

Title: Keeping You Informed, Summer '94

Organization: Alberta Advanced Education and Career Development

Form of Material: newsletter

Note: Title of newsletter uncertain

Complete text:

WHAT WE HEARD

Summer '94

This is the third in a series of "Keeping You Informed" newsletters, designed to keep you up-to-date about Alberta Advanced Education and Career Development's strategic planning process known as Adult Learning, Access Through Innovation.

This process has been ongoing since 1992, and has consisted of a number of related initiatives designed to develop a new direction for adult learning in Alberta.

The round two consultation meetings, which took place in the first week of May 1994 in Edmonton and Calgary, provided approximately 300 stakeholders the opportunity to provide input to the draft White Paper, An Agenda for Change, that was released by the Minister to the public for review in late March 1994. In addition, over 7,000 copies of the draft White Paper were mailed to individuals who had previously participated or who had expressed interest in the process.

The purpose of this round of consultation was to confirm the vision, mission, features, roles and goal statements contained in the draft White Paper and to test and receive input on the proposed strategies.

This newsletter provides an overview by the Moderator of the information received from the Edmonton and Calgary public meetings as well as from the written submissions that Albertans mailed to the department.

The information received from this round of consultation will be considered in the development of the Minister's White Paper. The White Paper will be released early in the fall. It will provide a policy framework and action plan for the renewal of the adult learning system in Alberta. The policy directions in the White Paper will also result in changes to the department's three-year business plan that was released earlier this year.

The support and cooperation of all stakeholders will be required to make the strategies and actions outlined in the White Paper a reality. The department will continue to consult with stakeholders and the public throughout the implementation process.

Moderator's Comments -----

As moderator of the recently held consultation meetings in Edmonton and Calgary I made a commitment to all the participants to take the input of our face to face deliberations and, coupled with inputs from written submissions, prepare a summary "What We Heard" newsletter as a report back to you.

The views from the meetings held in Edmonton and Calgary were broadly similar. This was noteworthy because the participant mix at the two meetings was different. In Edmonton there was more business and student involvement than in Calgary, whereas in Calgary there was more institutional involvement.

The participants provided a wealth of feedback on the proposed vision, goals and strategies.

You told us the vision needed to be bolder and more clearly stated.

You told us not to place undue emphasis on the needs of the economy at the expense of the quality of education. I heard you say that a priority needed to be placed on ensuring that adult learners receive a quality education.

The importance of both relevant job related training and the benefits of a broadly based education were discussed. It was recognized that both were important and one should not be sacrifice for the other.

All participants shared a common perspective on the importance of education and training and the need to move to a learner-centered system that is focused on continuous learning. It was identified that such a change would require a fundamental attitude shift on the part of stakeholders.

It was suggested that a reference to research be included in the vision statement.

There were other recurrent messages that were reinforced throughout the discussion of goals and strategies.

Interwoven throughout the discussions was a call to improve the credit given for prior learning and life experience as well as to enhance course transferability toward program completion between institutions.

Whether the issue was tuition fee policy or employer sponsored training, there was clear support for increased collaboration and partnerships among stakeholders in the adult learning system. The formalization of partnerships was seen by some as one of the few ways quality could be preserved in an environment of reduced government funding. A number of participants noted to me that these meetings afforded a valuable opportunity for students and the institutions to sit down together and enter into some meaningful dialogue.

Access at the local level was important to all participants. Improvements and support in the area of distance education, alternative methods of delivery and the use of community consortia were cited.

The importance of literacy in enabling learners to upgrade their skills was also identified and stressed.

Accountability, through the establishment of standards and key performance indicators, was fully supported with the condition that the department recognize the unique characteristics of the various providers. It was suggested generally that good performance be rewarded and that poor outcomes not be. This was true whether discussing students, institutions or other providers of learning. It was stressed that evaluating the achievements of the system should not be solely based on economic measures. The importance of quality needs to be captured in the evaluation criteria.

Roles were widely discussed. There was a great desire among the participants to get on with the job of improving transfer arrangements; for the government to facilitate and measure outcomes; for the institutions to be held accountable for their effectiveness and productivity by rationalizing their activities and eliminating turf battles; and for students to be responsible for their lifelong learning and contributing back to society for that which they have received. It was also suggested that the roles of other providers of education and training be clarified.

