

THE OPEN STANDARD

The Newsletter of the Open Learning Division of Thompson Rivers University

Spring Issue

April 2010



Aiming for Gold



TRU-OL hit a high point this year and Canada followed with record breaking wins.

by Cameron Beddome, Chief Recruitment Officer

An electric buzz filled the halls of the BC Centre for Open Learning this January and February while staff in all corners were red with not only the patriotism of an Olympic host populace, but also the blush of excitement at having raised the bar for Thompson Rivers University, Open Learning (TRU-OL) by setting all kinds of new records.

January 2010 saw a number of new student activity records being set and while it only takes seconds to establish such records, it takes a considerable amount of time and determination for TRU-OL to reach such accomplishments. Behind each one of these records are TRU-OL employees and the team effort they devote to accomplishing such feats.

One landmark day for TRU-OL was January 4, also known as the busiest day in Kamloops. Just how busy is determined by comparing various measures to that of last year such as: the number of registrations; TRU-OL website visitors; and calls received.

The stats are in and they show:

- 384 calls received which indicates an increase of 25% over last year. With all this activity, only nine calls were missed and three of them hung up in less than 20 seconds.

- 5,074 visits to the TRU-OL website which indicates an increase of 18% over last year. This represents an increase of 14% over any single day in the past.

- 159 enrolments in a single day which broke the 144 daily enrolment record which was set in September 2009.

With such a great start to the month, January as a whole did not disappoint. Some records set for the entire month include:

- 2,582 enrolments for a month which is the highest number since TRU-OL moved to Kamloops. This monthly enrolment also represents a 15% increase over last year and a 3.5% increase over any other month's enrolments in the Kamloops location.

- 108,013 visits to the TRU-OL website with over half of them (56,606) visiting for the first time. Both of these were monthly records.

February, it seemed could be nothing but a success as a result of TRU-OL's roof raising January results partnered with high interest in TRU-OL offerings and the world spotlight coming to British Columbia for the 2010 Winter Olympics.

> continued on page 2

THE OPEN STANDARD

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IN THIS ISSUE

- > Setting Enrolment Records
- > Breaking Student Activity Records
- > TRU Hosts International Conference
- > New Dean of Law
- > Law Curriculum License Agreement
- > Social Media Contest
- > Contestant Stories
- > Student Success Stories
- > CVU Celebrates Anniversary
- > Life in OL
- > What's News in OL



THOMPSON RIVERS
UNIVERSITY
OPEN LEARNING

Aiming for Gold
 > continued from page 1

Tremendous success was certainly observed for Canada as it set the Olympic record for the most gold medals won by any nation at 14 - a number which eclipsed the 13 golds previously attained by both Norway in 2002 and the Soviet Union in 1976. The 14 gold medals won also established a record for the most won by a winter host nation and it broke the Canadian record of 10 gold medals won at the 1984 Olympics Summer Games in Los Angeles.

The buzz of the games captured the attention of the nation as well as students across the province. Many post-secondary institutions even made exceptions for patriotic students by suspending classes during the games. For TRU-OL, all of this meant the only records of interest were those being set by the Canadian Olympic Team.

February's enrolments dropped 9% from 2009, but despite the downturn the result did mean another record was set for TRU-OL's first month of 2010. January marked the sixteenth month in a row that enrolments in the current month exceeded the enrolments in the same month as last year.

February was not all gloom for TRU-OL as by the end of the month things were right on course to grow TRU-OL course enrolments by 14% and Full Time Equivalent (FTE) students by 20% over last year.

Spring is in the air and expectations are once again high for the months ahead. The Ministry FTE target is once again within reach. ☺



A day in the life

New Year, new records are set and they sound like success.

The New Year started off with a bang for the Open Learning Division of Thompson Rivers University which serviced hundreds of student inquiries on its first day of operations for 2010 - a positive indication of student interest in Open Learning for the year ahead.

On January 4, 2010, the first day of 2010 that TRU-OL opened its phone lines to hundreds of inquiring minds, the Admissions and Enrolment Services department responded to 375 phone calls, 21 face-to-face student visits to the British Columbia Centre for Open Learning and approximately 70 emails. Combined, that means a total of 465 student inquiries were addressed in one single day.

The sheer volume of calls alone represented a record breaking day for TRU-OL as the Admissions and Enrolments department answered 23% more calls in a single day than it ever had before. These telephone inquiries represent an impressive 28.5 hours of phone counselling by the Admissions and Enrolment Services team.

TRU-OL's realized virtual growth of interest in its website as well. On Jan. 4, 2010, 5,074 individuals visited www.truopen.ca, which represents an 18.44% growth over the same day last year. These hits may have been a result of the 27.24% growth over the same day last year, of web users who were directed to TRU-OL's website through Google searches. The number of users who visited the Open Learning website directly and intentionally grew by 3.71% over the same day last year. Overall, the statistics are in and they say it's going to be a good, good year for Open Learning. ☺



MTMI-TRU 2010 International Conference

TRU hosts business management and technology conference.

Open learning and distance education is just one of the topics slated to be discussed at this year's MTMI-TRU 2010 International Conference entitled Emerging Paradigms and Practices in Business Management and Technology.

From June 12-13, 2010, Thompson Rivers University (TRU) will play host to international academicians, practitioners, researchers and students, congregating to share and discuss research-based knowledge related to the Conference theme.

The theme, according to Dr. Siva Prasad Ravi, Program Chair, School of Business and Economics, TRU, was chosen to "reflect the purpose of the conference which is to share the current and emerging knowledge and practices in management and technology" and thus meet one of the organizers strategic goals of promoting research among international representatives and stakeholders.

