *The Varsity*  
UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

University of Toronto professor Paul Links has been chosen to hold the first chair in North America exclusively devoted to the study of suicide.

The Arthur Sommer Rotenberg Chair in Suicide Studies was established by Doris Sommer-Rotenberg whose son, a physician who held two degrees from U of T, committed suicide in 1992.

Links, a professor with U of T's department of psychiatry and president-elect of the Ontario Psychiatric Association, says a primary focus of his work will be "action research," which will involve testing ways to prevent suicide and suicidal behaviour.

"Our academic program goal is to see decreasing rates of suicide and suicidal behaviour [by] looking at causes and psychiatric interventions," he said.

Links is also deputy chief of psychiatry of the Wellesley Central/St. Michael's Hospital's joint Mental Health Service, and he plans to continue clinical work, which will inform his research. Doris mounted an extensive fundraising campaign that raised \$1 million towards the establishment of the chair, and U of T matched these funds.

She says she decided to raise the funds because she wanted more scientific and social insight into her son's ailment, which was bipolar affective disorder formerly known as manic depression. It was also important for Doris that the silence surrounding suicide deaths be broken.

"[Because of] the shame, stigma,

regret, and guilt associated with suicide, people deny it and cover it up. Death by one's own hand has the same dignity as other deaths [because] the illness forces them to do it," she said.

Doris says her talented son deserves to be honoured in memory. Upon graduating from Victoria College, Arthur won the Lieutenant Governor General's award for consistently outstanding grades. He then received a degree from U of T's faculty of medicine. A highly talented skier and tennis player, Arthur also did carpentry work, and Doris still has the coffee table he had made for her.

"I was very proud of him. He was very clever, he was attractive, witty and charming. He had everything to live for."

Suicide is one of the leading causes of death for people under 35 years of age, and approximately 3,500 Canadians take their lives every year.

Gerry Harrington, director of the Suicide Information and Education Centre, which is located in Alberta, says given the fact that the number of suicide deaths in this country outweigh the number of AIDS deaths by a ratio of nine to one, more money must be committed to the study of suicide.

"I find it appalling that the federal Ministry of Health puts millions of dollars more into AIDS [research when] suicide is the biggest killer for men. Canada's been very slow in doing work in suicide prevention [and] there's been virtually no co-ordinated effort of any sort of funding," he said.

He adds that he hopes the new chair will not focus simply on adding more literature to an already exhaustive

clinical database but rather will do practical research, such as monitoring existing suicide prevention programs to assess whether mental health professionals need any help in identifying and treating suicidal persons.

"There are some places where suicide prevention is being done [but] nobody follows up. We need to find out what's being done. [Suicide] is a perfect area for research because we don't know what to do [and] sometimes we can do more harm than good," said Harrington.

Links is already taking steps to implement a proactive research approach, and says that one of his priorities is to host a series of community education events to provide advice to mental health professionals, as well as encouraging families to talk about suicide deaths.

Harrington says families often won't acknowledge a suicide death, because people are afraid they won't know how to handle the emotional subject.

But Links cautions that breaking the silence can sometimes be a double-edged sword. He says the media has to treat the subject responsibly as there is evidence that when the media places a suicide death in the headlines and sensationalizes it, there is a notable increase in the number of suicides.

Also connected with the chair is a graduate fellowship, which is named for *Globe and Mail* journalist Stephen Godfrey, who also took his own life.

WITH FILES FROM DAN ZACHARIAH  
<http://www.campuslife.utoronto.ca/groups/varsity>

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