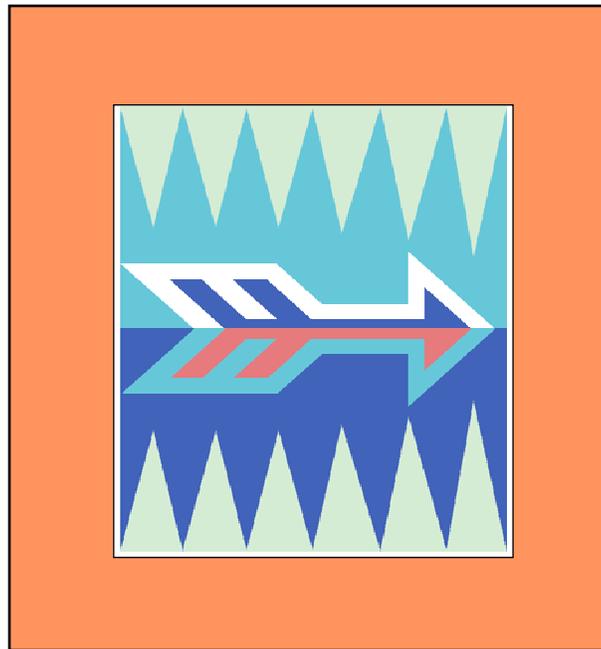# Innovative Approaches ...

... and Promising Directions

**Meeting the Needs
of Underrepresented Populations
in College Academic Upgrading Programs**

April 2006

College Sector Committee
for Adult Upgrading

Acknowledgements

Innovative Approaches and Promising Directions was a major research initiative which committed to a high level of inclusiveness. It gave managers, faculty, support staff, and students at all colleges the opportunity to provide input on a variety of important topics pertaining to Academic Upgrading. These included the following: "What do colleges do well?"; "Where could colleges improve?"; and most significantly, "What should colleges do next?"

Achieving the objectives of such a large research project in a short time period (January to March 2006) required the commitment of many people.

The College Sector Committee for Adult Upgrading (CSC) wishes to thank the 610 managers, program delivery staff, and students who participated in the 84 focus groups. They welcomed the researchers, organized the focus groups and most of all provided meaningful insights and strong recommendations about the present and future of college Academic Upgrading. The CSC would particularly like to recognize the 456 students whose input was moving and inspirational. They confirmed the CSC's belief that Academic Upgrading does make a difference and reminded us that it is really "all about them"!

Special thanks are extended to the three researchers who devoted their time and expertise to make this project a success: Stewart Kallio, Bob McIver and Lynne Wallace. They worked as a team from a distance to achieve a shared goal. The term "24/7" really does apply to the commitment that was necessary to get the work done.

The CSC would like to thank Barbara Glass, the report editor, who took focus group summaries and report components written by different authors and transformed them into a cohesive whole. Thanks also go to Dee Goforth whose experience with "plain language" was called upon during the final editing process.

The CSC also thanks the members of the CSC Executive for their support and direction throughout the project.

Finally, the CSC would like to acknowledge the Skills Investment Branch of the Ministry of Training, College and Universities for the opportunity to conduct this extensive research at such a critical time in the evolution of the broader Ontario educational system. A particular thank you is extended to Felicity Burr whose questions, guidance and participation helped the team to fully explore key issues and opportunities facing colleges.

Table of Contents

Executive Summary

The broader educational system in Ontario has been undergoing considerable change focused on increasing the number of well trained workers required to address current and anticipated skill shortages. Both the federal and provincial governments have initiated discussions for increasing participation in apprenticeship, moving foreign trained professionals into the workforce, and ensuring that workforce participants have the necessary literacy and numeracy skills to participate in the new economy. College Academic Upgrading Programs are ideally situated to participate fully in the broader educational system that is emerging, and collectively they have the capacity to achieve the goals identified in the discussions. Since their inception more than 40 years ago, Academic Upgrading Programs have been "one stop", client centered, and focused on preparing adults for higher skilled employment. They have always known that improved educational opportunities are linked to a sound base in literacy, numeracy, and essential skills.

In an effort to examine the practices and structures currently in place in Academic Upgrading Programs on which future initiatives can be built, the College Sector Committee for Academic Upgrading (CSC) launched the *Innovative Approaches and Promising Directions* project with the support of the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU). The focus in this project was on conducting extensive primary research. This was accomplished by gathering practical information from managers and frontline delivery staff at all 24 colleges through focus group discussions led by a small team of consultants. The team also made a commitment to systematically collect input from students currently enrolled in Academic Upgrading Programs. The project was very successful in meeting its objectives in a very short time period – January to March 2006.

This report contains 41 recommendations. Some require the active involvement of MTCU; others require action on the part of the college system and individual colleges. While improved funding is needed to implement some of these recommendations, others require only a refocusing of resources and activity.

A number of important messages were heard provincially. Perhaps the most recurrent was that college Academic Upgrading is "the best kept secret" in Ontario. Students noted that while college upgrading programs were just what they needed to improve their employment and training opportunities, they had not been aware of this route to their goals. All the focus groups identified that "word of mouth" was how most students found out about the program. Consequently, a significant number of recommendations focus on the promotion and publicizing of college Academic Upgrading Programs.

Students expressed a high level of satisfaction with college upgrading programs. They identified that program policies, support structures, and individual staff were responsive to their needs and circumstances. They frequently described the learning environment as being a community or family where they felt they belonged. They clearly understood that upgrading links them to postsecondary and apprenticeship opportunities, and felt confident that successful participation in upgrading would lead to future successes. This confidence is

substantiated by the CSC's annual *Prepared for Success* report which quantifies the success of upgrading students enrolled in postsecondary education in terms of grade point average (GPA), retention and program selection.

Another recurring message involved the tracking of program activity. While all program personnel considered it important, tracking program activity entirely by the number of students and the number of student contact hours (SCHs) fails to take into account critical outcomes such as academic progress, lifestyle changes and student commitment to lifelong learning. SCHs have actually become a barrier to innovations that address the needs of those underrepresented in postsecondary education especially youth, Aboriginals, Francophones, the physically and learning challenged, and first generation learners. These students frequently require the kind of support and assistance that does not generate the number of SCHs that college programs need to maintain funding.

The use of SCHs has also resulted in the emergence of "have" and "have not" colleges. Colleges that have large population bases or are the primary upgrading providers in their community can more easily generate the SCHs they require to maintain and increase funding. As a result, they are able to hire sufficient staff, provide expanded timetabling opportunities, ensure that counseling is available within the program, and take on new initiatives like specialized programming for youth or technology-enabled delivery. The "have not" colleges, meanwhile, struggle with small numbers of staff just to provide the most basic programming. Unfortunately, a disproportionate number of these "have not" colleges serve northern and rural communities where population may be small, but student needs are significant and diverse.

The reliance on SCHs is also a barrier to reaching prospective clients who would benefit from a distance delivery model. The focus groups clearly indicated that distance learning is not an option for students accustomed to traditional classroom delivery. Students currently in face-to-face, on-site programs require immediate support, clarification, and encouragement; they benefit significantly from the social aspects of participating in a classroom setting. Managers indicated that the absence of a funding and accountability mechanism which takes into account the development as well as the delivery costs has meant that they have been reluctant to consider distance learning as another avenue for students. Ironically, all the focus groups could identify individuals who would benefit from such an opportunity: employed people, people with family responsibilities (especially during the summer), those with permanent or temporary health issues, and people living in isolated communities without public transportation. Do other current needs exist? What future needs can we anticipate? We do not know. The only known is that the field of education is expanding its use of technology in increasingly effective ways. College Academic Upgrading Programs, therefore, need to begin planning now for the educational programs and services they will be required to deliver in the future. Such planning could be described as "future forward" or operating from the "Gretzky principle" – it needs to take its direction from where the puck will be going, not where it is now!

The term "innovation" implies that a process is new. While there were many new activities like programming for students under 19, technology-assisted delivery, linkages with Job Connect and Pre-Apprenticeship Programs, and recruitment through postsecondary

connections, much that is innovative in college Academic Upgrading has been in place for years. Many college upgrading programs have well established linkages with postsecondary including dual and transfer credits, program shadowing opportunities, and course input from postsecondary. Often, because of limited funding, most colleges have developed very creative ways to take advantage of the broader services available internally like counseling, special needs, and employment services. Because the upgrading student base is so diverse and individual needs are so specific, upgrading programs have many and varied connections with frontline staff within their colleges and the communities they serve. These are connections that programs can call upon to help students achieve their goals. Such practices are innovative, but they are not necessarily new.

It is important that adult learners have multiple pathways to their future based on their individual abilities and goals. The delivery of adult education in Ontario is rich with opportunity offered by a number of sectors – college, school board and community-based – and specifically tailored to meet the needs of learners in various streams: Anglophone, Francophone, Aboriginal and Deaf. The problem is not a lack of opportunity; it is helping the learners understand all the options so they can choose the pathway that suits them best.

Colleges need to clearly define the advantages of their delivery methods and opportunities for learners, other deliverers, referring agencies, and employers. For many students, college Academic Upgrading is the best route to acquire the skills and knowledge for success in further education and employment, particularly for those jobs requiring postsecondary technology, health care, business and social services education.

College upgrading programs also provide adults with direct routes to employment through a number of alternate credentials: the Test of Workplace Essential Skills (TOWES), General Educational Development (GED) preparation and Academic and Career Entrance (ACE). Ontario colleges, in their recent provincial consultation and report *Pathway to Prosperity,* have committed to expanding educational opportunities for Ontarians. College Academic Upgrading Programs are an important part of this pathway. Like Highway 17 which crosses Ontario, college upgrading programs are the "Route 24" which links students to broader educational and employment opportunities.

Much of the value of the primary research conducted through *Innovative Approaches and Promising Directions* is embedded in the detailed comments of the focus groups. The CSC encourages you to read the focus group summaries posted on www.collegeupgradingon.ca.

Each of the main sections of this report contains a summary of recurring themes, a brief narrative, and a list of recommendations. The summaries and narratives provide critical context for understanding the recommendations. The CSC urges you to read them and to examine the recommendations carefully, for it is the recommendations that form the vital link between current programming (innovative approaches) and the future (promising directions).

Introduction

Overview

In October 2005, the College Sector Committee released a document entitled, *A Snapshot of College Sector Workforce Delivery,* which identified ongoing innovative approaches and promising directions colleges were developing in the area of workforce and essential skills delivery to effectively move learners into employment, postsecondary programs, and apprenticeship. It was a response to the spring 2005, *Train Ontario 2* workshops which were sponsored by the Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) Unit of the Skills Investment Branch of MTCU. A careful reading of the materials provided at these workshops revealed that while they were comprehensive and well organized, they did not fully capture ongoing or planned activity in the College Sector with respect to workforce preparation for learners.

Innovative Approaches and Promising Directions expands on the narrowly focused discussion presented in the *Snapshot* report. *Innovative Approaches and Promising Directions* addresses the challenges of increasing the participation and success of learners traditionally underrepresented in postsecondary and apprenticeship. Its findings will be of interest to practitioners in all sectors (colleges, school boards, community-based) and streams (Anglophone, Francophone, Native, and Deaf). *Innovative Approaches and Promising Directions* identifies effective educational strategies to improve the recruitment, participation and preparation of adult learners in Ontario community college Academic Upgrading Programs. These strategies will, in turn, contribute well trained employees to meet the demand for an increasingly skilled workforce.

The report is based on consultations conducted in January and February 2006 with students, faculty, support staff, and managers at all of Ontario's 24 community colleges. It gives voice to their unique point of view.

Current Environment

The educational backgrounder to the 2006 Ontario budget describes the government's efforts toward "strengthening Ontario's education and skills advantage." A practical interpretation of that message means that both educational Ministries (Education, and Training, Colleges and Universities) are collaborating to bring a coherent and coordinated focus to the entire continuum of lifelong learning. Education and training are the foundations for building Ontario's skills advantage because learners take new knowledge and apply it to the emerging needs of the workplace.

The McGuinty government's 2005 *Reaching Higher* plan for improving education at the postsecondary level is of specific relevance to *Innovative Approaches and Promising Directions*. Increasing government attention is being focused on meeting the needs of learners traditionally underrepresented in further education, especially Aboriginals, first generation learners, at-risk youth, Francophones, and persons with disabilities. Their needs include physical access, funding to support enrolment in programs, and the necessary academic and essential skills required for entrance to college postsecondary programs and apprenticeship training. Without their participation in higher education or training, Ontario's efforts to train and build a skilled workforce are diminished.

Evolution of Academic Upgrading in Ontario Colleges

Colleges have a 42 year history of delivering adult upgrading to prepare learners for further education and employment. The upgrading program, *Basic Training for Skills Development* (BTSD), originally approved in 1964 through what is now the Colleges Branch of MTCU, was delivered at four levels. Adult learners progressed, as appropriate, through levels one to four in preparation for skills and trades training. In the late 1960s, colleges delivered adult training principally through Manpower Retraining programs funded under federal sponsorship (Employment Insurance or EI). In 2003, BTSD Level 4 was updated and renamed. It is now called the Academic and Career Entrance Program (ACE).

The withdrawal of federal sponsorship in the 1980s meant a shift in focus and funding for colleges' adult upgrading programs. Federal sponsorship had focused on further training; the new provincial focus was on literacy and numeracy, particularly programming that improved social assistance recipients' chances to secure and sustain employment.

Literacy's link to employment is supported by the 22-country International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS) released in 1994, which showed that 44% of Canadian adults either lacked or did not have adequate (identified as level 3 on a 5-point scale) literacy, numeracy and document handling skills to secure and sustain employment. The subsequent 2005 International Adult Literacy and Life Skills (IALLS) report found there had been little improvement.

Throughout the late 1980s and early 1990s, colleges delivered a series of literacy and numeracy programs that responded to evolving and very specific provincial program and funding guidelines (Technical Upgrading Program – TUP, Ontario Basic Skills – OBS, Literacy and Basic Skills – LBS). Colleges currently operate under the LBS guidelines introduced in 1996 and updated in 2000. LBS is aligned with the provincial governments' focus on moving people off of social assistance and into employment. It "focuses on adults who are unemployed, with special emphasis on people receiving social assistance" (October 2000, LBS Program Guidelines). LBS is offered free of charge to a literacy level approximating IALS level 3 (the accepted level at or below which adults face serious barriers to employment).

MTCU manages the LBS Program and provides more than $60 million in annual funding to third-party deliverers. Colleges, school boards, and community agencies deliver the LBS program to over 45,000 adult learners at more than 300 sites across Ontario. The overriding mandate of LBS, however, continues to be workforce preparation, particularly the preparation for employment of persons supported through provincially funded social assistance. Like their sectoral partners, Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology deliver the LBS program, but colleges focus primarily on more advanced academic levels. Unlike their delivery partners in other sectors, they are the sole deliverers of the college entry level preparation (ACE) funded by OBS dollars. Though some colleges still offer a fee-paying option, Academic Upgrading in the colleges is primarily delivered through LBS/OBS funding.

Academic Upgrading, Ontario Colleges, and Changing Government Priorities

Although LBS/OBS programs are funded by MTCU and follow MTCU guidelines, they also operate in college environments that are beginning to pay greater attention to both the learner and to learning itself. Many colleges across Canada and the United States are beginning to explore organizational development based on learning principles grounded in two key questions: Does this action contribute to learning? How do we know this action contributes to learning?

These questions and others are being addressed by the Learning College Project, supported by the League for Innovation in the Community College, based in Phoenix, Arizona. Though the Learning College Project is based in the States, the learning college model is developing roots in Ontario. Humber College is one of twelve colleges across Canada and the States (known as Vanguard Colleges) who are leading the movement toward the learning college model. Other Ontario colleges are showing strong interest as well. The five themes (areas of organizational focus) that guide the Vanguard Colleges' activities align well with the learner-centered focus of colleges' LBS and Academic Upgrading delivery: under-prepared students, learning outcomes, information technology, staff recruitment and professional development, and organizational culture. More information about the Vanguard Colleges and the Learning College Project may be found at http://www.league.org/league/projects/lcp/vanguard.htm

Upgrading programs in Ontario also operate in a college system which is undergoing change. The funding crisis of the mid 1990s saw colleges scale back and refocus, becoming what Bob Rae called the "'poster child' for public efficiency gains" (Rae, B., 2005, p. 48). After 2000, colleges received a new charter giving them more local authority, including the right to grant applied degrees. The colleges' postsecondary mandate was evolving, but troublesome issues continued to slow the momentum. Until very recently, the system continued to be seriously under-funded. Currently, its ability to deliver graduates fully able to participate in Ontario's future skilled workforce is compromised by low postsecondary participation and graduate rates.

"One of the major themes of the Liberal campaign was education and the restoration of public services in Ontario" (Constantinou & Drea, 2005). In 2004, Premier McGuinty commissioned a review of higher education in Ontario, resulting in the winter 2005 release of the Rae report, *Ontario: A Leader in Learning. Final Report of the Postsecondary Review Panel.* The government's response, *Reaching Higher: The McGuinty Government Plan for Postsecondary Education*, followed in May 2005. It committed $6.2 billion more to postsecondary education and training for the period leading up to 2009-2010. The goal of the plan is to improve quality and accountability, and to significantly increase the number of students enrolled in postsecondary education.

Shortly after the release of *Reaching Higher*, a review of adult education was presented to the Ministers of Education and Training, Colleges and Universities - *Ontario Learns: Strengthening our Adult Education System* (Wynne, June 2005). This comprehensive report, which based its findings on input from all the delivers of adult learning in Ontario, noted that "all of these systems - school, college, and all the variety of creative partnerships - have a role to play in the delivery of programs to adult students. One of the reasons it is

important for our provincial government to establish a focus on adult education is to encourage creative solutions to particular local problems and to support the strengths of all deliverers."

Innovative Approaches and Promising Directions identifies creative solutions by exploring ongoing innovative practices in the colleges' delivery of adult learning through its Academic Upgrading Programs. Moreover, it makes recommendations for addressing the particular problem of increasing participation and retention of early school leavers and underrepresented adult learners in Ontario's colleges.

The participation rate - the ratio of the student population to the general population of the same age - is an indicator of the number of students who actually enroll in postsecondary. Research studies use the 18 to 21 year old group as the comparator. Junor & Usher (2004) show that 36.6% of Ontario's 18 to 21 year olds went on to postsecondary (college or university) in 2002-2003, while 12.9% of the same group went to college. The data reflect only postsecondary students, so the percentages could be higher if participation in non-postsecondary college programs was included.

Equally concerning is the number of students not graduating from high school. The fourth and final phase of the King Report (October 2005) confirmed that as many as 48,000 students (about 30 per cent) could not acquire enough credits for graduation after four or five years of secondary school. These findings support the McGuinty government's concern with respect to increasing college participation rates.

The Rae Report asked, "How can we increase participation and success in higher education?" (p. 2). Increasing college participation rates will get students into college where they will have an opportunity to successfully graduate and contribute to building Ontario's skilled workforce, yet only 57.1% of the students who start a college program eventually graduate (ACAATO Environmental Scan 2005). On one hand, too few students are entering college; on the other, those who do are not experiencing a high level of success.

Increasing the number of college graduates means improving the rates at which people both participate in college and succeed once enrolled there. The *Reaching Higher* plan speaks to access and opportunity. Enhancing Academic Upgrading opportunities for underrepresented learners supports this plan. When fully implemented, the Academic Upgrading initiative will grow to $15 million at maturity in 2007-08 and provide 6,000 early school leavers with additional opportunities to fast track development of the academic and essential skills required for entry into and success in apprenticeship training, postsecondary programs, and employment. In the annual *Prepared for Success* report produced by the CSC, college Academic Upgrading Programs have documented (since 1995) that their graduates not only achieve the grades required to succeed in college postsecondary programs but also demonstrate high retention rates. Eighty three percent of Academic Upgrading graduates achieve the grades required in their first semester of postsecondary programming; 85% are enrolled in second semester. Only 1% of those enrolled in the second semester changed programs.

The timing of this project, *Innovative Approaches and Promising Directions*, is fortuitous. The provincial government has identified clear priorities for increasing postsecondary participation and success, and it is prepared to commit funding to those priorities. The two Ontario Ministries with direct responsibility for secondary and postsecondary education have a report which describes the current adult education environment. Ontario is a signatory to a new Canada-Ontario Labour Market Development Agreement and Labour Market Partnership Agreement (LMDA/LMPA). The colleges are beginning to recognize a cultural shift that acknowledges the growing importance of the non-postsecondary side of their operations – particularly Academic Upgrading. This is an opportune time for Academic Upgrading, the colleges' "best kept secret", to make the broader college system aware of the vital role upgrading can play in achieving the objectives of the emerging educational issues and priorities in Ontario.

Purpose

Colleges required specific information about promising practices related to increasing the accessibility of Academic Upgrading and enhancing its delivery to underrepresented learners including Aboriginal, Francophone, youth 16 to 18 years of age, deaf, and rural or remote learners. This information was best obtained by a research project examining successful practices within the college sector.

Innovative Approaches and Promising Directions focuses exclusively on primary research. Secondary resources which were identified in the course of the project are listed in Appendix D, but extensive secondary research was not intended to be a component of this project.

In this project, the CSC proposed to do the following:

- o identify the specific supports and programming required to enable youth to succeed in a college environment, to make recommendations, and to develop models for the appropriate involvement of other educational deliverers and community support organizations;
- o identify the current level of participation of Aboriginal learners in Academic Upgrading Programs with a special focus on present and future partnerships and appropriate program delivery to promote participation;
- o follow up on the CSC *What Works* (2001) report to determine what directions colleges have taken to recruit and promote the successful participation of Ontario Works recipients in Academic Upgrading and determine the possibility of expanding services to this client group;
- o link with the CSC *Provincial Models of Integration* (2005-2006) project to identify appropriate connections with Job Connect, Pre-Apprenticeship and Apprenticeship Programs that can lead to increased access to apprenticeship and higher skilled employment for Academic Upgrading students;
- o explore the potential for expanded online learning for Academic Upgrading students.

Target Population

Identifying how Academic Upgrading can improve the participation and success of underrepresented learners in postsecondary and apprenticeship programs clearly addresses and strengthens Ontario′s education and skills advantage. The underrepresented groups on which much of this project focused (Aboriginal, youth, online learners, and Ontario Works recipients) have both common and unique features in terms of the strategies required to promote their participation in Academic Upgrading and further training.

Colleges have two reasons to examine more carefully the current level of participation of Aboriginal students in Academic Upgrading. One is to identify the opportunities for partnership with Aboriginal programs in the colleges, First Nations Institutes, and the broader community. The second is to inform the development of Academic Upgrading strategies that best serve present and future Aboriginal students.

Updating the profile of the participation of Ontario Works′ (OW) recipients in Academic Upgrading can help colleges identify and explore two related areas: the potential to increase the number of OW recipients who enroll in Academic Upgrading, as well as the number who enroll and actually achieve their personal and educational goals.

