

BY ANDREW MACPHERSON  
VICE-PRESIDENT INTERNAL  
UPEI STUDENT UNION

IN THE LAST ISSUE OF THE X-PRESS THERE appeared an eight-page segment which constituted the results of a recent Student Union initiative. This consisted of a questionnaire on the quality of teaching at UPEI. This survey was distributed to as many UPEI students as was possible during our given time span. In this article I will review the recent history of student teacher evaluation at UPEI, I will outline the goals of the Student Union in conducting this survey, and I will provide some analysis of the results of the survey.

Over the past number of years the senate of this university has been looking into whether or not mandatory student teacher evaluations should be implemented at UPEI. To be blunt, this process has been dragged out much too long. I will not give you a complete history of the senate subcommittee on the evaluation of teaching at UPEI, but the proposals of this committee have been introduced to senate three times, the last being April of 1993. It is this last proposal which I would like to focus upon because it is what finally forced the Student Union to take action. This final proposal was not dealt with in the spring of 1993 and was thus put off until senate reconvened for the new academic year in September. When it finally came up for discussion, representatives from the faculty association requested that they be given a chance to review it, and it was put off again for several months.

The Student Union's chief concern is the fact that the faculty association was given a chance to review this report and give input at that time. There was no need for the process to be repeated. It is clear that some members of the faculty of this university are not interested in what students have to say about their teaching methods. That is not to say that all professors feel this way, but enough do to delay this process an undue length of time. Since being sent to the faculty association the report of this committee has been on the agendas of no less than four senate meetings but has not yet been discussed.

Student representatives on the UPEI senate are elected for one-year terms, and for this reason don't know the background history of what has happened to past reports to senate,

# Students fight for professor ratings

## Struggle for student evaluations of professors continues

and are not aware of the mickey mouse game which has been played with student teacher evaluations at this university. When the Student Union became aware of the situation it was too late to stop this report from being bogged down by the faculty association again. Instead, we chose to make our point known in a slightly different manner: we followed the lead of Student Unions at UNB, Dalhousie, and several other Atlantic Canadian universities in developing our own survey on this vitally important subject. Support for this initiative on the students' council was very strong, passing with no opposition.

The message we wanted to send to the senate with this survey was that the students at this university are very concerned with the quality of teaching at UPEI. It is obvious that those who suffer from inferior teaching practices are the students. The purpose of this survey was not for students to say that their professors mark too harshly, and I think that it is a childish reaction on the part of those faculty who say that students are not qualified to evaluate their practices. Most students are not looking for the easy way through university.

We are here to learn something, not to ask that it be given to us. Poor teaching practices (in the eyes of students) for the most part have more to do with the way professors teach and whether they are able to pass their knowledge on to students in a clear manner than with the difficulty level of the course.

The response to the survey was not exactly as good as the Student Union had hoped. We received 731 responses out of a maximum possible number of about 12,000. This being the first time the survey was conducted, combined with the limited amount of time we had to distribute surveys at the end of the fall semester, it is an understandably low percentage. Another drawback was the fact that we were unable to officially hand this out during class time, as would occur with a survey conducted by the university. Incidentally, at the University of New Brunswick the student teacher evaluation done by the student union has been approved by the senate of that university.

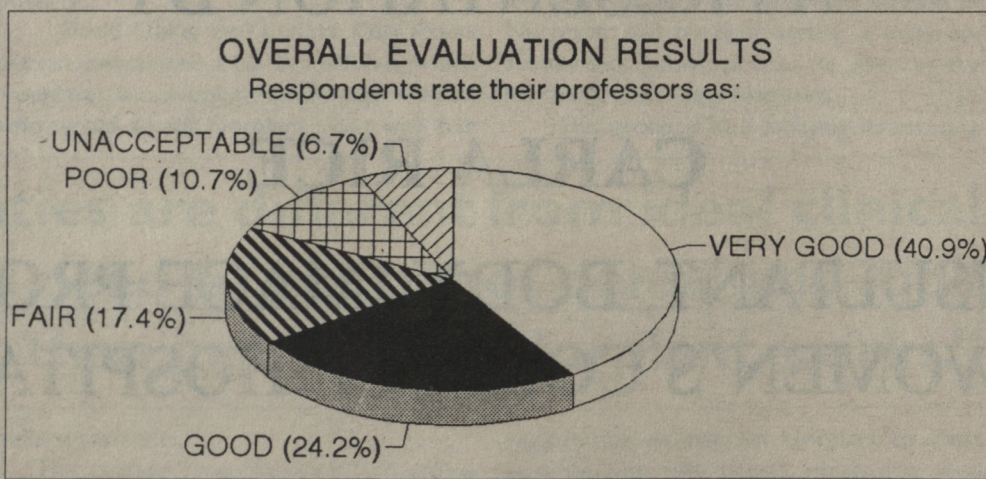
There is a major difference between this survey and the one which we hope will be conducted by the university next year in that

our survey was geared to a certain extent toward being published in the X-Press. Unfortunately, the survey which is being considered by senate is for internal use only but it should be emphasized that any survey done is very beneficial because the results go to the committee that matters most: the tenure committee.

Due to the low number of responses, the results for the survey were broken down into faculty and departments along with the classes we felt had adequate representation to be published. The overall results of this survey show that the students who responded to the survey were generally very pleased with their professors' teaching: approximately two-thirds of the responses were 'very good' or 'good'. There were very few respondents who said that their professors were 'poor' or 'unacceptable.'

The Student Union plans to continue this project no matter what the senate finally decides to do with student teacher evaluation. We believe this is important information which students can pass on to one another. There will be some adjustments of course, as is the case with any new project. We will be adding a "comments" section to the questionnaire because this adds another dimension which in many cases is more valuable than simple facts and figures. We will also be approaching members of the faculty to see if they would be willing to distribute the questionnaire in their classes. This would enhance the number of responses we get to the survey. We will also make an effort to present our information in a different, more understandable way. A guide like this with a large enough number of responses could be invaluable to a student. Not all students have the opportunity to talk to their peers about the quality of teaching certain professors, but a survey of this nature could help in this area.

At the February meeting of the UPEI senate the only topic on the agenda that was not addressed before the two-hour meeting was completed was the Report of the evaluation teaching committee at UPEI. Therefore, this should be addressed at the upcoming meeting of senate in March. It is important that this report be accepted during this academic year so it can be put into practice for the next semester. If it is delayed further we could be looking at another long year before UPEI students have their proper say in this matter.



"HILARIOUS!"  
-Jack Mathews,  
NEW YORK NEWSDAY

THE SNAPPER

© 1993 Miramax Films  
All rights reserved

also playing -  
The Search For Signs of Intelligent  
Life In The Universe

CITY Cinema  
64 King St. 368 3669

Beadwork By Holly  
Handmade Jewellery  
Repairs - Custom Orders

T-shirts - Native Crafts - Dream Catchers  
10% off students, staff, faculty  
Home 892-6269

Farmer's Market  
Saturdays

Look for Display at  
Amigo's Gym!

GAY, LESBIAN,  
BISEXUAL AND QUEER  
SUPPLEMENT

The X-Press will be  
running its annual GLB  
supplement next week  
Input of any sort will be  
cherished