



Alberta Council on Admissions and Transfer

30 September 2003
Portage College, Lac La Biche

PRESENT: Lucille Walter (Chair), Shirley Barg, Ed Behnke, Fred Carnew, Catherine Eddy, Matthew Glass, Gretchen Hess, Judith Hughes, Gord Nixon (morning only), Lynne Mulder, Raja Panwar, Marilyn Patton (Executive Offer), Marena Fakli (Manager), Kyra Kubrak (Production Assistant)

ABSENT: Peter Haney, Vance MacNichol, Kevin Paul, Jean Valgardson

The Chair welcomed members to Portage College, Lac La Biche, and reported that regrets were expressed from Peter Haney, Jean Valgardson, Vance MacNichol and Kevin Paul. The Chair introduced Kyra Kubrak, Production Assistant, and welcomed her to her first ACAT meeting. Kyra is ACAT's first contact with Contact Persons and their Assistants, with respect to the Transfer Guide database, and has a major role in production of the *Alberta Transfer Guide*, web-site maintenance and telephone and e-mail inquiries from students.

1. Presentation from Portage College, Lac La Biche

The Chair introduced Mr. Bill Persley, President. Mr. Persley extended a warm welcome to the members of ACAT, and noted that as Campus Alberta grows, the need for transfer will continue to grow. Mr. Persley introduced Mr. Ralph Troschke, VP, Student and College Services. In keeping with its practice to invite the host institution to make a presentation, Mr. Troschky introduced members to Portage College and provided an overview of its metamorphosis from Alberta Vocational College to its current mandate, and an indication of its planned direction in the next few years.

The Chair thanked Mr. Troschky for his presentation, and offered congratulations on the momentum Portage College is achieving.

2. Minutes, 11 June 2003

It was MOVED and SECONDED that the minutes of 11 June 2003 be adopted.

CARRIED

3. Items Arising From the Minutes

Concerns/Recommendations from Glenn Keeler at The King's University College

The Chair explained that since ACAT now invites the host institution to make a presentation about the institution and raise any transfer issues, it is important that ACAT discuss the issues and take action as warranted.

At The King's University College presentation, 11 June 2003, three concerns or recommendations were presented by the ACAT Contact Person for King's:

- ACAT could play a stronger role by monitoring how institutions follow ACAT's policies and procedures when considering a decision to accept or reject a course for transfer. It is a "terrifying prospect" for a small institution to see ACAT's mediation. Therefore, he suggested that ACAT audit instances where transfer agreements were denied to ensure the policies and procedures are being followed.
- Computing science would benefit from a program articulation process.
- Residency requirements affect transfer success. When the computing science department of a receiving institution states that a certain number of senior courses must be taken only at the receiving institution, equivalent courses at a sending institution are not transferable. On this issue, one member suggested that ACAT might consider studying what percentage of students have 'credits extra to degree' because of residency requirements, and consider if this is a hindrance to students.

The Chair invited members to comment on these concerns and to recommend if and how the Council should proceed.

Regarding the first point (the possibility of auditing instances where transfer is denied, or perhaps doing a random audit on some instances where transfer is denied), members suggested that ACAT should continue to be the facilitator, to provide assistance to institutions, because in the end the decision to accept a course for transfer is a decision of the receiving institution. Members queried the magnitude of the problem, and when told that only one formal mediation had ever occurred, wondered if the process should be reviewed to determine if there are instances where mediation isn't undertaken despite a need. The Executive Officer suggested that the Secretariat review rejected agreements and report back to Council.

Members agreed that the question should be posed at the annual Committee of Contact Persons meeting, to determine if Contact Persons perceive a need for a monitoring process or an improved mediation process.

Regarding the second point, on whether to strike a computing science articulation committee, members commented that:

- In computing science programs institutions tend to try to have original programs, not duplicate programs. This originality may increase confusion about transferability.
- Computing science programs are also areas where curriculum is rapidly evolving, (short shelf life on transfers) and where there are often fundamental differences about the way in which students should be taught in the first two years.
- Some of the issues are around prerequisites and differences in prerequisites from one institution to another. An articulation committee might be worthwhile to have just to clarify the differences.

Members agreed that the question should be posed at the annual Committee of Contact Persons meeting, to obtain Contact Persons' input.

Regarding the third point, residency requirements, members commented that institutions have the right to set residency requirements. Residency requirements can be problem, particularly in programs where there is a high area of specialization. Students may need a higher level of awareness of program requirements regarding transfer.

