

More women choose med school

by Rebecca Schwartz,

The Varsity, University of Toronto
Female enrolment at Queen's University's medical school has increased dramatically this year.

In 1991, the first-year medical class at the Kingston, Ont. university was 35 per cent female. This year, that figure is 55 per cent.

Duncan Sinclair, vice-principal of Health Services and Dean of the Faculty of Medicine, said he is pleased with the 20 per cent increase.

"There is, in the entering class now, I would say, a balance between the sexes," he said. "There have been, for some years, proportionately more applications from women and more offers to women applicants.

"This year there were more qualified women applicants who accepted our offer of admission than in the past," he said. "We're delighted."

Sinclair said an interview and a requirement that students have a prior university degree were new application requirements at Queen's this year, however, he said he didn't know

whether the changes in the application procedure account for the increase.

Out of 1241 applicants, 566 were female.

Meanwhile, the University of Toronto's medical school continues to enrol proportionately more men than women.

In 1991, 37.5 per cent of the U of T first-year medical school class was female. The 1992 figures show a slight improvement: 40 per cent are female. Out of a pool of 2029 applicants, 879 were female.

"We're doing well, but not well enough. It's very important to have opportunities for women," said Arnie Aberman, chair of medicine at U of T.

However, David Rayside, an assistant professor in U of T's political science department who specializes in gender politics, said the male-dominated culture of professional faculties like medicine, law and engineering does not change overnight.

"All of the professions are male-oriented. The male experience is treated as the norm and

then the female experience is added or subtracted from the male experience," he said. "In a general and sometimes unspoken way, the male body is the norm against which women are measured."

However, McMaster University in Hamilton, Ont. has maintained a rate of 60-70 per cent female students in its medical school over the last five years. The school also attracts greater numbers of female applicants than Queen's U of T.

While female applicants to Queen's and U of T made up 43 and 45 per cent respectively of the applicant pool this year, McMaster's applicant pool was 54 per cent female.

Dr. Michael Marrin, chair of medical admissions at McMaster, said the university makes an effort to attract female students.

He said the McMaster program focuses on producing doctors with strong interpersonal skills and does not require science prerequisites. ●



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