



# **Alberta Council on Admissions and Transfer**

28 March 2001  
Boardroom, 7-218  
City Centre Campus  
Grant MacEwan College

**PRESENT:** Terry Moore (Chair), Terry Cooper, Catherine Eddy, Elaine Foulon, Shirley Holloway, Erin Ludwig, Sue Lynch, Vance MacNichol, Harry Reding, Marilyn Patton (Executive Officer)

**ABSENT:** Naomi Agard, Anne Marie Decore, Judith Hughes, Peggy Patterson, Jean Valgardson

President Paul Byrne brought greetings on behalf of Grant MacEwan College. He emphasized the importance of the work of ACAT and commented that, without Council's work we wouldn't be the province we are. Council personifies cooperation and collaboration and the work it does directly benefits students. After inviting members to tour the campus, he wished Council continued success.

The Chair thanked Dr. Byrne noting the important role Grant MacEwan College plays in Alberta's transfer system.

The Chair then welcomed new member, Sue Lynch, who has replaced Jim Dueck as Alberta Learning's secondary system representative. He also noted that Jean Valgardson had recently been appointed to replace Bob Lockwood but that she was unable to attend the meeting. Also sending regrets were Naomi Agard and Judith Hughes.

The Chair then announced that he will be leaving Council at the end of June. He chose to leave Council after 15 years at a time when several key initiatives were coming to closure. He cited such examples as the work of the Minister's Working Group on Admissions and Transfer, transition course in Math, progress on a common grading scale for universities, and the massive project to reengineer the transfer agreements Web sites and database. As his leaving now provides an opportunity to review the staffing of the Council, the Chair noted he had invited Phil Gougeon, Assistant Deputy Minister, Adult Learning to speak to members.

P. Gougeon began by noting that most members present only know of Council with Terry Moore as its Chair. He noted that Dr. Moore's hard work and dedication are appreciated. The ADM expressed his interest in talking to members about how the Ministry plans to continue to support Council. Prior to the amalgamation of the two departments (Advanced Education and Career Development and Education), the Council office was set somewhat outside the department. Since the amalgamation, all permanent positions in the office were moved to the Adult Learning division. In order to provide the support needed by Council, the Minister has decided to change the chair position from a full-time contract to an appointed position such as is currently found with the Apprenticeship and Industry Training Board, Students Finance Board and the Private Colleges Accreditation Board. The Council chair position would thus be a volunteer position for 3 years with renewal. As a voluntary position, the chair would receive an honorarium for time spent on Council business.

Since 1990, Council and the Private Colleges Accreditation Board (PCAB) have shared staff and office space. From the current resources of ACAT and PCAB a secretariat would be created under the leadership of Marilyn Patton to support the two organizations. P. Gougeon

noted that there is a need to provide additional resources for Council and by creating the secretariat as a fully operating unit under the Community and Institutional Services sector of the Adult Learning division, he hopes to provide it with more support. The independence of ACAT's decisions will not be compromised by having the secretariat be part of his division. In fact, the members of Council should see no difference.

In the meantime, P. Gougeon noted that he had asked the Executive Officer, in consultation with a consultant, to draft the terms of reference of chair. Council members will then be asked to review them. In terms of the appointment process, P. Gougeon noted that he will try to build Council members into the selection process, although it is the Minister's appointment. The changes have already been discussed with the university Vice Presidents Academic and they have been supportive provided Council's independence is retained. In closing he noted that it isn't anticipated that the office will move from its current location in the short term. Having the secretariat as a fully functioning unit within the Ministry will provide an information exchange that will support both the division and Council.

During the ensuing discussion a number of members expressed serious concerns about the move to a voluntary chair noting that Council has been well-served by the current system. One member suggested that members should have been consulted. When the importance of contact with students was raised, P. Gougeon noted that this should be built into the terms of reference of the chair position so that future chairs will be available to continue this contact.

One member recommended that a new chair be selected by June.

In response to members' concerns about the secretariat workload, P. Gougeon responded that he anticipates expanding the secretariat.

Another member noted how important the articulation committees are to smaller colleges, in particular. Someone has to coordinate these and the momentum that has been started by the current Chair cannot be lost. P. Gougeon responded that future chairs would have to ensure that a process is in place to continue this work.

