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UPEI MOVES UP IN MACLEAN'S ANNUAL UNIVERSITY RANKINGS

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MacLean's Magazine University Ranking Issue

Craig St. Jean
Contributor

Once again, The University of Prince Edward Island has moved up the list in Maclean's annual university rankings.

This year marks the highest ranking, fifth in the Primarily Undergraduate category, that UPEI has achieved, and continues the university's upward trend on the Maclean's list over the last several years.

"Our reputation is catching up to our quality" says UPEI Vice President of Academic Development, Vianne Timmons. "Five years ago when I took my position here, we were ranked 18th."

Timmons cites a number of statistics which have contributed to the high overall ranking.

"We've increased our graduation rate from 76 per cent to 82 per cent in the last year. We also have the highest ranking in Canada for faculty awards and we're not far behind in student awards."

She also points out that UPEI has recently moved up from 15th to 10th in terms of offering scholarships. Much of this has to do, Timmons said, with the industrious and entrepreneurial approach of President Wade MacLauchlan, who has achieved a great degree of interaction with the

wider community during his time in office.

Timmons is also adamant to point out that although UPEI is receiving increasingly high recognition by Maclean's, many of the university's most attractive assets are unappreciated by the ranking system.

"We have a mandate" she said, "to serve the people in the province. We don't intend to be an elitist school, we want to provide heightened access to education."

With this inclusive approach of accessibility comes opportunity.

"The focus is not so much on what students come in with, but what we can provide them with and what they leave with."

Although she is overjoyed with this year's high ranking, Timmons freely admits that the Maclean's ranking system is far from the be all and end all indicator of a university's quality. Concern has been voiced this year over the number of universities that have opted out of submitting the data that Maclean's requires (an issue which President MacLauchlan addressed in a recent campus newsletter). Timmons feels that one of the qualms universities have with the way the rankings are compiled is the use of "summary scores" in producing a numbered

ranking. This means that Maclean's averages out the scores that a school receives for each program it offers. Timmons notes that, as a result, "a school could have an outstanding chemistry program that may not be reflected in the overall ranking."

This returns Timmons to the point that while she feels UPEI completely deserves the recognition it is receiving, there are still many

great things that UPEI offers which will never be reflected in the rankings. She points to the outstanding quality of the recently renovated sports centre and student centre, as well as the nature of campus life as some of the most prominent examples.

All in all, the take-home message seems to be that "a GREAT small University" is now a truer description than ever.

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