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History Credits Offered in "January Clearance" Sale

UPEI Makes National Headlines

Ray Keating - Editor in Chief
and Sean Molloy - Reporter

In the midst of what was dubbed "Academic Integrity Week" by the university's administration, Dr. David Weale came under fire for a unique offer he made to students in his History/Religious Studies 332 class. Weale offered up a deal he called "The January Clearance." Essentially, students who accepted the offer would be given a final grade of 70% in the course, in return for a promise to not attend classes.

While most students chose not to accept the offer, approximately 20 did. When word of the deal reached the ears of administration, Dean of Arts Richard Kurial said, "There won't be a free pass, this university prides itself on teaching excellence. We've won many awards and this is an aberration."

When pressed for comment, Student Union President Ryan Gallant said, "While I understand to a certain degree what Dr. Weale is trying to say, obviously the integrity of this institution is of utmost importance to us, the students who invest our time and energy here. Upon graduation we must be assured that our degree means something, that we've achieved some degree of success and met certain standards. I am not at all pleased with what this story will mean for our reputation, and how, in the minds of many, it will very likely overshadow the other great things that are happening here."

While the university's response has been overwhelmingly negative, *The Cadre* wanted to offer Dr.

Weale the opportunity to explain the motivation behind the offer. What follows is a transcript of that conversation:

The Cadre: Why offer this deal?

Weale: I felt it was in everyone's best interests, certainly, by eliminating the overcrowding in the room it provided an enhanced learning environment for the approximately 70 students who were really interested in the course, and not just the credit. That surely is worth a few raised eyebrows.

The Cadre: Is it fair to students?

Weale: You would have to ask them. There was a lengthy discussion about the option with the entire class, and not one of the students who remained has complained to me that they are being treated unfairly. Ironically, I think the people who are complaining the loudest about it being unfair are those - both students and professors - who believe that everyone must "play the game" the way they have been forced to play it. Is it fair what I am doing? I suppose that means playing by the rules, and at that level perhaps it's not fair; but there is another level, a deeper one, and that is the question of who made the rules, and in whose interests, and whether or not the rules themselves are fair. Rule makers hate rule breakers - as a rule.

The Cadre: Is it ethical?

Weale: Demanding ethical or moral behavior is often just a way of getting people to comply with a pre-



David Weale

arranged program. I could only have second thoughts about my decision if it could be pointed out to me that what I did was clearly injurious to individuals. Did I harm anyone? I don't believe so, but am open to talk to anyone who feels they have been hurt or damaged by what has happened. Is it ethical for young adults to be forced to fit into a system

where they have no say about how they are processed and evaluated? I suspect that the people who are most concerned about what has happened are not thinking about the individuals involved, but about the challenge it poses to the status quo. And what could be more unethical than that - putting the system ahead of the individuals within it. The question of whether or not all of this is ethical would make a great classroom discussion. Perhaps I'll suggest that to my friend Neb, in philosophy.

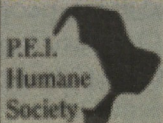
The Cadre: Does it undermine the value of traditional education?

Weale: The question of the value of a university education is an interesting one. I think the university is a wonderful place; but not for everyone; not for the many students who are pressured into going there, but who would probably be better off following some other avenue of learning. The expensive credits many students receive at UPEI are largely worthless, and when their time there is over many are left with a crippling debt-load that greatly limits their ability to pursue what they really love. In a word, time spent at university is a great benefit to some, and a great waste of time to many others, and I don't believe most universities are really honest about that.

While Dr. Weale's methods are controversial, the university community sees some validity in the root issue. When asked for the position of the Academic Integrity Committee on the matter, Dr. Wendy Shilton said "there are legitimate concerns, including class size. Professors need control to address the quality of teaching... changing unilaterally in ways that undermine the integrity of the degree is not the way to proceed. It is an untenable position to put students in." While Dr. Shilton's comments fall short of an outright condemnation, the reaction of students has been more pointed. Zac Kurylyk, the Student Representative for the same committee said "I'm disappointed to see UPEI sink to this level, Many people think that UPEI is an easy university, but it's never been this bad before. I can certainly see, though, why this option would appeal to someone with no work ethic. I think that someone who takes this deal isn't getting what they paid for - education."

The university's administration has ordered Dr. Weale to take the students who accepted the deal back into his class, but the general consensus is that, unless the university is prepared to have someone oversee his class lists and grading, it will be very difficult to enforce this ruling. This situation leaves students, academics and administrators in many universities anxiously awaiting the final outcome as an answer to a bigger question... where does the administration's authority end and the professor's begin?

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