In response to one member's question, P. Gougeon noted that these changes are a way to bring more resources to Council. With every change there may be negatives but there are opportunities, as well. Regardless, Council is losing 15 years of experience. The vacancy and volunteer position will allow the Minister to look at people with high credibility who still want to continue to make contributions to post-secondary education.

Another member noted that Council's work involves many stakeholders. Ongoing cooperation has depended on a steady, persevering person who works at linkages. The member expressed concern that we not take for granted the ongoing effectiveness of collaboration that Council does. This could be at risk in moving away from a full-time chair. Sharing this unease, another member spoke of how easy it is for the transfer system to fragment. The biggest danger is in not having an ongoing person as chair.

In closing, P. Gougeon thanked members for their comments indicating that the Ministry is committed to making this work.

The Chair observed that that the Council might consider meeting with the ADM in a year's time to assess if the changes are meeting the needs of ACAT.

1. Minutes, 27 September 2000

It was MOVED by C. Eddy, and SECONDED by S. Holloway, that the 27 September 2000 Council Minutes be adopted as distributed.

CARRIED

2. Items arising from the Minutes

The Chair indicated that there were no items arising from the Minutes that wouldn't be covered under one of the agenda items.

3. Council Office report

The Chair reported that Council's 1999-2000 Annual report was sent to the Minister in January. He anticipates presenting a draft of the 2000-2001 Annual Report for consideration at the next meeting.

Turning to discussion of the proposed changes announced by P. Gougeon, the Chair encouraged wider feedback and thought. He suggested that the Senior Academic Officers should discuss the plans.

One member reiterated the need to emphasize the importance of articulation committees in the terms of reference for the chair. In response to a suggestion that the Chair identify issues that are on the horizon which will need attending to, the Chair suggested this be done when the Business Plan is discussed later in the meeting.

Another member spoke to the need to ensure that the next chair is someone who will be fully engaged in the work of Council.

Turning to other matters, the Chair reported that the Education Program Articulation meeting was held on 27 October 2000 and the Engineering Articulation Committee on 11 December. As a result, transfer agreements were reviewed, some were refined and others were initiated. The Executive Officer noted that she had attended two meetings of the Provincial Academic Upgrading Coordinators since the Council's last meeting. The group has finalized a process to review new courses that might be added to the chart which is published in the *Guide*. In addition, the Executive Officer updated members on the success with respect to finalizing program agreements among the seven colleges and technical institutions that offer Office Administration diploma programs. These agreements will be reflected in the next edition of the *Guide*.

The Chair asked members to address his recommendation to the Minister that another university member be added to Council so that all four universities could be actively represented. He provided an overview of the changes to membership over the years and his rationale for his recommendation.

It was MOVED by T. Cooper and SECONDED by H. Reding that the Minister invite the Universities Co-ordinating Council to nominate one additional member to serve on the Alberta Council on Admissions and Transfer.

CARRIED

In speaking to the motion, the Chair suggested that this was an important way of strengthening ACAT as it would enable all four universities to actively participate in identifying issues and proposing solutions. Currently the Council of Presidents provides nominations for four persons while the UCC provides nominations for three. This addition

to the membership would help ACAT to better meet the challenges of maintaining and improving Alberta's outstanding student transfer system.

One member suggested that it makes sense to have all four universities at the table and suggested that action be taken expeditiously on the recommendation. This move would reflect a maturing regarding the role of both Athabasca University and University of Lethbridge in the transfer system.

#### 4. ACAT's draft Business Plan, 2001-2004

The Chair presented the draft Business Plan noting that there may be a need to make things as explicit as possible to enable a smooth transition. He then walked members through changes. Throughout the process he emphasized that Council doesn't do the work of the institutions or the ministry. It needs to be faithful to its role.

Members suggested that maintaining what we have in place with respect to program articulation and flagging new areas that would benefit from the articulation process was important.

Members then began examining if anything was missing in the Business Plan. The Chair noted that environmental science and computing science are program areas which have been identified in the past for attention. However, he cautioned that Council has to set priorities and it will take time to work with these new program areas.

Commenting that she is often asked how well students do when they transfer, one member suggested that long-term planning is important and that we don't pay enough attention to it. Our objective is not just that students can transfer, but that they transfer successfully. Another member commented that there isn't a system-wide perspective on the success of transfer students, although the Chair noted that the University Transfer leavers Key Performance Indicator and the companion one following these students after one year at a university or private university college is being done. From the results he has seen, there appears to be a high level of success. One area that is not being captured systematically, however, is the success of diploma graduates who move into post-diploma degree programs.