The strategies were supported conditional on clarifications, improvements in wording and some modifications. The strategies which required clarification or modification included: the setting of tuition fees, particularly for foreign students; the Adult Learning Forum; degree granting status for colleges; the Access Fund; implementation of a new funding formula and consideration of changes to labour relations legislation to allow post-secondary institutions to respond quickly to economic change.

Participants had some difficulty in answering the question of whether the package of strategies proposed to address the goals would, if successfully undertaken, lead to their accomplishment. However, a general consensus emerged as captured in the comments on the specific strategies.

The written submissions carried many similar messages to those I heard in Edmonton and Calgary. It should be noted, however, that these messages reflected the viewpoint of the individual or respondent type while the messages brought forward from the Edmonton and Calgary meetings represented a measure of consensus resulting from a collaborative discussion of ideas.

In the written submissions there was general agreement that learners needed to take more responsibility for their education, however, there was no common viewpoint on the extent of that responsibility.

It was interesting that both students and post-secondary institutions felt that provision should be made to support part-time and continuing education in the adult learning system.

Faculty were concerned that the needs of the learner would drive the system and adversely affect and influence curriculum.

Business felt that it was important to have learners understand the true value of the cost of their education.

Respondents from all stakeholder groups said that improved transfer arrangements and accountability were extremely important. Cooperation and development of partnerships were cited as critical factors towards making improvements in these areas.

In terms of enabling Albertans to participate in a changing economy and work force, there seemed to be a polarization in the written responses. Some respondents such as provide education providers strongly felt that education and training should be focused on the needs of the economy while others strongly believed that education and training should be more general and emphasize the development of transferable skills in order to better serve the needs of society.

It was suggested that industry and business should be involved in programs providing job specific training and that institutions should focus on developing the skills of individuals such as critical thinking, creativity and logical analysis that assist them to become productive members of society in all aspects including the labour market.

Respondents said it was important to promote access so that localized and affordable educational opportunities could continue to be made available.

It was felt that a broader definition of educational opportunities was needed that would include life skills, non-credit programming, literacy and skills training in addition to credit programming and that one must not ignore or over-emphasize any one aspect of the system.

In closing, I feel that our collaboration to improve the adult learning system for future generations is one that works and in which I have been proud to participate as moderator. Through the sharing of views at the public consultation meetings stakeholders came away from these meetings with a greater understanding of issues from both listening and being listened to. I also learned a great deal from the valuable contributions of those who wrote in to the department and expressed their views.

It is my hope that you will each continue the dialogue and ensure that the adult learning system in Alberta continues to be equal to any in the world.

Harry G. Shaefer F.C.A.
Chairman of the Board
TransAlta Corporation

Moderator: Round Two
Consultation Meetings

A Report from the Moderator
WHAT WE HEARD

The round two public consultation meetings held in Edmonton and Calgary in May brought together a wide representation of stakeholders in adult learning from across the province. Stakeholder representatives included students, faculty, business and labour, institutional presidents and board chairs, private education and training providers and other community leaders. The agenda for the consultation meetings reflected the structure of the draft White Paper. Participants were divided into small groups to discuss and provide input into the section of the draft White Paper dealing with vision, mission, features, and roles and then to each of the four goal areas and accompanying strategies.

Each small group was asked to answer the following questions:

1. Do the strategies and actions need to be modified, or additional strategies and actions created?
2. Taken as a package, will these strategies and actions lead to the accomplishment of the goal?

The following overview summarizes the answers to these two questions. The input received through these small group discussions represents a collaborative viewpoint reached through a sharing and debate of individual ideas.

Vision, Mission, Features, Roles -----

The vision for the adult learning system in Alberta and the mission for the department as proposed in the draft White Paper is as follows:

Vision -----

In the year 2005, Alberta's adult learners will be recognized for the excellence of their knowledge, skills, attitudes and experiences that enable them to

- * take responsibility for shaping their futures,
- * participate in a changing economy and workforce, and
- * enrich the quality of life in their communities.

Alberta's adult learners will achieve excellence by participating in high quality, life-long learning opportunities.

Mission -----

Advanced Education and Career Development will lead and work with other partners in facilitating new directions for adult learning that ensure for learners and taxpayers an accessible, responsive and affordable system of adult learning that is accountable for results.

Many comments were provided concerning the vision.

