

Task force chair defends document Student aid: public or institutional responsibility?

GORDON LOANE
THE BRUNSWICKAN

It is a Task Force Report that took five months of quiet preparation.

There were many hours of discussion, some sixteen meetings, many more hours reading background information, fact checking, at least one impact analysis and more than a few telephone calls.

The result is a 75-page discussion paper that could signal the largest increase in tuition fees year over year in many a decade, to say nothing of organizational change.

It is a situation that has UNB officials anxious, perhaps even a bit nervous, wondering whether the final recommendations of the President's Task Force on Future Tuition and Other Student Fee Policies will ever win general approval in the university community, much less the support of the University's Board of Governors.

Dr. John Morris, Chair of the Task Force is the first to admit that some of the recommendations outlined in a discussion paper released last week will not be universally accepted, or even popular.

"There is a certain angst among Task Force members heightened all the more by the general economic climate that we are in," said Morris, UNB's Director of Extension and Summer Sessions.

"Any time you are talking about a change of this scale it does cause a lot of concern," Morris told the Brunswickan interview this week.

Concern certainly, if one is a Science Student at UNB Fredericton. The Science Faculty and its students will be particularly hard hit by the Task Force recommendation to convert UNB's tuition pricing policy from a flat fee to a per course fee.

Tuition could skyrocket by as much as \$1000 next year for full time undergraduates in Science, because they need more credits and more courses to obtain a degree than say an Arts student.

Still, Morris says tuition in Science will not be the highest in the Maritimes.

Dalhousie University already charges \$3895 in tuition in the Science Faculty, not including a few other supplementary fees for some courses. Dalhousie has yet to set tuition fees for next year.

What impact would large tuition increases have on a student's ability to pay? For example, would students in some faculties stretch out their degree programs to five or six years instead of the usual four because tuition would not be affordable?

Morris said studies at Saint Mary's University and Mount Saint Vincent University, where per-course tuition fees are charged, found that there have not been appreciable differences in the number of courses people take.

Would the Provincial Student Aid Program be able to absorb large potential increases in tuition at UNB?

Morris said as the Task Force enters the public discussion phase of its work an analysis will be done.

"Some preliminary discussions took place with Provincial Student Aid officials when the Task Force was considering a change in the method of calculating tuition."

"There seemed to be some indication that they would be able to



Veteran Brunswickan reporter Gordon Loane questions UNB Tuition Task Force Chair John Morris. DREW GILBERT PHOTO

adapt if the university went about the change", Morris indicated.

New Brunswick students who go to universities elsewhere and must pay tuition either by credit or by course already are accommodated by the student aid system, according to Morris.

The Task Force also looked at the feasibility of establishing work-study grants for UNB students. Several other universities provide work to students from lower socio-economic backgrounds.

"The whole idea presents some problems," said Morris.

"It would require funds from the university operating budget to provide the hourly wages for student workers at a time when all the budget projections that the Task Force had seen do not look very rosy."

"If we charge everybody who pays tuition so that money can go to work-study grants then the many pay for the benefit of a few," he said. Morris noted that establishing eligibility would present some problems and there would certainly be extra administrative expenses.

Morris was asked to defend a decision not to name any student to the seven person Task Force on Tuition Policy.

The Task Force has been taken to task this week for this omission by UNB Student Union Vice-President External Anthony Knight.

Naming a student to the Task Force was certainly discussed but in the end the tight time frame needed to complete the report, the work load of the Task Force and the difficulty of picking a representative student from among full-time undergraduates, part-timers and graduate students on two campuses mitigated against a selection.

"I decided and the Task Force agreed that it made more sense to do the preliminary work, do the analysis and put together a discussion paper which all members of the university community, including students, can comment on," Morris stated.

In its discussion paper, the Task Force looked at undergraduate tuition fees, supplementary fees, international student and graduate

student fees even rejecting an appeal for a Senior Citizens tuition waiver for auditing a course.

But there is no mention in the Task Force Report of the half-tuition waiver that has been in effect for many years for the families of UNB faculty and staff.

"The Task Force did not look at that matter although I can say it has been raised in the past," Morris said.

"It is not an easy one to deal with because for all but a few that policy is tied into collective agreements at UNB."

"But this is not a new perception or argument," he said.

"This is a publicly funded institution paid for by all the tax payers so why should certain ones get a break more than others," Morris said, reporting a line of argument raised by seniors groups when their tuition waiver was canceled in 1994.

Morris also said that the decision to recommend converting tuition fees to a per-course method is no attempt at any sort of "revenue grab."

The Task Force Report says the net effect of the conversion will mean a slight revenue gain on the Fredericton campus and a loss on the Saint John campus.

Morris could not provide the amount of the revenue gained on the Fredericton campus.

"We set up the system so that the university would not jeopardize its academic programs by suffering an overall reduction in revenue."

