

THE OPEN STANDARD

The Newsletter of the Open Learning Division of Thompson Rivers University

Summer Issue

July 2011

Celebrate good times

Open Learning acknowledges annual achievements.

It is amazing what can be accomplished in just one year when about 120 onsite Open Learning staff and faculty, in addition to approximately 180 often remote Open Learning Faculty Members, are heads down hard at work. What makes all of Thompson Rivers University, Open Learning (TRU-OL)'s 2010-11 achievements amazing is not just the numbers and significance of them, but the fact that the goal for the year was intended to be 'let's finish what we started.' As usual, TRU-OL employees have gone above and beyond the call to not just finish things up but to excel at the Division's mission to meet the open, distance and online education needs of British Columbians and learners worldwide by offering innovative, learner-centred, quality education and service.

On June 16, 2011, TRU-OL staff, faculty and administration met for the fourth consecutive year to recognize these accomplishments at the annual Celebration of Accomplishments gathering. Staff and faculty lined the walls at the intimate event which Judith Murray, Vice President, TRU-OL, kicked off by introducing the vibrant posters portraying the TRUe Stories of TRU-OL's achievements for 2010-11. Staff from TRU-OL's Vancouver office were also included in the festivities through a remote video link.



TRUe Successes

In line with Open Learning's most recent advertising campaign, which promotes real life stories and images of Open Learning students and graduates, the posters tell the TRUe Stories of success for each department. While each department, and TRU-OL overall, had countless outstanding facts and figures to share, each individual poster highlighted one TRUe Story fact deemed the most significant achievement. The accomplishments are in many cases unique to each area working behind the Open Learning scenes, but in many cases a resounding, cross-institutional achievement is recognizable. One such achievement, which reiterated TRU-OL's goal to 'finish what we started,' relates to Project SAGE, the University's Banner implementation project (converting Banner 3 to Banner 8.5) and an endeavour that came to fruition as a result of the hard work and efforts from all facets of Open Learning. While the go-live of Project SAGE was implemented and the conversion to Banner 8 completed, work on the Project still continues as amendments and solutions are ongoing.

In support of Project SAGE, Enrolment Services and Admissions provided staff contributions and support to the Project's student, WinPrism and FlexReg implementation teams. Admissions and Advising also provided leadership and significant staff contributions to the Project. The Business Intelligence department helped see the Project to completion through its Business Analysis division which provided support in the development and implementation of Banner 8, with a focus on: testing; error logging; documentation; and user training. The department's Budget Office was another aid to Project SAGE's activities as it provided: a new Open Learning Faculty Member pay system; the Open Learning student module in Banner related to fees and account mapping; WinPrism implementation; and the FAST budgeting and forecasting module. While other technical support for Project SAGE was offered through IT Services, which helped it go-live by developing custom applications, data conversation and project management at the end of the project. The Marketing and Communications department also contributed by developing an easy-to-use course search function and providing valuable input on the course registration process from search to purchase.

Continued >

THE OPEN STANDARD

Publisher:

Judith Murray

Layout & Design:

Amanda Blyth

Julie Hall

Writers:

Élise Desjardine

Lindsay Norris

Moragh MacAulay

Editor:

Élise Desjardine

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THOMPSON RIVERS
UNIVERSITY
OPEN LEARNING

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Other general achievements of the Open Learning Division at large included the opening of the Vancouver office, located at 1030 West Georgia Street. The launch of the new office was facilitated in part by support from the Network and Technical Services area of IT Services which installed telephones, network, video and multimedia classrooms, as well as IT's Media Services division, which set up audio and visual requirements including video conferencing. Enrolment Services also helped populate the Vancouver office by establishing and filling the Open Learning Service Representative position at the new office. Further growth was seen in the Strategic Partnerships team, which grew by two new Strategic Partners who are operating out of Vancouver. Program Delivery transitioned the exams to the new office while the Marketing and Communications team helped to promote the office's official launch and has since developed new collateral and communications for the Strategic Partners working out of the Vancouver office.

During the 2010-11 year, Murray boasted that TRU-OL's bid to be included in the Alberta Transfer Guide and become a member of the Alberta Council on Admissions and Transfer was accepted. This means that Alberta students can now find out what courses delivered by TRU-OL they are able to transfer to their Alberta institutions and what courses they are taking at an Alberta institution can be transferred to TRU-OL. Murray suggested that TRU-OL is the first non-Albertan university to be accepted which bodes well for TRU-OL's national status as a leading post-secondary provider.

Also adding to TRU-OL's prestige was the Provincial Government's appointment of TRU-OL to the Business Process Review Steering Committee for BC Council for Admissions and Transfer (BCCAT); and to the Strategic Advisory Council for BC Campus. "This appointment speaks well to our perceived role within the (post-secondary) system," Murray said.

Open Learning's role as a positive and viable purveyor of post-secondary education is also gaining strength within the Aboriginal/First Nations/Metis communities, according to Murray who noted that due in part to the efforts of Strategic Partnerships, in 2010-11 TRU-OL received enrolments of 224 Sponsored Aboriginal/First Nations/Metis students, who were sponsored by 90 Aboriginal/First Nations/Metis communities and/or organizations, into 457 courses delivered by Open Learning.

To review the individual 2010-11 achievements of TRU-OL's departments and to watch the Celebrations of Achievements ceremony held June 16 please visit: barabus.tru.ca/celebration

Facebook Facts

Deconstructing the TRU-OL Facebook fans.

By Lindsey Norris, Web Editor, TRU-OL

The Facebook fans of Thompson Rivers University, Open Learning (TRU-OL) are a diverse bunch. How diverse? Discover the numbers behind TRU-OL's Facebook Fan Page here.



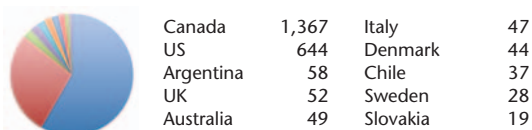
- **2,645** – Number of fans as of June 14, 2011.
- **12** – The number of percentage points by which males outnumber females.

That's right: Though the majority of Open Learning students are female, the majority of our Facebook fans are male, at 55% and 43% respectively (2% are unknown).

So what's up with that? The results of some studies suggest that although women spend more time on social networking sites, they are less likely to interact with a company or organization. It's a privacy thing.

- **1,367** – The number of fans who live in Canada.
- **58** – The number of fans that call Argentina home, making it the country with the third-highest number of fans. Its followed by the UK at 52 and Australia at 49.

