

HAWTHORN CAMPUS NOTES 1

All members will agree that tutors are the backbone of U3A, except perhaps the tutors themselves, who reply: "Whoever heard of a university without students?".

For those involved in the day-to-day administration of U3A the feedback from both sides is fascinating. Students seem to have two main concerns - the supply of tutors drying up and their own performance as pupils. The tutors' only concern seems to be whether their students are enjoying or getting what they want from the course?

If the tutors 'get-together' held on Saturday, May 11, is anything to go by the tutors are thoroughly enjoying their classes and as keen to see U3A prosper as anyone, especially as many of them are also students.

This first *Campus Notes* is a report on the 'get-together', which was arranged to give the tutors a chance to compare notes on teaching styles, and to talk to the 'bods' in administration about the wrinkles in the system. After a general discussion, the participants broke up into three groups to consider: 1. Adult Education techniques and other issues. 2. Evaluation of the survey conducted last month. 3. Administration problems. Various recommendations emerged from these groups and we would like your comments on the ideas put forward - do you agree? Disagree? Can you suggest any improvements or variations for general consideration?

ADULT EDUCATION TECHNIQUES

Techniques

The group had an animated discussion on learning techniques. On the one hand there was the merging of the traditional academic approach that assumes the tutor is the major repository of knowledge and that the students are relatively "empty vessels" wishing to be filled. This was contrasted with adult education models, where students are seen as bringing a life time of experience to their learning situation and the tutor stimulates and orders this so that the students can pursue whatever learning they want. For example, those learning about nutrition, relate their new knowledge to a lifetime of observing the different effects of foods on themselves.

Tutors talked about the different ways they organised their groups and the desirability of sharing as much of the work load as possible - students can handle the "roll call", prepare sessions in advance, organise multiple copies of material, hire films, design and present segments of the curriculum, find guest speakers and report on relevant items in the media. Many of the classes, set mutual goals to be achieved within a period of time and negotiate changes as issues emerge. Almost all U3A learning is through active participation.

Titles

We agreed to drop titles from all U3A members names (Dr, Revd, Mrs, Mr, Miss, Ms).

Fees

It was reaffirmed that we adhere to the concept of not paying fees in any form to tutors, but that all out-of-pocket expenses be reimbursed.

Integrated learning

Integrated learning within the community was discussed and we agreed to co-operate with the **Learning for the Less Mobile** group and wait and see what type of integration with "youth" emerges. The young people enrolled in the car maintenance course have not continued.

Rae Alexander.

SURVEY EVALUATION

This group did not stick strictly to the terms of reference, but we started off in the right direction and along the way covered some interesting points. Not all class members have returned their forms and it was thought it might be a good idea to write to those who hadn't, explaining what we hoped to gain from the information and asking them to complete the form.

On reflection it is now felt that the time is almost ripe for a second survey with revised questions. It should be stressed that these surveys are in no way aimed at assessing either tutor or student, rather they are an important source of feed back for records and research, and for tutors - 'is the content and style of the course what's wanted?' for instance. It is also a way for all to contribute to the development of the University. Following on from this the group felt that students often needed to receive a broader outline of their chosen course than there is room for in the *Newsletter* and they asked that this be done by sending more details to students with course confirmation.

The group agreed that, although it would be nice to know the reasons why people leave classes, students should not feel obliged to give them. The number who leave is very small. In some subjects, such as languages or practical art, people do not know until they attend a class once or twice if the standard or approach is for them, so a certain adjustment rate is inevitable.

The idea of a monthly report from tutors was discussed at some length. Such a report could achieve two purposes: (a) feedback to tutors regarding the style and content of their courses; (b) it would provide information relevant to programming courses and assessing vacancies. More comments from tutors on this idea, please. Meanwhile the results of the first survey await analysis, as do the figures on enrolments, students, classes and a number of variations on this theme. Margaret Drake and I hope to have some results for the next *Campus Notes*.

Jill FitzGibbon

ADMINISTRATION PROBLEMS

The main discussion centred on tutors equipment needs. It was agreed that a taperecorder and cassette player were needed at 24 Wakefield Street and this will be ordered.

Tutors showing slides seem happy to bring their own projection equipment. A chalkboard has already been ordered for the William Tresize Centre and delivery is promised for this week.

Whether there should be a term system for classes was discussed but it was felt that it was essential for the duration of classes to remain flexible, to fit in with tutors and class members.

Some tutors are involved in photocopying material for classes and infringement of the Copyright Act came up as a concern. It was agreed that this should be looked into.

Nan Brown.

Bowen Street Family Centre

needs a volunteer to work with a three-year-old group. We are looking for an adult who would be interested in contributing to this programme. It would involve playing with children reading stories etc. A trained kindergarten teacher would be present at all times. Only 12 children in the group. If you think you would be interested please contact Ann Whyte or Sarah Tallent (836 9646).