

# Editorial

*The opinions expressed in this column do not necessarily reflect those of the staff of this publication or the Student Union.*

The end of yet another semester at UPEI is creeping up on us, and now's the time when a lot of students step back, evaluate their performance, and figure out what kind of effort is required in the days to come. The university itself may be doing some re-evaluation too, and by now most magazine buffs will know why: Maclean's magazine recently issued its second annual ranking of Canadian universities, and we were not amused. We finished (ahem) seventeenth among "primarily undergraduate universities" in a field of eighteen universities examined, leaving us only the cold comfort of edging out that Rodney Dangerfield of the university set, the oft-maligned UCCB. What exactly does this mean? For the moment, all it seems to be doing is adding fuel to the eternal flame of inferiority complexes on our little island, but we should ask ourselves first why, if at all, we should bother trying to compare ourselves to our mainland counterparts and whether such comparisons are either fair or useful.

There is, to be sure, some merit in the idea of an independent, impartial rating of Canadian universities. A compilation like that in Maclean's gives the prospective student some inkling of the educational choices in this country, all at a glance and for \$2.50. It's the "at a glance" aspect that is worrisome, though, because it risks creating a university's reputation within a narrow definition and may affect how objectively some students look at certain schools. In short, it risks labelling our schools in one way or another, which can be hurtful to universities and misleading for students -- if they don't look beyond those labels. No study, not even in Maclean's, should be taken as gospel.

Perhaps a more important point is whether an institution like UPEI should be judged within such a far-ranging study as this. For the geographically challenged who may not have realized

it, this place is sitting smack-dab in the middle of a small Atlantic island. The university's chief mandate, as Maclean's acknowledges, is to serve the Island population, and about ninety percent of our enrolment is drawn from the PEI population. It's a comparatively small community to draw from, and it's only natural then that we be a comparatively small university within it. We simply can't match the enrolment, facilities, and funding of universities within larger centers since we neither have nor need the access to those kinds of resources. UPEI is well-suited to meeting the needs of PEI, and more than a few out-of-province students also find our services satisfactory.



While we may not be king of the "primarily undergraduate universities", the subgroup in which

UPEI was judged, we can take comfort not

only in our unique situation as an island university but also in

being a small university of the types largely typical in this category of schools. We

can see some of the advantages of small scale in Sackville's Mount Allison University, which finished

first in our subgroup of primarily undergrad institutions. Some of the benefits of small universities mentioned in Mount A's favor are applicable here to some degree as well, including the comfort of smaller classes and the opportunity for undergrads to be taught by and have more one-on-one contact with professors personally. Small universities like ours can be a lot more human, and consequently a healthier and happier place to develop academically even if we aren't top-heavy with PhD's on staff. A university is above all a place to grow, and at UPEI you have lots of space to do it in.

Sean McQuaid,

Editor-in-Chief