The Executive Officer commented that some information might be available next year as a result of the department's Graduate Student Survey which will have questions pertaining to transfer, including questions about what credit students got and whether they got what they expected. If they didn't get the credit they expected, one reason might be that the course(s) didn't transfer because they were extra to degree.

At The King's University College presentation, The King's Contact Person had demonstrated how their Web site retrieves agreements directly from ACAT's database. He raised a concern about the slowness of a particular query function of the ACAT database. This has been resolved by the ACAT Secretariat, and an ACAT logo included so that the ACAT database appears as the source of the information, when queried by outside searches of this nature.

ACAT response re Bill 43

Members were provided with a copy of the letter providing feedback on Bill 43 that was sent to the Assistant Deputy Minister, Adult Learning Division.

ACAT's Annual Report and Business Plan

Since the last meeting, both reports were finalized, and members were provided with the Web site address where both documents can be obtained.

eLearnAlberta

This group has been renamed eCampusAlberta. They will provide a presentation at the Committee of Contact Persons meeting, since it is important for prospective receiving institutions to hear about this initiative, and for ACAT to be involved. Two ACAT members, Lynne Mulder and Gord Nixon, are on the eCampusAlberta management committee. They report that the site will be launched with 40 courses on 1 October 2003. See www.ecampusalberta.ca for more information.

Prairie Bible College

At the June meeting, members agreed to accept Prairie Bible College into the transfer system as a sending institution. It has formally agreed to ACAT's principles, policies and procedures and Douglas Lewis has been appointed as the College's first ACAT Contact Person.

4. Chair's Report

The Chair referred to the agenda backgrounder, and highlighted a few activities:

On behalf of ACAT, the Chair attended the CABAC (Campus Alberta Board of Accreditation and Coordination) consultation for post-secondary institution representatives, student groups and faculty groups on 28 August 2003. Some ACAT members and Secretariat staff were also there. A copy of the agenda was provided for members' information. The results of the consultation will inform the development of regulations regarding the proposed CABAC, included in Bill 43. A smaller group of volunteers expects to have continued consultation with the department as Bill 43 progresses.

Members who had attended the CABAC consultation commented that this had been one of the better focus groups they had attended, and that considerable work had obviously been done by the department to prepare for the session.

In the Secretariat's Report it was noted that Shirley Barg and Matthew Glass were reappointed for a further one-year term.

The Secretariat is now collecting data for the DAD (Duplicate Application Detection) Report, and for the Transfer Patterns Report.

The Secretariat is currently recruiting for a new Manager, Policy and Planning, as Patti Papirnik has moved to another position in government.

5. DeVry Institute of Technology – Calgary, *Transfer Guide*

At the 11 June 2003 meeting, members passed a motion to defer until the September meeting the request of DeVry Institute of Technology – Calgary, to be included as a receiving institution in the *Transfer Guide*.

For the information of members, included in the background information was a document outlining the accreditation process that the Private Colleges Accreditation Board (PCAB) would have followed in order to recommend accreditation by the Minister of Learning for three degree programs offered by DeVry - Calgary.

Two members who were unable to attend provided their support for a motion to accept DeVry-Calgary's request.

The Chair clarified that if the motion to include DeVry – Calgary were defeated the next order of business would be to articulate the rationale for the decision that would be in keeping with ACAT's principles.

The following motion from the 11 June 2003 meeting was presented:

It was MOVED and SECONDED that ACAT approve the inclusion of DeVry Institute of Technology – Calgary as a receiving institution in the next edition of the *Transfer Guide*.

CARRIED

Several members spoke in favour of the motion.

At the 11 June meeting, members had asked the Secretariat to provide a sample version of how DeVry Institute of Technology – Calgary would appear in the *Alberta Transfer Guide*. Sample pages were provided for information.

At the 11 June meeting, members had asked the Secretariat to provide draft "marketing" statements that could be provided to new sending or receiving institutions. Members discussed the sample statements and indicated that definitions of the phrases, sending institution and receiving institution, should be provided. Members agreed that if they were able to suggest shorter versions of the statements, they would provide them to the Secretariat. The statements would also be presented to Contact Persons for their comments.

6. Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition

The Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC) (PEP) Steering Committee on Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) has completed some of its initial work. That work includes the following:

- Create an annotated bibliography of current PLAR research in Canada
- Establish two focus groups (Saskatchewan and Ontario), for the purpose of vetting survey questions among colleges and university faculty and staff, to determine the appropriateness and focus of the inquiry,
- Administer an electronic survey in April 2003, and
- Provide short snapshots of the provinces and territories regarding their policies and initiatives.

