

**A Review
of the
Labour Market Status of Home Economists
In PEI**

Submitted To: PEI Home Economics Association & UPEI (Dept. of Family & Nutritional Sciences)

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- Contents -

I	Project Background	4
II	Project Outcomes	6
III	Project Management & Methodology	7
IV	Description of Current Environment	9
V	Summary of Research Findings	18
	1. Historical Context	18
	2. Literature Search & Document Review	20
	3. Labor Market Analysis	26
	4. Focus Group Interviews	32
	5. Prospective Employer Interviews	47
	6. Skills Mapping Exercise	52
VI	Summary of Key Themes	58
VII	Strategic Directions	60
VIII	Conclusion	77

Appendices are Included In The Attached Compendium Report

Foreword

In completing this Study, the Consulting Team gathered a wide range of information and data in an effort to fully identify and explore the issues facing the profession within the current labour market. The attached Reports attempt to capture the range and scope of the information collected, provide some analysis and interpretation, and develop some strategic directions and actions.

In completing the task, it was apparent that there was often a “spectrum” of views and interpretations regarding the nature of the Study itself, the research methodology, the findings and interpretations and the possible directions. These Reports in and of themselves will not answer nor reassure all the questions and concerns that may be generated by their contents.

While certain findings, facts and interpretations may be subject to further question and critique, the overall message that comes through in terms of the essential issues and challenges facing the Home Economics profession are clear. The following Reports are intended to provide additional direction, guidance and support to both the PEI Home Economics Association and the Department of Family and Nutritional Sciences at UPEI as they continue on a mutual journey toward the renewal of the profession.

I Background

In recent years, the dynamics within the work environment have changed dramatically for many professions. Some of these new dynamics include such things as:

- ▶ new/increased public demands and expectations;
- ▶ an increasingly older population of consumers;
- ▶ the introduction of technology and the knowledge economy;
- ▶ fiscal restraint policies, and pressures to reallocate financial resources;
- ▶ the restructuring of public policy and delivery organizations; and
- ▶ changes in job roles, functions and classification status.

To a greater or lesser degree, all professional groups have been impacted by many of these factors. For some sectors these changes are presenting challenges to many professions in terms of education and training (i.e. new knowledge and skills), and employment opportunities. In many ways, this is the situation facing the Home Economics profession.

In PEI, the number of new students entering the program at UPEI has been static over the past decade, and there been an increasing concern with regard to the quality of incoming students, the retention of students, and the number of students graduates. These enrollment concerns, and the absence of an identifiable career track, and employment opportunities for Family Science graduates, are viewed as two of the more important challenges to be addressed.

In addition, the PEI Home Economics Association has seen its membership numbers decline over the past decade. A large part of this decline can be attributed to a significant increase in the Canadian Home Economics Association

(CHEA) fees in the early 1990's. Many existing members either were not able to afford the increase, or were forced to choose between Associations (some people were also members of other Associations; e.g. Canadian Dietetics Association). The Association has also experienced difficulty in attracting new and younger members. As its membership base has declined, this has weakened the Association's capacity to actively promote itself to the community generally, and to employers in particular.

Labour Market Study:

The PEI Home Economics Association, in partnership with the Department of Family & Nutritional Sciences at the University of Prince Edward Island, is interested in changing this situation. These two partners, with the assistance from Human Resources Development Canada, have contracted with a Consulting Team to complete an analysis of the current labour market with respect to home economists.

The essential objective of the study is to gain a clearer understanding of what the Association can do to re-establish itself as a viable force in the labour market, what can be done to attract and retain high quality students to the profession, and what can be done to identify any new employment opportunities for home economists on PEI.

The Project sponsors believe that the knowledge base and skills of home economists continue to be relevant in terms of many current family and community needs. However, it is clear that the demands and requirements of labour market have changed, and the profession must become more proactive and deliberate in responding and adapting to these changes.

II Project Outcomes

This Report will outline the key findings from the research activities, and will develop and propose a plan to enhance and strengthen the employability of members of the Home Economics Profession within PEI, and the broader labour market generally.

In addition, the Report will address other specific project requirements including:

1. Exploring where the Home Economics profession stands in relation to its own sense of identity and its own sense of relevance to the labour market.
2. Developing a listing and analysis of the critical issues facing the future of the profession.
3. Developing an outline of the current knowledge base and skill sets of the profession.
4. Developing inventories detailing current employability obstacles, employment opportunities, and potential workplace practicums.
5. Identifying new practicum possibilities, and training needs/requirements.
6. Increasing the capacity of PEI Home Economics Association membership in terms of numbers, profile, and employability.
7. Developing a marketing strategy to inform/engage PEI employers regarding the capacity and versatility of home economics and FNS graduates.
8. Developing an action plan, with both short term and long term goals, designed to achieve the above outcomes.

III Project Management & Methodology

Consulting Team:

To complete the Study, the Project Sponsors contracted with a team of local consultants who came together to collaborate on the task. Team members included: Steve McQuaid from the Discoverers Group; prior to his work as a consultant, Steve, a social worker, spent some twenty three years with the province government in the Health and Social Services system. Steve was responsible for overall project management, focus group and key informant interviews, and the drafting of the interim and final reports. Terry Allen from the Champion Group; Terry has a background in competency based learning, adult education, and business marketing and promotion. Terry was responsible in developing the performance skills map, and was instrumental in developing the promotion and marketing approach. Nishka Smith is a graduate of the UPEI Home Economics Program, and has her Masters in Dietetics. She was responsible for completing the literature search and document review, and assisted with the focus group and key informant interviews.

Project Management:

In completing the Project tasks, the Consulting Team was guided by the Project Sponsors (UPEI FNS Department, and PEIHEA) and the direction and advice of a Project Steering Committee. This Committee included representation from Project Co-Sponsors, several local home economists, a person from PEI Business Development, a representative from Human Resources Development Canada, and the President/Board Chairperson of the Canadian Home Economics Association. (See appendix A for the complete list of Steering Committee members, and their terms of reference).

Methodology:

The Project methodology included the gathering of both quantitative and qualitative data with respect to the education/training of professionals in home economics, their employment and employability experience, and their perception and understanding of the issues facing the profession within the broad labour market.

The research tasks included a consultation process with those organizations, groups and bodies who would have direct interest in the education, support and employment of Home Economists. This included organizations such as: the PEI Home Economics Association, UPEI (Department of Family & Nutritional Sciences), the Dietetics Association, the PEIHEA History Committee, the Canadian Home Economics Association. In addition, a number of employers were contacted with regard to exploring employment possibilities. The methodology to gather the views and comments of various individuals and groups included a combination of telephone, one-on-one, and focus group interviews.

A literature search was conducted to identify current and/or pending issues facing the profession. To assist with this task, relevant provincial, regional and/or national reports/studies dealing were secured and reviewed. In addition to the conventional document search exercise, an Internet search was conducted to see what other provinces are experiencing in terms of similar labour market changes, and how they might be adapting/working with the issues. The main findings of the literature search are summarized in section VI as well.

Finally, a performance skills mapping exercise was completed to identify and document the current knowledge base and skill sets of the profession. To assist with this task some fourteen home economists, representing a variety of work experiences, assisted Terry Allen in establishing a Home Economics Skills

Performance Chart. The development of this chart is more fully elaborated in a later section.

IV Description of Current Environment

General Overview:

Home Economics as a discipline and profession was created in the Early 1890's in response to rapid societal and technological change associated with the Industrial Revolution. Home Economics* was chosen as a name for this new discipline, with home representing a place of shelter and nurturance, and economics representing the management of the home in terms of time, energy and money.

Early post secondary education home economics programs included courses aimed at increasing the efficiency of household management and were viewed as a means to teach the household arts (cooking and sewing) to women. Over the past several decades, the discipline has evolved to address a broader range of issues. There is now a strong focus on the fostering and promotion of home and societal environments that support the diversity of families, and such issues as family violence, poverty, malnutrition, product safety, and public policy are part of the agenda. The explosion of knowledge in the various areas of home economics has also resulted in a growth in a number of specialties in areas such as foods, nutrition and family sciences, and clothing and textiles.

* The title "home economists" may be used interchangeably with a wide variety of terms including Human Ecologist, Family and Consumer Scientist, Household Science Consultant, and Home Management Specialist.

Home Economists On PEI – Population & Employment Status:

According to recent estimates, there are approximately 217 trained home economists on PEI. Using the information contained in the PEIHEA Newsletter Subscribers list, information supplied by PEI Home Economics Teachers Association, and the local knowledge of some existing home economists, the employment status of some 142 of these individuals was identified:

- 50 were employed in the School System
- 44 were employed in the Health System (primarily Dietitians & Nutritionists)
- 21 were employed in non-traditional public sector job positions (staffing officer with the Public Service Commission, Project Coordinator with HRDC, Business Development Officer with PEI Business Development Inc., Communications and Public Relations)

- 16 were retired
- 9 were self-employed (have set up a consulting business, providing in some cases clinical counseling, and in other cases advice/consultation to customers of large grocery chains and pharmacies, or to various community projects)
- 2 were working part-time from their home (contract work)

PEIHEA Membership:

In 2001, there were 31 members with the PEIHEA/CHEA. Among these members, 8 are retired persons, 15 are people with permanent full-time employment, 2 work part time, 5 work by contract, and 1 is in seasonal employment. The various employers include government agencies, UPEI, the school system, the non-profit community and private industry. There was a peak in membership in the late 1980's when the number of members in the Association was in the 80 plus range. In recent years, the participation has

increasingly diminished. A significant decrease in membership occurred shortly after fee levels from CHEA were sharply increased in the early 1990's. This trend with respect to membership levels is consistent with what has happened in other provinces.

Post Secondary Education & Training:

Over the past decade, the student enrollment in the Home Economics Department at UPEI was static, and there was a continuing concern with regard to attracting and retaining quality level students. While it appeared that the program/curriculum content was relevant to many health and social needs at the community level, an insufficient number of students saw Home Economics as an attractive or viable career path. While the Foods and Nutrition program stream was relatively strong and student enrollment was steady, there was a concern about the future of the Family Science stream.