With respect to online learners, discussion with OntarioLearn.com may identify the potential for Academic Upgrading to expand into online learning and open a dialogue about how to make that expansion possible. OntarioLearn.com is a consortium of 23 Ontario community colleges who have partnered to develop and deliver more than 700 online courses to thousands of online college students each semester.

Provincially, the number of 16 to 18 year olds (youth) in college programming is minimal, but it is clearly identified as an area for growth. The 1997 *International Adult Literacy Survey: Literacy Skills of Canadian Youth* identified that early school leavers have significantly lower literacy skills. Furthermore, the province′s *Learning to 18* initiative speaks to improving graduation rates of secondary school students. During the past two years (2004 to 2006), some colleges used additional Ontario Basic Skills (OBS) delivery dollars to target service to youth. Other colleges have indicated that they are also interested in providing increased services for 16 to 18 year olds, but they clearly identified that specialized programming and additional supports would be needed if training were to be effective in assisting youth to achieve their employment and training goals.

Methodology

Building on the work already done in the *Snapshot* document, the CSC conducted focus groups at all colleges to determine what materials and supports had been developed, what barriers both the program provider and the clients had encountered, and the overall success of the training for youth, Aboriginal learners and OW recipients. Special emphasis was placed on client success as measured by retention and progress towards their goals of further training and employment, especially in apprenticeship areas. Particular attention was

paid both to the criteria for selection of appropriate students for college Academic Upgrading Programs and to the process for referral of students to other programming available in the community.

Initially, a letter was sent to all college managers outlining the purpose of the project and inviting their participation. Two consultants were each assigned nine colleges to visit. The third consultant visited the remaining six colleges and provided overall project leadership. Prior to starting the focus group process, the three consultants developed interview guides (Appendix A) to be used with managers, program delivery staff, and students. Each consultant scheduled and completed college visits in January and February 2006.

At each college, the consultants conducted focus groups with youth, Aboriginal learners, and OW recipients to determine the following:

   o   why they left school early
   o   why they had returned to a college program
   o   what aspects of programming they had found both frustrating and helpful
   o   what recommendations they would make for improving delivery

Consultants also conducted interviews in varying formats (focus groups, face-to-face, and telephone interviews) with Academic Upgrading managers and program delivery staff to determine what obstacles and challenges they had found (or anticipate finding) as they expand service to these client groups. The interviewers asked college personnel to identify the supports they would find useful and why. College managers had an opportunity to verify the focus group comments immediately after the consultations and again prior to their posting on the CSC's web site.

Consultations by the CSC project team resulted in over 400 pages of data categorized by college and by participant group: students older than 21, students under 21, Aboriginal students, faculty and staff, and managers. At many colleges, however, all three student groups were often represented in one focus group. The following chart summarizes overall participation:

Students Over 21	Students Under 21	Aboriginal Students	Faculty and Staff	Managers	Total Participants	Total Sites
273	145	38	117	37	610	35

A more complete grid illustrating the participation is included as Appendix C.

The project team identified broad themes emerging from the focus groups which individual consultants used to guide a thorough review of the complete data and to prepare summary descriptions which include thematic statements and recommendations. As a result, the following sections constitute the body of the report:

- o Client Profiles and Delivery Strategies
- o Technology-Enhanced Learning and Delivery
- o Financial Assistance and Learner Supports
- o Promotion and Marketing
- o Partnerships
- o Staffing and Resources

The project team also reviewed the data to identify "Highlights of College Delivery", which is included as a separate section.

Throughout the entire project the team held regular meetings (audio conferences) to review progress and manage the data analysis. Of special note was an opportunity to present and discuss preliminary findings to the CSC Executive at their meeting on March 9 and March 10, 2006.

Finally, the project results were made available in an interim report to MTCU and in a final report to the both MTCU and to participating colleges.

Constantinou, P., & Drea, C. (2005) The Devil is in the Details: A Response to the Report of the Postsecondary Review in Ontario. *College Quarterly, 8* (3). Retrieved March 13, 2006, from http://www.senecac.on.ca/quarterly/2005-vol08-num03-summer/constantinou_drea.html

Junor, S., & Usher A. (2004) The Price of Knowledge 2004: Access and Student Finance in Canada. Retrieved March 13, 2006, from http://www.millenniumscholarships.ca/images/Publications/Price_of_Knowledge-2004.pdf

Rae, B. (2005). Ontario: A Leader in Learning. Final Report of the Postsecondary Review Panel. Government of Ontario.

Wynne, K. (2005). Ontario Learns – Strengthening Our Adult Education System. Retrieved March 19, 2006, from http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/adultedreview/report.html 05

Summary of Recommendations

Funding and Accountability

The need to review the current funding allocation model and to revise it based on updated program indicators became evident during the consultation. This is necessary to promote the expansion and enhancement of delivery. There is no doubt that student activity and participation will always be an important part of determining program success and subsequent funding levels. Student Contact Hours (SCHs) are clearly understood and applicable across all sectors. Unfortunately in the College sector, the focus on SCHs has become a barrier to serving people underrepresented in postsecondary as well as deterrents to the development of new initiatives.

6.1   That the MTCU funding allocation model be modified, with college input, to better reflect the efforts required to promote access and success for students, especially those underrepresented in postsecondary programming. This structure should recognize that each student requires numerous and varied services which are not reflected in SCHs accumulated during time spent in class. The current funding model has become a barrier to the development of innovative delivery. It is particularly a barrier to the expansion and delivery of distance education.

There is a need to target funds for specific activities.

1.1   That increased funding for Aboriginal focused programming in both remote communities and urban centres be provided for ongoing recognized Academic Upgrading, which will promote Aboriginal student participation in further education. It is especially important that this upgrading prepares people to participate in Pre-Apprenticeship Programs. Funding should include dollars to support the development of the necessary partnerships required to secure the advice and commitment of local bands and Aboriginal support groups during the planning and recruitment phase of delivery. Learning materials and assessments appropriate to the level of Academic Upgrading, which relate to Aboriginal life experiences and goals, should be identified, developed, and shared as required.

1.6   That MTCU fund programming for youth at all interested colleges which builds on the success of college delivered youth initiatives. This programming should be targeted at young people for whom participation in a secondary school program or alternative high school is not a viable option. This programming should include the development of recruitment strategies, community partnerships, staff expertise, and delivery models designed to meet the unique academic and non-academic (essential skills) learning needs and styles of youth in Academic Upgrading Programs.

1.12   That college upgrading programs be funded adequately to enable them to deliver oral communication classes which address the learning and integration needs of learners.

1.9   That dollars be provided by MTCU to support Academic Upgrading student participation in college Special Needs Services.

2.1   That MTCU fund the development of a provincial initiative involving leaders in online delivery of Academic Upgrading to develop a future-focused strategy to accelerate the online delivery of Academic Upgrading courses across the province. This initiative must include as partners OntarioLearn.com, AlphaPlus, and the colleges. It must also include a mechanism to realistically identify activity and the cost of delivering online programming in consultation with pilots currently taking place at Collège Boréal and Confederation College.

6.5   That MTCU provide the necessary funding to all colleges to enable them to hire adequate personnel to address both the academic and essential skills training required for success by this expanded student demographic. This especially includes a commitment to providing a counselor specific to the Academic Upgrading Program at each college.

There is a need for a new accountability structure which takes into consideration the client groups serviced and realistic program outcomes. It must be recognized that SCHs are not the only criteria for judging program effectiveness. As one manager who had participated in the development of the Job Connect accountability framework described it, "The Field must be involved. An accountability framework must start with a clear understanding of what is being evaluated. It must be clear that the identified measures are actually providing the required feedback. Efficiency (doing well), effectiveness (doing the right thing) and customer service are good indicators of quality service."

3.1   That MTCU create, with college input, a new accountability structure for Academic Upgrading on which funding is based. This new accountability framework must recognize non-academic outcomes including the development of self-esteem and interpersonal skills as well as improved lifestyle choices. The funding should support delivery to students, especially those underrepresented in postsecondary programming as they access, participate in, and leave college Academic Upgrading programs. It must be recognized by MTCU that conducting and documenting follow-up requires significant financial support. As part of this accountability structure, colleges must be prepared to demonstrate annually how they are serving underrepresented learners including the documentation of distance and technology-assisted learning.

3.2   That college student information systems develop a process to track the movement of students from Academic Upgrading programs at one college to postsecondary programming at another college. College registrars and information technology staff must be involved in this process.

Colleges have certainly been able to increase delivery and range of services as a result of the additional funds for Academic Upgrading and technology enhancement which have been made available during the past two years. They recognize that there are often complicated government processes which must be addressed before money is distributed; however, success would be increased with more time for planning and recruitment.

6.2   That any additional funding for colleges be announced early in the annual funding cycle to allow for adequate program planning and student recruitment.

Promotion

Colleges endorse the need for multiple, well understood pathways that lead students to further education and training opportunities and ultimately to employment. Students across the province primarily hear about the program through "word of mouth" and identify Academic Upgrading as "the best kept secret in Ontario".

4.1   That the colleges develop a provincial information strategy to promote Academic Upgrading. This strategy should inform employers about the academic and essential skills training provided to current and potential employees through college Academic Upgrading programs. It should also be aimed at those not currently participating in programming, especially those underrepresented in postsecondary education. This campaign should build on the notion of pathways and include the desirable program features articulated by students in the focus groups. Professional marketing advice should be accessed in the design of this campaign. It should also include the identification of a common provincial name for Academic Upgrading.

4.2   That MTCU continue to actively engage other provincial Ministries and agencies as well as federal service providers to promote the development of coordinated policies and procedures which both expand access and eliminate barriers for all Ontarians who require Academic Upgrading to improve their employment opportunities. These groups include but are not limited to the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Community and Social Services, Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration, Workplace Safety and Insurance Board, Service Canada, Job Connect, as well as the Apprenticeship Branch and Colleges Branch staff of MTCU. The Skills Investment Branch should form an advisory committee to assist in identifying the issues and to provide suggestions for policy improvements based on their firsthand knowledge.

Partnerships

College Academic Upgrading programs have multiple internal and external partnerships which promote the access and success of their students. They look forward to the additional opportunities which current federal and provincial initiatives present.

5.2   That College Academic Upgrading programs have a strong voice in the consultations and implementation of the LMDA/LMPA, particularly with respect to the structure of the planned "employment services and referrals" function.

Community Partnerships

5.3 That community partnerships be developed involving all academic deliverers including apprenticeship, support agencies including Job Connect, and citizens groups dedicated to helping marginalized youth reach their goals.

5.4 That the roles and responsibilities of both the college and the community deliverer be clearly identified and formally agreed to when any component of Academic Upgrading must be provided by a deliverer other than the college.

Internal Partnerships

5.5 That all colleges make a commitment to develop policies which facilitate the movement of Academic Upgrading students into further training including dual and transfer credits. MTCU needs to promote (with senior college management) the importance of developing internal linkages and coordinated programming.

5.6 That colleges commit to referring underprepared postsecondary applicants and postsecondary students in need of academic skills to Academic Upgrading Programs.

5.7 That the sharing of Job Connect, Academic Upgrading and Apprenticeship services by students in all three programs be facilitated. Barriers resulting from current program guidelines in all three programs must be identified and eliminated to ensure equal provincial access for all Ontarians in need of their services. A special focus should be on developing a pool of well prepared individuals for Pre-Apprenticeship and Apprenticeship Programs.

5.8 That Academic Upgrading staff be consulted with and/or involved in the development and delivery of Pre-Apprenticeship Programs at all colleges.

5.9 That the tracking of referrals among Academic Upgrading, Job Connect, Pre-Apprenticeship, and Apprenticeship Programs – regardless of the delivery institution or department – be mandated by MTCU as a program outcome for all of these programs.

5.10 That information packages explaining how Academic Upgrading, Job Connect and Apprenticeship Programs can work together be developed and distributed to front line staff and managers in all three programs. Special emphasis should be given to promoting apprenticeship opportunities and preparation for employment.

Delivery

Francophones

1.2   That Boréal and La Cité work together to develop an action plan to identify and develop the learning materials necessary to prepare students for postsecondary and apprenticeship programming. Development of this action plan should take into consideration the need to link with Pre-Apprenticeship Programs and apprenticeship training, as well as the need for materials relevant to students' life experiences.

1.3   That based on the priorities identified in this action plan, the two Francophone colleges work together to develop and pilot Academic Upgrading learning materials and assessment processes in order to make the best use of limited staffing and to ensure the most effective use of dollars.

Second Language Learners

1.11   That MTCU reconsider and revise the current program guidelines to enable second language learners from across the province to participate in programming which enables them to acquire high level oral language skills (as well as other academic skills) through Academic Upgrading programs, recognizing that these skills are required to succeed in employment or further college training. The need for Franco-Ontarians to have proficiency in English in order to access postsecondary and apprenticeship training, as well as permanent employment, should be recognized and supported as part of this consideration. The development of communication skills must be recognized as a cultural issue which applies to students in all streams: Anglophone, Francophone, Aboriginal, and Deaf.

Employment Focused Strategies

5.11   That a strategy be developed to support apprentices experiencing academic difficulty during in-school training as well as apprentices preparing to write their Certificate of Qualification examination. This strategy must link upgrading and apprenticeship programming.

5.12   That Essential Skills Resource Centres be established across the province based on the model developed at Fanshawe College.

Support to Students

1.5 That Anglophone delivery agencies be encouraged to make students educated in French aware of the advantages of participating in French upgrading programming and facilitate their referral to available programs. A critical component of this strategy is to make the research which advises this course of action known to Anglophone programs.

1.10 That adjustments to the entry requirement of grade 12 or equivalent be made for deaf students to enable these students to participate in the apprenticeship system. Both the Apprenticeship Branch and employers need to be engaged in the discussion.

1.7 That staff serving youth be hired who understand the needs of this particular client group and appreciate the energy which they bring to the classroom.

1.13 That the criteria for Mature Student status for postsecondary college admission be modified to take into account recent changes in the broader educational system.

1.8 That colleges make all students aware (during orientation activities) of all supports provided by the college and the community. This especially includes Special Needs and Aboriginal Services.

3.3 That MTCU continue to engage the Ministry of Community and Social Services (MCSS) in discussions which focus on the barriers which MCSS' policies present for the successful participation of first generation learners in postsecondary education. These barriers include levels of financial support for students in Academic Upgrading, especially participation requirements and deductions of earnings from monthly benefits, as well as the moving of OW recipients to OSAP during postsecondary participation. There is also the need to redefine "shortest route to employment" to read "the most effective route to long-term, sustainable employment".

3.4 That policy be created to ensure that no qualified Academic Upgrading student is denied access to further education or training because of financial hardship.

3.5 That MTCU review and update OSBP funding to reflect current costs.

3.6 That a time-limited task force of college representatives come together to identify barriers to student access and success, and make recommendations for improvement for inclusion in LMDA/LMPA and provincial consultations. This includes assessing the true level of living and educational supports required by students in Academic Upgrading and the most efficient and provincially consistent process of approving clients for college upgrading programs.

5.1   That Academic Upgrading students be allowed to access all the college ancillary services available at a particular location. This requires an understanding that there are differences between main campus and satellite locations.

Staff Development and Resources

Colleges are enthusiastic about increasing delivery to students traditionally under-represented in postsecondary programming and are confident that with training and resources they will successfully meet the needs of an expanded client group.

6.3   That resources be provided to colleges to allow them to hire new faculty and staff and train existing personnel in the areas of non-academic program content and delivery. Employees in other areas of the college with relevant expertise can be utilized to provide this training. Professional development must help teachers address the needs of youth and learning disabled students, as well as those with physical challenges and mental health issues. Professional development focused on distance and technology-assisted learning is also required.

6.4   That the CSC facilitate a process for colleges to share information about staffing models, both currently in place and anticipated, which enable them to deliver the required program outcomes in a cost-effective manner.

Research and Development

Programs identified areas requiring further research.

1.4   That a study be conducted to gain a clearer idea of Francophone student needs as well as the capacity of the broader delivery system to address these needs. This study should clearly identify pressures on the system resulting from the relocation of people from Quebec as well as immigration from French-speaking countries.

1.14   That further research (primary and secondary) is required to assist college Academic Upgrading programs in developing effective orientation (front-end) and ongoing (integrated) programming which addresses the learning outcomes often referred to as essential skills or life skills. Further research is especially needed into the academic and personal needs of students under 19 so that colleges can respond with appropriate and effective programming.

5.13   That colleges explore the potential for implementing Academic Upgrading program advisory committees to include participation from postsecondary and apprenticeship programs, employers, sponsoring agencies and community partners

Client Profiles
and Delivery Strategies

Recurring Themes

1. Students in all focus groups expressed their appreciation of the respectful and individualized approach to students in college Academic Upgrading. They identified gains in self-esteem and self-confidence as important.

2. All students (mature, Aboriginal, youth) indicated that having a sense of belonging, often described as being part of a family or community, is important.

3. The negative impact of various bureaucracies (college, government, and referring agencies) on access and completion rates of all students was identified as significant.

4. The need was identified for more and different program resources. These involve both human and material resources, particularly in non-academic areas, to improve success for younger students.

5. The need for improved information and referral links with apprenticeship and Job Connect was highlighted.

6. Demand for services for Aboriginal students varies greatly from community to community, but it is particularly needed in isolated northern communities where there are few other alternatives.

7. The Aboriginal community is difficult to reach, particularly in large urban communities like the Greater Toronto Area (GTA).

8. Any initiatives for Aboriginal students must involve consultation with those representing Aboriginal interests. Linking with internal (college) and external (community) support organizations is critical to recruitment and student success.

9. Availability of age and culturally appropriate learning resources is a concern for all students. It is particularly the case at Francophone colleges where there are limited staff members to develop materials and where much that is commercially available is European.

10. There is an increasing need for distance delivery, particularly for programming in French.

11. Appropriate referral of all students to the best programming is essential. Appropriate referral of Francophone students to Francophone programs is especially critical.

12. Current LBS/OBS guidelines discourage the participation of second language learners in programming at both Anglophone and Francophone colleges.

13. There is a need for more oral communication classes which also help people integrate into Canadian society at both Anglophone and Francophone colleges.

14. There is a lack of funding for learning supports for students with physical, mental and learning challenges, and this impacts on successful program participation. Increasing numbers of these students are accessing both Academic Upgrading and

postsecondary programming and putting a strain on Special Needs Services. The demand has also increased the need for professional development for classroom staff.

15. Youth (under 19) are a very different client group for college programs. A significantly different kind of program is required for young people in the GTA and young people in the rest of the province.

16. Should programming for youth be integrated or segregated? What are the essential components of the program? What is the ideal level of staffing and resources for this group? What are realistic student outcomes for this group?

17. Professional development is required for staff to better understand and develop programming for youth.

18. Youth's familiarity with reading and technology presents both opportunities and challenges.

19. The Mature Student guidelines for admission to college postsecondary programs present serious systemic barriers to accessing postsecondary programming.

20. An increasing number of home-schooled students are enrolling in college upgrading programs to document their learning or to address gaps that will allow them to move on successfully to further training.

Summary of Findings

This section begins with an overview of the findings related to Client Profiles and Delivery Strategies organized into three areas: reasons for enrolling, source of income, and delivery strategies. Following these general comments there is a discussion of more specific findings that apply to five profiles of Academic Upgrading learners:

- o Aboriginal
- o Francophone
- o learners with oral communication needs
- o learners with physical, mental or learning challenges
- o youth

Reasons for Enrolling

While the focus group interviews of frontline delivery staff and management asked for comments on several groups of students (Aboriginal, youth, Ontario Works recipients, and online learners), the educational profile that emerged for all groups in college Academic Upgrading Programs revealed the same three patterns. Many students are in upgrading because they have not completed secondary school; others have completed secondary school but have not completed specific courses or achieved the grades needed for entry into

postsecondary college programs; still others have completed high school several years ago and need to refresh their knowledge and skills. Student responses also supported these three categories.

A related issue of helping students for whom English is a second language surfaced frequently because solutions or best practices created within the context of college upgrading continue to conflict with eligibility, funding guidelines, or both. The reality, in most cases, is that these students have no other program to go to that will provide the language training to prepare them for postsecondary, and college upgrading is seen by them as their preferred and best option. Often, they have completed lower levels of English as a Second Language (ESL) in college, school board, or community-based programs and need to achieve higher levels of language proficiency than are available in ESL programs. Because they are planning to move on to postsecondary programming, they want to achieve the necessary levels of language proficiency in a college setting. In many cases, these students need Academic Upgrading subject matter as well as high-level ESL.

Source of Income

The 2004-2005 year-end statistics indicate that 30% of LBS students and 44% of OBS students are employed. These students are juggling both work and school. This presents definite challenges to college upgrading programs. It has resulted in an increasing number of part-time participants which affects student contact hours. A part-time student generates an equal amount of administrative involvement as does a full-time student but generates less than 50% of the contact hours.

Increased numbers of employed students have also resulted in a need to offer programming at times which accommodate students' work schedules. This has resulted in an increase in evening programming as well as initiatives to provide weekend delivery, both of which contribute to higher delivery costs which may not be covered by the contact hours generated. At Seneca College, there is an after hours strategy (4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.) which enables workers to drop into programming on their way home from work. At Cambrian College, the needs of shift workers with changing work schedules have been addressed by enabling students to participate in day or evening programming on a day-to-day basis. The Niagara College initiative to provide weekend delivery is being watched with interest by other colleges. A number of employed students indicated they would be very interested in participating in online and distance delivery if it were available.

A common element of discussion was the range of influences that have a negative impact on access. Many colleges stated that learners 16 to 18 years of age were admitted to Academic Upgrading as exceptions only (the 10% rule). To qualify for admission to postsecondary as a mature student, applicants must be 19 years of age and out of school for a year. Also, the support of Service Canada (EI) and OW for their clients' participation in Academic Upgrading varies greatly across Ontario. Finally, the withdrawal of OW support and the resulting debt accrued while depending on OSAP during postsecondary programs is seen as a difficulty for many on OW. (Financial challenges are discussed more thoroughly on pages 43 to 47.)

Delivery Strategies

In the academic area, practices that worked well in the eyes of many people interviewed were found in most, if not all, colleges. They include the following:

- o individualized student action plans based on needs and goals
- o upgrading curriculum content linked to postsecondary and apprenticeship goals
- o flexible timetabling especially for students with work and family responsibilities
- o one-on-one classroom assistance and its inherent confidentiality
- o pacing that suits the learners' situations
- o immediate response to student needs

Negotiated and monitored progress is acknowledged by students, delivery staff, and management as a key strategy. Close links with the broader college community, especially counseling and disabilities services, were also cited as having a very positive impact on the success of students. At satellite locations, the availability of these broader services is usually dependent on the size of the operation and the staff complement located at the campus.

