



THE ALLIANCE OF NOVA SCOTIA STUDENT ASSOCIATIONS

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STUDENT CONCERNS: ISSUES BRIEFING

TO: DR. TIM O'NEILL

FROM: THE ALLIANCE OF NOVA SCOTIA STUDENT ASSOCIATIONS (ANSSA)

DATE: MONDAY FEBRUARY 15TH 2009

RE: **ISSUES BRIEFING – ACCESSIBILITY AND AFFORDABILITY**

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS – ACCESSIBILITY

- GUARANTEE ACCESS TO HIGHER EDUCATION FOR ALL QUALIFIED NOVA SCOTIANS
- ENHANCE EXISTING GRANTS PROGRAMS USING A PROGRESSIVE REWARDS SYSTEM
- IMPLEMENT A GRADUATE SCHOLARSHIP SYSTEM TO ATTRACT AND RETAIN TALENT
- IMPLEMENT A PROVINCE WIDE EARLY OUTREACH STRATEGY
- IMPLEMENT PROVINCE-WIDE ACCESSIBILITY TARGETS AND GOALS

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS – AFFORDABILITY

- SET A GOAL FOR A 20% STUDENT SHARE OF THE COST OF UNIVERSITY EDUCATION
- ELIMINATE DIFFERENTIAL TUITION FEES FOR OUT OF PROVINCE CANADIAN STUDENTS
- SCRAP GRAD TAX CREDITS, DEVELOP AN EVIDENCE BASED YOUTH RETENTION STRATEGY



The Alliance of Nova Scotia Student Associations (ANSSA) is a non-partisan, not-for-profit organization representing over 35,000 students at five post-secondary institutions across the Province of Nova Scotia. ANSSA's mandate focuses exclusively on post-secondary education, and is committed to advocating for a high quality system that is accessible and affordable to every qualified student.

ANSSA MEMBER ASSOCIATIONS INCLUDE:

- Cape Breton University Students' Union
- St. Francis Xavier University Students' Union
- Dalhousie Student Union
- Saint Mary's University Students' Association
- Acadia University Students' Union

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INTRODUCTION

The global economic recession has hit both students and universities hard. University endowments are growing slower, meaning less operating revenue for institutions, and fewer bursaries and scholarships for financially needy students¹. Over 40 000 students entered a university classroom in Nova Scotia in the fall of 2009, and many of them were financially unprepared for the challenges that lie ahead. Many will have been unable to find summer employment this past summer. The unemployment rate for students aged 19 – 24 reached 21 per cent in July 2009, the highest rate on record in the past 32 years².

Despite these financial constraints, the value of an educated populace has never been clearer. We know that individuals who hold a university degree in Nova Scotia are currently earning an average of \$19, 140 more annually than those with no post secondary credentials³. We expect that 70% of the jobs created in Canada in the next six years will require some form of post secondary qualification⁴. Unfortunately, Nova Scotia's higher education system is not yet accessible enough to ensure participation levels in higher education meet the demands of tomorrow's labour market. On top of that, the careers students are being trained for aren't plentiful in Nova Scotia yet, forcing many graduates to leave our province for better opportunities elsewhere. If our population is aging, and many educated youth leaving, the fiscal and social prosperity of our province is at stake.

These factors should bring three important questions to the minds of Nova Scotians. If outmigration and demographic trends continue (and all signs indicate they will), where will the tax dollars come from to fund the rising cost of social services like health care and education? Secondly, if our post-secondary participation rates fail to meet the proportion of jobs requiring a post-secondary credential, will we become uncompetitive as a province in the knowledge-based economy of tomorrow? And lastly, if we cannot provide the opportunities necessary for graduates to stay here, will we be relegated to a second class province because of the combined effect of a retirement boom and outmigration leaving us with a dwindling and decreasingly skilled workforce?

For the success of our students, the sustainability of our institutions, and the prosperity of our province, elected leaders must take decisive action. Our government needs to distance itself from the mistakes of the past, and harness the opportunities made possible by reforming and repairing a higher education system in peril. This briefing is the first of two such documents to be delivered to Dr. Tim O'Neill, a consultant hired by the premier to review the university system in Nova Scotia. This briefing will focus primarily on issues related to the accessibility and affordability of university education, while the second briefing will focus on issues related to the system-design, university coordination, governance and accountability, and long term vision and sustainability.

¹ Usher, A, and Dunn, R (2009). *On the Brink: How the Recession of 2009 Will Affect Post-Secondary Education*. Toronto, ON: Educational Policy Institute.

² Statistics Canada. (2009). Labour Force Survey. The Daily for Friday August 7, 2009. Retrieved on 10 August 2009 from <<http://www.statcan.gc.ca/daily-quotidien/090807/dq090807a-eng.htm>>.

³ Berger, J. and Parkin, A. (2009). "The Price of Knowledge: Access and Student finance in Canada". *The Value of a Degree: education, employment and earnings in Canada*. Canadian Millennium Scholarship Foundation.

⁴ M. Lapointe et al. (2008), *Looking Ahead: A 10-Year Outlook for the Canadian Labour Market (2006-2015)*. Ottawa: Human Resources and Social Development Canada, 2006). 2008.

ACCESSIBILITY

GUARANTEE ACCESS TO HIGHER EDUCATION FOR ALL QUALIFIED NOVA SCOTIANS

ANSSA believes that anyone who is academically qualified, with the desire to pursue post-secondary education, should not be prevented from doing so due to financial barriers – perceived or otherwise. Government underfunding of post-secondary education has resulted in costs being off-loaded to the student and their family. This has resulted in escalating tuition fee levels and extreme increases in student debt levels – tripling over the past twenty years⁵. While costs of education remain high, it is also important to recognize that there are barriers that exist beyond the price-tag of an education. These barriers have reduced the accessibility of our post-secondary education system. Nova Scotia must do more to eliminate them.

There are compelling social and economic reasons to invest in a targeted accessibility strategy in Nova Scotia. From an economic prosperity perspective, it is clear that post-secondary education can be Nova Scotia's competitive advantage in the knowledge-based economy. We still have many obstacles to overcome if we are going to fully utilize this advantage. In particular, our province's demographic challenge will mean declining enrolments unless participation rates increase. Participation rate growth will not likely happen without a strategic approach to make it happen and an increase in participation is not going to come from the places it has traditionally come from – youth from middle and upper-income backgrounds.

We need to be creating policy tools that target access for the groups who are traditionally under-represented in universities – students from low-income backgrounds, students with disabilities, rural students, Aboriginal students (the fastest growing demographic in Canada), and African Nova Scotians. In addition to young people who are not participating now, we need to start talking seriously about participation for those who may not fit that traditional model of a student – mature students, single parents, the recently unemployed, and those whose credentials have become outdated. They will have different educational and student life needs than a traditional student who goes to school right out of high school, but these are the sorts of changes we need to be talking about and making in our universities.

In 2006, the Education Policy Institute released a report that branded Nova Scotia as the “least affordable jurisdiction” in North America in which to pursue a degree⁶. That report used several different measures of affordability, and took into consideration tuition levels, expected earnings, and various public subsidies and forms of financial assistance available to students. While several beneficial changes have been made to the financial assistance system and tuition regulation since 2006, one of the authors of the affordability report recently reaffirmed our student assistance system as being “one of the weakest in North America”⁷.

The Nova Scotia Government must combat this reputation with significant policy changes. Students are the most numerous participants in the university system in Nova Scotia. With 10,683 university students⁸ enrolled in one of the weakest student assistance programs in North America, we must recognize that this weakness is doing nothing

⁵Statistics Canada. (2008). *The daily: tables*. Retrieved 2 May 2009 from <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/daily-quotidien/060901/t060901a-eng.htm>

⁶ Usher, A., and Steele, Kim. (2006). *Beyond the 49th Parallel II - The Affordability of University Education*. Toronto, ON: Educational Policy Institute.