Table # 1

Family & Nutritional Sciences – General Enrollment Statistics – 1991 – 2001										
Year	9 1 - 92	9 2 - 93	9 3 - 94	9 4 - 95	9 5 - 96	9 6 - 97	9 7 - 98	9 8 - 99	9 9 - 00	00-01
Graduates	15	8	6	7	10	9	10	12	11	6
Enrollment *	479	547	475	560	503	469	354	367	464	472
Total # of Classes	31	30	31	26	28	30	27	26	27	25
Class Size (mean)	12.4	14.5	14.5	21.5	18	15.5	13.1	14.1	17	18.9

* Note: Enrollment figures reflect total number of students in courses offered by the Department (both majors and non-majors). Numbers vary because of changes in course offerings as well as course enrollments.

In an effort to address this situation, UPEI changed the name of the Home Economics Department to the Family and Nutritional Sciences (FNS) Department

in 1997. In addition, it reorganized the curriculum around a decision to offer two majors - a Bachelor of Science in Foods & Nutrition, and a Bachelor of Science in Family Science. As a result of this change, the Foods & Nutrition curriculum has become more specialized in response to student demands, an integrated Dietetic Internship Program was introduced, and graduating students continue to be accredited through the Canadian Dietetic Association.

The Family Science major was further developed to offer students a broad range of courses including, family studies, food and nutrition, and clothing and design. In addition, it is anticipated that FS will be able to become accredited through the certified Canadian Family Life Educator (CFLE) program. With the recent conversion of the position to the tenure track, there is every indication that the Family Sciences major stream will be strengthened and developed.

In addition to these changes, the FNS Department has become much more proactive in terms of engaging the prospective employer community. It has introduced the Integrated Dietetic Internship Program, and a 32 hour practicum. As part of a marketing strategy, a web site was designed, printed materials were developed, and the Department advertised its programs in the Labour Market Expo. In addition, developing a higher profile with Island high schools has been a strategic focus. In the past, presentations have been made to guidance counselors, site visits have been made to various schools, and this fall (2001) a high school family living class will be visiting the Department.

While in some respects it is a little early to determine the precise impacts of these changes, there are some positive indications in student response to date. There have been more students enrolling in the program since the change. Since 1998/99 there has been a 28.6% increase in the total enrollment numbers, and for the fall 2001 semester there has been a tripling of student enrollment (from 10 to 35) in the Introductory Foods -FN/FS 111. (Source – Department of Family & Nutritional Sciences).

Employment:

Home Economists:

Employment levels for home economists have fluctuated over time, and tended to be driven or impacted by public sector (government) policy priorities and fiscal resources. Perhaps the biggest “boost” in terms of public sector employment occurred during the years of the PEI Development Plan (1969-1979). This 10 year Federal-Provincial Agreement provided the fiscal resources for the province to develop most of its public sector administrative infrastructure and program inventory.

During earlier times, home economists were hired by the Department of Agriculture as District Home Economists working in extension offices, and as teachers within the school system. However, in terms of the generalist role, there are currently no positions classified in the PEI public service requiring a home economics degree. Those home economists who worked in the Department of Agriculture were re-assigned to new/different functions and job roles within the system, following a policy shift from a community service focus to a Agri-Food Industry focus. In fact job titles/descriptions requiring home economics background and skills have essentially disappeared in most government departments.

Within the school system, there has been an erosion of influence and profile for the home economics teachers as well, but this change has been more gradual. According to the Home Economics Teachers Association, there are 34 Home Economics teachers in Junior and Senior High Schools, representing different schools across the province. However, this number has been eroding in recent years for a number of reasons. In high schools, fewer students are taking home economics because of the semester system, and school administrators are conscious of the costs of providing the programs. In addition, it is no longer

required that a teacher be a Home Economist to teach the curriculum; one only needs to have an education degree.

In many respects, in today's world a graduate with a general Home Economics degree is in much the same position as a graduate with a general B.A. or B.Sc. degree. While the generalist base provides for a good starting point, the explosion of information and technology has moved the world into the knowledge economy. This has meant that the labour market has become much more specialized, and employees/workers generally need a higher level of knowledge and skills to meet the demands of the job market. While it would appear that individuals, families and communities are perhaps in greater need of the knowledge and skills that home economics graduates have, there is little evidence of any growth in job and employment opportunities. In fact, the evidence over the last decade or more has been the opposite.

Nutritionists & Dietitians:

Dietitians require a Bachelor's degree (Internship Coordinators must have Master's degree) in dietetics, nutrition or a related field such as food and nutritional science or biochemistry. In addition, graduates must complete a 9 to 12 month graduate internship, usually at a hospital. Increasingly, Internship Programs are being moved to become integrated with the undergraduate Foods and Nutrition Program. In PEI, the job title, dietitian, is protected by law, and workers calling themselves dietitians must be registered with the Canadian Dietetic Association. The job title for nutritionists is not protected by law.

Currently there are some 51 dietetic positions across the health system in PEI. Thirty dietitians are between the ages of 25-44, and twenty are between by ages of 45-64; there is one male. The average income earned is \$37,000. (Source – HRDC –PEI Job Futures 2000 web site). However, in the past several years, there have been relatively few new positions created. And with the average age

of the current workforce being approximately 45, there may be some vacancies available for new graduates over the next decade or more.

Canadian Trends:

On a Canada wide scale, the experience with respect to employment appears to be similar to that of PEI. With governments being in fiscal retrenchment mode for most of the past decade, and redefining their policy roles in the face of global economic and social trends, Home Economics as a profession has seen its traditional employment base erode, and is having difficulty in determining how to re-position itself in terms of profile and influence.

In 2000, CHEA commissioned a major research effort to explore the issues impacting on the profession and employment in more detail. The results of the research – the CHEA Target Market Research Report – indicate that the profession is having difficulty defining a new focus in the face of the specialization of many of the areas that were once part of home economics. In addition, the professional title of “home economics” or “home economist” - does not hold strong appeal with the younger generation of professionals and/or incoming students.

In part as a response to this feedback, the CHEA recently developed and released a public relations campaign to better inform both the public and potential employers of what the profession is all about, and what home economists do. This campaign consists of a colorful and informative poster display, accompanied with a variety of brochures targeting various audiences. The intention is to have the local Home Economics Association take a leadership role in putting the campaign into action in each province.

However, the campaign is not having the hoped for impact for two reasons; firstly, many of the provincial Associations depend on volunteers, and do not

have the resources (time, dollars) to aggressively promote the materials; and secondly, the fundamental issues facing the profession go beyond simply better informing the public.

In the fall of 2001, the National CHEA Board will host a "Summit". This "Summit" will include a number of home economic professionals who will be invited by the National Board, and the Presidents of all provincial Associations. The meeting is intended to be a "crossroads" event with representatives being asked to discuss/debate and conclude answers to a series of introspective questions: Who are we? What do we want to do? What body of knowledge do we see ourselves protecting? What do we want to call ourselves? Where do we want to go in terms of the CHEA? (Source; CHEA Ex. Director)

The U.S. Experience

Canada is not the only country in which the Home Economics profession is dealing with the issues of identity, relevance and future direction. In recent years, in an effort to consolidate and strengthen its membership base, and to strike a stronger resonance with consumers and potential employers, the American Home Economics Association (AHEA) changed its name to the American Association of Family and Consumer Studies (AAFCS) in 1996. While it is a little early to measure the long-term impacts, membership numbers in the AAFCS continue to be down.

Correspondence from the American Association indicates that it has (and to some degree still is) experiencing some of the same concerns and issues as the CHEA. Issues such as the changing labour market demands/requirements, changing public policy directions, the disconnect between family and community needs and the lack of employment options for Family and Consumer Science Professionals.

The AAFCS informational brochures outline two streams in terms of career and employment options for FCS graduates; one is “Family and Consumer Sciences”, and the other is what is called the AAFCS Business Section. The Family and Consumer Science stream focuses on a wide spectrum of possibilities ranging from the food and nutritional services, to wellness/fitness, to hospitality, to human development and family support. The Business Section places a special focus on the development of networks, alliances and partnerships with the businesses and corporations which have similar goals and objectives. The key objective is to develop new employment opportunities, and areas such as public relations, marketing, product development and testing, fashion and clothing design, and entrepreneurship counseling are profiled and explored.

Summary

In summary, the general scan of the current environment indicates that many existing home economists on PEI are currently employed in some capacity, and while there is some concern around underemployment and the lack of new opportunities, on the positive side there seems to be no sense that there are large numbers of experienced home economists looking for work at the moment.

In the past, employment opportunities for home economists were primarily developed through government. However, in recent years, many of the traditional opportunities (agriculture and education) that once existed are no longer there. While this lack of opportunity may not be impacting on existing home economists to a great extent, the lack of tangible employment opportunities is a very real problem for new graduates. At the same time, employment prospects for Dietitians have remained relatively stable.

As a means of addressing issues of student interest/enrollment, retention and graduation numbers, UPEI changed the title of the Department in 1997. In addition to the name change, the UPEI Department has become more proactive

in connecting its students with the broader employment community. While there has not been enough time to measure its full impact, there has been a noticeable increase in student interest and enrollment.

Many of the challenges being faced by the home economics profession on PEI are similar to what is being experienced in many other provinces, as well at the national and international levels.

V Summary of Research Findings

As part of the data gathering process regarding the challenges and issues facing the Home Economics Profession, the Consulting Team engaged in several research activities: it reviewed some of the historical context, completed a literature/document review, a series of key informant and focus groups interviews with a wide spectrum of home economists, and conducted interviews with a number of potential employers within the community. The following section of this Report outlines the main findings of these research activities.

1. Exploring the Historical Context:

In terms of the historical context, the research team had an opportunity to consult with the History Committee of the PEI Home Economics Association. Over the past year, this Committee of five eminent Home Economists (See Appendix B) have been researching and writing about the historical achievements of the profession both in PEI and the larger North American context. This work is being completed in preparation for the release of a history book to mark the 60th anniversary of the PEIHEA in 2002. Their work chronicles the rich history and capacity of the profession, and helps to put some of the current challenges in a broader and evolutionary context.

These capacities or strengths have been expressed in a number of ways, and at their essence, they remain very relevant in terms of contemporary family and social issues. Some of these include:

- Home Economics, in terms of its vision, has seen itself as a profession interested in, and responsive to social and community needs. Many of the family and community needs that challenged the profession over the past century continue to be much in evidence (albeit in a more modern, different context) as we enter the new century. Issues such as family and child poverty, domestic violence, balancing work and family life, timely access to health care services, helping people deal with life transitions, and addressing the needs of the elderly remain very much with us. The challenge for the profession is to continue to look for opportunities to effectively apply the newly emerging scientific information, in ways that will improve and enhance the lives of individuals, families and communities.
- The profession has always been holistic in its view, and recognizes the complexity of many human and social issues. Hence, the profession has always been committed to a diverse study/preparation curriculum with a solid balance of both theoretical and practical applications; this ensures that its graduates are well prepared to respond/adapt to a wide variety of work/career options.
- The profession has always believed that a multi-disciplinary or team approach can be a more effective response to many human and social issues. Hence, future collaboration and partnerships with other like-minded professions, groups and associations will be necessary. Efforts must be made to link the physical and life sciences with the social and behavioural disciplines. In the future, this interface is going to be very critical.

