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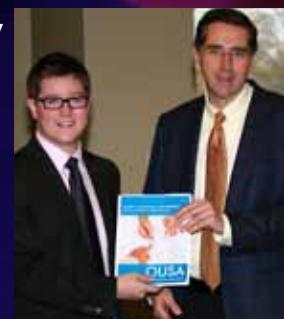
The Future of Post-Secondary Education Issue

NEW: Editorials, Photo Essay, and News

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speaks to
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Assembly

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OUSA

Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance

**University Differentiation:
Presidents Speak Out**

p.14-17

EDUCATED SOLUTIONS

EDITOR: Alvin Tedjo

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE:

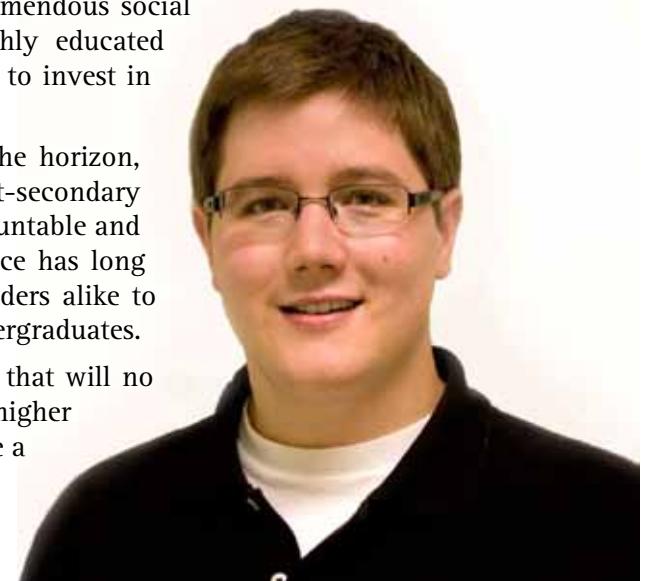
With the upcoming expiration of the McGuinty government's Reaching Higher Plan, this is a time of uncertainty for Ontario's post-secondary education sector. Over the last five years we have seen significant new investments in the accessibility and quality of a university education, but there is still much to be done. Recent enrollment increases have monopolized much of the new funding and in this tumultuous economic climate, governments are short on new funding. With increased pressure to reduce spending and control the deficit, students are concerned for the future of post-secondary education.

In these difficult times, it is important that we celebrate the tremendous social and economic benefits that come from investment in a highly educated citizenry. If Ontario is to remain competitive, we must continue to invest in the accessibility and quality of higher education.

With a new long-term plan for post-secondary education on the horizon, this issue of Educated Solutions will examine the future of post-secondary education and how we can ensure an accessible, affordable, accountable and high quality system. The Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance has long fought for these ideals, working with government and stakeholders alike to develop educated solutions to the problems facing Ontario's undergraduates.

I want to thank our contributors for providing engaging pieces that will no doubt challenge the status quo. This is what our system of higher education was founded on: great minds coming together, to shape a better future for our world.

Dan Moulton
president@ousa.on.ca



FROM THE EDITOR:

Post-secondary education can mean a lot of different things to different people. To me, it meant living away from home, meeting new friends, and giving myself the ability to learn and expand my knowledge of the world as I knew it. Now more than ever a university education is crucial to the knowledge economy that we are trying to develop here in Ontario and Canada. Research shows that soon, nearly seventy per cent of all jobs will need some kind of post-secondary education.



Much of the debate about PSE extends to funding: money for infrastructure, money for faculty, money for access, and so on. These issues are still the pressing issues of the day, and OUSA will continue to lobby for greater accountability, accessibility, affordability and quality.

Today, however, we have an opportunity to push the discussion towards the future. We have an opportunity to shape the future of PSE in this province, as the government seeks to outline a new plan to replace its 6.2 billion dollar Reaching Higher investment. The ideas presented in this issue are about the future of funding, the future of teaching quality, e-learning, student advocacy, university differentiation, debt and grants, infrastructure and institutions.

I hope you find this issue thought-provoking. Thank you and welcome to our sixth issue of Educated Solutions.

Alvin Tedjo
communications@ousa.on.ca

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Contributors



DR. JACK LIGHTSTONE is President and Vice-Chancellor of Brock University. He also holds an academic appointment as Professor of History in Brock's Faculty of Humanities. Before coming to Brock, Dr. Lightstone spent 30 years at Concordia

University in Montreal. A longtime Professor of Religion at Concordia, he also served from 1989-92 as Associate Vice-Rector, Academic (Research). He was Provost and Vice-Rector (Vice-President) from 1995-2004, and led an extensive academic planning process through a difficult period of budget restrictions and into a period of major renewal and expansion.



DR. AMIT CHAKMA is the 10th President and Vice-Chancellor of The University of Western Ontario. Dr. Chakma arrived at Western after serving as University of Waterloo Vice-President, Academic and Provost, and as a professor in the Department of Chemical

Engineering. Prior to that, he served as Dean of Engineering and then Vice-President (Research) and International Liaison Officer at the University of Regina. He began his academic career as a professor of chemical and petroleum engineering at the University of Calgary.



ERIKA LEIGH HUGHES is a fifth year Visual Arts Honors student and Chief Photographer of the *Brock Press* at Brock University. She is from Ottawa, and is passionate about art, photography, travelling, snowboarding and the outdoors. Her future plans are to pursue an MFA and continue her art practice.



JOY MIGHTY, PH.D is the Director of the Centre for Teaching and Learning at Queen's University, and a Professor in organizational behaviour. Joy has a wealth of experience as an administrator, teacher, educational developer, researcher and consultant. Her interests include management of workforce diversity, the dynamics of diversity in teaching and learning, and organizational development and change. Joy is the President of the Society for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education, and represents Canada on the Council of the International Consortium for Educational Development (ICED).



DAVID JOHNSTON taught law at Queen's University (1966), and the University of Toronto (1968), and was the University of Western Ontario's Dean of Law from 1974-1979. In 1979 he was named Principal and Vice-Chancellor of McGill University and returned to McGill's Faculty of Law as a full-time Professor in 1994. Professor Johnston took office as the President of the University of Waterloo on June 1, 1999, and was formally installed as President and Vice-Chancellor later that month.



THE HON. JOHN MILLOY was first elected Member of Provincial Parliament for Kitchener Centre in 2003. He was appointed Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities on October 30, 2007.



DAVID SIMMONDS works for the Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation. He graduated from the University of Western Ontario with a degree in Political Science. He served as OUSA President in 2007-2008.



MARK LANGER became OCUFA's 28th president on July 1, 2009. Prior to his appointment, Prof. Langer held numerous offices within the Carleton University Academic Staff Association (CUASA), the Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT), and OCUFA. Prof. Langer has been a professor of Film Studies at Carleton University since 1977.



MIRIAM KRAMER is Director of the Canadian Education Project, part of the Higher Education Strategy Associates.



SCOTT COURTICE is the Public Affairs Officer at the University Students' Council at Western. He has served students for over a decade, having previously held the positions of Executive Director of the Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance, Executive Director of Meal Exchange, and President of the Alma Mater Society of Queen's University.



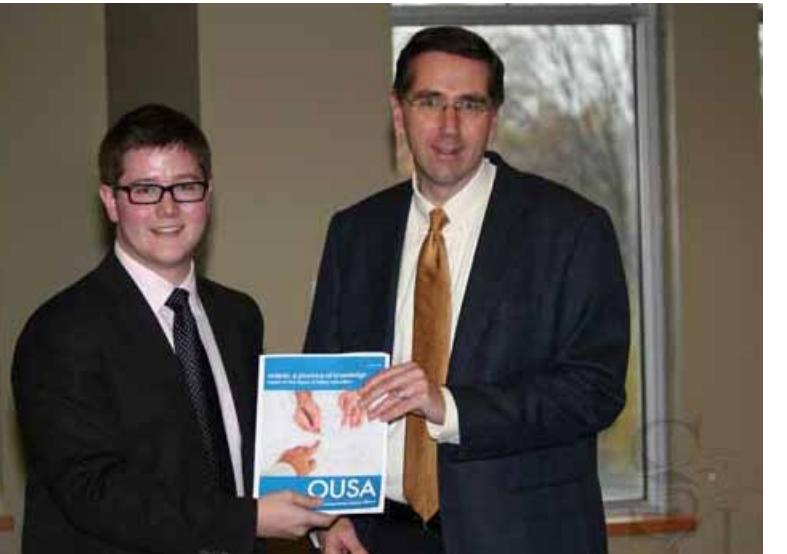
PAUL BIEN joined OUSA as the Director of Research and Policy Analysis after a one-year stint working for the Aga Khan Foundation in India. His past life has included research and policy work for

development organizations, the United Way and an MP's office. He graduated from Carleton University with his Bachelor of Public Affairs and Policy Management.



GRIFFIN CARPENTER is a fourth year student at Wilfrid Laurier University, majoring in political science. He is from Conestoga, Ontario and is looking to go to grad school for environmental economics and policy. He is interested in longboarding, legomations and lobbying. He is also OUSA's local campus coordinator.

News from OUSA



OUSA PRESENTS GOVERNMENT SUBMISSION: During OUSA's Fall General Assembly, President Dan Moulton presented Minister of Training, Colleges, and Universities John Milloy with a copy of *Ontario: A Province of Knowledge*, OUSA's submission to the provincial government for the new investment to replace the soon to expire Reaching Higher plan.

"As you know we have been working hard on this issue, and have come to OUSA to get your feedback," said Milloy. "This is hard work what you do, representing your institutions and your students."

Dan Moulton, OUSA President added, "this is a very important time for government to recognize that students need better financial assistance, students are struggling and are asking their government for help."

OUSA's submission to the government is a 40-page document with three main priorities: student financial aid, student success (quality), and tuition. The document has been presented to the special secretariat to the Ministry of Training, Colleges, and Universities (MTCU) as well as to the Premier's education adviser, the deputy minister for MTCU, and all assistant deputy ministers responsible for universities.

OUSA MEETS WITH UNIVERSITY PRESIDENTS

OUSA MEETS WITH UNIVERSITY PRESIDENTS: OUSA discussed its lobby priorities with university presidents Peter George of McMaster, Max Blouw of Wilfrid Laurier, Daniel Woolf of Queen's, and Alan Wildeman of Windsor during its tour of member school campuses in September and October. OUSA presented its priorities of Student Financial Aid, Student Success, and Tuition to the presidents and principals, while discussing ways that OUSA and the Council of Ontario Universities will work together in the future. All the leaders were very receptive to OUSA's message, and OUSA has provided them with its submission to the government *Ontario: A Province of Knowledge*.



