

THE BRUNSWICKAN OPINION & EDITORIAL

Editorial

Evaluation system useless

Pink surveys poor measures of effective teaching

by Cindy Brown
Editor-in-Chief

I remember watching *Street Cents* when I was younger. My favourite segment on the show was "What's Your Beef?" My beef, as well as that of many of my peers, are those pink evaluation forms we have to fill out at the end of each term. What's the point?

They are positively useless.

Supposedly, the data collected is used to evaluate the performance of each professor. While this attempt to get student's opinions is noble, I would argue that it is ineffective.

Students are asked to rate their professors on certain skills on a scale from one to six, with one being "strongly agree", five being "strongly disagree", and six being "not applicable."

Many of the questions are ambiguous and vague. For example, question number two states, "The instructor conveys strong interest and enthusiasm for the subject matter." So, does this mean that the instructor is enthusiastic about the subject and

shows it, or does it mean he/she is instilling enthusiasm for the subject matter into the students? If these types of questions, which are obviously vague, are supposed to help determine which profs get tenure and/or promotions, the future of UNB looks bleak.

Of all the questionnaires I have filled out, fellow students have questioned the importance of the survey. As students, we are never told the results of the surveys and therefore, they mean little to the student population. I know many students do not take the surveys seriously, especially when they fill out column six (not applicable) for all 21 questions. I think the student opinion surveys would be improved if there was a section for written comments. Students who were able to clarify their answer may be willing to take the process more seriously. I know I would. This would take a great deal of time to go through, but written comments would benefit professors more than "fill in the circle" questionnaires. Written comment questionnaires would also make it easier to sort out the non-serious surveys from the serious ones, whereas in the current surveys, it is hard to determine whether someone really "strongly disagreed" to every question, or just didn't care.

One of my professors actually takes the time to pass out his own questionnaires in class, which asks course-specific questions

pertaining to how useful the text is, the effectiveness of lectures, etc. These surveys are also anonymous, but my professor compiles the comments into one sheet and passes out a copy to each class member at the next class. Discussion follows.

I would argue that this process, although it would a little more time on the part of the individual professor, is much more effective than the pink surveys. Students feel they are part of the process because they see results and are able to discuss the comments other students made at a later meeting. Professors can also identify more closely with how the students feel about specific aspects of the course. Some would argue that students could be identified by their handwriting more easily in a written comment format, opposed to the pink surveys.

The university could, however, set up web space for each professor where a student could go online and type their answers - with their identity being blocked to the professor.

If students feel more involved in a process, they are more likely to participate, therefore giving more effective feedback to professors.

Perhaps the university administration should urge each professor to make up and distribute their own student surveys mid term, thereby bettering the lines of communication between students and professors and making UNB more of a community.

Guest Mugwump

Knowledge, for a small fortune

by Stephanie Brunet
Staff Writer

As tuition increases, reflecting the ever rising costs of university education, one must ask: are students really getting their educational worth?

Figures from Stats Canada illustrate why students are reeling from the soaring cost of education. Increases of more than 126 percent over a ten-year period leave many students concerned with their ability to continue paying for their education, or faced with extensive student debt loads. On top of all this there is the ever mounting fear of the creation of an elitist culture surrounding these ever rising costs.

If I had attended UNB five years ago, when I began my undergraduate education, I would have been paying almost \$2,000 less than I am now. Instead I attended Mount Allison, a tiny undergraduate institution, that charges tuition fees on par with larger universities, such as the University of Toronto. Mount Allison may rank first for undergrad institutions in Canada according to *MacLeans*, I hardly think that such a small institution should be charging tuition that ranks up with some of the largest universities in the country.

Are we getting what we pay for? Is our education really worth the average \$25,000 for an average undergraduate degree? I was paying \$4,220 in my final year (2000/2001) at Mount Allison University. There, I had the luxury of small classes and a beautiful campus. At UNB I pay \$3,945 for my education. But I see no difference in the quality of my education. Both campuses have their shortcomings, something true of any post-secondary institution. How then can universities justify the cost of education? I have a hard time finding the ability to place a cost on my learning,

especially as tuition keeps rising. I understand that a university has its integrity to worry about, spending more money to attracting new faculty, thus improving their product. Can these concerns justify tuition costs that are rising at a rate six times greater than the increase of national inflation according to Stats Canada?

Professors have to be paid equitable salaries, especially when considering a small university such as UNB. In speaking with university faculty, the constant concern is that younger professors will leave if not given salaries comparable to those at larger institutions. Universities like UNB must stay competitive when it comes to research; in order to do so, universities have to keep their facilities, and more so the competent, competitive faculty and staff.

