ON CAMPUS

Eye on the Environment UPEI's New Director of Environmental Studies & Sustainability

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Contributor

With all this talk lately about climate change, Kyoto and wind energy, it's great to see that UPEI has created a new faculty position to help the University deal with its impact on the environment.

Professor Almut Beringer was named the new Director of Environmental Studies and Sustainability in October of last year. She recently landed on the Island, arriving from Australia, and is already hard at work. Luckily for her, she got here just in time for all the wind and snow (It was 25 degrees Celsius the day she left Australia).

Professor Beringer has two major roles as the new director. First she is responsible for educating students on various environmental issues and how they relate to us as individuals and how they impact the natural world around us. Her other major role is to develop campus environmental sustainability. This means Professor Beringer is going to be working with students, faculty and staff to help reduce UPEI's impact on the surrounding environment. Her vision is to have UPEI recognized as the most sustainable campus in Atlantic Canada.

Professor Beringer has tons of passion, ambition and many ideas to help make UPEI a more environmentally friendly place. Some of them include promoting public transit, carpooling, getting students to bike to school, having campus vehicles powered by bio-diesel, creating more campus green space, getting rid of the Styrofoam in the cafeteria, and many, many more.

Professor Beringer has been very impressed with the amount of support she has received from the UPEI senior management including the President, Wade MacLaughlan. However, for real change to take place on campus, Professor Beringer says that students need to get involved. "Students are the driving force behind change."

Right now, Professor Beringer's students are taking part in a campus sustainability assessment. They are measuring such things as green house gas emissions, campus food quality, building efficiency, green spaces and parking density. We all know something has to be done with the parking situation. This assessment project will be the platform for future change and further recommendations.

Professor Beringer is hoping that other students will also come forward to help make UPEI a cleaner, healthier, more sustainable place to learn, "I hope I have students lined up at my door wanting to help." As students, we all have ideas on what changes should be made on campus.

If you would like to help make UPEI more environmentally sustainable, or just want to learn more about environmental sustainability, you can contact Professor Beringer by phone at 566-0509 or by email aberinger@upei.ca. She is eagerly awaiting your call.

What is Island Studies anyway?

Are you interested in Islands, does the "island way of life" concern you? Is there one? Why?What is it? How do you know? Do you care? Why should you care? Is the "island way of life" different on The Island (PEI of course), to any other island? What about a Newfie's perspective a.k.a. Julie Bull "Island 2 Island: A Newfie's Perspective...on Winter!", The Cadre, Feb. 1, 2005, p.14? What a Maltese perspective? "Malta is Malta, not 'The Island'...and the people are Maltese, not 'Islanders'", says Dr. Godfrey Baldachinno, a recently transplanted Maltese.

Why are Icelanders, as well as immigrants to their country, mandated to use Icelandic names ONLY for their children?

Why, at an earlier time not so long ago, was water available to hotels in the Mediterranean Island of Cyprus on a daily basis, while the locals were rationed water just 3 days of the week?

If you have a passion for islands and a propensity for hard work....you may want to consider looking into the newly created Master of Arts programme in Island Studies (affectionately referred to as MAIS).

Recently, UPEI sent the only North American contingent to Taiwan to participate in the Islands VIII conference. Three professors and 5 MAIS graduate students presented their research particular to Islands at this international forum. (UPEI and The Institute of Island Studies had hosted the Islands VII conference in 2002). As well as being a forum to share their work and concerns, it was the perfect opportunity to connect with other researchers from all over the world who are interested in specific issues, and understanding and improving Island living through home grown policies and programs.

"This masters program is not for anybody...we are interested in attracting bright students who are passionate about Island learning and who want to consider the particularities of Islands around the world."Says Dr. Baldachinno, who is the world's first appointed Research Chair in Island Studies here at UPEI!

To learn more, check out the website www.upei.ca/islandstudies/master, call 566-0377, or email lhoward@upei.ca.