Raymond Rice – President

by Gordon Loane
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Raymond Rice is a fourth year Business Student from Fredericton who is running for President of the UNB Student Union. Rice says he has no previous experience in student politics, which he sees as an advantage.

What do you see as the issues in this campaign and what are your priorities for the next year? There are definite money priorities. Money is always an issue, whether it be spending by the Student Union, student loans, or whatever. They've got to find a way to manage it all. I've noticed an article in last week's *Brunswickan* where two of my opponents want to raise the SU Executive salaries, yet they are talking about cutbacks in other areas and possibly even raising student fees. I think that is ridiculous. If they want to raise the salary of the SU President to between $15-18,000, that pretty much takes them out of a student's lifestyle. You can't understand what students are going through when you are living pretty well compared to everyone else. You can't justify cutting money in some places and raising salaries. It is a full-time position as is, and that's the way it should be. I would not expect any more salary than they have right now. In fact, I'm not even sure what that is, but if it is in the $9,000 range for a year, I'd have to get by on that. Every other student gets by on a lot less.
Another priority would be to demand responsibility from other members of the Union. I've noticed over the last couple of years there's been apathy and I'm pretty much the leader of the apathetic vote. Everyone seems not to care about the Student Union and I want to increase awareness of the Union. I'd also like to fix relations with Saint Thomas. We seem to have a clash there, and they are students as well. Together we could have a greater voice. I'd like to also set clear objectives of what the Student Union is to do.

What do you see as the role of the President in providing leadership to Council and the Executive? First of all, he/she has to be responsible and accountable. They have to be there for the members and coordinate activities well. This year with Duncan Fulton being out and other members being absent, a President has got to be there and talk to them and make sure they fulfill their responsibilities to the students that they have agreed to take on. There seems to be a lot of absentees at council meetings as well and this has to change.

Do you intend to renew the Union's 3-year funding commitment to the College Hill Day Care? I believe our $3,000 a year commitment should be renewed. We have students with children. We have a responsibility to help all students and $3,000 a year is not much to take out of the budget to help those students who have children.

What are your ideas about the internal re-structuring of the Student Union? Well, as I've not been involved in student politics before, I'm not actually sure. We do have our five-executive system of passing the buck, but all those positions seem very necessary. I would also be interested in creating new positions on Council where Residence Representatives get seats. There are a lot of problems, particularly in Neill House, and other people I've talked to in residence that have problems. If we as students can help each other and work out these problems, I think it would be a great advantage.

There has been some discussion of compensation levels for Executive members. Where do you stand on this issue? The salary for SU President is, I believe, around $5,000 and during the school year somewhere around $4,000. I find that more than enough. That's what other students have to live on. There's no way of getting around it. I'm not going to elevate myself. I'm not going to run for this position for the money because it's secondary. All of this hard work should be done because you want to do it, and people should be committed to that. It's not about money. That's enough for a student to get by and that's enough money for the SU President to get by.

Given the fact that tuition rates will be increasing this year, and that the Student Union fee has kept pace with tuition, do you feel that the fee should increase this year? It's a tough question and I haven't really looked closely at things. But I know we do have great student services as it is (CHSR-FM, *The Brunswickan*, student events, The Cellar). But yes, I think student fees will rise, not by a great amount, but probably an extra five dollars per student. I think students can afford the increase as they have a way of earning the extra amount.

What will be your priorities as SU President for the summer months? I'd be looking at the concept of restructuring. I'd be getting to know who I was working with and make sure that things run smoothly. As I'm a new face on the political scene, they'll all have about six months to decide if they love me or hate me. I'll work closely with the Union staff and other Executive members to coordinate activities for the upcoming school year. I'll be contacting politicians and advancing the interests of students as best I can.

What immediate concrete steps will you take, as President, to reassure the students of UNB that the SUB Expansion project is proceeding forthwith? It will go through. I'd like to work closely with the new President of the Saint Thomas Student Union to see if we can't get some sort of agreement to get their help with SUB Expansion. STU students will be using the SUB and I have no problem with that whatsoever. But I don't want to create a situation where it might appear that UNB students are bullying them. I hope as UNB and STU students we can all get along and make things work.

Is it your intention to get agreements in writing re: CAMPUS, GSA in SUB Expansion? I figure part-time UNB students should help. They do use the SUB and they should be accepted here as well as full-time students. I would like to see them contribute through CAMPUS and I would have to meet with them, talk to them to see if we could not come to a written agreement to help fund SUB Expansion. It benefits all students.

What steps do you intend to take to improve the media relations of the Student Union? Stop the scandals! I don't know how it works right now, but relations between the SU and the media appear fairly good. I know there were some problems with the SU President this year and I want to prove to UNB students that there can be changes. I've got nothing to hide and I'll be forthright to the media and keep SU Affairs in the open.

