

What would the
ideal post-secondary system
for New Brunswick look like?



Dr. Jack Vanderlinde

President

Tel: 506-458-8977

fnbfa@nb.aibn.com

65 Brunswick Street Suite 287

Fredericton, NB

E3B 1G5

Tel: 506-458-8977

Fax: 506-458-5820

fnbfa@nb.aibn.com

www.fnbfa.ca

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1.0 Introduction

Established in 1973, the **Federation of New Brunswick Faculty Associations (FNBFA)** represents the interests of more than 1200 university faculty at **St. Thomas University** (Fredericton); **Mount Allison University** (Sackville); **l'Université de Moncton** (Edmundston, Moncton and Shippagan); and the **University of New Brunswick** (Fredericton and Saint John).

In order to address both the discussion paper tabled by the Commission on Post-Secondary Education, and the vision of post-secondary education espoused by New Brunswick's university faculty, FNBFA will very briefly discuss the history of university education in the province.

Much of the information will be extracted from the **Deutsch Commission report** of 1962 to which we refer the reader for further information.

- **King's College**, now the **University of New Brunswick**, is Canada's oldest state-sponsored university and one of the oldest in North America. It traces its origin to 1785, although it did not confer its first three degrees until 1828. The early settlers made considerable sacrifices in difficult circumstances in order not to deny their children a higher education.
- By 1854, a feeling that Kings College did not entirely answer the needs of the community gave rise to the province's **first royal Commission on Higher Education** (John H. Gray chairing), which said in support of higher education:

“We are persuaded that the youthful intellect of New Brunswick is not inferior to that of any other Province or State, nor the heart of its people less courageous and patriotic; and with equal aid from the Government and Legislature for educational development and intellectual progress we doubt not, but the future of New Brunswick will be of such intelligence, enterprise, and prosperity as will make her the boast and the joy of her own people and the admiration of other provinces.”

- The 1854 Commission considered that education in New Brunswick could best be delivered by a non-sectarian University of New Brunswick as the sole degree granting institution to which the denominational colleges would be affiliated. This structure was not to be, as the legislature subsequently chartered a number of degree granting universities as independent entities in the years succeeding the 1854 report. Deutsch observes:

“The University's devotion to curiosity stimulates, nourishes, and disciplines the able young mind and equips it for mature judgment. It is also the guardian of truth and responsibility in the community. One of the first efforts of every dictator has been to silence the free voice of the University else it be heard in protest against deceit and error. No human

institutions will ever be infallible or omnipotent, and we cannot expect such qualities from our Universities, but their tradition of intelligent inquiry represents one of the essential guarantees of truth and integrity. One of the highest aims of our western society must be the preservation of the academic freedom of its institutions of higher education. The maintenance of all other liberties depends greatly upon the vitality of this freedom.

Higher education in New Brunswick faces the challenge of a new world and a changing province. What is done now to support higher education will be, to a significant extent, the key to success or failure. We believe that the view regarding the necessity for sound educational development expressed by the Commission of 1854 is even more pertinent today:

The inhabitants of New Brunswick have this noble destiny in their own hands; and the responsibility and shame will rest upon themselves if they do not achieve it. Their magnificent country invites—demands it at their hands; the example and progress of the neighbouring Provinces and States urges them to it, if they would keep company and maintain rank with those provinces and States.”

- In 1962, there were six universities with a government charter in the province. The oldest and largest is the University of New Brunswick (Fredericton). Following in age and size, Mount Allison University (Sackville), was an affiliate of the United Church of Canada, The remaining four universities of the era were all associated with the Roman Catholic church, St. Joseph’s (Moncton and Memramcook), Sacred Heart (Bathurst), St Thomas (Chatham) and St. Louis (Edmundston).
- Present day (2004-2005) full-time equivalent (FTE) student enrollments of New Brunswick’s universities are:

University of New Brunswick	11,037.4
Saint Thomas	2852.1
Mount Allison	2163.9
MONCTON (including Shippagan, Edmundston)	5351.6

