



A three year fall

The Heslington East expansion is set to increase the university's size by approximately 4,500 students. The current administration, therefore, has every reason to be 'concerned' by the decreasing number of applications to study here. A 15% drop in applications not only exceeds the national average but should cause further worry when it is taken into account that this is the third year of declining applicant numbers to York.

Some departments are clearly suffering more than others, and we must focus our attention on reversing these trends. At present, when some departments have suffered a 44% drop, it is worth asking why new ones are being opened at all. But while the administration continues to worry, YUSU President Anne-Marie Canning has taken a more apathetic approach. Frankly, when our President is instructing those who elected her to 'get a life' we are right to question her ability to continue.

What Canning fails to realise is that the falling applications have implications for academic standards, and for York's overall reputation. If the university must reject fewer candidates, the quality of those it does accept will almost certainly decrease.

The University must continue to attract the best students possible and expansion must not take place to the detriment of academic standards. If our University does not begin the expansion in a strong position, the value of a York degree could plummet. This should concern us all.

Late to the game

Figures obtained by this paper have shown that the University's Annual Fund is significantly smaller than that of our major academic rivals. The first place to scrutinize is the Development and Alumni Relations Office (DARO) which is responsible for administering the fund. But a close inspection shows that, considering it has only been running for two years, the DARO is actually doing a fairly good job and has ambitious plans for the future.

There are some good reasons why York is behind other universities. At 44 years old it is a relatively young institution with far fewer alumni than many others. Somewhat morbidly, there is not a regular cycle of alumni dying and leaving gifts to the University in their wills. In 20 years this will all have changed.

But there are some which are less good. It is truly bizarre that the University would wait as late as 2006 to set up a fully functional DARO when numerous others were already in existence in other British Universities - including other 1960s institutions such as Warwick. If there was not enough inspiration locally than a quick glance across the Atlantic would have revealed hugely sophisticated American operations that wring millions of dollars out of alumni.

The Annual Fund is the bedrock of alumni fundraising. York must work fast and aim high if we are to catch up and maximise the benefits for students and alumni.

Goodbye and good luck

In an office overlooking the lake, and at a time of year when you can't move for herds of goslings, the urge to talk about nests and spreading wings can be overwhelming. As term draws to its lazy close, those about to leave think of the future and those left think of what they mean to us. *Nouse* sincerely wishes all of those graduating this year the very best of luck for the future. A few are particularly close to this paper's ink-stained heart.

Thanks first to Heidi Blake, last year's editor, whose guiding hand played a crucial role in shaping both the paper and the editorial team who have followed in her exceptional footsteps and for doing what it took to become the only "girl" Colin Hindson has ever wanted to punch. To Ellen Carpenter, *Nouse's* designer supreme, who almost single-handedly created the design manifesto and who initiated a bunch of square-eyed first years in the mysteries of the drop half column.

To Daniel Whitehead, the beloved grandfather of the paper, who's had more editorial positions than we've had hot dinners and without whose tireless efforts *nouse.co.uk* would not exist. To Dave Coates, who's repressible wonderfulness spread far beyond film to every section and everyone he touched. Not like that.

To Albi Furlan, the dragon of Politics, whose racism we never really understood. To Sara Sayeed, our classy auntie and way cool Big Sister. To Robin Seaton, the git with a pint and the soiled bike seat. He will be missed. To Sam Thomas, the guru in whose path may we humbly follow. To Ally Carmichael, the man behind the camera.

Comment & Analysis

Tragedy and comedy with a cast of ridiculous characters

ADAM HANLEY



Lily Eastwood
Comment Editor

Reflections on a record-breaking year for York student politics.

"Stories which we voted on, they are in some way our legacy."

Another year brings with it another barrage of events and non-events, from YUSU's farcical opening act of sexist goody bags, to the news story curtain call of cocaine. Now, it seems, is the appropriate time to stand back and see what will really affect students, both current and prospective, at the University of York.

Student reactions alone put two particular stories near the top of the news pile. These are of course the vote of no-confidence in one of our own sabbatical officers, Academic and Welfare officer Grace Fletcher-Hackwood, and the election of Mad Cap'n Tom Scott, the joke candidate, to the YUSU Presidency. These are both stories which we voted on, we made happen, and so they are in some way our legacy.

The Presidential campaign was record breaking in terms of turnout, not to mention distinctive in terms of candidates. Mad Cap'n Tom Scott swept to victory with 40.3% of an incredible 2,986 votes. But the precedent for high voting turnout was not set by that election; it was set by the UGM which ousted Fletcher-Hackwood. UGMs tend to skulk by with one or two paltry motions, but this one really raised the bar. 1400 students voted and a wave of lesser motions swept past the usually intimidating

quoracy level, riding the coattails of the furor caused by the Chav D debacle.

But what have we, the students of 2007-8, really shown by our record-breaking interest? True interest in student politics? Or a keen eye for big personalities and fancy dress.

