



TEACHING MATTERS

newsletter

UNB Saint John

“TEACHING IN THE MIDST OF THE PSE”

BY DAVID CREELMAN & SANDRA BELL

MAY 2008

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Robert Whitney	2
Morris Mendelson	2
Ruth Shaw	3
Cheryl Fury	4
Murray Goddard	5
David Creelman	6
Elizabeth McGahan	7
Rod Hill	8
Janet Fraser	9
Paul-Émile Chiasson	10
Greg Marquis	10
Joe Galbo	11
Lynne McAlpine	12
Mary Ann Campbell	13
Miriam Jones	14
Mike Bradley	15
Joanna Everitt	16
Rob Moir	17
James Kieffer	18
Lisa Best	19

Editors: David Creelman &
Sandra Bell

Designer: Mary Astorino

For many at UNB Saint John, teaching in 2007–2008 was unlike teaching in any other year; as Cheryl Fury writes, “last year has given us all a crash course in political science, whether we signed up for it or not.” Editors Sandra Bell and David Creelman thought that Teaching Matters might act as a record of the experience of teaching under the pressure of the PSE report. When we called for submissions from across the campus we were impressed, and maybe a bit surprised, that we received contributions from every faculty and sector of UNBSJ; we appreciate that so many people across campus were willing to undertake the sometimes difficult task of recording and reflecting on their experiences. In this edition, we have gathered together a range of voices that detail the effect of the PSE experience on what happened (or did not happen) in the classroom; on the relationships of faculty, students, staff and the larger community; and, as Robert Whitney succinctly puts it, on our need to address the question of “why university teaching matters.” The difficulty of conducting classes, of motivating ourselves and our students, of balancing academics and politics are concerns addressed by many; however, these submissions also reveal the growing sense of a united purpose and increased commitment to our university and our community. As Rob Moir states, “we taught like we never taught before; we taught as if our lives, and the life of the community, depended upon it.” Of course, faculty are not the only ones in the classroom, and we have given the last word to the students, their concerns collected by Lisa Best.

Calls for Papers

Are you interested in contributing to UNBSJ’s own teaching journal? The following are calls for submissions for editions of the 2008–2009 academic year.

Teaching Matters Fall 2008

Students learn best when they’re engaged with the material, and teaching is most fulfilling when you have engaged students. Sometimes, however, class sizes or course material or other concerns challenge our attempts to capture our students’ imaginations and involve them actively in their own education. The next edition of Teaching Matters wants you to share your positive experiences, your “top tips,” of engaging students and creating active learners. Have you developed successful strategies in the large classroom? Created assignments that encourage more involvement? Found the secret to getting students to read required material? Share your expertise with us. Entries should be between 250–2000 words. Submission date is 3 November, 2008.

Teaching Matters Winter 2009

While we spend a lot of time teaching at UNBSJ, we are also busy with research projects and community enterprises. Teaching Matters wants to provide you with an opportunity to share with colleagues and the larger community how your activities as a researcher or your involvement in the community shapes what you do in the classroom. Entries should be between 250–2000 words. Submission date is 6 February, 2009.

DOES UNIVERSITY TEACHING MATTER: TRUE OR FALSE?

ROBERT WHITNEY / DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY AND POLITICS

When I was asked to submit a piece on my teaching experience during the fall semester of 2007 at UNB in Saint John, my immediate reaction was to decline the offer. The fall of 2007 was without a doubt the most difficult term in my professional life, and I thought I did not want to remind myself of some rather unpleasant memories. But on further reflection, I concluded that it can be important to voice memories, no matter how unpleasant, and hopefully we can learn from past experiences and draw some lessons for the future.

From talking to colleagues, I do not think my experience of fall 2007 was that different from most other people. We were all swept-up into a storm and found ourselves fighting for something that none of us imagined we would ever have to fight for: the principle that a university education should be accessible to the people of Saint John and region and that the university is a valuable part of the community. The idea that anyone would challenge these ideas was – and remains – incomprehensible. But, there were – and remain – powerful people who do not share this perspective. They still might get what they want.

It was precisely this sense of the living the unimaginable that made the teaching experience of fall 2007 at best surreal, and at worst, depressing. In my case I was fortunate to be teaching courses I had frequently taught in the past, so I had no course

preparation to worry about. Still, under normal conditions I always update lectures, re-think teaching methods, and spend more time working with students. Since conditions were far from normal, those things did not happen. I felt constantly distracted and ill-prepared. I know many of my students felt the same way. Students, staff, and faculty were under collective attack, and we never really understood why. By the end of the term, I know that I, and several of my students, were simply angry: we were going to do our small part to keep this university going, no matter what and for as long as possible. That anger got us through the term.

Which leads me to the question of why university teaching matters. That is the question we were forced to address over and over again in the fall of 2007. We all know that our job as teachers is to help students learn to think critically and to develop the reading, writing, speaking, and research skills that are required for critical thinking. Our job is not to “produce workers” for the labour market. Thanks to the experiences of fall 2007, I now inform my students that the one of my primary teaching objectives is to help them identify who has power in our society, why some people have power and others don’t, and how to develop the critical thinking skills (“skills based knowledge”) to resist those in power, if necessary.

MY SURVIVAL IN THE CLASSROOM DURING THE PSE REPORT CONTROVERSY

MORRIS MENDELSON / FACULTY OF BUSINESS

As the 2007-2008 academic year winds to a close, assignments are marked and exams are written and graded, we should take some time to reflect on the year that was. And, oh what a year it was!!! I think it goes without saying that due to the bomb called the PSE report exploding over NB late last summer, many of us are still shell shocked, but hopefully recovering from what has been, and somewhat continues to be a tremendously taxing time for the entire university community here in Saint John.

From a personal perspective, it has been downright stressful and it has affected me in almost every one of my life roles, including the one I play at home with my spouse and our many pets. However, it has most affected my experience in the classroom. Although a majority of the stuff that hit the proverbial fan did so in the Fall, I find that the effects are still reverberating today. As I reflect on these events, I ask myself the following questions. How did the PSE report and the ensuing uncertainty affect me, and my engagement level with the material covered in my classes? In what ways did it require me to adjust what and how I facilitated classroom learning? What effects did I observe with my students? And finally, in what ways has this experience served to both enhance and detract from the teaching experience?

It was late August, a time when both professors and students were preparing for the new academic year. Word leaked in the press that the commissioners of the PSE report (Rick Miner and Jacques L’Ecuyer) would be recommending the “transformation” of two Université du Moncton campuses and the University of New Brunswick Saint John into Polytechnic Institutes. The rumour became substantiated upon the release of their report on September 14th, 2007. Not a very auspicious start to the new academic cycle to say the least.

As others can attest, the ability to invest all of one’s emotional, physical and cognitive resources into facilitating learning in the classroom was rigorously challenged due to the external pressures brought to bear from this flawed report. First, there were many on and off campus protests organized mainly by the students and by a fairly small group of dedicated faculty members. Emails, phone calls, strategy meetings, and protest planning certainly cut into the time and energy needed to effectively administer my classes, never mind conducting research. Nonetheless, being able to do something and have people come together in an attempt to effect positive change and redirect the government was in many ways, a very positive learning experience.

Although a few of my classes were cancelled due to these events,

MY SURVIVAL IN THE CLASSROOM DURING THE PSE REPORT CONTROVERSY**CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2**

and class attendance sometimes suffered, I did find, that despite these challenges, my anger and passion was often redirected positively into the material I covered in my classes. Perhaps it was the nature of the material that facilitated this. Covering leadership theory with MBA students certainly dovetailed nicely with the events unfolding in our community. We saw many academic, student, and community leaders emerge during this crisis. This stood in stark contrast to the misguided leadership of the provincial Liberals.

In my Human Resources class, I often discuss the moral and economic merits of putting people first and looking at employees as an organization's most important resource. This requires deep investments in training, recruitment and selection, sound compensation and performance management practices, health and safety and positive employee relations in general. It was with passion that I often used the handling of the PSE debacle as how NOT to treat people. And my students were quite engaged by these discussions and I sincerely believe some very deep learning occurred.

The winter semester however, was a very different story. Although the worst of the PSE controversy seemed behind us by the end of January (once the Premier finally signaled that UNBSJ and the U de M campuses were "safe"), the stresses of the ongoing uncertainty had apparently taken its toll.

I have at times found it extremely difficult to engage my students this last semester. This is unusual, as normally my students are quite interested and willing to discuss and debate various HR and leadership theories and practices. In fact, my classes are designed in such a way as to minimize lecturing while maximizing learning through discussion and questioning, case work, group activities, and self-assessments. Even so, as compared with other semesters, I witnessed a significant drop

in attendance and participation in some of my classes. On a positive note, this forced me to take many more risks by trying different learning techniques, often on the fly. For the most part, however, I found it to be one of the most frustrating semesters due to my difficulty in inspiring my students.

