

From Jim Randall, UPEI Vice President Academic:

“Last year I was able to establish a new Strategic Initiatives Fund (SIF) at UPEI. The purpose of this project was to provide an opportunity for faculty and staff to act on good ideas. As a consequence of this initiative, the following fifteen projects received support.

From the descriptions below, you can see that some excellent stories are already emerging that are benefitting students and faculty. If you want to know more about any of these projects, I would encourage you to get in touch with the contact person(s) listed below each of the projects.”

The Student as Scholar

The student as scholar initiative seeks to strengthen, broaden, co-ordinate, encourage and support undergraduate research efforts for students across their entire education (from their entrance at first year to their capstone experiences in their final year). Of course, there are already opportunities for creating and disseminating original work for senior students in honours programs, however incorporating creative, original thinking and dissemination into the first-year curriculum will build both the skill-set and instill the virtues associated with scholarship and research in a more progressive manner. Our plan is to host a small interactive workshop in February of 2012, followed by an intensive training workshop on campus near April of 2012 facilitated by leaders in the field of undergraduate curriculum development and inquiry-based learning. This will be offered to the general campus community and will identify key ambassadors for the initiative.

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Community Service Learning Facilitator – University 100 Program

The Community Service Learning Facilitator will assist with developing and advancing community-based service learning projects within the University 100 Program. Over the past five years University 100 students have completed course-based Community Service Learning Projects. The (CSL) projects have helped first year students extend what they have learned in the classroom to practical, real life settings. Building upon these meaningful, experiential learning opportunities the University 100 Program has expanded its course offerings to include University 203, Introduction to Leadership Studies (fall 2011) and University 303 Leadership Theory and Practice (winter 2012). Hiring for the CSLF position is currently underway and the Facilitator will be actively engaged in identifying community partnerships that align with the course objectives associated with each course including service learning opportunities for U100 and U203 students. The Facilitator will work with University 100 faculty to coordinate internship placements for U303 students. University 100 is committed to providing authentic student engagement projects for UPEI students and we believe that the addition of these new learning opportunities and the role of the CSLF will build capacity to extend these experiences for upper level students.

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A Learning Community in the Arts – Who Are You?

As result of the 2010-2011 SIF grants and strong efforts made by faculty, UPEI is currently offering a first-year Arts based learning community entitled – Who Are You? This is an integrated teaching and learning experience that has linked classes together to create a unique learning experience. As a result of the one-on-one recruiting by faculty, 25 students have signed up to participate in this pilot project. Efforts are well underway to provide a meaningful curricular and co-curricular experience for this year's students. There is active discussion around what the offering might be for next year; including who might want to be involved and what courses would be connected to the learning community (ies). Discussions and strategy involving the recruitment and promotion of next year's learning communities will need to begin shortly - with this, our hope is to include our current students' reflections on their experiences with this sort of teaching and learning process. Without question, one of the benefits of the SIF grant was the opportunity it has provided for staff and faculty professional development: including a well attended summer workshop on learning communities, student readiness and integrated teaching and learning. Further investment in professional development remains a priority as does increasing student engagement.

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First Year Experience: Extending New Student Orientation

Traditionally the New Student Orientation (NSO) week takes place the weekend before classes begin and during the first week of classes. During this short period students are full of energy and school spirit. In hopes of maintaining and carrying on this energy, we have planned events that are scheduled throughout the year to enhance student involvement, student life and the overall first year student experience. Not only will it enhance the first year experience, it is also an opportunity for upper year students to stay involved as leaders. Here are some examples of activities we have planned for this year; Movie Marathon, Halloween Party/Pumpkin carving, Pool Party, Night of Sounds @ The Wave (karaoke), Shinerama fundraising at sports games and more!

