

Modernizing the Regional College System: A Learning Infrastructure for the New Saskatchewan

Regional College Review 2010 – Interim Report

February 1, 2011

INTRODUCTION

Saskatchewan has experienced much success in the last five years, leading the country in economic growth. But demographic trends, including an aging work force, lower than average labour force participation rates, and lower educational attainment have resulted in a provincial labour supply gap. Labour market shortages, which will limit growth and prosperity, have been estimated to be as high as 120,000 workers by 2020, or an average of 10,000 workers per year (AEEI 2009). Educational and training opportunities are critical for ensuring that Saskatchewan is prepared for future labour market demands with a broad array of post-secondary options available to learners. Currently Saskatchewan's adult learning infrastructure is a combination of centralized curriculum development and distributed learning opportunities, with programming ranging from university courses to skills training to adult basic education.

If Saskatchewan is to be competitive in the new learning environment, the province requires a regional college system that is a learner-centred system, innovative, responsive to community needs, and meets national standards. The world of adult learning has changed significantly over the last decade creating a learning society both fostered and facilitated by information communication technologies, globalization, internationalization and changes to post-secondary institutions. The 2010 Regional College Review will examine the regional colleges' mandate in the context of the provincial learning system that is evolving to meet these challenges. Our concern is to identify means of improving efficiency and effectiveness, but we are sensitive to changing standards and expectations and to legitimate differences of opinion regarding how efficiency and effectiveness should be defined and pursued.

REGIONAL COLLEGE REVIEW 2010 – MANDATE

The *Regional Colleges Act* requires that a committee be appointed at least once every five years to review and report on the mandate of the regional colleges and any other matters concerning the Act. Michael Atkinson, Executive Director of the Johnson-Shoyama Graduate School of Public Policy, was appointed to direct this review, drawing on the school's resources to provide logistical and research support. As outlined in the *Regional Colleges Act*, the 2010 Regional College Review will analyze and report on the mandate of regional colleges with a focus on Section 5 of the Act including an evaluation of:

- a) university and technical institute courses provided by way of a contract between the college and a university or technical institute;
- b) training programs that prepare individuals for a career or provide education with respect to health or social issues;
- c) training programs paid wholly or partly by private businesses, non-profit groups or government agencies;
- d) career services; and

e) adult basic education, literacy and upgrading programs.

Furthermore, as requested by Honourable Rob Norris, Minister of Advanced Education, Employment and Immigration, the review will focus on “the effectiveness and efficiency of the system in relation to its legislated mandate and alignment with government objectives, including the needs of Saskatchewan learners, The review will assess regional colleges’ effectiveness in meeting government objectives and priorities, assess regional colleges’ efficiency in planning and service delivery, and will include recommendations on ways to optimize the operation and funding of the regional colleges” (September 22, 2010 letter from Minister Norris to Dr. Atkinson).

This mandate allows the 2010 Regional Colleges Review Panel to address three broad areas - accountability, relationships and strategic planning - in addition to those operational issues that bear directly on effectiveness and efficiency. The 2010 Review will provide advice on how to situate regional colleges in the evolving post-secondary context, assess the performance of the system, and comment on future directions.

COLLEGE REVIEW PROCESS

In September 2010, the Review Panel began its task by developing a work plan, undertaking a documentary analysis, establishing an evaluation framework, conducting interviews and consulting with colleges and key stakeholders. In addition, the review panel set up a website to provide up-to-date information on the progress of the review. On September 23rd 2010, Dr. Atkinson attended a meeting of the Council of Regional College CEOs at Great Plains College in Warman Saskatchewan to discuss the process. He followed up with a letter to each of the CEOs outlining the review’s purpose, objectives, and mandate.

A number of different information gathering approaches have been used thus far in the review process. During the months of November, December and January the Chair, accompanied by Professor Kathy McNutt of the School, visited each of the regional colleges and met with community partners. The public have also been invited to contribute written submissions on the Saskatchewan regional colleges and regional college system. In addition, the panel began a documentary analysis of key institutional and government reports, academic research, and policy advice on adult learning from international sources.

Documentary Analysis

Overviews or “snapshots” have been created for each of the regional colleges. Similar snapshots were also created for Lakeland College, Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies, Gabriel Dumont Institute, and the Saskatchewan Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Commission. The snapshots provide an overview of each regional college including their history, campus information, program offerings, student enrolment, and financial situation. The snapshots also highlight innovative or unique programs offered by individual regional colleges.

An e-scan will provide background data and trace the evolution of the Saskatchewan Regional College system. The analysis will touch on previous Regional College Reviews and Annual Reports, review existing legislation, reference questions in the Legislature and its committees testimony, and review newspapers, editorials, and expert reports.

Consultation Process

To date the 2010 Regional Colleges Review Panel has undertaken consultations with all the regional colleges, most board members, many community partners and other key stakeholders. Table one provides a truncated list of those who have participated in the consultations to this point.