Overall, general support for the vision statement was expressed although some had concerns about some of the terms used. Many participants questioned a vision centered around the learner in contrast to the goals and strategies which primarily centered on the department and institutions. There was also a concern expressed that the vision was being driven too much by the needs of the economy and was therefore too narrow in focus.

Recommendations concerning the vision included the following points:

- * The statement should reflect the diversity of learners within the system.
- * A reference to access to learning opportunities should be included.
- * The role of research, particularly with respect to the creation of new knowledge, should be incorporated.
- * Alberta's adult learners must be recognized globally for their achievements.
- * The vision statement should contain no reference to a date or an endpoint.
- * A glossary of terms should be incorporated into the final document and the following terms relative to vision be defined: adult learners, active learners, quality, quality of life and communities.

There was consensus that it was the department's mission to ensure an accessible, affordable, responsive and accountable system of adult learning.

It was recommended that the reference to "learners and taxpayers" be replaced with "adult learners". This change should also be reflected in the Goal 2 statement. It was also suggested that a reference to an endpoint could be included in the mission statement.

There was a general agreement on the features of a renewed adult learning system. The messages that were reinforced emphasized:

- * The adult learning system must be driven by the needs of learners.
- * The system should remove barriers to transfer from basic education through to post- graduate studies.
- * Quality of education and training should remain a priority. Learners should be allowed to participate more fully in measuring the quality of education or training services received.
- * Access, including geographically-based access, should be an important feature of an improved adult learning system.
- * Individuals should actively take on the responsibility for defining and pursuing the types of learning that they desire.
- * Accreditation of private education and training providers should become a feature of the new adult learning system.
- * Education and training are both vital aspects of a successful adult learning system and one should not be sacrificed for the other.

Generally, participants agreed with the roles of learners, providers and business and industry.

Participants liked the idea of individual learners playing a greater role in the system of adult learning. It was recommended that the different needs of learners at all levels be recognized to avoid having people fall through the cracks.

A need for greater role integration between stakeholders such as institutions and business and industry was stressed. Collaborative efforts, it was suggested, are the only ways to increase quality. In keeping with the need for greater role integration, participants saw the role of government as a facilitator and not as a "centralized decision maker". The role of government, it was stated, should be to show leadership, through facilitating, coordinating, and communicating.

Some of the individual ideas we heard:

- * The roles of institutional boards and the federal government need to be included and defined.
- * With declining resources, an increased role for innovation is a necessity if quality is to be maintained.
- * Make a formal reference to the role of universities in the area of research in the White Paper.

Goal 1 - Foster Individual Responsibility In A Learner-Centered System
Strategies -----

1. Improve information and counselling services

The department will foster informed student choice by ensuring learners have access to information on learning opportunities, labour market demand, and the performance of programs and institutions within the adult learning system.

2. Revise tuition fee policy

The tuition fee policy will be revised so that students assume a greater share of the financial responsibility for their learning, in line with the benefits they receive. Institutions will be accountable to students for the level of tuition set and the services provided.

3. Rationalize student financial support

Student assistance programs will be adjusted to maintain the long-term viability of financial assistance programs so that access by qualified and motivated learners is not prevented by financial need.

Participants agreed with Strategy 1. It was suggested, however, that the strategy needed strengthening through clarification and definition. It was also recommended that information should be standardized, and that information distribution should be improved. While there was a call for more information to be made available, concern was expressed over the validity of information aimed at predicting labour market demand. Many were uncomfortable with the term "labour market". Clarification of this term was also requested.

It was agreed that counselling is an important aspect of the adult learning system. There was no consensus, however, on who should do the counselling. It was suggested that the department's role should be to coordinate the provision of information and counselling but that it not necessarily be the deliverer of counselling.

Some of the individual ideas we heard:

- * Information could be made available through local malls, libraries and school counsellors.
- * Technology should be utilized to create useful electronic data banks of information.
- * Greater links with Alberta Education should be established to improve counselling, beginning at the junior-high level.
- * Business, alumni, parents and the community should play a larger role in the provision of counselling.

While many concerns were expressed regarding Strategy 2, there was a general acceptance that the proportion of tuition fees paid by the student will increase. Student participants reiterated the point that any increase should be reasonable and predictable. There was no consensus as to how tuition fees should be set and level at which tuition fees should be capped. Some participants suggested that tuition should be regulated and increased incrementally on an annual basis. Among others, there was some support for deregulating tuition fees and allowing institutions to charge whatever the market would bear.

