



# Young Profs Offer Private Universities

# CASA Launches Campaign for Student Representation

By Stu Clark  
TORONTO (CUP) -- Martin de Groot wants to open Canada's first private university. But his university will be nothing like the costly private schools that have existed for years in the United States.

De Groot's university will have no campus, no buildings, and very little bureaucracy.

The unemployed academic and several colleagues are asking Ontario's provincial government to let them teach liberal arts courses in spare rooms in Kitchener's public library.

De Groot came up with the idea when he couldn't find full-time work teaching history at any of Canada's regular universities. Instead of looking for another line of work, he decided to start his own university.

"Of course we have to do it in 90s style," he said. "We're not going to be able to do what they did in the 1950s and 60s when they built the University of Waterloo because there aren't huge government funds available."

Nineties style means doing without more than just a campus and buildings.

Professors at the proposed university will be paid about \$40,000 a year, and they will only be paid for teaching, not for doing research.

While de Groot says a private university could teach other institutions to run more efficiently, he is worried that he could be too successful.

"The last thing I want to demonstrate is that we can provide high-quality liberal arts education without any kind of support other than tuition fees," he said.

Student leaders are also worried that universities run

without government funding would make it easier for governments to cutback education budgets.

"The problem in the system will not be solved by independent private institutions cropping up," said Brad Levigne of the Canadian Federation of Students. "The solutions lie in adequately funding the universities we do have."

## Warren's proposal would charge students 40 percent lower tuition fees than regular universities.

Governments have cut back billions of dollars worth of funding to universities over the last 10 years and that is why young scholars can't get jobs, and universities are in a state of crises, Levigne says.

De Groot, who has been thinking about starting a private university for three years, says his timing to start the school is very fortunate. While Ontario's previous government wasn't interested in privatizing universities, Premier Mike Harris has made it clear he is willing to consider the idea.

Harris has already set up a panel to study the issue.

De Groot's idea is new, but not unique. Shawn Warren, a Graduate student at Saint Mary's University in Halifax, has put together a proposal to start a private campusless college where student would hire professors the same way they hire lawyers.

Warren's proposal,

called Greenvale College, would charge students 40 per cent lower tuition fees than regular universities. Warren says this can be done by putting all the work normally done by university administrators into the hands of professors.

His professors -- or independent contractors' as he likes to call them -- would be responsible for registering their own students and collecting tuition fees.

The profs would keep 90 per cent of those fees as salary while the other ten per cent would be used to pay for the colleges overhead.

"The reasons tuitions are so high in established institutions is because we have things like football team and cafeterias and bloated bureaucracies," Warren said. Warren's plan has been rejected by the Nova Scotia government, but it has gained interest in other provinces.

He says he recently met with the Manitoba's Minister of Education, and there is talk of opening a prototype of Greenvale in 1997. Tom Carson, Deputy Minister for Advanced Education, says the Manitoba government is very interested in Warren's proposal, but it is too early to say if and when the province will allow the college to start up.

While Warren spends the fall trying to sell his idea to student groups and governments, de Groot and his four colleges will start teaching non-credit courses in October.

De Groot says the group wants to prove that they can get students interested and registered their classes. From there they plan to approach the government for accreditation to grant university credits and degrees.

By Tuija Roman  
REGINA (CUP) -- If students are expected to pay a larger part of the cost of their educations, they should have more say on how universities are run, says one national student group.

The Canadian Alliance of Student Associations, along with 10 local student unions will be campaigning this fall for more student representation on university governing boards.

The campaign comes on the heels of changes to the University of Manitoba act.

In April the Manitoba government changed the University of Manitoba act to give students twice as many seats on the university's board of governors.

Six students now sit on the 23-member board.

Trevor Lines, president of the U of M's student council, says students in Manitoba have been lobbying for increased representation on their Board of Governors for the last 4 or 5 years.

"We should have representation equivalent to the amount of money that is paid through student tuition into the general operating budget of the university," said Lines. CASA director Matthew Hough says he realizes that success will take time.

"It's an issue that we won't see really big results in until couple years down the road, but persistence is the key."

Students at the University of Alberta haven't lobbied for increased representation before, but are eager to start says student council president Garett Poston.

"Times have changed... Students are now paying about 25 per cent of (the) university's operating budget. Membership (on the board of governors)

should reflect funding (levels)."

The University of Alberta now has 3 students in the board of 18. They are hoping to increase the number into 6 out of a board of 21.

For students at St. Thomas University the number of representatives on the board of governors is less important than the quality of representation.

Student council president Carrie Ricker says the St. Thomas University Board of Governors only meets twice a year.

Because the board meets so rarely, it has given much of its practical power to the executive committee, Ricker says.

"We would be very interested in trying to get student representation to the executive committee," said Ricker.

Universities taking part in the campaign to increase student representation on governing boards include:

- Acadia University
- Dalhousie University
- McGill University
- The University of New Brunswick
- The University of Waterloo
- Wilfrid Laurier University
- The University of Ottawa
- The University of Saskatchewan
- Brandon University
- The University of Alberta

Editors note:

To the best of my knowledge, our student union is not currently involved with a campaign of this type. Students hold 2 positions on the UPEI Board of Governors which has a total membership of 22.