

# Just the Basics vs. a Quality Education?

## UPEI struggles with proposed cuts by Provincial Government

By TOM BEVERIDGE

In the upcoming provincial budget, the University of Prince Edward Island expects to join the list of post-secondary institutions across Canada affected by a cascade of government cutbacks.

Attempting to deal with the projected cuts, the university's Senior Management Group (SMG) has attempted to take a pro-active role in planning to deal with predicted cuts of up to 10% or \$1.8 million dollars of UPEI's funding.

As part of the SMG, the Dean of Arts, Philip Smith feels, "the management group is keeping an eye on the university's mission", which is founded on the tradition of a liberal education. He hopes "with innovation the budget will not drive education decisions".

W. Pineau, the Dean of Science, voiced his own opinion over some cabinet ministers' comments that students may have to study some elsewhere if UPEI finds that it can not offer certain courses.

"We are looking at how to maintain quality which requires ingenuity", he said and continued on to say, "we are trying to find how not to shut down programs", when asked about the recent loss of Mt. Alison's education and engineering departments.

Dr. John Crossley, the university's Vice-President (academic operations), stressed that no fixed decisions have been made at this time. The Senior Management group is only looking at options open to the university, based on the information available at this time.

Dr. Crossley agreed that closing programs for UPEI is at the bottom of the list cur-

rently, but that all areas of its operations must be reviewed. He pointed out, "students should expect a change to service delivery", stressing the same quality will still exist.

Shared faculty positions, cross-listed courses, larger classes, higher tuition and cuts to some services are a number of ideas considered by the SMG at this time. "The use of user fees or differential fees will be put to the students before they would be implemented", Dr. Crossley said.

At the moment the most immediate sign of the upcoming cuts could be through Student Development, which is described by its Director as, "front line intensive" and that any cuts to the department will affect services.

When asked if student input into budget options was being used, members of the Senior Management Group admitted that there is very little direct input from students at this stage of planning.

The lack of direct student input into the budget exercise has left many students unhappy and concerned about the quality of education that UPEI will be capable of offering in the future.

Currently the UPEI Student Union is looking at what position to take over issues related to the budget, such as differential fees and has passed a motion to support a petition asking for the university's health centre to remain open.

The Deans of Arts and Science defended UPEI's ability for gaining funding and providing quality research for the university and the province. This ability could be affected if faculty become overloaded with teaching responsibilities and larger classes, which are

options under review at this point.

Recent comments regarding the age at which faculty perform their best research has garnered an angry response from many faculty members, adding to the stress over the debate on the budget exercise.

Dean Pineau suggested the possibility of broadening UPEI's degree granting powers to offer graduate degrees, beyond those at the AVC, as an option to be discussed with the province.

These new graduate programs would provide additional instructional aid, allowing for financial savings without compromising quality education. Another benefit of graduate programs is more research funding and tuition for these graduate students.

Neil Henry, Vice-President (finance and facilities), included that until the university's Board of Governors makes the budget decisions, scheduled for the end of March, no decisions will be acted on. Neil Henry agrees this budget is, "one of the more difficult", that he has had to go through.

The university's Senate was also mentioned by Dean Pineau, on how it should become more pro-active with regard to budget decisions as well.

Student Union executive members reported on their meeting with Pat Mella, the government's Treasury Minister, and her opinion that students should be making demands on the university for what type of education and services they want, and through those demands letting UPEI know where the cuts should be. The minister's statement created an astonished stir among the council members.

This Thursday, the Student Union's executive will meet with the Premier and Education Minister Chester Gillian. The executive hopes to have some good news coming out of this meeting.

UPEI is still uncertain how deep the government cuts will be or how the cuts will be applied to the university. Re-

action to the budget planing has been mixed across campus. Until the province's budget comes down the university will have to put its future plans on hold and wait.

- Note: Next issue comments and reaction on the budget.

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