The major concern about increasing the level of tuition fees paid by students was that access would be discouraged and less likely to be equitable. The increased debt load of students was also a concern expressed in both Edmonton and Calgary. It was noted that consultation with students about higher tuition fees would make a difference.

Participants rejected the idea of charging international students full cost-recovery. The suggestion was made that international students' tuition fees could be set by the institutions.

Some of the individual ideas we heard:

- * Apprentices should pay tuition fees.
- * Tuition levels could be set annually and institutions could be required to publish 3-4 year tuition plans in their calendars.
- * Tuition fees should be set according to the cost of delivery of a particular program of study.
- * Students should be allowed a greater representation on the boards of institutions.
- * Collective bargaining agreements between the institutions and the students could be created.

There was a general agreement with Strategy 3 to rationalize student financial support through flexible repayment options arranged through financial institutions. The strongest recommendation was that student financial support reflect any increases in tuition fees.

While it was noted that Strategy 3 was already implemented, some concerns were expressed.

These included:

- * that access may be compromised by the requirement of parental support;
- * that a two-tiered system of student financial support was being created where certain students would be able to negotiate better repayment interest rates; and
- * that the needs of part-time students and other individuals with special needs were not being recognized fully.

Some of the individual ideas we heard:

- * Monthly earning limits of students should be reviewed and increased to allow students to supplement their students' financial assistance without penalty.
- * Student financial assistance should be adjusted not only to respond to increases in tuition fees but also to increases in other educational costs (ancillary fees) and increases in the cost of living.
- * Incentives for prior financial planning should be given (i.e. exempting RRSP assets) in assessing student loan applications.
- * Remission of a portion of the student loan or increased scholarships and bursaries should be provided based on excellence of performance.
- * Further investigation should take place into the use of an income contingent repayment program.
- * A voucher system should be looked at.

It was recommended that Strategies 2 and 3 be adjusted to better reflect the goal of fostering individual responsibility and vision of a future learner-centered system.

Goal 2 - Ensure Responsiveness And Accountability To Learners And Taxpayers

Strategies -----

1. Establish an Adult Learning Forum

An Adult Learning Forum, comprised of learners and institutional, business and industry, community and government representatives, will be established to monitor the department's progress toward achievement of the goals set for adult learning, and to provide advice to the Minister on adult learning issues, particularly in the area of work force development.

2. Improve arrangements for transfer and recognition of prior learning

The department will encourage initiatives that enhance the recognition of prior learning and experience, and promote the smooth and effective transfer of students in courses/programs of comparable subject material.

3. Coordinate application systems

The department will work with post-secondary institutions and the Alberta Council on Admissions and Transfer to implement a province-wide electronic application system in order to increase the ability of institutions to respond more quickly to students seeking entry.

4. Establish an accountability framework

Advanced Education and Career Development will play a lead role in ensuring the development and implementation of an accountability framework for post-secondary institutions and programs with performance measures that focus on results.

5. Remove barriers to responsiveness in programming

The department will move away from its current procedures of program approval and develop a broader system of accountability using key program performance measures and indicators.

It was agreed that Strategy 1 needed greater clarification as to the exact function and membership of the Adult Learning Forum before it could be supported. Concern was expressed about possible duplication and the creation of another level of bureaucracy.

Some of the individual ideas we heard:

* Stakeholders should be selected for multi-year terms and meet more frequently than once a year in order to be effective.

* An Adult Learning Forum should not be tied to a particular goal but should act as an open forum where once or twice a year individuals could come together to share ideas.

Strategies 2 through 5 received a strong measure of support.

Many individuals felt that improving transfer arrangements is one of the key strategies leading to fulfillment of the vision. Improved transfer arrangements would enable learners to reach their goals more effectively and efficiently. It was felt that government should mandate such improvements. Some said that action should be taken quickly to review legislation in the area of transferability and accreditation. The general consensus was that the mandate of the Alberta Council on Admissions and Transfer should be strengthened and given the "teeth" necessary to successfully influence effective transfer arrangements between institutions and to arbitrate disagreements when required.