The survey has been completed, the data collected, and the Steering Committee has reviewed the results and prepared a report to CMEC.

The Chair is a member of the National Advisory Committee for the Fifth National Forum on Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition which will be held in Winnipeg, Manitoba on 19 – 22 October 2003. The Chair reported that in an effort to increase the national profile of ACAT, and recognize the relevance of PLAR to its work, ACAT contributed financially to this Forum. ACAT's sponsorship will be acknowledged at the Forum.

For the conference and for the CMEC study, the Chair submitted a brief snapshot of PLAR information. In preparing the snapshot for the Conference, the Chair discovered that very little change has occurred since ACAT compiled the document "Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition: Policies and Procedures at Selected Post-Secondary Institutions" several years ago. As a result, ACAT had decided in June to activate its Advisory Committee on PLAR. A small steering committee has been formed to draft new terms of reference for the committee. Fred Carnew will be an ACAT representative on the committee.

The first meeting of the Advisory Committee will take place on November 17. Athabasca University will be hosting the meeting.

As well, the Chair nominated the Alberta Apprenticeship and Industry Training system for an award at the PLAR Conference in Winnipeg in October. The Chair reported that she would have also nominated Athabasca University as well, but had received mis-information that Athabasca had already received an award.

7. CMEC Working Group on Credit Transfer – Summary and Principles

ACAT's Executive Officer represents Alberta on the Working Group on Credit Transfer under the auspices of the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC). At previous meetings she has reported on the work undertaken to compare and assess the state of transfer in all provinces. A summary paper was provided for members. 'Provincial Post-secondary Systems and Arrangements for Credit Transfer' provides an overview of the post-secondary system in each province or territory and outlines current initiatives with respect to transfer.

The Working Group continues to meet by telephone and is currently working on a possible research agenda. In addition to trying to determine the status of the Pan-Canadian Protocol on Transfer of University Credits (www.cmec.ca/postsec/transfability.stm) the group is leaning towards recommending that certain types of research be undertaken at the provincial or territorial level according to the needs of that jurisdiction. Currently the three being discussed are:

- Transfer student profiles (who they are, their academic performance, etc.)
- Costs and benefits of transfer
- Studies of demand for transfer

The group would also like to see a Pan-Canadian Web site where best practices would be shared.

The research topics will be discussed at CMEC in Newfoundland.

At the last Council meeting, the Executive Officer undertook to ask Contact Persons for their comments on the CMEC principles. A report on the response to the principles was provided. Contact Persons were not in favour of a large database with course by course agreements across Canada, rather, they would be in favour of provincial systems linked interprovincially.

ACAT last reviewed its principles, policies and procedures in 1993 on the recommendation of a subcommittee of ACAT. Given the need to review them again in relation to the Pan-Canadian principles and the developments in post-secondary education locally and nationally since 1993, a new subcommittee was struck to review the principles and make recommendation to the full Council. At the meeting, Matthew Glass, Lynne Mulder, and Gretchen Hess volunteered to serve on the subcommittee.

The Chair requested that Gretchen Hess provide more information about the UofA's new policy regarding student transfer. Dr. Hess indicated that:

- The UofA supports transfer and the CMEC principles of transfer but is concerned about the principle where neither transfer nor direct entry students should be disadvantaged.
- The UofA is changing its policy on student transfer because it believes that direct entry students are being disadvantaged by students transferring in from other institutions at the 3rd and 4th year level, and because it is unable to provide space for an increased number of students.
- Next year the UofA will no longer guarantee admission at the minimum average of 2.0 for transfer students into general arts and general science programs (non-quota), although the final minimum average has not yet been determined. The policy will apply to internal and to external transfer students.
- In a quota faculty, a set number of students per year are admitted into the program. Then the top applicants are taken to fill those spaces.
- Other quota programs have transfer agreements with institutions, with agreements to accept a certain number of students from a certain institution at a certain time in the program. Again, the top applicants are taken to fill the spaces. Although the UofA has sometimes accepted more students than the quota per institution, it may be necessary in the future to limit the number of students who are accepted to the actual quota per institution.

- The UofA is working out how to communicate these changes to achieve transparency, and since the admission GPA fluctuates, is trying to determine how to communicate a fluctuating and rising GPA, recognizing that actual admissions are based on the caliber of students who apply in that year.
- The UofA recognizes the need to clearly communicate its decision to transfer institutions and to high schools.