I have frequently reflected on why this might be occurring. Until recently, I just assumed that this was likely a result of my fatigue and reduced commitment after such a grueling experience. However, I have spoken with a number of my colleagues who express similar sentiments about their classes.

I guess it should come as no surprise, especially to me, that this has occurred. One has to look no further than organizational theory. Organizational behaviourists and human resource specialists agree that when you threaten people's security with potential job losses and destroy their psychological contract by violating mutually agreed upon implicit and explicit expectations you will end up with employees with low levels of job satisfaction and emotional commitment to their organization. In effect, this is what the government did to all employees at universities and colleges across this province. But even more importantly, I believe that this has had a very similar impact on students. The same psychological principles apply regardless of one's organizational role. This would certainly be a very interesting case study to write and share with future generations of business students. Perhaps, this can be an additional task that I will take on during my much need Sabbatical leave starting this July.

Upon my return in 2009, I look forward to entering the classroom with renewed vigor, having had time for the effects of the PSE report to wear off. I certainly hope that we, as an academic community, are able to heal the wounds, work together and grow that much stronger; but not just for us, but for all, especially our current and future students.

**RECOLLECTIONS ON THE IMPACT OF THE PSE REPORT ON CLASSES
IN THE FALL OF 2007****RUTH SHAW - DEPARTMENT OF COMPUTER SCIENCE AND APPLIED SCIENCE**

This past fall was an experience most of us would not want to repeat ... but the silver lining was the increased profile of our campus and programs within the community and province. It still surprises me that the general public does not know that UNB Saint John is a full-fledged university campus with numerous four year degree programs! Hopefully the uproar caused by the PSE has changed this perception for the better.

As for the effect this had in the classroom, my experience was that the impact was negligible. The computer courses I taught did not present an opportunity to incorporate current events into the curriculum so the PSE fallout was swirling around outside of the classroom but not inside it.

Some of our upper level computer science students were very upset, however, and I am sure this impacted their studies. Our part-time students were concerned about finishing their degrees and our international students were concerned about the value of their degree if UNB Saint John ceased to exist. A significant number of our students fall into the part-time and international category so we do not know what impact this will have on our program enrolments for the upcoming year.

TEACHING & LEARNING IN THE TRENCHES

CHERYL FURY - DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY & POLITICS

The uncertainty which clung to UNBSJ over the last while has probably taken years off my life. The issue played out on so many levels. Naturally, I worried about my job. I couldn't imagine living or working in a place that didn't have a university and I have no wish to uproot my family from Saint John. However, my husband and I both have university degrees and I felt confident we were employable elsewhere, if the very worst should happen. I had no doubt that our sons would go to university somewhere even though I was determined to fight tooth and nail to ensure they would be able to earn a degree in their hometown. After all, their grandparents were active supporters of the founding of the university in Saint John over 40 years ago.

On days when the rumour mill spewed forth grim tidings about the university's fate, I mourned the potential loss of scholars and staff who had put down roots and contributed so much to the city. At least we had options. More worrisome was the fact that many students (who were already at the end of their financial tether) would have no access to a university education should UNBSJ close down. Almost everyone, it seemed, had a story about what this place meant to them and were keen to share it. I gained a new appreciation for what an educational lifeline UNBSJ is to a wide range of people.

It goes without saying that the prospect of UNBSJ being turned into a polytechnic caused us all to do much soul searching. That wasn't necessarily a bad thing. At the height of the PSE crisis, in the depressing days of autumn '07, offices, hallways, classrooms and parking lots hosted countless conversations about what a university is and what it isn't. The future of post-secondary education in N.B. was a catalyst for rollicking discussions about every facet of university education and its place in the greater scheme of things. The ripples of this were felt well outside our once quiet campus.

In addition to grey hairs and an active ulcer, I emerged with a clearer vision why I am an educator and what I believe the purpose of a university degree is. From all these discussions, I also know with a greater clarity why my colleagues do what they do and how essential the role of UNBSJ is in our lives.

The crisis of this year broke down many barriers between faculty and students and forged greater links between the university and the larger community. I think we have all benefited from the dialogue that resulted from the proposed post-secondary education changes although I wish it did not take place at gunpoint.

I don't know if I did my best teaching this year but I can say I appreciate my time in the classroom more than ever. It's a rare day I don't look forward to going to work—ok, I admit to some cranky days during essay marking season—but one values one's students, colleagues and even a leaky, windowless office when others threaten to take it away.

Besides teaching at UNBSJ, I was also a student. Before the onset of the PSE crisis in September I had enrolled in a first year Latin class B something I had wanted to do for years. I felt privileged to be learning a language which was the gateway to the Ancients and the Universal Church. While some might argue that Latin was dead, I could see that it was very much alive in modern languages as well as my own research. Yet, if the proposed Miner-L'Écuyer changes were implemented, it would likely mean the termination of my brief career in Latin. That one had to defend the study of a language which had been the bedrock of scholarship in western civilization for eons was even more mindboggling than declensions themselves. Latin was most definitely, like UNBSJ, "worth the fight".

The material I taught in my own History courses took on a new resonance as well. I could see endless parallels in every chapter of the past and so could my students. As we jeered at politicians at countless rallies, I developed a new appreciation for rioters in early modern Europe. It's easier to savour Churchillian oratory when you're feeling like Britain circa 1940.

As I looked around my classroom every day, I wondered if this would be the last year that the cash-strapped students would be able to study the past or literature or philosophy B the things that give my life so much meaning and shape my worldview. As I heard myself explaining why Renaissance scholars believed fervently that studying the Humanities was the best preparation for life, I pondered why I had to justify teaching courses which enhanced students' ability to write, think critically and understand the world around them. Surely such courses were both "applied" and marketable – the buzz words of the PSE debate. Yet, given the scorn aimed at Arts degrees in some of the rhetoric, it was evident we needed to reiterate the Humanists' arguments again and again for the modern age. The educational barbarians were at the gates and three NB campuses of higher

TEACHING AND LEARNING IN THE TRENCHES
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

learning were under siege. Although those who supported UNBSJ grew skillful at articulating their own case for the continuing existence of our university, we learned that the political debate is as much about mobilizing opposition and emotion as having the most polished argument.

Just as in the many crises in the human past, people reacted in a variety of ways: some as fighters, others as ostriches who hid their heads in the sand, and everything in between. I was determined that at the very least, my students would learn how to fight for access to education. Preserving UNBSJ might be the first time they fought so frantically but at some point in their lives, they would doubtless have to take on The Man again. This was the most important lesson of the year: it is my hope we are graduating more lions than ostriches.

I suppose that the last year has given us all a crash course in political science, whether we signed up for it or not. For me, teaching is about relationships between student and instructor and the PSE crisis surely bred some mighty tight connections. Standing shoulder to shoulder with one's students, placards in hand, would not have been the sort of extra-curricular bonding activity I would have chosen but unquestionably, it did the trick.

I very much hope that the last year has renewed our commitment to university education, research and academic freedom. Somehow I think it will be a very long time before I take my position as a teacher and a lifelong learner for granted.

ONE PSYCHOLOGIST'S PERSPECTIVE ON THE PSE REPORT
MURRAY GODDARD - DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY

In September, 2007, I was teaching a graduate seminar course (Psychology 6303 – Biological Bases of Behavior) to five graduate students, three from UNBSJ and two from Fredericton. In addition, I was teaching a third year undergraduate psychology course (Psychology 3743 – Comparative Psychology) to approximately 75 students.

In Psychology 6303, I had chosen a fairly “high level” textbook that was approximately 1000 pages in length. Introductory material was taught by me at the beginning of term and then each student was responsible for two class presentations. In addition, there were two exams, each composed of 50 multiple-choice questions, 10-20 short answer questions, and two essay questions. Prior to the beginning of term, I had organized the course so the entire textbook could be covered. Unfortunately, there was one storm day, so the students had an exceptionally long class the following week to ensure all material was covered (I have tenure now so I'm not particularly worried about negative teaching evaluations!).

In Psychology 6303, there was not much time to talk about the PSE Report but I did have several opportunities to talk with the two graduate students from Fredericton before and after class. Both graduate students assured me that while UNBSJ was experiencing considerable turmoil,

many students and faculty in Fredericton were only dimly aware of the PSE Report and many had little understanding of how damaging the report was to UNBSJ.

In Psychology 3743, I had chosen a standard textbook and at the beginning of term planned the course so the entire textbook was covered. Due to the number of students, it was not feasible to have class presentations but there were three exams and a cumulative final. All exams consisted of 50% multiple-choice questions, 40% short answer questions, and 10% essay questions. Fortunately, the storm fell outside a class day so the entire textbook was covered without incident. Again, in this course, there was not much time available to talk about the PSE Report. However, the PSE Report appeared to have an effect on the students, although one must carefully consider that these are subjective impressions and wouldn't really “cut the mustard” from a scientific perspective. Nevertheless, in my mind, some students appeared to be more distracted than usual. One mature student in particular, that earned high grades and sat near the front of the class, appeared particularly distracted. Later, I found out that, as a mature student, she was unsure how she could afford to complete her degree by traveling to Fredericton when she had family obligations in Saint John. To her credit, however, she still managed to earn a nice grade, although it was somewhat lower than her previous grades.

