



**The History of The Organization
of Part-time University Students
(OPUS)**

**Mary Catherine Schisler '88
Windsor, Ontario, May 2007**

**This account of the History of OPUS
is dedicated to the memory of
Dr. Dale Woodyard
who was always a good, wise and loyal friend
to part-time students**

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In writing the history of OPUS, it took several months of research before I was able to begin the process of documentation. I was fortunate to glean sufficient information from personal interviews, OPUS AGM President Reports, various articles from *The Lance*, the current student newspaper, and *The Ambassador* and *Newsline*, both past University of Windsor newsletters. The reader may find over all, the history is quite detailed and often repetitive in certain parts which can be explained simply by the desire to give an in-depth account of what occurred each semester of every year. Rest assured this account is factual: no sentence was fabricated or elaborated upon, although there were a few omissions which could not be helped. I found the writing experience enlightening and fulfilling, discovering what transpired over the thirty plus years of the OPUS organization on the campus of the University of Windsor.

The story of OPUS could not have been written without the help of a number of special people. First, I'd like to thank Professor George McMahon, whose awesome memory gave me hope that the OPUS history could be retrieved from the past and finally written; the plucky and resourceful Josie Iannetta who, with fearless determination, got OPUS off the ground and running, never looking back; then there's most helpful Maryan Amalow from the OPUS office and, lastly, the dedicated OPUS Presidents, Badarrudin Khuhro and Dr. Edward King. Without them, the footprint of OPUS and what it accomplished over the years, might have faded away never to be seen or heard of again.

My sincerest wish is that OPUS continues to grow and serve its students in every way it can. Let it always strive to be inclusive and open to progressive ideas so it can expand its horizons. It must never permit part-time undergraduate students to be exploited for the benefit of others. Yet, it must trust and be trustworthy in whatever it says and does, so that OPUS will always be respected in the corridors of power and influence, all the while, remaining unsullied by crass politics. The future is bright and I'm certain OPUS will embrace it as it has in the past with great enthusiasm and a profound sense of duty.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary C. Schisler '88
OPUS Past President (1991-1997)
Windsor, ON May 2007

THE HISTORY OF THE ORGANIZATION OF PART-TIME UNIVERSITY STUDENTS (OPUS)

Introduction: Who and What is OPUS?

The Organization of Part-time University Students (OPUS) at the University of Windsor has as its major goal to ensure equal opportunity to quality education for all part-time undergraduate students. The OPUS Board of Directors, made up of volunteer part-time students, is committed to serving the interests of part-time students regardless of race, creed, colour, ethnic origin or sexual orientation. The primary function OPUS performs is advocacy, through participation in the decision making process of university governance. OPUS serves on the University of Windsor's Board of Governors, the Senate and numerous other University committees where decisions are made that affect part-time students, such as: accessibility, course and programme offerings, fees, student services and quality of student life.

In the beginning...

The history of OPUS might have been written more than a decade earlier had it not been for the unavoidable disruption of the renovations on campus to the existing student centre (now the CAW Student Centre) and the move of OPUS into its new office in the building. It became obvious that writing the history later would be more advantageous because so much activity of various kinds occurred in the intervening years that can now be recorded. Student life on campus had also become more pro-active and thereby more rewarding. The contribution made by OPUS toward its goal of having part-time students recognized as a respected and valued student group will finally be publicly acknowledged in this account.

OPUS has come a long way from what it was in the beginning. What it became is the result of a dedicated few: a confident and progressive organization respected by all who have come into contact with it. How it came to be that way will be revealed by documenting its growth and achievements, recording it for all to read. How, back in the early years, OPUS struggled to influence change in University policies toward its students, finally, paying attention to their legitimate, collective needs and concerns, is enlightening. The result, in retrospect, is that the whole University community benefited, making the institution more relevant: responsive, open and transparent in all its deliberations.

The University of Windsor, with roots in Assumption College (founded in 1857) inherited all its traditions when it opened its doors in 1963. But it would take OPUS another thirteen more years, years of struggle and setbacks before it became a reality and legally established. The 70s were a radical period at the University of Windsor's campus, as it was at other universities. Those early days of student political activism were difficult for most university administrations to deal with and the University of Windsor was no different. Students, faced with all sorts of

roadblocks and indifference to their full participation in many areas of student life, demanded their rights: from academic matters, the lack of courses to services on campus. At first, the University resisted change but eventually was forced to compromise, especially after the student body supported a sit-in by occupying the President's office. That was in 1969! Determined to test the willingness of faculty and administration to be open to their demands for fairness in policies affecting them, students persisted and eventually won a few important battles. Over time, others would follow.

But it was not without strain and alienation on both sides that progress was made. Fortunately, hope was on the horizon in the person of the Dean of Students, George McMahon. At that time, he was teaching "night school," coming in contact with many part-time students. He soon came to admire them for their dedication, discipline and strong work ethic, so apparent in his classes. What eventually became well known later was, at the time, obvious to only a few in the University's Administration offices:

The majority of part-time students at the University of Windsor are mature students with an average age of thirty-four, who work full or part-time, have family responsibilities (some are both parents of post-secondary students and students themselves), and bring to the University rich, diverse, life experience. This life experience adds a valuable dimension to the classroom and university life in general. Representing about one third of the undergraduate student population, they are a distinct group within it. (*Oct. 1996: OPUS response to the Ministry of Education and Training's Paper on Future Goals for Ontario Colleges and Universities*).

Professor McMahon and other like-minded individuals, such as colleague, professor Ken Long, (who later became Dean of Students) knew the time had come for the formation of an organization that would represent the interest of these special students. Apparently, their needs and concerns were not being met by the full-time student organization at the time, the Student Administrative Council, (SAC). He, with the leadership of an informal group of part-time students, began a campaign of student awareness throughout the campus community. They lobbied strongly for an organization to represent them, one that would be accepted as equal to SAC and an integral part of the University's total student body. The campaign was a huge success with an impressive turn-out resulting in the eventual establishment of OPUS.

Prior to 1971, OPUS existed only as an informal group representing part-time students and was not formally and legally established until 1973 (later incorporated in 1976). However at the time, its students, all volunteers (as today), provided leadership by spearheading the initial goals of OPUS, always advocating for the rights of part-time students. They made an incalculable contribution to OPUS in those early days, and all future part-time students generally benefited by their activities, their determination to contribute to the advancement of students' priorities. Past OPUS presidents included: Debbie Weeks, Betty Black, Josie Iannetta, Mike Walden and Walter Costa. Each in their time became engaged in the struggle for acceptance, working diligently for their student voices to be heard.

But it was Josie, the little dynamo with the big heart and social conscience, who made the greatest impact in those early days, months and years, working tirelessly with purpose, making a difference for students like herself. Josie was a University of Windsor employee (1986, Advisor to students with special needs and later, Assistant to Dean of Students) and also a part-time student. She saw the necessity of becoming an activist for student rights and was determined to bring fairness to their academic experience at the university. As founder, and president of OPUS from 1971-1981, she began by attacking the entrenched status quo attitude of the Administration which seemed to be against students having a say in certain areas of interest. It did not take long before the collective heads of the University began to spin. Josie was unrelenting in her determination to push student causes at every turn.

In order to get the fledgling OPUS organization up and running as a bonafide entity in service to part-time students, Josie, as president, initiated a questionnaire to identify areas of student concern needing attention by the Administration. Once drafted, it was sent to all part-time students. This was 1973 and nothing like it had ever been done before. It was the very first questionnaire specifically aimed at part-time students (interestingly, the University's Administration was not involved). Part-time students were asked questions, such as: what hours did they prefer for classes, what kind of courses did they need and what difficulties did they face regarding parking, registration and the cancellation of classes without notice. These concerns had been identified by part-time students early on as serious, inhibiting their advancement to a degree. The result of the questionnaires were tabulated and sent to the University's Administration for study and hopefully implementation. It met with some success and was seen as a victory by OPUS.

At this time OPUS received needed assistance from special people like faculty member Larry LeDuc who became a great friend to OPUS and, in particular, a mentor to Josie. He recommended she become a member of the University's Health and Safety Committee (which led to a position with Local SEIU as an educator and later as a Health and Safety activist). This position encouraged her activism on behalf of OPUS.

In 1977, a referendum was held enabling OPUS to request fees from part-time students so it could continue in its role of representing them. It passed and a fee of \$2.00 per semester was established and placed in the OPUS account. A constitution was also adopted at that time, as was joining the Canadian Organization of Part-time University Students (COPUS), the national body representing part-time students across Canada. OPUS began reaching out to other student groups, continuing the effort over the years.

What began in the Fall of 1981 as an initiative by OPUS and later adopted by the University, was an orientation for part-time students. This had never been done before. Its aim was to inform and help students adjust to campus life through presentations by Administration officers, councillors, representatives from the Registrar's Office, Library advisors etc. Even tours of the campus were given. Its main speaker was an educator, Al Linell, from the Essex County School Board who had earned his degree through part-time studies. Up to 300 students attended,

making it a huge success. Now each Fall, the University of Windsor conducts its own orientation for full-time students. OPUS can claim it saw a need for a new service for all first year students hoping it would make their early days on campus easier. In doing so, OPUS had set a precedent the University wisely adopted.