"Benefits to conference participants include updating their knowledge base and developing new ideas for research," Dr. Siva Prasad Ravi, member of the Conference Committee, said. "Participants can look forward to making new contacts that will result in networking and joint research with faculty from other collaborating universities."

Presented by the Modern Technology and Management Institute (MTMI), in collaboration with TRU, the conference will feature papers presenting new ideas, concepts and paradigms based on original empirical research or real life case studies relating to emerging trends. The goal of the conference, which is sponsored by the Open Learning Division of TRU, the University of Maryland Eastern Shore and Frostburg State University, is to present emerging theories, cutting-edge research and best corporate practices from areas of interest including:

- Business Strategy
- Operations and Supply Chain Management and Decision Sciences (Operations Research)
- Entrepreneurship
- Marketing
- Information Technology / Computer Science
- Human Resources Management
- Finance
- Accounting
- Economics
- Open Learning / Distance Education
- Tourism Management

Academicians and professionals can submit full papers (camera ready) in any of the previous areas by April 15, 2010, in order to ensure that they will be published in the conference proceedings.

In order to encourage research among students, the conference is offering a separate session for student paper presentations, provided that a sufficient number of student papers are submitted. A separate session will also be organized for tutors, instructors and teachers representing open learning. The two best papers will be awarded a cash prize of US\$100.

"At this conference, participants, including TRU-OL tutors, will be able to use the knowledge they have gained both through their teaching and through their guidance of student projects," Prasad Ravi said. "By guiding student projects, individuals taking part in the conference will be helping their students by providing them with an opportunity to participate in an international conference."

The last date to submit registration fees, without a late fee, for the MTMI-TRU 2010 International Conference is May 10, 2010.

Visit www.tru.ca/mtmi for more details. ☺



THOMPSON RIVERS  UNIVERSITY



TRU Welcomes Founding Dean of Law

First new Law School in Canada in over 35 years welcomes new Dean.

Chris Axworthy, the former Attorney General of Saskatchewan and current Dean of the University of Manitoba's Law School, will become the Founding Dean of Law at Thompson Rivers University (TRU) on May 1, 2010.

"We are extremely pleased that TRU's Founding Dean of Law has the credentials and experience of Chris Axworthy," Dr. Ulrich Scheck, Provost and Vice-President Academic, TRU, said. *"We are not only excited about what he will contribute to TRU academically, but also about the expertise he will offer as we establish our Law School in partnership with the University of Calgary."*


A native to the United Kingdom, Axworthy set forth on his Law career upon graduating from what is now London Metropolitan University in 1970. Soon thereafter he immigrated to Canada where he completed his graduate studies in Law at Montreal's McGill University. Axworthy's first interlude with teaching was in 1972 when he served as Assistant Professor of Law at the University of New Brunswick, a position which he took to Dalhousie University in 1975. It was in 1984 that he became a full Professor of Law at the University of Saskatchewan, where he was also the founding Executive Director of the Centre for the Study of Co-operatives.

Four years later Axworthy found a new niche in government when he was elected to Parliament as the MP in Saskatoon. Axworthy was re-elected twice and in 1999, he was appointed Minister of Justice and Attorney General for the Province of Saskatchewan. From there his career flourished and included great honours such as being appointed Queen's Counsel in 2000 and becoming the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs in 2001.

After a successful career within government, Axworthy returned to the post-secondary sector serving most recently as Professor and Dean of Law at the University of Manitoba. Today, in 2010, he will take on new and exciting challenges in his new post as Founding Dean of Law at TRU.

"It's a rare opportunity to build a Law School from the ground-up," Axworthy said at a press conference held February 22, 2010. *"It is particularly attractive to do so in a vibrant community like Kamloops with such a forward looking and dynamic university as Thompson Rivers University with the support of the University of Calgary."*



TRU's proposed School of Law was first announced on February 16, 2009, in a Speech from the Throne in which the Government of BC officially made the commitment to create the new school. Currently, the target date for the first semester intake is September 2011. Prospective TRU students can begin applying to the three-year, fully accredited this fall. 

Curriculum Agreement Gets Green Light

TRU's School of Law will be based on modified version of U of C's curriculum.

The Faculty of Law curriculum license agreement between Thompson Rivers University (TRU) and the University of Calgary (U of C) has been finalized.


The curriculum agreement states that TRU can license existing curriculum that has had appropriate content modifications which recognize the differences in BC legislation. The reason this is feasible is that the majority of Law school studies are common across Canada and graduates of common-law Law Schools can article in any other common-law province, regardless of what province they studied in.

"This is an historic agreement and we are very proud to be part of it," John Sparks, Counsel and Secretary, TRU, said. *"Not only does it facilitate the establishment of our law school by licensing the curriculum of an existing first class law school, it does so across*

provincial boundaries in Canada. We think this is a great model for efficiently starting a new law school in a way that will serve our students and our communities."

In his communication with TRU, Alastair Lucas, Dean of the U of C Faculty of Law described the partnership as "invaluable" explaining that it will allow the two institutions to "bridge the gap by expanding the reach of our exceptional curriculum."

"Our focus on Natural Resources, Energy and Environmental Law is uniquely suited to academic priorities at TRU and we are excited to provide them with a program that focuses on practical legal skills instruction in the context of more theoretical legal principles," Lucas said.

The degree granted by TRU's School of Law will be Juris Doctor (J.D.), the same as that of U of C, and will be done so in collaboration with the U of C Faculty of Law and will feature the official crests of both institutions. 



THOMPSON RIVERS
UNIVERSITY
Faculty of Law



UNIVERSITY OF
CALGARY

Enter to Win

Compete to complete

Contest to provide one winner with up to \$9,500 in education.

