

cross-canada briefs

Drop in applicants a mystery

BY SARAH SCHMIDT

TORONTO (CUP) — As the number of applications to Ontario universities continues to drop, those in the education sector can't seem to explain the trend.

According to preliminary data released by the Ontario University Application Centre, the number of high school students who have applied to Ontario universities for next September has dropped by 2.5 per cent from last year.

Northern universities in particular show a significant drop in applicants. Thunder Bay's Lakehead University reported a 20 per cent drop, Laurentian University in Sudbury a 15.8 per cent drop, and applications to Nipissing University in North Bay dropped 8.6 per cent.

"I'm not sure if tuition fees make a big deal. Students may not be deterred because of tuition. [But] they may be deterred by the panic created in the media about tuition fees," said David Marshall, president of Nipissing University.

But Robert Rosehart, president of Lakehead University, says it would be irresponsible to ignore tuition fee hikes as a key variable.

"I can't ignore the fact that the difference from last year to this year is a 20 per cent increase in tuition fees," said Rosehart. "Twenty per cent in one year is pretty traumatic."

McGill to privatize international students

BY M-J MILLOY

MONTREAL (CUP) — Foreign students will be private students next year at McGill University if a controversial plan to raise more money is passed by the university senate next week.

The university might "keep the tuition fees which are collected from the students and not remit them to the government. The government will as a result remove the funding for these students, but the net result should be in McGill's favour," wrote Phyllis Heaphy, McGill's vice-principal in charge of finance in a memo outlining potential budget plans.

Heaphy estimates that privatizing international students could net McGill over \$3 million next year.

Currently, Quebec universities send all money they receive from international students to the provincial government, which then divides the money between the schools. Since McGill has the largest number of international students, it donates much more than it receives.

Although the plan does not say whether international students would end up paying more, McGill may be able to charge them whatever it liked if the university pulled them out of the public system.

Heaphy's memo estimates that McGill will get almost \$20 million dollars less from Quebec City than it did last year, representing a cut of almost 15 per cent.

Privately, some student leaders are worried that McGill's fiscal situation, along with the government's plan to loosen regulations on tuition fee levels, could lead to McGill pulling all students out of public funding, creating Canada's first fully private university.

NorTel deal threatens academic freedom

BY MEG MURPHY

TORONTO (CUP) — A recent agreement between the University of Toronto and Northern Telecom has raised questions about the relationships between universities and corporate donors, say experts on intellectual property rights.

The corporation's \$8 million donation will establish the NorTel Institute for Telecommunications at the University of Toronto and launch advanced research programs under the direction of two new faculty chairs who were hired by the university in consultation with the company.

The deal gives NorTel significant intellectual property interest in the fruits of one of Canada's largest universities for a relatively low cost, a private sector intellectual property lawyer told the U of T Varsity on condition of anonymity.

Under the agreement, U of T owns all intellectual property resulting from NorTel-funded research. But the company controls the right to market these inventions.

Don Savage, executive director of the Canadian Association of University Teachers, is concerned about the possible threat to academic freedom.

"What happens if NorTel refuses to allow a graduate student to defend his or her thesis because the subject matter is confidential to NorTel? Or demands that the thesis defence be put off 12 months? How will promotion, tenure and the like be handled if committees involved are forbidden to see the results of the research of the candidate?" said Savage.

Trouble in the SUB

Staffer resigns over harassment

BY TIM COVERT

An investigation into harassment at the Dalhousie Student Union has been complicated by a personal relationship between the person accused and student union vice-president Katharine Hannah.

A SUB employee resigned her position during Reading Week as a result of the alleged harassment. She felt threatened by the accused individual, and was worried nothing would be done to address her concerns.

The names and positions of the individuals involved cannot be disclosed because of the unconfirmed nature of the allegations.

The employee's concerns regarding the harassment were brought to the Dalhousie Student Union (DSU) executive's attention this week in a letter from the Student Union Part-Time Staff Association (SUPSA).

The letter complained about the accused employee and the DSU executive's lack of action.

The letter, addressed to DSU executive administrator Amy Newhook, further alleges that executive vice-president Katherine

Hannah — as a result of a personal relationship with the accused — did not act on complaints arising against the individual.

"We strongly feel that being involved with this person...should force Ms. Hannah to abdicate her responsibilities as they pertain to people with whom she has a personal relationship," the letter stated.

The former employee first made her complaints known to SUB technical director Pat Martin.

DSU president Brad MacKay said while he was glad the concerns were brought up, procedures already in place to address complaints were not utilized. The letter was the first he'd heard about the problem.

The DSU constitution outlines that for staff problems, written complaints go first to Martin, then to Newhook and then, if the employee feels the complaint was not properly addressed, to the Employment Resolutions Committee.

