

“LEARNING TECHNOLOGY” AND DIGITAL DISTANCE EDUCATION: THE FUTURE OF THE UNIVERSITY?

This issue of the *Forum* is devoted to "Learning Technology" and its role in higher education, featuring three articles as well as commentaries from invited UW faculty members.

Gary North, author of "The Coming Breakdown of the Academic Cartel," takes the extreme view that "Digital Distance Education" is the future of higher education, removing the need for lecturers in the classroom. North sees universities as

holding a monopoly on education. Digital education can break this monopoly and make knowledge available to people at a fraction of the cost of tuition fees. North's article, which is posted on the WWW, is reproduced in this issue.

In a commentary written for the *Notices of the American Mathematical Society*, Steven Krantz, a mathematics professor at Washington University, St. Louis, warns us of the "dangerous trend" in attempting to replace (mathematics) instructors with "Learning Technology" software - a trend that has grown from the introduction, and subsequent rationalization, of calculators in mathematics education. Prof. Krantz' article, "Imminent Danger - From a Distance," is reprinted in this issue.

Jan Narveson, of UW's Department of Philosophy, has written "In Defence of Stick-in-the-Mud Teaching" as a commentary to the articles by North and Krantz. Prof. Narveson defends the role of the university professor as classroom lecturer yet also acknowledges the values of Internet resources. In his report, Jan also refers to the commentary, "Teaching is Like Making Love," by Clifford Orwin, Dept. of Political Science, University of Toronto (*National Post*, Sept. 6, 2000).

The *Forum* sent invitations to forty recipients of UW's Distinguished Teacher Award to comment on the articles by North, Krantz and Narveson. An invitation was also sent to Prof. Tom Carey, Dept. of

Management Sciences and Associate Director, Learning Innovation and Technology, Teaching Resources and Continuing Education (TRACE). Given the busy time of year, a significant fraction of the invitees expressed much interest in the issue yet politely declined to accept the invitation at this time. We are very grateful to Prof. Carey and four DTA recipients for accepting the invitation. Their commentaries appear in this issue.

We hope that these articles will stimulate further discussion and debate on the issue of "Learning Technology" and higher education. Readers are encouraged to submit their opinions for publication.

HAGEY LECTURE

Renowned author and historian Michael Ignatieff will present this year's Hagey Lecture on Wednesday, January 24, 2001 at 8:00 p.m. in the UW Humanities Theatre. The title of Dr. Ignatieff's lecture is "Human Rights and the Rights of States: Are They on a Collision Course?" He will also deliver a student colloquium entitled "Putting Cruelty First" on January 25 at 10:00 a.m. in MC 5158. See Page 14 for more information.

Inside this issue:

Editorial	2
Coming Breakdown of Academic Cartel	3
Imminent Danger – From a Distance	6
In Defence of Stick-in-the-Mud Teaching	7
UW Faculty Respond	9
Book Review	12
Hagey Lecture	14
Pension & Benefits	15
President's Message	16

EDITORIAL

The *Forum* thanks Jan Narveson for providing the stimulus that resulted in this special issue on Learning Technology. Jan originally discovered Gary North's article in "e-space" and sent me a short commentary. After I sent him the articles by Profs. Krantz and Orwin, he expanded his report and supported the idea of circulating the three articles for responses.

Learning Technology, Canada Research Chairs, the "Galactic Intelligence Report" on "Truth": special themes covered in past three issues of the *Forum*, with so many more to address. With the many challenges facing UW at this time, why not also use the *Forum* to engage in a critical, open examination of where we – the university – are, what we have accomplished and the direction in which we should proceed?

Let me direct your attention to a monograph that could possibly assist us in this exercise, namely, *The Academic Ethic: The Report of a Study Group of the International Council on the Future of the University*, by E. Shils (University of Chicago Press, 1983, 104 pages). The *Ethic* presents a refreshingly clear, "undeconstructed" view of the university and its mission; the role of the academic as teacher and researcher; the obligations of the academic to her/his discipline, to the university, to the students and to society; the role of administration and its relationship to faculty.

The first few sections of Chapter I, "An Inherent Commitment," will remind *Forum* readers of the lamentations of the Galactic Observers, Netti and Avkon, as well as some terrestrial ones (F. F. Centore):

Universities have a distinctive task. It is the methodological discovery and the teaching of truths about serious and important things. Part of the task is to enhance the students' understanding and to train them in the attitudes and methods of critical assessment and testing of their beliefs so that they can make what they believe as free from error as possible. The discovery and transmission of truth is the distinctive task of the academic profession. . . . That truth has a value in itself, apart from any use to which it is put, is a postulate of the activities of the university. It begins with the assumption that truth is better than error. . . .

The ascertainment of any truth is a difficult matter; the truth must be re-ascertained incessantly. These truths are changed continuously by new discoveries which may indeed be defined as the revision in the light of new observations and analyses of propositions previously held to be true. For these reasons, there must be elements of tentativeness and readiness to

revise in the attitudes towards any truths accepted at present. This readiness to revise is not tantamount to relativism. It does not mean that any proposition is just as true as any other proposition or that the truth of a proposition is dependent on the social position or political orientation of the person asserting or accepting it.

Are universities accomplishing this task? Many at UW argue "Yes," pointing to a number of "indicators" such as "reputation" and high employment of our graduates. They argue that we simply need to build upon our past accomplishments in straightforward ways. Others counter with "No", arguing that the academic quality of university degrees, including that of our own, has decreased dramatically over the past few years and that reputation alone may not be enough to meet the needs of the future. What is the verdict here?

If we are not accomplishing the above task, then what is preventing us? Lack of funding? A deteriorating public educational system? Lack of respect from government, business and a society obsessed with consumerism and wealth? These qualify as obstacles but, in fairness, does the all the fault lie "out there"? After all, many of our government and business leaders have university degrees, do they not? And who teaches those who teach our teachers? The final paragraph of Chapter I of the *Ethic* may contain some hints on where to look for answers:

Universities would never have achieved the status which they are accorded in civilised societies if they had not demonstrated that they sought, acquired and presented reliable knowledge. Universities have passed through many vicissitudes and one of the main reasons why, from time to time, their status has declined and responsible parts of their societies have turned against them has been their negligence or indolence in the pursuit of truth by the best-known methods and by the best, currently possible, assessment of received and transmitted knowledge.

In other words, have we, the university, been true to the mission? Or have we departed from the path, for example running to those who would accept us and fund us, marketing ourselves and tailoring our "truths" to the perceived needs of our "consumers" in these "new times"? If this be the case, then is there a Faustian price to be paid? The *Forum* awaits your replies.

ERV

THE COMING BREAKDOWN OF THE ACADEMIC CARTEL

Gary North

Higher education in the United States is a cartel. It is rarely discussed in these terms, but that is what it has been throughout most of the 20th century.

A cartel is an association of producers that jointly establishes certain output criteria for membership. The goal of the cartel is for all of its members to obtain net revenues above what would be possible if there were open competition, especially price competition. Members restrict output in order to gain high revenues per unit sold. The cartel's members raise their prices.