OPUS was always courting new ideas to keep its students informed on issues that might interest or help them. Once it resorted to airing its complaints publically to get the attention of the University's Administration. This was in 1979. An ad was placed for the OPUS Annual Meeting on the local TV Community Channel. A litany of complaints against the University's lack of services, the lack of long-term planning of courses for part-time students were aired. Needless to say, it caused a stir which had the University's President at the time, Dr. Mervyn Franklin backed by the University's Board of Governors, demanding its removal. Josie withdrew the ad after extracting a promise from him that he attend the OPUS Annual Meeting, which he did. The result was positive: the Registrar's Office opened during lunch hour and later in early evening so part-time students could register then (usually it was closed at those times hampering students from accessing additional information they might need). Rudeness in its office was reviewed and dealt with. Parking spaces were added. Food Services extended its hours to serve hot food in the evening, plus, bus availability was also improved. The list, a familiar one, had the President listening, and he acted. Mighty Josie had left her mark.

The 1980s were busy years. Student enrolment was growing and part-time students had become almost one third of the student body. Finally, OPUS had a seat on the Senate and on the Board of Governors. It also had representation on various committees of university governance and academic matters. It was then that part-time student bursaries were instituted. A student handbook was printed and sent to all part-time students. In addition, a quarterly newsletter for part-time students, *Dialogue*, was created and made available to them on campus. The presidency of OPUS passed on to Eric Dobbs and then to Sue Dufour, both part-time students and employees of the University. The big issue of the day was the age and inadequacy of the student centre. It desperately needed a make-over. Many hours of discussion and debate were held with the University's Administration and the three student groups: SAC, OPUS and GSS (Graduate students Society). The upgrade would be expensive and all students would have to share the cost. At first SAC, representing the largest group of students, resisted the University's proposal but later relented. OPUS, on the other hand, provided student leadership early on by supporting the cause, raising funds through a mass-mailing to its students. OPUS hoped its commitment would ensure office space on the main floor of the new Centre. Included in the appeal was an additional request to increase its financial base from which OPUS would be able to provide additional services and conduct its business in a more professional manner.

Early in the planning process, OPUS made a presentation to the renowned international architect, Raymond Moriyama, who was in town to meet with the three student groups. As head of the design team, he was interested in learning about the needs of OPUS in their new facilities in the Centre. OPUS requested space on the main floor (easy accessibility for handicapped students) and included the wish for "a room with a view" which, at the time, seemed to impress

him. Of the three student groups, only OPUS submitted their requirements in writing, also including a basic drawing of a floor plan. At the time, the OPUS office had been housed in a very small room just inside the old centre's main entrance. During the renovation, it would be moved temporarily to a house on Sunset near Wyandotte behind the new Odette Faculty of Business (OPUS donated a flowering Crab tree to be planted in honour of the building's opening in October 1991). Space had to be found for all the offices previously housed in the existing building. Complaints about the inconvenience of the moves were few, in expectation of a spectacular yet functionally designed building. OPUS was not disappointed.

The groundbreaking ceremony was held on April, 1992. A whole year would pass before the OPUS office could be moved back into the new student centre, renamed the CAW Student Centre (its new name came from the generous financial contribution of the CAW Union). It took a year of adjustment but also of great anticipation as students watched the dramatic transformation taking place on the building site.

Highlights: May 1993 - April 1994

The grand opening ceremonies of the new Student Centre took place on October 23, 1993. Dignitaries and special guests from the CAW Union, the Windsor and District Labour Council, the President, the Chancellor of the University, members of its Board of Governors, the President of Assumption University and the presidents of the three student groups, all welcomed the crowd assembled in the huge, bright two-story atrium. As was stated in the Centre's programme that day under the heading, "Building Futures:"

***OPUS Sets the Stage. We Can Make It Happen. Vote Yes For More.
Yes! Watch Your University Grow.***

With these slogans, the Organization of Part-time University Students (OPUS), under the leadership of former president Susan Dufour became the first student group to endorse a financial commitment to the student centre project. The year was 1989.

OPUS was proud of its contribution and efforts in support of a much needed building for all students. Its financial gift was publically recognized and appreciated. Everyone celebrated the Centre as a great achievement. "A Perfect Union," it was called. It was a truly wonderful day. Mr. Moriyama modestly stated he was very pleased that everyone he encountered was impressed with his design -- modern, functional and yet so open and welcoming. The new Centre beckoned and the OPUS executive and staff could hardly wait to see their new home.

With their new president, Mary Schisler (1991-1997), at the helm, the challenge was, after moving in, how to furnish OPUS new quarters. To say the executive and staff were happy with their new space would be an understatement. It was so much larger than expected, with huge full-length windows actually showcasing "a view," albeit, just the back of Assumption Church. Not only were the facilities generous but they were well-placed in the west corner of the

building with an accessibility ramp right next door. Having the foresight to set aside moneys for furnishings, so as not to put a strain on the OPUS budget, the executive was able to approve purchasing furniture needed for the office. Mary, who had been an interior designer in her former career, was able to approach a reputable office supply company with confidence and the selection of furniture and accessories were ordered with professional ease. The colours chosen were soft and pleasingly coordinated so as to give the premises an atmosphere of calm and welcoming to all who entered through the OPUS door. However, it did take several months before the office was completely furnished, nevertheless, it did not take very long before it was operating fully. The university also employed the same design company to furnish spaces elsewhere in the Centre.

New office procedures instituted would produce a more cost-effective and efficient operation. The result would hopefully provide a more professional service for students. Services offered to all part-time students were: A word-processing service, Perfect Papers, (in the early 90s not many students owned computers), would provide professionally typed papers at a reasonable cost. The OPUS newsletter, *Dialogue*, was revamped to include the most current issues and activities of interest to part-time students. As was the *OPUS Handbook* (filled with vital information and small enough to carry in purse or pocket). Both were now sent out to students prior to each Fall Semester.

OPUS continued to offer a number of awards to part-time students. OPUS Bursary Awards were available to students who qualified each Fall and Winter Semester. Both the OPUS Academic Achievement Award and the OPUS Faculty Award were presented each year at the Annual Awards Wine and Cheese Reception to which students, members of the Administration and faculty were invited. The Academic Achievement Award of \$500. was presented to Shirley Bergeron, a single mother of two. And the first-ever Faculty Award was presented to Professor Richard Householder of the School of Music. The turn-out to honour the recipients was good and most appreciated. As enrollment grew, new awards were considered for implementation.

Each Fall Semester, OPUS was gratified to have student volunteers come forward to serve as Class Representatives. A dedicated group, they willingly offered to make others on campus aware of OPUS through personal contact. Always faithful in attending meetings, they gave of their time in various ways. They helped sell tickets for a chance on tuition remission for one semester and assisted in the campus-wide drive for the United Way. Most importantly, their opinions were very much valued as a resource for decision making by the OPUS Board of Directors.

Unfortunately, registration and accessibility at the time remained a problem for far too many part-time students. The cutting back of evening courses was creating a barrier for those students in the latter half of their programmes who needed them to complete their course requirements. It was rumoured that Sessionals, who taught third and fourth year courses in the evenings, might be phased out. In addition, on every occasion possible OPUS expressed its disapproval to the Registrars's Office regarding their arbitrary decision (without consultation) to discontinue mailing out Course Offerings. This change in policy had become a detriment to part-

time students, making it more difficult for them to register in time for the courses they needed. A question arose at the time: did the change affect part-time student enrollment figures? So serious was the situation that OPUS made a commitment to pursue a pro-active stance regarding course variety and availability. A decision was taken to make the Senate aware of their concern through the Continuing Education Committee report soon to be tabled.

By serving on University committees, OPUS members provided student input into decision-making at almost every level of University government. Their reliable attendance and participation was always appreciated by the chairs of committees who felt students' perspectives on issues were helpful. The list included:

- The Board of Governors's External Relations Committee.
- Senate Continuing Education Committee.
- Senate Library Committee.
- Senate University Government Committee.
- The President's Advisory Council on Student Life.
- Student Health Advisory Committee.
- CAW Student Centre Board.

The CAW Student Centre seemed always to be in a deficit position and might, in the near future, become a serious boondoggle needing solutions in many areas of increased costs, operations and general upkeep. Tension was growing when the burden of fee increases loomed on the horizon causing division between the student groups. A serious break occurred when SAC and GSS voted in favour of raising the OPUS fee to the Centre from a flat fee to an unacceptable per-course fee (an astronomical increase up to 350%). This unprecedented action did not bode well for future student cooperation.

Over time many special committees were formed on which OPUS had representation:

- University's Committee on Sexual Harassment.
- Search Committee for the Chancellor of the University.
- Crisis Intervention and Peer Support Committee.
- Panel on Traditional Prejudice and Discrimination.

The Nelles Report was brought to the Senate for study. A Task Force of five members was formed to propose the direction the University should take in the future. *The Council of Ontario University's Discussion Paper on Tuition Reform* was greeted with fear and apprehension which produced an open forum where the future of massive fee increases would be discussed.

From time to time OPUS was asked to donate to a good cause. In supporting a seminar in honour of Women Composers, OPUS was happy to recognize the exceptional accomplishment of women in the important field of music. OPUS always acquired University Players tickets and participated in the Christmas Adopt-A-Family programme. Each Fall and Winter Semester,

OPUS received invitations to various functions on campus - events like The President's Wine and Cheese Reception, the University's Annual Giving Campaign, the opening of the Freed-Orman Conference Centre of Assumption University and the opening of the Special Learning Centre at the Faculty of Education. OPUS always tried to send a student to attend University events.