Some of the individual ideas we heard:

- * Increase the use of challenge exams.
- * Allow the international baccalaureate program offered in high schools to be credited towards the first year of a college or university program.
- * Provide some transferability of credit for job and other learning experiences.
- * Merge the department of Advanced Education and Career Development with Education.
- * Standardize the first two years of post-secondary education and make it available in different types of institutions.
- * Study the system of transferability currently in use in European countries.

It was felt that a coordinated application system could potentially benefit students and lead to cost-savings. It was clearly indicated that such a system should not be used as a centralized admissions or registration system.

In terms of Strategy 4, establishing an accountability framework, a clear message was sent that performance measures should not be solely quantitative in nature, but should also reflect qualitative aspects of the system. It was also recommended that performance measures should reflect the different mandates of institutions. A suggestion was made that core measures be established for the system with additional measures to reflect the unique characteristics of each institution.

Some of the individual ideas we heard:

- * Standards should conform with other provincial, national and international jurisdictions.
- * Improve recognition of foreign credentials as well as interprovincial transfers.
- * Student evaluations should be undertaken 3-5 years after graduation/completion of studies.

In conclusion, it was generally agreed that implementing the strategies would lead to the accomplishment of the goal. In particular, Strategies 2 and 3 were strongly supported.

Goal 3 - Enable Albertans To Participate In A Changing Economy And Workforce

Strategies -----

1. Focus on programs that address the needs of the economy

Adult learning will continue to address the social, intellectual and cultural needs of Albertans. However, the institutions will be expected to give renewed emphasis to programming to respond to the needs of the economy. Business and industry will be encouraged to take increased responsibility for job-specific training needs.

2. Emphasize employment preparation initiatives for the disadvantaged

Greater emphasis will be placed on meeting the learning needs of Albertans who are currently disadvantaged in the labour market by developing cost-effective and relevant initiatives that help those individuals enhance their employability and self-reliance.

3. Develop alternative routes to labour market entry

Through partnerships with Alberta Education, business and industry, the department will develop alternative streams to labour market entry for those Albertans who do not pursue traditional post-secondary education.

4. Promote more employer-based training

The department will consult with employers, business and industry associations and labour groups to seek ways to increase private sector investment in training.

Strategies 1 through 4 were generally supported. The comments regarding Strategy 1 seemed to reflect the debate as to whether or not programs specific to jobs should be emphasized. Many felt that general education in the liberal arts was just as important and that enhancing the quality of life should be a focus of programming. Participants questioned which programming would be supported by the public purse and which would be funded through business and industry.

Participants generally liked the idea of applied and associate degrees but required more clarification as to their exact meaning. Other terms that required definition were "entrepreneur" and "job specific training". One suggestion was to combine Strategy 1 and Strategy 4. Promoting employer-based training, it was suggested, went hand-in-hand with a focus on programs aimed at addressing the needs of the economy.

In terms of Strategy 4, much discussion took place concerning the use of tax incentives offered to business and industry to increase the level of employer-based training. It was suggested that tax incentives for employees wishing to access further training be considered.

Some of the individual ideas we heard:

* A Registered Educational Savings Plan for adults (R.E.S.P.) should be established.

There was a consensus of opinion that strengthened partnerships were essential to successful outcomes for individuals with barriers to education and employment. Partnerships among Advanced Education and Career Development and Family and Social Services, the federal government and community agencies (private and public) to integrate service delivery were suggested.

There was support for the movement from passive income support programs towards employment preparation initiatives such as academic upgrading and skill training. It was noted that these programs need to be more accessible for individuals with barriers. Storefront delivery, more opportunities in the home and in rural communities were given as examples. It was also suggested that learners in these programs be supported by services such as needs assessment and counselling.

There was a strong message that a term other than "disadvantaged" was needed to describe those who face barriers to employment and training.

There was strong support for literacy programming. It was recommended that English as a Second Language (E.S.L.) should also be stressed.

There was an indication that the participation of aboriginal peoples in the adult learning system had not been discussed and that the White Paper should address this issue.

Strategy 3 was supported. Apprenticeship programs were recognized as an excellent alternative route to labour market entry. A concern was expressed that society still placed greater value on traditional college and university-based education. It was felt that a strategy aimed at influencing people's attitudes toward technical training was required. It was recommended that counselling be increased in the primary and secondary school system and that the provincial and federal government collaborate to promote alternative entry routes.

