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## Critical Skills Low Among Arts Grads

By Laura Connell  
The Varsity  
University of Toronto

as a by-product of a liberal arts education.

York's Dean of Arts, George Fallis, agrees. "The question is whether we can do a better job as professors by thinking more explicitly about how these skills might be acquired through the study of liberal arts disciplines," he said.

It is precisely these personal skills such as critical and analytical thinking that are widely thought to be the hallmarks of a liberal arts education. They are also sought out by businesses when hiring new recruits.

"Obviously students are interested in the application of the skills for their future employment prospects. I don't think this needs to be in conflict with a basic liberal [arts] education," said Fallis.

York's study points out that arts programs should not be geared towards teaching job skills. However, the criti-

Liberal arts students are not being taught how to think critically and analytically or to communicate effectively, according to a study from York University's Institute for Social Research.

The report surveyed first and final year arts students at York for their skills in a variety of areas including communication, critical, and analytical skills. Graduating students were found to have better so-called generic skills than first-years. However, the report found no correlation between good grades and the acquisition of these skills.

The study suggests arts programs at universities should be spending more time focusing on how they are going to teach these skills instead of assuming they will be learned



Pat Binns speaks with UPEI Students. UPEI to host debate -- details on page 3

cal, analytical, and communication skills it says are not being explicitly taught in the classroom are precisely those used in the workplace.

"I think the reality is that employers look for those exact skills in all the hiring they do, whether they're hiring engineers [or] liberal arts [students]," said Marilyn Van

Norman, of the University of Toronto's career centre.

In her experience, the only complaint employers have about university students is a lack of communication skills. This applies to all disciplines, though, not just the arts.

"If [employers] would have any skills strengthened it would be communication, both

oral and written, but that would be true across the board, not unique to liberal arts," Van Norman said.

She adds that arts students are not at a disadvantage when it comes to generic skills.

"I don't think it's been our experience in talking to employers that liberal arts students didn't have those skills. I haven't seen it, I haven't heard it," she said.

U of T's Dean of arts, Marsha Chandler, disagrees that arts programs aren't focusing enough on teaching their students critical, analytical, and communication skills. She feels these skills are in fact the driving force behind liberal arts programs.

"Indeed one of the objectives of the faculty of arts and science is to not be filling students with facts that may become out of date. The primary objective of what we do is just that-critical thinking," she said.

## College May Make Laptops Mandatory

By Mike Hirsch  
The Reflector  
Mount Royal College

ing more information from the committee within the next couple of weeks.

The program could be instated on a pilot basis next year said Dawson. "We have to examine whether this thing is even feasible."

The cost of the computers for students is not yet known. They will most likely be made available through leasing, renting or purchasing if students wish.

How much can students afford to spend on a compu-

ter? With tuition costs ranging between \$1,000 and \$3,500 a year, most students don't have a whole lot of extra cash to spend.

Student response to the idea is varied. Some feel it was a great idea, but others feel it isn't really necessary.

They say students should take advantage of the computer labs available in the school. Also, many students already have a computer at home.

"It's a great idea, but I wouldn't be able to spend more

than a thousand dollars," said Kathleen Hill.

Renee Benstead wondered why more money would go towards computers. "Our tuition fees already go towards the labs already available," she said.

As of September, all first year students at Acadia University in Nova Scotia are required to lease a laptop and software from the university. The computer costs students \$1,200 per year.

Mount Royal College could become the second postsecondary institution in Canada to make owning a laptop computer mandatory for all students.

The proposal is in the preliminary stages and Mount Royal vice-president Larry Dawson says it is too early in the process to release many facts. He is, however expect-

Pages 1 - 3

Pages 6 & 7

Pages 10 & 11

Page 14

Page 15

News

Sports

Music

Notices

Comics