## SENECA COLLEGE – MANAGER INTERVIEW

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)
- We've had more youth recently. We're attempting to reach out and to help them explore options.
- Many youth in the area are unemployable because of low literacy and numeracy skills, but they are not motivated to get a general education (high school curriculum model).
- Assessments we are doing for the Two-Wheel Drive community group (having youth learn how to repair bicycles that get redistributed to the community) of under-prepared youth reveals that area youth are not well informed about the possibilities of acquiring better careers through education. They would not fit well with the existing student body because of their differing goals, low skills levels and, in some cases, low levels of maturity. They really respond better to hand-on learning activities.
- We were thinking of a Pre-Apprenticeship math that bridges the gap between basic numeracy and grade 12 level apprenticeship math. It needs to be relevant to the needs of apprenticeship and/or the workplace. This would need to be negotiated with other stakeholders.
- Maybe through essential skills testing or something similar we could develop courses that fast-track them into apprenticeship.

### ONLINE LEARNERS
- Remedial students, especially in English, are less ready for online learning which depends on strong reading and writing skills. Online learning might be appropriate for our higher level (ACE) students who have already demonstrated commitment to their career path in an earlier classroom learning situation.
- Online requires a higher level of readiness to learn.
- It would be difficult to extend online to all learners (i.e. not all have access to Internet).
- There is potential (i.e. learners who have to exit early to work may want to continue education online). The learners would have to be motivated.
- Ontario Learn has not been used.
- One centralized online site for the GTA would be more realistic, cost-wise, than distance learning offered from numerous small campuses like this one or from a number of GTA colleges.
- In order to deliver online, we'd have to develop our design and technology capacity. Online could include a TV Ontario approach to keep it viable.
- Newmarket campus submitted a proposal for a distance learning component but funding was refused. We have the expertise (especially in content area), but not enough demand to be cost-effective. AlphaRoute would not be a suitable deliverer of a college prep distance education course. Would OW be willing to buy computers and pay for Internet access for clients?

### ABORIGINAL LEARNERS
- There is not a significant number of Aboriginal learners and not a lot of potential to grow.
- One of our former Aboriginal students has won the Woman of Distinction Award (YWCA) which will generate a lot of publicity for upgrading in the Aboriginal community. This campaign will be released on March 8.

### ONTARIO WORKS CLIENTS
- Statistics show a significant number of students from Ontario Works.
- We have consistent referral process with local OW offices, but the communication is arms length. OW usually pays for daycare and transportation (although students have funds for daycare they often cannot find the service). We take care to avoid abuse of this system. We could recruit more aggressively this way, but not all case workers are equally supportive.

- We have a constant waiting list, but it is not significantly larger than our attrition level, especially in this time of strong economy (getting jobs in the retail/service sector is a strong attracter).
- We also notice students coming to us have a lower average skill level, in response to which we have adjusted our curriculum. This would include students with professional training in their home countries but poor language skills, and students with fairly good English (dialect) but low numeracy. Many of these are from Africa or the Caribbean.

## MARKETING ACADEMIC UPGRADING

- Students find out about upgrading by word of mouth and by flyers/pamphlets.
- The fact that the program is located in the mall and it's so connected to its community is the best reason for people knowing about it.
- Data on this is collected through the intake process.
- Students select this program to better their situation.
- Sometimes it's for second language learning.
- Most have plans for further education.
- At Yorkgate, there is an on-going colocation agreement with the Toronto District School Board which has an LBS 1-2 class on site.  There is an active campus Advisory Committee which includes representation from community organizations and educational partners. There is also collaboration with the Jane-Finch Concerned Citizens Association which is located on site. They focus on community outreach and development of youth employment initiatives especially Pre-Apprenticeship, tutoring and mentoring.
- Signage in the (Yorkgate) mall could be better, but the mall is allowing us more display space. We sometimes have outreach displays in the mall. We will be holding a sort of career fair in the mall with information on our various programs.
- College "mainstream" promotion doesn't really have a role.
- College referrals are more useful for Newnham, which is located in a major campus, than at outside sites like Yorkgate.
- Admissions Office sends flyers to those who don't pass the Mature Student entrance test or meet entrance requirements.
- Apart from Admissions, the rest of the college is less knowledgeable about upgrading. Some continuing education fee-for-service upgrading programs see us as rivals.
- We refer people to General Arts and Science if they want to be prepared for university rather than college entrance.

## COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS AND REFERRAL PROCESSES

- At Newmarket, there are external linkages with YMCA/Job Connect, and internal linkages with Contract Training, Continuing Education, Apprenticeship Programming and TOWES. At Markham East the primary linkage is with Job Connect. At Newnham Campus the link is with Postsecondary, Continuing Education and Apprenticeship.
- We have a partnership with the Yorkgate Mall and take advantage of their seasonal/promotional events planning.
- Local programs are about advocacy more than generation of students, but they keep channels of communication open.
- At Yorkgate, we have a mandate to support the community, and for that reason people in the community will have a commitment to Seneca over other colleges.

## INTERNAL COLLEGE LINKAGES

- Students who complete the ACE computer course receive credit for the mandatory first year computer course in postsecondary. Upgrading graduates are not retested to enter postsecondary unless it is a program specific requirement for all qualified applicants.  Postsecondary faculty are available for presentations and to arrange tours.
- On the other hand, we have not had trouble having our courses accepted as alternate prerequisites for college programs.

## PRE-APPRENTICESHIP AND APPRENTICESHIP LINKAGES

- These linkages are developing.

**EMPLOYER LINKAGES**
- Not applicable at this time

**ALTERNATE FORMS OF DELIVERY (online, web-based, software applications, learning technologies, distance delivery)**
- Might be a demand for distance education for students who cannot meet our full-time or part-time timetable.
- We already use Blackboard for some assignments and in theory could offer a larger part of the curriculum that way.
- We would have to count contact hours differently if we added distance learning.
- We would also have to allow for many additional teaching hours, as online teaching is currently very time consuming.
- A lot of the people in this community do not have home computers and/or Internet access, so demand might be limited for this campus.

**TRACKING, REPORTING, AND PERFORMANCE INDICATORS**
- We have difficulty moving students from LBS to OBS levels through the MTCU database. A large proportion of our OBS level learners have started with us at LBS 2/3 and moved up through the program without any break. This is difficult to reflect in our statistics.
- We have our own parallel database for day to day operations.
- Our current MTCU field consultant has been very helpful and supportive, and visits us more often than during the formal monitoring visit. Because of our frequent communication she is on top of any problems and we are able to solve them before they become serious.

**ADDITIONAL COMMENTS**
- We do TOWES as a college, clustered with Job Connect in the Contract Training portfolio.
- We are setting up an Essential Skills Centre in Richmond Hill (this is the model developed at Fanshawe), which will later be dovetailed with upgrading. Job Connect counselors will be able to target youth who lack specific employability skills and offer them modularized learning. We are concentrating on the three essential skills associated with TOWES. Students would not be paid, but the tuition would be covered by LBS. This project will be funded as part of the expanded OBS budget.
- Individuals who are not self-directed and need more teacher support could be referred to upgrading classrooms or other local literacy providers. It is possible that such centres may be opened at other locations in future.

**SENECA COLLEGE – FACULTY/TAFF FOCUS GROUP RESPONSES**

Program delivery staff from two locations were interviewed: Newnham and Yorkgate. Their responses are listed separately.

*Yorkgate Campus*

**LEARNER PROFILES**

**To what extent does your program serve youth, Aboriginals, and Ontario Works and online learners?**
- A few youth (17-18) but tend to attend poorly or leave the program when they find jobs
- Many slightly older students were early school leavers; 19 to 21 is a common age group and may be more successful in completing the program and entering postsecondary.
- May have about one Aboriginal student at any one time; this neighbourhood does not have large Aboriginal population.
- Many Ontario Works clients (up to 40 percent). We notice that they are more reliant on us for training support (e.g. bus passes) than in the past.