Table One Regional Colleges On-Site Consultation	
CARLTON TRAIL REGIONAL COLLEGE	
Glen Kobussen	CEO
Board Members	
Aaron Behiel	Humboldt
Ron Bessey	Watson
Andrew Burgess	Director of Finance
Maureen Doetzel	Humboldt
Marlene Gillespie	Chairperson
Marlene Law	Strasbourg
Islay Ehlert	Bladworth
Shelley Romanyszyn-Cross	Watrous
Amy Yeager	Director of Programs
Community Participants	
Sharon Armstrong	Resident of Wynyard
Leigh Bishop	Southey Town Council
Mara Doepker	Doepker Industries Ltd.
James Dosman	University of Saskatchewan
Islay Ehlert	St. Peter's College Board
Ralph Eliasson	Watrous Town Council
Mike Forman	Davidson Town Council
Des Grace	St. Peter's College Board
Rob Harasymchuk	St. Peter's College Board
Janine Hart	Humboldt Regional Newcomers Centre
Troy Lucyshyn	Prairie Agricultural Machinery Institute
Gerald Junk	St. Peter's College Board Co-Chair
Marlynn Rogstad	St. Peter's College Board
Marilyn Scott	Humboldt City Council
Sylvia Watered	Prairie Innovation Enterprise Region
Jim Wassermann	St. Peter's College Board
Fr. Demetrius Wasylyniuk	St. Peter's College Board
Carol Weiman	Career and Employment Services

CUMBERLAND COLLEGE	
Valerie Mushinski	CEO
Board Members	
Rosalie Daisley	Hudson Bay - Board Vice-Chairperson
Cecil Gooliaff	Star City
Jim Thiessen	Melfort
Joe Taylor	Tisdale
Armand Thibodeau	Board Chairperson
Peter Waldbillig	Kipabiskau
Community Participants	
Eldon Crain	Education Councillor, Muskoday First Nation
Cassandra Crane	East Side LIMB Outreach
Brenda Ives	Coordinator, RIC
Chris Hudyma	Executive Director, Oasis
Carrie McHarg	Daycare Director, Melfort
LP Miller	Former High School Principal
Don Remple	Director of Education, North East School Division
Lawrence Rospad	Mayor of Nipawin
Angela Schmidt	CEO, The North East Enterprise Region
Dwayne Seib	CEO, For a la Corne Employment Development
Laura Smith	Manager, CanSask
Tasha Stringer	Former student
GREAT PLAINS REGIONAL COLLEGE	
Teresa Cole	A/CEO
Board Members	
Rosemarie Brown	Gravelbourg
Trevor Koot	Swift Current
Raymond Sadler	Herbert
Brian Shygera	Board Chairperson
Community Participants	
Beth Adashynsk	Cypress Health Region
Elizabeth Davidson	Newcomer Welcome Centre
Anika Henderson	Newcomer Welcome Centre
Gloria Illerbrun	Cypress Health Region
Adrienne Jansen	Saskatoon, Regional Economic Development Authority
Allan Krupka,	Plains Midstream Canada
Bryce Martin	Cypress Health Region
Esperonza Pimentel	Newcomer Welcome Centre
Brenda Schwan	Cypress Health Region
Beth Vachon	Cypress Health Region
LAKELAND COLLEGE	
Glenn Charlesworth	President and CEO
Board Members	
Doug Elliott	Board Chairperson
Mary Holtby	Member, Saskatchewan

NORTHLANDS COLLEGE	
Bill McLaughlin	CEO
Board Members	
Brian Chaboyer	Cumberland House, Board Chairperson
Brenda Janvier	La Loche
Terrance Iron	Ile a la Crosse
Wayne Elliot	Denare Beach
Loretta Morin	Buffalo Narrows
Pam Mirasty	La Ronge
Sandy Rediron	Beauval
Community Participants	
Tony Bunz	New North CEO
Valerie Barnes-Connell	The LaRonge Northerner
Grace Charles	Lac La Ronge Indian Band
N. Gardiner	Northern Health Strategy
Steve Innes	Northern Career Quest
Glenn Lafleur	Areva Resources
Herman Michell	Nortep-Norpac
Linda Mikolayenko	Mamawetan Churchill River Health Region
Lorraine Parada	Woodland Cree Ent. Inc
Jason Slinn	Former student
Joan Strong	Coordinator, Athabasca Training and Employment
Candice Waite	Councillor, NVBN
Ron Woytowich	Kikinahk Friendship Centre
NORTH WEST REGIONAL COLLEGE	
Bryan Nylander	President and CEO
Board Members	
Norman Deutscher	Meadow Lake, Board Chairperson
Ken Hodgson	Big River
Colin Hughes	Canwood
Les Hurlburt	North Battleford
Harry Kostuik	Loon Lake
Wally Lorenz	Wilkie
Community Participants	
Randy Fox	Director of Education, Living Sky School Davison
Ian Hamilton	Mayor, City of North Battleford
Barbara Jiricka	VP, Integrated Health Services, Prairie North Health Region
Tim Lafreniere	City Planner, City of North Battleford
Grace Lang	Owner, Sobey's City of North Battleford
Denis Lavertu	Economic Development, City of North Battleford
Linda Machniak	Executive Director, Battleford Chamber of Commerce
Dwaayne Onofriechuck	Account Manager, Financial Services
Eunice Skinner	CEO North West Enterprise Region
Glennys Uzelman	VP, Primary Health Services, Prairie North Health Region
PARKLAND COLLEGE	
Fay Myers	President

