

Matt Collins – President

By Gordon Loane
Brunswickan News

Matt Collins is in the first year of a two year BEd program. He graduated last year from UNB with a Bachelor of Arts degree double major in English Drama and North American history. If elected Student Union President Collins would take a course load equivalent to that of a full-time student.

What do you see as the issues in this campaign and what are your priorities for the next year? I have read in *The Brunswickan* how my opponents Clark and Melanson would like to cut back the course load for SU Presidents to one per term. I'm not for that at all. I think if a SU President is going to reflect the students he/she should be a student and not take a token course, which I think each of those two candidates plans on doing. I plan on taking four courses a term. I don't understand how you can turn the SU President's position into a forty hour a week job and still stay in touch with students. On the issues, my first priority is dealing with Student Aid and Student Loans. Just because you are a university student does not mean you are exempt from poverty. A lot of students have to pick up part-time jobs to help pay for their schooling. With the student loan system and the 80% requirement, rather than being students rewarded for working part-time to make their way through school they are being penalized the following year. This places enormous pressures on a student. I've been there. We need to address this issue. What are the student needs? What are the resources? What areas do they need help in financially? Academically? Regardless of whether I win this election, I have volunteered my services to work closely with UNB's Financial Aid office and Sue Weisner to try and address these issues. I'm in the same boat as most students. I'm on financial assistance in the form of loans from both the federal and provincial government. Perhaps as well, we need to look at setting up a university food bank. If you are living in residence and can afford it, that's fine, you are getting fed. But if you live off campus and you are paying rent, you've got bills to pay and you have got to buy your own groceries, and it can get difficult by the end of the term in December and April. Perhaps we could set it up in conjunction with the SU Help Center or Student Resource Center or with UNB's Financial Aid office. Sue Weisner also has a survey constructed that she would like to administer on campus regarding student resources and student financial need. She just has not been able to get the funding to implement the survey program. We need this survey if we are to lobby government on this issue.

