

# COPUS Atlantic Conference - "Exploring our potential"

by Paula Gauthier

The Canadian Organization of Part-time University Students Annual Atlantic conference was held on Nov. 6, 7, and 8th on the St. John Campus of the University of New Brunswick. The theme chosen by this year's host, "Exploring our Potential," was developed in a variety of areas and from a variety of perspectives.

The opening seminar, "Exploring Government and University Support; research and Funding of Part-time Students," was led by Rich Woyawada, Director of Policy for Student Aid, Secretary of States' Office, Ottawa. Mr. Woyawada informed the conference that the Student Aid Program is under reassessment and that the "failure of application" for part-time student loans has been reinterpreted, through feed-back from part-time students, as a "failure to meet the needs" of 40% of the current university population. Part-time student loans are payable one month upon receipt. An advisory committee is now being formed; the Atlantic region is being represented. Revision of policies developed in 1964 concerning student aid, and policies concerning part-time student loans developed in 1984, are recognized by Ottawa as long overdue.

The workshop "Exploring the Potential of Student Groups; Effective Lobbying" was headed by Mari-Jeffries, Local NDP Candidate in the last provincial election, New Brunswick. Ms. Jeffries discussed ways and means of gaining the attention of members, the public, government and opposition and informing them of the principal goals of organization. Special emphasis was placed on the particular difficulties encountered by part-time student organizations to develop communication networks given the traditional university structure. Ms. Jeffries assured the gathering that most of the work involved in successful organization is typically accomplished by a few dedicated leaders.

Under the topic "Exploring your Potential; Effective Leadership," James

Millican, Cooperate Training Manager for NB Tel, contrasted traditional manager behavior with effective leadership behavior. Organization environments can do much to block or encourage commitment by de-basing or satisfying individual's social/psychological needs. One of the main influencing factors on commitment is healthy two-way communication that creates a well-formed body on the issues; communication facilitated by approachable, interested leaders in informal, open-door environments. Mr. Millican cautioned that although the concept of communication is understood and paid lip-service, administrators will have to acquire a host of new skills and attitudes about their roles in organizations to be effective in the future.

"Exploring the Potential of the Student; helping the Students to Help Themselves" centered around assistance to students in recognizing and dealing with personal problem areas, along with suggestions as to how a committee might be set up as a liaison with administration to deal with academic penalties. The workshop was led by Fred Fuller of the Employment and Student Assistance Program of New Brunswick. The speaker on "Time

Management" discussed the necessity of overcoming original, underlying decisions characteristically made to avoid doing. He stressed that the rules we live by can be re-evaluated. "All musts — no wants" results in an unbalanced life-style. For a good return on time-investment, defining goals, establishing priorities, creating time and making basic decisions must be perceived as a life-long process. This seminar was particularly relevant to part-time students who typically attempt to balance family, jobs, studies, etc. — not to mention involvement in organizations such as COPUS.

Complementing the formal seminars and workshops were informal discussions between the attending delegates who represented traditional full-time student, as well as part-time student, organizations. Although both groups shared a common need for education; difficulty of access was mainly the concern of part-time students.

While the system was reasonably accessible to the mainstream student, difficulty of access was the main concern of part-time students. Inadequate range of evening classes, lack of financing for tuition and childcare, limited library hours, student services and business offices operating on a 9 to 5,

Monday to Friday basis, lack of physical space and funding to facilitate communication, organization and representation were problems experienced only by part-time students. Systems simply have not been developed to accommodate the needs of these students.

Hence, the issues raised by part-time students are broad in nature. The contention that life-long learning is being increasingly perceived as a valued goal in our society is supported by the current enrollment figures — 40% of all university students are part-time. One can only speculate as to how high the percentage might be if equality of opportunity was a reality. Considering that productivity correlates positively with education, the economic argument tends to lose credibility. revision of national policy and/or provincial accountability is long overdue.



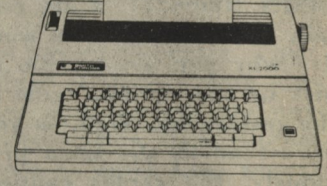
As witnessed by the support. Most of the universities from the Atlantic region sent delegates. Part-time, traditional and non-traditional full time students, faculty and administration were represented; individuals from the public and private sectors led workshops. All shared their particular views, experiences and expertise. However, part-time students for the main part continue to perceive their problems as personal as opposed to social. The needs and potential of part-time students have only begun to be explored.

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Hello, a new and exciting change is in store for all you IVCFer's. This coming week the meeting will be held on THURSDAY instead of Friday. Of course we'll still have it at 7:00 p.m., but it will be held in Robertson Library room 110. Now don't get lost.

Our guest speaker this week is Sam Lewis from Overseas Missionary Fellowship. He is an English teacher in China, and is just chalk full of interesting and exciting stories to share with us. So come on out and have a ball (or a chair if you'd be more comfortable). All are welcome.

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