

CROSS-CANADA BRIEFS

B.C. has too many academics, not enough skills training

BY STU CLARK

TORONTO (CUP) — A B.C. government report that suggests too much emphasis is placed on academic education at the expense of skills training is shortsighted and simplistic, according to a University of Victoria vice-president.

The report, which is titled "Training for What?", says that B.C. is graduating too many people with academic degrees and not enough with applied skills for a changing work force.

John Schofield, associate vice-president of academics at UVIC, says that the report doesn't look at the long-term advantages of an academic education.

"I don't think we should overlook the advantages of broad-based liberal education programs as these provide many of the sorts of skills that the report itself says students will need for the 21st century," said Schofield.

"There is a need for a balance, I think, between applied for-the-job training, and the more general education, which is not by any means irrelevant.

"You need to equip people for tomorrow as well as today. You need to equip them with the capacity to think clearly and flexibly so they can adjust to the work place as it evolves in the future, particularly if the work-place skills they have acquired become obsolete."

Shawn Robbins, director of communications for B.C.'s education ministry, says the report backs up the governments approach to education.

"[The report] reinforces many of the things we have been saying and working towards over the last couple of years," said Robbins.

Robbins says only 35 percent of B.C. high school students go on to post-secondary education. He says that the government has to do more to train the other 65 per cent for the work force.

The report points out that enrolment in degree programs has increased by 26,000 over the last 10 years, while the number of people in vocational programs has only increased by 6,400.

He says the report should be used to look at the way high schools in the province operate.

"What we heard from students, parents, and business, is that you have to look at the relevance of the curriculum that you are offering — is it focused on both the provision of knowledge, and some skills?"

"We have to look at the school as a place where we can prepare students for a range of choices."

Robbins doesn't think the report should be used to change the way universities operate.

"We're not suggesting what universities should or shouldn't be."

But Schofield is worried that government and business are unaware of what universities do.

"I'm not altogether sure that the business and labour group that prepared this report is fully aware of all that is going on in universities these days," said Schofield.

He says that universities have done a great deal over the last few years to prepare students for the job market.

"Co-op education programs have been growing rapidly for the last 20 years. These are just the sort of programs that the report is calling for."

CFS calls for On-to-Ottawa trek

BY LAUREL FORTIN

OTTAWA (CUP) — Taking a cue from labour history, Canada's largest student group is organizing an On-to-Ottawa trek for next May.

The Canadian Federation of Students (CFS) resolved during its annual general meeting that its member schools will cooperate with other community and campus organizations to pressure all levels of government to commit to a fully-accessible, high-quality, publicly-funded education system.

The On-to-Ottawa Trek will attempt to mobilize the government to consult Canadians about how they want their institutions constructed. "We have a responsibility as students that a lot of people don't have," said Michael Temelini, a McGill University graduate student representative on the CFS national executive.

"We have the means, the time and the infrastructure," to develop a comprehensive plan for government social policy. Temelini sees it as the "duty of our generation" to ensure a strong future for Canada. For the CFS, that means protecting education.

The On-to-Ottawa Trek will be held in the spirit of the 1935 trek during which tens-of-thousands of Canadians made their way to Ottawa to express their public objectives.

Plans for the event will be specified in the coming months. The recent meeting of representatives from across the country also resulted in a decision to circulate petitions condemning the Red Cross for its donor health assessment questionnaire. The questionnaire is considered homophobic, as it suggests that HIV is transmitted exclusively through male homosexual practices.

The petition will demand the Red Cross change the question to reflect that HIV transmission is based in sexual practice rather than sexual orientation.

Killam Library to get \$1.4M facelift

BY DANIEL CLARK

"Is the Killam suffocating us?"

The response: "Probably," said William Lord, director of Physical Plant and Planning. "We've been aware of the problem for years."

He added that the problem has always been a lack of funds and that something else was always more urgent and needed to be done immediately.

Each year the university receives \$1.4 million from the Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission (MPHEC), which was followed up this year by an \$800,000 Federal Infrastructure grant.

All of this money is earmarked for upgrades.

"We are not allowed to use it towards anything operational," said Lord.

From the federal grant, \$200,000 has already gone to funding the new field.