- While the profile of Home Economics as a profession has declined over the past three decades, the actual sub-specialties (dietetics, family science, textiles, etc) within it (and which it has nurtured) have grown and become specialty areas of their own. This growth in specialization is due in large measure to the huge explosion of information over the past two decades, the changing cultural and social context for families, and changes in the family and work roles of women. The challenge for the profession is to find a niche area in which to re-establish its role and contribution.
- While many of the inherent strengths of the profession are still intact, it would appear that the title of home economist as a professional title has probably outlived its usefulness in terms of clearly communicating what it is about, and what it can contribute. As an illustration, Cornell University in Ithaca, New York, which has a long history as a pioneer in the Home Economics field, reframed and renamed its program to the College of Human Ecology in 1969. It believes that human ecology – seeing individuals, families and communities as an interactive system with their social, work and learning environments - more accurately describes the profession, and its potential contribution to the many family and social challenges of our modern society.

2. Literature Search – Document Review

The Home Economics Labour Market Study included an extensive literature search. The search focused on looking for information on the larger trends and environmental factors that have impacted the Home Economics profession over time. It also tried to discover what issues Home Economists in other provinces are experiencing, and how they are addressing these issues. The search process included several activities:

- obtaining relevant reports and documents from members of the Advisory Committee;
- completing an extensive data base search;
- completing a manual review of several issues of the Canadian Home Economics Journal and Journal of Family and Consumer Sciences;
- exploring various Internet sites including government websites, university websites and professional association websites; and
- requesting information or relevant documentation from the CHEA, and several provincial Home Economic Associations, including; Alberta, Manitoba, New Brunswick, and B.C. Contact was also made with Australia.

Overall, apart from federal and provincial government labour market web sites, very little information was found regarding the issue of employment and employability. There was some good information found on the government (both federal and provincial), websites and university websites regarding general labour market trends. This included information on issues such as education/training needs, skill development, average earning capacity, labour force statistics, key areas of employment, distribution by age, and the national outlook for new graduates. However, there was very little information found in journals and unpublished documents on any of the larger/broader underlying issues that may be influencing and impacting on employability within the profession, and how other jurisdictions may be dealing with these issues. (A listing of the sources referenced in the following summary is attached in Appendix C).

CHANGING TRENDS IN HOME ECONOMICS

Home Economics made its debut as an academic discipline after the Lake Placid conferences between 1899 and 1909. During the late 19th and early to mid 20th century, it provided many women with one of the few opportunities to attain a

higher education. Through a home economics university program, women had the opportunity to study such areas as: textiles and clothing; housing and interior design; home management and consumer studies; foods and nutrition; and child development and family relations (Richards, 2000). Not only did studying Home Economics allow women to develop specific skills in these household management areas, it also gave them the opportunity to receive a liberal education in areas such as botany, mathematics, and economics (Collins, 1994 & Berry, 2000).

Up until the 1950s and early 1960s, many colleges and universities were unable to keep up with the demand for home economists. During the 1970's and 1980's however, societal values began to change. With the increase of women in the labour force, and the expansionary phase of post-secondary education in the 1970s, society began to place less value on home and family, and more value on work outside of the home. The study of home economics prepared students for household management that could be applied to both the labour force and to women's roles in the home. However, the removal of care work from the formal economy, the shift away from generalization to specialization, and the changing role of women in society resulted in a decline in employment opportunities for home economists (Berry, 2000, Welsh, 1997).

Many university programs and professional associations were unprepared for these changing societal trends and over time, experienced a decline in student numbers (Collins, 1994). At a Midwestern university in the United States, a study was conducted over a 10-year period with students entering the home economics program. Through this study it was noted that enrollment in home economics climbed quickly in the first three academic years (1983-85) and then dropped off over the next seven years (1986-93) (Smith, 1995). This finding is congruent with a study done by Harper and Davis (1986) that also documented a decline in undergraduate home economics programs beginning in the 1970's.

With the explosion of new research and knowledge, each individual component of home economics has evolved and become specialized. This shift towards specialization appears to have eroded the traditional base of Home Economics as a profession, and has resulted in the reorganization of Home Economics departments and programs at many universities (Davis, 1993).

“Individual knowledge bases and specialties within home economics continue to strengthen their own identities, sometimes viewing the integrative approach of home economics as irrelevant or subordinate to specialized interests.” (Davis, 1993 pg. 27)

Many Canadian universities have dropped the title of Home Economics, and have reorganized and reshaped their curriculum to fit the needs of current students and employers (Collins, 1994). Most Canadian university programs are now specializing in a variety of areas including human nutrition, food science, family studies and consumer studies. (See appendix D for a description of program titles and curriculum profiles of a random sampling of Canadian universities and colleges).

With this increase in specialization, and expansion of the traditional Home Economics program base, students are finding it difficult to recognize the home economics field. According to Berry (2000), these title and structural changes have left prospective students, parents and guidance counselors with a sense of insecurity in term of the where the profession is at, and where it seems to be going.

With respect to the program in secondary schools, home economics teachers at the junior and senior high level are faced with the challenge of balancing past roles and meeting the evolving needs of junior and high school students. Historically, home economics within schools taught basic living skills such as cooking, sewing, meal planning, etc. With the change in family culture and the strong focus on university preparation however, it is becoming increasingly difficult to continuing to offer Home Economics in this traditional manner (Tenpenny Erwin, Moran & McInnis, 1996).

In order to meet the changing needs of students, home economics teachers are being urged, often by guidance counselors, to focus on teaching the traditional subjects from a global perspective to help increase the personal and social relevance of the programs (Stephen, 1994). They are also being urged to update their curriculum in such a way that it attracts students and prepares them for work life and daily living.

With the increased requirements of the high school diploma and emphasis on university entrance, programs such as math, science and technology are diminishing the importance of courses like home economics/family studies

(Peterat & Khamasi, 1996). In many ways, students don't have a lot of time or space for complementary courses. This leaves home economics competing with other subject areas such as entrepreneurship, global studies, health and sexuality, technology, and co-operative education (Peterat & Khamasi, 1996). In order to stay in the loop, home economics teachers need to modernize their curriculum and make it more relevant to today's students.

While many high school guidance counselors still tend to have the traditional view of home economics, this is beginning to change somewhat. Several guidance counselors stated that the home economics curriculum should be updated, and focus on preparing students to develop critical thinking skills, self-evaluation, and goal setting, all of which can impact on their personal and career goals. They feel the content should be focused on such things as family relationships, interpersonal conflict management, decision-making, child development and parenting (Tenpenny Erwin, et al, 1996).

The general public also has a limited understanding of 'Home Economics'. Most people automatically think of cooking, sewing, planning meals and household cleanliness (Welsh, 1997). This stereotype has been very hard to overcome, and many Home Economists are tired of explaining their profession or defending it. This persistent negative stereotype has resulted in a ongoing debate within the Home Economics community. Those Home Economists who are aware of the profession's history and philosophical base may be more likely to perceive the integrity of all areas of home economics and to support the traditional name, whereas graduates of the newer programs, or those who have become more specialized, feel it is an outdated name that does not depict what they do as professionals (Davis, 1993).

Some professionals cited in the Davis (1993) paper listed reasons for wanting to change the name: 'It is out of date and anachronistic.' - 'It is no longer what we do.' 'Business and academic communities do not respect it.' 'Foundations and granting agencies give it low priority.' Others listed reasons for wanting to keep the name: 'New, unfamiliar names must often be defined in terms of home economics, so nothing is gained.' 'The content image rather than the name should be changed.' 'It has gained the most widespread recognition.' Many jurisdictions have been involved in this discussion for some time, and will likely continue to do so in the foreseeable future.

The findings of the literature search clearly outline many of the trends and changes that have impacted on the Home Economics profession over the past three decades. It would appear that the changes in societal and cultural values, the changing role of women in society, the shift away from generalization to specialization, the changing focus of university and school programs, and the persistence of the negative stigma attached to the title 'Home Economics' have

had an accumulative effect on eroding the profile and position of Home Economics as a profession.

This reality, in turn, has resulted in a subsequent decline in employment opportunities, and has brought the profession to a point where it is searching to re-establish its identity and future. In order to take its place once again in the service provider community, and compete in today's labour market, traditional home economics needs to be reworked and re-positioned to meet the changing service needs and values of consumers and employers.

3. Labour Market Conditions & Trends

The following information is summarized from data taken from the Job Futures 2000 website of Human Resources Development Canada. This website contains labour market information regarding issues and trends of a wide range of professions and occupations across Canada. The information provided here was gathered from an extensive follow up survey with approximately 1000 graduates from two separate occupational sectors. The first group is the Food and Household Science Sector; this group included students who would have graduated from a generalist home economic program. The second group profiled are the Dietitians and Nutritionists.

National Overview

A. Food & Household Science Sector

The following information and analysis was developed out of employment related data collected from students who have graduated with an undergraduate degree in the following areas: nutrition, food science, household science, and consumer and family studies (these areas of study are part of the home economics curriculum in most university undergraduate programs in Canada). The survey was conducted in 1997, and the target population were student who graduated in

1995 from Canadian universities; hence, most students had been out in the labour market for two years prior to the survey.

Profile of Recent Graduates:

Home Economists:

The labour market survey of the 1995 graduates, revealed the following trends:

Employment:

- Graduates from this sector (food & household science, nutrition, consumer & family studies) often find work in the same occupations as community college graduates in cooking, institutional management and service industry technologies, as well as with university graduates from other areas such as health and biology.
- Graduates have usually found work as dietitians, in restaurants, and as food managers. They work in hospitals, long term care facilities, prisons, the bakery food industry, and in social services agencies.
- Two years after graduation, 87% of these graduates were in the labour force; however, only 64% of graduates were working full-time; this ratio was lower than the average of 74% for all other Bachelor degree graduates; and 14% of the graduates were unemployed, compared to 10% of all graduates at this level. This was the second highest unemployment rate for all graduates at the Bachelor's level in life science and primary technologies.