It was recommended that more diversity of trades and occupations be offered in the apprenticeship system, that access be expanded, and that co-op education programs, internships and other measures be used to support the school-to-work transition.

Finally, it was suggested there is a need to develop some way of accrediting private trainers. It was also recommended that a mechanism be established to provide formal recognition of skills, knowledge and work experience gained through alternative routes.

In conclusion, it was generally felt that the strategies would lead to the accomplishment of the goal. The observation was made that the strategies under this goal had a strong interrelation with the need for improvements in transferability (see Goal 2). Again, it was emphasized that the goal not solely focus on the economy but also reflect quality of life.

Goal 4 - Promote Access To Affordable, Quality Learning Opportunities

Strategies -----

1. Clarify roles within the publicly funded adult learning system

The roles of providers within the system will be clarified to direct and concentrate efforts in response to demand for adult learning opportunities.

2. Establish an Access Fund

A \$47 million Access Fund will be created to finance innovative, cost-effective means of expanding Albertans' access to learning opportunities that address the learning needs of the workplace.

3. Respond to future demand

By 1997, Alberta Advanced Education and Career Development will present a plan to address the further growth in demand for adult learning opportunities to 2005.

4. Implement a new funding formula for publicly funded post-secondary education

A new formula for funding post-secondary education and training that focuses on access and performance outcomes will be devised and implemented by 1996-97.

5. Consider changes to labour relations legislation for post-secondary institutions

Consideration will be given to adjusting the legislative framework for labour relations contained in institutional legislation to allow institutions to respond quickly and efficiently to changing economic circumstances.

6. Develop appropriate standards

The department will initiate the development and implementation of standards that promote quality in learning opportunities through its role in ensuring accountability. In cooperation with program providers, the department will also initiate a process to design a framework and set common standards for adult basic education and academic upgrading programs in Alberta.

7. Develop centres of program specialization

In response to the need to ensure the efficiency, cost-effectiveness and quality of programs, the department will encourage institutions to develop centres of program specialization.

8. Expand the use of educational technologies and alternate forms of program delivery

New educational technologies and alternate forms of program delivery will be evaluated and implemented where appropriate.

There was broad support for Strategies 1, 6, 7, and 8.

In Strategy 1, there was no clear direction on the question of whether colleges should be allowed to grant degrees. Arguments were made on both sides. It was recommended, however, that universities and colleges collaborate more fully to broaden the availability of degrees across the province.

It was suggested that the roles of private providers of education and training be clarified. It was suggested the White Paper should address access over the entire adult learning system and not just emphasize the publicly funded aspect.

Some of the individual ideas we heard:

- * Allow degree granting status for Mount Royal College.
- * Athabasca University should operate similarly to the Open Learning Agency in B.C. which delivers programs on behalf of other institutions.
- * The role of Further Education Councils could be expanded in order to increase access to credit programming.
- * The Alberta Vocational Colleges could be integrated into existing community colleges where appropriate in order to reduce duplication.

In terms of Strategy 6 the message came forward that standards should be measurable and set up in such a fashion that results could be compared provincially, nationally and internationally.

Participants supported the move towards establishing centres of program specialization. One of the concerns was that barriers to access not be created as a result.

Everyone generally supported the expanded use of educational technologies and alternate forms of delivery. The questions on most people's minds were how to ensure effectiveness and where the funding would come from to support the up-front infrastructure costs.

Some participants saw Strategy 8 as key to fulfilling the vision/mission of the department. This was true especially in terms of increasing access to learning opportunities and demonstrating to an international audience the ways in which Albertans have been supported in their ability to participate in learning opportunities.

There was a mixed level of support for Strategies 2 through 4. The consensus was that the strategies were too vague and required more clarification before broad support could be given.

Clarification on the Access Fund was requested in the following areas:

- * criteria and priorities for the allocation of funds;
- * committee composition; and
- * eligibility to apply.

Some of the individual ideas we heard:

- * The Access Fund should be linked to the strategy on the funding formula.

In terms of the funding formula, some of the criteria suggested were that it be fair, equitable, visible and objective. It was suggested that criteria be applied that account for the differing mandates of institutions.

In terms of Strategy 5, there was no consensus on changes to labour relations legislation for post-secondary institutions. A common opinion was that collective bargaining agreements should not unilaterally be changed midstream through government action.