- The program faculty use what can be described as a 'case-management' approach; they have specialized functions (i.e. teaching, counseling) but they also work across functions. Their efforts have a more holistic approach that takes into account the learners, the program and the community.

## 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?**
- We advertise in newspapers (Learning Curves), flyers, brochures at local sites like Employment Resource Centres.
- Word of mouth is another source.
- We are in the Seneca calendar and web site, but could be easier to find.
- We get many referrals from community agencies like OW, high schools, school board.
- We can track the ways that students find out about the program through the intake and assessment process. We are also work closely with our students, hearing directly from them.

**What are the main reasons why students select an Academic Upgrading program?**
- Most of them select college Academic Upgrading because they want to get into postsecondary programs (70 percent).
- Nursing is the single most popular career goal.
- Many of them need to improve their English (ESL).
- Many students who had not originally planned to take math (or who want programs that don't have a math prerequisite) come to realize the importance of math in everyday life.

**What community and/or internal outreach strategies do you have in place?**
- We refer prospective students to other agencies and deal with OW from time to time.

**What are you considering?**
- We are part of Contract Training, as is Job Connect. The department is scattered among different college campuses and sites. Some other campuses have closer ties to Job Connect because of colocation.
- We have individual connections with postsecondary programs through faculty networks and arrange field trips or advocate for individual students, both before and after they graduate from upgrading.
- We get some referrals from admissions following placement testing. Most often the student comes to us and tells us he/she was referred.

## 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 students are motivated by prospects of job promotion.
- OW encourages students to move to employment as soon as possible, but learners have higher ambitions and want to enter jobs that require longer training (e.g. Nursing instead of PSW). Support for students' goals by OW or EI varies a great deal.
- A significant number of students have undiagnosed learning disabilities and they are unable to get formal assessment funded and lack the funds to do it themselves. This leads to frustration and lack of motivation. We accommodate a lot of students just because we suspect special needs, but we know that postsecondary programs need to have documentation to support accommodations. There is a double standard, because the program manager has arranged for special needs assessment for the students at the Newnham campus (which is geographically close to the special needs office). This might apply to only a few students each semester. Yorkgate students may use personal counseling from Seneca, but they have to travel to another campus (the closest is Seneca@York).
- Mobility is another concern. Few students in this campus can easily move to colleges outside the GTA. They cannot afford residence because they are supported by their families. This does affect their program choices.

**Describe the process and supports that help them clarify/confirm/establish goals. Why do they change goals?**
- We dedicate part of CSM class (Communications & Self-Management) to vocational research, in general and specific ways. We work one on one with some students to plan and enter their OCAS applications. We also meet individually with students to discuss career prospects and/or map out an educational plan for the goals they have already chosen. This is often triggered when we review each student's individual training plan.
- We also provide guidance in employment skills such as interviewing and resume writing, both individually and through CSM classes.

**What are the factors that affect why they do not reach goals?**
- Financial need is a major problem in this neighbourhood. Many students leave because families or social workers compel them to get a job to meet immediate financial needs.

## 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?**
- Many students are assessed with very poor math skills, so we have changed delivery to offer a one-month "pre-math" level to students who have good English. This allows them to move quickly into the mainstream math class and not fall behind their English cohort.
- The bar for assessment level is moving downward, which may be due to a strong economy. On the other hand, students are coming with stronger computer skills, so we are offering more advanced computer skills.
- The addition of science is a function both of student demand and additional OBS funding by the MTCU. If we had further funding, we could add physics to our curriculum.
- We offer additional math topics to students who completed the program if their career goals require it (e.g. Real Estate math).
- The English program also offers an option of career related reading and research topics.
- We have a standard curriculum but it offers a certain amount of choice. This requires flexibility on the part of the teachers. We know the students very well and there is a strong bond and caring. The teachers have a stake in our students' future success.
- Yorkgate's cohort-based approach allows teachers to offer a mixture of individualized and collaborative learning. Students help one another enormously and the friendships they make here are one of the chief reasons for retention.

