

College education essential to prosperity

Canada's prosperity is at risk and the country needs to put greater emphasis on the education and training of its workforce, say leading experts.

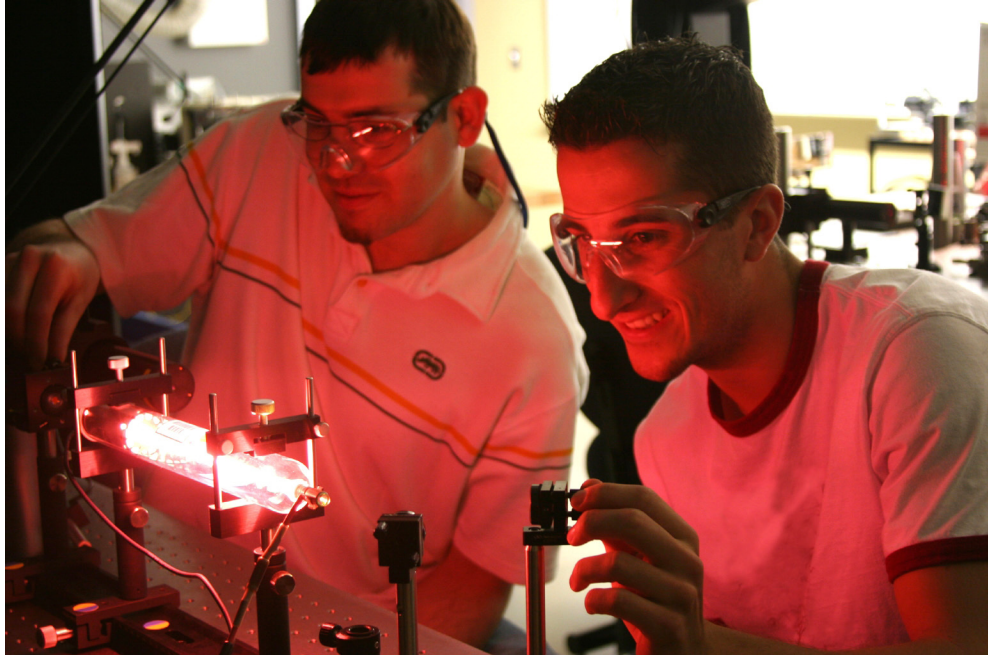
"Sometimes I feel like Chicken Little when I go and give these reports," said Dr. Anne Golden, president of the Conference Board of Canada, in a recent presentation to college officials in Toronto. "It's because we can't see our productivity slipping."

Golden and others note that shifting demographics and the challenges from globalization present real threats to Canada's economy and social cohesion. In Ontario, for example, workers' real earnings (adjusted for inflation) have been falling, and the province's competitiveness is also slipping.

Across the country, birth rates are falling and it is predicted Canada won't have enough new people to replace retiring workers, even with high immigration levels.

Golden said Canada faces a deficit of 1.2-million skilled workers in 18 years' time. She said people don't see the pending crisis because of the resource boom in Alberta, but that boom won't last.

The problems facing Western societies are



Canada needs to focus more attention on college education and training. Photo: Algonquin College.

more apparent in the U.K., where the demographic shifts are more pronounced. The U.K. is initiating a national skills strategy that empha-

"We can't see our productivity slipping," says Dr. Anne Golden of the Conference Board of Canada.

sizes more postsecondary education and training, said Chris Humphries, the director general of the City and Guilds of London Institute.

Speaking at the recent Colleges Ontario conference, Humphries said Canada needs to follow a similar strategy. He said Canada must produce greater numbers of college graduates if the country hopes to have the educated and skilled workforce needed to bolster Canada's prosperity.

"Community colleges are the most important economic resource any country has available to it," he said. "It will be our education system that makes us or breaks us."

'Virtual campus' offers lectures online



One would expect a college to embrace technology, but Loyalist College has made history as the first Canadian college to establish a "virtual campus" in the cyberworld known as Second Life.

Second Life is a virtual world built and owned by Internet users. Just a couple of years old, the

website is "inhabited" by more than five million people around the world and is growing each day.

Loyalist's online campus is located on "Edu Island," alongside 19 other postsecondary institutions, including New York University and George Washington University in the United States, and Mohawk College in Hamilton. The virtual campus allows students to engage in a wide range of activities, including attending class lectures online.

"The technology is overwhelming and incredibly valuable in giving students hands-on experience," said Loyalist student Micheal Leverton, who studies New Media Production and Animation at the college.

Leverton is helping to build a virtual 3-D prison for Correctional Worker students that will allow the students to role play according to various jailhouse scenarios. He says Second Life provides a great opportunity for students to enhance their learning opportunities.