CAMPUS VISITS: OUSA spent its first two weeks of October traveling across Ontario visiting each of its 7 member campuses. Every campus had a presentation to its council/assembly/board which governs its student government. Many schools had information booths and meetings with university presidents and campus media coverage. Every campus also had the opportunity to participate in a focus group regarding financial aid, allowing OUSA to conduct primary research of its members. Also, town-halls on post-secondary education, OSAP, and university issues were hosted at McMaster and Windsor. Much appreciation to the steering committee members, campus coordinators and volunteers who made these two weeks of traveling across Ontario a successful venture.

LAURIER & WATERLOO HOST FALL GENERAL ASSEMBLY: On October 23 to 25, student leaders from across Ontario came together at Wilfrid Laurier University and the University of Waterloo to discuss the critical issues facing students today. The OUSA fall General Assembly saw policies calling for the creation of a pan-Canadian accord on higher education, the implementation of the federal Repayment Assistance Plan in Ontario, and a focus on student success all passed unanimously. Over many hours of breakout sessions, students discussed issues ranging from simplifying university-to-university credit transfer to improving teaching quality to a need for enhanced student support services.

OUSA welcomed the Honourable John Milloy, Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities the keynote speaker. The Minister gave a short address and then answered questions from students for the better part of an hour. At the conclusion of the Minister's remarks, OUSA President Dan Moulton presented him with a copy of OUSA's submission on the new long-term plan for higher education, this spring.

Also presented at the meeting were the OUSA Annual Report, OUSA's audited statements and a mid-term financial update.

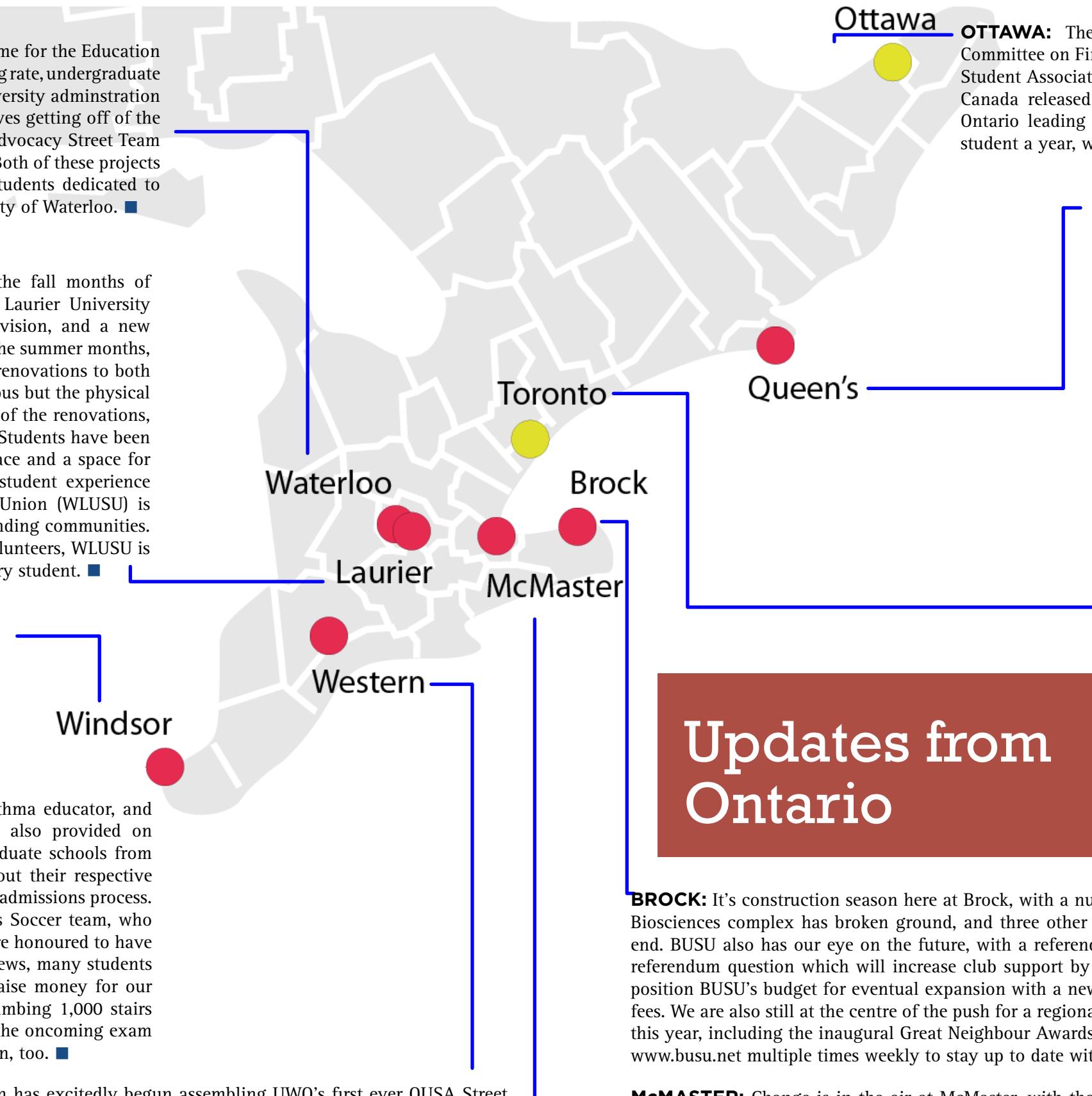


WATERLOO: The fall term has been an exciting time for the Education portfolio at the University of Waterloo. At an increasing rate, undergraduate students are getting involved with lobbying the university administration and local representatives. Two exciting new initiatives getting off the ground this term include the creation of the Feds' Advocacy Street Team and the hiring of a Student Advocacy Coordinator. Both of these projects will help to develop an ever growing number of students dedicated to improving the educational landscape at the University of Waterloo. ■

LAURIER: Making their way to classes during the fall months of the 2009 - 2010 school year, students at Wilfrid Laurier University (WLU) are now experiencing a new look, a new vision, and a new commitment to environmental sustainability. Over the summer months, the Waterloo campus of WLU underwent extensive renovations to both quads improving not only the aesthetics of the campus but the physical accessibility as well. Possibly the biggest highlight of the renovations, is the new outdoor amphitheatre in the lower quad. Students have been using the amphitheatre as both a social meeting place and a space for outdoor studying. Enhancing the extra-curricular student experience at WLU, the Wilfrid Laurier University Students' Union (WLUSU) is excited to engage with both the campus and surrounding communities. With a workforce of approximately 1500 student volunteers, WLUSU is confident in providing a positive experience for every student. ■

WINDSOR: Things have started to get busy again as students at the University of Windsor prepare for exam season. Many events have been going on around campus, and the CAW Student Centre Commons is always bustling with people. The recent student health fair helped students get more information about services available on campus – they were able to take part in a mini reflexology session, had their lung capacity analysed by an asthma educator, and got their blood sugar checked. Information was also provided on how to be cautious about the H1N1 flu virus. Graduate schools from all over Ontario came by to give presentations about their respective programs, and provide more information about their admissions process. Windsor Lancers are also very proud of their Men's Soccer team, who finished second in their division this season, and were honoured to have two of their players selected as all-stars. In other news, many students took part in the United Way iClimb challenge to raise money for our community, teams or individuals participated in climbing 1,000 stairs for the cause! Windsor Lancers are quite busy with the oncoming exam season, but have plenty of activities to be involved in, too. ■

WESTERN: The University Affairs team at Western has excitedly begun assembling UWO's first ever OUSA Street Team. The team has been created to enhance the OUSA presence on the UWO campus and is will be comprised of students-at-large from the Western community. Moving forward, the street team will be preparing for the OUSA Spring General Assembly. The UWO External Affairs committee, External Affairs Coordinator and Provincial Affairs Commissioner have started the preliminary planning of the UWO Blue Chair campaign, working with students and members of the community to promote the promising campaign. ■



Ottawa

OTTAWA: The federal government's House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance met with representatives of the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations discuss the OECD's annual education report. Statistics Canada released a report on university tuition across the country, with Ontario leading with the highest average tuition at \$5,951 per full-time student a year, with the national average at \$4,917. ■

QUEEN'S: Queen's is continuing to grow with the opening of the first phase of the Queen's Center on December 1, and construction is to begin on a new medical building as well as a performing arts center. A warm welcome goes out to the new VP (Operations) and VP (Administration) Caroline E. Davis, and VP (Academic) Bob Silverman. The OUSA campus coordinator is in the process of planning the OUSA Awareness Week, which will be taking place from January 25-29. Stress balls with OUSA information, beer cozies, foam bricks, blue chairs, and a night out at Clark Hall Pub will all be included in this amazing week that will raise awareness on the Queen's campus of the Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance. The week will also be combined with Financial Aid Awareness week, to ensure that students have all the tools that they need to succeed in their university career without facing financial barriers. ■

TORONTO: With the government's Reaching Higher Plan set to expire in 2010, a post-secondary secretariat has been created to devise a new long-term plan for higher education. OUSA is working with the secretariat to ensure that the needs of Ontario's undergraduate students are taken into account in the new plan. The issues of financial aid, student success, and tuition are at the top of the agenda. ■

Updates from Ontario

BROCK: It's construction season here at Brock, with a number of major projects on the go. The Niagara Health and Biosciences complex has broken ground, and three other projects are underway which will be completed by year's end. BUSU also has our eye on the future, with a referendum coming up in February. Students will be voting on a referendum question which will increase club support by over 700% per year, establish an environmental fee, and position BUSU's budget for eventual expansion with a new students' centre...and do this all without increasing your fees. We are also still at the centre of the push for a regional transit system in Niagara, and have many new initiatives this year, including the inaugural Great Neighbour Awards and student-selected Teaching Awards. Make sure to visit www.busu.net multiple times weekly to stay up to date with the latest information. ■

McMASTER: Change is in the air at McMaster, with the announcement of our new President, Patrick Deane. The MSU executive is excited to meet him and discuss some of the issues facing undergraduate students. We were proud to use McMaster as an exemplar of effective teaching practices in the student success components of OUSA's recent government submission, and are strongly behind our University's commitment to group and problem-based learning. We are also overjoyed that our TA's and our administration were able to come to an agreement, ending a short but inconvenient strike. ■

Minister Milloy speaks to OUSA's General Assembly

Remarks at Wilfrid Laurier University

Friday, October 23, 2009

DAN MOULTON (OUSA President): This evening we are pleased to welcome the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. OUSA has always been appreciative of the work that this government has done and the commitment it has had to Post-Secondary Education (PSE). Over the past several years, this government has made PSE a priority. We have seen increases in quality and accessibility and improvements in the lives of students. A great deal of this work has been done by the Honourable John Milloy.

