

A Response to the *Discussion Paper* circulated by the
Commission on Post-Secondary Education in New Brunswick

Submitted by

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Presented by

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An Introduction to Arts at UNBF

The Faculty of Arts of the University of New Brunswick Fredericton (UNBF) expresses its sincere appreciation to the Commissioners for an opportunity to respond in person to the *Discussion Paper* circulated as part of the review of post-secondary education in the Province of New Brunswick.

For a number of reasons, both academic and historical, the Faculty of Arts of UNBF holds a unique position in the post-secondary landscape. As the largest faculty in the only national comprehensive university in the province, Arts offers its students a wide range of academic experiences and opportunities in and outside the immediate humanities and social science settings. As the only Faculty of Arts in the province which sustains an array of graduate programmes in humanities and social sciences, including several nationally recognized PhD programmes, it welcomes students to a rich and varied research environment. And, of course, as the oldest continuing faculty (of any sort) in the province, Arts at UNBF enjoys an established reputation among the population of the province as a provider of the consistent, diversified, and high-caliber undergraduate degrees which have gained entrance for a host of New Brunswickers to first-rank graduate programmes around the world.

The undergraduate programmes of the Faculty of Arts are organized through eleven departments, and six interdisciplinary units. The opportunity for honours, majors and minors in most of these programmes, and for combinations of various programmes, including joint honours and double majors, creates an academic atmosphere which values and encourages interdisciplinary or multi-disciplinary degrees. Moreover, as one of the two core faculties of the academy, along with the Faculty of Science, the Faculty of Arts provides essential service courses through all our departments and programs to students in other faculties. Our vision, then, must include not only some broad array of undergraduate disciplinary and interdisciplinary programmes for Arts students, but also a continuing offering of elective courses to non-Arts students.

We currently accept some 400 new students annually into BA programs. As a result of demographic trends in the province and increased competition, regionally and nationally, and in spite of our aggressive recruiting campaign, we anticipate that undergraduate Arts enrolment will decline marginally over the next five years from the 1525 (fte) reported by the Registrar in Fall 2006. At the same time, we expect our current graduate registration of 230 (fte) to be sustained.

Our vision is to be a leader among the best liberal arts faculties in Atlantic

Canada, known nationally for our quality teaching and learning, our innovative curriculum and research, and our public-minded contribution to the well-being of our Province. Our mission is to provide high quality learning experiences in dynamic undergraduate and graduate programs informed by creative scholarly activity and innovative research programs.

Four goals provide the framework of a five-year strategic plan to move the Faculty closer to its vision:

- 1) To deliver superior academic programmes (undergraduate and graduate) in the Humanities and Social Sciences which provide positive learning experiences through quality teaching, strategic staffing, innovative research, and a progressive curriculum.
- 2) To recruit and retain both highly qualified faculty and staff, and the most promising graduate and undergraduate students, to a working and learning environment which promotes opportunities for outstanding achievement
- 3) To create a student-centered environment in which every student is advised consistently, taught effectively, treated respectfully, and offered a broad range of extra-curricular academic opportunities
- 4) To contribute to the well-being of the Province of New Brunswick through educational and cultural activities, by promotion of dialogue with the public on important social, political and cultural issues, by volunteer work across a wide array of community agencies, and through collaborative research with government and community groups.

While the discussion of what is best in education is by its very nature a never-ending one, we realize that the Commission is working within the bounds of a very limited timeframe. Therefore, we have chosen to focus on what we consider to be four major issues raised by the *Discussion Paper*, and to address them in turn under four headings:

1. The Value of an Arts Education
2. UNBF Arts and the Commitment to Research
3. UNBF Arts: Education and Training
4. Collaboration in Arts

There are, of course, a host of other topics concerning which we might offer comment, but for the purposes of this session, we appreciate the need to be succinct.

The Value of an Arts Education

On page 6 of its *Discussion Paper* the PSEC asked the question: “*Why do so many university students enrol in arts programs, while the need grows for graduates in the sciences, pure and applied mathematics, computer science and engineering?*” Now, since the question seems to imply that an arts education is somehow of less value in, or less necessary for citizens of, the modern world, we feel obliged to begin with a brief statement of the value of an Arts education.

