



Alberta Council on Admissions and Transfer

11 March 2004
NAIT

PRESENT: Lucille Walter (Chair), Shirley Barg, Ed Behnke, Fred Carnew, Catherine Eddy, Matthew Glass, Peter Haney, Gretchen Hess, Judith Hughes, Irene Langille (for Gord Nixon), Lynn Mulder, Vance MacNichol, Peggy Patterson, Marilyn Patton (Executive Officer), Marena Fakli (Manager), Guy Germain (Manager)

ABSENT: Raja Panwar, Jean Valgardson

The Chair welcomed members to NAIT, and expressed regrets from Raja Panwar and Jean Valgardson. The Chair introduced Guy Germain, Manager, Policy and Planning, and welcomed him to his first ACAT meeting. The Chair also welcomed back to Council Dr. Peggy Patterson, Vice-President of Student Affairs at the UofC, who will represent the university sector.

1. Welcome from NAIT

The Chair introduced Dr. Paul Hunt, Vice-President, Academic. Dr. Hunt welcomed members to NAIT, and to the new HP Centre, and invited members to tour the building and see the new facilities. Although Dr. Hunt is relatively new to Alberta, he is well aware of the British Columbia transfer system, and confirmed the importance of a transfer system that ensures students have an opportunity to move from one institution to another in an effective, easy, seamless way.

2. Update on the Post-Secondary Learning Act, Bill 43

Connie Harrison, Director, Business Integration and Coordination, Alberta Learning, provided an update on the status of Bill 43, the *Post-secondary Learning Act*. Bill 43 combines and updates the current *Universities Act*, the *Colleges Act*, the *Technical Institutes Act*, and the *Banff Centre Act*. The Act's proclamation is expected to be imminent. When the Act is proclaimed, it will be posted at Queen's Printers along with the accompanying regulations.

Ms. Harrison noted that the Act has been developed quickly relative to other legislation and acknowledged that some fine-tuning may need to take place as time goes on, as well as additional regulations that need to be developed. She highlighted the following:

- The Minister will approve the mandate statements of all publicly funded post-secondary institutions. Institutions that wish to change the types of programs offered (for instance to begin offering degree programs) first will need to have a new mandate statement approved.
- Six regulations are expected to be approved when the Act is proclaimed. They involve Athabasca University, tuition fees, dispute resolution, land development, program approval, and pension programs.

- The new regulations will be available at the Queen's Printer. Old regulations were not available.
- There is a revised definition of "applied degree" in the new Act, as well as a definition of the word "university". Use of the term "college" has also been defined.
- In governance structure, there will be greater flexibility in the appointment of boards of governors (numbers of members, overlapping terms).
- The Act provides for the establishment of the Campus Alberta Quality Council, to review any matter relating to a proposal to offer a program of study leading to the granting of an applied, baccalaureate, master's or doctoral degree other than a degree in divinity.
- Appropriate freedom of information and protection of privacy clauses have been added to the Act, to clearly outline information that can be provided to the minister.
- A new policy for tuition fees will be in place for the 2005/06 academic year. The policy will control tuition fees and all mandatory fees for instruction. A definition of mandatory instruction fees will be in an upcoming regulation. At this time the department is analyzing fees to determine the definition.
- The tuition fee policy distinguishes between a distance delivery program that delivers education to Albertans, and a distance delivery program that delivers education to non-Albertans.

Ms. Harrison offered to provide a presentation to any post-secondary institution to clarify the impact of the new legislation on a particular post-secondary institution's business.

3. Minutes, 30 September 2003

It was MOVED and SECONDED that the minutes of 30 September 2003 be adopted as amended.

CARRIED

4. Items Arising From the Minutes

The minutes of Council meetings are detailed, and historically have been used to communicate to other post-secondary stakeholders. Both the minutes and the agenda packages require significant Secretariat resources to prepare. Other projects that would move the work of the Council forward could benefit from any time saved on the minutes and agenda packages. The Chair has learned that additional Secretariat full-time resources are unlikely, although contracted staff may be possible for specific projects.