Thompson Rivers University, Open Learning (TRU-OL) is making history as it delves into the realm of recruiting through social media. In order to promote online and distance education to the student masses TRU-OL has officially launched its first ever tuition credit contest entitled *Grow Your Education, Compete to Complete* utilizing Facebook as the medium for contest entries.

"By using social media to run this competition we are developing communications in human, rather than institutional, terms," Cameron Beddome, Chief Recruiting Officer, TRU-OL, said. *"Communicating this way - listening first and initiating second - allows us to create relationships with the very people that may want the opportunities we can provide through our open and accessible approach to online and distance education."*

One lucky winner of the contest will receive all the fees normally associated with completing up to 60 credits through TRU's Open Learning Division - a prize valued at up to CAN\$9,500 - that will be used towards the completion of their post-secondary credential.

"This contest is intended to make people aware that they are closer to a university degree than they may have thought," Beddome said. *"The majority of students at TRU-OL take 60 credits or less as most program students come to TRU-OL to complete or continue a credential which they began elsewhere."*

In order to spread the message to students that their educational goals are closer than they think, TRU-OL decided to use Facebook as the medium for communications and the contest as an incentive to spread the word.

"This contest stands out because of its inherent honesty and transparency, aspects which encourage students to spread the word to their peers and make it a truly viral campaign," Richard Baldelli, Director, Marketing and Communications, TRU-OL, said. He explained that the rules, which clearly direct students to forward contest information to friends and encourage them to join TRU-OL's Facebook profile page, not only increases their chances of winning but also markets TRU-OL. *"We believe that when people find out about TRU-OL and what we offer, the opportunities to grow their educations will sell themselves,"* Baldelli said.

In order to gain one entry, each contestant must first create a new Facebook group for the *Grow Your Education, Compete to Complete* contest that describes how winning the contest will make a difference in their life. From there they must fill out an entry form and invite friends to not only join their own Facebook group but also become a fan of TRU-OL's Facebook profile page.

Currently, TRU-OL's Facebook page has grown from 96 fans at the end of January to 2,437 fans as of April 6, as a result of the contest.

Each friend a contestant's Facebook contest group ultimately has in common with TRU-OL's Facebook profile page counts as one single entry. Each contestant can achieve up to 1,500 entries which means their chance to win can be quite substantial depending on how well they market their plea to grow their education through TRU-OL.

Baldelli explained that using social media as the contest medium for the contest not only provides potential students with their own voice to convey their message but it also allows TRU-OL to converse with students in a different voice that traditional advertising does not allow.

Through social media, TRU-OL, he explained, this contest can help to ultimately target the perfect online and distance education market.

"This contest uses Facebook as a social media tool to help us reach our target market by simply engaging in conversations with the right people which is potentially more effective than advertising," Baldelli said. *"When our students and prospective students are engaging with us, we need to be there listening - social media provides us with that channel and opportunity."*

Advertising through communicating has allowed TRU-OL to leverage its ability to interpret exactly what its market desires according to Baldelli.

"Social media is the new communications system," Baldelli said. *"It (social media) helps us properly understand what our students are looking for and where they are looking. It can help us respond to market trends."*

And the trends are saying that online and distance education fills a real niche for mature students who have work, familial and other life obligations necessitating an alternative and flexible method of learning. Students requiring an open and accessible education are out there and are driven to complete their post-secondary education for a number of reasons ranging from a desire to start their own successful business to wanting to be a better parent and teaching their children the value of education.

The contest, which launched on January 29 and runs until April 18, 2010, comes at an auspicious time for many individuals, who are both swayed by today's troubled economy and yet concerned over related tuition fees, to return to school to enhance their job marketability. ☺

The Power of Post-Secondary

TRU-OL's tuition credit contest inspires many to compete to complete their education and serve as role models for others.

Ibelieve;" two little words that have come to mean so much.

Associated to Canada's best, these words uphold the qualities of perseverance, strength and success, qualities upheld by Gina Phillips who is a mother of five, a believer in the power of post-secondary education and a contestant in Thompson Rivers University, Open Learning (TRU-OL)'s *Grow Your Education, Compete to Complete* contest.

In order to gain entry into the contest, Phillips had to form a contest Facebook group describing how winning this contest and completing her post-secondary credential would make a difference in her life.

One of more than 135 contestants (at presstime) in the contest which will provide one lucky winner with virtually free education through TRU-OL, Phillips entitled her *Compete to Complete* story "I believe I can achieve."

Phillips' story begins at the age of nine, when her mother moved out leaving Phillips to fend for herself. Unable to handle the demands of the gifted program she was in and without a parental figure to support her, Phillips dropped out of school and went to work. Years later, Phillips' mother was diagnosed with cancer and chose to make atonement for her past actions.

"Before she died she wrote me a letter asking me to finish my education because her biggest regret was that she fell away into addictions and alcoholism instead of supporting me through to university," Phillips writes on her Facebook page. *"When I was pregnant with my first daughter I reread that letter many times. I decided to go back to school and get my education for my self-esteem and for my future so that I could be a better mom."*

During one of her last terms in TRU-OL's Diploma in Management Studies program, Phillips had an extremely harrowing emotional experience which resulted in a break from school and her immersion into work. Phillips however persevered and returned to TRU-OL once again to finish her diploma and work towards a degree but soon after, life took a turn. Her youngest daughter was diagnosed with autism and as a result all extra finances went towards the expensive behaviour treatment that was necessitated by the neural development disorder.