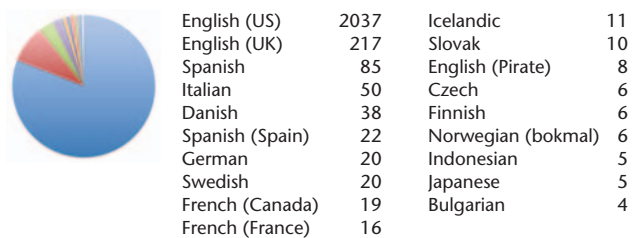
Here's how the rest of the world compares:



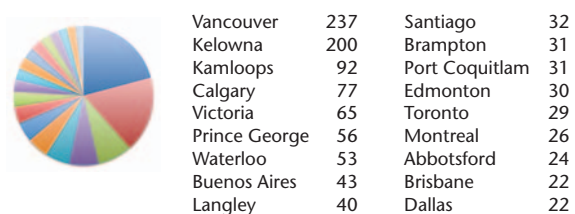
- **16.8%** – The single largest population segment among our fans: males, between the ages of 25-34.
- **13,983** – The number of times that TRU-OL Facebook posts were viewed in the month of May.

- **11** – The number of fans who selected Icelandic as their default language setting when accessing Facebook.
- **32** – Number of fans located in Santiago, Chile

Number of TRU-OL's Facebook Friends represented by the default language they selected for their Facebook account:



Number of Facebook Friends represented by the city in which they live:



A Little History

Open Learning's past relations celebrate 30 years.

Believe it or not, before Open Learning became the successful online and distance education Division of Thompson Rivers University (TRU) it was the "purveyor of incredibly dry talking-head lectures," according to an article published April 15, 2011 in the *Burnaby NewsLeader*.

In April 2005, the British Columbia Open University (BCOU) transformed into the Open Learning Division of the newly created TRU, formerly the University College of the Cariboo, but Open Learning's legacy actually began in 1978. It was in this year, that the provincial government founded the Open Learning Institute (OLI), a non-profit, fully accredited institution. About 10 years later the OLI combined with BC's educational television broadcaster, the Knowledge Network, to form the Open Learning Agency (OLA) of which the BCOU was a Division.

It was under the OLA, when Open Learning was known as the BCOU, that the "talking-head lectures" served as the continuing education type of academic offering for the Agency. The lectures were intended to spark conversation and encourage audiences to read a related book. Unfortunately, "the lack of interaction made it increasingly obsolete, particularly with the onset of Internet," according to the article, and eventually the lectures were abandoned and the network's role with distance education was transferred to Thompson Rivers University. At this point, all programs and courses of the former BCOU became part of TRU under the Open Learning Division.

But what ever happened to the Knowledge Network, the English language public educational cable television network that was once a 'sibling,' if you will, of Open Learning under the OLA?

Well, 30 years since its inception in 1981, the Knowledge Network, now simply known as Knowledge, is still on the air and doing better than ever with a refocus on children's as well as arts and culture programming.


By simplifying their offerings and focusing on what's not being offered elsewhere on TV, Knowledge has

created a truly great, and commercial free, product. No toys, cereal and sugar-infused snack promotions here, only 12-hours per day of solid children's programming aimed at building literacy and numeracy skills. Not to leave out the more mature viewers, the network also airs documentaries exclusively in the evenings from Monday to Thursday.

In order to promote independent talent from all across the province, Knowledge has also put an end to producing programming in-house. Instead they use their budget to commission works from BC filmmakers. Some such works focus on BC's early years, First Nations heritage languages and BC artists such as musician Sarah McLachlan, writer-artist Douglas Coupland and First Nations artist Roy Henry Vickers.

Currently celebrating its 30th year of being on air, Knowledge, still a provincial Crown corporation as a result of voting against privatization five years ago, is the number one rated channel during the weekday mornings and afternoons among the two- and six-year-old demographic; but where to go from number one?

Knowledge is working towards creating a platform-neutral application after abandoning its iPhone application in 2010, so that programming can be viewed from any mobile device. The network will also be ramping up its web presence on knowledgekids.ca and encouraging artists to upload their own videos in addition to awaiting Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) approval to relaunch its recent purchase of the BBC Kids cable channel as a channel for children and teens. This channel will have a subscription fee however it will still remain commercial free and revenues will go towards the purchase of programs and commission of original content for Knowledge.

Thompson Rivers University, Open Learning congratulates Knowledge on its 30 years of hard work and is proud to share a history with the provincial educational broadcaster. 

Knowledge Fast Facts

(files from Wikipedia.org June 17, 2011)

Knowledge



Launched

January 12, 1981

Owned by

Government of British Columbia
(Knowledge Network Corporation)

Slogan

Pass it on

Country

Canada

Broadcast area

British Columbia (via cable)
national (via satellite)

Headquarters

Burnaby, British Columbia

Formerly called

Knowledge Network (1981-2008)
rebranded Sept. 28, 2008

Website

www.knowledge.ca

Availability

Satellite: Bell TV Channel 268
Shaw Direct Channel 354

Cable: Vancouver Channel 5
Victoria Channel 4

Student Profiling

Giving online and distance students a voice and solutions to their educational woes.

By Moragh MacAulay, Market Research Analyst

Just what does an online and distance student look like? How can this virtually present, yet visibly absent student be defined and determined when they are out of arms reach and eyes gaze? The answers lie in the work of the Metrics and Analytics department of Thompson Rivers University, Open Learning (TRU-OL).

Through student feedback surveys and analysis of facts and figures, the Metrics and Analytics team carefully crafts a snapshot of the student profile and demographics for TRU-OL. And what does the survey say? Of the 19,712 course registrations processed at TRU-OL over the past year, those that completed the survey indicate that one-third of Open Learning's students are program students while the remaining are single-course takers who are often attending other post-secondary institutions¹ (see Table 1).

Students enrolled in programs offered through Open Learning typically work full time, have dependents and are seeking affordable and accessible educational credentials in order to advance their careers or improve job prospects. Pursuing online and distance education options affords them the chance to gain a credential in a more flexible and accessible environment. For example, online and distance learning offers more time to complete a course in addition to the option to study at a time and location of one's choice rather than having to be in a classroom at a designated time. However, for online and distance program takers, significant life and work responsibilities present a challenge to successfully completing studies. Even with additional time and ease of access, students sometimes struggle to finish online and distance courses and programs.

Knowing what TRU-OL's students look like and what problems they face allows TRU-OL's Metrics and Analytics team to determine where opportunities exist to help students successfully finish courses and programs. In order to do so, Metrics and Analytics conducted a program retention and course completion research study with the intent to recognize areas of strength and identify areas for improvement of the student academic experience and ultimately, to identify effective ways to help TRU-OL learners reach their educational goals.