Earnings:

- After two years in the labour force, these graduates earned on average 15% less than all other university graduates at the Bachelor's level. They were among the lowest paid of all graduates at this level in life sciences

and applied technologies. They earned 27% less than those with a similar Master's degree. After five years they earned 17% below the average for all graduates at the Bachelor's level.

Post Secondary Enrollment:

- In 1997, 1,010 students received undergraduate degrees in food and household sciences. This reflects an increase of 7% from 1987 to 1997, compared to an increase of 20% for all graduates at this level. All of the increase in the number of food and household science graduates occurred over the 1987-1992 period. Since 1992, the number of these graduates has decreased by 10%.

National Outlook to 2004

On a national basis, in the occupations in which these graduates generally look for work, the outlook is fair to good.

Level of Career Satisfaction:

As part of the survey of graduates from this sector (Food and Household Science), graduates were asked to respond to a number of questions designed to measure their level of satisfaction with their chosen field of study and employment experience. The following summarizes their response:

Table # 2

How Many Said Yes?	This Field of Study (%)	All fields of study at this level (%)
Would you make the same educational choice again?	46.0%	71.0%
Are you satisfied with your work?	89.0%	90.0%
Does your work directly match your training?	39.0%	51.0%
Do you feel overqualified for your work?	53.0%	33.0%

The results of this part of the survey would seem to indicate that many graduates in this field are ambivalent about their career choice, and/or frustrated with their employment experience. While respondents are comparable with other graduates regarding work satisfaction, those graduates in the field of study (Food & Household Sciences) have a lower level of satisfaction with regard to questions around career choice and underemployment. This level of feeling may be reflective of the availability and nature of employment opportunities for people with training in this field generally.

B. Dietitians and Nutritionists

This occupational group includes home economists working in dietetics or nutrition jobs/roles such as clinical and community dietitians, nutrition and dietetics researchers, and public health nutritionists.

The labour market survey of the 1995 graduates, revealed the following trends:

Nature of Role/Job:

Dietitians and nutritionists plan, conduct and supervise diet food service programs and provide nutrition counseling and consulting services.

Dietetic and nutrition graduates tend to work in government, hospitals and other health care institutions, industry and educational institutions.

They also conduct research to improve the nutritional value, taste, appearance and preparation of food, and may specialize in different areas such as clinical, community or research dietetics, public health, food service administration or industry.

Education, Training and Experience:

Dietitians and nutritionists require a bachelor's or master's degree in dietetics, nutrition or a closely related field, one to two years' supervised training, and registration with the national regulatory body.

Employment:

29,000 people were employed in 1998, an increase of 20.6% from 1988. After employment gains of 17.4% from 1988 to 1993, employment growth slowed to 2.7% from 1993 to 1998. In comparison, employment in all occupations grew 12.3% over the same ten years, and 8.2% over the last five.

23% work part-time, compared to an average of 19% for all occupations.

17% are self-employed, equal to the average for all occupations .

66% are women, well above the average of 45% for all occupations.

The unemployment rate averaged 1.9% from 1996 to 1998, compared to the national average of 6%. This rate is among the lowest for professional occupations and for other occupations in the health sector.

Earnings:

Earnings in this occupation are generally good, ranging from \$30-35,000 to \$60,000 depending on level of training (BA , MA or Phd) and years of experience.

National Outlook to 2004

Currently, the chances of finding work in these occupations is rated as "Good"; both employment opportunities and earnings are above average.

Over the next five years, this outlook is not expected to change, as the number of job openings is expected to be matched by the number of qualified job seekers.

As the Canadian population grows older, demand for health care services of all kinds will grow, increasing labour demand in this occupation. However, this increase in labour demand may be offset by government initiatives to restrict health care costs.

Almost all of the increase in employment requirements through 2004 for these occupations is expected to occur in the retail trade industry, in hospitals, or in the private sector; e.g. in senior citizens' homes.

Summary

The preceding labour market overview suggests that there is a variance between the employment prospects and experience between the generalist home economist and the dietitian/nutritionist. Generalists are likely to be in more competition for potential jobs with other graduates who have a similar training, background and skills. As well overall job opportunities, earnings, and job satisfaction for home economists tend to be lower. Whereas for dietitians and nutritionists the experience is different; job opportunities, earnings and job satisfaction tends to be higher. PEI's experience essential tracks the national trends in terms of the key labour market indicators.

4. Key Informant & Focus Group Findings

Key informants were consulted as a part of the data collection process. Some 70 key informants were involved in total; these included:

- 46 Home Economists who participated in six different focus groups;
- 8 Family and Nutritional Sciences students (focus group);
- 6 one-on-one interviews were held with persons from PEIHEA and UPEI faculty;
- 5 interviews with out-of-province key informants; including the Executive Director of the CHEA, and representatives from N.S., N.B., Ontario and Alberta HEA's.
- 5 key informant from the U.S. responded to an e-mail request outlining a series of questions related to the Study.

A complete list of focus group participants and key informants is included in Appendix E.

The purpose of the focus group and key informant interviews was to get the views and perspectives of the participants with respect to:

- (1) Their educational background and employment experience;
- (2) The current realities facing the profession from both an image and a practice context;
- (3) The future possibilities for improving and expanding employment options; and
- (4) What the profession must begin to do to position itself to better match the needs of society, and to benefit from future employment possibilities.

Each focus group interview was guided by a series of questions designed to engage the participants in the task. (See appendix F) The session lasted about two hours, and in addition to notes being taken, the discussion was audio-recorded. The notes from each session were then summarized into the following themes/issues.

History & Experience:

When focus group participants were invited to reflect back on their education, employment experience, and their views/perceptions of the strengths and challenges facing their profession, the following themes emerged:

Strengths & Assets:

Education – A Solid Base: People who worked within the field directly, or who continued to work on the “edge” of the field, generally felt that they used their Home Economics background and skills on a regular basis. People also felt that the program provided individuals with a very solid grounding in a wide spectrum of skills and knowledge that one can draw upon even when working in unrelated fields.

Transferable Skills: Others whose career path may have taken them in another direction entirely were able to transfer the “softer” skills; skills such as communication, managing interpersonal relationships, developing and making presentations, project leadership and management. Home economists and/or dietitians whose careers have moved into non-traditional roles have tended to do well with this strong education and practice background.

“I think the most useful part of my Home Economics degree was the broad base that we covered ... when you get out into the field you have a broad base of skills – budgeting, communication, education, management, leadership ... there are a lot of people like myself who are off doing other jobs because it teaches you a lot of different things ...”

(Participant – Dietetic Association Focus Group)

- **Family & Community Focus:** While our modern context is different, many of the family and social issues that confront us today are familiar; i.e. issues such as family and child poverty, domestic violence, balancing work and family life, timely access to health care services, helping people deal with life transitions, and the needs of the elderly. Fostering the well-being of individuals, families and communities has always been the central focus of the profession. This focus can serve as an “anchor point” in helping to re-focus and re-position the profession.
- **Holistic Approach:** The profession has always embraced a “holistic” and multi-disciplinary approach to seeking solutions to many personal and

social issues. The profession continues to build on this approach in terms of its diverse study curriculum, and is able to complement this with a solid balance of applied training and experience.

Issues & Challenges:

The following summary represents the larger and more dominant themes/issues that emerged from focus group discussions and key informant interviews. Those issues are sequenced in a way that gives some weight to the issues; those issues that were identified the most frequently, and/or were issues that participants felt most strongly about are described first. Participants noted a broad range of issues and challenges that have faced, and are facing the profession.

Role Delineation & Role Diffusion: Individual Home Economists often struggle over what to “call themselves”, or to know how to present their skills and competencies to prospective employers. Given that there are virtually no Home Economics positions available, individuals often do not identify themselves as a Home Economists when pursuing other types of positions. A number of home economists also spoke about always having to “explain to others what you do” with some exasperation – some people have simply stopped giving the explanation.

“... depending on what you did a lot of the skills were relevant but the perception out there was not positive and it was always something I felt I had to justify ... I think there was, and still is, the cooking and sewing mentality amongst the public – its female – you don’t get the same kind of respect or financial rewards from it – there is a whole culture there and after a while you just get tired of it all, so why do you want to continue to fight it” (Participant – Public Sector – non –traditional)

Changing Perceptions of Women’s Role: Over the past three decades, many more career opportunities became available for women. Today almost 85% of women have a career outside the home, and there is often less time/energy available to develop and/or teach the knowledge and skills needed to manage a home. The perception has seemed to change over the last several decades with the feminist movement and the move away from more traditional female roles.

Cultural-Social Change: The Home Economics profession has been impacted by the value shift that has taken place within our whole society and culture. Our cultural values around work and employment generally dictates where the professions develop. At one time many of these strong values were centred around the home and family. Home Economics is a profession that developed around the focus of effective home management.

“I think what has happened to this profession is parallel to the change in the value system of our whole society and culture ... what we value in culture is where the professions develop to where they are ... this one happens to have been related to the home and cooking and sewing and home management ... now the values have switched to outside of the home... what is interesting though is that if you look at what is happening today you see there is a degree of interest to going back to some of that but I don't think it will all be in the same form ... I think that values that have been lost perhaps are troublesome to some people now but I don't think this profession will re-emerge in the same way.” (Participant Public Sector – Non –Traditional)

Professional Profile & Visibility: For some focus group participants, it appears that the Home Economics profession has gone “off the radar screen”. Employers seemed to say ‘okay, we don't think this is necessary, useful, or whatever’ either because they changed the focus of their departments and school curriculums, or for financial reasons job positions were cut back. In some schools it was a budgetary issue because Home Economics was one of the more expensive programs to run – the need for sewing machines, lots of space, food for cooking, kitchen facilities, etc.

Disconnect between Social Needs & Public Response: The research and the literature with regard to population health clearly paints a picture of increasing individual and family vulnerability – particularly for many of today’s young families. There is now a generation of young families who grew up without a lot of exposure to those in the profession, and therefore have no idea what services and supports could be available to them.

Many people believe there is a disconnect between the knowledge base and awareness levels of senior decision-makers and the “grassroots”; policy and program decisions are being made by people who don’t really understand what is needed at the grassroots. Over the years, the profession has not had a voice at the policy and planning levels to ensure its profile and influence.

