

# UPEI is Playing the Marketing Game

by Cindy Venema

Student Services is currently examining student satisfaction or dissatisfaction with UPEI's programs and facilities. They are conducting an extensive study that is split into three phases. Hopefully, this study will answer the many questions that most universities want to know -- why do students leave before they have finished their degree, and why students applied to the university but did not come.

Part of this study is focused on high school students, and is in the form of a questionnaire. Originally, Student Services was going to perform one-on-one interviews with select high school students, but after President Epperly had a meeting with the senior high school principals in PEI, this study has been altered to a questionnaire that will be given to all the students eligible to apply to university.

This is a pioneer project in Canada, which is a problem according to Blaine Jensen, head of student services, because they have no data to base their results. However, the data they do get will hopefully expose some important information, both to the university and to the high school students. In fact, President Epperly remarked that one of the focuses of this questionnaire is to inform students of what UPEI does well and what they don't know about the school. One interesting fact that she pointed out was "We have more students who major in Biology that will get into medical school than Dalhousie or McGill. That is an astounding fact."

Jensen explained that the questionnaire is split into three sections. The first section is aimed at discovering what high school students are looking for in a university, and what are the top schools in their rankings.

They are asked to check off several issues that they believe are most important in a university, such as class size and library resources.

The second part of the questionnaire is focused on where the students actually intend to go to school. The hypothesis is that these answers will not coincide with the answers of the first section. If this is true, then student services wants to know why students didn't choose the "best schools." Is it because of cost, location, or some other reason.

The third section of the questionnaire is on recruitment, and it focuses on whether or not the high school students have been approached by universities (ours included), and if so, how were they approached, and what did they think of the presentation.

As they are scoping out the competition, UPEI is also attaining valuable customer input. Jensen

emphasized that "this is not a superficial marketing ploy." He doesn't want UPEI to "market, market, market" as many schools do in the US. The reason being is that they do not want to bring in students who are going to be dissatisfied with what UPEI offers. Yet, Jensen did not deny the fact that UPEI is looking to attract students to the university, and the method that they are using is the "honest approach."

With the data received they are going to see where improvements are needed and what UPEI can do to attract more students. Also they want to find where the school is strong and build from its strengths. Jensen noted, however, that "We have to keep in mind, this study is studying high school students and their perceptions, and we realize that some of their perceptions are not going to be accurate to the reality."



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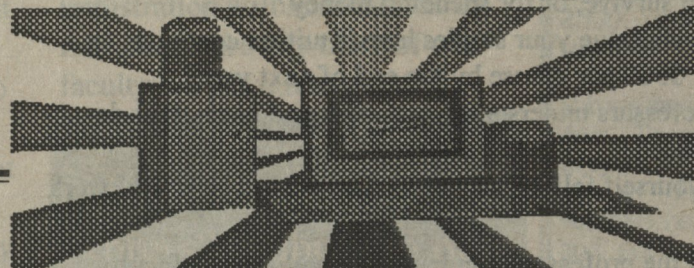
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