1.1 English Language Universities

- The **University of New Brunswick**, a nonsectarian university (although not always non-religious) from its beginning, was conceived by Loyalists in 1785 when land was set aside in Fredericton to establish an “academy of liberal arts and sciences”. Following the Deutsch Commission it absorbed the already affiliated Teachers College and sprouted a second campus in Saint John. It is a comprehensive university offering undergraduate and graduate degrees in most disciplines except medicine. Currently, it also has small satellite operations in Bathurst and Moncton.
- **Mount Allison** came into being in 1839 as the Mount Allison Wesleyan College and was granted degree conferring powers in 1858 to take effect when the college had a president, two or more professors, and ten or more regularly matriculated students. Its first degrees were granted in 1863. It maintains an emphasis on undergraduate education admitting relatively few students to postgraduate work. Mount Allison draws its students from a wide population throughout the Maritimes as well as Ontario.
- **Saint Thomas University** was established in the 1860’s by the first Catholic Bishop of Chatham to provide training for ecclesiastical students. In 1880, the sponsoring Christian Brothers ceased operations and, for 31 years, there was no higher education for English speakers in the Diocese of Chatham. In 1923, the operation of the college was returned to the diocesan clergy. In 1934, the college was given full degree granting power and the first degree was granted in 1936. Since coming to share the UNB campus following the Deutsch report, it offers primarily a liberal arts education but also offers degrees in education, a Bachelor of Applied Arts, Bachelor of Social Work as well as several certificate programs.

1.2 French Language Universities

- In 1864 New Brunswick’s first Francophone university was founded as St. Joseph University in the Memramcook Valley in response to requests by the Bishop of Quebec. In 1868, it was incorporated and given full degree granting powers. As the best developed of the francophone institutions, the Deutsch Commission recommended that it become the basis of the French language university system as the **University of Moncton** and that the remaining Universities of St. Louis and Sacred Heart become colleges of the University of Moncton.
- St. Louis University (Edmundston) had its origin in 1943 when it was agreed that the Eudist Order would establish its second college. In 1944, an arrangement was made with the Department of National Defence to transfer to the college a site then in military use. In 1946, construction of a college building was undertaken. A year later, it received degree-granting powers and the college was named St. Louis University. Following the Deutsch Commission report, both St. Louis and Sacred Heart became affiliate colleges of the University of Moncton. The College

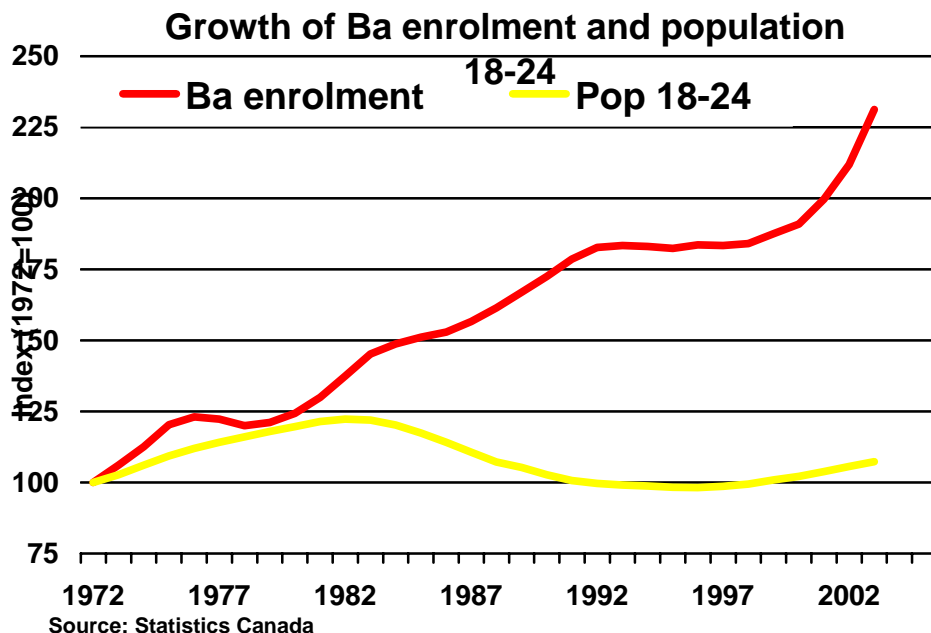
Maillet, already affiliated with St. Louis became an “annex” college to St. Louis and the two institutions amalgamated in 1972. In 1975, the amalgamated colleges known as the Collège St. Louis-Maillet changed to a new name, Centre Universitaire St. Louis-Maillet. Today it is known as the **Edmundston Campus of the University of Moncton**.

