

# Degrees of Opportunity

## Examining Access to Post-Secondary Education in Alberta

Final Report of the Senate Task Force  
on Access to Post-Secondary Education

June 2000



**Vision Statement**

The Senate is an independent body of community leaders that examines, fosters and celebrates the diversity and excellence of the University of Alberta.

**Composition of the Senate**

The Senate is a 62 member volunteer body whose members are drawn from as broad a representation of society as possible. The Senate comprises elected and appointed members from across Alberta, and appointed members who represent the Alumni Association, the Board of Governors, Deans' Council, General Faculties Council, the Graduate Students' Association, the Non-Academic Staff Association and the Students' Union. The Senate is chaired by the Chancellor of the University.

**Role of the Senate**

The Senate acts as a bridge between the University and the public. Its role is based on the belief that an ongoing relationship with the community is fundamental to the effectiveness of the University. Through the Senate, the community can deliver an opinion or a point of view to the University; through the Senate, the University can reach the community.

The Senate also provides a forum in which issues and concerns about post-secondary education in Alberta may be debated. The Senate has the power to require a report from any part of the University, and it may receive and consider submissions from any member of the public.

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The Senate strives to communicate the needs and views of Albertans to the University and the Alberta government, and to interpret to the public the many different facets of the University. As one way of accomplishing this, a task force may be formed to investigate an educational matter brought to the Senate's attention. This report is the result of such a task force.

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# Executive Summary

**T**he Senate Task Force on Access to Post-Secondary Education was struck in response to growing concerns that certain barriers to post-secondary education are denying academically capable Albertans the opportunity to pursue higher learning. While there are many positive incentives to undertake a post-secondary education, the challenges and barriers to access are seen to be growing rather than lessening.

The benefits of advanced education, both to the individual and to the Province, are undeniable. University and college graduates are using their skills for the betterment of our society on a daily basis — as doctors, teachers, scientists, engineers, daycare workers, and artists. Education is also driving the rapidly expanding ‘knowledge-based’ economy that characterizes global commerce in the information age. In addition, as numerous reports demonstrate, individuals with a post-secondary diploma or degree continue to enjoy higher employment and salary levels when compared to high school graduates. As we enter a new century, the importance of a highly educated workforce is greater than ever.

Yet despite the obvious value of post-secondary education, a surprisingly low percentage of the population has taken advantage of the learning opportunities available to them. Systemic barriers limit access to post-secondary education for Albertans from lower-income backgrounds, as they do for those from rural, northern and Aboriginal communities. Rising instructional fees and high student debt are also discouraging many Albertans from enrolling in the quality programs offered by our Province’s post-secondary institutions. As a result, certain segments of the population are not generally afforded the economic, social, and cultural benefits of higher learning.

Although the Government has recently been reinvesting in post-secondary education, a decade of funding cuts to universities, colleges, and trade schools has created barriers that will not be easily lowered.

Post-secondary institutions have done an excellent job of maintaining high quality programs in the face of fiscal restraint, in part through increased cooperation under the Campus Alberta initiative. However, the maintenance and renewal of campus facilities has been deferred for several years, and capital expenditure is required to properly serve the student body at present levels. The process of faculty renewal and retention is also crucial to the future success of the post-secondary education system.

Moreover, demographic evidence suggests that even if the status quo is maintained, pressure on the capacity of the post-secondary education system will continue to rise. A dramatic increase in the youth population (the “baby boom echo”) will require post-secondary institutions to offer more places or turn away many qualified students. The importance of higher education in the rapidly changing job market — as evidenced by the Federal Government’s estimate that nearly half of all new jobs in Canada will require a minimum of sixteen years of education and training — will further inflate demand for post-secondary education. Add to that the rising interest in lifelong learning from Albertans who realize that continual educational upgrading is necessary in the information age, and the ability of the system to deal with demand is called into question.

Several measures have been implemented by stakeholders in an effort to reduce barriers to post-secondary education so that academically capable Albertans are provided with the opportunity to pursue the bright future that higher learning can offer. Grants, bursaries, and scholarships have been augmented, though the effectiveness of the distribution and promotional systems is uncertain. The Government of Alberta has also made efforts to check mounting student debt loads by providing student loan remission, though many Albertans remain unaware of this program. A sophisticated inter-institutional credit transfer system has been developed,

reducing geographical and financial barriers by allowing students to begin degree programs at local colleges. Furthermore, institutions are utilizing new learning technologies to further improve the efficiency and flexibility of the post-secondary education system in our Province. These measures have been breaking down barriers to post-secondary education, but, as this report demonstrates, much more needs to be done.

The Task Force has four main recommendations to improve access to post-secondary education in Alberta, and to the University of Alberta in particular. We believe that the implementation of these recommendations will lessen the barriers to higher learning, allowing more Albertans to reap the benefits offered by our Province’s world-class post-secondary education system. Achieving these goals will require the involvement of all stakeholder groups, including businesses, governments, parents, students, teachers, and post-secondary institutions. To this end, the Senate Task Force on Access to Post-Secondary Education makes the following recommendations:

- 1. Ensure that *all* Albertans are given the opportunity to attain the necessary academic qualifications to pursue post-secondary education.**
- 2. Ensure that the post-secondary education system in Alberta provides flexible, high-quality learning opportunities for *all* qualified Alberta applicants.**
- 3. Improve the overall system of financial support for students to ensure that *all* Albertans are able to afford post-secondary education.**
- 4. More effectively communicate the social, economic and cultural benefits of higher learning, for both the individual and the Province, to all stakeholders and potential students.**

# I. Introduction

“I CONSIDER THAT THE EXTENSION  
OF THE ACTIVITIES OF THE  
UNIVERSITY ON SUCH LINES AS  
WILL MAKE ITS BENEFITS REACH  
DIRECTLY OR INDIRECTLY THE MASS  
OF THE PEOPLE ... IS A WORK  
SECOND TO NONE THAT CAN BE  
UNDERTAKEN BY ANY  
GOVERNMENT.”

HENRY MARSHALL TORY, 1908

With these words, the University of Alberta was opened by its first president, Dr. Henry Marshall Tory. A visionary for those times, Dr. Tory recognized that education would provide the foundation on which the newly established Province of Alberta could build a prosperous, healthy, and successful society. From humble beginnings with a student body of forty-five, the University of Alberta has grown to serve over 30,000 students annually. Over the years, it has been joined by other institutions, bringing the benefits of post-secondary education to a wider range of Albertans. As it was when the Province was in its infancy, post-secondary education remains vital to Alberta’s social, economic, and cultural development.

Yet despite the obvious benefits to both graduates and society generally, post-secondary education is not accessible for all academically capable citizens. Indeed, only 34% of Albertans have received any form of post-secondary training.<sup>1</sup> This low rate of participation is not necessarily due to a lack of interest. For example, in 1998 alone, nearly 2,000 qualified applicants were not offered admission to any of Alberta’s universities.<sup>2</sup> Clearly, a number of barriers to post-secondary education remain including socio-economic background, motivation, costs, and the capacity of the system.

These systemic barriers have been magnified by the impact of the funding cuts to post-secondary education that governments across Canada imposed throughout the 1990s. The Government of Alberta, faced with a budget deficit and a drastic decrease in federal subsidies for social programs, has aggressively reduced its expenditures over the last decade. As a result, the budget for higher education was slashed by 21% between 1994 and 1996 alone. In

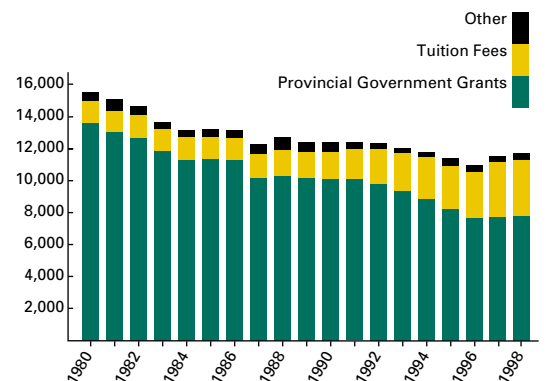
order to maintain the viability of the system, the Government authorized an alternate means for publicly funded post-secondary institutions to generate revenue: tuition increases.

Post-secondary education in Alberta has thus been gradually transformed from a low user-pay to a high user-pay system. Students have been asked to assume a much greater share in the costs of their education, likely pricing it beyond the financial means of many Albertans. While Government funding dropped by over 40%, from almost \$14,000 per student to less than \$8,000 between 1990 and 1999, the average fee for an undergraduate Arts degree increased by 193%, from \$1,244 to \$3,658, over the same period. The result of this trend has been an amplification of student debt.

Realizing that the cost of a post-secondary education is becoming prohibitive, Alberta’s Minister of Learning, Dr. Lyle Oberg, recently told the Senate that access has become the main issue for the post-secondary education sector. In response, the Government has brought forth several initiatives to cushion the effect of tuition increases and rising student debt. Certain programs considered to be in high demand have been given additional funding to increase stu-

**Figure 1**

**Operating revenues per student (Full Time Equivalent) by source (in 1998 constant \$)**



Source: University of Alberta, 1999-2002 Strategic Business Plan (1999).

- 1 Government of Alberta, *Get Ready Alberta: Strengthening the Alberta Advantage* (Feb. 2000): 10.
- 2 Alberta Council on Admissions and Transfer, *Duplicate Application Detection Project, Fall 1998* (February 1999).

## II. Degrees of

dent places. Student financial assistance programs have been extended and improved. These are positive steps, but many Albertans — particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds, rural and northern areas, and Aboriginal communities — are still confronted with barriers to post-secondary education.

A successful post-secondary education system must maintain high entrance standards to ensure that applicants are academically equipped to handle the rigours of higher learning, and are therefore strong candidates to graduate. That being said, the system must provide opportunities to those applicants who are qualified. Despite the Government's recent efforts, many strong applicants to post-secondary programs still face roadblocks. Countless others may simply not apply, believing that the system is not open to them. Through cooperation among post-secondary institutions, the Government of Alberta, business, and the public, the barriers *can* be lessened. Together, stakeholders in education can create a more flexible, effective and efficient post-secondary education system that will increase access to degrees, offering a future of opportunity to more Albertans in the process.

