

Jeffrey Melanson – President

by Gordon Loane
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Jeff Melanson is seeking the office of SU President after spending a one year term as non-elected Chair of the UNB Student Council. He has been very active in Orientation serving as Chairperson in 1995. Melanson has been Co-Director of the Annual Red n' Black Revue and student Co-Chair of UNB's Venture Capital Fundraising Campaign.

What do you see as the issues in this campaign and what are your priorities for the next year? As a Student Union we need to rethink the way we are going about student government. We need to make students aware of what we have to offer. We seem to be running the SU office from day to day but there seems to be very little communication between the electors and the elected. A big issue for me is making the SU more accountable to the students and find out the best way to make student government work for them.

What do you see as the role of the President in providing leadership to Council and the Executive? A President is only as good as the Executive and Council. In the past, I have shown leadership and proven ability with a lot of integrity. I want to lead a strong team with a strong council. To take the SU back to the students it will need a commitment from both the Executive and Council. We also need to take an active role and go out and seek student opinion instead of waiting for them to come to us. For example, we need to do residence tours and I would like to see them more accessible to different students.

Do you intend to renew the Union's three year funding commitment to the College Hill Day Care? I want to do a student satisfaction survey and see what students really want. If concern is expressed in favour of funding day care, then the SU should give its support. If the survey indicates our money should be placed somewhere else, then we would do that. For example, we might open a sexual assault centre on campus.

What are your ideas about the internal restructuring of the Student Union? Summer presents us with a great opportunity for restructuring. It will allow the President and Executive as well as the office staff to sit down and look at the way the Union is run. We need to look overall at the positions we need and what positions we don't. We need to determine what are the primary areas and we need to focus our attention on them. As an SU Executive we need to be more accessible and more accountable, starting with telling everyone where our office is. We need to also set priorities based on what students want. We need to shake things up and put the pieces together after. A restructuring should look at all facets of the Union - the whole picture, which includes the Executive, the Council, the full-time staff. In other words, we need to restructure by going to the top and go down. We seem to be at a point, I believe, where most students can not identify with the SU. Anyone should feel more than welcome to walk up to the SU offices any time during the day and year, express their concern and have it dealt with. If we are not doing that then we are not the kind of Student Union that I want to be the head of.

There has been some discussion of compensation levels for Executive members. Where do you stand on this issue? If you are spending 40 hours a week in the office a fair wage is not unexpected. If students elect a person who will work full-time on their behalf, there has to be some kind of compensation. The average wage set should be between \$5.75 and \$6.00 per hour, same as the average student wage. Based on a set amount of hours, this wage for SU President is fairly reasonable. One course per term should be the limit during the President's term in office. For Vice Presidents, a set number of hours based on their schedule, based on student needs will have to be established. Priorities should be a determinant too. The work load may vary from week to week but there should be an established constant. Hours for Vice-President's might be set at between 10 and 15 hours per week with a full-time President, but it's a little hard to say just yet.

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? There will be an increase in student fee from \$102 to \$104 if the referendum on the New Brunswick Student Alliance passes. But aside from that, restructuring will allow us to look at how certain monies are being spent. We have to account for every dollar spent. There should be no grey areas. The Student Union should be put on an accountability first basis. Students will feel the SU is working for them, so they will feel their money is better spent, which is a feeling that has gone by the way side in the last few years. I think the student union fee could be lowered. A full-time position for the President may involve cutting back the General Administrator's post to half-time. Money could possibly be saved here as we change focus money can be saved in a lot of other areas as well.

What will be your priorities for the summer months? Restructuring the SU will be a priority but it will not be an easy task. It will require a large amount of time. The Executive, Council, and staff will need to be involved. A second priority will be student concerns and social issues. We need to work closely with the New Brunswick Student Alliance to look at such issues as rising tuition costs, legal aid and financial aid. There is the issue of student poverty with rising tuition. Summer jobs are not easy to get and are not paying what they used to. Once, a summer job covered the price of tuition but it doesn't anymore and the squeeze is on. During the last month of school, students are borrowing money off friends or selling off items for a cheap price just so they can have food or pay the last month's rent. The Student Union needs to grant emergency loans to help or create programs that will show how to better manage money or find students part-time jobs in the city through the SU Employment Opportunities Bureau. A final priority will be a student satisfaction survey. There should really be two surveys - one for returning students and one for new students. We need to start developing this survey over the summer months so that it can be administered by the end of September '96. As a Student Union, we need to take a look at the survey results and act from there.