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Faculty of Science Development and Enhancement of Writing (DEW) initiative

The Faculty of Science received funding to engage the services of a Science Educator to:

- develop a suite of online resources for writing intensive courses in science for professors as well as undergraduate and graduate students (to include online assignments and exercises and self-tests, as well as instructor-specific resources)
- provide one-on-one consultation services to graduate and undergraduate students who need discipline-specific writing support
- work in collaboration with faculty members to facilitate the feedback process for written assignments

A 2-year term position was filled in May 2011. The new *Development and Enhancement of Writing (DEW) Educator* has been actively engaged in fulfilling the objectives of the project. Consultations were held with departments and faculty members in Science who teach writing intensive courses to: (1) determine what they would like to see in terms of web and other resources; (2) gain an appreciation of the 'styles' used in different areas; and (3) identify

departmental 'go-to' individuals. Following this initial consultation period, the DEW Educator has been collecting and assessing writing-related resources for students and professors. The Faculty of Science Writing Assistance Moodle site, intended to develop support materials for students writing in the sciences, as well as for faculty and staff teaching writing in the sciences, went live in early September and already contains a wealth of information.

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Writing for the Workplace

The Writing for the Workplace Project was developed to increase writing literacy in the local community. Local businesses, whose income potential is directly related to the literacy of employees, have indicated a need for improved written communication skills within their workforce. UPEI is offering a solution to this need through the development of a non-credit or partial credit blended online writing course. Mature students are introduced to continuing education at UPEI in a non-threatening and flexible environment, as content directly targets needs and applications in the workplace. The course itself is hosted on Moodle over a six week period with three face to face sessions. At this time, the needs assessment and the course development have been completed. The pilot session will be held shortly with participants from some of the companies who participated in the needs assessment. The plan is to have this course as part of the Centre for Lifelong Learning's regular programming.

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Expanding the Capacity to Deliver E-Learning courses in Sociology

Soc101L, "Introduction to Sociology," was delivered on-line by the Department of Sociology and Anthropology in the second summer session of 2011. It was the first course ever taught on-line by the Dept. The funds and support received from the Strategic Initiative Fund (SIF) project and the Centre for Life-long Learning (CLLL) made the instruction and delivery of the course material possible. As a survey course, Soc101L introduced students to the basic concepts, theories, and general interpretive tools of inquiry of the sociological discipline. Ninety-four students enrolled in the course. Students from different disciplines, including engineering, education, business, and nursing, took the course as an elective. Some completed the course from China and the United States. The on line mode of instructing soc101L gave people who were constrained by barriers, such as work, family schedules and travel, access to a post-secondary education. It is our greatest pleasure that Soc101L afforded this group of learners an opportunity to enhance their life-chances. Moreover, our Department used Soc101L as a training opportunity to increase its personnel capacity for on-line delivery of courses. That is, the full time faculty member who taught the course also trained a sessional instructor, who is currently teaching Soc102L (the second segment of "introduction to sociology"). This sessional instructor may be available to teach other courses on-line in the future. The popularity of Soc101L, as evident in the high enrolment and the informal positive feedback we have received, is an indication that an on-line mode of instruction can increase recruitment for UPEI.

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Digital Instructional Strategies Lab via Video Observation

As a way to bridge the theory/practice divide in our B.Ed program, we received funding to purchase four video observation cameras which will enable our pre-service teachers to collectively observe an experienced K-12 teacher. Collective observation, followed by critical conversation, is a pedagogical step forward in student engagement. An entire education class can now observe a lesson from the UPEI campus, discuss it with the K-12 teacher afterward, and then further discuss as part of their engagement with better teaching strategies. Immediate and contextually relevant observation is a means of engaging students in the complex daily decision-making of teachers. In addition, these cameras will assist us in supervising pre-service teachers who take on international placements. Since receiving this funding, a provincial committee has been formed to identify which video observation package will best meet our needs. We've chose the Iris Connect system from *Therelow*, and are currently outlaying the strategy for pilot testing one camera on the three school district networks here on PEI.

