Increasing government attention is being focused on meeting the needs of early school leavers who are unable to make a successful transition to postsecondary, pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship programs. We are interested in learning more about how Academic Upgrading. Funding can facilitate accessible and successful pathways for early school leavers - especially youth, Aboriginals, Ontario Works clients, and online learners. Please provide your thoughts regarding what works, what improvements/changes are needed at your college, and what supports are needed in those areas.

**YOUTH (ESPECIALLY AGED 16 TO 18 YEARS)**
- Faculty say they need a separate class for youth.
- A part-time school / part-time work program is being introduced in February.
- Have to have all supports in place: financial, health, cover any aspects that may prevent learning
- Need life skills – goal setting activities
- Teacher needs experience in dealing with these supports.
- GED prep is promoted to youth with Job Connect – building for C&CP (Mohawk’s College and Career Preparation program – includes Academic Upgrading and GED preparation.
- GED is inadequate for college, but is satisfactory for jobs.
- FIT system tracks students when they come in.
- Several ways of entering postsecondary (GED, Mature Student, C&CP, etc.) – none are aligned.

**ONLINE LEARNERS**
- Internet and computers are used in class.
- AlphaRoute is disliked by manager, students, and staff:
  - not used by students much
  - teacher determines what sites are appropriate for the learner
- Problems with distance education, online learning:
  - students need face-to-face learning
  - an online student needs a certain level of skill already
  - self-discipline may be an issue for online students

**ABORIGINAL LEARNERS**
- Few at Fennell campus
- Hamilton has a Native Indian Friendship Centre where Aboriginal students can go
- Numbers are 20-25% in Brantford, down from 40-45% previously
- Decrease due to similar program offered on nearby reserve
- Mohawk College offers Aboriginal postsecondary programs.
- No links in C&CP with Aboriginal postsecondary

**ONTARIO WORKS CLIENTS**
- Many OW in Future Directions program:
  - Five-week program
  - Four intakes per year; 15 students each
  - Run with LBS funding
  - Offers goal-setting
  - Usually move on to employment; sometimes C&CP
  - Targeted to low levels, so not many go into Academic Upgrading
- Jobs Now is a problem
  - Numbers are high; jobs are bad – low paying
  - Literacy screen is gone
  - Advent of Jobs Now led to reduction in OW participation in LBS/OBS
  - Shortest route to employment = no training
• OW numbers in Academic Upgrading can be increased by having better connections with OW workers.
• C&CP staff promote program with presentations to OW staff.

MARKETING ACADEMIC UPGRADING
• Marketed through
  o Job Connect liaison
  o Pamphlets are out
  o Advertised in Mohawk College calendar
  o Newspaper ads
  o Community agencies and networking
• 26-27 high schools in Hamilton – generally they don’t want students to go elsewhere
• Should “school to work” be promoted within high schools? – other options besides high school
• Some high school dropouts cannot connect schoolwork with their career goal.
• Should be connection between Job Connect, C&CP, schools, and work
• Outreach strategies
  o Little help from higher levels of college staff
  o C&CP staff must market program themselves – presentations to WSIB, OW, etc.
• Name changed from “Literacy & Basic Skills” to “College & Career Preparation”
  o “college” attracts people more than “literacy” which did not attract higher level students
• Marketing internally
  o C&CP teachers connect with college departments to determine what skills are needed
  o Presentations are made to Registrar’s Office
  o Letters about upgrading added with rejection letters for postsecondary applicants
  o Working with counseling department
  o C&CP web site is buried within the college’s web site, though it is being tailored to be more accessible.
  o Deaf Empowerment Program has web link on their pamphlet.
• Mainstream college marketing has no reach to Academic Upgrading students– emphasis is still on postsecondary
• Other college staff can speak about Academic Upgrading.
  o Job Connect trained to do so
  o Liaison is “iffy”
  o Contract training – yes
  o Apprenticeship – no (although chair may be knowledgeable)
  o Manager’s successor may have different slant on things.
  o College linkages are needed.