Members commented that the Learning Commission heard the frustration of students who were unable to predict what GPA they would need to enter a program. Members agreed that this policy change at the UofA has large implications because of the number of students who attempt to enter these programs in the two faculties, although it is possible that it will be perceived to have a greater impact than it actually does have. A comprehensive public information program to communicate this change is necessary.

Dr. Hess also provided information about the potential transfer of Augustana University College to the University of Alberta. Although the UofA Board of Governors has approved the transfer in principle, the final decision rests on a commitment from the Minister of Learning to provide financial support.

8. Secondary – Post-Secondary Articulation

(a) ACAT Science Articulation Committee

At the previous meeting, Council agreed to establish a secondary to post-secondary Science articulation committee. Volunteers for the committee, particularly volunteers who can speak to the broader science curriculum, are still required.

Raja Panwar reported that the changes to science curriculums are considered to be minor. For example, a little more organic chemistry will be added to the chemistry curriculum. He noted that relevant documents are published on Alberta Learning's Web site.

(b) ACAT Social Studies Articulation Committee

The first meeting of the secondary to post-secondary Social Studies Articulation Committee was held on 10 April. In mid August, the Chair and Executive Officer met with Shirley Douglas, Social Studies program manager to receive an update on development of the new curriculum. She reported that the grade 10-1 and 10-2 curriculums are drafted and consultations with stakeholders on the high school curriculum are to begin in mid October. Social Studies Articulation Committee members will be invited to attend any consultation they choose.

When the consultations are complete, the committee is expected to meet to review a rough draft of the grade 12 curriculum, some resources and a prototype of the diploma exam. Our plan is to have a report containing the Committee's recommendations ready for sending to post-secondary institutions in early 2005, a full-year before implementation at the grade 10 level.

Raja Panwar briefly reviewed the proposed content of the Social Studies curriculum.

9. ACAT Communications Plan

The ACAT communications plan is to increase awareness of the work of ACAT in the learning system and how students can most effectively take advantage of the admissions and transfer system to make the most of their learning experience.

Since the last meeting a small focus group was held with high school students at a high school in Edmonton. Reaction to the graphic design was positive, with students expressing interest and confirming the appropriateness of the graphic design, and also suggesting improvements to the wording.

At this time, the first phase of materials – a bookmark, poster and display are being created, in time for fall conferences, and will also be presented to the Committee of Contact Persons meeting in October. Other materials, such as an updated Web site and brochure will be rolled out in other phases. Evaluation tools are also being developed.

Members provided distribution ideas for the materials, recommended providing copies of bookmarks to Alberta Learning displays, and suggested banner ads and newsletter ads also be developed.

10. Alberta Transfer Guide 2003-2004

Transfer agreements are 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 to work with institutions to prepare the next edition of the printed *Alberta Transfer Guide*.

Because of the complexity of high school curriculum changes in Ontario, in particular, the Secretariat convened a short teleconference with individuals from Alberta's universities and private university colleges in order to finalize the "Other Provinces 2002-2003 Grade 12-level Subjects Acceptable for Admission to Alberta Universities and Private University Colleges".

The *Alberta Transfer Guide 2003-2004* was produced over the period of February – May 2003. 4800 copies were printed and distributed to post-secondary institutions and high schools in Alberta, as well as to post-secondary institutions in Saskatchewan and British Columbia. Notification of the availability of the 2003-2004 agreements via the *Online Alberta Transfer Guide* was forwarded to institutions in other provinces.

Highlights from the 2003-2004 *Transfer Guide* included:

- The UofA Faculty of Agriculture, Forestry and Home Economic renegotiated all program agreements to make the agreements more precise.
- Both Northern Lakes College and Portage College have begun to offer more courses at the first year university-level and are working out more transfer agreements.
- At time of printing, the printed *Guide* showed about 29,208 transfer agreements. Since the published *Guide*, the database has increased by a further 630 agreements.
- The number of agreements involving applied degrees has increased from 10 in the 1999-2000 *Guide*, to 26 in the 2003-2004 *Guide*.

Kyra Kubrak staffs the Infoline, and receives the questions from the public about transfer. She reported that:

- The majority of questions are now by email.
- Students are using the *Online Alberta Transfer Guide* more.
- Students' questions are more comprehensive and involved.
- University to university transfer questions are now the most common. Students must be informed about the pan-Canadian protocol, and directed to contact the institution.
- University to college transfer questions are also more common.
- Greater numbers of out of province questions, such as British Columbia transfer to Alberta, or reverse, are being noted.
- More questions are coming from the institutions themselves, often on behalf of students.
- More questions are being received from international students, even in other languages.
- Webtrends indicates the use of the *Online Guide* is increasing, but we can't track who is using the *Guide*. Some of the institutions are requesting fewer copies of the printed *Guide*.

