The Langara Students' Union (LSU), Historical Background, 2024

By Stanley L. Tromp, Langara College journalism graduate, 1993

Comments and corrections may be sent to stanleytromp@gmail.com

This record chronicles the controversial history of the student society of Langara College, Vancouver, B.C., the site of longstanding bitter conflicts with the student media and student electoral reformers.

With governmental officials' apathy and deafness to student pleas on the LSU, a weak and virtually unenforceable B.C. *Societies Act*, and student societies' exclusion from the B.C. *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*, it means that Langara College is indeed "the school of hard knocks" – one where students seeking accountability for their money are lost in a legislative Twilight Zone.

As what is out of sight is out of mind, one of the student unions' sources of power at community colleges is the two-year turnover rate of graduates, with the institutional memory slate wiped clean, and the old games renewed again with near-impunity.

The purpose of the chronology below is to reverse that woeful custom. The time is overdue to see the big picture and take the long view, and so, for the first time, most of these cases have been gathered into one file, here.

What may have seemed at the time to be one-time aberrations are now shown to be persistent patterns of misconduct over the past 55 years. For instance, we can see how the College temporarily stopped collected fees for the society (in 1987, 1989 and 1992), elections were voided due to "irregularities" (in 1995, 2005 and 2015), and it was nearly re-registered for non-compliance with the Societies Act (in 1983 and 2000).

This LSU story begins in 1969, decades before most B.C. college students were born. For example, in 1976, LSU ombudsman Bob Ross investigated the LSS's bank accounts after its bookkeeper was fired, and by 1978 discovered that a trust fund of $75,000 (i.e., $327,000 in 2024 funds) for a new student building was missing from LSU records.

It seems reasonable to wonder if the activities noted below – only revealed after strenuous efforts by intrepid *Voice* and *Gleaner* reporters, LSU whistleblowers, police probes, and external audits - are only the tip of the iceberg.

The stories below are summarized and paraphrased; an asterisk (*) marks items of special relevance for today; and there are links to the full texts of especially noteworthy articles in a secondary file here.

I would further say to the hundreds of my past, present and future Langara journalism student colleagues (such as those who have endured beatings from LSU staffers in the 1990s) that you can be very proud to uphold a lengthy tradition of public interest reporting over the decades.

The hard work of your forerunners cited below can serve as an inspiration, as you forever press the student union to account for students' involuntarily-extracted funds, against such onerous roadblocks (and it may serve as a kind of tough boot camp for the "real world" beyond). It would be an admirable service indeed to complete their great unfinished task begun in the 1970s.

Many problems raised in *The Voice* stories of long ago are, regrettably, so timeless they could have been written this morning; and with the LSU's current rising level of secrecy, how can we know if similar issues are not recurring today?

In sum, if the news articles below do not convince Victoria lawmakers of the urgent need for a complete legislative reform to student societies, then I fear that nothing else ever can. If not this, then what?

"Those who do not remember the past are condemned to repeat it."
- *George Santayana, The Life of Reason, 1905.*

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Historical note

Langara College courses and programs were first offered in 1965 at King Edward Centre as part of Vancouver City College. The current site at West 49th Avenue has housed the programs since 1970. Until 1994, Langara was called "the Langara Campus of Vancouver Community College (VCC)"; hence in those days it had a "principal" instead of a president.

In 1994 – partly in response to the stormy Langara Faculty Association strike of fall 1992 – Langara was granted the status of an independent college, with a president.

The LSU states it was "established in 1969," but it was then under the umbrella of the VCC student society, before assuming independence.

Today, all 9,000 Langara students are mandatory *de-facto* members of the LSU, which is mainly funded by student fees collected by Langara College. The LSU collected $5,262,379 in student fees in 2023, excluding the U-Pass fees.

The LSU website states that "the primary function of the Students' Union is the protection and advocacy of the rights and interests of its members." It operates as a co-operative, providing services to members; these include a health and dental plan, mental health resources, accounting services, a student discount program and more.

The Voice is the student newspaper of Langara College's journalism department; it was previously known as *The Tower*, and then *The Savant*. *The Gleaner*, published from 1985 to 2008, was a separate and far more offbeat, radical paper, which any student could write for; although funded by the LSU, it was still often very critical of the Society. (I wrote for both.)

1982

= ***Election violates bylaw 10.*** By John Trethewey. The Voice, Oct. 1, 1982

A strict application of the student society constitution could result in the LSU's by-election being judged null and void, says Lewis Quint, former chief returning officer.

= ***Funds missing.*** By Kevin Griffin, The Voice, Nov. 10, 1982

The LSU "employs inadequate cash controls," a report by auditor Bill Van Slee concluded. "Over the last year there has been absolutely ridiculous record keeping," he said later. "Loans are provided that haven't been paid back. There are too many people with a hand in the till."

= ***The joke has soured.*** Editorial, The Voice, Nov. 26, 1982

"Langara student council's image as a competent decision-making body is rapidly deteriorating."

1983

= ***Accounts a Mess: LSS plans clean-up***. By Avrill Peters. With ***Langara Student Council seeks new reputation***, The Voice, Jan. 18, 1983 *[Click on story at page 1 of LSU News File]*

The Langara Student Society, LSS, is putting together a financial plan to reverse its "hideous history," said the society's manager. The accounting books are held by VCC's regional office comptroller Jim Ho, because they were not managed properly and had four problems, he said. These included bank statements not reconciled monthly, and no monthly management reports.

= ***LSS orders audit of SUB books***. By Gerry Tubin, The Voice, March 31, 1983

The LSS will hire an independent auditor to review the Student Union Building trust account, regarding the creation of the new building. The $500,000 account [$1.3 million in 2024 funds] is "very confusing," said Malcolm Elliott, LSS business manager, adding: "The audit should have been done last summer."

= ***Society applies for legal OK***. The Voice, April 8, 1983

The KEC student society president says he expects to have his constitutional draft ratified by council by April 12. It was designed to re-register it with the Registrar of Societies in Victoria, which had struck the society off the rolls last year because it had failed to supply an audit of society accounts.

1984

= ***Council chaos***. By Margo Goodhand, The Voice, Jan. 13, 1984.

Ten representatives of the 18-member LSU Council have resigned. The VP Internal said it was because their grade point averages failed to meet the 2.0 council requirement.

= ***KEC suspends council.*** The Voice, April 6, 1984

The KEC Student Association should hear soon from a law firm on the legitimacy of appointments it made without the council meeting in quorum (making the appointments illegitimate). All council business has been suspended until then.

1985

= *Paul Mendes quits*. By Rich Dal Monte, The Voice, Nov. 15, 1985

The internal affairs coordinator of the LSU said he resigned from the executive on Nov. 4 because of the factionalism in the executive.

[1986 Voice newspapers missing.]

1987

= *College administration withholds student money.* By Carol Ann McKenna, The Gleaner, July 10, 1987

VCC administration withheld $22,425 [$51,000 in 2024 funds] of LSU funds in the summer due to what Langara principal J.J. Denholm called a "very bad report" from the Union's auditor, with six recommendations. LSU management improved, and the funds were then released.

Asked if college administration has a role in this regard, Denholm replied, "we have a role in that the college is acting as the *de jure* [legal] agent of the union, and as the *de facto* [in fact] agent of the student body at large." He added: "By calling the organization a 'union,' the impression is given that it has all the rights and responsibilities of a union under law. This is not so."

= *Students' Union chair's report embarrasses fellow execs*. By Jeff Barker, The Gleaner, Dec. 8, 1987

= *Williams resigns in frustration over questionable Union practices*. By Carol Ann McKenna, The Gleaner, Dec. 8, 1987

1988

= *Former executives find LSU practices questionable*. By Darren Atwater, The Gleaner, Jan. 20, 1988

Amongst the many complaints by two former LSU executives, including illegal activities: "The books have white-out all through them. If we were forced to an audit by Revenue Canada, they would never accept it…. The bureaucracy is 10 times larger than needed…. One or more members came to several meetings last term drunk and/or stoned…. The whole organization should be trashed."

= *LSU special agents get smart in cone of silence*. Editorial by Walter J. Cordery. The Voice, March 25, 1988

"No comment and the in-camera executive meeting are the two most disheartening things to members of the P.R.E.S.S. (Persistent reportage of Enterprising Student Scribes)

"'Don't the students have a right to know what their elected officials plan on doing with their money?' the bedevilling P.R.E.S.S. member asks. The executive members retreat to their only safe haven – the SUB office, where, in consultation with the other executive members (the resource staff, the bookkeeper, and perhaps their lawyer) they begin to feel secure knowing there is safety in numbers."

= ***LSU socked with 700 hours of overtime***. By Gord Smedley, The Voice, Nov. 3, 1988 *[See pg 2 of LSU News File]*

*LSU chairperson Paul Keet said the executive moved to limit overtime, adding that resource coordinator Philip Link is now restricted to 20 overtime hours per week.

= ***Langara's Robin Hood remembers LSS coup***. By Dean Pelkey and Dana Tye, The Voice, Nov. 10, 1988

Bob Ross recalls that when he was LSS [the former term for LSU] ombudsman in 1976, he led an investigation into the LSS's bank accounts after its bookkeeper was fired. By 1978 he had discovered that a $75,000 trust fund for a new student building was missing from LSU records. [$327,000 in 2024 funds]

*Although "nothing could be proved," Ross said "a lot went to general revenues," and what he called "bulk wages." In those days, the LSS paid honorariums to elected members.

= ***Langara loses its Voice***. By Dana Tye. The Voice, Dec. 1, 1988

Hundreds of issues of the Voice were reported missing from distribution boxes on campus, less than 24 hours after being distributed. On another day, a student found 200 untouched issues of the Voice in a garbage bin outside the Student Union Building.