One member summarized by saying that Council needs to set priorities as articulation in a particular area is a long-term commitment and that there needs to be a way of checking that students are succeeding on transfer. Council needs to consider these as it decides which areas to tackle.

In response to one member's question, the Chair explained the process used for identifying areas of need. One is feedback from Council, including its student members; another is feedback from Contact Persons. The Chair reminded members of its resolution authorizing the Council office to initiate the program articulation process if it perceived the need rather than wait for a decision of Council. Ultimately it is the Chair and Executive Officer's decision as to which ones are initiated. The Executive Officer also suggested that the Transfer Infoline is another useful source of information. T. Cooper added that the Senior Academic Officers could have as a standing agenda item on their meetings the identification of program areas that would benefit from program articulation. E. Ludwig suggested that both ACTISEC and CAUS could also provide input.

Turning to admission issues, the Chair updated members on the articulation of high school Mathematics and English Language Arts. He commented that there seems to be a good

communication plan in place with respect to the latter program but if concerns arise it might be helpful to use Council as a communication hub.

S. Lynch observed that there has been wide consultation about the English Language Arts curriculum revision. She noted that timing issues related to its implementation are important and asked for members' feedback as to when their decisions about its acceptance for admission might have to be made. Members decided to discuss this further under agenda #8, Secondary – Post-Secondary articulation.

S. Holloway reported that several students from the first pilot of Applied Math 30 had applied to NAIT. All scored poorly on NAIT's test for preparedness for Calculus, although all had blended grades in Applied Math 30 in the 70 percentile range.

The performance indicator that 100% of public institutions have agreements in the Transfer Guide has already been achieved. Therefore, one member suggested we devise a performance indicator with respect to student satisfaction. Various suggestions of how Council would obtain this information were made such as asking ACTISEC and CAUS to help or turning to advisors or Contact Persons for feedback.

The Chair suggested that Council needs to incorporate student satisfaction with transfer information into a new indicator which would include awareness of this information and whether it is user-friendly.

Responding to a question about whether or not Council could obtain feedback via our Web site, the Executive Officer indicated that we already do receive feedback. She described a recent e-mail from a diploma student attempting to find non-existent transfer agreements to an applied degree program via the Online Alberta Transfer Guide. This led to a review of the calendars and contact was made with the two institutions involved. It was discovered that an 'understanding' with respect to transfer was in place but that there was no formal agreement. Therefore, there wasn't an agreement in our database. The inquiry led to the establishment of an agreement between the two institutions which is now included in the database. As well, a subsequent agreement was established involving another college that offered a similar diploma program.

In conclusion, the Chair indicated that revisions would be made to the Business Plan and then brought back for approval.

#### 5. Minister's Working Group on Admissions and Transfer, Final Report

Since the September meeting of Council, the Working Group on Admissions and Transfer produced its Final Report and submitted it to the Minister in November. In December, the Minister wrote to Dr. Abrioux, chair of the Working Group, to acknowledge receipt of the report and to express appreciation to those who helped with the report. The Chair observed that Council is cited in 11 of 30 recommendations. He asked for advice on how Council could keep a spotlight on issues and monitor them.

Members discussed recommendation 5 on page 3 of report that universities should adopt a common presentation format for admission requirements. They also looked at recommendation 8 which called for development of an interactive computer program to present information on post-secondary programs and their admission requirements.

The Chair noted that this is potentially a mammoth task. The ministry could hire a consultant to work out ways to graphically present it in paper and Council could be the communication hub. Or a consultant could develop it for presentation on the Web. The

institutions should have opportunities to comment on a draft to ensure that it is appropriate.

One member felt that students are interested in taking a group of courses and asking the question, 'what can I do with these courses in a particular area'.

S. Lynch thought there might be room for a collaborative project between Adult Learning and the institutions and with Basic Learning as well. She suggested the project might fit under the umbrella of Campus Alberta.

The report had also recommended that Council convene an annual forum. The Chair noted that the Working Group chair saw value in a gathering of stakeholders once a year to identify issues and then send Council or others off to work on them. The Council Chair noted issues related to cost and fitting the forum in to everyone's busy schedule.

