



34th Annual Report 2008 - 2009



Alberta Council on Admissions and Transfer

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Chair's Report



The Honourable Doug Horner
Minister of Advanced Education and Technology
342 Legislature Building
Edmonton, Alberta
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Dear Minister Horner:

On behalf of the Alberta Council on Admissions and Transfer (ACAT) and in accordance with ACAT's Terms of Reference, I have the honour of providing you with the *34th Annual Report* for the year ending March 31, 2009.

Alberta's post-secondary institutions continue to be strongly committed to Alberta's transfer system and to the principle that a student should not be required to repeat previous learning experiences in which competence has been demonstrated. Council's work revolves around matters that assist learners in their quest for lifelong learning. The 34th edition of the *Alberta Transfer Guide* demonstrates the ways in which post-secondary institutions cooperate and collaborate for the benefit of learners.

We continue to develop a new governance model for ACAT that will strengthen our commitment to serving learners and respecting the roles of member institutions. The ACAT Council looks forward to implementation in the 2009-2010 academic year.

We are pleased to update our progress implementing the ACAT communication plan which is designed to raise stakeholder awareness. The plan included a rebranding of ACAT to "Transfer Alberta" and a migration of the Transfer Alberta information to the Alberta Learning Information Service (ALIS).

Thanks to the ongoing efforts of our network of "Contact Persons", comprised of representatives from each of the 36 member institutions, we continue to see the number of transfer agreements in Alberta grow. The *Online Alberta Transfer Guide* now contains over 29,000 active and over 39,000 grandfathered transfer agreements.

In November 2008, ACAT sponsored and presented at the *Canadian Association of Prior Learning Assessment (CAPLA)* conference in Banff. The meeting marked the launch of the *Advancing Prior Learning and Recognition (PLAR) in Alberta: An Action Plan*. Since the CAPLA meeting a PLAR Manager has been hired to begin the initial implementation steps over the next two years and Council will be following this work closely.

We have been actively engaged with Councils in Alberta and Saskatchewan to identify mechanisms to facilitate transfer between institutions in our respective provinces. ACAT also continues to play a lead role on the national scene.

On behalf of ACAT, I would like to acknowledge the contribution of the post-secondary institutions which are part of Alberta's transfer system as they develop and use ways and means of facilitating smooth transitions for students. I would also like to thank the Ministry for the support provided by the Secretariat and the Department. I look forward to our work over the next year to help facilitate transitions for learners and to realize the Campus Alberta vision.

Sincerely

Ron Woodward

Chair



Vision

ACAT assists learners by increasing their access to and mobility within Alberta's post-secondary system through a nationally and inter-nationally recognized admissions and transfer system.

Mission

The mission of the Alberta Council on Admissions and Transfer (ACAT) is to support evolution of Campus Alberta by being a catalyst for beneficial change and an advocate for learners in the areas of post-secondary admission and transfer.

ACAT also plays an active role in the implementation of these policies through monitoring, facilitation and research. Council has a continuing responsibility for facilitating improvement in communications and working relationships across all institutions regarding admission and the awarding of transfer credit.

To fulfill its mission, ACAT is engaged in the following activities:

Leadership

- Including the formation of policies and procedures whereby effective transitions and prior learning assessment and recognition are supported.

Communication

- Including continuous improvement of communication on admissions and transfer matters.

Publication:

- Including a Business Plan, Newsletters, and the annual Transfer Patterns Report.
- Maintenance of the *official online Alberta Transfer Guide* and the production and distribution of the printed annual *Alberta Transfer Guide*.

Facilitation:

- Ensuring that the best interests of learners are served.

Applied Research:

- Relating to the admission and transfer of learners throughout the Alberta Transfer System.

Highlights from Strategic Priorities

ACAT has identified strategic priorities to respond to the significant opportunities and challenges to achieve its goals and strategies for 2008-2011.

The strategic priorities described below were identified as key tasks for Council over the past year in addition to the important ongoing core businesses of ACAT.

Learner Transitions

ACAT continued to provide leadership to ensure that secondary to post-secondary admission issues were addressed. Through participation in and facilitation of a number of articulation committees, ACAT works with Alberta Education to ensure secondary courses prepare students to be successful in their post-secondary studies.

National Leadership

ACAT continued its work with other Canadian jurisdictions through its leadership role in the Council of Ministers of Education Canada (CMEC) Working Group on Credit Transfer.

Council hosted the first Tri-Council meeting in Edmonton with representatives attending from the British Columbia Council on Admissions and Transfer (BCCAT) and the Saskatchewan Council on Admissions and Transfer (SaskCAT). Alberta also participated in the second Tri-Council meeting in Vancouver in February 2009 where a work plan was developed identifying opportunities for collaboration. ACAT is committed to continuing to work closely with these partners on joint initiatives in the future, in part because of learner mobility factors between the three jurisdictions.