⁷ Usher, A. (2010). “Carpe Diem, Nova Scotia.” [Blog Posting.] *Eye on Higher Ed*. Globe Campus. Retrieved on 1 February 2010 from <http://www.globecampus.ca/blogs/eye-higher-ed/2010/01/29/carpe-diem-nova-scotia/>

⁸Nova Scotia Student Assistance (2009). Unpublished statistics on student assistance recipients, provided upon request - October 2009.

to strengthen the university system in Nova Scotia. In order to strengthen our student assistance system we should look to jurisdictions that are performing admirably in student assistance and follow their lead.

The Government of Ontario, in cooperation with the universities in the province, has established a “student access guarantee”. This guarantee ensures that any student who is accepted on academic grounds to a university in the province is guaranteed the financial assistance necessary to complete their education. ANSSA considers such a guarantee as a valuable starting point and overarching principle for enhancing student assistance programs in Nova Scotia.

RECOMMENDATION

- ANSSA RECOMMENDS THE PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT INTRODUCE A "STUDENT ACCESS GUARANTEE" THAT WOULD ENSURE NO QUALIFIED STUDENT IS DENIED ACCESS TO POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION DUE TO FINANCIAL BARRIERS, PERCEIVED OR OTHERWISE. SUCH A GUARANTEE WOULD BE DELIVERED THROUGH A NUMBER OF SHORT-TERM AND LONG-TERM POLICY TOOLS AND PROGRAMS, INCLUDING, BUT NOT LIMITED TO THE RECOMMENDATIONS THAT FOLLOW.

ENHANCE EXISTING GRANTS PROGRAMS USING A PROGRESSIVE REWARDS SYSTEM

ANSSA believes that the best way for our government to increase accessibility to higher education is through the provision of grants. Up-front financial aid in the form of grants should account for the majority of government spending on student assistance. In the Government of Nova Scotia’s 2008 Budget, the Finance Minister announced the introduction of an up-front needs based grants program. The program converts 20% of a Nova Scotia Students’ provincial loan into a non-repayable grant. This is a start, but it alone is not enough.

In 2008 The Nova Scotia Government lent \$31.5 Million in student loans and dispersed almost \$7.6 Million through the Nova Scotia Study Grant program. In Budget 2009, the provincial government announced its plan to spend \$14 Million in graduate retention tax credits. By 2011 the government estimates that it will spend \$23 Million on this program, which is 303.9% more than it has spent on the Nova Scotia Study Grant Program, during its’ first year of operation. While the primary evidence suggests that tax credits are an ineffective tool for retaining graduates, there is significant evidence that suggests that effective up-front grant programs will increase university participation rates⁹. A more generous student financial assistance program would reduce student debt, and one might argue that this would reduce the outmigration of youth searching for better employment to pay off that debt.

The introduction of the Nova Scotia Study Grant program in Budget 2008 has been a step in the right direction. However, there are several improvements that ought to be made to the current system. The proportionate value of a grant and the fact that a student is required to take a Nova Scotia Student Loan to receive a grant are the primary concerns expressed here.

⁹ Chemin, M.(2009). Does Student Financial Aid Cause More Participation In and Graduation From University? Evidence from the Quebec Student Aid reform. A MESA Project Research Paper. Toronto, ON: Educational Policy Institute002E

PROPORTIONATE VALUE OF A GRANT

Under the current system, a student who qualifies for a low-value loan receives the same proportion of a grant as a student who is eligible for the maximum value of a student loan. The value of a provincial student loan accounts for 80% of assessed need, while the value of the Nova Scotia Study Grant is only 20% for students of all levels of financial need. The current student assistance system is effective at assessing and meeting the immediate financial needs of a student, but its long-term effects are neglected by trying to use a one-size-fits-all proportionate grant size to aid students.

What is problematic about the current student assistance system is that it leaves the student of the highest need with a significantly larger debt than the student of lesser need, or a student who doesn't qualify for loans at all. This acts as a disincentive for many students who opt not to pursue a university education. 33 % of Canadian youth not pursuing university education have cited financial reasons as the primary factor that has affected their decision to not go to university, making it the single largest factor cited¹⁰. Almost a quarter of students who discontinue their post-secondary studies before graduation cite financial reasons as their primary concern for leaving school¹¹. Unfortunately, under the Nova Scotia Student Assistance model this disincentive is magnified for the neediest among us as the assessed need of a student increases.

In Nova Scotia, an undergraduate student in a four year program can accumulate up to \$16, 640 in provincial student loans, in addition to \$29, 120 they can accumulate from the Canada Student Loans Program¹². In total, a student of highest need will graduate owing a principal amount of \$45, 780, which will ultimately grow once interest begins accruing. Students from low-income backgrounds, students who are the first in their families to attend post-secondary education, rural students, professional students and students with dependants will all encounter higher than average debt. Additionally, many students will struggle to get by and resort to additional bank or family loans to bridge the gap between government loan and employment income and their study and cost of living expenses.

ANSSA proposes that the provincial government adjust the existing grants system to use a dispersal mechanism that increases the proportionate value of a grant as assessed need increases. ANSSA believes that an acceptable base grant value is at minimum 40% of any students' assessed need. The value of this grant should be raised incrementally in a manner that will create a grant-administered debt cap comparable in size to that of other provinces with debt caps in Canada. This will ensure the students of highest assessed need receive the highest proportionate value of a grant. By further targeting assistance in this manner the government can begin to address some of the blind habits of our student assistance system that result in certain demographics completing their degrees with significantly more debt. For example, student from rural backgrounds typically incur \$5, 000 (or 25%) more debt than their urban counterparts¹³.

Such a model would have the student with the highest need receiving a grant of over 50% of their assessed need. Figure 1 illustrates what such a system could look like. Unlike other debt cap systems that deliver an "on-

¹⁰ Malatest, R.A. (2007). *Class of 2003 High School Follow-Up Survey*. Montreal: Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation.

¹¹ Lambert, Mylène, Klarka Zeman, Mary Allen, and Patrick Bussière. (2004). *Who Pursues Postsecondary Education, Who Leaves and Why: Results from the Youth In Transition Survey*. Ottawa: Statistics Canada.

¹² Byron, K. Personal Communication. Department of Education.

¹³ *MPHEC (2008)*. Outcomes of rural and urban maritime university graduates. *Trends in Maritime Higher Education* 6(1).

completion” debt cap, such a system would eliminate many of the financial stresses associated with completion-criteria dependence for debt relief.

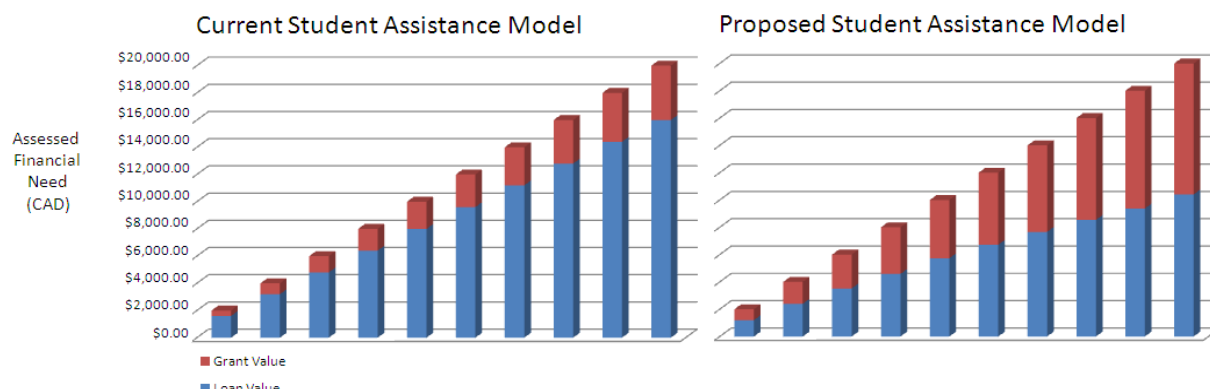


Figure 1 - the current student assistance model is compared to the proposed model which accounts for an increase in proportionate grant size as assessed need increases, as well as a base grant valued at 40% of assessed financial need.