Still, the justification for rising tuition is elusive. UNB suggests that their increasing costs are due to university inflation, the failure of the government to recognize that inflation, and the rising cost of oil. However, can the university actually justify the evident failing of many of their related costs? Students are all too well aware of the poor upkeep of campus, lacking resources, and ever increasing student numbers in ratio to professors. Can UNB, along with many other Canadian universities, truly say it is providing quality services in relation to their costs?

Is the achievement of earning a degree worth the increasing costs we have to pay? I find it hard to equate my quality of learning to the ever-rising costs of my education, especially because of the extraneous stresses placed on students and professors with shrinking resources and poor quality facilities. Is it truly a difficult position to take. It is hard to place value on learning.

Two fundamentalisms: understood

Search for answers leads to fundamentalist trends

by David Orton

I felt the need to read more about religions after September 11th, including reading about Islam. I came to understand through my readings, that in every major religious tradition in the late 20th century: Christian, Jewish, Islamic, Hindu and others, a fundamentalist trend has emerged.

Religious fundamentalism: Fundamentalism in a religious sense seems to mean going back to religious fundamentals within a particular orthodoxy of religious thought, and using such basic religious beliefs to guide thinking and engagement in all aspects of contemporary life. There is often an intolerance, and sometimes hatred, directed towards "non-believers", those outside this frame of reference, or those who claim allegiance to a competing religion. Yet Islamic fundamentalism offers those suffering from poverty, marginalization and injustice, a world view that allows some control over their lives, hence a social base for fundamentalism to recruit from. I found Islam has a real concern for

social justice, and it provides a religious base for a critique of the soullessness of Western materialism and its lack of morality. However it does not have an ecological understanding. There seems to be a relationship between the rise of Islamic fundamentalism and U.S. foreign policy.

There are real grievances in the Islamic world: depletion of its oil wealth; corruption and lack of basic democracy in many Islamic countries - Persian Gulf states ruled by "royal" families (Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Oman, and the United Arab Emirates); the treatment of Iraq by the West; the situation of the Palestinians, who face a systematic militarized and brutalizing occupation by the Israeli state; the subservience of countries like Egypt, Turkey, Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states to U.S. foreign policy, etc. There will be no social peace unless these grievances are addressed. (The U.S. imports about 60 percent of its oil from the Middle East.)

Economic fundamentalism: While the U.S. may show a consumerist pluralism in culture and lifestyles, it has a rigid fundamentalism in economic matters, which it endeavours to impose on the rest of the world. According to the International Action Center, led by former U.S. Attorney General Ramsey Clark, the United States has organized the overthrow of

more than 50 governments since the end of World War II.

The ideological selling of U.S. economic fundamentalism downplays the economic aspect, which is primary, but speaks expansively of "freedom," "democracy," "individual initiative," etc. and directly links this to a "market economy," the code for capitalist economy and private property.

Societies are not seen as having a variety of economic options to choose from. Economic fundamentalism contains a set of assumptions about how humans should relate to each other and what motivates them, and how humans should relate to the natural world.

According to this economic fundamentalist model, "international competitiveness" is considered the main indicator of a society's health. All countries must aim to have balanced budgets, no trade barriers, low inflation, minimum labour standards, minimal environmental regulations, maximum mobility for capital, etc. The U.S. is prepared to intervene unilaterally anywhere in the world in defense of what it sees as its own interests, even without the support of other countries.

The term "terrorist" can now be used to re-define some people as non-persons, who then lose all rights, and against whom anything can be done. We see this in the sensory-deprivation treatment accorded the U.S. prisoners captured in Afghanistan and declared "unlawful combatants." Canada's lock-step compliance is defended by politicians who ooze moral decay. Canada's massive 186-page Anti-Terrorism Act (Bill C-36) makes it clear to me that opponents of economic globalization are also in the gun sites.

Neither religious fundamentalism nor the oil-based economic fundamentalism of the United States globalization model can contribute to resolving the ecocrisis, that is, building a new, respectful relationship to the natural world. We need to rediscover how to live in a spiritual and cyclic relationship with the Earth, where we know but do not change the world around us. Animals and plants, along with rocks, oceans, streams and mountains, and not just humans, need to have spiritual or ethical standing. Both religious and economic fundamentalism preclude options. But economic fundamentalism-U.S. style, is clearly more of a threat to the well being of the planet and its diverse inhabitants than any form of religious fundamentalist.

Campus Watch

False alarms: costly, dangerous, and illegal

by Reg Jerrett, Director,
UNB Security and Traffic

On March 19, during a 15-minute time span, unknown persons activated fire alarms in Head Hall, the Old Engineering Building and Singer Hall. When this occurs, the fire department has to respond and buildings must be evacuated. Such a practice is costly, dangerous and illegal. The persons responsible for this action can be charged criminally. Anyone with information about who is responsible for this prank is urged to call Campus Security.