A cartel faces competition from members who cheat and from non-members who enter the market. This is why cartels that do not obtain protection from the State in restricting entry into a market eventually break down. Without State intervention, newcomers attract consumers by offering lower prices. Also, some cartel members cheat by secretly increasing their output, lowering prices, or both. The cartels' other members must then cut prices to retain customers. The cartel breaks down.

Whenever you find a cartel that has existed for several decades, begin a search for State intervention: civil sanctions placed on non-members who seek to enter the market through price competition. In the field of higher education, look for laws against the unaccredited use of certain words: college, university, B.A., M.A., Ph.D..

Accreditation

I have yet to see a history of the collegiate academic accreditation system in the United States. It would make a great Ph.D. dissertation topic for some free market economist. (Perhaps it has been written, and I have missed it.)

There is a Web site that lists the various collegiate accrediting associations: the Council for Higher Education Accreditation. The site also has a revealing page on Government Relations. The organization favors "voluntary enforcement," meaning self-policing by existing members, without additional regulations imposed by the U.S. Department of Education.

Economists might say that "voluntary enforcement" really means "government enforcement of existing regulations, especially against non-member interlopers, but with no new rules imposed on existing cartel members." (Except when analyzing the Federal Reserve System, economists say things like this.)

Recall that the chief goal of a cartel is to keep out price-competitive interlopers. In a document titled, HEA 98 – Summary of Accreditation Provisions, we read the following:

The President today signed into law the Higher Education Amendments of 1998 (HEA 98), as Public Law 105-244. The new law reauthorizes for five years the Higher Education Act, the basic framework for federal policies in higher education that includes the massive federal programs of student financial assistance. The new law retains current programs, provides some modest new initiatives, lowers borrowing costs to our students and authorizes small improvements in program funding.

With Federal money comes Federal regulation. This is nothing new. In every industry, those producers who are on the receiving end of this money can and do invoke a defense of cartel-defined standards in order to restrict entry by interlopers who might otherwise sell services to the public at lower prices. Restriction of entry through industry-policing "voluntary" standards, backed up by the threat of new civil laws if members do not obey the existing laws, is justified by the cartel's members in the name of both standards and the proper use of government money.

In higher education, government-enforced accreditation restricts the spread of new ideas, new methodologies, and above all, new technologies that enable producers to lower prices. This is how higher education has become uniformly secular, liberal, and mediocre: raising the cost of entry.

In this same report, there is a reference to something called "distance education."

Distance education programs will be assessed in accreditation under the same quality assurance criteria as other programs, and will not be subject to new and separate criteria. The new distance education demonstration program recognizes the role of voluntary accreditation.

What is distance education? Distance education is the Achilles heel of the education cartel's maintenance of control over higher education. It will be the battleground

(Continued on page 4)

of higher education over the next two decades.

If the cartel loses this battle, it will lose control over the content and pricing of higher education.

The cartel is going to lose it. The reason: price competition beyond anything ever seen in higher education. A technological revolution is almost upon us.

Plastic Disks and Fiber Optics

Today, it is possible to put 50 hours of video lectures (small image), without compression technology, on a conventional CD-ROM. Use the new DVD technology, and you can put 400 hours of lectures on the disk without compression. A DVD player now costs under \$200.

The typical student's college year involves about 450 lectures, 45 minutes each: 10 courses, 15 weeks, three lectures per week. Core academic courses are mandatory for all students, so a college can put one year's worth of freshman core courses onto a DVD disk that costs \$2.50 to produce and mail to the student. That's with no compression. With today's low-cost compression technology, any department (history, biology, etc.) can put all of its courses on one disk.

With compression technology due out later this year, the typical college could put its entire curriculum on one disk – twenty or thirty different majors. The student's only expense then is textbooks, and a growing number of lower-division textbooks can be downloaded free of charge from the Web.

Say that you are a college professor. You write your textbook, put it on your college's CD-ROM, and get paid, say, \$5 per sale as a royalty. The college gets \$1. Is that a good deal for you? No printing costs, no inventory costs, no nothing. Just cash your checks. Trust me: it's a good deal. The student pays \$6 per textbook that he "unlocks" on the disk. Cost saving for the student: about \$45 per textbook, and maybe more.

We are talking marketing revolution here.

Technologically speaking, as of today, a college education no longer requires classrooms, lawns, huge administration buildings, air conditioning, heating, dormitories, library buildings (rarely used by most students anyway), massive institutional debt, and all the rest of the barriers to entry in setting up a college.

This means that small groups with odd-ball views are now able to set up their own colleges. Only the government-imposed licensing monopoly for issuing degrees will delay this process, but it won't succeed. Here's why. Existing degree-granting colleges have already begun to start cutting prices for "distance learning." The others

will have to follow. I estimate that the lower limit for tuition is around \$2,500 a year. It may be less. Education can be conducted by CD-ROM and e-mail. The technology for conducting discussion groups is here but not yet cheap enough. It will be cheap within five years. The cost barrier to starting a college is about to fall dramatically.

I know of an accredited 80-year-old private college that charges \$10,000 a year in tuition, and pays its full-time faculty members a pathetic \$24,000 a year to teach 8 classes. It costs \$15,000 to send a student there – room, board, tuition, books.

With digital education, this college could charge \$2,500 a year, and pay its faculty members \$2,000 of this. Divided among 10 teachers (10 courses) per academic year, this is \$200 per course. A teacher who teaches 8 classes (24 semester units) of 35 students each could earn \$56,000 a year – more than twice what the school now pays. Most of today's tuition money is going for overhead. Cut the overhead, and the faculty wins.

Could a teacher teach this way? Figure it out. He spends, at most, less than two hours in reading one midterm exam (10 minutes) and a final exam (20 minutes), plus two term papers (20 minutes each). In fact, very few teachers assign term papers these days. True-false and multiple choice exams can be corrected, with answers provided for missed questions, by existing e-mail programs: 100% electronic and instantaneous.

Once the instructor records his lectures on video, and writes up his weekly digital-graded exams and answers (which most teachers do not give these days), all he has to do is answer students' questions by e-mail. He has 280 students (35 x 8), times 2 hours, or 560 hours of work per year – not 2,000, which is what most professionals work. He will make \$100 an hour (\$56,000 divided by 560). If he spends 2 hours in e-mail per student (he won't have to), he will still make \$50 per hour – and he will not be working year-round. If he is willing to teach twice as many classes by adding summer school and extra classes during the year, he can make \$110,000 a year.

At \$2,500 a year tuition, working adults will be pulled back into college because they do not have to move to the college. To rewrite the old slogan, "If Muhammed cannot go to the mountain, the mountain had better go to Muhammed. Soon."

The possibilities for education through the Internet will change the way we learn. Any college that does not adjust to the Web, including discount pricing, will disappear. This will take less than two decades.