The proudest moment for a president of OPUS was to be invited to attend Spring and Fall Convocations. It was an opportunity to congratulate many part-time students OPUS came to know over the years. Aware of the personal sacrifices they made to achieve their goal of a university degree, OPUS happily and enthusiastically celebrated their achievement.

Highlights: May 1994 - April 1995

At that time, the population of part-time students had fallen from 5,100 students to 4,278. This decrease in student enrollment was of great concern to OPUS. As was the probability of new, unexpected challenges to come. Many of the recommendations of the two *Strategic Planning Task Force Reports* would likely be implemented. The result of unrelenting government cut-backs, increases in tuition would likely follow. In addition, the University would also have to cut courses and even drop programmes. This new fiscal reality caused a ripple of fear among the student population. It seemed change would be difficult and inevitable.

Activities in the OPUS office increased. The *Perfect Papers* service expanded to include more than papers - to reports, letters, resumes, assisting with ACCIS employment forms etc. The *Dialogue* enlarged its scope covering more events and including more interviews. Its style and tone was now set and received compliments from various sectors on campus.

As in the past, OPUS was proud to offer Bursary Awards to part-time students in need. The Awards Evening was always a special event and held in the office board room. President Mary Schisler presented the OPUS Academic Achievement Award to Cathy Pare, wife/mother of two enrolled in the Faculty of Education. The OPUS Faculty Award went to two outstanding teachers in the School of Social Work: Dr. Catherine Daly and Professor Patricia Taylor.

University committees met, as usual, with the Board of Governors easily implementing the massive fee increase for the CAW Student Centre, knowing full-well the burden they were placing on part-time students. The Senate met regularly, a place where the democratic process, for the most part, operated. It was where Deans of faculties, heads of departments and schools, faculty members, Administration and student leaders resolved academic concerns. With the threat of more severe reductions in funding in the future, it was decided to accept the reality of 'doing less with less.' Finally, seats designated for part-time students became a reality in the Spring of 1994. Since 1991, OPUS had been striving to acquire additional student representation on Senate committees. In addition, an appeal for more seats for part-time students on the Senate Bylaw Committee was also put forward.

With the Dean of Continuing Education in attendance, OPUS presented a report to the Senate Continuing Education Committee on *Life Long Learning*. In addition, cut-backs to library hours prompted a call for reinstatement to the Senate Library Committee by the OPUS president.

New Senate Committees on which OPUS had representation included the following:

- Academic Planning Committee.
- University Committee on Academic Promotion and Tenure (*UCAPT*).
- Learning and Teaching Committee.
- Computer Resources Allocation Committee.
- Student Affairs Committee.
- Undergraduate Admissions Committee. Created to be a forum where students could ask questions of the University's Administration, The President's Advisory Council on Student Life, was found wanting. Instead of being able to express their concerns, students were criticized. Unfortunately, trial balloons were often launched at students' expense. OPUS considered limiting its participation.

Not having met for some time, the CAW Student Centre Board had lost credibility in the eyes of OPUS when it imposed its massive fee increase on part-time students. Shocked to learn the Centre had a huge surplus and that fee increases were not needed, no explanation was given. However, OPUS was determined to get answers.

“Students are NOT cash cows,” was the accurate slogan at the time. The Ancillary Fee Policy Committee met monthly and at issue was convincing OPUS that geographically distant part-time students attending either the University's Chatham or Sarnia campus should pay the CAW Student Centre fee. As they did not attend the main campus, OPUS insisted they be exempt.

OPUS provided input on the University's Committee on Sexual Harassment. It met only if a complaint was launched. The president of OPUS was asked to serve on a Search Committee for a Dean of Student Affairs. She agreed to serve.

Meetings of the Crisis Intervention and Peer Support Committee had been suspended pending recommendations of the *Strategic Planning Task Force Report*. This put Peer Support in limbo. OPUS offered a member for consultation. An OPUS brief to the Ontario Council of University Affairs (ACUA) was presented in October 1994 and printed in the *Dialogue*.

Recommendations from the President's Report on Traditional Prejudice and Discrimination were yet to be acted upon. Tensions prevailed. Fortunately, the Senate insisted it be retrieved from the 'black hole' into which it had fallen. OPUS response dealt with child care, a code of student conduct and the representation of diversity within student governments.

University of Windsor Strike Day was an all-day event, well attended by students. Protesting cut-backs by the federal government, it was considered a tremendous success, even receiving coverage in the Windsor Star.

Highlights: May 1995 - April 1996

OPUS faced the future with cautious expectation. As diligent advocates for students' rights, OPUS made strides on many fronts. On the whole, this period of time was quite productive. The prospect of impending change and the OPUS organization's ability to respond positively to it was the most dominant theme and its greatest challenge.

The OPUS office was running well with students being served, as always. The Awards Reception held in the OPUS board room was well attended by students, Administration and faculty. 15 Bursaries had been presented earlier to part-time students in need. The OPUS Academic Achievement Award was presented to two students: Kathleen Hodgson, wife and mother of two, majoring in Psychology and Scott Garant enrolled in Psychology/Criminology.

The OPUS Faculty Award was presented to Dr. Marcel Chabot of the French Department. All recipients were roundly congratulated by President Mary Schisler and others in attendance.

It was hoped the relationship with the University Administration would improve. OPUS was determined to work toward building up a more productive and positive understanding. There was also the need to build bridges to the two other student groups. The relationship was strained since both had collaborated with the Administration to unfairly raise the OPUS fee for the CAW Student Centre arbitrarily. However, it was recognized that much good could be achieved for students collectively if trust was reinstated.

Plans for restructuring the University was well underway as meetings were being held on a regular basis throughout 1995 and well into 1996. A preliminary report was rejected. It was to be revised. Other major events took much of OPUS time and attention. A grass-roots group, Windsor Committee on University Funding (WCUF) initiated two massive rallies and a march. It galvanized the University community against imminent provincial government cut-backs.

Committees and more committees... they had sprung up like mushrooms. The time spent in meetings seemed to be increasing rather than abating. Thankfully, OPUS representatives pitched in making the load lighter for the initial few. Their attendance and participation was noted and much appreciated.

The members of the Board of Governors seemed uninterested and distanced from the pressures and tensions faculty, staff and students were experiencing due to restructuring. The bottom line seemed to be their only concern and not the impact government cut-backs had on the institution in human terms. OPUS was informed its request for a seat on the Board's Resource Allocation Committee (finance) was denied. Not defeated, OPUS intended to apply more pressure.

Other Senate Committees met regularly. At last, OPUS was granted two more senators. SAC and GSS also gained more seats. Prior to a vote on a proposal endorsing marking on the Bell Curve, all three student groups decided to vote in unison against the practice. Even though supported by a number of faculty members, unfortunately, the proposal passed. Out of this cooperative atmosphere came the Senate Student Caucus.

Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) came to take up much of the time of the Committee on Continuing Education. Of interest to part-time students was a process whereby universities would be able to access and grant credits for learning garnered outside the classroom. The Learning and Teaching Committee met to discuss the Faculty Evaluation Form, the use of technology and the impact of large classes.

The Library Committee announced that the new computer system was operational, making it possible to access other university libraries. Their budget had been cut and its hours of operation reduced. All due to fiscal restraint. Even renovations to the old bookstore had slowed down because of funding shortages.

The most active committee of the Senate was The Academic Planning Committee (APC), except for the SRC. It met bi-weekly to assist in restructuring the academic side of teaching and learning. It examined the criteria for viable programs, core courses, rating measures to assess the future credibility of existing programs, among others. Its recommendations were forwarded periodically to the Senate for approval and implementation.

Unfortunately, the Student Affairs Committee seldom met because of a lack of a quorum. Full-time student members consistently failed to show. Sadly, this committee could have become a productive forum for students to air their frustrations and concerns. The Food Services Advisory Board (FSAB) made up of mostly residence students, also had quorum problems, so concerns relating to food could not be dealt with. The President's Advisory Committee on Student Life, called at the pleasure of the chair, announced that a consultant on student centres was on the doorstep of the University. The CAW Student Centre operation was to be observed but neither OPUS or GSS had been informed (only, SAC) which was a serious omission by the Administration. This unilateral action was typical of how little it cared to communicate with either of the two student groups.

The Senate Executive Sub-Committee on Openness and Transparency met regularly in the OPUS office to draft a document drawn from the recommendations in the *Canadian Association of University Teacher's (CAUT) Report on Openness and Transparency in Post-Secondary Education*. After several meetings of heated debate, a document less effective was eventually presented to the Senate for adoption and implementation.

A surprise greeted students when the CAW Student Centre Advisory Board met in August, 1995. Somehow the Centre had incurred a huge debt (\$165,000). How could this have happened asked representatives of the three student groups? The long, drawn-out so-called

explanation did not wash and was unacceptable. Actually, it was compounded by an additional fiscal slight of hand (the removal of many thousands) benefiting the Administration. No explanation or apology was forthcoming, so it was decided to send a letter to the President of the University asking him to investigate. It took until February 1996 to get an answer which, unfortunately, was unsatisfactory. No satisfactory explanation was ever given.