Due to his background, Minister Milloy understands the role of the academy in our society and of the student experience. OUSA has always appreciated the support we've received from the Minister for our priorities, and for the student voice. He's been receptive of the student opinion and open to feedback on the policies of the government.

Join me in welcoming the Honourable Minister John Milloy.

MINISTER JOHN MILLOY: Thank you very much for that kind introduction. I'd like to welcome everyone to Waterloo, my riding. I'm glad we're going to have some time

today to talk about post-secondary education and the way ahead. It is not my intention to speak at great length today, but instead hear from all of you and answer your questions about the state of PSE right now and where we are heading.

It's tough out there, as I'm sure you are all aware, and I know that colleges and universities across the province are under great pressure. But I remain very optimistic about PSE for a number of different reasons. Politics has always been about choices regarding what is going to be a priority. I have been very fortunate to be part of a government and under the leadership of a Premier who very much sees PSE as a priority. Obviously, we want to make sure that we have a highly educated population, and at the same time, especially in light of what's happening economically, we see PSE as a big part of Ontario's economic agenda. We must ensure that we have a highly skilled and highly educated workforce, in order to complete and in order to succeed.

And we've tried, I think, to put our money where our mouth is, as the saying goes, and we've done this through the Reaching Higher investment and through follow-up

programs that have come forward. We're now at the point, after five years, where we can assess where we are and where we want to go.

Today there are a hundred thousand more students in our colleges and universities than there were only seven years ago. We've reduced barriers for aboriginal peoples, francophones, people with disabilities and first generation students. We've created twelve-thousand new graduate spaces and are on track to expand that by nearly three thousand more over the next three years. We're creating more first-year medical spaces and we're building four new medical education campuses. More students are graduating with a college diploma or university degree, with completion rates up for both. Fewer students are having to rely on student loans. Lastly, over the past year we've announced forty-nine knowledge infrastructure projects at Ontario institutions, creating thirty-six thousand new student spaces.

And that's just a short list of some of the achievements we've had over the past several years. Hopefully these successes set a framework for how we want to move forward. As I and others have met with different groups, what we have stressed is that we have to think about results. I think that for too long the discussion about PSE for this government has only been about Reaching Higher and the investments that have gone into the system, and that it hasn't been enough about what are some of the results.

I think that we have to wrap our head around the results from our investments thus far. This is an important conversation for right now, as there are three things which are coming up for review. The first,

obviously, is the Reaching Higher funding itself, which was a five year funding program and thus logic would dictate that in the coming budget we must indicate to institutions what funding is going to be available to them in the future.

The second piece is tuition. There are two points to underline in this area with regards to the framework. Firstly, you as students have every right to say "when we pay tuition, what are we getting for our money? What is the value for that investment?" The second point about tuition is that we have to make sure that whatever new framework comes forward, we have to ensure that it is based on a principle that financial issues are never an obstacle for a student going on to higher education. These are two areas we will be focusing on as the current tuition framework comes to an end.

The final piece is one that is rarely discussed but is extremely important: the multi-year accountability agreements. In the Rae Review, which spawned Reaching Higher, it was suggested that the government sit down with each institution and reach an agreement with them, building on the outcomes and value for investment that I have been talking about today. The government has been saying to institutions that if you are going to be receiving more funds from us as well as students, we want to ensure that you are accountable, and each year to publish those results.

As many of you know, those results are, in fact, published. These are so important, because these are ways for us to hold the institutions to account. For you as students, because you are what PSE is about, it is a way for you to measure what's going on in your institutions and the success that is taking place.

My view is one around accountability. This is about potential future investments from the government. This is about continuing investment from students. And when we talk about accountability, we want to look at some of the key areas such as teaching support - particularly for the first year for students - and we want to get feedback on how we can measure



OUSA President Dan Moulton presents Ontario: A Province of Knowledge

this and how we can encourage and direct our institutions to come forward with reports that are meaningful.

The final area to touch on is the issue of pathways, and for you as students to understand how to work your way through the system. Credit transfer between institutions and types of institutions is one of the fastest growing pathways for students. Being able to move from an applied learning atmosphere to a more theoretical one, and visa versa, is something I see whenever I go and meet with students.

Unfortunately, I think that we as a government put obstacles in the path of students to move from one system to another. Again, it comes back to accountability and the fact that you are investing hard earned money into your education, and shouldn't have to take an extra year or two at a university or at a college because you are transferring from one to the other.

As you know we have been working hard on this

issue, and have come to OUSA to get your feedback, and it's an area where we want to make sure that the system is as transparent and open as possible.

This is just a quick overview of the system and its future. And in closing, I just want to say thank-you. This is hard work what you do, representing your institutions and your students.

I want to thank OUSA generally for the very good relationship they have with the Ministry and our Office, and with myself. I always enjoy coming out to your events and continuing our dialogue. ■

John Milloy is the Ontario Minister of Training, Colleges & Universities, as well as Minister of Research and Innovation, and is the MPP for Kitchener Centre.



This is hard work what you do, representing your institutions and your students.

Canada Needs Universities Of All Sizes To Contribute To Research

By Jack Lightstone

President, Brock University

THIS SUMMER the leaders of five large Canadian universities went public in lobbying governments to concentrate research spending at their schools. The implication was that research money would be diverted away from other universities.

They argued that only these few institutions in Canada have the potential to be world-class centres of research and graduate education; all they need is more money. The rest of the country's universities would be largely undergraduate institutions with some limited graduate education and research.

This policy would be so completely wrongheaded that it would be dangerous for Canada. History has already taught us the painful lesson of what happens when students have their potential restricted by discriminatory or exclusionary approaches to research opportunities.

We are in an era when Canada requires not

only many more people to have university educations in order to maintain our national competitiveness, but exponentially –more people with post-graduate degrees, especially as countries such as China and India ramp up their capacity to deliver bachelors-level education to their citizenry.

This is universally recognized by all OECD countries, Canada among them.

Canada needs all of its universities to contribute to post-graduate education. Four or five, even 10 or 13 institutions could not possibly produce the numbers without becoming mass-education, graduate student factories – precisely the wrong model for post-graduate education.

We would be turning back the clock more than 50 years, when only a limited number of Canadian universities offered graduate programs in a wide array of fields. At that time, many of Canada's best undergraduates

went elsewhere for post-graduate education, and many did not return.

of Canadian universities offered graduate programs in a wide array of fields. At that time, many of Canada's best undergraduates went elsewhere for post-graduate education, and many did not return.

In recent years Canadian universities have hired hundreds of young, gifted academics. It is heartening to see the quality of these young faculty members, and their potential to have not only stunning teaching careers but also significant research careers at the cutting edge of their disciplines.

These faculty have a reasonable expectation that their careers will be well served at more than just a handful of Canada's universities, and they ought to be able to have confidence that good research work and good research proposals will win grants in open, peer-review competitions, notwithstanding their home university. To restructure the system otherwise is to tell them to leave Canada, since they cannot all migrate to the handful of universities that put themselves forward as candidates for preferential funding and research support. What a loss to Canada! And what a loss to teaching at the undergraduate level as well as at the graduate level! For all teaching greatly benefits from a research environment.

At Brock University in the Niagara area of southern Ontario, many of our research and graduate programs are drivers of the economic, social and cultural development of our host region. In this respect, Brock is pivotal to addressing the economic challenges of our region, once one of the most heavily industrialized in Canada and now facing all of the challenges associated with the globalization of manufacturing.

To play this role, Brock's researchers and institutes in many disciplines increasingly partner with local agencies, local government and local industry to define research programs, to conduct research and to disseminate the results – not only to the international scholarly community but to local stakeholders, in a form that directly addresses local developmental challenges.

A handful of "Tier 1" institutions could, and would, never play this partnership role for the plethora of Canada's regions. Yet playing this role in itself drives research excellence and

enriches graduate programs and graduate students.

The current funding model, especially for research and related activities, already ensures that Canada's research powerhouses get more resources: more chairs; more indirect-cost grants; the lion's share of federal grants. That is appropriate – they have earned it. But they should continue to have to earn it, just as everyone else should earn what they receive. That is the true driver of quality and excellence, not a priori entitlements.

After all, Institutions do not do research. Researchers and their teams do research. And therefore governments ought to fund the work of these individuals and teams – wherever the quality warrants it.

Focusing on a few institutions as loci of top-

**Institutions do not do research.
Researchers and their teams do
research.**

flight research and graduate studies – and relegating other universities to the status of largely undergraduate schools – would be a great step backwards.

It would leave much of our intellectual capital underdeveloped, would incite an exodus of first-rate minds to campuses south of the border, and would leave many Canadian communities without the necessary drivers of their economic, social and cultural development in an age of global competitiveness–effectively relegating these communities to "Tier 2" status.

This would be a national disaster. Canada needs more researchers, not fewer. And, therefore, Canada needs more of its universities increasingly engaged in research and graduate studies. ■

Jack Lightstone is President and Vice-Chancellor of Brock University in St. Catharines, Ontario. For more information contact Kevin Cavanagh, Associate Director of Communications and Public Affairs at Brock University, 905.688.5550, ext. 5888 or kcavanagh@brocku.ca

A Smart Canada and Higher Ambitions for Higher Education

By Amit Chakma and David Johnston

Presidents of the University of Western Ontario and the University of Waterloo

RECENTLY AN IMPORTANT DEBATE on higher education has received public airings in the national press. Should universities be viewed and funded as if they are all the same or should we distinguish those that emphasize teaching from those with more research? Higher education is of significant national importance and as such, a public debate on the future of higher education is welcome. In a globalized world we need to excel in areas that are important to Canadians if we are to maintain and enhance our high standards of living and quality of life. The global community also needs Canada to share its values in making the world a better place. To achieve these goals, Canadian universities must provide the highest quality of education to our next generation and feed the innovation through creation, discovery and interpretation to give Canada a competitive edge in attaining and enhancing knowledge and wealth for its own citizens and those of the world. In the game of discovery and innovation, second place is not good enough. Canada and Canadian universities

must seek gold. Since we cannot be at the top in all that we do, we need to select areas within our own institutions that are of strategic importance to this nation and where each can excel. Thus, we strongly believe in institutional differentiation for the sake of attaining global excellence. The question is how? We suggest the following:

Canadian Universities are chronically underfunded. Average funding per student in Canada is one of the lowest in North America. We need to raise this level of funding to at least the North American average. Without this, our hopes and dreams of achieving global excellence will remain unfulfilled. Individually, universities will have occasional successes in advancing research and teaching due to sheer luck and philanthropic contributions from generous Canadians, but we will not have a systemic capacity to excel.

