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Dalhousie ties for last place in efficiency study Data used to measure schools misleading, Dal registrar says

BY AMANDA LABONTE

ST. JOHN'S (CUP) — A recent *National Post* article could give Canadians an incorrect impression about three Canadian universities, including Dalhousie, say members of the schools.

The Mar. 12 article reported on a study, conducted by two University of Alberta professors, that measured the efficiency of 45 Canadian schools after grading them in nine categories.

The three universities at the bottom of the list are Dalhousie, Memorial University of Newfoundland, and Laurentian University in Sudbury.

The *Post* reported that while most Canadian universities operate at "uniformly high levels of efficiency", the three schools lagged

significantly behind the national average.

Melville McMillan, one of the report's authors, says efficiency was measured by comparing a university's output — the number of students who graduate in four years and the number of grants and research dollars faculty bring in — with its input — the resources put into running the university.

But Gudrun Curri, Dalhousie's registrar, says the study is misleading, especially from a student's perspective. She says the study was done on a purely economic level and some major

considerations for students were left out.

"The study shows a low

"[Readers] remember the headline — there was a story in the *National Post* about inefficient universities. That's what you remember."

student to faculty ratio. This is good for students, but in an economic perspective this is bad. Students

need to know what the basis of the study is and what is [the study's definition of] efficiency."

Memorial economics professor Wade Locke agrees.

Locke says the *Post* article could

give readers the wrong idea about the schools.

"People reading that story

could get the impression that [the universities] are somehow wasting resources and that would not necessarily be a legitimate inference to draw from that particular story."

He says the real issue is how to define the output of a post-secondary institute. Until that is done he says it's very difficult to measure efficiency.

"The university may have broader social goals that it's trying

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Changes to sexual harassment policy contested

Removal of independent body could lead to more problems, critics say

BY KATIE TINKER

An attempt to make Dalhousie's sexual harassment policy more user friendly has some worried the revisions merely substitute one set of problems with another.

Lynn McIntyre, dean of health professions, says the old policy was inefficient, outdated and stifled complaints.

"[It] required the person making the complaint to repeatedly tell their story," she said. "People were discouraged... because it was such a long, onerous procedure."

Under the old policy, a person wishing to make a formal complaint would meet with an independent panel that would review the situation and decide if discipline was required. If so, the case would then be passed on to whatever administrative head had authority over the person being complained about.

The revised policy removes

the independent hearing stage altogether.

Now, if someone wishes to file a formal complaint, the case goes directly to the administrative head.

But Jennifer Bankier, a law professor, says removing the independent hearing places too much power in the hands of the administrative head, who may not

"You really need some independent party to look at the issue so that it doesn't simply get swept under the rug. Now, the only independent mechanism we had has been eliminated."