“EDUCATION REPRESENTS THE FOUNDATION OF EVERYTHING WE WANT AND NEED TO ACHIEVE BOTH ECONOMICALLY AND SOCIALLY. IT IS THE KNOWLEDGE BEHIND A KNOWLEDGE-BASED ECONOMY. IT IS THE KEY TO ADDING VALUE TO THE GOODS AND SERVICES WE PRODUCE AND TO THE IMPROVED PRODUCTIVITY I BELIEVE WE SO DESPERATELY NEED. IT IS THE PATH TO EMPLOYABILITY, TO A MORE HIGHLY QUALIFIED WORKFORCE, AND TO A HIGHER STANDARD OF LIVING FOR ALL ALBERTANS.”

ERIC NEWELL  
PRESIDENT & CEO, SYNCRUDE<sup>3</sup>

**A**s we enter the information age, post-secondary education in general, and a university education in particular, has become the key to success. According to the 1998 labour statistics for Alberta, university graduates enjoyed the highest labour force participation rate of any educational group, with the majority holding jobs that were relevant to their program of study. Employers are demanding a workforce with abilities that include critical thinking, adaptability, clear communication, and cultural sensitivity — the very skill sets that the University of Alberta and its educational partners offer to their students. Recent employment figures for University of Alberta graduates bear this out: for example, the unemployment rate was only 1.2% for Arts and Science degree holders five years after graduation.<sup>4</sup> On the other hand, the Conference Board of Canada has confirmed that “a lack of education is a low-income life sentence.”<sup>5</sup>

Globally, the nature of employment is rapidly shifting toward high-skilled, knowledge intensive jobs.<sup>6</sup> In formulating a new economic strategy for the Province, Premier Ralph Klein has set the goals of “unleashing innovation, leading the world in learning, competing in the global marketplace and making Alberta the best place in the world to live.”<sup>7</sup> If this grand vision is to be realized, Alberta must maximize its human capital by supporting and extending its commitment to post-secondary education.

- 3 Eric Newell, “Toward a Knowledge Based Economy: Productivity and education in a more challenging world” (Speech given at *Choices for Tomorrow 1999 Progressive Conservative Policy Conference*, April 24, 1999). Mr. Newell is also the Chair of the Board of Governors at the University of Alberta.
- 4 University of Alberta Senate, *Success By Degrees: Preparing our Graduates for Alberta's Second Century* (May 1997): 8.
- 5 Cited in: Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada, *Notes for a Presentation to the House of Commons* (November 3, 1997): 2.
- 6 This move toward a “knowledge-based economy” is almost universally identified throughout the literature on economic change. See: Gordon Betcherman and Kathryn McMullen, “Training for the New Economy” Canadian Policy Research Networks (1998); Robert Reich, *The Work of Nations* (1991).
- 7 Government of Alberta, *Get Ready Alberta: Strengthening the Alberta Advantage* (2000): i.

# Opportunity

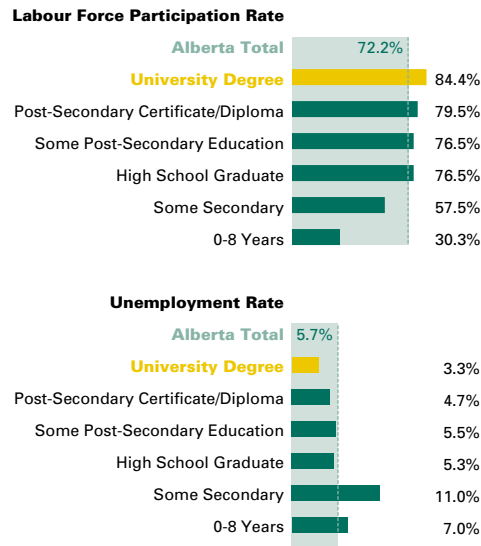
In fact, investing in post-secondary education for its citizens provides an excellent return for governments. Post-secondary education leads to higher paying jobs for graduates, which translates to higher tax revenues. For every dollar the Government of Alberta puts into a university degree, it receives over two dollars back in extra taxes based on the graduate's resultant higher level of income.<sup>8</sup> That investment only looks better when one considers that a more highly educated population draws far less on government sponsored social programs, including health, justice, and social services.<sup>9</sup> Add to this the economic benefits resulting from an educated community of employers and knowledge generators and the potential benefits of advanced education to the Province become even more evident. Investment in post-secondary education by all stakeholders is the key to making the most of the opportunities that the new century will present.

Clearly, improved accessibility to post-secondary education can benefit all Albertans by developing leaders who will promote a prosperous Province, both economically and socially. Moreover, the importance of education in the rapidly changing job-market continues to increase, as evidenced by the Federal Government's estimate that nearly half of all new jobs created in Canada will require at least sixteen years of education and training.<sup>10</sup> Responding to global trends, Alberta has had the foresight to begin diversifying its economy on the bases of knowledge and innovation. In this context, barriers to post-secondary education result not only in lost opportunities for the Province, but for individual Albertans as well.

**"A well-educated population is not only a commendable goal in itself, but studies demonstrate convincingly that investments in post-secondary education show a significant rate of return. There are direct returns in higher employment rates, additional income that follows from obtaining a higher credential, and increased income tax revenue flowing to government from higher incomes."**

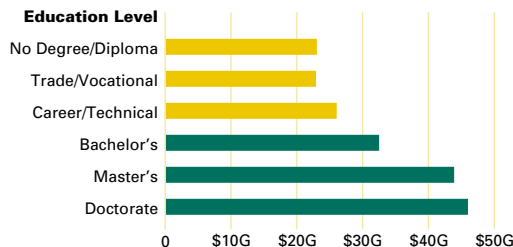
British Columbia  
Ministry of Advanced Education, Training and Technology, *Federal Spending on Post-Secondary Education. Transfers to Provinces: Trends and Consequences* (December 8, 1999)

**Figure 2**  
1998 labour force statistics for Alberta based on level of education



Source: Alberta Learning, *Business Plan 1999/2000 to 2001/02* (1999).

**Figure 3**  
Median earnings of graduates (Canada)



Source: University of Alberta Senate, *Success by Degrees* (1997).

8 Robert Allen, *The Education Dividend: Why Education Spending is a Good Investment for BC*. Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (March 1999): 18.

9 Michael V. Hayes and James R. Dunn, *Population Health in Canada: A Systematic Review* (1998); Robert G. Evans, Morris L. Barer, and Theodore R. Marmor (eds.), *Why Are Some People Healthy and Others Not?: The Determinants of Health of Populations* (1994).

10 Human Resources and Development Canada, *COPS 1997: Macroeconomic Reference Scenario T-97-E*, Technical Documents Series, 1997.

# III. Opportunity Lost: Barriers to Post-Secondary Education

- 11 Interview with Fred Hemingway, Acting Assistant Deputy Minister, Alberta Human Resources and Employment, November 24, 1999.
- 12 University of Alberta Senate, *Survey of Alberta School Guidance Counsellors* (Jan. 2000). The survey was designed to test counsellor opinion on commonly heard statements about post-secondary education. Questionnaires were sent out to counsellors at 470 Alberta secondary schools. The response rate was 31.9% (34.6% for urban schools, 29.5% for rural).
- 13 Dianne Looker, "In search of credentials: Factors affecting young adults' participation in post-secondary education" *The Canadian Journal of Higher Education*, vol. 27, no. 2 (1997): 1-36; Samuel McGrath, "Correlates of post-secondary participation" in *Youth in Transition: Perspectives on Research and Policy*, edited by Burt Galaway and J. Hudson (1996): 189-198.
- 14 Interview with Doug McNally, CEO, Edmonton Community Foundation, December 16, 1999.
- 15 George Butlin, "Determinants of postsecondary participation" *Education Quarterly Review*, vol. 5, no.3 (1999): 30.

## Lower-Income Albertans

"THOSE WHO ARE MOST AFFECTED BY BARRIERS TO POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION COME FROM UNDERPRIVILEGED ENVIRONMENTS. FOR THEM, THE IMPEDIMENTS ARE NOT ONLY ECONOMIC, BUT ALSO CULTURAL."

FRED HEMINGWAY  
ACTING ASSISTANT DEPUTY MINISTER,  
ALBERTA HUMAN RESOURCES AND EMPLOYMENT<sup>11</sup>

It is widely asserted that academically capable Albertans from lower socioeconomic backgrounds are under-represented among the post-secondary student body. To explore this claim, the University of Alberta Senate asked Alberta's high school guidance counsellors whether students from middle- and high-income brackets are more likely to attend university than those from a low-income bracket. The results were overwhelming: 95% agreed with the statement.<sup>12</sup> Indeed, many recent studies have demonstrated that there is a much greater probability that Canadians from more affluent backgrounds will attend university when compared to their less privileged counterparts.<sup>13</sup>

The rising cost of post-secondary education is an obvious potential barrier in this regard. Yet tuition fees are only one aspect of the perceived financial burden: the cost of books and supplies, moving and living expenses, and income foregone during a period of study are all factors that may exacerbate any apprehension felt by Albertans considering a post-secondary education. The present policy shift by governments to a high user-pay system has only served to raise the 'sticker price shock' for those contemplating a university education, driving

away potential students from less privileged backgrounds. Moreover, the media has been bombarding prospective students with stories of crippling debt loads amassed as a consequence of pursuing a university education. Increasingly, grants and bursaries have been made available to alleviate the cost barrier, but information about these sources of student aid does not always reach the intended audience. Many Albertans are simply not aware of the bursary, scholarship, and loan remission programs that exist to make post-secondary education more accessible to all students.

In addition to financial barriers faced by disadvantaged students, other factors contribute to low levels of motivation to pursue post-secondary education. Doug McNally, the former Chief of Police for the City of Edmonton who now works with inner-city development programs as CEO of the Edmonton Community Foundation, suggests that "for most underprivileged youth in Alberta, university isn't even on the radar screen."<sup>14</sup> A lack of awareness about

the value of post-secondary education, the scarcity of role models, or the absence of encouragement are all barriers to higher learning, and to a university education in particular. For example, the attitude of one's peer group can affect educational outcomes. Students whose friends believe it is important to complete high school are almost twice as likely to attend university when compared to those whose friends do not.<sup>15</sup> Ultimately,

a simple lack of exposure to the idea of pursuing post-secondary education creates an obstacle that can only be removed through early intervention.