In the non-academic area, small group processes that have been found to help students from a variety of backgrounds prepare for more rigorous work in Academic Upgrading and beyond include those listed below:

- o helping students build comfort and confidence for themselves within the college
- o establishing or confirming academic and vocational goals
- o developing a personal academic prescription based on their further training goal
- o identifying each student's individual academic level in required subjects
- o helping students establish support groups
- o introducing students to available college services

In some colleges, these are orientation processes conducted prior to participation in the academic program (referred to later as *front-end* delivery) in blocks of time that vary from one to twelve weeks, depending upon the target group and their needs. At other colleges, orientation sessions are scheduled during the delivery of academic subjects and integrated with those subjects (referred to later as *integrated* delivery).

In the focus groups, there were frequent references to program components that appear to be dedicated to non-academic outcomes and delivered front-end:

- o goal orientation (two weeks) at Algonquin
- o focused and much shorter orientations at George Brown and Cambrian designed to get learners connected to curriculum and committed to participation
- o Personal Career Development (twelve weeks, half days) at Confederation
- o Employment/Training Readiness (eight weeks) and Focus for Change (twelve weeks) at Conestoga
- o Future Directions (five weeks) at Mohawk

It has been suggested that small group processes like these may be effective ways to determine if students are ready to work in more self-directed academic classes. This may be a way to deal with concerns that Academic Upgrading classes might become a "dumping ground" for all students who don't succeed in high school. Success in front-end programming could be established as a requirement for entry into broader, academically focused programming.

Numerous colleges report that the integrated approach involves work with counselors, student advisors, and faculty. The Academic and Career Entrance (ACE) Self-Management and Self-Direction course was also cited as an important part of the integrated approach.

The acquisition of staffing and resources for the non-academic components is seen as a challenge. Contemporary-minded (younger) faculty and counselors/advisors are seen as critical for successful delivery, particularly for the growing youth population. Where the front-end approach is used, people with group facilitation and life skills training and experience are seen as essential resources for the success of these activities. Where programming is delivered at main campus locations, inclusion in all college services and social activities was cited as desirable.

The online learner category generated the least discussion with comments in two categories: distance delivery and classroom use of computer-based resources. Students who favoured distance delivery because they already had substantial learning experience with technology were in a significant minority. Comments ranged from, "It would be good that I could work online if my kids got sick," to, "If I have a problem, there is no one there to help." The experience and the consensus among management, staff and students was that online learning is a good option for use in conjunction with classroom delivery where staff are available to help. AlphaRoute was generally described as inappropriate for learners at the upper level of delivery. There was support for the idea of online science materials; however, staff emphasized the need for time and dollars to identify and develop materials. (Technology-enhanced delivery is discussed more thoroughly on pages 35 to 41.)

Aboriginal Learners

The demand for specialized delivery of programming to Aboriginal learners varies greatly from college to college. It is affected by proximity to Aboriginal communities, concentration of Aboriginal people in urban settings, and availability of alternate programming offered by Aboriginal organizations. A major complication is also the great variance in band funding policies for postsecondary and non-postsecondary education. It was difficult to get a firm idea about Aboriginal participation because data is not collected, and many Aboriginal learners do not self-disclose. Most of the northern colleges as well as St. Lawrence, Durham, Fleming, Georgian, Fanshawe, Lambton, Loyalist, Mohawk and Niagara identified either a significant Aboriginal participation in programming or community potential to increase that participation. George Brown indicated a need to reach out to address the needs of Aboriginal learners in Toronto.

Aboriginal participants in the focus groups identified the same reasons as others for leaving school and for their subsequent return. They are early school leavers who want to improve their financial circumstances by accessing better jobs through further education and training. To a much greater extent than non-Aboriginal students, they identified the importance of being role models for their families, especially their children. They often expressed a desire to acquire the necessary skills to enable them to provide leadership in their home communities. They are tired of welfare and minimum wage jobs and are making or have made significant lifestyle changes. One young father from Thunder Bay described the reality for many as "grief before you heal." Upgrading is clearly seen an initial step towards healing.

The Aboriginal learning environment has changed significantly in the province. At one time many colleges had Aboriginal schools which delivered Aboriginal-specific postsecondary programming, but there has been a decline in this focus. Colleges are tending to deliver common postsecondary programming with an Aboriginal specialization. Many colleges have, however, retained Aboriginal student support structures, like Negahweewin at Confederation and Wabnode at Cambrian. Other colleges continue to address Aboriginal needs through staffing, for example, by providing an Aboriginal counselor in Special Needs Services at Sault College, or through specialized college departments like Aboriginal Studies and Liberal Arts at Georgian and the Aboriginal Learning Unit at Canadore.

Delivery outside the college has also changed with the development of Aboriginal high schools and postsecondary institutions. In North Bay and Chatham, Aboriginal high schools have been established. There are Aboriginal postsecondary institutions located in the following communities: Thunder Bay, North Bay, Deseronto, Cornwall, Manitoulin Island, Fort Frances and Grand River. All of theses are members of the Aboriginal Institutes Consortium (a coordinating body). Some have articulation agreements in place with various colleges. The Anishinabek Educational Institute (AEI), for example, has an agreement with three colleges: Canadore, Cambrian, and St. Clair. AEI has campuses at Nipissing, Fort Frances, and Munsee-Delaware First Nations. Others, like the First Nations Technical Institute (FNTI) in eastern Ontario, offer upgrading as well as postsecondary training. Academic Upgrading Programs have also been established in Aboriginal communities with varying degrees of success. Aboriginal students in focus groups expressed a desire to participate in the "real" and "recognized" educational experiences available through colleges.

Addressing employer needs in the far north, the James Bay Coast, and Hearst has become the driving force to increase the availability of Academic Upgrading. There is a demand for Academic Upgrading to enable people in these communities to successfully participate in the Pre-Apprenticeship Programs required to supply the employee needs of the DeBeers Victor Diamond Mine and Eagle's Earth tourist attraction. One man from the James Bay Coast described those still in their home communities as "waiting to learn".

Individual band educational officers currently make local decisions on academic packages to be used in the community. Consequently, there are a variety of programs in place in isolated communities across northern Ontario varying from the GED to commercial and

private school packages as well as Independent Learning Centre (ILC) materials. Many of these do not qualify people for the next step of training, nor are they offered on a consistent, ongoing basis. There needs to be one consistent program available in all communities throughout the year which is linked to postsecondary and Pre-Apprenticeship admission requirements. This model is in place in Grand River where Niagara College curriculum is used. A similar arrangement is being considered by another local band for delivery in fall 2006 through Fanshawe College. It was reported that many Aboriginal Band Councils recognize only high school credit and postsecondary programs as eligible for their financial support; this is seen as a significant disincentive to the participation of Aboriginal students in college upgrading. Other bands, recognizing that students need academic skills and documentation to access further education, do support Academic Upgrading participation. Like other organizations, bands have a defined allocation of money, and if it is spent on academic preparation, it is not available for postsecondary participation.

Access for Aboriginal students also seems to hinge on factors that relate to community connections. Providing Academic Upgrading programming in rural communities or providing transportation to program sites depends on funding for the expense of such initiatives. There is a history of attempts to run programs, but a model for continuous and successful activity seems elusive.

Focus group participants identified a number of important principles for the expansion of programming to Aboriginal students. First, it is necessary to develop any programming based on consultation with local Aboriginal leaders. Although a college may have identified a need in a community, this need must also be recognized and supported by those local leaders. Next, materials and educational standards must meet the same requirements as delivery to other students. Culturally appropriate materials and program options might attract more students. The AlphaPlus Centre has a very large number of Aboriginal resources, including research reports, student materials, and National Film Board videos which colleges can borrow for extended periods. Ningwakwee Learning Press is also a good source of material.

Effective marketing strategies must be developed. Focus groups conducted by Durham College would indicate that traditional outreach methods are not effective. Aboriginal students across the province did suggest the best way to connect is through information distributed by bands and Friendship Centres – any place where Aboriginal students might seek support or assistance such as health centres, OW offices, and daycare centres. They described them as "places where people go to make changes."

Once Aboriginal students are in programming, it is necessary to make them aware of internal Aboriginal college supports as quickly as possible. These include counseling, student centres, and cultural activities and gatherings. It is also necessary to give them the opportunity to acquire learning using culturally appropriate materials, especially in the areas of communications and self-management. Aboriginal students did identify that they like upgrading because it is an adult environment where "you can work at your own pace". They identified that they "feel like they belong". Having other Aboriginal students in the program raises the comfort level. Students in mixed focus groups were very interested in Aboriginal student descriptions of their cultural and social backgrounds, indicating that upgrading classrooms could play a significant role in promoting cross-cultural understanding.

George Brown College has identified a significant number of potential Aboriginal students in the downtown Toronto core, but "extensive outreach, consultation and communication are required to build this network". It is necessary to be sensitive about how and with whom to communicate the importance of Academic Upgrading. Building a relationship with the urban Aboriginal population is a "long term commitment". Seneca College identified that although there is little demand in their area, they do have an Aboriginal upgrading graduate who has won the Woman of Distinction Award from the YWCA. The March 8, 2006 award announcement and subsequent publicity campaign are expected to generate interest in the Aboriginal community.

Francophone Learners

Managers, staff, and students at the two Francophone colleges, La Cité Collegiale and Collège Boréal, identified all the same delivery issues as those identified at the Anglophone Colleges. They also provided additional insight into the delivery environments which are unique to them.

The Anglophone colleges have been able to move forward quickly with the full implementation of the curriculum delivered at the college entry level because there are 22 colleges developing and sharing materials. They have a large staffing pool from which to draw. In addition, there are numerous North American resources from which they can choose. The two Francophone colleges have a staffing pool of less than 10 and have identified that there are few Canadian resources in French appropriate to adult learners. CentreFora has been very helpful in finding and ordering materials, but just as Anglophone colleges often have to rely on American resources, the Francophone colleges must turn to France. There are significant cultural and language differences between the Canadian and European learning experience. Translating English materials is, therefore, not appropriate. Faculty identified that they don't have sufficient time to develop or even to search for appropriate materials.

There is a particular need for materials at the college entry level in the areas of science and mathematics. It was identified that the current curriculum is written too formally with an excessive emphasis on theory. Many of the Francophone students expressed a strong interest in finding out more about careers in apprenticeship. It is important that materials (especially in the Apprenticeship Math and Physics courses) be developed to ensure success in Pre-Apprenticeship Programs and the in-school components of apprenticeship training.

There is also a need to develop learning materials which clearly show the students how the curriculum is relevant to their lives. The learning needs to be applied; for example, topics like finances and taxes which are included in the ACE Core Math and Business Math courses need to be developed for use by the Francophone colleges. There is a need for La Cité and Boréal to work together to develop "skills for jobs" materials.

Provision of Anglais Langue Seconde is critical to the success of students at these two colleges. "Current FBO guidelines are ambiguous and restrictive," resulting in limited access

to English training. It must be taken into consideration that English proficiency is required for admission to postsecondary programs. Students, staff and managers all identified that good English oral communication skills are required to secure employment in Ontario.

The provision of language training is further complicated by the mix of students in classes. There is a combination of Franco-Ontarians who have competent English skills, individuals from Quebec who have an understanding of Canadian culture but very weak English skills, and immigrants from Haiti and Africa with little understanding of Canadian culture and only the most basic, if any, English facility. All of the focus groups, but particularly the students, expressed an immediate need for oral communication opportunities. Immigrants, especially, need classes which promote "integration into Canadian culture through language development and academic preparation." Boréal has introduced a Linguistics Centre meant to improve English proficiency for all college students. Academic Upgrading students will be able to access the services of the Centre, but it is primarily mandated to serve the needs of postsecondary students. Academic Upgrading students require intensive ongoing opportunities to develop their oral skills in English.

Concern was expressed at both colleges that Francophones who were able to speak English but had received their primary and secondary school education in French were being referred to Anglophone rather than Francophone upgrading programs, despite the studies which demonstrate that they would be more successful in a Francophone training environment. Often, referring agencies such as OW see English language training as "a more viable option for their clients". In addition, Anglophone upgrading programs tend not to refer Francophone students with adequate English skills to Francophone programs.

Francophones from across the province, especially those in English communities where there is no French programming available, have been making inquiries about the availability of distance delivered programming to prepare for admission to postsecondary. Boréal and La Cité have distance delivery platforms in place, but they are different. AlphaRoute materials were identified as helpful at the lower LBS levels. La Cité has already developed some courses for online delivery (e.g. biology), but further development costs are prohibitive, especially given the current student contact hour funding structure. The Boréal platform allows considerable flexibility for posting materials and assignments as well as tracking student progress and accurately determining time spent online. At Boréal, upgrading students' familiarity with this portal is seen as critical as it is used extensively by postsecondary teachers to post lecture notes and assignments. Both colleges identified a need for stronger tutorial services in the community at the more advanced levels to adequately support expanded distance delivery. (For a more complete discussion of technology-assisted delivery, see pages 35 to 41.)

Like students in other colleges, there was little enthusiasm for distance delivery from learners currently in Francophone programming. They expressed concerns about the need to remain focused and the need for face-to-face interaction with teachers and other students. One employed learner who was at an advanced academic level with a clear postsecondary goal did identify that working online would accelerate her progress. It was also identified that providing the online option to students during the summer, when they take leaves to be with their children, would avoid interruptions to their studies and promote success.

Boréal and La Cité have unique demands on their time. It is important that they participate in activities initiated by La Coalition to support Francophone delivery. They have also expressed the importance of participating in College Sector Committee initiatives which focus on college delivery in order to remain informed, involved, and current in the broader college community. In addition, at Boréal where there are 12 delivery sites, participating in LSP activities is significant. All this collaboration is seen as critical to the success of programming, but it puts a significant strain on colleges which do not have a lot of staff.

Learners With Oral Communication Needs

Addressing the oral communication needs of some learners is a much more significant issue in areas where there is a high concentration of immigrants, especially the GTA. However, the issue of persons whose first language is not English is found in varying degrees at all colleges across the province. In the same way that Francophone colleges are dealing with in-migration from Quebec, many Anglophone colleges are also servicing these clients. (The issue of providing Anglais Langue Seconde is discussed in more detail under Francophone Colleges.)

The problem is one of availability of programming and development of appropriate MTCU guidelines to ensure provincial accessibility to programming. Current guidelines make it clear that funding to support Academic Upgrading is not for the provision of English as a Second Language training. Unfortunately, in many communities (especially in northern Ontario), there are no (or very limited) ESL opportunities. There is also the issue of the gap between English-language proficiency demonstrated at the end of programming in Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) and the requirements to succeed in postsecondary and apprenticeship training. In the absence of alternatives, students have enrolled in college upgrading programs.

This presents two problems. The first is interpretation of the MTCU guidelines regarding eligibility. If the student has a literacy issue (i.e. the individual has not graduated from secondary school in her/his home country), s/he is eligible. If it is purely a language proficiency issue, the individual is not eligible. The guidelines do not make this differentiation for other participants whose need is preparation to succeed in further training or employment. Whether the participant has achieved a secondary school diploma or even further education is not a consideration. It is also necessary to realize that many of these language learners are not new immigrants. They have been in the country for a prolonged period of time, have worked, and are now facing the same challenges as other mature students (i.e. lay offs or injuries which require a career change). "I am here because I came to Canada 25 years ago and had no chance to go to school, and this program made it possible for me to go to school and learn."

The second problem is providing adequate opportunities to develop the oral communication skills of those people deemed to be eligible for Academic Upgrading, especially where they

form a very small percentage of the participants. Learner participants in the focus groups were very clear about their needs. In their words, they "need a better communication course to help immigrants get started"; "need to learn English, about Canadian culture and be able to function in Canada"; "need to upgrade my education to Canadian standards"; and "need upgrading for employment". They were eloquent in describing the difference Academic Upgrading has made in their lives. "I came to Canada six years ago; this was the first time I could vote. I feel good; I was able to participate." Another commented," For the first time in 25 years and after I became a Canadian citizen, I could vote and I understood the different parties' speeches."

The interpretation of current guidelines is not allowing equitable access for students in all communities. Many managers were reluctant to even open discussion on this issue for fear that strategies and opportunities which they had identified to meet the learning needs of these clients would no longer be available to them. It is time to eliminate the artificial distinction between literacy and language for second language learners for whom an LBS/Academic Upgrading program is the best (or in many communities the only) choice. It is also important that strong referral and delivery linkages be established with providers of English for Academic Purposes and LINC programs delivered both within the college and the community. Internal college partnerships with postsecondary remediation programs and international studies must also be developed to avoid unproductive competition for students.

Learners With Physical, Mental, and Learning Challenges

While this summary concentrates on learners with physical and learning challenges, there is also an increasing need for assistance to students with mental health issues. More students with learning disabilities are accessing programming, and it is anticipated that numbers will grow as increasing numbers of younger people are enrolled. Special Needs Centres, although they were developed and funded primarily to serve the needs of postsecondary students, have provided assistance to upgrading students. As the numbers of students requiring assistance in both postsecondary and Academic Upgrading increase, there is an expectation that these services will no longer be readily available.

Managers, faculty and staff in Academic Upgrading have indicated a need for more information about learning disabilities as well as a process for determining the necessary accommodations which students require. They made it clear that it is not enough to just detect the presence of a disability; there must be strategies and technology to address the problems. The strategy must include providing informed advice to students. The cost of learning disabilities assessment can be prohibitive. At Northern College, delivery staff worked with the Special Needs Centre to develop a modified, cost effective assessment tool to provide early identification of problems. At Fleming, staff suggested that money should go directly to students with disabilities to provide access to appropriate high and low tech resources.

Learners with disabilities identified that the only thing that might cause them to withdraw from programming would be if their disabilities became too overwhelming and help was not available. They also indicated that the current method of flexibly-paced, learner-centred delivery helps them manage the day-to-day challenges of being in school. They did identify a need for more tutors and interpreters. Deaf students expressed an interest in distance delivered programming.

Mohawk and George Brown Colleges are funded through MTCU to provide services to deaf students. George Brown has identified a number of concerns and suggestions for future directions. In many other colleges, deaf students are participating in regular classrooms on an individual basis which presents special challenges to them and their teachers.

There is a great deal to be learned from the expertise of George Brown and Mohawk in delivering Academic Upgrading to deaf students. All delivery is done through American Sign Language (ASL). Programs must understand that English is a second language for deaf students. Students start at a lower level and usually progress as far as LBS 4. They would like to progress to LBS 5 and college entry programming, but there are no teachers with the signing and academic skills available. Learning in an environment which is dedicated to deaf students creates a sense of inclusion, and those students expressed it well: "It is 'our' community." They also describe a classroom environment where teachers can sign as "cool". Because teachers are also deaf, they serve as role models. George Brown has expanded this concept to help establish an ASL club. Students from all George Brown programs become part of this community.

One teacher in the Deaf stream stated that, "What's not 'cool' is going to a regular class with an interpreter where the deaf students can not communicate with others through signing. They can't engage in unmediated conversation. Learning is passive. A serious barrier in a "regular" class is trying to write notes and watch the interpreter at the same time. Both processes are visual." This sentiment is echoed by a deaf learner in a mainstream (i.e. regular) class at a different college who expressed frustration both for himself and his teacher who was trying to learn to sign language so she could effectively teach. There is also a lack of understanding on the part of teachers in mainstream classrooms that the deaf have their own culture.

In addition, there is a need to help expand employment opportunities for the deaf. Most deaf students are only able to find employment in family businesses. Apprenticeship would be an excellent fit for deaf students because they tend to be hands-on, visual learners with strong essential skills. Unfortunately, they rarely achieve a secondary school diploma or equivalent. It is important to convince employers to allow deaf applicants to demonstrate their English and essential skills at a "standard appropriate to the trade" rather than as a grade 12 or equivalent credential.

Youth

Discussion around the issue of increased participation of young people in programming was vigorous in all the focus groups. Colleges have noticed a significant increase in the number of young people under 19 in programs and are anticipating an increase in 16 to18 year olds as a result of such provincial initiatives as *Learning to 18* and *Reaching Higher.* There has been extensive research about the characteristics and needs of this group. Terms have been developed to describe them: "millennial learners", "generation Y", and "YALLES" (Young Adults with Low Levels of Education). College staff identified other less philosophical descriptors which also capture the essence of these learners and their attitudes: "hats and headphones", "gadgets and gizmos" and "crippled without a calculator". They are not "us" at a younger age; they are simply different human beings. As colleges design programs and services for youth, they need to listen more carefully to identify the needs of those younger learners and less to what "we" think can or should be done for them.

The term *millennial learner* is discussed in an online interview with Dr. Oblinger, Vice President, Educause. She describes five characteristics of the millennial learner:

1. They are digital, meaning they are really comfortable with using digital devices (they just pick them up and use them) but not necessarily well versed in the theory of those same devices.
2. They are constantly connected through some technology with someone somewhere.
3. They are experiential – they prefer to learn by doing it themselves.
4. They have an enormous appetite for immediacy – waiting 2 minutes for a response is already too long.
5. They are actually quite social. They have a digital community which, in part, explains their need for constant connection.

She continues to describe how educators should respond to the millennial learner:

1. We must be aware of and overcome our comfort differences. We are very comfortable with our traditional in-class learners, but we do not acknowledge our discomfort with the millennial learner.
2. We need to recognize that the millennial learner works in a media rich environment; words (text) may not be their preferred means of communication.
3. We need to find ways to engage and motivate them while at the same time ensuring they experience a full range of educational outcomes (i.e. text-based material may not be a preferred medium, but they still have to learn reading and document use).
4. Learning must complement their naturally social, problem-based, experiential world.

Finally, Dr. Oblinger noted that all people who experience the digital world come to slowly acquire some of the characteristics of the millennial learner. A simple example is a preference to sit at a keyboard to "think through" a writing exercise, problem or issue.

Clearly, the growing college youth population fits the millennial learner description. Further, the concerns heard from faculty and staff and some of the suggestions they made about

dealing with youth, technology and online learning have a basis in Dr. Oblinger's comments. (For more information on Dr. Oblinger's work, see http://www.uoit.ca/teachingandlearning/contact/nov05/oblinger.mp3)

Currently two colleges in the GTA offer specialized or segregated youth programming: Centennial and George Brown. St. Lawrence and Mohawk Colleges are developing targeted programming for this group for delivery in 2006-2007. At other colleges that accept students under 19, those students are integrated with older students. Currently numbers are small, but any increases will necessitate the development of specialized strategies for youth programming. There are still a number of colleges that are under the mistaken impression that they are only to admit students under 19 as an exception.

Youth have the same reasons for enrolling as do older students. They have not graduated from high school, do not have the subjects they need for admission to the postsecondary programs they want, or they need to improve their grades. Like older students, they are seeking to improve their employment opportunities through education. Unlike older students who frequently express a desire for a more satisfying job, they tend to emphasize the desire to make a lot of money – now!

