



The Relationship of the community college to
other providers of postsecondary and adult education in Canada and
implications for policyⁱ

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Abstract

The community college is one of many providers of postsecondary and adult education in Canada. In making decisions about how the community college should allocate its efforts among various possible programs and activities, it is important to understand its relationship to other providers of postsecondary and adult education. This article describes and analyzes the relationship between Canada's community colleges and other providers of postsecondary and adult education in Canada. It attempts to identify the comparative strengths and weaknesses of community colleges relative to other providers with respect to particular types of activity, and from that analysis it offers suggestions regarding the emphases that colleges might place on certain of their activities.

Résumé

Le collège communautaire est un des nombreux fournisseurs d'enseignement supérieur et d'éducation aux adultes au Canada. En prenant des décisions concernant la manière dont les collèges communautaires devraient allouer leurs efforts parmi différents programmes et activités, il est important de comprendre leurs relations avec d'autres fournisseurs d'enseignement supérieur et d'éducation aux adultes. Cet article décrit et analyse la relation entre les collèges communautaires du Canada et les autres fournisseurs d'enseignement supérieur et d'éducation aux adultes au Canada. Il tente d'identifier les forces et faiblesses des collèges communautaires comparativement à d'autres fournisseurs relativement à certains types d'activités, et à partir de cette analyse, il offre des suggestions concernant l'importance que les collèges peuvent accorder à certaines de leurs activités.

Introduction

THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE is one of many providers of postsecondary and adult education in Canada. In making decisions about how the community college should allocate its efforts among various possible programs and activities, it is important to understand its relationship to other providers of postsecondary and adult education. This should include an understanding of the similarities and differences, along with the relationships between the community college and other providers. It should also include an understanding of the comparative strengths and weaknesses of community colleges relative to other providers of postsecondary and adult education specifically with regards to the provision of various types of postsecondary and adult education. The purpose of this article is to explicate these relationships, similarities and differences, and comparative strengths and weaknesses.

The first section of the article describes the landscape of postsecondary and adult education in Canada and situates the community college within this landscape. The next two sections explore the essential nature and identity of the community college and its principal variations. There follows a section that identifies the principal issues involved in the relationship between the community college and its potential partners. Because of the scale and importance of the community college's relationship with the university, a separate section is then devoted to that topic. The article concludes with an examination of the comparative advantages of the community colleges in various areas of postsecondary and adult education and comments on the policy implications of the analysis.

Situating the Community College in the Landscape of Postsecondary and Adult Education

THE LANDSCAPE OF ORGANIZATIONS and institutions that offer programs and courses of postsecondary and adult education is so diverse that there is not a comprehensive and widely accepted classification system for it.ⁱⁱ Nor are there any reasonably precise figures indicating the total number of providers of postsecondary and adult education, the number of people involved in postsecondary and adult education, or the amount of money spent on this realm of activity. There is some very good data on certain parts of this landscape, particularly public universities and community colleges, but the availability and quality of data declines as one moves toward the less well organized and less visible parts of the landscape, such as personal interest courses provided by an incredibly diverse range of not-for-profit organizations.

For purposes of getting an overview of the relative contribution of different providers of postsecondary and adult education, the 1998 Adult Education and Training Survey (AETS) is a particularly good source of data (Statistics Canada and Human Resources Development Canada, 2001). This survey covers organized, structured programs and courses taken by individuals aged 17 and over, excluding all regular full-time students except those subsidized by employers, or those over 19 in elementary or secondary school and those over 24 in postsecondary education. This data source thus

covers about 30 per cent of the students in postsecondary education plus most others involved in organized forms of adult education.

The survey showed that about 75 per cent of the programs that this population participated in were provided by educational institutions. The next largest categories of providers were: commercial schools and private training providers (9.7%); employers (4.7%); non-profit organizations (1.9%) and suppliers of equipment (1.5%). If the large cadre of full-time postsecondary students were factored into the equation, the percentage accounted for by educational institutions would go up substantially, and the other categories would be accordingly lower, indicating the predominance of universities and colleges as providers of programs.

However, a great deal of adult education is pursued only on a course-by-course rather than program basis. The survey figures are quite different when looked at in terms of courses, with educational institutions providing only about a quarter of all courses. In terms of provision of courses, the other providers account for a larger share: commercial schools and private training providers, 20.0%; employers, 22.3%; non-profit organizations, 9.2%; and suppliers of equipment, 8.9%. The figures for these other types of providers are particularly significant relative to the contributions of community colleges, because colleges have long been involved in providing job related and personal interest courses for adults who are not enrolled in programs that lead to a certificate or diploma. The implication is that colleges have substantial involvement in providing courses for which there are also other providers and in which they have to compete for clients.ⁱⁱⁱ

One of the main distinctions among providers of postsecondary and adult education is between educational institutions and other providers. Among educational institutions, the largest groups are public universities and public community colleges. So far as private educational institutions are concerned, there are very few private universities in Canada, but there are many private career colleges that offer programs and courses similar to those that community colleges offer. Data on this sector are not very conclusive. Robert Sweet reported that there were over one thousand proprietary institutions in Canada, with enrolment of about 134 thousand (Sweet, 1993). As of September, 2003, Statistics Canada had 497 private career colleges in its registry of postsecondary institutions, but the official in charge of surveys of postsecondary institutions speculated that the actual number of such colleges could be substantially greater (Orton, 2003, pp. 11-14).