Long-term social-policy solutions are required to make higher education truly accessible for all. Children must receive adequate attention in their early

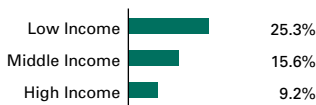
"For most underprivileged youth in Alberta, university isn't even on the radar screen."

Doug McNally  
CEO, Edmonton  
Community Foundation

years to ensure that they develop into healthy, educated and productive adults. “Programs for children starting at pre-natal stages and continuing to age six are a key investment need,” says Doug McNally. “These programs allow disadvantaged children to begin their education properly, and will integrate many from underprivileged backgrounds.”<sup>16</sup> When compared to children from higher-income households, a larger proportion of children from low-income families received considerably lower scores on tests that indicate their readiness to learn.<sup>17</sup> These startling statistics support the view that early intervention is essential in order to ensure that all children start their education on an equal level. From there, it is necessary that all Albertans are provided with a quality education from kindergarten through high school, so that students are motivated and academically qualified for post-secondary programs.

Much of the effort in this regard must come from government and from charitable organizations such as the Edmonton Community Foundation. But the University of Alberta can also contribute, particularly

**Figure 4**  
**Percentage of children aged four and five scoring poorly in verbal tests that indicate a readiness to learn (based on household income)**



Source: Human Resources and Development Canada and Statistics Canada, *National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth*.

**“The University can bring social policy research to the table, in an effort to minimize the socioeconomic barriers to post-secondary education. The resources are there. Interdisciplinary approaches could prove very fruitful.”**

**Doug McNally**  
 CEO, Edmonton  
 Community Foundation

through its research capabilities. University President Rod Fraser agrees: “Ensuring the health, safety and well-being of students is key to their success as learners. The University of Alberta has the resources and the vision to bring together teachers, parents, researchers, administrators and the community, in order to make substantial research contributions toward fostering such an environment for the least advantaged children. It makes sense to bring research and practice together in Education in order to harness our potential to improve the success rates of children in schools.” Ultimately, post-secondary institutions must actively and creatively contribute to the long-term solutions that are needed to lessen the access problems faced by disadvantaged Albertans.

Recently, the University of Alberta joined with a variety of community-oriented agencies<sup>18</sup> to establish the Community-University Coalition for Child and Family Development. This initiative creates a collaborative framework by which the University can integrate its research capabilities with the needs of the community. Post-secondary institutions must continue in their efforts to determine and communicate best practices for child and family development through programs such as this. Not only will doing so directly improve the lives of children and families, but it will better prepare and motivate children from disadvantaged backgrounds to face the rigours of post-secondary education, and break down barriers in the process.

- 16 Interview with Doug McNally, December 16, 1999.
- 17 *Globe and Mail*, 24 Nov. 1999, citing Human Resources and Development Canada and Statistics Canada, *National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth*.
- 18 The agencies that participated in discussions on the development of the coalition include: University of Alberta, Alberta Home and School Councils Association, Alberta Ministry of Children’s Services, Alberta Ministry of Community Development, Alberta Ministry of Health and Wellness, Alberta Ministry of Justice, Alberta Ministry of Learning, Alberta School Boards’ Association, Alberta Teachers’ Association, Capital Health Authority, City of Edmonton Community Services, Edmonton Catholic School System, Edmonton Public School System, Edmonton Community Foundation, Glenrose Rehabilitation Hospital, Grant MacEwan College, Mental Health Advisory Board, Oliver School Centre for Children, Aboriginal leaders, and parents.

## Rural Albertans

“FOR THE MANY ALBERTANS WHO GROW UP IN A SMALL SCHOOL AND SMALL TOWN ENVIRONMENT, THE TRANSITION TO CAMPUS LIFE CAN BE AN OVERWHELMING EXPERIENCE. MANY ARRIVE ON CAMPUS WITHOUT EVER HAVING VISITED THE CITY OR THE UNIVERSITY, AND SOME FIND THEMSELVES IN CLASSES WHERE THE NUMBER OF STUDENTS IS GREATER THAN THE ENTIRE POPULATION OF THEIR HOMETOWN.”

WENDY COFFIN  
ASSOCIATE DEAN OF STUDENTS,  
UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA<sup>19</sup>

- 19 Interview with Wendy Coffin, Associate Dean of Students, January 10, 2000.
- 20 Alberta Learning press release, November 12, 1999.
- 21 Butlin, “Determinants”: 23.
- 22 Monica Boyd and Doug Norris, “The Crowded Nest: Young adults at home” *Canadian Social Trends* (Spring 1999): 4.

Students educated in rural communities are another group that face specific obstacles to post-secondary education. Though often highly qualified — 41% of Rutherford Scholarships for High School Achievement were awarded to those from rural schools<sup>20</sup> — geographic and cultural barriers may well limit their participation in higher learning. For example, students from rural areas are noticeably less likely to attend university than

students from urban areas. Colleges, however, enjoy a higher attendance rate by rural students, as these institutions are more locally accessible.<sup>21</sup>

Because rural students must often leave their communities to attend their chosen institutions, educational costs are usually higher than for students living in cities with universi-

ties. While over 70% of full-time students in Canada between the ages of twenty and twenty-nine live with their parents,<sup>22</sup> this option is not available for most students from rural communities. Room and board and travel costs place an increased financial burden on these students and their families.

In addition to higher costs, significant cultural barriers exist for rural students, which might prevent them from pursuing post-secondary education. While there are many benefits to living in a smaller, close-knit community, it can be difficult to depart

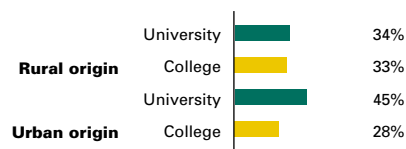
from this secure environment to pursue a post-secondary qualification. Not only are rural students obliged to absorb the higher costs of living away from home, but they must also leave behind the support of family and friends. The more remote the community of origin is, the more drastic the ‘culture shock’ will likely be. Specific bursary programs or tax incentives intended to alleviate the additional costs for rural students might prove beneficial in reducing some of the financial barriers. Many of the cultural barriers will, however, need to be addressed by the post-secondary institutions themselves.

For many years, the University of Alberta offered the “Summer Youth University” program, which brought students in grades 9 through 11 from around the Province to experience university life first-hand. Students attended special interest courses, and lived in student residences for the duration of their classes. This program encouraged students from rural areas to consider pursuing an undergraduate career at the University of Alberta, by removing much of the apprehension associated with moving away from their community, and creating a sense of familiarity with the campus environment. The “Summer Youth University” program should be re-examined as an effective marketing and orientation tool for university programming.

Perhaps the most effective improvements to access for rural Albertans have been provided by the Province’s strong post-secondary transfer program, which does much to reduce geographical barriers to advanced education. Students can attend fully transferable classes at an institution close to home, lessening financial and cultural concerns for the first part of their university degree. Eventually, however, transfer students must relocate, which will increase the educational costs for students and their families, and in turn enlarge student debt loads. Students will also be faced with the prospect of adjusting to a new environment at a time when course demands increase drastically. While the transferability of courses among Alberta’s post-secondary institutions is excellent, it is crucial that the students themselves are transferable. Measures must be taken to ensure that transfer students are prepared not only academically, but also socially and economically, for the rigours ahead of them. Detailed information should be provided on educational costs, housing, student life, and available support services. The University of Alberta’s Orientation Program is a good start in this regard, and the University should consider expanding the program and making it mandatory for all students during their first year on campus.

**Figure 5**

**Proportion of high school graduates attending university and college based on geographical origin**



Source: Butlin, “Determinants of postsecondary participation” *Education Quarterly Review* (1999).

# Northern Albertans

“WE MUST MAKE OUR NORTHERN YOUTH AWARE OF THE EDUCATIONAL POSSIBILITIES OPEN TO THEM, AND EMPHASIZE THE POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION.”

MIKE CARDINAL,  
MLA FOR ATHABASCA-WABASCA CHAIR,  
NORTHERN ALBERTA DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL<sup>23</sup>

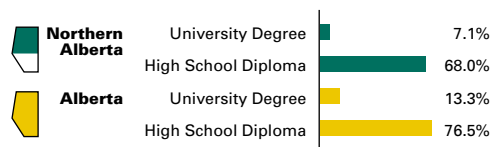
The issues surrounding the accessibility of post-secondary education for northern Albertans amount to a microcosm of those faced by low-income, rural, and Aboriginal communities. Family incomes for the area fall below the provincial average. Northern Alberta is also home to more than half of Alberta’s Aboriginal population living on reserves or in settlements, a group which faces specific barriers to post-secondary education. Levels of education in this region are generally below average, largely due to geographical isolation and cultural predisposition. For example, almost 50% fewer northern Albertans earn a university degree when compared to the provincial average.<sup>24</sup>

Northern Alberta is, however, fortunate to have a Government sponsored administrative body dedicated to furthering its economic interests: the Northern Alberta Development Council (NADC). Not surprisingly, the NADC sees education as a primary means of achieving its goal to maximize opportunity and prosperity for northern Albertans. Student support programs are a crucial element of NADC policy. Several bursaries have been established, including the Northern Student Supplement, which provides \$500 to \$1 500 to students with high financial need for the first two years of post-secondary education. Over \$1.5 million is distributed annually to approximately 1400 students. The NADC also supports several return-service bursaries, which bring graduates to northern Alberta to contribute directly to the local economy. The NADC was involved in the development of the Northern Labour Market Information ClearingHouse, in partnership with five northern colleges, in an effort to relate economic and labour trends to educational opportunities. In addition, the

NADC has established the Northern LINKS program which offers funding for the creation and improvement of programs that aid in the transition of northern students to a post-secondary environment.<sup>25</sup>

Funding provided by the NADC has undoubtedly made a positive impact on access to post-secondary education for northern Albertans. If there is a flaw in its programming, however, it comes from the limited direction that the Council provides. In the case of the Northern LINKS program for example, the NADC simply supplies a financial incentive for outside bodies to initiate transition programs for northern students. But money may not be enough. It would be worthwhile for the NADC, as a body that intimately understands the needs of northern Albertans, to be more directly involved in the development of transition programs. Furthermore, the NADC may be putting too much emphasis on support for job training over more general forms of education. To be sure, the north is in need of a workforce with technical skills, particularly in the oil and forestry industries that dominate its economy. But if northerners truly wish to diversify their economy, workers with other skills and expertise are required. This diversity can only be acquired by providing northern Albertans with access to a wide range of opportunities for post-secondary education.