TEACHING IN SPITE OF THE PSE

DAVID CREELMAN - HUMANITIES AND LANGUAGES

On October 17th the Provincial government promised that Saint John would continue to have a “strong university presence.” The phrase was of little comfort to the students and professors at UNBSJ who knew that the future of the university was still uncertain. But the government press release seemed to signal that the Liberals were beginning to look for a way to back down from an issue they were not prepared to push further. And though petitions, letters, articles, blog-postings, and parodies continued to be generated until Graham finally announced, with infuriating tardiness, on January 31st, that UNBSJ will remain a part of UNB, by the middle of October, the most intense period of protest was over. But what a strange period those first six weeks of term had been.

In some ways it never really felt like a normal term. Meetings about and protests against the PSE started shortly after our first classes met, and anxieties about the future of the university pre-occupied everyone throughout the term. Some odd things inevitably occurred within those first six weeks of term. Some of these unusual things were at a practical level. Two of my classes were shortened and material had to be rescheduled so that students could attend mass rallies and public meetings. Moreover, at the beginning of several classes in September, lectures were set aside to make room for discussions about the university’s future. It seemed odd to be talking about government reports and inane education proposals at the beginning of a class about Modern British Literature, but it was necessary. Until the upper level students had been reassured that they, at least, would be able to finish their degrees in Saint John, there was little energy in the classroom to begin discussing the work at hand. And then there were the inevitable requests for extensions from students -- who had been writing articles, drafting letters, and making signs -- who needed a few more days to finish their papers. And besides the disruptions at the practical level, we had to teach and learn in the midst of considerable turmoil and passion. That we had to attempt to work and learn in such a tense and anxious environment made us angry at the government. That a few arrogant technocrats were willing to limit the educational options available to a large part of the population of Southern New Brunswick made us furious. That the students were able to focus and learn at all during that period was a real testimony to their commitment to the university.

But amid the tension and stress there were some interesting and valuable teaching moments. I was impressed, repeatedly, by the skills my students displayed when engaged in public forums. It was encouraging to know that our students could argue cogently, express themselves forcefully, and employ the very analytic skills they had been working hard to develop. It was also encouraging to see students defend the subject areas for which they had developed a deep passion. In my English classes my students felt targeted by a government which was not-so-subtly suggesting that

their interest in the arts in general, and in literature in particular, was a waste of time. The arts students in particular felt, perhaps more acutely than ever, that narrow segments of society were attempting to reduce their education to training. They felt attacked by a government that was saying, in no uncertain terms, that education is a product and a learner has value only in so far as they serve the current demands of the marketplace. I was impressed by the passion and intelligence of UNBSJ students as they insisted their education meant more to them than job-training. They wanted to know about cultural contexts wider than their own city; they wanted to connect with the ideas and values of men and women who established the ground on which we think and feel; and they affirmed that while finances are important, so are aesthetics, ideas, and art. It was affirming to be teaching a group of students who obviously and passionately wanted a full university education.

A highlight for me, during the fall term, came early in September when my students in Canadian Literature examined Irving Layton’s poem, “The Fertile Muck.” I have taught this text several times before, but never to a class who instantly understood, and cared deeply about Layton’s celebration of the role of art and poetry. Though English students inevitably encounter writers who attempt to explain and justify what they are trying to do, Layton’s verse seemed to be speaking directly to our situation. Without any intention of doing so, an inept Liberal government had made a fifty year old Canadian poem immediately relevant for my students:

And if in August joiners and bricklayers
are thick as flies around us
building expensive bungalows for those
who do not need them, unless they release
me roaring from their moth-proofed cupboards
their buyers will have no joy, no ease.

Whatever else our students learned during the fall of 07, they learned that their protests and words, ideas and passions can awaken a whole community. And they learned that their city does value their work and their interests. I don’t want to ever repeat this year, but I’m grateful to know that while our government does not understand what we are trying to do, our students and our city care deeply about the work of this university.



Discover your inner superhero.
UNBSJ needs you.

ELIZABETH W. MCGAHAN
DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY & POLITICS

On the first day of classes, an off-campus colleague left a voice mail message confirming what I had suspected from the end of May: the forthcoming PSE report – to be released in eight days – would recommend that UNB Saint John should become a polytechnic institute. At that moment the events of the previous year – the intermittent faculty meetings held from October 2006 through April 2007, the setting up of a university–government relations office on the campus, the spring and summer newspaper accounts promoting a Knowledge and Technology Institute for the city, and the late August comments in French language newspapers predicting the “transformation” of a university to a polytechnic institute – all seemed to meld into a stunning and disheartening recommendation. The sackcloth ambience of the impromptu campus wide assembly held on September 12 and presided over by the university’s senior administrators two days before the official government release of its commissioned report reinforced the anxiety of the students and faculty.

On September 13, when my class met for the second time, most of the students seemed to know what the next morning’s government announcement would contain. As this was an upper level history class, several students anxiously wondered if they would be able to graduate from UNB Saint John. One or two asked if their credits would be accepted elsewhere. Most did not concern themselves with “elsewhere” because moving out of the city would be financially untenable. A number were already talking about a protest demonstration.

Well before classes had resumed in September, a number of faculty members realized that something potentially untoward was afoot. Several had been meeting privately with public officials, advocating for the university. A few attended a Saint John common council meeting on September 10. With the announcement on morning of September 14 the students and several faculty members began planning a rally to “greet” the formal presentation of the PSE report in Saint John. A number of students from my class were present on that day. The demonstration seemed to generate a host of individual and collective efforts from the students and the faculty to keep UNB Saint John on the public’s mind. Over the next few weeks close to 4000 “Save UNB Saint John” cards were signed and sent to the provincial government urging the retention of the university in Saint John. Meanwhile, any number of faculty undertook specific initiatives.

Until I was forced to desist I spent the weekends in September and October addressing local church congregations about the danger to Saint John if the government accepted the PSE recommendation. Conversations in the vestibules of churches revealed a source of ground level opinion not accessible in other venues that was conveyed directly to a number of colleagues and selected staff colleagues charged with defending UNB Saint John.

Invariably the lobbying experience whether in the churches, among the city councilors, or the MLAs found its way into my class lectures.

In my class – a course in nineteenth and twentieth century European history – there were opportunities to relate the current struggle in Saint John for university access to the obstacles faced by nineteenth century promoters of universal literacy. In a few classes I took time to reflect on Saint John’s quest to acquire a university: an institution viewed by its early proponents to serve those in the community who could not afford to leave the city to pursue higher learning, but equally important, also seen as an institution that could establish a base for developing the city’s intellectual capital. We talked about how all westernized countries had experienced some form of renewal after the Second World War: some literally rebuilding their urban infrastructure; others in Canada and the US rebuilding their urban infrastructure. We discussed the city’s past and how a renewed urban infrastructure in Saint John had been viewed by many civic leaders as including a university... that it had taken until the mid 1960s to achieve that goal.

At different times during class last term as I glanced across the faces of my students – all of whom had part time jobs to support their attendance at university – I wondered how could their elected representatives even contemplate removing access to higher education from their own constituents. It was a great challenge carrying on with the routines of the term when the ambience on the campus was anything but routine. I taught only one course but I found the combination of preparing for a weekly class, advocating one on one with various individuals and groups and attending rallies in both Saint John and Fredericton tremendously draining. In September and October after each rally or public meeting during which many students – including several from my class – eloquently articulated why the university should remain in Saint John, I felt that the students’ passionate defense of their institution was a superb testimony to the success of UNB Saint John. As the term moved into late October and November, students and faculty, too, were emotionally exhausted from all of the effort to “Save UNB Saint John.”

I have lived in Saint John since 1985 and have been a student of its history for more than three decades. Saint John is a city of personal contacts where access to on-the-ground knowledge is crucial. Some of the questions that I received from the admittedly select community groups with whom I spoke reinforced what I have come to know over the past number of years: support for UNB Saint John had slipped among its former community advocates, perhaps not in any deliberate way but we had dropped from the community’s radar. Somehow I think we had become remote. Although our students and a number of our faculty are connected as individuals to the community, the institution as a collective entity was perceived in many quarters to

ELIZABETH W. MCGAHAN

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7

have drifted from its local moorings. And in Saint John, a small community of even smaller communities, our campus cannot afford this perception for a host of historical reasons.

What I discovered as I met with various people is that we, at UNB Saint John, were vulnerable and we didn't even know it. The government, I am sure unintentionally, helped us to grasp this fact. After all, the government had received a recommendation to shut down the campus, suggesting just how tenuous our relationship to the wider community was perceived to be.

None of us – the administration, the community relations staff, the faculty or the students – were hired to “Save UNB Saint John.” But at some level that is what many of us were doing in the fall term of 2007. To be sure there were missteps which deserve greater scrutiny at a later date.