The Voice asked students "What do you think of the fact that Paul Keet, chairperson of the student union, is not a student?" A typical response: "I think it's ludicrous. It would be like having a prime minister who doesn't live in the country." (Keet said: "I am a current student in terms of the way my life operates.")

= ***LSU loophole lets Keet stay on the job.*** Editorial. The Voice, Dec. 1, 1988.

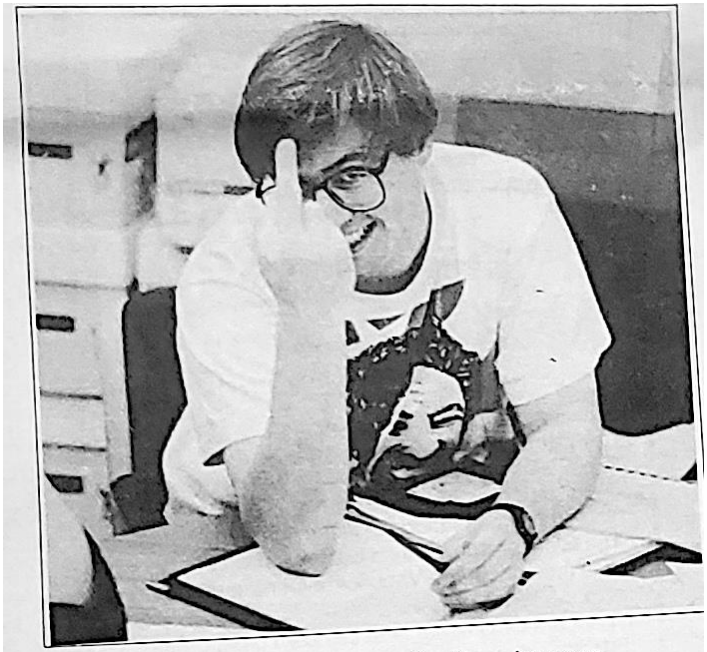
"He [Keet] has not broken the student union's membership bylaw, but has severely stretched its boundaries. The union must amend its constitution to prevent people maintaining their status as a student without attending classes."

1989

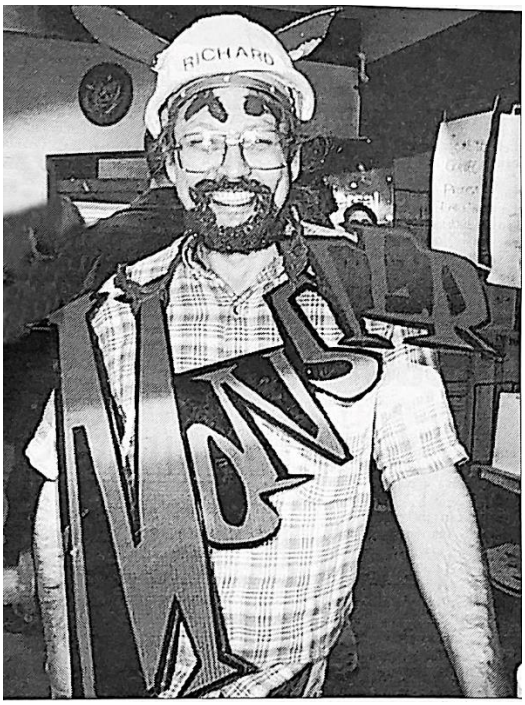
= ***LSU secretive on staff violence.*** By Jeff Barker and Ginger Teskey. The Voice, Feb. 9, 1989

LSU executives debated acts of violence between staffers Philip Link and Richard Bell for 3.5 hours in closed session, but will not reveal the content of four decisions made. One executive said he might resign, "because there is too much time and energy going into staff relations."

LSU employee Sandy Biggerstaff told the Voice she had entered the union staff office last Friday to find Bell holding Link in a head-lock. "I jumped on Richard and kicked Phil," she said, recounting how she had attempted to break up the fight.



Philip Link listens to a student's grievance



Above: LSU staffers Philip Link (left) and Richard Bell were both charged with assault and banned from Langara campus. Left – From *The Gleaner*, Dec. 7, 1989 / Right – From *The Voice*, Feb. 8, 2001, with caption:

TANYA FINK photo

MONSTER MASH: Richard Bell, financial co-ordinator for the LSU, donned a costume, Wednesday afternoon in the Student Union Building, to satirize perceived attacks on his character. More than 50 people watched Bell's interview with BCTV, which is investigating stories about the LSU first published in The Voice. Bell said that The Voice had portrayed him as "a big, scary LSU monster," and that this was all he could do.

= ***LSU loses grip on constitution***. By Theresa McManus, The Voice, March 7, 1989

Even though the LSU failed to obey its own constitution by not holding a general meeting by the end of February, the Registrar of Companies in Victoria says it will take no action.

= ***Spring cleaning needed at LSU.*** Editorial. The Voice, March 30, 1989 *[See pg 3 of LSU News File]*

"Langara students are caught up in a closed shop arrangement where the employer (read college administration) collects dues for a trade union (read LSU). In order to attend college, union membership is mandatory, and so is payment of dues regardless if one agrees with the political affiliations of the union.

"Meanwhile student union employees, many of whom are former members of the LSU executive, will receive $90,000 [$187,000 in 2024 funds] in salary payments, and the current union executives will share $13,000 [$27,000 in 2024 funds] in bonuses for attending meetings." Editorial concludes on LSU: "Maybe it's time to close up shop."

= ***Hannah's LSU fees fight heats up,*** by Kieran Dick, the Voice, Aug. 6, 1989

Langara student Rosalin Hannah presents a 611-signature petition to Langara College Board, asking it to stop collecting fees for the LSU, and that students should have the option to exempt themselves from LSU membership and not pay it fees, but the Board declines to act, because it is a matter for administration, which has a contract with the LSU.

A conservative, she wants the fees to go more into daycare spaces and bursaries (which the LSU says is solely in administration's purview) rather than "left wing" LSU political activism.

*The B.C. Supervisor of Societies Rose Elliott told the Voice that "a society cannot force a person to be a member," adding that fee collection is an internal matter between the society and its members.

Story notes: "Membership in the LSU can be refused at registration by not allowing placement of a membership card in the student card issued by the college." Student union fees are collected through an agency agreement between the college administration and the LSU.

= ***Link charged***. By Angela Wanczura. The Voice, Sept. 22, 1989

Vancouver Police charged LSU resource coordinator Philip with assaulting LSU staffer Richard Bell at the student union building on Sept. 6, said a VPD spokesperson. Both men were also involved in another incident on Feb. 3, 1989.

= ***LSU overtime bill a $36,000 headache***, by Ian Hanington, The Voice, Sept. 28, 1989 [$75,000 in 2024 funds]

= ***LSU mute on mystery memo***, by Lindsay Elliott. The Voice, Oct. 6, 1989

"The executive is as democratic as it can be right now, but we are still just learning everything about everything." – One elected member

= ***Trust Talks***. Editorial, The Voice, Oct. 20, 1989 *[See pg 4 of LSU News File]*

"There have been a few too many in-camera meetings in the last couple of terms to suit our taste. Absolute secrecy during a meeting of the LSU leads us to think, quite naturally, that there is something going on that someone wants to keep out of a newspaper."

= ***Students' union considers PR post***. By Dawn Hanna, The Voice, Oct. 20, 1989

Stewart Powell, LSU external affairs coordinator, suggested in a closed session meeting that the LSU create a public relations officer and a weekly column in campus newspapers, to disseminate LSU views.

Powell said he is not happy with the current press coverage of LSU matters, yet said the reactionary way in which the LSU and the newspapers interact gives students a bad image of both the press and the LSU. "We get what we deserve. We create our own press situations."

= ***LSU executive inexperienced, out of control, says Wenberg***. By P.J. Harston, The Voice, Oct. 27, 1989

The LSU is not taking care of business, and is being held together by paid staff, said LSU chairperson Tracey Wenberg. "If it wasn't for them we wouldn't get anything done." She agrees

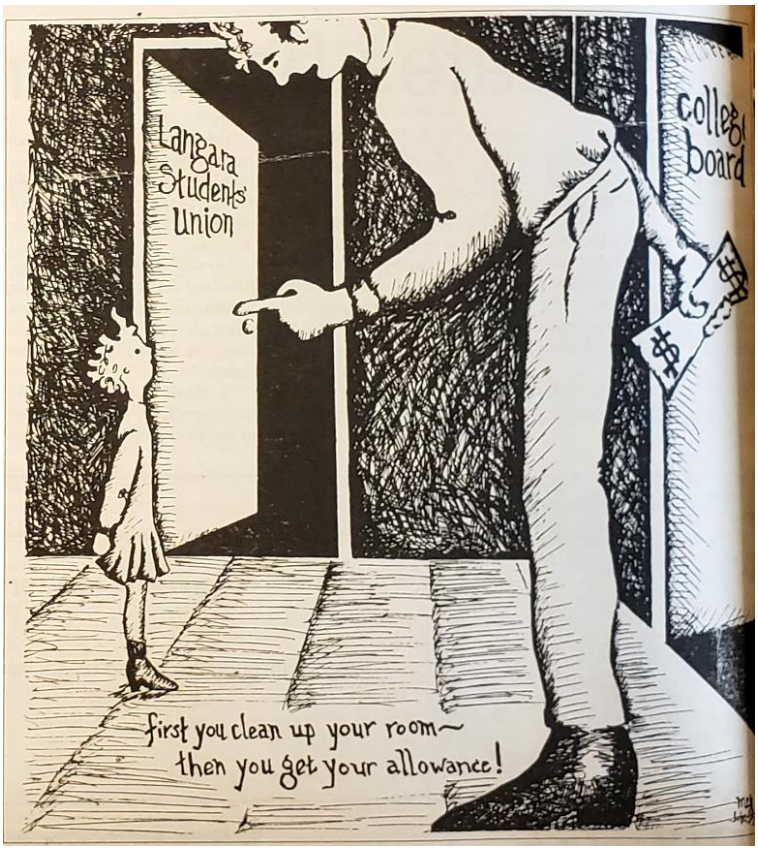
the current staff has been plagued by a lack of experience, ignorance of the issues, and too few members on the executive.