The term 'shadow sector' has been used to refer to programs and courses offered by organizations other than colleges and universities, but that are similar to the programs and courses offered by colleges and universities (Paquet, 1988). The component of the shadow sector that has been the subject of most attention is that consisting of programs provided by employers, in both the private and public sectors. These initiatives range from actual educational institutions with physical premises, full-time faculty, academic structures, and so on, to more informal, ad hoc arrangements.

The terms 'corporate universities' and 'corporate colleges' have been used mainly to describe the formal educational initiatives of private sector employers (Botkin, 1994).

As the word university is normally taken to mean an institution of higher learning that offers programs in a wide range of disciplines, it is a stretch to call institutions that were established to train employees in a particular branch of industry a university even if they have the authority to grant degrees. Still that term is used frequently in reference both to educational institutions established by employers that have legal authorization to grant degrees and to any substantial workplace learning initiatives that provide a variety of learning opportunities. An example of the latter type is The University of MGM Grand, the Las Vegas casino, which grants a Th.D., or doctor of "thinkology" to employees who complete 25 courses in its School of Leadership (Following the Yellow Brick Road to Service, 1999).

An example of a degree granting corporate university is McDonald's Hamburger University which in its campus near Chicago has five dormitories and classroom facilities for simultaneous translation into 18 languages (Botkin, 1994). Though there are more than thirty such degree granting institutions operated by private sector employers in the United States, there are none in Canada. Some U.S. based institutions have at times offered programs in Canada, for example, the General Motors Engineering and Management Institute which obtained degree granting authority in the United States in 1945. Though not offering degrees themselves, several corporate colleges in Canada have partnerships with universities which deliver some of their courses. For example, the Bank of Montreal's Institute for Learning (IFL) has partnerships with Dalhousie, Waterloo, Boston, and Northwestern Universities. The IFL has state-of-the-art educational facilities, 75 full-time trainers, and annually serves about 10,000 people. In 1998, it spent \$63 million on training (Kenyon, 1999).

Besides employers, another substantial component of the shadow sector is that of professional associations which often mount extensive educational programs for their members. Some of these are highly institutionalized, like the Law Society of Upper Canada which has a school complete with a registrar's office, full-faculty and a three month period of full time study in its Bar Admission Course, in addition to a plethora of continuing education activities.

It is impossible to determine the magnitude of the shadow sector because its activities are so diverse as to elude complete identification. Indeed, many employer organizations do not themselves know how much they are spending in total on training. A 1999 study by the Corporate University Xchange reported that the number of corporate universities in North America had grown from 400 in 1988 to more than 1,600 and that 40 per cent of Fortune 500 companies had them. The study director speculated that at their current rate of growth, the number of corporate universities would exceed the number of traditional universities by 2010 if not sooner (Goodings, 1999).

In 1988, Gilles Paquet made a "rough guesstimate" that expenditures on employee training in Canada were about \$20 billion compared to just over \$9 billion on traditional postsecondary education (Paquet, 1988). This ratio of about 2:1 for expenditures on employee training compared to postsecondary educational institutions was consistent with estimates made in the United States. This ratio would suggest that expenditures on employee training in Canada in 1999-2000 were over \$40 billion, as expenditures on

postsecondary education in that year were about \$20 billion. However, the indications suggested earlier that the corporate college movement is accelerating would imply that the expenditures on employee training could have been even higher.

Another way of coming at the question of size of the shadow sector is through the AETS data. The 1998 AETS indicated that about 28 per cent of Canadians participated in adult education and training activities in 1997 (excluding full-time students). That would mean a total of about six million individuals participated in adult education and training, compared to nearly one million full-time students in colleges and universities. The AETS reported also that the average number of hours per participant in the year was just over 200. A typical full-time student in a college or university would have two to three times that number of hours of instruction. So, as a rough measure, in terms of hours of instruction, the total amount of participation by full-time students in colleges and universities would be from one-third to one-half the total for other participation in adult education and training. This is consistent with Paquet's (1988) guesstimate of relative expenditures.

Community colleges accounted for about 40 per cent of total full-time postsecondary enrolment in 1997-98 (Statistics Canada and Council of Ministers, 1999, pp. 204-205). This would mean that full-time enrolment in the colleges accounted for somewhere in the order of 13 to 20 per cent of the total of adult and postsecondary education in Canada. However, community colleges also provide other educational activity such as part-time credit and non-credit courses and contract training, but the report of the AETS does not show how much of this type of adult education is provided by community colleges. In Ontario it was reported that the community colleges annually serve "approximately 1 million part-time learners per year in credit, non-credit, distance learning and contract training activities" (Ontario Colleges at a Glance, 2003). If the proportion of part-time learners in Canadian colleges that are served by Ontario colleges is the same as Ontario colleges' proportion of full-time learners, about 35 per cent, then the number of part-time learners served by community colleges across Canada would be about 2.8 million. This, in turn, would imply that the proportion of the total postsecondary and adult education in Canada provided by community colleges could be as high as 50 per cent.

While the data do not enable us to pin down with any precision the relative contribution of the community college to postsecondary and adult education in Canada, we can offer two conclusions: the community college is one of the largest contributors to meeting the demand for postsecondary and adult education in Canada, perhaps the largest provider; and, there is both a plethora of, and a great diversity of, other providers of postsecondary and adult education in Canada.

The Community College

THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE, as a type of postsecondary education institution, has its origins in the United States in the early twentieth century. In their penetrating analysis of the development of community colleges in Canada, while noting the unique events and circumstances which caused Canadian community colleges to take

their particular shape in the 1960s, Dennison and Gallagher also describe the profound influence of earlier developments in the United States (Dennison and Gallagher, 1986, pp. 13-15).