The Web is where the future of higher education is. The more expensive today's college education is, the more

vulnerable an institution is to price competition. When students can stay home, keep their part-time jobs, and learn everything they need to know in the majors that 80% of students select (social sciences and humanities), why pay \$50,000 to \$100,000 for a college education? Why not pay \$10,000, with the money used mainly to pay the faculty?

Setting the Precedent

Some rich entrepreneur is going to assemble a bunch of famous professors, record their videos, get their reading lists, and hire an army of Ph.D.-holding teaching assistants at \$15 per hour. He can hire retired big-name professors, pay them huge salaries, and play the big-name professor game better than the Ivy League.

He will own the finest university on earth, charge \$7,000 a year, and make another fortune for himself. Will it get its accreditation? If it does, the precedent is set: 100% distance learning. If not, then the accrediting system will be seen as a cartel-operated sham. Besides, what student will care if it is accredited? Harvard University is not accredited and never has been. This Web-based university will have bigger names than Harvard.

Once someone does this, the precedent will have been set: no accreditation needed. The dominoes will begin to fall. The price of a college education will fall with it.

If the government blocks this inside the U.S., the entrepreneur has 180 (this week) other nations to choose from. Get accreditation there, if it is needed for marketing. If not, forget about it. Use the same faculty, the same textbooks, the same CD-ROM's, the same e-mail addresses. This is distance learning.

When you think of "distance learning," think of an Olympics limited to 45-year-old athletes ("Skilled! Experienced!"), who one day must face 19-year-olds. The distance between the cartel's runners and the newcomers

will be measurable in yards, meters, and seconds. The cartel's members will learn at a very great distance.

This is where higher education is headed. The monopoly over higher education is going to be broken up, all over the world.

July 31, 2000

Gary North is the author of Crossed Fingers: How the Liberals Captured the Presbyterian Church, which is available free of charge as a downloaded text at www.freebooks.com.

[EDITOR'S NOTE: Just before the *Forum* was going to press, we learned of a study of two Simon Fraser University researchers that echoes Gary North's message ("Internet skips ivory tower" by Ashley Ford, *Vancouver Province*, November 21, 2000). According to Richard Smith and Brian Lewis of SFU's School of Communication, higher education is no longer the private reserve and monopoly of traditional post-secondary institutions. In their book, *The Tower Under Siege*, which will be published next spring, Smith and Lewis write that universities are being left in the dust in the face of the online learning offered by new education providers and corporate universities. According to Ford, the book is the result of two years of research funded from grants from the Telemarketing Network of Centres of Excellence and Human Resources Development Canada.]

Membership Reminder

Your membership in the Faculty Association includes a membership in the Grad House. Just show your FAUW membership card as your identification.

New FAUW membership cards for 2001 will be mailed out in December or January.

If you are not a member and would like to join, please contact Pat Moore in the FAUW Office (x3787 or facassoc@uwaterloo.ca) for a membership form.

IMMINENT DANGER – FROM A DISTANCE

Steven G. Krantz

Department of Mathematics, Washington University, St. Louis, Missouri

In Gulliver's Travels, Jonathan Swift describes a society in which students learn mathematics by swallowing pieces of paper on which theorems have been transcribed. Recently, California students have learned mathematics by studying Mathland, which has no textbooks, but uses "manipulatives." Soon thousands of university students will learn mathematics either by interacting with a computer or over the Internet via a process called "distance-learning".

These phenomena share one or more of the following three features:

- (i) They eschew the method of placing students in a classroom – in a controlled environment – under the supervision of a trained professional or *teacher*.
- (ii) They reject the notion that students should learn from a curriculum or a *text* that has been written by *practicing faculty scholars*.
- (iii) They value form over substance.

Those promoting distance-learning – i.e., students learning over the Internet without direct, synchronous interaction with a human instructor – want to substitute the act of "logging on" for the productive interaction of first-class minds that takes place in the classroom. Those promoting computer learning want to do much the same. When I think about undergraduate education and when I question one of these methodologies, I am questioning both.

Not to demonize Mathland, but it shares an alarming feature with many other modern educational products: It has no author. It is written by the *publisher's paid staff*. Likewise, the distance-learning companies are *not* hawking a curriculum created by you and me. They are packaging and selling materials that were created by their staff or that were hired out as piecemeal and later made into "learning materials" by staff.

Years ago we deviated from the true path with graphing calculators, which we neither designed nor consciously chose for our classrooms. They were foisted upon us by the manufacturers. *We conveniently rationalized the educational value of calculators after the fact.* Now, with distance- and computer-learning we have the opportunity to repeat the error on a much larger scale.

At a recent trade show in Atlanta, a major software vendor pledged his company to take over the teaching of

lower-division college mathematics in America, because his company's software can do a better job of it than university faculty.

All these observations describe a dangerous trend. In every instance, the proper role of the trained mathematics instructor/scholar is being usurped by a machine or by a device [made] by the paid staff of a retailer.

Learning from software has merits: (i) a course is self-paced, (ii) there are no "missed classes," (iii) the student can "try things." But the give-and-take of human interaction is central to the learning process; that dynamic is lost when a Pentium chip does the teaching.

Among other qualities, a good teacher

- shows the students how to read the subject matter;
- sets a pace for the students and evaluates their progress;
- adjusts the material to the audience;
- uses voice, style, personality, and knowledge to communicate;
- instills a love for learning;
- helps students to become engaged in the learning process;
- teaches students to reason and to think critically;
- sets a standard for what it means to be educated.

Can a machine perform any of these activities?

Proponents claim that distance- and computer-learning products lower attrition rates and raise scores. The important question is whether students are internalizing and retaining the material. Are they mastering the mathematical method? Can they think critically? Are they attracted to mathematical science? For the distance- and computer-educated, we do not know.

Provosts and deans have dollar signs in their eyes. They envision teaching more students with fewer faculty. But true education is never efficient. Often it is two steps forward and one step back, and it does not come cheap. As Harvard president Derek Bok said, "If you think education is expensive, try ignorance."

Traditional education may not be linear and bullet-like, but it enables students to master the ideas and to retain them for future use. Computer- and distance-learning are

slick and quick and high-tech, but their efficacy is unestablished. We should be hesitant to undermine or discard the traditional methods, which have had - and continue to have - considerable success. The vast majority of today's college faculty, for example, were educated with traditional methods. If such caution is not taken, then we are in danger of sacrificing the finest education system in the world on the altar of expediency, austerity, and bottom-line statistics.

If your university is investing in distance- or computer-learning, then apprise yourself of the attendant changes and of how they will affect the quality of learning.

Mathematics courses should be designed, taught, and controlled by those who are best qualified - that is, by the mathematics faculty. What is at stake is the education of the next generation of mathematical scientists.

Prof. Krantz is an Associate Editor of the AMS Notices. His article appeared as a Commentary. We thank Prof. Krantz and the AMS for permission to reprint this article.

