

Press Release issued by: Okanagan College Faculty Association (OCFA)
Date: Jan 8, 2016
Title: OCFA Contest: 30 Drops Out of the Bucket
Websites: www.30drops.wordpress.com
http://www.okanagan.bc.ca/Campus_and_Community/employees/ocfa/news.html

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Re: 30 current or former Okanagan College students with the highest student debt will each receive \$1000

In a nutshell: To highlight the crisis of student debt in our region, the Okanagan College Faculty Association is giving away 30 cheques for \$1000 to current and former OC students with the greatest student debt load.

The *Okanagan College Faculty Association (OCFA)* is sponsoring this contest with union dues paid by 302 faculty members and in collaboration with our provincial affiliate the *Federation of Post-Secondary Educators (FPSE)*. The OCFA wishes to call attention to the real world effects of the BC Liberals' continual reduction of support of our institution and the post-secondary education sector in general. This ongoing lack of commitment to post-secondary education has resulted, first and foremost in rapidly rising student debt.

Some facts about this worsening crisis:

- The average post-secondary student in BC now graduates with \$32,000 in student loan debt.
- BC students also pay the highest interest rates in Canada on these loans, typically owing between \$12,500 and \$27,500 in interest charges.
- Since 2001, per student funding in BC has declined by 20%, despite BC's budgetary surpluses and the fact that our economy has more than doubled in size in the past 25 years.
- This situation has worsened each year since Premier Clark took office. Okanagan College has received reduced funding each year since her election, and has as a result been forced into a situation where annually raising tuition fees seems like the only option. This situation will worsen considerably in the upcoming year, now that the Province has chosen to cut financial support to students pursuing ESL or ABE courses.
- Each year since Premier Clark's election, the government's Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services (comprised primarily of Liberal MLAs) has urged the government to restore funding to the post-secondary system. Every year Premier Clark has chosen not to make this a priority.
- As such, the BC Ministry of Advanced Education is the only portfolio to have had its overall funding reduced since Premier Clark has taken office.

We believe that the citizens of the Okanagan/Shuswap region share our belief that a properly funded public post-secondary system ought to be a priority of any forward-thinking government. Through this contest, we are hoping to draw attention to this issue and to encourage the public to join us in this campaign by taking a minute to sign up at www.openthedoors.ca. We also urge British Columbians to contact their local MLA (<https://www.leg.bc.ca/learn-about-us/members>) and ask them to urge the Premier to restore funding to the post-secondary system in this year's budget.

Eligibility/ how to apply:

All current or former Okanagan College students (from any department) are eligible to enter the contest, as long as they have completed at least one course from any program at OC since Sept. 1, 2005.

All applications must be received by mail, before noon Friday, Feb 26, 2016.

OCFA Contest: 30 Drops Out of the Bucket

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The 30 students with the highest level of debt will each receive a cheque for \$1000 ... thus 30 drops will be taken out of the 'bucket of student debt' that currently exists in our province.

The winners will be announced by March 1, 2016, and a spreadsheet will be published that gives a debt total for all who entered the contest (see application form for the details about the information to be published online).