

# IN RESPONSE TO UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA'S ACADEMIC STRUCTURE INITIATIVE

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## Position Statement – MAHE

The Manitoba Association of Home Economists (MAHE) is a professional association incorporated under Manitoba legislation - *The Professional Home Economists Act* (1990) and charged with regulating the professional "**practice of home economics**" in Manitoba.

MAHE is advocating that:

1. The faculty of Human Ecology and its holistic, multi-faceted education structured as Family Social Sciences, Interdisciplinary Health, Human Nutritional Sciences and Textile Sciences retain its identity, at a minimum as a college, within the proposed academic structure initiative. This is critical to enable the continued credentialing for the practice of home economics professionals. This is also critical to enable continued and improved educational programs that provide technically competent home economics teaching professionals.
2. That MAHE be formally part of ongoing discussions. Engaging key stakeholders, including employers, in the process will help the University ensure overall success and value in its academic structure initiative.

### Rationale:

- Within Manitoba, home economists are recognized with a professional designation defining and establishing standards for practice. The legislation defines the objective of the profession as “the discovery, integration and application of physical and social science principles for the purpose of enhancing the quality of people's daily lives and, without restricting the generality of the foregoing, includes the act of advising individuals, families, organizations and businesses, disseminating information, planning, conducting and evaluating educational programs and conducting research related to: (a) knowledge and skills required for satisfying basic needs for food, clothing, shelter and human relationships, (b) consumer goods and services, (c) management of individual and family resources, and (d) public and private sector policies and programs affecting the well-being of individuals and families
- Home economists work in all areas of the public, non-profit and private sectors to assist people in improving their quality of life. Their designation is a recognized skill set that takes an integrated and holistic approach to working with individuals and families in their homes, businesses and communities in countries across the globe.
- The Faculty of Human Ecology is unique in the education it provides students, and consistent with promoting interdisciplinary study and practice. One of the current goals of the academic structure initiative is to facilitate more interdisciplinary study. The Faculty of Human Ecology facilitates interdisciplinary study and provides its students with a structured approach to integrated practice - applying social sciences, wellness, nutritional science, food science and textile science knowledge and skills to practical practice at the community level. The result is that Human Ecology students have a unique and highly valued marketable skill – knowledge translation.

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- There is resurgence in the demand for such family centered skills - as home economics teachers, family resource management education, financial literacy educator, dietetics accreditation, diabetes and healthy life coaches, life skills and parenting educators, and community nutritionists. Within the international sphere, the practice of home economists continues to grow. Yet, The Faculty of Human Ecology is the one remaining fully-interdisciplinary faculty in Canada. The faculty can and should be widely promoted in Canada and internationally.
  
- In Manitoba, home economists work as:
  - Home Economics teachers and educators in middle and senior high schools, adult education courses and on-line.
  - Food and Nutrition experts in non-profit organizations in Canada and globally.
  - Therapeutic Dietitians in health care institutions;
  - Food Service Specialists, Food Scientists, Product Development Consultants, Registered Dietitians and Nutritionists in government, public health and community-based organizations, private industry and private practice;
  - Food Preservation Educators and Consultants
  - Leadership Development Specialists, 4-H and Youth Specialists, Employment Income Assistance Counsellors, Home Care Co-ordinators, Managers and Directors of work units with government (i.e. Directors of Rural Economic Development, Boards Commissions and Legislation, Food Commercialization, Chief Operating Officer of Food Development Centre, Managers of Rural Policy and GO Teams;
  - Healthy Living consultants and practitioners;
  - Family Financial/Debt Counsellors;
  - Business Consultants (Women's Enterprise Centre);
  - Managers of Child Day Care Centres, Early Childhood Educators, Community College and University Instructors, School Board Trustees;
  - Executive Directors and Program Managers for non-profit organizations (i.e. Alzheimer's Association);
  - Clothing designers, Artisans and Entrepreneurs; and,
  - Community Volunteer workers delivering home economics program and policy.
  
- Currently the Faculty of Human Ecology is responsible for a number of accreditation systems that support graduates. The two major professions include Professional Home Economists and Registered Dietitians. Additionally, the Faculty offers a number of transfer credit agreements with Red River Community College permitting credit hour equivalents towards Bachelor degrees from Child and Youth Care, Disability and Community Support, Early Childhood Education (joint Diploma and Degree option), and most recently, the Culinary Arts Diploma program. The Faculty's Practicum programs provide a vital link between educational theory and research and potential work and careers. Additionally, the Faculty works in collaboration with a number of allied groups and research centres such as:

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- Centre on Aging (founder and still active at undergraduate and Graduate Specialist in Aging at the graduate level);
  - Centre for Global Public Health;
  - Manitoba Centre for Health Policy
  - First Nations Centre for Aboriginal Health Research
  - Richardson Centre for Functional Foods and Nutraceuticals
  - Canadian Centre for Agri-food Research in Health and Medicine
  - Manitoba Food Monitor
  - Manitoba Institute for Child Health
  - Education for Sustainable Well-Being Research Group
  - Qualitative Research Group
  - Health Development Research Group
  - Education for Sustainable Well-being Research Group
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- The practice and teaching of Home Economics has evolved and kept pace with the changing nature of family, community and work. There is an increasing focus on food and nutritional sciences, family dynamics, basic clothing construction skills, and consumer and household finance.
  