It is through the study in the liberal arts disciplines—the humanities and the social sciences—that students encounter the issues truly critical to human life: questions of power, morality, and the search for truth; the root causes of human behavior; and the nature of knowledge itself. These disciplines teach us what we are and who we are, within the largest context of history, society, and human understanding. It is no surprise, then, that young people study Arts. Students are drawn to these disciplines in the way that young people have always been drawn to what is exciting and essential, what speaks to their own lives.

Study in Arts brings an awareness of different perspectives on human beings and the social organizations they produce. Whether students approach their studies from a psychological, sociological, cultural, or historical perspective, individuals with such knowledge are more than ever required in a world where all kinds of economic, social, and even military endeavors often come up short precisely because the people involved do not understand the complex human, cultural, and historical factors at work in the societies they are trying to influence. The well taught Arts student has a profound awareness of cultural and social diversity in all its possibilities and difficult complexities.

Consider an illustration: there are many efforts underway right now to help us comprehend the events of 9/11. Questions abound. Scientists have studied the flight paths and behaviors of the hijacked airplanes. Engineers have explained why the Twin Towers collapsed the way they did, and how to prevent such catastrophic breakdowns from happening in the future. But it is an Arts education that helps us comprehend the reasons why the hijackers took over the planes in the first place. Only through a deep understanding of human attitudes and aspirations, gained through the study of language, culture, religion, and history can we ever hope to confront the underlying causes of such disastrous thinking and to frame appropriate responses.

While some students enter undergraduate study in Arts with specific career paths in mind, and others are on a journey of discovery, the every-day truth of the matter is that there is a wide variety of careers that regularly begin with study in the

humanities and social sciences—careers in education, law, public-policy, politics, public service, diplomacy, public relations, communications, economic analysis, administration, healthcare, mental-health, journalism, fine arts, and a host of others. Even post-graduate programs in business administration and medicine are increasingly drawing students from the humanities and the social sciences because of their superior skills in communication and the extensive training they have had in critical thinking.

The flexibility demonstrated by self-reflective Arts students who are able to embrace diversity and change, and to engage both their local community and the global society is becoming appropriate as never before in the global economy, which puts a premium on life-long learning and the ability to re-tool oneself. And as western governments are quickly discovering, basic humanistic abilities in language and cultural literacy are more important than ever and have very practical applications. I would argue that the province needs graduates with these capabilities.

But perhaps the most eloquent testimony to the value of an Arts education comes, ironically enough, from the programs which produce the very “*graduates in the sciences, pure and applied mathematics, computer science and engineering*” who seem to be championed in the Commission’s *Discussion Paper*. For across every modern university campus, these very students are directed to include Arts electives as part of their educational experience to develop their ability to interact in the world, and to take part in the cultural discourse of human society. In the knowledge sets and theoretical approaches of Arts disciplines, they become acquainted with the essential skills of an engaged citizen.

This fundamental value of an Arts education is further enhanced for our students on a practical level by our Faculty’s position at the centre of the only comprehensive Anglophone university in the province. As one of eleven faculties or colleges on the UNBF Campus, nearly 40% of the teaching load of the Faculty of Arts supports the education of students in other programs. Because we teach large numbers of undergraduate students from our fellow faculties, many of our Arts classes offer unparalleled opportunities for multi-disciplinary interaction across the faculties. Non-arts students do not attend Arts classes in some sort of “educational ghetto” — courses which claim to be “Arts subjects for non-Arts students”. At UNBF, non-Arts student have access to the best teachers Arts has to offer, and so Arts students collaborate on group projects and interact in class discussions with their peers from Engineering, Science, Nursing, Business, Kinesiology, Forestry and Computer Science. Thus, the comprehensive academic landscape of UNBF provides a breadth of opportunities, both formal, such as concurrent degree programs with Science or Computer Science, and

informal (as described above), which outstrip those found in the context of a university with a program which is strictly liberal arts.