It was suggested that government allow institutions to negotiate redundancy and exigency clauses (within a set time limit) and that government legislate only if there is a failure in the resolution of such negotiations. It was suggested that clauses in other institutional agreements across Canada be examined.

There was a broad discussion of the role and function of tenure. There was consensus that academic freedom should be protected but distinguished from job security and performance.

Some of the individual ideas we heard:

- * Government could provide loans to institutions to facilitate the offering of voluntary early retirement packages.
- * Some felt that the entire legislative framework governing institutions should be reviewed, not just the labour relations aspect.

In conclusion, no clear indication was offered as to whether the strategies would lead to the accomplishment of Goal 4. Some felt that strategies such as the funding formula and the development of standards and centres of program specialization had more to do with accountability than with accessibility or affordability. It was stated that many of the strategies to promote access were focused on the department and the providers of education. Greater accessibility, it was suggested, may be realized by having the funding redirected to the student.

Finally, there was a clear message that the department should move from the discussion stage and get on with the task of implementing the strategies and actions outlined in the draft White Paper.

A Report From the Moderator

WHAT WE HEARD

From Written Submissions Received By Alberta Advanced Education And Career Development In Response To The Draft White Paper

The department received over 400 written submissions responding to the draft White Paper. The largest number of respondents were affiliated with the following: faculty of public post-secondary institutions (24% of all respondents) and community associations (18% of all respondents). A substantial degree of support was shown by respondents to the vision, roles, goals and accompanying strategies. The vision, roles and goals received an approval rating of 78% while the average approval rating for the strategies was also 78%. The lowest approval rating of any one strategy was tuition fee policy (59%). Faculty generally reported the lowest level of support.

It should be noted that the written submissions represent individual viewpoints. This fact should be kept in mind when reviewing the chart as well as the recommendation and concerns that follow.

Vision, Mission, Features, Roles -----

While there was a broad level of support, many respondents expressed specific concerns.

A concern was expressed that the vision statement was too general and that it could be improved.

Most respondents, including business and industry, felt that the focus of the draft White Paper on the labour market was too narrow and ignored or reduced the value of a general education.

Faculty and the post-secondary institutions advocated the need to see a reference to research and its role in the creation of knowledge and its application to educational technologies stressed.

Business, faculty and community associations also expressed concern as to whether the vision statement could be realized. Many believed that the ideals behind the vision needed more support from the actual goals and strategies.

There was concern expressed by some respondents that learners are not generally knowledgeable as consumers in a knowledge driven economy, and that there was a danger in letting them "drive the system".

Respondents viewed accountability as an important aspect of an improved adult learning system. There were differing views, however, as to who should be setting performance measures and who should be measuring results.

Many respondents felt that the reference to the year 2005 should be taken out.

Goals 1-4 and Accompanying Strategies -----

Respondents agreed with the need to improve information and counselling. There was a general feeling, however, that government should not be involved in counselling and that it should be done in institutions and in high schools with the help of employers.

There was agreement with the call for performance indicators to be made available to students. There were concerns expressed over the comparability of indicators from one institution to another. Also, issues such as cost of data collection and consistent application of performance indicators at institutions were raised.

Respondents from business, faculty, public post-secondary institutions and First Nations indicated that tuition fees may have to go up. A general recommendation was that fees should reflect the actual program costs. It was also felt that cost-benefit should be researched as a viable indicator in setting tuition fees. It was agreed that full cost recovery fees for foreign students, particularly graduates, went too far.

As in the public consultation meetings, it was felt that any increase of tuition fees should be accompanied by increased student financial support. A number of respondents generally expressed concern about the involvement of banks, the fact that an agreement had already been signed with one financial institution and that certain types of students may be treated unfairly. A majority of respondents including faculty, community associations, post-secondary institutions and students favored another look at income contingent loans as an alternative.

Respondents had similar concerns to those of participants at the public consultation meetings about the Adult Learning Forum.

There was strong support for improved transfer arrangements and recognition of prior learning from the majority of respondents. It was suggested by business and faculty representatives that implementation would have to be done carefully so as not to lower standards.

As in the public consultation meetings, the recommendation was made that a coordinated application system must not become a centralized admissions system. Some respondents were skeptical that such a system would result in cost savings or that it would help institutions respond more quickly.