**Figure 6**  
**Educational attainment of northern Albertans**



Source: Northern Alberta Development Council, *Economic and Demographic Profile of Northern Alberta* (1998).

23 Interview with the Hon. Mike Cardinal, Chair, Northern Alberta Development Council, November 16, 1999.

24 Northern Alberta Development Council (NADC), *Economic and Demographic Profile of Northern Alberta* (October 1998).

25 NADC, *Northern Development's Business Plan 1999/2000 to 2001/2002* (April 1999); NADC Press Releases, February 17, 1998, October 1, 1999.

# Aboriginal Albertans

“OVER 50% OF ABORIGINAL PEOPLE  
IN ALBERTA ARE UNDER  
THE AGE OF TWENTY-FIVE.  
THEY NEED POST-SECONDARY  
EDUCATION TO SECURE A  
PROSPEROUS FUTURE FOR  
THEMSELVES AND THEIR  
COMMUNITIES, BUT FOR VARIOUS  
REASONS ARE NOT GETTING IT.  
EDUCATION IS THE KEY TO  
INCREASING ABORIGINAL  
OPPORTUNITIES.”

PEARL CALAHASEN,  
MLA FOR LESSER SLAVE LAKE  
ASSOCIATE MINISTER OF ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS<sup>26</sup>

**B**roadly speaking, the Aboriginal population of Alberta is comprised of a diverse group of Treaty Indians, Metis, Inuit, and non-status Indians, all of whom maintain links to different bands and communities, and live in a variety of circumstances. Aboriginal peoples tend to be united, however, by the social, economic, and political challenges that they collectively face.<sup>27</sup> Governments have invested significant resources in attempts to alleviate the poor social conditions found on First Nations reserves in particular, but with limited success. In turn, Aboriginal leaders have lobbied for control of government sponsored social programs, arguing that they can better solve the systemic problems that trouble their communities. Both the Governments of Canada and Alberta have responded with commitments to work with Aboriginal peoples toward their goals of increased self-sufficiency, economic independence, and effective governance.<sup>28</sup> Stakeholders increasingly recognize that improving access to post-secondary education is crucial to the establishment of long-term socioeconomic well-being for Aboriginal peoples.

But despite increased government assistance, Aboriginal peoples remain chronically under-educated in comparison to non-Aboriginal Canadians. In turn, a close relationship exists between educational attainment and Aboriginal employment figures — higher education equates to higher employability. Several barriers, however, prevent Aboriginal Albertans from attending college and university in significant numbers, including inadequate levels of primary and secondary education. A potentially effective response to this problem has been proposed by the Edmonton Public School Board,

which hopes to open an Aboriginal high school as a way of improving on the 25% graduation rate for the City's 5000 students who identify themselves as Aboriginal.<sup>29</sup>

Furthermore, Aboriginal students tend to pursue post-secondary education later in life, often due to a need for basic educational upgrading. In 1997/98, for example, almost half of the First Nations post-secondary students in Alberta were over the age of thirty.<sup>30</sup> These mature students often have family obligations, and require specific orientation and student support services — in particular daycare for their children.<sup>31</sup>

Perhaps most daunting, however, are the cultural barriers to post-secondary education faced by Aboriginal peoples. The limited Aboriginal presence and perspective on campus — whether in the classroom or in the wider community — can make the institution an uninviting place for Aboriginal students. According to Lewis Cardinal, Coordinator of Native Student Services at the University of Alberta, “Aboriginal students are often left with the feeling that the post-secondary education system generally does not work for them, and they tend to approach the university with a sense of foreboding.”<sup>32</sup> Furthermore, like rural and northern students, many Aboriginal peoples face the difficulty of making the transition from a small community to a large urban setting. The resultant feelings of culture shock create barriers to both entrance to, and graduation from, post-secondary institutions.

Aboriginals themselves have taken measures to alleviate cultural barriers to post-secondary education. Several First Nations colleges have been established in Alberta to provide culturally sensitive degree and diploma programs that target the specific needs of Aboriginal students and their communities. Coopera-

26 Interview with the Hon. Pearl Calahasen, Associate Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, December 13, 1999.

27 Robin Armstrong, “Mapping the conditions of First Nations communities” *Canadian Social Trends* (Winter 1999): 14-18.

28 Government of Canada, *Gathering Strength: Canada's Aboriginal Action Plan* (1998); Government of Alberta, *Strengthening Relationships: The Government of Alberta's Proposed Aboriginal Policy Framework* (1999).

29 Karen Unland, “Native public school aims high” *Edmonton Journal*, November 23, 1999.

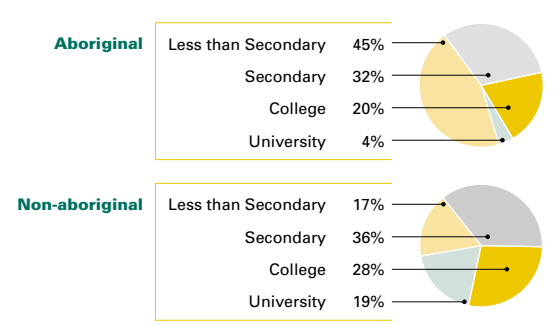
30 Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, *Post-secondary Student Program Database* (1998).

31 Native Student Services at the University of Alberta identified an Aboriginal daycare program as a vital need for Aboriginal students on campus.

32 Interview with Lewis Cardinal, Coordinator, University of Alberta Native Student Services, March 22, 2000.

**Figure 7**

**Distribution of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal populations aged twenty to twenty-nine, by highest level of education attained**



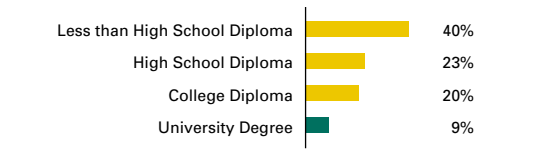
Source: Statistics Canada, *Education Indicators in Canada* (2000).

tive efforts have also enjoyed success. For example, the Yellowhead Tribal Council Education Program offers locally controlled community-based programs, including upgrading and university transfer courses, through partnerships with established universities and colleges in Alberta. Finally, initiatives such as the First Nations Adult and Higher Education Consortium have taken responsibility for developing and accrediting higher education programs within First Nations. These programs should be supported and encouraged by all stakeholders as viable methods of improving access to post-secondary education for Aboriginal Albertans.

In 1990, the University of Alberta’s academic governing council adopted the Aboriginal Student Policy with the intent of providing “a University environment which will encourage full access, participation and success for Aboriginal students.”<sup>33</sup> Under the direction of Native Student Services, programs targeting Aboriginal student needs have been established, such as the Transition Year Program (TYP) and the N’totemtik Peer Support and Outreach Program. Faculties have also encouraged Aboriginal participation at the University through the Aboriginal Health Care Careers Program, the Graduate Program in First Nations Education, the Indigenous

**Figure 8**

**Unemployment rate for Aboriginal Canadians aged twenty to twenty-nine in relation to educational attainment**



Source: Tait, “Educational achievement of Young Aboriginal adults” *Canadian Social Trends* (1999).

Law Program, and the School of Native Studies. Finally, financial support in the form of grants, bursaries, and scholarships has been made available for students of Aboriginal descent.<sup>34</sup> The ultimate objective of these support programs is to make it clear to Aboriginal students that they can succeed and are valued at the University of Alberta.

The challenges remain enormous, and the goal of increasing Aboriginal enrollment in post-secondary education is enjoying only moderate success despite the cooperative efforts of government, Aboriginal leaders, and post-secondary institutions. Constructive dialogue and cooperation among all stakeholders must be established to ensure that the resources allocated for the improvement of Aboriginal access are utilized in the most efficient and effective manner. Additionally, governments and post-secondary institutions must more effectively communicate information about the variety and level of financial support available to students of Aboriginal descent. Ultimately, improved levels of participation in post-secondary education will allow Aboriginal peoples to take control of their future and enhance the independence of their communities. The University of Alberta and its post-secondary partners actively support this goal.

33 University of Alberta, *General Faculties Council Policy Manual*, 108.13.1.

34 University of Alberta Native Student Services, *1999/2000 Aboriginal Student Handbook* (1999).

# IV. Challenges and Solutions

## Higher Tuition and Unstable Funding for Universities

35 Interview with Leslie Church, Vice President (External), University of Alberta Students' Union, December 16, 1999.

36 Interview with Doug Owram, Vice President (Academic) and Provost, University of Alberta, January 27, 2000.

37 Association of Universities and Colleges Canada, *Trends 1999*.

38 Government of Alberta press release, March 10, 2000.

“TUITION IS THE MAIN ISSUE FOR STUDENTS WITH REGARD TO ACCESS TO POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION. IT IS THE ONE ELEMENT OF COST THAT IS CONTROLLED BY THE GOVERNMENT.”

LESLIE CHURCH  
VICE PRESIDENT (EXTERNAL),  
UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA  
STUDENTS' UNION.<sup>35</sup>

As previously stated, tuition policies across Canada have shifted toward a high user-pay system. In response to their own fiscal situation, the Government of Alberta drastically cut grants to the post-secondary sector, while endorsing tuition fee increases as a way to counter the financial shortfall. As a result, government funding has diminished considerably as a proportion of institutional budgets. These cuts have left the University of Alberta with notably lower operating revenues than many other Canadian universities and American public institutions. Since these revenues fund the core elements of the University, including faculty salaries, labs, and library acquisitions, they are crucial to the overall quality of the university product.

The stresses on the system created by budget cuts have forced post-secondary institutions to make difficult choices. As Doug Owram, Vice President (Academic) and Provost at the University of Alberta, has noted “the goal of improved access to the University has to be balanced with its long-term financial health.”<sup>36</sup> Under present fiscal circumstances, post-secondary institutions have continued to raise tuition in order to maintain quality services. For universities and colleges, the effect that higher fees might have on access is the lesser of two evils.

