



# **Alberta Council on Admissions and Transfer**

18 November 2002  
Grant MacEwan College

**PRESENT:** Lucille Walter (Chair), Shirley Barg, Ed Behnke, Catherine Eddy, Matthew Glass, Peter Haney, Gretchen Hess, Vance MacNichol, Carol McLean (for Rick Morrow), Kevin Paul, Marilyn Patton (Executive Officer), Marena Fakli (Manager), Patti Papirnik (Manager).

**ABSENT:** Judith Hughes, Rick Morrow, Lynne Mulder, Gord Nixon, Jean Valgardson

The Chair welcomed members to Grant MacEwan College.

The Chair reported that Judith Hughes, Lynne Mulder, Gord Nixon and Jean Valgardson had each expressed regret that they were unable to attend today's meeting.

## 1. Presentation from Grant MacEwan College

The Chair welcomed Mr. Alan Vladicka, Grant MacEwan College's Executive Director, Strategic Planning to the meeting. In keeping with its practice to invite the host institution to make a presentation, Mr. Vladicka was invited to give an overview of the challenges facing the College, highlight recent successes, and comment on the transfer system.

Mr. Vladicka focused his remarks on the challenges facing Grant MacEwan College (GMC). One key challenge is the rapidly increasing enrolment pressures. He remarked that since 1992/93, the College has experienced enrolment growth of 124% and the current capital facilities are full. The south campus has recently been renovated and expanded, and future growth of the downtown campus to the west of the current site is anticipated.

Mr. Vladicka spoke to the volatile state of post-secondary education in Alberta at the current time. The potential expansion of degree-granting status to colleges in general, and GMC specifically, raises new issues. He clarified GMC's position on this. Rather than being a "university wanna be", GMC desires to continue to be an institution which successfully responds to community need and demand. GMC believes that by offering a few selected degree programs, it can meet this community need.

One of GMC's strategic priorities is to expand access to post-secondary education. The past experience of responding to increased enrolment supports this. Not only are the raw student numbers increasing, but more and more students are indicating that GMC is their first choice. These students also indicate that their preference would be to complete their degree studies at GMC.

A greater number of occupations are requiring degrees and indicators suggest this trend will continue. Diplomas and certificates will continue to have their role as well, although diploma programs may be demanded less. The College wants to maintain a balance between diploma, certificate and degree programs.

Mr. Vladicka noted that Alberta produces well below the national average of baccalaureate degrees per capita. He commented that Alberta produces 17% fewer baccalaureate

degrees per 100,000 than the Canadian average. To sustain Alberta's competitive advantage and skilled workforce, this must increase.

Mr. Vladicka also noted that both University of Alberta (UofA) and University of Calgary (UofC) are reaching the limit of their ability to accommodate increasing numbers of students. He suggested that a city the size of Edmonton could support additional degree-granting institutions.

In summary, he stated that the College aspires to offer selected degrees in arts, sciences and commerce. The College will maintain its high commitment to face-to-face teaching. It does not desire to be a basic research institution nor does it desire to be a distance-learning site. The College's strength is its teaching/student community.

If any of these changes occur, it will affect transfer issues and roles of institutions. Grant MacEwan College is primarily a transfer (sending) institution at the present time. With enhanced degree-granting programs, the College would develop as a receiving institution, one that is as open as a receiving institution as they are as a sending institution. Maintaining good relationships with other institutions, particularly UofA, is vital to the College.

Mr. Vladicka offered to respond to questions from members. He was asked how many out-of-province students attend the College and he replied that it is currently about 10% of the student body. The College anticipates expanding its international enrolment. A residence on campus would help attract out-of-province and out-of-country students.

When asked about trends in program choice, Mr. Vladicka indicated that university transfer studies remain strong. The enrolment pattern stands today at 55% university transfer, 40% career studies, and 5-10% in preparatory studies. Maintaining this trend is a strategic priority of the College.

A member inquired if the strong enrolment pressures were having the effect of pushing admission grade point averages up. Mr. Vladicka responded that to date, the College has resisted using a grade point average to manage enrolment. Entrance requirements in career programs are largely determined by industry or labour market demand. In university transfer programs, the grade point average is the important admission criterion.

When asked if the College would attempt to match the requirements or composition of a degree at the UofA, Mr. Vladicka responded that this was not the case. The College is not endeavouring to mirror the UofA programs, but rather offer alternative, unique degree programs.