IN DEFENCE OF STICK-IN-THE MUD TEACHING

Jan Narveson, Department of Philosophy

"We are in danger of sacrificing the finest education system in the world on the altar of expediency, austerity, and bottom-line statistics." So says Steven Krantz, contemplating the teaching of mathematics by computers instead of people. But why should we be opposed to expediency, or austerity, or especially, bottom-line statistics? The question is what the statistics are about. If somehow they reflect real understanding of mathematics. The point is not to reject statistics as irrelevant, but to express doubts that people who learn their maths by that means really do learn them.

The endeavour is certainly not impossible. Let us have no illusions about that: Some people do learn a lot from books without teachers, and others from computer screens. Now and then, we have a good idea without having read anything at all. But still, there is ample room to doubt that your typical good student will come away from his high-tech experience with a solid understanding of the subject.

And if that is so in mathematics, it is the more so in the arts. There the student can read the book and yet get little out of it, until he has had contact with someone who has learned to ask the right questions about the text.

This brings us to Gary North, who alleges that education is a cartel. According to him, those of us in the establishment, with our degrees and the rest of it, band together to elevate prices and exclude competition. We are all, he thinks, severely at threat from educational entrepreneurs with technologies that bypass these irrelevancies. "Distance education is the Achilles heel of the education cartel's maintenance of control over higher education." It will enable price competition "beyond anything ever seen in higher education." Moreover, it seems, higher education "has become uniformly secular, liberal, and mediocre."

North seems to me to be wildly off base on both points. Firstly, the claim about uniformity is downright silly. There are hundreds and hundreds of institutions of higher

education in the U.S. that are not secular. RC, Lutheran, Methodist, you name it - each has its own college! And secondly, these schools are hardly uniformly mediocre, varying greatly in quality. One wonders how extensive his acquaintance is with what he is criticizing. (And if he thinks the U.S. has a cartel of this type, he should have a look at Canada, where, until very recently, all universities HAD to be public - private ones were illegal!)

As to the point about price competition, North seems unaware that Distance Ed has been on the scene for a long time - who better than we at Waterloo to point it out? But the interesting point about our experience is that Distance Ed is on the decline rather than the other way around. Perhaps with DVDs, you could see your prof talking so it would pick up a bit. But the investment necessary to make TV teaching effective is greater than most of us are willing to make. Producing a decent lecture on audio tape, as those of us who have done so are keenly aware, is a lot more work than producing one to a real class during a prescribed hour. Doing so on video is technologically much more involving. And then - guess what! Almost anything you see on TV is simply a great deal inferior to what a decent teacher does every day in the classroom. This is especially so if genuine education, rather than entertainment, is the goal.

This brings us to the crucial point. I suspect that the overwhelming popularity of on-campus higher education is due to a factor that it is all but impossible, at least with present and near-future technology, or maybe any technology ever, to replicate: real contact with fellow students and professors.

Why do people queue up to spend \$25,000 per year or more to send their kids to Ivy League schools, and some others? Almost certainly it is because there the kids make contact with (1) other kids of like mind, like intellect, and probable prospects for future business and other contacts, and (2) teachers who know a lot and are able to impart it

and inspire students. It's all but impossible to replicate that on the Internet.

Education in the narrowest sense has something to do with it, but by no means everything. Contact with fellow students is of inestimable value, given the proper "other students," and we may be sure that about 7 of every 10 of those many dollars is expended in search of the right sort of social contact, in the eye of the parent (and, most likely, the student himself). But even on the educational front, there is, again, simply no substitute for direct contact with professors when you're into cutting-edge research. Most students aren't, to be sure. But a fair number are, and from this flows most of humanity's technical progress at the present time. That sort of contact has been the soul of the highest echelons of higher education since Socrates, and I don't think it has basically changed one bit. The chance to participate in such association is what motivates the best and brightest, and keeps the best universities going. Even at awesome cost ratios as compared with tapes and mailed-out notes, people will pay the difference, and think, plausibly, that they've spent their money wisely.

Actually, this is not confined to the best ones. Most universities have a few people who are working at that level, and collecting a few students who share the joy of such contact. It's probably the main thing that makes life at less-than-topflight universities bearable for the more gifted faculty – and with a little bit of luck, it's a lot more than "bearable" – it's great!

I doubt that Distance Ed technology will do much to displace that ever, though I agree one must knock quite persistently on wood in saying such things! However, one thing is clear: If Mr. North were fully correct, the university and colleges as institutions would already be dead. And they aren't: On the contrary, the high-end schools keep raising their tuitions and receiving them.

I conclude with a comment on the interesting article on the other side of this debate by Clifford Orwin ("Teaching is like making love," *National Post*, Sept. 6, 2000), who argues that Learning Technology may have its place, but by and large that place isn't a place that can replace the classroom. On that point, he seems to me to be dead right. The time might perhaps come when you and your students can be visible to each other on-screen, speaking up as if we were all in the classroom together. Maybe. Until it does, though – and I don't recommend waiting breathlessly for it to happen – but even if it does, probably not even then will it be able literally to replace the classroom. There just is no substitute for real-life contact with real-life people.

Orwin is perhaps a bit too severe when it comes to books, but still, he has a point there, too. The computer and the net are excellent time-savers in some aspects of scholar-

ship. It is delightful to be able to type in a phrase, click or type something, and moments later find out where, in that 438-p. volume, so and so *did* say such-and such – or that he didn't say it, after all. Here Learning Technology (if that counts as an example) is indeed, as Orwin says, on the side of the impatient – but why not? I see no virtue in ploughing through fifty pages you don't need in order to get at the one you do. Or if there is, it's a virtue I'm not interested in cultivating.

Apart from that, I incline toward his appreciation of real books. Computer screens aren't as "nice" as real pages, and scribbling notes in the margins isn't as easy, and they do indeed have a comfortable presence that what's on the tube does not. On the other hand, we can print out hard copies from the computer, and that is very handy indeed. And there are various other aspects of The Computer as an aid to the humanist which I would greatly dislike to be without, now that I have them. Above all, e-mail is a fabulous tool for research and communication with other scholars. But that isn't the same as teaching – it just isn't! In some protracted e-mail exchanges I've had with some students, I've realized that we would have done better in face-to-face discussion.

What remains is that, so far as teaching goes, all the advantages of technology are rather marginal. Mark Hopkins on one end of the log and the student with bright, inquiring, interested mind on the other is still what education in the humanities is all about, and I don't see that changing, frankly – now, or ever. Even the lecture/discussion class with fifty students enables discussion, if not as much or as intense. Until the communication is strictly one-way, the live classroom situation remains the plush academic ideal, irreplaceable and unimprovable.

Just one more point. Universities are about research, primarily. We teach in order to enable others to help us all learn more. Association with fellow scholars in an atmosphere of serious collegiality – how would one replace that? Teleconferencing, and the like, is all very well, but compared to the university community, it's piffling. And, once again: really good students can see that very quickly. They aspire to university life because they realize that there just isn't anything like it – nothing else will enable them as well to utilize their intellectual capacities on behalf of producing human knowledge.