"I do not have the money to take courses and pay for this treatment program," Phillips explains. *"It was school or treatment and clearly my daughter was the only choice I could make."*

Still determined to complete her business degree and show her family that you can achieve anything you set out to do, this February Phillips entered the *Grow Your Education, Compete to Complete* contest in hopes of realizing her post-secondary dreams.

"I want my kids to know that if you believe enough, and you work hard enough, you can achieve your goals and dreams!"

Passing on the value of education and the difference it can make to your life and future is a theme echoing throughout the stories of many individuals competing to complete their education through TRU-OL.

Brianne Sheppard, a single mother who discovered a better life than she had ever hoped after having her son, has dreams of returning to her post-secondary studies in order to complete a degree in Sociology and progress her current career. It is for her son that she dreams.

"He really is the best thing that's ever happened to me," Sheppard writes.

"He is bright and articulate and wise beyond his years."

Sheppard's son already aspires to become something great - a doctor, a mechanic, a police man "... the list changes daily." But one thing remains, Sheppard will do everything in her power to ensure her son has the ability to continue his education, including showing him that there are no boundaries that should hold you back.

"I want to teach my son that advancing your education is important no matter your age or circumstance," she writes. *"I don't want him to think he held me back. I want him to know that he has inspired me to move forward, so that I may inspire him."*

Photo: Gina Phillips and family.

Inspiring the next generation is also a motivation for Dawn Boissonneault to compete to complete an Early Childhood Education program and ultimately open her own quality daycare/preschool centre where she can help children realize their full potential.

"I have a passion and hope that I can teach and influence young children to have morals and values that grow with them and cause them to become leaders and changers," Boissonneault said.

Currently, the contest is in its fifth week and with only seven weeks left before one lucky winner receives all the fees normally associated with completing up to 60 credits through TRU's Open Learning Division (a prize valued at up to CAN\$9,500) students are encouraged to sign up and compete to complete their education.

All current and former TRU-OL students as well as any individual who has not been a full-time student (have taken 12 or more credits during any eight month period) at any post-secondary institution after December 31, 2006, are eligible to Compete to Complete their university credential and grow their education. ☺



A Will and A Way

Traveling from sea to shore, one OL student is bound to have her books in tow.



Despite where her work takes her, Amelie Chiasson's studies are sure to follow.

Working as a Senior Surveyor for a leading survey and subsea construction company in the oil and gas industry, which requires a lifestyle of persistent travel and offshore living, Chiasson knew that attempting to grow her education would be difficult. However, her determination to upgrade her post-secondary studies and gain management skills targeted towards a technical field led her to Thompson Rivers University, Open Learning (TRU-OL)'s Bachelor of Commerce, Technology program.

"I did not want to leave my career and with my type of schedule I could not take classes part-time as I travel almost six months of the year," Chiasson said. "An Open Learning program proved perfect for me as I can study wherever and whenever I want."

Flexibility in the method and medium of study was essential for Chiasson who is based in Halifax, Nova Scotia but often lives offshore on the rigs in locals as far as Australia for up to five weeks at a time. The ability to choose between print or web-based coursework for many of TRU-OL's courses was therefore ideal for Chiasson.

"We sometimes do not have Internet onboard our vessels so it was important that I took classes with textbooks," Chiasson explained. "I reserve my time offshore for any readings that need to be done and I typically work on my assignments at home, where I have easy access to email and Internet."

Working from home, however, is no easy task, as after being away for four to five weeks at a time, it's challenging for Chiasson to give up the little time with family and friends she has and instead devote it to her studies. This challenge, as tackled through the online and distance approach to learning, has in turn helped Chiasson to develop some desirable traits.

"The great thing about Open Learning is the time management abilities you develop," Chiasson said. "Time Management is a great skill and I think employers can appreciate and recognize someone with this when seeing that they have completed a degree through distance education."

Juggling twelve-hour shifts, course readings, assignments, travel and time with friends and family, certainly indicates that Chiasson must have mastered the art of time management. It also means that with the help of her Open Learning education, she is

sure to be successful in her goal to gain the skills required to enter into a management position in the oil and gas industry.

"Undertaking the Bachelor of Commerce in Technology degree through Open Learning has given me the chance to focus on and progress my career as well as further my education," Chiasson said. "Distance education is great for working professionals who do not necessarily want to leave their job to further their education." ☞

Coming Home to Home Care

One student discovers being a mature student translates into respected experiential learning.

Knowledge never dies, it only grows with experience. Thompson Rivers University, Open Learning (TRU-OL) student Maggie Marsh discovered this invaluable lesson through her experience as a mature student enrolled in the revitalized Return to Registered Nursing program.

"The coursework and the tutor's support helped me to recall just how much I still did know," Marsh said. "My life experiences since having left the nursing profession were also acknowledged and respected (by cohort students and tutors)."

Marsh began her career in nursing in 1987, immediately after graduating from high school. She worked as a Registered Psychiatric Nurse (RPN) for six years before returning to school. Here is where Marsh's TRU story begins.

In order to upgrade her education, Marsh enrolled in the RPN/RN Access program at Thompson Rivers University, formerly known as Cariboo College. In 1992, she completed the program and became a Registered Nurse (RN). Despite the program's medical approach to nursing, Marsh returned to the field of mental health for another six years. At this point, she decided to make a huge life change.

"I left the nursing profession all together and became a Registered Massage Therapist (RMT)," Marsh explained. "I have enjoyed this field for the last 13 years but a few years ago I had to ask myself if I could still do the labour intensive work of massage therapy for the next twenty years of my working life and the answer was 'no'."

Despite a complete shift in careers, Marsh found that through TRU-OL, she was able to return to her professional roots and find a new niche and new future, in her old career.