What immediate concrete steps will you take, as President, to re-assure the students of UNB that the SUB Expansion project is proceeding forthwith? As a former co-chair of the Venture Campaign student initiative, a priority concern was expansion of the SUB. I have extensive ties in the UNB Development and Public Relations Department and I am committed to SUB Expansion, believe in it, and will put time into it. We need to get a commitment from the UNB Administration on this. Students are putting in \$25 a year towards SUB Expansion and are seeing no results right now. If people are paying, they want to see something for their money. We need to see something done - a cornerstone laid, a wall up or renovations to the current SUB as a start. We need to see our dollars at work now. I will be after our new UNB President to make this a priority.

Is it your intention to get agreements in writing re: CAMPUS, GSA in SUB Expansion? This is a tough question to answer at the moment as only time will tell. The new UNB President may see these agreements as a priority. We do need things in writing, though. We need to eliminate the double speak and get written assurances that things are going to happen.

What steps do you intend to take to improve the media relations of the Student Union? In 40 hours a week, if elected, I will attend as many student functions as I can. If a Student Union President is not concerned about taking part in their lives, how do you expect students to be concerned about their government? We need to establish a bi-weekly SU newsletter to report to students. Perhaps an electronic voice suggestion



box could be established. We will have more to tell the media if we are an active Student Union.

How do you intend to prevent an "Ivory Tower" situation developing between the Council and students? Accountability here is the real issue. If the SU President is attending events it's both a public relations opportunity and a chance to get to hear student concerns. At the current moment, SU Executives are too stuck in their offices and I want to change this next year. We should institute town hall meetings around campus and move the SU meeting sites. Accessibility will eliminate the "Ivory Tower" attitude.

What about the credit card situation, given your position on council? Last summer, I felt they were a bad idea. With something like these, there is a lot of room for misuse and abuse. I don't feel that any conference or any function of the Student Union warrants having that kind of spending power. I think credit cards are a luxury. If we are trying to tell students that we want \$102 of their money, we are not here for the luxuries and the perks. Students should be the first people to receive a perk from the Student Union. SU credit cards should not be issued again.

What about the Fulton situation, given your position on council? If we are going to be accountable to students we need to have established office hours and that has not happened. I believe in team work and I would let any executive member in this situation know that there is no "I" in team, so if everyone else is going to put 99 percent into it and they only feel like doing 40 percent then they should seriously re-consider whether they should be a member of that team. We cannot be an effective team if there is a weak link in the chain.

Some have considered open government a problem, how do you feel? I want to institute an 'Opening Doors Campaign' for next year where we take the doors off the SU and leave them open for frosh week. A lot of students don't know they can request information. If they read something in *The Brunswickan* and want to know more about a financial report they can request it. If students want something and the By-laws state they should get it in three days, that's when they should get it - in three days. I will be the first person to approach the executive member who doesn't comply and tell them what our responsibility to students is. They will be reminded of why they are in office. If it is at all feasible or legal at all, the financial books of The Cellar should be open. If students want to see the books for The Cellar, and we are sinking their money into it, they should be able to see them.

If you were the SU President this year, how would you have dealt with the Orientation Budget problems? If I were President I would look at serious things like - Orientation '95 went over but did they really go over or is that what it really costs to do Orientation? If you look at the actual figures, all of that money is accounted for and there were really no extravagances in the Orientation program. I know it has been an issue raised by one of my opponents, Mr. Clark about bringing the Orientation budget back into line. I don't think it is an issue in this election, the past is behind us. Let's look forward to other issues in the next year. Character and integrity is about accepting responsibility and I have accepted partial responsibility as a member of the executive of Orientation '95 for the budget overage. Character and integrity is not established by trying to escape from any responsibility. Students should realize that if Mr. Clark wants to make this an issue, he was the Vice-Chair of Orientation '95 and had an equal say in the accumulated deficit and offered at that time no major solutions. He has accepted no responsibility and is only making it an issue now in this campaign.

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a little more work on the Orientation Executive's part, but in the long run, it will pay for itself. Orientation is the only campus activity that isn't run by the Student Union. Definitely in the future, Orientation has to be taken under the wing of the Student Union. The Orientation Executive will have to answer to Council for expenditures and what have you. They will have to ask permission for different things. Council should not decide personnel for Orientation, however. After all, the \$29,000 Orientation deficit this year had to be covered by the SU, with no help from the UNB administration or anyone else.

If you were the SU President this year, how would you have dealt with the number of appointed positions in the Executive? It is a difficult question in that a by-election costs a lot of money to run. It's extremely expensive. I would probably rule against a by-election because it costs so much money. But there should have been more awareness on campus that these people were replaced who resigned. Posters would have to be put up saying OK, submit your resume if you are interested in this position, so that every person on campus could take that position if they wanted to. Then there would have to be an interview, just not a selection by the SU Executive. Applications should have been sought campus-wide instead of the Executive coming to Council one day and saying we have appointed them and everybody raise your hand.