Cohen and Brawer have noted that the key factors which contributed to the rise of the community college in the United States were: the increasing need for trained workers to operate the nation's expanding industries; the lengthened period of adolescence; and the drive for social equality, factors that were common to Canada as well (Cohen and Brawer, 1984, p. 1). Cohen and Brawer add that the "simplest overarching reason for the growth of community colleges" was the "plethora of demands placed on education at every level" (p. 2). This notion has even more relevance in Canada than the United States, because far more than simply responding to private demand, Canada's community colleges from the outset have been instruments of government policy.

Until about the 1940s, most of the institutions that are now called community colleges were known as junior colleges, institutions which concentrated on offering lower division university studies. However, as early as the mid 1920s, the junior colleges were also responding to the social, civic, and vocational needs of the communities in which they were located. Between the 1950s and the 1970s, vocational education became a more prominent component of their activity, and the institutions came to be known as community colleges (Brint and Karabel, 1989, p. 234).

The American community college thus was an organization that combined two quite distinct forms of activity: the provision of lower division university courses, and provision of education and training in various occupational fields for direct entry into the labour force. Increasingly over time, many of the occupational fields in which the colleges offered programs were those that had no direct counterpart in the university, and this has caused major problems for students who began their postsecondary experience in a community college and wished subsequently to continue to a university.

Besides their two major functions, both American and Canadian community colleges gradually have adopted other functions, the chief ones among them being: developmental education which involves equipping people with the academic knowledge and skills necessary to take advantage of the two core functions of the college; the provision of general interest courses; civic education and the provision of various types of services to enhance communities economically and culturally; customized training for employers, which is deemed part of the vocational education mandate; and apprenticeship and trades training, which can also be viewed as part of the college's vocational mandate.

Besides looking at functions, another way of describing what community colleges are is in terms of their fundamental characteristics. Dennison and Gallagher listed ten characteristics which taken together could be seen as distinguishing community colleges from other educational institutions in Canada: curriculum comprehensiveness; student heterogeneity; open admissions; substantial provision of student services; operational flexibility; decentralization of institutional facilities; responsiveness to government; emphasis on teaching and learning; community orientation; and their essential public character (Dennison and Gallagher, pp. 69-80). Though developed in the mid 1980s this list is still highly current, and also suits community colleges in the United States.

Of course community colleges differ from each other considerably in regard to the relative attention given to various functions and in the extent to which they embody the above characteristics. Because of this variation, Cohen and Brawer suggested that the most accurate way to define the community college is in terms of a characteristic that was absolutely common to them all. They defined the community college as "any institution accredited to award the associate in arts or science as its highest degree" (Cohen and Brawer, pp. 5-6). This definition would not have fit Canadian community colleges in a literal sense, because most colleges in Canada do not award associate degrees. Nevertheless, the essence of the Cohen and Brawer definition was highly relevant to Canada, because until near the end of the twentieth century the primary basis of distinction between community colleges and universities was that the colleges did not offer degrees. However, now the validity of this definition has been called into question in both the United States and Canada, because in several states, and in three Canadian provinces (Alberta, British Columbia, and Ontario), community colleges may now award baccalaureate degrees (Floyd, Skolnik, and Walker, 2005).

This development highlights the difficulty of keeping a definition of the community college constant because the institution itself is still evolving. The introduction of the baccalaureate degree has been somewhat controversial within the college community. As Townsend notes, in a review of the debate about the community college baccalaureate, critics of this development have argued that offering the baccalaureate is inconsistent with the idea of the community college, i.e. that institutions that do so would no longer really be community colleges (Townsend, 2004, forthcoming). Townsend adds that others have argued that an institution that maintains the traditional programs and policies of a community college and has a relatively small proportion of its enrolment in baccalaureate programs would still have the predominant character of a community college.

In attempting to resolve the thorny issue of when a community college might cease to be a community college, it may be helpful to consider one other characteristic not in the Dennison-Gallagher list that has been central to the idea of a community college (Skolnik, 2002a). That is that the occupational or career fields for which the colleges provide education and training are in the *middle* range of labour force. They are between skilled occupations and the professions, in fact many of them have been referred to as para-professional occupations. For example, Grubb refers to college trained data entry clerks working with accounting and spreadsheet programs as "para-accountants" (Grubb, 1996, p. 10). The spectrum of jobs that required more than secondary school but less than a university degree emerged after World War I and grew rapidly from the middle of the twentieth century on as a result of changes in technology and the way that work was organized. These developments occurred simultaneously with the establishment and growth of the community college and, in fact, they have comprised the main stimulus for that growth. However, changes in technology and the nature of work have continued, if not accelerated, and accordingly the knowledge and skill requirements of the middle segment of the work force have continued to increase. In this way of looking at change, offering baccalaureate programs in selected fields is consistent with

the mission of the colleges as preeminent providers of career education for the middle segment of the workforce.