Over the past twenty years, Canadian universities and colleges faced a drop of 30% in per student funding, while their American counterparts have enjoyed a 20% increase over the same period.<sup>37</sup> The tide, however, appears to be turning in Alberta. Although the majority of new funding has been targeted toward specific programs, the Government of Alberta should be applauded for putting money back into the system. Overall spending on post-secondary education increased by 9% in the provincial budget for 2000.<sup>38</sup> Still, base operating support at the University of Alberta was raised at a rate below inflation.

The University of Alberta has done an excellent job of attracting private monies to bridge the funding gap. However, most of these donations fall under the cat-

**Figure 9**  
Comparison of operating revenues per student (Full Time Equivalent) 1996/97



Source: University of Alberta, *1999-2002 Strategic Business Plan* (1999).

**Figure 10**  
Fundraising results of the University of Alberta CAMPAIGN

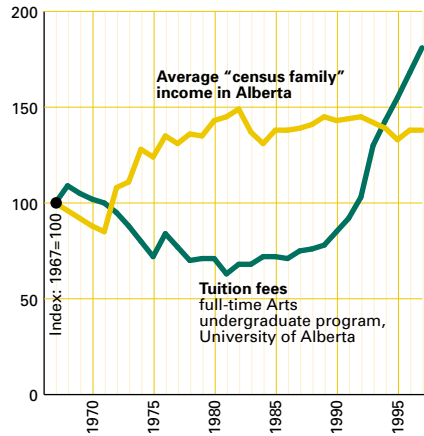


Source: University of Alberta CAMPAIGN Financial Report (April 13, 2000).

egory of designated funds, leaving the University searching for other sustainable revenue solutions. Present budget projections suggest that even with tuition increases, the University will face a deficit of \$800,000 in 2000/01, rising to almost \$7.4 million in 2002/03.<sup>39</sup> Defending the quality of a University of Alberta degree requires tuition increases to make up for these budget shortfalls, but the adverse effect on accessibility that may result from passing costs on to students is a concern for students and the administration alike. Both acknowledge the need to keep tuition levels as low as possible.

Throughout the 1990s, students have been faced with tuition increases that have risen far more quickly than the level of family income over the same period. Such rapid increases have undoubtedly undermined the ability of family savings to cover the costs of post-secondary programming. In answer to this problem, the Federal Government redesigned the Registered Education Savings Plan (RESP) to provide greater incentive for parents to save for the education of their children. Under this program, the Federal Government contributes a yearly grant of 20% of the first \$2000 invested, while allowing for tax-free growth sheltered for up to twenty-five years. Such savings programs allow parents to more readily protect their

**Figure 11**  
Family income and tuition fees



Source: Statistics Canada, *Census Family Income*, cat. no. 13-1208-XPB, and *Tuition and Living Costs*, cat. no. 81-219; *University of Alberta Calendars*.

children from educational debt while making a direct contribution toward securing a prosperous future for the next generation.

## Student Debt

“ONE OF THE MAIN IMPEDIMENTS TO A UNIVERSITY EDUCATION IS THE PERCEPTION OF HIGH STUDENT DEBT LEVELS. BUT SHORT-TERM DEBT DOES NOT SEEM UNREASONABLE FOR A LIFETIME OF OPPORTUNITY.”

ANNE McLELLAN  
MP, EDMONTON WEST  
MINISTER OF JUSTICE AND  
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF CANADA<sup>40</sup>

For many Albertans, student loans have become the primary method of financing an increasingly expensive post-secondary education. Almost 50% of University of Alberta students graduate with a debt that averages \$18,000.<sup>41</sup> At first glance, the Student Loan Program, financed jointly by the federal and provincial governments, appears gen-

**Figure 12**  
Annual contribution expected from a student’s family by the Student Finance Board.

People in Family	Annual Family Income (before taxes)		
	up to \$40,000	up to \$55,000	up to \$70,000
3	\$0	\$4,522	\$9,962
4	\$0	\$2,414	\$7,854
5	\$0	\$850	\$5,984
6	\$0	\$0	\$4,352

Source: Alberta Learning Information Service.

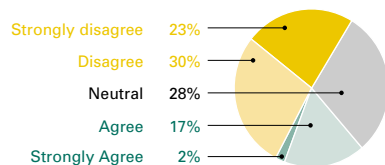
39 University of Alberta Preliminary Operating Budget (January 31, 2000).

40 Interview with the Hon. Anne McLellan, Minister of Justice, December 17, 1999.

41 Marianne Sorensen and Harvey Krahn, *Student Satisfaction at the University of Alberta: Results from the 1999 Alberta Universities Student Satisfaction Survey* (November 1999).

**Figure 13**

**University of Alberta undergraduates were asked whether student loans were accessible for all students who wanted to apply for them.**



Source: University of Alberta Senate, *Survey of Undergraduate Students* (March 2000).

erous, offering a maximum annual loan of \$10,100. But this amount can be drastically reduced depending on parental income or the proximity of the student’s family residence to the institution they are attending.

Indeed, many students may be willing to take on debt to finance their post-secondary education, but are not able to borrow the required amount through government programs. For example, the Student Finance Board will decrease the eligible loan amount based on the income of a student’s parents. Consequently, full-time students seek part-time employment or turn to more costly private credit arrangements. Student debt levels have garnered a great deal of media attention, increasing public awareness of the issue. In turn, fears have been raised regarding the impact that potential debt

**“Anyone who wants a student loan should be able to get it. Income testing for parents is a problematic method of limiting student loan accessibility, as many parents simply won’t contribute.”**

**Mike Cardinal**  
 MLA, Athabasca-Wabasca  
 Chair, Northern Alberta Development Council

may have on a student’s decision to pursue post-secondary education.

As the costs of post-secondary education increase, so too must loan limits. At present, over 30% of undergraduates at the University of Alberta do not have access to the financial resources required to cover the cost of their education and associated expenses.<sup>42</sup> Furthermore, as opportunities to pursue post-secondary education expand, more demands will be placed on a loan program that already fails to meet the financial needs of many students. Better access to post-secondary education requires a more accessible Student Loan Program.

The Government of Alberta has realized the need to develop and implement a more effective Student Loan Program. The 2000 provincial budget increased the annual loan limits by \$300, while allowing for an increase in the number of students assisted by about 1500. The Government has also made a commitment to keep student debt at manageable levels. To this end, it has developed the Loan Remission Program, which limits debt levels to \$5000 per year of post-secondary education regardless of the total loan amount. Thus, a student who accumulates \$40,000 in government student loans over the course of four years of study will only have to repay \$20,000. An extra \$16 million will be injected into this program over the next three years.<sup>43</sup> Yet many Albertans are unaware of the Loan Remission Program. A startling 75% of University of Alberta undergraduates surveyed did not know that it existed.<sup>44</sup>

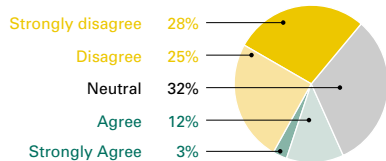
42 University of Alberta Senate, *Survey of University of Alberta Undergraduate Students* (March 2000). A total of 1496 undergraduate students were surveyed, including students from various Faculties and different program years. The Senate would like to thank the University of Alberta Students’ Union for their participation, and generous financial contribution to the completion of this survey.

43 Government of Alberta, *Budget 2000 Highlights* (2000).

44 University of Alberta Senate, *Survey of Undergraduate Students*.

**Figure 14**

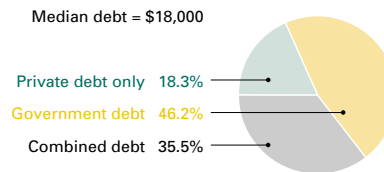
**University of Alberta undergraduates were asked whether student loans adequately cover educational and living expenses.**



Source: University of Alberta Senate, *Survey of Undergraduate Students* (March 2000).

**Figure 15**

**Composition of student debt for U of A graduates**

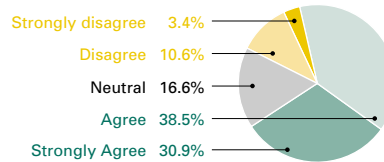


Calculations based on figures provided by Sorensen and Krahn, *Student Satisfaction* (1999).

The Loan Remission Program should be more clearly defined and easier to access — even made automatic for all loans that qualify — in order to give students a sense of financial certainty. At the very least, the Government must inform all eligible students about the availability of loan remission to reduce their debt load. Furthermore, studies undertaken in the United States indicate that for every \$1,000 grant increase per student, dropout rates fall by as much as 14%.<sup>45</sup> Consequently, it would be worthwhile to publicize Alberta’s Loan Remission Program to students as a form of grant that rewards their hard work upon graduation, in order to alleviate the fear of student debt as a barrier to higher learning, and encourage program completion.

**Figure 16**

**University of Alberta undergraduates were asked whether working at a part-time job negatively affects a student’s academic performance.**



Source: University of Alberta Senate, *Survey of Undergraduate Students* (March 2000).

## Grants, Bursaries and Scholarships

“GOVERNMENT HAS RESPONDED TO TUITION RAISES WITH IMPROVED STUDENT GRANTS. BUT A GAP EXISTS. THOSE STUDENTS WHO COME FROM A BACKGROUND OF POVERTY ARE ACTUALLY DOING BETTER IN ACCESS TERMS — THEY ARE ELIGIBLE FOR HIGHER LEVELS OF BURSARIES AND SCHOLARSHIPS. THOSE COMING FROM A MIDDLE-CLASS BACKGROUND, HOWEVER, DO NOT QUALIFY FOR AS MUCH FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE.”

BRIAN SILZER,

ASSOCIATE VICE-PRESIDENT & REGISTRAR,  
UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA<sup>46</sup>

**W**hen compared to other provinces, Alberta has always had a strong record with regard to scholarship and bursary programs. Rutherford and Alberta Heritage Scholarships have long provided excellent funding opportunities for those pursuing higher learning. The Government has recently increased both, with the Heritage Scholarship Fund receiving a boost of \$5 million to \$18.5 million. The private sector has also

been adding its support to scholarship and bursary programs. At the University of Alberta, the total amount available for bursaries and needs-based grants has risen from \$2.8 million in 1996/97 to almost \$14 million for 1999/2000, due in part to generous donations from Alberta’s business community and concerned individuals.