Always needing more money, they claimed for student services, the Ancillary Fee Policy Committee was often called upon to break the bad news. Again, students would cry out in protest they were not 'Cash Cows,' but the Administration ignored their voices. Students, too, were experiencing fiscal pressures in their personal lives. With tuition on the rise, too many felt they had to reconsider whether they could afford the luxury of attending university worrying it would be out of reach for them. Even though student leaders had signed an agreement with the Administration on how and when fees increases would be assessed and implemented, the Administration ignored the agreement. Obviously, it was hoped none would be required in the near future but it was not to be. Unfortunately, both Health/Medical Services and Athletics and Recreational Services had requested fee increases. OPUS was determined to resist these demands.

More Committees? Yes, they had become a way of life. Newly constituted was the Judicial Review Committee. Formed to deal with the alarming rise in student infractions and conflicts on campus, it was hoped a policy and a process would be developed regarding unacceptable anti-social behaviour and situations. Also newly formed and off and running was the Human Rights Advisory Committee, chaired by the recently appointed Commissioner of Human Rights, who identified the first task: to create "a comprehensive new policy of non-discrimination and a process of dispute resolution" for the University. Revising the University's Sexual Harassment Policy was placed on the top of the agenda.

Outstanding Issues, Visits, Reports and Special Events.

The Windsor Committee on University Funding (WCUF) organized an Emergency Forum of the University Community in the CAW Student Centre. Students gathered together, united again under the banner 'Mobilize for Our Future,' held a successful rally in Windsor on the National Day of Protest. Its major role included educating students about the financial cuts and their impact on the post-secondary educational system.

Students received a visit from the Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Education and Training (MET) in the Winter Semester. He listened to Students' concerns/complaints and was brutally direct answering that the government had a mandate to reduce the province's debilitating deficit and that tuition increases were inevitable. Other issues like OSAP (student loans) were discussed.

That the Ambassador Auditorium in the CAW Student Centre should become a Super Classroom popped up out of nowhere. Again, OPUS was not informed the University was coveting the space. This issue came about due to the prospect of increased enrolment caused by the elimination of Grade 13. All students agreed the space was not built for that purpose and the wear and tear on its furnishings would be unforgivable. The upkeep would be extraordinarily expensive and students agreed they were not willing to pay the maintenance cost. The issue was brought up for discussion repeatedly but students were adamant the space was not negotiable. No proposal came forward and if it had, it would have been rejected.

The Strategic Renewal Committee's Report was received by the Senate Student Caucus for study and input. The document set out the proposal for a merger of present faculties into three with one becoming a professional school. The result would be a Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences and a Faculty of Engineering and Science. The remaining Faculty of Professional Studies would house Law, Education and Business Administration. It was hoped it might unify like-minded disciplines and encourage creative interaction between them resulting in the development of a variety of new, relevant interdisciplinary programs with the potential to attract students and eventually boost enrollment in the future. The University's structure and programs would continue and evolve, changing periodically following implementation. Cautious approval was given by students present at the meeting. Two open forums were planned after which accepted submissions would proceed to the Senate for debate and probable implementation.

The Smith Report on the Operations of the CAW Student Centre finally arrived after considerable controversy. Massive and daunting in its breath and depth, it had far-reaching financial implications for students and the Administration. A cursory overview revealed the deplorable state of the Centre's financing. It recommended fundamental changes in how the Centre operated, its structure and composition of the Board and the tremendous costs students would bear in order to get it back on its feet. It had become a drain on student fees and would continue to be in the near and distant future. For years, this debt was kept from students by the Administration. The day of reckoning had arrived. OPUS vowed to keep their students informed about this disastrous situation because it would likely be an ongoing concern in the future, possibly, as early as a year or even two.

Highlights: May 1996 - April 1997

OPUS was experiencing dramatic change, internal and external, the most dramatic being the unprecedented reduction in OPUS student membership, the greatest in the life of the organization. The sharp reality of this development hit home in the Fall Semester when part-time student enrollment dropped to a new low of 3,200 students from 4,000 the previous year. Each year since 1991, when membership peaked at a high of 5,200 students, less students decided to register part-time. It was hoped the downward spiral would not continue in the coming Winter Semester. The drop had serious implications for the organization: how to continue to fund its services to its students..

In general, this period of time was an unfortunate continuation of an all too familiar and disheartening trend. On-going, disruptive, academic restructuring set the tone with the entrenching of tuition increases each semester leading the way, followed by little hope that government funding for universities would be reinstated to previous levels. Though disheartened, OPUS, under the leadership of President, Mary Schisler, found itself in the midst of these changes responding with a mature and responsible voice within the University community.

Change and the prospect of more change with opposition to change was the dominant, underlying theme posing the greatest challenge to OPUS. What to believe? Unanswered questions arose about restructuring. Would these changes actually reduce costs? An optimistic attitude was adopted in the OPUS office, a determination to continue serving students as in the past. Tightening the operation was a concern at first but was soon managed, so there was little loss in student's services or cut-backs in staff and office hours. Despite the pressures from various quarters, OPUS was determined to speak out on the issues affecting the lives of its students, academically and economically. In fact, OPUS took a leadership role in not being discouraged by the recent turn of events but instead became more pro-active, protecting the gains students had made over the years.

At a time when the University was already vulnerable due to intense restructuring, more instability was created when in January, the University's President, Dr. Ron Ianni, announced his resignation, effective July 1997. His failing health prompted him to call for a Search Committee to be struck to seek a replacement.

The uneasy relationship OPUS had with the University's Administration had not changed. Trust had yet to be restored and, in fact, was at a new low. No attempt had been made to reach out and gain student's trust. Unbelievable as it seemed at the time, an additional tens of thousands of dollars of students' money had been removed from the CAW Student Centre's account and placed in a reserve account accessible only to the Administration. This action was taken without prior notification or approval by the student leaders on the CAW Student Centre Advisory Board. This came as a complete surprise because the University's Finance Department had sworn it would never occur again after a similar amount was taken in the Fall of 1995, again, without student knowledge or approval. So much for trust. Twice, students were taken advantage of. What should one think of the utter disregard with which they were held by their University? Surely, students were more than cash cows for a cash-strapped institution? It was a sad situation and a new low in student-university relations.

However, ties with the Faculty Association had grown. And the relationship with the two other student governments, the newly re-named, University of Windsor Student Alliance (UWSA) and the Graduate Student Society (GSS) had become productive on several major fronts. All three had spoken with a united voice against tuition increases, for openness and transparency in University governance and in support of accessibility to university education. In addition each student group responded to the government's White Paper on Post Secondary Education: *Future Directions on Post-Secondary Education in Ontario*.

The restructuring of the University was in its final stage, with Transition Teams having met on a regular basis since the Fall. Their responsibilities were to explore how to put in place structures needed to permit the melded faculties to function effectively (an OPUS Board member served on the Arts and Social Science Faculty Team). Though the process was certainly flawed and divisive, it was expected all three faculties, which included the Faculties of Science and Engineering combined with the faculties of Law, Education and Business, were to be in place by the summer. An attempt to arrive at a consensus, with both sides of the debate on academic restructuring, was unsuccessful. Unfortunately, an uneasy situation, that of strained relations, continued unabated. Nevertheless, there was hope the outcome would eventually result in academic renewal the campus community could adjust to and live with, especially one that would be the least disruptive for students.

OPUS involvement and support for the Windsor Committee on University Funding continued. WCUF, formed in 1995, was a small grass-root group made up of faculty, staff and students who came together to fight against government cut-backs to post-secondary education. It continued to be effective in raising the consciousness of all sectors of the campus community to the deleterious effects the lack of funding had on the University and other universities in the province. It was an on-going theme no one could ignore.

Continuing WUCF's efforts in the Fall, an education fair was held in the CAW Student Centre which kept the issue alive for students. Since the government issued its need for additional increases to tuition in the future, a meeting was held to launch a concerted effort against this likely initiative. It was agreed to approach the V.P. Finance and members of the Board of Governors at their next meeting. Meeting face to face, the students pointed out the injustice of such a move and the grave implications for the university if it embarked in that direction. A strong case was made how harmful it would be to students, denying them accessibility to a university education. And how it would seriously hamper graduate research and how it would tarnish the University's reputation in the community and beyond. Later, it seemed the message had fallen on deaf ears.

As for student services, the OPUS office finally achieved its potential as a well-run, cost-efficient, professional operation. Despite the drop in enrolment, its operation had to become more creative in how it utilized its reduced resources. As a base for its advocacy on behalf of part-time students, the office continued to serve their most concrete needs so their time on campus was well spent. A reduction in staff hours became a concern but the office remained open in the evenings with the assistance from student volunteers. The determination to continue offering its services to students, as it had always done in the past, made it necessary to moderate the budget. An eye was always kept on the possibility of a deficit.

The OPUS *Dialogue* continued to be mailed out to part-time students three times a year with the Summer issue containing the *OPUS Handbook*. OPUS students were often called "Zoomers," because they were seen as students-in-a-hurry. A few were able to spare some time as Class Representatives. It was important to keep in touch with them, in order to learn if OPUS was fulfilling their needs and if there was more it could do for them. OPUS could only be as effective as the input it received from its members.

OPUS Awards were given out as was the practice in the fall. Besides the Bursaries granted to part-time students in need, the OPUS Academic Achievement Award (a monetary award of \$500.) was presented to Judith Wheeler for her enduring efforts despite great personal difficulties. The 1996 Faculty Award was presented to Dr. Dale Woodyard of the Psychology Department who was nominated for his efforts in assisting part-time students achieve their academic goals.