UNB Saint John was “saved” at least for now thanks to the visible efforts of the students and faculty who took to the streets at the immediate risk of interfering with their work for the long range goal of preserving a university. Their success in galvanizing sufficient numbers from the greater community to join in condemning the recommendation of the PSE report spoke to the emerging recognition of UNB Saint John's role within the city. The political implications of so many bodies at the rallies in Saint John and the rally in front of the Legislature was not lost on local MLAs. As one told me: you cannot ignore a few thousand people in the street.

Last term, students experienced real-life activism in defense of their university and their futures while attempting to carry on with their usual routines. At the same time, faculty engaged in defending UNB Saint John's existence and relevance to the city had to acknowledge that arguments about access to opportunity and building a broadly based source of intellectual capital for the city are not enough. The idea of a university, any university, is still relatively new in Saint John. And so the professoriate, and the entire campus community, must bring the campus to the city in a renewed commitment to campus outreach. In a city that is still getting used to having a university it is too easy to be targeted as elitist and irrelevant. In a city where only one generation has reached adulthood with a university in its midst UNB Saint John's faculty must be a proactive presence. We can never forget that the idea of a university is still relatively novel in Saint John. All of us were reminded of this on September 14.

ROD HILL

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SCIENCE

The struggle for the campus's survival that followed the disgusting performance of The Two Stooges in the Delta Brunswick Hotel in September, while very stressful at times, had some surprisingly positive aspects too.

My normal work routine is very solitary. I work at home as much as possible; I hardly ever see students outside of the classroom, and it's easy for a month to go by without having even one conversation with someone from another department (with one obvious exception).

The post-Two-Stooges situation was very different: working with colleagues from other departments collecting signatures at the Kingston Market or making demonstration signs with students or participating in demos, for example. There was a real pleasure in collective action for a common purpose.

Perhaps I am not alone among my colleagues in often being beset by doubts about the social value of what we do. (Will any of the students remember anything from this course in the future? Will it matter even if they don't? Am I handing out passing grades to students whose understanding of the subject matter barely exceeds that of an inebriated newt?) Some of those doubts were pushed aside by the sight of the enormous number of people who came out to the demonstration in Saint John organized by John Wallace and his committee. They were saying very emphatically that what we do is worthwhile.

But it would be a shame if, after the apparent victory, we just go back to the status quo ante. Our campus was singled out for attack not only because it sits on the oligarchy's home turf and seemed to be within easy reach of its claws, but also because of our perceived weakness. While the campus was saved by a level of broad public support that must have surprised the government, the onus is now on us to give more back to the community. Let's think about how to do that.

TEACHING IN INTERESTING TIMES

JANET FRASER - WARD CHIPMAN LIBRARY

As I approached my fourth-year anniversary at UNB Saint John in August of 2007, I reflected on the many changes I had witnessed since my first day at Ward Chipman Library. Changes any campus might experience: faculty and staff retirements and hirings, a subtly different blend of students each year, cosmetic improvements to the campus buildings and grounds, enhancements to programmes, services, and technologies. And then there were the hints of a proposed metamorphosis in the upcoming PSE Report, a proposed transformational change that many of us faculty, staff and students suspected might not be in the best interests of our 'quiet' campus.

I had not worked at UNB Saint John long enough to fully understand its history and reputation as a 'quiet' campus. However, I have deep family roots in Saint John and I know something of the quiet pride of Saint Johners and the quiet anxieties and disappointments of people who live in a "company town". The first hint I had that perhaps this quiet campus would find a united voice, and a loud voice at that, was the invitation I was given by a faculty colleague, Miriam Jones, to join the blog "livingininterestingtimes". Only weeks later the blog became much more than a 'buzz' around campus. It became the hive around which worker bee students, staff and faculty created, collaborated, and reported.

I've been a traveller most of my life, a traveller who has attended four universities and worked at over a dozen libraries. I was able to view our campus crisis with a modicum of objectivity, I believe, and it's this objectivity that intensified my feelings of admiration and passion for the vibrant, dedicated and talented people of this campus. To paraphrase Dann Downes, we're the cool campus, and it's our turn to show New Brunswick just how important, necessary and wonderful we are.

At the same time, I admit to subjectivity and personal vulnerability: I have a job I love and want to continue, and I work in a library that this year has undergone entirely positive 'transformational' change. With our highly successful new Learning Commons, a variety of enhancements related to our building and our services, and an increase in our librarians' teaching output, we at Ward Chipman have much more than ever a cause for celebration of UNB Saint John.

There's no doubt the crisis took a toll on everyone, professionally and personally. Ironically, this past fall was the time chosen to have librarians fulfil their teaching mandates more comprehensively than ever. Yet it was a time when stressed faculty members were often unable to accommodate librarians who wished to teach in-class. My librarian colleague David Ross and I discussed this issue. In David's words: "One professor told me that rallies, protest, and meeting had cut into his class time so much that he could find no time for me to talk to his class about the library. This was understandable because, under the circumstances, he was struggling to cover all the material he wanted to teach, but he and I were disappointed that I would not have the chance to talk to his students. This also made me wonder how many other instructors wanted me to provide library instruction for their students, but couldn't find time to schedule it because of the pressures placed on them. This, for me, was the most negative part of the PSE review experience."

David was a newly-graduated professional librarian when he was hired by UNB Saint John in the summer of 2007. He says: "When I saw the community's and the university's reaction to the PSE report, I learned very quickly and convincingly how important and how valued UNBSJ is to so many people in New Brunswick and around the world. I really felt the spirit of this place and felt like I was a part of something special, which was really great, especially because I was so new to UNBSJ and to Saint John and didn't expect to feel so attached to the university and the city so quickly."

Negatives and positives – is it possible to call the experience a 'mixed blessing'? Given the choice, I suppose I'd say I wish it had never happened. I know that the library was able to flourish under these difficult circumstances, and I believe that it provided a warm place to land in when things seemed to be flying off-course. As far as library instruction goes, I taught mostly in situations that appeared to be "business as usual". However, I did get to know many of the faculty members and students better through the interplay of class instruction and political involvement. And I was touched by the number of students who spoke highly of the faculty members and the university not only when I met with them on campus, but also when I ran into them around the city, usually at their part-time jobs.

TEACHING UNDER THE PSE REPORT - FALL - 2007

PAUL-ÉMILE CHIASSON - EDUCATION/TESL COORDINATOR

The release of the Post-Secondary Report on Education had a profound effect on the students of the BA/B.ed. Concurrent Program at UNB Saint John. First and foremost on their minds was would they be able to complete their four year concurrent degree, and what value would be placed on two degrees from a “Polytechnic” type of institution. Another factor was the impossibility of many of our students attending university elsewhere as we have a significant number of mature students, single parent students and those who can’t afford the costs of completing degrees elsewhere. Fears and apprehension had to be dealt with and the classroom was the venue.

The impact in the classroom was therefore direct and immediate. In particular, during my ED: 3051 course, School Law and Organization I felt compelled and wanted to address the concerns of the education students. In fact some of the more vocal protesters were from our program. The issue was also constantly part of questions during the many advising sessions that I regularly conduct with education students during the term.

On a personal note, it meant that some adaptations had to be made in class to address concerns. Work outside of class as well was affected as many students came for supplementary advising to discuss the possible scenarios, but more to seek reassurance. It ultimately had an impact on my regular workload as additional time had to be spent to counsel students. This left little time for regular tasks that needed to be attended to and was a source of stress for all concerned.

TEACHING DURING THE CRISIS

GREG MARQUIS - DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY & POLITICS

Teaching during the PSE controversy of 2007, especially in September and October, was both highly memorable and entirely forgettable – that latter because of the crisis-driven atmosphere. Although everyone’s energy levels were drained and stress levels were high, there was plenty of drama and excitement. As someone who prefers to be somewhat detached in class, it was a bit unnerving to hear myself expressing my own opinions.

As an instructor, I did let a number of small things pass, but I held all of my classes except for one, the day of the rally in Fredericton. I also granted extensions on all assignments. It was inspiring to see students – and former students – at the various rallies and meetings and although we were blocked by ‘protocol’ from speaking in Saint John area high schools, graduates of those schools freely volunteered to return there to speak on the importance of maintaining UNBSJ. I also received a number of well-written email messages from students whose insights and eloquence were second to none. In the end, the students were the true defenders of their institution. This was not always an easy task, and many struggled to find the right balance between devoting time to activism and to their studies. Despite the 18-hour days, and despite the fact that many administrative duties and almost all research by professors were put on hold, the education process at UNBSJ weathered the storm. My sense was that most students, staff and professors actually benefited from the experience.

TEACHING AT UNBSJ AT A TIME OF "TRANSFORMATIONAL CHANGE"**JOE GALBO - DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SCIENCE**

Jotting down my thoughts about the teaching experience during the aftermath of the PSE report felt like coming to terms with the ghosts. It forced me to revisit many issues with which we so recently and heatedly engaged and to draw lessons from the experience, knowing full well that these ghosts will haunt us again.

