

Faculty Update

Vol. 2 Number 3 • March 15, 2006

STRIKE OF 2006

GEORGE BROWN COLLEGE • LOCAL 556
College Professors, Counsellors & Librarians

We're moving the system *Up!*

Local 556 Strike Office • 25 Cecil St., Ste. 301 • tel (416) 977-0684 • fx (416) 977-9181 • opseu556@gmail.com

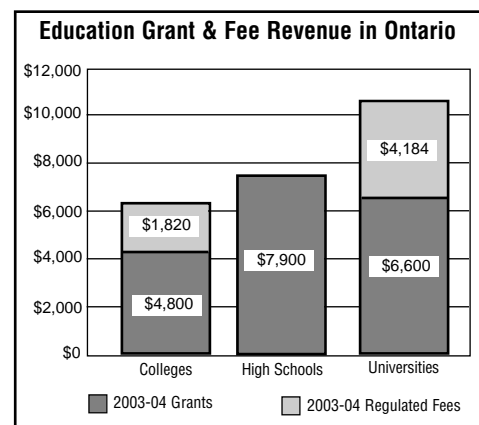
EVERYONE OUT FOR THE THURSDAY RALLY!

Please gather at Dundas Square (SE corner of Yonge and Dundas) at 11:00 – sign in there with your picket captain for the march to the Queen's Park Rally at 11:45. Out of town colleges are relying on us for a loud, strong presence, as not all of them can afford to bus in lots of striking faculty. Let's show management, the government and the media our strength and resolve! ↵

IT'S ALL ABOUT MONEY. WELL, NOT EXACTLY.

It's all about money. Management says there isn't enough, and they can't afford the union's proposals. Is this true?

Management's statements do make reference to a sad reality regarding the funding of Ontario's community colleges. After the 1989 faculty strike, our Communications Committee sent a discussion paper to Bob Nixon, then Ontario's Treasurer, entitled "*How Shall I Underfund Thee... Let Me Count the Ways*". It drew attention to the province's underfunding of our college system. Since then, Ontario's college system has been starved even more by successive governments. As the charts below show, in 2003-4 Ontario's colleges operated with less per-student revenue than secondary schools and universities. And the per-student revenue to our colleges is currently the lowest in Canada. (Source: *Colleges: An Investment in Ontario's Future. 2005-6 Funding Requirements. Association of College of Applied Arts and Technology of Ontario. February, 2005.*)



Underfunding was one of the reasons why Bob Rae stated in his Postsecondary Review (Feb. 7, 2005) that "It was very clear to me that we have a system that is in some jeopardy" and called for an influx of monies. The provincial government has provided a one time injection of \$100 million. But this alone can't undo the strain on the system resulting from years of underfunding.

Yet given these funding realities, the current situation isn't just all about money; it's about exploitation as well. The colleges have been able to find ways to survive and even prosper in the face of underfunding. For example, George Brown College currently has a reserve or contingency fund of \$19 million, and that's after the outright purchase of the Pasquale Brothers Inc. building at St. James for management to move into. How can our college have a surplus in an underfunded system? Some of the strategies that are employed are, of course, the increasing use of part-time, partial load and sessional faculty, maximizing faculty workload, increasing class size where possible, and the creation of the 7-1-7 semester system so faculty can teach a spring/summer semester, even though the stress it places on student learning is enormous. But these are all just techniques for how the colleges ultimately make money – the government and students give them money to spend on education, and they don't.

The provincial government is aware of the need to increase funding to the colleges. But even if we get it the concerns we have regarding quality education will not necessarily be addressed. There has been, and is, a growing ideological conflict between faculty and management around how monies should be spent in the colleges. Management's swing into corporate mind space and their love affair with trendy ideas like expensive technological fixes to all problems, world class this and that, being globally competitive (even though we fundamentally are "community" colleges) runs counter to faculty's concern with the more earthly realities of teaching, learning and the well being of students (which are, by the way referred to as FUs – funding units – in the current provincial and college accounting system).

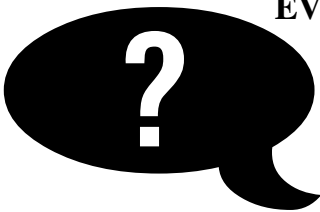
So it's partly about funding, partly about exploitation, and ultimately about what education is about and what education is for. We say it's about quality. ↩

CHEFS' NIGHT OUT HAS BEEN CANCELLED

There was going to be the North American Chefs' Association dinner and meeting at Siegfried's on Thursday night. As a result of phone calls from UNITE HERE and our local, it has been cancelled. ↩

CUPE SUPPORT FOR OUR STRIKE

The CUPE locals of part-time faculty at both Ryerson and York University have contacted us to offer any and all support they can provide. The Ryerson members have even offered financial assistance. As part-time faculty, they fully understand our issues and share our concerns about quality education.



EVEN MORE EVERYDAY PHILOSOPHICAL QUESTIONS

- How do they get the deer to cross the road at that yellow road sign?
- If you can't drink and drive, why do some bars have parking lots?
- Why is it considered necessary to nail down the lid of a coffin?

REAL LIFE BUMPER STICKERS

Experience is something you don't get until just after you need it.
An elephant is a mouse drawn to government specifications.

***There will be no Thursday night picketing shifts.
Instead, everyone is invited to the Big Rally on Thursday.***

GOT A QUESTION? LET US KNOW YOUR PICKET LINE STORIES!