

## Are Mandatory Course Evaluations Really a Useful Tool?

by Colleen Easter

This year, for the first time ever, there are mandatory course evaluations in all classes. In every class, students will be given the opportunity to voice opinions on the course. In some courses students will be allowed only to answer the restrictive questions of computer-read-only evaluations. Some cutting edge evaluations actually allow the students to write down their opinions and comments!

A year ago, I used this very forum to slam the senate on their obstinate refusal to pass this motion. I firmly believed in the necessity of these evaluations. I believed they were an important tool in making professors accountable to the students and the university as a whole. I even went so far as to suggest there needed to be teeth added to the motion so that the evaluations would be used for something, not just read and thrown away. Jobs, promotions, tenure, all these decisions should use mandatory evaluations as a part of the process. The students should be heard! Those were my opinions a year ago. I have changed my mind. I now feel mandatory evaluations are a useless waste of time.

Evaluations can be very useful. Professors who wish to have their courses and themselves evaluated will give in-depth surveys to students, possibly in the middle of the term. They will read them, implement the good ideas, and change things for the better. Professors who are forced to have evaluations will do little with them.

As for using these evaluations in decision making processes, this is laughable. Last year, I thought students could rate their own ability to evaluate courses based on their attendance, work in the course, etc. I also thought they would fairly evaluate professors and courses, based on the events which happened in the classroom. I now believe that for a majority of students this does not happen. I see vindictive students who wish to get back at profs who have given them low marks. I see classes with chronically low attendance except on evaluation day -- don't ask me how they know -- and then these students evaluate the course, giving no thought to their ability to judge a course they have rarely attended. I see students who just do not care and will put anything down. Sure, there are some good evaluations made by thoughtful students. But I do not think there is anyway to discern the few good from the many bad. How can such evaluations be used to make decisions?

What has changed my mind? Last year I was a fourth year student in small classes, full of students who sincerely wanted to make the courses better in the future. Evaluations from these courses could have been used in a positive way. This year I am taking first and second year courses. The attitude of the students is vastly different. I see many petty, malicious students who don't care what effects their evaluations might have.

Professors, usually the ones who have always had them, will use insightful evaluations and get constructive comments. Other professors will ignore all results. Deans and decision makers will find it impossible to discriminate between the useful evaluations and the ones written by students with a grudge. What I once believed was a positive step will have little effect on teaching at UPEI.

## Down at the Gazebo

by Keya Dasgupta

It has been almost three months since the campus of UPEI awoke once more to the dawning of a new semester. With midterms a few steps behind us and finals looming around the corner, those days of roaming lazily about the campus in care-free bliss seem ancient. It is difficult for me to recall a time where there hasn't been a certain assignment to pass in, paper to write, or yet another test to cram for, but in the midst of all the chaos and pressure of campus life stands a curious structure.

You may have happened upon it on one of your morning treks to class, or glanced at it on the way to the parking lot. The structure to which I am referring is the gazebo that sits on the northern outskirts of campus. Every morning as I drive towards the university, its simple and elegant beauty greets me. When I see the gazebo, nestled among the trees of a growing forest, at the foot of a tranquil pond, I can't help but feel a little less tense. The gazebo stands, like a reminder to everyone of the more enjoyable side of the university, often buried under the drudgery of work.

When I ask my friends and other people on campus about where this gazebo came from, everyone seems to have a similar ignorance. The gazebo seems to have come from nowhere. A few mysterious builders just appeared one day with some hammers and wood. I had ruled out

the idea that it was the brainchild of a colony of aliens from outer space, so I set out on the journey to find the origins of this gazebo.

My search led me to the doorstep of professor C.W.J. Elliot, the former president of UPEI. Dr. Elliot told me that the idea for this little piece of paradise was his inspiration. During his time as president he was not only concerned with the administrative side of the university, but also the more human side. Dr. Elliot felt that the north end of the campus looked rather bare as compared to the rest. The field had already been scattered with trees, so he added the foot bridge and gazebo in an attempt to make the campus a little more attractive.

The gazebo and bridge are the building blocks of what he hopes will become a park for the residents and visitors of the Island to enjoy. He sees this park as a little break from all the fast food joints and stores that surround the university, as a place where people can relax and enjoy the trees and water around them. The cost to build and buy the materials for the structure came to little more than \$4000. It was not a huge drain to university funds, as the money was attained through various donations given to the university from outside sources, and contributions made by professor Elliot himself.

## CIBC Cuts Student Banking Costs

(press release)

CIBC announced today that service fees will be reduced 50 per cent on all banking transactions for full-time college or university students. The discount also applies to students who select flat fee packages for banking services.

"We realize that most students have limited funds while studying full-time," said Perry Eisenschmid, general manager, CIBC transaction accounts. "Introducing more ways to save on banking services is a key

element of CIBC's approach to student accounts. Today's students are key customers of tomorrow."

Service fees for all day-to-day banking transactions have been reduced 50 per cent. Students now pay 25 cents and 30 cents respectively for an ABM or in-branch withdrawal, while flat fee packages cost \$2.63 for the automated banking option and \$4.75 for full service banking. To qualify for the reduction, students can apply to their local branch. For more information, they can call 1-800-465-CIBC.

Significant contributions were made by a gentleman by the name of Kwo-Yau Lee, a graduate from St. Dunstan's University, class of 1962. He previously made donations for the purchase of new computers and scholarships. He made this last donation specifically for improvement of the grounds. All developments that were made to the field were done by Professor Elliot, Lee's contribution was made to commemorate our former president's retirement.

So the next time you are on your way here or there, to do this lab or that presentation, take a break. Stop and enjoy the gazebo and enter that world of peace for just one moment. You could read a poem, have a conversation, eat your lunch, or just sit and ponder the meaning of life. Do something that is just for you. I think that it is important for everyone to have a sort of gazebo, or place to escape to at some time during the bustle of the week. We all need to know that somewhere beyond, or perhaps within the pressure of the world, there exists that place in which we can just be.

**HEY EVERYONE!**

**The next deadline is January 11, 1996, so keep your submissions until next year.**