"I never thought that I would nurse again but one day it popped into my head that I could return to nursing," Marsh said.

After contacting the College of Registered Nurses of BC (CRNBC), Marsh had a plan. She would complete a CRNBC-accredited "refresher" program, a necessity as she had been away from nursing for more than five years, through TRU-OL's accredited Return to Nursing program.

"I chose to go through Open Learning because it allowed me to still continue to do massage therapy and bring in an income while pursuing my return to the nursing profession," Marsh explained. Through online and distance learning, Marsh was not only able to keep working and fit studying into her schedule but she was also able to stay in her hometown of Castlegar, BC, a six hour drive from TRU-OL's home base in Kamloops, BC.

"I was initially concerned I would feel very alone at home, just me and my computer, but was delighted to discover in a short time, the togetherness I felt in coming to know and work with my cohorts during group assignments, online sharing and discussions about our work experiences," Marsh said. "It was liberating to see how much we all had to offer and how much we still remembered and could readily contribute once again to the nursing profession."

Before even beginning her return to nursing adventure, Marsh knew she did not want to go back into psychiatric nursing, nor work in a hospital and through TRU-OL's practicum component Marsh was able to get a taste of the nursing sector that did interest her - Home and Community Care.

After completing her practicum at Nelson Home and Community Care, Marsh was offered casual status as a Quick Response Nurse and after just one month of work the verdict is in... *"I love it," Marsh exclaimed.*

"Much has changed in nursing in the last decade and the Return to Registered Nursing program helped prepare me for that," Marsh explained.



"While I have lamented to my new colleagues that I still feel like a student they have responded to say that we are all students and that even after many years of work, the learning never stops."

While she is thrilled with her role as a Home and Community Nurse, Marsh knows that her yearning for learning will pop up once again and now she knows how to quell that desire - return to Open Learning and perhaps attain a degree in Registered Nursing.

"I feel confident that the OL approach will help me to easily attain my goals and thus I will be able to continue to live my life and pursue my educational dreams without too many distractions," Marsh said. ☞

\$10,000 in gifts to Distance Ed students

The Canadian Virtual University (CVU), of which Thompson Rivers University, Open Learning (TRU-OL) is a founding member, marks a decade of operations this year. In celebration of its 10th anniversary, CVU is offering 10 gifts of \$1,000 to students who start and successfully complete a distance course this year.

CVU offers an online catalogue of 2,000 courses that students can use to search for Canadian university distance education courses. In addition to the convenience of a single access point, students also benefit from certain fee savings.

As a service to its distance students, TRU-OL waives letter of permission fees for those who take a distance course at one of its partner universities in CVU. Partner universities waive admission fees for visiting students enrolled in TRU distance programs.

TRU students who start and complete a distance course from a CVU partner in 2010 are eligible to apply for the \$1,000 gift.

For more information, visit the CVU website at www.cvu-uvc.ca/10thAnniversary.htm.



Spring blossoms on campus



Photo: TRU Creative Services 2009

LIFE in OL

TRU-OL's Enterprise Resource Planning project entitled Project SAGE is well underway however Chief Recruitment Officer Cameron Beddome says despite this progress, the project is not moving at the rate anticipated by the initial implementation plan. In an update to TRU-OL staff, Beddome explained that it is unlikely the Project's minimal expectations will be met by the June launch date.

"It is very important that when we go live with our phase one systems, we are confident about their operating capabilities," Beddome said.

"The confidence will come from having sufficient time to do extensive testing and training before our go-live date."

In the best interests of students and other stakeholders, Beddome said the Open Learning portion of Project SAGE is now set to be launched at the beginning of August while the on-campus portion will go live as planned, at the beginning of June.

The Admissions and Enrolment Services department welcomes **Linda Fleck** to the position of Data Management/Records Coordinator. Fleck, who brings to this position a diploma in Computer Systems: Operations and Management, will be working on TRU-OL's student record system. Prior to joining TRU-OL, Fleck was engaged in work running her own business, as an Office Manager, in Software Quality Assurance and as a Software Developer. Fleck has served TRU-OL for more than three years in the position of Development Support Officer and expanded the scope of her role by developing the custom database 'Data for the People.'

The Instructional Design department welcomes **Donna DesBiens** to its team. DesBiens brings to this position a Masters in Adult, Community and Higher Education from the University of Calgary as well as experience as an Instructional Designer at SAIT Polytechnic.

TRU-OL is please to welcome 31 new tutors to the team:

- Chandra Balakrishnan, BA, MSc
- Bob Barlow, BSc (Hons), MSc
- Peter Chevrier, BBA, MBA
- Derek V. Cook, BA, MBA
- Shannon Cox, BBA, MBA
- Sean Finucane, BMath, MA, PhD
- Avninder Gill, B. Eng., MSc, PhD
- Shahriar Hasan, BA, MA, PhD
- Lona Heinzig, RN, BSN, MA Ed
- Salman Khan, BSc, MSc
- Sean Kheraj, BA (Hons), MA, PhD
- Laura Lamb, PhD
- Andre LeDressay, BA (Hons), MA, PhD
- Lynnette Lettinga, BSc
- Marie Low, BBA (Hons), MA, PhD
- Fatima Marankan, BSc, MSc, PhD
- Stephen McGilligan, LLB, LLM
- Timothy Mitchell, BA (Hons), MA
- Christina Mohr, BSc
- Joseph Morong, BA, MSc
- Kevin O'Neil, BS, MA
- Iain Pardoe, BSc, MSc, PhD
- Marie Potvin, LLB, LLM, BSc
- Hafiz Rahman, PhD
- John Roberts, MSc
- Kathie Ross, BBA, MBA, CGA
- Maya Rupert, PhD
- Fraser Smith, BSc, BEd, MBA
- Ron Smith, BSc, MSc, PhD
- Sara Stevens, BSc, MSc, MA
- Bernie Warren, BS, MBA

What's NEWS in Open Learning

Accessible education key to combating labour shortage

Affordable, accessible and high quality post-secondary education is necessary if Canada is to ensure a skilled and knowledgeable Canadian workforce is available to meet a potential labour shortage in Canada according to a report recently published by the Canadian Chamber of Commerce. The report, entitled *Recession, Recovery and the Future Evolution of the Labour Market*, states that labour shortages will be a reality in Canada despite unemployment brought by the recent recession. In addition, it warned that the pre-recession labour shortage will resurface even after the economy fully recovers.

