

Computer Science funding debate continues

University, Provincial Government acknowledge dilemma

STEVE WRIGHT
SHEAF STAFF WRITER

The Honourable Glenn Hagel, Minister of Post-Secondary Education and Skills Training, made a visit to University campus on January 5. He was in town for a Computer Science funding meeting to discuss problems in the department that student representative Aaron Boyko calls "a terrible crisis."

Along with Hagel and Boyko, Tom Wishart, Acting Dean of the College of Arts and Science, Dick Neal, Associate Dean of the Arts and Science College, Rick Bunt and Eric Neufeld, professors in the Department of Computer Science, and members of the Computer Science Student's Society (CSSS) Executive met to address concerns made by students. Boyko pointed out that the meeting was organized by the students, with backup from professors in the college.

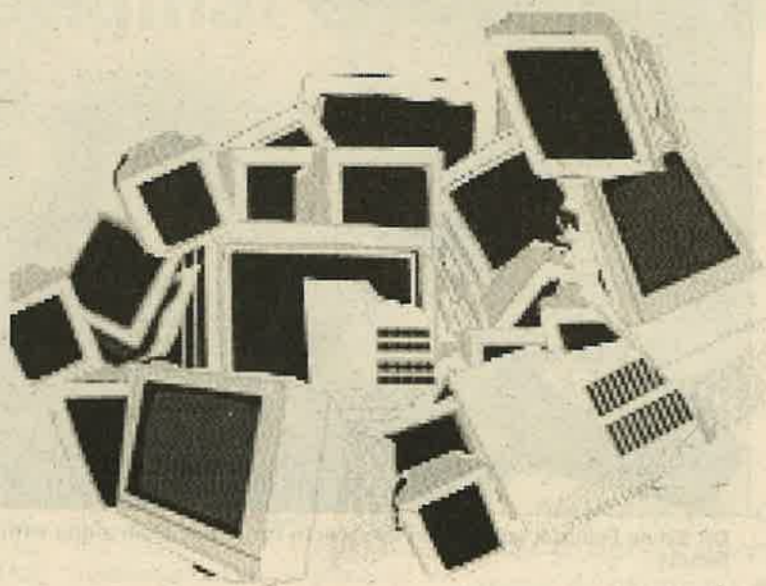
Topping the list of concerns the students had for the department, were the issues of congested and

non-functioning computer labs, insufficient faculty for those labs, and the general cost to students to use computers.

Rick Bunt, a professor of Computer Science, stressed that the department is a very strong one, being among the top five in Canada. Graduates of this field are also very high in demand. He went on to say that resources in the department per student are dropping, with more funding for the department being an obvious solution. Both Boyko and Bunt referred to the issue as being in a "crisis state," with Bunt adding that there could be "serious consequences [in the department] if [these issues] are not addressed."

While no total solutions were made at this meeting, Boyko said it was "quite productive," and he enjoyed the opportunity for concerned Computer Science students to "touch base with the Provincial Government about this crisis." Bunt agreed, affirming that the "problems appear to be understood" by the University and the Provincial Government.

However, Associate Dean of the College of Arts and Science, Dick Neal said he disagrees on some



points made by the CSSS. While he said he has "recognized their problems" in the Computer Science department, he does not believe increased funding is necessarily the answer. While commending the Computer Science students who managed to get the attention of Minister Hagel, Neal suggested that personnel changes in the department have also caused problems in the long run. Faculty members with great

The computer science department is facing a "terrible crisis" according to student representative, Aaron Boyko.

expertise have been lost, and increased funding will not correct problems made by this fact, said Neal. He does admit that if there

were funds available to disperse at this time, the Computer Science department would be a likely recipient.

Minister Hagel furthered the notion that the meeting was very "comprehensive and forthright," and agreed with both the CSSS and the College of Arts and Science that all problems the department is facing are real and need to be addressed.

"This has been acknowledged by students and faculty, as well as by the province that this has been identified as an important and growing need," he commented.

Hagel complimented the CSSS for "terrific organization" of the meeting, and said that the issue would be carefully reviewed for more funding later in the year while the budget is worked on. Hagel did point out that any increases in the department's budget will be provided by the University, and the province can only allocate more funds to the University of Saskatchewan, but not departments therein. Providing that the needs of the department have truly been identified by the University, Hagel said he sees no problems in the allocation of funds to go toward more computer equipment and resources.

Two U of S sciences chosen as academic priorities

ERIN TAMAN
NEWS EDITOR

While students were busy writing and studying for finals in December, the University of Saskatchewan Council approved the Northern Ecosystems Toxicology Initiative (NETI) and the Biomolecular Structure Teaching and Research Program as the top two academic priorities for the future.

Faculty members are invited to propose ideas for areas that they

think should be considered as priority areas for the university. Over the past two years, criteria has been developed to judge proposals.

The Northern ecosystems toxicology and biomolecular structure will accompany biotechnology, which was outlined as a priority last year. The process will continue next year as well.

Funding comes as a result of each college putting aside a small percentage of its operating budget to a central fund that is used to finance the chosen proposals.

NETI would include four more faculty members, one in each of Veterinary Pathology, Soil Science, Geological Sciences and Biology. \$250,000 will come from the operating grant to support NETI.

Four new faculty members will be hired based on their knowledge of the Canadian Light Source and the Saskatchewan Structural Sciences Center for the Biomolecular Structure Teaching and Research Program. Once

again, \$250,000 will be donated annually to this project. Biochemistry and Chemistry will hire faculty in X-ray Crystallography, NMR spectroscopy and Biophysical chemistry.

Transit

from A1

A universal bus pass is another solution, which Huck said would also provide for increased bus use.

The City "certainly missed the boat in terms of the students' union," and has not been receptive to transit issues brought up by the USSU in the past, City councillor Rik Steernberg said. However, progress is being made and the City has become more "sensitized" to student concerns, he added. There are "lots of options available, [but] it's who will provide the options" that has become the question, he said.

A parkade, park and ride system, extra buses and again, a universal bus pass are some options, he said. A universal bus pass how-

ever, would require a long term strategy and is at least 18 months away, Steernberg added.

The cost of any added services and resources or improvements to those services are the three major factors in any solution, he commented, adding that the City is always looking at ways to improve service. But, whatever the outcome, he said cooperation between the USSU, the U of S and the City is essential and feels all three parties are in a good position to address the issues, from the perspectives of both students and transit providers.

Daryl Anderson, the Manager of Planning and Service Development with Saskatoon Transit Services (STS) said the next step is to look at transit demands and options, with preliminary results hopefully coming in by May or June of this year. STS is hoping to bring in a consultant

to look at the issues, including peak transit times and current demands, Anderson added.

STS is planning to investigate the situation but Anderson is unsure as to when a report might be completed. The "issue might be bigger than transit on its own," he said, so more information is needed before any recommendations can be made. Anderson is confident that STS can work with the City and the U of S, but agrees that it is too late in the academic term to implement any changes right now.

Last month's meeting was the first step in a renewed partnership with the City and STS to find a solution to a somewhat long standing problem, Huck said.

And while students will not see any dramatic changes to services this term, the move is on to alleviate transit troubles without letting students down, he added.

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CALL FOR ARTWORK

"In the Fleche: The Authentic Aboriginal Art Show"

This is a call for artwork, by Aboriginal Students, to be displayed in the Library Link for the month of February 2000.

Contact Sarah Williamson at the Indigenous Students Council Room 34, McLean Hall (across from the Observatory) or call 244-1262.