The complaint thus far was verbal, and only to Martin.

"Until we perform an investigation...I really can't comment [on the harassment allegations]," MacKay said.

To MacKay's knowledge, concerns about Hannah dealing with employees with whom she has a personal relationship haven't been addressed before.

Hannah, the executive member in charge of the SUB, said complaints about the accused employee were never brought to her attention. She has not yet received her copy of the letter, nor was she notified about the situation by SUPSA before the letter was drafted.

She was aware Martin had received complaints, but the concerns never got as far as her office.

SUPSA vice-president Karla Makhani — who signed the letter along with president Andrew Younger, treasurer Jennifer Riordan and SUB staffer Kathleen Matthews — agrees the letter was strongly worded.

"I was concerned that the DSU wasn't going to do anything about [the situation]," said Makhani. "We saw it as our last resort."

She admits that the letter exaggerates in places.

An investigation of the harassment allegations is underway by members of the executive — excluding Hannah.

Students win partial victory

BY RACHEL FUREY AND STU CLARK

OTTAWA (CUP) — When a group of angry students took over the president's office at Carleton University to protest increased tuition fees, the end result seemed all too predictable.

After all, the previous two weeks saw angry student groups at three other Ontario universities take over their presidents' offices and all three groups gave up their occupations with no discernable gains.

But Carleton was different. Instead of denouncing the protestors — as the three other university presidents had done — Carleton president Richard Van Loon agreed with them and denounced the government.

In an open letter to Ontario's education minister John Snoblen, Van Loon wrote: "We must keep tuition fees at a level that will ensure both quality and accessibility of education. However, the recent cuts to post-secondary education funding have severely threatened all Ontario Universities' ability to fulfil this mandate."

The letter then asked the government to increase post-secondary education spending to the average level of all 10 Canadian provinces. Currently, Ontario spends less per capita on its universities and colleges than any other province.

Van Loon's letter, along with concessions on a series of other student demands was enough to end the occupation. But the students were not completely victorious as the university will still raise tuition fees by 10 per cent next year.

It was a Feb. 5 government announcement allowing universities to increase tuition fees by up to 10 per cent that sparked the protests and had angry students hauling their sleeping bags to administration buildings across the province.

Students at the University of

Toronto began the trend when they took over the office of Robert Prichard on Feb. 10. Unlike his counterpart at Carleton, Prichard didn't negotiate with students. Instead he sent out a press release calling for deregulation of tuition fees so he could increase fees by more than 10 per cent.

While the U of T protestors gave up after 97 hours, groups at York University and the University of Guelph took up the cause and took over their presidents' offices. But, like the students at U of T, they finally gave up their occupations amidst threats from university administrators.

While Van Loon didn't agree with the student protestors on the need for the tuition increase, he says he shares their concerns on the direction Ontario's government is taking universities.

"We both strongly believe the government is close to destroying post-secondary education in this province," he said.

"I would feel the same way as [students] do in their situation, but I have no choice but to recommend

the [10 per cent] increase."

While his willingness to talk to students might win him friends on campus, Van Loon could find himself a very unpopular man the next time Ontario's university presidents gather together. The assorted presidents have been among the loudest voices demanding universities be allowed to increase tuition fees to make up for cutbacks in government funding.

That's why students have been occupying their president's office instead of the provincial legislature, says Brad Lavigne of the Canadian Federation of Students. He adds it is important to remind students of the link between cuts to the federal and provincial budgets and the tuition increases, especially with a federal election only a few months away.

"These protests will help inject a level of militancy during the federal election," he said.

Meanwhile the protests on campus aren't over. Lavigne says a few more campuses are considering occupations, and there is talk of a province-wide protest in March.

Campus apathy reaches new low

BY NIK MADAN

Lack of entries in a draw for two \$500 student awards at Dalhousie has cost the school its place as the only school eligible for the awards.

Despite the fact that students had over two weeks to enter, only around 200 entries were received, instead of the expected 5,000. According to organizers, this was a surprisingly low turnout. As a result, the company sponsoring the awards will widen its promotion next year to include all Atlantic university campuses.

During a February 15th varsity hockey game against the visiting

University of Prince Edward Island Panthers, a presentation was made to the two Dalhousie students who won this year's awards.

Shelley Malcolm, a physiology student, and Craig Whynot, a science student, each won a Dalhousie scholarship worth \$500 courtesy of Kraft-Maxwell House.

In order to be eligible for the award, Students were asked to collect a UPC symbol from any Kraft-Maxwell House product, fill in a couple of details (name and address), and put the entry into one of the Kraft boxes located around campus. What's more, students could enter as many times as they wished.