

NEWS

Improving UPEI's rep will help MacLean's ratings

Stacey Murray
Advertising Manager

Improving the reputation of University of Prince Edward Island will help increase its score in MacLean's University Ranking, says university president Wade MacLauchlan.

UPEI ranked fifth among undergraduate schools in Canada in the 2006 survey, which brings it up 18th in the 2000 survey.

Ranking number one in publication effectiveness, many of the university's scores have increased since last year. It ranked 3rd for research, and has seen increases in international students and graduate students.

MacLauchlan said the university has improved its position in areas that matter to students.

"I think the long-term trend of UPEI's progress in MacLean's is important and irresistible."

Some areas haven't increased and have even decreased since last year such as the university's reputation ranking. In 2005, the university ranked 12th but this year, despite overall growth, it has fallen to 13th. In 2000, it ranked 15th.

MacLauchlan said although there is a large gap between this ranking and the overall ranking, improving a university's reputation is an ongoing process.

"I think it takes long. Reputation is like that. It's like a ocean vessel: it takes a long time to turn around."

The ranking does suggest they need to continue to get the word out about the university's achievements and ensure its getting credit for what

it has done in the academic community as a whole, MacLauchlan said.

In looking at the questions for which reputation is ranked, he said it's a very rough measurement.

"I don't think it's a very sophisticated instrument."

Nonetheless, MacLauchlan feels the survey is a way to hold the university accountable in comparison to other institutions but it shouldn't be a student's sole guide to deciding on a university.

To continue to move up in overall rankings, MacLauchlan said improving the university's reputation could mean the difference between fifth and fourth next year.

While number one may be in the university's sights in the coming years,

MacLauchlan is taking it one step at a time.

"When you get to number one you're very vulnerable because there's only one way to go."



Merry Christmas and
Happy New Years from
the Cadre Team

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Of Erudition and Scholarship: Behavioural and Neuropsychology Part 2

Colleen MacDougall
Contributor

In the last issue of *The Cadre*, we learned a bit about UPEI grad student Melissa Burt's work in the behavioural neuropsychology lab. Keep reading for more exciting details of her work on schizophrenia!

So back to Melissa: what exactly does she do? It's pretty complicated, but luckily using Fetal Alcohol Syndrome as an example, she was able to dumb it down enough for me to understand.

Basically, Melissa uses a toxin (like alcohol) to stimulate a particular brain pathway in baby rats (like human fetuses). She then monitors these rats throughout development and into adulthood and looks for specific behaviours. Such low doses of domoic acid are administered that no immediate effect is produced in the baby rats. But interestingly, permanent changes are observed in the rats as adults. If toxin-exposed rats behave differently than non-exposed rats, it is likely the toxin caused some type of functional change in the brain.

More specifically, Melissa uses domoic acid – a toxin produced

naturally by shellfish indigenous to PEI— to stimulate a specific chemical system in the brain of rat pups. She times the exposure so that it coincides with a period of rapid growth in the brains of the baby rats. This period occurs eight to fifteen days after birth in rats, which roughly approximates the third trimester in humans. So although Melissa's rats are exposed neonatally, it is equivalent to a prenatal exposure in humans.

In particular, she has chosen to use domoic acid as a toxin because it stimulates a specific brain system. And Melissa is interested in determining whether alterations to this system affect brain areas that are implicated in schizophrenia. In turn, the brain area of interest to Melissa is the Dopamine pathway – more commonly referred to as the Reward pathway.

In order to determine whether or not the Reward pathway has been altered in response to this toxin, Melissa looks at specific behaviours such as responses to novelty and reward, which are mediated by this pathway. Furthermore, human disorders such as drug and alcohol addiction, attention deficit and hyperactive disorder, and



Photo: Colleen MacDougall

Melissa Burt conducting innovative and exciting behavioural research

schizophrenia, are often associated with dysfunctions in this Reward pathway. The development of 'good' animal models that represent these diseases is important because it constitutes one means by which information that will eventually lead to treatment and prevention strategies is obtained.

Being frightfully near the completion of her degree, Melissa has been conducting these experiments steadily over the past two years. And she has some interesting results to show for her work.

She has found that adult rats that were exposed to domoic acid as babies