

Federation of New Brunswick Faculty Associations



Report of the Interim President

May 15, 2020

Greetings,

Here is an account of the activities of the Federation and the issues addressed thereof over the course of the past year (see highlighted points for a shorter version):

- Attended CAUT council (2-5 May 2019)
- Meeting with representatives of the New Brunswick Student Association (15 May, 12 August 2019)
- Attended GNB Labour Market Information Forum (22 May 2019)
- Attended meeting of the Atlantic Canada Council of Faculty Associations (ACCFA), Mt St Vincent U., Halifax (6 June 2019)
- Meeting with ABPPUM president and vice-president (external affairs) regarding ABPPUM's departure from the FNBFA (17 June 2019)
- Responded to media comments by PETL minister with respect to his expressed wishes to see universities be mindful of the labour market trends (doubled down in follow-up Brunswick News editorial and commentary)
 - FNBFA response letter published in Brunswick News newspapers (24 August 2019)
 - Letter forwarded to PETL Minister (5 September 2019)
- Attended PETL Deputy Minister presentation before the Public Accounts' Select Committee on Public Universities (26 September 2019)
 - One of the main topics raised through MLA questions: nursing programs at UNB and Udm
- Meeting with MPHEC chief executive officer, Catherine Stewart (31 October 2019)
 - Possible collaboration between FNBFA and MPHEC; agree to meet annually
 - Testimony of the MPHEC before the Public Accounts' Select Committee on Public Universities (26 September 2019)
- Meeting with PETL Minister, Trevor Holder (12 November 2019)
 - Public universities vs labour market challenges
 - PETL given copies of the FNBFA *Position Paper on the Implementation of Performance-based Funding in New Brunswick Public Universities*
 - Low % of people holding university diploma in NB
 - Chronic underfunding of public universities
 - Dismissals at Maritime College of Forestry Technology

- Attended the rally in support of Rod Cumberland following his dismissal from the Maritime College of Forest Technology in June 2019 (19 November 2019)
- Monitoring of the renewed memoranda of understanding between the GNB and public universities
- Attended CAUT Council (29 November-1 December 2019)
- Letter sent to PETL minister in support of MAFA's request that the minister issue a "no board" report following the conclusion of the Conciliation Officer that negotiations at MtA were at an impasse (2 December 2019)
- End of fall term association general meeting visits: MAFA (6 December); FAUST (6 December); AUNBT (9 December)
- Meeting with Green Party leader, D. Coon, and MLA, Megan Mitton (7 January 2020)
- Release of the *Position Paper on the Implementation of Performance-Based Funding in New Brunswick Public Universities* (29 January 2020) – Please see FNBFA website (www.fnbfa.ca/) for copies of the paper.
 - Interview and news media coverage follow-up in February & March:
 - Global News
 - Brunswick News
 - CBC : *Information Morning* (Fredericton)
 - CBC : *Information Morning* (Moncton)
 - CBC : *Political Panel* podcast
 - *L'Acadie Nouvelle* (response to commentary by prof. Roger Ouellette, U. de Moncton)
 - Invitations as a discussion panelist by the National Graduate Caucus of the Canadian Federation of Students (March 2020) and by the Canadian Association of University Teachers (April 2020); both events cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Meeting with N.B. Liberal Party leader, Kevin Vickers (30 January 2020)
 - Public universities vs job market challenges
 - Presentation of copies of the *Position Paper on the Implementation of Performance-Based Funding in New Brunswick Public Universities*
 - Low % of N.B. population holding a university diploma
 - Chronic underfunding of public universities
- Support to MAFA during faculty strike (3-8 February 2020)
 - \$1,000 donation
 - Messages (e-mails, Facebook, Twitter)

- Attended the Auditor General’s presentation before the Public Accounts Committee (20 February 2020) following her report regarding public universities (December 2019)
- Meeting with the Director of Post-secondary Relations of the Min. of Post-secondary, Training and Labour, Ms Rachel Brown (Topics included: the role of public universities in the post-pandemic planning of the GNB and the economic recovery; Ms Brown emphasized the experiential learning initiatives of the GNB and stated that more are to come; regular meetings between Ms Brown and FNBFA are in the works) (30 April 2020)
- Letters & commentaries sent to:
 - Kevin Vickers, N.B Liberal Party leader
 - Kris Austin, Peoples Alliance Party of N.B.
 - Public Accounts Committee: Auditor General report
 - Minister of Finances (GNB): 2020-2021 provincial budget consultations
 - Brunswick News : Bill 13 regarding wage clause arbitration vs the employer’s capacity to pay
 - Minister of Post-secondary Education, Training and Labour (the role of the public universities in the post-pandemic planning by the GNB and the economic recovery)
- Drafting of a memoir to be sent to the Standing Committee on Law Amendments with regard to Bill 13 and wage clause arbitration vs the employer’s capacity to pay. Hearing dates TBD.

Update on various on-going issues of interest to the Federation:

- *University Financing*

New Brunswick Speech from the Throne (19 November 2019): “The government will work with post-secondary institutions in New Brunswick to better prepare students for current and future labour needs, as well as ensure the education system is doing its part.” (p. 9) This is the only mention of PSE in the whole speech.