## EXTERNAL PARTNERSHIPS

**Describe how your college program serves these groups of students through <u>external</u> partnerships with educational or employment providers.**
- We have WSIB clients from time to time but there is no fixed partnership.
- We have an educational partnership with the Toronto District School Board LBS program, which has a site here. We share some field trips and special events, and some of our students are shared (English in one, Math in the other).

## INTERNAL PARNERSHIPS

**Describe how your program serves these groups of students through <u>internal</u> partnerships with the college's programs and services. Do your students have access to the same programs and services as funded postsecondary students?**
- Our course mnemonics are part of the college system and students are given college transcripts.
- ACE level course (e.g. EAC 149 our ACE English) is accepted as a prerequisite for College English (EAC 150).
- Some students want a high school diploma that would be recognized.
- The greatest barrier to students receiving an ACE diploma is the difficulty to finishing ACE level math. We hope to be able to award more ACE certificates when the science program finishes its first session (in August).
- It would be helpful if college calendars listed ACE (either the certificate or individual courses) in their prerequisites.

## APPRENTICESHIP

**Are you aware of links with apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship programs at your college? Describe them. How did you find out about them?**
- Seneca has the Mechanical Techniques Certificate: Tool and Die Maker/Mould Maker/Machinist/CNC Operator – students take this as preparation for apprenticeship.
- We know of Pre-Apprenticeship Programs offered by Centennial, Humber and George Brown. We don't have close ties to those outside Seneca.
- We would like to get more involved in preparing for apprenticeship, but our current students have shown comparatively little interest. Part of the problem is that the majority of our students are women from more traditional cultures; they are not comfortable with the idea of working in skilled trades like machining.
- We need to attract more people in the community but there is too little knowledge about apprenticeship in the community or prospects of taking apprenticeship programs at Seneca.
- We are planning to bring in a speaker on apprenticeship in the spring.

## 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?**
- Might be a demand for distance education for students who cannot meet our full-time or part-time timetable.
- We already use Blackboard for some assignments and in theory could offer a larger part of the curriculum that way.
- We would have to count contact hours differently if we added distance learning.
- We would also have to allow for many additional teaching hours, as online teaching is currently very time consuming.
- A lot of the people in this community do not have home computers and/or internet access, so demand might be limited for this campus.

## 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?**
- We need to know more about paths to apprenticeship in the GTA, which are scattered and shared among colleges, private sector and for-profit training programs.
- We do receive notification of PD events offered by the Metro Toronto Movement for Literacy
- The College does not offer literacy level PD options, but does have workshops on cultural diversity and learning disabilities from time to time.
- The annual CSC conference provides valuable PD support too.

## 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?**
- The program could do more to meet the upgrading needs of all demographic groups in the area. Some of the barriers may be cultural attitudes to women's education and our inability to accept students at low levels of ESL ability.
- We have little trouble attracting students, and we have a sizeable waiting list. The problem is retention. Many students have trouble either completing the program or moving into the postsecondary program of their choice because of financial barriers and family responsibilities. Being able to transfer students between part-time evening and full-time day programs has been helpful this way. For example, seasonal workers (construction) might attend full-time during the winter and part-time during the spring, summer and fall.

- We are too small to offer an extremely flexible timetable (so that students may choose which of two math teachers they prefer), but students do get to know and work with all the teachers. If possible, we accommodate requests for specialized timetables so that a student may work with a preferred teacher. In general, students are more concerned to move from level to level with their cohorts.

## *Newnham Campus*
*There was limited time available for discussion with faculty/staff at this campus, so the following notes are brief. It was also interesting to note that this group represented several Seneca sites other than just Newnham, many of whom were themselves meeting one other for the first time.*

### LEARNER PROFILES

**To what extent does your program serve youth, Aboriginals, and Ontario Works and online learners?**
- Do have youth but a broad age span is represented in the program (18-50 years old); most from the ages of 25 to 38 at Newnham site
- Aboriginals not represented (only 2 in this college's program)
- Ontario Works – yes, about 20% are from this source (e.g. single mothers)
- ESL – There is a great proportion of ESL speakers in program. They have not been able to jump from LINC or other community-based programs directly into a college program. At the Newnham site, there is a 50% ESL population, usually are LBS 2 level.
- ESL participants are extremely motivated/not happy with community programs.

