

Donations an Important source of Income for UPEI

by Sarah Murphy

Universities are big business, but also a worthy cause for donation.

Donations to UPEI in the last fiscal year totalled over 1.9 million dollars.

The reputation of the university has never been better, Bob Gray, President of Alumni Affairs, explained. It is a great time to be a

the new Student Centre.

Planned giving provides money not only for improvements to the university but also to scholarships and bursaries.

A number of gifts come from individuals who are not linked to the university in any way.

"It is about student support," Gray said. "If they want to feel great about giving to something, the university is a good place."

Dr. Ray Morrison, a graduate of Prince of Wales College, donated a music collection with a value estimated at 90,000 dollars, two years ago. The collection held such a cultural value that it was given special consideration by Revenue Canada.

There are approximately 1,200 donors every year, but Alumni Affairs' goal is to triple that number. In 1994, 20 to 22 per cent of alumni were giving; now only 15 per cent of alumni are making a donation. "We would like that number to double," said Cathy Gillan of Advancement Services.

Gillan noted that despite this drop in contributions, the number of scholarships and bursaries for UPEI students has increased by 150 over the last two years.

The largest private commitment in the University's history was made recently and led to the Sir James Dunn Animal Welfare Centre. The establishment of the centre, whose goal is to improve the lives of animals through research and service, was dedicated on September 27th. The commitment of 2.2 million dollars was made by the Friends of the Christofor Foundation.

"We are very grateful for this generous support and for the vote of confidence in the University's contribution to animal welfare," said UPEI President Wade MacLauchlan.

The centre was named in honour of Sir James Dunn, who was one of Canada's foremost industrial leaders and supporters of university education. The friends of Christofor was created by the Estate of Lady Beaverbrook, the late wife of Sir James Dunn.

Donations to the university can be anything from 10 dollars from a new graduate to 2.2 million from a foundation such as the Christofor Foundation, said Gillan.

Before this donation, the largest had been the Webster donation, a five-year commitment. It has been invested to help UPEI improve the use of technology in the classroom. ITEC and 'Smart Classrooms' in various campus buildings are the result of this gift.

Gillan noted that other Atlantic universities such as Acadia University had also benefited from a generous donation which led to the creation of the Acadia Advantage. "Acadia put all their money into hardware," said Gillan, explaining that UPEI had not only invested in computer equipment, but had also insisted on providing training to the users of this new technology for the purpose of improving education at the university.

Part of the Webster donation also went towards improvement of the Robertson Library.

Another important donation to the university was the

provincial government's commitment to the K.C. Irving Chemistry Centre, without which the building would not have been built.

In 1997, Revenue Canada made it advantageous to give, said Gillan. "You can save money by donating, although people don't give because of taxes, they give because they want to make a difference."

The university has not refused a donation to date said Gillan, except for a private donation whose conditions did not meet Canadian human rights legislation. A trust has been administering the award.

Other donations were also

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student, and to be alumni, because of the quality of the education and all the exciting things that are taking place at the university, he added.

The university becomes a focus to those who want to give to PEI. "This is an obvious place," added Gray. "The university is key to the future of PEI."

"People give to the university because they can. It is an investment in the future and in PEI and in the students."

Others give for sentimental reasons.

"Some really love this university and feel they owe it to the university because of the education they have received here," Gray said. "Others give in memory of someone."

Alumni Affairs have several methods of seeking funds. These include: financial commitments by governments, corporate donations, planned giving, which include wills and bequests, and the Annual Appeal.

Previous Annual Appeals, a large phone and mail fundraising campaign, also aimed at increase contact amongst UPEI alumni, raised money for projects such as

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questioned by the university community.

"Some were not thrilled about the Irving donation," said Gillan. "[but] when you start judging money, it gets complicated." Gillan added that issues such as these were dealt by the Board of Directors.

No part of the donations made to the university goes to the administration of the gift. Gillan added that some donations were made for the specific purpose of alumni operations.

"What is important about donations is that you are highly accountable - we must make sure the money is spent properly," Gillan explained. Once received, donations are all processed the same way, although they were likely negotiated differently. □