



Students face financial stress

by Gordon Loane

Sue Weisner is seeing more and more university students coming to her door with severe financial problems.

As UNB's Director of Financial Aid, Weisner sees how increasing tuition fees, the lingering recession, tough summer job situation and changes to the student loan program are affecting students. Clearly it's a tough situation for some.

"I can only describe the situation as I see it," Weisner commented. "For some, their financial situation is critical and over the last couple of years their numbers are growing."

"Let me give you an example," Weisner continued. "We have a limited number of UNB loans available and I've seen one student every 15 minutes or about 22 a day from January 19th to February 4th."

"Students are clearly under financial pressure," she said "There's no doubt that finances are the number one non-academic pressure."

Some students are trying to relieve the financial stress any way they can. "I'm seeing students who are working 20 to 30 hours a week and going to university full time," said Weisner. "I know of other students who are helping out their parents at home because the recession has claimed their parents' jobs." "Students are helping their parents with the mortgage and other household expenses," said Weisner. "I know many parents who just cannot help put their sons and daughters through university and that's stressful for them and adds to the financial pressure for any student trying to get by," Weisner said.

"I'm also seeing students whose families have fixed incomes and the student loan program is just not flexible enough for them."

The student loan program requires students to save 65% of their income and for some students and families this is not possible given the current economic climate, Weisner explained.

"Fortunately, the student loan appeal process can work and does work for some," she said.

In recent years, more mature students have been admitted to university but they are not immune from financial difficulties either. "Some mature students have debts which have spilled over from their previous lives and are trying to pay these as well as attend classes," Weisner said. "Students loans don't take previous debts into consideration."

"Eventually a mature student finds that it's impossible to attend university on a student loan and finds themselves in a trap given this scenario."

Weisner said student loan allowances for married students and single parents are just too low. "It's just another of the problems I'm see-

ing," she said.

Increasingly, students are becoming worried about their debt loads. "The new provincial student loan program adds a loan component before a bursary and that only increases a student's debt load," Weisner explained. "Some students are graduating with \$20,000 debt loads with uncertain job prospects," Weisner said.

Needless to say, more students are seeking financial advice these days at the financial aid office. Weisner says it's increased the office work load for two reasons. "We're seeing more students but we're seeing students with more complicated problems too," she said. "The student loan process is now more complicated and some students are bringing more complex

personal and family difficulties to our attention."

Next year, the financial aid office, with the help of others, is hoping to offer students at least two new programs. "We would really like to see the student peer help program expanded," Weisner said. "We also intend to develop a debt counselling model for students that we hope will be successful."

Donahue show probably a no-go

by Stacey Barton

If anyone is still waiting to make their television debut on *The Donahue Show*, they may have to wait a little longer. The show's producers have put the idea on hold.

The producers had wanted four or five UNB students as guests on an episode discussing the issue of date rape, after the controversial opinion piece by Professor Martin Yaqzan made international headlines.

Two women from Phoenix Arizona who put out a comic book

called "The Meaning of the Word" to make students aware of the issue of date rape in American high schools, were also to appear on the show.

Donahue's producers wanted the show to be taped after the 10th or 12th of December, but the Student Union would not agree to the dates because they would have interfered with the students' exams.

Pat FitzPatrick, the Student Union VP University Affairs, was informed that the show broke for Christmas and resumed taping a few weeks after that. The taping,

FitzPatrick was told, would take place around the end of January.

Suzy Stein, of *The Donahue Show*, stated that the issue has not been forgotten; it has merely been "put on hold".

She gave indication that they were holding out for an interview with Yaqzan, and since that may not happen anytime soon, a show with the students could be a long way off.

Luckily, no students had been chosen to go on the show yet. However, a large number of students sent

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Polar Dip always a good ice-breaker

by Melanie Messer

They've done it again. The sixth annual Bridges House Polar Dip on Saturday was once again a splash of success.

Mayor Brad Woodside and some of Bridges own (no one seems to know the exact number) took the plunge amidst the shouts and cheers of the large crowd who came out to witness the event.

"It might have been the biggest turn-out yet," said Chris Wolfe, House president.

Conditions this year were better than last with a temperature of -3°C. "But the shock was worse because the water was so much colder,"

Wolfe suggested.

The event lasted 45 minutes, and afterward everyone congregated in the Lord Beaverbrook Hotel for a quick dip in the heated pool and a visit to the sauna.

Not only was Woodside's challenge for two tonnes of food met again this year, Bridges proved that they meant business and raised a total of 2.8 tonnes for the Fredericton Food Bank.

The majority of food was gathered the weekend before when the Bridges residents canvassed the city for donations. Wolfe was impressed.

"The response was great," Wolfe said. They collected the food in vans

donated for the cause while the event was filmed by television crews.

If next year proves to be anything like the last two, the Mayor will be joining his friends on the hill yet again. Asked if he foresees a repeat performance next year, Wolfe said, "We'll be waiting for the Mayor's challenge."

Should the success of the event continue in the years to come, our local politician may need to consistently mark this event on his calendar.

The Bridges residents are excited about the success of this year's event and hope that next year will see even more involvement.



Fredericton Mayor Brad Woodside's popularity certainly won't shrivel after making the plunge in the annual Bridge's House Polar Dip. Photo by Pete Duchemin

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Our 11x17 printer will be fixed next week. Thank you again to the SU.