Neither the Fletcher-Hackwood story, nor the rise of the Mad Cap'n, make it feel as if the student body echoes with reverence for our illustrious leaders in YUSU. We lust for the blood and the chase. Personalities dominated: the fierce feminist, the ogrish Tory-boy, and later the pirate king of YUSU outcasts. They captured our imagination, perhaps admirably, and stirred up some support, if only for a little while. But around us bridges fell, bars stood empty and un-ethical merchandise was purchased again and again and again. All these things, which supposedly stir disdain within the student population, stand unattended to without a comical cast of principals.

When alleging blame for the pitfalls of this year, perhaps we shouldn't be so quick to damn YUSU or curse the faceless suits of Heslington Hall. We have made things happen. A pat on the back for everyone who voted. It must have been tough opening a new window (never close Facebook) and clicking the

boxes at yusu.org. But far larger congratulations are in order for anyone who took a stand on all the things the rest of us persist in whining about, but cannot be bothered to take action for. The student who dresses up as a duck and becomes the bridge mascot will be the student who solves all our problems. What an unimaginative bunch it seems we can be.

Perhaps I have sounded a little critical. I am sure many York students are trundling around broadly satisfied, protesting about nothing in particular, and that's fine. But spare me your whining if you answer only to the call of our more eccentric political activists.

All in all it's just another year, but it is due time to consider what we can and can't achieve as a student body. Above all else let's remember to keep everything in context. Together we can exert fantastic diplomatic force, but life goes on. This year a man stood on a bridge and threatened to blow it up, a student was driven to cheat and to court by the pressures of his degree, and another was found drowned in the Ouse. Take forward the good times and the achievements of the year but remember these events, as these, the ones we cannot control, are the ones that punctuate our time here.

Declining admissions and standards



Peter Campbell
Contributing Writer

Heslington East will be the last straw for York's declining admissions.

The University is losing out in admissions. While, due to a change in UCAS admissions policy, there was an expected drop in admissions of 7% nationally, York has suffered severely with a drop of 14.5% - over double that figure. Furthermore, ten departments have seen falls of over 20%, with the highest being 44% in Educational Studies. As current students, this will no doubt affect the status of our degree once we leave university, but there is a bigger problem.

Everybody loves to hate Heslington East. But now, the proposed increase in student numbers, combined with the dramatic decrease in admissions can only have one result. More students who apply to York will gain entry. Having previously been a pretty standard university for Oxford rejects, York will become filled with all of those who couldn't gain entry into other lesser regarded universities.

Obviously it is very easy to blame the change in the UCAS application process. But that just doesn't explain the higher drop in admissions at York. We can also blame the academic departments involved in the drop, but again, this will not alter that fact that Hes East will fill the University with people who previously would not have got in. We can level blame at the parties involved all day, throwing around arguments against Hes East, but ultimately we must look at the winners and losers.

The winners in the long term will be all those who gain access once Hes East is open. The losers will surely be us. We are the students who have gained access to the University when it was considered one of the greats, when it rated highly in the good University guides of the *Guardian* and the *Times*. We have embarked on a qualification here, only to be told once we arrive

that in a few years' time the University's status will devalue to such an extent, that we might as well have taken up our insurance offers. Well I'm sorry, but that doesn't seem entirely fair.

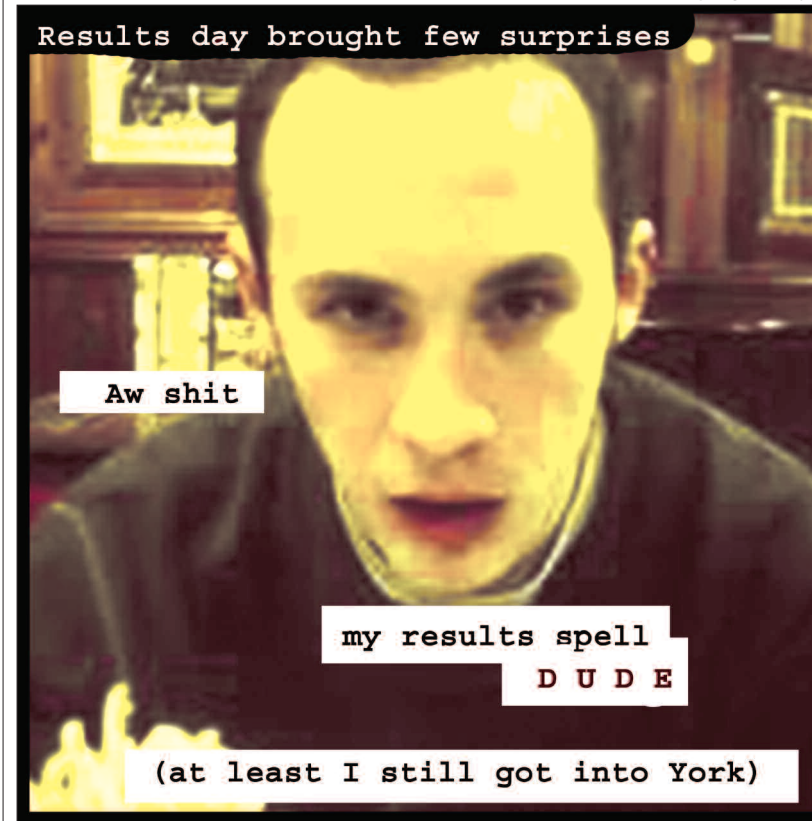
In a time when banks are accused of advertising to gain new customers while simultaneously ignoring their existing clients, I start to feel the same about our situation here. That the University feel they can sacrifice the quality of students simply in order to line their pockets from an influx of more tuition fees is absolutely disgraceful. A university that only this year was rated within the top 100 in the world, and probably one of the youngest on the list, should not now get above its own

station. We are a small university, we offer excellence in particular subjects, we are in no position to imitate big city universities yet.