"It's an incredibly engaging environment," says Ken Hudson, the e-learning facilitator at Loyalist. "Once you're involved in it, you're totally engaged. You're having fun and it's very easy."

Hudson brought Second Life to Loyalist last fall, and the college held its first class, in e-journalism, in January. Students were able to sign in from any computer to hear a lecture.

Loyalist president Maureen Piercy is a big fan of the project and proud that Loyalist was the first Canadian college to jump on board.

Award-winning program offers support to women



Sheridan Institute student Susan Arjoon has always had a desire to help others.

Building on a group project from one of her Community Development classes, Arjoon and fellow student Andrew Macpherson launched P.O.W.E.R. (Positive Outreach for Women and Equal Rights for Everyone), a women's outreach program at Sheridan that

provides information to help women deal with issues such as violence and homelessness.

Operating mostly through phone calls, emails, and a regular newsletter that is distributed throughout Peel Region, P.O.W.E.R. raises awareness about social and self-esteem issues, and provides details on local support services available to women.

"This has really been building an agency from the ground up," said Arjoon, who recently won a provincial Colleges Ontario award for her work. "If we can help one person feel good about herself, that is success."

P.O.W.E.R. organizes fundraisers and is continuing to build on its outreach efforts. For example, at the time of the December anniversary of the Montreal massacre, P.O.W.E.R. ran an information campaign that told students of the signs of abuse and how people can prevent abusive behaviour.

Arjoon is committed to seeing P.O.W.E.R. continue to thrive, and will continue to stay active in the organization after her graduation this June.

Former Durham president receives prestigious award

Dr. Gary Polonsky, the former president of Durham College, has won the Minister's Lifetime Achievement Award for his contributions to education.

"Never did I dream that I might some day become a twice college president and founding president of a university," said Polonsky. "But I loved teaching adult students from the first day, just as I later loved serving them in other ways."

Polonsky began his career as a contract teacher in adult education in northwestern Ontario. In addition to his achievements at Durham College, Polonsky spearheaded the creation of the University of Ontario Institute of Technology, in Oshawa, and was its first president until his retirement in 2006. He has also served as president of Red River College in Manitoba.

Over 40 years, Polonsky oversaw many important contributions to education and training, including the creation of the Whiteby Skills Training Centre, and the Integrated Manufacturing Centre in Oshawa.

"Thanks to dedicated leaders like Dr. Polonsky, our colleges have a firm foundation



Training Colleges and Universities Minister Chris Bentley, left, presented Dr. Gary Polonsky with the Minister's Lifetime Achievement Award.

to provide the education and training that students need to thrive," said Training, Colleges and Universities Minister Chris Bentley. "I congratulate him on this honour and thank him for promoting excellence within our college system."

A valued leader, Polonsky has been awarded the Paul Harris Fellow, the highest recognition that the Rotary Club gives for community commitment. He has also received numerous distinctions from industry and business.

Sport Seneca director honoured

Slava Corn, the director of Seneca College's Sport Seneca program, was named one of the Top 20 Most Influential Women in Sport and Physical Activity for 2006 by the Canadian Association for the Advancement of Women and Sports and Physical Activity (CAAWS). Sport Seneca trains athletes in gymnastics and figure skating at a world class level.

"We are immensely proud of Slava," said Seneca president Dr. Rick Miner. "Slava is deserving of this recognition as she has been a key factor in Sport Seneca's international recognition and success."

Thomsen receives technology award

Volker Thomsen, the president of St. Lawrence College, has received the Kingston Technology Council's Champion Award for his role in promoting the growth of knowledge-based enterprises in the Kingston region.

Thomsen was recognized for his innovative ideas and for his dedication to sustainable energy alternatives, made real through the construction of wind and solar technologies on St. Lawrence campuses.

Chilean officials visit North

A group of 20 mining representatives from Chile recently visited Collège Boréal in Sudbury to learn about the college's expertise in training people for mining, and to explore new business opportunities.

"We have developed a top-notch expertise with our numerous ongoing projects around the world, in regions such as West Africa, Europe and Latin America," said Boréal president Denis Hubert, who addressed the delegation in Spanish. "We hope to pursue our close work with our partners in order to implement many other projects."

Researchers meet in Toronto

Some of the world's most innovative researchers, educators and technology leaders will come together June 4 and 5 for the Ontario R and E Summit 2007 in Toronto, presented by the Ontario Research and Innovation Optical Network (ORION).

For more information and registration details, visit <http://www.orion.on.ca/2007orionsummit/home.html>.

College Voice
Published by Colleges Ontario
655 Bay Street, Suite 400
Toronto, ON, M5G 2K4

Please forward comments to:
Rob Savage, Editor
Tel: (416) 596-0744, ext. 239
E-mail: savage@collegesontario.org