The root problem of defining the community college, however, goes somewhat deeper than identifying the institution with a particular segment of the workforce. More than anything else, the college was an intentional creation of provincial governments and educational leaders to meet particular societal needs and address particular social problems. The forms that the institution took reflected society's needs and problems as these needs and problems were perceived at the time the colleges were established. Perceptions of societal needs and problems change over time, and the most fundamental characteristic of the community college may be its capacity to reinvent itself as the needs and problems that it is asked to address change. Such plasticity is very difficult for any human organization to achieve, and at every point in the evolution of the community college there have been strong voices declaring that the final destination has been reached and further change would destroy it. Yet the evolution goes on, because that is the essence of the institution. Thus, in regard to defining the community college, the best that can be done, as I have tried to do above, is probably to describe what the principal characteristics of community colleges of the day seem to be, bearing in mind the centrality to this definition of continuous change in response to changing societal needs.

Variation Among Colleges

AS COMMUNITY COLLEGES were created by in large by governments, especially in Canada, to address particular societal needs, and these needs, or at least various government's perceptions of them, differed from one region to another, it is not surprising that the college systems that were created varied considerably from region to region. Although one often hears generalizations comparing community colleges in Canada and the United States, the reality is that the substantial variation among college systems within each country makes comparison at the national level problematic. For example, in some ways community colleges in Alberta are more like those in Florida than like colleges in Ontario. And colleges in Louisiana have been more like those in Ontario than those in Florida.

The principal variations among provincial college systems have been described in some detail by Dennison and Gallagher (1995). They identified five principal models for community college systems in Canada, while noting that there were also internal variations within each of these models. In the order in which Dennison and Gallagher presented them, the first model was that of the most and least populated provinces, Ontario and Prince Edward Island. The colleges there were intended to complement the university systems, serving mainly young people who were not eligible for university admission and oriented toward preparing them for the workforce. The second model, that of Alberta and British Columbia, was for comprehensive community colleges, modeled on those in California, that combined university transfer programs with technical-vocational programs. One difference between those two provinces that they noted was that in British Columbia the community colleges provided second-chance opportunities

for adults while in Alberta, "most second-chance students were still directed to government-run vocational centres established throughout the province" (p. 385).

The third model was described as that of "the postsecondary vocational-technical college, without any transfer function and with a much stronger accent on shorter term work-entry training programs than on more advanced technological education" (p. 385). This model was associated with Manitoba, New Brunswick, Newfoundland, and the Yukon and Northwest Territories, though it was noted that Newfoundland subsequently incorporated transfer into the mandate of its colleges.

The fourth and fifth models were unique to single provinces, Saskatchewan and Quebec. Saskatchewan was characterized by a combination of colleges without walls in the rural areas and technical institutes in the urban areas. The former operated as brokers rather than service providers with the responsibility to arrange for provision of educational services by other institutions and community agencies. This part of the model was, as Dennison and Gallagher explain, "effectively set aside in the late 1980s when four previously independent technical institutes were reconstituted as a new multi-campus Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology and the more rural community colleges began to provide, as well as broker, educational services" (pp. 385-386).

Perhaps the most distinctive model was Quebec's in which a system of colleges of general and vocational education that borrowed from European experience was established. Situated after Grade 11, these colleges had two streams: a university preparation stream of two years which was a requirement for any Quebec student intending to go to a Quebec university; and a career preparation stream of three years. The Quebec colleges were not originally intended to place much emphasis on adult education or short term vocational training, though the authors note that most became active adult education centres anyway. Because it starts after Grade 11, and is compulsory for students going on to university, the two year stream in the Quebec colleges is normally referred to as a university preparation rather than a university transfer stream.

In their 1995 article, Dennison and Gallagher said that on balance Canada's college systems had become more dissimilar than similar over the years as they have responded to different economic, social, and political circumstances (p. 389). This may have been true up to the time when they made this statement, 1995, but by 2003 the systems were clearly becoming more similar. The chief reason for this is that each system has itself been in the process of becoming more diversified, incorporating just about every function that it is possible for a community college to perform. For example, while at one time there was a major division over the issue of university transfer, today nearly all systems make provisions for transfer, though some do much better at it than others. At the time of Dennison and Gallagher's article, only one province, British Columbia, had provision for community colleges to offer baccalaureate degrees. Now, as noted earlier, this is done in three provinces.

In concluding this discussion of the essential nature and identity of Canada's community colleges, it is appropriate to say something about the number of community

colleges in Canada. The two main sources for a listing of community colleges are Statistics Canada and the Association of Canadian Community Colleges (ACCC). The list of "Community Colleges and Related Institutions" in the 1999 publication, *Education Indicators in Canada*, which I will refer to as the EIC list, contains names of 204 "Main Institutions", excluding multiple campuses of a single institution (Statistics Canada and Council of Ministers of Education Canada, 1999). On its web site, ACCC lists 154 member institutions (ACCC, 2003).

A significant part of the discrepancy between the two lists lies in the fact that EIC includes close to 30 hospital schools of nursing, radiography, or cancer treatment that are not ACCC members. For some provinces, British Columbia, for example, the two lists are almost identical. The biggest discrepancies between the two lists are for Quebec (90 in EIC, 45 in ACCC) and Ontario (41 in EIC and 27 in ACCC). In Ontario, most of the difference is accounted for by health sector institutions in the EIC list; in Quebec by the large number of specialized colleges and institutes that are not members of ACCC. In a few cases (New Brunswick and Saskatchewan) the numbers on the ACCC list are substantially greater than on the EIC list, because different campuses under the same structure appear to have their own memberships in ACCC.

