

York to build largest women's studies school

BY SIOBHAN MCCLELLAND

TORONTO (CUP) — York University is in the process of establishing the largest women's studies school in the world.

The school, which should be up and running by next summer, will have 200 faculty members and over 2,000 students. It will combine a number of programs, faculties and libraries spread around the various York campuses.

"[It will allow] feminists in various departments...to come together," said Katherine McPherson, women's studies undergraduate program co-ordinator. Susan Erlich, chair of the school, says it will help students obtain greater access to courses.

"We're different because we are bringing together all faculties," she said.

Students will be offered a wide range of courses at the school, ranging from history and business to fine arts. It will also provide greater access to research, vocational counselling and conferences.

The idea for the school was conceived during an undergraduate program review at York in 1994. While the review praised York for having the best women's studies program in Canada, it criticized the lack of accessibility between the undergraduate programs offered at York's three

different campuses.

But improving access for students is not the only impetus behind the amalgamation of women's studies programs, faculties and libraries. Recent budget cuts at York have also played a role in the decision.

Since coming to power in 1995, the

provincial Conservative government has cut \$400-million from the budgets of Ontario's universities and colleges. York's share of the cuts was in the tens of millions.

Women's studies was first offered to York students in 1972, and the university began awarding degrees in women's

studies in 1983. York's graduate program in women's studies was the first in the country to offer a PhD in the field.

Late last month the university held a celebration to mark the eventual opening of the school.

"We have every confidence that [everyone] is committed to the

sustenance of the women's school," said Varpu Lindstrom, chair of the school's advisory committee at the event.

So far, \$2-million has been raised for scholarships and bursaries at the school, with the ultimate goal being \$5-million.

The school is slated to open next summer.

Newsletter shuns gay content

BY KIRSTEN RODENHIZER

VICTORIA (CUP) — A student's experiences as a gay teacher have proved too touchy a subject for a University of Victoria student newsletter.

The Education Students Association recently denied University of Victoria (UVic) undergraduate student Duane Lecky, a high school teacher on leave, the opportunity to write articles about his experiences as a gay teacher on grounds that they would be controversial.

Last month, Lecky, a fourth-year undergrad with eight years of teaching experience, sent an e-mail to the association, proposing to write articles for their newsletter about being a gay teacher and about gay, lesbian and bisexual students and student

associations.

Lecky says the first reply he received from the association was ambiguous. When he asked for clarification, he received a reply that stated the newsletter was not a "medium for controversial issues".

"We recognize the importance of acknowledging the issues surrounding gay and lesbianism, and suggest that you submit your article to a newspaper, such as the [University of Victoria student newspaper, The Martlet,] that deals with controversial issues," wrote Kristen Doan, director of publications for the association.

"They said to me quite clearly they didn't want to receive anything on gay and lesbian issues," Lecky said.

"I think it's really short-sighted and

foolish. The people who have refused to deal with these issues are the people who are going to be teaching in a few years."

Doan and other members of the association declined comment.

Lecky adds that if education students at UVic can't deal with gay teachers, he wonders how they will deal with gay, lesbian and bisexual students.

"I grew up gay in the system, and you just hide it," he said. "You really train yourself to be heterosexual."

Members of the association have since met with UVic dean of education Bruce Howe to discuss Lecky and the newsletter.

"I'm optimistic things will be clarified," Howe said, but refused further comment on his discussions with the association.

He adds, however, that it is not his role to encourage or discourage the association from printing material.

"The newsletter is their business," he said.

Lecky posted his correspondence with the association on the education students listserve, along with an expression of his shock and disgust at the decision. He received several responses to his posting, ranging from congratulations to condemnations.

Lecky says he will be looking for support from the Gay and Lesbian Educators of B.C., and the UVic Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Alliance. He also plans to attend the association's next meeting to discuss the matter and offer encouragement to young gay and lesbian members.

Students bring UBC to court

BY CHRIS NUTTALL-SMITH

VANCOUVER (CUP) — Four University of British Columbia grad students are suing their university in an attempt to reverse recent tuition and ancillary fee increases.

