

LETTERS

continued from page 3

flict... The faculty and college milieu must make students feel sufficiently supported so that they don't become intimidated or defensive when confronted with new ideas. This means that the proper match of students with teachers is more important than aptitude scores or professor's credentials.

Granted, this is a long passage, but one worthy of citing, because it is within the wisdom of these words that my concerns can be found.

Since coming to UPEI a few years ago I have been generally pleased with the education I have been receiving. I have been able to study courses in a wide variety of subject areas and this has allowed me exposure to professors from several different faculties. For the most part the professors and instructors have treated me with the respect and sincerity I feel I deserve and I have returned this courtesy out of wanting, not out of feeling it was my duty. Unfortunately, my recent experiences have done a great deal to dampen my enthusiasm for the university. Rather than allowing my anger and frustration to take control of my senses, I decided to voice my concerns here and let the cards fall where they may. Also unfortunately, I am not brave enough, or perhaps foolish enough, to sign my name to this article, because I am not convinced, based on experience, that those who will find it offensive are professional enough to handle it in an objective, rather than subjective manner. I am a serious student and it is extremely important to me that I graduate.

In the past several months I have been witness to, or had reported to me, many incidents which do little to sufficiently support, and much to intimidate, students. I have heard professors berate adult students for asking perfectly reasonable questions, when it has been clear that the problem rested with the professor's inability to listen effectively to the question being asked. I have been informed of professors suggesting, on the basis of the tiniest bits of evaluation, that students are not capable of success. I have been subjected to professors who, although they appear to welcome student input, consistently respond to student comments in a condescending manner. I have been informed of a professor who has made it clear to his students that their input is not welcome and he is not interested in their opinions. Professors might do well to entertain our ideas; perhaps one of the future's greatest minds is sitting in the back row listening.

How many profs at UPEI realize that most students take five courses? When students complain about a heavy work load, perhaps there is some merit in probing the students for more information. The current emphasis in education is on quality not quantity, but this seems not to be the case in some UPEI faculties.

I have heard of complaints of overworked students being referred to as whiners. Perhaps when professors demonstrate an ability to accurately predict in which month students will start whining (as seems to be the case in at least one faculty) this should be interpreted as strong grounds for investigation into the concerns of the students. Our society is in great need of problem solvers, but the approaches used by some of the professors will do little more than encourage students to read and regurgitate.

I have been in the presence of too many profs who apparently assume that students are immature and need to be spoon fed. Stop reading to me. If you plan to spend a large portion of class time reading off of an overhead or handout, step aside and let me do it myself. I can read and, quite frankly, I have better things to do with my time. I find it terribly interesting that it is often (not always) these professors that have a large portion of their course grade dependent on class participation. God save you if you learn better by reading and listening than by talking. All I ask is that you treat me like an adult. Assign the work and let me get on with it. Let me decide if I need to be present for every class or not and

"Professors please listen to your students."

if you find your classes are becoming quite vacant, then perhaps it is time you reviewed your methods, or content. Outside of seminar classes I see little use for participation marks other than to fuel a troubled ego

Perhaps the thing that concerns me most is the fact that the majority of whining and complaining I hear from other students is rooted in legitimate concerns, but some profs and some faculties choose to completely ignore, or discount student concerns when they are put forth in an appropriate manner (ie: course evaluations). Subsequently, the students are left with no outlet for their frustrations, other than whining and complaining to other students. Thank god for my peers and several objective profs who have been wonderful listeners. And therein lies the key to most of the problems: LISTENING.

Students please stop whining and start responding to some of the nonsense you are

subjected to. We pay \$228.00 per course and if we feel that we are paying to be treated like children, or we feel we are paying for boredom and frustration, we need to speak up. If a prof does not appear approachable speak to a Dean. If you are not comfortable going to the Dean call the student union. We are supposed to have an ombudsperson to handle these situations. No matter what your concern, you have the right to be heard. If you are not sure your particular concern is one that deserves attention outside of your own need to make some personal changes, get an objective opinion. Based on my experience, there are many profs at UPEI who are objective and helpful. If you don't feel comfortable approaching any one mentioned here, then go to student services and see a counsellor. If you know your concerns are shared by many others, get together and elect a few representatives to voice your concerns. You have a right to be heard.

For all of the professors who read this article with contempt, it is probably you that I am addressing. For those of you who have already discounted this letter as gibberish and 'whining' take note that this article is not written by a border line student who blames the teacher for failures. I am a high functioning honor student. I don't need anything to change at the university in order to feel good about myself, my academic abilities, or my future; however, a few changes on your part could make UPEI a much more comfortable place to spend four or five years, or in your case a few decades.

Professors, please listen to your students. Assume that most of us are bright and articulate, or desire to become so. You might learn to such riddles as, why does everyone always get that particular answer wrong? Or, why does everyone complain about this particular assignment? Or, why does everyone start to complain at the same time of year, every year? Treat us with respect and you will likely be surprised at how many of us return the courtesy. When you are planning your courses remember that quantity rarely translates into quality. And it wouldn't hurt to prepare your course outlines prior to the first day of classes, including evaluation criteria and the dates for exams. Carefully selecting courses and effectively managing our time is difficult enough without surprises. This list could surely be longer, but I think the message is clear. Take a look at yourself before you judge your students' concerns. Don't assume that most of us are only at university to kill time; perhaps this is your problem, not ours.

In closing I want to thank the 18 or so out of 20 profs who have provided me with an incredibly positive experience. Some of you have taught me that there is no limit to the height of sincerity; one of you taught me that what I understand is usually more important than what I know and many of you have provided me with the respect and guidance I needed to dig deep inside myself and find the motivation and desire to learn beyond course requirements.