

# UPEI one million dollars richer

BY KAREN RAWLINES

One million dollars has been donated to UPEI by the chancellor Norman Webster and family, and is being used to turn the institution into a "smart campus" over the next five years, aiming to extend the smart classroom concept and to improve the use of information technology.

The bulk of the donation, \$500,000, comes from the R.Howard Webster Foundation of Montreal. The foundation was established by the late Howard Webster, a businessman and philanthropist. Howard Webster was the uncle of UPEI's chancellor, who is currently the president of the foundation. The remainder of the donation was brought together by other family members.

The donation has been in the works since Webster was named chancellor two years ago, and the entirety will be invested in technology.

John Crossley, UPEI Vice President Academic, says donations such as this one are necessary for things not in the university budget, such as buildings and complete new technology. "The single biggest financing challenge for universities is information technology."

This funding will work in conjunction with the Knowledge Economy Partnership, an initiative involving the federal and provincial governments along with UPEI, Holland College and the private sector.

John Crossley, UPEI Vice President Academic, says that the money towards technology is "entirely consistent" with what the Partnership is trying to achieve, and is actually acting as a "springboard" for the project.

"[The donation] helps this province move its economy into the knowledge-based in-

dustries," said Crossley. "Holland College is doing exactly the same thing."

Webster feels that the donation is important in developing the campus.

"The university is a major institution in every sense of the word in this province," said Webster. "I'm dedicated to making it as strong as it can be."

The Websters and UPEI administrators are intent on making the "jump forward" into technology.

"UPEI prepares first-class thinkers, scholars, and researchers who can use technology to contribute to their communities, to create sustainable economic development, and to enhance the Island way of life," said Webster. "Our family is committed to supporting this concept."

But enhancing the island way of life via a focus on technology is not as widely accepted as may be expected.

Many are criticizing the donation, saying that the money could be better spent in other aspects of the campus, considering, for example, that the Arts faculty stands to lose its Spanish component of Modern Languages after this semester.

But John Crossley, Vice President Academic, contends that these core components are not those that make investors want to donate.

"No one will fund a Spanish program," Crossley said. "The fact of life when you go fundraising is that the organization will not fund routine activities. Just special projects."

Crossley continues to say that the money is not able to absorb the damage done by the cuts to education.

"We cannot use this money to compensate for the

million and a half [dollars worth of] funding cuts from the government," he said.

But Crossley also notes the benefits that students will receive from this focus on technology.

"[Students will] become

more proficient at information technology, just like becoming a better reader or writer," he said. "People will expect you to know how to use this. This is the first time in the past two years that I've experienced this: new money," he added.

Crossley says that over the next few weeks, an implementation strategy will be developed. "We want to make sure it [the funding of technology] makes an obvious difference on campus."

## Audit Opposition?

BY TODD MACLEAN

Although UPEI's Student Union is against the provincial government's Value for Money Audit, no formal position on the matter was reached at a Council meeting held January 11th.

Instead, a committee has been created to fully investigate the unknown procedures and background of the audit in order to obtain supporting information to backup their position before it is publicly announced.

"We're interested in finding out exactly what it is," explained SU President, Janice Broderick. "Most of us are against it, but we don't want to look like we're just opposing it without any concrete reasoning behind us. We want to look like we've done all our homework on it."

"We don't want to look like we have something to hide," added another executive member.

The newly formed committee has two parts: a research component, and a strategizing component, which will determine how the facts

can be dealt with. Its basic aim is to find out what impact the audit will have, and report on these findings at the upcoming Council meeting. The Student Union then hopes to reach a formal position on the audit.

The Student Union's concern over opposing the audit is because they feel that there are relatively few other groups who have taken action against it. The reason why they are hesitant at speaking out is because they don't want the public to get the wrong impression: one of simple, "whiny" students complaining again.

"Those who were afraid [of giving a wrong impression with their position on the Value Audit] were mostly afraid of the media misrepresenting their views and then giving the public more of a reason to support the audit," said Stephen Ramsay, VP Finance, and chair of the committee investigating the audit. "The motion wasn't passed mostly because of 'i-dotting' and 't-crossing.' All the council had to say was 'we are against it.' That didn't happen, and I'm disappointed

by that."

In fact, the motion was debated on for an hour at the council meeting before a conclusion was reached, with 42 speakers on the speaker's list -- the highest number that can ever be recalled. The discussion was also "heated" at times.

"We just want to eventually create such an uproar over this that the government will not be able to use the audit against us," said Melissa Doucette, member of the committee. "We're concerned that the government will use the results as an excuse to cut more funding to programs."

"Our best hope is that the government will bury it," said an SU executive member. "That is probably the most realistic thing that we can expect."

"If we come out with a strong position after this investigation, we can make a difference, and stop the devolving of this university."