The Senate (now 70 members) continued to meet on a regular basis but Senate Sub-committees and other University committees were meeting on an irregular basis. The work and reports of various committees should be noted in brief. The Academic Planning Committee's two years work coincided with the Strategic Renewal Committee's report, resulting in programme evaluations, assessments and viability finally being approved. New programmes introduced were Women's Studies, Labour Studies, Professional Studies and a doctoral programme in Social Justice.

Of interest, was the efforts of the Transition Team for Arts, Social Science and Human Kinetics that finally facilitated the merger of all departments and programs.

Because of the drop in part-time student enrolment, the Senate Committee on Continuing Education decided to sponsor a survey to explain the reasons for the decline. The Department of Sociology and Anthropology's fourth year Research Methods class collected the data. 500 part-time students were contacted by phone with 350 participating and questioned about their university experiences. The data was analysed and a report made available in June of 1997.

New state-of-the-art mobile staff units were installed in the Library as well as Voyager micro-computers for students. Once the faculties and departments were reorganized, the Senate bylaws governing the Senate would need to be revised reflecting their new structures.

The Teaching and Learning Committee met and of special interest to part-time students, was a pilot project on Prior Learning Assessment (PLA). As a method of assessing the level of knowledge an individual had acquired through self-education, career and life experience, it could be credited to their academic record. The Department of Continuing Education received a Human Resources Canada Grant to produce a guide on developing outcomes, as a part of PLA. It placed the University on the leading edge of PLA for Ontario universities. A step in the right direction, if implemented, it would make academic life easier for adult students upgrading their education.

Finally, the Senate adopted the *Openness and Transparency in University Governance* document. Prepared by two faculty members and the OPUS President, it survived months of delay and a final intense debate. Monitoring would be required to insure that recommendations would be implemented.

It was hoped the leadership of the new Chair of the Board of Governors might develop more openness and inquiry. Finally, at long last, student representation was increased on the

Board's sub-committees. Originally pursued by OPUS, the three student presidents would provide more input serving on the Executive, Resource Allocation and External Relations Committees.

It was inevitable that "Brand Name" food outlets would arrive on campus. It had been a trend taking hold at other universities. Since the strike of the University's food service workers, the Food Services Advisory Board was inactive. A concern was growing about the possibility of contracting out food services jobs. The strike of Local 1001 representing Housekeeping Workers and Ground-keepers halted the availability of food on campus forcing students to look elsewhere for their meals. It took more than five weeks of serious, often violent disruption throughout the campus before the strike was settled. This was a low period in the life of the University community no one was proud of.

As a member of the Human Rights Advisory Committee, the President of OPUS, with a broad segment of the campus community, produced a draft Human Rights Policy to address the inadequacies of the existing policy on sexual harassment. The draft was circulated to all sectors on campus for input. Although the OPUS President participated in its development, she had reservations about the composition of the formal panel having the responsibility to resolve disputes. It was felt a panel of four would be too small and not diverse enough to render fair judgements.

Student members of the CAW Student Centre Advisory Board tried to come to grips with the inadequacies of the Centre's operation, hoping to make a dysfunctional operation efficient, well-run, professional and, most importantly, accountable. It was no easy task. As meetings were seldom held, student input was almost impossible. The loss of the huge amount of money unfairly taken from the CAW Centre's account was a terrible blow to the relationship between students and the University's Administration. Audited statements were requested when security suddenly became a concern after an alleged sexual assault took place in the Centre. The money removed from the account would have been useful for the installation of electronic surveillance equipment.

In late 1996, Dr. Ianni met with representatives from the three student groups with a proposal for the students to enter into negotiations with the Administration on forming a management board for Centre operations. With its deficit growing yearly, why would students want to take on such a losing operation? In order to understand the full responsibility of the Centre's bottom line, they requested complete disclosure of capital and operational financing. Unfortunately, it was not forthcoming. It would be irresponsible for student governments to take on such a financial burden without knowing all the ramifications of a move in that direction. After studying Dr. Ianni's proposal, the student members of the Board sent a response proposing an alternative process to begin discussion on the future of the Centre. Students were prepared to wait for a reply.

In the Fall, *OPUS Response to the Government's White Paper on Future Direction in Post- Secondary Education in Ontario* was presented to the Government Panel at the University of Western Ontario in London: It meshed well with the University's response. This integrated

presentation was prepared early on by consultation with all three student groups and the University. OPUS was proud its V.P. External represented all students in the University's delegation. Overall, the joint response was well-received. Later on, in studying the Panel's recommendations, there was disappointment: the students' report did not reflect part-time student input, nor was Life Long Learning mentioned. This prompted a reply of concern to the Chair and Minister of Education and Training (which was included in the OPUS President's Annual Report).

Networking with other student groups was always an important and special activity for OPUS Board members. A part-time student conference was organized by the McMaster Association of Part-time Students (MAPS) in Hamilton. Besides OPUS, a number of part-time student groups attended: University of Toronto's (APUS), Laurentian's (ALPS), Ryerson's (CESAR), McGill and Queens universities. Discussions centred on resurrecting effort to launch a provincial part-time student organization (OPSA). Unfortunately it was not unanimous. APUS declined because of its support for Ontario University Student Alliance (OUSA). Without APUS, (and its 30,000 plus part-time students) the realization of a provincial organization was unrealistic. It was mutually agreed to keep the lines of communication open. Due to a reduction in revenue, OPUS was unable to host a mini conference in the Fall.

Highlights: May 1997 -April 1998

OPUS had a new president in Marty Lowman, who believed the academic year would see pivotal changes for the university. Shortly, after the beginning of the Fall Semester, the campus community heard of the passing of Dr. Ianni. What followed in the new year was a new President, Dr. Ross Paul. The University community looked forward to his leadership and the opportunity to realize the University's potential for excellence in the near future. OPUS welcomed Dr. Paul, prepared to work cooperatively with him on every level.

OPUS made some significant gains but there were areas that needed improvement. The financial deficit looming ahead needed immediate attention. Because of the reduction in part-time student enrollment and contractual obligations, it was a difficult challenge. The goal of a balanced budget was foremost in mind and OPUS. With good management, it was soon able to extricate itself from the financial setback without any reduction in services to its students.

Finally, the University offered bursary assistance to part-time students. OPUS was instrumental in bringing this about and formulating the criteria for qualification. Throughout the year, OPUS promoted part-time student bursaries at every opportunity, and approximately \$20,000. was distributed to 62 part-time students in financial need. The demographics of OPUS students suggested that more could qualify for financial assistance. That tuition increase caused much concern, unfortunately, only a handful of students took advantage of part-time student bursaries. Offered to help offset tuition increases, they were provided for academic benefit. Both the OPUS Academic Achievement Award and the OPUS Faculty Award were presented with great ceremony in the fall to Barbara Murawski and Dr. Eleanor Matika-Tynlale, respectively.

As usual, OPUS represented part-time students on the Senate, the Board of Governors and subcommittees of both Senate and the Board. In addition, OPUS also served on standing committees on campus, exploring recruitment and retention. A significant amount of time was spent, well spent providing part-time student's perspective and consideration within all decision making bodies.

The sharp decline of part-time students in the Fall Semester prompted the university to fund a survey to explore reasons why part-time students were dropping out. Once completed, the analysis and report, containing a number of recommendations, was discussed. They had the potential to enhance the University's ability to be more accommodating of the needs of part-time students. Presented to and placed on the Senate's agenda, OPUS hoped adoption of at least some of the recommendations would be seen as a demonstration of their commitment to part-time students. The report, *(Dis)Continuing Education: A Look at Part-time Student Attrition at the University of Windsor* was made accessible on the OPUS web-site for all to read.

The management of the CAW Student Centre had become a great concern for the three student groups. For a very long time, the lack of input available to students about the operations of the Centre saw it become a near crisis situation at one point. Since the operations was funded exclusively by students, it was only right that students have a high level of input into its management. In addition, it was hoped the missing student funds would be returned.

Early in the year, the Administration approached the student groups with a proposal which would enable them to have full responsibility for the Centre. Initially, the Graduate Student Society was in agreement with the proposal, but later decided to transfer their funds to the operations of the Grad House on Sunset. Negotiations proceeded between OPUS and the University of Windsor's Student Alliance on how to structure a management board which would give fair representation to both groups, meet the needs of the constituents of both groups, and provide a better service for all students. It was expected that an agreement would be reached within the next academic year. OPUS welcomed input from its students.

Highlights: May 1998 - April 1999

OPUS hosted a conference of part-time students groups. Attending, were students from Ryerson, McMaster, Carleton, Ottawa, Western and Windsor. Part-time student issues were discussed and workshops were conducted on media relations by the University's News Services Department and another on mediation by a group of University of Windsor law students.

Early in the academic year, the University's Administration, UWSA and OPUS came to an agreement that had the University hand over management of the CAW Student Centre collectively to both student groups. The initiative had been negotiated the previous year and was realized in the Summer of 1999. The result was the Centre would be operated. by the Policy Management Board on which OPUS has representation. A Mission Statement, goals and objectives and a policy

for day to day operations for the Centre were put in place. Much more needed to be done before the Centre would become the kind of place students had visualized.

As was the practice, each Fall Semester, orientation sessions and campus tours were held for new part-time students. A useful service many students took advantage of.