Given my earlier comments about the difficulty of defining a community college, the assertion that it is impossible to say precisely how many community colleges there are in Canada should not come as a surprise to the reader. As I have noted, besides hospital schools, the EIC list also contains specialized institutions like the Nova Scotia School of Fisheries and the Maritime Forest Ranger School, and vocational institutes like the Alberta Vocational Colleges, that seem somewhat distant from the concept of a community college. On the other hand, there are a few problems with using the ACCC list to determine the number of community colleges. For whatever reasons, not all of the apparent community colleges in Canada are members. For example, some CEGEPs are not members, though a substantial majority are. Another problem is that in some cases the ACCC has separate listings for different campuses of a single institution, the New Brunswick Community College being a good example. Of course it could be argued that each of the nine major campuses of NBCC are more comparable to one of the 25 Ontario Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology than to campuses of the Ontario CAATs.

Taking the most stringent approach on the multi-campus issue, a low estimate of the number of community colleges in Canada would be about 125. To the extent to which some of the institutions that are called institutes of technology display many of the characteristics of community colleges, and some of the major campuses under a single governance authority display a strong community orientation and have a measure of local autonomy, the best estimate of the number of community college type institutions in Canada is probably about 150. This is double the number of universities, which, according to the EIC, was 76. It is interesting to note that while community colleges thus comprise about two-thirds of the number of postsecondary institutions in Canada, the comparable figure in the United States is only about 40 per cent (Carnegie Foundation, 2000).

Community Colleges and Their Partners

THE SECTORS AND ORGANIZATIONS with which community colleges have important relationships are many and include: secondary schools; employers; community agencies; professional associations and unions; and of course, universities. Of these relationships, I will devote the most attention to that with universities, because this has been the most researched of these relationships and the focus of considerable attention recently. The others are also of considerable importance, and developing a better base of information and understanding pertaining to them should be a high priority for the community college research agenda.

It has been well established that the economic benefits of continuing on to some form of postsecondary education are substantial in terms of reduced unemployment, higher earnings, and greater economic contributions to society. Although Canada leads the world in the proportion of its working age population with a postsecondary credential (Statistics Canada and Council of Ministers, 2003, p. 144), still over thirty per cent of the population does not go on to any postsecondary education (Statistics Canada, 2003).

In the United States, there have in recent years been some attempts to increase the proportion of high school students who go on to postsecondary education through the establishment of special programs that are intended to enhance linkages between high schools and community colleges (Bailey, Hughes, and Karp, 2003). An example is that of dual enrolment programs in which high school students enroll simultaneously in college programs, giving them first-hand exposure to the requirements and experience of the community college while completing their high school programs. Almost all states now have dual enrolment programs, and according to Thomas Bailey, Director of the Community College Research Center at Columbia University, "the dramatic growth of dual enrolment programs for high school students has been one of the most talked-about recent trends in community colleges" (Bailey, 2003, p. 2).

While community colleges in Canada have since their founding devoted resources and effort to high school liaison, except in some places in regard to aboriginal students, they have not generally pursued more aggressive forms of linkage with high schools like dual enrolment programs. This might be something that should be considered, particularly in urban areas with large immigrant populations.

In practice, the constituency with which community colleges have the strongest relationships, is that of employers. Colleges have been resourceful and energetic in devising and implementing mechanisms and approaches to make the linkage between the college and the workforce more effective. Such mechanisms and approaches include the establishment of program advisory committees, placement offices, co-op programs, and contract training. In considering the role that colleges should play in meeting the workforce needs of employers, it is impossible not to take note of the substantial scale and growth of employer provided training, including, as discussed earlier, the apparent extraordinary increase in the number of corporate colleges.

The economic theory of training developed by Nobel Prize winning economist Gary Becker in the 1960s implies that colleges should concentrate on imparting general or generic knowledge and skills, and employers should be responsible for providing job

specific training. However, as W. Norton Grubb has noted, one of the problems with this kind of division is that there is great variety among employers in regard to what they are willing to provide themselves and what they seek from postsecondary institutions (Grubb, 1996). Grubb found that some employers want training that is even so specific to a particular piece of equipment that it is difficult for colleges to provide it, while others prefer that colleges concentrate on developing "higher-order competencies necessary for promotion within flexible, high-skilled companies" (Grubb, p. 176).

Although some employers have the preferences of the first type that Grubb describes, the emphasis in college programs that are funded from its basic operating revenue should be on the types of learning objectives that are associated with giving graduates a strong foundation for subsequent learning and professional and personal growth. This would mean emphasizing courses in communications, critical thinking, and understanding the social world in addition to core knowledge in the intended area of practice. When something more company-specific is desired, that could be provided for a fee that should, besides covering direct costs, contribute to the overhead that maintains the college's core programs. Of course, as knowledge advances, the boundary between general and specific curriculum content for an evolving area of practice will shift, and thus, besides being an important way of maintaining linkages with industry, contract training can also significantly inform the ongoing process of curriculum development in core programs.

Similar ideas about the balance between general and specific training should guide the colleges' relationships with professional associations and unions. It is as important for the colleges to take the views of these organizations into account as those of employers in designing their curricula. However, where instead of being an input into general curriculum design, the wishes of a professional association are allowed to become the entire specifications for the curriculum, then the contract training model would be appropriate. Insofar as they represent the longer term interests of their members, professional associations and other employee organizations should be better able than employers to appreciate the value of the more foundational elements of the curriculum, though this is not always the case.