"That would not be in anyone's interest," said Morris.

Morris said the Task Force will be accepting written submissions until January 31st.

A final report of recommendations will be prepared by the Task Force next month.

Asked if the final report will be made public before it goes to the university's Board of Governors for final approval this Spring, Morris said that decision would be up to the President, Dr. Elizabeth Parr-Johnston.

GORDON LOANE
THE BRUNSWICKAN

UNB's Task Force on Tuition and other Student Fee Policies has concluded that the onus of ensuring access to post-secondary education should continue to rest with student aid programs offered by both the federal and provincial governments.

But the Task Force examined several options at other universities that might assist students in obtaining a degree at UNB.

The Task Force noted that the several universities in Canada follow a policy of allocating part of their income to finance scholarships and bursaries.

Dalhousie University has a program of this nature in place and the Province of Ontario now requires that universities in that province allocate two percent of their permitted student fee increase of twenty percent for 1996-97 to go towards institutional Student Aid programs.

UNB has decided not to adopt such a policy because the Government of New Brunswick, as a matter of policy, disallows general provincial operating grant funds from being used for residences, bookstores, food services, intercollegiate athletics, contract research or capital projects.

The Task Force report suggests the University should look at work-study grants similar to those offered at other universities.

Work-study programs provide grants to students with demonstrated financial need in return for part-time work of value to the institution.

The report concludes that the university does not have the resources at present to undertake this form of employment opportunity. The study points out that UNB is still a large provider of part-time work for students.

In studying the issue of scholarships at UNB, the Task Force notes that unfortunately the awards which the university is able to offer from private sources are not competitive with scholarship programs available at other universities.

A number of options were explored by the Task Force to improve the situation.

The report notes that the preferable option is to increase the amount of scholarships available at UNB by pursuing more private donors.

Otherwise, the university may have to look at the option of providing scholarships by supplementing the monies obtained from private sources with amounts from the University's annual operating budget.

UNB Student Union fee fourth highest in Maritimes

GORDON LOANE
THE BRUNSWICKAN

A survey conducted for UNB's Task Force on Tuition and Other Student Fee Policies shows compulsory Student Union fees for full-time and undergraduate students on the UNB Fredericton campus are the fourth highest of nineteen universities or colleges in the Maritimes.

Students at UNB Fredericton pay \$127.00 in Student Union Fees- \$102.00 to support the general operating budget of the SU and \$25 for a Sub Expansion Fee.

Students paying more SU fees than UNB Fredericton attend University of Kings College (\$273.00 per year), Mount Allison (\$192.00 in SU fees per year) and Acadia University (\$147.00 per year).

Students at Saint Thomas University pay \$91.50 while at Universite de Moncton the SU fee is \$104.50.



UPPERDECK

Keith's Crew Fraternity
Sat Jan 25th
Only \$5.00
2 Hours of Beer & Fun

**2:00 p.m.
Afternoon Tip**

(Not The Mickey Moose Club)

SUPERBOWL SUNDAY

3 x 10 Foot TV's

Pools - Prizes
Cheerleaders,
Face Painting

Happy Hours all day

OR

ALL-U-CAN-DRINK-DRAFT

Plus Steak Dinner
(7-10pm)
Only \$25

458-1254

NO COVER CHARGE

Dock Happy Hours

\$6.00 Pitchers 4-8pm
Mon - Sat

Poor Boy Mondays

\$1.50 Drinks in "Rave"
2 for 1 Beer 10-2am
\$3.99 1/2 pound steak
Dinner

Live Go-Go Dancer
Alternative Dance Nite

RAVE DANCE CLUB

DOCK PUB & BREWERY

LIVE
Fri, Sat, Sun
"Big City Blues"
No Cover

Next Week
"ANTIC"
Saturday
"Slocum Sisters"

UpperDeck
"Next Door Neighbours"

UPPERDECK SPORTS BAR

NEVER A COVER
457-1475

HILLTOP PUB

Terrific Tuesdays

8-10 1.05 Draught
9-11 2 for 1 Bar Shots
8-Close 1.75 Shooters

DJ...Dancing...Good Times...Good Friends

THUR - FRI - SAT

STARTING TIME

9PM-12 2 for 1 Bar Shots
9PM-11PM Munchies \$2.99

450-BREW

GRECO

Pizza On Time... Or Pizza On Us!...

Great Campus Special

Medium Pan 3 Items
\$7.99 plus taxes

Add a Toonie for 8" Garlic Fingers with sauce or stuffed crust

Only Greco Guarantees
FREE DELIVERY *After 5 pm conditions permitting
in 30 minutes or FREE FOOD*
DunDonald St. Store Only

Greco Student Number **454-3030**

We also deliver Free*
Donairs, Oven Subs, Garlic Fingers, Chicken Wings, Mozza Sticks
* Minimum \$8.00 order. Except other specials