McGill University's plan received with caution

Montreal (CUP) – Reaction to the McGill University plan to place time limits on the completion of undergraduate degrees ranges from nonchalance to alarm.

The proposal, which goes into effect next fall, will restrict arts and science students to a maximum of eight terms to complete their programs.

"Even though students can apply for an extension, I can't see anything good about the plan," said McGill student council arts representative Peter Nixon.

"It seems like a little bit of Social Darwinsism, in that it will put a lot of pressure on people to finish and it will cut down on the quality of education by making the experience totally academic," he said.

Council club representative Carlene Gardiner said she thought the time limit was a bad idea from the beginning.

"I'm quite surprised by the decision, and I don't understand their rationale for wanting to impose the limits," she said.

Associate dean of science Roger Rigelhos said it won't be that difficult for students to satisfy the requirements of the time limit.

"All we're asking is for students to maintain reasonable progress towards a degree," he said, adding that the plan will help insure general standards.

"This will allow programs to be updated and course requirements changed. If you get a bachelors of science degree in physics in 1987, you expect two people graduating to have taken the same program."

Rigelhos denied that the policy change will create assembly line graduates because many students can maintain full course loads. He also said that extensions for cases of illness or other extenuating circumstances will be fairly easy to obtain.

Gilles Cote of the Concordia University admissions department said no such time limits are in effect at Concordia, although the engineering and commerce departments both have grade point average requirements.

"Actually, I think it's a good idea and I agree with the general standards argument," he said. "Unfortunately, these decisions are often made quickly and students are told after the fact. I think they should be given plenty of warning."■

Research at UPEI

by Kaberi Dasgupta

The Biology Department

In this conclusion of our Research at UPEI series, The Gem takes a look at the goings on at the Biology Department.

Professors are not the only researchers at the University of Prince Edward Island. The biology department, which recently introduced an honours program, possesses a few student researchers. One of these students is Vincent Adams, a third-year biology major.

Under the guidance of Professor Louie Hanic, Vince has been experimenting with methods of holdfast regeneration in Chondrus crispus; Irish Moss. Holdfasts are used by many seaweeds for attachment to substrata such as rock.

Vince's first series of experiments involved specimens of Irish Moss that he had severed just above the holdfasts. With a dentist's drill, he made a small hole in each plant, near the cut end. Through the holes he drew a piece of nylon string.

He had hoped the plants would form holdfasts around the string, unfortunately this did not occur. Thus a new series of experiments were tried.

Vince and Professor Hanic hypothesized that holdfast regeneration failed to occur because of the nature of the substratum that they had used. Vince is now experimenting with strips of ceramic instead.

Another hypothesis that Vince and Professor Hanic are considering is that perhaps the nature of the tissue in the holdfast is different from that of the rest of the plant. Consequently the cells of the plant body cannot generate holdfast tissue. Differentiation has been established. To test this possibility, Vince is experimenting with sections of holdfast tissue, trying to find out whether these sections will give rise to plant body tissue or holdfast tissue.

Of what value are experiments with Irish Moss? Well, aside from the fact that no attempt in gaining knowledge is futile, these experiments do have "practical" value. One is improved methods of propagating Irish Moss. Irish Moss is used in many foods, cosmetics, and in medicine as a gland ointment.

A method of propagation now used is that of placing pieces of Irish Moss in an unwound rope ,and twisting the rope tightly: plants then emerge from the rope. They must then be cut off. However, if these plants possessed a holdfast that wound around the surface of the rope, harvesting would be easier as they could be pulled off the rope like beads on a string.

More important for Vince and other students, however, is the fact that such projects provide invaluble training in methods of scientific thought (and the development of the ability to remain in the laboratory from 9:00 A. M. to 6:30 P. M. on beautiful summer days).

Other budding researchers at the biology department include Stephen Farmer who is working under Professor E. Johnson and Larry Green, Diane Gamble, and Doug Kelley, all of whom are being guided by Professor L. Hanic. Diane and Doug have been identifying the species of plants that grow in particular areas of Prince Edward Island.

Recently Larry Green had a large dose of success in his studies. He DISCOVERED a species belonging to the algal genus Ulothrix. (Congratulations, Larry!)

What's next? Perhaps one day the cure for the common cold will be developed by biology students at the University of Prince Edward Island■

NOTICE

All students who plan to return as full-time students to UPEI in September, 1987 are requested to complete an intent-to-return form at the Registrar's Office before they leave for the summer.

All students who have completed an intent-to-return form and are eligible to return may preregister during the summer. Pre-registration material is not processed unless the student completes the above form and is eligible to return■