

President's Update to the College Community



Serving the communities of Northwestern BC

October 31, 2005

Trip to China

From October 12th to 20th I was in China to explore and promote opportunities for the College and to spend time with Qingdao Vocational and Technical College in Qingdao. This was a whirlwind trip beginning in Beijing at the China Education Association for International Exchange (CEAIE) forum on international education. The forum showcased current developments and trends of vocational education and training in China, Canada, Germany, Australia and the Netherlands. Additionally, it provided an opportunity for Colleges like ours to liaise with institutions in China and market our programs to prospective students.

The most valuable portion of the trip proved to be that which had been prearranged and occupied most of my time while in China - the "President mentoring program" initiated by ACCC and CEAIE. In this program, presidents of Canadian and Chinese colleges agreed to provide an overview of their country's college system, their own college and the management styles and practices of their institution. After much discussion and email with ACCC and Qingdao Vocational and Technical College (QVTC) regarding suitability, QVTC and NWCC agreed to engage in this program together. As a result, I was a guest at QVTC for a period of four days: October 16th to 20th.

Qingdao Vocational and Technical College is a public college established by the Shandong provincial and municipal governments. It is one of many colleges supported by the Department of Education and Finance in China. It offers a variety of programs from teacher training education to vocational and career programs as well as Adult Basic Education and Fine Arts. It does not offer degrees. It operates from three campuses, and is rapidly expanding, having a full-time student population of over 7500.

Further information on QVTC can be found at www.qvtc.edu.cn

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Northern Collaborative Baccalaureate Nursing Program

This summer we received approval from the Registered Nurses Association of British Columbia for the Northern Collaborative Baccalaureate Nursing Program. This collaboration involved UNBC, College of New Caledonia (CNC), Northern Health, and ourselves. Approval has been given until December 2007 with a phase two review and site visit scheduled for next fall.

The new Bachelors program began in September with a full class of 18 students from around the northwest. The entire degree program will be offered in Terrace with the first two years being offered at NWCC campus and almost entirely by our faculty. The following two years students will be at UNBC's Terrace campus and taught UNBC faculty. CNC has greatly assisted us through the sharing of resources and curriculum.

Strategic Plan

The new College Strategic Plan was completed and distributed at NWCC's Galts'ap Day on August 31st. All college staff have been asked to review this plan and undertake discussions regarding implementation. A Strategic Plan Implementation Task Force has been initiated to receive implementation plans and help ensure that the Plan is actualized. This Group is comprised of: the President, the Board Chair, a representative from First Nations Council, Ed Council Chair, the three union leaders, and the Vice-President, Finance and Administration. We will be reviewing implementation progress quarterly and reporting back to the College community. Please ensure that these discussions are taking place and be prepared to report back to this Task Force in mid November.

Community Outreach

The trades area is embarking on a community outreach project with select industries/corporations. Their aim is to solicit assistance with material acquisition and practicum experience support. This initiative will be coordinated with the President's office, Continuing Education, and Finance to ensure there is no overlap in the contacts and solicitation being done by various areas of the college.

Events on Campus

Science World is touring schools in the northwest and will be holding their grand finale 'Celebration' at Terrace campus on November 19. The celebration will be open to the public and will provide the College with a great opportunity to showcase their science and technology programs/courses. All departments and program areas are invited to participate. Those interested can contact the Communications Department.



Trip to China cont'

During my visit to QVTC, I engaged in several discussions regarding ways in which our institutions might work together. As a result of these conversations, a Letter of Intent was signed outlining our mutual desire to explore student and staff exchanges and share resources, professional development opportunities as well as joint programming. The Letter of Intent will be made available on the college website and has been forwarded to Education Council for discussion.

We are currently involved in the planning of a visit from Qingdao Vocational and Technical College this November. Pending the receipt of visas, President Shi Zhong-Jian, Vice-dean Wang Wenzhong and Interpreter Sun Guo-dong will be in the northwest the week of November 6th -10th. They will begin their visit in Prince Rupert, travelling to Terrace on Nov 8th with a side trip to Hazelton on November 9th. Once I have confirmation of their visit, I will circulate the schedule to the college community.

A partnership with Qingdao Vocational and Technical College holds many opportunities for Northwest Community College. Preliminary discussions have begun regarding the following programs and workshops: a Business Administration degree with an international business specialty; a Tourism Management program, English language instruction, and professional development workshops for faculty. It is my hope that as early as this spring, we may send one or two faculty members to Qingdao to begin working on some of these opportunities.

Literacy projects in the Northwest

Northwest Community College, with its community partners, once again received a significant number of cost-shared literacy grants. These grants were awarded in response to proposals submitted to the Province and the National Literacy Secretariat. The following six projects have been approved:

1. Prince Rupert Literacy project in partnership with the Roosevelt Community Society
2. Community Readers and Writers Program in partnership with the Terrace Volunteer Bureau
3. Adult Literacy in Kitimat Enrichment program in partnership with the Kitimat Child Development Centre
4. Upper Skeena Literacy-on-Wheels project in partnership with the Learners Opportunity Group Society
5. Smithers Community Learning Services project in partnership with the Smithers Community Services Association
6. Houston Link to Learning project in partnership with Houston Link to Learning Society

Rising Stars Networking Program

The Business Administration Department has started a new program involving the Prince Rupert and District Chamber of Commerce to pair Northwest Community College Business Administration Students with business leaders. Partners envision this pilot project as having the potential to direct students to a meaningful business network in Prince Rupert, with the hopes of inspiring those students to create a business or secure meaningful employment upon completion of their studies without having to leave the northwest.

