

FACULTY CIRCUIT

Election Issue

January 2005

Alberta Colleges & Institutes
Faculties Association

acifa

Serving college and technical institute faculty

ADVOCACY CAMPAIGN PAYS OFF

Creation of Separate Advanced Education Portfolio
'Recognizes Post-secondary as a Priority' – Bill 1 to
Focus on Access and Tuition

Concerted advocacy efforts by faculty and student groups, as well as administrations and boards, appear to have been successful in bringing home to the Klein government the need for immediate action to address critical issues facing Alberta's post-secondary education system. In the wake of the November 22 provincial election, which saw a significant decline in support for the Tories, and the loss of a number of seats in Edmonton and Calgary, the premier has announced that the government will respond to widespread demands and make post-secondary education its priority in the upcoming sitting of the legislature.

Mr. Klein also announced the appointment of David Hancock, the former Minister of Justice, and a Cabinet insider, to head a stand-alone ministry of Advanced Education, which has been reinstated, according to the official news release, due to 'the increased emphasis on post-secondary education in the government's 20-year strategic plan'. Minister Hancock will also serve as Government House Leader and as a member of the powerful Agenda and Priorities Committee, as well as Vice-Chair of the Standing Policy Committee on Education and Employment.

Details of the internal structure of the new ministry have not been released, as yet, and it remains to be seen how the undivided attention of the minister will benefit the post-secondary system, but Mr. Hancock

is widely seen as an influential figure within the government and the party, with the clout to move post-secondary issues up the agenda.

In an interview with the Edmonton Journal last month, Premier Klein stated that 'access to post-secondary education is one of the biggest problems facing the province, and fixing it will be his government's top priority in the next year.'

Expanding enrolments in the PSE system while controlling costs to students will be the focus of the government's Bill 1 in the February sitting of the legislature. Details of the bill remain to be worked out, but, in the premier's words: 'We heard quite clearly that this is a major concern for Albertans, the cost of education and access to education.'

Mr. Klein went on to acknowledge that to expand capacity while limiting tuition increases may involve spending more money, but observed that 'we consider that an investment in human infrastructure, just as we consider spending money on roads or schools or hospitals.'

ACIFA President Deryle Generous commented that this is a significant concession from the premier, who, during the recent election campaign, was quoted as saying that he was 'sick and tired' of hearing that post-secondary education was underfunded. 'ACIFA welcomes the premier's commitment to make post-secondary education the government's priority this year,' said Mr. Generous. 'ACIFA's advocacy efforts, through the 'Wise Up' coalition and the 'Fair Deal' campaign of Public Interest Alberta, have made a difference. I think the lesson is that, by collaborating with other stakeholder groups, we can help shape public opinion and keep the pressure on the politicians to address our issues. We will be working hard to ensure that the government now follows through.'

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BOOK REVIEW

The Community College Baccalaureate – Emerging Trends and Policy Issues

Edited by Deborah L. Floyd, Michael L. Skolnik &
Kenneth P. Walker
[Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing, 2005]

The current debate over degree-granting by colleges and technical institutes is not unique to Alberta. Across Canada and the U.S.A., the structure of post-secondary education is changing, and the traditional division of responsibilities between universities and colleges is being blurred as the demands of the ‘knowledge economy’ create an expanding market for baccalaureate credentials.

A new paperback, *The Community College Baccalaureate*, brings together thirteen essays by American and Canadian scholars and practitioners, covering a range of issues raised by this trend. (The editors assert, plausibly, that there are enough similarities between post-secondary systems in the U.S. and Canada, that useful comparisons can be drawn, with due consideration paid to differences of perspective and terminology.)

In an essay entitled ‘The Community College Baccalaureate in Canada – Addressing Accessibility and Workforce Needs,’ Professor Michael L. Skolnik, of the University of Toronto, briefly surveys the development of the ‘applied baccalaureate degree’ as the ‘predominant model’ for college/institute degrees in this country, and provides some detail on standards and procedures for approval of these degrees in different provinces. While this is a useful account of the ways in which applied degrees have been used by provincial governments to make the post-secondary system more responsive to the labour market, it is already out of date, given recent developments, notably here in Alberta.

Skolnik goes on to offer a basic classification scheme for new college degree programs in the U.S. and Canada, which focuses attention on the underlying rationale for producing more baccalaureates. Is the aim to provide baccalaureates different in kind to those offered in universities; or is ‘increased access’ to traditional baccalaureates the goal? And how do the alternatives affect our understanding of

The bottom line here is...well, the bottom line. For government, the question is – if more baccalaureates are meant to produce higher per-capita income and higher per-capita GDP – ‘how then to produce the greatest economic gain relative to the expenditure – expand the universities or have colleges deliver baccalaureate programs?’

