

FAST FACTS



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Shooting the Messenger?

By now the rather public battle between the Manitoba Government and the former president of the University of Winnipeg has largely faded from view. Between the allegations of under-funding on one side and the hints at mismanagement on the other, the whole story will likely never be known, and it was no doubt complicated by personalities and politics.

Nonetheless, there is an ongoing dispute between the University of Winnipeg and the province based on an important issue which did not leave along with the former U of W president. Does the U of W receive a fair share of funding from the provincial government?

The University of Winnipeg has long taken the position that it is underfunded. The province has consistently rejected this claim, and has publicly stated on numerous occasions that U of W is actually more expensive to operate on a “dollars per credit hour delivered” basis.

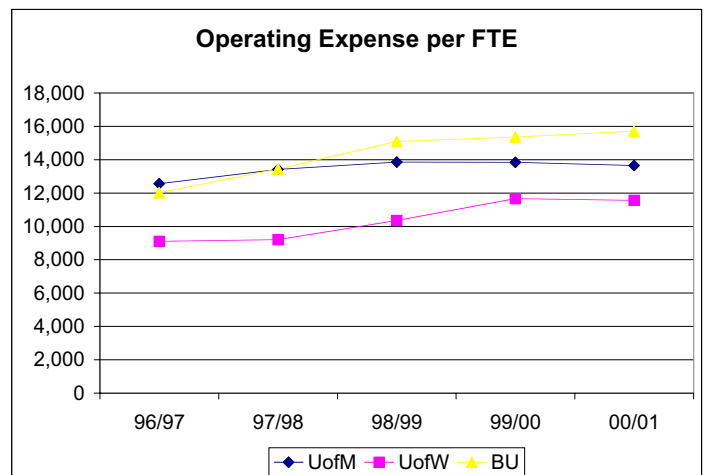
And the government provides evidence that it costs the U of W \$352 to deliver one credit hour, compared with \$349 per credit hour at Brandon University. At face value, this seems to make the government’s case: U of W spends more to deliver a single credit hour than Brandon University. Case closed.

Or is it? Another look at the information illustrates several things.

First, the numbers that the province uses are derived from calculations intended as a tool for interdepartmental comparisons within each university. Using them to compare universities is a misapplication, similar to saying that six litres is more than three gallons because six is bigger than three.

A readily available and more accurate measurement is to compare the various operating costs per student between institutions. Based on financial reports published by each of the Universities and using Council on Post Secondary Education (COPSE) enrolment data, the following picture emerges.

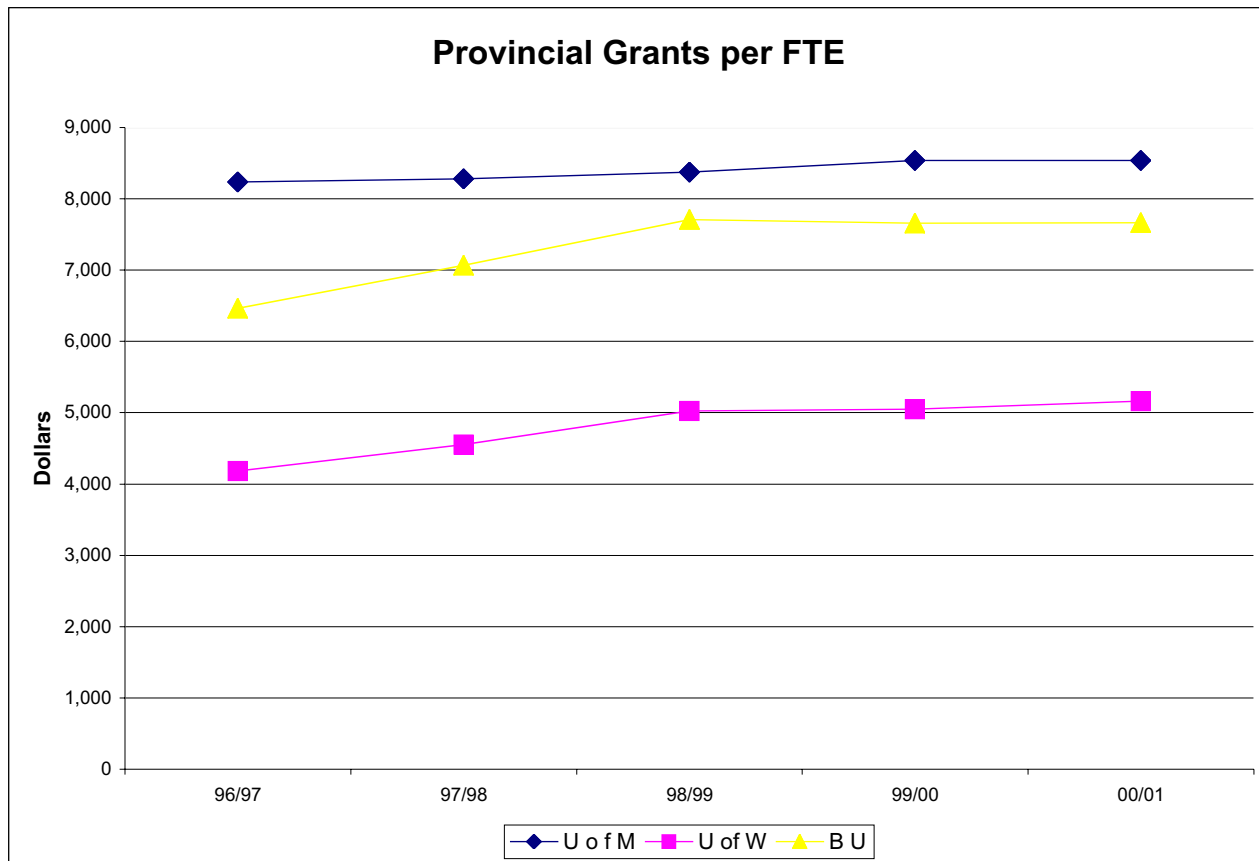
As the table illustrates, U of W spends an average of 77% of what U of M does and 72% of what Brandon University



does on a per Full Time Equivalent (FTE) student basis.

More Important Question

But all of this actually sidesteps a more important question, given that we are considering whether or not the U of W is underfunded. Instead of asking how much does the delivery mechanism cost, we should ask *how much does it cost the government?*



Well, how much does it cost? The following table is based on enrolment levels and provincial operating grants as calculated by the Council on Post Secondary Education.

The U of W consistently receives less funding per FTE student. U of W's average funding level in recent years is 57% of U of M's and 66% of Brandon University's per Full Time Equivalent Student.

Some of this discrepancy is justifiable, given the lower costs of operating U of W, but not all. On average U of W costs 77% of what U of M does, but receives 57% of its funding level. In a similar fashion, U of W costs 72% of what BU does, but receives 66% of its funding level.

Based on provincial audits and COPSE's information, U of W is delivering a less expensive program per credit hour, and doing so with significantly less government funding per credit hour than all of its public competition in Manitoba.

Whatever the other circumstances surrounding the departure of the U of W's president may be, the evidence suggests that when she argued that her institution was underfunded, she was right.

—Kerniel Aasland

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