Program Retention and Course Completion Patterns

The initial phase of the program retention and course completion study required the collection of a data set from the Banner 3 student information system on courses completed between January 1, 2006 through to mid-February 2011. Variables collected and subsequently assessed for significance included:

- demographic information
- urban/rural location
- time of first engagement in coursework
- seasonality of registration
- previous experience in an online or distance course

Almost 82,000 records were returned from the original query, with just over 60,000 of those being used in the study's statistical analysis. Early results indicate that the less time it takes a student to complete coursework, the more likely they will be to complete the course successfully. The number of assignments submitted was also shown to be a factor; less engagement with the material indicates a slightly lower likelihood of completion. Another factor in course completion includes previous experience taking an online or distance course through TRU-OL; a very positive indicator for successful completion.

Table 1

Courses Taken by Students During the Fiscal Year*		
	Average # Courses Taken	Percentage of Courses Taken
Non-Program	1.57	66%
Program	2.2	34%
Course Enrolments by Students During the Fiscal Year		
FY 2010/11		20,115 enrolments (including PLAR)*

* An increase of just under 1% over the previous year.

1 Students at universities and colleges across Canada transfer credit earned from TRU-OL to their home institution, using distance learning to complement campus programs of study.



The second phase of the study, which is still in progress, begins with the presentation of the results to different operational units such as: Academics; Program Delivery; Recruitment; Advising; and Marketing and Communications. The feedback received from these administrative units will further guide research including surveys or focus groups that delve deeper into the student experience with respect to improving learner success using qualitative and further quantitative methods. It is anticipated that policy review and improvement of various practices will occur as a result of the tangible evidence from measured and analyzed student actions inciting changes in operations.

The Value of Research and Data Collection

The disciplined and cyclical information collection in combination with focused research studies offered through the Metrics and Analytics department, such as the program retention and course completion study, helps TRU-OL obtain information that supports or challenges assumptions, provides for understanding of students, identifies emerging trends and informs prioritization of a range of activities. Some other forms of research conducted include:

- broad external scanning
- regular student surveys evaluating multiple aspects of the learner experience longitudinally
- in-depth studies into particular topics (such as course completion patterns)

The value of ongoing research activities is in the benefits not only to the students but also the institution. Because post-secondary institutions are currently facing recruitment challenges, as a result of a changing demographic shift to an aging population, over capacity as enrolments naturally decline and increased competition from a greater number

of universities interested in the same shrinking group of traditional students, knowing the student demographic, how to attract them and help them successfully complete their educational initiatives, is key.

The concomitant focus on individual students with regard to retention, as well as academic and social engagement, means the range of student services required to be competitive is increasing. With respect to budgetary concerns, this signifies that resources need to be allocated judiciously and carefully, and that the implications of poor decisions have considerable effects. It also denotes that the students' actual participation in learning, through a combination of interaction with the Open Learning Faculty Members, working through the course materials and doing the assignments, is more important than ever. Spreading positive word of mouth is key to TRU-OL's future as students are becoming increasingly aware of their options for progressing through their studies.

At TRU-OL, student academic success is the ultimate goal of Divisional activities. Ongoing research helps Open Learning work towards better understanding of the student experience and implementation of the resources and supports that are required to be in place to ensure learner success. Research broadens, enriches and refines the information context for all members of Open Learning, allowing for continuous improvement of student services, courses, program development and delivery for the purpose of helping students achieve their educational aspirations.

Research

Analytics

Student Voice

Play By Play

Open Learning proudly provides sponsorship to the BC Lions.



A blur of vibrant orange and black moved powerfully, tactically and ever so lithely, across Hillside Stadium at the Tournament Capital Centre (TCC) this June announcing the arrival of the 2011 BC Lions football Training Camp. For the second consecutive year, from June 2 to 20, the BC Lions called Kamloops and the Thompson Rivers University Student Residence and Conference Centre home, while they worked on scrimmages, defensive plays and simply securing a position on the team.

A three-day rookie camp held June 2-4, kicked off the training camp, which saw players sweating, limping and vying to be part of the team's roster. On June 5, football veterans joined the rookies and began working on perfecting their practice and plays; a sport spectacle Thompson Rivers University, Open Learning (TRU-OL) staff and faculty enjoyed from the fantastic vantage point of the windowed walls of the BC Centre for Open Learning, which butts up alongside the TCC's football field.

For the first time, TRU-OL supported the 2011 BC Lions Training Camp as an official sponsor and a Presenting Partner of Fan Fest, held June 12. Jennifer Read, Director, Marketing and Communications, TRU-OL explained that the partnership with the BC Lions was a natural fit for TRU-OL.

"Many of these players will come out of their careers looking to get back into education," Read said. "They now have a better understanding of who we (TRU-OL) are and what we can do to help them find further success outside the stadium walls."

As one of the lead sponsors of Fan Fest – a fun-filled day of football-inspired festivities where fans met the players, got autographs, enjoyed live entertainment, face painting, prize draws and watched the Lions in action during a public practice – TRU-OL promoted Open Learning at a booth alongside BBQ and the BC Lions cheerleaders, the Felions. In addition, TRU-OL was promoted as the Presenting Partner of the autograph session and had its logo incorporated

into the Fan Fest logo for all marketing initiatives related to the Training Camp. Promotions included a 30 second radio spot, promoting TRU-OL as Presenting Partner, that aired on CHNL 610AM, Country 103 and The River, in addition to a full page ad in the 2011 BC Lions Training Camp Guide and two ads in the *Kamloops Daily News* promoting Fan Fest as presented by TRU-OL.

Throughout the entirety of the Training Camp, the TRU-OL logo could be seen on signage lining the field as players pushed forward during their twice-daily practices and on the 2011 BC Lions Training Camp website at www.bclions.com. The TRU-OL logo was also proudly displayed on the Lions' practice shorts, as a patch placed on each players practice shorts worn through the duration of the Camp (See Photo below).

Open Learning was also able to rub shoulders with the players at a sponsors Thank You luncheon, receiving four tickets to the event. Two tickets were awarded to TRU-OL staff Sean Mauricio, Development Support Officer, and Andrea Rhodes, Program Advisor, who read the Open Learning Newsletter and quickly and correctly answered the content-related question of the most recent *Open Standard Contest*.

Keep following the BC Lions by visiting www.bclions.com/schedule/year/2011/1 to see the full schedule of BC Lions games for the 2011 season. 