In the fall and winter months we watched the Saint John community rally around its university in a show of public support that forced the Liberals of Shawn Graham to retreat temporarily. When the report came out I was stunned at the shoddiness of the research and the lightness of its ideas, not to mention the \$1.2 million price tag. I became involved in the Save UNBSJ committee because what was being proposed was an outrageous attack on the very idea of a public university. No one that I know at UNBSJ is for the status quo given the unfair treatment of our funding formula, but the PSE was just pandering to the more venal interests of business. What was equally galling were the attempts of the local media and the government to frame the issue in terms of the reactions of an emotional self-interested group of academics and students and their families versus a rational, level-headed consortium of politicians, media pundits and chamber of commerce types who think they know what is best for the city and have the arrogance of power to wish to make it so.

The PSE turmoil was disruptive for students and faculty alike but I think I had an easier time than some of my colleagues because as a sociologist and media researcher there was a natural fit between the content of my classes and what was occurring in local politics and the media. I kept pretty close to my syllabi and felt no tension between doing my teaching and addressing the threat to my university. The topics I investigate in my courses deal with film, alternative media, politics, culture and public intellectuals. Often these themes may seem distant and abstract to students but unfolding right in front of their eyes were events that made them relevant and personal. Suddenly these issues mattered for my students in a way that they may have not before.

Many of the students I worked with were already actively involved in facebook, blogs, the campus radio station, writing for the campus newspaper, and making films. During the PSE brouhaha I was particularly impressed at students' abilities and skills at creating alternative sources of information, something that happened very quickly and was executed with tremendous intelligence and a sense of

urgency. The rallies were filmed and posted on YouTube: you can still watch in unforgiving close up Minister Doherty's unwillingness to defend UNBSJ and his city. International students were particularly vocal against the PSE and one intervention by a Chinese student during the Miner/L'Ecuyer presentation at the Delta Hotel was a priceless example of cutting through the intellectual smokescreen of the report and getting to the nub of the issue: "Do you now what we call a polytechnic in China? We call it a fake university."

A lively and serious democratic discussion about the role and purpose of a university, drawing thousands of students and other citizens, took shape everyday in Facebook pages across the province and spilled into the opinion pages of the Telegraph-Journal. Issues of accessibility, the relevance of knowledge, the importance of nurturing curiosity, and the complexity of modern public education were addressed in a serious manner. In a province where the media is anything but autonomous this was a refreshing and hopeful reminder that there is a new generation out there, media savvy, adept at the use of new media technology, and able to bypass the framing devices used by the conventional media. If further evidence is needed of the emerging phenomena in New Brunswick of a vibrant media alternative, think of the growing opposition to the government's plan to cancel French immersion and the viral political movements that are enabled by Facebook and blogs.

Teaching during the PSE, and especially teaching courses related to the media, turned out to be invigorating and I hope challenging for my students. During the fall term students and faculty were reacting to events and moved to action. Winter term was more of a holding pattern. When Premier Graham finally announced that there will be a university in Saint John and it will be part of UNB we all had a sigh of relief, but the unnecessary ordeal took a toll on most of us. After the initial release of creative energy student and faculty felt exhausted. Today the forces responsible for the PSE, like ghosts, continue to haunt us. The future of our university continues to be unclear and so it is up to us — students, faculty, staff and the community — to defend the idea of a public university and build on the alternative and significant networks and coalitions created during this fight.

ESL/LAT/PSE

LYNNE MCALPINE - SAINT JOHN COLLEGE

I teach in the ESL Support programme at Saint John College, but last autumn I was also part of the History and Politics Department teaching Introductory Latin. Through this department, I was involved in a few Saturdays at the Kingston Market, where professors and instructors from a variety of disciplines were asking for public support of UNBSJ's objections to some of the PSE report's more asinine recommendations. For the first time in my life, I took part in protest marches. All in all, it was a memorable time, not only for me of course, but for many in Saint John and at UNBSJ in particular.

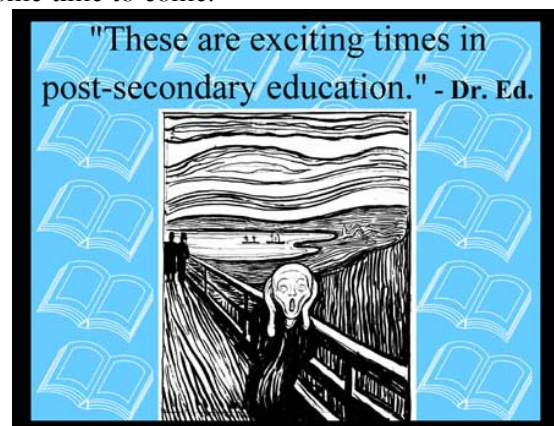
At Saint John College, for instance, where most students have conditional acceptance to the university, many were experiencing a high degree of anxiety. There were students whose scholarships from their home countries were dependent upon their studying at a university, not a polytechnic. There were students who had invested a considerable amount of money settling in Saint John, and who knew that a degree from a polytechnic would not be recognized at home. Former SJC students still studying at UNBSJ were worried that they would not be able to complete their degree programmes. Warning e-mails, advising those at home not to register for study at either campus of UNB, were being sent, and students were enquiring about other English programmes in Canada. Parents were panicking and sending urgent requests for information which we could not give about the university's future. Some students left before committing too much time or money to a programme which might lead them nowhere. As the College is a cost-recovery unit, many teachers, too, were uneasy about their futures. They knew that should the university cease to exist, international student numbers would drop dramatically, and jobs would be in jeopardy.

Across the Ring Road, in Hazen Hall, the atmosphere was just as tense. Professors in the Arts Faculty were concerned for their jobs and for the integrity of the Arts programme at UNBSJ. Some were applying for jobs elsewhere. Arts students, among them my daughter, were wondering what their degree would be worth, even if they were "grandfathered," if the university that they graduated from ceased to exist. Who would teach them if the professors decided to leave? Time and attention were diverted from study towards public awareness campaigns and protest rallies in Fredericton and Saint John.

Through all this, however, classes had to continue. The ESL Support programme is intensive, and there is a lot at

stake for the students, so there is little time for discussion outside the syllabus. Some Support students were certainly anxious, and one student took time off class to seek other options (he has since returned), but overall, students knew they could not afford to be distracted, and their work did not appear to be affected. We did, however, make a point of discussing the nature of the democratic system and tried to help students understand that if they had objections to what was happening, they could safely make their voices heard, and that this could have an impact on a government's decisions. We encouraged them to view the rallies as democracy in action and were delighted to see some of our students at one of the local protest marches. So although anxiety about the PSE did not have a significant impact on student or teacher performance in general, either in Support or in the other ESL programmes, we do hope that the protests and the effects these have had on the government's actions have given our students a better understanding of the democratic process.

In the Latin class, of course, there was no need to make students aware of their rights. Students and discussions about the PSE were brief and usually took place before class began or during individual consultation times. For the most part, in class we were all more concerned with the complexities of Latin grammar than with the vagaries of our political leaders, and although a number of students were involved in organizing the various rallies, and some mentioned that this had affected their submission of some assignments for other courses, their work in Latin did not appear to suffer. However, their confidence was noticeably shaken. That any government could consider the dismemberment of their university was a shock, and we will all feel the tremors for some time to come.



MARY ANN CAMPBELL
DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY

When asked to write something about my experience of teaching during the PSE crisis in the Fall 2007 term, my first thought was where will I find the time! Then I thought about it for a moment (or two), as one should always do when pondering a significant issue such as this, and realized that the reason I am so busy this term is because of last term's impact on career as a whole. What I mean by this statement is that the PSE crisis caused significant delays in my ability to plan and function effectively in other areas of my job, which I am now trying to make up for. But that is not what this particular piece is suppose to be about – it's about the effect of the PSE debacle on my teaching – so, let me just say that the PSE "doomsday" weight that was ever present throughout the entire Fall term was very heavy on me and my students. This weight was one which a person could not get away from; even when preparing course material, teaching in class, or going to the washroom, someone was always near you talking about it – it was everywhere. The end result was major distraction and attention difficulties on my part as an instructor. The topics I was trying to convey during class became almost meaningless or insignificant to me because I had bigger things to worry about. Who cares about Freud's psychoanalysis or theories of criminal behaviour when I might not have a job to pay for my brand new house! From a student perspective, I would imagine that they had similar thoughts about whether they were wasting their time at UNBSJ if it was going to cease to exist in a year and likely wondered whether they should even bother with their current course material if "no one" (you know who I mean) respected their university and its quality of education! That is how it felt for me anyway – disrespected by the government despite UNBSJ's meaningful contributions and my personal contributions to New Brunswick and Saint John in particular in my field of practice and research. Because I was so distracted, I found that I had a more difficult time putting the necessary "oomph", if you will, into my lectures. The "oomph" factor is crucial if one wishes to maximize student engagement in the course material; it's what captivates their attention and helps them remember those little details that we test them on later. But alas, my "oomph" (or "mo-jo" as I often call it) was deflated that term and I am still struggling to get it back to its full peak again. Psychologically, an ongoing stressor like the PSE issue can be very overwhelming, especially when there is no clear resolution or end point. We had months of uncertainties to live with during this period. People in such a situation can become very discouraged

and almost go into a learned helplessness mode where they either give up and stop trying to overcome the stressor or they think about ways of escaping it (i.e., quit or find a new job!). For those lucky enough to re-direct their "mo-jo" into the fight for UNBSJ, I would imagine that the stress would be no less significant or exhausting. How can these emotional states not affect one's teaching?