### 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?**
- Seneca Calendar
- ESIW
- Flyers
- Info Warehouse
- Newmarket (ads in local newspaper)
- Staff member in Newmarket put up posters in town shops/library/community centre
- Agency Referrals – Literacy Networks/Ontario Works/WSIB
- Secondary schools (but are they capturing the early leavers?)
- Community Outreach Centres
- The "front-desk" program staff find out how students heard about the program.

**What are the main reasons why students select an Academic Upgrading program?**
- Second language development
- To gain confidence
- Program is recognized by colleges for entrance into specific programs
- Increase English competency for ESL learners who are in the gap between LINC and postsecondary and career entrance level
- Path to apprenticeship opportunities

**What community and/or internal outreach strategies do you have in place?**
- Not discussed

**How helpful is the college's 'mainstream' promotion in recruiting learners to Academic Upgrading? How well informed are other college staff (Liaison, Job Connect, Contract Training, Apprenticeship, etc.) about Academic Upgrading?**
- What about targeting parents of potential students for the program?
- Program needs to research better ways to raise awareness of Academic Upgrading.

- What about outreach to 16 – 18 year olds who could benefit from program?
- More information to guidance counselors in the secondary schools


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

- Many students are not clear or realistic about goals.
- Many students are not aware of paths that open after program is completed.
- Many students change their goals throughout the program.
- There is a huge need to teach self-management skills to students.

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

- In-class discussion with staff

**What are the factors that affect why they do not reach goals?**

- The usual things – funding, language barriers, personal issues


## 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?**

- Guided at the beginning of the student's program
- Try to create variety across the learning environment
- Diversity is accommodated and welcomed at all sites.
- There is evidence of peer mentoring among the younger students.
- At Newmarket site, textbooks stay in the classrooms unless purchased by students.

**What benefits or challenges do youth, older and Aboriginal learners present in your learning environment?**

- Students have an initial dependence on facilitator.
- Many students find it difficult to comprehend the textbooks
- There is a need to bring up the level of computer skills.
- There is difference between competence and confidence (students are confident of their computer skills but do not actually demonstrate competence with the software).
- Some students prefer the online applications to the textbooks.
- Many youth are very computer savvy.


## EXTERNAL PARTNERSHIPS

**Describe how your college program serves these groups of students through <u>external</u> partnerships with educational or employment providers.**

- Some sites are currently shared with other agencies/institutions.
- Transportation (Metropass Student Rate/Subsidy for qualified students)
- Metro Toronto Literacy Community
- Students with weak language skills are referred to community ESL programs

### INTERNAL PARNERSHIPS

**Describe how your program serves these groups of students through <u>internal</u> partnerships with the college's programs and services. Do your students have access to the same programs and services as funded postsecondary students?**
- Students receive a college student number that stays with them
- Library/recreation/partial health services are included for all students in the program

### APPRENTICESHIP

**Are you aware of links with apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship programs at your college? Describe them. How did you find out about them?**
- No, staff don't have strong knowledge of the potential for apprenticeship opportunities.
- They also noted that the understanding of ACE and its fit with grade 12 equivalency continues to be ambiguous for students and parties who need to accept it (i.e. apprenticeship)
- Students have a very strong focus on further education (not necessarily apprenticeship).
- Staff knowledge about the apprenticeship programs is limited.
- Academic Upgrading program is recognized by apprenticeship programs.

