

cross-canada briefs

Fail-out rates lower in residence

BY CHAD LUFF

ST. JOHN'S, Nfld. (CUP) — Many people view life in a university residence as a never ending orgy of toga parties and drinking games leading to late nights leaning over a toilet bowl while finding religion.

But researchers at Memorial University could soon replace that image with one of late-night study sessions and high grades.

A study by the university's department of student services shows students living in residence are 15 per cent less likely to drop out of university over a two year period than those living in apartments, and 10 per cent less likely than those still living at home.

Brian Johnston, Memorial's director of student housing, credits many of the services, such as house computers, academic advisors and house tutors for the success of residence students.

Dave Piercy, a student and academic advisor in Burke house, a co-ed residence, is a firm believer in the benefits of residence life.

"A lot of the residents have already gone through their first year and know exactly what it feels like to be shoved into this sort of environment from high school to university," Piercy said, adding the information and peer support provided to first year students is invaluable.

Universities and colleges to team up

BY RACHEL FUREY

OTTAWA (CUP) — The line between Ontario's universities and colleges is starting to blur with a series of joint programs for students aimed at combining elements from each type of institution.

The recently announced joint projects mark the first time universities and colleges are cooperating at such a scale at the provincial level to offer combined degrees. While universities have traditionally focused on providing analytical skills, colleges are oriented more towards job skills.

Tim Easley, College-University Consortium Council co-chair and president of Lambton College in Sarnia, says the government and the council suspect money and time is being wasted in the present system. When students switch from one type of school to another and aren't able to transfer their credits, they may end up repeating certain courses.

However, Vicky Smallman, spokesperson for the Canadian Federation of Students, says that if the current trend continues, academic priorities will be set by the needs of the marketplace rather than society's needs.

"Universities and colleges may not support other programs that meet the needs of society like community development and social work," said Smallman.

Aboriginal leader now hero of partition movement

BY M-J MILLOY

MONTREAL (CUP) — Quebec cannot expect to separate and take the Cree Nation with it.

That was the unequivocal message the Grand Chief of the James Bay Cree, Matthew Coon Come, gave this week to an enthusiastic crowd of over two hundred at a panel discussion on Quebec's borders after separation.

"No other people but the Cree will decide our future affiliation. We will not be passed from owner to owner like cattle in a field," he said.

The Cree Nation has always been self-governing, and the days are gone when Cree territory could be assigned to one or other provincial power without their consent, Coon Come said.

"In 1763, in 1898, this land was transferred with the stroke of the pen, without our knowledge," said Coon Come. "When I told my father-in-law that his hunting territory was transferred by the King, he said to me 'But how, he has never been to this land?'"

"Those things will never happen again."

This was not the first time that Coon Come has made such strong statements — he's been saying exactly the same thing since the Cree held their own referendum on their future, just days before the last provincial vote on sovereignty. Over 95% of Cree voted to remain in Canada in the event of a "yes" vote in the Quebec referendum.

Coon Come has gone from being a relatively obscure aboriginal leader to a hero among many in the partition movement for his clear and unequivocal stance against the sovereigntist government of Lucien Bouchard.

Howe many have left?

BY LAURA RYAN AND STEPHANIE PIERI

A string of vacated residence leadership positions at Howe Hall has led to amendments to the residence's constitution.

The co-ed residence has experienced an unprecedented number of withdrawals from people working on residence council and as resident assistants for the 1996/97 year.

Howe started the school year with problems when an election had to be called in September to fill four of the thirteen residence council positions that became vacant over the summer. To date, one-third of Howe Hall's residence and house council positions have been abandoned. During the first term, the position of president was held by two different students, Matt Ringer and Jeff LeGrow. Both men stepped down citing academic reasons.

In addition to the presidential vacancies, residence coordinator Bob Jones has left on an indefinite leave of absence for "personal reasons."

"I would rather someone leave than...not admit that they had a problem with someone," said Andrew Ferns, current president of Howe Hall. "[The reason] why Matt left — one or the other

(council duties or academics) is going to suffer."

Time management is one of the topics covered in the training sessions mandatory for the residence council. The course suggests that the key to success is balancing one's time between academics and council commitments.

While Ferns was shocked by the accumulated number of resignations, he wasn't concerned about the future of the residence council.

"One of the good things about Howe is the fact that whether someone leaves or not, we usually find really good people to take over," he said.

All four vacant positions were quickly filled in the fall with general elections. As well, the houses which experienced vacancies in their individual councils acted quickly to fill the abandoned positions, or redistributed responsibility among the remaining council members.

