
ACCESS TO ADVANCED EDUCATION AND JOB TRAINING IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

REPORT OF THE PROVINCIAL ACCESS COMMITTEE



Submitted to
The Hon. Stanley B. Hagen
Minister of Advanced Education
and Job Training
Victoria, British Columbia
September, 1988

Summary of Recommendations

PRIORITY CONCERNS

1. Institutional Capacity and Program Quality

It is recommended that government, through multi-year commitment to operating and capital grants, provide predictable funds to allow institutions to maintain quality of programs and upgrade space and equipment.

It is recommended that institutions be encouraged to achieve optimum space and equipment utilization through flexible scheduling of instruction.

It is recommended that the advanced education and job training system give priority to the use of open learning systems to increase accessibility to educational opportunities.

2. Literacy and Adult Basic Education

It is recommended that colleges be provided, beginning in fiscal 1989, with supplementary funding to enable them to assume the direct educational costs (fees, books and required supplies) of students taking literacy and adult basic education courses.

It is recommended that, in preparation for the International Year of Literacy in 1990, a provincial advisory committee be established to advise government on, among other issues, means of informing illiterate adults of available educational opportunities.

3. University Degree Programs Outside the Lower Mainland

It is recommended that, through a combination of different methods of delivery, a core program of second year courses be provided in each college.

It is recommended that in sparsely populated college regions, university degree programs be expanded by means of the Open University or by co-operative arrangements between the college, universities and the Open Learning Agency.

It is recommended that in more densely populated college regions outside the Lower Mainland and south Vancouver Island (for example, Okanagan and Cariboo

College regions), university degree programs be expanded by means of the establishment of an upper-level "university college" component.

It is recommended that in the North, improved access to university degree programs be achieved through support for the evolution of current relationships between the colleges, the universities, and other agencies.

It is recommended that there be further exploration of the potential of a distinctive "University of the North".

4. Under-represented Groups

People in Small Remote Communities

It is recommended that the government strongly support the Open Learning Agency to carry out all aspects of the role given to it in legislation.

Native Indians

It is recommended that the provincial government take immediate steps, in consultation with Native Indian groups, universities and colleges, to develop and implement a detailed strategy to address the diverse advanced education and job training needs of Native Indians.

The Disabled

It is recommended that the Ministry, in collaboration with other Ministries and agencies, ensure appropriate support services for disabled students enrolled in advanced education and job training programs.

Prison Population

It is recommended that the Ministry of Advanced Education and Job Training consult with the Ministries of Education and the Solicitor General to review, in collaboration with universities, colleges, and institutes, the strategy for the funding and delivery of educational up-grading and job training in provincial jails.

5. Admissions, Transfer and Articulation

It is recommended that a Co-ordinating Council on Admissions, Transfer, and Articulation, with representatives chosen from names submitted from

within the system, be established to provide a mechanism for the resolution of difficulties which may arise from time to time with respect to admissions, course and program equivalency, degree requirements, and transfer of course credits.

ADDITIONAL CONCERNS

1. Program Offerings in the Lower Mainland

It is recommended that the Henderson Report (see Appendix A), supporting degree granting status through the Open Learning Agency for the Emily Carr College of Art and Design, be endorsed in principle by the Ministry of Advanced Education and Job Training, and that the Ministry refer the proposal to the Open Learning Agency for evaluation and action.

2. Program Offerings in Smaller Communities

It is recommended that the Ministry of Advanced Education and Job Training provide the resources to permit colleges to establish more learning centres in smaller communities to facilitate the offering of a greater range of courses and programs, on a scheduled and predictable basis, (utilizing open learning communication technologies as well as face-to-face instruction).

It is recommended that there be cyclic offerings of vocational and technical programs and courses in smaller and more remote communities, on a planned three to five year basis.

It is recommended that short term refresher and upgrading courses for industry be offered in small communities, utilizing mobile training facilities as appropriate.

3. Financial Barriers

It is recommended that the British Columbia Student Assistance Program be given more publicity.

It is recommended that Regional Access Committee recommendations regarding student financial assistance be forwarded to the Standing Committee on Student Financial Assistance for review and action.

4. Informational Barriers

It is recommended that ongoing counselling services be more readily available, especially in interior colleges where students have less access to community information and counselling services than students in larger centres.

It is recommended that the existence of quality educational opportunities through open learning systems be more effectively conveyed to all residents of British Columbia.

It is recommended that the Ministry of Education continue its efforts to make available more course options in small secondary schools, particularly in academic subjects, and particularly through the use of distance learning technologies in situations where course registrations are low.

It is recommended that Discovery Training Network terminal access points (TAPS) be set up in all secondary schools.

5. Retention, Completion and Transition to Work

It is recommended that legislation be changed to allow colleges to grant associate degrees.

It is recommended that British Columbia's educational institutions place a higher emphasis on guidance and student services so that students are given more specific direction with respect to prerequisites, entrance requirements, program expectations and transition to work.

It is recommended that educational institutions place increased emphasis on quality of teaching and the development of teaching skills.

It is recommended that colleges and institutes make provision for more sports, cultural and extra-curricular activities.

It is recommended that specific career-technical and vocational certificate programs be expanded where there are high employment needs.

