

Why should YOU care?

tually a part of a professor's job. Of the three things that they are assessed on for promotion and tenure, along with research and feedback by the SOS, service on the campus is a definite factor.

"All professors are involved in some committee work... and there are lots of committees," says Fritz, who was formerly a Dean and coordinated the involvement of many professors. "Students wouldn't actually see a lot of that, but it takes up a lot of time."

So is apathy an issue?

Ok, so let's put it all together. Apathy is complex, no question, so there is no simple answer.

Obviously more funding and resources could go into spreading awareness about events, issues and activities by the SU, UNB, clubs & societies, and everything else. Yet this is only going half way.

Generally, people are aware of the activities of UNB and even the Student Union, but they don't seem to care, or at least not as much as they should.

Really, we've got everything going for us here at UNB. We're all well educated, have access to computers, are young, ambitious and full of ideas. But we're also poor, overworked, over-schooled, and have little time for involvement.

A lot of people do realize their responsibility. We are a community, after all, even though we may only be at university for 4 years; some of us longer. Yet, that's exactly when we should get involved, because after this it's the 'real world,' which can be even busier.

People are involved, in everything; whether it be with sports, the Student Union, writing for the Bruns, voting, or whatever. Students find what interests them and they do it, or as much as they can. And some people just like to drink, which can be a blast too.

Studies and statistics have shown that cynicism about politics is a growing trend. Even municipal, province, and federal voting turnout is depressingly low. Have people given up, don't feel they're informed, or just think that there's more important things to do?

People need to feel that their opinions do matter, and they should matter. Anyone can visit a Student Union executive, email an MLA or even send a free letter to the Prime Minister. They can say what makes them angry, surprised, or happy. But is it heard?

When people feel that politics is relevant, that involvement does make a difference, that's when they'll set the time aside to do so. In fact, many do, and more often than we probably think. There are people getting engaged, in a myriad of ways; but not everyone, or not enough, seem to be.

Whether it really is cynicism, laziness, lack of time or apathy, it is a problem. But it's only by taking those two minutes to vote, ten minutes to read the paper, or two hours per week to join a club, that we become involved. It's everyone's right and responsibility, so we've got no excuses not to.

SOS: Because your opinion matters

Now is the time to give your opinion on the quality of teaching at UNB

by Greg LeBlanc

Got an issue with teaching quality in your classroom? Want to do something about it? Well, there is only one way in which your voice has a direct impact, and that's through the Student Opinion Survey (SOS).

"It's the only tool that the university has to do an evaluation of [professors] for the purposes of tenure and promotion," notes Pierre Zundel, Dean of Renaissance College, and a strong supporter of the SOS.

"...It is for career decisions," adds Judy Roy, professor and co-chair of the Teaching and Excellence Policy (TEP) Committee, which looks after the development of the SOS. "It's also intended to be used formatively to inform [teachers] so that change can happen."

As the only official instrument for giving feedback about their opinions, the surveys are the best way for students to have their say on teaching quality, in an anonymous way.

"It's a tool so students can [indicate] what they think about their professors, about the teaching quality in the classroom, about feedback,"