It is worth noting the cost associated with administering loans for student assistance. For every dollar loaned to a student, there is an additional 30 – 40 cents spent in administration that is a cost to government, but offers no direct advantage to needy students. When considering the cost of implementing the program we have outlined here, public officials should also consider the immediate savings of 30 – 40 % of any sum of money being converted from loans to grants with the cost associated with not having that money repaid.

“What is problematic about the current student assistance system is that it leaves the student of the highest need with a significantly larger debt than the student of lesser need, or a student who doesn’t qualify for loans at all.”

GRANT AND LOAN COUPLING

Nova Scotia is unique in coupling the grant directly with a student loan. For instance, the American Pell Grant system provides non-repayable assistance to students with demonstrated need separately from the student loans system. The Nova Scotian approach is advantageous, in one respect, as it ensures that the grant value rises directly as financial need increases, so long as the criteria for needs based assessment are fair. However, it continues to promote a debt-culture for student assistance. A student who qualifies for assistance under the provincial student loan program has obviously demonstrated financial need. Yet, many students cite unwillingness to take on debt as an influencing factor that prevents them from enrolling in post secondary studies. Students who have already accumulated debt from previous degrees, lines of credit, loans and mortgages are disenfranchised by a student assistance program that compels the student to incur debt. Mature students, in particular, are served poorly by this system. 21 per cent of students over the age of 26 reported having a mortgage in 2002¹⁴. To expect these students or any students to take on additional debt unwillingly in order to receive a grant that they have already qualified for financially is irrational.

¹⁴ Canadian Millennium Scholarship Foundation (2002). Chapter 6: Other resources from borrowing and non-loan governmental assistance in Making Ends Meet: The 2001-2002 Student Financial Survey.

ANSSA RECOMMENDS

- THE GOVERNMENT OF NOVA SCOTIA SHOULD IMMEDIATELY INCREASE THE MINIMUM VALUE OF A BASE GRANT TO 40% OF ASSESSED NEED, AND SET A LONG TERM GOAL OF DELIVERING 100% OF STUDENT ASSISTANCE FUNDING THROUGH NON-REPAYABLE GRANTS
- THE GOVERNMENT OF NOVA SCOTIA SHOULD ENSURE THAT THE PROPORTIONATE VALUE OF A GRANT INCREASES INCREMENTALLY WITH A STUDENT'S ASSESSED NEED TO ENSURE STUDENTS WHO QUALIFY FOR MORE FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE HAVE A MORE *MANAGEABLE* DEBT, WHICH WILL BE CAPPED AT AN AMOUNT COMPARABLE IN SIZE TO THAT OF OTHER PROVINCES IN CANADA WITH DEBT CAPS.
- THE GOVERNMENT OF NOVA SCOTIA SHOULD EXPAND ELIGIBILITY FOR THE NOVA SCOTIA STUDY GRANT PROGRAM TO INCLUDE STUDENTS WITH DEMONSTRATED AND ASSESSED NEED BUT WHO DO NOT HOLD OR WISH TO RECEIVE A NOVA SCOTIA STUDENT LOAN.

IMPLEMENT A GRADUATE SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM TO ATTRACT AND RETAIN TALENT

Nova Scotia currently has no means of providing adequate assistance to graduate students in financing their post-bachelor studies and research at the graduate and post-doctoral level. While there are governmental programs in place for students studying in specific disciplines, namely the Nova Scotia Health Research Foundation's Graduate Student Research Awards¹⁵, there are no such programs that provide research funding for students in other areas of study. This policy argues for the merits of a government-funded graduate scholarship program in Nova Scotia as both an access and affordability tool that will help students and also as a demographics tool that will attract and retain skilled youth in Nova Scotia.

While potential graduate students have completed undergraduate degrees, most are still paying for them. Just under 60% of Canadian graduates completed their undergraduate studies in 2009 with an average debt of \$26,680¹⁶ (all sources). With this level of debt, many students are unable to even entertain the idea of pursuing a second degree before paying off their current debt. In Nova Scotia both the incidence and intensity of debt is even more significant – where 69% of students carry an average of \$31,900 in debt upon completion of their undergraduate degree¹⁷. With this debt load in mind, potential graduate students will no doubt be tempted to follow the money to jurisdictions where there is a greater opportunity for scholarships once they have narrowed

¹⁵ Nova Scotia Health Research Foundation (2010). Student Research Awards: Competition Requirements Document. . Retrieved on 5 December 2009 from <http://bit.ly/5TDV48> .

¹⁶Berger, J. (2009). Student Debt in Canada. In Berger, J., Motte, A., and Parkin, A., *The Price of Knowledge* (p. 185). Toronto: Canadian Millennium Scholarship Foundation.

¹⁷ Ibid.

their options down based on their interest area of research. Additionally, tuition for graduate students in Nova Scotia is the second highest in the country, and is \$2060 more expensive than the national average¹⁸. The combined burden of debt from an undergraduate degree, and top rank tuition fees are likely encouraging many scholars to put off future studies or pursue them elsewhere.

Graduate students are a central component in the process of creating and advancing research by providing capacity to the research institution. They also increase the opportunity for collaboration for the institution and the faculty through past experience and future networking (conferences, collaborative work, etc). Without a healthy supply of graduate students, research simply doesn't go forward.

Graduate students are heavily influenced by the availability of research funding when deciding where to pursue graduate research. However, the availability of research funding influences more than the students' decision; conversations with students indicate that supervising professors are often reluctant to take on an additional graduate student if that individual appears to be a financial burden and does not have the adequate amount of funding to support their studies. Additionally, specific funding for graduate student studies gives those students independence from their immediate supervisors and empowers them become independent researchers.

The provinces that lead the country in research—Ontario, Quebec, Alberta and British Columbia – have all established government funded graduate student scholarships providing assistance to students driven towards research¹⁹. Additionally, the government of Manitoba has introduced a relatively small number of graduate student scholarships for post-bachelor students. The federal government provides financial assistance for student research in the form of graduate scholarships to masters and PhD students through the tri-council funding agencies. The National Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada (NSERC), The Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) and the Canadian Institute of Health Research (CIHR) all provide funding for graduate scholarships. The Governments of Quebec, Ontario, Manitoba, Alberta, and British have all prioritized the sponsorship of student research by creating graduate scholarship programs, some of which distribute funding to students who have not received a grant from one of the national granting councils.

With 6,692 graduate students registered at Nova Scotia institutions in the fall of 2009, our province educates almost three quarters (72.87%) of all maritime graduate students²⁰. This gives us an incredible competitive advantage against our neighboring provinces for attracting some of the brightest minds on the East Coast. Nova Scotia has built a reputation for graduate studies within the region and our universities have the infrastructure to support research in a diverse number of fields. Unlike many undergraduate students, most graduate students will have developed much firmer roots to both the local academic community and the broader community throughout the course of their graduate studies. By the completion of a these studies they will have increased their annual earnings at an average premium of \$13,109 above that of a Bachelor's Degree holder in Nova Scotia²¹. These

¹⁸ Statistics Canada (2009). University Tuition Fees. Retrieved on 20 October 2009 from <<http://www.tinyurl.com/tuitionstats>>.

¹⁹ See Appendix A for an annotated summary of the scholarship programs offered in other provinces within Canada.

²⁰ Association of Atlantic Universities (2009). *AAU Survey of Preliminary Enrollments*. Retrieved on 5 December 2009 from <<http://bit.ly/6szOdq>>

²¹ Berger, J. and Parkin A. (2009). The Value of A Degree: Education, Employment and Earnings in Canada. *Price of Knowledge*. In Berger, J., Motte, A., and Parkin, A., *The Price of Knowledge* (p. 11). Toronto: Canadian Millennium Scholarship Foundation.

earnings are not only partly captured in taxes by government, but can also be expected to land in the coffers of local business and the provincial economy.