I took the moderate road in my stress management and attended rallies and paid some money to support our front line advocates, but I chose to keep the classroom as free of PSE topics as I could. The reason I did so was to offer students in my class a clear focus that was not clouded by discussions and debates about the PSE report and its potential impact on their future. My classes were about psychotherapy and criminal behaviour that term – there was no PSE on my class syllabus. There were many other venues and forums for students to vent and hear the latest gossip about the PSE and what they can do to help in the pro-UNBSJ fight. I announced rallies and cancelled a class so that students could attend one, but I wouldn't go any further than that because it would jeopardize the integrity of what I had to offer my students in their courses. In general, I wanted to preserve the integrity of their term because, whether UNBSJ fell or not, their grades from this term and the level of knowledge they leave with after taking my course would last on their transcripts. Thus, despite my distractions, discouragement, sense of being disrespected as an academic, and loss of my "mo-jo", I did what I could to make my teaching style and methods maintain their integrity for the benefit of the equally distracted, anxious, and deflated students in my classes. If we were to fall, I wanted them to leave with a sense that at least the faculty at UNBSJ cared about their education in the short and long-term even amidst a crisis of this magnitude!



SOME THOUGHTS ABOUT THE LAST ACADEMIC YEAR

MIRIAM JONES - DEPARTMENT OF HUMANITIES AND LANGUAGES

It was the worst of times, but in an odd way, it was also the best of times. I'm talking, of course, about the 2007/2008 academic year at UNB Saint John.

There were threatening rumblings much earlier: in the previous winter according to those with their ears to the ground. By spring those rumblings had become increasingly more ominous, though still, few paid attention. I myself started a weblog to discuss the future of our campus and related issues back in May of 2007, but did not write on it in any sustained way until the end of August, whereas others had already been busy over the summer. Incredulity? Denial? A little of each, plus a personal need to recharge after a difficult winter seeing my father through a course of radiation. At any rate I came back at the end of the summer reinvigorated and eager to engage with the PSE issue. And it was an engagement, with all that implies in terms of planning and organizing. And, luckily, comradeship.

So where did all that activity leave teaching? I had a full course load in the fall, as did most of us involved in the Save UNBSJ Committee, but involvement in the campaign meant that there was considerably less time and energy to spend on classes. One of my colleagues justified the inevitable outcomes of such a conflict — to choose one example, taking longer to return assignments — by arguing that fighting to save the campus, while it might mean compromises in the classroom now, was in the best interests of the students in the long run. This is doubtless true, but we as instructors still had a duty to the students immediately in front of us: at minimum a duty to provide a course, and a also, I would argue, a duty to help them engage with the growing tensions over the term. Other instructors decided it was "business as usual," but since it so manifestly wasn't, this option did not seem tenable to many of us.

So, my students and I talked about it in class. Admittedly, such discussions are probably more natural in the arts and humanities; indeed, many of my colleagues abandoned their previously determined curriculum and addressed the PSE issue in creative ways in their courses. This is not as easy when one's subject is Beowulf, as mine was in September in my introductory course, though I did spend more time talking about tribal power and politics than I might have otherwise. And there were some nice connections to be made in my eighteenth-century literature course when we discussed women's passionate arguments for access to education. But in the main we talked about the PSE issue directly, and as far as I could tell the students appreciated the chance to air some of their concerns and ask questions: they knew very little about what was going on, were being told next-to-nothing, and were feeling considerable anxiety.

Dealing with external political issues in a classroom can of course be tricky. With the PSE issue there was little chance that anyone would disagree too far on the substance — at least, if anyone wanted their university decommissioned they were wise

enough to keep silent — but with regards to appropriate actions and responses there can be a range of opinion. I wanted to encourage those who were willing to participate in the fight-back, but without diminishing those who were unable, for whatever reasons, to become active. Hence, when I cancelled classes on days on which there were demonstrations, I tried to be very clear that there was no expectation of attendance. Although some of our critics accused us in the media of manipulating our students, that couldn't be further from the truth. One can't build a social movement of any strength by trying to manipulate people, and we were trying to build a social movement. UNB Saint John was finally taken off the chopping block for one reason and one reason only: so many people from so many different sectors, over a sustained period, made their displeasure known to the provincial government. It was a battle that happened on many fronts and in many different ways, and it became a diffuse battle, or series of battles. It had to be, because it spread upwards from the ground and people engaged as they saw fit, from the sidewalks to the boardrooms. All these levels of engagement were necessary, and they were only possible because it was a broad-based movement.

I wanted to communicate this sense of possibility, of power, to our students. We were being told that our institution was unworthy of continuing, that what we were doing was irrelevant to the common good of our community. We were being told the closure of the campus was a "done deal." "You can't fight City Hall." And, indeed, it seemed for quite some time that we were invisible to the provincial government, that we really were "irrelevant." An unpleasant message for even someone experienced and resilient; what, then, must this have been like for many of our students? "Self-empowerment" is not usually on the syllabus in literature courses; my colleagues in English and I are happy to leave that sort of thing to Oprah and Dr. Phil. But this was different: this cut to the very core of our mission, a mission that we were being told was insignificant, unimportant, without utility. We were being told we were insignificant, faculty and students both. So two things needed to happen: we — all of us — needed to reject the fatalistic messages we were hearing and stand up, and, almost by default, we needed to reengage with that sense of mission that so many of us tend to take for granted when we think about it at all.

I opened this piece by saying that this last year was also the best of times, and part of the reason is that, for many of us, the crisis prompted us to think about what we are doing in university in a way that we hadn't since graduate school. We were prompted to re-evaluate our commitment to education and to articulate the role of a university in a community. And specifically, in this community. Students were prompted to justify their choice of university in the face of messages that they were wasting their time and money; they were prompted to reassess their goals. As a result, rather than skulking away with our tails between our legs we developed an unprecedented sense of community: our small

SOME THOUGHTS FROM THE LAST ACADEMIC YEAR
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 14

community at UNBSJ, and our strong roots in the larger community of Saint John and region. In that sense, the provincial government has created a monster: we know what we are and what we can be, and there is no going back.

This all sounds very triumphalist no doubt, and I do not want to minimize the growing exhaustion that most of us felt over the fall term, nor, and this is not much of an exaggeration, the post-traumatic stress of this past winter term. Anecdotally, for instance, it was a particularly bad season for colds and flu, and I for one am convinced that this was a direct consequence of the sustained tension since last August. Nor do I want to minimize the compromises and accommodations that happened in some classes. Well, all right, in my classes, at least. Never the quickest marker, this past year I set new records. Sometimes discussions were a little more diffuse than strictly desirable. And in some cases allowances were made that might not have been otherwise, in terms of deadlines and such, in recognition of the toll the uncertainly was taking on the students.

But while some courses this past two terms may not have been as rigorous as one might choose, it was surely an educative year, for all of us. Many of our students are moving on but it seems unlikely that they will easily forget the lessons of the fight-back for our campus.

And for those of us that remain, faculty and students both, that education will surely stand us in good stead as we face new challenges to our campus and our mission.

MIKE BRADLEY
DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY

The PSE report and the Provincial Government's reaction constituted an assault on my core beliefs. Throughout the fall and much of the winter my thoughts, actions and emotions were a consequence of the events and statements surrounding the report. Intellectual opportunity is a high water mark of a democratic society. An enumerate report written below the level of a vacuum cleaner sales document threatened this opportunity for Saint John. The local politicians in going "mute" appeared to be in an organized campaign to deprive Saint John of its University. The government rather than fostering the reasonable will of the people was going to deprive taxpaying citizens to serve some narrow interest groups. Narrow interest groups are served from time to time, but the extent and nature of this attempt was beyond my previous horizons. It was a revisit to fascist history or an Orwellian dystopia. Every aspect of reasoning was on its head. The report was a string of insubstantial anecdotes. The logic of labor shortage was based on false assumptions. Even as the report was being written workers in Northern New Brunswick were losing their jobs and Ontario was contemplating manufacturing job loss due to the high dollar and the stirrings of recession from problems with Asset Backed Commercial Papers. Worse, the thinking seemed directed by the coalition of government and business thinkers who have piloted the provincial economy to the 59th spot out of the 60 states and provinces rated. Universities not only serve the basic function to educate but they become interactive and bring formative aspects to their communities. They are magnets for retention and growth. All this was missed by the report. The goal seemed to be the manufacturing of what would be a surplus of technical workers for very specific industries at great cost to the taxpayers and not the industries themselves. Thanks to the citizens of Saint John who stood up against this organized assault on the community better heads have prevailed. The thoughts are now in the realm of reason: greater support for community colleges, slightly more competitive wage rates and the design of steady jobs rather than a layoff cycle will solve any "alleged labor shortage". I have been shaken. We lived through a period where an ignorance characterized by an unrestrained inability to reason, predict, deal with information, or think in logical ways seized power and on points of pride, and self interest refused to give way to the legitimate desires and needs of the people. It has changed my concept of the stability of our society and shows the great dangers from undemocratic forces that lie below the surface.