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Advancing Tourism Knowledge and Strengthening Internationalization: A New Partnership with LaRochelle Business School

The SIF for the School of Business and TRC is being used to establish a new partnership with Groupe Sup De Co La Rochelle Business School. Offering an extensive number of specialized programs in the 'business of tourism', including a Bachelor's in Tourism Studies, an Executive MBA in Tourism & Hospitality Services Management, and Graduate degrees in Tourism Management and Tourism and Hospitality Management, La Rochelle Business School has established a reputation for excellence and innovation in teaching the areas of business, management, and tourism. Furthermore, the School's Tourism Research Unit carries out research on emerging issues in the tourism and hospitality industry, and its intersection with society. The Business School also emphasizes the importance of international exchanges and internships. Complements between the program offerings and research pursuits of La Rochelle Business School and UPEI's School of Business and TRC offer significant opportunities for valuable student and faculty exchanges, program developments, as well as research collaborations that can benefit both institutions and the Island community. The funds will be used in the spring of 2012 to visit LaRochelle University this fall to sign an MOA for a strong working partnership.

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Development of an Interdisciplinary Gerontology Program at UPEI

The funding awarded from the Strategic Initiative Fund competition supported the development of a proposal for an interdisciplinary gerontology program at UPEI. With the funding received, the Advisory Committee hired a staff person to assist with developing the proposal. The Advisory Committee was expanded to include a student representative as well as additional university and community members. Meetings were held with the chairs and faculty members of relevant departments and administrators at UPEI. These meetings served to describe and promote the proposed gerontology program and to elicit interest in offering cross-listed courses with the new program. We investigated ways to incorporate e-learning into the program. Meetings were held with IT staff at UPEI and some of the funding was used for the staff person to attend the Dalhousie Conference on University Teaching and Learning and the Canadian e-Learning Conference. Enrolment data and other information on gerontology programs were gathered from multiple

sources including the Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission (MPHEC) and other Canadian universities. We designed an on-line survey to gather information about the need for an interdisciplinary gerontology program at UPEI. This background information served as the basis for the identification of the specific credentials and requirements recommended in the proposal. Contact was made with other universities in the region to gain an understanding of their programs in order to tailor the UPEI proposal to complement those already available in the region. Support for the program was solicited and letters were received from relevant organizations. The proposal is now approved by our Advisory Committee, and will be submitted to the host department (Family & Nutritional Sciences) for discussion at the next Department meeting on Oct. 6. Assuming approval by the University and MPHEC, we may anticipate a start date of the new interdisciplinary gerontology program at UPEI in the fall of 2013.

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Study Abroad Fund for Students

The purpose of the Study Abroad Fund (SAF) was to increase the number of UPEI students who study abroad. In September 2010, we had 29 students arrive at UPEI as exchange students. That same semester, we had three students leave UPEI to study abroad on exchange – a rather disappointing number. In January 2011, each student that went abroad was awarded \$500 to help toward travel costs. Word quickly spread and by September 2011, our outbound student numbers reached 10, more than three times what it was this time last year. Of the ten students studying abroad six received \$750 each from the SAF. Numbers for January 2011 are also up over last year, with 14 applications complete and five more expressing interest (deadline is Sept 30th). As you can clearly see from the numbers above, the SAF is doing exactly what we suggested it would! The more funds available; the more students will be able to take advantage of the opportunity to study internationally. Students who received funding from SAF in January 2011 were asked to present their experience at our first annual International Opportunities Day on September 27th in MacMillan Hall. Students spoke to their peers and answered questions about their experience and helped promote their international experiences. These same students also blogged about their experience and one student wrote an extensive paper on her experience upon return. We also had a student Skype in from Sweden to talk to other UPEI students at an information session last spring. If the numbers prove accurate after the deadline for applications, our total number of students participating in an international student exchange opportunity for 2011/2012 will be more than double what they were last year.