  - The Faculty's role is to provide the theory and research that guides students in the modern practice. In support of the University's Indigenous Access Retention and Success Initiative, Human Ecology education is well positioned to work with First Nations students in an adaptive approach rather than with a pathology focus found in other fields of practice.
  
  - The Faculty has retained consistent enrolment of more than 450 undergraduate students annually with more than 100 others, enrolled in graduate programs. Additionally, over the past 5 years, ten to twenty-two international students per year were attracted to PhD and Master's programs at Manitoba's faculty.
  
  - The recent report: "Chief Provincial Public Health Officer Report on the Health Status of Manitobans 2010 Priorities for Prevention: Everyone, Every Place, Every Day" indicates that almost 2/3 of the causes of death and illness in our province have a nutrition-related component. It further suggests that prevention is key to stemming the epidemic of chronic disease plaguing our population. Home economists and dietitians are key agents in population health promotion and disease prevention.
  
  - Home Economists, who are extension workers in Agriculture, can be an important bridge between health and agriculture, as Agriculture is increasingly acknowledging its role in health promotion and disease prevention.
  
  - Home Economics courses in middle and senior high schools require teachers who are graduates with not only the integrated human ecology education (food, nutrition, clothing, textiles, family social

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sciences) but also appropriate teacher education and in-class practicum experiences from the Faculty of Education. The demand for Home Economics education within Manitoba's school system is growing with school divisions facing ever increasing challenges in hiring adequately trained new teachers to replace those leaving the system. School divisions must do so, not only to ensure educational standards, but in light of the safe work and liability legislation, Home Economics teachers must ensure the health and safety requirements of the classroom.

In summary, public policy is recognizing that the factors impacting health lie outside the health care system – that is the social determinants of health. The practice of home economics focuses on addressing the social determinants of health, with a long and respected history of operating outside the traditional medical model, promoting and providing tools and strategies to promote healthy lifestyles, healthy family relationships and healthy communities.

### **Background– Manitoba Association of Home Economists**

Manitoba Association of Home Economists (MAHE) was preceded by the Manitoba Home Economics Association (MHEA) founded in 1911 after the Diploma of Household Science was established within the Manitoba Agricultural College, University of Manitoba.

MAHE was established in 1987. Its constitution was adopted in 1989 outlining the goals of the association which are three fold:

- 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.
- To study social issues with the primary focus and expertise of the home economics profession and make recommendations for action when appropriate.

In 1990 an act of the legislature, *The Professional Home Economists Act (Act)*, granted MAHE the responsibility for the regulated profession. The Act defines the practice of home economics and charges MAHE with the authority and responsibility to safeguard the public by identifying and approving a Member's right to use the designation of professional home economist (PHEc). In addition, MAHE must respond to complaints against a Member's professional practice and carry out investigations and/or discipline as deemed necessary.

MAHE is a strong supporter of the Canadian Home Economics Foundation (CHEF) which funds dynamic home economics research, education and community projects. Beginning in 2008, the Provincial Board undertook the challenge of modernizing the structure and governance of the association.

MAHE has championed a number of initiatives that contribute to its goals and responsibilities as a regulated profession. Some of these initiatives include: the development of the Basic Skills for Living resources used nation-wide; local educational events such as the Financial Forum; cooperative partner

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in the 'Farm to School' healthy choice fundraiser; home economics consumer education through regular Breakfast TV programming and the HomeFamily.net Blog.

MAHE is a Member of International Federation of Home Economics (IFHE), founded in 1908 following a series of international Lake Placid Conferences from 1899-1908. In tandem with IFHE's World Home Economics Day, the Province of Manitoba annually declares March 21<sup>st</sup> as Home Economics Day in Manitoba. As a member of Provincial Council of Women, MAHE contributes annually to the Council's resolutions. In addition, MAHE supports the Association of Canadian Home Economics Student (ACHES) and Home Economics Students Association (HESO), collaborates on home economics education initiatives with Manitoba Home Economics Teachers Association (MHETA) such as the bi-annual Canadian Home Economics Symposium and acknowledges Canadian Dietitians as a sister organization accredited through the same Faculty.