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# Analysis of External Environment

## Fall 2002

In developing Douglas College's interim strategic plan, every member of the College community needs to be aware of the following challenges and opportunities facing the college.

Trend	Implications
<b>Population and Enrolment Demand</b>	
<p>1. <i>Continued growth</i> Overall population, as well as the traditional college age group, will continue to grow in the Douglas region despite falling school age population across the Lower Mainland. Potential ripple from bulge in Ontario enrolment demand arising from the elimination of Grade 13.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The overall demand for admission to Douglas College should continue to exceed the seats available, although some individual programs may be under-enrolled.</li> <li>- With national postsecondary enrolment growth, opportunity to encourage more students to complete an Associate Degree at Douglas before transferring to university.</li> </ul>
<p>2. <i>Rate of ethnic change is slowing</i> Dramatic change in the ethnic composition of Douglas region in the 1990s is shifting to a more stable multicultural community.</p>	<p>High diversity and educational needs of the current student body are likely to continue. Potential increased demand for more diverse postsecondary options.</p>
<p>3. <i>Secondary school reform</i> Desire of provincial government to provide greater choice, raise standards, and better serve students who are not university bound.</p>	<p>Potential changes in the qualities and capabilities of recent high school leavers who enter Douglas College.</p>
<p>4. <i>Different drivers of enrolment demand</i> Demand for liberal education from students and parents remains high. Employers are calling for more career programs, at the diploma and baccalaureate levels. Government policy can affect the demand for preparatory courses.</p>	<p>The program mix described in the Master Education Plan of 1999 remains relevant, but should be reviewed in light of current and emerging trends.</p>
<p><b>Labour Market</b> <i>Past trends seem to be continuing. The following are of particular significance for Douglas College.</i></p>	
<p>1. <i>Retirements will lead to skill shortages</i> Although not new information, the business community is particularly concerned about anticipated shortages of skilled labour in certain vocational fields and trades.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Difficulties in recruiting and retaining personnel at Douglas College.</li> <li>- Potential policy decision by government to increase the number of graduates of applied programs.</li> <li>- College will have to be responsive to emerging labour force training needs.</li> </ul>

<p>2. <i>Need for both specific and general skills</i> Specific skills and knowledge seem to be needed to get many jobs, but performance and advancement may depend greatly on general knowledge and abilities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Curriculum needs to be balanced in terms of general education (which encompasses what business calls “employability skills”) and job-specific skills.</li> <li>- General knowledge and performance outcomes for associate degrees and diplomas could be promoted to increase public awareness of graduate outcomes for Douglas College programs.</li> </ul>
<p>3. <i>Uncertain career paths and employment</i> With changing skill and credentialing requirements, organizational restructuring, and varying economic conditions, career paths and continuing employment are uncertain for many workers.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Potentially changing enrolment demand and occupational opportunities in various college programs.</li> <li>- Continuing importance of lifelong education and just-in-time training.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Postsecondary Education</b> <i>The most significant environmental changes for Douglas College are in the BC postsecondary system.</i></p>	
<p>1. <i>Less reliance on government operating grants</i> At least two more years of no increase in public funding, but requirement for enrolment growth. Substantial tuition increases in the short run. Possibility of differential fees in the college sector.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Great deal of attention will have to be devoted to budgeting, efficiencies, selective cutbacks, alternative funding sources and student finance.</li> <li>- Affordability and sustainability will be major concerns during a period of financial constraint.</li> <li>- Seek revenue sources from the not-for-profit and private sectors.</li> </ul>
<p>2. <i>Less regulation and restrictions</i> Degree-granting privileges to colleges and private institutions. Less bureaucracy in introducing new programs and in directing how operating grants are to be spent. Anticipated mandate review may result in legislative changes as to what is required and what is permitted in colleges.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Government may continue to give strong direction as to what it expects community colleges to achieve, but then leave it up to institutions to determine how they will achieve the objectives.</li> <li>- Hard decisions may have to be made within institutions.</li> <li>- Need to develop college processes that enable the college to respond effectively and efficiently in an era of less governmental bureaucracy.</li> </ul>
<p>3. <i>Institutional competition and complementarity</i> Government is encouraging public-private partnerships and private educational institutions. College and institute sector is fragmenting into small groupings of institutions with similar characteristics. Changing entrance requirements at local universities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Potential increased competition from private institutions in such fields as English language training, selected career programs and niche degrees.</li> <li>- Increased sense of vulnerability and exploration of new partnerships to reduce risk.</li> <li>- Traditional transfer destinations may change for some programs.</li> <li>- Increased need to market programs and the advantages of a college education, such as block transfer</li> </ul>
<p><b>Government</b></p>	
<p>1. <i>Break from the past in provincial priorities</i> Government has described its agenda as a “new era”. It is disassociating itself from past practices in a number of areas.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- College may be called upon to explain and justify activities it takes for granted as essential.</li> <li>- College will have to demonstrate responsiveness to developing demands and trends.</li> <li>- Apparent contradictions between announced long term goals and short term tactics may be confusing and frustrating for educational institutions.</li> </ul>

<p>2. <i>Accountability and performance measures</i>  Government is seeking evidence that the public sector is achieving its goals, and not just working hard or properly.</p>	<p>A new accountability framework for colleges and institutes has been promised. Not clear that it will necessarily affect day-to-day operations, but it has the potential to be significant. Institutions need to engage proactively in the discussion and establishment of accountability measures.</p>
<p>3. <i>Changing social policy</i>  The social safety net and means for advancement may be changing for certain ‘at risk’ and disadvantaged groups.</p>	<p>Historic Douglas mission in terms of equitable access cannot be taken for granted. Need to consider the extent to which programs and services are suitable for specific populations.</p>
<p><b>Technology</b></p>	
<p>1. <i>Growth of new technologies</i>  Availability of technology and user expectations are changing and growing rapidly. Saturation of technology in many aspects of contemporary life.</p>	<p>- Need to balance challenges, e.g. costs and training, with opportunities and flexible access, e.g. richer learning experiences. - Ongoing struggle to remain relevant and viable, making appropriate technology choices given Douglas’ philosophy and resources.</p>
<p>2. <i>Online courses</i>  Ministry is attempting to bring online college courses under a single umbrella.</p>	<p>Douglas is not likely to be a leader in online education, but will seek to gradually increase online delivery capability in niche areas within the provincial framework.</p>