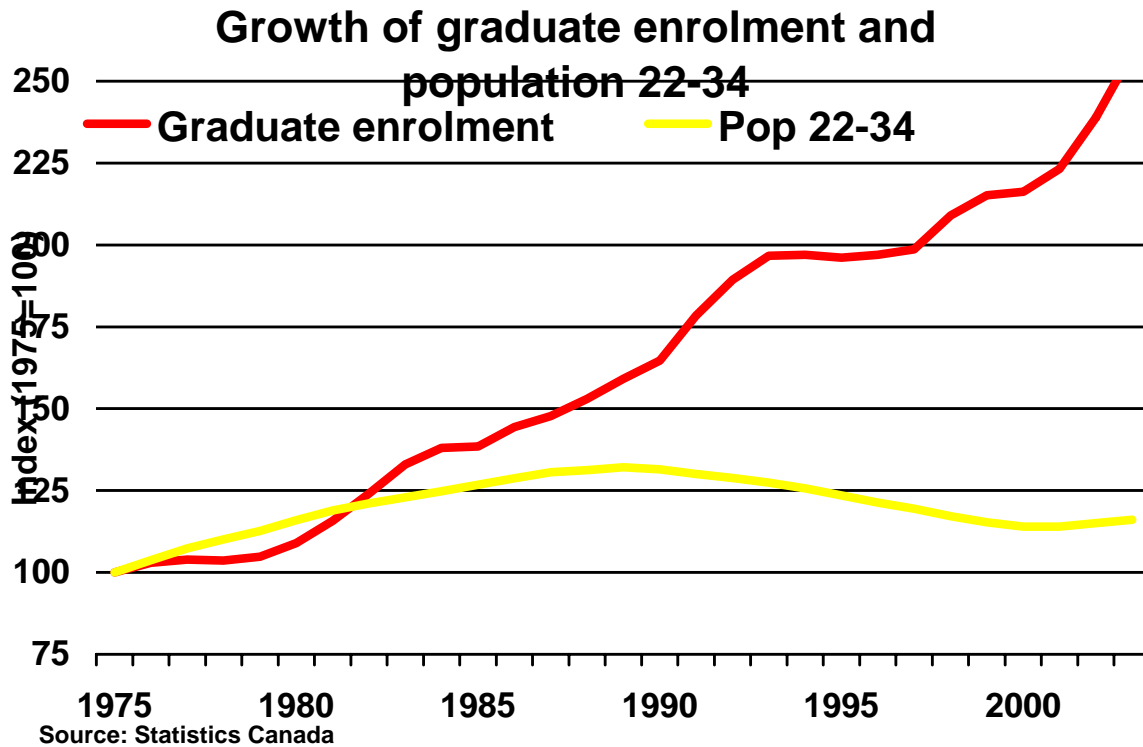
- A convent that later became the Irène Léger Building of the Collège Jésus-Marie was opened in 1948 in Shippagan by the religious order, Jésus-Marie. In 1960, the convent became the Collège Jésus-Marie affiliated with the University of Moncton in 1963. The 1975 Wallace Commission recommended closure of the college, but popular support by people of the northern portion of New Brunswick demonstrated by a march on the legislature led the government to pronounce itself in favour of restructuring the University of Moncton to include the Shippagan campus. The college initially became the Centre Universitaire de Shippagan and in 1977 became known as the **Shippagan Campus of the University of Moncton**.