The students say the increases violate the tuition freeze which the provincial government has in place. Tuition fees for domestic students increased 1.6 per cent this year at UBC, and some non-academic ancillary fees also increased.

The students are also fighting a 210 per cent tuition increase for international graduate students which came into effect this past September.

They say this and the other increases violate UBC's policy on consulting students about tuition fee increases. The policy holds the university to a fixed schedule of public consultation with students before raising fees.

Amir Attaran, a UBC law student

who prepared much of the students' case, said one of the university's arguments in defense of the increases — that they didn't follow their consultation policy to the letter, but lived up to its spirit — is insulting.

"They've come into this knowing that they bloody well didn't consult over the ancillary fees or over international grad fees in the way they're supposed to," he said. "If they're simply going to do that, then what's the point of having the policy?"

Dennis Pavlich, UBC's associate vice president of academic and legal affairs, wouldn't comment on the case since it's before the court.

The judicial review, heard by the B.C. Supreme Court November 18 and 19, isn't being fought using oral testimony and cross examination. Instead, each side's arguments are based on written affidavits from key people involved in the case. Judicial reviews are used to

speed cases through the courts.

According to Attaran, a submission from the former president of UBC, David Strangway, says the university isn't bound to heed the opinion of students. Attaran says he finds this disturbing.

"This is not the way I'd like to think that my university is run, but yet that's the argument they're leaning on," he said.

According to Attaran, UBC's affidavits also argue that the ancillary fees should not be considered 'pure tuition,' but instead as just 'tuition' — therefore exempt from the provincial freeze.

The university is citing a clause in the British Columbia University Act — which protects university directors from being sued — as the reason they think the case should be dismissed.

The court could take between a few days and a few months to reach a decision in the case.

UBC Forestry seeks laptop deal

BY CHRIS NUTTALL-SMITH

VANCOUVER (CUP) — The Faculty of Forestry at the University of British Columbia is looking into a deal with IBM which could see every student lease a computer from the corporate giant.

IBM wants the faculty, which has approximately 600 students, to sign onto its "ThinkPad U" program.

The program typically requires students to lease an IBM ThinkPad laptop computer from their university. Every year they get a new model with current software, but students don't get to keep the computers when they graduate.

The program is already in place at one Canadian school. Beginning this past September, first year students at Acadia University must lease an IBM laptop from the university. The cost is \$1,500 per year, and by September 2000, every Acadia undergraduate will be leasing an IBM laptop.

Students in the forestry faculty use computers for much of their course-work, including high-tech geography analysis and number-crunching applications.

And the new Forestry Sciences Centre, where the faculty will move when it's completed this spring, was planned with computers in mind. It is wired for computer hook-up.

Ron Turner, a UBC forestry computer specialist, says computer availability at the faculty needs to be improved.

"A lot of students complain that the ratio of computers to students is 1 to 10, but that's all we can fund currently," he said. "We just don't have the line item in our budget to replace the computers every three years."

The forestry department's most current computer lab has 21 machines with Pentium processors.

Chad Croft, a fourth-year forestry student who uses the lab, says having a laptop would be useful. But given the choice between paying for a laptop or using the free labs, Croft says he'll pick the lab any day.

"For most people this is going to be brutal," he said. "That's way too expensive."

But Michelle Scott, an IBM

spokesperson, says students can write off the computer lease when filling out their tax return by including it as part of their tuition cost.

"Students typically go 'Oh my God, oh my God, it's going to cost.' But that isn't really the case," she said.

Compared to the \$6,000 Acadia students will spend on the lease in four years though, actually buying a computer might be a bargain. IBM ThinkPads with specifications similar to the model Acadia students are leasing this year retail for under \$3,000.

Corporate-university partnerships of this sort have come under fire for contributing to the commercialization of Canadian campuses.

And UBC is no stranger to these kinds of partnerships. In 1995, both the administration and the student union signed lucrative contracts with Coca-Cola — making it the exclusive cold beverage supplier on campus.

The UBC administration is refusing to release how much it made from the deal.

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