“If you look at the people that we think need our help, they aren’t out there crying for us”. (Participant - Home Economics Association Group)

Specialization: Home Economics as a profession has become highly specialized. As these specializations have emerged, graduates may not always have the same generic knowledge and skill base. This can cause confusion in the minds of potential employers; if you seek out and hire a generalist home economist, what sort of knowledge and skill base are you getting? While many people felt that an undergraduate degree in home economic (or a FNS graduate) provides the individual with a better chance of getting a job than an Arts degree, they believe in today’s world specialization is here to stay.

“Its just a sign of the times – you need to go on and specialize – you need more than the general degree”. (Participant – FNS Student Focus Group)

- **Unstable and Underpaid Employment:** As public sector employment options began to dry up, individual Home Economists began to branch out into contract work. For some this seemed to work out well, particularly if one were taking time to raise a family. However, employment contracts could be sporadic, and this could be difficult in terms of not having a regular pay cheque, or access to benefits.

In addition, many people believe that the traditional image – cooking, sewing, homemakers skills, women’s work – has resulted in a low value being placed on the role and skills of Home Economists. Sometimes employers have taken advantage of this situation; e.g; in PEI there doesn’t seem to be a big difference in the salary level of an Home Economist and a dietitian. Given a choice, an employer would probably hire the dietitian, and have an employee with additional skills at a similar salary.

- **Employment/Career Options – Externally Driven:** People’s career paths in home economics were often driven by “external forces”; government program managers and policy makers generally made decisions about the number of employment opportunities, the role and nature of the work required, and other types of decisions without any dialogue or discussion with the profession. The Development Plan was identified as being a notable fiscal stimulus behind much of the public sector employment growth in the 1970’s and 1980’s. In many instances, home economists felt their careers were often impacted by events and decisions beyond their sphere of influence and control.
- **Public Perception/Image:** While the program content in terms of knowledge and skill provides a solid base from which to pursue a career, the image and perception of who a home economist is, and what a home economist does, continues to be strongly attached to a ‘decades old’ stereotype. A significant number of people interviewed during the focus

groups believed that the “decades old” image of “cooking and sewing” is strongly entrenched in the minds of both the public and employers. Some people indicated that they have felt and/or lived with the impact of this image for as long as they can remember.

“ I don’t know when it started but I could see it happening when I graduated in 1969”. (Participant – Public Sector Focus Group)

Many people felt frustrated and uncomfortable with this narrow and limiting view, and felt that they often found themselves continually “explaining what they did”, or having to justify their role/work with employers. For many of those who have moved beyond the traditional job role, they tend to not see themselves as, nor refer to themselves as a home economist. Many do not see the title of “Home Economist” as having a high currency in today’s employment market.

“ Right now in your life if you were looking for a job would you stress your home economics background? ... I would acknowledge it, but I wouldn’t push it front and center” (Participant – Home Economics Teachers Focus Group)

For young people, they see the title both as a barrier and a limitation. It is a barrier in that many young people are not attracted to this field of study because of the image, and a limitation in that there appear to be very few job positions requiring a home economics degree. Recent graduates do not see themselves as home economists, and do not wish to be called, or referred to, as a home economist. They clearly see themselves as Family and Nutritional Sciences graduates. For the younger person, the old-fashioned, “cooking and sewing”, a female tied to the home is “not cool”.

This stereotype is strongly entrenched, and is being seen by many as not communicating the desired professional image.

“ when I think of a Home Economist I picture an older lady with a bun in her hair baking a cake .. when someone says ‘oh, you’re a Home Economist’, they automatically think a female who cooks and sews ... I think it is associated with the way females used to be treated – I think that we have come so much farther and we have to drop that old view”. (Participant – Student Focus Group)

Limited Promotional Effort/Skill: Some home economists described their profession as caring and hard working, but not accustomed or skilled at promoting itself. As a group, the profession is sometimes reluctant to stand up and be counted; the profession is not good at promoting itself. The profession has historically had to defend and/or justify its purpose and role. For home economists this has been a trying experience over the years. Over the past three decades years the profession has taken a ‘beating’, and hasn’t been able to come back from it. The fact that it is a relatively small professional group in terms of number is a factor as well.

“The profession needs to sell itself ... if you asked an employer if they had a position for a home economist ... you will be asked – what does a home economist do? Why do I need a home economist? ...the profession is very meek ... there is a lack of promotion.” (Participant – Dietetics Focus Group)

Gender Imbalance: The profession has historically been almost exclusively female dominated. Those few males that have ventured into the program have been pursuing nutrition/dietetics. Males are very hesitant to enter the home economics program, not because of the course content but because of the image – cooking and sewing. Most men, like many women, would have difficulty being referred to as a home economist

in terms of their career/profession. Some groups felt that the new program name – Family and Nutritional Sciences - would make it easier for male students to choose the program.

“Most males seem to get into the home economics program to become dietitians.... I was very hesitant to enter the home economics program as a male ... if there had been any other way around it I probably would have taken it ... there are not a lot of men who would want to consider themselves a home economist...” (Male Participant – Dietetic Focus Group)

Home Economics – Too Broad A Focus: The traditional holistic nature of the Home Economics profession may be too broad a focus; perhaps it is better to narrow the scope, and promote one or two areas of knowledge and skill that will really resonate with the public and potential employers.

“In some ways our strongest point, which is our versatility, is our downfall; we can’t be all things to all people; we need to focus on one or two aspects and promote those”. (Participant – Non Traditional Public Sector)

Future Employment Possibilities:

When focus group participants were invited to identify areas in which they felt there were future employment possibilities for Home Economists and/or Family and Nutritional Sciences graduates, they were able to see a number of possibilities; these are described in the following summary. Note: some of the possibilities listed are obviously more suitable to either the Foods & Nutrition graduate or the Family Science graduate.

Expanded Nutrition Education & Counseling: Given the growing increase in terms of awareness/concern about eating healthily, there is an opportunity to broaden this out beyond the institutional/clinical levels to the

individual, family, community and organizational levels. There is so much information out there that people are getting overloaded, and increasingly unable to understand what may be best for them. There is a need for trained people who are able to give advice and guidance based on the best scientific research; someone who can help them learn how to critically evaluate options. (likely agencies to approach include Community Family Resource Centres - CHANCES, Four Neighbourhoods Community Centre, Pharmacies, health clinics, physicians, Fitness Centres, etc).

Natural Foods & Supplements: This is an extension of the previous point; increasingly the public is beginning to look to food supplements, vitamins, nutraceuticals, homeopathy, naturopathy, herbs, and other alternative therapies for their health and nutritional needs. This is a future growth area in terms of need, and presents a further employment opportunity for dietitians. (Alternative health practitioners, alternative health treatment therapy groups).

Life Skills & Family Supports: Focus group participants noted that the modern world “time crunch” is placing a lot of stress on today’s families. People are finding it increasingly difficult to cope with the many demands that are being placed on their time and energy resources. In addition, there are many young families who have not learned effective personal and life management skills. These are areas in which people with a Home Economics background could be very helpful at either the family or community level.

Family Poverty & Health: There is growing evidence that many low income families are having difficulty on a number of fronts; general financial management, food buying and food/meal preparation, preparing school lunches, parenting and child care issues. Many young parents have never learned/developed the range of skills necessary to plan for

and manage many household and parenting tasks. Helping young families become more proficient and confident in their home management and parenting roles is an area in which both FN and FS graduates could be employed. (Places to approach would include health regions, community/family service agencies, and school boards).

Family & Community Services: In addition to family poverty and health, there is a broader range of other social issues needed attention and intervention. These include such things as homelessness, family violence, the lack of support for family caregivers, obesity, eating disorders, healthy eating, active living, balancing work and family life, timely access to health care services, and helping people deal with life transitions. All of these unmet needs represent potential employment opportunities to explore. (agencies to approach include the Department of Health & Social Services, Family Service Agencies, other community organization)

Seniors Care & Home care: With an aging “baby boomer” population, there will be an increasing demand for food/nutrition education and support, and general wellness programs. (DHSS, seniors groups and associations)

Healthy Child Development: With the Department of Health & Social Services commitment to a Healthy Child Development Strategy over the next five years, it may be an opportune time for the Family Science aspect of the profession to explore the possibilities for practicums, internships/coops placement, and future employment possibilities. (DHSS, ECDA, Kindergartens, ECD Centres)

Food Safety: This is likely to be a huge area over the next decade. Consumers are becoming increasingly aware of food production and processing problems and fears. There is a real need for food safety,

education and monitoring at all levels including corporate production and processing, product development and retail sale, food handling and preparation at local church suppers, community lunches, and fast food restaurants. In addition, the whole area of food labeling is likely to soon become a huge growth area in terms of employment, given that Canadian law will eventually make food labeling mandatory. (Restaurant Association, Environmental and Community Health, PEI Food & Beverage Association, food processors – Polar Foods, consumers groups etc).

Food Science: The area of food science and product development is another potential growth area in terms of future employment options. Increasingly the food industry is going to be looking at “added value” issues and new product development. Given the province’s strong agriculture base, and the need for farming to become more diversified, this area needs to be further explored by the university. (PEI Food Technology Centre, and the PEI Food & Beverage Association).

Wellness Programs and Clinics: This area is increasingly becoming a concern for both private and public sectors companies and organizations. There will be opportunities for positions such as wellness coordinators, and program design/delivery functions within governments departments, and larger corporations and businesses. Graduates coming through the Family and Nutritional Science Program may be ideally suited to focus on the wellness of the employee, and address other family issues and concerns. (Places to approach include provincial government departments, health clinics, fitness centers, private sector companies, federal government depts. – DVA, HRDC, ACOA, etc)

The ‘personal chef’ market: This is new area, and is something which could be an opportunity for the entrepreneurial minded. In many instances, because of people’s busy schedules, cooking is becoming a lost art. There

is a market there for Home Economist/FNS graduate to be able to relate to the person, and give them some general healthy guidelines for meals and menu planning. (e.g.; At Your Place Catering)

Housing and Home Design: This is an understated issue and could be a focus of an enterprising and creative individual. A lot of poor decisions are often made around the whole shelter issue; many people need help in designing and furnishing living areas in a practical way. (Do It Centre, Southport Home Centre, Home Builders Association)

Re-positioning & Future Directions:

With respect to what the Association/profession should be doing to re-position itself to better address challenges, and take advantage of current and emerging employment opportunities, focus group participants offered a number of suggestions:

Interest Based Associations vs Professional Based Associations:

Because the employment market has trended toward specialization over the last 10-15 years, there may be a need to explore a different type of association or binding mechanism around which individuals would come together in the future. Rather than a profession or a common job title, people may come together around a common focus and/or interest; e.g; program evaluation, community based programs like school breakfast/lunch, exploring models of self-employment, and so on.

