

Eugene Davis – President

Eugene Davis, a fourth year Arts Student majoring in Political Science (International Relations), is running for President of the UNB Student Union. He is currently serving a two year term as student representative on the Fredericton Senate. He is also on the Web site committee for SPARC. Davis has previously been involved as an executive member of the Political Science Students' Association.

What do you see as the issues in this campaign and what are your priorities for the next year? My primary goal is to bring respect and integrity back to the student union. I think there is a real problem there. There is also a problem with bridging the gap between the Student Union and students. They don't see the relevance of it. They are spending money for something that they can't identify with. I want to help correct that. I don't have a set agenda. If I get elected as President I am going to address the needs and concerns of the Union and of those who elected Councilors.

What do you see as the job of the President in providing leadership to Council and the Executive? The job of the SU President is to provide that leadership and to help set, in consultation with the Councilors and the Executive, the objectives of the Union. A president is basically there to offer direction, to delegate responsibility to individuals and committees. A president should be an overseer, a type of general manager.

Do you intend to renew the Union's three year funding commitment to the College Hill Day Care? I don't know the ins and outs of the agreement. But I think it is an essential service needed. Part of the Union's mandate is to help support and to help cultivate education. We should be able to come up with the funds to support this. This is a very good reason to spend money.

What are your ideas about the internal re-structuring of the Student Union? There is a lot to be done, I think. The first question you have to start with is the executive. They have to have a clear understanding of their mandate. Each of us has to be responsible for our job and answerable to council. I think one of the big problems in the past, the perception is that the executive has its own agenda and they don't listen to the Councilors, which means they don't listen to the students who elected the Councilors. That has got to change. We are there working for them. This is where we have to begin. If we start with the big things, the little things take care of themselves. But those are primarily the problems with the student union itself. The Executive has got to be overhauled. Another thing is we have got to get rid of this mudslinging, back stabbing thing even if it is not intentional. There has to be better communication and co-ordination among the executive members, before they go to council, so that you don't get different executives saying different things about different people, and then that executive is caught off guard. Communication needs to be overhauled.