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS AND REFERRAL PROCESSES
• LSP is of limited value; there are no referrals after LBS 5 and OBS/ACE.
• OW links depend on C&CP effort.
• C&CP does outreach work, but OW does not come to C&CP.
• Service Canada – EI recipients can only be in school 10 hours per week; if client has a Return to Work Action Plan, s/he can go full-time.

INTERNAL COLLEGE LINKAGES
• Links within the college are informal.
• Mohawk College accepts all college Academic Upgrading learners except for programs linked to university.
• C&CP would like to pursue preferred admission status and transfer credit possibilities.
• There are referrals to Academic Upgrading from Registrar’s Office.
• In the college’s eyes, C&CP is pre-postsecondary; college sees ACCESS as an on-ramp to postsecondary
• C&CP staff made a program information grid showing program requirements for each college program and found that requirements are generally the same with slight variances.
PRE-APPRENTICESHIP AND APPRENTICESHIP LINKAGES
- Links with apprenticeship – C&CP staff should be delivering Academic Upgrading components of Pre-Apprenticeship Programs

EMPLOYER LINKAGES
- Limited
- Would like to have more, similar to upcoming “ACE for Youth” program (part-time school – part-time work)
- Job Connect - Academic Upgrading - employer connection for youth

ALTERNATE FORMS OF DELIVERY (online, web-based, software applications, learning technologies, distance delivery)
- Software and Internet available in classroom.
- No distance education
- Face-to-face learning is needed.
- Learning disabilities use adaptive technology (example, reading --machine) loaned from Special Needs office at college
- Advises to work with Special Needs office – run with postsecondary funds
- Do not rely on teacher – student should be trained and then able to use.

TRACKING, REPORTING, AND PERFORMANCE INDICATORS
- IMS is still “primitive”.
- Tracking of goal attainment is done well.
- Process-based performance indicators are needed.
- Did they go to work or get additional training/education?
- Exit and follow-up need to be more specific.
- Are they successful?
- Where is the job?
- Emphasis on outcomes is good.
- Goal-oriented; outcomes-based
- Follow-ups
- MTCU’s performance indicators should be designed with a variety of local contexts within which programs operate.
- “Prepared for Success” is tracked (success of Academic Upgrading graduates in postsecondary).
- Job Connect has tracking elements which could prove beneficial.
- Tracking is beneficial, but funding must be there to support it.
- Must have a computer system – useable database which reflects activity.
- Funding, dedicated staff members – provide this – resources & funds.
- Tracking should not be more work for classroom teachers.
- Depends on field consultant – staff complains about paperwork as it is.
- There are no formal internal program performance reviews.
- Banner student information system at Mohawk cannot handle LBS students.
- Coming and going students in Academic Upgrading programs should be in the college student information system.
- Would be easy for tracking
- Suggests introducing course numbers for Academic Upgrading Programs

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS
- n/a
LEARNER PROFILES

To what extent does your program serve youth, Aboriginals, and Ontario Works and online learners?

- C&CP currently for age 19 and over.
- “ACE for Youth” starts February 6th for 16-18 year-olds.
  - part-time work / part-time school program
  - created out of extended OBS dollars
  - working with Job Connect
- School-College-Work program is in Brantford.
- 20-25% of Brantford C&CP students are Aboriginal; numbers have lowered since a similar program was introduced on the nearby reserve.
- Jobs Now is a problem for Ontario Works students.
- C&CP does not offer distance education.
- Students below level 3 are redirected to St. Charles or GED.

STUDENT RECRUITMENT

How do they know about and gain access to your program? What data do you have about how students find out about Academic Upgrading?

- Data collection is done in intake process (“How did you find us?” is one of the questions asked); it’s also a requirement of Mohawk College.

What are the main reasons why students select an Academic Upgrading program?

- Academic Upgrading students choose Mohawk because it allows them to say, “I’m going to Mohawk”
- Offers students a connection to the rest of the college

LEARNER GOALS & CAREER COUNSELLING

In your experience, what are the goals of your learners? In other words, what do they expect the program to do for them? How are the goals of youth and Aboriginal learners different from other students?

