

Report to the University Senate EC
December 22, 2006

In response to the EC charge to the Student Affairs Committee to evaluate the educational value of the Targum, we conducted telephone interviews with Dean Marie Logue and Dr. Barbara Reed, faculty members on the Targum Board of Trustees and Brian Rose, Office of Student Affairs. SAC members were also asked to review the most recent Targum Concept Plan, submitted to the EC in Fall 2006, as well as the Guidelines for Special Student Organizations. In addition, the SAC meeting of December 8, 2006 was devoted to a discussion of Targum with the following Targum representatives: Editor in Chief (Catherine Snipes), Business Manager (Kru Patel) and Managing Editor, as well as Dr. Barbara Reed.

Prior to the December 8th meeting, the Targum representatives were asked to come prepared to discuss these issues:

I. Concept Plan Issues

According to guidelines, The Concept Plan should describe the structure, aims, general policies and intended programs, along with an explanation of the educational value of its activity.

- A. Structure- How often does the Board of Trustees meet? How are the three student representatives selected? How are voting members appointed to a seat on the board? Is a function of the board members to act as mentors or advisers?*
- B. Aims – “to enhance the educational and social goals of the University”. Aside from those actively participating in the production of the Targum, how does the newspaper enhance the educational and social goals of University student readers?*
- C. General policies – Are there published policies for article and/or editorial content? Are there published policies for accepting advertising? What are they?*
- D. Educational Value – What are the results from the referendum conducted 3 years ago? Can you estimate how many of the 17,000 issues distributed campus wide are read by students? Has the Targum won any awards since the 2002 Columbia Scholastic Press Association award? Who are some of the graduated student members of Targum who have gone onto successful journalism careers?*

II. Issues surrounding impact of re-organization of undergraduate education

- A. Is preparation underway for the spring 2007 referenda?*
- B. Do you have concerns about how the campus restructuring will affect this referendum?*

III. Funding Issues

A. Targum will be requesting more than \$224,000 per year over the next three years from student fees (assuming 23,000 undergraduate full time students X \$9.75 per year). This is an 18% increase over the existing \$8.25, or an increase of more than \$34,000 per year. With currently held assets and revenue generated from advertising, how is Targum, as a non-profit organization, justifying this request?

Discussion at the December 8th meeting:

Many of the SAC members felt that the Targum Concept Plan did not contain sufficient information to answer many of the questions raised above. Presentations by Targum representatives and subsequent discussion resulted in the SAC requesting an “Addendum” to the concept plan. This Addendum, prepared by the Targum, was submitted and has been appended to this report in MS word format: *Addendum to Targum Concept Plan*. In addition, financial information requested by the SAC is attached as a PDF file: *Targum Financials*.

Conclusions:

We SAC members felt that we had a very productive discussion with Targum representatives. They came quite prepared to address all of the issues and provided much information. In addition, with the supplemental report made available, it appears to us that the Targum does provide an educational value to both students participating in the production of the paper and the student population in general. Note that it was not possible for the SAC to conduct a scientifically valid survey of the student body’s’ opinions regarding Targum in the short time frame of this charge. The Targum conducts readership surveys every four years and has these survey results in their offices for review. Targum summarized the most recent survey in their addendum. While we believe that we did not receive the same detailed financial information as is contained in the audit provided to the University Treasurer’s Office, we feel that Targum satisfactorily articulated their reasons in requesting an increase in student fees over the next three years.

We recommend that the EC consider requiring a more detailed and comprehensive concept plan from special student organizations in the future. The addendum document sent by Targum reflects the detail that the EC would find informative. In addition, since the Senate currently requires this concept plan only every three years, and given that the undergraduate reorganization on the New Brunswick campus is likely to affect the referendum required for this category of organization, the regulations covering special student organizations *in general* should be reviewed and amended as necessary. Finally, it is recommended that during this review process, input be solicited from the Office of Student Affairs.

Respectfully submitted,

University Senate Student Affairs Committee