

Low enrollment plagues universities in Atlantic provinces

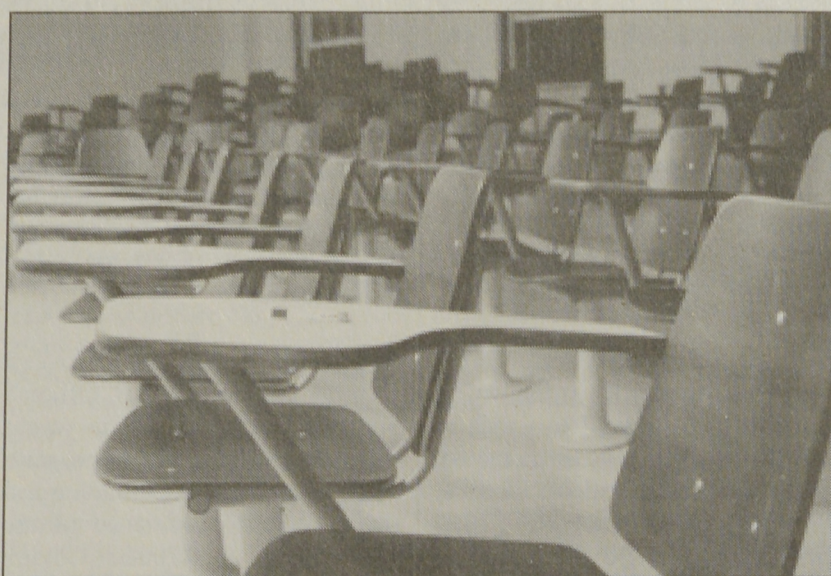
by Angela Wilson
CUP Atlantic Bureau Chief

WOLFFVILLE (CUP) – As fewer students graduate from high school in the Atlantic provinces, university enrolment is nose diving. But while some universities are struggling with up to a 30% decline in student numbers, others are experiencing a small boost.

The growth of community colleges, an aging population and the declining number of students graduating from high school in the Atlantic provinces have all contributed to declining university enrolment numbers.

But Mireille Duguay, Chief Executive Officer for the Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission (MPHEC), said that the region has been hit harder than expected.

Acadia University's student population has decreased by approximately 30% since 2000-01. St. Francis Xavier University lost over 450 of its normal 5,000 students since their numbers



Andrew Meade / The Brunswickian

peaked in 2004-05 and Mount Allison University's enrollment has dipped by approximately 10% since 2004, according to preliminary data released by MPHEC.

Peter Halpin, executive director for the Association of Atlantic Universities, is quick to comment, though, that the region is coming off a growth period where universities experienced a 30% increase in enrolment between 2000

and 2005.

"While some universities are experiencing increased enrolment, some are remaining stable, and some are experiencing declining numbers," he explains.

Both Duguay and Halpin believe that the healthy Canadian economy is part of the cause for this decline, arguing that it has created jobs for high school graduates that do not require university

degrees.

"When the economy is strong," Halpin said, "there is a tendency for fewer people to go to university. Therefore, some young people are delaying their decision to go to university, and plan to return after working out West."

However, not all Maritime universities are suffering the trend. In fact, some are experiencing enrolment boosts. Halpin explains that some universities have been ahead of the curve in terms of branding their institutions, which seems to be paying off.

"All Universities in Atlantic Canada are doing very well at developing institutional brands, although some are doing it better than others, and those that are working in niche markets — with a targeted recruitment strategy — are getting good results."

Dalhousie University, Cape Breton University and the University of Prince Edward Island are among some universities that are experiencing higher enrolment numbers, according to a study conducted by MPHEC. Preliminary figures for UPEI also indicate that they are expecting a 5% increase this year over their 2006 numbers.

The number of students enrolled from Nova Scotia enrolled at UPEI is

expected to double over last year.

Memorial University of Newfoundland is also experiencing growth, despite declining high school graduation numbers in their own province.

For the past three years, the number of Nova Scotian students studying at Memorial has doubled every year, although it is expected to remain stable this year.

Sheila Devine, Memorial's Director of University Recruitment, attributes this success to their focused recruitment strategy in the Maritimes, low tuition and an ability to attract a higher percentage of high school graduates, despite the declining graduation numbers.

Meanwhile, Acadia University has been trying to expand its horizons as well, building its profile in other parts of the country rather than focusing solely on students from the Atlantic provinces.

"We have experienced remarkable and sudden demographic changes in the Maritime provinces, especially with the boom in Alberta," said Scott Roberts, a spokesman for Acadia. "Acadia has traditionally relied heavily on students in the Maritime Provinces for recruitment," he continued, "now we are working on building a presence in other

parts of the country."

Meanwhile, the Association of Atlantic Universities is focusing on improving access to post-secondary education to diversify participation, and maybe even boost enrolment.

According to a study published by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), less than 30% of Canadians attain a university-level education, a figure lower than many other OECD countries.

