

Olds College, October 4 - Selected Highlights

ISSUES, CONCERNS AND SUGGESTED DIRECTIONS RAISED BY PARTICIPANTS

- Attracting and retaining faculty is a growing issue. It is increasingly difficult to compete when you are unable to match industry standards. (*faculty representative*)
- The college is short of equipment and, as a consequence students have to purchase expensive but necessary specialized equipment (e.g. as much as \$4000 for arboreal equipment). It is too difficult to get a loan. "Everything is an asset. If I had a cat, I would have to sell it." Also, student loans do not take into consideration the costs of traveling from considerable distances in rural settings. (*student*)
- How can students live off what they get in student loans? If you get a maximum of \$9000 and subtract \$4400 in tuition then you have only \$700 a month to live on. I don't believe tuition should be free, but we need lower tuition fees and greater access to grants and loans; this would mean that people would not have to work 20-30 hours per week in term time, with their marks suffering. (*student*)
- Our fundamental problem is that we are being asked to do "more with less," and we are constantly looking for resources. The government cut us back 21% in the mid-1990s, and we have never really recovered. We fundraise all the time in the business community; our job as instructors has changed (it seems like we are "always selling cookie dough"). "The cost is the people." Also, "it didn't used to have this focus on getting money." The increased private funding means that we have to "be careful that the tail doesn't wag the dog." (*instructor*)
- We graduate many fine people from our high schools, and they simply can't get into post-secondary institutions, despite the fact that they are well qualified. We have students returning to do academic upgrading even though they have 80% averages. When they do get into transfer programs in colleges, too often they then can't get into the university. (*high school teacher*)
- I asked for \$11,000 from student finance and received \$8,000 – and I simply can't do it. My scholarship was considered as an asset so it was deducted. I don't mind paying for PSE, "but if we can't afford it, then what?" Many of



- my friends have decided to "stick it out at Subway" rather than go on to college. (*student*)
- Over the past eight years we have been tracking our graduates. There was only one year we had more than 50% of students go on to any form of post-secondary education, including the trades. (*high school principal*)
 - We had to get rid of our herd of 120 horses for the equine program, because they were too expensive to keep. Now students bring their own horse and pay for the upkeep or we use a private contractor for students who don't have their own horses. (*faculty*)
 - As a mature student, it cost me twice as much (\$2100) as someone coming out of high school. I have used my RRSPs that I saved up over the ten years I was in the workforce and now my net worth is zero. I found consistent roadblocks in the way as an older student. (*student*)
 - There is simply no way to be involved in any extracurricular aspects of PSE life when you are studying, working at a job and traveling 45 minutes each way. (*Student*)
 - My daughter took the transfer program at Red Deer College and would have been an excellent teacher but couldn't get into the university program because she couldn't get a 3.8 average. Using marks as the only filter means that we ignore many other important qualities. "Is education only for the brightest?" (*parent*)
 - We have been part of "a twenty year loss of intellectual capacity", and it is a direct consequence of refusing to fund PSE properly. (*psychologist*)