They are a very diverse group. Challenges include but are not limited to the following:

- o frequent incidence of learning disability
- o lack of goals
- o difficulty managing expectations (i.e. I passed math in high school but your test says I have to do a lot of my math over again; I just want my grade 12 but I didn't know it would take this much work.)
- o single parenthood
- o involvement with the legal system
- o previous negative high school experiences (being banned from high schools due to zero tolerance policies; being marginalized and bullied)
- o lack of parental or financial support, or both
- o low academic ability (although it was generally agreed that by and large they have the ability to succeed in further training)

Most delivery staff and management agree that the above are common characteristics of many older students as well.

Challenges of youth related to their young age and to having recently dropped out or been "kicked out" of school, were cited as follows:

- o inability to be self directed
- o immature behaviour (disruptive, noisy, restless, inattentive)
- o need for discipline
- o lack of commitment
- o unrealistic expectations

A number of delivery staff and managers reported that many of these students' needs were

higher in the non-academic areas of essential skills, self-direction, and self-management than they were in academic areas. Many younger students interviewed agreed that these challenges existed for them and that the college environment and program practices were just what they needed. For example, upgrading assessment and placement testing provides a real indication of where they stand academically relative to their chosen goals. Along with the colleges' performance expectations, they felt that they were being treated as individuals and with respect.

All the young people interviewed identified that returning to a high school program, even in an adult day school, was not a viable option. They described it as "going back to school" and perceived it as a regressive step. Going to college is seen as moving forward. One teacher captured it in the youth's own vernacular: "They SO don't want to be in high school!"

Home-schooled students have emerged across the province as a significant client group needing documentation of their learning in order to gain access to further training. Home-schooled individuals present some unique problems. "They come to the program for confirmation of their preparedness for college, yet many have a much lower academic level than they think they do. Explaining that home schooling hasn't prepared them for college is a difficult conversation to manage."

Delivery staff as well as mature student focus groups identified that any increase in the numbers of youth would necessitate separate delivery environments. Mature students identified that youth behaviours, especially the level of noise which they bring to the learning environment, affect concentration levels for others. Some youth identified that they need noise to learn. This is a critical difference in learning style. Some colleges permit students to use portable music players with headphones as long as the sound is not disturbing others.

There was general agreement from mature students, faculty, staff, and managers that separate classrooms and different processes are needed if youth participation increases. The following criteria were identified:

- o   an intensive front-end orientation process and program which stresses appropriate college learning behaviours, respect for others, and goal setting
- o   pre-admission screening to ensure they have the necessary maturity and that external barriers have been addressed
- o   more availability of immediate counseling
- o   identification of shorter, and hence, more attainable goals
- o   increased use of technology for program delivery ("gadgets and gizmos")
- o   stricter attendance and progress rules
- o   a more structured program
- o   schedules that accommodate shorter attention spans
- o   smaller classes with teacher-led instruction included, as well as younger staff
- o   more realistic program outcomes which include changed lifestyles as well as progress to further training or employment as measures of success

Separation from older students was not how youth saw their needs being addressed. They are aware that their socialization and restlessness impact on the classroom, but they don't see it as a serious problem. They commented that older people talk too. They like being in mixed-aged classrooms: "Having a mixture of ages makes it less like school and more adult, more like a family." Many of these students felt marginalized in high school and they resented the "drama of high school life" and the cliques of which they were not a part. In colleges they feel they are treated as equals, not judged by other students, and they feel accepted as part of the learning community. The identification of the college environment being like a family or community came up in many focus groups.

On the other hand, some adult students disliked that youth brought the high school attitude with them described as "gossiping, socializing, challenging authority, inappropriate dress and appearance, lack of goals." Some adult students were very blunt: "They don't belong here." Other adults welcomed them to their classrooms. Frequently both groups identified that "maturity is not a factor of age." Older students recognized that many of these young people have had life experiences which have resulted in their having to grow up much faster. Adults saw themselves as role models who could help youth understand the "real" world and help them adjust so they wouldn't be back in school in their 30s and 40s. Young people also saw the adults as role models, but expressed it in a slightly different way: "I don't want to end up like them – old with no career."

There is also the issue of programming that addresses the needs of youth within specific communities. This is particularly true of areas in the GTA. Colleges delivering in these areas have engaged the broader communities formally and informally. Centennial College program counselors have become recruiters, going to the housing developments to reach students directly. The Centennial program has received considerable media coverage and has been recognized by municipal and provincial politicians as making a significant long term difference in Scarborough. George Brown College has made a long term commitment (10 to 12 years) to work with the Regent Park social housing project to ensure youth from this development have the skills to participate in the rebuilding and rejuvenation of Regent Park. Seneca College collaborates with the Jane-Finch Concerned Citizens Association located at the Yorkgate campus. A joint advisory committee of educators, agencies and citizens focuses on community outreach and development of youth employment initiatives especially Pre-Apprenticeship, tutoring and mentoring. They also have a partnership with the Two-Wheel Drive community group; this group teaches young people how to repair bicycles which are then distributed in the community.

There is a great deal to be learned from the experience which the Toronto colleges have acquired during the past two years in effectively serving marginalized youth and helping them to make different lifestyle choices. Centennial's comments provide considerable guidance. "They [youth] often have inflated ideas of where they are at or really don't understand what is expected of them at the college level." It is necessary to provide frequent progress reports and to continually remind them of their goals. "We have to talk about subjects like ethnicity, religion, poverty and race, but these can be difficult subjects as students don't have high tolerance levels nor do they have good critical thinking skills. They can be explosive." Front-end assessment is crucial. Students have to be engaged with

the material being taught and kept busy with a mixture of approaches. Assignments and daily goals need to be very clear. Students are not given any unstructured time. Peer work is encouraged to support teacher-directed classroom work. There needs to be adequate staffing. At Centennial, there are two teachers handling a mixed teaching load, as well as a program officer and part-time coordinator. A partnership with Youthlink (a community-based organization) also provides a youth worker who is assigned to this project two half days per week to support the instructors working in the classrooms.

Students feel at home at Centennial. They feel like they belong at any of the college sites. "This is an important point since many come to the program feeling safe only in their home communities. If they had not been exposed to the college program, it is unlikely they'd travel much beyond their home community." Centennial also identified that youth have trouble following directions and need a lot of structure to improve reading skills.

Computer skills are a significant issue for young students. Many young people across the province identified that they have advanced computer skills because they are able to use online chat programs and download music. However, they don't know how to use computers to find information or enter and analyze data. They are not computer literate; they are technology comfortable (see previous comments about the millennial learner). Many young people with technology skills could help adult students, as well as staff, to acquire new computer skills. Many other young people identified they did not have computer experience in high school and do not have access to home computers. In other words, their experience and comfort with computers is the same as older students.

All colleges identified that academic ability is not the problem; development of essential skills is the issue. Given the opportunity, youth will succeed in postsecondary and Pre-Apprenticeship training.

It is necessary to form partnerships particularly with Job Connect and the local secondary schools to reach these young people and design effective programming. Both are currently referring increasing numbers of young people to college upgrading programs. It is important that colleges are not seen to be recruiting from secondary schools. A joint effort is required to determine if the college environment is appropriate. It must also be remembered that many of these young people are no longer allowed to attend secondary school. Collège Boréal has developed a detailed intake agreement which young participants sign, making it clear that the secondary school option has been thoroughly explored before they have considered college.

College managers also identified that there is real potential to link with the numerous school to college initiatives currently being delivered jointly by colleges and school boards. These college-located, school board staffed programs do not currently have any linkages with Academic Upgrading, but that may be a useful partnership to help these students reach their goals. Once again, it will be important for a level of trust to be established between the programs to make it clear that Academic Upgrading is not actively recruiting students, but rather offering an opportunity for appropriately identified students to reach their goals.

Managers also identified a further systemic obstacle. For students without a secondary school diploma, current college Mature Student guidelines identify eligibility criteria to participate in postsecondary as 19 years of age and out of school for one year. This clearly needs to be re-examined, taking into consideration that students are leaving high school earlier and participating increasingly in Academic Upgrading Programs which they can, in some cases, complete prior to their 19th birthday.

Recommendations

1.5   That increased funding for Aboriginal focused programming in both remote communities and urban centres be provided for ongoing recognized Academic Upgrading, which will promote Aboriginal student participation in further education. It is especially important that this upgrading prepares people to participate in Pre-Apprenticeship Programs. Funding should include dollars to support the development of the necessary partnerships required to secure the advice and commitment of local bands and Aboriginal support groups during the planning and recruitment phase of delivery. Learning materials and assessments appropriate to the level of Academic Upgrading, which relate to Aboriginal life experiences and goals, should be identified, developed, and shared as required.

1.6   That Boréal and La Cité work together to develop an action plan to identify and develop the learning materials necessary to prepare students for postsecondary and apprenticeship programming. Development of this action plan should take into consideration the need to link with Pre-Apprenticeship Programs and apprenticeship training, as well as the need for materials relevant to students' life experiences.

1.7   That based on the priorities identified in this action plan, the two Francophone colleges work together to develop and pilot Academic Upgrading learning materials and assessment processes in order to make the best use of limited staffing and to ensure the most effective use of dollars.

1.8   That a study be conducted to gain a clearer idea of Francophone student needs as well as the capacity of the broader delivery system to address these needs. This study should clearly identify pressures on the system resulting from the relocation of people from Quebec as well as immigration from French-speaking countries.

1.9   That Anglophone delivery agencies be encouraged to make students educated in French aware of the advantages of participating in French upgrading programming and facilitate their referral to available programs. A critical component of this strategy is to make the research which advises this course of action known to Anglophone programs.

1.10   That MTCU fund programming for youth at all interested colleges which builds on the success of college delivered youth initiatives. This programming should be targeted at young people for whom participation in a secondary school program or alternative high school is not a viable option. This programming should include the development of recruitment strategies, community partnerships, staff expertise, and delivery models designed to meet the unique academic and non-academic (essential skills) learning needs and styles of youth in Academic Upgrading Programs.

1.11   That staff serving youth be hired who understand the needs of this particular client group and appreciate the energy which they bring to the classroom.

1.12   That colleges make all students aware (during orientation activities) of all supports provided by the college and the community. This especially includes Special Needs and Aboriginal Services.

1.13   That dollars be provided by MTCU to support Academic Upgrading student participation in college Special Needs Services.

1.14   That adjustments to the entry requirement of grade 12 or equivalent be made for deaf students to enable these students to participate in the apprenticeship system. Both the Apprenticeship Branch and employers need to be engaged in the discussion.

1.15   That MTCU reconsider and revise the current program guidelines to enable second language learners from across the province to participate in programming which enables them to acquire high level oral language skills (as well as other academic skills) through Academic Upgrading Programs, recognizing that these skills are required to succeed in employment or further college training. The need for Franco-Ontarians to have proficiency in English in order to access postsecondary and apprenticeship training, as well as permanent employment, should be recognized and supported as part of this consideration. The development of communication skills must be recognized as a cultural issue which applies to students in all streams: Anglophone, Francophone, Aboriginal, and Deaf.

1.16   That college upgrading programs be funded adequately to enable them to deliver oral communication classes which address the learning and integration needs of learners.

1.17   That the criteria for Mature Student status for postsecondary college admission be modified to take into account recent changes in the broader educational system.

1.18   That further research (primary and secondary) is required to assist college Academic Upgrading Programs in developing effective orientation (front-end) and ongoing (integrated) programming which addresses the learning outcomes often referred to as essential skills or life skills. Further research is especially needed into the academic and personal needs of students under 19 so that colleges can respond with appropriate and effective programming.

Technology-Enhanced Learning and Delivery

Recurring Themes

1. Colleges are cautious about proceeding with online learning.

2. Academic Upgrading students have mixed feelings and opinions about online learning.

3. Learners and deliverers will be challenged to do online learning well.

4. Online Academic Upgrading is most effective with a particular learner and curriculum profile.

5. "Web-enabled" and "distance" describe a range of online delivery modes.

6. Using contact hours for reportable data reflects neither the work nor the cost required to deliver online learning. It is actually a barrier to further development.

7. Technology mediates and enhances learning, particularly for persons with disabilities.

8. Building capacity for online learning is a future-forward proposition involving the college organization as a whole.

9. Campus-based and online upgrading programs include learners with disabilities who require college resources and services.

10. Academic Upgrading can learn from the OntarioLearn.com model.

11. Demand for online learning is driven by necessity.

12. Staffing online delivery brings particular challenges.

13. There is already an increasing use of technology in college delivery.

14. Current Academic Upgrading students do not express strong interest in online learning, but there may be learners who would be interested if it were available.

Summary of Findings

This section discusses forms of learning that go beyond the traditional classroom-based experience. Although these approaches can be described as alternative forms of delivery, the descriptor is too broad. For example, learning can be enhanced by technology, either in the classroom or out; learners can participate in learning, at a distance, without physically traveling to the classroom site; and learners can work independently with self-directed learning materials. Access to learning services and resources (assessments, instruction and tutoring, print material, testing, advising, and record keeping) can be available through multiple means including mail correspondence, telephone, e-mail, learning platforms such as Blackboard and WebCT, and web sites. The idea of a "classroom" in which people gather as

a community of learners is not limited to a physical space or location. The following discussion explores the expansion of colleges' site-based Academic Upgrading community to include learners not traditionally served by it.

While the following discussion uses several technical terms, the reader should bear in mind that the focus of the discussion is not on technology but on exploring the feasibility of online delivery of Academic Upgrading and reaching out to learners not traditionally served by current delivery approaches.

One of the consistent findings was a generalized resistance to the concept of online learning, defined here as Academic Upgrading delivered to learners at a distance through an Internet link. The resistance showed itself in two ways. First, students indicated that online learning is not something they would like to do, and delivery staff reinforced that view, saying it would not work for their learners and should not play a significant role in their program delivery. The second aspect was a credibility issue. Students said they had bad experiences with online learning: "It is too much of a scam. They all want more money. You are not guaranteed success." Delivery staff were almost unanimous in their concerns about AlphaRoute. In their words, "It was one program we tried but found almost unusable." Managers had doubts about the "return on investment" if online learning is implemented. In their view, the first priority is providing really good classroom-based curriculum. Without funding support or release time to do curriculum development, programs can not invest in both classroom-based and alternate deliveries. Managers were also concerned that online programming would be a waste of funds, especially if development funds were drawn from regular programs, and particularly if the students didn't use it.

Although students were generally not enthusiastic about online learning, they offered some very interesting insights into the issue. Their first reaction can only be described as negative. Students said they needed the social environment, the face-to-face contact, and the immediate feedback of the classroom-based setting. Many have no access to technology nor do they have the income support to acquire it, although they asked if Ontario Works would be willing to pay for computers and Internet access. Some students felt they lacked the self-discipline for online learning. However, the students saw a positive side to online programming as well. Some felt that it would give them greater flexibility and access to their learning when they needed to be away from school. Others indicated that they would not have to cover the costs of traveling to their on-site program. Some students saw online programming as an opportunity to learn new skills they will need in the future. Still others said it would give them alternate ways to communicate with their teachers.

One student observed that learning from books is similar to learning online because in each case you "learn as you go", and you need someone online helping all the time as you do in class. Another had a very pointed way of describing his potential frustration: "How do you explain the problem you are having to a computer?" Finally, a third noted that learning to use technology increases future competitiveness because "high tech failures in Ottawa led to a lot of competition from well educated people for low paying jobs."

Learners will be challenged by an online learning environment. They are more apt to ask, "Is this going to be on the test?" than to think about how to adapt to the actual process of

learning online. Learners who attend campus-based programs repeatedly talk about the importance of the social world created by their classes and about the quality of help they get from their teachers and the college. Online delivery, therefore, will require careful attention to socializing the learner to being in school, being a student, and learning how to learn online. Learning at a distance requires time for the deliverer and the learner to establish a sense of relationship.

The message from the consultations is that online delivery is neither appropriate for learners who come to campus-based programs nor easily developed, delivered, or supported by its program staff. These doubts, however, are not reasons for abandoning the possibility of doing online delivery. Colleges only have to consider who is not coming to their programs because of what and how they offer those programs, and then reconsider how they could deliver upgrading differently for that population. As Academic Upgrading enters the online world, it must remain open to exploring new delivery opportunities outside the context of what current students have the ability to take and what programs have the capacity to deliver.

Online learning is not appropriate for everyone. It is not appropriate for students who need a lot of learning supports or remediation, nor is it an option for foreign-language students who have little experience with the technology itself. Learners require sound reading skills, information literacy, basic knowledge of how to use the technology, and a structured, monitored learning environment. Online learning is more appropriate for independent, self-directed learners.

Design of online learning needs to include relevant content and be sensitive to how learners learn. Delivery staff need to ask if the design focuses on learning styles (e.g. visual learner), learning strategies (e.g. time management, time-on-task, information literacy), or both. Finally, because there will be technical challenges to overcome, programs will have to focus significantly on keeping the technical glitches out of the way of learning.

Academic Upgrading needs to be selective about the curriculum it delivers online. Higher-level courses such as ACE sciences and virtual labs may be a good place to start. However, online learning is well suited to more than delivery of academic courses. Essential employability skills (reading text, document use, numeracy, writing, oral communication, working with others, thinking skills, computer use, continuous learning) that are acquiring a higher profile in the colleges since their inclusion in the Colleges' Framework of Instruction are an integral component of Academic Upgrading. Moreover, work is underway at some colleges (Centennial, Fanshawe and Seneca) to formalize essential skills more widely throughout the fabric of college curriculum. Online learning could incorporate reading, document use, numeracy, and technology and computer use. In addition, it could focus on applying problem solving skills (logical thinking and reasoning), and introducing career exploration through self-management and self-direction, including self-assessments of interest and aptitude.

Online learning exists in many forms but two categories – *web-enabled* and *distance* – help

to simplify the discussion. Web-enabled refers to the in-class use of online resources. Students learn something from their teachers or from class materials and then go to the Internet to augment or reinforce that learning. Virtual science labs online are a good example. Distance refers to learning enhanced by technology and delivered at a distance using Internet links, college learning platforms, audio/video conferencing, telephone, email, and chat groups. These elements expand the traditional view of distance learning that relied primarily on older technologies to transmit materials, send print-based learning materials, or both.

Confederation College, for example, is delivering synchronous and asynchronous distance programming to connect learners in Northwestern Ontario communities with teachers in Thunder Bay. Collège Boréal is developing a pilot project that has students working online (while in class) to demonstrate comparability between online and in-class hours. Their experience with tracking meaningful contact hours and establishing benchmarks for time and resources invested in online delivery will provide a better understanding of the real number of contact hours required to teach and learn online, and the true cost to deliver it.

Contact hours as a true measure of activity is an issue for college upgrading programs, and online delivery is of particular concern. Programs are required to count actual contact time with the learner but that discounts the time learners spend working online. Arguably, self-directed learning (time spent on or offline) could be viewed in the same context as homework (for which hours are not counted). An hour of online contact means hours of preparation to deliver the course and hours of follow-up when the self-directed learner meets with the teacher for direction. Upgrading programs are funded on an hour-for-hour basis, yet the reportable tracking data neither reflect the time to design and deliver programming nor generate the revenue to fund it.

In addition to online learning, there is a great deal of technology-mediated learning whereby learners have access to adaptive technology, learning software and applications, and various technological devices such as calculators, cell-phones or portable digital devices. For example, Career Cruising is used for goal setting at Centennial and St. Clair; the 2010 system works well for math at Fanshawe; PLATO Learning is used at Seneca, Lambton, and Humber. Most colleges have capacity for in-house learning platforms such as WebCT and Blackboard which they require or encourage their learners to use because it prepares them now for the postsecondary experience they will have later. The Kirkland Lake campus of Northern College, for example, uses Blackboard extensively, and students have expressed satisfaction with the approach because it is on-site and teacher supported. Other delivery staff at Northern College sites said Blackboard was easy to use, and they would like to have courses already developed at other colleges placed on Blackboard or WebCT. Collège Boréal was the only college to develop its own platform because WebCT did not serve its needs. Boréal's platform is not available through OntarioLearn.com, but it can be accessed from around the world. Use of college learning platforms on college intranets describes both web-enabled and distance categories.

Finally, a very specialized use of technology-enhanced learning was noted at George Brown's Literacy and Basic Skills Program for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Adults. Teaching

and learning in that setting is constructed in a predominately visual environment. For more information on this program, visit http://gbcdeaf.georgebrown.ca/index.htm

Faculty at St. Lawrence College noted that the educational use of computers and current and yet-to-be-developed digital devices will "change with the increasing congruence of information and technology." So, as colleges look to build capacity for new deliveries (including bandwidth capacity for online), they will have to include the technology needs of Academic Upgrading in their annual and long-term infrastructure, capital, and service planning. Too often, operational practices such as scheduling, maintenance, and upgrading of labs and software applications are ongoing struggles for upgrading departments because postsecondary is the IT priority. However, some colleges such as Boréal and Algonquin are further down the road to building greater capacity. Introducing alternate delivery means recognizing that technology and the options it provides change quickly. Colleges need to "plan forward" by anticipating who their learners will be and by what means they will be accessing learning. Colleges entering the world of online, technology-enhanced learning will have to build into their planning the time it takes to develop, market, and pilot new deliveries and measure that against the pace of change itself. Finally, they will have to continuously evaluate their progress.

Learners at a distance experience the same range of learning disabilities found in site-based classrooms; thus, curriculum design and delivery must accommodate their needs too. As Academic Upgrading receives more students, it will be expected to serve their legitimate expectations and demands for accommodation and access to adaptive technologies. Persons with disabilities, whether they are in upgrading or in postsecondary, are still persons with disabilities and must be served accordingly. The key to serving learners with disabilities in the classroom or at a distance through alternate forms of delivery and technology enhancements will be ensuring that colleges properly identify learners' needs in advance and plan accordingly to provide the resources necessary for their success.

Program delivery staff are very clear about how online learning should proceed, suggesting that new design and delivery could be coordinated centrally. OntarioLearn.com was put forth as a model, but not in the sense that Academic Upgrading would simply be included in OntarioLearn.com delivery. Briefly, OntarioLearn.com is a consortium of Ontario community colleges that shares curriculum. Currently, 23 of 24 colleges are signatories to the consortium. Only one college takes responsibility for designing courses (claims them), but all colleges have access to one another's course(s). Provincially, there is a body of courses developed locally and delivered provincially through the OntarioLearn.com access site.

Academic Upgrading can learn from the OntarioLearn.com model of shared curriculum and centralized delivery, but it has to apply what it learns to serving the different needs of its specific upgrading population. Venturing into online delivery will include exploring how to reach the learner who cannot travel to the site-based program, what messages to communicate, and how those messages actually engage learners on a web site. (Web sites are judged in the blink of an eye.) It will mean exploring how to assess learners' readiness for learning online, determining where they begin the program (placement), how to register them when they enter, and how to document their performance when they complete. Given

the learners' potential sophistication with and access to technology and their readiness to learn independently, program developers will have to be selective about what curriculum to deliver and how to deliver it. They will have to consider the quality and immediacy of the feedback to provide, and they will need to consider how the online learning is credited with contact hours and funding.

