

ness is justice: the justice to award grades based on students' abilities or shortcomings, not on personality.

Professor Belliveau said that he often agonizes over whether to emphasize the good or the bad in a student's essay; he was not alone on that front, and all agreed that a certain balance has to be struck between being kind, emphasizing what the student has done well, and being firm, emphasizing what needs improvement. It is this balance that has given rise to the current pedagogical standard to first remark on the good before remarking on the bad. But all in attendance were in agreement that to write copious comments on a student's essay pointing out shortcomings is not unkind, rather it would be unkind to not write any comments at all and not try to help the student improve. Unkindness requires a malicious intent, and a professor's intent should always be to help the student along.

Perhaps Dr. Lindsay is right: perhaps there is an 'us versus them' hostility between students and professors. Maybe the true key to kindness is understanding. For students, that is an understanding of the expectations and sensitivities of our professors. For professors, it means an understanding of the peculiar pressures and expectation that students labor under. In both cases, it is, as Professor Irving points out, seeing people as human beings that are subject to feelings and not falling into the same trap as the characters in *Wit* and dehumanizing their subjects. Certainly further dialogue such as that which was initiated by this panel can further accommodate that understanding.

## Panel on Kindness in the Medical Profession Oddly Reassuring

by Joel MEGGS

Immediately following the closing show of *Wit* this past Sunday, a panel was held on kindness in the health care community. All of the panelists and many in attendance (mostly nurses) had come from the play, which deals with a professor, Vivian Bearing, who is diagnosed and treated for advanced ovarian cancer. The treatment she receives borders on cruel and unusual punishment; her doctors are concerned only about what contributions she can make to their research and show little empathy towards what she is going through. The health care workers bark orders at her and extend to her little in the way of human kindness.

All in attendance at the panel were in agreement that the actions of the medical community in this play were deplorable. However, few saw the play as a true reflection of the health care profession, at least on Prince Edward Island. (The play is written by an American.) The panel, which consisted of Heather MacMillan, coordinator of the Pap Awareness Campaign; Marlene Bryenton, cancer advocate; Malcolm Murray, Philosophy Professor and medical ethicist; and a student from the Faculty of Nursing, agreed that there are those in the profession that will treat patients with the cold indifference that is found in *Wit*, but the norm here on the Island is doctors and nurses that are understanding and empathetic towards those being treated.

In the play, the doctors refer to a class taught in medical school that sets out guidelines for the sensitive treatment of patients, but being sensitive for the doctors means an obligatory "How are you feeling today" every time they encounter a patient, a phrase that quickly becomes devoid of meaning. Dr. Murray, while pointing out that such courses are important, suggested that they can't instill in a health care professional feelings of sympathy for patients that aren't already present.



A scene from ACT's production of *Wit*.

"Either you are empathetic, or you're not."

Most of us have known someone whose life has been affected by cancer. Maybe what can't be taught in a clinical class is the understanding that comes from having a loved one suffer through the ordeal that is cancer treatment.

The panel was quick to point out, however, that although our Island hospitals are filled with caring professionals, we on the Island, and by extension Canada, face a greater challenge – that of shortages in the health care system. The panel noted that *Wit*

is an American play, and the character receives excellent care because she pays for it. Here, Vivian Bearing might be subjected to long waits, doctor shortages, having to travel off-island for treatment, etcetera. From here, the panel quickly devolved into a gripe-session about the current state of health care on Prince Edward Island.

Still, if the health care professionals on Prince Edward Island are as responsive to patients' needs as this panel discussion would lead one to believe, then at least there is that to be said about Prince Edward Island health care.

### Campus Cleanup - A First "Greening the Campus" Event for Environmental Studies

The UPEI Environmental Studies program invites all students, faculty and staff to participate in a "Campus Cleanup" event on Friday, November 2 at 1:30 pm. We will meet at the Faculty Lounge at Main Building and spend about an hour picking up litter and garbage in the North Campus area between the perimeter road and the Charlottetown Mall. We will then return to the Faculty Lounge for some refreshments (cider) and informal visiting.

The Environmental Studies program is interested in developing ways of working on "greening the campus" issues, and invite the input and participation of all members of the University community. We hope that you will come out for what we hope is the first of a number of activities that focus on our campus environment. This will be a good opportunity to meet and talk with other people on campus who are interested in environmental issues.

We look forward to seeing you on Friday, and hope that the good weather continues! For more information about this event, or any other aspects of Environmental Studies, please contact Don Mazer, the program Coordinator (ext. 0519; mazer@upei.ca).

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**City Cinema**  
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*The Deep End*  
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Times and Descriptions at  
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