Another member asked what effect operating at near-capacity will have on diploma and certificate programs. Mr. Vladicka responded that there is still some capacity at Grant MacEwan. He summarized his comments with the statement that it is not the College's intent to pursue degree programming at the expense of career training.

The Chair thanked Mr. Vladicka for his presentation and responses to questions. In response to a member's request, he agreed to share a written version of his comments with the Chair for distribution to members.

Before proceeding with the meeting, the Chair directed members' attention to the agenda. She requested that an item be added to the agenda under Item #12, Other business. This topic is Legislative Change and the Effect on ACAT. In addition, another member asked to

add an item entitled, Rescheduling of Diploma Exams. With these additions the agenda was adopted.

2. Minutes, 26 September 2002

It was MOVED and SECONDED that the 26 September 2002 Council minutes be adopted as corrected. On page 2, a correction was made to the spelling of 'lose'. The amended sentence now reads, "ACAT must not lose sight of the need to facilitate such relationship-building activities".

CARRIED

3. Items arising from the Minutes

There were three items arising from the minutes of the 26 September 2002 meeting.

The Executive Officer provided an update of the Council of Ministers of Education Canada (CMEC) working group on credit transfer. The agenda package included a copy of the Ministerial Statement released at the CMEC meeting on 9 October. It outlines a set of principles to which the Ministers have agreed. These principles are very similar to ACAT's existing principles although Principle 5 calls for procedures for students to appeal credit transfer decisions. The Executive Officer will gather more information on the appeal practices in Alberta institutions. The Working Group has been asked to continue.

A second item arising from the minutes is the discussion of legislative review. At the last Council meeting, Phil Gougeon, Assistant Deputy Minister, discussed the review of the *Universities Act, Colleges Act, Technical Institutes Act* and *Banff Centre Act* which is currently underway. Council members directed the Chair to respond to the ADM's letter on behalf of ACAT. A copy of the 8 October 2002 letter was included in the agenda package. A member complimented the Chair on the thorough response prepared, indicating that it summarized the discussions and the complexities of the issues well.

The Executive Officer summarized the follow-up which has occurred with Mount Royal College since the last meeting. The issues Mount Royal College had identified in their presentation to ACAT concerned applied degrees, the common grading scale and academic policies about transfer admission grade point averages and acceptance of transfer grades.

4. ACAT Chair and Secretariat reports

The Chair provided a list of various meetings she had attended during the months of October and November. A written report from the Executive Officer was included with the agenda package.

The Chair reported on the presentation she made at a parent information night, co-hosted by the Calgary Board of Education and Bow Valley College. This was an informative meeting as it clearly showed that parents are particularly interested in how does transfer work, how well does it work and what are the current issues or difficulties in the transfer process?

On 4 October, the Chair and Executive Officer met with representatives of the Alberta TechPrep program to follow up on earlier discussions of how to make TechPrep articulation agreements better known across the post-secondary system. Using the ACAT

Web site was explored. It was reported that the program has hired a full-time articulation development officer.

The Executive Officer reported that recruitment is underway for a public member on Council. This individual will replace Harry Reding whose term ended on 9 November. A member suggested that all current members should take an active role in soliciting interested public members for the Council.

One of the topics at the recent Alberta Registrars' Conference was the implementation of the common grading scale. As institutions move from the 9-point scale, issues with respect to the acceptance of minimal passing grades and the variance in how descriptors of grades are used, particularly for 'satisfactory', are being raised. The Chair noted that since autonomous institutions make decisions about acceptance for admission or transfer credit on their own, there is little ACAT can do to simplify this. However, members noted that it is up to the specific institution to make their practices, such as what a satisfactory grade is, and the grade needed for transfer, well known to the public.

The Executive Officer reported that she has had discussions with officials from Saskatchewan regarding the development of an on-line transfer guide. As Lakeland College serves students from Alberta and Saskatchewan, she has procured an invitation for the College to be part of these discussions.

#### 5. Committee of Contact Persons meeting

Each year, the Chair and Executive Officer meet with Contact Persons and their assistants to discuss issues of importance to the work of ACAT. The 2002 meeting was held in Grande Prairie on 23 October and was hosted by Grande Prairie Regional College. In preparation of the meeting, Contact Persons had been asked to respond to a number of issues. These results, which were summarized by the Secretariat, were provided to members.