In addition, we are the only provincial Arts faculty offering our students an extensive range of graduate programs across nine departments in humanities and social sciences, with a tenth pending. While all these programs have solid academic records, several have, over the years, established national and international reputations based on the high quality of their faculty, and the significant accomplishments of their students, including the Creative Writing program in the Department of English, the Atlantic Canada studies program in the History Department, and the nationally and internationally accredited clinical program in the Psychology Department. The presence of continuing, nationally recognized graduate programmes, and the interaction between graduates and undergraduates adds a depth and richness to the overall university experience for all students in Arts at UNBF which does not exist on a campus which maintains only undergraduate programs.

In the larger provincial context, the StatsCan list of employment numbers by sector speaks directly to the continuing importance of Arts graduates in NB. Across the sectors—trade/retail, health care, manufacturing, education, hospitality, construction, public administration, transportation, other services, and agriculture—the bulk of the occupations are service-oriented, requiring significant cultural, communication and inter-personal skills. And we can all see the significant number of retirements looming in the public sector, where there will be a large demand for new people with policy research skills. Arts graduates have established careers across the country and around the world—as teachers, professors, librarians and curators; as lawyers, judges, legal advisers, and law enforcement officers; as media directors, journalists, editors and authors; as public administrators, deputy ministers, diplomats and politicians; as corporate managers of human resources, public relations, marketing and advertising; as directors of NGOs, government agencies, religious non-profit service organizations and environmental watchdog agencies; as policy directors, economic advisers, social researchers, and special counselors; as corporate directors, board members, union leaders, and labour mediators. The Arts graduates of today are the leaders of tomorrow, and New Brunswick needs such leaders.

It is our contention that Arts at UNBF provides a high quality education, preparing our students for the wide range of life experiences and vocations that they will meet in a constantly changing global society. The province's single English-language comprehensive university needs a strong Arts Faculty to fulfill its mission to the people of New Brunswick and of Canada. The more of our citizens who have the opportunity to enroll in courses and programs in Arts, either towards their BA degree

or as part of other degree programs, the better are the prospects for New Brunswick's future.

Our Commitment to Research

The *Discussion Paper* points out that NB ranks last in funded research. While this is not surprising given the absence of a medical school in the province, the observation reminds us of the need to keep New Brunswickers informed about university research, and Arts research in particular.

The challenge to society and government in the future will not only be that of managing the material world, but also of managing the social world. Harnessing the social world to respond to the needs of the material world will be critical. For that task, sustained, high-quality research in all the disciplines of the humanities and the social sciences is essential. This is the face of research in the UNBF Faculty of Arts today.

UNBF Arts researchers are at the forefront in studying central concerns in the human world of our day: defense and security, family violence, mental health and wellness, autism, economic foundations of aquaculture, government regulatory practices, regional economic disparity, coastal fisheries management, political participation rates, environmental degradation, fiscal imbalance, digital communications, immigrant economic issues, and many more of the major issues facing our region and our globe.

At the same time, UNBF Arts researchers are also exploring a broad range of subjects in the ongoing study of what it means to be human: from pre-contact archaeology in north eastern North America to 20th Century German literature; from Continental Philosophy to Classical Art; from Native North American literature to visual memory and perception, from feminist analysis of early modern political thought to New Brunswick labour history—to name but a few.

Such initiatives are indicative of a long tradition of research excellence that attracts internationally known, leading scholars. Our Canada Research Chairs (CRC) are a case in point. Marg Conrad, CRC in Atlantic Canada Studies, is assisting in the development of more effective policies to improve the social and economic well-being of the Atlantic Provinces. David Gants holds a CRC in Humanities Computing and is working on innovative approaches to electronic editing and publishing that can be employed in humanities research and in the publishing industry. Lucia O'Sullivan, CRC in Adolescent Sexual Health Behaviour, is exploring the present-day risks that threaten the physical and social well-being of New Brunswick and Canadian youth.

Both Dr. Gants and Dr. O’Sullivan are examples of a reversal of the “brain drain”, since they both came to UNBF from universities in the United States.