= ***Bad bookkeeping ends old union.*** By Phillipa Beck. The Voice, Nov. 9, 1989 *[See pg 5 of LSU News File]*

In 1985, the VCC College Board withheld fees from the King Edward Campus (KEC) student council, a move which eventually shut down the executive. The action was warranted, LSU manager Philip Link said, because thousands of dollars had gone missing, in a case unrelated to the LSU.

On Oct. 5, 1989, the VCC Board kept $122,000 [$253,000 in 2024 funds] it had collected on behalf of the LSU (insisting the LSU upgrade the SUB building). All but $10,000 was returned 20 days later.

In 1984, however, the VCC Board simply kept the student fees it had collected that January. It was to counter a group that had taken over the KEC union and spent student's funds without accounting for it, said Link.



Cartoon from The Voice, Oct. 3, 1989

= *Union's Philip Link assaults press freedoms*. By Paul Bulat. The Gleaner, Dec. 7, 1989 *[See pg 6 of LSU News File]*

Langara journalism students bring two grievances: on the disappearance of Voice newspapers, and the alleged assault of Voice reporter Ian Hanington by LSU resource manager Philip Link.

Journalism student Bob Mackin said he saw LSU staffer Paul Keet take the entire supply of Voice copies from out front of the library and slip them into his backpack.

[In 1990, after his banning from Langara College, Link was *promoted* to the role of executive officer in the Canadian Federation of Students, B.C. branch.]

1990

= *External Affairs coordinator resigns with much bitterness.* By Darren Atwater, The Gleaner, Jan. 17, 1990

LSU executive P.J. Harston resigned his post this month. Among his complaints:

"The major problem is inadequate bylaws." These were written by "the old boys," and can be interpreted any way. "That usually comes down to the staff, because they have years and years of experience within the CFS. The contract [LSU and staff collective agreement] is bullshit. The staff have rights way beyond what any staff should ever have.

"We have 18, 19, 20-year-olds on the executive having to deal with the staff on an employer/employee basis, and not really knowing how to handle it, and the staff will walk over the executive every time because they are older, or experienced, and know what they are doing.

"I don't think there is anybody on the executive that is willing to put forth the effort, time and energy, or possibly has the depth of knowledge or fortitude to wade through the bylaws, policies, contracts and staff collective agreements, and make the appropriate changes that need to be made."

= *Students' union shoves fee hike 'down students' throats.'* By Neil Christopher, The Gleaner, Jan. 25, 1990

The LSU decided to add a permanent fee increase of roughly 45% on Langara students. In the past, such fee increases were put to a vote at a general meeting of students, but this step was bypassed so as to cover the "emergency situation" of a $13,000 cash shortfall, seen by many as the result of poor budgetary planning. [$25,000 in 2024 funds]

= *Link admits destroying students' newspaper*. By Neil Christopher, The Gleaner, Feb. 1, 1990

LSU employee Philip Link admitted destroying a stack of Gleaners left for distribution at a conference held at the Alexander Centre. In his defense, Link said: "I had every right to destroy the paper, it libeled me." He also admitted he had spat on a stack of Gleaners.

A witness said that "Link ripped up the entire stack, and then he said he had to go find and destroy the rest of them." Constable G. Gavin of the White Rock RCMP said "the Gleaner definitely has grounds to file public mischief charges." About 2,000 copies of last week's Gleaner went missing from campus.

= *Link's record speaks for itself.* By Tim Kosub, The Voice, Feb. 2, 1990

LSU resource coordinator Philip Link was convicted of assault and fined $100 in Provincial Court. He also pleaded guilty to a charge of criminal mischief and damages under $1,000 for smashing the window of LSU member Adele Paris' car with his fist.

In yet another case, Voice reporter Ian Hanington protested Link's mass destruction of Voice newspapers by carrying a stack of these into the LSU office and dropping them onto the floor. When he then tried to photograph the scene, he said, Link struck him in the face, knocked him to the floor, and choked him with his camera strap. "Link was totally out of control," said one witness. "He looked like a 2-year-old having a fit." ("I should be given a fuckin' medal for what I did," Link later said at an LSU meeting.)

= ***Change ain't nothing new***. By Jeremy Hainsworth, The Voice, Feb. 23, 1990

Dislike of how the LSU was run and a heavy workload were two of reasons that led to the resignation of the LSU members. One said he left because of Philip Link, his allies and his staff – "the LSU was basically set up to be a total waste of time so they could have jobs."

A second said meetings accomplished very little. "The whole system was designed to discourage participation, including elected members. A third said of the state of LSU affairs: "Things couldn't get much worse."

= ***LSU opens its doors***. By Jeremy Hainsworth, The Voice, March 2, 1990

For the first time this term, the LSU held its weekly meeting without going in-camera. "I'll be the first to admit that we spend far too much time in-camera," said LSU chairperson Tracey Wenberg. Many of the issues discussed at in-camera sessions could be dealt with at committee meetings, she added: "We (the executive) are there to refine committee decisions."

Other student unions are wondering why the LSU is not working on the issues, Wenberg said. "I'm rather choked at the way things are happening. It's really embarrassing because we're doing dick-all."

"That's garbage, it really is," UBC AMS VP Johanna Wickie said when told of the LSU's heavy use of in-camera meetings. The AMS holds very few of those; she added, for there is no way for an elected student council to get "real student feedback" with such meetings.

= ***Dozens of Voices silenced by vandals***. By Kathleen Zecchini, The Voice, March 8, 1990

Dozens of copies of the Voice have been found in garbage bins at the LSU building and have disappeared around campus. Journalism instructor Rich Ouston criticized the trashing: "The public not only has a right to know, they have a need to know."

The problem is not new, and was also reported by the Gleaner. "If we do any serious coverage of the union, the paper will probably be stolen and destroyed as it has in the past," said Gleaner reporter Neil Donald.

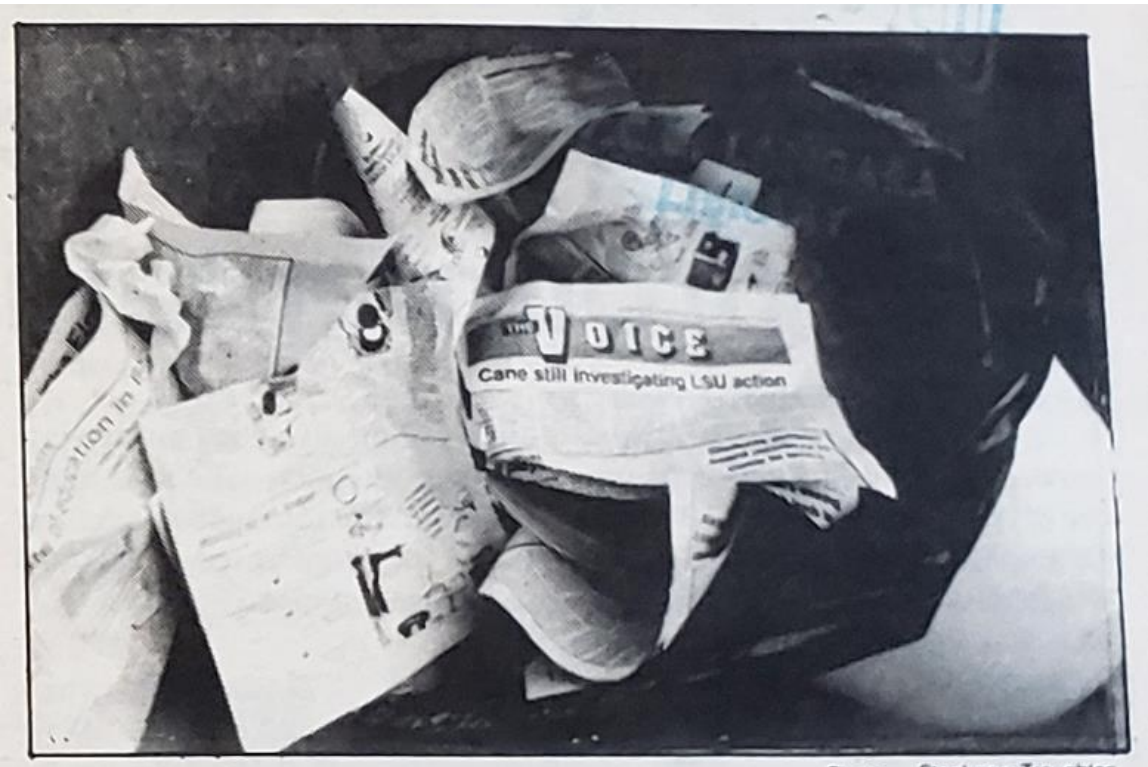


Photo — Stephanie Troughton

The Voice paper chase ends in Student Union Building trash bin.

= *LSU employee saying union not running smoothly*. By Dianne Whelan and Linda Pugh, The Voice, Nov. 9, 1990

= The LSU said a computer containing the past four years of its financial records is missing. LSU external affairs coordinator P.J. Harston said the LSU did not call the police to investigate, because an internal search was necessary first. "The Student Union has been mismanaged for the last two years," he added.

1991

= *Meeting doors closed.* By Paul Chapman, The Voice, March 8, 1991

The amount of time LSU executive meets in closed session has risen from 30% to 75%, a Voice review of union meeting minutes shows. "There is no need for the meetings to be so secretive," said LSU staffer Paul Keet. He added that important issues are being neglected because members are caught up in the "soap opera" aspects of the union.