2.0 Demographics

A major rationale for the Commission appears largely to be its predicted decline of student numbers in university based on declining high school enrolments.

The Commission’s figure 1: **Potential Post-Secondary Students** dramatically illustrates this and invites us to draw the “obvious conclusion”. Coincidentally, a Canada Human Resources study: *Forecasting university professors and enrolments in Canada* presented in February 2007 at the annual COPS Conference in Winnipeg, while agreeing on the declining number of secondary students, comes to a very different conclusion on the university population as shown in the following two graphs. They conclude that it is primarily disposable income and unemployment rate and lastly population that affect University enrollments.





3.0 Accessibility

- The Commission in its position paper remarks that “there must be no barriers imposed by income, age or choices made earlier in life” with respect to access to post-secondary education. Yet, clearly, income is a significant barrier to many and to suggest that choices made earlier should impose no barrier oversimplifies and cannot be realistic. A failure to read or to do arithmetic will certainly have an impact on access to post-secondary education. And a decision to become a hairdresser at age 18 will rarely serve one to enter university at an advanced stage later. In order to make access to post-secondary education a reality for all New Brunswickers, we must first ensure that the public education system equips each and every student for post-secondary education.
- The Commission complains that more students go to university and fewer to community college. And further, that the 20 per cent “drop-out rate places New Brunswick universities in the bottom half of Canadian universities”. Could it be that by providing access to a wider range of students, more students not well prepared for university careers enter, and we see the consequent failures? Could it be that the large number of full-time students who, because of financial constraints, also fill a full-time job in the evenings and on weekends do not fare well? Is the Commission’s suggestion that the universities are failing by not promoting such students despite lackluster performance? This brings us to the apparently inappropriate choice made by students in choosing university.

- New Brunswick is not rich in natural resources and it does not seem likely that the future of the province should rest upon training our youth as “hewers of wood and drawers of water”. Instead we need to rely on **the intellect of our people, which we submit is no less than that of people in neighbouring provinces and states.** We submit that our youth recognize these truisms and act accordingly. Given the persistent lower incomes in New Brunswick, it is remarkable that numbers have significantly increased in the last 15 years, a clear indication that the population recognizes the value of a university degree on earning power. This is not to say that the trades should be entirely abandoned, but five to 10 per cent of the population trained for the trades does not seem unreasonable. We believe that university should *educate* our youth in the broadest sense. Job training should be the responsibility of the employer, not the taxpayer.
- The Commission asks: “Does the difficulty of obtaining university credit for work done in college discourage college attendance?” This fails to address the question of whether the work done *should* receive university credit. In some provinces, the college system is essentially a feeder for the universities and engages in considerable academic work. In New Brunswick’s colleges, on the other hand, most of the courses are in the applied trades. It is difficult to see how course in welding or carpentry or hairdressing might be appropriately credited. Nonetheless, courses in subjects such a Licensed Practical Nursing might well obtain some university credit.

Where there is reasonable applicability of a college course to a later university program, we fully support giving credit. It might be noted that at most universities of New Brunswick, a student can “challenge for credit” in areas where they have work or other relevant experience. There appears to be an inconsistency in the Commission’s reasoning in suggesting first that some of the less stellar students should go to community college rather than university and then suggesting that the presumably lower level community college courses should get university credit. New Brunswick’s universities work hard to establish and maintain a reputation for quality of their programs and wholesale crediting of lower level courses would devalue our degrees universally.

- As the Commission observes, many of our graduates leave the province. To a considerable extent, this is occasioned by the crushing debt loads of the graduates. New Brunswick’s wages are relatively low compared to those of Ontario and Alberta and graduates perceive that they can much faster pay their debts by working elsewhere. There is also a perception that there is more upward mobility in firms outside New Brunswick. If we wish to keep more of our young graduates in the province, we need to improve the labour climate and the perception of opportunities in the provinces. We also need to encourage entrepreneurial offshoots from the universities that will employ our graduates in high-quality jobs and we must maintain local accessibility to university education in as many regions as possible.

