

LETTERS

Call to action
Re: "What do you mean I don't qualify?"
(Opinions, Dec. 8)

KATHERINE DECLERQ'S DEC. 8 op-ed, "What do you mean I don't qualify?", hit the nail on the head on the topic of the Liberal government's tuition fee promise. The election promise of a 30 per cent reduction in tuition fees certainly appealed to a lot of students, and the unfortunate reality is that Premier

McGuinty isn't keeping his promise. Instead, the provincial government will be implementing a yearly tuition grant for eligible students every year. The catch is that only about one-third of students will be eligible. If you're part time, if you're a second-entry student, if you're out-of-province, if you're an international student, a graduate student, or if you aren't a "dependent," you won't be eligible.

Tuition fees are expected to rise

again this year, forcing many students to take on even more debt, and this in Ontario—the province that already has the highest tuition fees in the country—where the average student graduates from a four-year degree \$37,000 in debt.

This is the reason the Student Federation of the University of Ottawa (SFUO) is organizing a rally for the National Day of Action on Tuition Fees on Feb. 1. Every student deserves an affordable education. Education is a right.

On Feb. 1, students will be marching from Morisset Terrace to Parliament Hill to demand the federal government earmark funds to reduce tuition fees. Students from Carleton University will be joining us, and students across Canada will be taking action on the same day.

The SFUO recently won the right to academic amnesty for the day of action, which means that your professors are not allowed to schedule midterms or take attendance on the day, so there won't be any barriers to you attending.

Ms. DeClerq is right that it seems as if the government doesn't think students will notice when promises are broken, when our tuition fees go up every year while our classes get larger. We can prove them wrong by taking to the streets on Feb. 1. Everyone is encouraged to join us at 10:30 a.m. that day on Morisset Terrace, and demand the government ensure affordable, high-quality post-secondary education for everyone in Canada.

And if you're interested in getting involved in the campaign, join us at 6 p.m. every Thursday in Café Alt to help with the planning, to volunteer, or just learn more.

I look forward to seeing you on Feb. 1.

Liz Kessler

*Vice President, University Affairs
Student Federation of the
University of Ottawa*

Open letter to Allan Rock

DEAR MR. ROCK,
This letter seeks to reaffirm the urgent need for a new building for the students of the Faculty of Health Sciences, 40 per cent of whom are students in the nursing program. We are concerned by the University of Ottawa administration's inaction in view of this space problem with which we have been faced for several years.

Our student population is scattered across the campus and this situation has continued for several years. This not only affects our student population's sense of belonging, but it infringes upon the principles of interprofessional training.

It also makes access to University of Ottawa services difficult for undergraduates, services for which all of us pay.

Furthermore, we have noticed major disparities with regard to the student experience and the opportunities offered to students in our program. These disparities are, for the most part, caused by a difference in service accessibility and proximity. This difference is so obvious that it cannot be passed over in silence.

As nursing students, we are losing significant time travelling between the different campuses. It is obvious that this lost time negatively affects our academic performance, our quality of life at the university, and our ability to participate in student life.

Several times per week, we must travel to the laboratories on the Lees campus. The physical environment of these new laboratories leaves much to be desired. For example, the tap water in this building is not even potable. There is even a sign above the water fountain discouraging us from drinking this water.

How is it that, in 2012, the University of Ottawa has water that is not even potable in one of its buildings? How do you explain such a situation when the student experience is likely one of your main concerns?

During this period of intense recruiting, we are dismayed by the messages being conveyed by the University of Ottawa with regard to undergraduate health sciences programs. These messages are inconsistent with our student reality and speak of an environment that is not ours.

We must admit that this form of recruiting is unethical and that, given the facts, future students will not have access to adequate workspaces, academic and administrative services in proximity to their classrooms, a rewarding student experience, and full status at the University of Ottawa. In short, these new students, like us, will not have a building on the main campus and will have to grapple with the feeling of being second-class students.

In conclusion, we truly hope that future nursing students will not have to feel isolated from other University of Ottawa students or deprived of academic and administrative services in one way or another. We hope that they will enjoy a new state-of-the-art building that will reinforce their sense of belonging with their student population and adhere to the principles of interprofessional training.

Luc Cormier

*President of the Undergraduate
Nursing Students' Association*

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