This strain to Canada's labour market is a result of an aging population and low birth rate, according to the report.

"Canada will have too few workers to meet the needs of its economy and of society," Perrin Beatty, President and CEO of the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, said. "We need to expand Canada's labour force if we want the Canadian economy to continue to grow."

According to the report, globalization and technological advances are changing the composition of the workforce, transforming the nature of work and reshaping the workplace. It suggests that Canada's competitiveness and prosperity depend on maximizing the education and skill levels of Canadians, and on the ability of our workforce to create and apply ideas and knowledge.

In order to fill this shortage, the report advises all businesses to recruit Canada's older workers, Aboriginal peoples, disabled individuals and new immigrants to Canada.

"Looking to the future, Canada faces many skills-related challenges, but they also present opportunities," Beatty said. "Addressing them and improving our nation's ability to compete is vital both to our businesses - small and large - and to Canadian workers."

AUCC backs government's budget investments

The Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC), of which TRU is a member, is in support of the government's plan to continue to invest in universities in order to support the initiatives of *Budget 2010: Leading the Way on Jobs and Growth*.

"Given Canada's fiscal outlook, we are pleased that the government is continuing to invest in university research and innovation to create jobs today and to build the economy of tomorrow," Michel Belley, Chair, AUCC Board of Directors, said in a recent press release.

Under *Budget 2010*, the government will continue to commit \$32 million annually to three major granting councils which will allow universities to continue with research that will drive innovation and produce highly skilled workers. The budget will also provide \$8 million for the Indirect Costs Program.

The Knowledge Infrastructure Program will enter into its second year and according to the AUCC, will continue to make a difference on Canadian campuses and paying dividends.

"The new investments in post-doctoral fellows will build on the stimulus provided by the Knowledge Infrastructure Program and the research funding announced today," the AUCC said in the release. "The fellowship program, funded at \$45 million over five years, will be internationally competitive and will help attract and keep talented recent PhD graduates in Canada."



BC post-secondary funding stable

Funding for post-secondary education is secure according to the BC government's latest budget which was released early this March by the Ministry of Finance. Under *Budget 2010: Building Prosperous British Columbia*, funding for post-secondary schools is maintained at \$1.88 billion for 2010-11. This includes a \$55 million increase added in Budget 2009 for universities, colleges and institutes.

Ontario to increase numbers of post-secondary graduates

The Council of Ontario Universities welcomes goals made in the provinces throne speech which include developing an online university, increasing domestic and foreign enrolments in order to produce more university and college graduates. However, the Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations feels that meeting the governments commitment to add 20,000 post-secondary education spaces will do damage to the quality of education if funds are not also allocated to hiring new faculty and student support services. The throne speech made no commitment related to the underfunding of provincial institutions.

Prior learning increases likelihood of graduation

A new study published by The Council for Adult & Experiential Learning (CAEL) indicates that students who have been awarded academic credit for prior learning are more than twice as likely to graduate, or persist even if they did not graduate, than their peers who have not earned such credit. The study entitled *Fuelling the Race to Postsecondary Success: A 48-Institution Study of Prior Learning Assessment and Adult Student Outcomes*, examined the educational records of more than 62,000 adult undergraduates at 48 post-secondary institutions and reported that 56% of students enrolled who had some prior learning assessment credit went on to earn an associate or bachelor's degree compared to only 21% of students who did not receive any such credit. Other findings the study published include the fact that students who received prior learning credit earned their degrees more quickly than their peers, saving on average between 2.5 and 10.1 months for bachelor's degrees and up to 4.5 months for associate degrees.

Campus Saskatchewan to close

Campus Saskatchewan, a partnership between the province's post-secondary institutions and the Ministry of Advanced Education which supported online and distance learning, is slated to cease operations on March 31, 2010. At its final meeting on December 2, 2009, the Campus Saskatchewan Board of Directors made the decision based on the fact that the partnership had fulfilled its mandate. Information about online and televised courses from the province's public post-secondary institutions as well as off-campus, face-to-face courses at the province's regional colleges is now available from the Saskatchewan Post-secondary Distance Education Directory while transfer credit information is available from the Saskatchewan Online Transfer Credit Guide.

Distance education network bolsters economy

A significant amount of economic activity in Northern Ontario is generated through a distance education and training network according to a report recently released.

The study conducted by Lakehead University's Economics Professor Dr. Livio Di Matteo suggested that Contact North, a northern Ontario-based distance education network, generates between \$9.7 and \$16.1 million of economic activity in northern Ontario. This economic effect is then spread to 94 remote northern Ontario communities in where the company maintains centres and hires local staff.

In addition, the study indicated Contact North supports the development of 146 to 243 full-time jobs.

Online Learning promoted by US Department of Education

Digital learning is slated to see improvements in the elementary, secondary and post-secondary systems according to the draft of a new US federal plan. The US Department of Education's Office of Educational Technology released the report entitled *Transforming American Education: Learning Powered by Technology* which is a draft of the *National Educational Technology Plan 2010*, on March 5.