Discussion:

- The level of detail and thoroughness of the agenda packages is very appreciated by Council members.
- Background documents are thorough and can be photocopied to provide a briefing for others.
- Members appreciate having all documents included in the agenda package, without need to search for stray documents.
- Members perceive the full agenda packages as an investment in effectiveness, particularly when Council meets only four times per year.
- Public members and student representatives echoed the need for full agenda packages, since they have less access to some of the post-secondary information than others might have, and because they are subject to a more rapid turn-over in membership and the agenda packages provide continuity and context for them.

- Detailed minutes are also appreciated. However, Council members would be willing to support a synopsis of discussion, followed by action items.
- Bulleted format for the minutes would be acceptable.

5. ACAT Chair and Secretariat Reports

Chair's Report:

A written report was provided.

Additional updates:

- The Chair responded to two different reports provided by the Post-secondary Expectation Project Committee of CMEC. One was a comprehensive research report on the status of PLAR across Canada, reporting that there are only approximately 6,000 anecdotal cases of PLAR in post-secondary institutions nationally. In her response, the Chair noted that:
 - ◆ if PLAR is to flourish and realize its potential it has to have leadership at a national level
 - ◆ Individual provinces should consider the development of a policy framework such as the one in Manitoba
 - ◆ PLAR is very work intensive, and therefore costly. Its growth will happen only with proper funding and support.
- The Chair attended a Lifelong Learning Awareness Initiative meeting on 17 February 2004. The focus of the group is to increase the positive news about learning in Alberta.
 - ◆ Participants related their pride in what the post-secondary system and the K-12 system are accomplishing. They supported the need to put forward good news stories and also to look at partnerships to promote life long learning.
 - ◆ ACAT was acknowledged by participants and the Deputy Minister noted that ACAT had been showcased at the recent inter-provincial conference on quality assurance. The Chair noted she had taken the opportunity to speak about ACAT's contribution to the good news on Education in Alberta. The Chair indicated a willingness to remain active in this initiative.

Secretariat Report:

A written report was provided. The Executive Officer provided the following updates:

- CAETO's Articulation User Guide Project
 - The Executive Officer is a member of the Canadian Alliance of Education and Training Organizations (CAETO) advisory committee for this project.
 - A contractor was hired to draft an articulation user guide. The Executive Officer was involved by being interviewed and by providing recommendations within Alberta of individuals who should also be interviewed.
 - A first draft needed significant revisions. Focus groups of key stakeholders in provinces that would benefit from them are planned for this spring.

- Inter-provincial Post-secondary Quality Assurance Conference
 - BC, Alberta and Ontario hosted an inter-provincial conference on quality assurance of degree programs in Toronto on 8 – 10 February. It provided an opportunity for governments, PCAB and quality assurance boards in BC and Ontario, and interested government officials from other provinces to have a good discussion about what quality assurance means, and how quality assurance can be fostered for degree programs across Canada.
 - The Executive Officer made a presentation on Alberta's experience with respect to transfer and credential recognition. Both ACAT and PCAB have a long history. Many positive comments regarding Alberta's systems were made by participants.
 - A working group from the three provinces has been struck to do further work in on quality assurance as it is seen as extremely important nationally and internationally.
- In Home Education
 - At his request, the Chair and the Executive Officer met with Leo Gaumont, who provides consulting about home education. The meeting helped to identify some of the issues facing home-schooled students as they attempt to make the move into post-secondary studies, especially if they do not write diploma exams.
 - The Executive Officer has information from Contact Persons regarding various post-secondary institutions' admissions policies for home-educated students. Several members requested copies.

6. *Alberta Transfer Guide 2004-2005*

This is production season for the next transfer guide. Between 50 – 75 new transfer agreements are being processed per week.

