

ACADEMIC PLAN, 2008

Analysis of the Environment

Introduction

The environmental scan has been approached from two angles. One approach was assembling a range of documents, posting them on the web, and preparing a draft synthesis that presents key findings to initiate conversations about the possible implications of the findings. This document and background materials are available on the planning page of the Institutional Research website at <http://www.douglas.bc.ca/instres/planning.html>

The second approach, used in this analysis, was to pose key questions and begin answering them using the posted documents. The suggested implications are just discussion starters that will be amplified and amended throughout the planning process.

The hope is that by using both inductive and deductive approaches, the resulting conclusions will be relevant (a strength of the deductive approach) as well as sensitive to developments beyond what is normally monitored in day-to-day college operations (a strength of the inductive approach.)

What do we know about students?

Who are our current students?

Age: Young (70% age 24 or younger)

Enrolment status: Part-time (65% taking three or fewer courses)

Sex: Female (64% female)

Multicultural: 48% had a childhood language other than, or in addition to, English

Local: 60% from north of the Fraser River, Burnaby to Maple Ridge.

(One quarter of all students live in the TriCities)

Live in parental home: 60%

Less clear about goals and motivations than at some other institutions

(See, for example, 2007 Applicants Survey)

Mobile: about 50% return to Douglas each year, 20% enroll elsewhere in the BC public postsecondary system, and 30% disappear. Of the 30% who disappear, graduation from Douglas accounts for only one fifth of the discontinuing students.

Enrolment patterns: considerable differences exist between open and limited enrolment programs. Also, variation exists in student characteristics across Faculties, e.g. older students are concentrated in Health, CFCS and Student Development.

Frequently not university eligible: about 15% of the recent high school graduates who have come to Douglas College had the grades and courses to go to university instead.

Potential implications:

- *Douglas College serves a student body that is “young” in many respects. We could seek to attract a different caliber of student or we could emphasize a transitional, developmental role as a distinctive niche. The situation varies significantly, however, across open and limited enrolment areas.*
- *With many students living at home and studying part-time, not all are financially constrained and short on time. Employment may be a lifestyle choice rather than a necessity.*
- *Douglas serves a student body that is 2/3 female. Many institutions north and south of the border have recognized similar patterns and have adjusted their recruiting patterns and marketing plans.*
- *What other possible implications do we need to consider?*

How have students changed in the past 5 to 10 years?

Demographically: not very much, e.g. part-time/full-time mix is similar to a decade ago and Douglas still serves mainly recent high school graduates. The proportion of females is slowly increasing (3 percentage points more than a decade ago.) In the early nineties, the big change was a rapid increase in the multicultural composition of the student body.

Qualitatively: Something seems to be happening with the twixters, NEETS, and boomerangers that is congruent with anecdotal reports from Douglas faculty. (See page C30 of the Environmental Scan for the Douglas College Strategic Plan for discussion of these terms.) Some of the changes are elaborated below.

Potential implications:

- *The significant changes seem to be attitudinal, e.g. students’ sense of entitlement. Faculty’s experiences as educators of these students need to be compiled to give a comprehensive picture of the changes. The College’s attention to the scholarship of teaching and learning may be timely.*
- *What other possible implications do we need to consider?*

Who do we expect our students to be in the future?

Fewer recent high school leavers: demographic decline in province. (See pages C2 – C4 of College Strategic Plan scan.)

Selective consumers, with lots of institutional choice (especially those living in the large centres of Burnaby and north Surrey)

Continued high levels of immigration and under-prepared students

Potential implications:

- *In today’s more competitive environment, Douglas needs to be persuasive and appear professional to its traditional high school clientele.*

- *Need to expand enrolment of older students if the College is to meet its enrolment targets. The foreign born population may be a good place to start.*
- *Keep in mind the large numbers of under-prepared students for whom Douglas College could be the institution of choice.*
- *What other possible implications do we need to consider?*

How are the needs and desires of our students changing (and what do we anticipate them to be in the future?)

Tech savvy, particularly with regard to communications media
 Sense of entitlement, consumer mentality
 Perhaps less convinced of the value of education, but receptive to good arguments.
 Career paths and routes into adult roles seem less obvious to today's teenagers.
 Choosy (especially prospective adult students who are looking for upgrading, career switches or personal development)

Potential implications:

- *High school grads are used to educational technology and often come from schools that were recently built or renovated. They expect similar or better quality and service from Douglas College.*
- *May need help with goal setting and educational planning, and with the developmental tasks of entering adulthood (including the task of meeting faculty expectations for study at the postsecondary level)*
- *What other possible implications do we need to consider?*

What resources does Douglas College have to offer students?

