

Remove 40 percent

Staff Editorial January 27, 2015

The human appendix is the classic example of a vestigial organ. It doesn't really do anything, hundreds of people die a year from them exploding and millions of dollars are spent on surgeries to remove it.

Unfortunately, we are all born with these vestigial organs. In Vermont, we have a vestigial law.

Turn two pages back and you'll reading an account of Vermont's archaic and deficient "40 percent rule."

The rule binds the hands of our administration and empties the wallets of our out-of-state peers. Legislators have all but forgotten about it and it is costing us, the students, millions upon millions. The 40 percent rule was a law passed in 1959. The law caps in-state tuition at 40 percent of out-of-state tuition, effectively more than doubling out-of-state tuition.

UVM is the only school in the country to have such a restriction. The artificial difference was supposed to have been subsidized by the state legislature, but never was. When almost 60 percent of our general fund came from the state, we were in the clear.

Now, as we hover around 14 percent from state funding, we should all be scratching our heads.

What's more, the 40 percent rule originally had a state funding requirement attached to the law, a requirement that was inexplicably removed two years after the law was put on the books. What you're left with is the fourth highest out-of-state tuition in the country.

Students at UVM are starting to notice. We've collected numerous accounts of such students who are forced to leave their dream school for another university. Some have not returned to school at all.

The Cynic stands firmly against the 40 percent rule. We call upon our legislators to take steps to stand on the side of reason and take steps to fix this.

They either need to make good on their more than half a century old pledge to subsidize out-of-state tuition or simply repeal the law.

We hope you stand with us.