

UPEI Budget's Causes and Effects

BY TODD MACLEAN

This Thursday, the provincial budget comes down, and will indicate how much funding will be cut from post-secondary education this year.

With a debt load of \$850,000, much will be chopped away at in order to break even this year, including university employment positions, campus services, and even academic programs. A much needed jump on the "student bandwagon" by the government would be welcomed greatly in this time of need.

"The province continually screws higher education," said Stephen Ramsay, UPEI SU VP Finance. "Any tough financial decision that the university has to make should be blamed on the province. The administration is only given so much money to work with, and with every percentage point that's cut from the total budget, tuition will have to increase so much more as well."

Ramsay said that the Board of Governors will soon be deciding upon next year's tuition costs, once faculty contract negotiations are determined and once the government announces this year's grant.

"It [the tuition increase] could increase anywhere from 0-12 percent in order to cover costs, but we've already said that we can't do that," Ramsay said. "Looking at the students, it's just unreasonable."

John Crossley, UPEI VP Academic, said that the government may show concern about rising tuition this year because of the recent uproar regarding student poverty.

"Their main concern would be the cost of education for students," Crossley said. "The government probably isn't all that concerned with

the cutting of programs, etcetera. There is a general assumption that the grant will be cut by about four percent."

According to Crossley, this year's debt load has caused academic "bleeding" in programs such as Classics, Fine Arts, Math and Spanish. Also, The Asian Studies program now has no guarantee of ever

being offered again.

"It's tough to reduce resources without damaging students or overworking professors. You just have to look at where the university can best afford the bleeding," he explained.

Two sessional contracts were taken away from both Asian Studies and Classics.

The cutting of courses within the non-tenured Spanish program was also unavoidable.

"These year to year programs are vulnerable during budget time," Crossley said. "The Spanish one was the hardest decision to make -- it has the potential now to really change how that department works, but if it wasn't Spanish,

it would be something else."

The debt figure of \$850,000 has been worked down to about \$400,000 so far this year by cutting some expenditures, but those involved with writing the budget are awaiting the government's decision on its funding before determining further financial actions.



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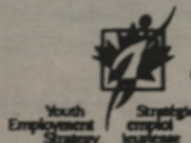
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