

ALBERTA COUNCIL ON ADMISSIONS AND TRANSFER JULY 2010 NEWSLETTER

CHAIR'S UPDATE



It has been a productive year for ACAT and I am pleased to have the opportunity to update you on the exciting work that we have undertaken. Over this past year ACAT has continued its strong commitment to achieving the vision of Campus Alberta. This commitment is reflected by the collaborative work of ACAT and its member institutions which ensures Alberta has a strong learner centred transfer system.

During the past year ACAT has taken several steps to align itself with the pending *Alberta Public Agencies Governance Act (APAGA)*. Council has adopted its Mandate and Roles and Code of Conduct documents, both requirements of the APAGA. ACAT is also implementing its competency-based governance model.

The new model facilitates the expansion of Council to 17-20 voting members, and 2 non-voting members. This new design, which details specific competencies for all Council members, ensures more inclusive representation from across Alberta's post-secondary system. Alignment with APAGA coupled with ACAT's broad system wide representation, position ACAT as a cornerstone of the evolving Campus Alberta vision.

ACAT continues to support the collaborative work of post-secondary institutions in the Transfer System. In an effort to reinforce and enhance this collaborative culture ACAT established an articulation sub-committee to examine expanding the number of articulation committees in Alberta. With this aim in mind, the sub-committee has developed a new articulation model that will more effectively employ ACAT resources.

Additionally dialogue has taken place with First Nations institutions to broaden and strengthen relationships with the Aboriginal community. A significant step toward this goal has been discussion around the establishment of an Aboriginal Education articulation committee.

The implementation of Advanced Education and Technology's (AET) Advancing Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) in Alberta: an Action Plan is well underway. Work that occurred over the past year has been focused on laying the foundation to build capacity for PLAR in the future. Activities in 2009-10 included: a definition for PLAR was endorsed by AET, an environmental scan was completed providing a glimpse of the state of PLAR in the province, four PLAR Stakeholder Committee meetings were held, a new policy statement for reporting PLAR credits through the Learner and Enrolment Reporting System was approved, and PLAR-related workshops and courses were offered in Alberta by the Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology. Year two of the implementation promises to be equally productive.

This year's June 2010 Pan Canadian Consortium on Admissions and Transfer (PCCAT) meeting in Vancouver, British Columbia, saw 64 delegates from across Canada gather to exchange information on work and initiatives underway in their jurisdictions and at their institutions. In the coming weeks presentations delivered at PCCAT will be made available on the PCCAT website. I encourage you to visit www.pccat.ca for PCCAT news including information on this year's meeting. I am also happy to announce that at the conclusion of the meeting I assumed the role of Western Co-chair. I look forward to the opportunity to continue to champion the hard work and spirit of Alberta's TransferSystem as the PCCAT Western Co-chair.

On behalf of ACAT, I would like to acknowledge the contribution and collaboration of the post-secondary institutions which are part of Alberta's Transfer System. 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.

Regards,
Ron Woodward
Chair, ACAT

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CAMPUS ALBERTA

The Campus Alberta vision aims to ensure key stakeholders in the advanced education system work together to deliver seamless learning opportunities to Albertans. Campus Alberta partners include publicly-funded post-secondary institutions, the apprenticeship and industry training system, private providers, community-based organizations and industry all working to create accessible, affordable and quality lifelong learning opportunities for Albertans. Campus Alberta is driven by key principles including Learner-Centered, Collaborative, Accessible, Innovative and Responsive- these principles support the removal of barriers faced by learners of all ages, and foster lifelong participation in learning. The Ministry of Advanced Education and Technology provides long-term strategic direction to the evolution of Campus Alberta and works with partners to create a quality, globally recognized advanced learning system that is sustainable, resilient, and responsive to learner, economic, and social needs.

A mechanism that supports the Campus Alberta vision is the Campus Alberta Administration (CAA). Guided by the Campus Alberta Administration Governance Framework, CAA is tasked with facilitating and enhancing a collaborative environment by pursuing administrative operational efficiencies and leveraging synergies across the system. The Campus Alberta Administration Framework document is available on the Campus Alberta website (<http://www.advancededucation.gov.ab.ca/post-secondary/campusalberta/partnerships.aspx>)

Work is currently underway to develop a Campus Alberta visual identity. This visual identity will serve to establish a common marketing and communication approach that profiles the benefits and attributes of a collaborative and unified Campus Alberta system, and will signify quality assurance for post-secondary providers and learners.