It is in the best interest of government to invest in citizens through education and recognize both the individual and societal benefits of that education. By providing financial incentives for research and graduate studies, governments can begin to attract more bright minds, cultivate them through our quality institutions and turn them into sector leaders that will attract even more talent to our province. The combination of high tuition fees, high undergraduate debt-loads and lack of provincial graduate student scholarships in Nova Scotia is a recipe that is likely preventing many potential innovators from embarking on their post-bachelor studies at Nova Scotian universities.

RECOMMENDATION

- THE GOVERNMENT OF NOVA SCOTIA SHOULD ESTABLISH A NOVA SCOTIA GRADUATE SCHOLARSHIP FOR WHICH ANY STUDENT STUDYING IN A MASTERS OR PHD PROGRAM IN A NOVA SCOTIA INSTITUTION IS ELIGIBLE FOR.
- THE GOVERNMENT OF NOVA SCOTIA SHOULD PROVIDE INDIVIDUAL SCHOLARSHIP FUNDING FOR PHD AND MASTERS STUDENTS AT FUNDING LEVELS COMPARABLE TO THE ONTARIO GRADUATE SCHOLARSHIP DESCRIBED IN APPENDIX A.
- THE GOVERNMENT OF NOVA SCOTIA SHOULD WORK WITH STUDENT GROUPS AND GRADUATE STUDENTS SPECIFICALLY IN DEVELOPING ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA AND ADMINISTRATIVE PRACTICES FOR THIS PROGRAM.

IMPLEMENT AN EARLY OUTREACH STRATEGY ACROSS NOVA SCOTIA

Recent research speaks to the impact of “interacting barriers” on access to higher education. We already know a great deal about the barriers that students face once they decide to attend post-secondary. However, in order for students to even get to a place where they are facing these types of barriers, they have to already be prepared, willing and able to go on to post-secondary education. This is where interacting barriers come in. These barriers are often divided into three groups - academic barriers, financial barriers and motivational barriers. Through coordinated early outreach initiatives, our government could make substantial steps towards reducing and eliminating many academic and motivational barriers of students who have yet to enter the post-secondary education system in Nova Scotia.

The Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation (CMSF) has been one of the sector’s leaders in identifying interacting barriers. In the 2007 edition of the *Price of Knowledge: Access and Student Finance in Canada*, the authors discuss these barriers in the following way:

- Academic ability, measured by grades or standardized tests, is closely linked with postsecondary enrolment. High school graduates with “C” averages are about half as likely as those with “A” grades to pursue post-secondary studies within two years of graduation.
- Finances play a substantial role. During the past 15 years, the cost of higher education in Canada has grown significantly. One-third of youth who do not pursue higher education cite their financial situation as an obstacle to further studies.

- Youth who lack career focus, who are uninterested in school or who lack a network of support for post-secondary studies are less likely to complete a post-secondary education. The barrier most often cited by those who did not pursue postsecondary studies within two years of graduating high school is a combination of a lack of career focus or a lack of interest in higher education.
- At the university level, there are two youths from the highest-income families for every low-income student. Low-income youth are less likely to have savings for higher education, to discuss financing their studies with their parents and to report receiving sufficient information about postsecondary education. Additionally, low-income youth generally score lower on standardized tests and report lower high school grades than wealthier students.
- Compared to the children of post-secondary graduates, first-generation youth are less likely to plan for higher education, to be convinced of its benefits or to have above average high school grades. They are more likely to put off postsecondary education after high school and those who do enroll are less likely to have access to financial support from family.
- Aboriginal youth are substantially less likely to have completed high school than non-Aboriginal individuals, particularly in Western Canada. Manitoba, seven in ten on-reserve First Nations youth had not completed high school by age 24. In addition to the barriers discussed in detail in this chapter, Aboriginal Peoples face a number of unique obstacles, including incidences of real and perceived racism in the school system.²²

Often the barriers listed above overlap with one another, making the decision to attend post-secondary education very complex and barrier-ridden for those from under-represented groups. In Nova Scotia, these barriers are especially acute, with the cost of university above the cost in most other provinces and with persistent poverty in many communities across Nova Scotia. In addition to the challenges experienced by Aboriginal youth living in Nova Scotia, African Nova Scotia also face similar barriers.

But, as discussed above, we also know that increasing participation rates in post-secondary education and encouraging those from under-represented groups to attend will not be simple. We will need outreach programs to those currently under-represented in higher education as well as programs to support at-risk kids to increase their high school graduation rates. We will need tutoring and mentorship and to continue building strong communities where kids can thrive and grow and learn without being threatened by violence of the physical or economic kind.

As academics, policy-makers, student advocates, politicians and educators concerned with the accessibility of a post-secondary education, we have a responsibility to think about the challenges of access from a different perspective. Discussed below are some of the ways that the Province of Nova Scotia can act to become a leader in thinking differently about access. (See Appendix B for descriptions of successful early outreach programs in other jurisdictions.)

An early outreach strategy to foster increased participation in *all types* of post-secondary education is an excellent tool to aid in the implementation of a “Student Access Guarantee”. The model for such an early outreach strategy ought to be the highly successful “Pathways to Education” program in Toronto, discussed in Appendix B here.

²² Berger, Joseph, Anne Motte and Andrew Parkin. (2007). The Price of Knowledge: Access and Student Finance in Canada. Montreal: Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation, pg. 33.

RECOMMENDATIONS

THE GOVERNMENT OF NOVA SCOTIA SHOULD IMPLEMENT A PROVINCE-WIDE “EARLY OUTREACH STRATEGY”

THE PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT SHOULD UNDERTAKE TO COMPREHENSIVELY “MAP” EXISTING EARLY OUTREACH-RELATED PROGRAMS ACROSS NOVA SCOTIA.

THE PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT SHOULD ESTABLISH A NOT-FOR-PROFIT FOUNDATION WITH AN ENDOWMENT SUFFICIENT TO FUND COMMUNITY-BASED EARLY OUTREACH PROGRAMS ACROSS NOVA SCOTIA.

EARLY OUTREACH PROGRAMS MUST PROVIDE INFORMATION AND RESOURCES TO STUDENTS, FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES TO ASSIST IN MAKING BETTER INFORMED DECISIONS ABOUT EDUCATIONAL PATHWAYS, INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO GUIDANCE COUNSELING, PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT ACTIVITIES AND CURRICULUM CHANGES.

THE PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT MUST ADEQUATELY FUND AND UNIVERSITIES SHOULD IMPLEMENT AND/OR STRENGTHEN SOCIAL AND ACADEMIC SUPPORT AND ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS TARGETED FOR, BUT NOT LIMITED TO, UNDER-REPRESENTED STUDENTS.

EARLY OUTREACH PROGRAMS MUST BE TAILORED TO THE UNIQUE NEEDS OF A COMMUNITY AND COORDINATED TO ENSURE THAT COMMUNITY PLANS EFFECTIVELY SUPPORT THE PROGRAMS OF EARLY OUTREACH.

REGULAR ASSESSMENT MUST BE DONE ON ANY EARLY OUTREACH PROGRAMS THAT ARE IMPLEMENTED TO EVALUATE THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THESE PROGRAMS.

IMPLEMENT PROVINCE-WIDE ACCESSIBILITY TARGETS AND GOALS

The recommendations presented here are a suggested set of policy tools to achieve long term vision of a post-secondary education system where no student is denied access to a post-secondary education due to financial barriers alone. Different measures are used to accessibility of post-secondary education: post-secondary enrollment rates, post-secondary graduation rates, comparison of participation rates to high-school graduation rates etc. In order to best measure the success of access initiatives in Nova Scotia, it is necessary for the government to set measurable expectations for the suite of programs they choose to implement. These goals and targets can then be used as motivation to successfully implement policy tools, as a mechanism for accountability and a means to measure progress.

Other provinces have adopted the targets and goals established by reviews of higher education. *Campus 2020: Thinking Ahead*, the report commissioned by the provincial government in British Columbia suggested the government adopt several goals, one of which was to equalize post-secondary education and attainment rates

across the province's regions and income quartiles²³. The Rae Review, commissioned by the Ontario government, called for ambitious medium and long term targets for participation rates in higher education both in the general population but also in underrepresented groups,²⁴ as did the comprehensive review of post-secondary education in New Brunswick²⁵. If Nova Scotia does not develop a long term vision that includes goal and target setting we will be outcompeted by the provinces that have.