Each Contact Person was asked to report on whether or not his/her institution has a policy with respect to notification of changes to admission and program requirements in advance of their implementation. The typical practice is to give one year's notice and to use the institution's calendar to communicate the change.

Contact Persons were also asked to provide a sample transcript of a student who had obtained credit toward his/her credential from one or more Alberta post-secondary institutions and whose transcript shows how well the course transfer process worked. These sample transcripts will be used to develop a research proposal to examine the success of the transfer process.

Contact Persons were also asked to outline the steps taken at his/her institution to ensure that transfer agreements are kept current. The Executive Officer noted that several institutions use the opportunity of calendar review to update agreements. She stressed the importance to the integrity of the transfer system of ensuring that agreements are kept current. During discussion of maintenance of agreements, one Council member recommended that annually a summary of all calendar changes for each institution be sent to ACAT and ACAT Contact Persons. Another member recommended that each agreement be designed with a sunset period, a date at which the agreement is automatically reviewed for currency. There is a perception at at least one receiving institution that not all institutions are diligent enough about notifying their partner institutions

about changes that might affect existing transfer agreements. Citing changes to the University of Alberta's Physical Education activity courses as an example, G. Hess noted that, despite notification of these significant changes, the transfer institution courses had not changed nor had the agreements. Students were being negatively impacted. Another member cautioned that it is not possible to react to such changes for the following academic year if the notification isn't received in advance of calendar change deadlines at the sending institution.

With respect to substantial changes to agreements, it was also proposed that when a sending or receiving institution makes such a change, they should communicate with the relevant partner institution the exact nature of the change, the date of implementation, and a two year date after which the agreement would be null and void if not renewed. Although members supported the intent of the proposal, it was noted that this would greatly increase the workload of and resources needed by receiving institutions, in particular, and potentially create further bottlenecks. It was suggested that this might be a goal and that each institution would determine the date for review. One member expressed concern on behalf of students if the agreements weren't relatively enduring as they use the published agreements to plan their programs.

The Executive Officer explained that the current agreements database application allows institutions to create new versions of their courses when change occurs. At the same time, it identifies all agreements and proposals affected by the change. The Contact Person determines if the change is substantial or not and notifies the partner institution who can, in turn, determine if the changes affect the agreement. It is not possible at this time to build in a mandatory review date field but when agreements are completed, the receiving institution could indicate a review date in one of the comments fields.

There was support for institutions such as the University of Alberta to implement an internal policy with respect to review of agreements. The policy should be clearly communicated to the sending institutions.

These suggestions will be taken into consideration. The efforts of the Contact Persons were appreciated. The next Committee of Contact Persons meeting will be in October 2003 and will be hosted by the University of Alberta.

## 6. Meeting Schedule

At the Council meeting in June 2002, meeting dates for the next four meetings were planned. Since then, six new members were appointed and scheduling conflicts became apparent. There was a need to reconsider the meeting dates for the remainder of this academic year.

All members were polled and the majority of members confirmed their availability for 17 March 2003 and 11 June 2003. These will be set as the new scheduled dates for Council meetings for the remainder of this academic year.

## 7. Continued discussion of future directions of ACAT

Over the last several meetings, members have been discussing a document, prepared by the Chair, which outlines potential future directions and activities of ACAT. The underpinning question is "What will improve the transfer system?"

The Chair reviewed the status of the action items in the discussion document. She noted that the preparation and distribution of materials, as proposed, is on hold pending the development and resourcing of the Communications Plan. With respect to potential research projects, she also reported that J. Hughes, is working on one of the research topics regarding the success of the transfer experience, and this will be discussed at the next meeting. The Chair intends to request a meeting with the Assistant Deputy Minister, Phil Gougeon, to discuss other research activities discussed by the Council at the previous meeting. We have excellent data on transfer patterns and institutions have excellent data on how transfer students perform. What is needed is information on the transfer experience.

At the September Council meeting, members suggested that Contact Persons be asked their thoughts about enhancing institutional Web sites to help students determine the programs to which they are admissible. The idea was that students would enter their high school courses and be able to see if they had the correct courses for admission to specific programs. There appeared to be little support from Contact Persons for this initiative. They felt that it was too complex and that its development and maintenance would be too expensive.

