

Budget and salary hikes debated

by Gordon Loane
Brunswickan News

UNB Student Union councillors are less than happy with certain salary increases granted to SU regular employees, including a 16.6% salary and benefit increase for General Administrator Barb Kirk.

They are even less happy with the way the whole matter was handled by certain members of the SU Executive, who bypassed Council with recent salary increase recommendations and took them directly to the UNB Foundation for Students for final approval.

The Foundation, made up of selected students, Dean of Students Tom Austin and UNB Comptroller John O'Brien, collects and distributes monies from student fees and acts as the employer for the SU's full-time staff.

The whole issue prompted Council to kick out the press and discuss the issue behind closed doors at this week's regular Wednesday night meeting.

After the closed session, Law representative Paul McLean and VP-University Affairs Pat FitzPatrick introduced a motion calling on the SU Executive to bring "all matters pertaining to staff salary and contracts before Council for approval in a closed session before presentation to the UNB Foundation for Students.

But in the end, councillors had second thoughts, tabled the motion until next week, and decided to seek a legal opinion on the matter.

The skirmish over salaries highlighted a night in which council debated its proposed 1995-96 operating budget.

Student pay and perks, otherwise

known as honoraria, were debated extensively for the Social Issues Commissioners, Student Support Centre and Orientation.

Thrown into the mix were the operating budgets proposed for next year and what parts of the budget should go to honoraria and organizational items. The overriding question was whether or not there should be compensation for volunteers.

Council will be back at the budget debate again next week when the results of this week's CFS-Referendum become known.

If the "No" side prevails, well over \$32,000 will be freed up for other purposes.

Council will pass its operating budget for 1995-96 at its last meeting of the year on April 5th.

Distance Education to be offered in Chatham

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Mount Allison, St. Thomas University, l'Université de Moncton and the UNBF and UNBSJ are examining the option of forming a consortium to deliver distance education both within the province and for export.

"The availability of new technologies for the delivery of courses, the increasing cost of going away to a university to study and the increased desire for life-long learning all make off-campus study an attractive option for some students," said Dr. Roger Barnsley, STU Vice-President (Academic).

Historically, most courses taken away from campuses were taken by nurses or teachers for upgrading. Today, new opportunities are available, such as the program offered on the Chatham campus of the New Brunswick Community College.

Mount Allison, STU and UNB are co-operating to make 11 first year courses

available in Chatham. This allows students to start their university program without leaving home. Each of the universities now accepts first year courses from the others for credit so students do not have to decide where they plan to complete their degree when they initially register. The program will be more accessible as students can make a better decision on whether they want a university education before committing themselves to the cost of living away from home.

A study is now being done to see if there is a demand in other centres for programs similar to the one offered in Chatham. A questionnaire is being circulated to grade 11 and 12 students at several high schools in the province.

"If we can form a consortium to benefit all four universities in this field, there may also be other new areas we can share in the future and provide more accessible programs for New Brunswickers," Barnsley said.

SUB expansion funding reduced

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One area highlighted at the meeting which still must be financed is an annual provision for heat, light and maintenance in an expanded SUB.

"The university does not want to pick up the tab for these items," said one of the meeting participants.

Sources also say the UNB Administration is playing "wait and see" before deciding what the next step will be.

Administration officials find the SU's current expansion plan and financial package too vague, sources say.

UNB SU President Paul Estabrooks had scheduled a meeting to discuss the latest proposal with President Robin Armstrong and Associate VP Michael Lyon just after the March break.

The meeting was cancelled and has not yet been rescheduled, Estabrooks said this week.

Meanwhile, other student groups who could have been potential backers of the SUB expansion project have other plans.

"We don't use the SUB as much as undergraduates so there is no enthusiasm among our members to become involved," said Tim Buskard, President of the Graduate Students Association.

"UNB Graduate Students have other priorities according to Buskard, referring to a fund initiated in 1986 that has collected \$100,000 to date to build a Grad House either on or near the campus.

"We are currently preparing a formal

proposal outlining our priorities and hoping for a commitment from university officials for land on campus to build a Grad House eventually," said Buskard.

"We hope to take out a mortgage to build the project if the administration agrees," he said.

The proposal is being sent to Michael Ryan, and Buskard is hoping for a positive response so the planning process

can begin in earnest.

A second group of students is not expected to be involved in the SUB project in the next term at least.

Saint Thomas students turned down the proposal in a referendum last spring. STU SU President Shane Donovan has already indicated the decision will not be reversed in the near future.

If you were PM for a day

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Magna International Inc. announced that \$1,000,000 has been set aside to establish the Magna For Canada Scholarship Fund, an annual awards program for Canadian college and university students, which asks them to respond to the question: "If you were the Prime Minister of Canada, what would you do to improve living standards and unify the country?"

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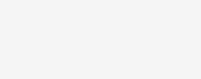
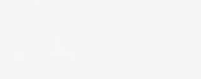
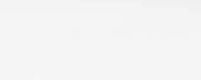
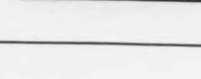
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