The Secretariat plans to reduce the number of published *Guides*. At the Committee of Contact Persons meeting, the Contact Persons will be asked to determine how many print copies they continue to need. At the previous Contact Persons meeting, the Secretariat was advised that print copies continue to be required, particularly for advising functions. The Secretariat plans to include a response-back card in the next *Guide*, so that recipients can remove their information from the distribution, where appropriate.

Some of the colleges, Mount Royal for example, provide a mini *Guide*. The Secretariat customizes a booklet and provides a camera ready copy to Mount Royal's specifications. This option is available to any institution.

Members commented that every institution is in the same debate with respect to their calendar, over preferred format, and which version is "legal" version. It's very difficult to use a Web site in a way that an advisor would use a paper calendar. Print, web and compact disk versions have not brought costs down, but instead made information more easily available to different people.

11. Committee of Contact Persons meeting

To facilitate communication both among the institutions as well as with ACAT itself, in 1976 the Council established a network of post-secondary institutional representatives called "Contact Persons". Presently this network of Contact Persons includes a representative from each of 36 institutions. An updated list of Contact Persons was circulated.

Each year, the Chair and Executive Officer meet with Contact Persons and their helpers to discuss issues of importance to the work of ACAT. The 2003 meeting will be held in Edmonton on 29 October, and will be hosted by the University of Alberta.

The draft agenda indicates that a Best Practices in Transfer subcommittee might be formed.

In commenting about the scope and potential membership of the committee, members commented that it is impossible to ensure that all faculty know about the transfer system and the impact of potential changes. In fact, it's necessary that certain "filter points" in each institution know. This might be the associate deans in each faculty and some of the people in the faculty office.

Dr. Hess recommended that one of three associate deans from the UofA be invited to participate. The associate deans recommended speak publicly about the need for good transfer agreements, and have recent experience in negotiating transfer agreements.

Members concluded that it would be helpful to generate a list of categories for best practice development, which might include:

- Setting up a new program
- Becoming a new institution in the transfer system
- Negotiating block transfer agreements, and
- Negotiating an agreement with an institution in a different sector.

Members are encouraged to email the Secretariat with other suggestions.

The Chair thanked the University of Alberta for agreeing to host the Committee of Contact Persons meeting this year, which includes hosting the Registrar's Conference the following day at the UofA Conference Centre.

12. Post-Secondary Transitions in Alberta 2000/2001

For five years, ACAT has collaborated with partners in Alberta Learning to study the transitions that Grade 12 students make as they enroll in post-secondary programs. The Transitions Study titled: "Post-Secondary Transitions in Alberta: 2000/2001" is the latest publication resulting from the collaboration. Members were provided with a draft copy, which was to be returned to the Secretariat at the end of the meeting. The ACAT Secretariat will distribute the document, once approved by the Minister, to participating post-secondary institutions and ACAT members.

Members requested that a presentation about the Transitions Study be made at the next meeting. They are interested in knowing what policy and directions might result from it. The Secretariat requested that members email any specific questions they may wish to have answered prior to the presentation.

13. Items for Information and Discussion

- "Alberta post-secondary numbers at the bottom", *Red Deer Advocate*, 5 July 2003.
- "Higher Learning 101", the *Edmonton Journal, Education Supplement*, 10 August 2003.
- "UofA approves Augustana merger: Takeover would alter character, standards of Camrose college", the *Edmonton Journal*, 21 June 2003.

- “Colleges want power to grant degrees: Students like environment but want credentials too”, the *Edmonton Journal*, 16 August 2003.
- “‘A’ students bear brunt of strained system: ‘Paradoxically, we’re treating an opportunity to train a generation as a problem’: Enrolment crunch”, *National Post*, 28 July 2003.
- “Universities have greater expectations: Enrolment crunch: On track to require 90% average for arts and science”, the *National Post*, 18 August 2003.
- “Post-secondary squeeze hits students hard: Qualified applicants go begging as colleges, university hit capacity”, *Calgary Herald*, 8 September 2003.
- “Postsecondary Education Participation Survey”, Statistics Canada Web site

The Chair again expressed her thanks to Ed Behnke and Portage College for hosting the meeting and to President Persley and Ralph Troschky for their remarks on the strategic direction of the College.

It was MOVED and SECONDED that the meeting be adjourned.

CARRIED