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UPEI top undergraduate university in research income growth

EDITORIAL STAFF
The Guardian

The University of Prince Edward Island was the top Canadian undergraduate university in research income growth from 2002 to 2007, according to Canada's Innovation Leaders 2008, a report published by Research Infosource.

From 2002 to 2007, research income at UPEI rose from \$5.2 million to \$13.2 million, an increase of 153.8 per cent, says the report. Research Infosource is Canada's premier source of research and development information.

"UPEI's surge in research funding is based in faculty excellence and strong partnerships," says Dr. Katherine Schultz, the university's vice-president of research and development.

"Our positioning as first in our category is a clear reflection of UPEI's research focus and the energy with which we pursue our goals. UPEI's researchers are to be commended for this achievement."

Research Infosource has ranked UPEI fourth out of 17 primarily undergraduate Canadian universities in its undergraduate research universities of the year category. UPEI is the only university from the Maritimes in the top 10 of the undergraduate category.

Schultz says that as one of the top 10 research-intensive universities in Canada, UPEI is well-situated to be a leader in research in the region and the country.

In 2008, external grants and contracts for all research areas at UPEI rose to \$16.4 million in 2008, with a goal of reaching \$40 million within 10 years.

This translates into greater opportunities for UPEI faculty and students to participate in ground-breaking research, and in the establishment of state-of-the-art research facilities on the campus.

Biology student Ashleigh Allen, is an example. She was one of 26 undergraduate students who received awards from the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council last summer for research projects.

Allen spent her summer working with her supervisor, Dr. Robert Hurta, investigating the possible protective effects that natural "bioactive" compounds extracted from two species of seaweed may have against cancer cells.

Under Hurta's guidance, she learned about working in a cancer research lab, something she is interested in pursuing in the future.

UPEI now has seven faculty members who hold Canada Research Chairs in the sciences, and the social sciences and humanities. Their research covers:

- the study of small islands;
- development of natural compounds from marine organisms;
- population health;
- the role of inflammation in diseases such as Alzheimer's, multiple sclerosis and Parkinson's;
- development of a research and training program to understand challenges faced by youth;
- watershed ecology;
- and the development of minimally invasive techniques to monitor and treat disease such as prostate cancer.

Researchers are also contributing to discoveries related to school health, immigration, stroke, infectious diseases in marine life, cultural engagement, invasive species, animal movement, 'green' chemistry, and learning in a virtual environment, among others.

As well, UPEI researchers collaborate with the P.E.I. BioAlliance, the federal and provincial governments, and the local business community to move their research from the lab into the community and the economy.

The Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada recently released a report that found Canadian universities performed 36 per cent of the country's research and development, well above the average of other developed countries.

The report also notes that university research is estimated to have contributed as much as \$60 billion to the country's gross domestic product in 2007.

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