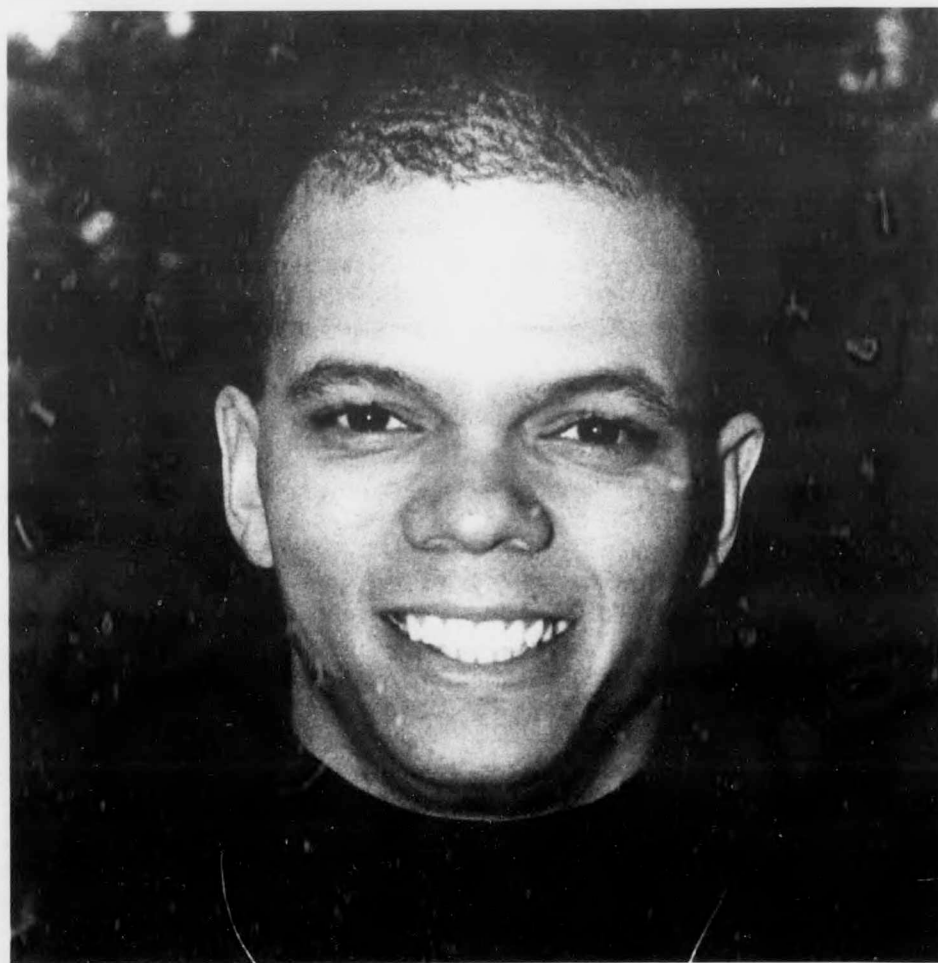
There has been some discussion of compensation levels for Executive members. Where do you stand on this issue? I don't see any thing wrong with paying the executive, and for that matter councilors money to work for students. A lot of work goes into the Student Union and hopefully more of that work will become relevant to the rest of the student body. That's what an SU President should be here for -to bridge the gap. Some type of remuneration can be expected. As far as a set amount I am not really decided on that. It's a big job and anyone that has been in that role knows there has been a lot of work to it. That's only fair. I don't know the job of the President and Executive in quite a lot of detail, certainly not as much as those who are talking about making the Presidents job full-time. But I know they do put a lot of work into their individual tasks. Sure there is room for negotiation. \$9,000 seems a little small. This person (SU President) is the CEO of a huge corporation with a budget of over \$700,000 a year. To remunerate him, to keep things in order in the executive is not too much to ask. Vice-Presidents also do a lot of work. I know that the executives I intend on working with, if elected, are going to earn every cent. We are going to work very hard, very diligently to get that respect and integrity of the Union back on track, like it was several years ago. Sure, some type of remuneration is warranted.

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 student fee should increase this year? No. I don't see how the student fee should increase. There is no need for it. I intend to keep expenditures under control, which will also be one of my primary focuses. I want to be just as tight with money as I can be without stepping on too many people's toes. We should be fine. This is a time of fiscal restraint I think for the union. I see no need to raise the student fee at this time.

What will your priorities be for the summer months? Over the summer many of the executives including myself will take the time to learn our jobs in detail. That is going to give us a good opportunity to get to know each other, to kind of find a rhythm of how we work together, and I think we have to sit down together, in collaboration with the Councilors. First we have to get ourselves organized and know what we are doing, meet with the Councilors and set objectives for the Union. The primary focus needs to be re-structuring the Union and the Executive. We need to review the budget and do what we can. We want to make sure that every dollar we are spending gets the maximum amount of utility. We need to ask ourselves do we need it? If the answer is no, then we don't need it. Outside these two items I do not have a closed agenda. We have to listen to what students are concerned about.

What immediate concrete steps will you take, as President, to reassure the students of UNB that the SUB expansion project is proceeding forthwith? My feeling from many students that I have talked to, even though the SUB expansion fee has passed in a referendum, I find wondering whether we need an expansion of the SUB at this time. Not that we don't need one, but do we need one at this time. Is this the best possible time to build? As far as securing that, well, it needs the co-operation of both universities to make it feasible. If STU in their second referendum votes to drop out of the SUB expansion, that presents a problem for UNB. We have to think about the fact that it is obviously going to increase our cost. Perhaps we have to run another referendum asking the students of UNB if they want to throw some more money into it. A lot of students, though, are saying why am I going to throw money out or spend money on a facility I am never going to use, or perhaps never even see? These questions have been brought to my attention, so I said we'll have some discussion about that.

