

feature

Diversity, awareness keys for Atwell

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word 'racism,' she says. "I just used the word 'discrimination'."

Lynn now uses the term after hearing about incidents of racism from some of the students she advises.

"I never want our international students to go away with a bad taste of Canada or Dalhousie."

Lynn is not a big fan of Dalhousie's proposed discriminatory harassment policy.

"I look at it as a necessary evil," she says.

She hopes the policy will encourage people who prejudice other cultures or groups to think before they speak.

"I have been sensitized just because I am from a different culture," Lynn explains. Her mother is from Scotland and her father from Egypt. Lynn spent time in both places, but grew up mostly in Egypt.

Lynn says she can relate to students who have experienced racism.

"I have been discriminated against, hurt, followed in stores because people think that I am going to take something, had nasty comments made to me."

"Actually," she says after a brief pause, "I like overt racism better than bigotry." Her explanation is that with overt racism, a person at least knows what he or she is up against, but with bigotry, people will sugar-coat their insults.

"And that's just worse than overt racism."

Although Lynn says it's unfortu-

nate that the discriminatory harassment policy will also effect those people who have no intention to offend, it is necessary.

"There has been at least one professor who has hurt a student very badly," she says, "because of a prejudice on his part about the culture of this student."

Lynn doesn't like the policy, but says there may be a need for it, at least for a few years.

Asked what she would do with an unlimited budget, Lynn takes some time before answering. She'd like to see scanners and enlargers in every library on campus, equipment to help students with a visual impairment or a learning disability use Novanet, the computer system used for locating books in the library, and to make all the doors on campus accessible.

"Sometimes even money is not the only solution," Lynn says and then adds with a grin, "But it sure helps."

If she had a million dollars, she'd also make residences and the so-called 'accessible' washrooms accessible to a severely mobility-impaired student.

"But the biggest thing is awareness," insists Lynn. "If we could just look at each individual as an equal."

In Lynn's opinion, Dalhousie will be in danger of losing its international students with the \$1,000 increase that the Board of Governors agreed all new foreign students should pay.

"I knew there was going to be an increase," she said, "but I was really surprised by the \$1,000."

Lynn concedes that international



International Students Advisor & Advisor to Students with Disabilities, Lynn Atwell.

DALPHOTO: MIKE DEVONPORT

students use more services and it may take more time to process their paper work, but argues, "I'm sure the international students don't cost the university that much."

To make things worse, the Budget Advisory Committee has recommended a further \$1,000 increase.

"I think it's wrong," Lynn says, "not just unfair."

"We will have less international students coming. We're losing out because we don't have the cultural

diversity here."

Lynn is getting more than a little impatient waiting to move her office into the SUB.

"Sometimes I wonder what the hell is going on."

Lynn says they're just waiting for some piece of paper to be signed and there is no sense in blaming anyone.

"I don't know what's holding it up and I don't know who is responsible. I just know that everyone working on it has good intentions."

What Lynn Atwell loves most about her work is working with students.

"I just love the students," Lynn continues, saying how they keep her on her toes and that no two years have been the same. Lynn's smile grows as she says changes may be slow but they're happening nonetheless. Finally, Lynn describes the satisfaction she gets after helping a student and the thanks, smile or hug she sometimes receives.

"That's worth the world."

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