Board Members	
Sally Bishop	Kamsack
Lydia Cyer	Fort Qu'Appelle
Del Killick	Board Chairperson
Bob Maloney	Yorkton
John Oussoren	Sturgis
Doris Stelmackowich	Melville
Community Participants	
Richardson Alexandra	Saskatchewan Abilities Council
Gary Dutchak	Mosaic Potash
Gord Kennedy	Richardson International
Pearl Irvine	LPN Student
Marion Kreesil	Saskatchewan East Enterprise Region
Juanita Pelegi	Yorkton Chamber
Duane Reeves	Director, Good Spirit School Division
James Wilson	Mayor, City of Yorkton
SOUTHEAST REGIONAL COLLEGE	
Craig Brown	CEO
Board Members	
Judi Jones	Weyburn
Jonathan Marcotte	Weyburn
Sheila Sterling	Antler - Acting Board Chairperson
Community Participants	
Mel Barber	Local Entrepreneur, Weyburn
Lester Bill	Training Specialist, Shand Power Station
Michel Cyrenne,	Estevan Chamber of Commerce
Cory Harkeness	Sunrise Community Futures
Kelly Hilkewich	SE Cornerstone School division
Ed Komarnicki	MP Souris Moose Mountain Constituency
Jeff Richards	Weyburn Chamber of Commerce
Kevin Scobie	SaskPower
Bob Smith	City Manager, City of Weyburn
Gary St. Onge	Mayor, City of Estevan

The consultation process focused on three major themes: accountability, relationships (among post secondary providers), and strategic positioning. The first theme of **accountability** was largely focused on governance practices, financial management, policy and operations, and quality assurance. The second major theme, **institutional relationships**, concentrated on priority congruence. The third theme concerns **strategic positioning** with questions focused on strategic planning, entrepreneurship and innovation.

In addition to meetings with the regional colleges, the Review Panel has also met with a number of informants and participants in the post-secondary system (Expert Consultations: Table Two). Further consultations are planned for February including interviews with the Deans of Education

and Nursing at the University of Saskatchewan and the University of Regina and conversations with the distance learning units at each university. In addition, interviews with current and former government representatives from the Ministry of Advanced Education, Employment and Immigration are planned for late January and early February.

Table Two	
Completed Expert Consultations	
Name	Institutional Affiliation
John Biss	Independent Consultant
Joe Black	Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Commission
Beverly Crossman	Association of Saskatchewan Regional Colleges
Netha Dyck	Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology
Ray Fast	Independent Consultant
Robert McCulloch	Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology
Geordy McCaffrey	Gabriel Dumont Institute
Randell Morris	Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies
David Walls	Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology

Written Submissions

Each of the Colleges was also asked to submit in writing programming data concerning institutional relationships and current programs. More specifically each college was asked for a list of service delivery protocols that exist between the colleges and SIAST, universities, SIIT, Gabriel Dumont Institute, school divisions, Apprenticeship Board, employers and industry, private vocational schools, out-of-province post-secondary and community-based organizations.

The Colleges have been remarkably responsive to requests. Many prepared written responses to the initial questions and all have provided additional information as requested. The review panel has received excellent cooperation, and superb hospitality from all concerned.

EMERGENT THEMES

Throughout the information gathering process, valuable information has been collected and a number of key themes have emerged. While these themes will be discussed in more detail below, it is clear that over the last decade the Saskatchewan regional college system has evolved with shifts in administrative autonomy, long-term planning, innovation, entrepreneurship and unwritten conventions affecting governance practice, institutional relationships and financial management.

The themes identified below are indicative of the issues that dominate the system. They are not exhaustive and they do not reflect the views of the Ministry. They are, however, representative of the types of challenges that the system currently confronts and they will undoubtedly be the subject of further consideration in the final report.

