

# Glaring inequities emerge as universities bite the fundraising hook

BY ANDREW SUNSTRUM

TORONTO (CUP) — Smaller Canadian universities say they are getting the short end of the stick as the competition for private funds proceeds at a frenzied pace across the country and big schools continue to make a killing.

The current \$400-million University of Toronto fundraising campaign, boasted to be the most ambitious for a post-secondary institution in Canadian history, has already secured three-quarters of its goal just seven months into its public phase. The campaign will wind down in the year 2000.

This mammoth donor-wooing drive is just one example of the new energy colleges and universities are putting towards raising private donations. U of T's closest competition to date includes two big-time rivals hailing from Montreal and Vancouver.

In 1996, McGill University put a cap on its 'Twenty-first century fund,' which raised \$205-million. They were beat out three years earlier, however, by the University of British Columbia, which successfully completed a campaign that raised \$262-million.

Smaller schools were not so lucky. St. Mary's University in Halifax, Lakehead University in Northern Ontario, and the University of Winnipeg have wrapped up fundraising bonanzas over the last five years pulling in a whopping combined total of \$52.9-million.

Other universities are just breaking into the fray with ongoing campaigns designed to lure a few private dollars their way. Dalhousie, Carleton, York, Laurentian and Concordia have all jumped aboard with self-styled campaigns.

Not everyone is enthusiastic about the trendy uni-

versity marketing frenzy, however. Amidst what may appear good-spirited cash-courting competition lies a formula for disaster, warns Jennifer Story, national deputy chairperson for the Canadian Federation of Students.

"Those institutions who can recruit corporate funding will have a better level of education than the smaller and newer schools," she said. "Reliance on private funds leads to a system of have- and have-not schools."

In the world of slick campaigns, however, it appears a Darwinian approach appeals best to some university fundraising gurus. A McGill spokesperson says Canadian schools should welcome U of T's \$400-million initiative.

"It sets new standards in philanthropic society," Derek Drummond, vice-principal of development and alumni relations at McGill, said.

And there is no need to fret about smaller schools which aren't exactly in the big leagues from the outset, Drummond adds. "Their needs are not as great as ours, proportionately. It's all relative."

But a quick glance at just how much universities are raking in relative to their needs speaks volumes. At the larger schools, private proceeds are sometimes more than half the size of the university's entire annual operating budget. U of T's \$400-million equates to about 65 per cent of its budget, while McGill's \$205-million fundraising return is the equivalent to 48 per cent.

Their smaller counterparts rarely hope to reach the half-way mark. The University of Winnipeg has targeted the equivalent of only 20 per cent of its annual budget. And with a \$7.7-million goal, the University of Prince Edward Island can only hope to raise 15 per cent of its budget.

However, a UBC representative says smaller universities can make serious headway in the fundraising game by using the school's personal advantages to set up a playing ground for themselves.

"Experience shows that smaller universities create niches," Paula Martin, director of public affairs at UBC, said. "It's not an apples and oranges comparison."

At least one small school rep can vouch for the niche strategy as intelligent marketing, but says that doesn't mean the power players can't impede on small school turf. "Lakehead can be successful if it continues to direct resources to fundraising, create a niche and market it

appropriately, although it will be tough to compete with large schools," Rob Zubeck, manager of alumni services at Lakehead, said.

But the advertising glitz and glamour available to the big wigs makes gaining even modest ground difficult for smaller schools, Catherine Gillan, a spokesperson for UPEI, said.

"Everyone is going to be out there looking for the same limited dollars, so competition will become a bigger issue," she said, explaining that attracting donations from national corporations is difficult when competing against schools with cross-country exposure, such as U of T or UBC.

"I think inequity will become an issue over the years," Gillan said.

Certainly, the people power behind these fundraising drives differs wildly. Jon Dellandrea, U of T's chief development officer and the school's highest paid employee, netting a quarter of a million bucks for his services, estimates the university will spend

\$2-million on its colossal campaign nearly three times the actual fundraising goal at UPEI.

U of T currently employs a cast of 62 employees working out of their development office. McGill had 60 working on their huge campaign. But out in Halifax, St. Mary's only had five working on donor-wooing, while Lakehead had four and UPEI boasted two full-time fundraisers.

In fact, at one small cash-strapped school, students are asked to pitch in for the sake of the university.

Concordia students are required to pay \$150 over a three year-period toward the school's fundraising campaign.

Rebecca Alldworth, president of Concordia students' union, says her school is too focused on the fine arts to attract the rich business-type donors which is why they are forced to pick student pockets in the effort.

According to Story, the solution to these fundraising inequities is clear. "We would like to see institutions fully publicly-funded," she said, adding until that day the brutal battle will wage on.

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