- We concur that the under-representation of First Nations in post-graduate institutions is unacceptable and should be addressed by improved outreach efforts in the schools. It should be evident that the grinding poverty among many of the First Nation peoples is a strong contributor to lack of academic aspirations. Attempting to address the alienation of First Nation youth in their 20s is far too late.

4.0 Relevance and Responsiveness

- The Commission asks: “Is New Brunswick’s post-secondary system meeting needs of the province, including students and employers?” As the taxpayers and students—not the employers—are footing the bill, it is more appropriate to ask if society’s needs are being met by the current post-secondary system. As a corollary, we might ask if employers are meeting the needs of students by providing high-level employment with good wages. The exodus of college-trained students to Alberta attests to the greater attractiveness of jobs in Alberta as well as the ability of our students to fill those jobs. It would be a great disservice to our students to deny them quality education so they will not leave the province.
- Generally, New Brunswick’s university students report that they are very satisfied with the education they have received and employers outside the province provide similar feedback. Moreover, universities equip students to not just function in the present economy, but equip them to quickly adapt to changes in job requirements—an essential skill for work in the 21st century. Equally important is our contribution to the citizenship role that students will exercise. A student trained to think and reflect before asserting opinions on a subject will be a boon to our province whereas one who slavishly follows public opinion brings nothing new to the table.
- The Commission takes issue with the research dollars per faculty member employed in New Brunswick universities—pointing out that they receive significantly less than the Canadian average. Unfortunately, they appear to have overlooked the fact that New Brunswick had no medical schools during the years quoted, whereas the other jurisdictions do. Taking away the Medical Council grants from the research dollars brings the New Brunswick research institutions much closer to the average, exceeding the figures for Newfoundland and Prince Edward Island and nearly on par with Nova Scotia.
- Students drop out for many reasons, because they cannot cope, because they become disillusioned, or because they are unmotivated. The general grade inflation in high schools leads students to unrealistic expectations and consequent disappointment. Parental pressure may make them choose university as the path of least resistance. Rarely do we hear that poor teaching at university is the cause of a student’s dropping out. After all there is always the option of switching classes.

- Although the need for graduates in science, pure and applied mathematics, computer science and engineering is clear, many students enroll in arts programs because they have been taught that mathematics and science is difficult and are unwilling to expose themselves to the hard work and mental gymnastics that will be required to succeed in the above named fields. When they do choose a science, it is likely to be biology or another life science.

It has been said that the impersonal aspects of physical science and mathematics is unfriendly to students, however those students that try them find a welcoming environment. The problem is not that there are too many students in liberal arts. The problem is that there should be more students in hard sciences.

Improving the teaching of mathematics and science at the high school level will result in more students going to mathematics or science. It is generally acknowledged that the ‘hard’ sciences, for whatever reason, are less attractive to women than to men. We are pleased to note that the increase in numbers of students attending university in the last 15 years has largely been fuelled by the increase in women turning to higher education. In particular, New Brunswick’s “high” participation rate is largely due to women’s recognition that the way to a better life is through university education. The relative lack of male students is partial explanation for why the hard sciences are less subscribed. It is evident that we must, without diminishing our efforts to attract women, turn our attention to why fewer men, who in several institutions are in the minority, are continuing to university if we wish to increase the enrolment in the ‘hard’ sciences. Encouraging them to go to go to community college will do nothing to address the dearth of ‘hard’ science students.