1. Mandate Clarification

With the modernization of learning systems internationally and the needs of the new Saskatchewan in terms of economic growth and quality of life, there is a strong consensus among college leaders that regional colleges have outgrown their original mandates. The original legislation and regulatory frameworks are in place, and constitute a persistent point of reference, but they have become outdated as colleges have evolved organically to manage new challenges, create opportunities and serve the changing needs of their communities. The government's focus on the role of colleges in ensuring a prepared labour force does not exhaust the role of colleges as understood within their respective communities. Here an emphasis on social development and quality of life complements the government's focus on labour market attachment. The original mandate, which was to provide Saskatchewan people with enhanced opportunities for learning in their local community, is joined by larger expectations that include contributing to other policy goals and adopting a province-wide perspective in some areas.

- a) The system in Saskatchewan has evolved organically with each college responding to the changing needs of their respective communities. A level of specialization is developing that does not appear to have been contemplated by the original design of the system.
- b) Forces of globalization, internationalization and new information communication technologies have changed the competitive environment in which the colleges operate. New needs have emerged in local communities and college responses have created niche areas of emerging expertise.
- c) Competitive pressures give rise to demands for more autonomy in order to innovate effectively.
- d) The regional colleges' governance structure reflects an established concern for control, but the new spirit of innovation and mandate expansion has prompted board members to develop their advocacy responsibilities

2. Lack of a Collective Mandate

There is considerable uncertainty concerning the regional college's role in the provincial adult learning system. The existing legislation is no longer an adequate guide and the colleges feel the need for a well developed policy that will establish system-wide goals, benchmarks, and evaluation criteria. Strategic planning at the college level is uneven and would benefit from a well articulated system-wide strategy. The absence of a collective mandate has encouraged some of the colleges to perceive themselves as a regional resource rather than an element in a system that serves the entire province. As a result

there are limits to how far colleges are prepared to collaborate and create partnerships. Of particular importance, the colleges are limited in their ability and inclination to pursue a provincial labour force agenda, as opposed to responding to issues that bear on their particular areas of the province.

3. Autonomy and Credit Granting Status

The lack of credit granting capacity was a perennial theme of previous Regional College Reviews and continues to be an on-going debate that needs to be addressed. The colleges would like to offer for credit certificates and diploma programming. However, representatives from both industry and post-secondary institutions that broker programs to the colleges voiced concerns about quality assurance. This issue is connected to the broader question of which post-secondary institutions in the province should be authorized to grant degrees, certificates and diplomas. The final report will discuss the issue as it pertains to the Regional Colleges, but no resolution is likely until a review is undertaken of how the entire system is organized to provide appropriate credentials for post-secondary students.

In terms of administrative autonomy, colleges argue that there are too many rules and regulations that prevent long term planning. Of particular concern are situations in which colleges wish to enter relationships and partnerships but are prevented (or discouraged) from doing so due to a (perceived) lack of authority or the absence of financial backing and commitment. Most regional colleges recognize that the current brokerage model has efficiency advantages and represents a resource that cannot be duplicated in each region. But the colleges all believe that they have considerable credibility as academic partners and seek more autonomy to perform that role. As colleges become more capable institutions, the perennial question of decentralization versus centralization of programming and evaluation will have to be addressed. It is a more important issue at this juncture than at any time in the past.

4. Adult Basic Education

Adult Basic Education is a substantial challenge for all the colleges. Particularly problematic is the consensus that programming in this area is underfunded and that there are some problems with program delivery. In terms of underfunding, the colleges discussed their lack of capacity in delivering adequate ABE programming, which is critical to encouraging persons with historically low level of labour force participation rates to attach to the labour force. Colleges also observed that they did not have the funding capacity to serve all ABE needs in their regions. In addition to this, there are also programming problems. For example, some students appear to be dropping out and then

returning year after year with no apparent consequence. With nine out of ten jobs requiring a high school education (Canadian Council of Learning 2010), the importance of ABE to Saskatchewan's prosperity is critical as a learned workforce is necessary for both economic growth and improved quality of life (OECD 2003).

5. Reporting and Accountability

Most colleges complain that current reporting structures are overly burdensome and that very little is done with the information collected. While the colleges are currently working on a shared performance management framework, it is clear that there needs to be an ongoing assessment that is based on a set of province wide criteria developed by government. The current funding formula, which is based on historical activity levels, needs examination in the context of a set of performance measures sensitive to both local and provincial imperatives.

Based on the above themes emerging from the consultation and the review panel's established themes (accountability, relationships and strategic planning) the final report will create clarity concerning the role of the colleges and provide an evaluation of the overall performance of the regional college system. The final report, to be delivered at the end of March 2011, will contain recommendations that will enable regional colleges to more efficiently and effectively fulfill their mandate in the new Saskatchewan and ensure that government priorities and objectives are served by the regional college system.

Work Cited

Canadian Council on Learning. 2010. *Canadian Council on Learning Report: State of Learning in Canada: A Year in Review*. Ottawa: Canadian Council on Learning.

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