Programs

Academic emphasis. Like some other urban colleges (Langara and Capilano), Douglas has large Arts, Science and Business components. Applied programs often include university transferable courses.
 Large emphasis on Health Science and Human Service programs
 Trade programs not offered at Douglas
 Few technology programs
 Most courses are delivered in standard face-to-face, semesterized, weekday and evening formats.
 Few short programs; trend towards longer credit programs.

Potential implications:

- *The advantages and disadvantages of offering more short, perhaps laddered, programs should be explored.*
- *Arts, Science and Business courses are widely available in the Lower Mainland. Need to considered how to make Douglas' offerings stand out, e.g. through promotion of the Academic Signature.*
- *Offer more programming in formats that allow students to work/have a life while attending college.*

- *What other possible implications do we need to consider?*

Faculty

Well regarded by former students, but no more so than at other colleges
(See Key Outcomes Indicators, BC College and Institute Student Outcomes survey of former students)

Retirement wave starting

Already difficulty recruiting in some disciplines

Being stretched thin, on top of which is a desire to foster scholarly activity.

Potential implications:

- *Human resource planning needs to occur in tandem with academic planning*
- *Clear college priorities may help faculty with managing their scarce time.*
- *Expand data collection and professional development to further substantiate our claim that Douglas has excellent instructors*
- *What other possible implications do we need to consider?*

Learning Outside the Classroom

A broad array of services and learning supports, but rates of usage are lackluster by North American standards (See Community College Survey of Student Engagement, 2007)

Commuter institution; little campus life, or even study and lounge space.

Exploring virtual communities, e.g. online tutoring and real time library services

Library generally gets rated more highly than at other colleges (e.g. CISO former student survey)

Potential implications:

- *The characteristics of commuter schools can be hard to change, but targeted attention to learning outside the classroom may enhance the student engagement the literature has shown to foster learning.*
- *What other possible implications do we need to consider?*

Facilities

Adequate, but nothing special by standards of a number of local high schools

No residences.

No learning commons/centre.

Space shortages in a number of areas

Potential implications:

- *Budgets are tight, but seek ways of providing student space outside classrooms that is welcoming and which makes it easy for students to study individually or in groups on campus.*
- *Seek ways to provide learner resources in concentrated space.*

- *What other possible implications do we need to consider?*

To what other postsecondary institutions do we need to pay attention?

Partners

Former Douglas students study most frequently at SFU, followed by BCIT, Kwantlen, UBC and the University College of the Fraser Valley. (See Student Transitions Project, CISO former student survey, and BCCAT Transfer Profiles)

Potential implications:

- *Maintain strong relationships with SFU as it is the main destination of former Douglas students who continue their studies.*
- *There may be opportunities to develop partnerships with nearby BCIT and Kwantlen.*
- *What other possible implications do we need to consider?*

Competitors

With declining high school cohorts and increased capacity, universities are aggressively recruiting in the high schools with considerable success

Fraser Valley and Kwantlen are actively seeking university status.

Douglas has relatively few vocational offerings. Where it does, e.g. in the allied health or lower level information technology fields, the private sector is often the main competitor. Similarly, private ESL schools are numerous.

Developments at neighbouring institutions seem to be having large impacts on Douglas College, e.g. lowering of admission GPA at SFU and the migration of Maple Ridge students towards UCFV.

Potential implications:

- *Douglas' geographic location, coupled with the programming it offers and the type of student it has historically attracted, makes it vulnerable to changes at other institutions. Douglas needs to monitor developments elsewhere and be prepared to respond nimbly.*
- *Douglas needs to have its own plan and be proactive in terms of maintaining or increasing our market share.*
- *What other possible implications do we need to consider?*

What potential changes do we anticipate in the BC postsecondary landscape?

Continued focus on meeting enrolment targets, with varying success depending on the type of institution, location and program mix.

Campus 2020 – governmental response unknown, but expect some of the themes such as the need for more coordination and better information to persist

Efforts to serve First Nations, including through Adult Basic Education

Impact of private institutions is still unclear, but it is a government priority
Lots of competition for degree-bound students

Potential implications:

- *Government's response to Campus 2020 is not expected until at least March. When it arrives, it could be an important consideration in academic planning.*
- *What other possible implications do we need to consider?*

What are the characteristics of our local communities?