One of the members who served on the Admissions subcommittee of the Working Group suggested that the experience of that group might have been a driver behind this recommendation. The broad stakeholder representation on that subcommittee provided a learning experience for all participants. We each gained a better understanding across boundaries (secondary, post-secondary, parents, etc.). Perhaps it isn't the forum but the value of this experience that is important.

Another member suggested that it is appropriate for Council to have such a forum if it has expanded resources.

The Chair suggested that perhaps Council could plan one of its meetings where school superintendents, home and school, specialist guidance counselor and others would be invited for part of the meeting. This might invigorate Council and help identify issues and concerns. The representatives at this meeting could canvass their groups ahead of time in order to bring feedback to the meeting.

Members then discussed the timing of such an event. It was recommended that it be held around February to allow identification of issues at the fall meetings of SAOs, and similar groups.

Another member suggested that there didn't have to be an annual forum but that Council could schedule one presentation from each of the representative groups for every meeting (i.e., guidance counsellors for one meeting, superintendents for another). The two approaches were not seen to be mutually exclusive.

## 6. Common Grading Scale

The Chair provided background to this initiative noting that he had been asked by the Universities Co-ordinating Council (UCC) to chair a committee to propose a common grading scale for universities. At the 8 November 2000 meeting of the committee, members approved in principle the common grading system recommendation. Included in the agenda package was the report of the February 2001 meeting of the committee. On 19 March UofA's General Faculties Council received the recommendation on the 4.0 grading scale that distinguishes between A and A+ in alpha but not on the 4.0 scale. It was approved. The same scale is now being considered by UofC on 12 April, UofL on 7 May and Athabasca on 13 June. Concordia will be addressing the recommendation in early April. The 4.0 scale represents a significant change for both UofA (currently a 9-point scale) and Athabasca (currently a percentage scale) and minor changes for UofC and UofL. The Chair commended members of the Common Grading System committee.

In response to one member's question about whether or not a common grading scale will address the issue of acceptance of minimum passing grades, the Chair indicated it would, citing that a D- is no longer available. Thus this irritant between UofL and UofC is removed. In general, the grade of D will be accepted as a minimum pass. It will become immediately apparent if an institution doesn't accept a D on transfer and a credible explanation will be expected.

Another member wondered if the committee had done work on how a percentage would align with the 4.0 scale. The Chair explained that the committee had differentiated between marking and grading. The percentage scale may be used for marking but when a grade is assigned, the mark is converted to an alpha grade which is assigned a numeric value (A=4.0). One member suggested that it would be helpful to have the marking scheme and grade conversion on course outlines as students want to know how percentages marks map to grades.

Members then discussed whether the public colleges and technical institutes would also adopt a 4.0 scale. T. Cooper indicated that Medicine Hat College would move to this grading system as well.

#### 7. Alberta Transfer Guide and update on redevelopment of database and Web sites

The Executive Officer updated members on development of the re-engineered transfer agreements database and the public and Contact Persons Web site redevelopments. Despite delays caused by third party software bugs, the project is proceeding. She also noted that production of the *2001-2002 Alberta Transfer Guide* has not been delayed.

The Executive Officer outlined some of the features of the Web sites noting that both sites will provide more functionality for the user.

In response to a question about how long Council will continue to print a hard copy of the *Guide*, the Executive Officer responded that Council will have to consider this in the future. Of necessity, the format of the 2001-2002 Guide has changed dramatically and may not be the format of choice for all users of the Guide. More users are now migrating to the Online Alberta Transfer Guide. If institutional Web sites are linked dynamically to the Council database, this may be extremely useful. The Executive Officer described how students can click on a button on the course outline from The King's University College Web site and see how the course transfers. Behind the scenes a query is made to the Council database and the result screen from the Online Alberta Transfer Guide appears. If this programming can be achieved from the re-engineered database and Website, Glenn Keeler, Contact Person at King's, has agreed to share how it is done so other institutions can also dynamically link to results from the Online Guide.

#### 8. Secondary – Post-Secondary articulation

At each meeting of Council, the representative from the secondary education part of Alberta Learning has agreed to provide updates with respect to curriculum changes of interest to the post-secondary institutions.

