



# **Alberta Council on Admissions and Transfer**

17 March 2003  
Concordia University College of Alberta

**PRESENT:** Lucille Walter (Chair), Ed Behnke, Fred Carnew, Catherine Eddy, Matthew Glass, Peter Haney, Gretchen Hess, Irene Langille (for Gord Nixon), Vance MacNichol, Raja Panwar (for Rick Morrow), Jean Valgardson, Scott Winder (for Shirley Barg), Marilyn Patton (Executive Officer), Marena Fakli (Manager), Patti Papirnik (Manager).

**ABSENT:** Shirley Barg, Judith Hughes, Kevin Paul, Rick Morrow, Lynne Mulder, Gord Nixon

The Chair welcomed members to Concordia University College of Alberta. She also introduced and warmly welcomed Dr. Fred Carnew who was appointed by the Minister of Learning as the new public member. Dr. Carnew spoke about his experiences as a teacher, adult educator and administrator.

The Chair reported that Rick Morrow, Kevin Paul, Shirley Barg and Gord Nixon had each expressed regret that they were unable to attend today's meeting. Unfortunately, inclement weather meant that Lynne Mulder and Judith Hughes were unable to attend, as well.

1. Minutes, 18 November 2002

The Chair asked if any errors or omissions were noted. Hearing none, the minutes of the 18 November 2002 Council meeting were adopted by consensus.

2. ACAT Chair and Secretariat Reports

The Chair directed members' attention to the written report in the agenda package. She then highlighted several items including the engineering articulation meeting on 5 December, at which the University of Calgary indicated that it has made decisions that would make transfer easier for students from programs modeled after the UofA's engineering program.

At an 18 December meeting with the University of Alberta, the non-acceptance of minimal passes for transfer credit was discussed. The UofA remains firm in its decision not to accept minimal passes for transfer credit. G. Hess reported that the University of Alberta's new letter grading system, to be implemented in September 2003, had been fine-tuned recently. The grade point average for satisfactory standing for undergraduates has been adjusted to 2.0 from 1.7. In addition, the minimum transfer average is set at 2.0. The UofA has been encouraged to publicize these changes. This policy will be posted on the UofA Web site and notices will be sent to colleges.

Members were informed that Concordia University College of Alberta was also developing supplementary information to describe the letter grades. This will be provided to ACAT once it is completed.

On 12 February the Chair made a presentation to the Learning Commission. There were two main messages of the presentation. Firstly, the articulation process between secondary to post-secondary systems is very important to smooth the transition for students, and secondly, academic upgrading and avenues of second chance for students is important. There are currently 18 institutions offering opportunities for academic upgrading. The message also indicated that while these courses are accepted by post-secondary institutions in lieu of 30-level Alberta Learning courses, it would be beneficial if these courses could count toward a high school diploma.

The Chair also attended a second day with the Learning Commission as a guest. The discussion concerned the preparedness of secondary students for post-secondary programs and the preparation of teachers. Participants from the post-secondary sector suggested that students were well prepared.

On 3 February, the Executive Officer attended a meeting on the Raising Awareness of Planning for Post-secondary Studies initiative (RAPPS). The Executive Officer has joined the steering committee for the project and information about transfer was added to the package of materials to be handed out at various teacher conventions in the province.

The Executive Officer discussed her participation in the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC)'s Working Group on Credit Transfer. The Working Group has drafted principles which are largely based on those of ACAT and the British Columbia Council on Admissions and Transfer (BCCAT). These principles have been accepted by the Ministers. Members were asked to look at the principles closely to see if anything from these principles should be adopted by ACAT. The Executive Officer also agreed to request comments on these principles from Contact Persons. These principles will be discussed again at the June meeting of Council.

A member raised the issue of Prior Learning Assessment as she noted it was mentioned in the CMEC principles. This is an activity that members feel will receive increased attention in the years to come. The Chair confirmed that she has been appointed as Alberta's representative to the CMEC Steering Committee on Prior Learning Assessment. In her review of Alberta practices, she noted that little has changed since 1998.

Another member questioned the status of CMEC's information on provincial high school curriculums. The Executive Officer responded that the 1998 information on CMEC's Web site is currently being updated but no newer information is available yet.

The Executive Officer also reported that the CMEC Working Group on Transfer of Credit is continuing to work and is considering potential research projects. Each province is to report on what it is doing to enhance transfer and the associated performance measures.

### 3. ACAT Research

Over the last year, members have discussed future directions of ACAT in conjunction with the Business Plan. One item that arose from these discussions was the decision to undertake some research on the transfer system including student satisfaction and success with transfer. The Chair expressed her ongoing commitment to this research activity. The Chair and Executive Officer have explored these ideas with other areas of Alberta Learning and with the Contact Persons to determine what currently exists and what could be studied.