All major Canadian universities are publicly funded. In recent years, the provinces, including Ontario, have

been investing more in post-secondary education. The current economy has diminished provincial resources. If we are to achieve excellence, there is an alternative to the current funding system. The province could grant universities more latitude to manage their own financial affairs, including the setting of tuition fees within a broader regulatory framework and with a commitment that each university ensure all qualified students have the opportunity to attend.

It is not reasonable to expect governments to be the sole investors in raising the calibre of Canadian universities. A number of generous Canadians have helped our institutions build excellence in select areas. There is much more generosity that can be tapped if Canadian and provincial governments were to encourage philanthropists to invest in education by matching every dollar raised by all universities. Thus each dollar donated will translate into three dollars of investment. This matching is already taking place in many instances directly or indirectly. Making it transparent and institutional will attract private citizens to invest in building excellence in our universities.

Canada and the provinces also have the opportunity to improve our innovation capacity by doubling their investment in research and development. Current levels of support should be used to maintain the base with most incremental investments directed towards building excellence. The sole measure for deciding allocation of these incremental resources should be "excellence" in areas with critical mass. If excellence and obtaining critical mass of talents were used as the sole criteria for this incremental fund, the outcome will gradually lead to institutional differentiation. There will be no need to designate a handful of universities as research intensive universities. If a smaller institution seeks to be world class in a single area, this will allow that institution to do so.

Key government research laboratories should be fully integrated within the university system in Canada, along the models of U.S. national laboratories, to achieve increased synergies.

A blue-ribbon panel consisting of prominent Canadians, including those who are leading some of North America's top universities, should be convened to advise the government on how to support excellence. The current presidents of Berkeley, Princeton and Johns Hopkins are Canadians as is Princeton's immediate past president. They could all be invited to join this panel.

The report of the blue-ribbon panel can be the backdrop to a first ministers' meeting as suggested by our colleague David Naylor of the University of Toronto.

We hope that the outcome of such a first ministers' meeting will lead to the enactment of a Smart Nation Act-Canada Learning and Innovation Act, similar in its impacts to the

Canada Health Act and will establish Canada's aspiration and a multi-governmental framework for us to be a "smart nation".

Our undergraduate and graduate students have the intellectual ability, the desire and the discipline to compete with the best. But to achieve their goals, students need universities that are equally bold and ambitious. Canadian universities can compete and many of our institutions will rise to the top if a supportive environment is created. ■



Towards Enhancing the Quality of Teaching and Learning in Post-Secondary Education

By Joy Mighty

Professor, Queen's University

THERE HAS BEEN growing concern about the quality of Post-Secondary Education (PSE) in Canada. Among the many issues typically raised are questions about the levels of funding, admission and graduation standards, mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating programs and institutions, and the effectiveness of teaching practices. Given that PSE is a provincial responsibility, no national standard exists for any of these quality issues. Instead, several approaches to establishing, monitoring and evaluating various dimensions of quality co-exist, both across the country and within individual provinces.

In Ontario, quality oversight has over the years been the shared responsibility of various government agencies and non-governmental lobby groups. In 2004, growing concerns about quality led the Government to establish a commission, led by former Premier

Bob Rae, to review the state of PSE. The commission's report (Rae, 2005) emphasized the need to make the processes for ensuring quality explicit and recommended, *inter alia*, that every university in Ontario should participate in the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE). The NSSE represents "empirically confirmed good practices in undergraduate education" (National Survey of Student Engagement) and its results therefore serve as a proxy for quality in PSE. The Commission also recommended and subsequently led to the establishment of the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario (HEQCO) with a mandate to conduct research and provide advice to the Government with special emphasis on quality, accessibility and accountability. At the same time, the Council of Ontario Universities (COU), the organization of Executive Heads of Ontario's publicly assisted

universities, established a task force to develop "Guidelines for University Undergraduate Degree Level Expectations" (UDLEs) to serve as a framework for describing expectations of attributes and performance by graduates of universities in Ontario (OCAV, 2005). Universities agreed to use these guidelines in explicitly articulating their own undergraduate degree level expectations based on their unique institutional values and goals and to develop policies for incorporating them into their program review processes, effective June 2008. More recently, in 2009, the COU established a new Council - the Ontario Universities Council on Quality Assurance (OUCQA) - to oversee quality assurance for academic programs at both the graduate and undergraduate levels in Ontario's publicly assisted universities.

Despite these recent province-wide initiatives, there is still much scepticism among some stakeholders about the quality of teaching and learning in PSE. The Rae report, for example, decried the apparent lack of pedagogical innovation in our institutions. Since its establishment, HEQCO has taken several steps to encourage institutions to use their NSSE data to identify aspects of the undergraduate experience that can be improved through adopting policies and practices that are more consistent with research on good practice in undergraduate education.

"From the onset, we ... reinforce the paradigm that higher education is simply to suffer through meaningless tests, assignments and labs, affirming that one's goal here is simply to get through.... Rather than construct a system that mentors students in their quest for growth, awakens their creativity and invites independent thought, we have spawned the very antithesis. ... Universities have been insidiously converted into training farms for the professional class. We have been mandated to fulfill economic missions, pumping out cookie-cutter graduates readied for the information age. Whereas universities were to be sources from which new worlds sprang, we've instead structured our University to mirror the real world and so have constrained its ability to evolve something transcendent. We've been led into happy complacency that this is okay." (Bishop, 2004)

No doubt, if asked, this student would acknowledge that many of his university professors are committed, talented, caring and effective teachers who devote an enormous amount of time and energy to meeting their teaching responsibilities. He would also point out, however, that his concern is clearly not with individuals but rather with the system. And while this is only one student's perspective, I daresay that, unfortunately, there is at least a modicum of truth in what he says.

Indeed, other stakeholders have been

equally concerned, if less vocal, about the quality of teaching and learning in PSE. The Rae report, for example, decried the apparent lack of pedagogical innovation in our institutions. Since its establishment, HEQCO has taken several steps to encourage institutions to use their NSSE data to identify aspects of the undergraduate experience that can be improved through adopting policies and practices that are more consistent with research on good practice in undergraduate education.

In April 2008, HEQCO collaborated with the Society for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education (STLHE) to organize and sponsor a symposium titled "Taking Stock: Symposium on Teaching and Learning Research in Higher Education." The symposium sought to identify and synthesize, from multiple research traditions and perspectives, what is already known

One of the most effective ways that faculty can promote student engagement and thus enhance the quality of the university experience is to use active learning strategies

about teaching practice and student learning in higher education, what we still need to know, and the implications of what is known for improving the quality of education. The ultimate goal was to encourage system-wide adoption of teaching approaches that are consistent with what is known about student learning. Published by McGill-Queen's University Press, a book that will make the papers presented at the symposium widely accessible is now in the final stages of production (Christen Hughes and Mighty, in press).

While not exhaustive in coverage, the book synthesizes decades of research by scholars from various parts of the world, which has consistently found that there is a close association

between how faculty teach and how students learn, and how students learn and the learning outcomes achieved. When, for example, faculty teach and examine in ways that emphasize rote learning, students adopt surface approaches to learning which lead to less than optimal outcomes. Many university teachers tend to deliver more content than students can assimilate without cognitive overload, or to lecture for an entire class period without engaging students and facilitating their conceptual understanding of the material. Yet, research evidence suggests a host of more effective teaching practices that promote student learning. We know, for example, that learning is enriched when students are encouraged to: monitor their own thinking; create their own understanding by connecting new material to what they already know and to the "real world";

formulate and investigate their own questions; and share their findings with their peers. What is disturbing is that much of this research has been known for decades; yet we continue to teach in ways that are contrary to these findings. This begs the question: Why do we not teach in ways that we know to be more effective?

Many of our current approaches to teaching have been guided by tradition and dogma rather than by research. In addition, faced with large classes, increasingly heavy workloads, and the constant struggle to balance multiple, often conflicting roles and responsibilities at work and home, many faculty unfortunately choose efficiency over effectiveness. Despite these barriers, there is much

that can be done to improve the quality of teaching and learning if the transformational power of a university education is to be realized. Faculty members and students have unique responsibilities for enhancing quality, although some students may not always agree that they have any responsibility in the matter.

One of the most effective ways that faculty can promote student engagement and thus enhance the quality of the university experience is to use active learning strategies. In its most basic form, active learning requires that students participate in

constructs or patterns, and applying knowledge in real world situations. Deep learning involves integrating and synthesizing information with prior learning; it involves seeing things from different perspectives.

But how do we influence faculty and students to translate this evidence-based knowledge about teaching and learning into action? Fortunately, many universities now have educational development units, also known as teaching and learning centres, which can assist faculty members and departments in using research-guided pedagogy combined with modern

information technology to engage students in deeper, more meaningful learning. But as Rae observed in his report,

"they are not mandatory, and often it is teachers who need help most who get it least" (Rae, 2005: 17). Besides, improving the quality of teaching and learning in PSE is not the sole responsibility of such units. The government and university administrators also have important roles to play. The truth is that faculty might be more inclined to explore alternative teaching approaches with the judicious allocation of more resources to support teaching innovation and the establishment of more meaningful rewards for teaching excellence. Unfortunately however, the teaching function appears to be seriously undervalued at many of our institutions.

The outcomes of any transformational process are dependent to a large extent on the initial inputs into the system as well as the quality of the transformational processes themselves. In the case of teaching and learning, essential inputs include an adequate supply of effective teachers, recruitment of students with the requisite aptitudes and skills

for further development, and the provision of sufficient and appropriate physical and financial resources to facilitate the transformation. Except for students, the existing resources in PSE in Ontario can be summed up succinctly: not enough! Yet the physical, financial and human resources are inextricably linked. So too are faculty recruitment, selection, promotion and tenure processes in which teaching and learning competence and scholarship are valued, adequately assessed, and appropriately rewarded. Together, these contribute not only to the quality of teaching and learning, but also to student and faculty wellbeing, and to overall morale and valuing of the university experience.