- Universities host cooperative programs to give students a head start into the labour market to the few students that follow that stream. In those programs needing accreditation (like engineering), we contend that enough attention is paid for preparation for the labour market. In other subjects, like liberal arts or even mathematics, the program opens the doors to a variety of jobs. No specific preparation for any given specific job is needed. In addition, those subjects have the objective of sharpening the minds of our students, not only preparing them for the labour market. We do not see it as the mandate of the universities to prepare students for the labour market. Rather, we see our role as encouraging questioning and insubordination. There will be plenty of time for students to learn to fit in later in life.
- The Commission displays a significant lack of understanding when it suggests that with the advent of labour unions, Senates should perhaps be abolished. Unions deal with the working relationship between the university and its employees. Senates, on the other hand, deal with academic matters. Unions have no role in course development, student matters or program decisions. It will be noted that unions will defer to Senates with respect to academic decisions. To

leave the academic decision to boards of governors, or university administrators who have no academic experience or insight would be a travesty.

- Universities teachers are very aware of developments in the province's high schools through interactions with senior teachers in the schools. We cannot help but become aware of the results of high school changes when we face our first year classes.

5.0 Efficiency

- University research in New Brunswick would be improved both in quality and quantity by the injection of more money. One major frustration is that more and more federal programs require matching funds to be found by the researcher. The relative lack of industry in New Brunswick disadvantages us in obtaining these research funds. A matching fund pool would be a strong step forward. Encouragement of high-tech, research-sensitive firms in the province by preferential tax treatment and links with the colleges and universities would provide both an employer for science and non-science students as well as entrepreneurial encouragement for our youth and enrich the province immeasurably.
- New Brunswick universities take their teaching mandate very seriously. E-mail correspondence between students and their instructor has transformed out-of-class communication. A large fraction of faculty use Power Point presentations or other technical innovations for their classes and personal response devices (clickers) are rapidly coming into use. Despite the universities' undeserved reputations for stodginess, the truth is that their teaching is on the forefront of good practice.
- The opportunity to do research should be open to all professors. At those institutions where research is part of the workload, and it is for all of the younger faculty, promotion and tenure depend on research productivity. The teaching load of all university professors should leave enough time to do some research. Those who are very active in research should have access to even smaller teaching loads.

6.0 Collaboration with Differentiation

- Universities and community colleges fill different and distinct roles in society. Colleges train the crafts and trades people whereas the universities teach critical thought. It would not be untoward for the colleges to use the universities as resource centres just as high schools currently do, but the converse is questionable. Not maintaining the highest standards for the universities would be a betrayal to our youth whom we surely must equip to face the world on an equal footing. Would there be value in closer collaboration? In certain fields of study, such as computer programming, there should be a greater appreciation of the

differences between the knowledge acquired at the university level and the skills attained at the college level. It would be interesting to study a future bachelor's degree, which would integrate both fields, but we must take care not to diminish the value of a university diploma in order to enlarge the ranks of the students.

- Should college and university facilities in the same community be more closely integrated? We should look into enriching both programs, not integrating them to cover lack of enrolment or resources for universities. The mandates of these two institutions cannot be changed to achieve equality in the courses they deliver.

The universities produce the next leaders of the societies; the colleges prepare the future technicians very well. We cannot for a moment believe that bringing a student with two years of computer skills in web page mastering and integrating him/her in a third year computer science course in one of our universities is either a good idea or a good step for the poor student who would be miles behind his/her colleagues. Furthermore, the whole class loses in this situation since the level of the class goes down and professors bring down the teaching standards. In other jurisdictions, such as Ontario and British Columbia, fields such as social work have been seriously deskilled as a result of integration with the college system. It is imperative to think long and hard before allowing this sort of situation to become a reality, for the university students of our province would not be on equal footing with those from other provinces. Instead, we should be thinking of enriching our programs to offer a fighting chance to our graduates. We must not produce second-rate students because it is cheaper to do so.

7.0 Finance

- There is a division of thought on whether the student (as the recipient and beneficiary of the education) or society (as the beneficiary of an educated, well paid and taxed populace) should pay the lion's share of the costs. It is our unmitigated view that society must pick up a greater share of the cost than it does now.