Discussions with departmental staff have focused on the development of research proposals and the potential for collaborating on already planned research projects.

One possible avenue of research that was identified was the combined graduate satisfaction and employment survey that is a partnership effort between Alberta Learning and institutions. This survey will be common for all post-secondary institutions in 2004. Four questions about transfer have been drafted for possible inclusion in the survey. Members reviewed the questions and were asked to consider the wording to ensure we obtain the information that will be meaningful to us regarding admission and transfer.

The Chair noted that there were other research ideas under consideration. For example, what constitutes a "Campus Alberta" graduate? Are students acquiring a credential by amassing credits at a number of institutes? How is the transfer process working? To answer the first two questions, it has been suggested at past meetings that graduate transcripts be analyzed. A member suggested that a retrospective look at transcripts may not be the ideal way to approach these questions. How students have moved towards their goal is an interesting question. This is what ACAT is trying to facilitate.

The Executive Officer noted that there are a number of other initiatives that are underway or being planned in the department and the opportunity is present to participate with the department in a collaborative fashion to do some valid research.

#### 4. Presentation on Legislative Changes

The Honourable Dr. Lyle Oberg, Minister of Learning, was invited as a guest to the meeting to discuss upcoming legislative changes, development of the Campus Alberta vision and his thoughts on the articulation and transfer process in Alberta. Regrettably, the Minister was unable to attend because of a conflicting schedule.

Archie Clark, Executive Director of Institutional and Community Services, Alberta Learning attended and provided an update on some of the proposed changes to the *Universities Act*, *Colleges Act*, *Technical Institutes Act* and the *Banff Centre Act*. The proposed new legislation will consolidate the common parts of each Act and have a section specific to the unique aspect of each sector. More detail specifications will be removed and developed as regulations to the Act.

A new aspect of the proposed legislation will be the creation of a body, named the Campus Alberta Accreditation and Coordination Council, which will serve as a mechanism to expand capacity in the post-secondary system to degree programs. This new Council will draw extensively from the practices of the existing Private Colleges Accreditation Board. The focus of this aspect of the legislation is the maintenance of quality degree programs, wherever they may be offered. While quality of the program is of utmost importance, the delivery mechanism is secondary and must be flexible and creative.

Members were invited to ask for further information and clarification. In response Mr. Clark noted that currently, the structure and composition of the new Council is undetermined. It is recognized that the dual roles proposed for the Council of accreditation of programs and coordination of the post-secondary system will be challenging as these roles are quite different. One member suggested that public consultation will be important as there is considerable interest in the public about post-secondary opportunities and access to degree programs.

Several members also posed questions about governance of institutions and composition of academic councils. One member emphasized the growing concerns about access to degree programming in Alberta for both high school and transfer students. The Chair thanked Mr. Clark for attending and responding to members' questions. It is clear that the fundamental principles of a barrier-less learning system and avenues of multiple choice available to learners underpins the concept of the new legislation.

Members had the opportunity to reflect on Mr. Clark's comments. One member noted that securing the appropriate expertise and specialized knowledge to do both the accreditation and coordination role will be difficult.

#### 5. Presentation from Concordia University College of Alberta

The Chair welcomed Dr. Richard Kraemer, President, and Dr. Richard Willie, Vice President Academic, from Concordia University College of Alberta. In keeping with its practice to invite the host institution to make a presentation, Drs. Kraemer and Willie were invited to introduce members to their campus, their programs and their challenges.

After a welcome by Dr. Kraemer, Dr. Willie presented an historical overview of the development of Concordia. On its present site since 1926, and accredited to confer degrees since 1987, the university college now graduates approximately 300 graduates each year. Along with a number of Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Science degree programs, Concordia offers two after degree programs in Education and Environmental Health. Concordia also offers the University College Entrance Program and academic upgrading to adult learners.

Concordia's strategic plan identifies plans for a new Bachelor of Management Program, specializing in leadership studies, non-profit organizational fund-raising and career development programs. Another prong of the strategic plan is to develop and serve the life-long learning needs of the alumni, both in the professional degree programs and in the undergraduate programs. Concordia is focused on strengthening their support for research and scholarships. This year a new entrance scholarship has been introduced.

The Chair thanked Dr. Kraemer and Dr. Willie for the presentation and for the warm hospitality offered to ACAT.

#### 6. Duplicate Application Detection (DAD) 2002 Report

The purpose of participation in the DAD project is to provide post-secondary institutions with data that can be useful for informed planning, particularly in such areas as enrolment management, program rationalization, recruitment strategies, and performance indicators. With the ACAT Secretariat acting as a communication hub linking the post-secondary institutions, the DAD project provides participating institutions with data that they would otherwise not be able to acquire. This year 28 post-secondary institutions participated.