One member suggested that the use of technology should be encouraged to support students knowing how courses will transfer. The King's University College has been innovative in designing a program for their Web site which allows students, without leaving the institution's Web site, to determine how King's courses will transfer or what courses from elsewhere will transfer to King's as equivalent to a particular King's course. The program is written so that the results are directly from ACAT's Online Alberta Transfer Guide. Other institutions are encouraged to discuss such programming with Glenn Keeler, Registrar and Contact Person at King's. (See <http://www.kingsu.ab.ca/calendar/coursede.scr/biol200.htm> for an example.)

Discussion followed on whether first and second year programming requirements could be more flexible so that students who change programs would not lose credit for so many courses. Members felt that this was not really an issue, that most first year courses are credited upon transfer. However, a complete change in area of specialization will lead to loss of credit, and students can accept that even if they do not like it.

Another point of discussion was the impact of distance and online learning. Several articles on the subject were included in the agenda package. Today's student is skilled in the use of technology and new forms of instruction and delivery of material are popular. The new student is used to "anytime, anywhere, anyhow" access. This led to a discussion about letters of permission. The question of "residency" in a particular program may be challenged by the non-traditional student. Each institution should be encouraged to make its particular residency and letter of permission requirements known to all students.

Members discussed the purpose of standing post-secondary articulation committees. The Council currently has five articulation committees, although MECCA and PAUC operate independently. To date, Council has decided not to have more standard subject specific articulation committees. It was suggested that the role of ACAT might be to bring institutions together to identify brokering possibilities. Members were asked to consider the need for additional articulation committees and this will be discussed further at the next Council meeting.

The discussion of the future directions of ACAT was suspended at this time. The discussion will resume at the next meeting, beginning with item #7.

8. ACAT Communications Plan

The development of an ACAT Communication Plan has been underway for several months. The purpose of the communications plan is to increase awareness of the role 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. The plan has been presented once previously to Council members and in October it was shared with the Contact Persons for their comment. Comments from both groups were incorporated into the document presented at the meeting.

One of the key themes that members want to see reflected in the Communication Plan is that the Alberta admissions and transfer system is supported by a mosaic of independent institutions working cooperatively together.

A discussion of the proposed evaluation process followed. Additional work to develop specific evaluation criteria will be undertaken.

It was AGREED that the Communication Plan, with these modifications, would be forwarded to Alberta Learning's Communication Branch for further input.

9. Secondary – Post-Secondary Articulation

a) Social Studies

At the September 2002 Council meeting, it was agreed that a secondary to post-secondary articulation committee would be beneficial for the revisions to the Social Studies curriculum. The Chair reported that she is proceeding to recruit members for this committee. One name has already been submitted from the University of Calgary. Ed Behnke confirmed that he will take this issue forward to the next meeting of the Senior Academic Officers and a name will be brought forth at that time.

b) Curriculum Development Graphic

On behalf of Rick Morrow, Carol McLean gave a brief overview of Alberta Learning's curriculum development approval and implementation process, and she focused specifically on secondary curriculum. Ms. McLean indicated that there was a strong interest in ongoing curriculum 'evergreening' whereby a curriculum is modified/updated regularly rather than a large overhaul of a curriculum periodically. A handout was provided which briefly described the changes to the secondary science programs.

c) English Language Arts

The English Language Arts secondary to post-secondary articulation committee report was circulated to all post-secondary institutions in May. 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 will be forwarded to Alberta Learning with a request that they be posted on its Web site as information for parents and students. To date 17 institutions have submitted an advising chart.

Of note, The University of Lethbridge has recommended that when complete and stable information on both ELA 30-1 and ELA 30-2 is available, perhaps after the 2005/2006 academic year, the University should consider ELA 30-2 as an admission alternative to ELA 30-1. The Alberta College of Art and Design has noted that there will be a review of ELA 30-2 student performance after an interim period to assess its suitability for ACAD curriculum.

## 10. Other Business

- a) Revisions to Diploma Examinations - Peter Haney, University of Lethbridge asked for clarification of comments attributed to Alberta Learning in the *Lethbridge Herald*. These comments referred to the earlier scheduling of the diploma examinations for English and Social Studies, and implied that one reason for this was that the university sector wanted to receive high school marks earlier.

Carol McLean explained that the rationale for this rescheduling was to streamline the marking process. Both January and June examinations will be affected.

Peter Haney indicated he appreciated the clarification.

