

Students swing back to the arts

By De-Anne FitzPatrick and
Toby Sanger

ROLL OVER CALCULUS. SAY goodby to statistical mechanics. The arts revival is back in full force at Dalhousie and the administration isn't sure what to do about it.

First year undergraduates are in the forefront of a nation-wide swing back to arts and away from the sciences. Applications for first year arts degrees increased by 17.5 per cent to 813 over last year while applications for enrolment in sciences dropped by 12.5 per cent to 881.

Courses such as "the Gothic Novel", "Intro to Literature", "Intro to Philosophy", "Death and the Mind" and "Fictions of Development" are already full.

Students in second and third year arts programs who have had the luxury of registering late for all their favourite courses are now agonizing over enrolling in leftover courses.

Until this fall the general rule in the faculty of arts and sciences has been that 40 per cent of the students were in arts and 60 per cent in sciences, says Dr. Donald Betts, dean of the faculty. Betts says has been the case "since before his time."

Betts attributed the drastic change in part to the new, stricter math prerequisites Dalhousie requires for science applicants. This shift back to arts is part of a national trend, although exact figures for many other universities are not yet available.

One new student says many people are returning to university in arts because there are few jobs and little else to do. "It's better than being unemployed."

Other students entering first year arts were influenced by media reports last year about employers looking for students with the wide and more flexible range of education many feel an arts education provides. "There isn't a market for science graduates" says Heather Sutherland.

Collin Baird, a first year arts student, says "There's one thing on people's minds when they're leaving high school: a lot of people think about what type of job they'd like to get. They see a B.Sc. as a very specific degree — it won't afford them flexibility in the future. . . (it) scares them. They want something general."

Baird says employers are also looking for flexibility. "employers think they can mold arts graduates" in a way that they can't science students.

Don Lawrence, manager of the Canadian Employment Centre at Dalhousie, says in past years there has been an "inadequate flow of information being fed through counselling services that is often some years out of date. . . students could be trained for non-existent jobs."

He thinks both employees and employers have learnt from the experiences of past years. "Most employers agree it is best to have a workforce that is flexible to change in different technologies. Employers tend to look for more adaptable people."

"Employers in recent years have been looking for people

At Dalhousie, the number of undergraduate applications are up by only one per cent. Applications for arts, however, increased by 17.3 per cent, while the number of students who applied for science at Dalhousie dropped 12.5 per cent.

Applications for graduate school at Dalhousie are up by 10 per cent over last year, with acceptance at half that rate. Ten per cent more students want to get

into the law and medicine schools here, although acceptances have remained at last year's level.

Mount Saint Vincent saw a 5 per cent increase in the number of applications it received, 3800 in all. Aside from new programs in tourism and hospitality management, the largest increases were a surge in applications for education and public relations programs.

from a wider range of degree programs for their needs. By and large, students tend to screen themselves out of job markets more than employers do."

Alastair Sinclair, vice-president of academic and research, says people are starting to view education as a longer term process and entering B.A. programs with the intention of later enrolling in professional degree programs. This trend may mean the undergraduate degree is gradually replacing the high school diploma as the minimum level of education required for most jobs and for achievement of social respectability.

This desire for a more general undergraduate education makes the traditional split between the B.A. and B.Sc. degree programs unnecessarily restrictive. Sinclair admits the university hasn't looked at the implications of this

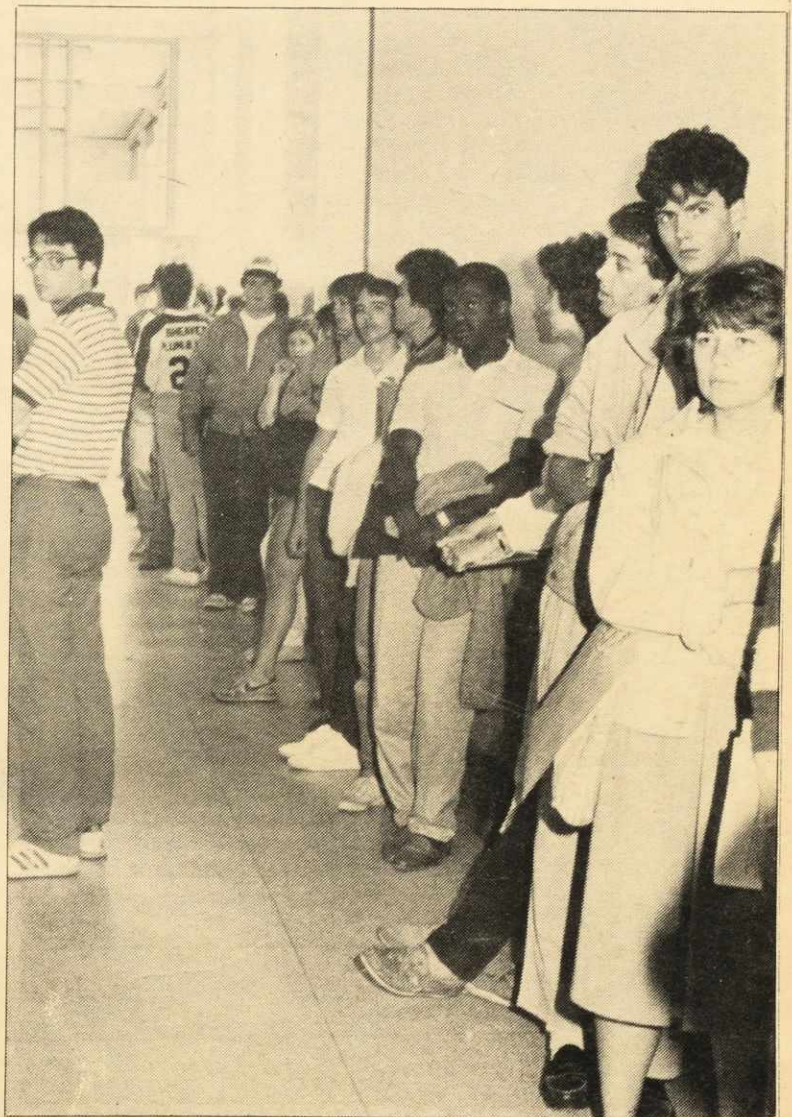
in any longer term planning but says "it is a fascinating question."