Neither Skolnik nor his fellow contributors seems much inclined to delve into the politics behind this kind of calculation, choosing instead to concentrate on the implications of college baccalaureate programs for the colleges themselves, and for the future of the college system as a whole.

Another U of T professor, Berta Vigil Laden, contributes a useful account of her ‘field-based’ study of applied baccalaureate degrees in Ontario – ‘The New ABDs’ – in which she examines perceptions of administrators and faculties regarding the new degree programs and their impact on Ontario colleges. Again, comparisons with our experience in Alberta are instructive.

Some of the American case-studies will be of less interest to Canadian readers, and the analysis in several sections has been outstripped by events, but the book as a whole still makes a useful primer because of the contributors’ care throughout to highlight issues, both in policy and practice, which require further research. Two of the editors have attempted to summarize and put these issues into context in a chapter entitled ‘The Community College Baccalaureate – Toward an Agenda for Policy and Research’.

The book also contains a basic introduction to resources and information concerning the college baccalaureate in the U.S. and Canada currently available on the Web, in journals and books, and in policy and conference papers.

By no means the last word on this hot topic, and making no great claims as a scholarly work, this book is still recommended, if not required, reading.

- John Nicholls, R & L Officer





Call for Submissions

DEADLINE EXTENSION to Friday, February 4, 2005

**100 Ways to / 100 Years to
Celebrate Alberta
Showcasing Education: Stimulate * Create * Agitate**

Radisson Hotel and Conference Center CANMORE – May 29 – June 1, 2005

We invite submissions from prospective presenters for Conference sessions related to one of the following themes:

- ✓ Historical perspective on post-secondary education in Alberta: where have we been? where are we now? where are we going?
- ✓ Creating a classroom that stimulates and agitates students.
- ✓ Ensuring that post-secondary education is showcased in a way that celebrates our successes and helps to create a culture of life-long learning and appreciation for knowledge.

TO SUBMIT A PROPOSAL:

Please complete a Session Proposal Form for ACIFA 2005, available from your academic staff association office or on our website at www.acifa.ca. Provisions for presenters are also outlined in the proposal form.

RETURN TO:

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Notes from Ottawa Post-Secondary Education a Federal Priority?

In the wake of the October 2004 Speech from the Throne, in which the Martin government announced plans for a new Workplace Skills Strategy, including new investment in lifelong learning opportunities, the latest Report of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance (December 2004) has recommended that the federal government give priority to changes in the way it funds post-secondary education.

According to the current formula (as of April 1, 2004), the federal government provides funding to the provinces and territories for post-secondary education through the Canada Social Transfer (CST). However, no specific conditions are attached to CST funds, and each province or territory can allocate these funds to education, social assistance, or other social programs, as it sees fit.

Having heard from witnesses urging that the federal government take a leadership role in working with provinces and territories to create a pan-Canadian accord on post-secondary education, the Standing Committee recommended:

- 1) that the government should review – with the provinces and territories, and with representatives of universities, colleges and students – its financial assistance measures for PSE;
- 2) that the government should, ‘on a priority basis, split the Canada Social Transfer into a Canada education transfer and a Canadian social assistance and services transfer; and
- 3) that ‘the government should ensure that adequate measures exist or are implemented to address literacy and lifelong learning issues in Canada’.

Witnesses before the Standing Committee also urged that federal funding for post-secondary education should be restored to its 1992-93 level, adjusted for inflation and demographic growth, and that a national post-secondary education Act should be legislated.

The Report of the Standing Committee, *Moving Forward: Balancing Priorities and Making Choices for the Economy of the 21st Century*, is available online at <http://www.parl.gc.ca>. The Throne Speech is at www.pm.gc.ca/eng/sft-ddt.asp.

Generous to Attend Minister's Strategic Forum on PSE

ACIFA President Deryle Generous has accepted an invitation from the newly appointed Minister of Advanced Education, David Hancock, to participate in a one-day Strategic Forum on post-secondary education, to be held in Edmonton on January 19th.

The Forum, which will bring together presidents of public post-secondary institutions from across the province, as well as representatives from other key stakeholder groups, has been called to discuss the challenges facing the PSE system. Specifically, the Minister has requested advice on the issues of access, affordability and quality in the system.

“I am delighted to have this opportunity to meet with Minister Hancock, and to put forward ACIFA’s policy recommendations, above all concerning

Editorial Content

The views in the Faculty Circuit are those of individuals and do not necessarily reflect ACIFA’s policies and positions. Please address all inquiries and submissions to:

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