

The new Student Centre: Coming soon to a campus near you

By Steve Ellis

CONSTRUCTION ON A NEW STUDENT CENTRE FOR the UPEI campus could begin in the year 2000, if not sooner. This, according to the plan of action of the Student Centre 2000 project.

Student Centre 2000 is a ten year project which was begun in 1990 by the UPEI Student Union. One of the most important parts of this project is the Student Centre Fund which has been set up to raise money for this major undertaking. Each academic semester, a portion of full time student fees is directed into the Student Centre fund.

Five years into the project, things are going well. Activities for SC 2000 are on track, and will soon shift into high gear. To regulate the new activities, a SC 2000 committee will be established. This committee will include students as well as other members of the university community, and it will report to the Student Union. With this spirit of co-operation between students faculty and staff, it is hoped that the project will become a joint effort between UPEI, and the Student Union.

At present, much of the activity for SC 2000 is being directed by Student Union General Manager Heather Love. Love is currently surveying students to gain input about where the building should be placed and what facilities it should

house.

When asked why student input was so important, Love responded, "Student input is critical input!". She went on to

explain that students know best the pedestrian traffic patterns on campus, and therefore know the best location for the student centre. Students also know what facilities are lacking in the present student centre, and can accurately forecast the needs of future students.

Love is personally admin-

istering the survey, as she believes it important to deal with students one-on-one about such an important matter. She plans to visit all buildings on campus, and hopefully gain a variety of opinions. So far, Love has surveyed more than twenty-five students, and she plans on surveying at least 150 in total. The greater the response the better!

So, if a kindly soul approaches you on campus and asks you to help her with a survey, please comply. You will be helping to make decisions which will affect future generations of UPEI students.

Any input for the SC 2000 project is welcome and encouraged. For more information, contact Heather Love at the Student Union office.

With this spirit of co-operation between students, faculty and staff, it is hoped that the project will become a joint effort between UPEI, and the Student Union.

New student organization takes form

By A. C. Snell and Gabriel M. Fantino (CUP)

A NEW ERA IN CANADIAN STUDENT POLITICS IS expected to emerge this week with the creation of the first new national student organization in 15 years. The Canadian Alliance of Student Associations (CASA) was officially created in Fredericton, New Brunswick last week.

A slew of student leaders from more than 20 universities gathered from Jan. 27 to Feb. 1 to finalize a constitution and give birth to CASA.

Among the delegates were representatives from the University of British Columbia, the University of Alberta, the University of Saskatchewan, the University of Ottawa, McGill University, Dalhousie University and Carleton University.

Of the 20 universities that showed up, seven are currently members of the Canadian Federation of Students (CFS) and six of the seven are facing upcoming referendums to decide whether they will remain in CFS.

Delegates at the conference say that CASA will feature 15 to 20 member universities and a permanent staff in Ottawa to lobby the federal government on post-secondary education issues.

The CFS was one of the main issues underlying the creation of CASA. CFS has been Canada's national student group since its formation in 1981.

Suzanne Scott, president of the students' union at the University of Alberta, says that CASA will be a better lobbying vehicle than CFS because it will be a strictly political body, and will avoid tackling social issues. The U of A is not a member of the CFS.

"We have not been involved in a national group in a long time and I think we have not had the same national voice that a lot of other schools have had. So we do not have that access to the federal government," Scott says.

If most schools expected to join CASA do so, it will represent about 450,000 post-secondary students, say delegates at the conference. CFS is currently about the same size.

Patrick Horan, the University of Manitoba's student union director of communication, says, "The fact that the universities will be working together frees up the researchers on campus to work on their own stuff while we will have researchers in Ottawa doing a better job of lobbying the government since our resources are being pooled.

"The bottom line is we will be better able to handle local issues because of the resources being freed and we will be doing a better job at the national level, too."

But Guy Caron, national chairperson for the CFS, says one of the problems with CASA is that students do not decide whether they want to be part of the group. According to the draft version of the CASA constitution, it is only the university's student council that decides whether the school is a member.

"If students do not want to be part of [CASA], they have no choice," Caron says.

Caron says the only way to pressure the government is through numbers. He says that while CASA may claim to represent more than 400,000 students, the actual students won't be there because only the school's student council will decide membership.

"Where will CASA get this means of pressure?"

Delegates at the conference say that CASA will feature 15 to 20 member universities and a permanent staff in Ottawa to lobby the federal government on post-secondary education issues.

Axworthy may back down on \$2.6 billion cut to education

(CUP)

THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT'S PROPOSED CUTS TO education are seemingly being overtaken by events. Recent press reports from Ottawa say that the federal government may be leaning towards bailing out of social programs altogether, rather than cutting them.

Dalton McGuinty, provincial colleges and universities critic for the Ontario Liberals, says he believes proposals put forward by Human Resources Development Minister Lloyd Axworthy to cut federal support for post-secondary education are no longer relevant.

The federal government is now looking at ways to hand over control of education and other social programs completely to the provinces, he says.

Decentralizing social programs would reduce Ottawa's bottom line, and might help win votes in Quebec, which wants greater control over spending, McGuinty believes.

"The social reform agenda has been taken over by national economics and the constitutional challenge of Quebec," he says.

"Block funding [will] roll in secondary education and health care, throwing them into one basket."

If adopted, these new proposals will pass on the difficult decisions about funding priorities from Ottawa to the provinces, McGuinty believes.

"[We'll] have to be creative on how we use our resources on colleges, universities and hospital care," he said.

It is uncertain whether this new idea of decentralizing, rather than cutting, education funding will be better for students than Axworthy's proposals, says student lobbyist Rick Martin.

Martin, a spokesperson for the Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance, says it's likely tuition will still rise, but possibly not as much. "I think there's a chance the cuts will not be targeted on us as much [as with the Axworthy proposals]," Martin said.

But Martin agrees with McGuinty that Axworthy's idea of balancing a significant cut in federal payments with a new income-contingent loan repayment (ICLR) form of student aid now seems unlikely.

"The huge increase followed by ICLRs seems to be dead," he says.

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