The two French-language colleges and the Metropolitan Toronto colleges offered other perspectives. Boréal and La Cité have the expertise to do online delivery but need financial help in order to expand it. "We are alone; we cannot share among colleges because of language and software; Collège Boréal does not use the same software. We have the capacity – technology and knowledge – but the cost to do it alone can be prohibitive (e.g. translation, development time, etc.)." Seneca College noted that "one centralized online site for the GTA would be more realistic, cost-wise, than distance learning offered from small campuses like this one."

Finally, colleges said that AlphaRoute is not a program or platform from which they could start to build a coordinated provincial approach. Although it is recognized as a well-established delivery vehicle for LBS levels 1 to 5, it is far less useful as a platform for college entry upgrading (i.e. ACE). Moreover, colleges expressed general concerns that using it is cumbersome and time consuming.

OntarioLearn.com operates in an educational environment that includes TVO and AlphaRoute. OntarioLearn.com is well established to deliver online courses for credit and to track those courses and the learners who take them within a college context. Extending the OntarioLearn.com model to include Academic Upgrading makes sense, in principle, because the partnership would mirror what is already happening between Academic Upgrading and postsecondary at each of the campus-based programs. Working with people (web designers, IT support, etc.) who design and deliver OntarioLearn.com courses means working with people and services that Academic Upgrading personnel already know well in their respective colleges.

The demand for online learning is currently driven by necessity; as a result, there is no strong interest in delivering it at colleges where learners could just as easily come to the college in person: "Our students are returning to school, so having school come to them, especially if they have access to the college, doesn't make sense." However, northern colleges like Cambrian, Confederation, and Northern do get involved, often in very remote locations where learner access to the traditional classroom is made possible through vehicles such as Contact North, with its many e-learning access sites. Northern College and Confederation College have long histories of distance learning activity, particularly with Aboriginal populations. Delivery staff at Cambrian College see great potential for bringing students to the college to train and familiarize themselves with technology, so they could then work primarily at home. Cambrian also pointed out that online learning is the answer for Manitoulin Island where there are numerous Contact North locations as well as an Aboriginal band office and Community Access Point (CAP) sites. Sault College sees opportunities to reinvigorate its place in communities it formerly served. Aside from reasons of necessity, the other common reason suggested for delivering online is continuity of

programming. Many Academic Upgrading Programs do not operate year-round. There are times during the year when adults may wish to continue studies, but their program is closed. There are also occasions when life circumstances intervene, and a student's ability to attend may be limited. For example, some students remain home in the summer with their children, even if their upgrading program is still operating. If online courses were available, such students may be able to take advantage of that opportunity during the summer months.

Finally, moving into online delivery has implications for staffing and training. Very often, it is the part-time staff who bring an aptitude and take an interest in alternate deliveries. Sometimes they are the ones who champion it. Professional development will help programs launch online learning, but adding new delivery staff who have a keen interest in it or encouraging and rewarding part-time champions who already know the students and the curriculum well may be alternatives to also consider.

Recommendations

2.1   That MTCU fund the development of a provincial initiative involving leaders in online delivery of Academic Upgrading to develop a future-focused strategy to accelerate the online delivery of Academic Upgrading courses across the province. This initiative must include as partners OntarioLearn.com, AlphaPlus, and the colleges. It must also include a mechanism to realistically identify activity and the cost of delivering online programming in consultation with pilots currently taking place at Collège Boréal and Confederation College.

Financial Assistance
and Learner Supports

Recurring Themes

1. Employment, Ontario Works (OW), and Other are the principle sources of income support for learners.

2. Ontario Works, through Academic Upgrading, can serve learners better.

3. Sponsors' policies (OW, Service Canada, Aboriginal bands) are creating barriers to student success.

4. Programs, supports, and services that are collocated better address learners' needs.

5. Learners require certainty about funding to support goal completion after upgrading.

6. Colleges provide learners with access to non-financial supports.

7. Ontario Special Bursary Program (OSBP) funding limits do not reflect current realities.

Summary of Findings

The sources of income support for learners in college Academic Upgrading Programs are identified in three primary areas: employed (30%), meaning they are learners who provide their own income support from work (usually part-time); OW (29%) which provides support allowances while their learners (clients) are in the program; and Other (27%), which means they are not working or sponsored but have the support or means to be in school.

Approximately 50% of colleges described their relationship with OW as positive. At satellite campuses where community partners and services operate in close proximity, the college and OW work together to address community barriers in ways such as those described below:

o Transportation is covered by OW for students in outlying areas (Cambrian College's Manitoulin operation).
o Local Employment Financial Assistance Centres (EFAC) support collaborative efforts between the college and OW (Algonquin).
o Effective communication strategies are in place which build credibility with OW (Centennial).
o College staff participate in OW's Learning, Earning, and Parenting (LEAP) committees (Durham).
o Orientation is condensed (George Brown) to accommodate OW clients.
o Close relationships have been established with a core group of OW caseworkers (Loyalist).
o OW representative attends Literacy Services Planning (LSP) meetings (Sault).

Other colleges noted a need to improve or re-establish the relationship with OW. The varying level of interest in Academic Upgrading by OW offices is very much a factor of local jurisdictional applications of OW practice. The principle of "shortest route to employment" is a good example (i.e. OW clients may have to take any work that is available, even if it is not sustainable). The college route through upgrading programs leading to further education or training, to higher levels of educational success and attainment, and finally to work is often perceived as too much time to spend in school before entering employment. College upgrading personnel need to continue their advocacy with individual OW caseworkers to promote a "better route to employment" as a legitimate alternative to "any job now."

Ontario Works is clearly an important college partner that identifies and refers individuals to Academic Upgrading. The frequency of referrals, however, varies from region to region. Moreover, once the referrals have been made and OW clients are in upgrading programs, the attendance conditions required of OW clients often create further hardship.

Ontario Works requires most of its clients to attend full-time, but the level of income support OW provides is insufficient to alleviate their clients' financial concerns. As a result, school suffers: "I would like to know who to talk to about getting extra money to live on. I am constantly stopping off at the welfare system, but they don't care. The way I see things, I am going to be here for a long, long time. I won't give up, but with school and a side job, I don't have time to study." Further, some students who simply can not handle a full-time academic load can not have it reduced by the college without jeopardizing sponsorship. So, it is a "catch-22". Ontario Works students want to be in school, but they struggle financially; they would like to work and attend upgrading part-time to supplement their income, but they cannot or OW benefits are reduced. Indeed, learners themselves suggested that OW consider making some sort of financial incentive available for learners who attend regularly and make progress.

Colleges, however, are continuously trying to improve their relationships with OW in order to increase referrals to Academic Upgrading. They work with OW regional offices to inform caseworkers about Academic Upgrading, offer to help caseworkers administer assessments of readiness for further education or training, and redesign college intakes, assessments, and orientation protocols to avoid duplication of clients' prior assessment documentation. Colleges have also reported highly cooperative initiatives to assist clients financially (e.g. sharing transportation and child care costs and providing educational start up dollars for books and student cards).

Colleges do not have a lot of learners sponsored by Service Canada (EI). The eligibility rules for employment insurance benefits with the requirement to be actively seeking work do not fit well with a return to school strategy. If "return to school" is really a first step on a "return to work" plan, the plan itself can take too long to approve - so long, in fact, that the benefit period can run out before a plan is ever approved. Employment service agencies question the length of programs. One college noted, "A student [on EI benefits] who wanted to go into the Radiology Program was told that she could not because the program was too long. She changed to Pharmacy Assistant because it was a shorter, eligible program. The agency was then upset with her for changing".

The Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) tends to refer its clients to higher levels of upgrading with the expectation that students will prepare for and enter college postsecondary programs. College supports for WSIB students focus on managing schedules to mitigate the effects of students' medication (for pain) and ensuring appropriate adaptation or accommodations for physical or mobility barriers.

Colleges' participation in Aboriginal education is strong in areas where the need is well defined (e.g. Northern College's work with communities throughout northern Ontario, particularly the James Bay Coast). Even when colleges can recruit Aboriginal learners to their Academic Upgrading Programs, lack of secure funding puts students at risk. The bands have limited educational funds, so priority allocation is made on a case-by-case basis that may or may not support Academic Upgrading.

Interestingly, the issues that arise between Academic Upgrading Programs and the agencies they serve tend to work themselves out when the college and the services are colocated. One college noted that "much of the program's time [at the main campus] is spent troubleshooting on behalf of students and helping them to negotiate the red tape. In contrast, the relationship in the satellite locations with OW is very different and highly cooperative." In a sense, colocation operates in the Metro Toronto area as well. Five colleges have access to and relationships with a broad, interconnected range of social services and agencies. Simply put, there are more learners and service providers sharing the Metro landscape, and this presents opportunities to build unique partnerships that work to serve learners in specialized ways. For example, very unique, made-in-Metro solutions are well established at Centennial (Youth Project), Seneca (Yorkgate Mall), and George Brown (Regent Park Project).

All student focus groups cited finances as the principal reason for dropping out, changing goals, or not meeting goals. If they could not support themselves financially or secure sponsored education and living expenses, leaving school would be their only recourse. Upgrading is tuition-free, but further education or training is not, and the cost is a looming barrier that casts a shadow on students' goals. For example, one student who was preparing for Registered Nursing changed her goal to Practical Nursing because it was a shorter and less expensive program. She was very uncertain about her ability to finance her future education. A college teacher described it well: "A loan is a middle class concept for those who have a job and can pay for it. For people who go through upgrading, this is a terrifying concept. They can't get a line of credit and some have no relationship with a bank or no one to co-sign a loan."

The concept of increasing financial assistance to learners – in upgrading and beyond – can not be forgotten. Some focus group participants suggested that funds be put into scholarships and bursaries as incentives for upgrading students to persist and complete their transition to postsecondary. Durham College stated, "Each year we offer a postsecondary bursary to an Academic Upgrading graduate. This bursary can offset the cost of tuition for each year of the student's college postsecondary program as long as she/he maintains a 70% average in each year of study. This money is a gift to the student and is promoted in our information materials."

Colleges provide additional supports that help sustain learners' persistence in Academic Upgrading. For example, they provide some learners with their only access to resources like computers and open access labs, demonstrate sensitivity and understanding to learners' needs, and provide learners with access to counseling, Aboriginal services, student success courses, and special needs and adaptive technology. Academic Upgrading staff assist their learners in negotiating the transition to postsecondary or apprenticeship by offering educational advising and advocacy throughout the application and admissions process.

Because Academic Upgrading maintains a sound relationship with its internal partners and services (counseling, admissions, postsecondary programs and program coordinators, Registrar's Office), it can support students throughout their college career. However, students receive support from other quarters, too. Centennial College's OBS youth program which targets hard-to-reach youth was enhanced with a formal partnership between Youthlink and the college that included the services of a youth worker from Youthlink. The worker was assigned to this project two half days a week to support the teachers working in the classrooms. MTCU provides training supports, OW makes child care and travel dollars available, and Pre-Apprenticeship Programs offer free upgrading and trades training for qualified candidates who would normally be ineligible for entry to an apprenticed trade. Upgrading staff also reach out to their communities by participating in literacy networks and social advocacy committees (e.g. Learning, Earning, and Parenting - LEAP). Finally, some colleges have partnerships with local food banks and churches to help learners offset living expenses.

Many college upgrading personnel are interested in knowing how Academic Upgrading fits with a number of emerging initiatives including essential employability skills, the Canada-Ontario Labour Market Development Agreement (LMDA) and Labour Market Partnership Agreement (LMPA), and No Wrong Door. They also noted that the whole concept of financial aid is under review which may lead to revisions to the Ontario Special Bursary Plan (OSBP) and Ontario Student Assistance Plan (OSAP). Ultimately, these changes may help upgrading students to support themselves throughout their education.

OSBP provides assistance to financially needy students studying part-time and students taking Academic Upgrading or training programs on either a full- or part-time basis. Eligible students receive up to $2,500 per academic year to assist with the costs of tuition and compulsory fees, books, equipment, local transportation and child care.

With respect to the OSBP, the availability of funding and the $2,500 per year cap are the issues for Academic Upgrading students. The amount of $2,500 is a figure from over 20 years ago when that allocation really did cover tuition, books, living expenses, and transportation, but $2,500 is no longer adequate to cover those costs (even though OSBP does not affect OW payments). The assignment of dollars to each college is historic, so colleges like Cambrian, Algonquin and Durham that have traditionally been heavy users of the OSBP have significantly more dollars. OSBP is a major funder for the ESL clients who need but are not eligible for tuition-free Academic Upgrading. It is also a better funding route for disabled students as they can get extra dollars for supports such as tutors, interpreters, and note-takers. At Cambrian, it has been useful to fund youth (fee-payers) for a short, initial period during which they are assessed for readiness to make a full

commitment to the program. Durham uses OSBP funding at the end of programming for people who have accessed all the time possible through the free route. It can also be used to provide an alternative for students who have plateaued but don't want to take employment or enroll with another deliverer. In other words, the option presented to the student is, "You are no longer eligible for LBS/OBS funding, but here is another route with a clear timeline."

Recommendations

3.1 That MTCU create, with college input, a new accountability structure for Academic Upgrading on which funding is based. This new accountability framework must recognize non-academic outcomes including the development of self-esteem and interpersonal skills as well as improved lifestyle choices. The funding should support delivery to students, especially those underrepresented in postsecondary programming as they access, participate in, and leave college Academic Upgrading Programs. It must be recognized by MTCU that conducting and documenting follow-up requires significant financial support. As part of this accountability structure, colleges must be prepared to demonstrate annually how they are serving underrepresented learners including the documentation of distance and technology-assisted learning.

3.2 That college student information systems develop a process to track the movement of students from Academic Upgrading Programs at one college to postsecondary programming at another college. College registrars and information technology staff must be involved in this process.

3.3 That MTCU continue to engage the Ministry of Community and Social Services (MCSS) in discussions which focus on the barriers which MCSS' policies present for the successful participation of first generation learners in postsecondary education. These barriers include levels of financial support for students in Academic Upgrading, especially participation requirements and deductions of earnings from monthly benefits, as well as the moving of OW recipients to OSAP during postsecondary participation. There is also the need to redefine "shortest route to employment" to read "the most effective route to long-term, sustainable employment".

3.4 That policy be created to ensure that no qualified Academic Upgrading student is denied access to further education or training because of financial hardship.

3.5 That MTCU review and update OSBP funding to reflect current costs.

3.6   That a time-limited task force of college representatives come together to identify barriers to student access and success, and make recommendations for improvement for inclusion in LMDA/LMPA and provincial consultations. This includes assessing the true level of living and educational supports required by students in Academic Upgrading and the most efficient and provincially consistent process of approving clients for college upgrading programs.

Promotion and Marketing

Recurring Themes

1. Academic Upgrading in the colleges and its desirable features need to be advertised to the general public more effectively. It is the "best kept secret" in Ontario.

2. "Word of mouth" currently is the most frequent source of applications to Academic Upgrading.

3. Networking within colleges is generally becoming more productive.

4. Networking in the community is very time consuming and, in many cases, is minimally effective in generating referrals. Success often depends on who is involved in the networking, the trust built between individuals in the process, and the degree to which networking participants' motives are self-serving.

5. Collaboration between Job Connect and Academic Upgrading, when it exists, works well, especially for younger students.

6. Public advertising is locally oriented and has mixed results.

7. There is a need for a provincial promotion strategy.

8. Advertising for Academic Upgrading in mainstream college publications (calendars, catalogues, web sites) is mostly ineffective.

9. Colleges have adopted numerous names for their Academic Upgrading Programs eliminating reference to "literacy" or "basic" in the titles.

Summary of Findings

Academic Upgrading in Ontario community colleges is "the best kept secret in town." This comment is an attempt to summarize a finding that is based on feedback from students and supported by substantial numbers of program delivery staff and management across the Ontario college system. Student feedback included numerous suggestions to promote college Academic Upgrading more vigorously and broadly. When asked how prospective students found out about Academic Upgrading, the most frequent answer in all the focus groups was "word of mouth." It also became apparent from the students' comments that promotion needs to describe how the programs operate so that people will see that college Academic Upgrading is fundamentally different from their previous school experience.

Both this section of the report and the next (Partnerships) share much feedback that is common, but it is used to inform these two different issues which complement each other in their importance to Academic Upgrading. Promotion and Marketing deals with how people find out about programming and its potential for them – how to publicize this "best kept secret". The Partnership section deals with helping to build effective pathways for students as they proceed into, through, and beyond upgrading.

The findings and comments in this Promotion and Marketing section are divided into three categories: indirect internal promotion, indirect external promotion, and direct public advertising.

Indirect Internal – Through Colleges' Services and Programs

An encouraging finding is that internal college referrals from registrars' and liaison offices, counselors, postsecondary faculty, and Job Connect programs accounted for significant numbers of Academic Upgrading applications. This apparent good news should be viewed in light of the fact that these referrals had already found the colleges and that their eventual movement to upgrading was the result of significant internal promotion on the part of Academic Upgrading personnel, not a result of public promotion. Faculty, staff and management acknowledged that they have had to persevere to get these results, as strange as that may seem to an outsider.

Specific internal promotion strategies which are particularly effective include the following:

- o Academic Upgrading delivery staff and management conduct regular or annual information sessions with college liaison and admissions staff.
- o Postsecondary management are invited to Academic Upgrading department meetings to exchange information.
- o Academic Upgrading faculty regularly seek advice from postsecondary faculty regarding upgrading course content.
- o Academic Upgrading students regularly link with postsecondary to participate in course shadowing and program information sessions.
- o Academic Upgrading students have the same status and access to services as postsecondary students.
- o College senior management mandate links for Academic Upgrading within the college.
- o Free postsecondary courses for credit, transfer credits, and preferred admission status are standard policy for Academic Upgrading students at many colleges.
- o The success of Academic Upgrading graduates in postsecondary is tracked and publicized annually both internally and provincially in the CSC's *Prepared for Success* report.

The ongoing provision of information about Academic Upgrading to all college departments is necessary to keep those departments up to date, and such collaboration also facilitates the receipt of information and advice from postsecondary departments to Academic Upgrading personnel. Where Job Connect and Academic Upgrading are in the same college department, referrals either way tend to occur regularly. The process is even more effective where the two programs are colocated. Where Job Connect and Academic Upgrading are in different college departments, the efforts noted in the above paragraph tend to be required. The same scenarios are found when discussing links between Academic Upgrading and apprenticeship initiatives within colleges.

Strategies which have proven to be effective in linking upgrading to Job Connect and apprenticeship include the following:

o Job Connect, Apprenticeship, and Academic Upgrading Programs are colocated, are in the same department, or both.
o College senior management mandate links between those programs.

Indirect External Promotion – Through Community Organizations

Academic Upgrading delivery staff and management report spending significant amounts of time networking in each of their communities with a variety of organizations including community-based service agencies, school boards, EI, OW, WSIB, Job Connect (non-college deliverers), apprenticeship, Aboriginal Band Councils, and Literacy Services Planning committees to ensure that Academic Upgrading is known in their communities and to establish good referral relationships. While some of those strategies work well in some locations, the overall input from students tells us that the numbers coming to college upgrading as a result of this networking are small considering the amount of time and effort expended.

The following were provided as community networking strategies:

o developing trust relationships with the appropriate staff in community agencies, OW, EI, and WSIB;
o "showing the flag" at training and employment fairs;
o developing links with the appropriate staff in school boards – usually counselors who deal with at-risk students;
o being seen among community agencies and government offices as the "one-stop" place for Job Connect, Academic Upgrading, and Pre-Apprenticeship Programs as well as apprenticeship training and postsecondary;
o linking Academic Upgrading and skills training (e.g. Call Centre Operator).

The regular provision of information to community groups is necessary to eliminate any possible gaps in information about college Academic Upgrading. Unfortunately, many colleges report that their best efforts in this regard yield few or no referrals.

Direct Public Advertising

Efforts to reach the public directly, all with mixed success, include information sessions at service agencies and high schools, placement of flyers in public locations, good news stories in newspapers, and advertisements in both newspapers and free non-news (advertising) publications. With few exceptions, college promotion devices such as calendars, continuing education catalogues, and web sites were seen as ineffective in reaching potential upgrading students.

Colleges did make the following recommendations regarding direct advertising:

o Academic Upgrading should be clearly identified and easy to access on the college web site.

o Academic Upgrading should be highly visible in college calendars and catalogues. This usually means being featured on the first page or on the back page, rather than under the college department title.
o Distribution of Academic Upgrading program flyers and pamphlets should be targeted to specific groups.

Given the above findings, it would appear that "word of mouth" promotion resulting from quality program delivery, leading to satisfied students and satisfied postsecondary programs, currently outperforms the best efforts of upgrading delivery staff and management to promote Academic Upgrading through local networking and local public advertising. This reality has been in place for many years, changing only gradually as individual college Academic Upgrading departments apply their best home-grown strategies to their internal and external marketing. It would appear that the current situation requires much more expedient and targeted promotion strategies as opposed to the in-house evolutionary processes that have slowly developed over the past many years.

In discussing what promotional approaches work, a number of features were described as attractive to potential students, some of which are of limited availability across the system. These features include but are not restricted to the following:

o student perception of better access to postsecondary
o the lack of tuition fees (i.e. upgrading is free)
o individualized learning process
o focused preparation for the postsecondary program of choice
o the prestige of attending college
o the ability to complete a postsecondary course free of charge
o the potential of transfer credits
o preferred admission status
o Academic Upgrading curriculum that is advised by postsecondary faculty
o classes that are often available in a mix of full-time and part-time formats – a feature that is especially attractive to the large number of employed students
o the potential to acquire essential skills and/or appropriate credentialing for grade 12 equivalency (GED, ACE), or TOWES

It bears repeating that interviewees, especially students, suggested that these attractive features be highlighted in promotion. The challenge of getting this information to the people who need it remains.

A common theme among Academic Upgrading personnel is that MTCU should support the promotion of Academic Upgrading provincially so that students, parents, employers, and all other stakeholders in the general public will recognize it and its potential. Given the historically long and strong emphasis on and recognition of the expression "grade 12," a new branding exercise is likely to be required to introduce the new reality and generate interest in the new product: Academic Upgrading as an effective and efficient route to college postsecondary and apprenticeship programming.

Using names that include the terms "literacy" or "basic" has presented obstacles to the understanding and acceptance of Academic Upgrading. Consequently, many colleges have changed the name of the program. At Mohawk it was renamed "College and Career Preparation" to attract students functioning at a higher level. Sault College observed that their name change resulted in increased acceptance and support from postsecondary. Unfortunately, these name changes (while they clarify local understanding) contribute to the provincial confusion and complicate Internet searches for information by potential students. Add to this the need to avoid the appearance of promoting an alternative to, or competing with, the OSSD, and the challenge is substantial.