The modern university is probably more similar, in these latter important respects, to the universities of Oxford and Paris in the 14th century than any other contemporary institution to its remote ancestors. I don't think this is particularly surprising, when you get right down to it.

Ed Jernigan (DTA 1986)

Department of Systems Design Engineering

I prefer chalk and blackboard to a stick and some mud but I could make do with that if I had to! I teach

UW FACULTY MEMBERS RESPOND

relatively mathematical courses in systems, signals and image processing, and have always felt that no more advanced technology would be fundamentally better at conveying the ideas, derivations, and illustrations as they grow out of my efforts to convey and share the material with my students. Although I will confess that I would immediately adopt some improvements B dustless and unbreakable chalk, for example!

I am a strong believer in the community of the classroom, whether in working with my Shad Valley high school students in July or my advanced graduate students in a seminar course. Nothing beats that sense of immediacy and reality, that spontaneous interaction of the live, face-to-face classroom experience. No lecture I give, no matter how well packaged and rehearsed, is as effective as one which evolves in response to the reactions of the community of students I'm addressing. I write out everything I intend to say in preparing for a lecture – even after 25 years – and then do the class session without ever looking at my notes. The material is all covered, but the delivery is spontaneous and responsive. I have had the experience of being a student in one of Al Oppenheim's classes (he is a recipient of the IEEE Educator's Award and a professor at MIT) as well as watching his videotaped lectures on the same material. I would not hesitate to lay out at least 10 times the cash for the live experience!

As for the DVD/CDROM/WEBiversity leading to the disappearance of the real thing, it seems to me like arguing that the wonders of special effects and the movies will be the end of live theater. It's not going to happen. No amount of special effects and digital dazzle will substitute for the human connection.

* * * * *

TRUE ELUCIDATIONS IN SPITE OF LOFTINESS

Mariela A. Gutiérrez (DTA 1993)
Spanish & Latin American Studies

When Ed Vrscaj invited me, as recipient of the UW Distinguished Teacher Award, to write a commentary on this issue of "Learning Technology" vs. traditional educational methods, I immediately thought "impossible, I'm too busy." However, the more I read Jan Narveson's article, in which he so artfully comments on Krantz and North's own features, the more I felt compelled to accept the *Forum* Editor's invitation.

Needless to say that I agree with Narveson's comments regarding Arts: "There the student can read the book and yet get little out of it, until he [or she] has had contact

with someone who has learned to ask the right questions about the text." Myself, I have seen that happen so often; the moment we start discussing in class a particular up-to-that-point uninteresting poem, short story, or novel, their eyes light up, their faces become alive, stimulating questions and observations pour out. A while later, we leave the classroom with a new kind of awareness that fills our hearts and puts a knowledgeable smile on everyone's face.

Albert Einstein once said that "Not everything that counts can be counted, and not everything that can be counted counts." In a *Maclean's* editorial, Ann Dowsett Johnston asks: "How can you measure the unique impact of a university education in raw numbers? How can you tally the reverberating effect of a brilliant professor? How can you capture the lifelong rewards of the experience, except in words? In short, you can't." ("Measuring the quality gap", *Maclean's*, November 27, 2000, p. 82). Nonetheless, I believe that although some educational ingredients cannot be counted, some can be and should be counted with the goal in mind to "figure out what is desirable, [and] what is measurable" (p. 82), in order to determine what level of quality we, university professors and administrators, wish to provide.

Therefore, is technology part of the desirable? I would say yes, for as long as technology remains a craft "impossible ... to replicate real contact with fellow students and professors" (Narveson). Staring at a computer screen makes one dull after a few hours work; on the other hand, the experience of an interactive live classroom lays "virtual" halos over students and their teachers' heads. Renaissance men and women of the future must be "built" – within the confinements of a productive, interactive, interdisciplinary ambience – by a committed "body" of cultivated faculty. Live diffusion of human knowledge should not be considered a cartel, versus the wonders of machine omnipotence, as Gary North insinuates. Machine dynamics should be a part of our new millennium's university experience, but never should it take over the dynamics of voice, thought, criterion, fellowship, interaction, debate, and above all the trusted relationship between a learned individual and his/her students.

* * * * *

COMMENTS OF AN INTELLECTUAL LUDDITE

R.G.R. (Barney) Lawrence, Q.C., L.L.B.
Adjunct Professor, Faculty of Mathematics (to Dec.
2000) (DTA 1991)
Adjunct Professor, Department of Mechanical
Engineering

How flattering that you should invite me to write something on the subject of Learning Technology (LT). In a world increasingly dominated by technology, buzzwords and abstruse abbreviations, it should be made clear at the outset that this writer is "CI" (computer illiterate), "FC" (follically challenged), "CC" (chronologically challenged) and totally unqualified to address the subject of LT. But perhaps a fresh viewpoint, one uninhibited by any knowledge or expertise, may be of interest. To paraphrase Rudyard Kipling,

What do they know of LT,
Who only LT know?

Wasn't it Beethoven who sought the tradesman's opinion of his music?

It should also be borne in mind that this writer's field of expertise, such as it is, is in the field of Law, not an "exact" science. In the more exacting disciplines of mathematics and science, the procedure is to amass all relevant data to arrive at a conclusion. We, "of the long robe", however, start with a premise and then marshal all the facts, law and arguments available to support it. My observations, therefore, may not be as relevant to other disciplines.

While the wonders of technology no doubt have their place in teaching, it has always seemed to me that they should be our servants and not our masters. To echo Lord Beaverbrook's credo, "Res mihi non mihi rebus," freely translated as "Things are meant for me, not me for things." In the same vein one should remember the parable so graphically displayed by Walt Disney in the *Sorcerer's Apprentice* sequence of his immortal *Fantasia*, i.e. one should not put too much trust in mere machines.

A few months ago, in a conversation with our President, Dr. Johnston, we both agreed that the use of poetry in teaching can be very effective. Poetry is, after all, "the shorthand of the soul." My conclusion from this brief discussion was that the words, meter and incantations of poetry can in some way pierce the protective covering of the human mind and make memorable words and thoughts. At least some of our efforts as teachers should be directed to leaving something of value in the student's memory bank. Could technology possibly be used in teaching in the same way as poetry can be?

While addressing the British House of Commons, Sir Winston Churchill said, "The first duty of a university education is to teach wisdom, not a trade, character, not technicalities. We want a lot of engineers in the modern world but we do not want a world of engineers." Bearing these words in mind, it is my belief that if a teacher can inspire both an enthusiasm for and a love of learning in the student, he has gone a long way toward achieving success. An avoidance of painful pedagogy, "errant pedantry" and didacticism is advisable.

To conclude these random ramblings, I think that the best method of university teaching is for a professor to be engaged with his students in the classroom in a way that they can share not only in his knowledge but also in his life experience. To quote Churchill once again, "I love to learn but I hate to be taught."