A VIEW FROM THE SAVE UNBSJ WAR ROOM

JOANNA EVERITT - DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY & POLITICS

While individuals from all parts of the campus were actively involved in the “Save UNBSJ Campaign”, I do not think I would be mistaken in claiming that the Department of History and Politics quickly became the “war room” or campaign headquarters for our campus’ efforts to persuade the government of the lack of wisdom in the recommendations of the PSE Report. I am proud to say that all members of our department, both full and part-time faculty and even our Harrison McCain Visiting Professor were involved in the campaign. They showed up at the demonstrations (cancelling their classes so that students could do so as well), they wrote letters to the politicians, distributed postcards and letter writing literature to others and they buttonholed politicians in the market, in the churches and even at Christmas cocktail parties. Discussions about post secondary education and the value of a university regularly occurred during lectures and seminars. Discussing this issue makes sense in courses on Politics, but it was also relevant in History courses examining the Renaissance and the importance of liberal arts or in International Studies courses where it was used to illustrate the global nature of certain policy discussions.

Because of the strong commitment of many of my colleagues in the department, I as department Chair did not hesitate to commit whatever resources I could towards this campaign. The most significant of these resources was the time of our department secretary Joy Roy. While continuing to deal effectively and effortlessly with all of the normal crises that came with the beginning of the academic year, she quickly became the go-to person in the campaign, assuming the role of front office and central switchboard operator. She collected and kept track of donations to our campaign, relayed information about campaign activities to the public, the media and to those involved, and she kept an eye on the supply of campaign literature and protest postcards and ensured these were reproduced when the supply was low. Most importantly, from the perspective of our department’s budget, she monitored the number of photocopies made on our photocopier and ensured that the department was reimbursed for these expenses from the campaign bank account. Without her full and committed participation in our cause our efforts would have quickly fallen into chaos.

Along with the demonstrations in Saint John, Fredericton and Edmundston there were two events that I recall that demonstrate the politicization of my colleagues that oc-

curred as a result of the PSE Report. The first occurred in early September immediately after the release of the Report. We had just initiated the postcard campaign and the office was a buzz with several people producing the postcards and the “Save UNBSJ” postcard boxes. Others were stopping by to pick them up to deliver. What impressed me the most was the commitment of people to this cause, and in particular the commitment of our contract or part-time faculty, one who had only been teaching on campus for a week. They were all pitching in to help. Even more encouraging were the students who would stop by the department to ask if there was anything they could do to help. They were quickly put to work distributing the postcard boxes around the campus and photocopying more cards as the demand for them continued to rise. There was a real sense of community that developed from all of these efforts.

The second event occurred at the end of November when the government was releasing its Speech from the Throne. On the afternoon of the Throne Speech there must have been four or five people at different points in time clustered around Joy’s computer anxiously watching the Speech on line and waiting to hear what would be said about UNBSJ. While nothing concrete was revealed about our future in this speech, there was substantial discussion in the halls about the Premier’s subsequent statement about UNBSJ maintaining “programs like Arts”. The amount of political discussion and debate in our halls over this term was impressive.

All in all, while this was a tough year for everyone at UNBSJ I would have to say that because of my colleagues’ active and sustained involvement in the “Save UNBSJ Campaign” it was particularly challenging for the Department of History and Politics. I am very proud of the efforts of everyone involved and am honoured to be Chair of a department which played such a pivotal role



TEACHING UNDER THE THREAT OF CLOSURE

ROB MOIR - DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SCIENCE

*I*t was the best of times, it was the worst of times might best sum-up my feelings about teaching in the fall of 2007. A corporate-fueled [1 government-led attack upon university education in New Brunswick](#), and UNBSJ in particular was both a challenge and a gift in disguise.

Before I describe my story, I should first identify my perspective. I am a tenured associate professor of economics who has served on a number of university committees. While I have a reasonably active research program, recently I have devoted a significant amount of my time to working with community groups to conduct local-interest research and provide instruction. For example, I served as an intervenor on behalf of the Friends of Rockwood Park (FoRP) in the 2006-07 National Energy Board (NEB) hearings into the routing of a high-pressure natural gas line through the City of Saint John (including a significant stretch through Rockwood Park near UNBSJ). I am also an active candidate in the federal riding of Fundy Royal (for the NDP).

As the FoRP and related community groups discussed the results of the NEB hearings, a few people asked, “When do you think they will come after UNBSJ?” Early in 2007, the community predicted the vulnerability of our institution. By the early-summer of 2007, it was becoming clearer that a call for the dismantling of UNBSJ might very well arise and by the end of the summer these rumours became virtual fact. While classes started under a cloud of uncertainty, I think it fair to say that the uncertainty was not over the recommendations themselves but rather how the Graham-government would act upon these recommendations.

At the time, I was teaching a class each in Introductory and Intermediate Microeconomic Theory, and another class in Environmental Economics. If nothing else, the government and certain corporate interests gave me a great deal of fodder for classroom material. It was a virtual “Capitalism Gone Wild” commentary with none of the hormonally-charged Spring Break rituals that accompany the similarly-named videos. Two pedagogical issues arose: (i) getting the students the appropriate background material in order to discuss current issues in a meaningful way, and (ii) ensuring that we still covered other material.

Two additional problems compounded these pedagogical issues. First, students were upset, and felt abandoned. Some felt that professors and administrators were minimizing or even ignoring the whole issue and wanted to engage in frank discussion about very practical issues (e.g., Should I transfer to UNBF?, Can I finish my degree at UNBSJ?,

Does UNBSJ have to appear on my transcript, or can it read UNB?). Maintaining balance in both the quantity and quality of these discussions was difficult. Second, many classes were cancelled or shortened due to protest events and campus-wide meetings.

The uncertainty, the late nights, and the scrambling made this period one of the worst in my career here at UNBSJ.

Nevertheless, I believe this period marks a watershed moment for the institution. First, I and many others were reminded that our teaching does not have to be limited to the campus. Some people wrote letters and opinion pieces, some organized petition booths and worked at building support one person at a time, while still others gave public talks. We realized that the business community needed to be taught about the value of an Arts degree and worked to fill that gap. In many ways, we taught like we never taught before; we taught as if our lives, and the life of our community, depended upon it.

Second, we worked as a team. Students partnered with faculty and disciplinary walls were dismantled so we could present the united face of UNBSJ. This provided new and continuing insight into the strengths we have as a unified UNBSJ. Most importantly, as the cracks appeared in the façade that creates this ivory tower, we saw the community come to our rescue. Rather than shore-up the crumbling walls, the community invited us out and asked to be let in.

It is this last change, I believe, that ultimately decided the outcome and, if we let it, will become the lasting legacy of this brief period in the history of UNBSJ. While a university degree is limited by a cheque and a piece of paper, what we do as professors is not and cannot be limited by physical walls. We have a very real role to play in society, even when we wear our caps and gowns. It is our role to engage ourselves and others in the process of research and, where necessary, teach people about the techniques we use to find answers.

Indeed, it was the best of times, it was the worst of times,

1 Irving Oil contributed \$50,000 towards a \$150,000 report (<http://www.gnb.ca/CPSE-CEPS/EN/docs/Enterprise%20Saint%20John.pdf> accessed on 31 March 2008) written by Amulet Consulting which recommended restructuring UNBSJ to become something akin to a polytechnic training institute (<http://www.irvingoil.com/community/news1.asp?newsid=150> accessed on 31 March 2008). The recommendations in the Amulet report were largely repeated in the final Miner-1' Écuyer report (see links <http://www.gnb.ca/cpse-ceps/index-e.asp> accessed on 31 March 2008).

PSE REPORT: WHAT HAS IT DONE FOR YOUR TEACHING LATELY? JAMES KIEFFER - DEPARTMENT OF BIOLOGY

When asked about the PSE report, many of us have different impressions, feelings or perspectives. Depending on whom you ask, the answers will range from a mild “we will wait and see” to an explosive response! Regardless of the response, most of us have an opinion about the subject. Now that the dust has settled (somewhat), students and faculty/staff have an opportunity to reflect on “what has just happened”. As Chair of Biology and a faculty member who teaches courses within the Nursing program, I have witnessed first-hand the effects of the PSE report, on students, faculty and staff. These effects were wide-spread: high stress levels and mounting uncertainty were among the top on my list. From a classroom perspective, the damaging effects of the PSE report were noted immediately. It had impacts on student learning for various reasons; perhaps the most obvious was that students weren’t sure if they could even complete their fall courses. Others sought permission to take 8 courses during the winter term so they could potentially complete their degree requirements ahead of time. Still, others had the view that “oh well, we’ll get our degrees and then it doesn’t matter if they close the campus or not”. Thus, the view clearly depended on whether the student was in their 1st or 4th year of study.