It is still too soon to statistically gauge the effectiveness of bursary and grant programs in terms of alleviating cost as a barrier to post-secondary education. At the University of Alberta, it is expected that access for all academically eligible students will be preserved or even improved. With efficient information and student support mechanisms in place, this should be the case, but measures must be taken to ensure that bursaries and needs-based grants reach the students that require them most.

The efficient dissemination of information is a crucial aspect of a successful student grants program if it is to effectively limit barriers to post-secondary education. Communication strategies must be developed that provide Alberta’s high school students with the economic, financial, and program information that will allow them to make good educational choices for their future. Alberta can look to American jurisdictions for policy suggestions in this regard. For

<sup>45</sup> Michael Mumper, “Beyond Financial Aid: Alternative Approaches to Improving College Participation” *The Review of Higher Education* (1998): 91.

<sup>46</sup> Interview with Brian Silzer, Associate Vice President and Registrar, University of Alberta, November 30, 1999.

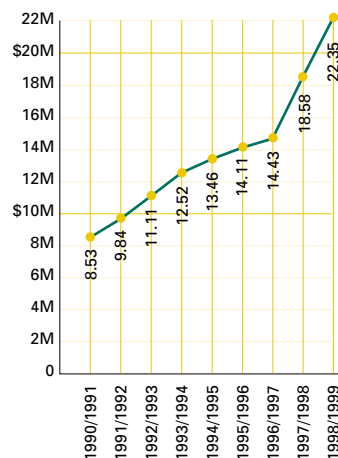
instance, the state of Indiana created the Indiana College Placement and Assessment Center (ICPAC) which implemented several initiatives to ensure that students — particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds — were getting consistent and accurate information about post-secondary education. Those activities included sending regular newsletters and information packages home with students, setting up a toll-free information hotline, and mailing financial aid forms to all students. Basically, ICPAC's goal was to improve access to the grants system, thereby increasing access to post-secondary education. Success was demonstrated by an 8% increase in participation rates between 1987/88 and 1991/92.<sup>47</sup> Access to higher education in Alberta could be improved through the implementation of similar programs.

'Assured access grants', which have been successfully utilized in the United States, provide another innovative method of increasing awareness of the opportunities to pursue post-secondary education. This program involves rewarding successful students from low-income areas early in the educational process — sometimes even at the primary school level. A solid academic performance earns a voucher-grant that is redeemable at universities and colleges, deferring future educational costs. More importantly, assured access grants create, at an early age, a level of enthusiasm for higher education, raising expectations in the process.<sup>48</sup> A proportion of Alberta's existing grant system might be employed in this manner, to better ensure that the best and the brightest from all backgrounds are academically motivated, and provided with the financial ability to pursue their education beyond high school.

As long as appropriate financial support is available to students, the negative impact of higher costs

**Figure 17**

**University of Alberta  
scholarships and bursaries**



Source: University of Alberta, 1999–2002 Strategic Business Plan (1999).

on access can be minimized. Policy initiatives should focus on designing an effective — and effectively communicated — system of student grants and loans that will maximize opportunities for Albertans to pursue post-secondary education. Newly announced investments by the Alberta Government in scholarships, bursaries and loan remission<sup>49</sup> are a positive step toward reducing financial barriers to post-secondary education. As experience in some American jurisdictions demonstrates, access can be maintained and even furthered in the face of tuition increases, as long as effective financial support programs are available to those students that need them.<sup>50</sup>

47 Mumper, "Beyond Financial Aid": 89-90.

48 Alex Usher, "Income-related barriers to post-secondary education" *Council of Ministers of Education, Canada: Post-Secondary Education Project* (October 1998).

49 Government of Alberta, *Speech from the Throne*, February 17, 2000.

50 Some initiatives are covered in Mumper, "Beyond Financial Aid": 83-97.

## Rising Demand

“DEMOGRAPHICALLY, WE CAN EXPECT A LARGE INCREASE IN THE NUMBER OF HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES IN THE NEAR FUTURE. THE GOVERNMENT MUST PLAN TO MEET THE RESULTANT INCREASE IN DEMAND FOR POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION, OR RISK ALIENATING PARENTS AND OTHER TAXPAYERS.”

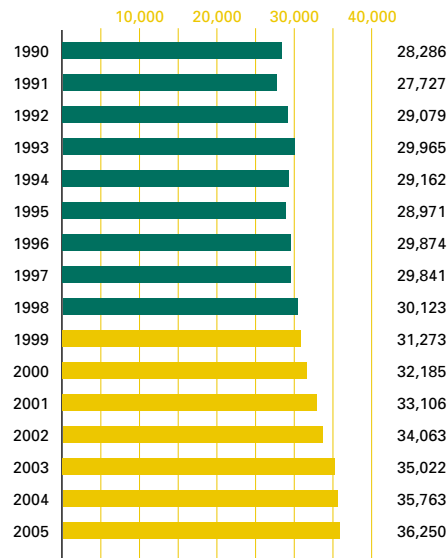
EMERY DOSDALL  
SUPERINTENDENT,  
EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS<sup>51</sup>

Canada is a nation that strongly believes in the necessity of higher education as a means for our society to prosper. A recent POLLARA poll found that 94% of Canadians surveyed agree that success in the job market will require post-secondary education.<sup>52</sup> Reflecting public opinion, today’s youth are attending university and college in increasing numbers. In Alberta, demand for post-secondary education has been expanding at a steady rate. With 52,000 full-time undergraduates in 1997/98, Alberta was educating only 200 fewer university students than British Columbia, despite higher tuition rates and a lower population.<sup>53</sup> Yet even this level of participation is not enough to meet Alberta’s economic needs. Companies have been forced to attract degree holders from out of province to fill well-paying jobs for which there is a lack of qualified Albertans.

Several factors will serve to create even more demand upon the system. Demographically, the pool of high-school graduates eligible for post-secondary education will increase significantly over the next few years. As a result, the University of Alberta might see its enrollment of full-time students rise from the 30,123 attending in 1998/99 to as high as 36,250 by 2005.<sup>54</sup> Adding to the pressure that the “baby boom echo” will place on the capacity of the post-secondary education system is the fact that Albertans are increasingly pursuing some form of adult education and training later in life.<sup>55</sup> Demand for lifelong learning opportunities will only intensify as more people realize the necessity of advanced education, and of university-level

**Figure 18**

**University of Alberta enrollment, 1990–1998 and assumed potential growth to 2005**



Source: University of Alberta, 1999-2002 Strategic Business Plan (1999).

programs in particular, for continued success in the knowledge-based, globally oriented economy.

The Government of Alberta has made a commitment to improve the accessibility of post-secondary education so that “all Albertans can participate in learning.”<sup>56</sup> This pledge must address the barriers that are faced by various constituencies. Lower-income groups, Aboriginal communities, and Alberta’s rural and northern residents all face obstacles, which, if lessened, will lead to an increased demand for higher education. Combined with a rising youth population, and the growing trend toward lifelong learning, demographic evidence suggests that universities, colleges, and other post-secondary institutions will be hard pressed to meet the educational needs of Albertans. In the United States, enrollments are expected to increase by as much as 31% over the next ten years.<sup>57</sup> Based on current government policies and population trends, Canada could experience similarly increased levels of demand.

“Media-hype, in particular, has misled Albertans as to the true cost of post-secondary education. Consequently, prospective students may choose not pursue higher learning because of the fear of massive debt. In reality, a U of A degree would cost the same as a mid-range car — something Albertans do not hesitate to finance. The Government must market its Student Finance system better.”

Fred Hemingway  
Acting Assistant  
Deputy Minister,  
Human Resources and  
Employment

51 Interview with Emery Dosdall, Superintendent, Edmonton Public Schools, December 17, 1999.

52 *Edmonton Journal*, January 11, 2000.

53 Statistics Canada, “University enrolment” *The Daily*, October 14 & November 10, 1998.

54 University of Alberta, 1999-2002 Strategic Business Plan (July 1999).

55 Alberta Learning, 1999-2003 Business Plan: Restated (November 1999).

56 Alberta Learning, Business Plan 2000-03 (February 2000).

57 Clifford Adelman, “Crosscurrents and Riptides: Asking About the Capacity of the Higher Education System” *Change* (January/February 1999): 23.

# Maintaining Quality While Increasing Capacity

In its present form, is the post-secondary education system capable of meeting the expanding learning requirements of Alberta's citizens and its economy? There is no simple answer to this question. The condition and capacity of buildings, the state of equipment, the ability of current staff to handle increased enrollment, and the requirements of new learning technologies all factor into the equation. The era of budget cutbacks was hard on the physical facilities at Canadian post-secondary institutions, which largely chose to maintain program quality over bricks and mortar. It has been estimated that a total of \$3.6 billion in campus infrastructure expenses were deferred nation-wide in the 1990s.<sup>58</sup> In Alberta, however, the Government had the foresight to limit the damage caused by infrastructure neglect through policies such as the Infrastructure Renewal Envelope, which provided funds for the renewal of existing physical facilities. Recently, \$13.5 million was granted for facility repairs and upgrading. Still, the University of Alberta is in need of more than \$138 million to renew and upgrade facilities for modern use, on top of the \$60 million required to cover deferred maintenance.<sup>59</sup>

Staffing levels have also dropped dramatically since the budget cuts began. Between 1991 and 1995, the number of permanent faculty at the University of Alberta decreased by 12.4% while the student population increased by 6%.<sup>60</sup> Support staff, part-time faculty, and sessional teachers have seen their numbers drop even more dramatically while enrollment has continued to rise. Class sizes have grown as a result, leaving teaching staff stretched to the limit. Furthermore, increased teaching loads have had a negative effect on the faculty's research capabilities, a core component of the University of Alberta mandate.

