

A Canadian university is an institution where football is taught...

...and a few classes are held for the feeble-minded.

Whose money is it anyway?

Athletic Board won't face students

editorial

More than half the money spent by the University Athletics Board (UAB) goes to fewer than a dozen men's teams, while intramurals get about 20 percent of the budget, and two-thirds of that goes to men's programs.

Student money makes up 73 percent of the UAB budget, and that means your money is being used to promote the role of the average student as a spectator rather than a participant, and being used to further the idea that men are more active than women.

And all this is being decided in a UAB forum where team coaches represent intramural interests, where fewer than a third of the board reps are elected directly by students, and where a decision to boost the fees you pay can be made without asking you.

Would it be unfair then to call the whole program elitist, sexist and undemocratic?

UAB gives the men's soccer team more money than it spends on the entire women's intramural program. The Bears Hockey program costs almost as much as the entire men's intramural program. Two teams, totalling less than fifty players, consume the same amount of resources as programs that almost everyone on campus can benefit from directly.

Now the UAB wants to raise fees by 15 percent. Or, more accurately, they want to change their constitution to allow them to raise fees by that much. And they want further changes which would allow them to bypass Students' Council when they get their budget approved.

The UAB's business manager Dean Hengel says, "It's not politically wise to be having a referendum every year." Sure, and it's not politically wise for Trudeau to call an election every five years, especially after cutting a billion dollars from education spending while giving seven billion to the military. But he has to be politically responsible, and in a democracy he must let the people decide. (They will probably turf him out and elect a Conservative government which will do the same thing, but that's another story).

The UAB cannot be allowed to just stick out their palms and tell the students to cough up another 15 percent. Without a moral mandate from the students, their legal right to take an increase, if exercised, will only create bad feelings.

Hengel and the UAB shouldn't be afraid of the democratic process. At the University of Saskatchewan two weeks ago, students voted 80 percent in favor of a \$6.50 increase in their athletics fee. For them, that meant a 38 percent increase on the old \$17.00 fee.

However, one of the main reasons the increase was approved so overwhelmingly was that their fees are earmarked for intramural-recreation and intercollegiate programs: \$4.00 of their increase went to the former.

Hengel is afraid that a 'no' vote would decimate the UAB's programs, leaving the Board to cut activities as inflation raises costs. And as long as 70 percent of the budget is used to support a few high-profile athletes, and recreation sees only 30 percent, a 'no' vote remains a very real possibility. But students, not Hengel, and not just the UAB, must decide - it's students' money we're talking about.

If U of A students wish to imitate commercial athletics - a few (mostly male) players acting as heroes and idols by performing to win, at all costs, for a majority of idle spectators - then the UAB will get their increase with no strings attached.

But if students figure that the general fun and fitness for the community is more important than the needs of professional teams for trained athletes, then the UAB will be forced to change its philosophy.

The figures show the current philosophy: there is plenty of money for spectator sports, especially men's, and little that directly benefits the university community. Unless action is taken to promote, organize and develop recreational programs at the U of A, the UAB will be seen as promoting elitist sports, mostly for men, without democratic input from the people who pay the bills. It just may be that students do want to pay for a parroting of the big-league systems.

But they must be given a chance to decide.

the Gateway

by Wes Oginski

In December, the University Athletics Board (UAB) will have the third reading of a constitutional change that would allow up to a 15 percent increase per year in UAB fees. The full time student UAB fee is now

\$27.00.

"We're not looking at that 15 percent to develop new programs," says Dixon Wood, UAB chairperson and president of Men's Athletics.

"Our objective is to maintain the quality of programming we already have," he says.

"I don't think it appropriate to have to go to a referendum."

Others disagree with Wood. Liz Lunney, SU v.p. academic, says that the UAB has a moral, if not ethical obligation to obtain student input on the issue of discretionary fee increases.

"Whether or not they have a moral if not ethical right to pass the fee motion without consulting students," Lunney says, "they legally do not have to ratify a change in their constitution."

"I just want the opportunity as a student to air these issues to a greater audience," she says.

Lunney says there are two inherent issues that should be discussed.

"My first question would be what is the UAB and what are their powers?" she explains. "Then the role of athletics: who receives the benefits and who should have to pay for them?"

Wood says that UAB is looking at actively changing their constitution.

"What should constitute membership, what powers and strengths should it (the UAB) have, where do its priorities lie?" are some of the issues a revised constitution will address, says Wood.

"The changes we are making," he adds, "are not to avoid accountability, but to rather more clearly define the role we play."

Hugh Hoyles, director of intramurals and campus recreation, and a UAB member, says the major reason behind the implementation of a 15 percent discretionary fee is inflation.

"I think it's more a question of process (that people are complaining about)," Hoyle says.

"I think the UAB has a right to set a fee," he adds.

Using an analogy of rising gas prices, Lunney says the students facing higher costs have the right to decide if they want to continue current use of consumption, increased or decreased.

"That's a service. (athletics)" she says, "and in my opinion services are optional."

Wood replies that the university supplies certain services, and somebody has to maintain them.

"Certain activities of an institution must be paid for and it's the responsibility of all the students," he says.



Gateway Informal Survey

Do you support the UAB's (University Athletic Board) motion to raise fees up to 15 percent per year without obtaining student input?

YES NO faculty: _____

Watch for Gateway ballot boxes, or drop off ballots at Rm. 282 SUB

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