

Study argues post-secondary education pays for itself

BY ALEX BUSTOS

OTTAWA (CUP) — British Columbia university graduates offset the cost of their education subsidies by paying higher taxes, a research institute says.

In fact, some graduates end up paying more than double the cost of their degree, a paper by the non-profit Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives argues.

Conducted by economics professor Robert Allen of the University of British Columbia, the study — the first of its kind in Canada — found students pay for their diplomas through post-university employment as well as tuition fees.

Using UBC figures, Allen concluded tuition fees for a four-year bachelor's program at the university costs on average of \$11,480.

Relying on government numbers, Allen also points out that university graduates earn substantially more than those without a post-secondary education.

The result is that B.C. graduates pay more than \$50,000 in net taxes over their working

lifetime. Allen argues in the paper released last week.

That tax figure — which includes income tax, Canadian Pension Plan contributions and unemployment insurance payments — balloons to \$120,000 for men with an engineering degree.

If you add tuition fees and taxes, women pay an average of \$61,066 and men \$74,376.

In contrast, providing four years of undergraduate study to women costs the B.C. government \$28,469 and \$30,099 for men.

In the long run, the study concludes, education pays for itself.

"If what I'm saying is true, then students are already paying

their education in full, and to increase fees would be overcharging them and limiting access," Allen said.

"My hunch is that this overall conclusion... also applies to the other provinces," he added.

But Mark Milke, Alberta director of the Canadian Taxpayers Federation, says Allen overlooks the fact that low tuition levels subsidize the rich at the expense of the poor.

"It's an interesting (study), except that it's still absurd to think that a son and daughter of a millionaire should be someone who earns \$20,000," Milke said.

"It makes far more sense to

charge students the full cost of education, but provide generous assistance for those who can't pay."

Some student leaders, however, say there should be no tuition fees at all.

Maura Parte, B.C. chairwoman of the Canadian Federation of Students, says Allen's study provides a strong case for zero tuition.

"The presumption in (Milke's) argument is that only the individual benefits from education," said Parte. "But what's important about Mr. Allen's study... is that it says society as a whole benefits from education."

DAGS

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DSU, because we are accountable to the DSU."

Michael Charette voted in favour of joining the CFS' group. He says the prospective

membership is in the best interest of graduate students, which is DAGS main objective, but shouldn't be interpreted as a slight to the student union.

"[It's] not to be taken as a sign of discord or a threat to the DSU," he said.

Lisa Underhill agrees. She says this will be a "year of exploration for DAGS."

At the end of DAGS year-long

trial CFS membership, a referendum of graduate students will determine if they want to become permanent members of the National Graduate Council.

Underhill also says the grad society's involvement with other groups will make DAGS a more effective, informed organization.

"This motion is an enhancement [of DAGS], not a break from the DSU."

American Sign Language wanted at Dal

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universities in Nova Scotia offer sign language, although it is available through the Nova Scotia Community College and is sometimes offered as a night class through some local high schools.

And Mccarron argues that the university shouldn't dismiss the idea of introducing an ASL course based on the premise that there isn't a need for it because she says there's always a need for classes like this. Mccarron says it's just a matter of people coming forward and letting the university know.

"Disabled students often don't make their needs known, and as a result they don't get the help they

could be getting. But if you don't lobby and advocate for change, you don't get change," she said. "What people need to realize is that, if there's action called for, there'll be action taken."

Cindy Boutilier works with the Society for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing of Nova Scotia. Like Mccarron, she says introducing more sign language courses would be a wonderful step forward for the deaf community — but since some classes are already available, lobbying to get universities to teach them is not one of her organization's top priorities.

"It's something that would be fabulous to have — but there are

things that are much more urgently needed in the deaf community, like more interpreters," she said.

But Mccarron says having more sign language courses available to people — even beginner courses — would make a big difference in boosting people's understanding and awareness of the deaf community.

"It's more than just learning hand signals — it's a cultural thing. It's deaf awareness — a step toward breaking down barriers," she said.

"If Dal wants to be progressive in its language programs, this is something they should consider."



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CGC vs NGC

Dalhousie's graduate alternatives

BY JANET FRENCH

When the Dalhousie Association of Grad Students was looking for a national graduate organization it had two main organizations to choose from.

It chose prospective membership in the Canadian Federation of Students' (CFS) National Graduate Council. The CFS is an alliance of campus-based student groups who represent the political and social interests of students by lobbying government at the federal and provincial levels.

DAGS passed on the independent Canadian Graduate Council (CGC). The CGC was formed in 1991 by graduate students who felt there weren't any existing public interest groups that met their needs.

Acronyms aside, the organizations differ most in their approach to lobbying.

Susie Waldman, chair of the grad students' society's advocacy committee, says the CFS takes a more aggressive stand when lobbying the government. The federation's group also organizes on-campus rallies, in addition to their lobby tactics, in order to keep students informed and involved.

Joey Hansen, national treasurer of CFS, says the federation lobbies for the social interests of students, rather than just the political ones.

"The CFS provides services... that must operate nationally [in order to be effective]," he said.

Rubina Ramge is the national chair of the Canadian Grad Council. And she says her council focusses almost exclusively on the political issues concerning graduate students.

"We function to help increase funding for graduate students, help with student-supervisor relations and act as a resource for issues such as intellectual property concerns," she said.

And that sole focus is why Kelly MacKenzie, DSU vice-president student advocacy, says she likes the CGC.

"I would prefer the CGC because... they were created by grad students for grad students and they lobby for grad students alone. If you're in the NGC you are however-many grad students out of however-many undergraduate students," she said. "I seriously believe it would water down how much impact grad students have on policy."

But the grad student society's Susie Waldman says she disagrees with the CGC's history of using compromise as a tactic for lobbying the government.

"[If groups] hold on tight to what they believe in, their chances for success increase."

THE ATTIC

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