Is it your intention to get agreements in writing re: campus and the GSA in SUB expansion? I don't think we need a written agreement from them. I think we can just make it an option as part of a student fee. If they opt to pay a part of our student fee then they can be assured that money is going to go for SUB expansion. They should have the option to opt-out or put their funds towards it. Obviously if they participate, the SUB expansion is going to be for all students and they have a right to space, absolutely.



What steps do you intend to take to improve the media relations of the student union? If the media will take it upon themselves to treat the sources they are reporting on with respect, I don't see why the sources they are dealing with, and the organization they are dealing with should not treat them with the same courtesy. News is news, but investigative reporters have to know when to use some restraint. A problem does not become a problem until they report on it. Not that people do not have the right to know, but sometimes some things are best left alone and dealt with. Because I find if you bring a lot of people into things, you bring public scrutiny into it, and media scrutiny first, and that leads to problems. So I think a lot of problems can be avoided if each organization treats each other with respect. I have every intention of treating the media with respect, but I will not put up with slander or taking jibes or anything. So, it is in the hands of the media. I'll deal with them with respect as long as they deal with me with respect.

How do you intend to prevent an "Ivory tower" situation developing between Council and the student body? I think we have to remember that we have been elected to represent the students concerns and desires. We wouldn't be here if it weren't for them. We have had a big problem with election turnouts. We can help curb that by addressing the concerns of the student body. There is no we/they. We are simply working for you. They elected us to do a job, and to act in their best interests. Any Councilor who comes in with the idea that it is we/they should really re-consider running for office.

What about the SU credit card situation this year? It goes part and parcel with my own personal belief about financial restraint. I think that the union has to control spending, and this is just one more way not to control spending. We don't need them. There is a section of the SU's Financial Policy which states that the resources of the Student Union and of the Foundation are not for personal use. So, let's not tempt anyone to use those funds. It's all a part of fiscal restraint.

What about the Fulton situation at the SU this year? I think he has done a great job. He volunteered to give his time. He is a very busy young man. Everyone knows he works for the Liberal Party. He is genuine about the job, although he can't always be here, or as much as he probably would have liked. But, outside of that, I think that by no means should executives not be around. I think when the new administration comes in, we will set hours when we are going to be there. Attendance both in the Council and the Executive is going to be addressed firmly.

Some have considered open government a problem. How do you feel? The union has to become more efficient. We have to take our jobs more seriously. Any Councilor and any Executive member who does not want to do that shouldn't be there. I would advise any person who is running for office that does not intend to be in attendance, don't run. I plan on being there and I expect that students expect us to do a job. They don't expect us to do a half-assed job. Attendance is essential, communication is essential. That should help efficiency as well. Things are too lackadaisical. One of the reasons I left the Council (I have a non-voting seat because I serve on Senate), is because I got tired of all the mud slinging and name bashing. I am not blaming anyone, it is just the nature of the whole Council. I said at the time that I was not there to mud sling and throw words around. I can read the reports and not waste three hours of mud slinging, and that was my stance. I said I was elected to Senate and I would do my job there.

If you were the SU President this year, how would you have dealt with the Orientation budget problems this year? I understand that the Orientation budget problem was not a misallocation of funds, but that the program was under budgeted. The old adage there is that there are too many chefs and not enough cooks. Too many people signing for things. That should never occur again. There have to be better control over expenditures. That is all that was! Student's money is at stake here.

If you had been the SU President this year, how would you have dealt with the number of appointed positions on the executive? There probably should have been by-elections because students have a right to vote. I know we have low election turnouts, but still the fundamental fact is this - students have the right to vote for whom they want to represent them. It's not a bad idea to appoint someone while the elections are going on. Get that person who is appointed on an interim basis to run. The students deserve that right. I know the union acted probably in the best interests of students, but let students decide that for themselves.