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Outreach to High School Students: Making Connections with Students in the International Baccalaureate Program

The purpose of this SIF is to connect UPEI, specifically the Webster Centre for Teaching and Learning, with students in the International Baccalaureate (IB) program. The program will provide the IB students from the two Charlottetown High Schools with workshops and materials on strategies required for academic success. While this program supports students in this intensive academic program, it also introduces them to UPEI academic supports and environment which will hopefully play a positive role in their decision when choosing a post-secondary institution. The program developed for the IB students was crafted from research and materials used in the UPEI's Student Success Program and titled, SSP for IB. A pilot project ran last academic year with 6 workshops (3 in each high school) and an evaluation meeting in June 2011, conducted here on

campus with the two IB Coordinators from the Charlottetown High Schools. Both coordinators reported that the workshops were very well received and stated that the majority of their graduating grade 12 students were registering at UPEI for their undergraduate degree.

In consultation with the two IB Coordinators, we have changed the program for this year. Currently, I am preparing materials to be delivered at a full-day IB retreat on Saturday, September 24, working with grade 11 students on goal setting, time management, learning style and study strategies. We have also started preparations for working with the grade 12 students, including having them sit in on a UPEI university lecture followed by a workshop on the importance of reading the text, class preparation, note-taking and class review. Future plans are underway broadening the scope to include any high school student interested in attending university.

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UPEI Societies project

The UPEI Societies project is designed to help create an ecosystem that will allow different student based societies and groups to flourish on campus. The project is a partnership between Integrated Communications and the UPEISU. The first part of the project involves developing a web based community space to allow different student organizations to post information about their groups in one place. This serves as advertising for the organizations and also helps with communications inside the organizations themselves. We have had approximately 50 groups post information in the community site over the past 9 months. The project also has a leadership stream which is designed to bring in different professionals to guide student organization leadership. We have done a variety of networking sessions, including inviting a societies expert from Alberta to come and visit our campus and work with different societies to come up with new, interesting ideas for events. In the next twelve months we are hoping to further refine our website to provide more functionality (including more social media integration) and to define better year to year transition policies in order to guarantee that our project will continue to flourish. You can see our progress at <http://societies.upeisu.ca>

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Experience U

The Experience U Open Course, which started October 19th, introduces students to the university experience. It is a free, five-week course offered by UPEI that answers some of the questions we hear most often from new students. It is designed to be a primer that will give students an overview of university and a context for the preparations and decisions they will need to make.

- Week 1 – What’s a student?
- Week 2 – What’s a professor?
- Week 3 – What’s a syllabus?
- Week 4 – What’s research?
- Week 5 – How do I succeed at university?

The project has attracted significant support from the Department of Education, with the former Minister of Education and the Deputy Minister sending a letter of support to educators around PEI encouraging their participation. We hope to make this project a semi-annual (or annual) event.

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Digitizing Student Records and Senate Minutes

The Registrar's Office submitted a proposal for a document management solution to assist with digitizing/scanning paper copies of student's academic records from 1969 to 1995 (72,000 individual hard copy records and 57,000 microfiched records) and a scanning and indexing project for Senate minutes from 1969 to 2010. Scanning and indexing student records will make it easier and faster for students to obtain copies of their historical transcripts and will save staff time. Digitizing and indexing the Senate minutes will allow faculty and staff to access a more complete historical record of Senate discussion and decisions. The Registrar's Office purchased the necessary software system called File Director, a scanner and dedicated computer for document scanning and management. On an annual basis the Registrar's Office prepares approximately 5000 files for scanning and digitizing. As of today, we are current in our records management and scheduled to cull the hard copy files for 2010 to initiate the next round of scanning and digitizing. The Registrar's Office provided the in-house labour for the scanning projects and we were able to use the scanning equipment in the Robertson Library and hire a student to facilitate digitization of the historical Senate minutes. Approximately 75% of the Senate material has been digitized. Once this is done, a Senate database will be constructed and made available.

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