

The Draft UNB Strategic Plan

25 October 2010

The UNB Strategic Planning Committee recently circulated a draft for comment. They have asked for responses by Oct. 29 and hope to have a final document for circulation to the Senates in November. The AUNBT Executive continues to encourage members to participate in this process. One could be forgiven for being jaded about such projects but the UNB community has been assured repeatedly that this plan will lead to action. Accordingly, it is incumbent on all of us to do what we can to shape the plan in directions we ourselves choose.

The draft document has the virtue of brevity. Unfortunately, it is such a "high level" document that a reader might project it as standing for nearly anything. Participants at the various campus meetings last week were assured that "of course" such-and-such was integral to UNB. In the next draft, these assumptions must be written down in black and white.

The next draft should also recognize that we are not rebuilding UNB from the ground up. In its brevity the draft before us does not reflect either UNB's history or its current context. Nor does it refer to the various binding documents that have shaped and will continue to shape the University, such as the UNB Declaration of Rights and Responsibilities and the collective agreements of the various UNB unions. The Declaration of Rights and Responsibilities <<http://www.unb.ca/humanrights/Declaration.pdf>> was the result of a long process that included representatives from all constituencies: academic staff, students, support staff, and administration. It addresses core issues about the type of community we want to build at UNB, and yet it goes unmentioned in the draft of the strategic plan. Even more so, our collective agreements represent decades of conversations between the administration and groups of employees. In evolving these collective arrangements, we have negotiated the shape of our workplace. It is no mere slogan to say that the working conditions of our members are the learning conditions for our students. Yet the draft plan makes no mention of AUNBT's two collective agreements nor of the agreements of any of our sister unions.

Nor does the plan mention the academic necessity, enshrined in the two AUNBT collective agreements, of collegial governance. The existence of the Senates is grounded in the **UNB Act** but the jurisdiction of the Senates is always prey to those who would attempt to construe it narrowly. We would have more confidence in the practicability of any strategic plan if it acknowledged that Senate

processes are the core of collegial governance. Such a plan should aim to strengthen collegial governance, not elide it.

Along with others, we are perplexed by the attention in the plan to new "metrics" to evaluate teaching and research. What are those metrics? What would they be used for? Already academic staff are assessed more thoroughly than practically any other profession, and entire wings of the administration exist primarily to track records and metrics (Finance, Research, Registrar's Office, etc.) The AUNBT collective agreement lists *twenty-one* ways in which the performance of full-time professors, instructors and librarians is monitored and reviewed. Academic units as a whole are subject to the MPHEC quality assurance process, and some are subjected to further assessments by professional and other accreditation agencies. Metrics used for university-wide planning cannot be purely mechanical; considerable thought must be given to the nature and role of any new metrics. While planning must account for the various units of the university, it must not be so detailed that strategic planning is conflated with individual employment decisions. Finally, any new metrics must conform to the constraints of the collective agreements.

University administrators come and go. Long after their departure it is AUNBT's members who shape the UNB mission. Whether or not you agree with the forgoing, please share your own comments with the Strategic Planning Committee before the Oct. 29th deadline. The current draft can be found online at <<http://www.unb.ca/initiatives/strategicplan/>>. Comments can be sent to Melissa Dawe at <mdawe@unb.ca>.