"Canada is behind other OECD countries," said Halpin. "We need to increase participation from groups who are currently underrepresented, such as aboriginal people, disabled people, and those living in rural regions."

MPHEC is approaching enrolment as a "long-term issue," according to Duguay, and is working to gather information and find solutions. Later this year, the organization will be hosting an open forum with post-secondary education stakeholders to see what should be done.

It is still too early to determine 2007-08 enrolment numbers in the Maritime provinces, although they are generally expected to be lower than last year. Most universities expect to release their figures by early October.

Holla back y'all to get your revenge

Smile! Street harassers caught on candid camera

by Cynthia Shulak,
The Link (Concordia University)

MONTREAL (CUP) -- 10:45 p.m. You've just finished a heinous study session or a gabfest over drinks and you're ready to call it a night.

You make your way over to the metro as fast as you can; you've been up since 9 a.m. and the thought of putting on a comfortable pair of sweatpants is literally making you salivate.

While waiting on the platform, you notice, out of the corner of your eye, someone approaching you. Slowly but surely they inch their way closer and closer until they have completely invaded your personal space. You look over at your uninvited friend and wonder what they're smiling about . . . until you can glance down and -- oooh no. No. No way!

If this doesn't sound familiar, then perhaps catcalls in public areas may strike a chord. Every woman I know has fallen prey to street harassment at some point in her life. Individual reactions tend to vary from scared for life to a total brush-off, but now some women are fighting back.

Websites like hollabacknyc.com are encouraging victims of street harassment to document their experiences by submitting their stories and catching mug shots of their antagonists via whatever may be handy, like a camera phone.

The site was inspired by the actions of Thao Nguyen, a student who in 2005 was riding a train in New York City when a man got on, sat down, smiled and began to jerk off in front of her. Instead of ignoring this gross invasion, she pulled out her camera phone and

snapped a shot of him to post on her blog. Within days the New York Daily News had that same photo of 43-year old chef Daniel Hoyt printed on their front page. Soon enough he was being identified as a serial public masturbator, all thanks to Nguyen's candid camera.

Since 2005 and the birth of hollabacknyc.com, similar (though unfiliated) sites have been popping up everywhere. Usually classified by region, these sites encourage locals to share their stories and photos with the online world in an effort to empower victims, band together and make the public more aware of how serious street harassment can be. The entries are moderated (by both men and women) in order to avoid publishing stories that don't seem credible.

This kind of blog-tivism doesn't seem to have picked up as much momentum here as it has with our neighbours to the south, and the feelings surrounding websites like this are mixed. Although there is a hollabackcanada.com listed, the entries are sparse and there are no photos. Rachel, a 24-year-old McGill student who only wanted to give her first name, says her experiences with street harassment left her unable to even think about taking blatant, on-the-spot action.

"There was a time when we didn't have camera phones," she says, "and even if we did I'd have been too scared to use one."

Her friend Erin Zacc, 24-year-old student at Concordia, looks at it another way.

"There are some situations where I wish I'd had a camera on me, that way I could let other girls know that this creep was out there and they wouldn't have to go through an experience like I did."

The jury seems to be undecided: Is it safe to encourage women to photograph aggressors? The answer to that goes along the lines of "use at your own risk" -- if you feel as though you want to take power into your own hands, why not holla back?

For more info and links to similar sites, visit hollabacknyc.com.

Rising cost of cab fare hits students hard

from Cabs page 1

"To me, paying however much money is nothing. It's not like I'm going to drink and drive and sometimes I really don't feel like walking home from the bar, so I'll pay any amount to whatever cab company I see first when I leave a bar. The price really doesn't matter that much to me."

There are over eight cab companies here in the Fredericton area and depending on the company, you may or may not see an increase. The Brunswickian contacted some of these companies, although most were unable to comment.

George Youssef, owner of Checker Cab Company was willing to comment.

Checker is one of the biggest cab companies in Fredericton and on one of the busiest of days has about 28-30 cars on the road at one time. He explained that due to the increasing insurance his



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company raised the price of a cab ride by fifty cents.

"When the insurance companies raise the price, there's really nothing you can do," he said.

Even when gas prices went up,

Checker still held firm and did not raise the price explained Youssef. "I know that it sounds bad that the prices went up just as students started coming into the city for school, but it's purely a coincidence".

"It was going up no matter what and I know that it sounds like it was planned to take advantage of students, but that's not the case at all. Students are the majority of our business and we want to keep them as happy as possible."

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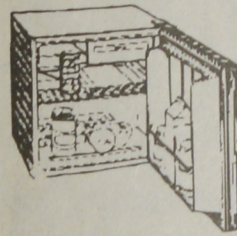
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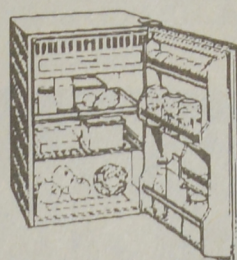
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