= *Money missing from LSU; police exhaust all leads.* By Michelle Brunoro, The Voice, Oct. 10, 1991

Vancouver Police have exhausted their leads into the theft of $18,000 in cash and merchandise from the LSU, after their probe was prompted by an unsigned letter. [$34,000 in 2024 funds] Union chairperson Greg Mitchell said he felt like he had "just entered a den of thieves," and "serious reservations about this community."

LSU minutes show the from September 1990 to July 1991, not one treasurer's report was filed, and the LSU had no treasurer from January to May of this year.

1992

= *Student union cash crunch looms: Langara threatens to stop collecting LSU fees*. By Lynn Moore. The Vancouver Sun, Feb 4, 1992 *[See pg 7-8 of LSU News File]*

Citing many problems, VCC officials have decided that as of August 26, they will no longer collect student fees for the LSU. Documents obtained by the Sun and interviews with 13 people reveal many problems, such as:

- An amount of cash estimated by association auditors at almost $19,000 went missing between October 1990 and March 1991. *[$37,000 in 2024 funds]*

- Sgt. Ron Joyce of the Vancouver police fraud squad investigated the missing funds. One thing that unnerved Joyce was that "it was routine that certain signatures of members of the executive were routinely forged for expediency's sake and (executive members) were aware of it.

"It was totally bizarre. If there was a theft, we could certainly never provide the evidence to support the charge, because the policy and the habits of handling the money were such that there were too many other explanations," Joyce said.

- An impeachment process was started last October against the current student union chairman, Greg Mitchell, for allegedly running credit checks on student union staff during contract negotiations (which he denied).

- Burnout, frustration and disillusionment run rampant among elected representatives, said Mary Lopez, a former LSU executive.

[P.S. I recall B.C. Advanced Education Minister Tom Perry saying in 1992 that was so troubled by the LSU's conduct that he seriously considered whether its funding should be closed down. – S. Tromp]

= *LSU fees still in limbo*. By Simi Sara, The Voice, Feb 14, 1992

The VCC College Administration Committee decided to wait for the next auditor's report on the LSU before deciding if VCC would still collect student fees for it. Committee chairperson Ruth Preston said a "nightmarish chain of events" had occurred at Langara, and the "viability of the LSU is at stake."

= *LSU in disrepair, Pinter says*. By Andrew Best, The Voice, Feb. 28, 1992

The LSU is in a constant state of turmoil because of structural problems, said its former executive director Marlene Pinter. She was fired by the newly-elected slate 75 days into her job.

She had wanted to install tighter financial controls, long term goals, and union job descriptions, and also opposed giving executives stipends for attending meetings. She added that LSU office

documentation is “very poor,” as executive meeting minutes, letters of agreement and contracts are not available. “I saw many people making decisions based on assumptions and heresay.”

= ***VCC takes hard line with LSU***. By David Da Silva, The Voice, Feb. 28, 1992

VCC president John Cruickshank said the LSU executive has to prove itself before the college board decides whether it will still collect student fees on its behalf, amid allegations of theft, missing funds and mismanagement.

*Cruickshank added that the 6% voter turnout for LSU student elections shows a lack of student support for the LSU. “I think that enhances the feeling that we’re financing a small club… I guess it has to be asked, ‘Is it worth it?’” He said the college board must take a hard line to “see the general student rights are safeguarded at the same time each new elected council grows more independent.”

= ***LSU Antics***. By Andrew Best, Opinion, The Voice, March 6, 1992. *[See pg 9 of LSU News File]*

Story begins at 1978 when concerned students look into a $75,000 LSU slush fund …. then a senior LSU staffer in 1987 signing cheques to a janitorial company she co-owned…. then the 1,700 blank cheques in 1990…. then the 1992 firing of Pinter, etc.

= ***Autonomy is KSU’s main concern.*** By Fiona Hughes, The Voice, March 6, 1992

Ernst & Young auditor Gary Wozny suggested that a fulltime experienced business manager be hired to look after the day-to-day operations of the LSU’s finances. That person should be independent of any group and not be staff, he said.

= ***CFS gets money from Langara*.** By Norma Kroeger. The Voice, Sept. 25, 1992

In a summer executive session, the LSU implemented a $6 per year rise in student union fees as requested by the Canadian Federation of Students, contrary to LSU bylaws that a student referendum should be held before setting such fees.

= ***De Croo dismisses controversy***. By Norma Kroeger, The Voice, Oct. 2, 1992

*In November 1991, the VCC college board said it would stop collecting fees for the LSU for one year, unless the LSU could demonstrate better control of its finances. This motion was rescinded at a July 1992 VCC board meeting, but VCC and the LSU would not say why.

= ***Students must pay their fees, says LSU***. By Lois Belluk, The Voice, Oct. 9, 1992

*The LSU said students who do not pay their student union fees will have their marks withheld and will not be allowed to register next semester. Some SFU students are suing that university on this issue. One said, “if we lose this case, students will lose the protection of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.”

The UN Declaration of Human Rights also states “no one may be compelled to belong to an association.” Richard Rheaume, a student at VCC’s King Edward Campus, started a group called Students for Democracy, to push for the right to withdraw from student unions if they chose.

1995

= ***LSU talks debt during closed door debate.*** By Sandy Reynolds, The Voice, Feb 3, 1995

= ***Election woes plague LSU***. By Gail Johnson, The Voice, March 22, 1995

The LSU needs to hold another election. *Langara College registrar Penny Gallagher nullified the February LSU election results because the union did not follow LSU bylaws that state a candidate cannot seek more than one position. She added that the College didn't have enough involvement with the election, and students might not have enough notice about it, causing low voter turnout.

1996

= ***Student demands refund of student union fees***. By Krysta Davies and Jason Oatway, The Voice, Feb. 8, 1996 *[See pg 10 of LSU News File]*

Langara student Gary Johnson only got his LSU students fees refunded because his circumstances were "exceptional," said a union staffer. *But Johnson said: "If freedom of choice was deemed a legitimate concern in my case, then wouldn't it be the same for every student?"

= ***LSU chair defends fee refund***. By Jason Oatway, The Voice, Feb. 22, 1996

Gary Johnson, the Langara student who demanded and won a refund of his student fees, is prepared to go to court so that other students can get theirs back too. He gave the LSU the option of refunding his money or going to court; the LSU chose the first option, even though it is not obligated to refund the fees. A second student, Rob Logan, is asking for the same.

1999

= ***The price isn't right; LSU fees don't add up to much***. By Carolyn Cooke, The Voice, Nov. 18, 1999

Langara students are questioning what they pay in student union fees and where that money goes. A fulltime student pays $65 per semester, a fee that is broken down into six categories.

2000

= ***Clock is ticking for LSU and Gleaner.*** By Trevor Kasteel, The Voice, Feb. 24, 2000

*The LSU is 10 months away from being dissolved as a society unless it files its outstanding reports. "I'm aware that I have been negligent in my duties," said LSU staffer Richard Bell. "I haven't got around to filing ours."

"Pretty soon they [the Gleaner] are going to get a notice saying that dissolution of proceedings are going to be in progress," said Dan Hood, financial analyst for B.C. Societies. "They will be dissolved, gone, finished, kaput." Nicole Dmytar of the dissolution department of B.C. Societies quoted Sec. 71 of the Societies Act to make the same point.

> *[Note: Those were the good old days when Victoria bureaucrats would speak directly to the student media, not only via the ministry's public relations branch. - S.T.]*

= ***LSU manages money by word of mouth***. By Trevor Kasteel, The Voice, Feb. 24, 2000

The LSU transferred $85,308 [$140,000 in 2024 funds] to the Gleaner Publications Society last year by verbal contract - as it has done for the past 15 years since the Gleaner was first voted in. "I don't think there is one right now," said LSU resources coordinator Richard Bell. "Does there need to be one? There should be one. That's for sure."

= ***LSU violates student fees agreement with college***. By Trevor Kasteel, The Voice, March 9, 2000

Langara College, which collects student fees, has transferred $2.3 million during the past three years to the LSU [$3.8 million in 2024 funds], even though the LSU has not filed its financial statements to the college since 1997 - which it is required to do, to show how the fees are spent, as per Sec. 12 of the Agreement, which was drawn up in 1996; before that, the money was transferred via a verbal arrangement.

= ***LSU's Bell refuses to open books***. By Trevor Kasteel and Douglas Brown, The Voice, March 16, 2000 *[See pg 11 of LSU News File]*

A formal request by Voice reporters (who are also LSU society members) to view how $665,121 [$1.1 million in 2024 funds] was paid in wages and benefits to LSU staffers over the past three years – as well as on a purchase of a house for students - was denied by Richard Bell, LSU financial resources coordinator.

*The reporters cited LSU bylaw XII (sec. 2) and B.C. Societies Act (sec. 37), both which empower society members to inspect records. Yet Bell still refused them, by claiming such records are "private." The LSU fell from $263,546 in cash assets in 1998 to a debt of $196,422 in 1999. [$332,000 in 2024 funds]

= ***Letter to editor***, by Thomas A. Bravard, The Voice, March 16, 2000

"The Voice's excellent reporting on this [LSU finance] scandal has angered this recycled student…. Place Richard Bell on paid leave, have an independent audit conducted, and ensure all paperwork is submitted to the necessary agencies. If this, or similar measures, cannot be carried out immediately, then agencies from outside the college will get involved, and the results will not be to our liking."

