

# New program called 'Mickey Mouse' over content

BY SHELLEY ROBINSON

As far as mice go, at least one student in a new program is calling his degree more Mickey than Mighty.

The Masters in Information Technology Education (MITE), 'mighty' for short, is one of two new programs offered in partnership with the Information Technology Institute (ITI), a for-profit education company. The other is a Master's in Business Administration in Information Technology (MBAIT).

The education program aims to train students with education backgrounds how to teach information technology at other schools like ITI.

But some say the educational components aren't as rigorous as they should be. They say Dal administrators may have rushed the program's approval for fear they'd lose the chance to make money if ITI shopped the program around to other universities.

Tuition for the 10 month program is \$28,600.

The university and ITI say every new program has kinks, but they stand behind the new degree.

The program is being run through Henson College, Dalhousie's continuing education affiliate, but because Henson doesn't have degree-granting capabilities, the actual diplomas are granted through the faculty of graduate studies.

One MITE student, who asked to be kept anonymous, says the program just isn't worth the extra \$7000 that separates his program from ITI's basic information technology program.

"If I knew everything I know now," he said. "I probably would have just done the ITI program."

He says Dal's part of the program doesn't have any practical application in teaching information technology, and that's why his classmates have labelled the program the MM (Mickey Mouse) MITE.

"Some of the courses we've had from the Henson component... if you scratch the surface there's not very much substance."

Susan Holmes, one of the program's administrators, disagrees.

She says the program was designed as the place "where the rubber meets the road" and gives theoretical concepts of adult education practical applications.

"The students have had to put up with the glitches but... in a way it's been an experience of what they'll face as facilitators."

The MITE program was first offered as a certificate program in adult education of information technology, and approved as a Master's after students had already started the program.

But the same MITE student says even before it was passed by the university senate he knew he'd get a degree.

"We were told come hell or high water we would get a Master's."

The student also says they were told a big Atlantic university with an education department and a university in Ontario were both interested.

Gerard McInnis, chief

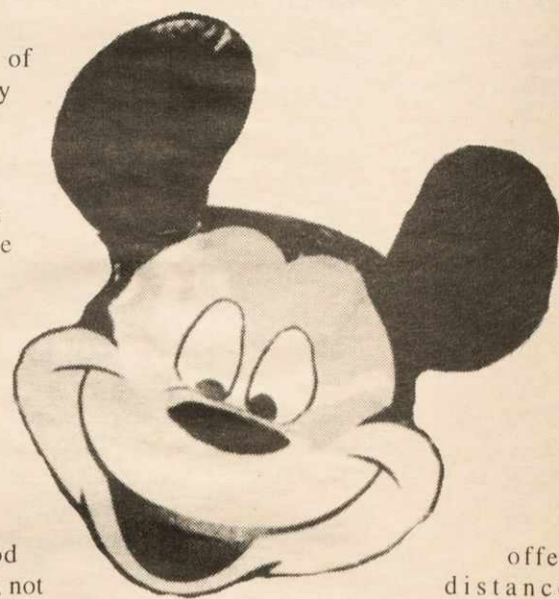
financial officer of ITI confirms they had other offers on the table.

Henson College's Susan Holmes says she heard it too.

But she says Senate approved the program because it was a good program that met a need and had a good corporate sponsor, not because the university was worried they'd lose out on a chance for some cash.

"They may have moved faster than they might in other cases but I don't think they made a decision that was any different," she said.

ITI's McInnis says as ITI looks to expand into other parts of Canada and the US there will be both a need for more MITE graduates and a market for Dal to



offer distance MITE programs. McInnis also confirmed that ITI and Dal are in "very preliminary discussions" about bringing parts of ITI's program into undergraduate degrees.

He says though that for now the focus is on the two programs ITI and Dal already share.

"The focus today is to get these two programs rolled out nationally."

# Government plans to regulate private career colleges

BY ANDREW SIMPSON

When Nova Scotia's Career Academy School of Aviation shut down last August its students had no warning.

But now, the 6,500 students attending private career colleges in Nova Scotia may be protected by a government initiative to regulate their schools.

Currently before the Legislature, a new act will require companies to provide students with detailed upfront information about courses, tuition, job prospects, and the loan default rate of graduates.

It will also establish an insurance fund to bail out students at any school that folds, while imposing industry-wide operating standards.

Education minister Robbie Harrison says business failures like the School of Aviation hurt the

credibility of the entire industry, which is why the new regulations are being welcomed by both students and colleges.