### 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?**
- No experience with delivering it
- Could staff deliver Academic Upgrading online – possibly?
- It could be used to supplement the in-class learning.
- Learners would need access to the technology.
- More blended/online/distance learning delivery options should be added to program.
- Older learners might benefit more, but they'd need assured access and knowledge of how to use it

### 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?**
- No time allotment
- Need more training
- Resources are lacking (technology)

### 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?**
- Pace of program should be different for different ages/levels.
- Many more partnerships with agencies and businesses should be developed.
- More attention given to ESL learners in program.
- There is a great need for increased awareness of program.
- Has Seneca attracted all its cultural communities? Are they interested in coming to Seneca? Why or why not?

## SENECA COLLEGE – LEARNER FOCUS GROUP RESPONSES

**What motivated you to enroll in the Academic Upgrading Program?**

- I am here because I came to Canada 25 years and had no chance to go to school and this program made it possible for me to go to school and learn.
- For any type of job, I need diploma so I have to finish college; I want to improve and get my diploma to be able to work.
- I had to work and couldn't study. My brother is not old enough to work and stand by himself. I looked for different jobs and got tired of looking for jobs so I decided to take this program.
- I want to get a better paying job so I can support my family.
- I need more educational background in order to get a better job with a better salary.
- Some other programs force students to take different (required?) courses in order to finish the program prescribed by the provider.
- I went to different programs and I came to college to upgrade because I was tired of looking for different schools.
- I just need it; it's during the day and I'm in a non-high school environment.
- I want to be Immigration Officer.
- I want to improve my English and have a diploma.
- English and math are two things that I need to learn more, so I came here. I got tired of looking for different college programs and was finally referred here.
- I found the program on Internet.
- There was a posting at Zellers about Seneca and the Academic Upgrading program.
- The need to upgrade academic skills in order to apply for college mainstream.
- As a new immigrant, there seems to be a need to obtain a recognized equivalent education in Canada.
- As a new immigrant, there is a need to improve on the spoken English language.
- A need to refresh outdated high school education in order to compete with current high school graduates. (Survey group consisted of secondary school graduates from 5 to 25 years ago)
- A need to prepare for college
- Some recent graduates of high school that did not immediately enter college/university mainstream felt a need to be stimulated by a more serious environment. They described their high school education experience as lax and a very social environment.
- Some students were anticipating a more serious environment in college and hoped that its affects would evoke a keener interest in continuing their education.
- Some felt that the adult academic program might provide a window view of the responsibilities that may be associated with a postsecondary education. As a result, they could make an informed decision about their future education.
- In a foreign traditional family setting within Canada, senior authoritative family member made recommendations to enter college. The student is obligated to adhere to these types of family dynamic decisions.
- As a result of health issues, a career change and or adaptation was necessary; thus, a need to re-educate in order to competitively participate.
- Some older participants who had already been in the workforce for many years were considering a second phase of life career choice.
- For some, priorities, focus, and obligations change; therefore, different career choices were being considered. As a result, updating education for prerequisites into mainstream college/university education became necessary. Others were just being prudent in order to compete for placements.
- As a result of primary school's curriculum realignment, the new expectation is that parents should be responsible for helping with educational/tutoring support to their children. The parents' own education can be out-of-date; therefore, they need to upgrade their skills is necessary in order to assist their children.
- Some mature participants had not graduated with a high school diploma, but since that time have decided to enter college and need to meet the prerequisites.

