

INTRODUCTION

The *Innovative Approaches and Promising Directions* report made many recommendations based on a very inclusive consultation process with all 24 Ontario Community Colleges. Recommendations were made on a wide range of topics including the following: Funding and Accountability, Program Promotion, Partnerships, Delivery, Support to Students, Staff Development and Resources, and Research and Development.

Often there is a feeling that nothing ever changes despite the best intentions of both programs and funders to improve delivery. The CSC decided to revisit the many recommendations of the *Innovative Approaches and Promising Directions* report to determine if indeed anything had changed.

Significant progress has either occurred or is occurring for virtually all recommendations. The CSC would particularly like to highlight the support which it has received to implement changes through project funding. Particularly significant was the funding to develop *ACE On-line*, to facilitate and promote program integration through the *Engaging the Frontlines* project and to develop learning materials for Construction Millwrights. The direction which the province is taking as a result of Employment Ontario will result in many more of the recommendations becoming practice.

This follow up is by no means exhaustive. It is intended only as a quick overview of how things have changed in the past two years. If we have missed any significant initiatives, we apologize.

Things are moving forward rapidly, and the CSC has been very pleased to have been part of this forward movement.

Each recommendation is presented exactly as it was written in the original document followed by a brief summary of the progress of which the CSC is aware.

Innovative Approaches and Promising Directions 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.

Progress to Date

MTCU is responsible for acting on this recommendation and to date no changes to tracking and reporting on site-based delivery have been made. College representatives have participated in CIPMS consultations and reinforced the message that funding and evaluation based on SCHs exclusively is a barrier to innovation.

The Ministry has given strong indications that as the Employment Ontario initiative moves forward the evaluation of all EO programs will be based on a variety of measurable program deliverables.

ACE On-line funding is based on a cost per student per course not SCH and provides a model for an alternative to SCH. It is also worth noting that although there is a requirement to identify SCH for the Academic Upgrading partnership initiatives, partners have also been asked to plan and base funding requests on a cost per student basis.

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 is 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.

Progress to Date

The CSC has not been directly involved at the program level with linkages with Aboriginal programming. Many of the partnership initiatives to deliver AU (ACE) programming are between a college and an Aboriginal community-based deliverer. The CSC has done a presentation to Council Fires on ACE Distance. This training opportunity was arranged by George Brown College. Council Fires staff and students were able to participate in the piloting of ACE materials.

The CSC also has a partnership project with CLO, CESBA and ONLC to develop a workbook and teacher training around Essential Skills. A major focus and learning experience for the project workers was understanding and incorporating the Aboriginal perspective. The workshop was co-delivered at the CESBA conference and will be delivered at the ONLC conference.

- 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.

Progress to Date

CSC did submit a project to develop materials to assist colleges in reaching and promoting the success of this group of students. The project was not funded. Year end stats indicate that the participation of this demographic continues to grow slowly in college upgrading programs. Colleges continue to serve the students developing strategies as funding permits. ACE On-line may provide an effective alternative to classroom-delivered programming. On-going closer working relationships with Job Connect both provincially and locally may also be of assistance. Some colleges, especially in the GTA, have developed specific programming for this student group.

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

Progress to Date

In the absence of enhanced funding, delivery of oral communication continues to be a challenge. ACE On-line may be of some assistance in expanding availability to all students. The ACE Anglais Langue Seconde is an opportunity.

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

Progress to Date

The CSC conducted a survey in May 2008 which outlines practice at individual colleges. Fanshawe has been a leader in redirecting LBS/AU funding to Special Needs. Recent government announcements regarding funding for students with disabilities may lead to improvement in this area.

- 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.

Progress to Date

Development of ACE for Distance Delivery in both French and English is now complete. Delivery for 300 students began in July 2008 and participation has exceeded expectations.

- 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.

Progress to Date

No change to date. ACE On-line does include an on-line counselor for all participants.

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.

Progress to Date

These issues are being addressed by MTCU as part of CIPMS and the implementation of Employment Ontario. To date there has been a very inclusive consultation process but to there are no announcements about specific changes.

- 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.

Progress to Date

CSC has completed the work of the Adult Student Pathways to Postsecondary project funded by MTCU through the Change Fund. It was determined that it is not currently possible through OCAS to track this movement. Recommendations have been made to OCAS to improve student tracking. Any changes will not be possible until 2009-2010.

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.

Progress to Date

Funding late in the year continues to be the norm. It is hoped with the recent signing of the LMDA and current MTCU focus on EO this situation will improve. Although releasing fourth quarter dollars continues to be a challenge for programs, it is also a welcome opportunity to develop materials and strategies which would not otherwise be possible. In 2008, the CSC was able to develop the Employment Track Express course in conjunction with delivery organizations in Western Ontario.

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.

Progress to Date

CSC did join with JC and Apprenticeship to develop a brochure and poster promoting college programming. MTCU also developed a First Generation campaign. CSC has examined individual college websites and has determined that lack of a consistent provincial name continues to be an issue. Marketing continues to be inconsistent across the province.

- 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.

Progress to Date

EO initiative is involving many of these groups in cross-ministry communication and development.

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”

Progress to Date

CSC was included as part of the Colleges Ontario (formerly ACAATO) consultation. CSC continues to have connection to the SDAG Committee through the Colleges Ontario representative.

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.