* * * * *

Morris Tchir (DTA 1984)
Department of Chemistry

Reading the article on the merits of the distance education program reminded me that I really must try to get a copy of "The Five-Minute University" with 'Father Guido Sarducci'. (It must be available on tape or CD: I wish I could remember the real name of the comedian.) I think that this monologue sort of puts the d.e. proposal in a proper perspective. It can also remind each us of the limitations of what we are trying to do everyday.

I have never taught a distance ed course but I have been at the administrative end for several years now. I have developed an appreciation for the program and an admiration for many of the students. Some of these students are taking one or two courses per term while holding down full-time jobs and dealing with the responsibilities of normal family life. It is not unusual to take five years or more to complete a general degree. In the past, these students often convoked at the October session (this has changed in the past two years) and it is a distinct pleasure to see them come to get the degree. Many have never been on campus, and they bring with them wives/husbands, children and sometimes even grandchildren.

Finally, we have one student who continues to take distance ed courses in post-degree status. I think that this one has done more than 30 courses since finishing an honours degree. It seems that this is being done for the pleasure of learning. Interesting.

* * * * *

TEACHING IS MORE LIKE MAKING WINE THAN MAKING LOVE

Tom Carey

Department of Management Sciences and Centre for Learning & Teaching Through Technology and TRACE

I read the articles by North and Krantz and Jan Narveson's commentary. Here's my Rough Guide to the three of them:

1. Don't waste your time reading Gary North's article. From his demonstrable lack of knowledge about his subject matter, I was quickly convinced that he hasn't tried any of what he is suggesting and has probably not talked to anyone who has. There's an extensive research literature about the contexts in which resource-based learning can be effective and what it costs to get it right, but Gary North doesn't show any signs of familiarity with that knowledge base. Skip it.

2. Steven Krantz may be responding to people like Gary North, in which case his arguments are probably more than sufficient to expose the most glaring of North's exaggerations. But Krantz' case begs the question: If the "trained mathematics instructor" does such a great job, how much more effective could the learning process become if they were complemented – not replaced – by carefully designed, research-informed software [or any other aids to learning]? And don't believe that part about "their efficacy is unestablished" – there's lots of evidence about improvements in both immediate and long-term learning when the right software, the right students and the right learning context are brought together. For the Math examples Krantz discusses, Bernie Gifford and his colleagues at UC Berkeley have shown that an appropriate combination of skilled instructors and learning-centred software can raise student performance and have longer term effects on future learning. If you'd like to see some of the research in a particular subject area, contact me and we'll dig some out for you.

3. Jan Narveson has some thoughtful reflections on the properties of good teaching and what we do as faculty to provide lasting value for our students. I just wish he had left out that paragraph stating that "Universities are about research, primarily". That statement could so easily be misunderstood: in the context of the larger article, I think it's clear he meant that universities are all about learning, and research at the frontiers of a discipline is learning in its most advanced form.

Still, maybe emphasizing the importance of research in a university like ours is still needed. Jan's commentary might have been stronger if he had included more research results and fewer "there is reason to doubt" and "I suspect that". There's lots of solid research into how good teaching works by getting students to interact with the

subject matter, the instructor and other learners. Similarly, there's lots of evidence about which of those interactions can be enhanced by technology.

4. Which brings me to a final suggestion: We might be better off to focus our attention on smaller questions. It's enjoyable to point out the obvious flaws in the claims of a Gary North or to defend the values of a transformative education against the shallow views of Krantz' villains "with dollar signs in their eyes". But for most of us as faculty, the day-to-day decisions are more mundane: We are going to invest some of our time this year trying to improve the learning experience for our students, and we'd like to know the best way to do that.

For a particular learning challenge where I want to help my students move towards deeper, richer, more effective learning, what's the best way for me to go about that? Would it be better to revise my course manual, provide an alternative assignment, add more readings [or delete some], invite a guest lecturer, engage the students with a real-world case simulated through software, shrink the class into small discussion groups conducted over the Internet...? Any one of these might be the right solution in a particular context, there's a lot of knowledge available from colleagues on campus who have tried various approaches, and there's a research base we can access to find out what is known already about addressing the kinds of needs my students have with the kinds of resources we can muster for the task. Labelling any of these options as "Stick-in-the-Mud" or "slick, quick and high tech" doesn't help me much in making decisions about how to invest my scarce time for the benefit of my students.

P.S. Jan, you mention Clifford Orwin's *National Post* article about "Teaching is like making love". Pardon the pun, but that really is a romanticized view of teaching – I suspect that for most of us "Teaching is like making wine" may be a more fitting simile. A good winemaker is quite prepared to use the latest technology if it improves the quality of the outcome.

FAUW Office

Room 4002, Mathematics & Computer Building

Phone: 888-4567, ext. 3787

Fax: 888-4307

E-mail: facassoc@uwaterloo.ca

FAUW Website

<http://www.uwfacass.uwaterloo.ca>

BOOK REVIEW

Jeffrey Shallit, Department of Computer Science

Morris Berman

The Twilight of American Culture

W. W. Norton, 2000

CDN \$34.95.

Morris Berman has seen the future, and he doesn't like it.

Berman is, according to the book jacket, "an innovative cultural historian and social critic" who has "held visiting professorships in the United States and Europe."

He believes that the US, like ancient Rome, is exhibiting signs of imminent societal collapse: rising economic inequality, falling literacy, rising anti-intellectualism, and spiritual death through an expanding corporate culture.

Berman provides a familiar litany of what's wrong: 53% of Americans don't know that the earth takes one year to revolve around the sun; 60% of adult Americans have never read a book; 70% of Americans believe in the existence of angels.

Drawing inspiration from the Dark Ages, Berman advocates a remedy in what he calls the "monastic option". During a time of intellectual stagnation, monks preserved and copied classical wisdom. This knowledge was then available for the cultural renewal that started in the 12th century. Following this precedent, Berman suggests that what he calls NMI's (new monastic individuals) start preserving what's best in Western culture so that it can survive the coming storm.

What's an NMI? You're an NMI if you love your occupation, aren't focused on celebrity culture, and haven't sold out to the corporate world to get where you are. NMI's are creative and nomadic. Hmmm, doesn't that sound suspiciously like a description of a certain cultural historian and social critic who's held visiting professorships in the United States and Europe?

As Berman admits, his notion of NMI has much in common with "Class X" from Paul Fussell's 1983 book, *Class*. Fussell dissected American culture into nine socio-economic classes, from "Bottom out-of-sight" to "Top out-of-sight". All of these classes are more or less despicable, except for an exceptional tenth class, Class X, which (surprise!) includes people like Fussell himself. Similarly, Berman's description of NMI's sounds like he is, with deep appreciation, looking into a mirror: "the NMI is the purist [sic] embodiment of the human spirit". Beware of books where people just like the author are depicted as saviours.