**In what ways has your learning experience been positive?**
- I feel lot better coming here - that is important, I am looking at my future.
- It's been positive in the sense that now I know what I am able to do and I can accomplish that if I put my mind to it.
- Very positive; I'm able to speak properly.
- I tried different schools, but I found it different here.
- The teachers bring a different approach to the learning of the subjects.
- More mature
- Students are willing to learn.
- Good learning, the people, the cultural background
- I came to Canada 6 years ago; this was the first time I could vote. I feel good; I was able to participate. If I didn't have chance to be in this program, I couldn't vote and I couldn't participate in Canadian life.
- For the first time, after 25 years and after I became citizen; I could vote and I understood the speeches of the different parties.
- After this program am I going to be able to get better job.
- Enjoy the manner in which they are being taught -activity based learning at your own speed.
- High quality of educators
- High quality and detailed curriculum
- This program is a better fit for some people who learn at a slower pace, or simply at their own pace.
- Enjoy the fact that they are not in competition with others
- Method of teaching and learning encourages independence, and development of self-confidence, and self-motivation, and maturity
- Pace at which we are learning is good.
- Teachers are flexible.
- Teachers are available to provide extra help to a student when needed.
- School location is convenient.
- School offers a variety of resources (i.e. learning commons, library).
- Mode of teaching is really preparing the student for college, as well as teaching the student to be an independent learner.
- Students feel they are getting a taste of the college environment prior to committing to a paid program.
- Upon entering this program, some students had anxieties about whether the teachers were similar to previous negative experiences with teachers. Many felt relief when they realized that the educators in this program were good, helpful, patient, and knowledgeable.
- Teachers' focus is on providing the right learning tools, and providing the appropriate environment in order to support the students in mastering the material.
- The college environment makes you feel that you are already enrolled in a college program.

**What factors might cause you to withdraw before achieving your goal?**
- The course format (at times); the fact that the courses are not valid for university entrance requirements; English courses don't go to a high enough level; not sufficient computer studies
- Many students have language problems and there are too many students at different levels of English; I don't get the kind of help I need.
- Classes that I am taking are math and reading; everybody is studying; people have different questions and not enough time for all of us to get answers from the teacher.
- If no one helps with math so I can move on with next lesson – I would be stuck.
- When I can't get answers in class, I often ask my daughter questions about my courses. But she is busy and can't help and my question will not be answered.
- Money
- Economic factors - being in school doesn't allow you time to be working; but with better education I know I will earn more when I finish.
- Opportunity for good paying job
- If I had to go back to work; my saved money is gone.
- Being unable to maintain my living expenses (rent, clothing, food, etc.)

- Accommodation (meaning I don't have a place to stay so I can go to this site)
- If I had to move to different location
- Family problems - children are the first priority, financial problems
- If I had to make priorities for my daughter, work, or study
- Difficulty with daycare; it is hard for me because have small baby
- Employment could interfere with school schedule, and homework time.
- Courses are not credit courses (want or need credit).
- Other financial commitments could prevent students from continuing the program (i.e. housing, food, family).
- Some students cannot motivate themselves in an activity-based setting.
- Some students are not serious enough about the program or school in general.
- Due to time and money constraints, some students have to change their goals because they cannot commit to a two or three postsecondary year curriculum and/or do not have the finances to continue.

**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?**
- The college has been very helpful and understanding; perhaps more individual help would be good.
- It might be better to have different level for different students with different levels of education and knowledge.
- Great teachers
- Most of the support students get is from the teacher.
- More teachers or teacher assistants
- More teachers to assist students in times of difficulties and levels of work
- Program's flexibility
- More tutoring
- More computer programs to learn
- More programs geared to some major college program areas
- Career self-management course is part of the curriculum.
- Computer course.
- Learning commons with commuters and library
- Tutors and teachers.
- Grants from OSAP for postsecondary that are based on attendance and performance
- Bursaries based on need, and based on doing good work
- Any type of financial assistance

**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?**

- About half the class indicated they knew something about apprenticeship.
- I worked as a mechanic before I came to school, but I felt like cheap labour. Am I going to have a better job? Will I get what and where I want?
- Came to Canada and worked as a carpenter; now comes to school and intends to go into an apprenticeship. But he wants to know if he will have to spend time learning what he already knows and if he'll get credit (and how much) for his previous experience.
- One student worked as a surveyor in his home country but wondered what how the learning and experience would translate to an apprenticed trade.
- Where do I go to find out about apprenticeship?
- How long does it take to finish apprenticeship?
- What skills do I need for particular types of apprenticeships?
- Students aren't sure how apprenticeship works.
- Will the employer respect the individual or student who attends the apprenticeship training?
- Very few students had any knowledge of what apprenticeship is.
- Some thought apprenticeship was like co-op.