RECOMMENDATION

THE GOVERNMENT OF NOVA SCOTIA SHOULD SET MEASURABLE TARGETS FOR AN ACCESSIBLE POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION SYSTEM TO MEASURE THE SUCCESS OF ACCESS INITIATIVES IMPLEMENTED WITHIN NOVA SCOTIA. SUCH GOALS SHOULD INCLUDE MEASURES OF

- *Participation rates of Aboriginal Nova Scotians, and African Nova Scotians*
- *Participation rates of low-income Nova Scotians*
- *Overall participation rates that adjust for students from outside of Nova Scotia*
- *Graduation rates for each of these categories*

THE GOVERNMENT OF NOVA SCOTIA SHOULD COLLECT INDICATORS FROM POST-SECONDARY INSTITUTIONS, PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS AND CENSUS DATA IN ORDER TO EFFECTIVELY MEASURE THESE PARTICIPATION RATES

AFFORDABILITY OF EDUCATION

SET A GOAL FOR A 20% STUDENT SHARE OF THE COST OF EDUCATION

In March of 2008 the Government of Nova Scotia instituted a plan that claimed to reduce tuition to the national average by 2010. Rather than reduce tuition outright, the plan uses a combination of tuition reduction bursaries for Nova Scotian students, a tuition freeze for all students, and the expectation that other Canadian provinces will continue to raise tuition fees. Last year marked the nineteenth of the past twenty years in which Nova Scotia had the highest average tuition fees in Canada²⁶.

²³ Plant, G. (2007). *Campus 2020 – Thinking Ahead: The Report*. Government of British Columbia.

²⁴ Rae, B. (2005). *Ontario, a leader in learning: Report and Recommendations*. Government of Ontario.

²⁵ Miner, R., and L'Ecuyer, J. (2007). *Advantage New Brunswick: A province reaches to fulfill its destiny*. Government of New Brunswick.

²⁶ CONSUP (2009). *Making a commitment to higher education in Nova Scotia*. Halifax: Council of Nova Scotia University Presidents.

Between 1994 and 2007, tuition as a proportion of university operating revenue in Nova Scotia increased from ~25% to 52%. This compares to a nationwide rise from 20% to 37% over the same time period²⁷²⁸. Nova Scotia is the only province in Canada in which tuition fees account for a majority of university operating revenue (excluding research funding)²⁹. Newfoundland and Labrador, on the other hand, boasts of tuition fees that have been kept relatively low and account for only 20% of university operating revenue, while still maintaining high quality education for their students³⁰.

ANSSA believes that a student should be responsible for a certain share of the cost of their education, but also believes that the current share is disproportionate to the benefits accrued and is inconsistent with the national standards of fairness for funding a university degree.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- ANSSA ADVOCATES THAT 20% OF UNIVERSITY OPERATING REVENUE, EXCLUDING RESEARCH FUNDING, IS AN ACCEPTABLE AGGREGATE AMOUNT FOR STUDENTS TO PAY IN TUITION, ASSUMING ADEQUATE FINANCIAL AID PROGRAMS EXIST TO ENSURE ACCESSIBILITY FOR ALL;
- ANSSA CALLS ON THE PROVINCE OF NOVA SCOTIA TO CAP TUITION AS A SHARE OF UNIVERSITY AND COLLEGE OPERATING REVENUE, EXCLUDING RESEARCH FUNDING, AT 40% AND TO REDUCE THE STUDENT SHARE INCREMENTALLY WHILE INCREASING UNIVERSITY OPERATING GRANTS UNTIL TUITION FEES ACCOUNT ONLY FOR 20% OF UNIVERSITY OPERATING REVENUE.

ELIMINATE OUT OF PROVINCE STUDENT DIFFERENTIAL TUITION FEES

Canadian students studying in Nova Scotia from another province from 2009 – 2011 will pay \$1,022 more in annual tuition fees than students who have lived in Nova Scotia prior to commencing their studies. The Nova Scotia Student Bursary Program is the mechanism by which tuition is reduced for residential students. Students from out-of-province will see a bursary of \$261 deducted from their tuition in 2010/2011 and the differential fee of \$1,022 will remain constant for next year as well. ANSSA has two primary concerns related to the introduction of differential tuition fees in Nova Scotia.

Concern one: Differential tuition fees create additional barriers to higher education

The cost of tuition is one of the most significant barriers to post-secondary education, and is cited as the largest single reason that students choose not to pursue higher education.³¹ The average cost of tuition in Nova Scotia is ranked as the second highest in the Canada, with average out of province tuition fees in 2009/10 being \$5,863³². The additional cost bore by out-of-province students creates an even higher access barrier. For students making

²⁷CAUT, P. (2006). CAUT Almanac 2006. Retrieved on 7 July 2009 from <<http://www.caut.ca/en/publications/almanac/2006-1.pdf>>

²⁸ CONSUP. (2009). Making a commitment to higher education in Nova Scotia. Halifax: Council of Nova Scotia University Presidents.

²⁹ Ibid.

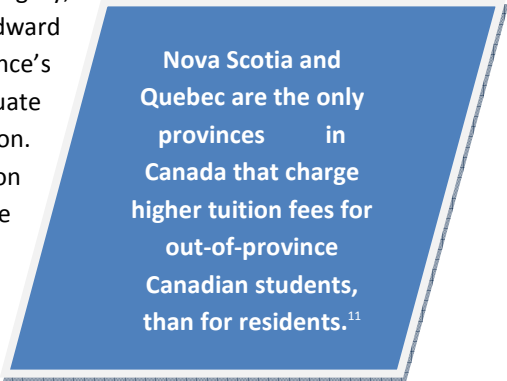
³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Millennium Scholarship Foundation, *The Price of Knowledge: Access and Student Finance in Canada*, 2002, 13.

³² Calculated using a weighted average based on enrollment numbers and fees at individual Nova Scotia Universities and 2009 tuition values from the MPHEC.

their educational decisions with financial constraints in mind, Nova Scotia would take a back seat to provinces who offer lower tuition fees than in Nova Scotia.

Those who support the maintenance of differential tuition fees might seek to dispel this concern by pointing to rising enrollments from out-of-province students and argue that their continued willingness to pay demonstrates that this is not a barrier. While some students certainly fall into this category, this attitude pays little respect to students from provinces like Prince Edward Island, where tuition is below the Canadian average³³, but the province's single and relatively small university offers few choices for undergraduate programs sending many students out of province to further their education. While Nova Scotia might be a logical choice thanks to our proximity, tuition levels in every other province in Canada continue to be more affordable and alluring than in our own.



Nova Scotia and Quebec are the only provinces in Canada that charge higher tuition fees for out-of-province Canadian students, than for residents.¹¹

Concern two: Differential Tuition Fees are counterintuitive in a province facing an inevitable trend of outmigration

Differential tuition fees send a strong signal to out-of-province students wishing to study in Nova Scotia. The message is often interpreted as one that does not promote belongingness or welcome. The province's capacity to fully embrace the knowledge economy is inhibited by the mass outmigration of young, educated professionals. "For 11 of the last 15 years when net interprovincial migration has been negative, it has been negative for 12 years for the 0-14 age group; 14 years for the 15-19 age group and it has always been negative for the 20-29 age group...there have always been negative net gains for the 55 and older population."³⁴ In order to become competitive in the emerging knowledge based economy, Nova Scotia must continue to educate its population at high levels and retain those workers within the province. Out of province students are a demographic of young professionals who can work to recuperate the loss of native Nova Scotians.

Our universities provide Nova Scotia the unique opportunity to promote our province to individuals, most of whom would otherwise not have the opportunity to experience life in Nova Scotia. Those who come to Nova Scotia to study are evidently impressed. A 2007 survey of maritime university graduate intentions indicated that almost a quarter of graduates said they would choose a maritime province as their first choice place to work, while proximity of family was the most popular answer for those students who would chose to work elsewhere³⁵.

