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Desbarats' tenure contested

by Tim O'Connor
Gazette Staff

The Vice-president Finance and Administration for the University Students' Council, Jim Vair, has contested the granting of associate professorship and tenure on the new dean of the Journalism school Peter Desbarats, on the grounds Desbarats has not fulfilled the conditions of appointment for tenure and because he has no academic degree.

Vair made his comments in reaction to the announcement in the Thursday, July 1 edition of the *Western News* proclaiming the granting of tenure upon Desbarats.

"My concern is that the tenure system has been developed so that a person will have achieved tenure by working his way through the conditions of appointment and obviously this has not occurred," said Vair.

The conditions for appointment approved by the University Senate and Board of Governors are based on evaluation in three categories: teaching ability, ability in research and publications and general contributions to the university, the academic profession and the community.

Vair said, "People given tenure are expected to have been around the university and obviously Desbarats has made no direct contribution to Western, having never been here in an academic role.

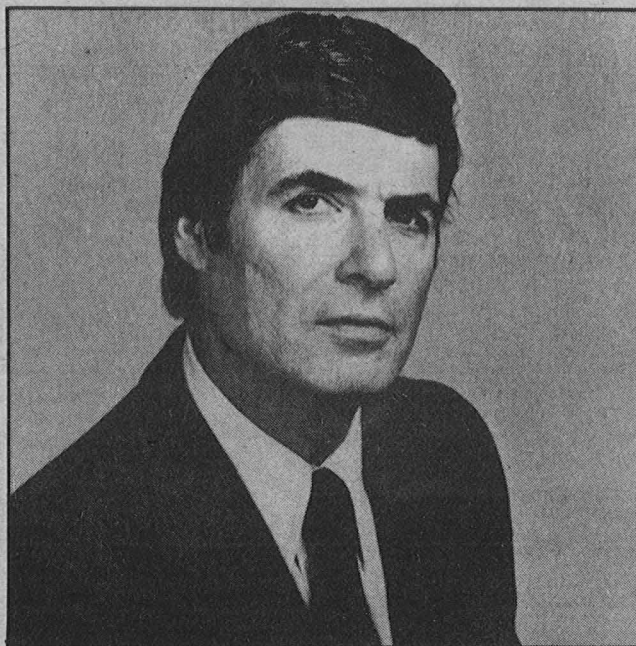
"He has a record for publications. Whether this record is strong enough to overcome the other deficiencies in tenure appointment is the question," Vair said.

J.C. Leith, vice-president academic at Western, said "Desbarats has met the criteria by fulfilling just one of the conditions of appointment. Any one of the three areas is sufficient."

Janet Stephenson, faculty association president, said "Excellence in one area of the conditions of appointment is sufficient. Some persons are appointed only on their teaching credentials, others on their publications and research.

"I could see how people could be quick to criticize Desbarats' appointment, but attracting a first rate dean the level of Peter Desbarats is hard," said Stephenson.

In regard to Desbarats' lack of a degree, Vair said "I find it strange that a person leading one of the two Masters programs in journalism in Ontario holds no degree of any kind." Desbarats left Loyola College in Montreal after one year to work with Canadian Press.



THE NEW DEAN of Journalism, Peter Desbarats, has been granted associate professorship and tenure. USC Vice-president Finance and Administration, Jim Vair, has disputed Desbarats' tenure saying the journalist has not satisfied the criteria for appointment to a career rank in the University.

Leith responded to Vair's statement saying "He (Desbarats) did it the hard way. It is unusual, but I venture there are many who don't have degrees but have done it (gained a faculty position) through experience, especially in the professional schools."

When asked to provide figures documenting such cases at the meeting of the Senate last Thursday, Leith said he could not give an accurate estimate at the time but that he would have figures for the next meeting of Senate.

Both Leith and Stephenson agree that appointments to professional

schools are different than other faculties because the candidate must have undeniable experience and credibility in his/her field.

Vair said "There is no question of his credibility as journalist, but why wasn't Desbarats given a limited term, probationary appointment at the rank of assistant professor? He could have been made dean without tenure."

Grant career rank

In reaction to Vair's comments, Leith said "Normally assistant rank goes to those who have not established their credentials. If we bring in someone at the peak of their career, at least we can grant them a career rank at the University."

"You need something more than a tentative appointment," said Stephenson. "Tenure is a strong mandate to attract strong applicants."

When asked whether those applying for tenure who did have degrees and have been at Western for a few years would think the granting of tenure upon Desbarats would be unfair, Stephenson said "There is more than just traditional academic qualifications to look at here. This was probably weighed heavily by the selection committee." The selection committee is made up of members of the particular faculty searching for a proper candidate for a faculty position.

"The process of selection tends to look at internal candidates to see if anyone is qualified, but if there is no internal candidate for a variety of reasons, then the committee must look outside the university and then what they can do to attract them here," said Stephenson.

"It is a real coup for the university to attract a man of Desbarats' ability," said Leith. When asked if he would consider Howie Meeker as a possible dean of physical education, Leith said, "I don't know. I'm not familiar with Mr. Meeker's work."

After Desbarats left Loyola College in Montreal, he worked at Canadian Press as a copy boy, feature writer, sports reporter and sub-editor. He has written five books on the Canadian political scene and he has worked for the *Montreal Gazette*, Reuters news service in the U.K. and the *Winnipeg Tribune*. He has been host and script writer for both the CBC radio and CBC-TV, has contributed to *Macleans*, *Saturday Night*, *The Times*, *Canadian Forum*, and has worked as Ottawa editor of *The Toronto Star*, but he is known to most Southwestern Ontario residents as Global television's Ottawa Bureau Chief until 1980.