Marena Fakli, Manager, ACAT Secretariat, introduced the Report and Summary Tables document which provides the results of the Fall 2002 project. She drew members' attention to the following highlights:

- Most individuals applying to a post-secondary institution submitted only one application. 13% applied to more than one institution and created 24% of all applications.

- 77% of all individuals who applied received one or more offers of admission from an Alberta post-secondary institution.
- 83% of individuals who received an offer of admission attended.
- 78% of all applications were from Alberta
- On average, almost three-quarters of each institution's applicant pool applied only to that institution.

The final page of the document features a table titled "Learner Application Activity" which summarizes results over the seven-year period from 1996 through 2002. In September 2002, the number of learners who applied to programs at post-secondary institutions increased by 6.5% from the previous year. The bulk of the applications are from Alberta (78.4). It is noted that compared to 1996, 36.4% more individuals applied in 2002.

Members also received copies of the DAD Trends document, which covers the period from 1996 through 2002 for each table of the DAD project. The tables can be very useful in spotting trends or anomalies.

Institutional members commented that they have noted a 30%-40% increase in applications for Fall 2003 over the same period last year. One member raised the question of frequency of the DAD study as he recalled from the minutes of June 2002 that ACAT had agreed not to continue the study on an annual basis.

Another member commented that the Alberta post-secondary system is moving into a volatile environment, with changing roles and responsibilities of institutions and that she recommends that the Duplicate Application Detection project be completed again in 2003.

The Council requested the Executive Officer to poll the DAD delegates for their thoughts on the project frequency. This topic will be brought forward to the June meeting of ACAT for further discussion.

## 7. ACAT Business Plan 2003 - 2006

The Business Plan identifies the vision, mission and goals of ACAT and relates the core businesses to their achievement. In this model, core businesses are identified to support the achievement of goals of ACAT. For each goal, there will be specified 2003-2006 strategies, actions and expected results. Performance indicators are then developed to help determine whether the organization has made progress in achieving what it set out to accomplish.

Over the last several meetings, members have discussed the document, "Future Directions of ACAT" and made suggestions on what could improve the transfer system. These ideas have been incorporated into the business plan.

The Business Plan is a three-year rolling plan. Each year members have the opportunity to re-visit the plan and make adjustments to ensure the business plan is current and reflects Council's priorities.

One member commented that given discussions of increased access to degree studies at additional institutions, it is possible that ACAT's and the Secretariat's workload could increase exponentially. If course by course agreements subsequently increase significantly, the work of establishing and maintaining these agreements may become too onerous. Therefore, some people advocate more block transfer agreements.

One member suggested that Contact Persons be asked to comment on the applicability of block agreements at the operational level.

Post-secondary to post-secondary articulation committees were then discussed. The members concluded that we have sufficient standing articulation committees at the present time and that new ones would be struck only if pressure points arise and there is a will on the part of institutions to have articulation in the area.

The Chair directed members' attention to this year's Business Plan. No changes are anticipated in the mandate, vision, or mission. As well, the principles, core businesses and goals are satisfactory.

There was discussion about the intent of the section named Opportunities and Challenges. One member felt it should reflect completed activities as well as those in the planning stage. Another member suggested that there should be a closer linkage between the identified challenges and the goal statements and strategies that follow. This section is meant to be an environmental scan of current and upcoming challenges of the admission and transfer system.

During the course of the discussion on the business plan, the topic of on-line learning was discussed. A member stated that there is a provincial steering committee for on-line curriculum development for the colleges and technical institutes. Gord Nixon, a current ACAT member, is on this committee. It was agreed that he would be asked to make a presentation to Council on the topic. The Executive Officer will follow up on this for the June meeting.

The Chair raised the question of implementation of the recommendations of the Minister's Working Group on Admissions and Transfer and whether there are still outstanding recommendations. Members felt that most recommendations had been addressed with the exception of the idea of hosting a forum on transfer issues. The consensus of members was that this topic should be put to rest. This is not an activity that ACAT can undertake presently.

One strategy of the current business plan is to 'educate students and other stakeholders about the benefits of being informed about the Alberta admissions and transfer system.' Members continue to feel this is important. The Chair indicated that effort was made on several occasions to make a presentation to guidance counselors. This effort will continue as will efforts to promote ACAT to high school students through Web site linkages.

The Chair summarized members' comments and indicated that staff of the Secretariat would make the necessary changes and enhancement to the business plan based on today's discussion. A draft of the Business Plan 2003-2006 will be circulated to members prior to the next ACAT meeting and considered for adoption at the June meeting.

#### 8. Secondary – Post-Secondary Articulation

Raja Panwar, Director of the Curriculum Branch, attended the meeting on behalf of Rick Morrow. He gave an overview of the development of new curriculum including the new high school science curriculum. Some minor adjustments are planned for the chemistry, biology, and science courses.