Whereas in 1975, student tuition accounted for roughly 15 per cent of New Brunswick's university operating budgets, in 2006 they account for 38.2 per cent of the operating budgets. In New Brunswick, the government share of operating funds at 53.1% is less only to that of Nova Scotia and Ontario. This shifting of the financial burden from society to the student places enormous strains on the student. It is evident that our students are disadvantaged by inequity in funding. As New Brunswick is reaching for self-sufficiency, it is worthwhile to look sideways at how other constituencies, notably Ireland, have succeeded in extricating themselves from backwardness and poverty by offering free tuition to all qualified students. Only through nurturing and exploiting the intellect of our people can we hope to prosper in similar fashion.

8.0 Additional Concerns of FNBFA

- As pointed out by the Deutsch Commission, universities are the best defense against dictatorship. In proposing the government has a greater role to play in determining the accreditation of courses, **the discussion paper is undermining the autonomy of the universities**. Without limiting accountability, it is essential for our democratic society that Universities be left to chart their own course.
- The Commission, in its discussion paper, focuses entirely on the economic impact of the universities on the government. The scholarly benefits are ignored. The self-satisfaction and pride of the populace is ignored. The non-monetary benefits to society are ignored. In framing the questions strictly as economic questions the Commission distorts the real value of universities and colleges and any conclusions reached on this limited basis is in danger of attempting to reinvent a mode of learning and self-governance that has survived and served society well for many hundreds of years—a survival many times longer than any corporation.
- If it is the government's expectation to become involved in diminishing the standards of the universities, we must resist and urge every citizen of New Brunswick to do likewise.
- The Commission has decried the paucity of hard science students. It would be wise for the Commission to look a little further into the future. Human Resources Canada estimates that 19,500 professors will retire in the next 10 years. With a current (full-time) professoriate of 34,002, this means that over half of all professors will need to be replaced. Even if New Brunswick were not part of this demographic, the need of other provinces will make it extremely difficult to retain or replace its own faculty. As one of the few remaining provinces that have not abolished mandatory retirement, we are very vulnerable to both raiding by other provinces and eroding our own resources by retiring productive and intellectually robust professors at the arbitrary age of 65. Therefore, we urge the Commission to join the Self-sufficiency Task Force in recommending the abolition of mandatory retirement to the provincial government.
- The Commission briefly mentions private universities. Perhaps it has a model of private universities such as MIT or Columbia in mind when it speaks of private universities. Those operational in New Brunswick are not of this genre. They are either denominational (Atlantic Baptist University) or for-profit organizations. Non-critical, religion-based higher education may be fine for divinity students, but not for the critical thinkers that are going to lead the province into the future. The for-profit universities such as Lansbridge, which has been shut down in British Columbia because of financial irregularities, have a suspect motive for both accepting and graduating under-qualified students. The degrees they award are not recognized by any of the publicly funded universities in Canada and they have zero academic accountability. It would be folly to encourage the continuation or the establishment of private institutions.

9.0 What Defines a University

We believe that a university may be defined as a community of scholars who profit from academic freedom to investigate critically subjects of their choice whether for curiosity or for applicability to the benefit of society. In exercising this freedom, we strive to nurture in our students a love of truth and critical reflection of the world around us.

10.0 Recommendations/Conclusions

The Federation of New Brunswick Faculty Associations recommends:

- the provincial and federal governments be urged to restore funding taken out of the university system since the mid-nineties;
- sufficient funds be allocated to the universities so tuition fees can be lowered and ideally eliminated in order that that no capable student is denied higher education by financial considerations;
- university education be seen as a public good (not the employer's bounty);
- universities be left to decide which non-university courses should be given credit;
- government improve the labour climate and the perception of opportunities in the provinces;
- government encourage entrepreneurial spin-offs from the universities that will employ graduates in high-quality jobs;
- improving outreach efforts in the schools to combat under-representation of First Nations students in universities;
- improving the teaching of mathematics and science at the high school level so more students will consider a degree in mathematics or science;
- creating a matching fund pool to compensate for the relative lack of industry in New Brunswick when pursuing research dollars;
- abolishing mandatory retirement;
- discourage the continuation or the establishment of private institutions.
- government focus on the business of governing and preserve the autonomy of the universities.