

Last words: Angry neighbours, a new economics school, and why we're not talking about Obama/Romney

By: none (<http://ubyssey.ca/author/none/>)

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THINGS THAT RESIDENTS OF THE UNA HAVE ACTUALLY COMPLAINED ABOUT*:



*no, really.

(http://ubyssey.ca/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/editcomic_sep23.jpg)

Comic David Marino/The Ubsysey

The UNA are offended by the sound of children playing

A deadly crisis is brewing in Corus, one of the market housing condos on campus. According to the latest front-page article of the University Neighbourhoods Association's monthly newspaper, the lives of campus residents are under assault from the pitter-patter of little feet. You know, *children*. Playing. On a playground.

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Clocked at a whopping 62 decibels by one particularly enterprising resident, the kids' "from-the-gut screaming" impacts condo residents' quality of life and bars them from lounging on their balconies. Apparently, the playground adjacent to Corus was built for preschool-aged kids, the kind who lie quietly facedown on the grass under the careful supervision of their parents. But these wild, school-aged ne'er-do-wells actually have the audacity to *go outside* and *play soccer* and *have fun while doing it*. Why are they outside in this designated play space? Why can't they all sit quietly indoors and watch TV or something? Never mind North America's child obesity epidemic. As one unhappy resident succinctly put it, "These kids are running wild." *The Ubyyssey* wishes the University Neighbourhoods Association godspeed in correcting this horrendous affront to residents' basic rights and freedoms.

Why we haven't been talking about Obama/Romney

So it's been nearly a week since Mitt Romney's infamous "47 per cent" comments were released to the world, and I bet you're all wondering: what the heck does *The Ubyyssey* have to say about it?

In fact, nothing! Okay, well not nothing, exactly. Maybe it's time to explain our thinking on this one.

Some of you might be wondering why we've barely mentioned the US presidential race within these pages. Heck, people might be looking over back issues down the road, trying to suss out what UBC students thought about Mitt Romney's tax rate or the Obama administration's use of extra-judicial assassinations.

In our opinion, a lot of student newspapers make the mistake of diving into national or geopolitical debates which they're totally unequipped to comment on. If you have someone who's really passionate and informed on the topic, it can make for truly original commentary. But at its worst, you end up with some guy fresh from an international relations class who is totally going to tell you what he thinks about the Israel/Palestine conflict.

So at every opinion meeting, we ask ourselves a lot of questions. Can we say anything new on this topic? Does it relate directly to students? Is wading into Quebec provincial politics going to make us look totally clueless?

That's not to say we live in a bubble and will only comment on, you know, the university's capital budget or the AMS or UNA residents being wacky old people. Closer to election day, we'll be reporting on how the U.S. elections are affecting UBC, and how proposed policies might impact international students — like we did in the summer (<http://ubyssey.ca/news/ubc-warns-american-students-of-possible-student-loan-rate-increase-765/>), when UBC warned students about possible increases to their student loan interest rate.

That falls within our student-focused mandate. Otherwise, we're not going to play pundit.

Be wary of VSE-style boutique programs

So the UBC Senate, the body in charge of all UBC's academic governance, recently decided to spin the department of economics off into an entirely new school. The Vancouver School of Economics (that name sure is shiny, ain't it?) hopes to admit its first cohort of students for September 2013.

There's nothing wrong with the department wanting to become a separate school. And the econ BA is still as accessible as before (the new school offers a new degree, the bachelor of international economics). But the way the decision was rammed through seems a little suspect.

The idea has been out there for some time, but it was passed by the Senate last Wednesday night, and the Board of Governors sorted out the finances the next morning. This raised some red flags for appointed members of the board.

We should be wary here. Now that the economics department is its own school, they'll be able to charge more for tuition. And the almost nonsensical inclusion of "international" in the degree title smacks of a cash grab.

If UBC's decision-making bodies are going to push through these kind of proposals without doing their due diligence, what's to stop other successful departments from getting a case of the dollar-sign eyes? Will we see already prestigious programs — say, international relations or fine arts — spin off into far less accessible boutique programs?

UBC needs alumni money to fund alumni centre to get more alumni money

Since the start of last year's Start an Evolution campaign, it's been hard to get UBC to shut up about their alumni fundraising activities. And not without reason; they want you to know about it, so you can give them money later.

But there have been some struggles in using alumni for UBC's relentless attempts to expand, most farcically the recent news that the UBC Alumni Centre is two-thirds unfunded, to the tune of \$11 million. The centre's entire purpose seems to be giving Alumni Affairs a place to invite people they are trying to hit up for money. (UBC's website says that the building is necessary because alumni "don't feel welcome on campus." Don't worry, alumni! Between construction, lack of graduate student housing, and constant conflict between students and residents, nobody feels welcome on campus.)

It's kind of funny that the campus's main fundraising component can't fundraise themselves a building. But it's a little more worrying when you consider the other projects that might stand as higher priorities, according to the most recent Board of Governors capital projects update. UBC Vancouver is missing \$39.7 million in capital fundraising dollars that have nothing to do with the alumni building: \$2.9 million for the Centre of Interactive Research on Sustainability, a building that's been open for a year. \$1.85 million for the Engineering Students Centre, on the rocks after three-way-negotiations between UBC, alumni and faculty have stalled. A whopping \$24.2 million for the Pharmaceutical Sciences Centre, for which UBC will have to take out a loan if they haven't got the money by the time they have to pay for it.

We'll see whether or not construction starts on the Alumni Centre before they have money for it. But considering the challenges in other areas, UBC might have more important stuff to take care of first.