As outlined in latter parts of this submission, ANSSA believes Nova Scotia must develop a comprehensive youth retention and attraction strategy through research and consultation with stakeholders. ANSSA proposes that the elimination of differential fees will play only part of the role in such a strategy to encourage and support students who might one day become permanent residents.

A response oft heard from proponents of differential tuition fees is that the federal government is at fault for using a funding formula (the Canada Social Transfer) that allocates post-secondary education funding to the provinces on a per-capita basis, not a per-student basis. Such a formula unduly punishes provinces like Nova Scotia for being net

³³ Statistics Canada (2009). The Daily: University Tuition Fees. Retrieved on 20 October 2009.

³⁴ Government of Nova Scotia, "Summary of the Nova Scotia Demographic Research Report: A Demographic Analysis of Nova Scotia into 2026." (2006): 3.

³⁵ MPHEC (2007). Intentions of Maritime University Students Following Graduation: A survey of the class of 2007.

importers of students, resulting in higher operational costs for our institutions and fewer dollars per student than in other provinces. ANSSA believes that this formula needs to change, but ANSSA also asserts that this formula ought not be reason for abdication of the provincial government's responsibility in eliminating differential fees.

If the federal government were to move towards a per-student funding model for post-secondary transfers to the provinces, Nova Scotia could receive an increase of as much as \$ 16.8 M in annual transfer dollars³⁶. Given that this amount of money is almost double the actual cost of eliminating differential fees in 2009, the traditional "blame the feds" excuse is only half-reasonable.

RECOMMENDATION

THE GOVERNMENT OF NOVA SCOTIA SHOULD ELIMINATE DIFFERENTIAL TUITION FEES BY PROVIDING OUT-OF-PROVINCE STUDENTS WITH A BURSARY EQUAL TO THAT OF RESIDENTIAL STUDENTS.

THE GOVERNMENT OF NOVA SCOTIA SHOULD ACTIVELY ADVOCATE FOR A DEDICATED FEDERAL TRANSFER PAYMENT FOR POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION TO ENSURE LONG-TERM SUSTAINABLE FUNDING FOR STUDENTS AND POST-SECONDARY INSTITUTIONS.

GRADUATE TAX REBATES

In 2006, the Nova Scotia government implemented a Graduate Tax Credit Program. The purpose of the program was to reward those who had graduated from an accredited Nova Scotia post-secondary institute, and had decided to make their living in Nova Scotia. The program rewarded those graduates with an initial rebate of \$1000, which was increased to \$2000³⁷ in 2008. The new government recently decided to expand the existing program. An increase of funding included in 2009 provincial budget will provide graduates who stay a tax rebate with up to \$2,500 annually for up to six years, deductible from taxes payable, for up to \$15 000 dollars. This enhanced program was motivated by a desire to increase the number of graduates that stay in Nova Scotia, but has been identified by the government as means of reducing the overall cost of tuition as well.

Though this program has been established in Nova Scotia for more than three years, there have been no analyses or reviews of the program to measure its effectiveness. This program is not one that is unique to Nova Scotia, and the Education Policy Institute has reviewed the effectiveness of similar programs in other provinces, namely, Manitoba and New Brunswick. No publicized research indicates that these programs have been successful in achieving increased retention. The National Graduates Survey (NGS) conducts studies on a five-year basis, and examines the movements of Canadian PSE graduates. The results of the survey of the class of 2005 have just been released. The results of the NGS indicates that in Manitoba and New Brunswick there has been no changes in retention rates of graduates in these province despite these governments' collective spending of roughly \$100 million retention motivated tax credits. As Alex Usher has stated these two provinces have spent \$100 million "in funding that's doing exactly nothing other than providing windfall gains to people doing exactly what they were going to do anyways³⁸."

³⁶ Calculated based on the estimated portion of the CST spent on PSE in Nova Scotia, the number of Nova Scotia students studying in other provinces, and the number of out-of-province Canadian students studying in Nova Scotia.

³⁷ Government of Nova Scotia, ND. Graduate Tax Credit – Questions and Answers. Retrieved on 19 October 2009 from <<http://www.gov.ns.ca/snsmr/access/individuals/graduate-tax/questions-answers.asp>>.

³⁸ Usher, A. (2009). *Damn the facts! Just declare victory*. EPI Commentary—Friday September 4, 2009. Retrieved from <<http://educationalpolicy.org/pub/epitoday/Commentary/090904.html>>

The tax credit program is intended to create incentives for students who studied in the province, to stay here after graduation, and to contribute to the work force. Unemployment among Canadians between the ages of 19 and 24 is at 21% as of July 2009, which is the highest it has been since unemployment has been recorded³⁹. The government intends for this tax credit to be a retention measure for graduates. What has been overlooked is the fact that there are few jobs that are available to these graduates. In order to increase the likelihood that students who attended Post-Secondary in Nova Scotia will remain in the province following their graduation, the province should shift their focus from tax credits to the creation and strengthening of a knowledge economy. The creation of a knowledge economy will encourage economic development in Nova Scotia, which will attract graduates to the possibility of staying in the province.

Beyond this, if the government is serious about retaining young Nova Scotians, they need to create retention policy through discussions with those young Nova Scotians. The Nova Scotia government needs to develop a retention plan that rests on more than just a single policy tool. For example, the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador launched a 41-point Youth Retention and Attraction Strategy in November of 2009⁴⁰. The strategy was developed with a 19-member youth advisory panel, engaged stakeholders including students, businesses and expatriate youth. The result: a plan has been produced that has been well received by the public, and is being supported by the local student federation. Graduate retention and youth attraction, as can be seen from reviewing the literature and the Newfoundland and Labrador reports, is a complex issue. Future retention strategies in Nova Scotia ought to be based on evidence based research and should involve collaboration with the youth such strategies would seek to retain.

Not only will the graduate tax rebate have no likely impact on retention, there is also no evidence to suggest that tax credits will have any effect on increasing accessibility to PSE in Nova Scotia. The government, it should be noted, has never made a claim to suggest it will, but as ANSSA is primarily concerned about issues surrounding accessibility, affordability and quality of education, it is worth noting in this submission. A graduate tax rebate rewards students on the wrong end of an expensive degree that too many cannot afford to begin with. This program is budgeted to cost \$14 Million this year, \$16 Million next year and \$23 Million the following year, totaling \$53 Million over the next three years. That is \$53 Million being spent on a public policy tool that is neither evidence-based, nor in the interest of increasing access or the affordability of education for most students.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- THE GOVERNMENT OF NOVA SCOTIA SHOULD MOVE AWAY FROM TAX-CREDIT BASED DELIVERY MECHANISMS OF STUDENT OR GRADUATE ASSISTANCE AND ELIMINATE THE GRADUATE RETENTION REBATE PROGRAM.
- THE GOVERNMENT OF NOVA SCOTIA SHOULD CREATE A COMPREHENSIVE RETENTION AND ATTRACTION STRATEGY FOR NOVA SCOTIA YOUTH IN COLLABORATION WITH YOUTH, EXPATRIATE YOUTH, BUSINESS LEADERS AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS CONCERNED ABOUT OUTMIGRATION.

³⁹ Statistics Canada. (2009). Labour Force Survey. The Daily for Friday August 7, 2009. <<http://www.statcan.gc.ca/daily-quotidien/090807/dq090807a-eng.htm>>.

⁴⁰ Department of Human Resources, Labour and Employment (2009). Creating a Province of Choice: A youth retention and attraction strategy for Newfoundland and Labrador. Retrieved on 6 Nov 2009 from <<http://www.lmiworks.nl.ca/yras/>>.

- THE GOVERNMENT OF NOVA SCOTIA SHOULD ALLOCATE FUNDING OTHERWISE INTENDED FOR TAX-CREDIT BASED INITIATIVES TOWARDS AN ENHANCED UP-FRONT GRANTS PROGRAM AS A MEANS OF INCREASING ACCESSIBILITY OF EDUCATION.

