

Press Release issued by: Okanagan College Faculty Association (OCFA)
Date: March 9, 2016
Title: OCFA Contest: 30 Winners each receive a \$1000 cheque
Websites: www.30drops.wordpress.com
http://www.okanagan.bc.ca/Campus_and_Community/employees/ocfa/news.html
Photos of winners: <https://30drops.wordpress.com/about/>

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List of emails of the winners? dwarren@okanagan.bc.ca



In the centre, Doug Birtwhistle, Treasurer of the Okanagan College Faculty Association surrounded by six contest winners (from left to right: Jeanette, Julie, Tara, Crystal, Laura and Alex). They each came to the college to pick up their individual \$1000 cheque rather than wait for it to come in the mail. The list of winners and more photos are on the website: www.30drops.wordpress.com One woman told her husband she had just won \$1000 for having the highest student debt. He replied, "Well that's a drop in the bucket." And then she said, "EXACTLY! That's why it's called 30 drops *out of* the bucket!"

http://www.kelownadailycourier.ca/news/article_d914050e-e5be-11e5-932e-03af8ce9f058.html

RE: Insufficient government funding blamed for rapidly rising student debt in B.C. by Andrea Peacock

College graduates are in over their heads in student debt, thanks to high interest rates and a lack of government funding, says the Okanagan College Faculty Association.

In an effort to raise awareness of student debt and to help local students with the highest debt, the OCFA recently held a contest to award 30 cheques of \$1,000 each to current and former Okanagan College students.

More than 140 people with a total student debt of \$4,475,132 submitted applications for the contest.

The highest debt recorded in the contest was \$89,321, belonging to a bachelor of business administration graduate. "It seems astronomical, but that's just the debt they have outstanding," said Tim Walters, OCFA president. "That doesn't include the interest or anything they have already paid back."

B.C. has the highest interest rates for student loans in the country, he added.

“That is something the government could do something about quite easily,” said Walters. “This ongoing lack of commitment to post-secondary education has resulted, first and foremost, in rapidly rising student debt. I think it’s an unnecessary tragedy on several different levels.”

Those who take on the most student debt usually come from the least affluent families, said Walters.

“I know from my own personal experience it has a huge effect on your life,” he said. “It limits your options. It’s difficult to start a family, buy a home, buy a car, and have the freedom of choice at the kind of work you want to do if you have this debt hanging over your head.”

The fear of student debt is a “massive disincentive” for people considering post-secondary education, said Walters.

“The national student loans office found the No. 1 reason why people don’t pursue post-secondary education is the fear of the debt they’ll have to go into, and people from low-income families are half as likely to go into post-secondary than people from affluent families, as a result of the fear of the debt,” he said. “It’s limiting and it’s contradictory, because the government has said 80 per cent of the jobs that will open up in the province in the next 10 years will require some form of post-secondary training, but the government has decided that students should take on a much greater share of the cost of offsetting that education.”

The situation has worsened since Premier Christy Clark took office, said Walters.

“At Okanagan College, we’ve had cuts to our base funding every year since Premier Clark took office, and the cuts have been worse every year since she took office.”

These funding cuts have forced the college to hike tuition, he said.

“So long as the government isn’t funding education, colleges don’t really have a choice. Post-secondary education has shifted from something that was once the responsibility of the government to something that’s now the responsibility of the people who are the least qualified to be able to afford it, and I think that’s a terrible thing.”

Depending on funding, the OCFA would like to hold the student debt contest again next year, said Walters.

“With more promotion, I think it will be interesting to see if we get more applications, which will give us a better sense of the problem.”