7. Grande Prairie Regional College (GPRC) Student Lawsuit

- A former GPRC University Transfer student recently successfully sued GPRC on the grounds that she did not receive proper advising from the College. A transcript of the lawsuit is expected. Council acknowledged that, without the transcript, facts are scarce at this time. The issues of student advising, risk, currency of information, and possible effects of this lawsuit were discussed. Support for both Grande Prairie and University of Lethbridge were expressed, and particularly, support was expressed to the advising staff involved.

The debate over this lawsuit brings to public attention the importance of advising from the student's perspective. It may result in a redefinition of accountability limits, and clarify an institution's 'duty of care' in this area. Students need to be able to trust the advice that they are given.

- A member reported that from a small rural and northern college's perspective, advising for all the possibilities can be challenging.
- The transfer system, through its Best Practices in Transfer Advisory Committee will need to look at best practices in situations where institutions make curricular or program changes that might impact existing transfer agreements
- Members expressed concern that the current outcome of this lawsuit appears to make post-secondary institutions extremely vulnerable in advising both transfer students and those transferring internally. All transfers have always been conditional on grades, program acceptability and admission.

8. Advising at Mount Royal College

- Several members noted that Mount Royal College (MRC) suspended individual advising activities for University Transfer students, but are providing group sessions. The Executive Officer read from a MRC e-mail that indicated advising is suspended temporarily while resource issues and institutional priorities are evaluated.
- Members from UofL and UofC noted sharp increases in the numbers of MRC students who are directly contacting the universities. P. Haney noted that UofL provides MRC with program planning guides specific to students wanting to transfer from MRC to UofL. They are now looking to have those made available via UofL's web site. P. Patterson noted that they had to make arrangements through MRC's student association to provide group advising sessions to Mount Royal students. She is concerned that there is a cohort of students who are not getting the information they need.

After further discussion, members adopted the following motion:

It was MOVED and SECONDED that a letter from ACAT to Mount Royal College be sent, advising of ACAT's concerns with the reduced level of advising to University Transfer students, and anticipating the resumption of services consistent with ACAT's principles.

CARRIED

Members also agreed that the principles should be attached to the letter and that the Chair should offer to meet with MRC officials.

9. Committee to Review ACAT's Principles

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 Council of Ministers of Education, Canada's (CMEC) Pan-Canadian Principles on Credit Transfer, and the new developments in post-secondary education locally and nationally, a new subcommittee was struck to review the principles, and make recommendations to the full Council.

The following were recommended by the subcommittee:

- A statement was added as a new principle (f) to provide opportunity for students to obtain rationale for a transfer decision.
- A new statement was added at the end of the principles indicating that all institutional members of Alberta's transfer system endorse ACAT's principles and endeavor to apply them with respect to transfer within the province, regionally and nationally.

Council reinforced its support of CMEC's principles, noting that although Alberta's principles are not identical, they reflect the spirit of the CMEC principles and suit Alberta's system.

Members recommended that the new principle (f) be revised to:

Post-secondary institutions are committed to developing and maintaining clearly stated policies and procedures for consideration of transfer credit and to applying them in a consistent manner.

Members also recommended that principle (d) be amended to:

Individual institutions have the primary responsibility for instructional programs, even though responsibility for higher education is shared among various constituents. The responsibility of institutions includes program design and delivery, determination of academic prerequisites and student admission criteria, and certification of the academic achievement of students.

It was MOVED and SECONDED that the revised ACAT principles be adopted as amended.

CARRIED

It was further agreed that the amended principles would be sent to Presidents of post-secondary institutions, with a copy to the Vice-Presidents Academic and Contact Persons, advising of the revisions, and requesting that the revised principles be taken to the appropriate committees for information.

10. Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition

The first meeting of the ACAT Advisory Committee on Prior Learning Assessment was held on 17 November, and resulted in a revised terms of reference for the reinstated committee. These were distributed at the Council meeting for discussion and feedback.