In alleviating barriers and streamlining the learning process for Alberta learners, the Alberta Council on Admissions and Transfer exemplifies one of a number of achievements that demonstrate the strengths and benefits of Campus Alberta.

Campus Alberta is helping to build Alberta's next generation economy and is preparing the province for future success.

Produced by *Campus Alberta Partnerships*

ARTICULATION COMMITTEES

Articulation committees provide a forum for developing collegial relationships and enhancing communication between discipline-specific faculties from Alberta's post-secondary institutions. As the goal of articulation committees is to facilitate greater integration within the transfer system, ACAT aims to grow the number of committees in Alberta.

Currently there are five post-secondary to post-secondary articulation committees and five secondary to post-secondary committees.

At their May 4, 2009 meeting Council established an articulation subcommittee to examine methods and opportunities to further expand articulation committees between ACAT institutions.

To this end the subcommittee has developed a new articulation committee model that will facilitate the goal of expansion. Unlike the previous version, the new model limits ACAT Secretariat involvement to assisting in the formation and launch of new committees. After the inaugural meeting, the Chair, Vice-Chair, and committee members will be responsible for maintaining the committee and propelling its work and objectives. A communication linkage will be maintained with the ACAT Secretariat to ensure that Council is aware of any issues.

The subcommittee has identified two committees to pilot the new model: English and Aboriginal Education. Currently, there is progress toward identifying and gathering appropriate faculty across the transfer system from institutions that offer instruction in these two areas of study. Inaugural meetings for both pilot-committees are tentatively scheduled for the Fall of 2010.

ADVANCING PLAR IN ALBERTA: AN ACTION PLAN

The implementation of Advanced Education and Technology's (AET) Advancing Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) in Alberta: an Action Plan (hereafter referred to as the PLAR Action Plan) is well underway. Most of the ten action strategies in the PLAR Action Plan are currently under development. Here is a brief summary of the highlights of activities that occurred over the past year.

Standard Definition for PLAR

AET has endorsed the use of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) as an umbrella concept under which transfer credit, credential recognition, and PLAR are differentiated types of prior learning assessment. The definition for PLAR is:

Assessing and recognizing a person's knowledge and skills, acquired through non-formal and informal learning, in relation to a certain goal (for example, receiving credit in a post-secondary program, meeting professional licensure/certification requirements, or obtaining employment).

A PLAR assessment may include one or a combination of the following:

- Written challenge exam
- Oral exam or interview
- Performance assessment
- Product assessment
- Portfolio assessment

PLAR Meetings at Institutions

In May–September 2009, PLAR meetings were held at the Comprehensive Research and Academic Institutions, Baccalaureate and Applied Studies Institutions, Comprehensive Community Institutions, and Polytechnical Institutions, with the goal of initiating and setting the stage for the first phase of the implementation of the PLAR Action Plan. A report was written summarizing the discussions, providing a glimpse of the state of PLAR in Alberta. The report can be found at <http://aet.alberta.ca/post-secondary/policy/plar.aspx>. As part of the second phase of the implementation, PLAR meetings are now in progress with the Independent Academic Institutions and Specialized Arts and Culture Institutions.

PLAR Stakeholder Committee

In December 2009, a PLAR Stakeholder Committee (PSC) was established. The goal of the committee is to support the implementation of the PLAR Action Plan by providing expertise and guidance on the action strategies, and by promoting the implementation of the plan within each member's institution/organization and region. Four PSC meetings were held between December 2009 and May 2010, and have proven to be lively and productive.

Reporting PLAR Credits

In order to document Alberta's post-secondary institutions' activity in PLAR, as well as the mobility of learners who have been awarded PLAR credits, a new policy statement for reporting PLAR credits through the Learner and Enrolment Reporting System (LERS) has been approved: credits awarded for a course through PLAR will be considered equivalent to the credits earned by taking the course and will be reported through LERS.