One of the major difficulties in managing the college's relationships with the kinds of external groups that we have been discussing here is that there is a mix of competition and complementarity potentially in all or most of the relationships. If the college accommodates the desires of these organizations and reorients its activities to meet their needs, it can gain their esteem, their political support, perhaps some direct financial support, and valuable developmental opportunities for its faculty and placement opportunities for its graduates. If the college feels that what the external organization is requesting would take it too far from its proper mission and refuses to accommodate to the demands, the other organization may elect to undertake the initiative on its own without involvement of the college, as is evidenced by the growth of corporate colleges. Since colleges have limited resources, including those necessary to manage collaborative initiatives, and constraints of perceived mission and values, hard choices have to be made in

response to the multitude of entreaties that they receive from various external organizations.

In keeping with their social role, a case could be made that, other things equal, colleges should be most accommodating with external organizations that have the least resources themselves. The reality is probably the opposite with colleges being the most accommodating in their relationships with large, affluent corporations. Insofar as this is true, it is no doubt due both to colleges' own financial insecurity and to the primary importance assigned by their provincial masters to their role as instruments of economic development. While this situation is understandable, and to some extent defensible, it does imply that some creative thinking is needed as to how colleges might better meet the needs of small and new businesses and community groups. This would seem an area where governments could and should play an important role.

Finally, one other case of competition between colleges and external organizations warrants brief comment. This is the competition between colleges and community agencies and organizations in the broad areas of life skills, immigrant adjustment, cultural awareness and enrichment, and social and community development. Colleges can bring some things to these areas that are important, particularly consistency of standards and policies, rigorous training and screening of instructors, and the ability to draw upon an intellectual infrastructure of great breadth and richness. However, in many of these activities, the context and particular subculture of community agencies represent major strengths. In such cases, rather than the colleges being involved in direct delivery, a supportive role in regard to training and certification of instructors and quality assurance would make for a better allocation of roles between the colleges and community agencies.

Community Colleges and Universities: Similarities, Differences, and Relationships

THE PRINCIPAL SIMILARITY between community colleges and universities is that a substantial activity for both is providing learning and development opportunities for secondary school graduates. In addition, a significant proportion of the learners that community colleges serve are adults who have not completed secondary school, something that would not generally be true of universities, although some of the students in their continuing education courses may not have completed secondary school.

For the university, in general, the advancement of knowledge is equally important as its transmission, though the precise weight given to these two functions varies from institution to institution. David Laidler, Bank of Montreal Professor of Economics at the University of Western Ontario, describes the university as a place where students are taught by researchers and where researchers teach.^{iv} This is an ideal vision of the university that is promoted by the official bodies that represent Canadian universities, though it is not a universal characteristic of universities. This description would hardly fit the community college at all, although applied research has become more common in some Canadian community colleges recently.

The principal fields of instruction and research in the university are the disciplines and fields in the arts and sciences and major professions that have been recognized by consensus within the academic community. The principal fields of study in the community college fall into one of two main categories. One category is that of the lower level courses in exactly the same disciplines and fields in which universities offer courses, typically the first two years of such courses. The other category is that of programs in applied fields in which there is no directly corresponding program in the university. In cases where there is a university program with some affinity to an occupationally focused program in a college, usually the university program is not nearly as highly job-specific as the college program.

While I will say more about the issue of transfer credit shortly, it is important here to note the different implications of these two categories of college programs for transfer. In regard to the first category of college programs, transfer of credit earned in the community college to the university can be handled fairly smoothly. Where there are significant barriers to credit transfer for courses that are part of a common hierarchy, these are due to poor communications between institutions, institutional politics, or simply inertia. With respect to credit transfer for the second category of college programs, there are barriers of a conceptual nature. How does a university decide what credit to give for courses which are different from any that it offers itself, and how does it deal with transfer students who want to reverse the conventional approach within the university of advancing from the more general to the more specific?

Some of the major differences between universities and community colleges have to do with the nexus of institutional mission and control. Canadian universities have enjoyed a high degree of institutional autonomy that has included the ability to establish their own institutional missions and priorities. The legislative acts pertaining to universities in Canada have served largely to codify in pretty general terms common Western ideas about the purpose of the university, and these provisions are quite similar across the country.^v The colleges, in contrast, as noted earlier, were established to serve as instruments of government policy. While they have been given a substantial amount of procedural autonomy, their substantive autonomy, including particularly control over their own missions, is tightly circumscribed by government.

Besides the prominence of the research function in the university sector, another way in which the missions of the two sectors have differed is in regard to the relative emphasis on economic and non-economic goals. Post-secondary education has always had diverse objectives which can be broadly classified as economic and non-economic. The economic objectives include preparing people to be productive workers in professional and other occupations and research which results in new products, new technologies, and greater economic efficiency. As important as these objectives are, they stand in contrast to the cultural, moral, civic, and broader intellectual purposes of education. Mission statements of Canadian universities have generally understated economic objectives and given more emphasis to non-economic objectives such the search for truth and the transmission of a common culture. By contrast, in almost all provinces there are some non-university postsecondary institutions whose primary

objectives are economic in nature, and in some provinces, like Ontario, the primary mission of the entire community college sector is training for employment. Indeed, it could be said that one of the principal effects of the establishment of colleges or entire college systems whose primary mission was economic was that by having this newer sector to respond to immediate labour market needs it enabled the universities to maintain greater emphasis on their non-economic functions.