When the news of the PSE first entered the student arena, I took a proactive approach within the classroom. We had some general discussions about programs, courses and the future of the campus. Following the news, my main focus was to help reduce student stress. Although a general “reassurance” was in place following months of waiting, the PSE report continued to plague me, personally. For those who know me, quality of teaching is one of my highest priorities at UNB. It motivates me. The uncertainty of my career at UNB and my campus was unknown. It almost felt as if the wind filling my “teaching sails” had disappeared. Did the students notice my stress? Probably not(!) but my passion for teaching was being slowly replaced with thoughts of leaving UNB. During the first term, I wasn’t able to catch my breath and give my classes a full 100% effort. The effects of the PSE were most noticeable in the supervision of my Undergraduate research students. Clearly, my mind was on my duties as Chair (and the increased numbers of meetings associated with the PSE report) and, thus, my students probably didn’t see the excitement and enthusiasm that I normally display regarding my research and the mentoring process. In the end, I was fortunate that I had 3 excellent 4th year

honours students working in my lab.

As Chair, I was constantly asked to be a reference for job applications from faculty members within and outside of Biology. Thus, the uncertainty experienced by my faculty and colleagues now partially weighed on my shoulders. Will we have enough biology Faculty to put on our programs? What about student numbers (which largely drive our budgets)? Will students leave because we don’t offer enough courses? All of these thoughts made it difficult for me to translate my normal enthusiasm into my teaching. In many respects, I felt that my classroom performance was lack-lustre and downright boring. I was becoming apathetic and in some ways distanced from my students (something that I have never experienced until this year!). Student office hours, which I normally look forward to, became abbreviated and stilted. My role as an instructor became robotic, rather than fluid. Some students would occasionally ask me “if everything was alright” or say “you look really tired and worn-out”.

To make matters worse, future budgets were uncertain. Because of the laboratory experience required by Biology students to complete their degrees, I had the unfortunate task of crunching numbers to determine what future courses could potentially stay and which might have to go; thus, our ability to plan in the long-term fell to the way-side. These potential budget cuts put enormous pressure on our dedicated support staff, who ensure our laboratories stay afloat. In addition, a reduced laboratory-based course curriculum could impact our ability to offer courses to our 5 biology streams. The PSE also had a further reaching impact on our department. In particular, we recently launched an exciting 12-week Marine semester a few years ago to service marine biology students from New Brunswick and beyond. As a department, we hoped that this unique opportunity would attract students to our campus, our city and our province. How the PSE has or will impact the success of our marine semester and our other Programs has not yet been realized.

I have a “half-full” as opposed to “half-empty” general outlook on things. Therefore, I still try to find some good in all of this. Finding the good in all this is the part that will require the greatest challenge and will take an enormous amount of energy. For me, this will have to wait as I am extremely exhausted and am trying to rise from the still smouldering embers.

LISA BEST DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY

When I began thinking about how the PSE recommendations affected my life, as a faculty member, the first thought that came to mind was that my experiences were probably pretty similar to those of other faculty members. Fall 2007 was stressful for everyone on campus. Given that many people will write articles about the effects of the PSE report on faculty members, I decided to approach the matter in a different way. I decided to ask my students how they felt about the PSE report and their experiences during the 2007–2008 academic year. The opinions that follow are those of a fourth year psychology seminar class.

In general, responses centred on four general themes: the effects of losing a university in Saint John; concerns about being able to complete their degrees and the perceived quality of those degrees; stress associated with the recommendations; and anger at the government.

From the responses I received, it was obvious that students were upset about the loss of a university. Several of the students felt that, without UNBSJ, they would not have been able to attend university. One student said, If this were not a city with its own recognized university the idea of attending would have never entered my mind as feasible. Not only would the PSE recommendations remove the financial feasibility of attending university, it would have taken away the dream of higher education. Several students had family obligations that would have prevented them from leaving the Saint John area and one student explained, Being a young single mother I would not have been able to even consider raising a baby and going to school if the school was not close to my support system (i.e., my parents, extended family and friends). The statement of one young mother best sums up their concerns: Without this campus, what would happen to a thirty year old single mother...a dead end job, call center, stress leave, welfare? Who knows. All I do know for certain is that without UNBSJ, I would not be a thirty year old single mother who just about has a university degree.

This group of third and fourth year students were also very concerned about the perceived quality of their degrees and many were not sure how they would complete their program (Firstly, where do I go to finish what I started? Secondly, which of my courses would have mattered in a new institution provided I'd have needed to switch institutions?). They were concerned about the perceived quality of that degree (What would my degree be worth? and Well, I think that I speak for a lot of people when I say that I was worried that my undergraduate degree was going to seem kind of silly since it would have come from an institution that no longer existed.). Students discussed the short term consequences that the loss of a university would entail: I was also beginning to plan my honours thesis, and leaving this university would have meant re-establishing connections with Professors with the capability or experience to supervise specific

topics. Another saw one of his dreams disappearing before his eyes and said, on a more personal note, my hope has always been to go to a big city university for graduate studies, but return to Saint John to become a researcher and instructor at UNBSJ. I was watching my chance of coming back disappear before my eyes.

As should be no surprise, students felt that the Fall 2007 was a stressful time: It was very stressful, going to a huge rally one day, then trying to concentrate on studying for your midterm the next day and the stress of having to choose between fighting to keep my university or attending class had to be faced many times throughout the fall term. Students perceived the overall atmosphere on campus to be distracting; I found it to be a major distraction. Everywhere I went people would ask me about it. In spite of this stress, students recognized that their professors were also concerned and one said it would be awesome to thank the faculty members that kept us informed.

Finally, students were (and are still) angry at the government. Students did not feel that the government was interested in listening to their opinions: I didn't feel like I lived in a democratic country anymore when Shawn Graham stated that students are 'not the stakeholders'. They also realised that the opinions of faculty members were not taken seriously: How could the government make such a crucial decision on post-secondary education without consulting the student body and UNB Faculty? Another student recognized the potential for bias and said, Why would the government hire the president of SENECA college (a polytech) to write a report on the future of a post secondary institution when the college's goal to is to promote polytechnics around the country? The anger with the government has not subsided, at least for some students, as is evident by a quote that sums up the opinions of many people, students and faculty alike: It still pisses me off that the government let us hang in the wind like that for so long.

To close, the concerns of students closely mirror those of faculty members. The academic year was coloured by the PSE report and many students were affected by the increased levels of stress they experienced during the last year. In general, the comments of these students centered on a question that many people asked: Why downgrade a University while you could upgrade a college? Having the best of several types of education systems and institutions will give people more choices, while maintaining high standards.





**FACULTY EXCELLENCE AWARD
FOR TEACHING
(FEAT)
RECIPIENTS FOR 2007-2008**

**FACULTY OF ARTS..... ANNE COMPTON
FACULTY OF BUSINESS.... JUDITH DUNSTAN
FACULTY OF SASE..... MERZIK KAMEL**

**UPCOMING CONFERENCE TO NOTE!
THE ASSOCIATION OF ATLANTIC UNIVERSITIES
PRESENTS**

THE AAU TEACHING SHOWCASE

OCTOBER 25, 2008

UNIVERSITY OF NEW BRUNSWICK - SAINT JOHN

CONFERENCE THEME: "TEACHING TO ENGAGE AND RETAIN"

Universities hope to retain their students. We hope to keep them engaged in their studies, challenged by their discoveries, content in their circumstances, and maturing as they prepare to enter the world on their own terms. But engaging and retaining students is no simple matter. Effective teaching methods are part of the process, but the issue of retention reminds us that universities touch all aspects of a student's life. Discovering how to engage and retain students is thus a process of figuring out how we can meet the needs and expectations of our students intellectually, emotionally, socially, culturally, and even spiritually. The 2008 Teaching Showcase will provide a provocative and wide ranging discussion of the many ways we can engage and retain our students. Dr. James Parker, the Showcase keynote speaker, will present his research into the way emotional intelligence correlates with university retention. His address, "Emotional Intelligence and Academic Success: Post-Secondary Implications," will anchor the conference, and the showcase promises to provide insights into the host of ways in which universities can better address the diverse concerns of their students.

FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT:

[HTTP://WWW.UNB.CA/CONFERENCES/AAUSHOWCASE](http://www.unb.ca/conferences/aaushowcase)

Teaching Matters @UNBSJ wants to know about any teaching conferences or projects you are attending, developing, or presenting. Please contact the editors to help spread the word about your work or scholarship as a teacher.