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## Exit Interview.



Andrew Meade / The Brunswickan

UNB's seventeenth President and Vice-Chancellor John McLaughlin will be retiring at the end of August. In his final interview with the Brunswickan, he shares his thoughts on PSE, the provincial budget and a strong UNB.

**JOSH O'KANE**  
THE BRUNSWICKAN

John McLaughlin would rather look forward than back.

UNB's outgoing president and vice-chancellor – the 17th in the school's history – has had two particularly tumultuous years dealing with post-secondary education policy, but says he'd rather examine opportunities than dwell on past battles.

"I have zero interest in rehearsing yesterday's debates," says McLaughlin, who will be retiring in August after seven years as president. "Let's think about going forward."

The Miner/L'Ecuyer report on PSE in Fall 2007 called for the closure of the UNB Saint John campus to create a polytechnic institution, among other sweeping changes. After significant public backlash, a Working Group of university presidents and community college principals was formed to

address PSE in the province instead.

A media leak of the Working Group's report last June saw the provincial government effectively rush its response, leading to an "Action Plan" for PSE that appeased some members of the community, but did not address many desired changes to student financial aid.

The 2009-10 provincial budget announcement last month saw unforeseen changes in PSE policy, leading to speculation on McLaughlin's part that the Action Plan might be tabled for the moment as the province adjusts to the world's harsh economic climate.

Going forward, McLaughlin believes it's time for the government to engage the public in determining its policy.

"Effectively, the last time around, we were given a report, and we spent two years responding to it," he says of the Miner/L'Ecuyer report. "That's not the way to do it."

"We've got to build a plan that all New Brunswickers can buy into from the get-go. We need to get back to that table, going forward."

Students were an integral part of the response last time, says the president, but they should be part of the process from the beginning.

"I think the students took a real leadership role in terms of responding to other peoples' agenda, but the next time around, they've got to play a much stronger role in crafting what we want to do, and what our priorities are," says McLaughlin.

The New Brunswick native says that students are what have impacted him the most during his time as president.

"There's going to be more than 10,000 students on our two campuses who've graduated on my watch. To see their lives enriched, and to see the difference that they're going to make in the bigger world, it's by far the most important thing for me," he says.

"I hope I made a small difference. I know the university community more generally certainly did. And they're our pride. At the end of the day, they're by far the most important."

UNB students have increasingly made marks on a national scale, he explains. He cites the UNB

Varsity Reds Men's Hockey team – 2009 Canadian Interuniversity Sport champions – and the winning Canadian Top Ad Executive team of MBA students Matt Daigle and Elizabeth-Ann McCleave as two recent examples of UNB students achieving national success.

"By almost any metric, UNB has gone so far up the ladder in terms of its profile as a national university," he says.

The search consultants for McLaughlin's successor as president echoed this sentiment.

"They said we had one of the strongest pools in Canada for any university in the country. It reflected how attractive UNB is to be part of these days."

The growing partnership between the Saint John and Fredericton campuses is another point of pride for McLaughlin. The two campuses came together to share UNB's vision of a nationally comprehensive university, he says.

"The PSE debate was big, complicated and had

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# LAST CLASS BASH

THURSDAY APR 8

BALLROOM EVENT

