

Chemistry Department to undergo major changes

By Shannon Younker and Steven Ellis

So far, 1995 has been a year of frenzied activity at UPEI's chemistry department. The faculty and staff have been busily preparing proposals for the approval of the university community. If the current proposals are accepted, chemistry students will see changes to the major and minor programs, a chance to complete an honours degree, and a brand-new chemistry building.

The 1995-1996 school year may be the first that a BSc with honours in chemistry will be offered. This honours program provides an increased opportunity to specialize within the discipline, as well as adding further courses with a research focus.

With the honours program comes a relaxation in the requirements for the chemistry major program. This relaxation will provide a distinction between the present major program and the honours. According to the plan suggested by the chemistry faculty, future chemistry majors will not have to complete as many courses in calculus, physics or physical

chemistry. They will also have the option whether or not to complete the present fourth year research requirement. The chemistry minor program will still be offered. Changes proposed for the minor will provide a more flexible program with more options than at present.

First year students will also be facing different chemistry courses. After 26 years of chemistry 110, the department is suggesting that General Chemistry should be split into two separate courses covering the same material.

The other major development is the proposal for the new chemistry building. Construction of this state-of-the-art facility will begin this summer if things proceed as planned.

Among the attributes of the new building are:

1. A 120 seat lecture theatre for lectures the size of Chem 110, 240 and 351/352.
2. Fifty and thirty seat classrooms.
3. A sixty seat first year laboratory.
4. A forty person organic/biochemistry lab.
5. A new Dean of Science office.

6. Expanded research space.
7. A computer laboratory.
8. A student lounge with lockers, study room and terrace.
9. Safer and more spacious storage for chemicals.

The L-shaped building will complete a five-building quadrangle at the south end of campus. Other members of the quadrangle include Duffy science, the Robertson library, the Wanda Wyatt dining hall, and Marian Hall. A scale-model of the building, designed by Bergmark and Hammarlund architects, with the co-operation of Bill Gregg, a research facility specialist, is on display in the President's office.

Unfortunately, the plans stated here are still only proposals. Before any celebration can begin in the chemistry department, the plans must be passed by the faculty of Science, assorted Senate committees, and the Senate itself.

UPEI's chemistry faculty and students are already well-regarded by other schools and industry. This set of recommendations provides opportunities for future chemists to benefit even more from their years at UPEI.

Ontario study shows ICRP would be more costly than OSAP to administer

By Darren Hart (CUP)

A study by the Ontario Ministry of Education and Training has shown that income-contingent loans would cost the government more to run than the current Ontario Student Assistance Program (OSAP).

The federal government expects to implement a form of income-contingent loans one year after cuts to transfer payments take effect in the provinces.

Income-contingent loan repayment is a form of assistance where students would repay their loans based on their income after graduation. Only students who make more than a certain amount would have to begin repayment.

Universally accessible income-contingent loans could be offered to compensate for the increase in tuition possible by 1997.

The provincial study, initiated for 1993-94 and completed in January, concluded that the income-contingent repayment plan, or ICRP loans, would cost the government more to administer than it costs for OSAP.

The ICRP would cost about 55 cents per dollar loaned to administer, compared to the 20 cents per dollar it currently costs for OSAP, according to Richard Jackson, manager of policy and communications for OSAP.

"The ICRP gets presented as a sort of wonderful program that will solve all of the funding problems," says Jackson. "But ultimately [post-secondary education] has to be paid for by tax payers, including students."

In recent years, the concept of income-contingent loans has been extolled by many economists and federal politicians, as well as by Dave Cooke, Ontario minister of education and

training. However, provincial support for the plan has waned in the months since the initial data was released in November 1994.

The test project consisted of 1,000 positions for income sensitive loans worth \$2,500, offered to students in their final year of a post-secondary program. To be eligible, the student had to have applied for OSAP funding and been turned down.

Using graduating-year students allowed the government to start studying the repayment portion of the plan immediately.

Only 100 students applied for the test loans. Of this number, 37 stayed in the education system (they did not graduate or try to find jobs) and had their loans converted into standard OSAP loans.

A further 12 students defaulted on their loans. This left only 48 of the original participants in a position to begin repayment.

Thirty-five of these students are not making more than \$20,000 a year, the minimum salary in the model necessary to have to make payments. This left only 13 students out of 100 that are making payments. Only seven are making full payments.

The ICRP isn't quite that simple, though. There are numerous variables to consider, such as who will be eligible for such a loan, how much will be lent, at what interest rate, what the minimum salary will be to begin paying back the loan, and other factors that weren't accounted for in the study.

"Everything I've seen about this plan has led me to believe it would be a complete flop," says Dalton McGuinty, the MPP for Ottawa South and Liberal critic for colleges and universities. "All the ICRP does is add debt to students in a different form."



Alternative Work Experience Day

By Aldera Chisholm

It is becoming increasingly difficult for students to find post-graduate employment. Many people are now seeking jobs in non-traditional areas.

On Wednesday, March 15, UPEI hosted an Alternative Work Experience Day. Displays from several organizations were set up in the Robertson Library Breezeway. The participants varied from L'Arche to SWAP to the Mennonite Central Committee.

What many of these groups have in common is that they are 'helping' organizations. They offer students volunteer experience -- and a possible paid position -- and the opportunity

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to assist other people in Canada and abroad.

Volunteer experience will not pay your student loan, but it will provide valuable experience in your chosen field. As the maxim goes "you can't work without experience, and without experience, you can't get work". Positions can vary from rebuilding villages, teaching youth, or designing a marketing plan. Working at an entry level position in the normal work force may pay you minimum wage and teach you to sort mail, but working with CUSO or Crossroads will be personally enriching and will have the added benefit of letting you decide if your chosen career is right for you.

These organizations can also cure your itch to travel. Positions are available in Canada, but many of the opportunities are in developing countries and you will see their culture in a way no tourist trip ever would.

Speaking of travel, another participant in the Alternative Work Experience was SWAP, the Student Work Abroad Program. SWAP sends students to a variety of countries and assists them in finding Visas and employment. SWAP is generally for a summer, although a variety of program lengths are available.

If you would be interested in such an alternative work experience, contact Sheila Lund-MacDonald at the Career Development and Employment Centre for details on specific programs.