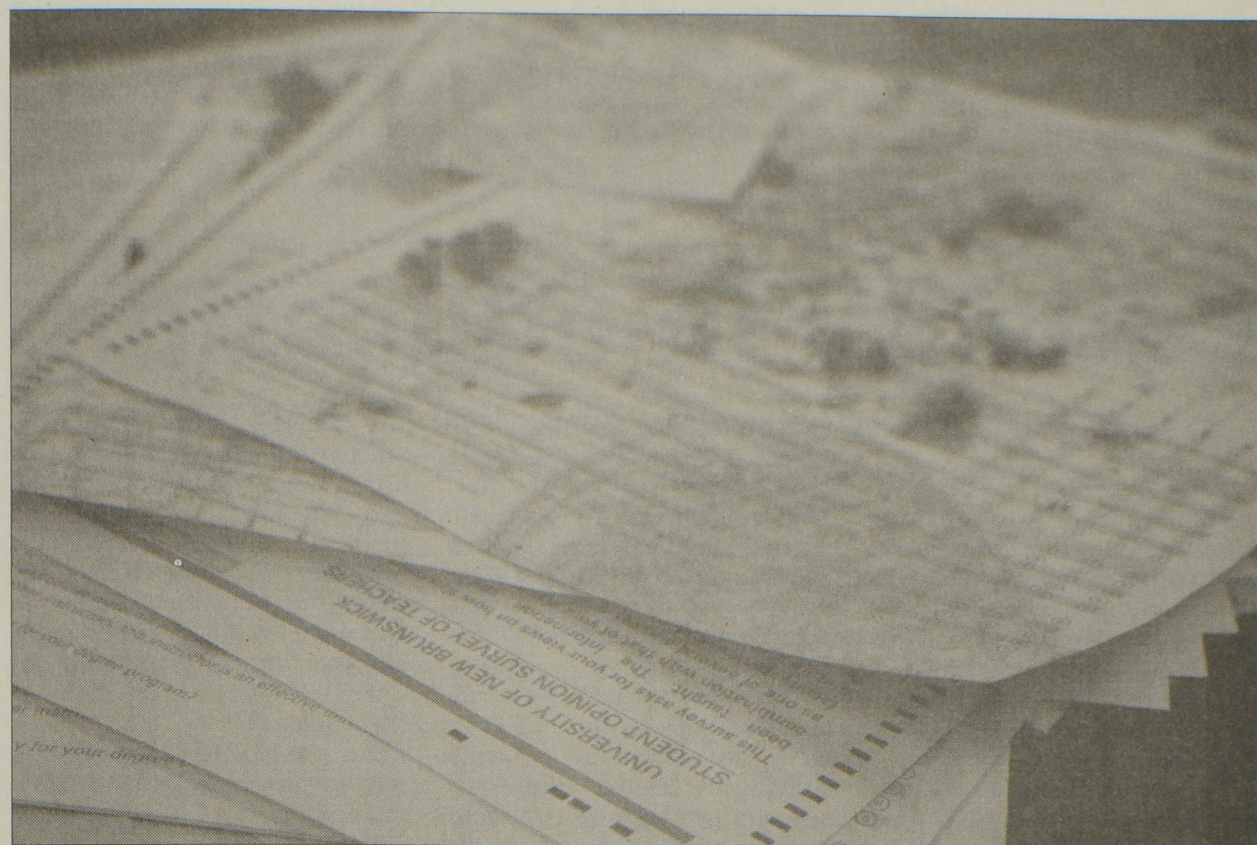
says Jill O'Reilly, VP Academic for the UNB SU.

O'Reilly also sits on the TEP Committee, and is working hard to promote the importance of the SOS to students. She has been working with the Academic Affairs Committee and student Senators, and has published an article in The Brunswickan, in SU e-newsletters, created links from the SU website, and placed ads in The Brunswickan, among other things, to get the word out on how to use the SOS.

Jane Fritz, Associate VP Academic at UNB, who is in charge of developing the learning environment at our campus, is also working hard to promote the SOS to professors and students. Fritz has been working with Integrated Technology Services (ITS) to make it very visible and accessible. She will be sending emails to students and professors to encourage them "to go online and vote."

"It's not an election, but it's your chance to give your opinion," Fritz remarks, "and your opinion makes a big difference."

One of the main reasons for such a push in promoting the SOS is that it has a spotted history at UNB. This time last year, after being the same



Brendan Doyle/The Brunswickan

Will students participate more in this year's survey? Last year saw low turnout rates and many unused surveys.

paper survey for 30 years, the first online version of the SOS was implemented. Because of a number of factors, including confusion over the change and some opposition from members of the administration and the teacher's union, the SOS was not as successful as was hoped, with a very low participation rate by students.