Entrepreneurial Model/Approach: There are definitely individual, family and community needs out there that the profession could respond to, but the approach needs to be different - a more entrepreneurial process. Rather than wait for some institution or agency to decide that there is a need, individual Home Economists and new graduates need to promote their profession, and the knowledge/skills they are able to offer. There is a

need to promote the profession and the skill sets. Approach employers and indicate how they can benefit from what you/the profession have to offer; i.e; more business, healthier employees, reduced employee sickness, more balance between work/home life, etc.

Technology: Both private and public sector institutions are being driven by new developments and advances in communication and information processing technologies. This new technology has led us into the knowledge economy, and is forcing service systems into becoming more integrated, collaborative, flexible, and creative. How can the Association work with this trend? Are there ways to use what technology has to offer to increase visibility, profile and influence?

Summary:

While participants spoke from their individual experiences and perceptions, there seemed to be a fairly strong consensus about what were the prominent issues facing the profession. In addition, a number of the key themes were consistent with the issues/findings identified by some of the background information gathered by the HEA History Committee, and the literature/document review. Generally speaking, many participants spoke positively about their educational training and experience – that Home Economics has provided them with a strong generalist base which has allowed individuals to develop many diverse career paths.

At the same time, many people noted the strong move toward specialization in the past two decades, and the impact this has had in lessening the profile and influence of the Home Economics role and function. In addition, people's perceptions of the limitations of the current employment market, and the constraints of the professional title came through consistently.

While there were a number of people who feel strongly about the title of Home Economist, and believe there could still be way to bring employers and the general public to a better understanding and appreciation of the role, many others have “turned the page”. Many no longer refer to themselves as a home Economist, and while they value the start their home economics education gave them as they began their careers, they do not see the title as relevant to their employment today.

5. Summary – Employer Interviews

The last key research area included a series of interviews with some thirty five potential employers: 10 were potential employers from the community Non-Governmental Organization sector, 13 were from the government agencies and departments, and 11 were from private sector companies and groups. (See Appendix H for list of people interviewed, and a copy of the interview guide). These agencies were selected based on the input from the focus groups.

Key informants from each agency/business were approached and interviewed to explore what sort of positions they tend to hire people for, and what sort of knowledge, skills and experience they tend to look for. They were also asked whether or not they knew what home economists/FNS graduates have to offer, and whether or not they would be learning more about this; e.g. would they be interested in exploring a practicum placement. The following section outlines the key findings from each of these groups.

Community Agency Employers:

In almost all cases, the agencies contacted indicated that were not very aware of the Family & Nutritional Science Program and the capacity of its students and graduates. Given that they tend to operate with a small core staff with people having to “multi-task”, these agencies look for people who have a broad generalist type of background. If it were possible (availability of dollars) many look for someone with a university degree. When the potential range of knowledge/skills of home economists/FNS graduates were described, most agencies felt these would be many of the skills needed in their work.

Every agency indicated that they would be prepared to explore the possibility of a student practicum placement – they indicated that it would obviously depend on what the university/student expected and what would be possible in terms of their needs and resources. In all cases, the above agencies operate with a small staff complement, and described their funding capacity to hire on new/additional people as limited. Often any additional staff that may be hired would depend on additional project funding from some other source.

Public Sector Employers:

Generally speaking, while many government departments and agencies were interested in hearing about what the profession has to offer, they acknowledged that the government has not been specifically seeking out and/or hiring home economists for a decade or more. Departments of Agriculture and Education were two departments that recruited Home Economists at one time, but this is not the case in recent years.

“ I have been in staffing for the last several years and I can honestly say that I have not seen a public sector ad go out that required a Home Economics degree.” (Staffing – Public Service Commission).

“I can’t remember the last time we certified a Home Economics Teacher ”. (Dept of Education – Certification Officer).

The Department of Health & Social Services continues to employ home economists who are certified Dietitians for their clinical positions in the acute care and long term care institutions, but have not hired a generalist home economist in recent years. However, there are developments which may be worth exploring in terms of a future role for the profession, and future employment possibilities.

The Department is beginning to move ahead with a major Health Strategy for the province. At least two of the stated priorities include areas which could be potential opportunities for home economists, and the Family Science graduates. Health promotion and the development and implementation of a wellness strategy – a strategy designed to encourage the public generally to take more responsibility for their own health and well-being. In addition, the province is implementing a Healthy Child Development Strategy – there will be a strong focus on early interventions supports for families and children,

The Department of Development & Technology – (PEI Business Development inc.) felt that the area of food science – safety, quality control, value added, and food production- could be growth area. One staff person believed that there were at least 8 food-processing companies who were now struggling with these challenges, but had limited capacity on the food science side. This person felt that this could be an opportunity, but it would require the program to develop the food science part of the curriculum.

With the exception of the above – most of the other government departments contacted were not aware of the knowledge base and skills of new Family & Nutritional Science graduates, and hence were not in any position to comment on or judge future employability prospects. One key informant did add that the public sector is moving toward the issue of competencies; for many positions there is an

expectation for a undergraduate or post graduate degree, but departments and agencies are more and more interested in competencies. When asked, most key informants were open to learning more about the Family and Nutritional Sciences Program, and exploring the possibility of student practicum options.

Private Sector Employers:

At the moment, there are some huge needs being experienced by the Food Industry, especially in the food science area; issues such as food quality, valued added innovations, and food production are among some of the more pressing ones. The Family & Nutritional Science Program does not have this emphasis, as most students in the Food and Nutrition major are interested in teaching and/or dietetics; hence, there is no critical mass of students who have an interest in the food science area.

Many of the food companies need people who have training in food science. Businesses are increasingly dealing with food quality/control issues, value added needs, and production challenges. Currently they are having to either hire out, scramble to get current staff trained, or do without. With the province beginning to roll out a Food Strategy, which is intended, to grow/improve the province's Agri-food Industry, this will be a growing area of opportunity.

The PEI Food Technology Centre has similar needs; they tend to hire the more scientific/technical-oriented student. They have difficulty hiring and must recruit off Island for the most part. This can be expensive and time-consuming; they would like UPEI to offer a Food Science Program.

Large grocery chains and pharmacies are beginning to make the link with the growing public interest in wellness and health issues. As a means of tying into this trend, and as a way of "getting a competitive edge", both pharmacy and grocery chains are beginning to seek out trained dietitians to provide nutritional

counseling and advice to customers. Pharmacies in particular see this as a growth area for them, and with the ongoing expansion of these stores within the provinces (it is anticipated that another 3-4 stores will open up on PEI within the next 5 years), this could present opportunities for enterprising nutritionists.

There has been some growth in the self-employment and private sector areas. Over the past several years, there have been a number dietitians who have created their own consulting business, and have been successful at promoting their knowledge/skills to a wide variety of community based programs (Meals on Wheels), and private sector businesses (Sobey's Superstore, Pharmacies). As a general trend, labour market analysts and economists are predicting that the employment growth will be in the self-employment, contract work, and work with small business and organization. This will mean that students and workers will need some skills in entrepreneurship, business planning and management, and marketing.

Summary

For the most part, the interviews with employers revealed that many employers are unaware and uninformed about the knowledge base and skill level of the home economist/Family and nutritional Science graduate. Some employers are often looking for a specific knowledge base when they hire, but many are looking for competencies/skills first and education second. Community agencies are quick to point out that often do not have large staff complements, and would only be able to hire additional staff through project funding. Government departments/agencies and larger private sector employers would have less problem with dollars if the need was evident. Almost everyone indicated that they would be open to exploring the possibility of practicum placements, providing there was an obvious mutual need that could be met.

6. Performance Skills Mapping

As part of the project to analyze the Home Economists profession, a map of outcome based skills was developed. The objective is to graphically show the skill sets available from home economists and to plot the skills that will be necessary in the future for the changing role of the profession. It was felt that this skills map would play a foundational role in future development in that it would define the skills in very specific terms.

Performance Skills Mapping

Performance Skills Mapping is a tool used in the performance-based analysis process. It is a methodology for analyzing an occupational field in terms of its relevant areas of competency and skills. The analysis process results in a two-dimensional spreadsheet that visually organizes the occupational field into areas of competency and their corresponding skills. This process is based in an “outcomes” or “performance” based style of adult education that focuses on the skills needed to be competent in a job or activity. It presumes that the successful performance of a skill is a combination of knowledge, experience and attitude. The test of whether these are all skills, stated in performance terms, is by using a qualifying phrase, which is: “The person must be able to....” before each skill statement.

Methodology

The exercise was completed using the Performance Skills Mapping technology. The original plan was to have twelve people working in the field come together, for a day, to define the skills. Because of time commitments this was not possible. The process was completed by using skill related documentation including entry level and continuing education curriculum, program skill sets, skill charts for sectors of the profession and personal interviews. It also gathers information on skills needed for emerging trends relevant to the profession. (See appendix H for a complete list of the individual home economists who were consulted, and a list of the additional reference materials consulted).

The exercise plotted a number of categories. They included “soft” skills, such as creative thinking, that are relevant to a number of skills areas but are essential to the home economics profession. “Hard” skills, such as dietetic counseling, are specific to the profession. New skills, such as entrepreneurship, that will be necessary for Home Economists to take advantage of future opportunities.

For the purpose of this exercise the statement of skills alone are of value in that they can be clustered to form skill sets or tasks. These skill sets may relate to a specific area of work, or can be used to show the skills available to move into new areas of the work force. In terms of other uses, the Performance Skills Map can also be used by FNS faculty members to review and adjust curriculum offerings; individual students or graduates may use it as a self-development and/or continuing education guide. It can also be used by the Home Economics Association as a human resource development tool for members of the profession. (A copy of the performance skills chart is included on the following pages).

The Importance of Soft Skills in the Current Canadian Labour Market

While it is obvious from an employment potential perspective that the Home Economics profession is struggling, there is growing evidence that the broad knowledge and skill base of Home Economists and Family & Nutritional Science graduates may be in greater demand. The knowledge economy is demanding that employees/workers are able to gather, process and use information differently/more creatively (critically evaluate), communicate and work effectively as team members, and be skilled in problem solving and project management. In short, employees in the knowledge economy must be resourceful, able to work independently, and able to add value to what they are doing.