The recommendations concerning a new accountability framework were the same as those arising out of the public meetings. Business, faculty, labour, community associations and public post-secondary institution respondents recommended that performance indicators reflect the differing mandates of institutions. Faculty were supportive of using student evaluations as performance indicators, provided that other indicators such as self evaluation, external professional reviews and comparisons with other jurisdictions were also used.

In terms of barriers to responsiveness, it was felt by business and faculty in particular that the draft White Paper was too vague on what the barriers are.

It was felt by some that binding collective agreements with faculty and rising tuition fees could be construed as barriers and needed to be addressed in some manner.

Both faculty and public post-secondary institutions felt that the department may have to enforce some controls on programming in order to avoid unwarranted duplication of programs.

In terms of programs that address the needs of the economy, it was observed by both public post-secondary institutions and business and industry that the needs of the economy change rapidly, making it extremely difficult to predict labour market needs three or four years into the future. It was felt that greater coordination was needed among institutions, business and industry, and the provincial and federal governments.

The need for improvements in coordinated delivery systems was a recommendation carried over into the area of employment preparation initiatives for the disadvantaged.

Respondents including faculty, private education providers and community associations expressed discomfort over the term "disadvantaged" and suggested it be changed

Co-op education, the Registered Apprenticeship Program (R.A.P.) in high schools and other such measures were recommended as good alternative routes to labour market entry. There was also general support for apprenticeship although it was suggested that some elements of the system need reform. It was suggested that the focus of developing routes to labour market entry that do not require diplomas or degrees should not be entirely on apprenticeship.

Many respondents felt that business and industry should take more responsibility for training and investment by business in training should be increased substantially. The recommendation of almost all respondents was that the potential offered through partnership arrangements should be tapped.

Business and industry recognized that employers need to do more to prepare their workers for future jobs. The concern was expressed that a disproportionate financial burden could be placed on employers.

Most of the comments concerning the clarification of roles centered on the topic of degree-granting status for colleges. There were various opinions on this point. Mount Royal College, for example, expressed a need to be given degree-granting status.

Several respondents voiced a concern that Athabasca University not be given the exclusive mandate for technology-delivered courses.

Many felt that basic education, academic upgrading and skill training are important and need to be offered at the local level. An expanded role was suggested for Further Education Councils in this area. Some said Alberta Vocational College could be given exclusive responsibility for academic upgrading.

There were very strong opinions on the Access Fund, both for and against. Faculty seemed to voice the strongest concerns.

The makeup of the advisory committee, the role of government and the eligibility of community-based providers of education and training (for example, First Nations and Metis providers) were cited as the most common issues requiring clarification.

The comments regarding response to future demand and the new funding formula were similar to those made at the public consultation meetings. These strategies were said to be too vague. It was suggested the funding formula should be the result of a full consultation that considers all variables in an equitable manner where qualitative and quantitative performance indicators are considered over a short-term and a long-term period.

There were differing viewpoints on changes to labour relations legislation governing post-secondary institutions (even within respondent groups). On one hand, it was felt that government should not intervene in specific collective agreements. On the other hand, there was a concern expressed that institutions do not have the flexibility required to let staff go for reasons for exigency or redundancy.

There was overall support for the development of standards. It was felt that the development (and enforcement) of appropriate standards would lead to consistency among institutions and help facilitate improved transfer arrangements. It was suggested that programs such as life skills, English as a Second Language, basic literacy and academic upgrading should be accredited/licensed by a government body. The concerns around development of standards was the institutional autonomy may be undermined and government control would be increased.

Many respondents expressed support for developing centres of program specialization. The concerns that need to be addressed are local access, interaction of students in various disciplines and the possible evolving of educational monopolies. One solution suggested was that programs could be made available through brokering arrangements.

Business and industry, community associations, faculty of public post-secondary institutions and labour respondents expressed support for the development of educational technologies and alternate forms of program delivery. Post-secondary institutions, private education providers and other individuals expressed concerns that technology-based delivery systems may not be either the best or most cost-effective means of delivery.

As in the round two public consultation meetings, there was a concern expressed over who would pay for the costs of developing technologies and appropriate infrastructure.

In conclusion, the opinions offered through the written submissions were reflected in the public consultation meetings. While respondents' views reflected their particular interests, overall support was shown for many of the goals and strategies outlined in the draft White Paper.