There were many reasons for going online, beyond trying to get away from the stale paper version. First, by using a digital version, student's opinions could be immediately used in improving classroom teaching, as the paper format took up to two years to be re-viewed and used. Savings in costs, time and energy were side benefits of going online. Qualitative, open-ended questions were also added to the online version, so that students could say in their own words what they thought about their class and teacher.

Another major reason for having the SOS online was that there was growing concern at UNB about the dwindling participation rate in the survey. With rates slipping from 60

to barely 50 per cent over the past few years, many were concerned about student 'apathy' surrounding the SOS, and felt that change was needed in order to increase participation. But with a rate of roughly 25 per cent, the first trial of the online format did not meet people's expectations.

"The fall semester [last year] was a disaster for a number of reasons," Jane comments, "but it was also a pilot."

For the winter semester, the Saint John campus chose to drop the online survey, while Fredericton professors were given the choice to do either paper or online surveys – 25 per cent picked the online version, and results improved (45 per cent online, 50 per cent paper). It was so successful that Senate approved the online version as the default for the next 12 months, with 75 per cent of professors now choosing to stay online. This is a good sign for the SOS.

"So what I think we need to do now is work on building up the confidence of both students and faculty in this administrative process of doing it online. At the same time, build up the confidence of students that the SOS makes a difference," Fritz states.

Roy goes on to add that, "we need to raise awareness that student opinions do matter, and we have to let the faculty know that students are capable and competent to provide useful feedback."

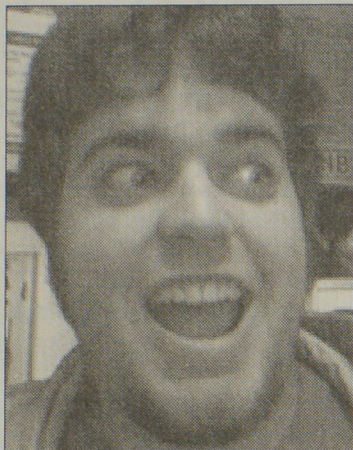
Zundel agrees, and says that if students don't fill out the SOS, "[it] can lead to one of two things: continuing the employment of someone who is not a good teacher, and therefore guaranteeing 20 years of bad teaching at the university, or conversely, not keeping someone who does a very good job of their teaching and missing the opportunity to keep a good teacher."

Since "it's very important that we have the highest quality teaching possible, for both students and professors," notes Fritz, it is imperative that students fill out the SOS.

The SOS is happening right now, and it will be continuing until the last day of classes. Log on to eservices.unb.ca to give your opinion today.

VIEWPOINT

What is your opinion on the Student Opinion Survey?



The student survey is kinda like showers... sure, you know you're supposed to take them, but you'd rather go drinking instead.
•Johnathan Lajoie•



The online student opinion surveys are a pretty good idea, I guess, for the new teachers.
•Vanessa Champion•

"With students making a statement about [the SOS] last year, everyone at the university realizes that you have to include people in these decisions."
•Jill O'Reilly•

"The good news is that we've got people talking."
•Judy Roy•

VIEWPOINT

Are you involved here at UNB? Why or why not?



I do intramural basketball, soccer, and volleyball, and I'm not involved in anything else because I don't know what else there is to be involved in.
•Allison Heighton•

MID-WEEK MAYHEM

Get in early, it's going to be a BIG ONE

10pm - Close

KEITH'S



\$2.00 Keith's & Bud Lt. Bottles
\$2.00 Gunshots

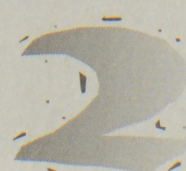
(rum, rye, vodka, gin)
\$2.00 Domestic Draft (16 oz)

No Cover With Valid Student I.D.

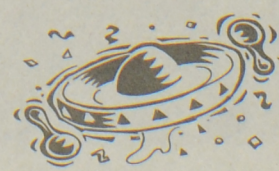
NICKY N ZEE'S

375 King Street

455-6406



2 FOR 1
TEQUILA
NIGHT



The
BACHELOR