In response to a member's suggestion, Mr. Panwar agreed to provide a list of post-secondary members of the advisory committees for the science changes. It will be appended to the Minutes.

a) Social Studies

The Chair indicated that she will arrange a meeting of the secondary to post-secondary articulation committee for Social Studies. Members from each sector have been recruited. The initial meeting will take place in April. At that time the discussion will focus on the course outcomes.

One member questioned the rationale for the new numbering scheme. Mr. Panwar responded that, the numbering scheme was designed to communicate that recent program revisions to the 13-23-33 programs had increased the curriculum standard. The revised program sequences for English Language Arts now have more common outcomes than before, and it is anticipated that the same will hold true for high school Social Studies. However, in the future, when learning pathways are introduced in high school as part of the Minister's Vision for K-12 Education, course numbering could be reviewed to better communicate the standard for a program sequence or potential pathway for further study and career preparation. The member continued to express concern that the new numbering scheme was problematic for post-secondary institutions.

b) English Language Arts

The work of the English Language Arts Articulation Committee is now completed. Each institution was asked to develop and submit to ACAT an advising chart illustrating the pathways a student might follow from Grade 10 English Language Arts to a post-secondary program. The charts have been forwarded to Alberta Learning with a request that they be posted on its Web site as information for parents and students.

9. Alberta Transfer Guide

Transfer agreements are being negotiated continuously throughout the year. As they are finalized and verified, they are then viewable via the Online Alberta Transfer Guide. Each February, the ACAT Secretariat begins working with institutions to prepare the next edition of the printed *Alberta Transfer Guide*.

The Executive Officer indicated that she would report fully at the next Council meeting on the 2003-2004 version of the *Alberta Transfer Guide*.

10. Transfer Patterns Study Fall 2002

Discussion of the Transfer Pattern Study 2002 was deferred until the June meeting due to time constraints. The Transfer Patterns Study Fall 2002 (Mobility Tables) and the Transfer Patterns Studies 1979 – 2002 (Extracts by Sector) were distributed.

## 11. Items for Information

The Executive Officer drew members' attention to the following news articles and documents included in the agenda package.

The first three articles presented perspectives on grade inflation at post-secondary institutions. There had been previous discussion at Council meetings about grade inflation.

- "The Dangerous Myth of Grade Inflation". *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 8 November 2002.
- "Duke Professor Releases Data on Grade Inflation at 34 Colleges". *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 30 January 2003.
- "Reports of Grade Inflation May be Inflated, Study Finds". *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 12 July 2002.
- "Universities grow wary of grade inflation". *The National Post*, 14 January 2003  
Universities across the country are raising admission standards as the number of applicants increase. Some university administrators suspect high schools are boosting grades to help their students.
- "New program will give students a head start on careers". *The Edmonton Journal*, 13 February 2003. Refers to Edmonton Public Schools' Career-Focused Education Initiative.
- "Widening student horizons: CBE, SAIT and industry work together". *The Calgary Herald*, 24 February 2003. Refers to Calgary Board of Education's Career Pathways program.
- "College education a great investment for students, society: Grads gain 14 per cent on investment". *The Edmonton Journal*, 4 February 2003.
- "Universities fight space crunch with lofty standards". *The National Post*, 13 January 2003.
- "Study: States' transfer policies must change". *Community College Times*, 1 October 2002.
- "Third of Students Transfer Before Gaining Degrees, Education Dept. Study Finds" *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 19 December 2002.
- "Study: Majority of students aim to transfer". *Community College Times*, 7 January 2003, Vol. XIV, No. 25.
- "New Study Examines Reasons for Leaving College Early". *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 2 December 2002.
- "Strengthening Accessibility and Excellence: A Roundtable on Post-Secondary Education" Knowledge Matters. Government of Canada: Human Resources Development Canada. [www.hrdc-drhc.gc.ca/cp-ps/sl-ca/events-activities/summary-resume/strengthening.shtm](http://www.hrdc-drhc.gc.ca/cp-ps/sl-ca/events-activities/summary-resume/strengthening.shtm) 17 January 2003.
- "Making a Difference". *The University of Lethbridge Legend*, January 2003, Vol. 2, Issue 5. ACAT member, Peter Haney, is profiled by the U of L.

The Executive Officer invited members to forward articles of interest that could be included in future agenda packages.

The Chair again expressed her thanks to Concordia University College of Alberta for hosting the meeting and to President Richard Kraemer and Dr. Richard Willie for their remarks on the strategic directions of the College.

It was MOVED and SECONDED that the meeting be adjourned.

CARRIED

The next meeting will take place on 11 June 2003.

### Post-Secondary Representatives on Science 10-12 Committee

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