Soft skills are distinctly different from hard skills. Hard skills are the technical abilities that are required to do a job or perform a task; these skills are often viewed as “content” skills, they are critical to any job task/function, and they are essentially acquired through training and education programs. Soft skills are generally process focused, and place emphasis on the “how” of getting things done. Soft skills may include things like:

1. Self-awareness; the ability to be aware of one’s emotions and behaviours and to manage them appropriately;
2. Analytical thinking; the ability to critically evaluate information, weight options, and make decisions;
3. Leadership skills; the capacity to organize a project, identify and delegate tasks;
4. Team Building skills; the capacity to evaluate and support other people’s strengths, give support, compromise one’s view/position;
5. Flexibility; the ability to adapt to changing circumstances and work environments;

Ability to communicate; to be able to listen effectively, give feedback, re-frame issues;

7. Creativity; confidence to explore and present new ideas or perspectives, ability to take calculated risks;
8. Problem Solving skills; the capacity to look for solutions rather than become intimidated with difficult circumstances; and
9. Change-readiness; the capacity to see change as opportunity, and to be able to adapt to, and integrate, new ideas, approaches and methodologies.

When discussing the issues of skills and competencies with UPEI Home Economics and Family and Nutritional Sciences graduates and students, they often described as one of the strengths of their study and practice experience in terms of “soft skills” development. This seems to be supported by the feedback from interviews with employers. In conducting these interviews, the research team specifically asked about their interest in students/employees who would have the following types of knowledge base and skills:

- knowledge in general nutrition and clinical nutrition;
- knowledge in family life skills, interpersonal relationships;
- knowledge in healthy child development;
- interviewing skills;
- critically thinking skills;
- communication skills;
- problem solving skills;
- project planning and management skills; and
- research skills

While several of those interviewed indicated they did not necessarily require specific knowledge of things like nutrition and/or family dynamics, almost everyone agreed that anyone with many of the other skills – the “soft skills” – would be an asset to the business or group. The profession needs to acknowledge the value of these skills in today’s market place, and find creative ways to promote these to prospective employers.

VI Summary of Key Themes

In terms of the spectrum of research findings, there is a lot of similarity of perception and consensus around the changes being experienced by the Home Economics profession, and the context in which many of the changes has occurred.

In examining some of the earlier historical context, the Research team had an opportunity to meet with the PEIHEA History Committee, and hear the perspective and views of its members. This Committee has chronicled the early pioneering work of the profession, and has identified a number of strengths which can serve as a basis to inform how the profession can begin to address its current challenges. While our modern context is different, many of the family and social issues that confront us today are familiar; many of these issues still demand society's attention and response, and the Home Economics profession can still play an important role.

The key findings from the literature search and document review clearly describe many of the issues and events which have lessened the profession's influence and profile. These include the trend toward specialization; the creation of new disciplines that were originally part of the home economics domain; the changing social and cultural changes values which impacted directly on the roles of women, and the definition of family, and the balance between work and family. Many of these factors seemed to result in a negative accumulative effect on the image and profile of home economics as a profession.

- General labour market data further reflects this picture. There appears to be fewer new job opportunities for the home economist who is a

generalist. In addition, there appears to be a “disconnect” between the growing needs of families and communities, the awareness/recognition of what skills and competencies that home economists have to contribute, and the employment opportunities that are available for people with these skills.

Key informant and focus group interviews further confirms much of the information revealed in the literature/document review. Many home economists speak highly of their education/training experience, but believe the profession that is not well “positioned” to effectively respond to many of today’s pressing family and social issues. While many acknowledge the inherent capacity of home economists to contribute, and can identify what they see as future possibilities, they see a profession that is not well connected with today’s labour market.

Employers who were approached to discuss their awareness of the profession, and to identify their staffing needs, were generally unaware of what Home Economists, or Family and Nutritional Sciences graduates from UPEI had to offer. However, they were open to receiving information, and most were open to exploring the concept of student practicums.

A strong and consistent theme which surfaced in all the research tasks, was the issue of the professional title and image – “Home Economics” and “Home Economist”. The overwhelming view was that, despite the history and inherent strengths of the profession, the title does not describe today’s practitioner, nor does convey a positive public image of today’s practitioner. In short, the title of Home Economist no longer resonates well with many practitioners working in the field, especially with many of the younger practitioners, recent graduates and students.

VII Strategic Directions & Actions

In attempting to outline some broad strategic directions, it is acknowledged that the current position and needs of the two sponsoring partners are different. The PEI Home Economics Association, together with its national and provincial counterparts, is in the early stages of a process of defining a new purpose and direction which will be able to capture the interests and commitment of potential members, and can be sustainable over the long term. On the other hand, the Family and Nutritional Sciences Department has already made some critical decisions about how it wishes to design and develop the future of its program. Its needs are to seek ways to strengthen and build on this new direction.

The following strategic directions are first stated in the form of a broad statement, then each one is accompanied by a series of recommended actions to achieve the goal. Some of these goals are things that can be addressed reasonably quickly and with limited resources; others are more long term, and will require additional resources to achieve.

A. The PEI Home Economics Association

Given the broader trends noted above, and the PEIHEA's interest in increasing its membership, increasing the employability of members, and its profile and influence on the community generally, the following strategic directions and actions are proposed.

Issue # 1 – Managing Change

The Association has been (and will continue to be) impacted by change: e.g. the focus and direction of CHEA , (fee change, the CHEA Summit), the focus and direction of the UPEI FNS Department, the perception/issues with regard to professional title, and changing consumer/employer needs and expectations.

Strategic Direction:

Begin to More Effectively Manage the Transition Issues: the Association needs to begin to more effectively manage the “change issues” in a way that allows its traditional strengths and capacity to adapt and respond to the new needs of families, consumers and employers, and labour market challenges.

Strategic Actions:

- (1) Mobilize/Energize the Profession:** Using this Report as a basis, the Association should conduct a series of meetings with a broad cross section of members and potential members. This exercise will provide background and context to the issues facing the profession generally, and begin to stimulate awareness and commitment regarding the need to re-establish a stronger community profile and presence. It will also provide an opportunity to invite a broader range of ideas and suggestions on future directions and priorities.
- (2) Establish a “Creating the Desired Future” Committee:** This

Committee should have broad membership including existing members, potential members, younger graduates, and students. The essential task of this Committee would be to assume a leadership role in addressing the “change issues”. Using this Report as a starting point, develop an action plan to implement a new direction for the Association.

- (3) **Address the Issue of Professional Title:** Make a decision to address the issue of title, and establish a structured process to allow/invite members of the profession to explore the option of a change of professional title/name. The outcome(s) of the Canadian Home Economics Association Summit which is to be held later this fall (2001) may help to assist/support this initiative.

Issue # 2 - Declining Membership Base

There is a need to build up the existing membership numbers to provide the Association with the necessary capacity to develop a long term direction and implement a plan of action.

Strategic Direction - Develop Steps to Strengthen and Expand the Membership Base of the Association.

Strategic Actions:

(1) Establish (or strengthen the role and mandate of an existing committee) a membership committee whose task is to develop and implement a strategy to recruit new members. This process would involve examining a range of issues with regard to membership; e.g. whether there could be various member categories, the benefits of being a member, how to add value to the experience of existing members, etc. The strategy should build on the new direction of the Association, and identify the type of expertise and experience it needs to get there.

(2) The Committee should target its recruitment energy in three areas:

- a) The recruitment of past members who may have let their membership lapse;
- b) The recruitment of members who could bring specific organizational knowledge and skills to the task of managing change and building capacity; and
- c) The recruitment of new graduates and students.

Issue # 3 - Profile and Visibility

The Association and the profession is not highly visible within the community generally, and with the employers community in particular.

Strategic Direction: Continue the Process of Reframing the Profile and Activities of the PEI Home Economics Association.

Strategic Actions:

- (1) Develop A Strong Theme/Message And Actively Promote It:** Drawing on the strengths of the profession, identify one or two key themes or messages (focus on the interests and needs of families and consumers) that can be easily presented and understood by the public, government leaders and agencies, and employers. Use these messages/themes as a basis to inform, and to convince others you have the knowledge and skills that are needed.
- (2) Focus On Changing Behaviour/Actions of the Association:** There is a need to demonstrate/show the community at large, and public/private sector employers what Home Economists and Family & Nutritional Science graduates can do, and how the profession contributes to, and fosters conditions which impact on the well-being of individuals, families and communities. The Association could more actively promote existing initiatives (Skills Development Project, work with School Breakfast Programs, Children's – Family Expo, letters to the editor, etc).
- (3) Focus On Issues Relevant To The PEI Community:** Continue to explore/act upon current issues that are important and relevant to individuals, families and communities (eg: child poverty, work/family balance, healthy/active living, etc). People tend to be more animated and inspired by issues that are meaningful and important to them.
- (4) Promote And Celebrate The Competencies And Skills Of The Profession:** actively support and promote Association members who are engaged in the community; look for creative ways to promote and celebrate the competencies that professional Home Economists, Family & Nutritional Science Graduates, Dietitians, and Nutritionists bring to their respective roles, and the contributions they are making to the community.
- (5) Develop A Media Strategy:** using the core message(s) identified above, develop and implement a media strategy which will help to increase the community's level of understanding and awareness of the issues and the

profession's capacity. Explore how to creatively use the media, and develop both the tools, and the outlets to distribute the message, eg. newspaper, radio or T.V. (See appendix H for an outline of a possible media strategy).

Issue # 4 – Developing Partnerships and Collaborations

The Association may be working too much in isolation; there is a need to begin to develop working relationships with associations and groups with similar views and interests.

Strategic Direction: Build on the diversity of the profession, and develop strategic alliances or collaborations with prospective partners.

Strategic Actions:

- 1) **Reach Out To Home Economics Teachers Association, Dietitians, and the FNS Department:** Invite these two groups to join the HE Association in addressing an issue of mutual concern. E.g. approaching Dept. of Education and School Boards with regard to changes in school curriculum, or the qualifications of teachers teaching home economics.
- 2) **Identify Other Likely Allies:** Identify other groups, associations and organizations which share some of the same population health concerns, and would be logical groups to with which to collaborate; e.g Healthy Eating Alliance, Active Living Alliance, Child Alliance, etc.
- 3) **Host A Discussion Forum:** Invite representatives/participants from some of these organizations and groups to explore how potential collaborations and partnerships might strengthen everyone's capacity to contribute to healthy family and community outcomes.
- 4) **Set A Goal:** Establish at least two strategic alliances with allied professional groups or associations (within the province) over the next year; this will help to increase awareness of the home economics profession among other groups, and will help to demonstrate the capacity of the profession.

