

# University of Calgary, October 5 - Selected Highlights

## ISSUES, CONCERNS AND SUGGESTED DIRECTIONS RAISED BY PARTICIPANTS

- Too much of each student aid dollar goes to administrative costs (as much as 60%). As well, the government has failed to involve students and faculty enough in their PSE review (it is like doing a health care review without consulting patients and doctors). *(student representative)*
- “Too many students have crushing loans, are working long hours and don’t have proper time for their studies.” We need policies which “lighten the load” on students. *(university faculty representative)*
- There are serious issues of recruitment and retention of staff, including a shortage of academic staff, and the need to be internationally competitive. The time has come to “reinvigorate the post-secondary system, and to strengthen the core of our universities.” *(university faculty representative)*
- It is very difficult to deal with the whole student loan administrative apparatus; “it’s like pulling teeth.” Morale among staff is declining; too many staff are “stressed out.” There is a serious lack of operational funding; “they can’t even print their syllabuses.” We need more grants and lower tuition. *(student)*
- When it comes to loans, “they always give the lower end,” then you have to appeal, and “appeals take so long. I usually have to do five appeals to get my loan each year. It shouldn’t be this difficult to get an education.” *(student)*
- The basis for determining student loans is unfair when it comes to family support. “The price of grain went up, so my parents were asked to pay more.” The fundamental problem is that we have dramatically downloaded costs to individuals, “but society still gets the benefit.” We should not pursue the alternative of “income contingent loan repayment;” in other jurisdictions this resulted in exponential growth in tuition fees, and low income enrolments plummeted. *(graduate student)*
- The government is failing to take seriously the growing problems in PSE. “Three quarters of my students are working, often a minimum of 20 hours per week.” The issue of corporate funding is a growing problem; “corporations are getting involved in the decision-making.” *(college instructor)*
- We are witnessing “privatization by stealth.” Business decisions are far more important,



- and educational decisions take a back seat. The crucial question is, “How can we increase our revenue?” We are having to offer programming that has little to do with our mandate (academic upgrading) in order to generate revenue (“We have to do it to survive”), but in doing so, we duplicate the diploma programs of other colleges, and fail to meet our own mandate in the process. We now take so much private money, “at what point does a public institution become private?” Educational leaders behave as CEOs and “think they are running Chrysler rather than a college.” *(college instructor)*
- Students don’t go into the more lengthy programs due to the prospect of the crushing debt load, so they go into shorter programs. *(college instructor)*
  - The Alberta government maintains the rural/urban divide, and Edmonton and Calgary suffer due to the power of rural representatives. The government is hostile to academic freedom and faculty autonomy. It sees PSE merely as an economic engine, whereas those in it see it as a social engine as well, for the development of society. The government believes that it is cheaper to import graduates from elsewhere than to train Albertans. As a consequence, Albertans don’t get access, outsiders provide the skilled positions, and more Albertans head for the service economy. *(college faculty representative)*
  - Many students are working 20-40 hours per week and are looking at as many as seven years to complete an undergraduate degree. As a result, they lose 3-4 years of earning at a higher level. *(faculty)*