

Critics denounce proposed men's centre at U of R

By SHERI BLOCK

REGINA (CUP)—A University of Regina student wants to establish a men's centre on campus, and while he's already received the blessing of the women's centre in his unconventional endeavour, critics say the idea stinks.

Karry Schmidt says the idea for a men's centre came to him as he was writing an essay about the necessity of a campus women's centre. When he questioned why there isn't a comparable meeting and educational space on campus for men, he says, he was upset by the response he received.

"The director of the women's centre was telling me about the services they offer, and apparently they do a lot of good for the women in the university," said Schmidt.

But when Schmidt asked why there isn't a men's centre on campus, he was told there's no need for one because every campus bar is a men's centre.

"That kind of made me upset," said Schmidt. "In fact, places like that aren't really a men's centre and that sort of stereotypes every male of going to the bar and acting like an idiot."

So the student decided to try to drum up support for a campus men's centre — or at least, a centre that would apply to both men and women equally.

Tammy Wagner, coordinator of U of R's women's centre, says she supports the initiative.

"If they feel there's a need for it and they can find support, if it's not just a backlash against the women's centre, I'm all in support of

it and I think everyone else is too," Wagner said.

But Wagner says men's needs could be met by her centre. "I'm in favour of men having support services but I think this support can be met at the women's centre."

Schmidt says the proposed men's centre would offer the same sort of services as the women's centre, including a space where male students can simply come and talk.

"Men do have issues as well, it's just that they'd be different than women's issues," Schmidt said. "There's a big stereotype that men are seen to be feminine if they talk about their problems [but] it actually strengthens their masculinity to realize that they do have problems," he added.

The centre would also be open to women so that both sexes could work together to improve gender relations, Schmidt said.

"One of the big things we'd support is men and women actively working to achieve equality," said Schmidt. "The real vision that we have is to convert the Women's Centre into a university centre."

But while Schmidt espouses equality between the sexes, he also insists women are taking away rights from men.

"The feminists of this age have gotten pretty much all that they've asked for politically, now when they fight for things all they are [doing] is taking away more rights from men," he said.

Education issues coordinator Jaime Reban disagrees, and says she doesn't see a need for a men's centre

on campus.

"It kind of degrades the many reasons why we need a women's centre," Reban said. "It diminishes the problem, the specific issues that women have to deal with as women."

"Men aren't fighting for things like pay equity and men on the whole don't have to deal with being victims of

domestic violence or issues like body image," she added.

Reban says men, not women, are in a dominant position in society.

"It is the white males who have all the power . . . They still earn the most money, it's women who are in poverty, it's women who have to suffer all the different kinds of violence against

them. A men's centre kind of spits in the face of all those issues and demeans them."

Schmidt says this is not his intent.

"I'm not woman-bashing in any way," said Schmidt. "The last thing I want to do is hurt women's rights, I just want it to be equal."



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