Last year's report of Nova Scotia's royal commission on post secondary education recommended universities adopt a first year core curriculum similar to the foundation year program at King's College.

Sinclair says there was substantial opposition to this proposal from faculty, not necessarily because they were opposed to the concept, but because the core curriculum recommended was too structured.

There would be administrative problems with the proposal, though. "It is difficult to get that degree of integration within the structure of the university," he says.

The trend in applications indicates students are willing to try and make the changes themselves.



New students lining up for "Death and the Mind." (File photo)

Day care proposal rejected

By Lois Corbett

THERE IS NO ROOM FOR more children at Dalhousie University.

A proposal for a fourth daycare facility on university property has been rejected by the administration despite an overwhelming need for more spaces for its staff's children, and a waiting list of over 200.

The Adhoc Daycare committee submitted its proposal to John Graham, vice-president of university services, early in the summer. Gwen Dawe, spokesperson for the committee, says while Graham recognizes the need for such a facility, he has told her group there is just no space.

The committee is not giving up, says Dawe, just because the university is putting more

emphasis on academic space requirements than providing much needed services for its staff.

"The need is the greatest for staff who have infants," says Dawe. "Infants need the highest staff to child ratio in day cares, and it is the most expensive. And there just aren't enough spaces for all of them."

Peter Green Hall, the University Children's Centre and the

Centre for Children's Studies provides some Dalhousie staff with care for their children while they work, but their waiting list in February had 242 children's names. The Adhoc Committee's proposal asked for a new facility for 80 children in the new women's residence on campus.

Scarcity of day care space is not unique to Dalhousie. Dr. Katie Cook, chair of the federal task force on day care, says over 80 per cent of children requiring day care facilities are cared for in private homes or unlicensed facilities. Operators of these facilities are usually people with little or no formal childcare training, and the Adhoc Daycare Committee says this means parents who are forced to use such facilities leave their children at risk everyday. Sometimes adequate day care is so scarce or so expensive that one of the parents, usually the mother, is forced to stay at home to look after children. Single parent families do not have that option.

"It is an emotional issue for any parent who is working, because she or he is always worrying about the care for their children," says Dawe. "If I hadn't had my parents, who were willing to look after my boy, I wouldn't have been able to come to work."

The Adhoc Day Care committee membership is based in the Tupper Medical Building, where

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Housing crunch hits Halifax

By Jamie Glasov

"YES, I GUESS YOU COULD call me a Dal student because I am registered for this academic year," says Amie Robisha, a first year student at Dalhousie. "The only problem is that, well, I don't have a place to live."

Robisha has been searching for a place to live since the beginning of August and there is still no light at the end of the hall. And she isn't the only one. Dozens of other students, despite their academic qualifications, also face the possibility of going home because of lack of housing.

As figures stand at the moment, more than half of Dalhousie students whose homes are outside of the Halifax metropolitan area are

having a difficult time finding a place to live while attending university. Moreover, many of the places that are available are usually far too expensive for the average university student.

The supply of university owned housing does not meet the demand for accommodation and the vacancy rate in the various private, commercial units is incredibly low. Dalhousie is always hit worse than any other university in the metro area by the annual housing crunch. Unfortunately, this year has not set a precedent. The Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation pegs

the current vacancy rate in the south end of Halifax at a little below one per cent. CMHA considers a generally acceptable rate at about five per cent.

"I'm pretty pessimistic, but I am not going to give up," says Greg Jeffries, a first year student at Dalhousie who is still looking for a place to live. "I'm living with some friends at the moment but I know that can't last forever. You know, I always thought that the main problem was to be accepted into university. Now I know better."

"What I don't understand is how the government can just stand by and watch young people be deprived of an education because there isn't a place for them to live. It's so damn stupid."

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