Council suggested the following revisions to the terms of reference:

- Change home schooling to home education
- Change Scope 2, to learning at private, not-for-profit or proprietary post-secondary institutions.
- Include a statement that Council would expect to receive regular reports at ACAT meetings and the role and usefulness of the committee would be reviewed in two years time.
- Improve the formatting so that the (a) that follows after principle shows as principle (a), written together.

About 20 Alberta post-secondary institutions have provided their PLAR policies/guidelines to the Secretariat. Further work is being done by the Secretariat in order to hire a researcher to explore the status of PLAR in Alberta and to collect best practices.

Council suggested:

- Communicating with faculties of graduate studies at universities to see if they could recommend graduate studies students. Contact information was provided on the spot.
- Communicating with Canadian Association of Prior Learning Assessment (CAPLA) for the suggestion of an experienced researcher.
- For survey development, communicating with centres for measurement at universities such as the one for evaluation of education at the University of Alberta.

Regarding who should be surveyed, Council suggested:

- Identifying a contact – the PLAR coordinator or someone similar - at post-secondary institutions by communicating with the Vice-President, Academic and copying the Contact Person.
- Interviewing students who have been successful and unsuccessful with PLAR.

11. Best Practices in Transfer Advisory Committee

Following the 20 October Committee of Contact Persons meeting, a Best Practices in Transfer Advisory Committee was struck. Council agreed that another committee member, representing the private university college sector, would be added.

A document outlining the suggested scope of the committee's work was provided. Council requested that, given the earlier discussion, the committee also explore best practices in providing information, institution to institution, about program change.

Regarding finding an appropriate researcher to undertake the best practices research and develop a handbook, Council advised:

- that an individual familiar with the transfer system should be sought. This might be someone who has worked in the transfer system, or someone who has worked in a registrar's office. Three names were suggested.

Regarding the interviewees, Council reflected:

- that there are issues to do with advising, policy, notification of change and admissions. Therefore, the appropriate groups to be interviewed would be the academic standards committees, and, at universities, admissions standards committees. Contact Persons should also be interviewed.

12. Computers/Computing Science Articulation Committee

Following the identification of a possible issue regarding the transferability of computers/computing science courses, Contact Persons were surveyed to determine the scope of the concern. Contact Persons did not support the need for an articulation committee, but some of them supported a 'pathways' committee, which might identify for students the differences among courses/programs and the pathways that provide the easiest transition.

Given the limited expression of concern of Contact Persons, Council did not endorse a pathways committee.

13. Duplicate Application Detection (DAD) Report, Fall 2003

The Fall 2003 DAD Report, as well as the Trends Report were provided to Council members.

The Secretariat's Manager, Operations, reported the following highlights:

- Fewer learners applied, down 1.6%.
- More applications were received, up 1.0%.
- The multiple application rate was up, 1.180 applications per person, compared to 1.136 last year.
- Fewer seats were offered. The number of learners who received offers of admission was down 6.1% from last year. However 75.8% of learners got at least one offer, and of those 82% attended.
- The number of applications from out-of-province learners increased by 11.0% over last year.

- Learners in Ontario submitted 25.8% more applications to Alberta institutions than last year. However, as a percent of total applications 5.0% of all applications were received from Ontario this year, compared to 4.0% last year.
- In 2003 88.5% of the Ontario learners submitted only one application, compared to 92.8% last year.
- BC learners submitted 15.8% more applications than last year. BC applications comprised 7.5% of all applications this year, compared to 6.5% last year.
- UofL and Concordia had a noteworthy increase in applications.

Council then discussed the motion, passed a year ago, that Council would not require DAD reports again, until further notice. Council confirmed this intention.

14. ACAT Business Plan 2004-2007

The ACAT Business Plan is updated yearly. The Chair provided a document outlining her suggested strategic drivers and priorities, and proposed a half-day facilitated discussion at the 12 May meeting in order to develop a new business plan. Instead, the Council suggested the following:

- Council asked the Secretariat to rough out a new business plan, based on recent agenda items, and to present a new draft at the 12 May meeting. Measures should enable members to determine if Council and its Secretariat spend time on the activities that support ACAT's goals.
- The Chair's suggested strategic drivers and priorities and the Future Directions document should also be incorporated.
- Members value the opportunity at Council meetings to discuss the issues that affect admissions and transfer in Alberta, and would welcome agenda item at each meeting where members could bring issues for discussion.