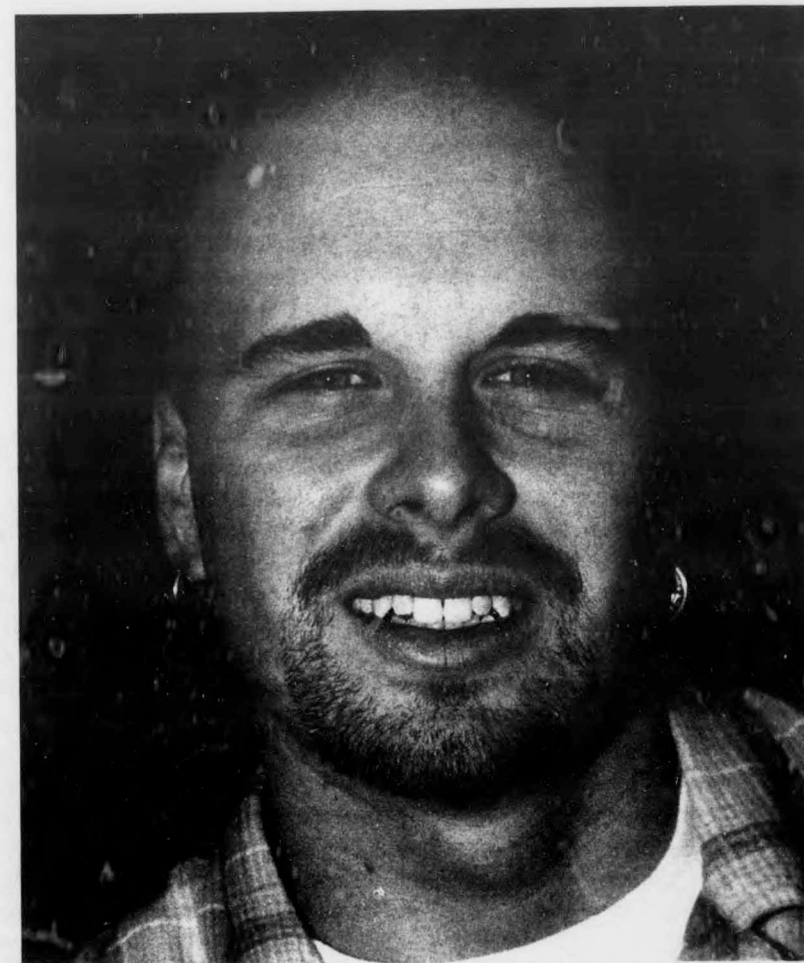
Another big issue on my agenda is Day Care. I see that the SU provides the campus Day Care Center \$3,000 a year. That's not adequate funding. My understanding is that it costs a single mother or a couple somewhere around \$50 a week to place a child there. If we are paying all this money to come to school, a service like this should be provided. The Day Care Center on Montgomery Street is a good facility but obviously it is not big enough. There is a large waiting list, and an SU contribution of \$3,000 a year is nothing. Let's also take a look at the SU budget for Campus Safety, which is \$2,000 a year. That's ridiculous. If this is such an important issue, and it is, why is it receiving just \$2,000 a year out of a total SU budget of \$700,000? I can't understand that. If you combine the budgets for Day Care and Campus Safety it's \$5,000 a year. I see that the budget for a leadership banquet at the end of the year is \$5,000. Is the leadership banquet more important than Day Care and Campus Safety? I don't think so. Another area is the budget for the Consumer's Guide and the Yearbook. Combined their budget is \$40,000. The Consumer's Guide is voluntary for professors to participate. What you get are professors who are confident in their abilities, confident in their classes and the responses they will receive. You get a tainted picture of what goes on here. You get a Consumer's Guide that produces a picture that only paints the good professors. You don't hear about the bad ones. Unless the Consumer's Guide is made mandatory and all professors participate, it is useless. Word of mouth is better. Let's look at the Yearbook with an annual budget of around \$20,000. I understand that a Yearbook is tradition. But who are we producing it for? Is it a record for the university to have? Is it a record for the SU to have? Is it a record for the students to have? And if it is, it should reflect the students on campus. It's hard to do this on a campus with 7,000 students. You might be better off taking a Kodak from home, taking your own pictures and making a photo album. But I realize cutting a Yearbook would bring some opposition. Right now I don't think there is a demand for a Yearbook. More than one year at university I have walked down the hallway by *The Brunswickan* offices and there have been stacks of year books just sitting in the hallway, 500 or 600 Year books sitting there, just a total waste of money! We should take the \$40,000 from the Consumer's Guide and the Yearbook and re-allocate it to Day Care, Campus Safety and Student Financial Aid.

What do you see as the role of the President in providing leadership to Council and the Executive? My role as Student Union President will be to be a student and to be a representative of the students. It's a privilege not a job. It's a privilege to serve these students and you have duties and responsibilities to them. Regarding salaries, before I decided to run I had no idea what a SU President got paid. That wasn't a big concern for me. I find a \$5,000 salary for the summer and a \$3,700 honoraria for the academic year, which is currently being paid, more than adequate, frankly. If you want a SU President and you want to pay them \$18,000 a year vote for Mr. Clark or Mr. Melanson. If you want somebody who is going to be a full-time student and reflect the needs of the students and do it for half the price then vote for me. As far as experience in student union politics, I have none. I don't think that's anything to be ashamed of, given the controversies of the last few years over finances.

What are your ideas about the internal restructuring efforts of the Student Union? I would like to see some changes made to Council. I think there are around 30 positions or so to be filled by election to Council each year. Yet in the first call for nominations about 19 of them were not filed. That's interesting. Do we have too big a council? Now what can we do on Council as well to more adequately reflect what goes on in this community? I would like to see Residence Representatives serve on Council. All of what went on at Neill House this year, their only voice was via the university, via the Dean of Residence. If they are on Council, then the SU can represent them. I think the residence community needs this, separate from House Committees. But if we are going to add positions on Council for the residence community we would have to cut positions in other areas. In Education we have three seats and we only were able to fill one. If the interest is not there for people to serve then why have the positions? If you cut the numbers down, only those people who really want to represent their faculty will run and be dedicated and devoted to what they are doing.

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? I think the \$102 student fee is adequate now. I think we can operate within a \$700,000 budget. As I mentioned before, if we can reallocate the funds and spend the money more wisely then I think the students will be getting \$102 worth of services. As it stands right now, I believe we are not, and I think I can improve upon that working with Council and the executive next year to revamp the budget and reallocate funds a little bit better. I certainly would not intend to raise student fees at all. No!

