

Students fight fee increase

by Sue Ann

At the NSCAD Board of Governors' meeting on Wednesday, September 29, College President Garry Neill Kennedy moved to defer for a month any decision on his proposal to impose differential fees for International Students. Kennedy based his decision to delay the vote on the student protest which erupted after he announced his proposal. Kennedy suggested that the extra month would allow for some student input into the decision.

The Students' Union (SUNSCAD) president, Brian Perkins, one of the students who sits on the Board of Governors, presented the Board with a heavily researched 11 page brief compiled by SUNSCAD. He requested that the Board study the facts presented in the brief before they made any decision on the matter.

"The Administration was presenting this decision as if NSCAD was an Ivory Tower." SUNSCAD's V.P. external, John Colville, told the Gazette. "NSCAD would have been the first in Nova Scotia to have imposed such regressive fees. This act would have ramifications affecting the entire province, and thus, indirectly, the rest of Canada. When we make such decisions, we are going to have to be responsible enough to study all aspects of the matter - both how they will affect us and also how they will affect the outside."

"Our job now is to inform the students of the facts related to the issue," said Perkins. "A lot of people get pretty emotional over

this. We're hoping they will analyze the facts and listen to their reason instead of their emotions. Hell, it doesn't take too much common sense to realize that students aren't the 'foreigners' who are really ripping off Canada."

SUNSCAD's brief made the following observation "From all indications, the implication of differential fees will bring negligible financial results for government. For instance, even if tuition fees were **tripled** for all visa students in Canada (5% of total enrollment) the savings for the provincial and federal governments would only amount to .45% and .55% in their respective shares of the total institutional costs. One half of one percent.

"This meager saving seems like so much window dressing, especially when compared with the significant tax breaks given to international corporations, whose percentage of profits continue to rise."

Student leaders are now trying to wage an information campaign to get the facts out. They hope to call a general meeting next week to get a student consensus on the matter.

"This is just exploiting the Canadian Nationalist sentiment that's being felt around NSCAD," said one student. "It's just like those Chevrolet commercials that say, 'Hey Canda! Look what Chevy's got for you! I mean, look, you want to know what the real 'international' problem is around here? It's that you're forced to look at art always from the New York point of view. We don't see any

Canadian art unless it's centered around New York art theories. It's not a problem of a lot of Americans going to a Canadian art school, it's a problem of a lot of people, Canadian, American, and European going to two New York art schools in Canada."

Student leaders have reacted angrily to the administrations assertion that NSCAD's financial problem is a "problem of student fee income."

"That's a myth that they're trying to spread," said Colville. "We already have one of the highest tuitions in Canada. Are they next going to say that since a majority of NSCAD's budget goes for salaries that would mean that NSCAD has a 'faculty salary problem'? Would they then conclude that the solution would be to cut by half the salaries of any staff who come to the College from outside Canada?"

Over 3/4 of NSCAD's faculty have a country of origin other than Canada.

Other students pointed out that it would be naive to think that such measures would give any benefits

to Canadian students, either in increased accessibility or lower tuition. "The administration themselves said that they didn't expect any decrease in the number of international students," said Perkins, "and you notice that they waited until they raised everybody's fees before they announced this one."

Student leaders have decided to make differential fees a major issue in building up to National Student Day. Mutual support and exchange of information is happening between SUNSCAD and Students' Unions from across Canada.

"Our contacts in the Atlantic Federation of Students and the National Union of Students, along with Dal's contacts in the Canadian University Press, is helping us to get advice and support from across the country," said Don Soucy, SUNSCAD's Fine Arts' Rep. "As a matter of fact, if we can get as good a commitment of solidarity with our student body as we have from places like the University of Manitoba and the Nova Scotia Agricultural College, then the Board of Governors will have to listen."



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