"Ten million over the last few years has gone into the Tupper Links, and that takes a huge bite out of our budget," said Lord. Four of the \$10 million went to upgrading the Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning system (HVAC).

Lord said the Killam money is scheduled to go into three areas. The building's lighting will be replaced and the new lights will be much more energy efficient, and produce very little heat.

"That's the first step," said Lord, "but it will also save us \$100,000 annually in reduced electricity costs."

Repairs will also be made to the Killam's HVAC system.

"Killam's problems lie in two areas," said Lord. "One, the areas which need air aren't getting it, and two, the building's outtake and intake vents are very close to each other. Very often the same air which came out will go back in."

Lord added that the courtyard

of the Killam will be turned into an atrium. There are plans for a coffee stand plus some seating to be placed in the area.

"Money on this project is very tight," said Lord. "We might not be able to finish the atrium, but it is something we really want to do, and at the very least we will start it."

When asked about the disruption, Mr. Lord explained that most of the work will be going on behind the scenes.

"We will do everything we can to minimize the disruption. Most of the very disruptive work is

planned for the times that the library is the least busy. But this is a big project, and there will be some disruption. The worst will be when we have to turn off the ventilation system."

The project is scheduled to be finished in September, 1996. The first test stages (seeing how well the new lighting works, etc.) will begin either this week or next.

"The building is very miserable, it's depressing. When we're done we hope it will be a place where students will want to go," he concluded.

Classes will never be full again

BY JEFF RICHARD

Many students have tried registering for class that are full. A few students have taken the initiative and found a solution around the administrative red tape.

"I'm morally casual," said one student who wished to remain anonymous. "I pay \$4,000 to go to this university, and if I want to take a class then I should be able to, no matter what."

What is the solution? A simple stroke of the pen. Instead of the old method of searching for, and pleading with professors to let them into a class, students are signing the forms themselves.

"I don't feel that I'm doing anything wrong, I just make sure that I get to take the classes I want," said the student. "It's a lot easier [signing yourself in] and you're guaranteed to get in the class."

Many students have said that this has been going on for years and that doing it is "too easy."

"Yes, we know about it," said Gudrun Curri, the Dalhousie University Registrar. "I would love to change it. There are lots of pitfalls left over from the last twenty years."

She said that she has been trying to change things from the moment she got to Dalhousie.

"We carefully control everything right up until the first day and then there seem to be no limits," said Curri.

The registrar made it clear that the bottom line is that the onus is on the student to do the right thing and if a student is caught with a forged class selection sheet, they will be charged.

Acadia university enters computer business

WOLFVILLE, N.S. (CUP) — When new students register for Acadia University next year, they may receive more than a student card and a class schedule — they may be given a computer and software.

The university is developing a plan that would see all students pay up to \$900 in an additional information technology fee, in return for a notebook computer and software.

Dr. Tom Regan, Acadia's dean of arts, says the plan is modeled after programs already in place at several American universities.

"We are trying to look at ways of extending our computer network so that all students and faculty have access (to Acadia's computer network)," said Regan.

Regan and three other members of the university's information resources committee joined delegations from Queen's University and the University of Ottawa to look at a program in place at Crookston College in Minnesota.

"The educational aspects of what is happening at Crookston was exciting," Regan said.

Regan says the proposal would provide equal access for all students to "Acadia's electronic cam-

pus" and increase the competency of students and faculty in the use of information technology, as well as make students familiar with "state-of-the-art hardware and software."

But notebook computers don't come cheap. Regan admits the plan could cost students up to \$900.

Acadia's student council president Julia Carrol says that the proposal is by no means a done deal. She recognizes that some students are concerned about the cost of the proposal and suggests that a student plebiscite on the idea might be in order.

Carrol says students should set up their own committee to look at the proposal and offer alternatives.

Regan doesn't think that the project's price tag will be a problem.

"The university is going to have to raise tuition anyways," he said. "With this plan, we would be able to show students added value for the increase in tuition fees."

The proposal recommends that the notebooks be phased in over time. It is expected that the first phase will begin in September but there has been no final decision as to when it will begin or which faculty will be the first to have the notebooks.