Like Rae (2005: 17), I am convinced that nothing short of a renewed commitment to teaching excellence is necessary. I fervently hope that effective leadership will emerge at all levels to ensure the availability of the necessary inputs and appropriate transformational processes so that the desired outcomes of the highest quality PSE in Ontario can be achieved. ■

Dr Joy Mighty is the President of the Society for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education, the Director of the Centre for Teaching and Learning at Queen's University.

Many of our current approaches to teaching have been guided by tradition and dogma rather than by research

the learning process and that they use content knowledge, not just acquire it. Learning is not a spectator sport. Students must talk about what they are learning, write about it, relate it to past experiences and apply it to their daily lives. The essence of active learning is captured in the well-known Chinese proverb: "Tell me and I will forget. Show me and I might remember. Involve me and I will understand."

The effectiveness of the transformational process that we call education depends to a large extent on the quality of the experience that faculty and students encounter in the symbiotic-style relationship that exists between teaching and learning. Active learning pedagogies influence students to take a deep approach to learning. Deep learning involves a personal commitment to understand the material which is reflected in using various strategies such as reading widely, combining a variety of resources, discussing ideas with others, reflecting on how individual pieces of information relate to larger



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"Proud founding members of the Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance"

Financial Aid Literacy

By Miriam Kramer

Canadian Education Project

WHEN DO I HAVE TO BEGIN paying back my government student loans? When does interest begin to accrue on them? How do I find out how much I have to pay back so far? Will any of it be remitted or forgiven when I graduate? How long will it take me to pay it back?

If you're getting stressed out just reading this list of questions, you're probably not alone. Hundreds of thousands of Canadian post-secondary education students deal with these important decisions before, after and during their time in college and university. Just as stressful as borrowing large sums of money is attempting getting access to coherent information that will both provide answers to these questions.

As part of the Measuring the Effectiveness of Student Aid (MESA; see www.mesa-project.org) project, I've had the opportunity to travel across Canada to speak with college and university students on, among several topics, their knowledge of and sources for financial assistance information. Overall, there is a lack of understanding (and immense frustration among students relating to this lack of understanding) regarding eligibility requirements, the rules and regulations regarding getting loans and bursaries and paying back loans. And levels of financial aid knowledge among Ontario students were the worst in all of Canada.

Regarding their knowledge of financial assistance, many Ontario students equated government student financial aid with student loans; while some were aware of the existence of bursaries, many were not. In Toronto, participants in these groups expressed the most cynicism

and disbelief about government providing "free money" to students. As well, most students assumed that it takes a lot longer than it does for the average student to pay back their undergraduate student loans. These students also thought that government loan interest rates were substantially higher than they actually are; they were wildly off the mark in terms of expected earning upon graduation with a BA. While most students knew that interest was not charged on student loans while a borrower was still in school, there was much confusion among students regarding when interest on government student loans began to accrue. In addition, there was confusion regarding when loans needed to be paid back; while most students answered correctly that they had a six-month waiting period between graduation and payback, many were unsure about this.

When asked about financial aid information sources, most students reported obtaining information by "word of mouth" from parents, friends, relatives or co-workers. Many talked about learning things from friends or relatives who had borrowed money. Several said they heard about student financial aid from siblings who had taken a student loan or from parents who had encouraged them to apply. While some reported getting some information in high school, Ontario students reported being told "to look at a government website to get information" instead of being offered specific information from their teachers or guidance counsellors.

This student financial aid illiteracy has ramifications for the future of Canada, particularly regarding student

default rates, which is something that should concern government deeply. As well, governments should care that students who are taking out large sums of debt are doing so responsibly and with full knowledge of the costs and conditions of their loans.

While the Ontario Student Assistance Program, the Canada Student Loans Program and post-secondary education institutions provide information that could answer these questions, it's not necessarily easy to find or understand.

Sure, we all could be a bit more detail-oriented in our lives and conduct a little bit more research and careful reading, including the fine print at the bottom of the page where we know many of the juicy details and caveats are explained. However, our research showed that students are seeking and getting information not just from friends and relatives, but also from government websites. And these websites are not exactly the most readable or understandable. In fact, the Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation recently conducted research on the Canada Student Loans Program website and some related financial assistance materials. They found that the literacy levels required to comprehend much of the information available were written at a graduate school level, a level of educational attainment that most parents of high school and undergraduate students have not attained, not to mention that of the students themselves.

The students with whom I spoke raised these issues as well. And in most of the discussions, they were keen to criticize how information about student financial aid information was provided, stating they did not receive enough information in high school about student loans and other funding options. In nearly every group, there were comments about the inaccessibility of government officials and the difficulty of using websites to obtain information. Students reported that they found it very difficult to locate information about student financial aid via the internet. They also reported difficulty in filling out the various application forms. A few had called the information telephone number for additional assistance, but most only used the website. Students suggested that it would be helpful to have individuals at their post-secondary institutions actively provide this information to students in information sessions.

How do we solve this problem? For starters, governments need to pay more attention to students. Policymakers and their staff who coordinate financial assistance websites and related materials should immerse themselves in the lives of students to really understand how students think, what students read, and how students get their information. It may be that student advisors are in order when drafting websites and other materials. Beta testing of the materials before and after they are drafted is necessary to get it right. A key aspect of this process is to simply

make materials and websites more understandable. Young people aren't stupid; they just get information in different ways than their middle aged and senior counterparts do. If the governments can't get this right, it might be time for the student associations to create their own materials and knowledge mobilization campaigns to ensure that Canadian students have the correct information and know their rights regarding all aspects of funding post-secondary education.

In addition, many provinces have a high school career curriculum in Grade 10 or 11 that deals with thinking about future careers and education. However, a quick scan of the curricula for these courses shows that they do not include a lot of information about students and families can plan to pay for post-secondary education. As such, governments could overhaul these curricula to ensure that an in-depth module on paying for post-secondary education is included for these high school students.

Compared to some of Canada's education woes, this problem of financial aid illiteracy is relatively cheap and easy to fix. The government just needs to better listen to and understand students and young people.

Miriam Kramer is Director of the Canadian Education Project (www.canedproject.ca), part of the Higher Education Strategy Associates (www.higheredstrategy.com). Email her at mkramer@canedproject.ca.

* Answers: In general, an Ontario student will have a student financial assistance package made up of provincial (OSAP) and federal (CSLP) loans and bursaries. Loans (or repayable student financial assistance) must be paid back after a six-month grace period that begins after a student completes their credential or leaves their institution; however, interest begins to accrue immediately after the student completes or finished school. For Ontario students, whether or not some or all of your loans will be paid for by government depends on how much loan debt you've accumulated. You can find out how much funding you've received and how much debt you've accrued by logging into the OSAP website Access Window (www.osap.gov.on). Through the Ontario Student Opportunity Grant, a grant will be awarded at the end of each year to pay down any combined federal and provincial annual loan debt exceeding \$7,000 for two terms (or \$10,500 for three terms). On average, it takes about seven years for a Canadian to pay back their undergraduate student debt; data from Statistics Canada's 2000 National Graduate Survey showed that 30% of Ontario college and 32% of Ontario university students had repaid their debt within two years of graduation. ■

Reflections of a Student Advocacy Senior Citizen

By Scott Courtice

University Students' Council of the University of Western Ontario

TEN YEARS AGO this September I decided to walk into the offices of the Alma Mater Society at Queen's University to look for a volunteer opportunity. I didn't know it at the time, but that decision was the first step of a journey that I'm still on today – advancing the interests of undergraduate students, and the post-secondary education system as a whole.

In student advocacy years, I'm a very old man; but along with my senior citizen status I think I've developed some wisdom along the way. Thus, I'd like to share some personal observations of how student advocacy priorities have changed over the past ten years and humbly suggest two areas where student advocates in Ontario should focus their attention over the next decade.

The biggest change since the heady days of 1999 has been a noticeable increase in the attention that student leaders give to defending the interests of students who have not yet entered post-secondary education – in most cases,

If you told me in 1999 that within six years an Ontario government would freeze tuition for two years, eliminate unfunded BIUs, and invest \$6.2 billion into the system I would have called you crazy

focusing on young people that are at risk of not entering the system due to a range of financial and non-financial barriers. Dialogue around the importance of early intervention strategies and other means of encouraging underrepresented groups to attend post-secondary education are now second nature to most enlightened student advocates, but ten years ago such discussions would have been deemed 'off-mission' in many student circles because they didn't address the immediate interests of current students.

This shift has had a significant impact on the policy lens used by many student groups when formulating their

advocacy priorities. If the policy lens had remained focused almost exclusively on what is best for the pocketbooks of current students, student groups like OUSA would have put all of their energies towards reducing costs for current students through tuition freezes, tuition reductions, tax credits, or other policy mechanisms that reduce costs for all students, regardless of their need. But with the lens broadened, the conversation became more complex. It forced us to ask the question "how do you best spend scarce public dollars to get more underrepresented students in university and college classrooms, while balancing the desire to contain costs for current students while ensuring quality is maintained?" This question does not lend itself to easy answers, or at least answers that neatly fit on placards!

Hitting the above policy objectives requires the right balance of tuition policy, financial aid, tax policy, government funding, and several other intangibles that we're only now beginning to understand thanks to emerging

research. Frankly, the admission by many student groups that this discussion is indeed complex – and their willingness to listen to research that may not align with previously held conceptions – has required tremendous courage from countless student leaders who could have chosen an easier path by sticking to old, popular,

tightly-held dogmas.

I ascribe this shift to two factors: the growing courage of student leaders to commit themselves to issues that are larger than themselves, and the explosion of research on access to higher education fuelled by the work of the Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation, the Canadian Council on Learning, Statistics Canada, the Educational Policy Institute, the Higher Educational Quality Council of Ontario, student groups themselves, and a host of other free-agents. When I began as an advocate, good research was scarce to non-existent. This allowed stakeholders of

all stripes to stick with their self-interested positions without fear of having assumptions challenged by solid data.

