Student representation

The Cord examines how student government reflects undergrad needs

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Each year, the undergraduate students at Laurier turn out, in relatively few numbers, to elect their student representatives for the next year’s Wilfrid Laurier University Students’ Union (WLUSU) government. These representatives hold an important role in the quality of life for Laurier’s students, as they are able to affect policy and decision making within the Student’s Union.

While the students elect both the WLUSU President and the Vice President: University Affairs, they also choose who will represent them on WLUSU’s Board of Directors. This past year, however, the roles of these elected representatives changed, as a new form of governance was instituted.

This model is based upon a system known as policy governance that is common in many other non-profit organizations, and was introduced in order to better represent the needs of the union’s ownership, the undergraduate students at Laurier.

“We needed a new governance structure; in my opinion it was just that simple,” says Matt Park, Chair of the WLUSU Board and its Chief Governance Officer. “And in my opinion, that comes down to a lot of things, one of which was that the Board [as it was operating] just wasn’t governing”.

The move towards a policy governance model has enabled the Students’ Union to have clearer ownership: the undergraduate representatives hold an important role in representing the needs of the union’s electorate is a common idea amongst current and former board members. Due to the large numbers of policies and provisions that were contained within the previous Governance Manual, which was nearly 200 pages long, many Board members did not necessarily understand their role as a director.

“This lack of clarity led to a scenario where the board was not necessarily acting in the interests of the school’s undergraduate students.”

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Break-in at King St.

An unidentified man broke into King Street Residence last Friday after midnight, stealing a set of keys from a don on the third floor female wing.

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Additional security measures are in place at the King Street Residence building after an incident last Friday in which an unidentified man entered a don’s room on the third floor female wing and stole a bag with, among other things, a set of keys.

The man later returned to the don’s room at approximately 2:55 am, knocked on the door and, upon receiving no immediate answer, tried to enter the room with the keys.

The don opened the door and caught sight of the man running away.

“At 3:18 in the morning, it got reported to us that the room had been entered and some articles were taken along with a set of keys,” explained Rod Curran, Director of Community Safety and Security.

“The bag that everything was in was found out in the parking lot and the keys were missing.”

“There’s no suspects at this time,” he added.

In response to the incident, Community Safety and Security and Residential Services have bolstered the building’s security with extra duty dons and special constables on patrol throughout the building.

Residents of King Street were officially notified at a meeting Monday night, though some had already been told if the situation by their individual dons.

Some, like Lauren Gillespie, a French student who lives on the fifth floor, felt that it was dealt with “pretty late” and that although it was the weekend, “the response time could have been so much faster.”

But Gillespie seemed to be in the minority of the approximately 25 residents The Cord spoke to.

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RESIDENCE STRIFE - An unmarked security cruiser stands guard.

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WLU Students' Union: representing students' interests?

After having switched their model of governance, in an attempt to make their operations more efficient and representative, The Cord looks into whether or not WUSU has achieved their goals and if the undergraduate students of WLU can have confidence in their elected representatives.

"We are acting too often as elected representatives who have the right to make these decisions," says current director Collin LeFevre, who was also a member of the board last year. "We're not doing enough consultations with the students-throughout our terms."

Another aspect that LeFevre feels will enable the board to better reflect the voices of WLU's undergraduate students is to move towards more meaningful training; "I think that right now, directors are not doing enough consultation with the students," he says. "It's more that we're not doing enough consultation with the students."

We should be giving and communicating more with the students and making sure that the way we want to see the board go is in the same direction that the students want to see the board go."

"So we should continue to look at where we've been and grow as a union," LeFevre says. "And at the end of the day, that's what we're trying to do."