UNBF Arts research centres include the Muriel McQueen Fergusson Centre for Family Violence Research, the Centre for Policy Studies in the Department of Economics, and the Milton Gregg Centre for the Study of War and Society. These centers provide specific clusters of expertise through funded research, often undertaken in partnership with researchers representing a multi-disciplinary perspective and linking New Brunswick with researchers outside our region.

Research publications flow from UNBF Arts. The Faculty is home to a number of prestigious internationally acclaimed journals, including *Acadiensis*, *Conflict Studies*, *The Fiddlehead*, and *Studies in Canadian Literature*, and members of the Arts faculty serve as editors of many other journals published by national academic associations. In the past five years, members of the Faculty of Arts have published 87 books, anthologies and monographs, literally hundreds of articles in international academic journals, and dozens of reports in support of government policy study, all contributing new knowledge to our province and the world.

Much of the research carried out in Arts is funded by external granting agencies and foundations. Again, this research contributes important new knowledge to our society, but additionally it often pays for the education and training of graduate and undergraduate students who learn specialized skills in their chosen fields. These opportunities help students develop their research techniques while apprenticing with senior, accomplished researchers.

For all of this, there are significant challenges that impede critical Arts research. When it comes to funded research in Canada, money gets money. A recent Social Science and Humanities Community-University Research grant proposal (title to follow) started at UNB but was later handed off to Laval because UNB was only able to find \$20,000 in support of the project while Laval was able to contribute \$500,000, much of it in cash. Agencies such as ACOA and the Canadian Foundation for Innovation require applicants to find “matching funds” for dollars sought. While other provinces in Canada have mechanisms to provide this support, New Brunswick does not.

Five years ago, the Electronic Text Centre (ETC) in the Harriet Irving Library was at the forefront in Canada of the application of new communications technologies to humanities. The Faculty of Arts brought in two CRC’s specifically to work with the ETC. Plans were afoot to convert it from a Centre to a stand-alone Institute and to make it the focus of a graduate degree in Electronic Publishing. These plans came to naught because of a lack of funding. This is a real loss for Arts, UNB, and the province.

This climate of poverty renders top researchers essentially ineligible for large pots of funding. Even recruiting of top researchers to the region is hindered by lack of resources for seed money. And we are continually at risk of losing top scholars to universities in more affluent parts of the country. The situation is that we lag behind other regions in our funding of graduate students and we lack other deliverables such as space and equipment which would help us attract post-doctoral fellows to our Faculty.

UNBF Arts researchers have maintained a national research agenda in large part through collaborations with other major universities outside the Maritimes. As equals with other major Canadian universities, we would like to be able to take the lead more frequently in large collaborative projects and to have our university and our students enjoy the benefits that accrue from this leadership.

In spite of these obstacles, UNBF Arts remains the preeminent provincial research engine in the social sciences and humanities. Research initiatives across the country and around the globe are adapting to a wider call for evidence-based practices everywhere—in the professions, at universities and within the broader culture. UNBF Arts is answering this call.

In a post-911 world, it is more important than ever for us to understand human history, human behaviour and cultures other than our own. For many of the important issues facing society today, especially as they relate to public policy and human behavior, we have an on-going body of research addressing that problem and seeking solutions. For the province to see the long-term benefits of such research, mechanisms must be put in place to recognize and support it.

Education and Training

The Commission's *Discussion Paper* suggests that there exists a tension between education and training. What is the interface between education and training within the Faculty of Arts at UNB?

The Faculty of Arts at UNBF operates under the assumption that both education and training are critical components of a high quality university experience. We believe that education involves the acquisition of knowledge domains while training involves the acquisition of skills critical to the performance of certain occupation-related demands. Another way of viewing the distinction has been to see the objective of training as the creation of a conditioned response to predictable circumstances, while the objective of education is viewed as the development of the ability to formulate reasoned responses to unpredictable circumstances. Whatever definition is used, both

undergraduate and graduate programs within the Faculty of Arts regularly consider education and training to be integrally and invariably connected. From our perspective, the best training is that which builds upon the knowledge that defines the disciplines and professions in which students are to be equipped.

