

Community Partners Breakfast Summary Report

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As part of the Strategic Planning outreach, community partners breakfasts were held in three locations to capture the opinions and ideas of leaders in the communities we serve. More than 60 senior representatives from business, health, education, arts and culture, as well as institutions such as the Chamber of Commerce, Board of Trade, RCMP, along with senior municipal staff attended the sessions held on Jan. 28 at the New Westminster Campus, on Jan. 29 at the David Lam Campus and on Feb. 4 in Maple Ridge.

Each session began with Bachelor of Business Administration student Anna Solnickova, Douglas College's Olympic torchbearer, providing a student perspective, followed by President Scott McAlpine's overview of the College. Participants then broke into groups to discuss three questions:

1. What's working between your organization and Douglas?
2. What needs to be improved?
3. What new initiatives would you like to see in the future at Douglas?

Key themes that emerged from all three workshops were:

What's working?

- Quality of graduates – our students are well prepared and job ready
- Community partnerships – joint initiatives are noticed and encouraged, including sports camps, arts events; between David Lam Campus, Pinetree Community Centre and City of Coquitlam, as well as shared ProD opportunities for Douglas College and city employees
- Public profile – in the TriCities especially, slightly less in New West and not at all in Maple Ridge (lack of physical presence leads to very low profile.)
- Communications/Recruitment – high school counsellors praised communications between the College's Office of New Students and the Regional Student Transitions Coordinator
- Reputation – dedicated faculty and staff, small classes

- Accessibility – for learners of all ages and abilities
- Welcoming environment – students and the public feel welcomed on campus
- Support for new immigrants and entrepreneurs through The Training Group

What needs improvement?

- External communication – needs strengthening to improve awareness and image. Suggestions included posting a list of experts on specific topics on website; a “What’s On at Douglas” page in the community press; more good news stories, more one-on-one interactions; more information on Continuing Education and The Training Group as opportunities for non-traditional learners
- Website/Email – website needs to be easier to navigate, should link to community initiatives; email blasts on events, new programs, etc. to stakeholders; post facility rental rates for community groups on website
- Community connections – expand connections with business community and immigrant service societies
- Image – lingering perception that Douglas is second best, not as good as a university
- Improved pathways – for skilled immigrants, for people returning to school to upgrade or due to being down-sized, for Second and Third Age Learners
- Greater involvement of professional societies so Douglas curriculum and programs reflect current practice
- Expansion of shared Professional Development with municipalities and other groups
- Improved signage –especially at the New Westminster Campus, externally so people know we exist and internally to make the facility more welcoming. Better use of electronic reader boards at both campuses
- Transportation links – especially to David Lam from places like Maple Ridge, New West and south of the Fraser. As well, improved transit links between New West and David Lam
- Outreach – hold Career Fairs, Information Sessions, Open Houses in the different communities instead of on campus

New initiatives

- Expand community partnerships – include a wider variety of community organizations and businesses; host some events in the community; open College events to community members; share expertise of faculty/staff with external agencies
- Hybrid and online courses – essential to attract working people who want to upgrade; innovative timetabling, i.e. classes from 4 to 7 to capture people before they go home
- Increase Pro-D opportunities in leadership and management, but also on interview, communications, and customer service skills, and offer to employees, community business and professional organizations
- Expand partnerships with high schools so students can take credit courses while in G12
- Build on Self Employment Program (that is well known throughout catchment area) by offering education to existing small businesses on a user-pay system
- Expand Continuing Education to offer professional education credits to lawyers, accountants, financial planners, etc.
- Expand programs for new immigrants in areas of re-licensing, fast tracking, mentoring and coaching
- Focus on adult learners
- Host Community Days at each campus, and take information sessions into the communities
- Expand post-diploma, post-degree programs
- Develop courses in Public Administration
- Partnerships with other Colleges/Universities, sharing resources, including space, and building on dual entry initiatives
- Strategic networking – develop partnerships between specific businesses and organizations and the corresponding faculty

And finally, we were told to **Be Bold** – find a niche and go for it.

Addendum

These additional comments had resonance across the groups but were not necessarily major themes:

- Participants liked the meeting format, especially the facilitation
- Douglas could play key role in community by explaining issues of the day to the public through lecture series or discussion groups
- Inspire students – identify key leaders in the community, or alumni, and invite them to speak to students and use students to recruit at high school post-secondary nights
- Place greater emphasis on job placement programs
- Share office facilities with community partners – external groups would benefit from space at Douglas College while Douglas could use community space for recruiting (storefront offices)
- Focus on local strengths – retail, agriculture, transportation, film industry – and offer programming in those areas
- Consider expanding into trades and other career education opportunities
- Support for aboriginal learners – Douglas could become a leader in this field
- Improve physical space to more accessible and welcoming
- Improve coordination between College and community libraries as a way to connect with the community – could enhance recruitment possibilities
- Build on positive reputation of Foundation
- Focus on new immigrants – establish satellite programs in their countries of origin
- Look to businesses/organizations in Ridge-Meadows for internship/practicum/co-op opportunities
- Market to new downtown residents of New Westminster offering flexible scheduling
- Offer Nursing Education in more flexible formats, including LPN.

Facilitators for the Community Partners' workshops: Robert Buller, Kathy Denton, Dean Howie, Ted James, Blaine Jensen, Piotr Kisiel, Lin Langley, Karen Maynes, Hazel Postma, Susan Smythe and Gary Tennant.