= ***SUB renos have little payoff***. Opinion by Douglas Brown. The Voice, March 22, 2000

Author objects that $2 million of students' money [$3.3 million in 2024 funds] for a new renovated LSU building produced an ugly result, like a ski chalet, without a pub, pool table or dartboards; instead "a little warren of halls, walled-in rooms, with precious little seating…. So heavy on flash and so low on appeal."

= ***The LSU won't show me the money!*** Opinion, by Trevor Kasteel. The Voice, March 22, 2000 *[See pg 12 of LSU News File]*

"Richard Bell, and LSU executive members, verbally have told me that any further questions regarding the LSU should go through their lawyers from now on. Why? Who pays for the legal fees for every single simple or convoluted enquiry? We do!"

= ***Why can't the LSU disclose the cost?*** By Michelle Macullo and Nicki Fellinger, The Voice, Oct. 12, 2000

Langara students are paying for a radio announcement on Z95 and XFM as part of a public education campaign for higher education funding, but nobody wants to tell them exactly how much it's costing. This year the LSU collected more than $830,000 from students. [$1.5 million in 2024 funds]

2001

= ***Student petition slams LSU.*** By Shaye Hoobanoff, The Voice, Feb. 8, 2001 *[See pg 13 of LSU News File]*

A group of Langara students started a petition urging the LSU to revoke its decision to fund the legal defense of its staffer Richard Bell; they are angry because the LSU agreed to pay up to $6,000 to Bell [$9,800 in 2024 funds]. He has to repay half of it by the end of his employment. It stems from Bell's charges of assault and uttering threats to voice reporter Trevor Kasteel. The UBC AMS president voiced concern that the LSU's legal funding action would set a precedent.

= ***LSU votes to discipline Bell over SUB incident.*** By Shaye Hoobanoff, The Voice, Feb. 8, 2001

The LSU voted unanimously to discipline its financial coordinator Richard Bell for his assault of Trevor Kasteel - via a written warning. "The letter would state he is not to engage in similar conduct [i.e., assaults] in the future," said LSU staff relations officer Hari Alluri.

The letter would also outline more severe consequences if such events happened again, though the LSU wouldn't say what those could be. Bell said that even if he was found guilty in court, he would still continue working at Langara, because he had provided "excellent leadership."

2004

= ***The Voice rejects LSU muzzling***. Editorial, The Voice, Oct 7, 2004 *[See pg 14 of LSU News File]*

LSU passed a Code of Conduct that states all media questions must be sent in writing, and will be answered the same way. Student journalists and elected LSU executives who not abide with the policy "shall be subject to discipline."

[Voice editors also complained in 2004 that Langara College president Linda Holmes began a similar policy of submitting questions in writing, and severely restricted the flow of information from administration to students.]

= ***Actions of LSU staffer under fire***. Opinion by Patrick Blennerhassett. The Voice, Oct. 21, 2004

In 2003 student Bob Wilkins alleged Bell verbally assaulted him after an incident concerning the LSU Women's Centre. In 2000 Bell was accused of mismanaging LSU funds when he failed to file financial statements with the college for three years (but later did). When confronted abut this, he initially refused to release details about how over $1 million had been spent, stating the matter was "considered private." [$1.53 million in 2024 funds.]

= ***LSU embroiled in conflict over staffer's behavior***. By Hilary Genders, Heather Wallace and Darryl Greer, The Voice, Oct. 21, 2004

Members of the LSU's Peace and Social Issues Committee are accusing LSU staffer Richard Bell of sexist and intimidating behavior. They add he interfered in the committee's meeting by dictating its agenda and arbitrarily ending it. "I thought it was much like a dictatorship," said one

= ***LSU meeting didn't bare all***. By Robyn Dickens, The Voice, Nov. 4, 2004

Time and agenda constraints at the LSU's last AGM left students' questions unanswered. "I was shocked that the LSU wasn't willing to discuss particular issues that the student body showed so much interest in," said Langara student Mac Flavelle.

= ***LSU creates committee to set up new media policy*.** Proposed plan would allow verbal interviews. By Kain Basaraba, The Voice, Nov. 12, 2004

"The current policy [that the media must submit questions in writing] is stifling us," said LSU executive Erin Sikora. "By not letting us talk about issues, it creates a lot of work. It would be easier to sit down and do an interview."

LSU resource coordinator Richard Bell dominated the meeting and quite often interrupted the executives. "They [journalism students] often defame people without knowing what they're doing." He suggested LSU executives go to the union's lawyers to file lawsuits if they feel they have been misquoted by the media.

= ***Media policy revamped. LSU opens up access to staff and executives***. By Viveca Ellis, The Voice, Nov. 25, 2004

After three months of restrictions on interviews, the LSU has reformed its Media Relations Policy to allow some executives to speak freely with journalists on an issue-by-issue basis. But the new policy compels LSU executives who publicly criticize staff to resign if they do.

The previous policy, which required the media to submit written questions, has been discarded. The LSU media policy spokesperson Erin Sikora said many LSU members were not happy with the hastily-written old policy: "We knew the policy was undemocratic."

Journalism dept. chair Rob Dykstra said the department still refuses to abide by any such LSU policy that tries to control the flow information.

= ***Letter to editor: LSU staffer Richard Bell apologized to the Voice***. The Voice, Nov. 25, 2004

"The LSU is one of the best financially managed student groups in B.C. The LSU had provided audited financial statements since 1969, and these have always been available to anyone who walks in the office… I wish you could understand how devastating the constant attacks on our integrity are."

= ***Letter to editor: Richard Bell's apology lacking facts***. By Trevor Kasteel, Langara journalism program graduate (2001). The Voice, Dec. 2, 2004

[After charges had been laid by Vancouver Crown counsel against Bell for assaulting Kasteel, Bell pled guilty to a lesser charge.]

"Please do not settle for Mr. Bell's response that the LSU's annually audited financial statements are enough. While these statements comply with the B.C. Societies Act, they're also very vague. They will not provide a specific breakdown of how and where your student money is spent and collected."

2005

= *Former LSU rep gets $8K tailor-made contract*. By John MacDermid, The Voice, Feb. 3, 2005

The union awarded an untendered $8,000 contract to former LSU business representative Sammie Jo Rumbaua to provide marketing services for the Rock the Vote B.C. campaign. LSU staffer Richard Bell said it was not advertised because it is not LSU policy to request bids on small contracts.

*Sophie Lee, a former LSU finance committee member, said there is no policy regarding awarding contracts.

= *Langara student union elections 'null and void.'* By Ian King, The Gleaner, Feb. 18, 2005

"Heated political rivalries, grudges, accusations of conflict-of-interest and interference, shouting matches, questions about ballot security, charges of rule bending, and an alleged death threat: it wasn't the recent Ukrainian election – it was Langara."

Half an hour after the polls closed, LSU elections committee Matthew Harmer told candidates that the committee had unanimously ruled the election null and void.

= *Journalism rep quits 'undemocratic' LSU*. By Rochelle Baker, The Voice, Oct. 20, 2005

Executive Veronika Stewart says the LSU's media approach was one reason for her resigning. "Freedom of information is something vital to democracy and that's something the LSU does not always uphold." The LSU has refused to answer questions about banned employee Richard Bell, and an investigation into past LSU operations.

2006

= *LSU staff in control of campus politics: former exec*. By Robert Mangelsdorf, The Voice, March 16, 2006

*The LSU is operating in its staff's best interest and not the students', said former LSU executive Don McLenaghen. Permanent employee positions hold more sway than brief student executive tenures, due to the transitory nature of the elected college students.

Langara College president Linda Holmes agreed. "You have to ask the question, 'Who's running who?'" McLenaghen said the large size of the LSU executive, which has 34 elected positions, further dilutes the students' power. (By contrast, the Simon Fraser University Student Society had only 16 elected positions.)

= *Bell blues ringing in Langara*. By Sarah Artis, The Voice, Oct. 12, 2006 *[See pg 15 of LSU News File]*

In 1999, a Gleaner staff member told police that now-banned LSU staffer Richard Bell had voiced threats, tried to shove her, and "applied his knees to the lower part of [her] anatomy." No charges were laid.

= ***LSU still says no to Voice's questions***. By Georgia Tsoromocos. The Voice, Nov 2, 2006

= ***LSU botches restructuring referendum.*** By Gloria Fung, The Voice, Dec. 1, 2006

The LSU's referendum on reducing the number of its executives from 22 from 36 has been annulled, due to a mistake on the ballot.

2007

= ***LSU opens new dialogue***. By Justine Davidson, The Voice, March 8, 2007 *[See pg 16 of LSU News File]*

The LSU executive has thrown out the union's media policy, calling it "impossible to follow," said Alex Moser, chair of the LSU policy committee, which is revamping the policy manual. The old policy preamble was dropped. Moser said: "I think it is quite insulting. It insinuates that people in journalism are incompetent or malicious or both."

The LSU policy started in 2004 in response to the Voice newspaper's alleged misquotations. It stated that only designated spokespeople could speak to the media. LSU staffer Sandy Biggerstaff said she never abided by it, and all it did was increase antagonistic relationships. A committee of LSU executives and journalism students had met to discuss a new policy.

= ***Misplaced funds a case of history repeating itself.*** By Frank Bucholtz, The Peace Arch News (White Rock), Sept. 6, 2007

"At the Langara campus of VCC, when I was a journalism student there in the late 1970s, work by several of my fellow students for our newspaper uncovered the fact that the student association president and business manager were using a great deal of fee money to pay their personal expenses. As is often the case, the president was a 'permanent student,' taking one course each semester to qualify as a student, and spending the rest of his time in his president's role."

2008

[In 2008, the LSU-funded Langara Gleaner student newspaper, which had started in 1985, ceased publication after 400 students voted in a referendum to stop funding it.]

