



International Student Concerns

By Wendy R. Carpenter

International students are students from another country and/or culture that have chosen to come here to get their education. However, when you stop to consider this, it is quite a challenge to leave everything you are familiar with and begin a heavy program of studies in an unfamiliar system.

Why would such a student choose UPEI? Well, UPEI has several advantages over larger, better known institutions such as U of T or UBC. For one thing, it is small. This means that there is a lot more contact with the professors and there is less of a chance of just becoming a number in the crowd. The smaller atmosphere allows new students to make friends more easily and feel more comfortable. Also, Islanders are well-known for their friendliness and open-heartedness and many students from other countries have been impressed with the care and love which has been shown towards them. This makes UPEI an ideal place for an international student.

However, international stu-

dents do experience difficulties in coming to PEI which need to be recognized. PEI is very different from their home environment. One of the first adjustments a new student must make is the weather, especially since most of the school term is during the winter months. Most international students come from warmer climates and the cold temperatures are quite a shock even if they have been warned. This necessitates a more extensive wardrobe which will increase their costs. As well, those students who do not live on campus and do not want to walk long distances in the cold weather will incur additional costs such as taxi expenses. These may be quite substantial due to the lack of public transportation. Some students purchase a vehicle but this can be quite expensive as well.

Another major adjustment which can cause great difficulties for an international student is the change in food. The meat and potatoes common in the cafeteria is far from the rice and the spices which may be common in their home country. This is of-

ten the major factor determining whether a student will decide to live on or off campus.

The North American lifestyle can be quite different as well and can lead to misunderstanding when actions may seem similar but are quite different in meaning. For example, close friendships between guys and girls are common in North America but may not even be considered in another culture where relations between the sexes may be much less frequent. As well, the use or abuse of alcohol may be much greater here than at home and it may be difficult for the student to adjust to living in such an environment.

The teaching methods may be quite different from universities that they attended previously in their own countries. This will require adjustment. For example, here there is a continual evaluation system with regular testing throughout the year but many systems only have exams at the end of two or three years. This can therefore require quite a change in study habits.

Probably the biggest difficulty

facing all international students is the problem of funding. To attend university in this country, international students are required to pay more than resident students. This means that, on top of the extra expenses of travel, etc., the student has to pay a lot more just to go to school. This is why many international students work so hard at their studies. If they are fortunate enough to be receiving funding from their government or they are hoping to obtain funding in the future, they must keep their grade point average as high as possible. Obviously, it is the best students that get what little funding is available.

The undergraduate international student fees at UPEI are close to three times that of Canadian students. In relation to other universities, this is not an unreasonable fee. However, the fees for the Veterinary College are much greater. The tuition fees are approximately \$27,000 per year (at least thirteen times that of Canadian students!) and this does not even include the cost of buying a personal micro-

scope, textbooks at about \$100 a book, and residence and travel. It is quite an outrageous and impossible fee and is the reason that AVC is having difficulty recruiting students for the international seats. Why would a student come here at this price when they can go to the Ontario Veterinary College for a less expensive education? (OVC tuition fees are slightly over \$7000 per year.) There are a lot of students who would like to be able to attend AVC but just cannot afford the cost. There have also been international students lost from the program for the same reason. The fee schedule needs to be changed drastically if the international seats are going to be filled.

This is especially true when the need for better animal and human health in developing nations is considered. By sending a student to study veterinary medicine in another country, these nations could make a significant improvement in these areas. However, how could a developing country afford to send a student

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