Despite a reputation as an intellectual, Berman frequently bases his argument on questionable sources. For example, he claims that 42% of Americans cannot locate Japan on a world map – an eminently believable statistic – but the impact is diminished by the realization that Berman's source is Garrison Keillor, the public radio variety show host. Two pages later, Berman devotes more than a page to the sad results when Jay Leno asked basic questions about American history of high school students and undergraduates. Americans' ignorance is legendary, but Jay Leno doesn't exactly have a reputation as a researcher well-versed in statistical methods. Yet another example is taken from "Car Talk", a public radio comedy show. Perhaps the example is true, and perhaps not, but couldn't Berman be bothered to check for himself? Never let facts get in the way of a good anecdote, I suppose.

Although Berman decries the abilities of today's students, he's not exactly Nabokov himself. In one section, he misuses the term "cybernetics", and, in another, includes this embarrassing sentence:

The group included men, women, and people of color.

Often Berman's arguments are based more on emotion than dispassionate analysis. Like many on the Left, he dislikes globalization, but can't coherently explain why. He remarks

In 1991, the Nike Corporation made \$3 billion in profits, paying its factory workers in Indonesia – mostly poor, malnourished women – \$1.03 a day, not enough for food and shelter.

This is incoherent because it does not tell us what is wrong with Nike's behavior. Is Nike employing slave laborers or busting unions, both of which we may defensibly decry? Or are its workers making a rational choice that, in the context of Indonesian employment opportunities, \$1.03 a day is better than nothing – even if the wage seems small by Western standards? Would Indonesia somehow be better off if Nike refused to employ any Indonesians at all? Berman doesn't say. An economist friend comments that Berman's analysis shows "more political bias than analytical acumen." Later, Berman remarks, "I am not an economist." No kidding.

In these days of dot-communism, social critics can hardly resist the tempting target of the Internet, and Berman is no different. The Internet is to blame, we are told, be-

cause it

disrupt[s] the 'vertical' experience provided by the printed word... What hypertext provides, in contrast, is a 'horizontal' experience of skimming across related (or, for that matter, unrelated) ideas, opening up kaleidoscopic windows, as it were. . . . Subjective space evaporates, to be replaced by mental theme parks that assist in the process of moving our culture from wisdom to schlock. [1]

I find this "analysis" the worst sort of gobbledygook, similar to the nonsense that Alan Sokal parodied so effectively in his famous hoax on *Social Text*. But even if it has meaning, Berman ignores all the benefits of electronic texts. To name just two:

(1) the ability to include supporting data that in the print medium would be excised to save paper;

(2) the ability to cheaply preserve and quickly retrieve valuable yet obscure cultural documents.

For example, as I write this, the outcome of the US presidential election is still in doubt, but it is trivial to retrieve detailed polling data on all congressional races and ballot measures, something not easily available in print. Similarly, I was recently able to find online a technical report written by Seymour Papert, debunking many of the claims of philosopher Hubert Dreyfus. This report was never published in a refereed journal and hence would be difficult to find in traditional libraries. If these successes mean my "vertical experience" has been disrupted, then disrupt away, please.

Despite being poles apart politically, Berman's analysis has much in common with Allan Bloom's bad and unintentionally hilarious 1987 polemic, *The Closing of the American Mind*. There is the same sourness, the same disdain for youth and youth culture. Both Berman and Bloom hunger for a better time long gone, when there were no McDonald's restaurants or Internet terminals in libraries. Both see literature and philosophy as the pinnacle of human achievement, and view science, mathematics, and technology with suspicion, even hostility.

Ultimately this is all familiar and well-trodden ground. Indeed, Berman argued much of it in his execrable 1981 anti-rationalist screed, *The Reenchantment of The World*. The reader with a need to feel superior to most of North America would be better advised to read Paul Fussell's much wittier book *Class* or even Joe Queenan's *Red Lobster, White Trash, and The Blue Lagoon*. Berman closes his introduction as follows: "I promise to do my best not to entertain you." This is one goal of the book that he has achieved.

[1] I wonder if Berman is also ideologically opposed to the academic footnote, which has much the same function.

FORUM EDITORIAL BOARD

Edward Vrscaj, Applied Mathematics, Editor

Andrew Hunt, History

*Paul Malone, Germanic & Slavic Languages
& Literature*

Jeffrey Shallit, Computer Science

David Williams, Optometry

John Wilson, Political Science, ex officio

*Pat Moore, Faculty Association Office,
Production*

CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

OCUFA TEACHING AND ACADEMIC LIBRARIANSHIP AWARDS

Each year OCUFA recognizes outstanding teachers and academic librarians in Ontario universities through its Teaching and Academic Librarianship Awards program. Since 1973 OCUFA has presented 290 awards. Approximately ten awards are presented annually.

Guidelines to assist in organizing a nomination are available from the FAUW Office and are posted on the OCUFA web site (www.ocufa.on.ca). The deadline for receipt of submissions at the OCUFA office is **February 23, 2001**.

HAGEY LECTURE

“Human Rights and the Rights of States: Are They on a Collision Course?”

Michael Ignatieff

Renowned author and historian Michael Ignatieff will present this year's Hagey Lecture on Wednesday, January 24, 2001 at 8:00 p.m. in the UW Humanities Theatre. Dr. Ignatieff's Hagey Lecture is based on his more recent research on the history of human rights. Earlier in November, Ignatieff delivered the CBC Massey Lectures, entitled “The Rights Revolution”, at the University of Toronto's Convocation Hall. Ignatieff was also the 1999 Tanner Lecturer at Princeton University. (These lectures will be published as the book, *Human Rights as Politics and as Idolatry*, by Princeton University Press, 2001.)

Recently, Ignatieff has been serving on two Independent International Commissions: one on Kosovo (1999-2000), the other on Sovereignty and Intervention (2000-2001). Currently, he is spending a year at Harvard University in the Carr Center for Human Rights Policy, Kennedy School of Government. He is also working on a book entitled *After Paradise: A History of the Moral Imagination in the Twentieth Century*.

According to Andy Lamey (*National Post*, Nov. 19, 2000), “Michael Ignatieff has gone from tough critic of nationalism to qualified defender.” Comparing Ignatieff's recent Massey Lectures to his 1993 book, *Blood and Belonging: Journeys into the New Nationalism*, Lamey writes:

What a difference seven years make. The Rights Revolution, Ignatieff's 2000 Massey Lectures, aren't a total renunciation of his earlier view, but it's clear there's been a big shift in his thinking about nationalism. With a few caveats, he has come around to a much more sympathetic stance. Gone is the emphasis on how group claims inevitably come into conflict; so is the call for skepticism. Instead, he urges all Canadians to recognize the legitimacy of the claims of national minorities such as natives and Quebecers: “The problem with equality of individual rights is that it is simply not enough. It fails to recognize and protect the rights of constituent nations and peoples to maintain their distinctive identities.”

Ignatieff is the author of nine books: *A Just Measure of Pain* (1978), *The Needs of Strangers* (1984), *The Russian Album* (1987), *Scar Tissue* (1993), *Blood and Belonging: Journeys into the New Nationalism* (1993), *The Warrior's Honour: Ethnic War and the Modern Conscience* (1995), *Isaiah Berlin: a Life* (1997), *Virtual War: Kosovo and Beyond* (2000), *The Rights Revolution: The Massey Lectures* (2000). He is also co-editor, with Istvan Hont,

of *Wealth and Virtue: The Shaping of Political Economy in the Scottish Enlightenment* (1983).