The Annual OPUS Awards Reception was held, as always in the Fall Semester. The OPUS Academic Achievement Award winner was Eunice James, a third year Sociology student and the OPUS Faculty Award was presented to Craig Pearson, who made an impact on part-time students in his Communication Studies course. It was a great pleasure for President Marty Lowman, the OPUS Board and guests in attendance to congratulate the recipients on their achievements.

OPUS had always assisted students on an individual basis but had also taken seriously its role of advocacy at the university level. Because of the restructuring, many of the University committees were not formed until late in the Fall Semester. Most were well-known and a few were new. The following committees had representation from OPUS part-time students:

- The Senate.
- Senate Steering Committee.
- Senate Program Development Committee.
- Senate Academic Policy Committee.
- Student Committee.
- President's Advisory Council of Student Life.
- University Committee on Academic Promotion and Tenure.
- Food Services Student Advisory Board.
- Information Technology Services Student Committee.
- ARAC.
- Campus Safety Audit Committee.
- Recruitment Committee.
- Retention Committee.
- Board of Governors.
- Resource Allocation Committee.
- Board of Governors Executive Committee.
- Board of Governors External Relations Committee.
- Marketing and Communications Task Force.
- CAW Student Centre Policy Management Board.
- Search Committee, Hospitality Services.
- Search Committee, Vice-President Academic.
- Search Committee, Associate Vice President, Teaching and Learning.

The above committees required a significant level of commitment from part-time Students. Their input at that level was enormously valuable, as they were playing an important part in the University's decision-making. It goes without saying, OPUS students were proud to contribute their time and energy in this way.

At the OPUS Annual General Meeting in the spring, a decision was made to pursue an associate membership in the Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance (OUSA). OPUS saw tuition fees skyrocket and while it argued (at the university level) that students were forced deeper and deeper in debt by the increases, it understood the reasons. It was the result of decisions made by both the provincial and federal governments that forced universities to raise tuition to such high levels.

While OPUS diligently served the needs of students on both the individual and university level, it had been keenly aware of how little input and influence it had at the level of the provincial government's Ministry of Education and Training. It was important for OPUS to become involved, however, the resources, both human and financial needed for the effort was beyond present means.

OUSA, an alliance of elected university student councils from Ontario universities had in the past lobbied the provincial government on behalf of undergraduate students. Its policies and political agenda driven by the member schools encouraged participation. The majority of its undergraduate student members attended university full-time with APUS the only part-time student organization to have joined so far. With OPUS, as an associate member, and another part-time student organization considering joining, a part-time student caucus within OUSA would be able to develop and carry out policies for the combined student groups. Membership with OUSA had the potential to provide OPUS with a stronger voice keeping not only full-time student concerns in the forefront but especially part-time student concerns in front of politicians and bureaucrats.

Highlights: May 1999 - April 2000

The above year was a transitional year which lead to important changes, some of which, were adopted. The early promise of Dr. Ross Paul and the good relationship with OPUS continued to be fruitful.

Fiscally, on firmer footing, OPUS continued to make significant gains on this front. The number of part-time students enrolled had improved and if the trend continued, the Organization's financial situation would remain stable. There was consideration given to setting up a contingency fund to assist OPUS in future financial problems if they occurred. To be prepared was important, especially, in light of possible future trends in part-time studies which could be so difficult to predict.

The OPUS bursary plan for part-time students continued to be well-utilized with over fifty having received bursaries. They take, on average, one or two courses per semester. The criteria asks for the requisite grade average and a certain low income level. Those income standards might be increased next year so more students qualify.

It always gave OPUS great pleasure to present its awards each Fall. Part-time student Janice Fantinic received the OPUS Academic Achievement Award and Dr. Berislav Primorac was presented with the OPUS Faculty Award. Congratulations to both were in order.

As expected, the OPUS President, Dr. Edward King, and other members of the organization continued to faithfully serve on the Board of Governors, the Senate and more than a dozen committees and sub-committees. There, they participated fully, making comments, asking questions, informing themselves and OPUS members later. A summary of some of the meetings follow:

A big disappointment for the University was the rejection of the SuperBuild Fund. The project, a great value for students, most notably those in Drama, the multi-classroom centre would have been an important asset beyond that department. Some government funding might still be available for the project to proceed. The news of a 10% tuition increase over five years would amount to a virtual freeze since it might be below the cost of living. Not good news for the University or students, were the operating grants. Overall, the provincial budget for post-secondary education was not good for students. They would receive less for their money since universities had become starved for dollars.

As the only student in attendance, the OPUS President was involved in the Special Appointments Committee which selected candidates for the honorary degrees at Convocation and for the titles of University Professor and Professor Emeritus.

The Senate approved of a joint PhD programme in Education for September, 2000. Senate also approved the publishing of Faculty Evaluations on the Web (archived for 5 years), an easier admissions policy for part-time students who do not have the standard entrance requirements, and a PLA Plan. These issues came to Senate from (APC) Academic Policy Committee.

Two fee increases were approved: one dollar per course to finance a shortfall in the operations of the CAW Student Centre, with four dollars per semester going toward the St. Denis Centre increasing its programming and the stipends to coaches.

A number of receptions and award banquets were attended by the OPUS President. He also presented medals at the Provincial track and field championships. Often the only student present, it raised the profile of OPUS and helped build good relations with various groups on campus.

OPUS noted its first year of membership in OUSA (Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance). Participation was very time-consuming with monthly meetings of five hours and three meetings a year of 2-3 days. Active discussions took place as there were policies on virtually every issue of student interest. OUSA lobbied against tuition increases but was supportive of a multi-year announcement which would allow students to plan their finances better for the future. Meetings were held in Windsor in August and May.

OPUS continued to bring up the issues of recruitment and retainment of part-time students to all administrators who might be involved as well at any meeting where the issue might come up. Various faculties on campus were approached to schedule more evening classes and to consider less traditional weekend classes. It was an ongoing issue where the idea is favourable but getting concrete action might be much more difficult.

The Program Development Committee (PDC) meeting once a month during the academic year, discussed program changes, changes in the course calendar and articulation agreements with other institutions. PDC met to review and make recommendations on five year plans submitted by program areas. It was a time-consuming and difficult task. The Fall and Winter Semester saw a total of twenty-two plans evaluated. After a review, the final recommendations were prepared for the Senate. The reports, though confidential, were to be released to student senators. Once read, it was suggested students keep in touch if they had any concerns. The senators would then bring them forward on their behalf.

Unfortunately, the Division of Continuing Education closed its doors with the Dean moving on. It took almost two years of lingering uncertainty before the final decision was made. Not only responsible for the delivery of Distance Education courses but Con-Ed was the administrative branch responsible for part-time undergraduate students. Initially, it was a great blow to OPUS, however many of Con-Ed functions were combined with the Division of Instructional Development to become the new Centre for Flexible Learning, which officially opened in July. The Centre was committed to developing more learner-centred, flexible ways of learning and would eventually be housed in the new Multimedia Learning Centre slated for completion in the fall 2002. Anything that would encourage the University to bring more flexibility into their delivery of material, including more flexible scheduling, would be most welcome by part-time students.

Highlights: May 2000 - April 2003

Due to unforeseen circumstances, little information on OPUS activities during this period of time was found for inclusion in this document. OPUS sincerely regrets this omission.

It was known that Dr. Edward King was serving as OPUS President from 2000 to 2001 and then in January 2003 he continued, stepping in to take over the reigns from then President Jerry McCorkell who left at the end of 2002. Jerry was responsible for getting OPUS on a sound financial footing. Unfortunately, he did not leave a President's Report.

Of interest, in May 2000 to April 2001, it was recorded that OPUS Awards were presented as usual: the OPUS Academic Achievement Award to Greg Klaver and the OPUS Faculty Award to Dr. Robert Orr. In year 2001 to 2002, the Academic Achievement Award was presented to Jennifer Payne, the Faculty Award to Dr. Stewart Page. Added, was the OPUS Ken Long Memorial Award given to Dwight Hillyard.

Dr. King continued to serve as President until April 2003, filling in the rest of the term. The OPUS organization was indebted to Ed for his selfless act of dedication to OPUS.

Highlights: May 2003 - April 2004

Dr. King was elected President of OPUS. This academic year marked the end of one five-year plan and the beginning of a new five-year plan for the University with the document "to Greater Heights." OPUS had responded to the document and many of the concerns OPUS had in earlier drafts were addressed in the final version. It was accepted by both the Senate and the Board of Governors. Explicitly learner-centred in orientation, there were concrete plans to implement such an environment.

Financially, OPUS remained on a firm footing with balanced budgets which resulted in the ability to buy new computer equipment and a fax machine. The double cohort increased student numbers significantly but had no effect on part-time enrollment. Fortunately, OPUS was able to invest in more scholarships and bursaries. The awards event in February was the highlight of the year with over fifty people in attendance, including President Dr. Ross Paul. Recognition of both faculty and staff had become an important part of the evening. For the record, a listing of award winners is appended to this document

OPUS represented part-time students and in some instances all students on the Board of Governors, sub-committees of the Board, the Senate and its sub-committees and many other committees of the University. As President, Ed King was an active participant on about a dozen committees. OPUS was known to have an excellent attendance record.

The opening of three new buildings contributed to increased morale on campus. The new Toldo Health Centre provided state-of-the-art classrooms for larger classes; the new residence had an excellent reception room which OPUS used for their awards evening; and the School of Dramatic Art had a new facility. Discussions took place to have more new buildings with major renovations to existing buildings planned for the near future. All the development was good for students as well as faculty.