= ***Charity funds diverted to SUB project.*** By Victoria Paterson, The Voice, Oct. 2, 2008

= ***LSU audit missing crucial document.*** By Sarah Douziech, The Voice, Oct. 16, 2008 *[See pg 17 of LSU News File]*

A report detailing a debit of internally restricted funds, including International Community Development Committee money (for aid to Africa), is missing from the LSU's 2007-08 financial audit report. It would detail credits, debits and a year-end balance for committees whose funds are collected from student fees.

= ***Show me the mandate.*** Opinion by Victoria Paterson, The Voice, Oct. 22, 2008

"Can the LSU use the surplus funds from the International Community Development Committee (ICDC) for the new student union building?" Author notes that last year a vote was held on this question and students voted No, "but now the LSU is saying that since the bylaws are silent on what they can do with that money, they might move it anyways….. they need to check if that's how the student body feels first."

= ***LSU explains cash move.*** By Cornelia Naylor, The Voice, Oct. 30, 2008

The LSU's plan to redirect ICDC funds towards the Student Union Building has been scrapped. The union is no longer pursuing that plan after being told by its lawyer such a move could be perceived as illegal.

= ***LSU doesn't give a dollar's worth***. Opinion by J. Fuller-Evans, The Voice, Oct. 30, 2008

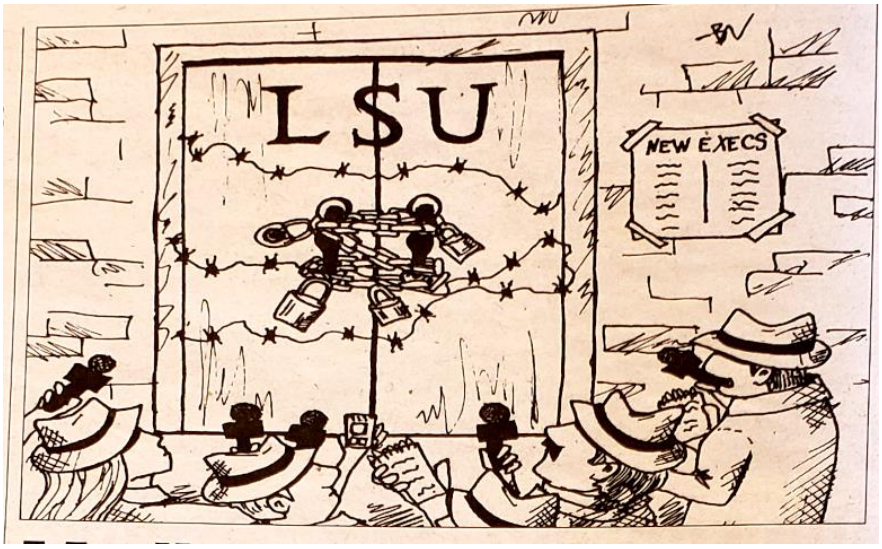
"Funds we've paid to the LSU for specific committees and resources should not be redirected without our consent….. If I give the LSU $65 and they tell me a portion of that money will go to volunteers build schools in Africa, and instead that money is used to pay their mortgage, my money has been misspent. Not only has our money been misspent, spending has been misrepresented."

2009

= ***Media rep is not helping***. Opinion by Jerome Turner, The Voice, Nov. 5, 2009 *[See pg 18 of LSU News File]*

Former LSU executive and Native Student Liaison says there is no need for a media liaison, that all LSU officials should be free to speaker to the media, as he once did. A Voice reporter tried to contact the new liaison via phone and email 10 times, with no response.

"The Langara public needs to know what its dignitaries are planning or doing with the student fees that get funneled to LSU committees."



Cartoon in The Voice, Nov. 5, 2009

= ***Student debt on rise along with LSU coffers.*** By Eric Plummer, The Voice, Nov. 26, 2009

The LSU is flush with cash, but tight-lipped on how it will be spent. The LSU financial statements from the last two years reveal a more than $500,000 surplus. The union's media liaison will not answer questions on the use of the surplus.

Sources inside the LSU, unwilling to be named, suggest it will be used to finance the outstanding balance of nearly $3 million on the new Students' Union Building.

2010

= ***LSU – let's be friends***. Opinion by Lee Dorner, The Voice, Feb. 11, 2010

"We are all students and students are going to make mistakes. After all, if we were perfect reporters already, we wouldn't be in journalism school. However, shooting down interview requests and making polices that forbid reporters talk to our elected representatives is not the way to go."

2011

= ***LSU under scrutiny after toss***. By Jesse Winter, The Voice, March 3, 2011

Langara College Security is investigating reports that LSU members threw out stacks of The Voice because of a front page story about controversial LSU election disqualifications. Five eyewitnesses said they saw LSU member Ram Al Aghbar removing stacks of the newspaper from their racks and throwing them into recycling bins minutes after they were delivered.

In its Feb. 24 story, the Voice told of three candidates who appealed their disqualification, and who said they were stonewalled and verbally abused by LSU media liaison Eli Zbar. After he said that Zbar had called him a "peon" and a "slime," Damien Otis wrote a cease and desist letter to the LSU.

= ***Improved LSU all up to us***. By Mike Hager, The Voice, March 10, 2011

A conflict between art design students and LSU, who denied them permission to use the Student Union Building. "This points to a clear lack of accountability to students. The design formation students were given various reasons at different times, many of which seemed arbitrary."

2012

= ***LSU won' say how it will spend $42K.*** By Sam Reynolds, The Voice, Oct. 4, 2012

The LSU's Student Issues Action Committee had a budget surplus of $42,000 for the 2011-12 school year, but refuses to provide meeting minutes of the year to the Voice.

= ***Jail time no issue for LSU***. By Sam Reynolds, The Voice, Nov. 1, 2012

LSU employees are entitled to full benefits and salary if they're sent to jail, if the incarceration results from an action taken at the request of the LSU, says a collective bargaining agreement leaked to the Voice that the LSU had repeatedly refused to release.

Labour lawyer Larry Page said "Collective agreements are public records, required to be filed with the Labour Relations Board of B.C. Maybe the student union didn't know that."

Under the deal, negotiated between the LSU and CUPE local 15, the current full-time LSU staffer wage is $30/hour (with many benefits), while Statistics Canada says the average wage for administrative occupations is $21.78/hour.

= ***New LSU bylaws drafted.*** By Jules Knox, The Voice, Nov. 1, 2012 *[See pg 19 of LSU News File]*

The LSU is trying to bring in new bylaws that would be the biggest organizational change in the union's history. Demands for greater accountability within the union triggered the adjustments, it says. Students running for office might need to submit a resume under the proposed changes, and budget responsibilities would be clarified.

= ***LSU is paranoid and secretive***. Opinion by Jules Knox, Nov. 7, 2012 *[See pg 20 of LSU News File]*

Seven "highlights" of recent LSU actions. e.g., resumes to weed out electoral candidates, an LSU employee paid to watch over a journalist look at public documents, poor summarized substitutes for genuine meeting minutes. As well, "The treasurer in charge of the LSU's money goes to UBC. But he used to go to Langara, so it's OK." And the LSU media liaison says "if the Voice continues to hurt board members' feelings, the union will consult its lawyer."

= ***LSU closing meetings.*** By Audrey McKinnon, The Voice, Nov. 7, 2012

Under proposed new LSU bylaws all students, including Voice reporters will be barred from attending all LSU board meetings.

= ***Who governs the Langara Students' Union?*** Opinion by Sam Reynolds, The Voice, Nov. 21, 2012

"As with many other student unions, the LSU's collective bargaining agreement – the document that defines the relationship between employees and employers – is negotiated by skilled union negotiators on one end of the table and students on the other end. Who, then is drafting the new laws? Who governs? Not the political class of the student body, but a clique of bureaucrats and their most loyal sycophants."

= ***LSU mum on reason for disqualification***. By Jana Minor, The Voice, Nov. 27, 2012

Emma Leigha Munro has been disqualified from three out of four previous LSU elections, despite receiving the most votes each time. Adam Giesbrecht, LSU spokesman, released a written statement: "Emma did not abide by election policy regarding campaigning online. She was disqualified for that reason." When asked to elaborate, Giesbrecht declined. (In 2016 the LSU began to allow online campaigning.)

Students elected to Langara's education council, known as "college positions," are sent as representatives to LSU board meetings. Munro said, "I was one of the people in there asking more questions than most people. I was whistleblowing, I guess. And for that I paid the price."

= *LSU objects to 'Vote No' campaign*. By Jana Minor, The Voice, Nov. 27, 2012

The LSU has told three students behind a "Vote No" poster campaign – all members of the LSU's aboriginal issues committee – to stop their opposition to the bylaw referendum underway. But John Dixon of the B.C. Civil Liberties Association said the LSU has no right to make such a demand.

Student Chris Cardinal objects to the LSU's secrecy, and to what he calls the difficult legalistic wording of referendum questions, not considering students with English as a second language.

= *Langara students vote on barring students from meetings*. By Stanley Tromp, Vancouver Courier, Dec. 7, 2012 (See URL)

Langara students voted on sweeping changes to the bylaws of the Langara Students' Union that would bar students from attending student union board meetings, prevent in-camera meeting minutes from being taken, and prevent students from making copies of student union records - even with a ballpoint pen. The B.C. Societies Act states in Sec. 37 that all society members have the right to just "inspect" records, but is silent on a right to reproduce them.

Each semester, the LSU collects $390 in mandatory fees from every student, for an income of more than $2 million per year. It spent $360,604 in wages and benefits for unionized staff in 2011/12, and held $1,082,073 in cash, term deposits and bank shares.

The LSU resource coordinator Gerald Hornsby hung up as soon as the Courier identified itself. LSU shop steward Donna Rainford-Cayenne said the LSU had no need to talk to the media because "we're going to get our own reporters and publish our own newspaper."