Over 80% of the University of Alberta's operating budget goes to salaries and benefits, which means the option of increasing staff levels is not available under current fiscal conditions. Despite these difficulties, however, quality is being maintained in the human resources area. An impressive number of teaching awards have been won by University of Alberta fac-

ulty, including twenty-two nationally recognized 3M Teaching Fellowships.<sup>61</sup> The University of Alberta has also led the nation in faculty renewal, which has relieved some of the pressure on the system.<sup>62</sup> According to the President of the University of Alberta, Rod

Fraser, "We are about two thirds of the way through the renewal process of replacing 40% of our 1995 faculty, and are solidly into the exciting second stage that focuses on attracting excellent new colleagues. But, we can only navigate the forces of the increasingly competitive marketplace with more resources. Our challenge is to build our core budget by putting the best case forward that universities should be at the top of the Government's priority investment list."

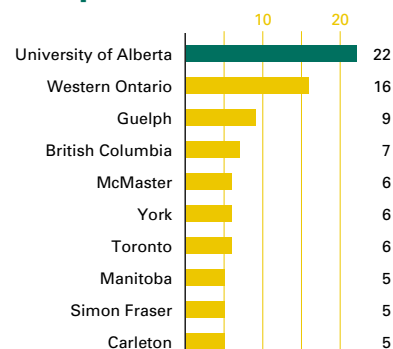
Preserving access is not only limited to ensuring admission for all qualified students. Sufficient resources are required to ensure that a high-quality post-secondary environment exists in Alberta — one that is conducive to high rates of program completion. Despite financial constraints, the University of Alberta has continued to provide strong programs that bring the best out of students, while enjoying the highest graduation rate in the Province.<sup>63</sup> Without increases in core funding, however, the University's ability to main-

**"We're in a period of extraordinary change across the country, a massive social policy experiment where only Alberta will win the race. The University of Alberta is ideally poised to seize the day in the next few years when other schools are going to be scrambling for faculty renewal. It's already begun the process and is well ahead of the others."**

**Ann Dowsett Johnson, editor of the *Maclean's Guide to Canadian Universities 2000*.**

tenance of its quality, however, the University's ability to main-

**Figure 19**  
**Accumulated 3M Fellowships awarded (to 1999)**



Source: The Society for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education.

58 Canadian Association of Business Officers and the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada, *A Point of No Return: The Urgent Need for Infrastructure Renewal at Canadian Universities* (2000).

59 University of Alberta, *1999-2002 Strategic Business Plan* (1999): 11.

60 Alberta College-Institutes Faculties Association and Confederation of Alberta Faculty Associations, *Post-Secondary Education in Alberta, 1997-2005* (October 1997).

61 University of Alberta media release, September 10, 1999.

62 Gilbert A. Bouchard, "Maclean's editor likes U of A's prospects" *Folio* (March 31, 2000).

63 "The Ninth Annual Ranking of Universities" *Maclean's* (15 November 1999).

**“Job-specific training is often the focus of politicians and the public, but I think the benefits of education in areas such as philosophy and ethics — areas where critical thinking is developed — are numerous. Leadership is about seeing the future, and it is people who possess broadly-based knowledge that lead the world.”**

Dale Ripley  
Superintendent,  
Edmonton Catholic  
Schools

tain quality while responding to increasing demand remains uncertain. The University of Alberta has been working with the Government of Alberta and its post-secondary partners to solve some of the infrastructure problems caused by increased demand for — and access to — post-secondary education. For instance, Alberta Learning implemented the Access Fund, which will allocate a total of \$51 million to create the equivalent of 10,000 new student places across the Province, particularly in information and communication technology (ICT) programs. But envelope funding only helps post-secondary institutions in very specific areas. Several programs with rigid

enrollment quotas and high demand — such as Medicine, Law, and Business — are not able to increase the number of student places that they offer. The Faculties of Arts and Science, the most popular programs at our universities and those that provide required courses to *all* university students, are not receiving resources for necessary expansion. This situation is occurring despite the fact that senior executives from Canada’s high-tech industry recently demanded better funding for the liberal arts and sciences, acknowledging that a definite need exists for “broadly educated, culturally literate decision-makers who think creatively, reason well, and can also write and speak well.”<sup>64</sup> Only a restoration of core funding, without strings attached, can maintain the general long-term health of Alberta’s post-secondary institutions.

**“A two-tiered system has been created within the University of Alberta. Some faculties and departments are rich, while others are poor. Much of that is due to government funding envelopes.”**

Randy Garrison  
Dean, Faculty of  
Extension, University  
of Alberta

## Campus Alberta

**“CAMPUS ALBERTA WILL STRIVE TO CREATE AN EFFICIENT AND FLEXIBLE POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION SYSTEM BY ENSURING COOPERATION BETWEEN INSTITUTIONS AND MAXIMIZING PROGRAM TRANSFERABILITY.”**

MARIA DAVID-EVANS  
DEPUTY MINISTER, ALBERTA LEARNING<sup>65</sup>

If access to post-secondary education in Alberta is to be increased, it is vital that cooperation among institutions is maximized. To that end, the Government of Alberta created the “Campus Alberta” initiative in order to promote an efficient, flexible, and responsive post-secondary education system. As a result, many services have been integrated, including the development of a networked provincial library system. But the backbone of Campus Alberta is the inter-institutional transfer system. The Alberta Council on Admissions and Transfer has provided the mechanisms through which the Province has established one of the most efficient course transfer programs in Canada. Courses accepted by Alberta’s universities are now taught in colleges throughout the Province,

allowing Albertans to pursue the first two years of their degree close to home. Colleges also provide university transfer courses to those students who do not meet the entrance requirements of their desired university program, but ultimately intend to pursue the degree after proving their ability. Thus, options are left open for capable students who might otherwise miss out on educational opportunities. Patrick Sullivan, the chair of the Science and Engineering programs at Grant MacEwan College, noted that “the transfer system is working extremely well. Our students are able to fit in without difficulty once they move to the university.”<sup>66</sup>

Yet there are limits to the effectiveness of transfer programs. As one educational expert has cautioned, “it is imperative that all institutions understand the potential dimensions and limits of their services.”<sup>67</sup> Colleges must maintain the required teaching and content standards, or their transfer students will not be able to properly integrate into the university environment. Higher level courses require advanced resources, sophisticated facilities, smaller class sizes, and active research by members of the faculty. These criteria can only be met consistently by universities, with the result that as more students transfer to com-

64 Joan Walters, “Technology not enough, CEOs say,” *Edmonton Journal* (April 8, 2000).

65 Interview with Maria David-Evans, Deputy Minister, Alberta Learning, December 15, 1999.

66 Interview with Patrick Sullivan, Chair, Science and Engineering Programs, Grant MacEwan College, December 15, 1999.

67 Adelman, “Crosscurrents and Riptides”: 22.

- 68 Geoff McMaster, "Transfer students set to change campus demographic" *Folio* (December 10, 1999).  
 69 Interview with Doug Owrarn, January 2000.

plete their degrees, increased resources must be apportioned to senior-level courses taught at universities. This shift will require more funding, as the cost per student is approximately 20% higher for the final two years because of the smaller class sizes and extra infrastructure expenses required for senior courses.<sup>68</sup> Furthermore, many colleges in the Province have expressed a desire to increase enrollment in their university transfer programs. Unless capacity is increased at Alberta's universities, it will not be possible for all of these students to continue their studies beyond their second year, possibly leaving them without the opportunity to complete their degree. The University of Alberta, for one, has also expressed a reluctance to be limited to the role of a 'finishing

school', and believes in the value of offering a comprehensive undergraduate education.<sup>69</sup>

Overall, the University of Alberta actively supports Campus Alberta. The transfer system is working smoothly, and beyond certain unavoidable limitations is virtually seamless. The level of cooperation among post-secondary institutions in Alberta has greatly reduced geographical barriers to higher learning, and lessened educational costs for some students. But as noted, Campus Alberta not only alleviates access problems, but creates them as well. As the system expands, transfer programs will create increased demand for university places that simply cannot be met under present circumstances.

## Technology

"THE CHALLENGE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA IS TO INTEGRATE NEW LEARNING TECHNOLOGIES INTO ITS PROGRAMMING, WHILE MAINTAINING QUALITY AND PRESERVING THE IDEALS OF THE INSTITUTION. THE FUNDAMENTAL IMPACT OF DISTANCE LEARNING TECHNOLOGY IS PERHAPS OVERSTATED, BUT IT WILL HAVE AN EFFECT ON HIGHER EDUCATION BY ENHANCING CLASSROOM LEARNING AS MUCH AS IT WILL BY PROVIDING NEW FORMS OF DELIVERY."

RANDY GARRISON,  
 DEAN OF THE FACULTY OF EXTENSION,  
 UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA<sup>70</sup>

New learning technologies are providing new solutions to accessibility problems faced by the post-secondary education sector. Distance learning programs in particular are reaping the benefits of technological innovation. By utilizing the potential of the internet, CD-ROM, and electronic mail, distance education courses have become more interactive than ever before. Quality instruction can be made readily available when and where prospective students want to study. Furthermore, new course delivery methods that utilize computer technology have the ability to reduce the pressure on crowded classrooms for campus-based students. The potential of new learning technologies is not lost on the Government of Alberta, which is

directly promoting the enhancement of "access to learning opportunities through alternative delivery mechanisms and technology."<sup>71</sup>

Post-secondary institutions can indeed expand access to their programs through the utilization of technology. It is very important, however, that Alberta's colleges and universities cooperate with one another in this regard. Athabasca University has been offering distance-delivered university-level programming for thirty years, and is recognized as a leader in the field of distance education in Canada. Other universities and colleges in Alberta should work with Athabasca University to develop complementary rather than competing programs.

Another area where technology fosters improved cooperation among post-secondary institutions is in curriculum development.

Information and communication technology allows for increased interactivity among institutions. As a result, the universities that accept transfer students can more readily provide leadership in system-wide curriculum planning, ensuring that the equivalency of programming is maintained. Such efforts would increase the efficiency of the transfer system. Teaching resources can also be shared across the province through technological means. For example,

"Distance education is not seen by the Students' Union as the best way to improve accessibility to post-secondary education.

We should not undermine the significance of the campus environment to the university experience."