This program has received support from CityTel, Ridley Terminals Inc., Prince Rupert Port Authority, Cowlicks Hair Studio, and Overwaitea. The program started with 27 student applications who were paired with 27 mentors and now has three new applicants waiting to be matched. The "kick-off" event was held on October 19th at the Crest. Students and mentors attended a joint Rotary/Chamber meeting on October 27th with the Enbridge Gateway Project team as the luncheon speakers.

Students will be attending three more Chamber meetings with their mentors. Wendy Prystay and Marilyn McCarthur worked on behalf of the Chamber to recruit mentors. Business Administration Program Coordinator Bob Lipsett and Prince Rupert Campus Manager Debbie Stava have both been working on this program.

Calendar Production

The final draft of the calendar is expected in house next week and once approved will move into print production. Printing is estimated to begin the week of November 7 with delivery to the College by the end of November. The calendar will reflect 2006-2008 programming as has been identified at this time.

Welcome Boards

To better utilize internal space for promotional use, each campus has installed 'Welcome' boards. These bulletin boards will display college specific information in an organized and professional manner. Each board contains pre-produced branded graphic panels as well as headers to highlight and display information on new programs, feature programs, events, schedules and important notices.



Literacy for Northwest Community College

Literacy is an issue that was repeatedly highlighted during our strategic planning consultations and emerged as a key direction in the final draft of our new Strategic Plan. As a result of this emphasis the College's value statement which spoke to 'accessibility' was rewritten to include a commitment to addressing barriers to education. The issue of literacy has become a high priority for the College,

Strategic direction 2.4 in the Strategic Plan also outlines our commitment to 'Enhance Literacy and Other Fundamental Skills' in the region.

As well as being a reoccurring topic in the strategic planning process, the issue of literacy comes up frequently during many other conversations. Conversations about the economy, social problems, enrolment figures, poverty, and barriers to education. Despite many efforts to address low literacy skills, the problem is as large as ever - here and around the country.

Forty-two percent of Canadians aged 16-65 do not have the literacy skills required for full participation in the knowledge economy. This number hasn't changed in over a decade and neither have our statistics in the northwest.

We clearly must do much more to reach out to a significant proportion of the population.

A lack of literacy skills is a huge barrier to enrolment at the college and to providing residents with the skills and training they need to participate in an economy that is finally beginning to grow. Between 1997 and 2002 the population of B.C. grew by 4.3% with the population of the northwest region declining by 7.6%. In the last two years more than 3,000 children left the K-12 system. This huge out migration of people has had a significant effect on the College. At 71%, our utilization rate has never been lower. With many people leaving the area and changes in MHR and INAC funding policies, many of our CCP enrolments have experienced downward spiraling numbers. However government funding is not the only factor in our enrolment numbers. Even in times of government largesse the College's enrolment numbers have never been at the level they should be. Despite a clear need for our literacy programs, this decrease in enrolment numbers is not just a 'blip' in the chart but a merging trend.

Low literacy skills in the labour force are also impacting the ability of companies to start up and grow in the north. This situation is only going to intensify. There is a legitimate fear that the heightened level of economic activity in the Greater Vancouver Region and elsewhere will accentuate the flow of population from rural B.C. communities. "Deruralization" in BC has the potential to have devastating consequences for the economy if it deprives the northwest of the workforce necessary to ensure its sustainability and further growth.

To succeed in the competition for labour, we need to maximize our human potential. Our greatest hope of doing this lies in providing more education to a higher proportion of our own population.

Low literacy skills are a major obstacle in reaching this objective. We have the lowest literacy rates in the province and our K-12 students have poorer educational outcomes than do most students in other parts of the province. The high school completion rate for BC is 74.8%; for the northwest it is 69.75%.

This problem is amplified in the Aboriginal population. High school completion rates for Aboriginal students are just under 45%, well below the provincial average for all students. The affect of these statistics have a greater impact in the northwest since we have the highest proportion of Aboriginal people in the province - 35%.

Over the next year we will be placing increased emphasis on reaching out to those struggling with literacy issues and a lack of academic preparedness. I have asked Education Council and the CCP Cluster to heighten discussions on this issue and to take the lead in initiating effective strategies for change.

Education Council Election results

Welcome and congratulations to our new Ed Co members!

New Student representatives are:

Prince Rupert Campus:
Sara Antwis

Terrace Campus:
Moriah Inkster, Justin Demedeiros, Cayley Western

New Staff representatives are:

Ken Hawkins -representing Business/Computer Technology
Michelle Nehring - representing Social Services/Health
Randy Chalifoux - representing Natural Resources

New College Board Appointments

Welcome and congratulations to our new College Board Members!

Community Appointees:

Nirmal Parmar - representing Terrace
Matthew Vickers - representing the Kispiox Valley

Student elected representatives:

Salomon Garcia (UC - Prince Rupert)
Jennifer Rice (ACE - Prince Rupert)