15. Transfer Patterns Study, Fall 2003 Report

Annually since 1979 Council has collected information from each post-secondary institution to enable a report about the volume and direction of post-secondary transfer traffic. The ACAT Secretariat produced two reports: Transfer Patterns Study Fall 2003, Mobility Tables and Transfer Patterns Studies 1979-2003, Extracts by Sector.

The Secretariat's Manager, Operations, provided the following highlights:

- 9,827 students were admitted in Fall 2003 who had previously attended another Alberta post-secondary institution. There was a 6.0% increase over last year.
- More students transferred into universities, private colleges with accredited degree programs, private colleges and technical institutes. Fewer students transferred to public colleges.
- 4,071 students transferred into the province, a decrease of 6.3% over last year.
- 4,953 students with prior post-secondary experience were admitted to universities.
- There is no change in the first seven sending institutions over last year. They are Grant MacEwan, Mount Royal, UofA, UofC, Red Deer, NAIT, and SAIT. UofL has moved from 10th place to 8th place this year. 9th place was Grande Prairie. 10th place was Medicine Hat.
- For the top ten receiving institutions, UofA maintains first place, UofC moved to second place from third, Grant MacEwan dropped from second to third place. UofL maintained fourth place, and NAIT moved from 6th to 5th place. Positions six to ten are as follows: Mount Royal College, SAIT, Athabasca, Red Deer and Lethbridge.

16. Secondary-Post-Secondary Articulation

ACAT seeks to promote smooth transitions as students move from high school to post-secondary programs and has struck secondary to post-secondary articulation committees in various high school subject areas.

The Secretariat's Manager, Policy and Planning provided the following information:

- **Sciences:**
 - ◆ Changes to high school sciences curriculum changes are reported to be minor. A report will be written this spring to be shared with the post-secondary sector. Faculty members were willingly working with the secondary system in order to ensure they have the knowledge they need.
 - ◆ The Secretariat had invited the sciences curriculum experts from Alberta Learning to meet with ACAT's post-secondary Engineering Articulation Committee in December, who also provided good feedback.
- **Social Studies:**

Changes to the social studies curriculum are considered to be major. A consultation with interested post-secondary representatives was held in the fall. Overall the post-secondary representatives were happy with the changes being proposed although they continued to suggest that history and geography, rather than social studies, be taught in high school. The report is expected to be written ahead of implementation of the new curriculum.

Discussion:

- It would be helpful if post-secondary institutions were sent the list of skills that graduates would have in each high school curriculum area. This list, which is readily available, would be helpful for both the secondary and the post-secondary representatives to continue to align their expectations. Additionally, the list would be very useful for PLAR purposes.
- Some creativity is necessary in dealing with the concern that high school students are not clear about the distinct discipline areas of history, geography, political science, etc. Social studies is not taught at the post-secondary level.

17. Alberta Transfer Guide 2004-05

The *Alberta Transfer Guide* is being developed for 2004-05, and is proceeding according to schedule.

18. Items for Information

Newspaper articles and news releases were provided for information.

- "Post-secondary education offers big returns", Edmonton Journal, 11 February 2004.
- "Keyano welcomes transfer students from Saskatchewan", Fort McMurray Today, 3 February 2004.

- "Please Leave, Already", The Chronicle of Higher Education, 6 February 2004.
- "Ontario colleges see 22% spike in applications from high-school students", National and International Education News, 2 February 2004.
- "Colleges criticize congressional proposal to dictate credit-transfer rules", The Chronicle of Higher Education, 23 January 2004.
- "One-time funding paves the way for online course sharing", Alberta Learning website, 13 November 2003.