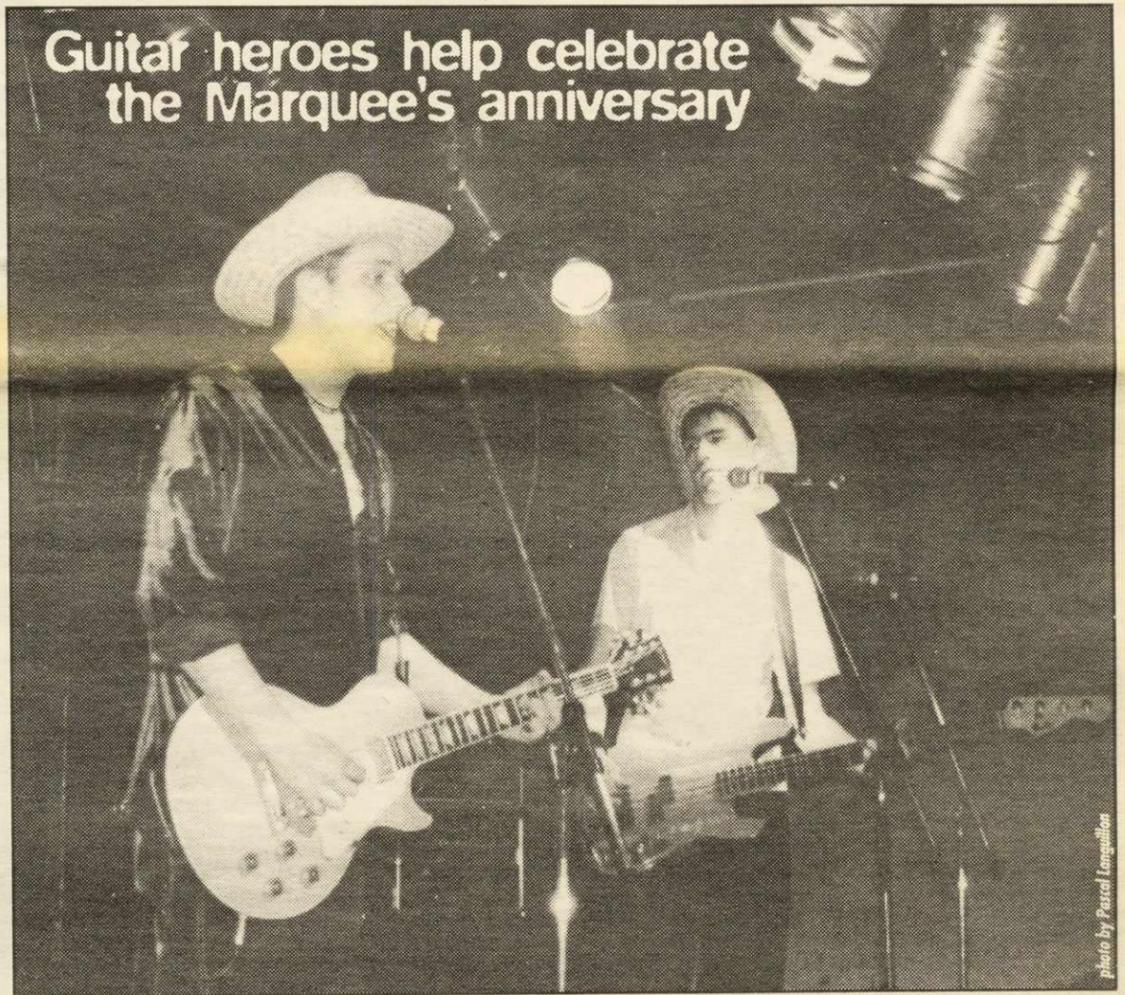
fully understand the issue or feel like dealing with it.

"Often the [person handling the complaint] doesn't get the issue," she said.

"There was one famous case, where the dean was of the old school, and he and the [accused] simply agreed that there was no problem. The complainant and the sexual harassment officer thought there was a problem, but they couldn't do anything about it."

Bankier says even though the independent panel didn't have the power to make any final decisions, it still presented a neutral

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Guitar heroes help celebrate the Marquee's anniversary

photo by Pascal Langlois

New students bolt early Registrar sees need to examine how first years are treated

BY AMY DURANT

The first eight weeks of university has a disproportionately high number of first-year dropouts.

In 1998, approximately 48 first-year students dropped out before Dec. 1. 20 of those were in the faculty of arts and social sciences — the program with the highest dropout level. In 1997, 52 first year students dropped out within the same period.

The dropout figures for the rest of the year are unavailable, but Dalhousie registrar Gudrun Curri said, in a presentation to the Senate, that they're relatively low.

Curri says the numbers aren't alarming, but do indicate how important a student's first eight

weeks in school really are. As a result, she says Dal needs to re-examine how first year students are greeted and whether or not the transition from high school to first year is made easy for them.

"We should be looking at what the professors are saying to these students," she said. "People are coming in full of confidence because they had relatively high grades in high school... if the professors are saying during the first few weeks, 'half of you won't be here by Christmas or next year'... they become scared."

Professor David Sutherland is a history professor who teaches some first-year classes. He says he loses approximately 20 percent of his students within the first few

weeks of classes, but doesn't know if these people necessarily drop out of school.

"I'd like to know more about why people are dropping out," he said. "But there's no articulation of why. Students don't have to come and tell us that they're leaving, they just leave."

While Dalhousie used to have withdrawing students fill out an exit survey, this procedure has been discontinued.

Curri says the main reason students leave is a combination of financial and personal reasons.

In the university's highest academic body, the Senate, Curri said that students most at risk of dropping out are those with the least developed career and study goals.