How do you intend to prevent an "Ivory Tower" situation developing between Council and the student body? By being elected, I'm part of the students that aren't in the "Ivory Tower." I'm part of the 80% of students who usually do not vote at SU elections. I certainly won't be looking for a pay raise if I'm elected SU President and that's one first step. A second step is I'd increase meetings with the residence students and try to be more vocal to get more support out of the Student Union. I'd like to work closely with first year students to get them involved in the Student Union in an attempt to promote it that way. I want to ensure that there is nothing hidden and everyone knows where I'm coming from.

What is your opinion about the SU credit card situation? I would agree to SU credit cards if *The Brunswickan* would agree to print all my credit card statements as they came in. I'd like to have them open for public viewing since the SU has an open book policy. But I'd make sure there is no hiding. I think it's ridiculous that grown men and women can't control themselves if they have a credit card with rash expenditures, and expenditures that are not even involved with SU related matters. Basically, the credit cards would be used for the Student Union, and that alone, and I would make sure that these slips or statements would be available for publication at any time.

What is your opinion of the Duncan Fulton situation? I'm not too sure about it. All I know is what I've read. Basically, he is not spending time in his office. He should, and I think that definitely has to change. If you are going to be in that position, you have to spend the amount of hours required which is 20 per week, I believe, for the position. Twenty hours a week is not much. Spend it in your office. If there is a need to get work done that is not SU related, you just do it in your office. You have got to be there, you have got to be responsible to take the phone calls and make sure people can get a hold of you when they are supposed to.

Some have considered open government a problem at the SU, how do you feel? I definitely feel there has got to be more information given out about the Student Union and how it works. Here I am, four years at UNB. I still have no idea what's going on in the school as far as the Student Union is concerned. I want people to get more involved as I have myself. I'm taking the big plunge here to find out if I can make a difference for the eighty percent of students that didn't come out and vote last year.

If you had been the SU President this year, how would you have dealt with the Orientation budget problems? I would have kept a closer eye on what was going on. We do run a great Orientation program and I congratulate those involved. The deficit: maybe SU President Kelly Lamrock should have been looking into it more. I know I would have taken more interest to make sure things were going A-OK. That is part of the 40 hours a week. I'm sure he was pressed for time, but you have to keep your eye on things - you are the President.

If you had been the SU President this year, how would you have dealt with the number of appointed positions on the Executive? I definitely would have had a by-election called. I don't know if that would have been my responsibility as SU President or what. But I would have pushed it, that's exactly what I would have done. I would push for the by-election then, but in the meanwhile it is my responsibility as President to take over those positions or see someone takes them on an interim basis. If the by-election does not work out and nobody wants to run, then I would interview other people who would want to be appointed to the position. But if there is a by-election, people would probably come out and run if they are interested and there would be no need for an appointment.

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If you had been the SU President this year, how would you have dealt with the Orientation budget problems? I know Mr. Melanson. I've worked the last couple of years with him on Orientation and the Red N' Black. Jeff is a great guy and good with the public. He made a definite mistake going $26,000 over budget last year. I don't know what happened. I was on the Orientation Committee, but from what I saw I don't know where the money went. Something I would have wanted from Mr. Melanson as SU President would have been a printed statement of where the money went, how he went over budget and why he went over budget and a justification if he can for such actions. I would want a breakdown of how he spent the student money and I would want it printed in *The Brunswickan,* because the students have a right to know why Mr. Melanson and his executive went $26,000 over budget. Melanson served Orientation well for a number of years and he has always had good ideas. But he screwed up basically and I don't know how he did it. Maybe he doesn't know and that is why he has not accounted for it. It was sort of swept under the carpet and never dealt with as far as I know except for a few articles in *The Brunswickan*. But Melanson is not totally to blame. He has an Executive that is equally responsible including the Vice Chair of Orientation Mr. Clark.

If you had been the SU President this year, how would you have dealt with the number of appointed positions on the Executive? I think the students should have been given an opportunity to express their opinions. A by-election would have been more appropriate. If they are having problems with the people they appointed, you can't hold the students accountable for that because they didn't vote them in. For the Council to criticize Duncan Fulton is for the Council to criticize themselves because they appointed him and put him in that position. They trusted he could do the job and do it well. Now some of them are saying he is not. But by-elections should have been held and those who wanted to run could have. It gets back to the whole patronage thing. If I was Student Union President and somebody resigned and I was still into appointing what would the Council do? Well, who do we know? Who does the Council know? Who do we think can do a good job? That gets back to keeping the whole Council to an in-crowd. There are so many people in the community that we don't know about that might want to run for positions.