Paramount to this report is the suggestion of increasing the role of online learning in all levels of curricula from kindergarten to grade 12 and the college level as well.

The Obama administration's push to improve elementary and secondary education, increase the number of college graduates by 20% by 2020 and overhaul the No Child Left Behind Act, incited this report.

The first national broadband plan, a report released by the Federal Communications Commission, suggested ways of expanding digital learning such as giving schools and hospitals affordable access to ultra-high-speed broadband.

17% increase in online course enrolments

A survey from the Sloan Consortium indicates that in the fall of 2008, online enrolments at American colleges increased 17% from the year before, with about 4.6 million students taking at least one course online.

Overall, all post-secondary education enrolments increased only 1.2% which shows just how much advancement has been made in online learning.

The survey indicates the greatest demand for online courses is a result of the recent recession, with 66% of schools reporting increased demand for new courses and programs and 77% seeing increased demand for existing courses and programs. The survey found that public institutions are most likely to believe that online learning is critical for their long-term strategy.

Distance Education policy amended

Effective immediately, the National Certification Board for Therapeutic Massage & Bodywork (NCBTMB) has suspended its policy regarding distance education for kinaesthetic or hands-on programs. Previously, policy required that an instructor be present for the final assessment of acquired skills. The decision to revoke the policy was a result of feedback from the profession.

After reviewing continuing education options and current best practices, NCBTMB determined that instructor/proctor requirements are no longer necessary and that the method of evaluation should be determined by the individual approved provider. The new testing policy reads: "When a participant is issued a certificate of achievement for a home study/ kinaesthetic or distance learning course, an evaluation is required. The evaluation may be practical or written, at the discretion of the approved provider."

What's NEWS in Open Learning continued >

What's NEWS in Open Learning



Increase in Indian students coming to Canadian colleges

A pilot project between Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) and the Association of Canadian Community Colleges (ACCC) has successfully helped to double the acceptance rate of Indian students studying at a group of Canadian Colleges.

The goal of Student Partners Project, the pilot project launched between Canada's visa offices in India and 20 member colleges of the ACC in April 2009, was to increase the approval rate for study permit applications at participating Canadian colleges.

Canada's Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism Minister Jason Kenney said that international students offer Canadian colleges financial and cultural contributions. A 2009 study commissioned by Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada reports that in 2008, international students contributed over CAN\$6.5 billion to Canada's economy.

New Delhi to gain funds for open schooling

In New Delhi, the government is considering a framing policy that will enable schools to adapt a distance education program as an effort to bolster the support and acceptance of the open schooling system. In his address to the annual meeting of National Consortium for Open Schooling Human Resources Development Minister Kapil Sibal said he wants to increase the number of students pursuing post-secondary education through the open school system by 337-400% by "the end of the 11th five year plan."

Sibal believes that if traditional schools adapted distance education programs it would upgrade the quality of distance schooling and make it more acceptable as well as efficient alternative to traditional education,

thus increasing the number of post-secondary enrolments coming from open schooling.

Minister of State for Human Resources Development D. Purandeswari said the government will come up with a scheme to provide financial support to the state governments to start an open schooling system.

Distance education provider offers tuition to low income students

Sikkim Manipal University Directorate of Distance Education (SMU-DDE) based in India recently launched a scholarship initiative entitled Vidyadeep, which is aimed at the poorer section of India's society. The nationwide scholarship program will assist 1,500 students by paying up to 100% of tuition. Students eligible for the scholarships include those currently enrolled in their first to fifth semester of programs in the following streams: IT; Management; Journalism and Mass Communication; Fashion; Hospitality and Tourism; Allied Health; Biotechnology and Bioinformatics. A further eligibility marker includes those with a low family income.

SMU-DDE was established in 2001 by the Sikkim Manipal University of Health, Medical and Technological Sciences. The programs offered by SMU are recognized by the Distance Education Council (DEC) of the Government of India.

Botswana promotes open learning

The second highest motion planned for a recent Parliamentary meeting in Botswana was to request the Botswana Government to sponsor students to study at Botswana College of Distance and Open Learning.

New Open Learning Programs Delivered to Ghana

In late January, 2010, the Open University of Malaysia (OUM) formally launched programs in Ghana. These programs are directed at students from Ghana and other African countries.

The Accra Institute of Technology (AIT) is set to deliver the Open University program which enables students to study both undergraduate and post-graduate programs online and upon completion, be awarded a degree from OUM.

"It is encouraging that in support of the agenda of the government of Ghana to develop the capacity of the citizenry in the era of ICT, the Open University of Malaysia in collaboration with AIT is offering degree programs as well as research programs tailored to the needs of Ghana," Haruna Iddrisu, Ghana's Minister of Communications, said.

Iddrisu expressed his hopes that this initiative will lead to the Ministry of Education's development of national policy on open learning. Professor Clement K. Dzidonu, President, AIT, the Open University concept is an essential tool to help Ghana drastically improve university enrolment and broaden access to tertiary education to the Ghanaian public. Furthermore, Dzidonu explained that AIT had secured the necessary approvals with the National Accreditation Board to offer the OUM programs stipulated under a partnership agreement in the form of a memorandum of understanding signed between OUM and AIT last year.

The OUM was developed by 11 Malaysian public universities.

Digital libraries a future reality, a distant future

A study authored by Geneva Henry and Lisa Spiro of Houston-based Rice University, indicates that libraries are heading in the direction of primarily digital infrastructures but at a slow rate.