Institutions currently use their own student information systems to track enrolments in courses and programs. Each institution uses this information to submit its annual enrolment report through LERS. By using LERS and the existing enrolment reporting process to report awarded PLAR credits, data and trends can be tracked. This also means that PLAR credits will be included in the institution's annual full load equivalent enrolment totals. The first LERS submissions that will include awarded PLAR credits will be in June-July 2011, reporting on the 2010/2011 academic year. (AET plans to have LERS ready to receive PLAR credit reporting for the 2009/2010 LERS submissions.)

PLAR Professional Development

The Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology (SIAST) has been contracted to offer two workshops and four courses on PLAR-related topics in Alberta. The workshops have been developed specifically for our Alberta audience, and the courses are from SIAST's Recognition of Prior Learning Practitioner distance program. The workshops are delivered in Calgary and Edmonton by SIAST facilitators. The courses are delivered using print-based correspondence and a message board. Each workshop and course was offered in winter 2010, and will be offered again in the 2010–11 academic year. All tuition and materials costs are covered by AET. Dates and registration details will be forthcoming for the 2010–11 offerings. Here are the names of the workshops and courses with the target audience in parenthesis:

- One-day, non-credit workshops:
 - Introduction to PLAR/RPL (institution faculty and staff)
 - Developing Authentic Assessments for RPL (mainly faculty; other institution staff, space permitting)
- Distance credit courses
 - Introduction to RPL (institution faculty and staff)
 - Advisory Services (student advisors)
 - Portfolio Development (faculty and CALCs)
 - Capacity Building (PLAR coordinators/facilitators)

For any questions or concerns regarding PLAR, please contact: PLAR Manager: Sonia Jevne at (780) 638-2887 or sonia.jevne@gov.ab.ca

CONTACT PERSONS MEETING

On October 30 2009, ACAT facilitated the Committee of Contact Persons' Annual Meeting, hosted at The Banff Centre. The meeting provided transfer system stakeholders an opportunity to network and collectively discuss admission and transfer issues which assists ACAT in improving processes within Alberta's Transfer System.

Mr. Calvin Barnes of the Alberta Post-Secondary Application System (APAS), delivered an presentation about the development of the single online application service and its role in facilitating a smoother admissions process for learners in Alberta. Dr. Frank Gelin, Director and Co-chair of the British Columbia Council on Admissions and Transfer, provided a presentation on students' transfer credit satisfaction and student mobility trends.

The next annual meeting will be held on October 22 2010, in Edmonton where NAIT has graciously agreed to provide the venue.

SITE VISITS

Ongoing institutional site visits are an important process through which ACAT is able to ensure that all users have the opportunity to contribute to the transfer system. These site visits and discussion they generate are institution-specific and work to facilitate dialogue related to concerns, progress, and opportunities for institutions within Alberta's Transfer System.

Since 2008, ACAT has planned a rotation of site visits within which most ACAT institutions have been visited by the ACAT Council Chair, Director, and Manager. As this rotation of site visits is completed, a new cycle is planned to ensure the consistency of progress and further enhancement of a smooth, learner-centered transfer system.

INSTITUTIONAL PROFILE: BLUE QUILLS FIRST NATIONS COLLEGE

Established in 1970, Blue Quills First Nations College remains one of four First Nations post-secondary institution ACAT members. Blue Quills offers its students the unique opportunity to maintain Indigenous culture and recognizes that the consequent positive experiences can be used to foster a hospitable environment for higher learning and growth. Blue Quills is committed to effectively preparing students for academic and personal success by recognizing the need for continuous development of transfer agreements and active participation in facilitating student mobility processes.

- Within Alberta's Transfer system, Blue Quills participates in agreements that foster several transferable courses, categorized within fifteen different areas of study.
- Since 2007 , ACAT Council includes representation from Mr. Vincent Steinhauer of Blue Quills First Nations College.

Blue Quills' efforts toward advancing student mobility are evident through their continuous development of important and relevant learning opportunities. Blue Quills' Social Work Diploma is an explicit example of its commitment to broad and flexible opportunities for the benefit of students. Processes to facilitate complete accreditation in areas of Social Work are being constantly negotiated with some of Alberta Universities. While the program encourages primary objectives of enhancing culture and facilitating indigenous solutions, the commitment to expand opportunities through transferability is significant.



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