The winning football team and the championship track and field team contributed to school spirit. A new fitness facility built onto the existing structure and a new stadium together with hosting the World Junior Games added an important dimension to the University. These facilities have become valuable not only to University athletes but also to the many students involved in intramural sports.

The tuition freeze might be good for students as long as the shortfall could be made up by the Government. Had the University less money, it would not benefit students. After a two-year freeze, the government's exit strategy, though important, was unfortunately unknown.

President King attended many receptions and awards events. Often the only student present, his presence helped build good relations for the OPUS organization on campus.

The Centre for Flexible Learning (CFL) developed from a vision born out of research and studies presented in a White Paper on education. It revealed a direction that could set the University of Windsor apart from others as a cutting-edge learning institution which would give its graduates a unique advantage in Canada. The University's smaller size would allow for the specialization in often overlooked and minimized pedagogical approaches to education clearly articulated in the *White Paper on Education and Learning*.

A search commenced to find someone who would share this singular vision and become a leader in innovation, a crucially important task, which had proved very complex and challenging. Unable to find a suitable candidate, it was necessary to revisit the entire process and begin again which caused delay to be longer than expected..

OPUS had representation on the CFL Committee. Apparently, it extended beyond what was expected, nevertheless the commitment was strong as was the commitment of the other members who had agreed to serve. A high level interviewing process of potential candidates commenced which demanded the sacrifice of personal, study, work and family time. Nevertheless, it was time well spent giving much satisfaction. It was of great value to be a major contributor in the selection of the right person for the position. Serving on the Academic Planning (APC) committee was possible after the work on the CFL had drawn to a close.

There are changes that may seem trivial to department heads which can be monumental to students, such as the scheduling of several exams on one day. Fortunately, a policy change was presented to the Senate (and adopted) to assist students with this problem. They are now able to consult with faculty and the Registrar's office to reschedule one exam at a later date.

Communication had progressed in negotiating more flexibility in traditional closed programmes of study to part-time students. A deep desire exists to initiate the acceptance of part-time students in the Teaching Education Programme. Concerted effort was made to work toward this goal and to open other doors to OPUS students as well.

An on-going problem in representing part-time students has been the great diversity of this group of students. OPUS plans to reach out to more students to find out first hand their issues and problems so the organization can better represent them. OPUS continues to strive to make decisions in their best interests and in the interest of all students of the University.

Highlights: May 2004 - April 2005

The most important event of the year was the opening of the new Fitness Centre named the FORGE which was supported by funds from UWSA and OPUS. President Ed King participated in the ribbon-cutting ceremony on March 9. The funding guarantees the Centre keep its current level for 25 years. An impressive facility for students, together with the new stadium has provided the University with a first-class sports complex. The new stadium provides a venue for both varsity and intermural sports: a great asset in recruiting players for the University.

OPUS held its first Awards Dinner on March 18 with great success. Awards receptions had been held each Fall Semester for many years but a dinner made it an even more special event. More awards were given - to faculty, staff and students. It is hoped this format will become an annual event. To date, significant amounts of money continued to be spent on bursaries and scholarships. Of interest, a list of Award recipients have been appended to this report.

The Rae Report, released in February, was viewed as being good overall for students providing most of its recommendations receive approval. It called for two more years of tuition freeze, greatly increased funding for post-secondary education and significant changes in funding of students who are financially needy. Cautious optimism was advised.

The new five-year-plan: "To Greater Heights," signalled a bold move to build a new engineering building, a new music building, another new residence and a new plan for student services which may or may not involve a building. The plan also called for converting the University into a learner-centred institution.

The Board of Governors established a Task Force on Performance to work toward improving the University not just for surveys for Macleans but to make the University a genuinely better place for students. In addition, OPUS commissioned a study to help the organization meet their needs and better represent what is clearly a diverse group.

OPUS VP served on the IT Steering committee currently working on installing Wireless Internet throughout the University campus. Areas in the CAW Student Centre, including the OPUS office, have been designated for access.

A financial audit was proposed for the current year and would be held every second year with the election of the Board of Directors in accordance to the OPUS Constitution.

The USWA accepted OPUS students into their Health and Drug Plan. Efforts were made to make the plan more affordable for part-time students, hopefully, with rates comparable to those of full-time students.

Other advances by OPUS included the approval of adding a dinner to the OPUS Awards Reception. More social events were held, such as an Appreciation Day, a Pot Luck lunch and a Cappuccino Day. OPUS was happy to learn that scholarships for part-time students in financial need were increased..

Strategic goals for the following year were proposed: to press for the Library and Computer Centre to stay open for twenty-four hours. To make OPUS more effective in communicating with its students. To encourage students to become more active and involved in OPUS activities in the future. Boost communication between part-time students, board members, staff and faculty. To encourage and support interdisciplinary collaboration. To strive to have Nursing, Education and Engineering degree programmes offered to part-time students. Ultimately, OPUS asked of part-time students: their suggestions, new ideas, e-mails, collaboration and support.

Highlights: May 2005 - April 2006

President Badaruddin Khuhro presided over the decision the OPUS Board of Directors made which adopted a number of policies permitting OPUS business to run more professionally and effectively. Conflict of interest, attendance issues and agenda procedures were dealt with. Most important, was the review the OPUS Constitution and making the necessary amendments in order to fulfill the needs of part-time students and the law. New awards were to be added to existing awards. Current membership included over 3000 part-time undergraduate students who had regularly been informed on important issues and special events by mass e-mailings.

The relationship with the University in general continued to improve. Working closely with the Administration, staff and student governments had improved the academic life experience of part-time students. Since the OPUS office was refreshed with paint and new carpeting, it had attracted more students in utilizing all OPUS offered. Always inviting, it was now a place where students could meet students like themselves. Of interest, University committees met on a regular basis and their reports were made available monthly to students.

The OPUS V.P. attended the Canadian Federation of Students (CFS) Annual General Meeting in April. It was decided that OPUS join CFS, an activist group advocating on behalf of students on the Federal level. Currently, the main concern was increases in tuition fees. In order to serve students better, OPUS conducted a wide ranging survey on their needs. Part-time students were informed that OPUS finances had been well managed and for three years its financial position remained strong.

Easy Internet access arrived at the University and was installed around the campus. OPUS had it installed so their students could have the use of wireless web in the OPUS lounge. A work station was created, equipped with a computer and printer. There, they could check their web mail, view their courses and print out their class notes and projects for a small fee. In cooperation with the University, the new OPUS web site was updated and moved to: <http://www.uwindsor.ca/opus> becoming more informative with regular updates.

To promote the OPUS Organization to student members, it renewed the OPUS newsletter by publishing a single edition. More services were offered to part-time students by the OPUS office. The return of photocopying and faxing would cost students a nominal fee. OPUS had always appreciated the assistance of its Work Study Students. Without them and their day to day assistance, OPUS would not have been able to advance the Organization's goals.

Opus held a Welcome Barbeque for part-time students on the lawn of the North-West corner of the CAW Student Centre, right in front of the OPUS office. Several hundred students and faculty attended on that bright sunny day, drawn to the food cooked by one of the Centre's kitchen chefs. All enjoyed the event which was presented and assisted by OPUS volunteers, Board and staff members. Their hard work was acknowledged as the event was a huge success. Another event, pot-luck luncheons, had become so popular that a demand for them to be held every semester was created. In the fall in the OPUS office, a get-together pot-luck meal was held to say farewell to a senior staff member.

The OPUS Board of Directors decided to create more incentives for part-time students to attend OPUS Orientation sessions. It introduced a chance for first year students to win tuition remission for one course. It was decided OPUS would continue to offer this exciting opportunity at each Orientation session.

The Annual OPUS Award Reception was held, as always, to recognize University Administration, faculty, staff and students for their achievements. It had served as a reminder how inviting and exciting the University of Windsor can really be. It was a great celebration of part-time students, congratulating them and showing them a small token of appreciation by OPUS. Also recognized were the many contributions made by faculty and staff in supporting part-time students throughout the year. Of interest, a list of winners is appended to this document.

A survey of part-time students, on which OPUS had representation, was completed but its findings have still to be collected and correlated

Highlights: May 2006 - April 2007

OPUS had an extraordinarily busy year. The referendum to join the Canadian Federation of Students (CFL) was a positive move which, as full members, OPUS would be able to lobby along with other Ontario part-time student associations for student loans and more grants. Another

positive initiative OPUS achieved for part-time students was providing them with the coverage of a health insurance plan. President Badaruddin Khuhro was encouraged that an evening/online degree was in the works, the first-ever such programme at the University of Windsor.

OPUS current membership reached over 3500 part-time undergraduate students. Every effort was made to keep in touch with them through “mass email” alerting them to special events or important information.

The relationship between OPUS and the University in general and the Administration in particular remains productive. Working closely with the Administration, faculty, staff and student governments continues to enhance the University academic life experience of part-time students.

Within the organization, OPUS finances have been managed efficiently. The recent newsletter was a great success, so a second edition was published. OPUS produced a promotional video which highlighted the various services and the role OPUS plays in the lives of part-time students. Special events such as the Welcome Barbeque in the Fall Semester and Pot-luck get-together were great successes. Open, not only to part-time students, but included faculty, Administration and staff who partook fully of delicious food.