Socio-Economic Characteristics

The formal Douglas region, Burnaby to Maple Ridge, is largely upper working class and middle class. Average income is close to the BC average.

Mainly suburban, with some urban and rural areas.

Transportation congestion seems to be an increasingly important consideration as residents make choices.

Ethnically diverse, though less so in the eastern regions. Mainly Asia Pacific immigrants, whose cultures place a high value on education. Less predominantly South Asian than Vancouver and Kwantlen regions.

Maple Ridge, Pitt Meadows, Port Coquitlam and Port Moody have the largest share of the population age 15 years and younger (about 20% in each of these communities)

Douglas also enrolls some students from North Surrey and North Delta. Some neighbourhoods in north Surrey have low incomes.

Potential implications:

- *The multicultural aspects of our communities are perhaps the key demographics that need to be considered in academic planning.*
- *Transportation barriers and competition from other institutions may make it difficult to recruit students from afar, except for unique and distinctive programs.*
- *Establish a greater presence in North Surrey.*
- *What other possible implications do we need to consider?*

Demographic Forecasts

(Results from the 2006 census are still being released, so the projections relied upon here may change in future iterations. Also, the booming economy and assumptions about future economic conditions may affect projections due to different migration assumptions.)

Grade 12 enrolment projection for the Douglas region is flat. Losses due to small families and aging children are expected to be offset by in-migration. Western portions of the Lower Mainland will see declines or no growth in Grade 12 enrolments.

Grade 12 enrolments in the eastern regions of the Lower Mainland are growing modestly, with the largest absolute growth south of the Fraser River.

Provincially, the 18 – 24 population is expected to be flat for about a decade, then decline for decade before starting to recover. The Douglas region is forecast to show very modest growth.

The growth in the Douglas region will be 25 – 44 age group and especially in the 45 – 64 age group.

Potential implications:

- *Need to increase the proportion of students who are older, but this is not an easy task given the diversity of the adult population.*
- *What other possible implications do we need to consider?*

How might changing economic conditions affect Douglas College?

Occupational Forecasts

(Comprehensive, long term, good quality occupational forecasts are surprisingly few and far between. Most forecasts are by economic sector rather than occupation, for specific occupations or are short term.)

While the majority of all job openings will require some form of postsecondary education, only a minority will require a university education.

Retirement: Forthcoming wave of retirees will lead to a talent shortage rather than a general labour shortage, i.e. it will mainly affect certain industries and occupations.

US job growth is predicted to be largest in service and professional occupations. Many of the occupations with the fastest projected rates of growth are in the health and selected IT fields.

Shortages are emerging in the trades, but it is less clear the extent to which public institutions are able or need to fill the gap.

Potential implications:

- *In the absence of compelling evidence about overall occupational outlooks, it may be best to look for occupational niches and to use a pilot test/experimental approach.*
- *What other possible implications do we need to consider?*

Economy

Anecdotal evidence and the conventional wisdom are that young people enter the labour market rather than go to school when the economy is strong, but few empirical studies are available to confirm this.

The BC Minister of Finance has warned that the strong BC economy may weaken in the short term. There is speculation that economy may do poorly after the Olympics in 2010.

Potential implications:

- *Enrolments may rebound in a few years, but we can't count on it.*
- *What other possible implications do we need to consider?*

What public policy issues are most pertinent to Douglas College?

Provincial

Attention to Health and First Nations issues.

Additional provincial funding is being put to uses other than college education, e.g. no inflationary grant this year.

Tension between centrally controlled decisions (e.g. tuition and salary increases) and market principles (e.g. enrolment competition)

Cost-recovery and for-profit education seems to be viewed favourably by government.

Potential implications:

- *Build on Douglas' existing programming in the health sciences*
- *What other possible implications do we need to consider?*

Federal

With the 2006 census showing 20% of the Canadian population is foreign born, the federal government's emphasis on helping foreign trained professionals enter their professions in Canada, and on Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition generally, is likely to continue.

Calls for a national postsecondary strategy, but nothing imminent.

Potential implications:

- *Develop fast track offerings for people with previous educational qualifications.*
- *What other possible implications do we need to consider?*