ACAT Strategic Direction 2008 - 2009



Council also prepared a draft policy regarding inclusion of British Columbian institutions in the Alberta Transfer System, and circulated the draft policy to members of the Alberta Transfer System for feedback.

ACAT also continues to be a contributing member of the Pan-Canadian Consortium on Admissions and Transfer (PCCAT), including participation on the PCCAT Research Subcommittee which is proceeding with research about interprovincial mobility.

ACAT's Profile

ACAT took significant strides towards raising the awareness of ACAT through implementation of several initiatives from ACAT's strategic communications plan, such as, the distribution of promotional materials to high schools and post-secondary institutions, the re-brand of ACAT as TransferAlberta.ca and housing ACAT information on the Alberta Learning Information Service (ALIS) website.

Presentations were made at a number of local, provincial and national conferences and workshops.

Recognition of Prior Learning

ACAT sponsored and presented at the Canadian Association of Prior Learning Assessment Conference in Banff, Alberta in November 2008. More than 300 participants attended and the *Advancing Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) in Alberta: An Action Plan* was officially launched at the conference.

A manager has been hired on a two year secondment to begin implementation of this Action Plan.

Research

A web usability survey was conducted to assist in the development of a redesigned ACAT website. Student focus groups were held to obtain learner feedback about the current ACAT website, its search tool, and changes to ACAT's online resources and content that students would like to see on the ALIS website.

In collaboration with the Alberta Transfer System member post-secondary institutions, the annual Transfer Patterns Study was completed for students registered in Fall 2008. Key findings from this study include an increase of 24% within-province transfers, and an increase of 20% into-province transfers including learners transferring from other countries.

Goals and Accomplishments



Core Business One
Admission

Admission practices and policies at post-secondary institutions are clearly articulated.

Goal 1

Facilitate the development and maintenance of fair and equitable admission practices and policies at post-secondary institutions.

Outcomes

1.1 Students make smooth transitions from secondary to post-secondary and post-secondary to post-secondary studies.

1.2 Students have improved opportunities to apply for admission.

Accomplishments

Outcome 1.1

- Continued secondary to post-secondary articulation meetings in Mathematics.
- Continued the secondary to post-secondary articulation meetings in Languages other than English.
- Reviewed Alberta's articulation model and those in other jurisdictions such as British Columbia.
- Continued post-secondary to post-secondary articulation committees in Computing Science, Biological Sciences, and Engineering.
- Continued to consult with the Provincial Academic Upgrading coordinators and published charts outlining acceptance of upgrading courses for admission to post-secondary programs.
- Joined an Alberta Education committee designed to look at the future of Arts Education courses.
- Developed proposed plan for launching additional articulation committees in Alberta for the 2009-2010 year.
- SharePoint Site developed and utilized as an information repository for articulation committees.

Outcome 1.2

- Strategic work with Institutions will commence with 2009-2010 year.

Goals and Accomplishments



Core Business Two *Transfer*

Facilitate agreements among post-secondary institutions to acknowledge and recognize appropriate previous learning experience.

Goal 2

Learners receive appropriate educational credit as they transfer from one Alberta program to another.

Outcomes

- 2.1 An effective and efficient student transfer system.
- 2.2 Prior learning assessments are given system-wide recognition.

Accomplishments

Outcome 2.1

- Updated the Online Alberta Transfer Guide daily and published the hard copy Alberta Transfer Guide, pursuant to consultations with Alberta Transfer System members about the need for an ongoing hard copy guide.
- Saw a large increase of 1,794 active by-course transfer agreements for a total of 29,259.
- Added 13 by-program transfer agreements for a total of 813.
- Collaborated with 30 post-secondary institutions to compile the 2008 Transfer Patterns Report.
- Worked with Ministry representatives concerning the development of the Graduate Outcomes Survey specific to 2005 - 2006 transfer graduates.
- Provided training and orientation sessions to 18 post-secondary institution representatives.
- Worked with Information and Technology Management representatives concerning performance and functionality of the ACAT Contact Persons' transfer system and signed off a Business Case for a future redesign of the Transfer Agreement Archival and Retrieval System (TAARS).
- Worked with Red Crow Community College and its partner institutions to finalize a number of their transfer agreements for the 2009-2010 Transfer Guide.
- Business Case for Learner Progression Best Practices Research Project was developed and approved by Council. Survey instrument was developed and released. Actions were taken to form an Advisory Committee.
- Work commenced to develop a status report for Alberta "Members in good Standing".

Outcome 2.2

- Provided input into the development of Alberta Advanced Education and Technology's Action Plan concerning Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR).
- Sponsored and participated in the Canadian Association of Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (CAPLA) annual national conference, where over 300 participants observed the launch of Alberta's new Action Plan. Presented sessions on the highlights of the plan and ACAT's role in advancing PLAR.

Goals and Accomplishments



Core Business Three *Communication*

Ensure that learners and other stakeholders have timely and accurate information about institutions' admission requirements, course and program transfer options.