The paper, which looks at campus-based efforts to build new libraries oriented to a digital future, states that because faculty members are unwilling to conform to a digital only library collection and because the "e-reader" market is unprepared for the current state of e-books, it might take up to half a century for digital libraries to be a reality. "Although some e-book standards such as ePub are beginning to emerge, there is still significant flux and divergence from those standards," Henry and Spiro write. "Standards are important in enabling consumers to read content from multiple publishers on their devices, to move content around to multiple devices, and to preserve books for the long-term."

While e-books will likely become a norm in higher education within the next decade, the reality is they do not convey the same experience of a traditional book such as offering the ability to photocopy, write in margins, highlight sections and bookmark pages. However, advantages of searchability of electronic documents and databases do persist as a real advantage over traditional print books.

Other advantages are related to the cost savings as print collections require preservation controls while e-books do not require space or maintenance.

Distance Learning Awards Accepting Nominations

The Commonwealth of Learning (COL) is accepting submissions for the 2009-10 Excellence in Distance Education Awards which will be presented during the 6th Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning. The Forum is slated to be held November 24-28, 2010 in Kochi, Kerala, India.

There are four award categories which recognize excellence at:

- the institutional level
- in the development of learning materials
- in student accomplishment
- for a lifetime achievement in and contribution to, open and distance learning

The deadline for submissions is April 30, 2010. For more information and to download the Award brochure, visit www.col.org/ede.

The 6th Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning - organized by COL in partnership with Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) - will explore how open and distance learning can help to achieve international development goals and education for all. The conference theme is "Access and Success in Learning: Global Development Perspectives," with a focus on:

- Social Justice
- Community Development
- Skills Development
- Formal Education

For more information on the Conference visit www.col.org/pcf6.

The COL is an intergovernmental organization aiming to promote the use of open and distance education throughout the Commonwealth.

Enrolment marketing and management forums for higher education

Professionals involved in education marketing or enrolment management at Canadian universities and colleges can gain fresh insight and learn valuable best practices regarding their sector at the Strategic Enrolment Marketing and Management (SEMM) Forum 2010 series which begins this April. The SEMM forums will be held in Boston on April 8, Calgary on April 20 and Toronto on April 22. For the first time, there will also be a SEMM Forum on International Student Recruitment held in Toronto on April 23. Areas of discussion include: post-secondary enrolment trends and challenges; effective front-line recruiting tactics; emerging technologies affecting student recruitment; understanding Millennials and how to connect with them; and strategies to create an effective brand.

Visit www.SEMMForum.ca for further details and to register.

Software develops tech skills for students

IBM recently announced the launch of its free "academic cloud," a bundle of web-based IBM software that is intended to help professors teach technology skills to students. The software aims to ensure post-secondary students gain sufficient technology and technical skills to meet the needs of the workforce of the future.

The IBM software intends to help professors to help teach students in specific areas of technology, including software development, information management, Web 2.0 and cloud computing. Professors can use the software to build IT curriculum, make long distance education easier as well as free up existing internal infrastructure. More specifically, technology skills will be based on IBM Rational, WebSphere and Information Management software.

The new academic cloud is set to be freely available and accessible to 20 colleges and universities across the United States. However, an IBM company announcement stated that it plans to add additional schools over time.

What's NEWS in Open Learning

continued >

What's NEWS in Open Learning



Taking Aim at Diploma Mills

Legislation recently unveiled in the US Congress aims to develop regulations regarding diploma mills. The bill intends to: cement in federal law definitions of “diploma mills” and “accreditation mills” (the unauthorized agencies from which the phony institutions claim to derive their authority to operate); bar federal agencies from using degrees from diploma mills to provide jobs or promotions that depend on candidates’ educational credentials; and give the Federal Trade Commission more authority to define and crack down on deceptive practices by dubious institutions.

The bill was discussed at a recent international forum sponsored by the US Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA), by New York’s Congressman Timothy Bishop.

“We have an obligation to see to it that people have confidence in our institutions, particularly our institutions of higher education, and in the credentials they provide,” Bishop said.

The bill would define a diploma mill as “(1) any entity that is not accredited by an agency that is recognized by the U.S. Education Department or the Council for Higher Education Accreditation or authorized to grant post-secondary degrees by a state government (business licensure is not sufficient) and (2) offers degrees or other credentials for a fee but requires ‘little or no education or course work’ to gain that credential.”

The proposed law would assert that institutions choosing not to seek regional or national accreditation but earn a state’s approval to grant degrees, will not be considered a diploma mill if they require work by students to earn degrees.

The bill would also direct the Federal Trade Commission to establish regulations that would define as “unfair and deceptive act(s) or practice(s)” a fairly wide array of activities:

- Issuance of a degree or other credential by an entity that is not recognized as legitimate by the U.S. education secretary, “if such degree, diploma, certificate or similar document misrepresents, directly or indirectly, the subject matter, substance, or content of the course of study or any other material fact concerning the course of study” for which the credential was awarded.

- The issuing of an “academic, professional, or occupational degree” by an institution not accredited by the education secretary or CHEA “unless the entity offering or conferring” the degree “clearly and conspicuously discloses, in all advertising and promotional materials that contain a reference to such a degree, that the awarding of the degree has not been so authorized or that the entity offering or conferring the degree has not been so approved or recognized.”

- Any advertising or promotional claims that an educational entity is accredited unless it is accredited by a federally or CHEA-recognized agency, or any claim of approved status by an unaccredited entity that “misrepresents, directly or indirectly, the nature, extent, or credibility of such approval.”

- The issuing of accreditation to a degree-granting institution by any entity “that is not recognized for accreditation purposes” by the education secretary or CHEA. 