While it may be that the existence of community colleges allowed the universities to steer a more academic course at least until near the end of the previous century, some observers have suggested that recently there has been a significant "blurring of the vocational part of the boundary that has traditionally separated the universities and colleges" (Fisher and Rubenson, 1998, p. 93). A major cause of this is alleged to be the increased vocationalism of the universities, as they have taken on more responsibility for training highly skilled technical employees and retraining of professionals. Fisher and Rubenson refer also to "academic drift" in the colleges. Academic drift is a pejorative term for what could be viewed alternatively as the inevitable advance in academic capability of those who work in postsecondary institutions and the maturation of those institutions (Skolnik, 2002b). An indication of this maturation is the recognition by the research granting councils that colleges have the capacity to administer grants, scholarships, and fellowships. Further, colleges have been deemed eligible for grants from the Canada Foundation for Innovation, and according to the CFI web site, as of June 18, 2003, 27 colleges had received funding, seven of them more than a million dollars each. This may be relatively small compared to the amounts that leading universities have received, but it is a significant development nonetheless.

The relationship between universities and community colleges is affected considerably by similarities and differences in mission and fundamental institutional characteristics, and more so, by perceptions about those similarities and differences, which are not always the same as the reality. Chief reasons why perceptions about these similarities and differences may be inaccurate are that in recent years there has been quite a lot of change in both sectors, especially in the community colleges, and few staff in either sector have recurrent contact with the other. For example, there has been a quite significant increase in the level of complexity and sophistication in the content of many college programs. That many new students in the colleges are university graduates is still regarded as a curious irony rather than an indication of the academic stature that the colleges have attained. Similarly, the extent to which universities have responded, in some cases quite rapidly, to market-driven needs of employers may not be widely appreciated. In short, in addition to the real differences between the two sectors, the relationship between community colleges and universities is governed also by out-of-date and stereotypical ideas that each has about the other.

The most important aspect of the potential or actual relationship between community colleges and universities is that pertaining to enabling students to combine courses from the two types of institutions toward academic credentials granted by one or both institutions. The traditional form of this relationship is of course that in which the student transfers from a community college to a university and the latter awards the

student credit for some or all the college coursework toward the university degree. As noted earlier, arrangements for college to university transfer were originally designed for the situation wherein the college courses are lower division courses in the same disciplines offered by universities. This kind of transfer works best when colleges and universities employ a common course numbering system, as is the case in the state of Florida. It is difficult to see why other jurisdictions have not adopted this practice.

The more difficult case is that of occupation-specific programs offered by the colleges that have no direct counterpart in the universities. In general, community colleges have found it easier to work out satisfactory credit transfer arrangements with universities that have a more applied orientation themselves than with more academically oriented universities. Since Canada has relatively few universities with an applied orientation, this means that Canadian community colleges have often found that their students in career programs have better opportunities to continue their education with a foreign than with a Canadian university. One of the consequences of community college students finding it easier to transfer their credit to a university outside Canada is that they may decide to stay in the country where they attend university (most often the United States), thus becoming part of the brain drain of educated Canadians.

Research has shown that whatever the type, transfer arrangements are more effective where provinces have provincial policies on transfer and some type of coordinating agency to encourage and assist institutions in this respect (Jones, Skolink, and Soren, 1998). The Ontario experience suggests that while the mere provision of information, in the form of an online college-university transfer guide, may be useful, it is not as effective in promoting transfer as having a provincial agency with more clout as exists in Alberta and British Columbia. The newest development in this regard is the Post-secondary Learning Act in Alberta which places all postsecondary institutions under a common legislative authority and establishes a Board of Accreditation and Coordination "to facilitate the development and expansion of degree completion opportunities" (Government of Alberta, 2003). Given the extent of inter-provincial educational and labour mobility in Canada, and the desirability of increasing opportunities for the former, consideration should be given to some type of national agency that would, as the Alberta legislation just cited is intended to do within that province, help to make postsecondary education a seamless enterprise across Canada. One such suggestion is for a national academic credit registry through which postsecondary institutions could enter into reciprocal arrangements for credit transfer.

The concept of transfer implies a sequential pattern in which the student first spends a block of time, e.g. two years, in one type of institution, followed by another block of time, e.g. the next two years, in the other type of institution. Recently, there has been substantial growth in what are termed joint or integrated programs. These involve arrangements in which during the same period the student may take courses in each type of institution, and at the end of that period obtain a degree from the university and/or a diploma or certificate from the community college.^{vi} The new University of Guelph - Humber Institute of Technology and Advanced Learning is an example of an arrangement in which students take courses from both institutions during the same time

period and end up with a bachelor's degree from Guelph and a diploma from Humber, in the same time as it would normally take to earn just the bachelor's degree. The premise underlying such initiatives is that for many students both a university and a community college have something distinct to offer, and the contribution of each is of greater value to the student when combined with the other.

Here are two observations about arrangements whereby a student earns credit from both types of institutions and academic credentials from one or both. First, this makes sense only if the two institutions offer something quite different from each other, springing from their different mandates, traditions, and character. If community colleges and universities become substantially alike then there won't be any point in having collaborative programs between them (except of the kind that a university may have with another university). Second, integrated programs between a college and a university may be the beginning of something much broader in which a student designs his or her own program by drawing upon the resources of more than two institutions. At present, the regulations of most postsecondary institutions work against this, but some institutions, like Athabasca University in Alberta, do actually facilitate students treating postsecondary education as if it were a seamless web.

Concluding Thoughts: Comparative Advantages of the Colleges

OF WHAT I HAVE REFERRED to as one of the two major functions of the community college, offering lower level courses in the exact same programs which universities offer, there are no serious competitors to the colleges - except of course, the universities. It may be that other providers will offer comparable courses through distance learning, but these would likely be only in particular vocational areas, not in arts and science. Thus, the opportunity and the social need for colleges to offer transfer courses will depend mainly upon how willing the universities are to cede this territory to the colleges.

