

# Maclean's ranking of law schools criticized

BY DAVID COCHRANE

OTTAWA (CUP) — Maclean's magazine has extended its controversial practice of ranking universities to Canada's law schools, and has once again met with criticism from those under inspection.

The October 6 issue of the national magazine ranks 16 law schools from best to worst in such areas as reputation, graduate satisfaction, entrance criteria, class size, and library expenses. Unlike its broader guide to universities, Maclean's does not provide an overall ranking of the best and worst law schools.

But just like the original university survey, the law school evaluations are being criticized by academics who say the magazine doesn't tell the whole story.

"I think they were working very much to a deadline and there are some things that clearly need some fine tuning," said Marilyn Pilkington, the dean of Osgoode Hall in Toronto.

Maclean's collected data from recent graduates, current members of the bar, and the law schools themselves in compiling the survey.

Osgoode Hall ranked at or near the bottom in all four categories judged by recent graduates. But when assessed by judges, lawyers and legal academics, it consistently placed among the top five schools. Pilkington says such stark contradictions highlight problems with Maclean's methodology.

"The survey just isn't fine-tuned to look at what law schools are doing or what they offer," she said.

Maclean's faced similar criticism in 1993 when it began its practice of ranking Canadian universities. The following year a number of universities refused to participate in the survey, accusing the magazine of shoddy research methods and an arbitrary ranking system some said was misleading. It wasn't until last year, after the ranking process was revamped, that all English language universities in Canada rejoined the survey.

Ann Dowsett Johnston, Maclean's assistant managing editor, says the magazine has updated its research methods over the years and points to the "grad report", where recent law school graduates evaluate the quality of their education, as one of the survey's strengths.

"How well were those who went through the experience pleased with what they received?" she said. "Students benefit more from looking at these raw indicators."

Dowsett Johnston says her magazine is providing a public service by evaluating law schools. She says that if students are expected to take on three more years of debt, the average length of a law program, then they should be provided with as much information as possible before picking a school.

But Juanita Westmoreland, the dean of the University of Windsor's law school, says Maclean's ignores the unique qualities of each school. Unlike its general university survey, which divides schools into particular categories, Maclean lumps all law schools into the same category, making no distinction between large and small schools.

"I think that a student is looking for the law school that fits their

objectives and I'm not sure that, looking through these [rankings], a student is going to find that information," said Westmoreland.

Windsor scored high in the "most innovative" and "leaders of tomorrow" categories, but the university ranked at the bottom of other categories, including median entering grade and median LSAT

score, because it refused to provide Maclean's with that information.

Westmoreland says it has long been the university's practice to keep that data confidential and the school even went as far as to buy an ad in the magazine to make that policy public. She says that academic success is only one of several factors examined when

screening potential students, and the Maclean's survey places too much emphasis on grades and not enough on life experience.

"I don't find her reaction surprising given how they handled the survey itself," said Dowsett Johnston. "It was extremely narrow-minded of Windsor not to release this information."

Maclean's will once again be releasing its general university guide later this fall. Dowsett Johnston says the magazine also plans to expand its post-secondary education rankings, suggesting business and medical schools could be examined in the future.

## McGill group to write alternative university budget

BY ANNA LIACHENKO

MONTREAL (CUP)—A group of McGill students, professors and administrative staff are banding together to write an alternative budget that will be presented to the school's governing body.

According to Anna Kruzynski, an executive member of McGill's graduate student union, the McGill

Alternative Budget Group has several goals it plans to incorporate in its alternative budget: increased public funding, lower tuition fees, and greater security and stability for university employees.

"[The] budget is a question of priorities," she said. "We want to generate a debate."

The group plans to present the

university's Board of Governors with a budgetary alternative for 1998-99.

In the wake of provincial cuts to the operating grants of Quebec universities, McGill University has been trying to make up the multi-million shortfall by cutting faculty, staff, and services, and by introducing new student service fees while increasing current ones.

Over the past four years at McGill, 420 administrative and staff positions have been eliminated, as well as over 40 library staff positions. A policy of replacing only one out of every three retiring professors will also soon be taking effect at the university. And students now pay up to \$140 in non-tuition service fees, fees which some students argue are a backdoor approach to increasing tuition.

Kruzynski says the idea for the alternative budget came after McGill president Bernard Shapiro issued a challenge to students — after some occupied his office last year to protest fee increases — to come up with an alternative.

Representatives of the group say they would like the budgetary process at McGill opened up, with more public input in the earlier stages of the budget's preparation.

"University administration has one perspective [but] creative ideas come from everywhere," said Tara Newell, president of the McGill student union and a member of the alternative budget group.

Undergraduates, graduates, professors, librarians, secretaries and others have joined the alternative budget group. No members of senior university management, however, have expressed an interest in taking part.

McGill isn't the first university where an alternative budget has surfaced.

In 1995, the graduate student union at the University of Toronto drafted an alternative budget, which called into question the university's assertion that it had no choice but to cut staff and services and increase student service fees. The union, in its budget, found that the university actually had enough money to expand, rather than to cut. Though financial consultants from several major corporations found the alternative budget sound, it was largely ignored by the university administration.

Kruzynski says she hopes, however, that the McGill group will have greater success with its alternative budget because of its broad base of representation.

## Recommendations

*continued from page 3...*

and destructive behaviour" on the parts of some candidates.

At the same time, Riorden lauded other candidates writing, "there are many persons within this organization who do incredible work."

Riorden did not choose to elaborate on which participants in last year's election she considered "mean-spirited" and which did "incredible work".

Adams was not without criticism. Although he describes the report as "well put together" and credits Riorden for her "valid" recommendations, he says that some of the report is just "a lot of rhetoric". However, he did add that the inclusion of

complaints received about the election process make the report more objective.

The main purpose of the CRO report is to assist the next CRO with election problems.

The CRO position for the 1997/98 election has not yet been filled. As a result of lack of applicants, the DSU has reopened nominations.

Riorden left this warning to the person who will fill her shoes for this year's DSU elections.

"The amount of flack you take is directly in relation to the quality of the ethics you employ and the strength at which you protest unconstitutional and mean-spirited behaviour."

**How much satisfaction has your GPA given you lately? Try focussing on something else.**

**Write for the Gazette. Meetings every Monday at 4:30pm room 312, SUB.**

Who are the



1701 Barrington Street (Corner of Prince Str.)

Graduating?

Berryhill Photography will be at Dalhousie for 2 days before the Christmas break.



Nov. 13, 14 Room 224 Dal S.U.B.



Berryhill Graduation Portraits Park Lane • Halifax

For details see S.U.B. display

Call 429-1344 to book your sitting.

Don't wait until it's too late.