The responsibilities of residence coordinator are now being shared by Terry Gallivan, associate director of Residence Life, and Chuck Maxner and Nancy MacConnell-Maxner. These duties include overseeing the activities of the resident assistants (RAs).

MacConnell-Maxner held a position at the front desk of Howe

Hall last year and is currently the administrative secretary. Both the Maxners are Dalhousie graduates and have worked as residence assistants at Howe and Shirreff Halls.

Three of the thirteen resident assistant positions have been vacated this year. Studley lost Cameron Jones while Smith House lost Andy Melvin and Catriona MacFarlane.

MacConnell-Maxner thought that these losses, coupled with those on residence council, were "totally bizarre." While she is not critical of the RA selection process, she will be placing greater emphasis on the dedication of the RAs.

"We are asking for a higher degree of commitment on the part of those seeking positions," said MacConnell-Maxner.

Two significant amendments have been made to the Howe Hall constitution in response to the difficulties encountered this year. These amendments will ensure problems of people quitting are counteracted in the future. First, the position of Howe Hall treasurer has been changed from an elected position to that of an appointed one. Second, on abandonment of the position of president, the vice-president will automatically assume the position.

Ottawa examines loan levels

ST. JOHN'S, Nfld. (CUP) — Four months after nine of Canada's premiers called on Ottawa to increase student aid, plans for raising federal lending limits are still inconclusive.

The investigation of student aid levels started last September after the First Minister's conference in Alberta. At that conference the premiers acknowledged student aid levels have not increased to meet the rising costs of postsecondary education.

But questions have been raised about the value of raising student loan limits across the board.

Gerry Godsoe, policy group manager with Canada Student Loans, says the agency is "examining the [students'] repayment obligation" in light of the prospect of amassing giant debts in the future.

"We're asking ourselves, 'Does one loan limit for all students make sense?'" Godsoe said. "The loan maximum only affects a small minority. Only a small percentage of students, less than a quarter, are at the full level."

However, according to the Canadian Federation of Students, such increases are a necessity to help students survive the economic struggles of postsecondary education.

Dale Kirby, Newfoundland's executive representative to the federation, said there is no other option.

"What's the alternative?" Kirby asked. "Less people having access to education?"

Kirby agrees, however, that across-the-board increases will only result in loading students with more debt.

"The real solution is a new structure on grants and a cap on the amount you can borrow," he said. "You're not going to solve

anything by just giving people another \$20,000 debt."

According to Godsoe, the federal government has already introduced a series of special opportunity grants in the last few years covering students with permanent disabilities, part-time students and women pursuing doctorates in certain fields.

The government is also looking at extending the grant system as part of a proposal submitted to them by the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada on January 20. He said it is too early to speculate what the result will be, however.

Differential limits for students with dependents is another option, allowing them to borrow more. Some provinces such as Ontario already have these differential limits in place. Kirby agrees that funding should be provided to those with greater financial demands.

"I agree with more funding," Kirby said, "for all students with higher needs like student parents."

However, Kirby said that focusing more attention on grants rather than on the present loan system would be a "better way to go."

7.6%

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applicants from lower income brackets are being discouraged by high tuition fees from applying.

Adams attempted to bring the law and medical schools' concerns into the broader picture.

"When a nationally-recognized law school sees a cut in applicants we have to take a step back and look at how tuition increases are affecting other programs [at Dal]," he said.

Senator Mike Bradfield raised concerns about not only tuition increases, but the proposed 0.9 per cent cut to departmental budgets. He suggested that Dalhousie is in a crisis that it is failing to recognize. Bradfield compared the gradual cutting of departmental budgets to a frog in a pot.

"If you put a frog in hot water it will jump out. If you put a frog in cold water, it will swim

around. But if you slowly turn the heat up, the frog will continue to swim around and will eventually die.

"[At Dal] the heat is constantly being turned up and we say, 'Oh, that's only one degree.' I look at my department today and I used to have a staff of 25 and now I have a staff of 15 with a lot more students to teach."

Senator Norman Pereira said that he was satisfied with the BAC XI report.

"BAC's proposal is reasonable," Pereira said. "A balance has been struck by BAC and it is painful, but reasonable because I can't think of another way it could have been done."

University President Tom Traves said that he would take people's comments and concerns into account when he receives the final budget proposal.

"No one runs forward to say that they will absorb all the cuts, so everyone has to share," Traves said.

"At the end of the day we are going to have to have those balances and tradeoffs."