What will be your priorities for the summer months? Should I be elected, my first priority is financial - student loans, anti-poverty at UNB. I will work very closely with UNB's Financial Aid office on this. I would certainly take a good look at Campus Safety issues this summer. I would try to set SU priorities for the fall and would begin with familiarizing myself with the position of SU President and my responsibilities so that come September when Council comes back I can be a strong leader. I'm in a



faculty which produces leaders (Education). We teach Canada's youth. What better place to find a leader than in that Faculty. Hopefully I can display those skills and work on them over the summer. But by no means can I do this all by myself. I need a strong Council to help me out.

What immediate concrete steps will you take, as President, to reassure the Students of UNB that the SUB Expansion Project is proceeding forthwith? I must admit I haven't given it much thought. I know we pay \$25 for a SUB Expansion fee. Obviously, in one year I can't build a SUB that is bigger. What I can do is improve upon the one we have. I think one of the best places to start is in the SUB cafeteria. Many people have complained about the food services. I understand the food contract is in review now. The SUB cafeteria should have better services - a wider variety of food. Everything down there seems to be fried. There is not much there for the vegetarian. The fad of the 1990's is that physical fitness and nutrition are becoming more important and I think we should reflect that in the food we offer downstairs. I would like to see improvements in the SUB. But I can't make any promises regarding the expansion because that is something to look at down the road. It is also a good idea to combine the SU Help Center and Student Resources Center because there is limited space in the SUB we have now. The SUB ballroom is an area that is used sporadically. It doesn't get the use it should. I think we need to take a look at that and see what we could do with it.

Is it your intention to get agreements in writing re: campus, GSA in SUB Expansion? Again, I haven't given this much thought. To ask part-time students and graduate students to make a commitment to SUB expansion is a bit difficult. As a part-time student I don't think you should be expected to pay the same fees as a full-time student. But as a part-time student you do receive the same services as a full-time student. It's a bit of a dilemma. I'd have to give this much more thought.

What steps do you intend to take to improve the media relations of the Student Union? Obviously, what I have read in the media here since I've been at UNB has never been too kind to the Student Union. So, the relationship can't be too friendly. Although, I guess you have to paint a true picture of what is going on at the Student Union. What I'd like to see is a more positive picture painted of the Student Union. For that to be done I think you need new fresh faces in there such as myself. If you ask the ordinary student at UNB what they think of student politics most are not going to give a damn. You have to make them care and for me to do that I've got to get out there and get around campus. I noticed in the SU budget that there was no item for marketing. I think we need to market the SU more.

How do you intend to prevent an "Ivory Tower" situation between Council and Student body? I am going to maintain my status as a full-time student and stay as active as I can in the community in other organizations on campus. Right now, I am considering moving back into residence for my final year. If that's the case then I'm right in the community. Creating a residence representative position on Council will help Council keep in touch that way. For off-campus students it is a bit more difficult to maintain a relationship with the Student Union. A SU President should be available and have set office hours when people can stop by.

What do you think about the SU credit card situation? I've heard of an executive member of the SU spending money at the Gap in Ottawa for personal reasons. What do you buy at the Gap for the university? I don't know, a pair of jeans we can all wear and pass around? In general terms, the SU credit card has been abused obviously even if it has been canceled. I think that is something that myself and Council would have to sit down and address. There certainly has to be some way to regulate it and some way of accounting for all the costs made. The situation in the past has not been a good one. We haven't been responsible in the past. I don't know if it's a good idea to bring it back!

What about the Fulton situation? As I said before the SU Executive positions should not be a full-time job. It's an opportunity to serve the university community and a privilege to do so. But that privilege carries responsibilities. There should be set office hours. If the SU Council appointed Fulton, they obviously thought he was responsible enough to do the job. If he can't be there for office hours or can't make permanent office hours then some times you have to be compassionate with that because he is a student. I want Council members to be students first. But you should certainly make yourself available some times.

Some have considered open government a problem this year. How do you feel? Someone has been unable to keep on top of things if VP's cannot maintain some office hours and there is a lack of timely answers to requests, e.g. getting financial records in three days as stated in the financial policy. As SU President I would do everything in my ability to keep things up to date. We might be able to take care of a lot of things by revamping council.

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