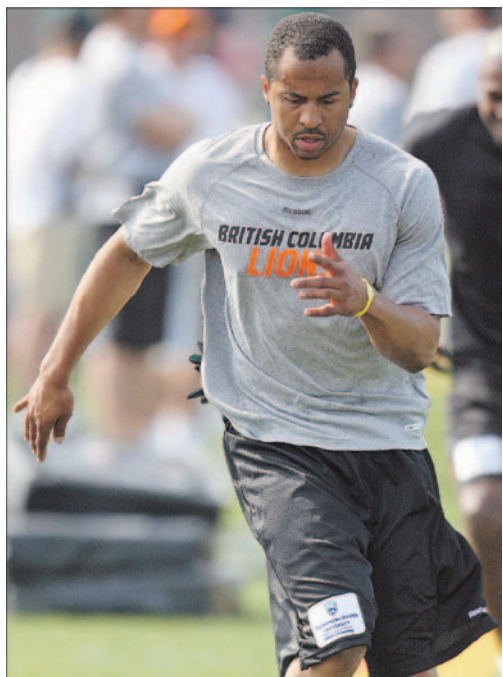


Photo (left): CFL veteran Kamau Peterson sports TRU-OL's logo on his practice shorts at a practice during the 2011 BC Lions Training Camp.



Photo (below): Andrea Rhodes cheers for the BC Lions at the sponsors Thank You luncheon.



TRUe story Contest Part II

Students and alumni entered to win \$1,000 towards their Open Learning education.



On June 8, 2011, Thompson Rivers University, Open Learning (TRU-OL) launched its second annual TRUe story contest, which offered OL students and alumni a chance to share their TRUe story and be entered to win \$1,000 towards courses delivered by Open Learning.

Students and alumni who have studied through TRU-OL were encouraged to enter the contest, which ended July 4, 2011, and explain the factors that led them to add an online course to their studies or enrol in a program. The motivating and even life changing stories TRU-OL received through the contest, may help encourage someone who is returning to school after a hiatus or is unsure about whether to begin their post-secondary journey.

The individual stories of growth and inspiration garnered through the contest will be shared through TRU-OL's TRUe Story ad campaign, which, according to Marketing and Communications Director Jennifer Read, "aims to resonate with its audience with a simple, focused and emotional appeal: *If I can do it, you can too.*"

"These credible and compelling stories from real Open Learning students are being used to distil the essence and uniqueness of Open Learning and highlight positive end results," Read explained. *"TRUe Story is simply acting as a conduit for people to get their stories out, essentially making this a campaign written by the people, for the people."* Therefore, in order to maintain the honesty of the campaign, contest participants must be current TRU-OL students or alumni.

The winner of the contest will receive a \$1,000 voucher for courses delivered by Open Learning and will be featured in TRU-OL's TRUe Story book.

It is important to note that the \$1,000 credit must be used within one year upon receiving notification of winning. However, if the winner finds their life a little too hectic for studies at that time, the prize voucher can be transferred to another individual who will receive \$1,000 off their Open Learning education as represented by Open Learning Division courses delivered by Thompson Rivers University.

Judging of the contestant entries began July 4, 2011 at which time a winner will be selected by committee based on set criteria. The winner will be contacted during the week of July 11, 2011 and the winning story will be published on www.truopen.ca.

Tips for filming a great video

Expensive video equipment was not required to submit an entry to the TRUe Story contest. Today, many digital cameras and cell phones record video and were perfect for our purposes. However, there are a few ways to ensure a video is easy to watch and the audio is clear.

1. Choose The Setting. A messy, unattractive or cluttered background can be distracting; choose a plain backdrop like a white wall or consider filming in a pretty location outdoors.
2. Observe the Lighting. Make sure there is good lighting so the images are clear without too much glare or harsh shadows.
3. Focus on Voice. Many cameras and phones have low-quality microphones. Stand close enough to the device that the voice comes across loud and clear and choose a quiet location to reduce background noise.
4. Use a steady hand. To avoid camera shake, enlist the help of a friend or family member to hold the camera.



Student Spotlight

Gus Lazopoulos

Gus Lazopoulos has been working towards his Bachelor of Technology, Trades and Technology Leadership degree through Thompson Rivers University, Open Learning from his hometown of Toronto, Ontario for one year now. By making online and distance education work for him, Lazopoulos plans to attain his degree through Open Learning in just two short years.

Q: Why did you enrol in online and distance learning through Open Learning?

A: Since I am busy working full-time as a Project Management Assistant with Govan Brown, a construction project management firm that specializes in interior office projects across Canada, the TRU program through Open Learning fits well with my schedule and I can get my degree completed quicker with the TRU, Open Learning model.



Q: Is this your first experience with post-secondary education?

A: No, I completed a Construction Engineering Technology program at George Brown College located in Toronto, ON. This was a three-year program geared towards Construction Management. Once I graduated from George Brown, I put my credits from George Brown College towards the Bachelor of Technology, Trades and Technology Leadership degree through Open Learning.



Q: Have you been dedicating all of your time to your online studies or are you juggling other responsibilities?

A: Apart from working full-time and managing Global Export Leaders (www.globalexportleaders.com), a company I co-founded that brokers international trade deals for clients in South America and Europe to bring the buyers and sellers together to facilitate the trade deal, I spend a lot of my evenings and weekends working to finish my assignments. I am fast tracking this so I am aiming for one course a month.



Q: What are your educational goals through Open Learning?

A: I want to get my bachelor degree and get the fundamentals I need to excel in the workplace. Once I have completed my bachelors at Thompson Rivers University through Open Learning, I plan to go back and get my MBA. The MBA program for me is not about the paper, but more about furthering my knowledge and most importantly, making connections and building friendships with influential and likeminded individuals. My overall career goal is to become a full-time entrepreneur seeking out business ventures that are profitable.



Q: How have your Open Learning courses helped you in your educational endeavours?

A: They have helped my writing skills tremendously, as well as my critical thinking and research skills. They are also helping me to develop skills that I use in the workplace. Thompson Rivers University, Open Learning has the right program for me, as it is flexible in course scheduling and completion. I am managing to complete my degree in two years but if I went to an Ontario University to complete my degree part-time it would have taken me five years and they are not as flexible in scheduling and do not have the open, online and distance learning opportunities that Thompson Rivers University has through Open Learning. I am thankful to this University for providing the open, online and distance learning platform to complete an accredited degree. I feel that education is important to add value to my overall credibility.



Planned Success

Open Learning's transfer credit options and stellar student services equal success for this OL student.

The course of one's life can only be predetermined by the truly determined; a reality embodied by Stephanie Beerling, student and full-time government employee.

Quickly climbing the ranks of municipal government, Beerling, with a youthful vigor personified by this crackerjack of a 22-year-old, preplanned her career with post-secondary education carving her path.