"Right now to register a company you need only have a fire-marshall's plan, a \$50,000 bond and a curriculum — very few other standards exist... and [the industry] is saying that this isn't good for business," he said.

He also says the act will ensure high quality, accessible education while protecting and informing consumers.

The act includes a train-out fund which is a guarantee that students enrolled in a program can finish it even if the college itself goes belly-up. The fund will be paid through college profits and a small surcharge on tuition.

Alanda Jefferies is enrolled in a 40-week office assistant's program that is costing her about \$6,800. She

says the legislation sounds like a good idea for a couple of reasons.

"Anybody would want to make sure they get their degree after paying all that money," she said.

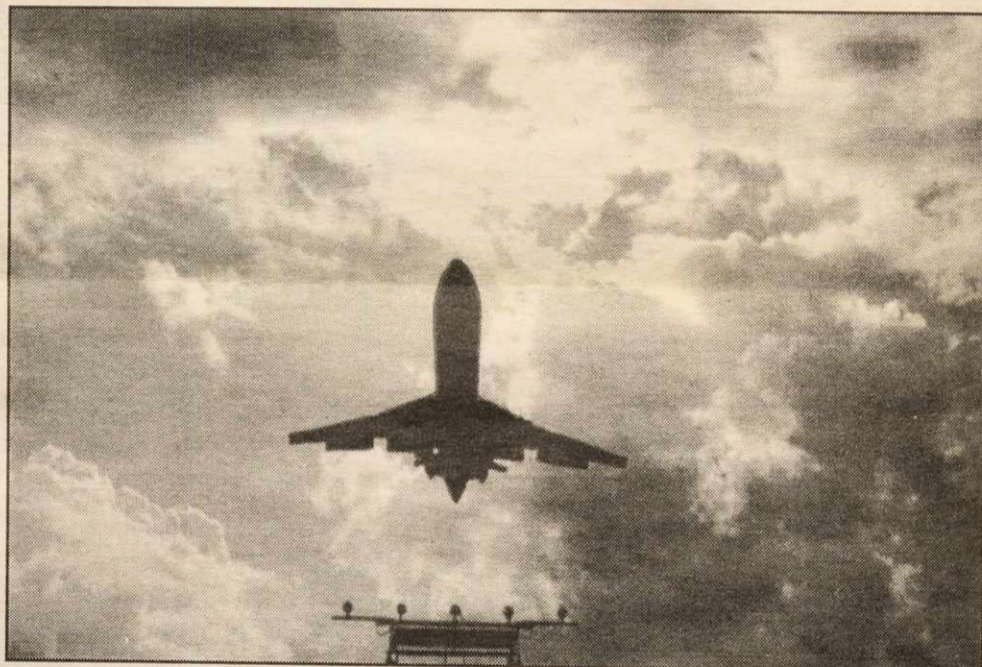
Jefferies says she's also interested in being able to find out actual rates of employment after a course.

"They tell you the percentage of people who get jobs, but... I would have liked to know how many people really get them."

Darren Tobin is taking an 18-month information technology course that costs about \$13,500.

"It's great news," he said. "Schools should give students a better understanding of what each course entails... and what they cost."

Work on the new legislation began 14 months ago, well before the Newfoundland-based Career



Academy closed its 14 campuses — including the School of Aviation — and Minister Harrison says he hopes the legislation will make future shutdowns less likely.

"We can't possibly prevent every business failure," he said. "[But] there will be a much more rigorous application process to get into the business in the first place, and a more rigorous and disciplined approach to staying in business."

Judy Smith is the executive director of the Association of

Private Trainers and Career Colleges of Nova Scotia. She says that while some concerns about the act have been raised, for the most part, the colleges support the new legislation.

"The industry has changed, therefore what regulates us must change. It will create confidence in the industry," she said. "[And] that is good for business."

"It will protect those schools that are top-notch... and eliminate those that may not be operating with high standards."

**THIS SPACE FOR RENT**

**FLASH YOUR STUDENT ID AND GET 15% OFF**

1701 BARRINGTON 429-PTA  
6249 QUINPOOL 4298-MOM

**GOOD QUESTION.**

**SAT NIGHT 10PM-CLOSE**

**PLUS! Check out our OPEN MIC NIGHT with Johnny Theodore and the Allstar Band Every Friday night - 9:30pm-close**

**THE PLACE TO BE 7 DAYS A WEEK.**  
5686 Spring Garden Road, Halifax NS (902) 423-6766