Trent's $3500 degree error

University quick to admit mistake; students continue to question security of degree

Does paper carry weight? That is the question being pondered by the hundreds of recent Trent graduates who found themselves in possession of two Trent University degrees after the Office of the Registrar made a typographical error on approximately 1380 undergraduate degree certificates.

A degree certificate. Is it a meaningless piece of paper or meaningful recognition of our academic accomplishments? When something is "on paper" it takes on a new life. It adds meaning, credence and sometimes respect to an event that can't necessarily be proved by word of mouth. Paper is used to represent a contract, an education, a birth, or a purchase. One could view this typographical error as a screw up on the part of the university, indicative of lackluster administration. Alternatively one could view the university's attempt to rectify the situation in an expedient manner as a very human and earnest attempt to correct a mistake. We all make mistakes after all.

The error, which lists the "Dean of Arts and Science" as "Dean and Arts of Science," was brought to the Registrar's attention by a student on Thursday, June 2. On the following Monday they sent an e-mail to every graduating student informing them of the mistake

> **"Now I have two degrees... It seems that security is getting worse - not better."**

"I hope you've taken time to celebrate your achievement in earning a Trent University degree," reads an e-mail from the Registrar. "I regret to inform you of an error on some of the degree certificates. Due to a typographical error, the title of the Dean is incorrect."

Recipients of the e-mail soon received a package from the Registrar containing the "correct" degree certificate, an apology letter and a self-addressed stamped envelope in which to return the erroneous degree. The cost of the mailing tubes, postage, self-addressed envelopes totaled approximately $3500. This, however, does not take into account the labour costs.

Trent University Registrar Susan Salusbury was immediately forthcoming in her apology about the error. "It was very unfortunate to have happened," says Salusbury. "We notified students immediately. People make mistakes, we made a mistake and are very sorry."

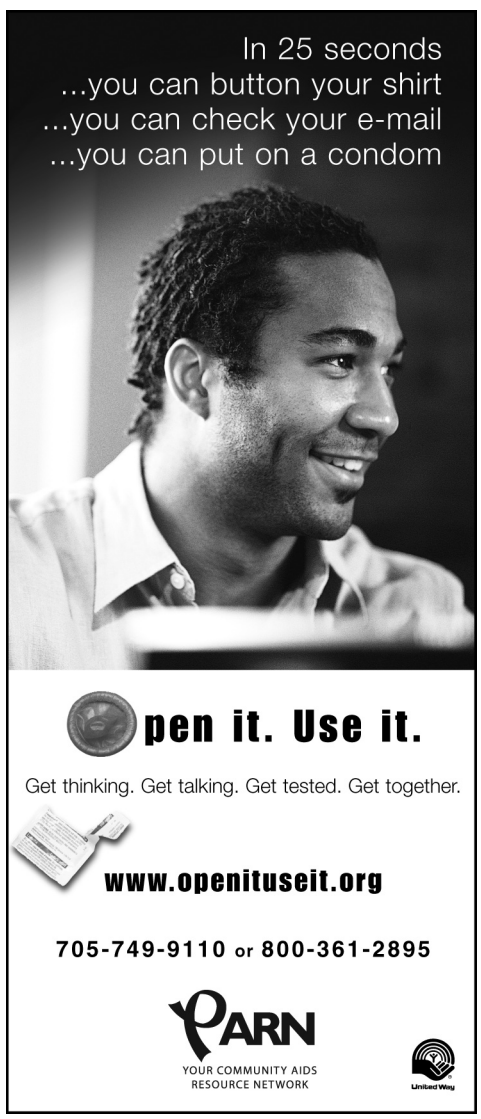
For some graduates however, the error puts the validity and security of Trent University degree certificates into question. "People campaigned so hard last year to install some security features on the degree," states recent graduate Ziysah Markson, making reference to the Trent Central Student Association sponsored campaign to enhance the degree's security and design features. "Now I have two degrees," she continues adding that she did not have to present identification to retrieve them "It seems that security is getting worse - not better."

Salusbury points out that replacing a lost or destroyed degree certificate is not out of the ordinary. "We will replace anyone's degree certificate if they lose it provided they send us $40," states Salusbury. "If someone's house burns down and they lose their degree we're not going to ask for proof of the fire. It's based on honesty."

Salusbury expresses a hope hope that the error does not reflect badly on Trent as a whole and points out that everybody makes mistakes. "If [the error] is a reflection on anything it is that we have a lot of work to do and not enough administrative staff to do it. That goes back to government funding."

"We worked hard to make sure students weren't disadvantaged," says Salusbury. "As soon as we identified the error we sent out letters of apology along with the correct degree certificate."

NATHANIEL CHRISTOPHER



Daring you to shoplift

"Freecycling is so in."

PHOTO BY SARA KNIGHTS

STUDENT NEWS

If the idea of karma- what goes around comes around- appeals to you, then undoubtedly so will the concept of The Free Market. Items donated by members of the community are made available to other members free of cost. Clothing, books, art, appliances, furniture, nick-nacks and widgets are all available at the Free Market.

The name of this store mocks our laissez faire paradigm- if the invisible hand of the market is setting the price, what we are truly seeing is the rise in the value of community. Thwarting traditional economic approaches to a 'store,' this Free Market is a small piece of counterculture revolution right here in little ol' Peterborough. The Free Market is not a trading post or barter system - no exchange is required. The "free store" addresses issues of poverty in a direct fashion, at once raising awareness and giving people a viable source of free clothing and other items.

Freecycling is so in.

The Peterborough Free Store Collective began as a group of Trent students running periodical clothing swaps at the Grassroots Café, in association with the Peterborough Coalition Against Poverty. They quickly acquired a large surplus of goods and decided that swaps were an inefficient way of redistributing goods. Considering the ease with which donated clothing has been acquired, it was decided that a free store would be a more viable way of supplying the community with free clothing and any other articles that might be donated.

The concept of the Free Market has been around for a while- the first store of its kind opened in the radical hey-day of 60's San Francisco, by a non-hierarchical collective of self-described hippies. The store still operates today.

A similar store was set up in New York a few years later. Unfortunately, New York did not quite take to the concept as was originally intended; used clothing stores went in and cleaned out the market completely. In two weeks, the store was shut down. The Free Market concept has gained currency (pun intended) since then, and has moved to cities across the United States.

Now the Free Store is a movement that has hit the Internet, a junk collector in Arizona initially launched the Freecycle Network in May 2003 as a way to reduce waste. In less than two years, Freecycle has exploded into an international network with 2,463 groups and 988,676 members exchanging goods that might otherwise be headed for the landfill.

The goal of the Peterborough Free Market is that the free store will initially be open two days a week, including at least one evening to ensure maximum accessibility. Summer hours are Tuesday 1-4pm, Thursday 4-7pm and Saturday 12-3pm. The Free Market is currently located on the 3rd floor of Sadleir House, 751 George Street North. Call 741-1208 for more information or to arrange to drop off items for donation.

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