"I have established a great career, beginning as Administrative Assistant and working my way up to Deputy Director of Corporate Services for the Village of Burns Lake, and my education will help me continue to grow and move up in local government," Beerling, whose contract with the Village of Burns Lake includes an education plan that is directly linked to her position and promotion levels, said. *"I feel confident that the degree I plan to obtain through TRU-OL (Thompson Rivers University, Open Learning) will help me adapt to changes and be prepared for them."*

Beerling, a TRU-OL Bachelor of Public Administration (BPA) student, is the epitome of organization; she has to be, juggling a full-time job with post-secondary studies at not one but at three universities consecutively. Believe it or not, working on three different credentials at the same time was not some horrendous administrative mistake, it was all part of Beerling's post-secondary plan to ladder her way up using transfer credit, ending with five credentials including a degree through TRU-OL and arriving at her ultimate goal; the position of Director, Corporate Services for the Village of Burns Lake's Municipal Government.

In preparation for her degree and her career ambitions, Beerling completed her Applied Business Technology Certificate through Thompson Rivers University (TRU) in 2009 with plans to return to the local government field while continuing her education.

Beerling knew she couldn't arrive at this goal while working full-time through traditional educational means. She had to carefully plan her route through post-secondary education utilizing online and distance studies.

"Open Learning allows me to complete my degree while working full-time in my career field of choice," Beerling said. *"I live in a small Northern BC community and online education provides an opportunity to complete a degree from a distance."*

While Beerling admits that working full-time while studying online and distance is time consuming, she knows that by honing her time management skills and working on self-motivation she will successfully accomplish her goals and excel in her job.

"Online education allows me to apply the skills and knowledge gained from each course in a practical manner in my current profession," Beerling said. *"I often find myself reading a chapter or completing a course assignment that directly relates to my work tasks and position, so I can apply my skills to the workplace."*

Beerling also attributes the success she anticipates for her post-secondary studies to support from not only her



employer, but also through the flexibility and accessibility of Open Learning and TRU-OL's stellar student services, which helped her easily navigate her post-secondary plan.


"Well-established transfer credits is one of the reasons I chose TRU-OL," Beerling said. *"It can be very difficult and time consuming to find out if credits will transfer between schools."*

"The TRU-OL Program Advisors are very helpful. They respond to your questions quickly and even offer advice and suggestions as to which courses you should complete first and how to make the most of your transfer credits. I am currently completing programs through three other universities in addition to TRU-OL and I find that TRU-OL student services provide the most help."

In order to obtain her degree in Public Administration through TRU-OL, Beerling knew she had to first obtain a certificate and then a diploma in the field. So, putting her plan into action, Beerling kicked off her post-educational agenda by enrolling in a Public Administration certificate through Capilano University (as well as a 'non work related' Event Management certificate through TRU's distance studies, just for fun). From there she will enroll in the Public Administration Management diploma program through the University of Victoria (UVic), which directly transfers into TRU-OL's BPA program.

"When I found out that I could complete a diploma program through the University of Victoria that would directly transfer to my degree program through TRU-OL, I enrolled," Beerling said.


Even better, Beerling found out that she could transfer all the credits from her Applied Business Technology certificate into TRU-OL's BPA and consecutively work on the required diploma through UVic while completing required courses through TRU-OL for the BPA.

So, where does this currently leave Beerling? Working full-time, completing two certificates through two different institutions and enrolled in her dream BPA through TRU-OL; one step closer to her ultimate goal of becoming Director, Corporate Services for the Village of Burns Lake and gaining upward momentum in her government career. 

Accolades Awarded

Open Learning Faculty Member honoured for leadership.

On Tuesday June 7, Jeanette Murray, on-campus Thompson Rivers University (TRU) Faculty Member and Open Learning Faculty Member, received the 2010-2011 newly created Chair Leadership Award, which includes \$1,500 to go towards her attendance at a Leadership workshop/conference of her choice. The Award recognizes individuals who demonstrate outstanding leadership qualities and abilities in carrying out their full range of functions in their role as Chair at TRU. Murray has served as TRU's School of Nursing's Chairperson for the last six years and, according to an email sent out by Dr. Ulrich Scheck, Provost and Vice-President Academic, TRU, she has been "integral to orienting new faculty and she supports and encourages faculty in their professional development." Dr. Scheck describes Murray as an ethical person who values integrity and professionalism.

"Jeanette (Murray) is an innovative and highly respected leader, not only in her role as Chairperson but on a national level," Scheck wrote, going on to explain that in 2008 she was one of 100 nurses to receive the Centennial Award from the Canadian Nurses Association. This one-time award was created to recognize exceptional registered nurses for their work such as that of Murray who developed examination questions as well as marked the Canadian Registered Nurse Examination. In addition to this national recognition, on April 27, 2011 Murray received the Excellence in Nursing Education Award from the College of Registered Nurses of British Columbia. 



TRUe Story: Five graduates from the Water Treatment Technology Program offered through Thompson Rivers University, Open Learning (TRU-OL), pose for the camera after June's Convocation alongside: Gordon Tarzwell, Associate Vice-President, TRU-OL (third from left); Dr. Alan Shaver, President, TRU (fourth from left); Judith Murray, Vice-President, TRU-OL (fifth from left); and Nathan Matthew, Director, Aboriginal Education, TRU (far right).



TRU's Newest President Recognized: On Wednesday June 8, Dr. Alan Shaver (right) was officially installed as the newest President and Vice-Chancellor of Thompson Rivers University (TRU). The formal ceremony, which also saw the installation of TRU's new Chancellor Wally Oppal, QC, preceded the four Convocations held on June 9 and 10 at TRU. Prior to joining TRU, Dr. Shaver was Vice-President and Provost at Dalhousie University in Nova Scotia from 2006 to 2010. He has also worked in the post-secondary education sector as Dean of Science at McGill University from 1995-2005 and as the University's Chair of Chemistry prior to that. Oppal is a nationally renowned lawyer who is dedicated to improving social justice and community safety. Currently, he is Commissioner of the Missing Women Commission of Inquiry.



LIFE in OL

The Business Intelligence and Operations group for Open Learning welcomes **Krystina Green** to the team in her full-time position as Business Analyst. Previously, Green worked in Business Analysis for Bell Canada for five years. She brings to her position experience in software implementation, process improvement and project management. Before moving to Kamloops, Green lived in Calgary and Ottawa, where she graduated from Carleton University.

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The Marketing and Communications department for Open Learning welcomes **Corey Wiwchar** to the position of Marketing and Communications Coordinator. Prior to joining TRU, Wiwchar spent five years working for the Sun Peaks Corporation in the capacity of New Media Administrator and most recently, Marketing Manager. In joining the Open Learning Division, Wiwchar returns to his alma mater as he received both his Bachelor of Business Administration, Marketing Major, through TRU and his Diploma in Events and Conventions Management through the University College of the Cariboo.