Recommendations

4.1 That the colleges develop a provincial information strategy to promote Academic Upgrading. This strategy should inform employers about the academic and essential skills training provided to current and potential employees through college Academic Upgrading Programs. It should also be aimed at those not currently participating in programming, especially those underrepresented in postsecondary education. This campaign should build on the notion of pathways and include the desirable program features articulated by students in the focus groups. Professional marketing advice should be accessed in the design of this campaign. It should also include the identification of a common provincial name for Academic Upgrading.

4.2 That MTCU continue to actively engage other provincial Ministries and agencies as well as federal service providers to promote the development of coordinated policies and procedures which both expand access and eliminate barriers for all Ontarians who require Academic Upgrading to improve their employment opportunities. These groups include but are not limited to the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Community and Social Services, Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration, Workplace Safety and Insurance Board, Service Canada, Job Connect, as well as the Apprenticeship Branch and Colleges Branch staff of MTCU. The Skills Investment Branch should form an advisory committee to assist in identifying the issues and to provide suggestions for policy improvements based on their firsthand knowledge.

Partnerships

Recurring Themes

1. Extensive informal articulation arrangements are in place between upgrading and postsecondary programs and services.

2. Colleges are able to demonstrate the success of upgrading students who move on to postsecondary programming.

3. The provincial No Wrong Door strategy is seen as a very positive step forward to the integration of Job Connect, Apprenticeship and Academic Upgrading Programs.

4. Academic Upgrading staff have been providing leadership in bringing these three programs together at individual colleges.

5. Colleges receive very few referrals from other deliverers of adult upgrading in their communities.

6. Colleges have established extensive linkages in their communities with a variety of referral and support organizations.

7. There is frustration regarding provincial inconsistencies around participant eligibility and support demonstrated by OW and Service Canada.

8. Colleges have identified a need to form closer linkages with employers.

9. There is a need to promote alternate pathways to employment like ACE, GED and TOWES with employers and the public at large.

Summary of Findings

The importance of forming partnerships for the benefit of students in Academic Upgrading and LBS Programs has been clearly identified since the inception of those programs. The term partnership has been loosely used to describe a wide variety of relationships ranging from informal information sharing to formal articulation agreements. There are numerous examples at all colleges of community and internal structures to share information, usually to develop policies and procedures to ensure the appropriate referral of students either among community providers or internally to facilitate transition to further education. Most colleges have articulation agreements with postsecondary programs and services. These have been developed informally on a program to program basis during the past 40 years. The focus group discussions did not identify any formal (i.e. written) agreements in place like those which have recently been negotiated between colleges and universities.

Internal College Partnerships

Internal partnerships have been the primary focus of Academic Upgrading Programs. Initially these were developed to facilitate the movement of upgrading students who had

acquired the necessary academic and personal skills to succeed in postsecondary or Pre-Apprenticeship training. More recently, these partnerships have focused on the identification and recruitment of students in need of Academic Upgrading before moving on to postsecondary.

Movement to Postsecondary Programs

The most fully developed linkages are with postsecondary programming. While the specifics may vary from college to college, these practices are widespread.

Postsecondary and Academic Upgrading faculty have worked together to identify not only the courses required for admission to specific postsecondary programs but also the necessary units of study within those courses. This is a learner-centred approach which enables the fast-tracking of students into the postsecondary program of their choice. The success of Academic Upgrading graduates in postsecondary is clearly demonstrated in the Prepared for Success report issued annually by the CSC. Colleges have a variety of strategies in place to enable both postsecondary and upgrading faculty to regularly review both course outcomes and units of study.

This flexibility has complicated the tracking and documentation system for the institutions – a problem which continues to be addressed as part of the ACE Program. ACE allows for both the issuing of the ACE certificate as well as the option to complete only those courses required for admission to specific postsecondary programs. All but two colleges have course codes in place for all ACE courses. Many colleges also have ACE-modified course codes which identify preparation for specific postsecondary programs. These course code grids are reviewed annually and distributed each spring to college registrars to facilitate admission of Academic Upgrading graduates to postsecondary.

Colleges have identified that while they have effective mechanisms in place to track the success of upgrading students moving on to postsecondary at their own college (even those who "stop out"), there is not yet an effective mechanism to track the movement of students from upgrading at one college to postsecondary at another. Consequently, the full picture of the effectiveness and impact of Academic Upgrading Programs is not being identified provincially.

Success of Academic Upgrading graduates in postsecondary programs is measured not only in terms of GPAs but also in terms of retention and appropriate selection of postsecondary program. These criteria are also tracked in the Prepared for Success report. The following list indicates strategies widely in place to promote the retention and success of Academic Upgrading students preparing for postsecondary:

- o Opportunities are provided for transfer credit (to postsecondary) for specific upgrading courses.
- o Opportunities exist for upgrading students to take one credit postsecondary course per term as part of their upgrading course load either through a postsecondary or continuing education department. This results in lighter course loads during the

critical first year of postsecondary study as well as familiarity with the demands of that environment. It has also promoted individual faculty recognition of the quality of upgrading students.

o Postsecondary course auditing and program shadowing are available for a semester or a few days. One college has expanded this to include a note taking exercise as part of their upgrading communications activities (Georgian); another has a comprehensive career report linked to program shadowing (Canadore).

o Information sessions are conducted for upgrading students by postsecondary faculty, either for groups or on a one-to-one basis.

o Tours of postsecondary facilities and Pre-Apprenticeship Programs are available.

There are other, less formal linkages with postsecondary based on individual college practices. Often, postsecondary and upgrading faulty share the same offices which inevitably results in increased awareness and acceptance of Academic Upgrading. At some colleges, faculty may have both upgrading and postsecondary teaching loads or may have transferred from postsecondary, which results in more detailed modification of upgrading courses based on postsecondary faculty input. At many colleges, the manager responsible for upgrading also has responsibility for one or more postsecondary departments which also encourages greater linkages. This is particularly true of connections with pre-programs such as General Arts and Science, Pre-Technology, and Pre-Health.

Because of the success of Academic Upgrading graduates, colleges have a number of admission policies in place which recognize their success. These include preferred admission status which at some colleges means preference over OSSD applicants; guaranteed admission to postsecondary (not necessarily to the program of their choice); guaranteed seats in specific programs (Veterinary Technician and Practical Nursing at Algonquin) and equivalent ranking with OSSD applicants. Even if an agreement is not in place, upgrading managers indicated that it is very rare for qualified students not to be accepted into the program of their choice. Academic Upgrading Programs also have very effective strategies in place to promote acceptance of graduates (especially to limited admission programs) by providing references and documentation on an individual student basis.

(For a more detailed listing of practices at individual colleges refer to page 80 in the Highlights of College Delivery section.)

Referrals to Academic Upgrading

As colleges have increasingly focused on the delivery of the upper levels of Academic Upgrading, they have made connections with postsecondary programs and their Registrar's Offices to increase referrals to upgrading programs. At many colleges, registrars advise applicants who have not been successful because of their grades or course selections, especially for limited admission programs or programs requiring specific prerequisites (usually sciences), that they can enroll in an Academic Upgrading program to address these deficits. This notification may take the form of specific information in the rejection letter or inclusion of a brochure or information sheet. At Conestoga College, the upgrading program was able to mail follow-up information to unsuccessful postsecondary applicants.

Upgrading programs have also made connections with postsecondary departments to advise them that first semester postsecondary students lacking academic skills can participate in upgrading as a remediation and retention strategy. As part of this strategy, upgrading personnel make presentations at postsecondary department meetings. Frequently, upgrading managers commented that postsecondary faculty had been previously unaware of the upgrading department and the opportunities it provides to address academic deficiencies. Upgrading personnel have also made connections with those college services which are often contacted by individuals seeking information about college programming, especially student services, liaison, employment and placement departments, and switchboards. It is not unusual for a "cold call" that no one knows what to do with being referred to the upgrading department for answers.

College Services

Academic Upgrading students, especially at main campus sites, can access a variety of college services. These include academic supports like the library and computer labs as well as employment supports like job boards, Service Canada kiosks and employment counseling. Specific services vary depending on whether it is a main campus or satellite delivery location. At many colleges, the only counseling support available to upgrading students is the college counselor associated with postsecondary services. At Loyalist College, a college counselor is assigned to the Academic Upgrading Program one day per week. This has been identified as significantly improving student success. Academic Upgrading students are also heavy users of Special Needs departments for access to both counseling and technology. (This issue is discussed more fully under Client Profiles and Delivery Strategies.)

At many colleges the philosophy is, "A college student is a college student." Everyone can access everything. This is reflected in student focus group comments about being part of a larger community. At other colleges, because upgrading students do not pay fees directly, there are some services which they can not access including food banks, athletic facilities, varsity and intramural teams, and student government. This is also reflected in focus group comments about upgrading students being treated differently or as "second class".

At some colleges, upgrading programs have been able to develop strategies to address these exclusions. Full-time students automatically receive student cards which provide access to college facilities. (This does not address the needs of the increasing number of part-time students in upgrading.) Upgrading students at other colleges can purchase student cards at dramatically reduced rates. Unfortunately, at some colleges it has not been possible to negotiate any access to some services.

Earlier LBS Program Guidelines (March 1994), indicated that MTCU expected ancillary services would be provided as part of the funding. These guidelines were key to enabling upgrading managers to demonstrate the college's responsibility to provide access to all services for all students.

Pre Apprenticeship, Apprenticeship and Job Connect

In a related project which the CSC is conducting, Provincial Models of Program Integration, the environmental scan conducted with frontline Academic Upgrading delivery staff in January 2006 indicates the following:

o 80% indicated they have little knowledge about No Wrong Door;
o 59% indicated they have little knowledge about Job Connect;
o 77% indicated they have little knowledge about Pre-Apprenticeship;
o 80% indicated they have little knowledge about Apprenticeship.

Clearly, there is a considerable amount of information sharing and educating which must take place to promote the integration of Academic Upgrading, Apprenticeship and Job Connect Programs for the benefit of students seeking to improve their employment opportunities.

Pre-Apprenticeship and Apprenticeship

The relationship between Academic Upgrading, Pre-Apprenticeship, and Apprenticeship Programs has not received the same focus as postsecondary because fewer students have opted for apprenticeship goals. These traditionally skilled trades-oriented programs are usually located in different areas of the building or in entirely different buildings; administrative responsibility for these programs lies in different departments; upgrading faculty do not usually have much knowledge about these career options and share the commonly held stereotypes of trades being low paid jobs for individuals lacking academic abilities.

Fortunately, the new federal and provincial focus on apprenticeship and the need to increase numbers is resulting in a re-examination of the opportunities which a career in apprenticeship offers and the development of better linkages with Academic Upgrading.

Discussion with student and faculty focus groups indicated a definite lack of knowledge about career opportunities and how the apprenticeship system works. They are particularly unaware of the many new occupations which can be accessed through an apprenticeship. There was a definite indication in focus groups that students had apprenticeship confused with postsecondary cooperative education programs. Program faculty and staff were also interested in obtaining more information about apprenticeship as they see the need to help students make informed career choices.

Manager interviews indicated a higher degree of understanding and integration. At colleges where Academic Upgrading, Pre-Apprenticeship, and Apprenticeship Programs are colocated, share managers, or are part of the same division, some degree of integration with Pre-Apprenticeship is already taking place. At Canadore College, the Academic Upgrading coordinator is also responsible for the delivery of the Pre-Apprenticeship Programs. At Durham College, the departments responsible for skilled trades and upgrading are involved with initiatives at General Motors to help that employer address skill shortages.

The apprenticeship and upgrading managers at Northern College are working together closely to develop strategies and programming to address the needs of communities on the James Bay Coast. At some colleges, Academic Upgrading curriculum is used as the basis for the upgrading component in Pre-Apprenticeship Programs. Like so many things that happen at colleges, these initiatives tend to be part of personal relationships which have been established rather than strategic directions.

At many other colleges, upgrading staff are not consulted during the development of Pre-Apprenticeship Programs and may not even be aware of what has been approved or is being delivered. As a result, MTCU's stated goal of having Pre-Apprenticeship graduates upgraded to a grade 12 equivalent status upon completion of Pre-Apprenticeship programming is often not achievable given the hours allowed for upgrading within Pre-Apprenticeship timelines. At some colleges, upgrading teachers also expressed the concern that upgrading students who did not have even the most basic math and reading skills were being accepted into Pre-Apprenticeship Programs.

To facilitate success in Pre-Apprenticeship, generic Academic Upgrading based on Service Canada's nine essential skills could be provided on an ongoing basis well before the start date of Pre-Apprenticeship Programs. This would ensure individuals in these programs are able to reach the identified academic levels for the occupation by the end of the program. It would provide the added benefit of developing a well prepared and committed participant pool for Pre-Apprenticeship. Currently there has been a pattern of repeatedly "gearing up" for recruitment of Pre-Apprenticeship candidates on short time lines which do not always result in the best selection of participants. A basic component of developing this sound applicant pool is providing increased information about apprenticeship careers to upgrading students and faculty. Students don't consider what they don't know. Student focus groups identified that those who were considering an apprenticeship were doing so because they knew someone who was an apprentice or journeyperson. Academic Upgrading should also assist in the identification of qualified participants. Using the Academic Upgrading curriculum in these Pre-Apprenticeship Programs would promote consistency and access to the ACE credential. Upgrading could also provide remediation both during and after Pre-Apprenticeship Programs, free of charge.

Academic Upgrading also has a role to play in improving the retention and success of apprentices. Students who are unsuccessful in academic portions of their in-school training could be referred to upgrading programs in their home communities. It is key that the apprenticeship provider, the apprentice, and the upgrading program all have a clear idea of the skills required and work together on the individual student action plan.

Colleges have already started to develop journeyperson test preparation courses to help apprentices prepare for the Certificate of Qualification examinations. Conestoga College has developed such a course which will also be implemented at Lambton and Fanshawe.

Job Connect

Like apprenticeship, coordination and integration of Academic Upgrading and Job Connect has depended largely on personal relationships rather than strategic directions. At colleges

like Durham, Confederation, Mohawk, and Fanshawe where both programs share the same manager, there has been a high degree of integration and client sharing. At other colleges like Sault where the Job Connect manager has experience with upgrading, the relationship has been ongoing. At still other colleges where senior management has recognized the need to form closer links, internal structures have been formed to promote these linkages. The Niagara College model is particularly interesting. A Skills Training Council meets once a month to address issues of mutual concern to Academic Upgrading, Job Connect, and Pre-Apprenticeship. For colleges like Canadore, George Brown, and Algonquin who do not deliver Job Connect, establishing linkages with community deliverers will be more challenging.

At other colleges, the provincial No Wrong Door initiative is driving the need to start forming linkages between these three programs. It is important that not only managers but also frontline delivery staff be actively engaged as soon as possible. Managers identify policy, but it is frontline personnel who successfully put the policy into practice. At last year's College Sector provincial Academic Upgrading conference, participants were asked to make a commitment to return to their colleges to initiate joint meetings. Follow-up conducted by the CSC has indicated that upgrading managers and delivery staff have taken the lead in moving these joint discussions forward.

Academic Upgrading can address the academic needs of Job Connect clients, especially those who do not have a secondary school diploma. Through their resource centres, employment preparation programs, and job development component, Job Connect can assist all upgrading students for whom direct access to employment is the most viable goal. This is already happening at Confederation and Mohawk Colleges.

External College Partnerships

Referring Agencies

Colleges have established relationships with a number of agencies who refer students to Academic Upgrading Programs. These are primarily Ontario Works (OW), Service Canada (EI) and the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB). The relationship with each of these organizations varies from community to community in terms of frequency of referrals, support to participants and ongoing consultation. (These issues are explored more fully under the Financial Assistance and Learner Supports section of this report.)

Some colleges have identified close ties with OW. They have worked out local agreements to ensure that dollars for supports like child care and transportation are well spent by both agencies. In one community where public transit is nonexistent, a van financed by OW picks up students and delivers them to classes each day. In other communities, OW provides funding for assessments, an assessor, or both. Some OW offices also provide educational start-up dollars for participants including money for a book deposit and student activity fees. The OW counselors and college upgrading advisors in these communities work together as a team to promote student success. In other communities, the principle of "shortest route to employment" has meant that referrals to upgrading programs are not a priority.

Service Canada policies are applied differently from community to community. In all communities, EI recipients must have an approved a Return to Work Action Plan. Service Canada does not approve programming that will be longer than one year in duration. Generally they do not approve participation in more than 15 hours per week of upgrading, though in some communities individuals have been approved on a full-time basis. Delays in approving the Return to Work Action Plans have also been identified as a barrier.

WSIB does refer clients to colleges to prepare for postsecondary education. These students tend to have clear goals based on in-depth assessments conducted by WSIB providers. WSIB provides income support as well as money to purchase supplies, transportation, and assistive devices. At some colleges, WSIB refers clients to the fee- paying stream of Academic Upgrading. At other colleges, WSIB clients participate in the provincially funded OBS stream.

College staff expressed frustration that the rules for sponsored students vary significantly from community to community – often within one college's catchment area. They also identified that frequent staffing changes in these referring organizations often means they are continuously informing new personnel and establishing referral protocols.

Community Support Groups

Colleges devote a considerable amount of time to establishing connections with a variety of organizations in the community which assist people in making changes to their lives. These connections are not only to recruit students but also to secure support for students already in programming who require extensive targeted support which the college is unable to provide. These supports include treatment for substance abuse, family counseling, medical interventions, legal assistance, and safe houses for families. Georgian College in Midland includes participation in community events as part of their programming.

Other Deliverers

Colleges participate with other literacy providers in community planning which is coordinated through regional networks. Colleges have expressed mixed satisfaction with this process. Many have found it to be an excellent opportunity to come together to share information and establish communications. Others have identified that their participation is not a productive use of their time. A majority of colleges have indicated that while they do refer students with low academic skills to community-based programs and students who are close to having their OSSD to school board programs, they see very few referrals in return of students with postsecondary or apprenticeship goals.

Two colleges, Northern and Boréal, have formed community partnerships where, despite a demand for Academic Upgrading delivery, establishing a college site in a small community was not economically feasible. These partnerships are with either a school board or a community-based program. The college provides the curriculum and materials. The deliverer provides a site and staffing. Both colleges are very aware of the need to ensure that the

curriculum taught and especially the assessments on which grades are based meet college standards in order to be recognized. Boréal is initiating a regularly scheduled teleconference to assist in providing consistency at its 12 sites across the province.

<u>Employers</u>

College upgrading programs acknowledge that their weakest link is with employers. Many have identified that getting employer feedback on programming is becoming a future focus. Loyalist College has a program advisory committee which meets to provide advice on programming. Fanshawe worked with local employers to develop call centre training. Some colleges are also developing strategies to contact local employers to inform them about the skills of Academic Upgrading students and to make them aware of services they can provide to employees. The upgrading department at Durham College works closely with General Motors to improve the academic skills of current employees. Fleming College in Haliburton, where a majority of students have an employment goal, works closely with local tourism operators to develop appropriate upgrading materials.

The familiarization of Ontario employers with college-based alternatives to an OSSD for hiring and promotion purposes has been identified as a necessary next step. Fleming has led the way in securing written acceptance of ACE by the Ontario Provincial Police. Other colleges have similar agreements in place with local employers. For example, Algonquin College has an agreement with The City of Ottawa and the Ottawa Civic Hospital. In addition to ACE, the GED and TOWES require greater employer familiarity as well.

The Essential Skills Resource Centre developed at Fanshawe College has been very successful in promoting essential skills and TOWES in the community. Colleges in all parts of the province have expressed a need to develop similar centres based on this model. Based on the Fanshawe experience, these centres show great potential to recruit students with employment goals to Academic Upgrading Programs.

Recommendations

5.1 That Academic Upgrading students be allowed to access all the college ancillary services available at a particular location. This requires an understanding that there are differences between main campus and satellite locations.

5.2 That College Academic Upgrading Programs have a strong voice in the consultations and implementation of the LMDA/LMPA, particularly with respect to the structure of the planned "employment services and referrals" function.

5.3 That community partnerships be developed involving all academic deliverers including apprenticeship, support agencies including Job Connect, and citizens groups dedicated to helping marginalized youth reach their goals.

5.4   That the roles and responsibilities of both the college and the community deliverer be clearly identified and formally agreed to when any component of Academic Upgrading must be provided by a deliverer other than the college.

5.5   That all colleges make a commitment to develop policies which facilitate the movement of Academic Upgrading students into further training including dual and transfer credits. MTCU needs to promote (with senior college management) the importance of developing internal linkages and coordinated programming.

5.6   That colleges commit to referring underprepared postsecondary applicants and postsecondary students in need of academic skills to Academic Upgrading Programs.

5.7   That the sharing of Job Connect, Academic Upgrading and Apprenticeship services by students in all three programs be facilitated. Barriers resulting from current program guidelines in all three programs must be identified and eliminated to ensure equal provincial access for all Ontarians in need of their services. A special focus should be on developing a pool of well prepared individuals for Pre-Apprenticeship and Apprenticeship Programs.

5.8   That Academic Upgrading staff be consulted with and/or involved in the development and delivery of Pre-Apprenticeship Programs at all colleges.

5.9   That the tracking of referrals among Academic Upgrading, Job Connect, Pre-Apprenticeship, and Apprenticeship Programs – regardless of the delivery institution or department – be mandated by MTCU as a program outcome for all of these programs.

5.10   That information packages explaining how Academic Upgrading, Job Connect and Apprenticeship Programs can work together be developed and distributed to front line staff and managers in all three programs. Special emphasis should be given to promoting apprenticeship opportunities and preparation for employment.

5.11   That a strategy be developed to support apprentices experiencing academic difficulty during in-school training as well as apprentices preparing to write their Certificate of Qualification examination. This strategy must link upgrading and apprenticeship programming.

5.12   That Essential Skills Resource Centres be established across the province based on the model developed at Fanshawe College.

5.13   That colleges explore the potential for implementing Academic Upgrading program advisory committees to include participation from postsecondary and apprenticeship programs, employers, sponsoring agencies and community partners.

Staffing and Resources

Recurring Themes

1. There is dissatisfaction with the use of Student Contact Hours (SCHs) as a primary funding criterion and widespread agreement that alternative criteria be developed.

2. There is a need for more program faculty and staff with expertise not only in delivering academic content but also essential skills and self-management/self-direction programming.

3. Inconsistent accessibility to college services for Academic Upgrading students is evident.

4. Professional development for Academic Upgrading faculty and support staff is needed.

Summary of Findings

Academic Upgrading Programs at all colleges identified numerous areas for development in terms of staffing and resources. Many of these require increased or reassigned resources, both human and material, to move forward with addressing the needs of an expanded student demographic. There is unanimous support with respect to the need for a revised funding model that goes beyond SCHs and which enhances delivery rather than limits it. Resources also need to be dedicated for the support of professional development among faculty and staff to address the increasingly complex profile of Academic Upgrading students.