- b) Legislative change and its effect on ACAT - At the September meeting of the Council, Phil Gougeon (ADM of Adult Learning) had noted that there are system-wide pressures to increase degree access and discussion is needed on the optimum way to respond to these pressures. Some examples of ways to increase degree access include allowing public colleges/technical institutes to offer select degree programs, increasing/enhancing brokering and collaborative degree program opportunities, and increasing the capacity of, or utilizing the unused capacity of, existing degree programs at universities and private university colleges. The ADM felt that increased degree access would have an impact on what ACAT does and how it does it. He suggested that ACAT should provide comment.

Members were asked to submit comment to the Chair or Executive Officer by November 29 and a response will be submitted to the ADM.

## 11. Commission on Learning – submission

Alberta's Commission on Learning has developed a public consultation plan that will give individuals and stakeholders an opportunity to share their views on the future of education in Alberta. This is the first in-depth review of the basic (K-12) education system since 1972. It will provide recommendations to the Minister of Learning in seven broad topic areas. One of these topic areas is facilitating smooth transitions into and through the

system. This topic is of particular relevance to the work of ACAT as it relates to the transition from secondary to post-secondary studies.

The workbook, *Doing Our Homework*, was included in the agenda package. Members were invited to respond individually if they so chose, but to facilitate Council's submission, members were asked to submit comments to the Chair. Contact Persons will also be asked for their input. These responses will be due November 29, 2002.

## 12. Items for information

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

- "Knowledge gap? What knowledge gap!" *University Affairs*, October 2002. pp 26-27 Dr. David Livingston, one of the founders of the national research network called New Approaches to Lifelong Learning, contends that Canada's workforce has more than enough skills already – all it needs is a chance to use them. This is recognition of the informal learning in which Canadians partake. He contends that most adults spend a significant amount of time teaching themselves, outside of formal classes or courses, about whatever interests them. This learning is typically ignored and undervalued.
- "No apologies for seeking best students, faculty: University of Alberta". *Edmonton Journal*, 9 October 2002. Doug Owram, University Provost, predicts that the face of university education in Alberta will change in the near future. Raising admission standards and emphasizing research and post-graduate programs are part of a plan by the UofA.
- "U of C braces for huge student influx". *Calgary Herald*, 16 October 2002. The article states that the University of Calgary must attract more professors and find campus space to deal with the coming nationwide surge in student numbers in the next decade.
- "University enrolment to jump 30%: 'We will have to start turning more students away' as Boomers' children crowd system". *National Post*, 15 October 2002. Demand for the 645,000 spots at Canadian universities is expected to increase by 30% within a decade. The pressure is from children of the Baby Boomers. The article claims demand for university education will be greatest in Ontario, Alberta and British Columbia.
- "Canadian universities face big challenges in the next decade, says *Trends*". *AUCC News*, 15 October 2002. This is a major report by the Association of Universities and Colleges in Canada. The report entitled, *Trends in Higher Education*, forecasts a 20-30% increase in enrolment and the need for 40,000 new faculty members in Canadian universities in the next decade.
- "Colleges could be in the degree business/changes proposed for the Colleges Act". *Grande Prairie Daily Herald Tribune*, 22 October 2002. The article provides comment by Jim Henderson, President, Grande Prairie Regional College concerning the desire of the College to be degree-granting. This topic is under discussion as the *Colleges Act*, *Universities Act*, *Technical Institutes Act* and *Banff Centre Act* are under review.
- "Missed Connections: online colleges complain about traditional institutions' tough credit-transfer policies". *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 18 October 2002. This is an

American article examining the difficulty students face having their online courses recognized for credit transfer by traditional institutions.

- “A Clean Slate: Many colleges start programs to forgive poor grades”. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 11 October 2002. At Joliet Junior College a policy called ‘New Start’ allows students to earn grade-point averages without including old grades from previous studies. This policy supports the idea that students deserve a second chance at achieving a higher grade point average.
- “Alberta’s learning system – meeting challenges, celebrating success”. *Alberta Learning News Release*, 30 September 2002.. Alberta Learning’s 2001-2002 Annual Report was released on 30 September. The full Annual Report is available on the Internet at <http://www.learning.gov.ab.ca/annualreport>.
- “Life skills may translate into university credits”. *Star Phoenix (Saskatoon)*, 26 April 2002. Adult students in Saskatchewan will be able to apply to get university credits for their life experiences, according to a plan approved by the University of Saskatchewan.

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

The Chair expressed her thanks to Grant MacEwan College for hosting the meeting and to Mr. Alan Vladicka for his 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 17 March 2003.