In addition to his books, Ignatieff has written extensively for books and magazines including the *New York Review of Books*, *The New Yorker* and *Foreign Affairs*. Over the past 15 years, he has also been a documentary film writer and host for BBC Television. He has also written numerous works for television, including the highly acclaimed series “Blood and Belonging” (1993, six 50-minute episodes) for the BBC, CBC and PBS affiliates, which dealt with ethnic nationalism in Yugoslavia, Turkey, Quebec, Northern Ireland, Germany and Ukraine. More recently, he produced the series “Future War” (March 2000, three 50-minute episodes) for the BBC and CTV.

Ignatieff has received a number of distinguished prizes for his writing, including the Royal Society of Literature Heinemann Prize (1987), the Governor General's Award for Non-Fiction (1987), Lionel Gelber Prize for Writing in Foreign Affairs (1993) and the Cornelius Ryan Award of the Overseas Press Club of New York (1994). He currently holds a MacArthur Foundation Grant.

Toronto-born Ignatieff's writing and academic careers have been quite intertwined. He was a reporter for the *Globe and Mail* in 1964-65, while an undergraduate at the University of Toronto. After receiving his BA in History (1965) from Toronto, he continued to write. As the holder of a Canada Council Fellowship, he completed his doctoral studies in History at Harvard in 1975. He was an Assistant Professor in History at the University of British Columbia from 1976 to 1978. From 1978 to 1984 he was a Senior Research Fellow at King's College, Cambridge University. As mentioned earlier, Ignatieff then served as a documentary film writer and host for BBC Television. During this period, he also served as an Editorial Columnist for *The Observer* (London, 1990-93) and *Time Magazine* (Atlantic Edition, 1998-2000).

Free tickets for the Hagey Lecture will be available in January from the Humanities Theatre Box Office, the FAUW Office, and members of the Hagey Lecture Committee (Morton Globus, Vera Golini, Prabhakar Ragde, Barry Wills, and Judy Wubnig). A student colloquium entitled “Putting Cruelty First” will be held on January 25 at 10 a.m. in MC 5158; admission is on a walk-in basis.

THE PENSION AND BENEFITS REPORT

*Sandra Burt, Department of Political Science
Chair, Faculty Association Pension and Benefits Committee*

Membership

Sandra Burt*
Len Eckel
Hannah Fournier
Ian Macdonald*
Jock Mackay*

* members of the University of Waterloo Pension and Benefits Committee

Health Benefits

For much of the past year, the University Pension and Benefits Committee (UPBC) has been considering recent increases in the premiums that the University pays to insurers for extended health and dental plans. Following the public meetings on this issue in September, the UPBC agreed to implement only two cost-saving measures, that appeared to have the least impact on members. Effective January 1, 2001 coverage of prescription dispensing fees has been capped at \$6.00. From May 1, 2001, the Plan will help to pay dental visits only if there has been at least a nine-month interval since the last visit.

The UPBC agreed that it would propose long-term solutions to the problem of escalating premiums within one year. To this end, the Faculty Association Pension and Benefits Committee (FAPBC) is now considering ways to facilitate consultation with faculty members on this issue.

Sun Life Demutualization

As a result of demutualization, the University of Waterloo has acquired the right to a fund of approximately \$400,000. About \$100,000 of this fund represents employee contributions to life insurance since 1997, when the University moved to Sun Life. The balance represents the University contribution. The legal status and tax implications of this fund are unclear. As a minimum requirement, Sun Life requires that all employee groups agree to a distribution plan before it is prepared to give the money to the University. Since the per capita payment to employees from this fund will be of the order of \$25-\$60, the UPBC is considering a proposal to use this money (both the University and the employee portions) for student bursaries/scholarships.

Early Retirement Plan

In its April 11 report to the Board of Governors, the UPBC recommended that the early retirement adjustment factors for those retiring from the University at age 55 or greater be revised as follows:

0% reduction at ages 62 and above
6% reduction per year prior to age 62.

Payroll Pension Plan

In that April report, the UPBC also recommended the setting up of a Payroll Pension Arrangement. The Revenue Canada Cap (Cap) restricts the maximum pension payable from our registered Pension Plan to \$1722.22 per year of service. This formula pension reaches this limit when Final Average Earnings reach \$97,7000. Since the Cap makes it difficult to deliver on the promise of the Plan design (2% pension integrated with CPP), the University has instituted a payroll pension plan. The Revenue Canada Cap will be replaced by a UW cap of \$2650 per year of service.

THE FAUW FORUM

The FAUW Forum is a service for the UW faculty sponsored by the Association. It seeks to promote the exchange of ideas, foster open debate on issues, publish a wide and balanced spectrum of views, and inform members about current Association matters.

Opinions expressed in the Forum are those of the authors, and ought not to be perceived as representing the views of the Association, its Board of Directors, or of the Editorial Board of the Forum, unless so specified. Members are invited to submit letters, news items and brief articles.

If you do not wish to receive the Forum, please contact the Faculty Association Office and your name will be removed from the mailing list.

ISSN 0840-7320

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

John
Wilson

The end of term approaches – much sooner, it always seems, unless you're missing a shoulder. It has seen a great deal of change (I am deliberately writing this on Sunday, November 26 so that I can avoid saying anything about tomorrow) and certainly some progress.


We are still wrestling in the Faculty Relations Committee with revisions to Policy 69 on Conflict of Interest where it seemed to make sense to address some of the implications of the internet for teaching along with the Ontario government's determination to permit the establishment of private universities in the province and to give degree-granting powers to the community colleges. They all

come together, so it would seem, because the anticipated new competition – if that is what it is – may create a demand for services comparatively easily provided through the internet and this is said to raise the spectre of a possible conflict of interest for Waterloo faculty members.

The debate has raised again the old concerns dealt with many years ago about how much time we can devote to concerns nominally not part of our university work. While the issues involved are undoubtedly important we are finding that they are far from being as simple to solve as we had thought. I doubt if this one will be settled quickly and there may have to be an extended campus-wide discussion.

Other matters on the go – such as the continuing examination of the benefits situation, our current negotiations with administration regarding new articles for the Memorandum of Agreement on redundancy, layoffs and financial exigency, and the salary negotiations which are about to begin – can wait for further comment in the new year.

Let me finally remind you again of two meetings occurring at the end of this term. On the afternoon of Wednesday, December 6 the fall general meeting of the membership will occur, when there will be reports on the many different activities in which we are involved. And on Thursday afternoon, December 7 at 4.30 we will hold again the reception for faculty members hired during the last two years – an event which has been very successful in the past. *[We regret that the Forum could not be printed in time for these events. Ed.]*



*Seasons Greetings
from the
Faculty Association
Board of Directors
and the
Forum Editorial Board*