- Very few students knew of any information available regarding apprenticeship programs.
- A student who participated in an apprenticeship program became frustrated when the employer still required more theory (education) background.
- Another student was frustrated after experiencing being passed over for certain apprenticeship tasks which were given to other apprentice students. The student felt this oversight was due to his own weak theory (education).

- **What would you like to know more about?**
- Where to apply.
- What type of apprenticeships are available
- What the pre-requisites are
- Where to find apprenticeship information
- How the financial end of it works (pay, subsidies, expenses, etc)
- How to find out whether the education a student has is sufficient to enter an apprenticeship program
- Are apprenticeship programs available in some type of science area?
- Is there any government standard that all employers who provide apprenticeship program have to adhere too?
- Does the government ensure consistency and continuity within apprenticeships for each category from employer to employer?
- Are grants available for apprenticeships?
- Are skills obtained through apprenticeships transferable between different employers in the same industry?
- Are there any type of government regulations in place?
- Are there any incentives or grants for employers to encourage them to offer more apprenticeships?

**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?**
- Most of the students are comfortable with basic computer use now.
- Computers help me go online and send information
- Previous experience was mostly negative – more for self-study, too many assignments when all you really need is a project, a book, and some instructions.
- I don't know about computers; I don't have a computer at home.
- Understanding how to use a computer gives me another chance to find a job (i.e. office work); we are learning things that we don't know.
- I would appreciate any more knowledge about computer programs.
- I didn't use a computer for long time. When I started again here it was very helpful. We are learning how to write a resume and cover letter
- I have to come to school to learn (i.e. I need to be in a classroom/college setting).
- Since the Canadian life style is so fast, learning online might help
- I need to be here in the whole program; I get help to explain the lesson(s).
- It works for some and not others. I could work at home but for some people there are competing priorities at home that could affect how you study or learn.
- One student knows how to do so taxes online.
- Current computer courses can tend to be at an elementary level for some; conversely, others who have no computer experience benefit from its current structure.
- College needs to provide innovative technology education, and or, at least have assisted access for students or teachers to some updated resources.
- Some students thought about taking online courses instead of the Academic Upgrading Program on-site but did not for the following reasons:
  - Online courses to impersonal
  - Unsure what online courses are credible
  - No immediate feedback with online courses
  - Working from home required discipline and resourcefulness
  - Hard to distinguish which providers are reputable
  - Some students find it difficult to manage themselves

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**Do you have any additional comments or recommendations you would like to make about college academic upgrading programs?**

- The educational curriculum here has to be reviewed in order to help people focus on their career goals, especially with the youth because sometimes they don't know where to go or what to do in future.
- The college Academic Upgrading programs are beneficial as long as people are well guided on the post-graduate advantages and their set goals.
- Maybe separate math levels/classes; more instruction (maybe including computerized math).
- Why are science courses only at night?
- More teachers, more time in computer classes
- Some courses that make you ready for university would be good.
- Evening classes for computers are useful.
- This is a comfortable class in terms of the space; students like it; we like being in one whole building for Seneca (i.e. the Yorkgate site is a Seneca site that has a range of programs needed by the community).
- Program needs to be advertised better.
- Referred by trial and error.
- Some people found out about the program after attempting to enter into a mainstream college program without success. Rejection letters were sent along with Academic Upgrading information.
- Information on sponsorship that is available to some students attending this program does not seem to be provided to all potential students.
- Some sponsorship's have very high qualification requirements.
- Some sponsorships have strings attached (i.e. you might owe an employer a certain length of service upon completion).
- Generally, the consensus is that little information is known, and even less information is shared.
- Would like to see a more comprehensive list of available courses in this program (i.e. sciences, arts)
- Offer potential employers some type of incentive to encourage them to allow their employees to participate in the program.
- The college does not provide all student services to the participants of this program. The reason provided by the college administration was that a decision is not forthcoming as to whether this program belongs to Continuing Education, or full-time programming. In other words, whose budget it should come from?
- Will the college add the Academic Upgrading for the sciences during the day at Newnham location of Seneca?