In trying to expand the size of the University, it is naive to think that you will instantly get the same calibre of students filling the University whilst admissions are already in decline. If the Vice-Chancellor is willing to let our University, still in its first flush of youth, drop before it has had a chance to peak, it is betrayal to all who both study and work here, and some serious questions need to be asked about his motives in doing so.

Read Jonathan Fransman's comment on hes east at www.nouse.co.uk.

GRETCHEN REVUELTA



The Langwith bar saga: students have the power



Will Heaven
Contributing Writer

With YUSU emasculated before the University students must take action.

The University is boss. YUSU, regardless of Matt Burton's entrepreneurial fantasies, is not. Langwith bar - yes, the saga continues - may not be open for Freshers Week after the University withdrew its support for the October start date. Surprised? I thought not.

There are reasons, of course. Many parts of campus - including the Langwith walkway - are being renovated this summer. The project to redevelop the bar is not seen as 'high priority'. The bar's new opening date will be in January 2009 because, as the email sent to Burton revealed, the Directors of Facilities, Management and Estates are under a lot of pressure.

What makes a project a high priority? At university, students should come first. But we have learnt that York will often look to the long-term, ignoring those who currently study here. To our detriment, high priorities for Heslington Hall are therefore future students and poten-

tial financial gain.

So, it's time for demonstrations. Let's chain ourselves to fences and occupy Heslington Hall. Let's make things happen, and look to our 1970s forbears for examples. The university is the oppressor and we are the oppressed. Come the revolution!

Or, we could be shrewd and play to the University's weaknesses. YUSU, we know, has no decision-making power - if the University won't redevelop the bar over the summer, the student body can only apply diplomatic pressure. But that shouldn't stop effective campaigning. Reputation, reputation, reputation - it's all that matters. The University of York is a brand and we, the students, are its ambassadors.

The most effective way to place pressure on the University is for the students to prove that we - not they - own the York brand. In other words, we don't just make a big fuss, we actively assert our right to a voice, a voice to be listened to.

Oliver Lester, Derwent College Chair, posted a brilliant video on YouTube that showed the standard kitchens and accommodation in blocks E and F of his college. If you Googled 'Derwent', high up the list of search results would be his well-constructed documentary. The University, red-faced as well as surprised, quickly sorted things out. The mould in the bathrooms disappeared and plans were made for kitchen renovation this summer.

The motion to mandate an active YUSU campaign for an October opening will undoubtedly be passed. It will also lead to student protests - Burton thinks if the Vice-Chancellor realises 'we care about this' things will change.

But to achieve this we need an active web-based campaign. Protests on campus are all very well but the Vice-Chancellor must realise that by letting York students down he is putting the university's reputation in jeopardy. Who's boss now?

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Even students are going to feel the crunch



Sarah Foster
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Upon discovering that rents for campus accommodation were likely to rise in line with inflated gas prices my first response was one of annoyance. Students are already paying ridiculous amounts of money for campus accommodation which is often poorly equipped and poorly maintained. To ask for more money for accommodation next year seemed downright wrong, and I wanted to argue as such. But then I remembered, when it comes to money, things are never really fair.

The facts are quite simple. Gas prices are rising. Oil prices are rising. As a result, the cost of heating accommodation blocks will increase. The university will have to pay for this increase somehow. As students we are perfectly aware of the fact that money does not, and never will, grow on trees. The money will have to come from somewhere. And in truth, it's probably best like this. If heating prices are not properly taken into account when drawing up accommodation costs, then the money needed will have to come from some other part of the university. Do you really want your tuition fees to cover some fresher who left his heating on and his window open while he was out at Ziggy's? Or the money earmarked for improvements in your department to be used to keep someone sitting in their bedroom in a vest in December? Yes, it's a somewhat selfish view to take, but it also makes sense. Of course, the university's decision to charge one flat rate for all accommodation is one that could be questioned at this point, as the person who wears an extra set of socks to bed to keep warm instead of turning their radiator on full blast is going to end up paying exactly the same as someone who keeps their heating on all through June.

While the financial world is imploding, it's generally been accepted by all that this is going to be a period of increased living costs. And it's going to affect everyone. Considerations like energy costs will have to be taken into account by all, and I know that next year, in my little house off campus, I'll be paying more to heat my house. Yes, I'm an unemployed student living on a small weekly budget, but I can't write a letter to British Gas asking if they wouldn't mind not charging me so much for the gas that I'm using. That's not really how life works. It seems that the only option we have available for us is to accept that living costs are going up for everyone, including the student.