The LSU refuses to publicly name their staff members, which stands in stark contrast to other student unions, who post photos of all their staff with contact data on their websites. Unlike in other student societies, LSU board meeting minutes are no longer posted (although they were prior to 2010 – See 2001 sample). The Langara College board goes further, posting minutes even of their closed session meetings, after the matters are no longer thought confidential.

= *Langara student union to do a vote recount*. By Stanley Tromp, Vancouver Courier, Dec. 14, 2012 (See URL)

A week after students at Langara College narrowly approved three controversial referendum measures, the Langara Students' Union says its intentions have been misunderstood. "We will do a recount," LSU media liaison Gurbax Leehl said, adding the bylaw is intended to bar the general public, but not students, from meetings.

Some objected that students barely understood what they were voting for. The ballot states that the changes were needed to "enable LSU members to hold council to a higher level of accountability." Some campaigners said the changes would have the opposite effect.

= ***Langara student union ratifies controversial referendum***. By Stanley Tromp, Vancouver Courier, Dec. 14, 2012 (See URL)

The Langara Students Union ratified the results of a referendum making controversial changes to the organizations bylaws. It prevents students from making copies of student union records, and more, and also extends the terms of some directors.

The B.C. Societies Act, is undergoing a review in Victoria, which says the Act is outdated. Lorne Brownsey, assistant deputy minister of advanced education, wrote to the Act's review in 2010 to say of student societies:

"It is submitted that any new or amended Societies Act must include provisions that require not-for-profit organizations to accurately share information about their governance, finances and operations at particular intervals. There must be appropriate investigative mechanisms included in the new legislation to enable the registrar to investigate, and act upon, potential abuses or deceptions."

Langara College administration declined to discuss LSU issues or Societies Act reforms, as did the minister of advanced education, and the NDP critic for the ministry. Vancouver-Langara MLA Moira Stilwell and Langara College board members also did not respond to questions.

2013

= ***Secretive LSU fails at diversity***. By Judy Chern, The Voice, Feb. 7, 2013

"Perhaps we have to resort to the Australian model and give students the choice to opt out of student fees. Maybe that way, the LSU will have to work and earn its money."

= ***LSU not willing to talk***. By Puneet Dhami, The Voice, Feb. 14, 2013

The LSU's media liaison Gurbax Leelh says she will no longer speak directly to the media. The LSU also prohibited candidates from using social media to campaign in student elections.

= ***LSU hides finance reports***. By Nadim Roberts, The Voice, Oct. 10, 2013

The LSU refused to disclose financial records to the Voice, in apparent violation of the B.C. Societies Act. "They're required to provide financials when requested," said Rhonda Johnson, senior examiner at B.C. Registries.

The LSU also chose to move its Annual General Meeting to June – when far fewer students are on campus – from September, a move criticized by other student unions' executives.

= ***LSU doubles its expenses***. By Nick Eagland, The Voice, Oct. 24, 2013

Amid skyrocketing spending of students' fee money, leading to budget deficit, the LSU decided to hike pay for its unionized staff for the next four years (from $31/hr. to $37/hour), similar to

those of other B.C. student unions. Meanwhile, the LSU plans a 17% increase in students' health and dental fees.

= ***LSU provides no funding for clubs***. By Gavin Fisher, The Voice, Nov. 7, 2013

2015

= ***LSU has yet to clarify***. By Murray B. Hunt, The Voice, Oct. 15, 2015

After last week's cancelled LSU election, students and even councilor candidates remain in the dark regarding the reasons. The LSU only cited unspecified "irregularities."

A senior advisor representing the Societies Act said that while Victoria won't investigate, dues-paying students have the right to know why the election was voided, and to ask the LSU when the next one will take place.

= ***Aborted LSU election "fishy."*** By Rumana Dsouza and Scott Drake, The Voice, Oct. 19, 2015

LSU board members who have remained silent after the unexplained cancelled election two weeks ago are "a joke," said student candidate Nathan Deschamps. He added that all identities, including the Chief Election Officer's, are not made public, even to council members. "[It's time to] figure out who they are and what their problem is."

= ***LSU info is hard to come by***. By Kevin Underhill, The Voice, Nov. 12, 2015

Article 13 of the LSU bylaws say members may view union records only after 48 hours notice, under staff supervision, and no reproduction allowed. Meeting minutes are also only available via an Article 13 request.

= ***Students seek FOI inclusion*****.** By Bridgette Watson, The Voice, Nov. 19, 2015

Two Langara journalism students, Owen Smith and James Munro, speak by video conference to the B.C. legislative panel review in Victoria of the freedom of information law, urging that it be extended to cover student unions such as the LSU. See their testimony)

2016

= ***Student rep info tough to find, access***. By Simran Gill, The Voice, Feb. 18, 2016

The LSU website does not list names of all elected student councilors, or staff, or their contact information. Most other B.C. student societies do.

= ***Langara's Secret Union***. Opinion by Sean Lee, The Voice, Feb. 25, 2016.

"Maybe the problem lies in the fact that we are entrusting fellow students, who may not have much experience with politics, to take up such an important position that bears so much responsibility. Maybe politics just gets to people's heads…. We're not even asking you to do a great job. The very least you can do for students to be transparent."

= ***Students stymied by college unions*****.** By Chandler Walter and Chantelle Deacon, The Voice, Feb. 25, 2016 *[See pg 21 of LSU News File]*

Under the B.C. Societies Act, student governments must conduct themselves in way that promotes the "public interest." Yet there is no outside oversight, and the societies themselves decide how to enforce it. Complainants can go to court to enforce the Societies Act, but most students cannot afford to do so.

As well, one Langara fine arts student said the second floor location of the LSU reception acts as a physical barrier between the union and its students.

= ***Transparency necessary: university unions***. By Anna Tilley, The Voice, Feb. 25, 2016 *[See pg 21 of LSU News File]*

= ***LSU reveals budget***. By Alyd Llewellyn and Vincent Matak, The Voice, March 24, 2016

After almost three months of skirting requests from the Voice (despite LSU bylaws stating only 48 hours notice is needed), the LSU allowed access to the figures, but only under strict supervision, and no copying allowed. The Voice noticed a nearly 30% rise in total councilor budgeted expenses for 2016 from the previous year.

Jenelle Davies, secretary treasurer of the Canadian Federation of Students' B.C. branch, said she's never heard of a union delaying this long. "Certainly that's troubling. Often [these issues] happen because people think they can get away with it."

= ***Bylaw revisions a must for LSU.*** By Bonnie Lee La Madeline, The Voice, Nov 3, 2016

A new Societies Act will soon be in force, which the LSU bylaws must conform to within the next two years. The B.C. Finance Minister said the changes were needed to ensure flexibility, public accountability, and member protection. In October, the LSU board ordered its general manager Desmond Rodenbour to draft new bylaws to "clarify and expand member rights with regard to access to LSU records."

= ***LSU quietly fires pro-reform GM.*** By Sean Hitrec, The Voice, Dec. 1, 2016

LSU general manager Desmond Rodenbour, hired to implement accountability reforms, was abruptly fired last week, the Voice had learned; it was not announced. It coincides with a plan by the LSU to extend the council's term beyond the usual one year.

Rodenbour said he did not draft the bylaw changes, and "they're patently unethical." (LSU lawyers from Borins & Co., who had recommended Rodenbour, were also "turfed.") He said he wanted to improve byelections and modernize the LSU to match other student unions. But these plans are unlikely to materialize now.

= ***More allegations against LSU surface***. By Chahira Merarsi and Jake Wray, The Voice, Dec. 2, 2016

Bullying student members into silence, staff resisting changes by elected members, and booze on the students' dime are just a few of the accusations levelled against the LSU, say sources speaking to the Voice.

Elected member Harsimran Malhi said she was fired last week after months of trying to exact LSU reforms, adding that LSU threatened to take legal action if she kept trying to improve

transparency and modernize the union. (Malhi later considered legal action for wrongful termination.)

2017

= ***Muzzling Student Media*.** By Chahira Merarsi and Jake Wray. *Langara Journalism Review,* April 27, 2017. Full text

For years, reporters for *The Voice* have tried to write about the LSU with little success. Whether writing about student union events or bylaw changes, the LSU has given little to no answer when *Voice* reporters question their inner dealings.

And whether at Langara or elsewhere, unions run the risk of losing credibility as a voice for students when there is a lack of transparency about their activity. *A lack of transparency between student unions and their institution's paper is not a problem solely plaguing Langara College; student reporters at other schools have run into similar roadblocks in their reporting. (Notes on Kwantlen and Douglas colleges.)

= *Students unaware of LSU perks*. By Perrin Grauer, The Voice, Nov. 2, 2017

The LSU's collective agreement with CUPE 15, gives current staff a wage of more than $35/hour. Staff can accumulate up to 200 paid sick days, and receive extended medical benefits for themselves, their spouses and dependents.

One student said "I've never seen anyone who has been helped by the LSU," while another said, "It would be nice to know what their primary job is."

= *LSU ballots lost and found.* By Perrin Grauer, The Voice, Nov. 16, 2017

After discovering vote-counting errors following last month's election, the LSU says it will develop new protocols for electoral oversight. Jennie Bates, the LSU's Chief returning officer, would not answer Voice questions on what those might be, or when they might begin.

2018

= *LSU increases its clarity*. By Patrick Penner, The Voice, Nov. 8, 2018

The LSU's updated website says the publication of annual financial audits and council meeting minutes is "coming soon." It would follow the practice of other B.C. student unions, and obligations of the new Societies Act. *[P.S. As of 2024, those records still do not appear on the LSU website - https://www.langarasu.ca/]*

2023

= *Students feel manipulated in LSU election process.* By Mateo Muego, Erin Conners, Thea Catipon, Cala Ali, with files from Emily Best and Emma Shular. The Voice, Oct. 18, 2023. Full text: https://www.langaravoice.ca/students-feel-manipulated-in-lsu-election-process/

Students seeking to run in the upcoming LSU election are questioning the eligibility process and are concerned about what they call a lack of transparency from LSU staff.