Given that significant student contact hour accumulation typically occurs within classrooms, the use of SCHs as a primary funding criterion is seen as failing to support several activities outside of the classroom that are required to promote access, retention, and success for many students. These activities and strategies have been discussed more fully in earlier sections of this report. Briefly, they include the following five items:

1. **Program promotion**, both internally and in the community, is of great importance. Potential learners and stakeholders will not access Academic Upgrading if they don't know about it ("the best kept secret"). Most Ontarians are unaware of the Academic Upgrading Programs available in Ontario colleges because, for many, college Academic Upgrading is a non-traditional and little-publicized route to career preparation and employment. It is essential that Academic Upgrading Programs are promoted on an ongoing and coordinated basis to reach the large number of Ontarians who are in need of upgrading but who are unaware of its availability and benefits.

2. **Partnership development,** both within colleges and with outside agencies, is important in establishing clear pathways that allow students to access upgrading and to be successful on their route to further training and meaningful employment. It is

apparent that the first step toward developing these internal and external linkages with other programs and service providers tends to be initiated by (or come from) the Academic Upgrading Program.

3. **Program delivery** to the diverse student population in Academic Upgrading includes numerous success strategies identified earlier in this report. (See the section on Client Profiles and Delivery Strategies.) Delivery strategies include those specific to both academic and non-academic areas of the program. In particular, strategies for youth, Aboriginal students, Francophones, and Ontario Works recipients are identified. It can be very challenging to implement these strategies effectively at numerous delivery sites of varying sizes and service levels, often across large geographic areas.

4. **The use of online resources** for class and distance delivery is far from consistent across the system. However, many colleges are using online resources or experimenting with them, primarily as a supplement to existing, face-to-face, classroom programming. Due to the high cost of acquiring and maintaining commercial products, some colleges rely on internally developed online resources. It can be very difficult to find electronic resources that are adult-oriented, user-friendly, affordable, and relevant to the learning outcomes and delivery modes of the Academic Upgrading Program.

5. **The accessibility to broader college services** by Academic Upgrading students varies considerably across the college system. These services may include counseling, library/learning resources, computer support, and especially athletic facilities, student government and social activities. Access to such services seems to depend on the financial strength and administrative commitment of the college. In cases where Academic Upgrading is offered at small satellite locations, the provision of all the services available at the main campus may not be economically viable.

Colleges appreciate the additional funds which they have received during the past two years for the delivery of Academic Upgrading and the purchase of technology. Unfortunately, the announcement and release of these dollars late in the annual funding cycle does not allow for the planning required to maximize their effectiveness. Although colleges have already been very successful in increasing the number of students accessing college Academic Upgrading programming, they could increase success with more time for planning and student recruitment.

The expansion of college delivered programming is dependent not only on dollars but also on the expertise of the faculty and staff. In order to provide the classroom delivery required within the funding provided, many colleges rely on a large number of part-time faculty. While students praise the work of most faculty, full-time or part-time, the frequent turnover that occurs with part-time faculty is seen as a disruption to their programs. Some colleges use faculty and support staff teams to deliver a full range of programs and services, a strategy that helps with expense issues and provides dedicated personnel who bring continuity and consistency to the program.

Expanding delivery to accommodate the emerging needs of Academic Upgrading students will require professional development of faculty and staff. Comments about professional development needs were quite consistent. Faculty identified the following PD needs:

- o training in recognizing and supporting learning disabled students
- o information about mental health issues and how to address them in the classroom
- o technical resources and alternate delivery strategies
- o strategies that work with younger learners ("millennial learners")
- o essential skills training
- o life skills training (self-management/self-direction)
- o Apprenticeship, Pre-Apprenticeship, and Job Connect information

Comments from several colleges indicated that in-house college PD opportunities were often not available to them because they occurred at times suitable only to postsecondary faculty and staff. Some also said that college PD usually dealt with issues more related to postsecondary programming. Many colleges indicated that they preferred to participate in system-wide PD on common Academic Upgrading issues; others praised the benefits of the annual provincial conference for Academic Upgrading organized by the CSC.

Recommendations

6.1 That the MTCU funding allocation model be modified, with college input, to better reflect the efforts required to promote access and success for students, especially those underrepresented in postsecondary programming. This structure should recognize that each student requires numerous and varied services which are not reflected in SCHs accumulated during time spent in class. The current funding model has become a barrier to the development of innovative delivery. It is particularly a barrier to the expansion and delivery of distance education.

6.2 That any additional funding for colleges be announced early in the annual funding cycle to allow for adequate program planning and student recruitment.

6.3 That resources be provided to colleges to allow them to hire new faculty and staff and train existing personnel in the areas of non-academic program content and delivery. Employees in other areas of the college with relevant expertise can be utilized to provide this training. Professional development must help teachers address the needs of youth and learning disabled students, as well as those with physical challenges and mental health issues. Professional development focused on distance and technology-assisted learning is also required.

6.4 That the CSC facilitate a process for colleges to share information about staffing models, both currently in place and anticipated, which enable them to deliver the required program outcomes in a cost effective manner.

6.5   That MTCU provide the necessary funding to all colleges to enable them to hire adequate personnel to address both the academic and essential skills training required for success by this expanded student demographic. This especially includes a commitment to providing a counselor specific to the Academic Upgrading Program at each college.

College Delivery Highlights

This portion of the report highlights practices and ideas which were identified during the focus group interviews as successful. Colleges may want to implement similar practices. In each case, the name and contact information for the site using the practice has been identified. Colleges are encouraged to contact the individuals mentioned for further information.

Please note these summaries are based on information which was shared during the focus groups. Many colleges may have additional exemplary practices which were not identified during the discussions.

Client Recruitment

At **College Boréal,** all incoming Academic Upgrading students are provided with an orientation package which includes a day timer, calculator, binder, paper, pens, a deck of cards and a pair of socks, all containing the college logo. This promotes awareness of the program via the "word of mouth" approach. The coordinator estimated the cost per package at $5.00. Boréal also recently launched a successful new television commercial developed by a local marketing firm.

Debbie Grier 705.560.0073 x 3140 dgrier@borealc.on.ca

Durham places its upgrading advertising on page 3 of the Continuing Education calendar where learners are more likely to discover it. College staff also noted that the "gestation" period for actually making a decision after repeated viewings of marketing materials is 23 months. This suggests that marketing must be persistent. Durham also ensures that Academic Upgrading is represented at the college's postsecondary information night because it draws "huge" attention from parents who see it as a way to prepare their children for success in college.

Jeanette Barrett 905.721.3130 jeanette.barrett@durhamc.on.ca

Ninety percent of **Humber's** Academic Upgrading students are referred by the Registrar's Office. By working closely with postsecondary staff, Academic Upgrading personnel have established their program as a reliable source of well prepared students. **Note:** at most colleges this link with Registrar's Office staff is either in place or is under development. Strategies include providing information about upgrading to postsecondary applicants not accepted because of subject or grade shortfalls.

Crystal Bradley 416.675.6622 x4606 crystal.bradley@humber.ca

La Cité is a destination for international French-speaking students who see La Cité's Academic Upgrading program as culturally relevant. At least two-thirds of the students are international.

Dominique Godbout   613.742.2493 x 2314   dgodbo@lacitec.on.ca

At **Sault College,** recruitment has been a major focus during the past year with outstanding results. Strategies have included eliminating "literacy" and "basic" from the program name (increasing postsecondary faculty interest in the program), featuring the program on the back page of the continuing education brochure, advertising weekly in the *Realize your Dream* portion of the local newspaper, using a public television feature, improving the program representation on the college web site, and creating testimonial posters featuring successful Academic Upgrading graduates. A particularly successful strategy was an internal email to all Sault staff announcing the start up of evening programming. Response was overwhelming and resulted in enough students to expand delivery to four nights.

Penny Perrier   705.759.1319   penny.perrier@saultc.on.ca

Orientation Practices

Cambrian revised its Academic Upgrading orientation this year. All students participate in a six week program (20 hours per week) focusing on assessment, training plan development, orientation to computers, and self-management skills. Before moving into full-time academics, there is a further 10 weeks of half-time academic classes and half-time study skills and computer training. The program advisor has developed self-management components for possible distance delivery. The course was shared at last year's CSC conference and is available from the CSC.

Mary Blanchard   705.566.8101 x7248   mpblanchard@cambrianc.on.ca
Mary Jonik   705.566.8101 x7530   mhjonik@cambrianc.on.ca

Conestoga has two program components that are delivered before participation in Academic Upgrading if needed. *Focus for Change* is primarily for single moms on OW and is usually 12 weeks long. *Employment/Training Readiness* is for a mixed student group and is usually 8 weeks long. Durations vary slightly depending on the needs of each group. These orientations help students research academic, financial, and personal realities as part of developing their academic and career paths. Also, students begin a "gentle" approach to math and communications and usually develop peer support during this group process.

Andrea Leis   519.748.5220 x3672   aleis@conestogac.on.ca

At **Confederation** there is an extended *Personal and Career Development* program which includes community speakers and a volunteer work placement. This is seen as an excellent way to determine how serious young people are before being scheduled into academic classrooms. During a student focus group, one student identified this work placement had helped her make a career decision, and she continues to be involved with the host organization.

Lynne Thornburg   807.475.6222   thornbur@confederationc.on.ca

George Brown is moving away from an extended intake, academic assessment, and orientation process to provide resources for standardized academic testing supported by on-site program assessment and career pathway counseling. Now, the focus will be on streamlining the academic assessment process and maintaining ongoing contact with students to provide progressive career counseling, employment preparation, and appropriate assistance. These components will then support bridging to advanced education and training in apprenticeships and other college programs. The focus is on supporting academic and work-entry goals.

Lorraine Trotter   416.415.5000   ltrotter@gbrownc.on.ca

Mohawk runs a program called *Future Directions*. It is five weeks long and has four intakes of 15 students per year, many of whom are on OW. The focus of the program is on goal setting; many students move on to employment.

Jim Vanderveken   905.575.2303   jim.vanderveken@mohawkcollege.ca

Seneca dedicates part of its Communications and Self-Management courses to vocational research, in general and specific ways. They work one-on-one with some students to plan and submit their OCAS applications. They also meet individually with students to discuss career prospects, to map out an educational plan for the goals they have already chosen, or both. This collaboration is often initiated when they review each student's individual training plan.

Leolyn Hendricks   416.491.5050 x4755   leolyn.hendricks@senecac.on.ca

A Culture of Recognition and Celebration

At Collège Boréal, students who complete all the requirements for an ACE certificate are recognized at the college graduation ceremonies. For others just taking portions of courses there are "Celebrations of Success" at all satellites. Awards are presented to current and past upgrading students.

Debbie Grier   705.560.0073.x 3140   dgrier@borealc.on.ca

George Brown introduced a celebration of learning for LBS students. LBS students, along with faculty advisors, planned and delivered a celebration of learning and achievement that brought together over 200 currently enrolled students for games, prizes, dancing, singing and food from many different cultures. Honorary guests presented awards to student ambassadors who volunteered for a community event that, by all accounts, was a resounding success. Future plans include student presentations, invitations to graduates, creating an event planning manual, web site promotion and celebration of the event.

George Brown also has formal agreements in place to recognize upgrading achievement and "fast-track" placement in upgrading programs. Also, college certificates are awarded in recognition of learning outcomes.

Lorraine Trotter   416.415.5000   ltrotter@gbrownc.on.ca

La Cité uses an in-house newsletter to recognize upgrading students who were winners of prizes and awards in their subsequent postsecondary studies and also to identify upgrading students who have graduated from postsecondary. The promotion encourages current students and promotes the recognition of upgrading within the broader college community.

Dominique Godbout   613.742.2493 x 2314   dgodbo@lacitec.on.ca

Sault runs a very successful Coffee Circle every four to six weeks, usually associated with a holiday season. It is a combination information session and social event organized jointly by staff and students. The information session could involve a presentation given by Job Connect staff, for example, followed by refreshments paid for by a local business.
A program newsletter celebrating student achievements and providing community and college information is distributed.

Penny Perrier   705.759.1319   penny.perrier@saultc.on.ca

Timetabling

Niagara College is piloting weekend delivery this year, especially to accommodate employed participants. **Seneca** offers a unique drive-home program (4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.) which enables people to write tests and get assistance on their way home from work. **Cambrian** has designed timetabling to facilitate the participation of shift workers.

Sue Reinhart	905. 641.2252 x4110	sreinhart@niagarac.on.ca
Leolyn Hendricks	416.491.5050 x4755	leolyn.hendricks@senecac.on.ca
Mary Blanchard	705.566.8101.x7248	mpblanchard@cambrianc.on.ca

Financial Supports

One of the perks that **Durham's** upgrading program offers is a postsecondary bursary, awarded to one student per year, to offset the cost of tuition for each year of the student's postsecondary program as long as she/he maintains a 70 %. This money is a gift to the student and is promoted in the program information brochures.

Jeanette Barrett   905.721.3130   jeanette.barrett@durhamc.on.ca

Access to College Services

At **College Boréal,** full-time students can purchase a student card for $10.00 (versus the $200.00 for postsecondary students) which provides access to all services. The only facility which part-time students can not access is the athletics complex.

Debbie Grier   705.560.0073. x 3140   dgrier@borealc.on.ca

At **Loyalist** "a student is a student is a student" regardless of his/her status as postsecondary, non-postsecondary, grant funded or project funded.

Brian Gibb   613.969.1913 x2306   bgibb@loyalistc.on.ca

Youth Strategies

At **Cambrian,** applicants under 21 are only accepted after an interview with the program manager or counselor and a reading test (*Nelson Denny*). Acceptance is based on demonstrating commitment and adequate reading scores.

Mary Blanchard   705.566.8101 x7248   mpblanchard@cambrianc.on.ca

Centennial has an OBS program targeted specifically at hard-to-serve youth who are actively recruited in the community (see *Toronto Sun,* September 14, 2005, p. JC5; *Toronto Star*, December 14, 2005). The program coordinator and a community activist literally reach out to youth with the message that college is possible even without an OSSD, and it's free ("no grade 12 - no problem"). The message is, "Continue if you're in high school, but come to the program if you're not." The youth program was enhanced with a formal partnership between Youthlink and Centennial College whereby a youth worker has been assigned to this project two half days per week to support the teachers working in the classrooms.

Students are very vulnerable; they can not or do not complete high school (some left school as early as grade eight) and come from a very complicated social world (low income environment and high level of peer pressure). Some students who seem to have few problems learning have disengaged from trying to achieve in previous educational settings. This program sometimes brings out their real potential and interest in improving their academic abilities.

Sara Katz   416.289.5001   skatz@centennialcollege.ca
Laurie Malabar (Program Coordinator)   lauriemalabar@sympatico.ca

The Two-Wheel Drive program at **Seneca's** Yorkgate campus offers a unique service for under-prepared youth to get a taste of learning suited to their hands-on learning style. Young people learn how to repair bicycles which are recycled for use in the community.

Leolyn Hendricks   416.491.5050 x4755   leolyn.hendricks@senecac.on.ca

St. Clair is piloting a dual credit program with a high school, targeting students who are seen as not likely to move on to postsecondary. In this program, students complete a college credit by being integrated into regular college classes. Nine of ten students who started the fall semester were successful.

Gayle Dale   519.966.1656 x4784   gdale@stclaircollege.ca

Aboriginal Learners

Algonquin has a long-standing partnership (ten years) with a Quebec First Nations band in which upgrading curriculum is delivered by the community on-site; the college provides the accreditation. (Note: the activity is outside MTCU funding.) The relationship works because it is personal, and there is community leadership (the band Chief is supportive). Also, the curriculum delivery is adapted to community needs.

Odette Regimbal   613.727.4723 x5477   regimbo@algonquincollege.com

The Aboriginal Program at **George Brown** helps Aboriginal people access college programs and services that include counseling services and the delivery of Aboriginal course(s). Planned activities and partnerships include the Aboriginal Youth Forum (a college sponsored conference for Aboriginal youth and Aboriginal organizations of the Greater Toronto Area) and a growing partnership with Negahneewin College of Confederation College to increase potential program and service offerings for urban Aboriginals.

Lorraine Trotter   416.415.5000   ltrotter@gbrownc.on.ca

One of **Seneca's** former Aboriginal student graduates won the Woman of Distinction Award (YWCA) which has generated a lot of publicity for upgrading in the Aboriginal community. The award was announced on March 8, 2006.

Leolyn Hendricks   616.491.5050 x4755   leolyn.hendricks@senecac.on.ca

A number of colleges have identified either internal linkages with departments providing support to Aboriginal learners or linkages in the broader community**: Cambrian, Canadore, Confederation, Fanshawe, Fleming, Georgian, Lambton, Loyalist, Niagara, Northern,** and **St. Lawrence.**

Underrepresented Learners

George Brown provides LBS Deaf programming for Level 3 and Level 4 Communications and Math courses. Interpreter and note taking support is offered to students who move on to the LBS Anglophone program. The George Brown LBS Deaf web site has been developed using American Sign Language as the first language for communicating program content and key messages. It is the first college to provide access to web-based information services using ASL as the first language of communication. The official site of the Literacy and Basic Skills Program for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Adults is as follows:
http://gbcdeaf.georgebrown.ca/index.htm

Lorraine Trotter   416.415.5000   ltrotter@gbrownc.on.ca

Distance Delivery

At **Collège Boréal** there is a pilot project to compare student contact hours for online versus in-class delivery. It will provide concrete statistics to use for developing a policy to claim distance delivery hours.

Debbie Grier   705.560.0073.x 3140   dgrier@borealc.on.ca

Confederation is currently operating two distance delivery pilots and has considerable knowledge to inform future delivery. They are evaluating both synchronous and asynchronous models.

Lynne Thornburg   807.475.6222   thornbur@confederationc.on.ca

Satellite Involvement and Coordination

At **Collège Boréal** (12 sites) there is a monthly student competition day for all 12 sites. Questions are posed online for students in a particular subject. They have a timed period to answer and a provincial results bulletin is posted.

Debbie Grier   705.560.0073.x 3140   dgrier@borealc.on.ca

Canadore has an expanding number of delivery locations (four). The program coordinator is very involved, visiting each site monthly at a minimum to support students and delivery staff and to promote consistency in the application of policies, processes, and curriculum. She also liaises with other managers (postsecondary, apprenticeship) who deliver programming at these locations.

Barb Glass   705.474.7600 x5455   barb.glass@canadorec.on.ca

At **Georgian** (eight sites) considerable effort is made to ensure staff at all sites are linked and informed. Staff training events are held twice a year which provide an opportunity to hear guest speakers and work on program areas and materials of concern to the participants.

Sandra Lee   705.728.1968 x1263   slee@georgianc.on.ca

Postsecondary Links

At the following colleges, Academic Upgrading is co-administered with General Arts and Science: **Algonquin, Cambrian, Canadore, Centennial, Fleming, Humber, St. Clair, St. Lawrence,** and **Sheridan.**

At these colleges, students can take one postsecondary course per semester at no charge**: Boréal, Cambrian, Northern, Loyalist, Niagara,** and **Sheridan.**

Students can participate in program shadowing at the following colleges: **Algonquin, Boréal Cambrian, Canadore, Conestoga, Durham, Fanshawe, George Brown, Georgian, Humber, Lambton, Loyalist, Mohawk, Northern, Sheridan,** and **St. Clair.**

Students are encouraged to learn about and use the organization's intranet learning platforms: **Algonquin** and **Boréal** (in-house program); **Canadore** (TLM – The Learning Manager); **Cambrian**, **Centennial, Northern, St. Clair,** and **Seneca** (all using Blackboard), **Durham**, **Loyalist** and **La Cite** (all using Web CT); Fanshawe**, George Brown,** and **Lambton** (all using Datatel).

There are transfer credits for Academic Upgrading courses**: Algonquin** (Success Strategies), **Cambrian** (Communications)**, Conestoga** (Preparatory Communications, Language Fundamentals, Biology, Essentials of Anatomy and Physiology, Math for Business, Essential Mathematics), **Loyalist** (Computers, Business Math), **Seneca** (Computers), and **Sheridan** (Computers).

At many colleges there are special or preferred admission arrangements: **Boréal, Cambrian, Conestoga, Durham, Fanshawe, George Brown, Humber** and **Loyalist** have developed a variety of agreements. At **Algonquin,** the Practical Nursing and Veterinary Technician programs reserve seats for Academic Upgrading students because they are satisfied with the success of upgrading students in their programs. All colleges identified that qualified students are generally accepted into the program of their choice.

Sheridan's Academic Upgrading Program provides summer courses for students needing math to qualify for entry into postsecondary business and technology programs. A similar arrangement is in place for those needing biology for entry into health science programs. Postsecondary faculty provide specific input on the skills to be mastered in these courses.

Further Information:
Janet Gambrell 905.845.9430 x5219 janet.gambrell@sheridanc.on.ca

Pre-Apprenticeship Links

At **Canadore,** there are strong linkages with Pre-Apprenticeship Programs offered annually. The Academic Upgrading Program coordinator is heavily involved in the design and delivery

(day-to-day) of all Pre-Apprenticeship Programs at all locations. Curriculum for the Pre-Apprenticeship academic components is LBS/ACE. This has led to closer ties with apprenticeship.

Barb Glass	705.474.7600.x5455	barb.glass@canadorec.on.ca

Confederation's Academic Upgrading personnel have been heavily involved in all Pre-Apprenticeship programming. The apprenticeship manager was formerly responsible for upgrading and has a thorough understanding of the importance of academic skills.

Lynne Thornburg	807.475.6222	thornbur@confederationc.on.ca

At **Northern,** Academic Upgrading and apprenticeship are working closely together to develop strategies and programming (ongoing and Pre-Apprenticeship) to address the academic needs of Aboriginal students in isolated northern Ontario communities, especially in view of the economic boom anticipated with the opening of the DeBeers Victor diamond mine and Eagle's Earth tourist facility.

Tori Hanson (AU)	705.235.7279x2292	hansont@northern.on.ca
Debby Donovan (App)	705.235.3211x2106	donovand@northernc.on.ca

St. Lawrence is seeing a real explosion in skilled trades programming because it is one of the college's key strategic priorities. As a result, the Academic Upgrading Program is exploring stronger links with apprenticeship programming.

Nancy Scovil	613.544.5400, ext. 1233	nscovil@sl.on.ca

Job Connect

Collège Boréal and Cambrian College are opening two new joint Job Connect facilities on the outskirts of Sudbury. An Academic Upgrading classroom for both colleges will also be colocated.

Debbie Grier	705.560.0073.x 3140	dgrier@borealc.on.ca
Mary Blanchard	705.566.8101.x7248	mpblanchard@cambrianc.on.ca

At the Espanola Campus of **Cambrian College**, Job Connect and Academic Upgrading are colocated and the community deliverer is nearby. All incoming students for both programs (mostly 16 to 24 year olds) receive the same orientation, and the sharing of clients as

required is ongoing. Espanola delivery model has been identified as a model of excellence in Job Connect College Sector's recent report.