- Some have unrealistic time expectation of program completion (thinking it will be a quick process).
- WSIB case managers often have unrealistic expectations of their clients.
- Some reasons why students are here are
  - to achieve their career goal
  - for a social life, or just to “be at a college”
  - to gain confidence that they can learn something
  - their parents want them here
  - want to help own kids with homework or role model for their kids
  - to stay out of jail
  - if they do not come to school, may get cut off from OW benefits

Do learners come to the program with program goals already set by someone else? By whom?

- Some goals are already set by WSIB or their parents

Describe the process and supports that help them clarify/confirm/establish goals. Why do they change goals?

- Goals are clarified by teachers.
- They discuss length of time to reach goal and what will be needed.
- This process begins at intake.
• Reasons for goal changes include
  o too much time required
  o they have found more information, researched the goal
  o curriculum is too hard
  o potential to go beyond initial goal
  o they figure they’ve lost already (at-risk students)

What are the factors that affect why they do not reach goals?
• Lack of clear goal
• Unrealistic goal
• Lack of proper work habits
• Fail to show up to school
• Lack of maturity; behaviour issues
• Learning style may not be compatible
• Short attention span; need activity
• Need social environment and life skills
• Financial reasons (employment, summer job – disappear over summer)
• Health reasons
• Family responsibility (illness, children)
• ADHD
• These learners may be helped by structuring the program to handle their immaturity (i.e. sit down, stay focused).
• Offer more technical support and more computers.
• More components besides upgrading but staffing, funding issues prevent this.
• Some students absorb knowledge in “small bytes” – they can handle a lot of information, just not all at once.
• Bounce them around among many activities.
• Be mindful of older learners.
• Offer a $25 stipend, but government may have issue with this

CURRICULUM, CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT AND DELIVERY DESIGN

How do student's learning and your teaching needs affect the way you design curriculum, deliver it, or use alternate learning strategies (i.e. technology? What specific adjustments are made for youth, older and Aboriginal learners?
• Some young students may not want to be in a mature environment.
• Many are “bit and byte” population (i.e. they grew up with computers).
• Youth want to work in a busy environment.
• Young learners are easily distracted.
• They need to get used to having to stay focused; postsecondary students must sit and listen for 1.5 hours at a time.
• Everyone is at a different level, so could branch people off into groups of similar levels.
• Different generations and learning styles
• College is looking for creative learning rather than lecture styles to offer more interaction.
• Get C&CP students off individualized training and onto deadline-oriented, mainstream college work.

EXTERNAL PARTNERSHIPS

Describe how your college program serves these groups of students through external partnerships with educational or employment providers.
• Grand Erie school board was given as an example; low level learners and high level learners can go through that school board.
INTERNAL PARTNERSHIPS

Describe how your program serves these groups of students through internal partnerships with the college’s programs and services. Do your students have access to the same programs and services as funded postsecondary students?

- Academic Upgrading students are readily admitted into postsecondary programs.
- Registrar’s Office refers students to C&CP.

APPRENTICESHIP

Are you aware of links with apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship programs at your college? Describe them. How did you find out about them?

- Teachers have contact with apprenticeship instructors.
- Apprenticeship staff do not come to C&CP – C&CP is the one doing the outreaching.
- Should be better coordination with Pre-Apprenticeship and C&CP
- Academic Upgrading component in Pre-Apprenticeship should be delivered by C&CP.
- Should be an MTCU mandated relationship with Academic Upgrading

BLENDED, ONLINE AND DISTANCE DELIVERY

Describe your experience with using alternate forms of delivery (i.e. online, web-based, software applications, learning technologies, distance delivery). What are the opportunities and challenges?

- Not discussed

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

How do you anticipate your professional development needs changing if this group of learners has a more significant role in your teaching practice?

- Not discussed

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Given the increasing government attention to meeting the needs of early school leavers unable to make the successful transition to postsecondary, pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship programs, do you have additional suggestions to ensure your that program is able to fully respond to the learning needs of youth, Aboriginals, Ontario Works and online learners?

- Not discussed

MOHAWK COLLEGE – LEARNER FOCUS GROUP RESPONSES

What motivated you to enroll in the Academic Upgrading Program?