The Auditor General’s report (December 2019) stated that the public universities funding formula had been in abeyance since the MOUs between the GNB and the universities had been signed (2017-2018).

Monitoring the impact on student enrolment and on university finances of the Renewed Tuition Bursary program (i.e., Free Bursary/Relief for the Middle Class tuition programs, expanded & diluted, now including private institutions).

- *Experiential Learning*

The UdeM student association campaign “Mon stage me ruine” (“My Field Placement Is Ruining Me”) was rolled out again during fall 2019. The campaign draws attention to the fact that holding program-related, off-campus employment, comes at a cost to students (transportation, clothing, lodging in some cases). Those expenses are assumed by students and add to their debt upon the completion of their education.

The FNBFA has one faculty representative (and one alternate) on the EL provincial committee. A report was submitted in early 2020 by our representative to the Board of Directors of the Federation. The Board has accepted the report and will take its observations and recommendations into consideration in the coming year.

- *Performance-based Funding*

The plan of the Government of Ontario to tie 60% of the funding of its public universities to performance indicators may revive the idea with the GNB since the GNB regularly looks to Ontario and Nova Scotia for policy and legislation ideas. Alberta and Manitoba have indicated their willingness to do apply similar policies in the near future.

As evidence for the above with regard to NB, the GNB Labour Market Information Forum (22 May 2019) saw the return of Dr. Harvey Weingarten (former president of the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario) as a guest speaker. Dr. Weingarten is a staunch advocate of performance-based funding (recommending that 100% of Ontario university financing be tied to performance indicators, as soon as possible) and said so at the Forum.

Throughout the summer and fall of 2019, the GNB minister of PETL was quoted numerous times in the media stating that universities, among other things, must be ready to do more in order to help New Brunswick meet its labour market shortage of ready-to-work employees, forecasting 120,000 vacant jobs in the province by 2027. A letter was sent by the PETL minister to public university presidents/rectors in that regard last fall.

It is the above situation which prompted the FNBFA to write and release its *Position Paper on the Implementation of Performance-Based Funding in New Brunswick Public Universities* earlier this year.

- *10-Year Education Plan*

The Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development released a green paper on education (3 Oct. 2019) and held an information summit on education (16-18 Oct. 2019). The paper and summit are mostly dedicated to grade school education.

- *Provincial Budget 2020-2021*

Provincial budgets are prepared and presented early in the year (i.e., February/March).

The Speech from the Throne from 19 Nov. 2019, although vague on most counts, led one to believe that austerity measures were to be expected in many sectors, repeating previous warnings to the effect that tough(er) times are to be expected (i.e., budget freezes and cuts and program terminations).

The Auditor General of NB tabled a report on 3 Dec. 2019 critical of the GNB's "hands-off" approach to public university funding. That report could provide some comfort to the GNB and PETL in their attempts to further impose performance-based funding indicators on public universities.

The provincial government budget released on 10 March 2020 had little to say about public universities. The MOUs between the GNB and public universities in effect since 2017-2018 already stated a mandated budget increase of 1% (nonetheless increased to 1.5% due to the prevailing financial circumstances – all of this prior to COVID-19).

- *Indigenization Issues*

In 2019, members of the FNBFA ad hoc committee on the indigenization of the academy, Robin Vose, Andrea Bear Nicholas and Craig Proulx, all from STU) explored ideas into ways to pursue the research that couldn't be launched in the summer of 2018 because the researcher had to withdraw from the project for personal reasons. An amount of \$12,000 had been voted for the project at the November 18, 2017 meeting of the FNBFA Board of Directors. In June 2019, Robin Vose applied as the principal investigator under the signing authority of the STU Vice-President of Research, and with the agreement that FNBFA would invest the funds remaining from the \$12,000 and a few other resources "in kind", to the *Social Innovation Research Fund Pilot Project* so that there would be more resources to better carry out the research project:

"This study will survey recent government, university, and First Nations involvement in Indigenous post-secondary education to determine what has already been tried; what has not yet been tried; and some effective ways to move forward. It will use local/provincial policy documents and original data analysis to examine demographic realities and types of funding deployed by campus and region, as well as resulting administrative structures and curricular resources (in both English and French, as well as Indigenous languages such as Maliseet and Mi'kmaq). It will make its findings freely available to government offices, universities, and First Nations communities in order to inform evidence-based strategic planning and policy development. [...]"

The attempt to secure funding was unsuccessful; a modified version of the project was resubmitted to the same funding body in early 2020. That attempt also proved unsuccessful. The Board of Directors of the FNBFA will need to reassess the initiative.

Upcoming issues and activities:

- Completion of the FNBFA public university “alternative” plan/document (2020)
- Minority government makes provincial elections possible at just about any time (fall 2020, spring 2021?); the COVID-19 situation may push the next provincial election further down the calendar.
- Monitor the COVID-19 situation impact on public universities in general, and on faculty in particular.

For more information on the FNBFA, please visit its website: www.fnbfa.ca/

Respectfully submitted,

Jean Sauvageau
Interim President