Goal 3

Learners have access to current, accurate information on admissions and transfer policies as well as course and program transfer opportunities, and are aware of the benefits of the admission and transfer system.

Outcomes

- 3.1 Information to assist high school and potential transfer students is available.
- 3.2 Albertans are aware of the benefits of our admissions and transfer system.

Accomplishments

Outcome 3.1

- Continued to work with post-secondary institutional partners to finalize transfer agreements within the On-Line Alberta Transfer Guide and the Alberta Transfer Guide for ACAT's annual Transfer Guide production process.
- Promoted the Alberta Transfer Guide through the *Learning Clicks* program and at numerous conferences.
- Worked with the *Alberta Learning Information Service (ALIS website)* web management team to develop an ACAT portal on the ALIS website. Commenced actions to rebrand ACAT promotional materials and distribute thousands of items across the province.
- The ACAT public website received 6,120,809 hits, an increase of 11.67% from the previous year.
- Continued to provide the Transfer Infoline services to learners and institutions by responding to 204 e-mail and telephone inquiries.
- Held focus groups with learners to obtain feedback regarding improvements to ACAT website and search tools.
- Implemented improvements identified in an earlier website usability survey including realignment of web pages and significant content revisions.

Outcome 3.2

- Delivered presentations to various groups including Learning Clicks Youth and Parent Ambassadors, Alberta Student Executive Council [formerly known as Alberta College and Technical Institute Student Executive Council (ACTISEC)] members, Educational Liaison Association of Alberta and ATA Guidance Counselors.

Goals and Accomplishments



Core Business Four *Influence*

Influence policy related to admission and transfer issues including assisting and advising other jurisdictions about the procedures for and benefits of establishing and maintaining an efficient and effective admissions and transfer system, and providing a forum for inter-institutional discussion of admissions and transfer issues.

Goal 4

ACAT influences policy decisions related to the admissions and transfer system and serves as a model for other jurisdictions.

Outcomes

- 4.1 Reinforce ACAT as the representative voice in policy development for the advanced education system on items related to Alberta admissions and transfer.
- 4.2 Alberta post-secondary institutions have a forum for inter-institutional discussion of admissions and transfer issues.
- 4.3 Provide advice and assistance to promote interprovincial portability of courses and programs.

Accomplishments

Outcome 4.1

- A Governance Review Subcommittee explored the structure and role of ACAT in order to enhance Council's leadership role in the areas of admission and transfer and provided advice to Minister Horner.
- ACAT's *Principles, Policies and Procedures* document reviewed and changes made to reflect alignment with Campus Alberta, including ACAT's mission and vision statements.
- Membership model and draft recruitment model were developed.
- ACAT Chair met with Minister Horner and Deputy Minister Trimbee in January 2009 concerning the further vision of Campus Alberta, ACAT's role, and Ministerial priorities.

Outcome 4.2

- Continued to provide an opportunity for round-table discussions of institutional issues at ACAT meetings.
- Invited the host institution for ACAT meetings to participate and discuss admission and transfer issues at their institutions.
- Coordinated the annual Contact Persons' meeting where 36 institutions and ACAT representatives discussed key transfer issues and identified opportunities for continuous improvement.
- ACAT Chair visited 13 member institutions to discuss issues, opportunities, and challenges.

Outcome 4.3

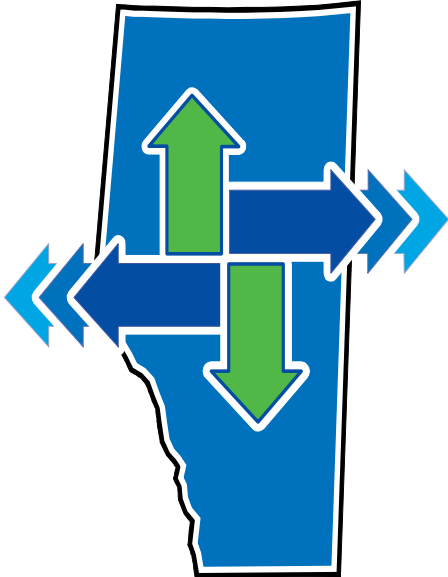
- ACAT Chair presented at the Quality Assurance Symposium, held in Quebec City, in June 2008.

Goals and Accomplishments



- Presented at the annual meeting of the Pan-Canadian Consortium on Admissions and Transfer (PCCAT) held in Toronto in June 2008.
- Supported a culture of interprovincial transfer by chairing the Credit Transfer Working Group and by participating in a PCCAT Research Subcommittee.
- Hosted the first meeting of the Tri-Councils (BCCAT, ACAT and SaskCAT) in Edmonton in September 2008
- Developed a draft policy regarding inclusion of British Columbia institutions in the Alberta Transfer System and circulated it to members of Alberta's Transfer System.
- ACAT Chair and Secretariat staff attended the Canadian Association for Prior Learning Assessment's (CAPLA) Fall Workshop held in Banff in November 2008.

Notes



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