In most of North America, one of the major factors responsible for the establishment of community colleges was the desire of universities to free themselves somewhat from the pressure of undergraduate numbers in order to concentrate on things which they felt they alone of all societal institutions could do: upper division undergraduate courses, graduate studies, and basic research. Ontario was probably the only large state or province in North America in which the universities did not take this position regarding the establishment of community colleges. Given the pressure of numbers of undergraduate students which universities face and the demands of the knowledge society, a strong case can be made for the expansion and enhancement of the transfer function of the colleges on both efficiency and accessibility grounds. On the other hand, a large commitment to undergraduate arts students on the part of the universities could serve as a counterweight to the forces driving them toward greater vocationalism. That caveat aside, insofar as universities benefit from being relieved by the colleges of some of the pressure of serving potentially large numbers of first and second year students, they should find it in their interest to ensure that smooth arrangements for credit transfer are in place. This could include working together with

peer institutions and colleges to adopt common course numbering systems as exist in Florida and/or participating in a national academic credit registry.

Community colleges have attained considerable expertise, through specialization and extensive interaction with industry, in offering career education programs of substantial sophistication and duration. In some of the most popular fields in which community colleges offer career programs of two or three years duration, they are subject to competition from proprietary institutions, but only the colleges offer such a wide range of programs. In general, the main differences between the community colleges and proprietary institutions are that the college programs take longer to complete, charge substantially lower tuition fees, and provide a broader base of general education and extracurricular activity. There is definitely a role in career education for proprietary institutions, especially for the student who is willing to incur higher out-of-pocket costs and forego a broader educational experience in order to get into the workforce in the shortest possible time. However, for offering a wide range of high quality career programs at relatively low tuition while at the same time providing an opportunity for broad intellectual and social development, the colleges are unrivaled. Moreover, the fact that in areas where their programs are quite differentiated from those of universities some colleges can offer a full baccalaureate program, should make them even more desirable - though the verdict on student response to the baccalaureate opportunity at colleges is not in yet.

The largest questions pertaining to the role of community colleges in relation to other providers of adult and postsecondary education are with respect to other types of activity than the two functions just discussed. Since their founding, the colleges have tried to be both postsecondary institutions and adult education and training centres. Among the reasons why colleges have sought to be adult education centres are that this is often a point of entry and a confidence building initiation into learning for students who subsequently go into postsecondary programs, and that these activities may generate revenue and community support for the college. Still, some have argued that it is not possible for an institution to go in those two directions, and that their success as adult education and training centres can leave them marginalized as postsecondary institutions (Clowes and Levin, 1989).

To some extent there is a common base of knowledge for both roles, and it may be convenient for clients if all their postsecondary and adult education and training needs can be met at one place. However, there seems to be a widening gap between the knowledge and skills needed for these different roles, and most clients have only one postsecondary and/or adult education and training need at a time. Continual advances in knowledge in the areas of college career programs have increased the necessary level of specialization and complexity required for longer duration career programs to the point where the complementarity with lower skill, short duration activities is weak.

In an era where public funding is becoming more constrained and privatization is on the increase, it is more important than ever for colleges to concentrate on areas where they have a comparative advantage over other public and private institutions and agencies. Clearly they have such an advantage in traditional transfer programs and in

offering a wide range of longer duration career education programs at low tuition and with a broad base of general education. For much of their part-time programming, including short duration vocational education and general interest adult education, there are many other providers, especially in the private sector and through the internet. It is not clear where the comparative advantage of the colleges over these providers would lie. While private vendors are probably not rushing to compete with the colleges in adult basic education - except for second language training - many community and non-profit agencies could provide these services and would have some advantages over the colleges, like lower overheads, smaller size, and friendlier surroundings. Of course, in smaller communities, there may not be an alternative to the colleges for these activities, except where governments establish local adult vocational centres as Alberta has done. Where there are alternatives, rethinking the colleges' role in adult upgrading and short term skill training seems warranted, and that should involve revisiting questions about identity and change in the community college that were discussed earlier in this paper.

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ⁱ An earlier version of this paper was prepared for the Learning Policy Directorate, Human Resources Development Canada.

ⁱⁱ I use the term postsecondary education to refer to programs and courses for which secondary school completion or the equivalent is a normal prerequisite for entry, and adult education to refer to organized educational processes in which adults participate.

ⁱⁱⁱ The 1998 AETS indicated also that classroom instruction, not multimedia or the Internet, was the main method of instruction, and in fact that the Internet was "still used sparsely by learners" (Statistics Canada and Human Resources Development Canada, 2001, p. 25). Quite likely, by 2004 more of the courses taken by adults are delivered by the Internet, but what is not known is whether any increase in the number of Internet courses is accounted for by the same providers who had been providing most courses previously, or whether this represents substantial activity by new providers such as media companies, software producers, and out-of-country institutions.

^{iv} Professor Laidler made this comment at a higher education policy seminar at McMaster University on June 13, 2003 at which the author was present.

^v A recent exception is the act for the University of Ontario Institute of Technology which is quite different from most other university acts, for example referring in its Act to addressing "the market-driven needs of employers".

^{vi} Sometimes these are called collaborative programs, but that term can also be applied to conventional transfer arrangements if the two parties collaborate on how the two parts fit together. Ideally all programs involving activity in both types of institution should be collaborative in that sense.