

Province to add student spaces

Ontario's colleges praised the provincial government's recent budget commitment to create 60,000 new spaces in colleges and universities over the next four years.

"This will help equip Ontario colleges to train the graduates we need to grow the province's economy," said Tony Tilly, the chair of Colleges Ontario and president of Fleming College in Peterborough.

The province announced it was investing \$64 million this year, increasing to \$309 million by 2013-14, to create more spaces for postsecondary students in the province. Other investments into higher education in the 2011 Ontario budget included:

- \$44 million over three years for literacy and basic skills.
- \$20 million in 2011-12 for instructional equipment.
- \$22.5 million in 2011-12 for the Summer Jobs Strategy, which targets youth in high-needs neighbourhoods.

The budget also included a commitment to create new multi-year accountability agree-



ments, which ensure that postsecondary institutions operate efficiently and transparently.

Tilly said the investments in higher education would help prepare the province for the economic challenges ahead, as the baby boomers retire and new innovations create demands for a better-educated workforce.

"The government is acting now to ensure our future is not one of jobs without people and people without jobs," said Tilly. "This budget will increase the number of Ontarians with postsecondary credentials, in order to have the skilled population Ontario needs to create greater prosperity."

Engineers net top honours at competition

A team of students from Conestoga College's Mechanical Systems Engineering degree program received top honours at a national competition last month at McGill University.

Competing against seven universities, the Conestoga team finished second in the senior design category and also received a special award for innovative design. These honours follow the team's historic win at the Ontario Engineering Competition in February.

"The team was ecstatic to win," said team member Jamie Hobson, of Waterloo.

Hobson said the team felt uneasy after the first day of competition. "But we really brought it together for the presentation. So taking home a podium finish was amazing. And win-

ning the innovation award out of all of the categories? Completely unexpected and brilliant for the team."

The other members of the Conestoga team were Ian Hillier of Petersburg, David Timmerman of Elora and Brian Montgomery-Wilson of Orangeville.

Each team competing had finished first or

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achievement
- John Tibbits,
Conestoga College**

second in provincial competitions. At the national event, the teams were given 10 hours to design and build a prototype for a bridge that would sense when a boat was near, open to let the boat through, then close once the boat was clear.

The structure also had to be strong enough to withstand the weight of truck traffic. Each

team was required to present its plan to the judges, with a demonstration of the working model.

Conestoga president John Tibbits said he was tremendously proud of the college's team, which was competing at the national event for the first time.

"This is a phenomenal achievement," he said. "It demonstrates that our students can compete with the country's best."

The winners were announced at a gala event in Montreal that was attended by more than 100 representatives of Canada's engineering elite, including industry representatives and executives.

"Our Mechanical Systems Engineering program helped prepare us for this competition because of its project-based learning, experience in making presentations, and working in groups," said Hobson. "We felt we had a huge advantage over the more theoretical university-based teams."

Marketing plan is golden

A marketing plan for McDonald's Canada proved to be as golden as the restaurant's arches for a team of advertising students from St. Clair College in Windsor.

The team won gold at this year's Cossette/AEAC (Advertising Educators Association of Canada) Advertising and Marketing Communications Competition in Toronto.

"It was a change to something hands-on and was our first real-world experience with a real client," said team leader Helena Wiebe.

The other members of the team were third-year students Ryan Hewgill, Jeff Popovich, Samantha Velecky and Dena Winter, along with Graphic Design graduate Melissa Bashura.

Seven Ontario colleges took part in the February competition. The teams were asked to respond to a marketing brief prepared by executives at Cossette, an international communications firm.

Each team developed its own advertising and marketing communication plan

for the client, which in St. Clair's case was McDonald's. The students presented to creative directors and account managers at Cossette.

Three members of the St. Clair team have been offered summer internship spaces at Cossette.



The St. Clair advertising team was, clockwise from top left: Helena Wiebe, Jeff Popovich, Dena Winter, Samantha Velecky, Ryan Hewgill and Melissa Bashura.

Northern plan praised

The provincial government's recently released Northern Ontario Growth Plan was praised for its focus on education and skills training.

"I am pleased to see that education features so prominently in the (plan)," said Fred Gibbons, the president of Northern College in Timmins. "Clearly, access to education and training is foundational for the stability and growth of our communities."

Graduate joins Sun News

Michelle Jobin, a graduate of the journalism program at Seneca College in Toronto, is the national weather specialist on the new Sun News Network. She will also be contributing lifestyle and entertainment segments and providing commentary.

Funding applied research

The federal government announced new funding last month for applied research at Canadian colleges.

The projects receiving support included information and communications technologies and photonics work at Algonquin College in Ottawa; health-care research at Centennial College in Toronto; renewable energy research at Durham College in Oshawa; and food technologies research at Niagara College.

Leadership recognized

First Nations student Samantha Elijah, a business graduate from Lambton College in Sarnia, is one of 12 women across Canada to receive a full scholarship to the new Indigenous Women in Community Leadership program at the Coady International Institute in Nova Scotia.

"I want to work with women and families to create sustainable communities and economic change," she said. "I want people to step away from the preconceptions, the stereotypes, and see the potential that is there in every person."

Money won for AIDS charity

Two post-graduate students from Humber College in Toronto recently won \$10,000 (US) for an AIDS charity in Africa.

The students, Malinda DenBok and Sam Banks, created a video for a Ford Motor Co. contest that spoke about their desire to help Kenyan children and women attend school. The video was posted on Facebook and was judged according to its quality and the number of "likes" it received from visitors.

College Voice
Published by Colleges Ontario
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New program fills the "gap"

Algonquin College in Ottawa is launching a new "gap year" program to help high school graduates learn more about their options.

The one-year option, called Global Studies (GAP Year), is aimed at graduates who have taken a year off before confirming what they are going to do next. The program allows students to sample college courses, university courses, community work and even a trip to Africa.

"This program is perfect for students who aren't sure what they want to do next," said Algonquin College president Robert Gillett. "The goal is to provide a variety of experiences and learning opportunities so they can make informed decisions about their next steps."

The program will begin in September. Enrollment for the program, which has the tag line "I've found me," will be limited to 30 students.

The program features 15 courses, including

two that are good for University of Ottawa credits. It also includes 24 hours of community work, outdoor programs and a three-week trip to Kenya, where students will work on water catchment systems and help build schools.

Since the elimination of Grade 13 in Ontario, many high school graduates often feel they are not ready to proceed directly to college or university. In Europe, it is common for students to take a year off and the idea is growing in popularity in North America.

Some graduates take the year to do additional high school credits, work or travel. This has become known as the "gap year."

Conestoga College in Kitchener offers a similar program. Tuition for the Algonquin program is \$6,500 for each of the two terms, which covers courses, flights to Kenya and all travel and living expenses while out of town during eight of the 28 weeks.

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- Robert Gillett,
Algonquin College