In the Department of Psychology, for example, the five year doctoral program in clinical psychology is a professional program, accredited by the Canadian Psychological Association and the American Psychological Association, where the primary mandate is to train students in the practice of clinical psychology. Students learn how to work as clinical psychologists in the community, providing psychological services such as the diagnosis, assessment and treatment of various mental health problems and disorders. The majority of the graduates obtain employment as psychologists in mental health clinics, hospitals or private practice. In order to maintain their accreditation, the program must meet strict academic standards, including a broad range of psychological knowledge and research skills (the education component), and demonstrate training in the provision of psychological assessment, diagnosis, treatment, evaluation, consultation, supervision and ethical practice. Graduates, who are in high demand across the country, are responsible for a large share of the psychological services now available to New Brunswickers. The College of Psychologists of New Brunswick, the legislated body responsible for the regulation of practicing psychologists in this province, defines in its bylaws the qualifications required for licensure—detailing both education and training requirements.

We might explore many other examples of the co-mingling of education and training within the Arts Faculty of UNBF. For example, basic research skills in the social sciences equip students to define a research question, design and execute a research project, collect, manage and synthesize data, and then offer a concise examination of the results for dissemination and presentation. Within the humanities, research and writing skills enable students to locate, organize and condense large quantities of information in order to analyze and discern trends; to explore human behaviour in different places and time periods; or to produce or critique creative work that celebrates our human ingenuity and intellect.

The Bachelor of Applied Arts, an articulated degree offered in partnership with the New Brunswick College of Craft and Design, is an example of our pioneering commitment to working with other institutions to provide the best possible blend of education and training. The program is a unique combination of the advanced reasoning, research and writing skills offered in a traditional liberal arts education and the hands-on studio art courses offered by one of Canada's most respected fine craft and design schools.

While education contributes to the intellectual and creative growth of our students, training is often understood to mean little more than skill acquisition, devoid of a broader cultural or economic context. Within the Faculty of Arts at UNBF, we believe education and training do—indeed must—co-exist, for training alone renders students without the intellectual breadth to move forward and to adapt to our constantly changing global environment. Education and training are co-partners in fostering in our students a readiness to accept the challenges of working in the 21st century, of competing in a global economy, and of living as informed citizens within and beyond the borders of our province.

Collaboration in Arts

Collaboration within and among educational institutions appears as a key theme in the *Discussion Paper* produced by the Commission. We ask what model of collaboration would offer the best results in the New Brunswick setting?

From the students' perspective, collaboration has the potential to provide increased accessibility and mobility. Perhaps the most useful model would allow students to take courses from any public-funded university in NB, and receive equivalent credits at similar costs. If students could move across a seamless academic landscape within a collaborative university system, the options open to them in any given area of study become much greater in number and significance. The resources available in Sociology, say, would now include the combined resources all public universities in the province. From the province's point of view, there are potential cost savings from shared infrastructure, shared programs, shared advertising, *etc.* While it would take a good deal of interaction to provide the basis for curricular, programmatic, and advising collaboration, the ultimate pay off might be many times as great as the cost. The first step toward this end might well be the formation of a provincial funding model which would remove the need to be competitive, and allow NB public universities to operate with a united front in important areas such as national and international recruitment.

A lack of any larger institutional framework stands in the way of any sustained and systematic lower level collaboration at the departmental level. Nevertheless efforts at co-operation have been successful to a point. For example, the UNBF History Department and the STU History Department have attempted to specialize in different fields, to avoid hiring faculty in the other Department's designated major fields, and to teach a course or two each year on the other campus. Moreover, the UNB Graduate Academic Unit in History recommended that their STU counterparts be made associate

members of the School of Graduate Studies at UNB in order to allow STU faculty to act as co-supervisors and readers of UNB theses. However, the participation of the STU professors does not count towards their tenure or promotion, and may even inhibit those achievements. Moreover, graduate supervision is regularly done as an overload at UNB, and so STU faculty members who supervise do so without being paid. Without any credit for assessment or remuneration from their labours, cooperation at the graduate level is rather limited.