Alcohol Abuse

In two separate incidents during the early morning hours of March 21, two female students found themselves in distress as a result of an alcohol overdose. Thankfully, there were other students around who had the presence of mind to help them. Had someone not taken the time to render assistance and contact Campus Security, the outcomes could have been tragic.

Good Samaritan

In one of the two incidents of alcohol abuse, the victim was found in the snow outside the Chestnut Club by a male student. Attempts to escort her to her off-campus residence were unsuccessful so they made their way to the UNB campus. Campus Security was contacted and, with assistance from the good Samaritan, an officer drove the female to her apartment.

Sometime between March 15 and 18, a \$1,300 Teleconference sound station was taken from MacLaggan Hall. Fredericton City Police are investigating and there are no suspects at this time. If anybody has any information on this theft, please contact Campus Security or the City Police.

A theft of \$120 occurred from a residence in the early morning hours of March 21. The room had been left unlocked and unattended for approximately 30 minutes. Never leave your room unlocked when you are out, no matter how short a time you plan on being absent. It takes only seconds for an intruder to walk away with your belongings.

Mischief

More incidents of damage to university property have occurred recently. On March 22, somebody damaged cabinet doors in the student lounge of Harrington Hall on the STU campus.

Also on March 22, around 5:15 p.m., the glass in the door of the back entrance to the SUB near the Cellar Pub was destroyed.

On March 23, Campus Security discovered damage to the exit sign on the third floor of Harrington Hall at STU.

On March 24, unknown persons threw a refrigerator from the second floor of Rosary Hall into the alley below. Nobody was injured but the fridge was destroyed.

If anybody has any information about who may be responsible for these acts of vandalism, please contact Campus Security.

If you see anything that seems suspicious or if you are a victim of any criminal act, we urge you to contact Campus Security immediately at 453-4830 or call Crimestoppers at 1-800-222-8477.

The UNB Security & Traffic Web site contains information on issues of safety and security on and off campus. The address is www.unb.ca/security.

We also encourage you to visit the Fredericton City Police site at www.frederictonpolice.com.

This week on CHSR

by Pierre Loiseleur

Hello and welcome to the first in a series of CHSR columns in *The Brunswickan*. We aspire to keep you tuned into what we've got on our airwaves. We have a myriad of programs to please all sorts of tastes. It is important that you check out our program schedule to find out what tempts your ears.

NEW PROGRAMS THIS SEASON

Although the hockey season is over (and that obviously ends our live hockey broadcasts), we encourage you to check out a new show called CHSR Sports Focus. Join John Lofranco and guests every Monday from 11:30 until noon to get your organized recreational fix. If you like strolling through the annals of music history you might want to tune in to Musical Memories on Tuesdays from 1:30 - 2:30 pm, when Don Roberts brings you music from the 1900s - 1960s. If you want to continue from there, Vicious Vinyl with Pat Hanley might be your next stop on Saturdays from 6:00 - 8:00 pm - that is, if you like classic rock from the 60s to the 80s. Tracking Sound is a new show Wednesdays from 3:30 - 5:00 pm where Ryan Johnston brings you all forms of entertainment soundtracks. And then there's You Are Being Lied To with Tan-Nee Ng. She delivers a show dedicated to exposing truth through spoken word and breakbeats.

THE POLITICS OF FOOD

Did you know that in 1998, Health Canada found that one in four eggs sold in Canada were unfit for consumption? On April 8th & 9th, we will be featuring a special two-day broadcast on food issues. From the politics of vegetarianism & veganism to Frankenfoods and organic farming, we will be occupying the airwaves with issues that affect everyone. I mean, we all eat, right!

NATIVE AWARENESS DAYS

On March 14th - 16th, the St. Thomas Native Student Council held their annual Native Awareness Days, with a theme called back to basics. CHSR is pleased to broadcast many of the talks discussing issues such as Native languages, the new Governance Act, racism and more during the month of April. Keep your eyes and ears open for more details which will be forthcoming in this column and on our airwaves. If you would like to know more about your station, pay a visit to our studios located above the Student Union offices in the SUB.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Oh, and by the way... we're going to be putting on *The Wall* April 5th and 6th in the Tilley Hall Auditorium. The big screen is the place to see this movie, complete with digital sound. Tickets are \$5 at the door and the show starts at 7:00pm. This is part of our annual fundrive. We try to make supporting your campus/community station fun.

Miss an issue? Check out *The Brunswickan* online at www.unb.ca/bruns
Questions? Answers? E-mail us at bruns@unb.ca