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Open Learning wishes **Troy Hanschen**, who resigned from his position as Interim Director, Admissions and Enrolment Services, best of luck in his new position as University Registrar/Secretary to Senate at the University of Northern British Columbia. Hanschen joined TRU in March 2007 as the Manager of Enrolment Services. During his time in the Open Learning Division, he was instrumental in developing the current Enrolment Service practices and refined them to focus on exceeding student expectations for world-class service.

Effective June 13, **Christine Wihak** assumed the role of Acting Director, Admissions and Enrolment Services. Other changes include: **Hilary Parsons**, who moved from her position as Service Coach to Acting Manager, Enrolment Services; **Scott Walker**, who moved from his position as Enrolment Services Advisor to Interim Manager, Admissions and Advising; and **Andrea Rhodes**, who moved from her position of Enrolment Services Advisor to Program Advisor.

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The Admissions and Advising department of Open Learning welcomes **Linda Huntington** who is returning to her position as Enrolment Services Advisor as well as **May Auger**, who is returning to her position as Admissions/Records Assistant. The department also welcomes **Yvonne Loewen** who is working as Admissions/Records Assistant. Previously, Loewen worked an auxiliary position with International Admissions for TRU.

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The Enrolment Services department of Open Learning welcomes both **Karen Nichols** and **Sarah Bijl** to their positions as Enrolment Services Officers. The department also welcomes **Deb Cousineau** to her now permanent position of part-time Enrolment Services Advising Assistant.

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Open Learning wishes best luck to **Nick Kirby**, who retired from his position as Development Support Officer with the Business Intelligence and Operations group. Kirby retired from TRU after providing 12 years of service at the Open Learning Agency (OLA), BC Open University and the Open Learning Division of TRU. He began his career at OLA with a five-day job working in the warehouse. The Print Shop Manager, impressed with Kirby's stellar work ethic, then offered him a job in the Print Shop. From there, Kirby took the position of Project Assistant in the PDRG department and then, in September 2005, Kirby began his journey with Open Learning. Kirby was one of the first Burnaby employees to make the move to Kamloops. *"Nick's good-natured professionalism will be missed by all of us at TRU, Open Learning,"* Martin Voelkening said in an email announcing Kirby's retirement. *"His contributions here have touched many of us and through his work he has set a high standard of excellence and professionalism. Along with being a great mentor for many of his coworkers, he was also the recipient of the Outstanding Achievements Award of Open Learning in November 2010. We will miss you, Nick."*



Continued >

LIFE in OL

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On April 21, **Dr. Ross Nelson**, Assistant Professor, Department of Geography, Faculty of Arts, received a plaque recognizing him as the first recipient of the Faculty Award for Excellence in Internationalization. The Award, presented on behalf of Thompson Rivers University (TRU)'s Senate International Affairs Committee, recognizes outstanding contributions to internationalization at TRU. The selection committee – comprised of representatives from the Senate International Affairs Committee, Open Learning, the Centre for Teaching and Learning and international students – were impressed with Nelson's nomination and his commitment to TRU's goal towards internationalization. Dr. Wesley Koczka, Associate Vice President, International and Chief Executive Officer, TRU World Global Operations, wrote in an email announcing the Award, that Nelson is being *"recognized, in part, for increasing student and faculty awareness of international cultures, being an active proponent of intercultural understanding and modeling appreciations of diversity."* Nelson, past Academic Director of the Arts Department with the Open Learning Division of TRU, will receive \$2,500 from the Senate international Affairs Committee towards his professional development fund in order to help defray costs associated with international initiatives.

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The mailing address for Thompson Rivers University, including the Open Learning Division, has officially been changed from the previous Post Office Box address to the following Civic Mailing Address:

900 McGill Road
Kamloops, BC
V2C 0C8

Specifically, the postal code has changed and the previous Post Office Box number is no longer included.

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Open Learning's new TRUe Story print advertising campaign is working, based on feedback from a reader of *Chatelaine Magazine's* May 2011 issue, which included a print insert of a TRUe Story ad. Shannon Bowdring wrote in an email to TRU-OL:

"I was interested when I opened my magazine package to find the (TRU-OL) postcard ad within my package. I was actually looking online to find online degree programs for visual arts. At first glance, Thompson Rivers University (Open Learning) may have what I am looking for. I am a full-time working adult, in Toronto, Ontario, working in the graphic design field. I completed my certificate (Graphic Design) at Durham College in 1995 and have been working since within the field in retail production. I also teach beginner art classes at a local gallery (Robert McLaughlin Gallery). I have always wanted to go for my BFA ... I am excited for the possibility of attaining this goal while still being able to support myself."

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Open Learning is pleased to announce the winners of the most recent Outstanding Achievement Awards, handed out at a celebration on April 18. Winners include:



Kearnon Kanne,
Open Learning
Faculty Member
OL Faculty Member Award



Janet Nystedt,
Budget Officer,
Budget Office
Peer-to-Peer Award



Barbara Loucks,
Project Assistant,
Curriculum Services
Executive Award



Gordon Down,
Manager,
Financial Aid and Awards
Non-OL Award

What's NEWS in Open Learning



A study, conducted by Michael Barbour, Ph.D., assistant professor of instructional technology at Wayne State University's College of Education and a resident of Windsor, Ontario, examines the legislation, policy and regulations that govern K-12 distance education in Canada. The three-year study evaluates ways that Canadian students benefit from the use of technology as a tool to provide distance learning. Data obtained from the study through surveys, interviews and document analysis with Ministries of Education and key stakeholders, indicated that in 2009 all Canadian provinces and territories had instituted some type of K-12 distance education, with British Columbia having the most and Prince Edward Island having the least. In 2010, Barbour observed that distance education was flourishing in Canada and that Alberta had begun the process of incorporating a blended approach of online learning into the traditional classroom environment to optimize student learning. Barbour presented his findings in the annual *State of the Nation: K-12 Online Learning in Canada* report, published each fall since 2008. The original 2008 report represented the first systematic examination of K-12 distance education policies and activities in each of the thirteen Canadian provinces and territories, and several Ministries of Education have used Barbour's reports as reference documents in their own internal reviews of their K-12 distance education policies.