Charline Smith   705.869.4113   casmith@cambrianc.on.ca

At **Confederation,** the upgrading manager is also responsible for Job Connect. Consequently the two programs work together closely to promote the success of clients in both programs. Job Connect has been particularly helpful in assisting plateaued Academic Upgrading learners of all ages move on to employment. (Academic Upgrading is also part of Negahweewhin College which promotes ties with Aboriginal services. Faculty stressed this is a "real" not just a managerial connection.)

Lynne Thornburg   807.475.6222   thornbur@confederationc.on.ca

One of the Deans at **Durham** has responsibility for Job Connect, Academic Upgrading, and Continuing Education, creating more effective liaison between the services available through these three program areas.

Jeanette Barrett   905.721.3130   jeanette.barrett@durhamc.on.ca

At **Georgian** in Midland, Apprenticeship, Academic Upgrading and Job Connect are in the same location and work closely together. Referrals go all ways. ACE curriculum is used in Pre-Apprenticeship Programs.

Gabrielle Koopmans   705.526.3666 x303   gkoopmans@georgianc.on.ca

Mohawk is piloting a part-time/part-time program for youth that combines part-time work through Job Connect sponsorship and part-time Academic Upgrading at the College. Colocation of the two programs facilitates a case management approach.

Dieter Klaus   905.575.1212 x3324   dieter.klaus@mohawkcollege.ca

Senior management at **Niagara** have formed a *Skills Training Council* made up of participants from Academic Upgrading, Job Connect, Contract Training, Apprenticeship, ESL, and the college's Tourism program. In addition to providing important guidance for their external marketing efforts, this group has raised the profile of these programs within the college.

Sue Reinhart   905.641.2252 x4110   sreinhart@niagarac.on.ca

Community Partnerships

At **Collège Boréal** there is special emphasis on the appropriate referral of students under 21 to the two French alternate high schools. Students still deciding to follow the college route must sign an agreement which indicates they have been informed and chosen the college, and that they understand the program they are taking will not provide an OSSD. Boréal is currently working with these two high schools to discuss the comparability of ACE and grade 12 courses. Boréal also has some delivery sub-contracts with school board and community deliverers at smaller sites. Monthly conference calls help keep these sites involved and consistent.

Debbie Grier   705.560.0073.x 3140   dgrier@borealc.on.ca

At the Coburg campus of **Fleming College**, Job Connect and Upgrading are colocated and share some clients. Job Connect assisted an upgrading student in securing a part-time job (resume assistance and counseling), and the student continues upgrading on a part-time basis. Upgrading is also colocated in the same building as the Help Centre and Legal Clinic agencies. As a result, there is considerable cross referral of clients. The Help Centre assists with resumes and job search. The Community Legal Clinic has assisted upgrading students with legal issues related to ODSP, for example.

Beth Bellaire   905.372.6865, x224 (Coburg)
                         705-749-5530 x1304 (Peterborough)   bbellair@flemingc.on.ca

George Brown's Academic Upgrading Program has partnered with the Regent Park Developers, apprenticeship training, and related community agencies to identify skills required to rebuild the Regent Park site. This project will ensure that youth who live in this community are assessed for these skills and have an opportunity to address the academic gaps that could pose barriers to full participation

The Regent Park social housing project is a 10 to 12 year commitment for George Brown. The Regent Park project works because expectations are managed from the start by doing a thorough pre-assessment of the needs and expectations of all partners resulting in clear and common outcomes. It uses a cohort model that provides time for the group to establish itself and access agency support workers. The project is a template for future projects because agencies learn about the college, and barriers are overcome regarding attitudes towards the college (i.e. students who would not have traditionally come to the college did participate in a college program). The Regent Park project is a long-term process of building a relationship with the community. For example, the Centre for Addictions and Mental Health (CAMH) works with the Regent Park project: George Brown does the assessment of jobs and needs, and CAMH does the health assessment.

Lorraine Trotter   416.415.5000   ltrotter@gbrownc.on.ca

Although highly unusual for a non-postsecondary program, **Loyalist** has a college preparatory advisory committee. Moreover, the chair of the advisory committee is the regional director of training for OW. (He is a graduate of the program, and his daughter also attended the program). There is also an employer represented on this committee.

Brian Gibb   613.969.1913 x2306   bgibb@loyalistc.on.ca

At **Boréal** and **Northern,** partnerships have been organized in small communities with both school board and community-based programs to deliver upper level curriculum. These are areas in which a college presence is not economically feasible. The college is responsible for the curriculum, assessment and documentation; the partner provides space and staffing.

Debbie Grier   705.560.6673 x 3140   dgirer@borealc.on.ca
Tori Hanson   705.235.3211x2292   hansont@northern.on.ca

St. Lawrence was active in the Gananoque community following a workforce reduction. The Academic Upgrading Program does specific outreach with the Employment Network Committee which is comprised of employment readiness practitioners who help prepare students for the transition to college upgrading. It is also linked to KEYS (Kingston Employment Youth Services) to do assessments and referrals.

The program manager is working with a "hard to serve" group through the Frontenac Community Mental Health Services. The clients are often very bright but marginalized socially. Programming focuses on offering something less academic (e.g. ACE computers) and offering it on-site. The intention is to help clients make an easier transition to further upgrading or to postsecondary

Nancy Scovil   613.544.5400 ext. 1233   nscovil@sl.on.ca

At **Seneca's** Yorkgate site, there is an ongoing colocation agreement with the Toronto District School Board which has an LBS Level 1 and 2 class on site. There is also an active Campus Advisory Committee which includes representation from community organizations and educational partners and collaborates with the Jane-Finch Concerned Citizens Association located on site. They focus on community outreach and development of youth employment initiatives especially Pre-Apprenticeship, tutoring and mentoring.

Leolyn Hendricks   416.491.5050 x4755   leolyn.hendricks@senecac.on.ca

Ontario Works Links

The Program at **Algonquin** maintains strong lines of communication with the Employment Financial Assistance Centre (EFAC) which is a centralized structure supporting financial counseling, OW caseworkers and employers. Some of the EFAC activity is also closely aligned with EI, thus bringing additional coordination of services.

Odette Regimbal   613.727.4723 x5477   regimbo@algonquincollege.com

At **Durham College**, delivery staff from Academic Upgrading sit on the Learning, Earning, and Parenting Committee (LEAP) which maintains the flow of information and strategies to connect OW clients to services. LEAP is a program for single parents under 21 that helps them link to supports and plan for education, career and family. LEAP ensures quick and easy access to daycare and transportation.

Jeanette Barrett   905.721.3130   jeanette.barrett@durhamc.on.ca

Sault College has an excellent referral process and working relationship with OW. The OW representative attends all literacy services planning sessions in the community.

Penny Perrier   705.759.1319   penny.perrier@saultc.on.ca

Essential Skills

Centennial is taking a strong focus on essential skills. A key dimension of this is implementation of portfolio development and embedding essential skills in the LBS curriculum, particularly the Academic Upgrading youth program.

Sara Katz   416.289.5001   skatz@centennialcollege.ca

Fanshawe has set up an *Essential Skills Resource Centre* in response to needs indicated by employers, Service Canada, and OW. Fanshawe has provided system leadership on the importance of integrating essential skills into curriculum as well as the impact which such a resource centre can have on referrals and linkages with employers. The Fanshawe model is being replicated across the province.

Sandra Hennessey   519.452.4430 x4553   shennessey@fanshawec.ca

At **Fleming,** *Strategies for College and Work* is delivered as a series of workshops covering 11 features. Students can demonstrate skills in such topics as time management in a variety of contexts including school, work, and future occupations. They are able to bring in materials from work and their personal lives (e.g. letters of application or complaint).

Beth Bellaire   905.372.6865, x224 (Coburg)
                       705.749.5530 x1304 (Peterborough)   bbellair@flemingc.on.ca

Seneca is setting up an Essential Skills Centre in Richmond Hill which will later be dovetailed with Academic Upgrading. Job Connect counselors will be able to target youth who lack specific employability skills and offer them modularized learning. They are concentrating on the nine essential skills identified by Service Canada, three of which are directly associated with TOWES. Students will not be paid, but the tuition will be covered by LBS. This project will be funded as part of the expanded Academic Upgrading programming. Individuals who are not self-directed and need more teacher support will be referred to upgrading classrooms or other local literacy providers. It is possible that such centres may be opened at other Seneca locations in future.

Leolyn Hendricks   416.491.5050 x4755   leolyn.hendricks@senecac.on.ca

Employer Links

Canadore has had considerable success with the introduction of TOWES to the community, particularly with Ontario Northland Railway. ONR, currently in a major expansion phase, is using TOWES scores as one of its hiring criteria.

Barb Glass   705.474.7600.x5455   barb.glass@canadorec.on.ca

When General Motors identified that its employees had a math gap, **Durham's** Academic Upgrading personnel worked with the online expertise of the Whitby campus staff to develop an online Apprenticeship Mathematics course. General Motors has also utilized **Durham's** *Career Shop* workshops with internal and external applicants for Pre-Apprenticeship. Academic Upgrading delivery staff participate as part of the workshops and promote Academic Upgrading for those who need to update or upgrade their skills to improve their selection standing. General Motors has encouraged and supported employee participation in Academic Upgrading to improve their ranking, and it also supports tuition reimbursement for employees paying fees to participate in upgrading courses.

Jeanette Barrett   905.721.3130   jeanette.barrett@durhamc.on.ca

Fanshawe partnered with two call centres to develop curriculum, with graduates going to work at the call centres. In Simcoe, a partnership was formed with a trucking company that saw the college delivering Academic Upgrading and essential skills specifically to meet the needs of that industry. The Call Centre Program curriculum has become the base for a program delivered by **Lambton** this year.

Sandra Hennessey	519.452.4430 x4553	shennessey@fanshawec.ca
Ann Marie Cosford	519.542.7751 x3537	acosford@lambton.on.ca

Georgian (in Midland) consults with employers regarding the best timing of Academic Upgrading and essential skills classes to maximize access for employed students.

Gabrielle Koopmans	705.526.3666 x303	gkoopmans@georgianc.on.ca

At **Northern,** TOWES was piloted with Academic Upgrading students. They specifically identified during focus group that access to TOWES was a very positive opportunity which had assisted in identifying an employment goal.

Tori Hanson	705.235.7279	hansont@northern.on.ca

Appendixes

APPENDIX A – Focus Group Questions

Questions to Guide Students Focus Groups

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 Programs, and apprenticeship training. In order to assist colleges across the province in designing and delivering programs which more effectively meet student needs, focus groups are being held to hear directly from students in academic upgrading what is working and what can be improved.

Comments from these focus group are confidential. We will be sharing summaries of what we hear in order to develop a provincial overview of what is currently working well and to develop recommendations for improved provincial delivery of Academic Upgrading.

1. What motivated you to enroll in the Academic Upgrading Program?

2. In what ways has your learning experience been positive?

3. What factors might cause you to withdraw before achieving your goal?

4. What could be improved to assist you in reaching your goals?

5. Both the federal and provincial governments have identified a need to increase the number of people in apprenticeship training 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?

6. 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?

7. Do you have any additional comments or recommendations you would like to make about college Academic Upgrading Programs?

Questions to Guide Program Faculty and Staff Focus Groups

Increasing government attention is being focused on meeting the needs of early school leavers unable to make the successful transition to post secondary, Pre-Apprenticeship Programs, and apprenticeship training. The 2005 *Snapshot of College Workforce Delivery* document identified various activities which colleges have launched to improve the success of Academic Upgrading. We are interested in learning more about early school leavers and,

in particular, how Academic Upgrading (currently delivered through OBS funding) can facilitate accessible and successful pathways for those learners - especially youth, Aboriginals, Ontario Works recipients, and online learners.

Please provide your thoughts on (a**) what works**, (b) **what your college and program can do better**, and (c) **what supports are needed** in the following areas.

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

2. How do they know about and gain access to your program?

   o What data do you have about how students find out about Academic Upgrading?
   o What are the main reasons why students select an Academic Upgrading program?
   o What community and/or internal outreach strategies do you have in place?
   o What are you considering?
   o How helpful is the college's mainstream promotion in recruiting youth, Aboriginals, Ontario Works and online learners to Academic Upgrading Programs?
   o How well informed are other college staff (liaison, Job Connect, contract training, apprenticeship, etc.) about Academic Upgrading?

3. In your experience, what goals do youth, Aboriginals, Ontario Works recipients and online learners have? In other words, what do they expect the program to do for them?

   o Do learners come to the program with program goals already set by someone else? By whom?
   o Describe the process and supports that help students clarify/confirm/establish goals.
   o Why do they change goals?
   o What are the factors that affect why they do not reach goals?

4. Describe your program experience with youth, Aboriginals, Ontario Works recipients, and online learners.

5. How do their learning and your teaching needs affect the way you design curriculum, deliver it, or use alternate learning strategies (e.g. technology)?

6. What benefits or challenges do youth, Aboriginals, Ontario Works recipients, and online learners present in your learning environment?

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

o   What are the barriers?
o   How can they be overcome?

8. Describe how your program serves these groups through <u>internal</u> partnerships with the college's programs and services.

   o   Do your students have access to the same programs and services as funded post secondary students?

9. Are you aware of links with apprenticeship training and Pre-Apprenticeship Programs at your college?

   o   Describe them.
   o   How did you find out about them?

10. How do you anticipate your professional development needs changing if these groups of learners have a more significant role in your teaching practice?

11. Describe your experience with using alternate forms of delivery (i.e. online, web-based, software applications, learning technologies, distance delivery) to reach youth, Aboriginals, Ontario Works recipients and online learners.

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

Questions to Guide Program Manager Interviews

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 Programs, and apprenticeship training. The 2005 *Snapshot of College Workforce Delivery* document identified various activities which colleges have launched to improve the success of students in Academic Upgrading (currently funded by OBS). We are interested in learning more about them and, in particular, how Academic Upgrading funding can facilitate accessible and successful pathways for early school leavers - especially youth, Aboriginals, Ontario Works recipients, and online learners.

Please provide your thoughts on (a**) what works**, (b) **what improvements/changes are needed at your college**, and (c) **what supports are needed** in the following areas.

1. Addressing the needs of **youth**, especially those 16-18 years of age.

2. Addressing the needs of **online learners**.

3. **Aboriginal Students**

   o Do you have a significant number of Aboriginal students?
   o Describe the potential in your catchment area to increase participation of Aboriginals in Academic Upgrading.
   o Does your college have postsecondary programs specifically for Aboriginal students?
   o What linkages have you established with these programs and/or with Aboriginal support groups?

4. **Ontario Works Recipients**

   Statistics show that a significant number of LBS students are OW.

   o What supports are in place?
   o How can the number moving on to Academic Upgrading (OBS) be increased?

5. **Marketing Academic Upgrading**

   o How do students find out about Academic Upgrading?
   o How is data on that collected?
   o What do you think are the main reasons students select a college Academic Upgrading Program?
   o What outreach strategies – community and internal – do you have in place?
   o What strategies are you considering?
   o Do you think/know if mainstream college promotion reaches the target groups we are discussing?
   o Can other college staff who are in the community (e.g. liaison, Job Connect, contract training, apprenticeship) speak knowledgeably about Academic Upgrading?

6. What **community partnerships and referral** processes are in place (e.g. LSP, OW, Service Canada)? How well do they work in helping students to move into and among programs to meet their needs?

7. What **internal college linkages** are in place and how well do they work?

  o Are these linkages formal or informal? Areas of interest include transfer credits, preferred admission status (to postsecondary), referrals to Academic Upgrading from the Registrar's Office, advice from postsecondary faculty with respect to Academic Upgrading curriculum, links with Pre-Apprenticeship Programs and apprenticeship training.

  o Have staff from Pre-Apprenticeship Programs and apprenticeship areas at your college approached you or your program about linkages? If so, what was their motivation?

  o How is activity that results from these linkages tracked?

8. What, if any, linkages have been formed with **employers**? How are employers involved with your program?

9. Describe your experience with **alternate forms of delivery** (i.e. online, web-based, software applications, learning technologies, distance delivery).

  o For whom do you use it?
  o What advice do you have regarding implementation?
  o If you don't use it, should you? For whom?
  o What do you need to get started?

10. **Tracking and Reporting**

Considering the government's increased attention to meeting the needs of early school leavers to make successful transitions to postsecondary, Pre-Apprenticeship Programs, and apprenticeship training,

  (a) How should MTCU's performance indicators be revised?
  (b) What internal performance indicators do you use and how do you use them?
  (c) What resources are needed to track successes?

11. Do you have any additional comments you would like to make about your college upgrading program?

APPENDIX B -Acronyms

ACAATO	Associations of Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology
ACE	Academic and Career Entrance
AEI	Anishinabek Educational Institute
ASL	American Sign Language
AU	Academic Upgrading
BTSD	Basic Training for Skills Development
CAP	Community Access Points
CSC	College Sector Committee for Adult Upgrading
EFAC	Employment Financial Assistance Centres
EI	Employment Insurance
ES	Essential Skills
ESL	English as a Second Language
FNTI	First Nations Technical Institute
FBO	Formation de base de l'Ontario
GED	General Educational Development
GPA	Grade Point Average
GTA	Greater Toronto Area
HRSDC	Human Resources Skills Development Canada
IT	Information Technology
IALS	International Adult Literacy Survey
IALLS	International Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey
ILC	Independent Learning Centre
JC	Job Connect
LBS	Literacy and Basic Skills
LEAP	Learning, Earning, and Parenting
LINC	Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada
LMDA	Labour Market Development Agreement
LMPA	Labour Market Partnership Agreement
LSP	Literacy Services Planning
MTCU	Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities
MCSS	Ministry of Community and Social Services
MoE	Ministry of Education
OBS	Ontario Basic Skills
OSAP	Ontario Student Assistance Program
OSBP	Ontario Special Bursary program
OSSD	Ontario Secondary School Diploma
OW	Ontario Works
PD	Professional Development
PLATO	Programmed Logic for Automated Teaching Operations
PS	Post Secondary
SCH	Student Contact Hour
T&DCC	Training and Development Coordinating Committee
TOWES	Test of Workplace Essential Skills
TUP	Technical Upgrading Program
TS	Training Supports
TVO	TV Ontario
YALLES	Young Adults with Low Levels of Education
WSIB	Workplace Safety and Insurance Board

APPENDIX C – Number of Focus Group Participants

Table 1: Total Participants By Category

Total Number of Participants	**610**
Number of Faculty/Staff	**154**
Number of Students	**456**
Number of sites	**35**

Table 2: Total Participants by College

College	Managers	Faculty and Staff	Students Over 21	Students Under 21	Aboriginal Students[*]	Number of Sites
Algonquin	2	6	17	10	0	1
Boréal	1	3	13	8	1	1
Cambrian	4	8	14	15	8	2
Canadore	1	2	8	3	2	2
Centennial	1	2	17	20	0	1
Conestoga	1	5	26	9	1	2
Confederation	1	12	5	12	7	1
Durham	2	5	15	2	0	1
Fanshawe	2	3	7	2	1	2
Fleming	1	3	9	4	1	2
George Brown	1	6	10	6	0	1
Georgian	1	3	6	3	1	1
Humber	1	2	7	1	1	1
La Cité	2	4	17	4	0	1
Lambton	1	2	8	4	0	1
Loyalist	1	4	14	2	3	1
Mohawk	1	8	6	7	1	1
Niagara	1	9	14	1	0	1
Northern	5	5	5	8	6	3
Sault	1	3	6	11	4	1
St. Clair	1	3	5	3	1	1
St. Lawrence	2	4	12	3	0	4
Seneca	2	9	20	4	0	2
Sheridan	1	6	12	3	0	1
Totals	**37**	**117**	**273**	**145**	**38**	**35**

*Aboriginal student numbers are not included in the over 21 or under 21 categories.
.

APPENDIX D - Associated Resources and Web Sites

Note: The list below reflects sources that the project consultants encountered during the preparation of this report. It is not a reference list.

Table 3: Associated Resources and Web Sites

Resource	Relevance to Report
Aboriginal Postsecondary Institutions in Ontario www.aboriginalinstitute.com	Client Profiles and Delivery Strategies
ACAATO Environmental Scan, 2005 www.acaato.on.ca	Introduction
American Youth Policy Forum. ERIC Digest no. 246, 2003 www.aypf.org	Client Profiles and Delivery Strategies
Snapshot of College Workforce Delivery *What Works (* College Sector Committee for Adult Upgrading, 2001 and 2005 www.collegeupgradingon.ca	Introduction
The Devil is in the Details: A Response to the Report of the Postsecondary Review in Ontario Constantinou, P., & Drea, C. (2005) *College Quarterly, 8*(3) www.senecac.on.ca/quarterly/2005-vol8-num3-summer/constantinou_drea.html	Introduction
Job Connect and the School Connection, Job Connect College Sector, 2005 www.algonquincollege.com/jccs	Partnerships
International Adult Literacy Survey (1994) IALS *International Adult Literacy Survey: Literacy Skills of Canadian Youth (1997)* *International Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey (2005) IALLS* www.hrsdc.gc.ca/en/hip/lld/nls/Surveys/indexsurv.shtml-26k-	Introduction

The Double Cohort Study; Phase Four Dr. Alan King, 2005 www.wdu.gov.on.ca/eng/document/reports/phase4/index/html	Introduction
Labour Market Development Agreement *Labour Market Partnership Agreement* www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/training/labourmarket.html	Partnerships
Models of Integration Project, CSC, 2005-2006 www.collegeupgradingon.ca	Partnerships
No Wrong Door Government of Ontario, 2006 alphacom.alphaplus.ca/alphacom/disc/infometenglish.nsf	Partnerships
Oblinger, Diana G., and Oblinger, James L., editors Educause, 2005 *Educating the Net Generation* www.educause.edu/educatingthenetgen Audio Interview www.uoit.ca/teachingandlearning/contact/nov05/oblinger.mp3	Client Profiles and Delivery Strategies Technology-Enhanced Learning and Delivery
Ontario: A Leader in Learning. Final Report of the Postsecondary Review Panel. Rae, B. 2005 www.raereview.on.ca/-5k-	Introduction
Ontario Learns – Strengthening our Adult Education System. Wynne, K. 2005 www.edu.gov.on.ca/adultedreview/report.html 05	Introduction
Pathway to Prosperity: What We Heard, ACAATO, Winter 2006 www.acaato.on.ca	Introduction

Prepared for Success, CSC, 2005 www.collegeupgradingon.ca	Introduction
The Price of Knowledge 2004: Access and Student Finance in Canada. Junor & Usher, 2004 www.millenniumscholarships.ca/images/Publications/Price of Knowledge-2004.pdf	Financial Assistance and Learner Supports
Reaching Higher: The McGuinty Government Plan for Postsecondary Education, 2005 www.edu.gov.on.ca?eng/document/nr/o5.o517.html-19k-	Introduction
Vanguard Colleges http://www.league.org/league/projects/lcp/vanguard.htm	Introduction