According to students who tried to run for the LSU council in this month's election, they were excluded from seeking election to positions they wanted and funneled into back-up positions they showed no qualifications for. There were no reasons given, they said.

Students said they submitted the required eligibility package that included a resume and cover letter outlining their qualifications for the primary position they wanted to run for, as well as three references. They also checked off a back-up choice on the package's application form.

They said they each received an email from the chief returning officer stating they were eligible for their back-up choice. However, there was no mention of the preferred primary position they applied for. They were not told they were eligible or ineligible and no reason was given.

The LSU may be breaching its own electoral eligibility policy that states that the screening process is meant to qualify anyone that meets the minimum requirements for the position. It is "not to screen for the best candidate or candidates."

Langara students Keshav Puri and Khushi Salwan say the LSU would not explain why they weren't approved to run for the elected positions they sought. Photo by Emma Shular

= *LSU election results: new council, same low voter turnout.* By Erin Conners, with files from Siddharth Teotia and Thea Catipon**,** The Voice, Oct. 26, 2023**.** Full text: https://www.langaravoice.ca/lsu-elections-new-council-same-low-voter-turnout/

The Voice is aware of at least three students leading up to the election who said that their applications to run for VP finance were ignored. They said they were only told they were eligible to run for a different role - and were not given any reason when they asked about VP finance. In

addition, because they were not directly told they were ineligible for the role, they were unable to appeal.

The LSU did not respond to questions from *the Voice* about the total number of students who applied and were not deemed eligible for VP finance or VP internal. *The Voice* is also unable to film or take photos inside of the building due to the LSU's building policy.

= *Some students believe LSU committees are not active amid struggle to join.* By Maiya Suzuki, with files from Emily Best, The Voice, Nov. 23, 2023. Full text at: https://www.langaravoice.ca/some-students-believe-lsu-committees-are-not-active-amid-struggle-to-join/

The LSU's financial documents show that tens of thousands of dollars are allocated to student committees, yet some members believe many committees have been defunct since the pandemic. Some students say they haven't been able to join since 2019 nor are they being provided meeting minutes or agendas. Others are questioning why the committees are not advertised.

The LSU website says it has 11 committees that students can volunteer for, but it's unclear who is currently in charge of these. Students can also apply for the electoral committee, which has limited space and a more involved application process. One said: "I have no idea what the students' union does except for the fact that they take a chunk of my tuition every term."

= *Instructors unsure what the LSU is doing for students.* By Sarah Amy Leung, The Voice, Nov 29, 2023 *(with files from Thea Catipon, Mateo Muego, Maiya Suzuki)* *[See pg 26-27 of LSU News File]*

Colin Mills, a geography instructor at Langara for the past 25 years, questioned whether the LSU is supplying sufficient services to students: "There should be an audit as to what the value Langara students are getting out for their payments into the LSU."

*Computer science student Arman Thakur launched an online petition on Nov. 9, challenging the LSU's lack of transparency. Amongst other frustrations, Thakur was outraged that the LSU had stonewalled several prospective student candidates at the last elections. The petition asks for an "independent inquiry" on this year's LSU general election. English professor Erin Robb signed it, saying: "A lack of transparency on the part of the LSU is unethical, and frankly, highly suspicious."

Today every Langara student must pay LSU fees. These are comprised of a base fee plus an additional amount per credit each semester. In total, the LSU collected $5,262,379 in student fees in 2023 excluding the U-Pass fees, according to the LSU's latest financial statement.

= *LSU transparency missing the mark.* By Emily Best, The Voice, Nov. 29, 2023 *[See pg 22-25 of LSU News File]*

In 2018, the LSU assured *The Voice* that its meeting minutes and financial records would be posted online when its new $15,000 website was launched. Yet no minutes have yet been posted. Most other student union do so.

In 2016, the Societies Act was amended to allow members to request to see records previously inaccessible. The LSU changed its bylaws to adhere to the Act but exploited a loophole, continuing to limit access as much as permitted.

The LSU does not state anywhere in its bylaws why it may move a meeting in-camera, in contrast with the bylaws of some other student unions, which all list specific reasons for doing this. The LSU said the decision to move a meeting to in-camera was made "at the discretion of the board."

LSU members are barred from sitting in on council meetings without submitting an online application, which then must be approved by the council.

For elections, other student unions usually require only that candidates be in good standing with the college, while the LSU also requires two work references, one academic reference and a curriculum vitae with the related expertise. *The Voice* is aware of at least three students who said their applications to run for VP finance and administration were ignored.

= *A note from the editor.* The Voice, Nov. 29, 2023 *[See pg 28 of LSU News File]*

Cites an email from the LSU's "Media Committee" (unsigned by any named person):

The LSU complains of the Voice's lack of "accuracy and bias." And so, "we regrettably find it necessary to limit our engagement to fulfilling the specific obligations mandated by the Societies Act regarding information provision. Should there be any requests that fall within these requirements, we will honour our obligations to provide the necessary information.

"Should there be a demonstrated commitment to unbiased and accurate reporting in the future, we would be open to reconsidering our position."

= *High pay for LSU staff and board problematic due to lack of services.* By Yashvika Grover, The Voice, March 13, 2024. https://www.langaravoice.ca/high-pay-for-lsu-staff-and-board-problematic-due-to-lack-of-services/

Story reveals Langara Students' Union staff members make on average $112,292, significantly more than SFU union employees — despite servicing less than half the number of students.

Like all non-profits, the LSU falls under the Societies Act, which does not limit staff pay but requires societies to disclose the total remuneration paid to all staff making over $75,000. Potentially, this could mean that five LSU staffers make $75,000 while executive director Gurbax Leelh might make almost $300,000, Langara instructor Spencer Dane said.

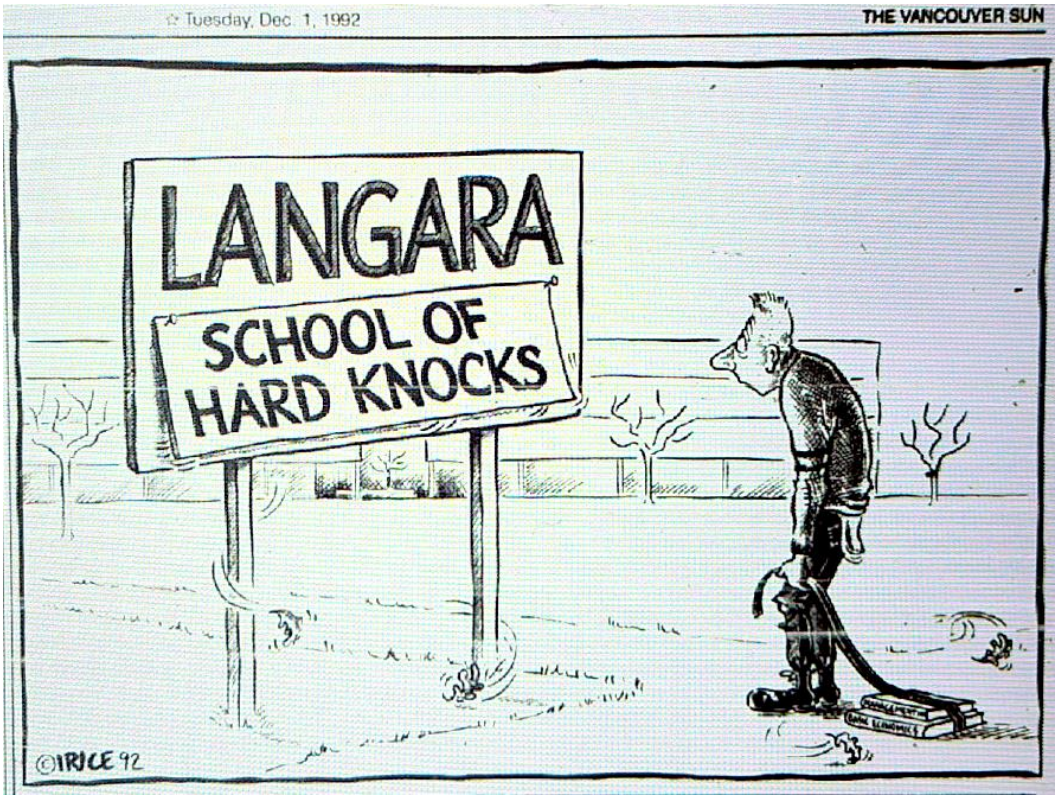
[So an LSU staffer is paid more than a Vancouver registered nurse the average B.C. high school teacher, or elementary school teacher, or Vancouver city councilor, or 2nd class Vancouver

police constable - and nearly as much as an MLA. They are paid about the same or often more as most fulltime Langara instructors (some with PhDs), or even department chairs. Their $112,292 salary is also higher than those of dozens of Langara College senior officials. Who – an LSU staffer or these others - has the more complex or onerous job, overall? – Stanley Tromp]

(See latest LSU financial statements here at - LSU Financial Docs - Google Drive)

"I'm very concerned about the information you presented about what's happening at Langara, as an advocate for open government and transparency at all levels."

- B.C. Premier David Eby, then an MLA, speaking to Langara students at *Legislative Special Committee to review the FOIPP Act,* Nov. 18, 2015. Testimony at: https://www.leg.bc.ca/content/HansardCommittee/40th4th/foi/20151118am-FIPPAReview-Victoria-n7.htm



Cartoon by Ingrid Rice, on Langara faculty strike. Vancouver Sun, Dec. 1, 1992