When Millennium first began releasing research many student leaders – myself included – were uncomfortable with the new data-driven reality, and initially questioned the motivations of the Foundation based on suspicions that their true motivation was to justify governments placing a greater financial burden on students. But as the Foundation continued releasing groundbreaking work, and as a more diverse group of researchers began entering the fray, it became increasingly difficult to ignore the data, or ascribe emerging research to some shadowy government conspiracy. As such, most post-secondary stakeholders recognized the explosion of research as an opportunity to critically analyze previously held assumptions, and to develop a more holistic set of policy solutions to increase access to higher education.

The second biggest change over the past decade is that governments started investing in higher education after years of lean times – the oft-cited \$6.2 billion investment in Ontario's 2005 Budget being a prime example. When I started as an advocate, professional programs were deregulated in Ontario, institutions were making deep and painful cuts due to government cut-backs, and institutions weren't receiving operating funding from government for many students within the system (so called "unfunded BIUs"). If you told me in 1999 that within six years an Ontario government would freeze tuition



Wilfrid Laurier University Students' Union

Wilfrid Laurier University Students' Union

for two years, eliminate unfunded BIUs, and invest \$6.2 billion into the system I would have called you crazy. Unfortunately, these good times were short lived, and a new era of scarcity has returned, putting students groups and institutions back on defence. After years of almost feeling entitled to good news on budget day, this has been a painful adjustment. But groups like OUSA have been quick to recognize the change, and are adapting accordingly.

It is difficult to predict the future, but I believe student advocates must focus on two additional priorities over the next decade: pay more attention to improving students' quality of life closer to home by enhancing the social, cultural, and economic vibrancy of the communities they live and study in; and, begin enhancing access and student success for adult learners.

Our economy is undergoing a fundamental transformation, and communities that host post-secondary institutions will be at the heart of this shift. Improving public transit, social conditions, culture, and overall economic vibrancy of local communities will improve students' quality of life in the short term, but will also set the conditions for their personal success after graduation, and the success of communities that host post-secondary institutions. Every graduating student won't be able to live in Montreal, Toronto, Calgary, Edmonton, and Vancouver – thus, medium sized university cities must adapt to retain more young professionals, and students can play a leading role in shaping communities to make this happen. Spending more time at City Hall isn't nearly as glamorous as roaming the halls of Queen's Park or Parliament Hill, but progress can be made locally that has a noticeable difference in the lives of students, and positive change can happen much faster at City Hall than in our senior legislatures.

Adult learning should also be part of the next frontier of student advocacy. The Institute for Employment Research argues that 80 per cent of new jobs created between 1999 and 2010 will require some form of post-secondary education. Putting more young people on the path to higher education will help meet our labour market needs, but what about the scores of adults that never got the chance? Adult learners have unique needs, pressures, and obligations that the current financial aid system is not designed to adequately address, nor is the Employment Insurance system. Ontario's Second Career strategy is a start, but I believe the needs of adult learners require more attention in the years ahead. I say this as a principle of social justice, but also from a clinical labour market and economic competitiveness perspective.

I am consistently impressed by the work of student leaders on behalf of their constituents. Most of their work goes unseen, yet they put in long hours on behalf of students in the system, and those who aspire to it. They are also willing to do what's right, even if choosing that path isn't an easy one. I'm humbled to serve with them, and look forward to supporting another decade of progress. ■

Scott Courtice is the Public Affairs Officer at the University Students' Council at Western. He has served students for over a decade, having previously held the positions of Executive Director of OUSA.

Our economy is undergoing a fundamental transformation, and communities that host post-secondary institutions will be at the heart of this shift

Check out OUSA's
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A screenshot of the OUSA website homepage. The header features the OUSA logo and navigation links for Home, About OUSA, Advocacy, Policy, Newsroom, and Contact Us. Below the header, there is a banner for the Fall 2009 General Assembly. A sidebar on the left includes a newsletter sign-up form, a welcome video player, and a blog feed. The main content area features a large image of a group of people, a video player for YouTube, and sections for news, blog, and visitors.

Our e-learning Future: Technology is Changing, but Principles Hold

By Griffin Carpenter

Student, Wilfrid Laurier University



WHETHER ITS MACLEAN'S trumpeting an article on "How computers make our kids stupid" or authors such as Don Tapscott promoting the idea of a Net Generation that is ripe and ready to thrive in a new economy, few doubt that the use of digital information is radically changing the way we live, and learn.

The post-secondary education system is not exempt from the digital information revolution. On the contrary, the digital progress being made is challenging traditional assumptions about how advanced teaching and learning should take place. This is quite evident in the policy considerations underway in the field of e-learning, that is, learning that takes place partially or entirely over the Internet. E-learning, in a sense, is a departure from the conventional educational framework as more and more aspects of the education system go

digital, and many courses, notes, and papers are now digitally available to all, free of charge.

In addition to greater and cheaper availability of information, digital media offers a unique approach to accessibility issues and provides a high degree of flexibility that has led to an increasing number of students enrolling at e-learning institutions. Many post-secondary institutions in Canada now offer e-learning classes as part of their core curriculum. Furthermore, the Canadian Virtual University boasts a 2008 enrolment of 100, 000 students while research from Athabasca University predicts that the university's current growth rate due to specialization in e-learning will cause it to become the nation's largest university in the coming decades.

E-learning classes are now leaving the experimental stage, and the results may be surprising to some. In May 2009, the US Department of Education released a meta-analysis that compiled the results of independent e-learning trials when compared to more traditional face-to-face teaching situations. The study concluded that while a combination of teaching approaches works best for the learning outcomes used in the various trials, e-learning actually outperforms traditional classroom instruction using the same considerations.

With all this potential, what issues then emerge as e-learning is integrated into the Canadian educational landscape? Surprisingly, the issues remain similar to those in the traditional post-secondary education system and so the same principles should apply. E-learning, like all aspects of the post-secondary education system, needs to be guided by the principles of affordability, accessibility, accountability, and quality. The examples of transferable credits, a credit-based tuition framework, and a commitment to funding will help illustrate how e-learning in fact further emphasizes some existing issues already present.

E-learning classes often face questions of credibility when the time comes to transfer from an online institution to a brick and mortar one, but this is not a unique problem. One need only think of the problems that students currently face when they attempt to transfer credits from one institution to another. This phenomenon holds even regarding credits on the same subject taught in the same province. Problems with the transfer of credits will only become more pressing as students not only study at multiple institutions, but under multiple learning formats.

The new kind of student who learns under multiple formats reinforces another problem that is starting to gain attention: the current tuition system is based on the assumption that every student will take a full course load. This fails to reflect the realities of student life. As calls for a reformed tuition framework, in which all tuition is charged on a per-credit basis, gain traction it is important to note that e-learning will further this trend as students in an e-learning environment are more likely to study on a part-time basis.

E-learning also requires strong and consistent funding to ensure that the system functions properly. Many institutions and governments have turned to e-learning, thinking that without a classroom, and with larger class sizes, e-learning will be a money-saving measure. Yet this has amounted to little more than wishful thinking. Lower human costs may be realized through larger classes in a digital medium, but the IT costs, both in setup and maintenance,

have been a surprise for some institutions. This lack of financial support has meant that in some cases, students are unable to access courseware properly and their learning suffers as a result. Furthermore, an e-learning environment may not actually reduce the number of faculty, as recent survey data suggests that the development and operation of a digital course requires additional time and effort, especially if honoured practices such as communal learning, detailed research, and academic risk-taking are to continue among faculty. E-learning should thus not be viewed as a more affordable substitute, but as an additional reason why funding a modernizing post-secondary education system is of the upmost priority.

The Canadian post-secondary education system is built on the assumption that students take full course loads within the same brick-and-mortar institution to get a four year degree and get into the workforce. Our

e-learning actually outperforms traditional classroom instruction using the same considerations

e-learning future puts further emphasis on the need for transferable credits, a credit-based tuition framework, a strong commitment to funding the system, and the application of good principles from which to shape the entire system. As our education system continues to evolve, and in some cases, change dramatically, these issues will not only require the government's attention, but demand it. The sooner the realities of e-learning are dealt with, the sooner Ontario can move fully into the twenty-first century and the modern knowledge economy. ■

Griffin Carpenter is a 4th year student at Wilfrid Laurier University, majoring in political science. He is from Conestoga, Ontario and is looking to go to grad school for environmental economics and policy. He is interested in longboarding, legomations and lobbying. He is also OUSA's local campus coordinator.

A New Frontier?

By David Simmonds

Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation

CHANGE IS life's only constant. As Ontario's higher education system prepares to embark on another journey of change, Ontario's students must be prepared to accept the reality that there is no time to waste.

A review of news clippings, speeches, discussions about research and system design illustrate that in Canada, and more pointedly in Ontario, there is a truly palpable sense of urgency. Leaders and advocates are marking their territory and preparing to engage in what promises to be a crucial conversation about the future of higher education.

Naturally, for student leaders, the number one priority must be enshrining a student-centered vision on your campuses and protecting the interests of your members. But the Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance has a reputation for being supernatural in its policies, positions, and tactics. The challenge for students in the next generation of higher education is ensuring that OUSA has the courage to move beyond access.

Moving beyond access. What does that mean? It means encouraging students, governments, and institutions to look beyond enrolment trends and participation patterns and think seriously about who makes up our campus populations, where they come from, and how reflective these students are of Canada's demographic reality. Ensuring that opportunity is driven in parallel with the pursuit of excellence is the new frontier.

Ignoring the imperative of social justice in higher education could mean loosing our province's most vital battle

At no time could the value of a university degree be more obvious than it is today. Here and around the world, there is a growing gap in earnings based on education levels. In 29 of 30 developed nations, the wage gap is widening between people who have completed some form of postsecondary education and those who have not. Despite increased enrollment and higher expenditures in the Province of Ontario, students from high-income

families are almost three times as likely to persist through university than their peers from low-income backgrounds. Gaps in degree attainment have not closed in the last ten years and, for some learning populations, they have widened. Even in the face of broader access, the challenges of opportunity are stubbornly persistent.

Ignoring the imperative of social justice in higher education could mean loosing our province's most vital battle. I mean that sincerely. Higher education has always been an important rung on the socioeconomic ladder in this country. But it's more than that now. In today's ever-changing global economy, postsecondary education is critical to individual success and the nation's continued prosperity and social stability.

And as Canadians face the most challenging economic conditions since the 1930s, a post-secondary education could very well be a citizen's most important possession. Approximately two-thirds of the jobs created in our new economy will require some form of postsecondary education, including degrees and credentials. That percentage increases even more if you take into account the certification programs and extended job training that many workers will need—and that colleges and universities often will provide.

