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

BETWEEN SCYLLA AND CHARYBDIS

- 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
  - See http://computinged.wordpress.com/2011/04/13/guest-post-eric-roberts-on-the-dangers-of-escalating-enrollments/

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!