Issue # 5 – Build Capacity and Resources

In order to move forward to strengthen and re-position the profession, resources (time, energy, dollars) will be required.

Strategic Direction: Establish an infrastructure and resource base to

support the vision, goals, and activities of the Association.

Strategic Actions:

- (1) Develop a plan to have an office base and an executive staff position in place within the next three years; develop a concept plan of what this might look like and how it could be implemented.
- (2) Explore this concept with the Association membership, and representatives from the Dietetics Association and the Home Economic Teachers Association to get their view of benefits and potential barriers. Seek views and consensus on the direction.
- (3) Conduct an asset mapping exercise within the Association and its potential membership base; this would involve documenting the experiences and skills that individual home economists could bring to the collective efforts of strengthening the Association.
- (4) Explore with those provinces (who may have taken this step) regarding how they approached the task, where funding came from, the setting up of the office, etc.
- (5) Identify potential funding sources (governments – through project funding streams, Foundations, others)

B. Department of Family & Nutritional Sciences

Issue # 1 – Student Enrollment and Retention

The capacity to increase the number and retain a quality level of student in the program (particularly Family Science) continues to be a concern.

Strategic Direction:

In collaboration with the Faculty of Science Administration and the UPEI Information and Alumni Office, establish a goal to attract and retain 15-20 students to the FNS Program each year.

Strategic Actions:

- (1) **Establish Target the Alumni of UPEI FNS:** Former/recent graduates should be some of the best sales people for the program. A first step would be to develop a database of all former FNS students, and break this list down into those who have direct contact with potential students, and those that might have some influence. Send regular updates on the program and ask for their support to solicit students for the program.
- (2) **Develop a UPEI FNS Multi-Media Promotion:** A multi-media promotional package could be developed to promote the FNS program. Once developed it could be on CD, on line through the UPEI website, or both. This would require resources and Holland College may be able to help. The College has recently started an Interactive Multimedia Program in co-operation with Sheridan College. Students take on multimedia projects as a group activity as part the program. The cost is minimal the FNS faculty would need to be prepared to provide time to develop content information for the project.

The projects are usually developed over a four-month period. They start in September and January. For more information contact Ann Greyborn – Learning Manager IMM Program, Holland College. (902) 566-9567 agreyborn@hollandc.pe.ca

- (3) **Develop FNS Students-in-School Projects:** Existing FNS students may be a good link with potential FNS students because of their age. Consideration should be given to developing small (in terms of time and resources) but interesting projects that could be delivered to high school students by FNS undergraduate students. This could be

coordinated through high school teachers. The potential subject areas for such and initiative would need to be discussed between faculty, FNS students and schools.

- (4) **Student/Group Tours:** Arrange opportunities to have potential students visit the FNS facilities on campus. A general invitation to all senior high schools could be sent out from the FNS Department annually. Any tours given should include access to both faculty and FNS students so that potential students can be exposed to all aspects of the program. Again, this could be coordinated with the high school home economic teachers.
- (5) **Solicit Family Studies Teacher Support:** In many instances, high school teachers who are involved with aspects of the school curriculum that complement the FNS program, can be a prime support group for recruitment. Consideration should be given to hosting an annual meeting with these teachers at the UPEI FNS Department; the agenda might include a small in-service, an update on the FNS program and a social time.
- (6) **Develop Professional Quality Promotional Materials:** Re-develop existing a high school specific brochure/materials, and target to high school teachers and guidance personnel. Again, Holland College graphic art students may be a resource.
- (7) **Ensure Program Flexibility/Diversity To The Degree Possible;** e.g. strengthen the community development focus, include some health promotion and wellness options. In addition, students should also be encouraged (or perhaps it should be mandatory) to take additional courses in management, business (marketing, business planning, and entrepreneurship).
- (8) **Continue Promote The Value Of The “Soft Skills:** Continue to promote other important skills such as; teamwork, communication, problem solving, leadership skills and management; (ensure that students know the importance employers place on these skills).

Issue # 2 – Strengthening the Family Science Major

The Family Science Major is currently underdeveloped.

Strategic Direction: To develop and promote the Family Science Major stream to ensure that it is an attractive option for students.

Strategic Actions:

(1) Develop the Family Science link with the Certified Canadian Family Educator (CCFE) program. Family Service Canada administers this program, and there is a PEI contact who would support efforts to help graduates obtain the CCFE certification.

(2) Continue to strengthen the FS curriculum: e.g training family education, human development, human sexuality, interpersonal relationships, values education, and program planning.

(3) Develop a formal student placement/practicum program for students; in collaboration with the University Cooperative Program Office, design it so students can gain practical experiences throughout their program. (use the Integrated Dietetic Internship Program as a model).

(4) Explore student interest in the aging/gerontology studies option by providing some course options to students.

(5) Explore the possibility of an articulation agreement between UPEI and Holland College to allow students who graduate with an Early Child Development or a Human Services diploma, to transfer over and pursue a bachelor's degree.

Issue # 3 – Identify Employment Options

The labour market has changed and there is a need to develop new strategies to open up employment opportunities for graduates.

Strategic Direction:

To expand the employment options for Family and Nutritional Science graduates.

Strategic Actions:

(1) Broaden The Base Of Student Exposure And Experience: By expanding practicum options in both Family Science and Food & Nutrition, continue to strategically place students in a wide range of work areas. This diversity of experience will help build exposure for the knowledge/skills base, and broaden future employment options for students.

For Family Science in particular, options and/or project initiatives should be developed to help students increase their visibility and profile; e.g. students could become involved in making presentations to family living classes in junior/senior high schools; they could be involved in helping to organize conferences/workshops for community agencies, developing resources for community agencies, working on projects/practicums with the Department of Health & Social Services, or doing research with the Centre for the Study of Health & Aging.

(2) Be Proactive With Prospective Employers: There is a need to “get the message out” to prospective employers; this can be done through a number of strategies: targeted promotional materials, expanding the diversity of student practicum placement, and developing “insider”

contacts and networks wherever possible.

(3) Develop The Link With The University Cooperative Education

Program: A new Cooperative Education Staff person has been recently hired, and she has already approached the FNS Department. There appears to be a good possibility that FNS students, particularly Family Science majors, will be able to participate; this option should be fully explored .

(4) Connect The Program, Faculty And Students With The Broad

Community; develop partnerships and/or alliances with agencies like the Food Technology Centre, Food & Processing Industry, the Restaurant Association, the Culinary Institute, the Health, Wellness and Fitness sector, and the Dept of Health & Social Services.

An example of how this might work: the Executive Director for the Food & Beverage Association has indicated that they could provide the Family & Nutritional Sciences Department with an opportunity to make a presentation to the Association's Employers Group (about 12 different employers, including businesses such as Polar Foods, Purity Dairy, and Cavendish Farms). This would provide a good opportunity to promote both the program and students to a group of employers, and perhaps open up future placement and employment prospects.

(5) See The Current Home Economics Newsletter Mailing List As A

Resource - Use a networking strategy to approach former home economists who are working in non-traditional public and/or private sector roles to host information/promotional sessions within their jurisdictions to promote students in terms of possible practicum and/or employment placements.

(6) Continue To Develop The Family Science's Profile With The

Department Of Health & Social Services: The Department of Health & Social Services is embarking on a broad health strategy which is placing a high emphasis on early childhood development, and health and wellness. Divisions such as Child & Family Services, Income Support, and Public Health Nursing are areas to approach. Identify some "friends" inside in the Health and Social Services system; these would be persons who are knowledgeable with the FNS program and its students, and would be willing to promote and advocate for practicum placements.

(7) Expose Students to Self Employment Options: Explore the option of having 3rd or 4th year students develop a business project/self-employment proposal as part of their entrepreneurial study and/or experience. This could be adapted after an existing student "Policy Project" that 4th year business students must complete.

Issue # 4 – Build On Existing Direction and Focus

There is a need to continue to strengthen and expand the profile and influence of Family & Nutritional Sciences Program within the University and the community generally.

Strategic Direction:

Continue to strengthen the profile and image of the Family & Nutritional Sciences Department within the University, High and Junior High Schools across the province, with employers, and the community generally.

Strategic Action(s):

- (1) **Develop Critical Partnerships with Other University Stakeholders:** In collaboration with the Faculty of Science, the Office of Recruitment and Retention, and the Information & Alumni Office, develop a FNS promotional plan. The series of strategic actions outlined with regard to issues # 1 and # 3 could be used as a basis for this plan.

- (2) **Create A Power Point Presentation For The Family & Nutritional Department** – this would be an a presentation which would highlight mission/vision of the Department, its history, the two program majors, core curriculum, its practicum and internship features, what graduates can go on to in terms of career and employment, and some of the unique ways in which the Department contributes to the community generally. This presentation could be used as an promotional tool in a wide variety of settings – with government, with businesses, and with community organizations and groups.

VIII Conclusion

The PEI Home Economics Association

The PEI Home Economics Association has seen its profile slowly diminish over the past two decades, both in terms of member interest and participation, and in terms of visible activity within the community generally. There is a sense that, unless the profession takes steps to reposition and promote itself, it will continue to decline in terms of active membership, and its contribution to the community.

The Association, together with its national and provincial counterparts, is in the early stages of a process of defining a new purpose and direction which will be able to capture the interests and commitment of potential members, and can be sustainable over the long term. Some of the essential questions around purpose, focus and title have been around for this past decade or more, and the searching process is likely to be continued into the foreseeable future. The Association is looking to this Study to provide content and structure to guide a renewal process.

The Department of Family and Nutritional Sciences

The Department of Family and Nutritional Sciences (previously the Home Economics Department) has already taken a number of steps in addressing its own questions of profile and relevancy. In 1997, in response to its concern over student enrollment, it moved to change the name of the Department to the Family & Nutritional Sciences, and provided students the option to major in either Family Science or Foods and Nutrition.

In many respects, the Family and Nutritional Sciences Department has

already made the critical decisions about how it wishes to design and develop the future of the program. While the transition is still new, and the initial results regarding enrollment are promising, the quality of the incoming student and student retention remain important issues. The Department hopes to build on its work to date, expand its efforts to further cultivate student interest, and build its profile within the broader employer community.

While each organization has its own individual challenges to address as they move forward, both partners see themselves working together to create the conditions to help current home economists, and future Family and Nutritional Science graduates, find relevant, satisfying and appropriately paid employment.