APPENDIX A – GRADUATE SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAMS IN OTHER PROVINCES

FONDS QUÉBÉCOIS DE LA RECHERCHE SUR LA NATURE ET LES TECHNOLOGIES BOURSE⁴¹

The purpose of this program is to provide financial assistance to students pursuing research in the natural sciences, mathematics, and engineering. It is renewable on a yearly basis and is valued at \$15,000 annually for a Masters Student and \$20,000 for a PHD candidate. In order to be eligible to receive such a scholarship students are required to have been a resident of Quebec at least one year prior to application and are required to attend an institution in Quebec.

ONTARIO GRADUATE SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM (OGS)⁴²

The Ontario Government awards recipients of the OGS \$5,000 per term, which can mean up to \$15,000 in funding annually for some students. Scholarship recipients are eligible for two years of funding as masters students and four years of funding as PhD students. The funding is only dispersed to students who are not receiving tri-council funding. Each year, 2000 scholarships are awarded, of which 60 are awarded to international students. The province of Ontario contributes two-thirds of the funding for this program, while the host-institutions are responsible for delivering the remaining third for each scholarship recipient conducting research at their institution

MANITOBA GRADUATE SCHOLARSHIP⁴⁴

The Manitoba Government provides scholarships to students studying at the University of Manitoba and the University of Winnipeg⁴⁵. The program provided assistance to the small number of graduate students in the province. Scholarship recipients at the masters level received \$15 000 in support annually for up to two years, while doctoral candidates were eligible for \$7,500 annually for up to four years in addition to the previously existing provincial funding of doctoral candidates which provides \$16,000 in funding each year.

ALBERTA INGENUITY GRADUATE STUDENT SCHOLARSHIP (AIGSS)⁴⁶

The AIGSS provides graduate students pursuing research in the natural sciences or an engineering discipline with funding to undertake full-time research training at an Alberta institution. Masters students can receive up to 23,000 annually while doctoral candidates receive up to \$26,000 annually. An additional \$1,500 yearly research allowance is provided. The maximum total period of support is four years. Approximately \$11 Million in such

⁴¹ Government of Quebec (2009). *Fonds québécois de la recherche sur la nature et les technologies: Scholarships*. Retrieved on 5 December 2009 from <<http://bit.ly/7czaRk>>

⁴² Ontario Student Assistance Program (2009). *Ontario Graduate Scholarship Program*. Retrieved on 5 December 2009 from <<http://bit.ly/rd90Q>>.

⁴³ Council of Ontario Universities (2003). *Full-Time and Part-Time Student Enrolment by Level, Fall 1990 to Fall 2003*. Retrieved on 5 December 2003 from <<http://bit.ly/83q0CM>>.

⁴⁴ Department of Advanced Education and Training (2005). *University of Manitoba Students Receive Graduate Scholarships*. Retrieved on 5 December 2009 from <<http://bit.ly/5LRLBX>>

⁴⁵ The University of Winnipeg (2009). *Graduate Studies: Internal Awards*. Retrieved on 5 December 2009 from < <http://bit.ly/8AtxD>>.

⁴⁶ Alberta Ingenuity Fund (2009). *Alberta Ingenuity Graduate Student Scholarship*. Retrieved on 5 December 2009 from <<http://bit.ly/4JW5F4>>

scholarships is distributed to graduate students annually. The initiative of the Alberta Government is funded in partnership with iCore, an arms length government agency intended to expand the provinces research capacity and competitiveness in the field of informatics.

ALBERTA QUEEN ELIZABETH II GRADUATE SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM⁴⁷

This scholarship program provides up to \$10, 800 in annual funding to students at the Masters Level, and up to \$15,000 in annual funding to students at the doctoral level. Recipients are selected by their institution of study, and each institution in Alberta is empowered to provide 10% of their graduate students with such a scholarship.

PACIFIC CENTURY GRADUATE SCHOLARSHIP (BRITISH COLUMBIA)⁴⁸

This program provides 1,000 scholarships valued at \$10,000 each over four years to masters, doctoral and post-doctoral students at the University of British Columbia, Simon Fraser University, the University of Victoria and the University of Northern B.C. Masters students may receive up to two years of renewal of these scholarships, while doctoral and post-doctoral students are eligible for up to three years of funding. Special consideration will be given to students who are intending to research in areas overlapping with the priorities of the government, namely: Life Sciences, Technology, Clean Technology, Natural Resources, Asia Pacific Gateway Strategy and Developing Business Skills. A portion of the scholarships will be used to support aboriginal students studying in B.C., and up to 20% are to be used to support international students with study permits in the province. The scholarships are to be administered by institutions themselves to deserving candidates who will be known as Pacific Century Scholars.

⁴⁷ Alberta Learning and Information Service (2009). *Scholarship and Bursary Information: Queen Elizabeth II Graduate Scholarship Program*. Retrieved on 5 December 2009 from < <http://bit.ly/6CRjYL>>

⁴⁸ Government of British Columbia (2007). Pacific century scholarships to draw top graduate students. Retrieved on 5 December 2009 from <<http://bit.ly/86prFL>>

APPENDIX B – EARLY OUTREACH PROGRAMS IN OTHER JURISDICTIONS

Excerpted directly from “Modernizing Canada’s System of Student Financial Assistance”. (November 2007). Canadian Alliance of Student Associations (CASA). Available online:

www.casa.ca/documents/Vision_for_Student_Financial_Aid_Final.pdf.

3.2 Early Outreach Programs

Other programs that help to address both the financial and physiological barriers of pursuing post-secondary education are early outreach programs. Early outreach programs, also commonly known as early intervention or head start programs, aim to increase participation in post-secondary education by focusing on students while they are still in high school or even elementary school. Most programs are geared toward increasing post-secondary access for under-represented groups, such as low-income students, Aboriginal students, or rural students.

3.2.1 Pathways to Education

One such example of an early outreach program is the Regent Park “Pathways to Education” project. The Regent Park area of Toronto is one of the oldest public housing projects and one of the most economically disadvantaged regions in Canada. It is a community that faces many financial, language and cultural barriers. Namely:

- Few families are earning more than \$18,000 per year (less than 1/3 the national average);
- Over 80 per cent of residents are visible minorities, many for whom English is a second language;
- The region has twice the number of single parent families as the rest of Toronto⁴⁹.

Pathways to Education, a stay-in-school initiative, has been operating since 2001 with a significant level of success. The program, in which 95 per cent of Regent Park’s high-school students are enrolled, has seen the high-school dropout rate decrease from 56 per cent to just 10 per cent. Further, post-secondary enrolment has quadrupled, from 20 per cent to 80 per cent⁵⁰. The program not only offers tutors, but also provides support workers, free transit tickets to help students get to and from school, and bursaries of \$1,000 per student per year to use toward college or university.⁵¹ The program relies on about \$3 million a year in private donations for 85 per cent of its funding, while provincial grants pay the rest.⁵²

3.2.2 CMSF Pilot Project

⁴⁹ <http://pathwaystoeducation.ca/regent/regent.html>. Accessed September 2007.

⁵⁰ http://www.theglobeandmail.com/servlet/story/RTGAM.20070716.wxpathways16/BNSStory/National/?cid=al_gam_nletter_newsUp. Accessed September 2007.

⁵¹ They gain access to the bursary as long as they finish high school with decent grades. http://www.theglobeandmail.com/servlet/story/RTGAM.20070716.wxpathways16/BNSStory/National/?cid=al_gam_nletter_newsUp. Accessed September 2007.

⁵² Ibid.

The Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation has been active in piloting projects across the country which aim to encourage high school students to pursue post-secondary education. One such project is “Future to Discover,” launched in partnership with the governments of Manitoba and New Brunswick.⁵³ The project began in 2004 and is slated to run for six years. It involves 4,400 randomly selected volunteer students at 30 New Brunswick high schools (15 English and 15 French), and 1,050 students in Manitoba at 21 sites.⁵⁴ The project has two components: “Explore your Horizons” and “Learning Accounts”.