It is recommended that more resources be made available for cooperative education programs (including trades training) and work-study components of programs, to assist in maintaining the currency of programs and to ease the transition from education to work.

6. Research Capability for Policy Making

It is recommended that the Ministry and institutions of advanced education and job training develop a common data base and continue to identify, undertake and monitor research projects on issues relating to accessibility.

7. Other Concerns

It is recommended that consideration be given to providing more on-campus student residences.

It is recommended that improved and more flexible day care facilities be made available.

USE OF TELECOMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY

It is recommended that the Ministry of Advanced Education and Job Training collaborate with the Ministry of Regional Development (Communications Programs) to ensure that Knowledge Network programs are available to all British Columbia communities with populations of 50 or more.

It is recommended that, in order to facilitate the implementation of a number of recommendations of this report, the Open Learning Agency prepare a proposal to enhance significantly our current use of telecommunications technology through the development and expansion of interactive networks.

CONSULTATION TOPICS

The following topics and questions are intended to focus your comments to the consultative panel from the Ministry of Advanced Education and Job Training. So far as possible your remarks should reflect your assessment of the needs of the whole Province, rather than those of your own institution or region.

1. The Provincial Access Committee has proposed the establishment of one or more "university colleges" in British Columbia; each would be a component of a regional college and would involve cooperation between a regional college and the provincial universities, and would offer programs leading to a university degree. Is this a viable project and would it satisfactorily meet a need? Would it be likely to generate sufficient enrolment to be cost effective? What program areas should be represented?
2. The Provincial Access Committee and the Ministry of Education have both proposed offering basic education, free of charge, to adult citizens of British Columbia. What are the problems in attracting and retaining adults in literacy and basic education programs? What special contribution can post-secondary institutions make to this process?
3. Post-secondary education in British Columbia is provided by a large number of autonomous institutions of many types, with different roles and different admission requirements. To what extent and in what ways would it be feasible and advantageous for these institutions to function as a system? Should regional colleges take increasing responsibility for the first two years of Arts and Science education? How can equal opportunity be provided for college and university students to enter 3rd year programs?
4. Overall approximately 60% of British Columbia high school graduates enter post-secondary programs (academic or technical), although the rate varies greatly from one part of the Province to another. Given that there is a positive correlation between years of post-secondary education and employment rates, should we concentrate on reducing inequities or on raising overall transition rates? Are the barriers primarily financial, or are social and cultural factors also important? What strategies should be employed to increase the transition rate and on what groups should they be targetted? Would the Provincial Access Committee's recommendation regarding program offerings in smaller communities help to increase transition?

5. British Columbia compares unfavourably with other Canadian provinces in the percentage of post-secondary students who complete their programs and receive a diploma or degree. What are the causes of this attrition? How best can the completion rate be increased? Would the establishment of a degree of Associate encourage students to complete two year programs. Would it tend to reduce the completion rate of baccalaureate degrees?
6. What is currently being done to assist students in the transition from post-secondary education to permanent employment after graduation? Should greater efforts be made? What form should these efforts take? To what extent should this be a responsibility of individual institutions?
7. How can an appropriate balance be achieved, in post-secondary programs, between the educational, social, and occupational needs of the individual and the economic and cultural needs of society? Should there be some change of emphasis during the next five years and, if so, in what direction?
8. The Provincial Access Committee has recommended that additional attention be given to the educational needs of currently under-represented groups: e.g. Native peoples, the disabled, and residents of remote communities. Are there other significant groups which are under-represented? What should be done to increase their representation? Should special programs be offered, designed for a particular group, or should special means be made available to assist members of such groups to participate in regular programs?
9. The Sullivan Commission recommends that the educational system "facilitate and provide lifelong learning", accessible to learners of all ages, involving "the resources of all institutions and agencies involved in education". What roles should post-secondary institutions play in promoting lifelong learning? Is the primary need for upgrading occupational skills or for personal development? Should upgrading be primarily the responsibility of the individual and industry?
10. Post-secondary educational institutions in British Columbia include many private institutions, academic and technical. Are there areas in which private institutions work best? Are they a threat or a challenge to public institutions? How can greater cooperation be encouraged between these and public institutions? Would a (voluntary) system of accreditation be helpful for private post-secondary institutions?

11. Canada lags behind other industrialized countries in its expenditure on research and on the creation and application of new knowledge. In Canada research and development takes place predominantly in the universities, where it plays a major part in the teaching function. Is there a way in which the regional colleges, and their faculty, can contribute?
12. The Science Council of Canada has called on the universities "to help strengthen our industrial research and development by improving their collaboration with industry in both research and education" and has argued that "universities must re-orient some of their activities to provide the teaching and research required by the private sector". Is this true of all post-secondary institutions, and if so what sorts of orientation are required? What should the institutions do to facilitate the transfer of knowledge and technology? What place would the humanities and social sciences occupy in the re-oriented curriculum.
13. The Provincial Access Committee has recommended that a greater range of courses and programs be made available in smaller communities by means of open learning communication technologies, as well as by face-to-face instruction, and it has called for proposals to enhance our current use of telecommunications technology. Should there be increased emphasis on these and other methods of distance education? What other new technologies should be considered?