On the other hand, the existence of separate arts faculties has in many ways produced a healthy and attractive (to students) academic diversity. The four Anglophone liberal arts programs in the province have not only established some unique academic specializations—for example, Fine Arts and Music at Mt A; journalism at STU, Creative Writing at UNBF—but also developed quite distinctive general academic cultures. For example, Saint Thomas University is chartered as a Catholic University and is in the process of rediscovering and reasserting these traditions. As a result it provides programs in Religious Studies, while UNBF Arts, part of a university conceived in a time of growing religious freedom, has never offered such studies, in light of its provincial charter which forbids the teaching of theology. Moreover, UNBF has a close connection with faculties of science, engineering, business administration, *etc.*; and enjoys a well developed collection of graduate programs which fosters a very strong emphasis on sustained research, while STU is a liberal arts university without a graduate program. And even where departments in two universities may seem similar, there is often a profound diversity, which is revealed in quite complementary programs. For example, UNBF's History Department has developed a national reputation for its programs in Atlantic Canada History and modern Military History, while STU has focused on teaching World and non-western histories. Or again, the UNBF Economics Department offers a rigorous MA program and several undergraduate programs in mainstream economics, while the STU Economics Department offers studies in Political Economy. Students who have taken courses on both campuses in these two disciplines have benefited from a broader selection of courses, and a real diversity of approach. In short, it is our opinion that students would find the greatest educational opportunities at NB universities in some combination of a sustained diversity of academic cultures and a serious development of systematic collaboration.

And what about collaboration between universities and community colleges? In 2001 UNBF Arts and the New Brunswick College of Craft and Design (NBCCD) jointly established the Bachelor of Applied Arts (BAA), which offers a degree programme involving instruction at both institutions. Members of the Task Force Review Committee on Fine Arts at UNBF were, in their words, “highly impressed with this

programme, both for the cooperation evident in its construction and for the originality of its design.”

Perhaps UNBF collaboration with any new Community College in Fredericton could follow just such a lead—establishing a variety of articulated degrees and ease of credit transfers. This process could be facilitated in a number of ways, including the situation of the college on the UNBF campus, the participation of University faculty in the design of curricula and programs, and funding arrangements for shared library and recreational resources. Such collaboration would, of course, require a rigorous academic standard on the part of the community college, along the lines of Humber or Seneca Colleges in Ontario, bridging the gap between universities and the current community colleges.

A new community college in Fredericton might well shift a considerable portion of 1st/2nd-year courses currently offered at UNBF/STU to the new college, which would, in turn, make more room for advanced and graduate students at the universities. Such a change would, however, require additional resources for an integrated advising system.

While the Commission document pointed out a looming 20% drop in potential students over the next decade, it overlooked an equally troubling statistic: women outnumber men 3:2 in university degrees in UNB (3000 women to 1947 men in 2006). If the province could get men to enroll in college at rates similar to women, and encourage them to move on to university, we could see a 20% rise in enrolment/graduation numbers. The community colleges provide a ready-made mechanism for what one might call “masculine affirmative action.”

Conclusion

The Faculty of Arts at UNBF is very much aware of the importance of a host of issues raised in the *Discussion Paper*, which will require our attention in the coming months. For the purposes of this brief response, however, let me summarize our thinking on the four issues which we have identified above:

- “The Value of an Arts Education”: we encourage the province to consider ways of capitalizing on the tremendous life-long value generated, both for the province and for our individual students, by an education in humanities and social sciences.

- “Our Commitment to Research”: we are committed to taking a leadership role in the ongoing development of an innovative and vigorous humanities and social science research agenda which is supported by the province.
- “Education and Training”: we are committed to providing a university experience in which the best aspects of education and training are co-mingled to produce graduates of intellectual breadth and capability, who are equipped with the research, information management and communication skills that are required in the 21st century.
- “Collaboration in Arts”: we are committed to collaborating with all other provincial post-secondary institutions in the development of a seamless, diverse and expansive academic landscape that will provide New Brunswickers with the best possible university education.

In sum, UNBF Arts is keenly interested in participating in discussions for progress.