The first component, Explore Your Horizons, includes four classroom-based initiatives. In total, students obtain about 50 hours of workshops over three years dealing with career counseling and the importance of post-secondary studies (including apprenticeships and vocational training).⁵⁵

Learning Accounts supports student participants who face financial obstacles to post-secondary education by providing an incentive of \$8,000, deposited into a trust account. The trust can be accessed upon successful completion of high school and enrolment in an accredited post-secondary institution. This second component is being delivered only in New Brunswick and is available to students from families with incomes below the provincial median.⁵⁶ Using random assignment, some students participate only the Explore Your Horizons component or the Learning Accounts program, while others participate in both.

Another program that the CMSF currently runs draws on a very successful American early intervention program, Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID). AVID was designed by Mary Catherine Swanson, a San Diego high school teacher who wanted to encourage her inner-city students to achieve higher academic standards and succeed at the post-secondary level.⁵⁷ The AVID pilot project in Canada is being run in partnership with the CMSF and the Government of British Columbia. It involves 1,200 students in 20 schools over 5 years.⁵⁸ It is an in-school academic support program for students in grades 9-12 that prepares them for post-secondary studies, by placing academically average students in advanced post-secondary preparatory classes and providing them with the necessary skills and support structure to succeed. One of its main goals is to level the playing field for minority, rural and low-income students, including those students whose families have no history of post-secondary attendance.⁵⁹

Though the impact that this program will have on post-secondary participation in Canada is not yet known, results in the longer-running programs in the United States have been reaffirming. In 2005-06,

⁵³ More information can be found on the CMSF website:
<http://www.millenniumscholarships.ca/en/research/ppFTD.asp>. Accessed October 2007.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ <http://www.millenniumscholarships.ca/en/research/ppAVID.asp>. Accessed October 2007.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

AVID students had an impressive 99 per cent graduation rate from high school, compared with the national average of 82 per cent.⁶⁰ Furthermore, AVID graduates from low-income groups enrolled in post-secondary institutions in equal or greater proportions to students from higher income groups. In total, 75 per cent of the 2006 AVID graduates were accepted into a four-year college program.⁶¹

Two other programs that the CMSF is currently running are aimed at improving participation and retention of Aboriginal students in post-secondary education. The first, LE,NONET, is being conducted in partnership with the University of Victoria. The project pilots a series of interventions over a four-year period designed to improve the retention of Aboriginal students registered in university programs through to graduation. This program includes access to mentoring, financial assistance, community internships, research assistantships, and improved support services.⁶²

The second project, Making Education Work, is a five-year joint initiative with the Government of Manitoba and several First Nations communities.⁶³ The project is designed to increase the postsecondary participation rate of Aboriginal students through a comprehensive set of interventions that includes better information, academic support, mentoring, community involvement and an Aboriginal curriculum (elective courses are available in Aboriginal Studies, Aboriginal Languages and Law).⁶⁴

Excerpted directly from “Early Outreach Programs: Reaching Out Early to Reach Higher” (October 2006). Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance (OUSA). Available online: www.ousa.ca/uploaded_files/pdf_files/Policy%20Papers%20and%20Statements/EarlyOutreachPolicy.pdf

The following are some of the successful early outreach programs in practice:

Pathways to Education, Toronto

The Pathways to Education program was founded by the Regent Park Community Health Centre in 2000, aiming to break the cycle of poverty in one of the poorest neighbourhoods in the province by increasing the rate of young people attending post-secondary education. The broader long-term goal is that the children of Regent Park will become doctors, nurses, administrators, lawyers, and civil servants, and ultimately return to the community and support its ongoing development.⁶⁵

About 800 Regent Park students participate in the program, about 95 per cent of eligible participants. The program provides mandatory tutoring for students whose marks fall below a certain level, and participants have mentors and support workers who can speak to them, their parents or their school. Participants receive public transit fare (since there is no local high school and many students cannot afford bus fare), and are provided \$1,000 a year towards college or

⁶⁰ <http://www.avidonline.org/info/?ID=2120&tabID=1>. Accessed October 2007.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² CMSF (2007) LE,NONET. Retrieved October 2007 from <http://www.millenniumscholarships.ca/en/research/ppLENONET.asp>. Accessed October 2007.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Carolyn Acker, “A Message from the Executive Director”, accessed online at <http://pathwaystoeducation.ca/home-executive.html>.

university tuition.⁶⁶ Pathways also develops a relationship with parents to ensure that they are playing an active role in their child's education, particularly where there are language and cultural barriers.⁶⁷

The program's annual budget is \$2.9 million a year, and it is funded mainly by businesses, community groups, unions, and individuals. The provincial government provides 15 per cent of its funding. The program has 33 full-time and part-time employees, as well as 200 adult volunteers.⁶⁸

Pathways has demonstrated dramatic results in improving the academic performance and future prospects of its participants:

- The high school drop-out rate has fallen from 56 per cent to 14 per cent;
- There is a 90 per cent acceptance rate for applicants to college or university;
- There has been a 75 per cent reduction in the number of students with serious attendance programs;⁶⁹
- The proportion of Regent Park youth moving on to college or university has tripled from less than 20 per cent to over 60 per cent since 2001.⁷⁰

GEAR-UP (Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs), United States

There is a longer history of early outreach programs in the United States, where the federal government has offered matching funding programs for states that offer such programs since 1992. The current federal program is called GEAR-UP (Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs), and funds partnerships between high-poverty middle schools, colleges and universities, community organizations, and businesses.

Projects offer tutoring, mentoring, counselling, parent involvement activities, curricula and staff development. Services include financial aid counselling, information about federal financial aid, college and admission test preparation, advice on college application procedures, and information for parents on helping their children prepare for college. Rather than targeting particular students, the projects are offered to entire cohorts of students at schools serving predominantly low-income communities. Some projects offer scholarships to participants that are funded by the state government.⁷¹ Average grants to projects are US\$1.2 million for partnership projects run by schools and post-secondary institutions in partnership with other community-based organizations, and US\$3 million for state partnership projects.⁷²

Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID), California

AVID is one of the longest-running early outreach programs, and can therefore illustrate some longer-term outcomes achieved after students complete high school, which are not yet available for most other programs. Participation in AVID involves enrolling in one for-credit class through both middle and high school, where they learn academic

⁶⁶ "The Pathways Chance", *Globe and Mail*, September 28, 2005, A24.

⁶⁷ Acker.

⁶⁸ "The Pathways Chance".

⁶⁹ Pathways to Education website, accessed online at <http://pathwaystoeducation.ca/facts.html>

⁷⁰ "Pathways students move on", *Pathways Newsletter*, Fall 2006; online at <http://pathwaystoeducation.ca/regent/Fall-2006.pdf>.

⁷¹ Cunningham, Redmond and Merisotis, p.9-11.

⁷² GEAR-UP website, accessed online at <http://www.ed.gov/programs/gearup/gtepgearup.pdf>.

survival and college entry skills such as note-taking techniques, time management, research skills, and strategies for writing tests. AVID courses also include tutoring sessions, motivational activities, as well as career and college exploration. The program targets middle and high school students from low-income, first-generation, ethnic minority backgrounds. AVID began in San Diego County in 1980 and has since expanded to more than 800 sites across California as well as 16 states. In 2002, the program served about 65,000 students in the United States.

The pathways of AVID graduates indicate that the program has had a clear long-term impact upon their academic success and post-secondary participation:

- In 1994-95, 98 per cent of AVID program graduates enrolled at California post-secondary institution, compared to 55 per cent of non-participants from the same area.
- AVID graduates were three times more likely to attend four-year colleges than the state average, and they had higher retention rates once enrolled.
- The AVID program also appeared to overcome the negative effect of parental income and education. AVID graduates from lowest-income groups enrolled in colleges in equal or greater proportions to students from higher income groups who had not participated in AVID.⁷³

⁷³ Cunningham, Redmond and Merisotis, p.43-44.