Progress to Date

Community partnerships have been an on-going initiative during the past 2 years. These partnerships have not specifically targeted youth. Some colleges particularly in the GTA have formed partnerships to address the needs of marginalized youth which have been very successful. Involvement of other EO programs is on a college-by-college basis.

- 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.

Progress to Date

CSC provided leadership for the development of a partnership contract. Input from all colleges assisted in the development of the contract. Implementation is on a college-by-colleges basis.

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.

Progress to Date

As colleges become more interested in recruiting Non Direct Entrants for postsecondary programming there is increased commitment to increased connections. The CSC has been part of a working group whose research and activities culminated in the Strategic Enrolment Management conference in June 2008. CSC is also frequently asked to provide input to Colleges Ontario research and reports. Second Career is also resulting in an increased focus on Academic Upgrading.

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

Progress to Date

This still tends to be done on an individual college basis. Anecdotal reports would indicate it is increasing. CSC participation on Colleges Ontario working groups and Change Fund initiatives has provided opportunity to promote this concept provincially.

- 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.

Progress to Date

This has been a major focus of the CSC for the past 2 years. In 2007 it culminated in a conference "Riding the Wave" which was well attended by managers from the three programs as well as EAS staff. This year the 3 programs received EONDF funding to fund individual college information days, four regional training events and 3 Information bulletins. The CSC is providing overall project management. The CSC has now conducted 3 environmental scans and a fourth is planned for Fall 2008. Progress at colleges is excellent. An EONDF project proposal has been submitted to continue the coordination of these four programs at all colleges.

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

Progress to Date

This continues to be an individual college decision, but the most recent environmental scan indicates this is a practice which has grown significantly.

- 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.

Progress to Date

EO and CIPMS provide the opportunity to move this recommendation forward. Currently there is greater pressure on Upgrading and Job Connect than on Apprenticeship to accomplish this end. The most recent EONDF proposal will provide colleges with a model for the internal referral and tracking of students

- 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.

Progress to Date

Quick Facts were developed and distributed as part of the *Integration Project*. They have been widely used at individual college information days. Integration discussions took place at the 22 individual college training days which were organized as part of the *Engaging the Frontlines* project funded through EONDF. The Fall 2008 environmental scan will track progress at individual colleges. EO is certainly increasing pressure to move forward.

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.

Progress to Date

This has been completed as part of ACE On-line.

- 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.

Progress to Date

This has happened as part of ACE On-line initiative.

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.

Progress to Date

This continues to be an issue which has not been formally addressed. ACE Anglais Langue Seconde is being delivered through Distance.

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.

Progress to Date

CSC is currently partnering with George Brown College and the Millwright Regional Council of Ontario to develop these materials and identify a process which can be modeled for other apprentices.

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

Progress to Date

This continues to happen on an individual college basis. CSC provided Essential Skills training on a cost recovery basis to 19 colleges.

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.

Progress to Date

This continues to be an issue. Availability of Francophone upgrading sites continues to expand. Francophone delivery agencies have not as far as the CSC is aware provided any research or documentation which could be used to promote the importance of this recommendation with Anglophone agencies.

- 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.

Progress to Date

CSC is unaware of any movement on this issue. Recent announcements regarding apprentices with disabilities may result in progress in this area. Many colleges – notably George Brown and Fanshawe – do have targeted support for apprentices with disabilities.

- 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.

Progress to Date

Colleges which do have youth strategies have hired individuals with an aptitude in that area.

- 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.

Progress to Date

There has been no movement on this recommendation to date. Students under 19 are encouraged to acquire either an ACE certificate or a GED in order to qualify for postsecondary admission.

- 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.

Progress to Date

This is an individual college responsibility. It has been incorporated as part of the CSC's Apprenticeship project.

- 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".

Progress to Date

Government is currently focused on EO. There does appear to be a movement away from "shortest route to employment" to an acceptance of further training and education. Second Career and Rapid Reemployment do acknowledge the importance of training.

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

Progress to Date

Colleges Ontario working group has done a lot of research on the impact of finances on student recruitment and retention. Colleges are currently discussing how more flexible programming (thus reducing financial hardship) might be accomplished.

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

Progress to Date

No movement to date. OSAP has been updated.

- 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.

Progress to Date

The SDAG does meet regularly and receives regular MTCU updates which are distributed to the field. Colleges Ontario does assemble working groups on an *ad hoc* basis to assist them in putting forward recommendations on a variety of issues.

- 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.

Progress to Date

Individual college practice continues to be the norm. There is increased acceptance of the inclusion of upgrading students in college life and services.

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.

Progress to Date

Colleges have begun to do some new hires as a result of retirements and partnership dollars. The primary hiring criteria continues to be academic credentials. In-house training continues to be available. CSC has provided Essential Skills/CIPMS/LSA training and will be providing guidance on blended and distance delivery.

- 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.

Progress to Date

Information has been collected and shared on an *ad hoc* basis to respond to individual college requests for information.

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.

Progress to Date

No progress to date. CSC does raise this issue as opportunities arise.

- 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.

Progress to Date

No provincially consistent progress to date. This was a focus of the 2006 "Ponder the Future" conference. A subsequent project proposal to address this recommendation was not funded. ACE ON-line has incorporated an up front orientation and assessment module for all learners.

- 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

Progress to Date

No provincial progress on this recommendation.