

# Students attack uni's Internet charges

By ANNE BRANSDON

Wollongong University students held a rally this week opposing the introduction of student Internet use charges.

Student Representative Council education officer John Finlayson said charging students for download time would restrict access to the Internet.

"By charging Internet fees and restricting downloading time, the university is making a mockery out of the reputation for excellence that it has been awarded."

Last week the university was named University of the Year in recognition of preparing students for the e-world and student access to the Internet is a highlighted feature in the current

edition of the Good Universities Guide.

"For the university to increase compulsory Internet subjects for every student to approximately 75 per cent and then hit us with charges is disgusting," Mr Finlayson said.

SRC president Nadine Torney said the student association realised the university was facing funding pressures but transferring the costs of

essential services, such as the Internet, on to students was "acting against the universal principle of accessible and equitable education for all".

"The introduction of Internet restriction and fees will dramatically affect all students, inevitably creating the information rich and the information poor," Ms Torney said.

## War of words on university email



Wollongong University Associate Professor Ted Steele. Picture: KIRK GILMOUR

## Prof caught in Net row

By MICHELE TYDD

A philosophical war has erupted at Wollongong University with one of the "generals" under threat of an email ban.

Dr Ted Steele, from the Biological Science Department and a long-term opponent to the corporatisation of the university, started an email debate on the role of universities about two weeks ago.

"I'm fed up with the appointment of Mickey Mouse professors who are managers and not academics," Dr Steele said.

"The genuine academics are tired of struggling for funds to continue important work while the corporate arm of the university (Illawarra Technology Centre) is awash with funds.

"It's not just quality of appointment ... these people come in over the top of genuine academics and cause enormous damage to the developing careers of people under their control."

Dr Steele, who has been described by an opposing academic as an "intellectual snob", said he was temporarily removed from the email system about four years ago for the same reason.

"This is an ongoing problem but I've been heartened to know from email feedback there is support for my argument," Dr Steele said.

Information Technology Services director Professor Ah Chung Tsoi told Dr Steele by email on Monday afternoon that he should be directing his thoughts to Forums and Debates mailing group.

"Since last week, I have received over 50 petitions from individual staff wishing to be relieved of the debate which you had generated using the 'All Academic Staff' and 'All General Staff' mailing list," Prof Tsoi wrote.

Prof Tsoi said Dr Steele would be locked out of the system if he posted any further emails about the debate to these two groups.

Dr Steele said yesterday he had ignored the directive and was awaiting a response.

"The email group suggested by Prof Tsoi would exclude students and office staff who are affected by the concerns I have," he said.

He said Prof Tsoi was trying to gag free and open speech and he believed that was ludicrous in a university where exchanging ideas should be paramount.

"Five other email users including two postgraduate students have joined the debate with stimulating views so I feel it would be very difficult for the university to single me out for disciplinary action," Dr Steele said.

A university spokesman said Dr Steele has been issued a warning in line with the policy governing email use.

He denied Dr Steele had been gagged and there were avenues available he could take to debate the issue.

The spokesperson said it was not the subject but the volume of email material that was causing concern among staff and management.

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