- Heavy workload
- Too old for high school
- LBS is quicker than high school.
- Not good in traditional classroom situations
- A lot of absenteeism
- Illness
- Finished high school but need math upgraded
• Chose college Academic Upgrading because
  o didn’t want to go back to high school
  o would have to start back at grade 10 math in high school; instead, came here and carried on from where he left off
  o tried another upgrading program but found them to be “schemey,” and charged money
  o quicker than St. Charles, only difference is there is no diploma involved.
  o first thing found after high school
  o flexible pace is better – fell behind in high school
  o presence in a college
  o college resources are available
  o learn what is required instead of going through entire high school curriculum
  o better chance to wind up in college (relates to “being in a college”)
  o failed Mature Student test; referred to C&CP in a letter

• Found out about program through
  o Job Connect
  o word of mouth (friend/family)
  o Mohawk College calendar
  o through high school guidance counselor after dropping out
  o other high schools “don’t know about it” … “no one cares”
  o employment office brochure
  o called college about GED and was referred to C&CP

In what ways has your learning experience been positive?
• Using current C&CP students in orientation was good
• Were shown,” Here is what you are good at.”
• Found encouragement
• You “find out what you want to do before going through it” (i.e. “don’t need trigonometry for Child & Youth Worker).
• “They put you where you want to be.”
• They “teach you what you need to know.”
• Teachers are helpful.
• You know how you’re doing along the way.
• Work at your own pace
• No due dates, but should be showing progress
• Progress reports
• Tests and assignments are marked – you see your mark and the teachers “go over everything with you”.
• Need 70% on a test to move on, so if you are moving along, you know you are doing well
• “I don’t think it can get any better.”
• Can also go to students for help
• Student attendance depends on the day.
• Lower numbers mean more attention from teacher.
• Good to be familiar with the college
• Possible improvements:
  o Some math books do not have enough examples - need more detail
  o Introduce sciences
  o Need larger range of material
  o Deadlines wanted - preparation for college timelines
  o Need a better business textbook – too many mistakes
  o Keep one teacher in the class; rotating teachers is confusing
  o Different teachers have different teaching and marking styles
  o English is slow-paced, too tedious
  o Too many essays
  o Paragraphs for plumbers? unnecessary
  o Math progress is “OK”
“Good program”
“No problems with the program”
Young learners should be separated from older learners
Apprenticeship work should be offered
Extracurricular activities should be available as well as intramural activities
Student numbers
Social integration with the rest of the college

What factors might cause you to withdraw before achieving your goal?
- Lack of attendance
- Family situations
- Employment
- Harassment issues in class
- Taking advantage of self-paced atmosphere
- Need help with self-discipline
- Should be more strict
- Each bit of work (demonstrations) should have deadlines
- “If you don’t keep up, exit.”
- Threats work (“do something or don’t come”)

What supports does the college have in place that are helping you to reach your goal? What additional assistance could be provided to help you reach your goals?
- Many were “unsure” or “still exploring”
- Went through Future Directions five-week program
- Found apprenticeship through Job Connect
- Friend or family was in the same career
- Short course, good pay
- Making hobby in to a career
- High demand / job market influenced decision

Both the Federal and Provincial governments have identified a need to increase the number of people in apprenticeship if Canada and Ontario are to continue to compete successfully in the global economy. What information do you have about job opportunities and the apprenticeship system? What would you like to know more about?
- Mohawk apprenticeship programs are “common knowledge”
- Billboards in school show information on apprenticeship
- Prior assessment of skills would be good to get credited for the skills you have
- Reasons for lack of interest in apprenticeship
  o hard to find employers
  o too much experience necessary
  o not interested in it as a career
  o look at education too much over work experience

What computer assisted learning activities have you had either in Academic Upgrading or in previous learning environments? In what ways have these activities been positive or negative?
- Have gone through walkthrough of “The BRAIN” (Mohawk College’s list of articles, magazines, journals, etc. on their website)
- Few responses to this question

Do you have any additional comments or recommendations you would like to make about college academic upgrading programs?
- Not discussed.