In other words, the educational bar already has been raised for those who hope to hold the jobs of tomorrow.

And to complicate things further, growing numbers of the province's underrepresented students already face daunting challenges. The math is inescapable: For Ontario to even come close to reaching the goal of 70 percent participation – which should be "re-understood" as degree attainment – achievement rates among underrepresented students will have to rise dramatically. The process of preparing students for an education beyond high school, getting them into PSE and helping them stay through graduation is essential to our collective well being. And this is especially true for aboriginal students, low income Ontarians, and Ontarians who are the first in their families to attend higher education. It is these Ontarians that



represent a rapidly growing percentage of our population. Closing the achievement gap isn't just the right thing to do, it's also the smart thing to do.

It's not just about money. When we say higher education has become the only reliable path into the middle class, this has implications far beyond mere earnings potential. We all know that higher education can transform lives and improve society. Education matters; it's that simple. Statistics show that degree holders earn more, save more and produce more in their lifetimes. They're happier, healthier, and they even live longer. They pay taxes; they're more likely to vote, volunteer, give blood, support charity, and take on leadership roles in their communities.

Conversely, the consequences of not earning a degree are increasingly dire and increasingly likely to affect those from groups that today are grossly underrepresented in PSE or face particular challenges—low-income students, first-generation students, and aboriginal learners. That's why—unless we want demography to dictate destiny—we must find ways to ensure that every willing and qualified Ontarian has the opportunity to succeed in higher education.

How does Ontario achieve this? Where can students make a contribution? I propose three policy efforts that should be pursued.

1) Make the development of human capital a cornerstone of Ontario's economic policy. To do this, Ontario must significantly increase the production of high-quality degrees, make postsecondary education more responsive to workforce needs, and expand opportunities for non-traditional learners. One way to accomplish all of these things is to bolster the province's community colleges in their efforts to improve their students' success rates.

2) Make sure that every child is prepared for success in postsecondary education. This means that K-12 standards must align with those at the post-secondary level. Also, students and families must get all of the information they need to plan for success, and they must get that information early—before eighth grade. We must change the way our government ministries see their business. The Ministry of Education's goals must look beyond high school completion rates. Our post secondary institutions have to appreciate their responsibility to partner with their colleagues in the K-12 system. Daunting challenges require collaborative and sometimes uncomfortable approaches.

3) Define student outcomes for postsecondary education, including expectations for completion and learning. Participation targets for Ontario should specify 70 percent

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Future of PSE Funding

By Mark Langer

President, Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations

STUDENTS AND FACULTY ARE UNITED in the belief that Ontario's universities are underfunded. Our institutions simply do not have the resources they need to maintain and expand a high-quality educational experience. More money is needed in the university system, and this money must be injected by the Government of Ontario. The Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations currently estimates that \$1.1 billion in additional operating funds are needed to help universities hire more faculty, renew their facilities, and keep tuition affordable for Ontario students and their families. Over one billion dollars in the midst of a recession?

Absolutely. Everyone is aware of the difficult financial situation faced by the provincial government, a predicament shared by governments all over the world. But the reality is this: university funding is not a cost to be avoided. It is an investment in the future success of Ontario, and we simply cannot afford to not give our universities the public funding they urgently need.

Ontario is in the midst of a painful transition from a traditional manufacturing economy to a new economic reality based on high-tech industry, innovation, and information. This knowledge economy requires a highly skilled workforce, exactly the kind of professionals produced by our universities. Research suggests that over seventy per cent of new jobs created in Ontario will require some form of postsecondary education. If

we don't give our universities the resources to equip our students for success in the new economy, we cripple the competitiveness of our province and consign ourselves to second-tier status in Canada and around the world.

The people of Ontario deserve better.

In the mid-1990s, Ontario universities endured deep cuts to their public operating grants. This forced many institutions into greater reliance on private funds like endowments and tuition. Increased reliance on endowment funds has exposed our universities to the vagaries of the stock market, essentially gambling a portion of institutional budgets on the boom-and-bust cycles of the global financial system. The folly of this policy shift is powerfully demonstrated by our neighbour to the south. The global financial crisis has hit American private universities – those that rely entirely on tuition, donations and endowments for funds – extremely hard. Conversely, public institutions in France, South Korea, and Australia have thrived during the recession. When universities have a strong foundation of public support, they need not turn to risky sources of funding like the stock market – sources that invariably dry up when the economy goes south. So while Harvard and Yale are forced to cut their budgets, French universities can continue advancing the social and economic goals of their citizens.

The other source of private income – students – is no less problematic. Shifting the cost of delivering higher

education onto students through high tuition fees has severe implications for the affordability and accessibility of our university system. In just two decades, tuition has risen 250 per cent. Student debt has risen alongside skyrocketing fees, saddling many graduates with a severe financial burden. What's more, higher tuition doesn't improve quality; it just softens the damage caused by government cuts. As a result, students end up paying more for less.

Increased use of endowment funds and higher tuition fees amount to a kind of privatization-by-stealth. As the balance of public and private funding gradually shifts, the very idea of a public higher education system becomes threatened. Canada's past successes have depended on robust public services, particularly in the education sector. The erosion of public support for higher education undermines this central principle and imperils our future economic and social vitality.

Premier Dalton McGuinty affirmed the importance of public support for higher education in his 2005 Reaching Higher Plan. This bold initiative injected \$6.2 billion into higher education over five years, and was a welcome change from the previous ten years of deep cuts and then static funding. But in many ways, the Reaching Higher Plan has been the victim of its own success. Unexpected enrolment increases largely erased the impact of the new funding. And with tens of thousands of new students expected at Ontario's campuses in the coming decade, an even bolder follow-up plan will be needed to ensure the quality of our universities in the years to come.

So, \$1.1 billion doesn't sound so crazy after all. In fact, Roger Martin, Dean of the Rotman School of Business at the University of Toronto, has estimated that Ontario's universities need \$10 billion to remain competitive with the rest of the world. With that in mind, a measly \$1.1 billion investment seems downright cheap. And let's be clear: a \$1.1 billion influx now means many more billions in economic returns down the road.

Students and faculty agree: to ensure Ontario's social and economic success now and in an increasingly competitive future depends on high quality higher education built on a foundation of strong public support. Or, in other words, how can we possibly expect to move our province ahead if we leave our students and universities behind? ■

Mark Langer teaches a variety of courses related to film history, national cinemas, genres and animation. His research interests are devoted to the early work of Robert Flaherty (the "father of documentary") and to the animation studios headed by Walt Disney and Max and Dave Fleischer. Outside of Carleton, he has been active as a guest curator for museums, archives and film festivals, including the Museum of Modern Art. He is currently acting president of the Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations.

A New Frontier?

Continued from page 31

attainment of "high-quality" degrees. Ontarians should not be content to increase the number of degree holders by the quickest and simplest means possible. That's a fool's exercise. As the subprime mortgage mess has shown us with brutal clarity, there's a very important difference between perceived worth and genuine value. Our students need degrees that have—and can demonstrate—real value. That's why a focus on learning outcomes must go hand in hand with our efforts to improve retention and attainment rates.

It will be important to see additional public funding made available to higher education institutions. We also know that money will be especially tight in coming years, particularly as the economic recession tightens its grip. This means difficult and strategic choices. (con't p.28) To achieve what I've described, the sector will need to work harder—and faster—than ever before, focusing on both increasing productivity and clearly demonstrating how and why leaders are using resources effectively and efficiently.

It all starts with data: collecting, measuring and analyzing data to help show the way. I've learned that compiling and analyzing the right data is essential to improving higher education. Every institution needs to track some basic things such as enrollment, progression and completion of students by income, age and, in some cases, aboriginal status. We can't achieve a goal if we can't track it. Every institution should define and report learning outcomes in a manner that allows the value added by institutions to be easily discerned. These systems should permit interprovincial tracking and analyses. Data that shows how institutions are performing should be public and broadly disseminated. Taking these steps will allow us to more precisely measure gains.

At this pivotal moment in our history, the decisions that are made by leaders today are likely to have a profound effect on our provinces economic, social, and cultural well-being. OUSA has to show the collective foresight and duty of purpose to recognize that higher education is at the core of our provincial prosperity and that the wise investment of resources will benefit every student—and thereby pay dividends that we will all share for many generations to come. Communicate this value broadly. Influence your partners. Lead through your values. ■

David Simmonds works for the Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation. He graduated from the University of Western Ontario with a degree in Political Science. He served as OUSA President from 2007-2008.

Generation of Debt

By Paul Bien

OUSA Director of Research & Policy Analysis

THE ONTARIO UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT alliance talks a great deal about student financial assistance. Some of these conversations are simple: "is it student financial assistance or aid?" Some of these conversations are incredibly complicated: "is the needs assessment formula representative of the kind of system we are hoping to foster?" One thing we don't talk about, beyond broad strokes and generalities, is the impact of high student debt on an entire generation of Canadians.

Now, I should say, it's not as though the issue isn't important to the organization. On the contrary, it is on our minds all the time. The real challenge is that we don't have enough information to talk about the impact that debt has in our country more specifically than just "well, we know it changes behaviour." I've been working in the area of post-secondary education issues for long enough that I could tell you that the average loan this past year was almost \$7,800, or that over one hundred thousand university students used the Ontario Student Assistance Program last year. But for the life of me, I couldn't tell you if having over \$20,000 of student debt means you can't get a car, or a house, or forces you to take a job you hate because you need to pay down your debt.

Do a quick Google search for student debt and over the course of the pages you might find a study here or there outlining some of the fall-out from high debt levels. Now add the word "Canada" to your search criteria and suddenly you lose most results resembling debt impact studies. There is a great deal of information about repaying your loans and those who face difficulty. You can find interesting studies about the relationship between staying in university and the debt that you carry. But that's where the data ends.

It is important to point out that staying in school, or persistence, is a choice and a clear impact of debt. When the Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation published their paper about debt impact in 2005 a number of interesting facts came to light. The study explains that "the group with the lowest level of persistence had the highest amount of debt for the amount of program they had completed." This means that students who chose not to stay through to the completion of their degree also had the highest amount of debt. The study goes on to point out that debt aversion was a main factor in the decision to drop out.

Understanding repayment and persistence is important, no doubt, but very little work has been done on how debt changes a graduate's non-academic life choices.

