DEMAND-DRIVEN SYSTEM

Alan Fekete (Uni of Sydney) representing John Grundy and CORE
FAME IS FICKLE

• Student interest in a discipline can vary enormously and rapidly
• Many factors:
  • News of jobs or sackings
  • Role in movies or TV shows
  • A celebrity who mentions/has a connection with the field
  • Outreach activities?
  • Changing school curriculum?
BOOM-BUST-BOOM-BUST etc

- What actually matters to the health of any discipline is *varying enrolled load*
- Consequence of varying demand
  - Even without “uncapped” “demand-driven” system
  - Though perhaps slightly damped in older negotiated quota system
- Eg Enrollment in Intro programming class at USyd
  - Late 1980s: about 300
  - Mini-boom in early 1990s (up to 700) then down again
  - Dotcom boom, peaking at 1100 around 2000
  - Crash to around 150 in mid 2000s
  - Now recovered to around 400
SHIFTS IN LOAD

• Between fields
• Perhaps between institutions
  • Not usually very great, between existing unis
  • But there is a real threat from arrival of for-profit private training ("bottomfeeders" exploiting govt funding without delivering either educational quality or research outcomes)
  • Cf NZ experience
• Between subfields
  • Danger of flight from fundamentals
  • Need to protect theory topics: important for the future of the whole field, and for the skillbase of the profession
What is needed is stable funding, and that depends on stable enrollments (measured growth would be nice)

What is disastrous is forced redundancies
  * Everyone in the dept stops doing real work for several years

As Stanford’s Eric Roberts has pointed out, too many students is as harmful as too few
  * Lecturers, tutors, labspace etc all overstretched

LOOKING FORWARD

- Accreditation is vital to protect quality and weed out shoddy profit-making
  - But keep compliance burden from blowing out
- Outreach, rise in work-integrated-learning, etc can be helpful
  - This might build demand and thus enrollments
    - and as side benefit, increase diversity
  - But departments have little spare capacity to support it: Deans need to do this!