Leslie Church,  
 Vice President  
 (External), Students' Union, University of Alberta

- 70 Interview with Randy Garrison, Dean of Extension, University of Alberta, December 10, 1999.  
 71 Alberta Learning, *Business Plan 2000-03*.

The *Campus Alberta Repository for Educational Objects*, a collaborative effort between the Universities of Alberta and Calgary, provides an ever-expanding archive of teaching materials for use by all post-secondary instructors in the Province. Furthermore, Alberta's post-secondary library system has been electronically linked, allowing students and teachers to access resources that were previously available only at large institutions.

Realizing the importance of integrating distance education into effective policy initiatives, the Vice President (Academic) and Provost at the University of Alberta struck a task force to review the potential of new learning technologies. The result was the *Distance Education Task Force Report*, which was released in April 1999. It provides a thoughtful analysis of the potential role of distance education at the University of Alberta, concluding that it should focus on 'distributed education' designed to integrate technology into both campus-based and distance education. Such efforts, it argues, will increase access to university-level programming for "students experiencing time, place, and situational barriers."<sup>72</sup> Those proposals of the Distance Education Task Force that encourage the use of technology to improve access to university-level programs, particularly for lifelong learners and those facing location barriers, should be supported.

Without question, learning technologies can provide new educational opportunities for Albertans. It is unlikely, however, that distance education will offer the primary means of toppling barriers to post-secondary education. It is merely an alternative delivery method that can increase the flexibility of the system. The number of students that can access such programs is limited by their own access to the required technology. For the majority of university students, face-to-face instruction will likely remain the norm, though undoubtedly enhanced by new classroom technology.

Moreover, as noted by the University of Alberta's *Distance Education Task Force Report*, capital expenditures are required to create flexible, efficient, and effective distance education programs, whether targeted at lifelong learners or campus-based students. Ultimately, access to certain types of post-secondary programs can be improved through the strategic use of technology, but to do so requires investment from government, post-secondary institutions, and students themselves. The possibilities presented by learning technologies are well worth pursuing, but their limitations must be realized as well. As participants at the Minister's Forum on lifelong learning in Alberta suggested, a balance should be sought "between traditional and virtual classrooms."<sup>73</sup>

## V. Conclusion

IF ONE WANTS A RETURN ON ONE'S INVESTMENT IN A SINGLE YEAR, PLANT CORN. IF ONE WANTS A RETURN IN TEN YEARS, PLANT A TREE. BUT IF ONE WANTS A RETURN EVERY YEAR FOR THE NEXT 100 YEARS, INVEST IN EDUCATION.

CHINESE PROVERB.

As Alberta approaches the end of its first century, it is faced with a rapidly changing world — a world that places a premium on knowledge, creativity, and adaptability. In order to maintain a strong economy in a global marketplace, Albertans must be given the opportunity to pursue all forms of post-secondary training. Indeed, the corporate world is increasingly demanding a high level of education from its employees. According to Vi Becker, Senior Vice President and Chief Operating Officer of Economic Development Edmonton, "new business is now looking for an educated workforce over government subsidies when choosing locations."<sup>74</sup> Without question, improving access to post-secondary education is crucial to maintaining and expanding the Alberta Advantage.

The business community particularly appreciates university graduates for their broad knowledge, cultural sensitivity, communication and critical thinking skills, and ability to lead. But the value of post-secondary education goes beyond fostering economic prosperity. Graduates are given the chance to lead full and satisfying lives, and gain a sense of belonging and commitment to their society and the world. They contribute directly to a better quality of life. In the widest sense, therefore, the University of Alberta is offering degrees of opportunity — not only to individuals, but to the Province as a whole. Every effort must be made to ensure that all academically capable Albertans are given access to these rewarding opportunities. By working together to improve access to post-secondary education in Alberta, stakeholders can assure a prosperous and just society for generations to come.

72 University of Alberta, *Distance Education Task Force Report* (April 23, 1999): 9. This report is available at [www.atl.ualberta.ca/articles/disted/dereport.pdf](http://www.atl.ualberta.ca/articles/disted/dereport.pdf)

73 Alberta Learning, *Minister's Forum on Learning, Learning for Life: What we heard*—(March 2000): 7.

74 Interview with Vi Becker, Senior Vice President and COO, Economic Development Edmonton, December 21, 1999.

# Recommendations

## 1

Ensure that *all* Albertans are given the opportunity to attain the necessary academic qualifications to pursue post-secondary education.

### Strategies

#### The University of Alberta should

- Maintain and continue to refine its high standard of teacher training, so that Alberta's youth receive the best and most current instruction possible in the K-12 sector.
- Continue to fulfill its responsibility as a leader in Alberta's education sector by promoting and fostering excellence at all levels of education in the Province.
- Increase its research support for early childhood development and K-12 programs.

#### The Government of Alberta should

- Provide the K-12 sector with the appropriate resources needed to maintain and extend quality educational opportunities for all children in the Province.
- Establish an effective system of early childhood services to ensure that all children, especially those at risk, are ready to learn when they begin their formal education.
- Improve consultation with post-secondary institutions and the K-12 sector when changes are proposed to the standardized curricula for secondary schools.
- Continue to work with the Federal Government and Aboriginal communities to provide assistance for Aboriginal students, especially in the areas of cultural support and outreach programs.

#### The business community should

- Directly encourage and support their employees' efforts to pursue lifelong learning.
- Formally endorse the idea that providing educational opportunities for their employees results in an enhanced ability to succeed in a knowledge-based economy.

#### Students should

- Ensure that they meet appropriate educational standards to take advantage of opportunities to pursue post-secondary education.
- Take responsibility for examining their post-secondary options and the qualifications required for acceptance.

#### Parents should

- Promote and support in the home environment the importance of education, of strong work and study habits, and of respect for the educational system.
- Encourage and support the opportunities that post-secondary education can provide to their children for a successful and satisfying career.

#### Teachers should

- Continue to provide strong academic training and act as mentors and counsellors to students.

## 2

Ensure that the post-secondary education system in Alberta provides flexible, high-quality learning opportunities for *all* qualified Alberta applicants.

### Strategies

#### The University of Alberta should

- Further develop the concept of bringing the University to the community through outreach, distance course delivery, and college partnerships.
- Expand its Orientation Program and make it mandatory for all students enrolled in their first year at the University.
- Through Campus Alberta, continue to work with Alberta's other post-secondary institutions in order to maintain and enhance standardized transfer curricula.
- Continue to respond effectively to the changing demands of Alberta's knowledge-based economy and society.
- Continue to provide and enhance flexible and innovative opportunities for lifelong learning.

#### The Government of Alberta should

- Increase core funding to post-secondary institutions to ensure that quality education opportunities exist for all Albertans. Increased core funding is required for:
  - a) faculty renewal and retention
  - b) increases in the number of available student places in all programs
  - c) deferred maintenance and infrastructure upgrading.
- Continue to foster cooperation within the post-secondary education system through the Campus Alberta initiative, and provide adequate funding to the institutions to ensure that all qualified applicants can be accepted.

#### The public should

- Promote the interest of taxpayers in ensuring that all Albertans can access post-secondary education, in order to maximize the social and economic benefits derived from a well-educated populace.

#### The business community should

- Promote the economic benefits derived from ensuring that all Albertans are able to pursue a variety of opportunities for post-secondary education in their home province.

## 3

**Improve the overall system of financial support for students to ensure that *all* Albertans are able to afford post-secondary education.**

#### Strategies

##### The University of Alberta should

- Review its tuition policy and commit to keeping tuition levels as low as possible, while ensuring the preservation of a quality learning environment.
- Improve its communication and dissemination of information on student assistance programs.
- Continue to encourage its benefactors to support new and existing scholarships and bursaries through private donations.

##### The Government of Alberta should

- Implement a system of “assured access grants” to target disadvantaged students early in the educational process.
- Revise its Loan Remission Program to make remission automatic when the student reaches the qualifying level.
- Provide more information about the Loan Remission Program.
- Design an effective — and effectively communicated — system of student grants and loans that will maximize opportunities for all Albertans to pursue post-secondary education.
- Increase the funding provided to students and post-secondary institutions for grants, scholarships, bursaries, and loans.
- Consider establishing a program whereby private donations to scholarships and bursaries are matched by the Government, as a way of emphasizing the partnership between the private and public sector in furthering access to post-secondary education.

##### The business community should

- Make a long-term financial commitment to support scholarship and bursary programs at post-secondary institutions, in recognition of the direct benefits to business of an educated populace.

##### Parents should

- Recognize their role in contributing financially to the post-secondary education of their children by:
  - a) proactively exploring financial assistance programs with their children
  - b) participating in long-term savings plans, including but not limited to those established by governments, in order to effectively contribute to the educational costs of their children.

##### Students should

- Actively explore the financial support options available to them for post-secondary education.

## 4

**More effectively communicate the social, economic and cultural benefits of higher learning, for both the individual and the province, to all stakeholders and potential students.**

#### Strategies

##### The University of Alberta should

- Actively promote the benefits of a university education to a knowledge-based economy — including general education that emphasizes critical thinking and problem solving skills.
- Publicize the research undertaken at the University of Alberta that improves the social, cultural, and economic conditions of the Province.
- Pursue stronger links to schools and communities across the Province.
- Increase the proportion of University Senators that come from communities facing the greatest barriers.
- Implement a ‘plain language’ advertising campaign directed at a wider range of students and utilize a variety of media outlets in an effort to promote all aspects of post-secondary education.
- Specifically target northern, rural, and Aboriginal students in this campaign, and recognize that these groups have special needs in both the communication and orientation process.
- Re-establish the “Summer Youth University” program, which enabled students in grades 9 through 11 from across the Province to attend special interest courses over a short period, as one of the most effective means of student orientation.

##### The Government of Alberta should

- Promote the benefits of *all* forms of post-secondary education, and the social and economic importance of maintaining program diversity.
- Establish information programs directed towards Albertans with low-participation rates in post-secondary education.
- Continue to encourage Albertans to take advantage of lifelong learning opportunities.

##### The public should

- Critically examine information on post-secondary education.
- Explore their opportunities for post-secondary education and lifelong learning.

##### Parents should

- Reflect on and discuss, within their family unit, the fundamental importance of education to their children and their family.

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