

PCMW Gala Speaking Notes – Diana Mager

July 9, 2013

Good evening,

Thank you for honouring the Manitoba Association of Home Economists (MAHE) with this distinguished award. We appreciate the opportunity to be recognized for the work that we do as a professional association; and for the work we do in partnership with our sister organizations like the Provincial Council of Women of Manitoba.

We sincerely thank Meghan Rafferty and Peggy Barker for their commitment to both MAHE and the PCWM. They keep us connected and informed, especially during the National and Provincial resolution process.

MAHE values the opportunity to contribute to the resolution process each year. PCWM's strong voice and lobbying efforts speak to many important social issues in which MAHE has common interests.

This year, MAHE put forth its own Provincial resolution to the PCWM, which was passed on May 30 at their annual general meeting. The resolution addressed the University of Manitoba's current Academic Structure Initiative and its potentially negative impact on the Faculty of Human Ecology.

To give you a bit of background, the University's Academic Structure Initiative was launched in January 2012 by President David Barnard. He identified the "cluster mechanism" as a useful starting point to improve and simplify the University's current academic structure. He asked the Provost to work with deans and directors, in consultation with their faculty, staff, students and external stakeholders to identify viable cluster options for reducing the number of faculties and schools from the current total of 20 to a number closer to the National average of 13, by 2017.

To date, the "clustering" options that the University is looking at, does not support keeping Human Ecology as an easily identifiable or unified faculty. We are at risk of losing our professional identity at a time when families need us the most.

The Faculty of Human Ecology delivers research and education excellence that promotes optimum health and quality of life to individuals, families and communities. It intergrates social science concepts with science concepts so that students learn to plan, implement, and evaluate programs that have a positive impact on the health and well-being of families throughout the entire lifecycle.

Did you know...that the Department of Family Social Sciences offer specializations, like family violence, that no other department offers?

Did you know...that the Department of Textile Sciences is unique in Canada because it offers an undergraduate program which acknowledges the contribution of textiles to human health, like antimicrobial fabrics and biotextiles?

And did you know...that the Faculty of Human Ecology still graduates Home Economics Teachers – professionals that are qualified to teach our children and grandchildren basic family, nutrition and textile skills that will help them acquire healthy, functional relationships and families?

The focus and philosophy for the profession of home economics (human ecology), has always been the family household unit.

The academic study of Home Economics was established at the University of Manitoba in 1910 when the first class of students (women) was admitted into the Department of Household Science in the Manitoba Agriculture College. After the Diploma of Household Science was established in 1911, the Manitoba Home Economics Association was founded by the first graduating class. Fast forward to 2010, and the Faculty of Human Ecology celebrates its centennial at the University of Manitoba, a testament to the fact that home economists are as relevant and needed today as they were 100 years ago.

MAHE was established in 1987. Its constitution was adapted in 1989 outlining the goals of the association which are threefold:

- To make the profession of home economics of increasing service to individuals, families, and the community
- To encourage and support students of home economics/human ecology at undergraduate and graduate levels
- And, to study social issues with the primary focus and expertise of the home economist profession and make recommendations for action when appropriate.

The practice of home economics is regulated through self-governing professional legislation which was enacted by the Manitoba Legislature in 1990. The Professional Home Economics Act granted MAHE with the authority and responsibility to safeguard the public by identifying and approving member's rights to use the designation of professional home economists; and to ensure that practising home economists are competent, qualified and ethical.

MAHE has a long history of supporting, advocating, and empowering both urban and rural families. It's our goal to keep the Human Ecology departments unified and easily identified under one cluster faculty within the University of Manitoba's Academic Structure Initiative.

The University has not made a decision yet on what cluster or clusters the Faculty of Human Ecology departments will be located under. We ask, and encourage, you to consider writing a letter, sending an email or talking to deans, ministers and other people who can influence the University's direction with this matter. You're welcome to talk to one of the home economist's here tonight if you would like more information.

In closing, Home Economists are valuable community resources, professionals, and educators that can bring essential skills into the home and everyday life so that families can be well and thrive. Your support can help ensure that the science, the art, and the craft of nurturing a healthy family continues be taught by a unified Human Ecology institution.

Thank you.