Colleges offering online programs to students in multiple states have been told that if they do not show a "good faith" effort to comply with various state rules governing higher education by the beginning of July 2011, they could lose their eligibility for federal student aid. However, an update to an earlier report on online regulation by the consulting firm Eduventures indicates colleges are still uncertain about

exactly what they need to do to avoid running afoul of state regulators or federal watchdogs. The report indicates distance education officials at various institutions are scrambling to undertake "extreme measures," such as acquiring licensing in every state where they enroll students or ceasing operations in all but their home states. State officials, meanwhile, have been reticent to update or rework their online licensing requirements, despite the fact that in many states the existing rules are "unclear," "patchily enforced," and archaic in light of the new norm of online education, Eduventures said. Only 14 states have updated or reformulated their policies, according to Eduventures. For reasons not primarily connected to online regulation, a coalition of higher ed officials, led by the American Council on Education, has lobbied to extend the July 1 deadline, which is when numerous federal rules are scheduled to take effect.

On April 2, 2011, the Human Resource Development Minister of New Delhi, India said the Government was aiming to enrol at least seven million students, largely from the underprivileged sections, into distance education programming to make education inclusive. In a message at the convocation function of the Indira Gandhi National Open University, Minister Kapil Sibal said that distant education can help in achieving the gross enrollment ratio of 30% by 2020. "The Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in higher education is presently hovering at a mere 13%, a whole 10% below the world average," Sibal said "I am setting sights to raise it to the global average by 2020, which by then will be around 30%." The Indian central Government's goal to add approximately 30 million more university student places by 2020 is hoped to be achieved by private sector and foreign education providers, expanding distance learning and enlarging the online format of learning.

On March 29, 2011 Ms D. Purandeswari, India's Union Minister of State for Human Resources Development, said the distance mode of education would help the poor to acquire skills and also increase the overall literacy rate in India. Purandeswari, whose statement came as the Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) inaugurated a regional centre, suggested that community schools should also be developed. In spite of odds, she said the result could be a literacy rate of 65% in the country. She requested the IGNOU Vice-Chancellor, Prof. V.S. Rajasekharan Pillai, set up IGNOU zonal office at Hyderabad.

Next Generation Learning Challenges (NGLC) – a grant program run by Educause and financially supported by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation – gave most of its first round of "challenge grants" to university-led projects aimed at either supplying free, top-flight online learning materials to colleges that could not otherwise afford them or increasing access to college degree programs. About half of NGLC's \$10.4-million pie went to seven applicants tagged as "open core courseware" projects, awarding each project \$750,000. The nine "blended learning" projects, many of which also focus on broadening access to online courses and course materials, were awarded the second largest funding. The "learner analytics" category had six winners, and the "deeper learning and engagement" category had seven. Each winner in these categories, with one exception, received \$250,000. Ira Fuchs, the Executive Director of NGLC, said instead of jumpstarting new ideas, the objective of the grants is to draw out existing projects that have smart

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What's NEWS in Open Learning

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plans for increasing college completion and give a boost to those that are most likely to go viral. One of the goals of the NGLC grants is to eliminate the bias at many colleges against using courses and technology that they did not invent themselves, Fuchs said.



Officials of a new effort by the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) unveiled plans at the annual AACC meeting, to create a single portal where prospective students can search and compare online degree programs at public, two-year institutions around the US. The new web portal, to be called **OnlineCommunityColleges.org** represents a way public post-secondary institutions can collectively make themselves more visible online on Internet search engines and such, and effectively compete against the mass marketing of for-profit institutions. So far, 10 institutions from across the US have signed on to pilot the website. Potential students using the site will be encouraged to investigate the online offerings at their local community college first. If their area institution does not offer the program they are seeking, then the site will help direct them to a "trusted affordable alternative." Students will be able to search by college name, program, cost, demographics, geographic area, financial aid and scholarships. In addition, colleges with profiles on the website will be able to see students who are interested in their institutions. To become a "charter member" of the website, community colleges must pay either \$24,500 or \$49,500 annually, depending on the services for which they wish to sign up.



The USDA Rural Development Distance Learning and Telemedicine Grant Program is funding a \$491,250 grant to connect 23 schools in rural areas of Waco, Texas. This grant will be used to purchase distance learning equipment to create new learning opportunities for over 6,200 students and increase training opportunities for rural educators. With this new

technology, the curriculum will now include the ability for students to attend virtual K-12 courses as well as college level courses. Educators will have access to the new equipment to keep accurate with online training programs. Community members will also have access to this equipment for education training, job advancement opportunities and for access to medical resources. "Students in the most rural communities may not have access to museums, science programs or various other educational resources," USDA Rural Development Texas State Director, Paco Valentin said. "Distance learning opens the door to new opportunities for these students to make connections and access current resources from within their own schools."



The Distance Education and Training Council (DETC) debuted *The American Way to Learn: The 85-year History of the DETC and its Service to the World* at its 85th Annual Conference, held April 3-5, 2011 in Williamsburg, VA. The 50-minute documentary film, which chronicles the DETC's history and explores the future of the organization and of higher education in general, traces the roots of the DETC to the boom of correspondence education in the late 1870s, discussing the forces behind the founding of the organization (originally known as the National Home Study Council) in 1926, and the motivation on the part of the founding members to set forth and adhere to ethical practices and business standards to self-regulate the industry and set their institutions apart from "fly-by-night" schools that threatened the integrity of distance learning at the time. The documentary reveals a number of little-known facts about distance learning, including, for example, the important role it played in World War II, when prisoners of war were permitted to enrol in correspondence courses. The film details the steady growth experienced by the industry after World War II and through the Reagan Years and outlines the challenges the organization met in the early 1990s, when a handful of unethical schools brought the industry

under scrutiny by irresponsibly taking advantage of federal financial aid programs. *The American Way to Learn* concludes with a discussion of the challenges currently facing the rapidly growing industry and a look toward a future for distance learning. Produced by California Southern University, the documentary was written by Dr. Phil and Nancy Rokicki, who spent more than three years researching the DETC's history. To view the documentary, visit **www.youtube.com/watch?v=txjQezrAaoM**.



The Moodle Moot, US-West Coast 2011 conference (**www.moot-us.com**), held in Rohnert Park (Sonoma County), CA is slated to feature a keynote address by Martin Dougiamas, founder and lead developer of Moodle. Keynote addresses will also be delivered by David Wiley, Associate Professor of Instructional Psychology and Technology at Brigham Young University, Susan Ko, author of *Teaching Online: A Practical Guide* and educational technology blogger, Michael Feldstein. The conference, held July 12-14, provides a forum to explore and discuss Moodle within six distinct session tracks that appeal to a wide range of Moodle interests and include Moodle in Action, Moodle Support and Governance, Moving to Moodle, Moodle Under the Hood, Moodle 2.0 and a track for Vendor and Sponsor presentations.



