

UPEI to Create Journalism Program

by Erin FAGAN

UPEI and Holland College are collaborating to offer a four-year Bachelor of Applied Arts in Print Journalism. Recently approved by the Maritime Provinces' Higher Education Commission, the newly articulated degree is expected to provide Prince Edward Island journalism students with the option of pursuing an enriched program of study.

"It will provide them [the students] with the alternative of developing their journalistic skills and education without leaving the Island," explained the program's coordinator, Dr. Anne Furlong.

The program builds upon the current two-year diploma program offered at Holland College, enhancing it with an additional two years of study in a range of subjects at UPEI. Ideally, the students will spend one year as pre-journalism students, complete the Holland College program in the subsequent two years, and will then conclude the degree with a final year at the University. During their time at UPEI, the students will be expected to complete sixty semester-hours in different areas of study, such as History, Economics, or the natural sciences.

Outgoing Dean of Arts Dr. Philip Smith described this as a program which would develop journalists "who aren't scared of numbers, who aren't afraid of asking questions, who know something of the scientific process, who have some awareness of the cultural diversity, some exposure to literature and History . . . to have a more liberal kind of education."

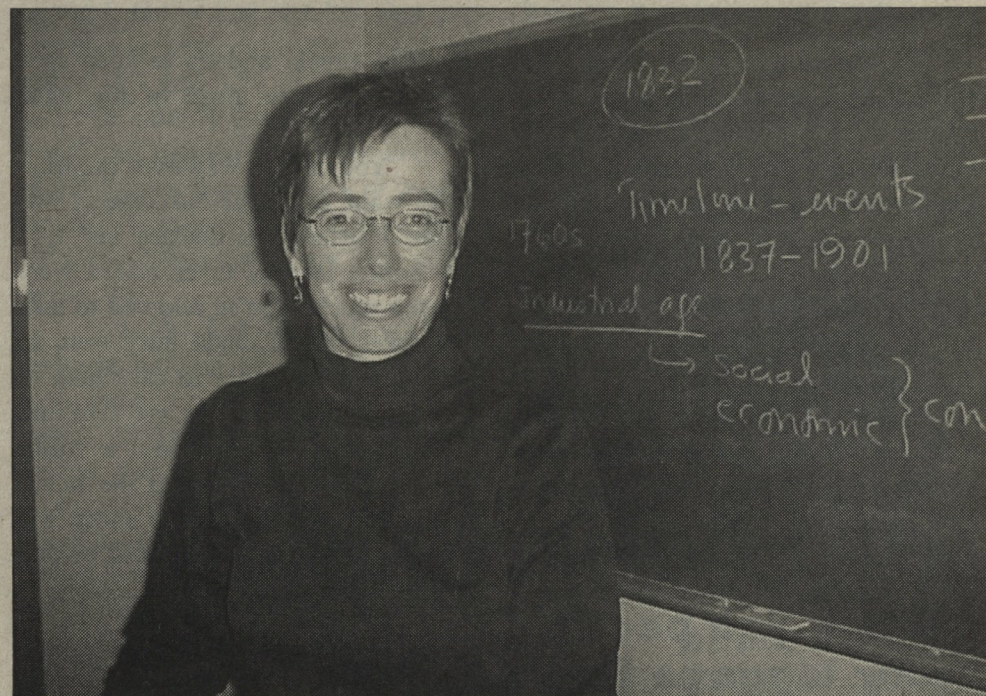
"Good journalists are good researchers," Furlong also noted. "The range of courses is both broad and narrow . . . to give journalism students sufficient background in any of these areas to the best satisfaction of them, editors, and readers."

"It's an option for those who want to pursue it," she clarified. "[The program does] not supercede the work that Holland College does." Furlong pointed out that the Holland College program, normally composed of thirty to thirty-five students, provides "a lot of individual instruction . . . internships, placements, and an excellent hiring rate," thereby enhancing the practical applications of the new degree.

When the proposal was being studied by the Maritime Provinces' Higher Education Commission, concern had been expressed by Stephen Kimber, the Director at the University of King's College Journalism program, "primarily about whether we really need another university-level journalism program in a region as small as the Maritimes, and whether there will be enough . . . jobs for [all these journalism students] when they graduate."

When contacted this past week, Kimber stated, "I won't say we aren't still concerned But the decision has been made now. There's no point in fretting over it. We wish UPEI and Holland College the best of luck."

Dean Smith, in response to Kimber's statement, stressed that, "this program will not add a single



Dr. Anne Furlong: program coordinator.

journalist to the pool of journalists looking for work in the world . . . [it is] an alternative to a subset of courses at Holland College. There's no way there'll be a lot of new journalists."

Smith also added that, "[Creating a new journalism program] is a fairly easy process to put into place; it doesn't require any new resources for either UPEI or Holland College." According to Smith, UPEI's financial contribution to the initiative will be about \$200.00, pending the approval of the Board of Governors.

"There's no risk that this program will interfere with other opportunities for our students. There's no way we can lose."

The process of development, according to Dr. Furlong, began in the Fall of 2000, when the Dean of Arts called a meeting for interested faculty. The subsequent two or three meetings provided an opportunity for troubleshooting and suggestions.

Furlong herself had never dabbled in journalism but became involved "because I was interested." Since her brother is the writer-editor of a magazine, she took the opportunity to do some "extremely informal, unscientific" information-gathering through his colleagues and contacts. The results offered a broad range of

responses on the education preferred by the responding journalists. The theme of the responses implied that "the most important thing [in preparing for a career in journalism] was the possibility for training that best suits them, their current life situation, what they want to work on." The opinion survey developed her interest in the program further, and eventually Dr. Smith invited her to become the program co-ordinator.

Furlong describes this as "a golden time to be a journalist," although she acknowledges that the challenges for journalists "haven't really changed." Students must learn how to manage new sources of information, she notes, and "the proliferation of commercial and non-commercial outlets means that it's more constrained than ever."

The only prerequisite which Furlong suggests for potential students considering the new program is that, "You want to write, you write fast, you write well, and you're not afraid to rewrite."

While she notes that there has been "a substantial amount of response" so far, Furlong believes that the nearly completed website will attract even more potential applicants to look into the program.

EXCELLENCE IN TEACHING AWARDS

Students, Faculty and Alumni are invited to submit nominations for the UPEI Faculty Association Awards for **Excellence in Teaching**. The awards are open to all University faculty members.

The deadline for nominations is noon, Friday, February 8, 2002. Information about the awards and nomination forms are available at the Faculty Association Office (Main Bldg. Room #214).