S. Lynch began by noting that the difficulties with articulation of the new mathematics curriculum seem to have mirrored those experienced when Science was introduced in the early 1990s. She noted that we must learn from this. After distributing a draft implementation schedule for new curriculum, she gave a general overview of the features noting the use of Alberta Learning's Web site to flag changes. Beginning with changes to

English Language Arts, S. Lynch explained that the curriculum is being broadened and updated. One stream is very much literature based and is building on the current 10, 20 and 30 stream. The second stream replaces the 13, 23 and 33 stream.

S. Lynch reviewed the history of why the mathematics curriculum was changed. She noted that Applied Math 30 is being reviewed to see if it can meet the needs of universities in non-Mathematics programs but she doesn't know if this can be achieved. Basic Learning division is interested in following up with institutions that have accepted Applied Math 30 graduates to see how well they are doing. NAIT has accepted a few of these graduates recently.

She also referred to the Athabasca University transition course noting that it is almost finished. As he is a member of the committee that is working on the development of the course, the Chair updated members on this development. He noted that 5 of the 9 areas of the curriculum have been reviewed. His sense is that the course will be ready in late June. He noted that there is less fear of the unknown now given that a) institutions now know standards for Applied Math 30 as the first administration of diploma exams for Applied Math 30 has taken place, b) a transitions course will be available in June and c) how high school students will move between the Pure and Applied Math streams is now clear.

S. Lynch observed that ACAT and the Working Group were instrumental in helping to achieve these outcomes. Alberta Learning could not have done this without these two groups.

In response to one member's comment about the need to have the Transitions course recognized in lieu of Pure Math 30 by post-secondary institutions, the Chair agreed that this is critical. He referred to the mechanism of the Provincial Academic Upgrading Coordinators group.

Members then discussed the length of the transition course and why colleges would want to offer it if they are already offering Pure Math 20 and 30. Following one member's question, S. Lynch offered to check with Human Resources and Employment with respect to funding for students seeking to take the transitions course and provide the response so it could be appended to the Minutes.

Concern was raised again for the students who had been ill advised and took Applied Math thinking they could be admitted to university. Included in the agenda package were the letter to the Minister from E. Ludwig and N. Agard about applied math high school students and his response. Several members commended the two student members on their letter. In the student's letter to the Minister about this, the writers had recommended that these students would have the Transition course paid for by Alberta Learning and that they would admit responsibility. It was noted that these students could easily be identified on their transcript. S. Lynch indicated that once she had an estimate of the number of students affected she would be willing to take the issue forward to the Minister.

Members then discussed how students can make wise course selection choices in high school. They noted the tension between fitting curriculum to meet the needs of various types of students while still keeping as many doors open to them as possible.

S. Lynch then noted other future curriculum changes. She indicated that the changes to the Science curriculum are expected to be modest. However, Social Studies will undergo major revisions. Referring to the implementation schedule for this curriculum revision, one member expressed concern about the timing if internal post-secondary admission decisions are to be included. S. Lynch noted that she would draw this to the attention of

Alberta Learning officials so that they connect with the VP Academics of each post-secondary institution to determine the lead-time they need. She will report back to Council on their findings.

S. Lynch also referred to Adult Skills Alberta (ASA) and undertook to provide further information about this initiative in the future. She saw it as a way to bring greater sense to the area of adult upgrading. As well, at a future meeting she agreed to talk further about the common credentials initiative and acceptance of academic upgrading courses on the high school diploma.

One member mused about the possibility of having Web-enabled admission information so that students would be able to see how their high school courses could be used for admission to post-secondary programs.

9. Other business

The Chair referred to a letter in the agenda package from the Superintendent of Buffalo Trail Regional School Division speaking to the usefulness of the Transitions Report. He noted that post-secondary institutions also find it useful. The study of the 1998-99 grade 12 cohort is being drafted and hopefully, that report will be released later this year.

Referring to the news article about the Conference Board of Canada and Career Transitions for Youth, the Chair indicated that he hoped new member J. Valgardson could shed light on the article. S. Lynch undertook to provide an update at a future meeting on career transitions projects.

Noting the lateness of the hour, members agreed to discuss the Fall 2000 Duplicate Application Detection project, Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition, and the Fall 2000 Transfer Patterns agenda items at the next meeting.

It was MOVED by T. Cooper, and SECONDED by H. Reding, that the meeting be adjourned.

CARRIED