A report recently conducted by the Association of Canadian Community Colleges (ACCC) calls for clearer pathways to post-secondary credentials. According to the report, learners are facing barriers as they move from one institution to another within the same jurisdiction, resulting in higher costs for students, institutions and governments, and lost productivity for Canada as learners delay entry into the labour force. ACCC is working with key education stakeholders to develop a pan-Canadian framework that would define clear pathways for students as they progress through higher education. "Spending extra



unnecessary years in school is a cost burden both for individuals and for governments," ACCC President and CEO James Knight said. "Tax revenues are sacrificed when careers are delayed. Employers suffer when they cannot find the skilled graduates they need to grow their businesses. Transferability of credits and credentials is a pressing issue for Canada." The report, *Transferability and Post-secondary Pathways: The Role of Colleges and Institutes* looks at the provincial mechanisms and agreements that exist between colleges and universities. It also examines student mobility and pathways through post-secondary education. "With 70% of jobs requiring post-secondary credentials, we must make it easier for students to transfer credits between institutions," Knight said.

Sri Lanka's Ministry of Higher Education recently signed an agreement with Mobitel to use Mobitel's mLearning as the National Higher Education Learning Platform through the National Online Distance Education Service (NODES). This agreement supports the Ministry's initiative to reduce existing regional disparities regarding access and delivery of higher education throughout the country. Mobitel's mLearning is a globally accessible content delivery and learning platform, which provides an extensible collaborative learning environment where tailor-made educational environments can be built to provide wide-ranging learning management solutions. The educational tool combines elements of current e-learning applications with multiple user interactive video conferencing features, slides, virtual smart boards, material upload facilities, content management facilities and also SMS, email and offline messaging. Furthermore, Virtual classroom settings add an interactive element to the learning experience. "Advancements in technology should be used to improve equal access to education to all,

across the country," the country's Minister of Higher Education S.B. Dissanayake said. "mLearning will take us one step ahead to the future, to experience revolutionary and groundbreaking methods of learning, appropriate for all those who are constrained to learn through accessibility, time and money."

Classroom Salon – a social networking site designed to encourage participation in discussions on articles and papers by allowing readers to add comments, annotations and tags to passages in text that can be read by others – is being investigated by post-secondary institutions to determine how it can help students. With Salon, students in a course can read assigned texts and then annotate them with online editing tools. These posts, which can be shared with a student group, highlight segments that spark discussion, cluster similar comments and identify which comments are most influential. As such, Classroom Salon can offer a sense of connectedness within a framework that allows groups to explore texts deeply, thus enhancing the student experience as readers and writers. Instructors at the University of Baltimore are studying the social networking tool to determine if it can help students who are in danger of failing introductory courses or dropping out of college.

Community colleges in the US reported a 9% increase in their distance education enrolments from fall 2009 to fall 2010, according to a national survey of two-year institutions. The survey, released May 17, 2011 by the Instructional Technology Council, an affiliated council of the American Association of Community Colleges, indicates the increase in distance education enrolments is 2% higher than the 7% increase in overall student enrolment of all other post-secondary education during the same time period. Factors contributing to this

growth, according to the survey, were a downturn in the economy and new enrolment initiatives. There was also growth in the offering of online degree programs. Of the colleges surveyed, 81% reported that they offer at least one online degree, representing a 6% increase over the previous year. Hybrid courses, or those taught with in-person and online elements, also experienced growth as indicated by the fact that 21% of respondents offered hybrid courses, a 15% increase from the preceding year. There was also an increase in the percentage of institutions with non-credit offerings online; 73% of the community colleges surveyed noted that they offer non-credit online classes, representing a 9% from the year before. For the seventh year in a row, distance education program administrators at community colleges ranked "the need for support staff for training and technical assistance" as their number one challenge. This year, their number two challenge was "adequate assessment of distance education" and their number three was "adequate student services for distance education." The survey also finds that enrolment in online courses is split 50-50 between those 18-25 years old and those 26 or older. In addition, 68% of the colleges surveyed report that "demand exceeds their distance education class offerings." In learning management system usage, Blackboard maintained its dominance of the sector with 45% of respondents noted using Blackboard, WebCT or Angel Learning.

In late May 2011, the Institute of Open Learning (IOL), Namibia's largest distance education institution, donated N\$10,000 to the Namibia National Teachers Union (NANTU) as its contribution to help improve education.

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On May 26, 2011, the US Department of Education elaborated on a 2010 letter, which urged college and university presidents to make sure that the "emerging technology" on their campuses squares with federal laws protecting disabled students from discrimination. Originally, the letter focused on controversies over the accessibility of classroom devices such as electronic readers, but the addendum made it clear that online courses and their content also must be accessible to disabled students. "All school programs and activities -- whether in a 'brick and mortar,' online, or other 'virtual' context -- must be operated in a manner that complies with federal disability discrimination laws," the addendum, which was written as an FAQ, said. The original letter contained no mention of online programs, which represents the fastest-growing area of higher education. Digital learning technology is evolving rapidly and approval from a given campus's disabled student services office is not always the first thing an instructor thinks about when introducing novel course content, Kelly Hermann, chair of the Online Education Special Interest Group at the Association on Higher Education and Disability, said. Some advocates worry that as digital course content grows increasingly interactive and sophisticated, it will be more difficult to equip disabled students with assistive technologies capable of reading it, or supply them with an equivalent alternative.

A recent report from the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC) suggests that since 1980, the number of full-time university students has more than doubled and that part-time enrolment is up 16%. The AUCC suggested that the demand for a highly skilled and educated workforce has been the principal driver of growth in university enrolment. Canadians are in for a major demographic shift, according to the AUCC. In order to respond to the expected economic, social and labour market demands resulting from this shift, the AUCC said that universities will need to both expand access for untapped segments of the population and international students and boost the quality of education students receive.

If you have a question about Open Learning you would like answered, please send an email with your question to: **edesjardine@tru.ca** and watch for answers in the next issue of The Open Standard!

A new report from the US-based National Center for Education Statistics, suggests that between 2000 and 2009, undergraduate enrolment in post-secondary institutions rose from 13 to 18 million students. According to the report entitled *The Condition of Education 2011*, of this increase, 27% occurred at private for-profit institutions. Some 30% of full-time students age 35 and over attended private for-profit 4-year schools in 2009, compared to 3% of full time students under 25. Private for-profit four-year institutions had the highest rate of distance course taking among all institutions, as well as the highest rate of students taking their entire program through distance education. The report notes that 41% more associate's degrees, 33% more bachelor's degrees and 49% more master's degrees were granted in 2008-09 than were in 1998-99. The full text of the report, along with related data tables and indicators from previous years, can be viewed at <http://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe>.