For example, if I were to graduate with \$90,000 of combined debt from an undergraduate B.A. and a law program at the University of Western Ontario would I still have the ability to pursue my dream of being a legal-aid focused lawyer? Could I still afford food, shelter, and an \$800 loan payment each month? Further, what life steps will I have to put on hold to repay this debt. Maybe I'll move back in with my parents, maybe I'll delay my wedding and put off having kids.

Worst of all, maybe I won't do any of this and instead go to Bay St. to take a high paying job that is not even in the vicinity of the reasons I had gone to into the profession of law for in the first place. This will ensure that I can repay my loans, but higher education is supposed to open the doors to achieving our dreams, not bolt them shut.

Imbedded in some of these questions are the kinds of metrics researchers might use to test the long term impact of debt. Comparative analysis between graduates from low-income and high-income family backgrounds would be useful in comparing post-graduation: employment choice; living situation; consumer purchases; or, further education. Moreover, a long-term survey and analysis, similar to the youth in transition survey conducted by Statistics Canada, would give important information over the period of time that might be considered the adult formative years: those years between graduation and your first serious professional employment in the field in which you studied. This will help answer the question of the true impact that the rising cost of higher education has on a student's life over the long term.

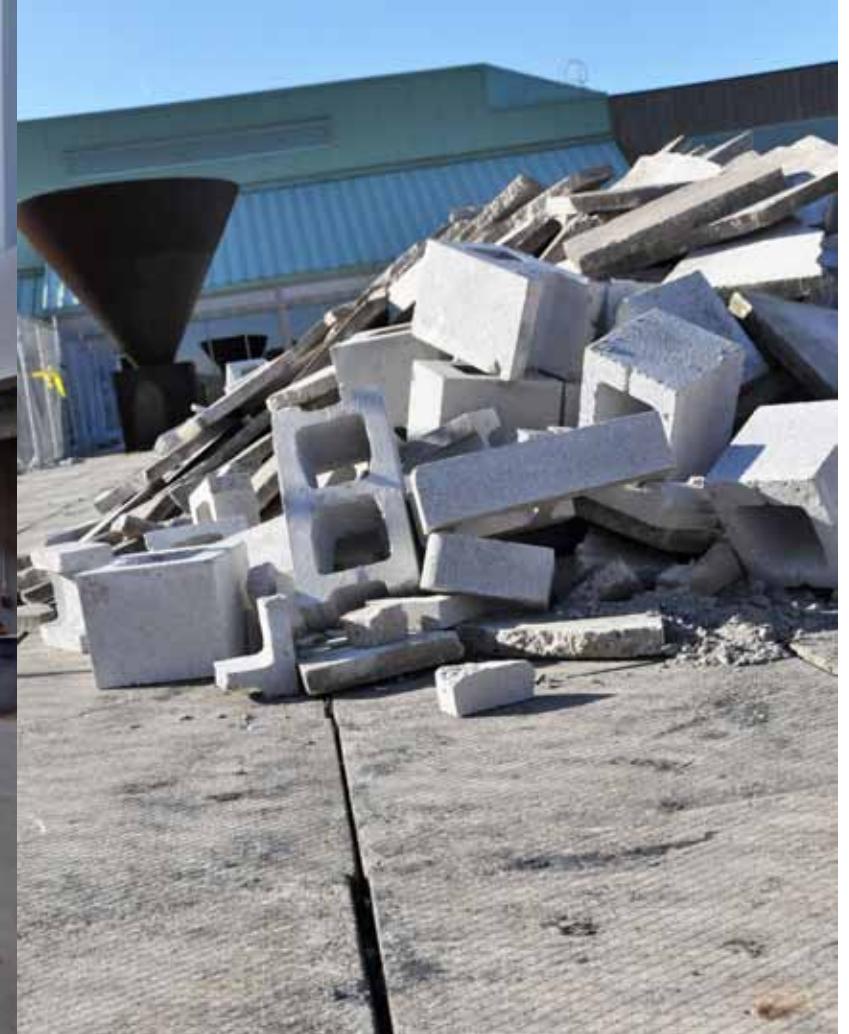
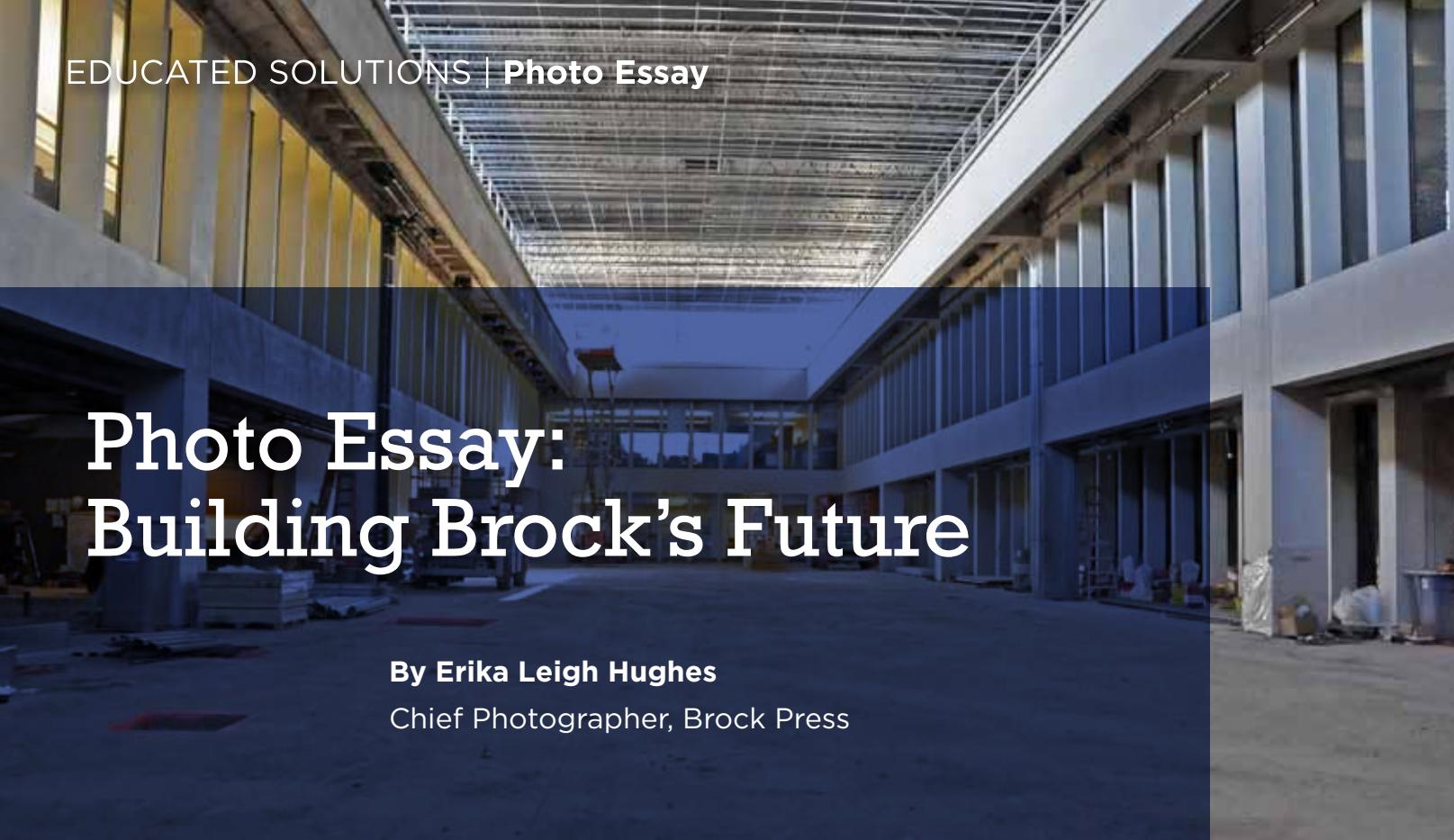
It is time that the community of post-secondary education researchers spent some serious energy in this area. As tuition fees continue to rise, politicians and institutions are inclined to say "it's ok, there's student financial assistance to make sure no student is unable to access higher education." But this is a worrying trend. If student loans are going to be used as the reason for allowing educational costs to grow ever higher, shouldn't we better understand the impact of these decisions? With the Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation's mandate coming to an end, it will fall to the government and others to pick up this mantle and push the issue forward. Without more knowledge, we're sending graduates down a perilous path without fully understanding where it might lead.

Paul Bien is the Director of Research and Policy Analysis for the Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance. He graduated from Carleton University with a Bachelor's in Public Affairs & Policy Management.

Photo Essay: Building Brock's Future

By Erika Leigh Hughes

Chief Photographer, Brock Press





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About OUSA

ORGANIZATIONAL HISTORY:

The Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance (OUSA) was formed in 1992 as the result of an informal alliance of elected student governments. The goal was to present a united front on issues that affect Ontario's undergraduate students in order to more effectively lobby the provincial government for change.

For over a decade, OUSA has been an organizational leader in student advocacy and has had many successes for students in Ontario.

OUSA REPRESENTS:

the interests of over 140,000 professional and undergraduate, full-time and part-time university students at seven institutions across Ontario: Brock University, McMaster University, Queen's University, Wilfrid Laurier University, the University of Waterloo, the University of Western Ontario and the University of Windsor

Our vision is for an accessible, affordable, accountable and high quality post-secondary education in Ontario. To achieve this vision we've come together to develop solutions to challenges facing higher education, build broad consensus for our policy options, and lobby government to implement them.



OUSA Steering Committee 2009-2010

OUSA'S SUCCESSES:

OUSA has a long record of success in lobbying for changes that benefit students at Ontario's universities. Some notable accomplishments include:

- * successfully lobbied for \$150 million investment in university infrastructure in 2009
- * successfully lobbied for creation of the Ontario Distance Grant and Text book & Technology Grant in 2008
- * secured \$5 million investment to help underrepresented groups access higher education in 2008
- * successfully lobbied for a two-year tuition freeze and associated funding for 2004-05 and 2005-06;
- * successfully lobbied for \$20.9 million in changes to student financial aid in the 2004 provincial budget, including:
 - o reducing the parental contribution;
 - o updating the definition of "independent" student from five to four years;
 - o increasing debt forgiveness for loans near-default; and
 - o extending OSAP to accepted refugees.

This space reserved for FSC
Certificate and Information

OUSa

Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance

**345-26 Soho Street
Toronto, Ontario M5T 1Z7
Phone: 416-341-9948
Fax: 416-341-0358
Email: info@ousa.on.ca
Web: www.ousa.ca**

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