

FACULTY CIRCUIT

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Members of ACIFA's Professional Affairs Committee, which gathered recently in Calgary, take time out of discussions for a group photo.

ACIFA Award nominations now open

The ACIFA Award for Innovation in Teaching recognizes innovative and creative teaching methods and design, which lead to improved student learning. This province-wide award provides both recognition and a financial award.

Recipients of the ACIFA Award receive \$1,500 and another \$500 is awarded to the winner's faculty

association. Local faculty associations must submit their nominee to ACIFA by February 20, 2006.

The award is open to all ACIFA members, either an individual or a team. Please consult your local faculty association for more details on the ACIFA Award, how to nominate someone or a team, or to learn more about eligibility.

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Eye on government

Advanced Education Minister Dave Hancock hosted a forum on post-secondary education in Edmonton on November 1 and 2. The gathering brought together 250 participants, including representatives from ACIFA. Minister Hancock, in his closing address to forum participants, announced three key priorities: learning foundations (improving literacy rates), support for aboriginal learning, and transforming the advanced learning system. Working groups are being formed see "eye on government" / p2

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to work on these priorities and to consult with stakeholders, including ACIFA.

Following the forum, Minister Hancock told reporters that students should prepare for a tuition increase in September 2006. The Premier, in the hours following the Minister’s comments, promised that tuition fees would remain frozen for another academic year. The government is aiming to have a new tuition policy framework in place by Spring 2006.

Unfortunately, neither the Premier nor the Minister has indicated whether the govern-

Extending the tuition freeze for an additional academic year, which the government has now committed, will carry a cost of approximately \$96 million, a cost the government is yet to commit to funding.

ment will fund the tuition freeze. The current tuition freeze, for the 2005-06 academic year, cost the government \$43 million; extending the freeze for an additional academic year, which the government has now committed, will carry a cost of approximately \$96 million, a cost the government is yet to commit to funding.

Institutions are designing their

2006-07 budgets with the possibility that they, not the government, may be forced to absorb the costs of the tuition freeze. Absorbing this cost, along with the natural rise in cost pressures and, in particular, the rising cost in energy, may prove to be a financial challenge for many of our institutions. While ACIFA applauds the government on its commitment to freeze tuition fees and build an affordable tuition policy, the government does need to commit the necessary funding to support that policy decision.

The fall sitting of the Legislature concluded on December 1. The question of whether the tuition freeze would be funded for a second academic year was not

addressed during the sitting. Post-secondary education was an active file in other areas however. The government tabled

Bill 55, The Post-Secondary Learning Amendment Act, 2005 (No. 2). This Act, which passed Third Reading, will allow colleges and technical institutes to create a new academic council, with the permission of the Minister.

The Amendment Act does not outline the composition, powers, and duties of academic councils that are created under the new

section. Those details will be developed in regulation, which have not yet been developed. The regulations will be developed in consultation with stakeholders and ACIFA will have an active role in those consultations.

The government has also made some spending announcements for the post-secondary education file. Advanced Education will be establishing a \$25 million Alberta Centennial Scholarship Program. This program, announced by Premier Klein while in Ottawa, will benefit 325 students, from all provinces, with awards worth \$2,005 each. The program is being touted as a means to include all of Canada in our province’s Centennial celebrations and to show gratitude to Canadians for their support of Alberta when we experienced challenges and more difficult times.

The government has also made a significant investment into the Access to the Future Fund. This Fund, legislated to contain \$3 billion, received an initial investment of \$250 million in the 2005 Alberta Budget. Earlier in November, the government announced that the Fund will benefit from an additional \$500 million from this year’s surplus. By the end of the fiscal year, the Fund will have \$750 million. The Fund has been established to support innovations in the post-secondary education system as well as provide matching grants to new projects within the system.

Call for Submissions



Please complete a session proposal form, available from your local faculty association or at www.acifa.ca/.

Return to: Lynn Devlin, Executive Officer, ACIFA, #412, 10357 - 109 Street, Edmonton, AB T5J 1N3 or email to devlinl@acifa.ca.

Alberta Colleges & Institutes
Faculties Association
2006 Spring Conference

Your session proposal must address one of the following strands:

- Insights into ACIFA
- Inspirations in Teaching
- Innovations in Technology
- Imagining the Future

Submission deadline is Monday February 6, 2006

Session presenters will be provided with one night of accommodation at the Mountain Park Lodge in Jasper, Alberta.

Happy Holidays

*Wishing you warm
holiday wishes and
all the best for the
New Year
From all of us at
acifa*

Post-secondary advocacy gets boost from public interest group

Public Interest Alberta, a broad-based provincial advocacy organization, of which ACIFA is a member, launched its post-secondary education advocacy campaign at the end of August. Public Interest Alberta is seeking to foster a broad discussion in Alberta as a means to affect and influence the government's own review of the post-secondary education system.

At its campaign launch, Public Interest Alberta released a background document, which summarizes policy trends and consequences on four major themes in the post-secondary education system: government funding, user affordability, accessibility, and quality. This document, Post-Secondary Education Reality Check, is available on the Public Interest Alberta website: www.pialberta.org/. The report has been de-

signed to raise awareness, among the public, about the government's review of the system as well as provide important context to help frame the debate occurring in our province.

Bill Moore-Kilgannon, Public Interest Alberta's Executive Director, also organized eight public consultations in cities and towns in all regions of Alberta. The public tour proved to be an effective instrument to collect a wide range of concerns and suggestions from participants. A summary of the discussions from each of the public forums can also be found at the Public Interest Alberta website: www.pialberta.org/.

The public consultation tour proved to be particularly effective in generating media impressions across the province, which subsequently increased awareness of the

campaign and the post-secondary education issue. The campaign has also caught the attention of the government, earning Public Interest Alberta a role in Advanced Education Minister Dave Hancock's own forum on Post-Secondary Education.

The last leg of the advocacy campaign will take place in February 2006, when Public Interest Alberta hosts a conference on post-secondary education. The conference is scheduled from February 24-26, in Edmonton, with an event scheduled in Calgary on February 23.

The purpose of the conference is to bring together a wide range of individuals and organizations to stimulate and collect ideas and strategies on keeping post-secondary education moving forward in our province.

Teaching & Learning Action Research Awards

ACIFA, through the Alberta Post-Secondary Education Trust Fund, awards up to three \$500 grants annually for action research projects related to improving teaching and learning conducted by our members. The award is intended to assist with materials and/or costs absorbed with the research project.

These awards are open to all members of ACIFA. All applicants must include appropriate institutional consent to conduct the research.

Award winners are notified by June 1, 2006.

For more information on the selection process and criteria, recipient obligations, and guidelines, please consult the acifa web page, www.acifa.ca, or visit your local faculty association.

Editorial Content

The views expressed in Faculty Circuit are those of individuals and do not necessarily reflect ACIFA's policies and positions.

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Member Associations

Alberta College of Art & Design Faculty Assoc.
Bow Valley College Faculty Association
Faculty Association of Medicine Hat College
Grande Prairie Regional College Academic Staff
Association
Grant MacEwan College Faculty Association
Keyano College Faculty Association
Lakeland College Faculty Association
Lethbridge Community College Faculty Assoc.
Mount Royal Faculty Association
NAIT Academic Staff Association
NorQuest College Faculty Association
Northern Lakes College Faculty Association
Olds College Faculty Association
Portage College Faculty Association
SAIT Academic Staff Association