The Annual Awards Dinner was held in the last week of March 2007 to recognize University Administration, faculty, staff, students and retiring OPUS Board members for their efforts. A list of award recipients is appended to this document.

The effort to conduct a survey was worthwhile and its expected analysis could provide valuable information on the composition and needs of part-time students. Joining the Canadian Federation of Students (CFS) was also worthwhile in that a health plan under them befitted part-time students. It was the first time OPUS had its own health plan with its cost lower than the plans jointly with either WUSA or GSS in the past.

Apparently, a good possibility exists that the Degree in Liberal and Professional Studies may be advertised for part-time students with a guarantee it could be obtained by taking only night courses and Distance Education courses. Final decisions have not been made. The OPUS President made a presentation to the Programme Development Committee (PDC) proposing some possible degree programmes which could be completed by part-time students who are only able to take evening courses. Professor Neil Gold, Chair of PCD, suggested OPUS make a presentation to the Deans' Council. As with PDC, OPUS received a fair hearing.

An OPUS representative on the Board of Iona College lauds the second language programme which has already benefited both faculty and students at the University of Windsor.

The retiring President of OPUS thanked Board Members and staff for their hard work and dedication to the organization. He acknowledged their commitment and devotion including the efforts of volunteer Associate Members. What was also recognized was that the major goal of advocating for part-time students was accomplished to a high degree. He praised OPUS as “*the best student organization at the University of Windsor.*”

The accomplishments of OPUS have been many and varied. Not only was the OPUS membership on the Senate increased to four, the campus itself had OPUS participating in the decisions to construct new buildings. Built were a new student residence, Alumni Hall and the Toldo Health Education Building. In the works, was the new Engineering Building. In addition, OPUS participated in the planning for a new learning commons and the development for a learner-centred university. OPUS never hesitated in being in the centre of the action at the University of Windsor.

Into the future...

Without doubt, OPUS will continue to be a positive force within the campus community of the University of Windsor in the future. It is dedicated to continue doing what it does best: advocating for its students, making their time on campus easier, more productive, providing financial aid when possible and celebrating their successes at every stage of advancement.

Now, after thirty-one years in operation, OPUS is proud of its achievements, its successes, proud to re-state its initial mandate, an appeal for understanding and acceptance:

that part-time students have different needs, concerns and problems from those of the rest of the undergraduate student body. That these students work hard to balance their many responsibilities of home, family, work and education, and that OPUS attempts to help students cope with the additional pressures of studies and the adjustment to an academic environment.

Always a refuge from the hurly burly of the CAW Student Centre and hectic campus activity, the OPUS Office will remain a calm, welcoming place for part-time students. Students will continue to be encouraged to relax or study before, between, and after their classes. There, they will also find office staff and even Board Members available to speak with them, answer questions and offer their experience whenever they stop by for a visit. The OPUS Organization will continue to be respected and be responsible in all it does and says, especially in its duty to be fiscally accountable. It will make all monetary decisions carefully after much deliberation and consultation with its constituency.

What will always matter most to OPUS is that part-time students be taken seriously. That their responsible voice and force on campus, their constructive participation in every aspect of student life be welcomed and acknowledged as positive. And that OPUS will always be able to address their students' specific needs, interests and unique concerns to the University and have them dealt with fairly and in a timely manner. As if in a partnership, OPUS expects equal respect in all mutual decision-making, not only with the University, but with the two other student organizations, UWSA and GSS.

The life of any organization is only as effective as its leadership. If an organization is strong because it has a dedicated President and a committed Board of Directors, it can face any challenge it might encounter. It must prove to its members it is worthy of their support because it exists only to serve them. In order to do this, OPUS must keep them well informed and one of the most effective ways is to provide them with an Annual Report listing highlights of the issues, events and achievements that occupied them during that particular year. Written by the President and presented to members at large at the OPUS Annual General Meeting each Spring, it fulfills, in principle, an important mandate: that information is a vital tool, and that empowering part-time students is a goal OPUS advocates.

The History of OPUS will continue to be written after 2007, as each Annual Report is appended to this document. Its documentation can serve as a guide for OPUS in the future and as a detailed record of its past. The path OPUS takes may be rocky from time to time but with determination, effort and good will, OPUS will always surmount its difficulties, remain open to change and continue to act in the best interests of its students. Their future will always be secure as long as OPUS faithfully fulfills its mandate with commitment and dedication by adhering to its Mission Statement.

Mary C. Schisler '88

OPUS Past President (1991-1997)

Windsor, Ontario, May 2007

APPENDIX

OPUS Awards from 2004 to 2007

2004 OPUS Awards

OPUS Faculty Award

- Rita Bison (Classical & Modern Languages).
- Dale Rajacich (School of Nursing).
- Dr. Robert Kent (Computer Science).
- Dr. Charlene Sen (Psychology).

OPUS Support Staff Award *(New)*

- Lorie Stolarchuk (Special Needs).
- Karen Roland (Employment Equity).
- Marty Lowman (SIRC).

OPUS Academic Achievement Award

- Yuanlin Zhu.

OPUS Special Needs Campus Community Recognition Award *(New)*

- Dr. Donald R. Leslie.

OPUS Special Needs Achievement Award *(New)*

- Kristen Wyoch.

Dr. Kathleen McCrone Award *(New)*

- Maria J. Mitchell.

Mary C. Schisler Award in Dramatic Art

- No nomination.

Ken Long Memorial Award

- No nomination.

2005 OPUS Awards

OPUS Friend of Students Award (New)

- Professor Neil Gold.

OPUS Faculty Award

- Dr. Alan Sears (Sociology and Anthropology).
- Dr. A. K. Aggarwal (Computer Science).
- Prof. Brenda Francis Pelkey (Visual Arts).
- Prof. David Hutchinson (Business).
- Amanda Burgess (Political Science & Women's Studies).

OPUS Support Staff Award

- Bernie Tennant (I.T. Services).
- Susan Page (SIRC).
- Carrie Hunting (Office of the Vice President).
- Violeta Enriquez (Food Services).

OPUS Academic Achievement Award

- Jessica C. Van Kesteren.

OPUS Special Needs Campus Community Recognition Award

- Dr. Laura Taylor (School of Social Work).

OPUS Special Needs Achievement Award

- Shannon Dawn William.

Dr Kathleen E. McCrone Award

- Diane Awram.

Mary C. Schisler Award in Dramatic Art

- Laura Ann Estil.

Ken Long Memorial Award

- Catherine Mary Elsdon.

OPUS Bursaries

- 10 Part-time Student Recipients.

2006 OPUS Awards

OPUS Teacher of the Year Award (*New*)

- Dr. Danielle Soulliere (Sociology Anthropology).

OPUS Friend of Students Award (*new*)

- Dr. Clayton Smith (Vice Provost, Students & Registrar).

OPUS Faculty Award

- Dr. Antonio Rossini (Modern Languages).
- Dr. Arshia U. Zaidi (Sociology & Anthropology).
- Francisca I. Omorodion (Sociology & Anthropology).
- Dr. S. Ejaz Ahmed (Mathematics & Statistics).
- Dr. Linda Patrick (Nursing).

OPUS Support Staff Award

- Mr. Dewey Allard (Housekeeping).
- Ms Both Oakley (Director of Educational Development Centre).
- Ms Alison Zilli (Office of the Senate).
- Ms Jessica Dyrda (Executive Director of OPUS).

OPUS Academic Achievement Award

- Ying Ye.

OPUS Special Needs Campus Community Regognition Award

- Franco Magliaro.

OPUS Special Needs Achievement Award

- No nomination.

Dr. Kathleen McCrone Award

- Laurie D'Alessandro.

Mary C. Schisler Award in Dramatic Art

- Alida Lemieux.

Ken Long Memorial Award

- Lindsey E. Bannister.

OPUS Bursaries

- 10 Part-time Undergraduate Student Recipients.

2007 OPUS Awards

OPUS Friend of Students Award

- Dr. Cecil Houston (Dean of Arts & Social Sciences).

OPUS Teacher of the Year Award

- Kimberly Ducey (Sociology & Anthropology).

OPUS Lifetime Achievement Award (*new*)

- Josie Ionna (Former OPUS President 1971-1980).

OPUS Volunteer of the Year Award (*New*)

- Stephanie Sanders (former OPUS Vice-President).

OPUS Faculty Award

- Dr. Niharendu Biswas (Acting Vice-President of Research).
- Dr. Catherine Quinsey (English).

OPUS Support Staff Award

- Patricia Cousin (Financial Aid Administrator).
- Kevin Johnson (Public Affairs & Communications).
- Laurie McGhee (CAW Student Centre).

OPUS Academic Achievement Award

- Jessica C.M. Van Kesteren.

OPUS Special Needs Campus Community Recognition Award

- Kimberley Ducey (Sociology & Anthropology).
- Roberto Muscedere (Electrical & Computer Engineering).

OPUS Special Needs Achievement Award

- Valerie Doumani.

Katherine E. McCrone Award

- Carol A. Reader.

Mary C. Schisler Award in Dramatic Art

- Anne Marie Lillico Lewis.

Ken Long Memorial Award

- Mary Alyssa Towers.

OPUS Appreciation Award (*New*)

- Ali Ahmed.
- A.K.M. Aktaruzzaman.

OPUS Bursaries

- 4 part-time Undergraduate Student Recipients.