

Contest offers top band for prom

Ontario high school students who best explain why “college sounds great” will be listening to a live performance of Canadian rock band Down With Webster at their prom.

The band will perform a concert in June for the high school that wins a new online contest – College Sounds Great – that launched last month. The contest encourages students across the province to describe why college education is an excellent postsecondary option, and the top 10 high schools with the largest share of entries will be finalists for the winning concert.

“What could be better than encouraging students to pursue higher education and getting to relive our own high school proms,” said Tyler Armes of Down With Webster.

Students can enter the contest by submitting a photo and a 50 to 250 word paragraph, or by making a video, explaining why “college sounds great.” Entries will be submitted on the website, www.collegesoundsgreat.com.

The 10 schools with the highest percent-



age of their student body entering the contest get chosen as finalists on May 5. Judges will review the entries and the winner will be selected May 12.

The winning high school gets Down With Webster to play at its prom (or a similar event) on June 18. Down With Webster is one of Canada’s hottest bands and is known for such hits as Your Man.

The College Sounds Great contest is part of the Ontario colleges’ efforts to promote the

fact that college and university are both viable postsecondary options, and students should choose the program that best suits their interests and strengths. Colleges offer a wide range of programs in a number of areas, including business, advertising, health care, IT, the culinary arts, the skilled trades, and much more.

“This is a great opportunity to get students thinking about their plans after high school,” said Linda Franklin, the president and CEO of Colleges Ontario, which is running the contest.

Ontario must not lose its talent

Melissa Sparling is a rising star in the horticulture world. A graduate of Fanshawe College in London, Sparling won a gold medal for landscape gardening at a national competition earlier this year.

Sparling aspired to go further, and wanted to build on her diploma by obtaining a baccalaureate degree in her field. But then she hit a roadblock.

The University of Guelph, which offers such a degree, would only recognize a handful of her completed credits. To get the degree, she would need to spend another 3 ½ years

studying, repeating many of the courses she already completed at Fanshawe.

So Sparling moved to Olds College in Alberta this fall. Within one year of classes and eight months of a work-study placement, she

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- Linda Franklin,
Colleges Ontario

will have her degree and work experience.

“That is the type of talent that is leaving Ontario because our postsecondary structure is outdated,” said Linda Franklin, president and CEO of Colleges Ontario. “In the new

economy, we can’t afford to continue losing creative and skilled people to other jurisdictions.”

Ontario’s colleges are looking for higher education to be reformed, to allow greater numbers of people to pursue a combination of both college and university education. The colleges are calling for an improved structure to recognize postsecondary students’ completed credits when students transfer to another institution.

In a submission to the province for the upcoming Ontario budget, the colleges request an investment of \$10 million to develop the new structure.

Ontario’s political parties say they support the need to transform the system.

Crazy Daisy prunes stigmas

Sarah Moir's dream was to open a floral design company that raised awareness about mental health and created jobs and opportunities for psychiatric survivors like herself.

With help from Mohawk College in Hamilton and a local commercialization company, the Mohawk graduate launched Crazy Daisy in 2008.

Three years later, business is booming and Crazy Daisy's success is drawing attention and acclaim. Moir was recently recognized with an Ontario Premier's Award for outstanding college graduates and a Mohawk College Alumni of Distinction Award.

"I started Crazy Daisy because I thought it was needed," she said in her acceptance speech at the Premier's Awards ceremony in Toronto. "Because I saw other companies set up like this around the world and the results for the people they are trying to serve. It changes lives."

Surprised by the recognition, Moir says she's more committed than ever to growing her company, which includes plans to go Canada-wide.

Moir's love of working with flowers gave her the idea to launch a floral design business. But until she received treatment for a borderline personality disorder, she had trouble holding onto a job and staying in school.

She became motivated to create a business



that would support others in similar situations while addressing common misunderstandings about mental illness.

"Sarah shows what happens when you combine passion and vision with a college education and some help along the way," said Mohawk College president Rob MacIsaac. "We're proud of what Sarah has accomplished and we can't wait to see what the future holds for Crazy Daisy."

Niagara brews another first

Niagara College has launched a one-of-a-kind Brewmaster and Brewery Operations Management program, complete with a full batch of 24 students.

"We will effectively be in full production (this month)," says Jon Downing, a veteran in the craft brewing industry, founder of Mississauga-based Downing International Brewing Consulting and brewmaster for the new teaching brewery.

In Canada, there is a growing need for qualified people with knowledge and experience in beer production, brewery management and product sales/marketing. The new program at Niagara will address all aspects of brewery education.

The program will be housed in Canada's first and only teaching brewery. Based on Niagara College's extensive experience and unprecedented success with its teaching winery – Canada's first and only commercial teaching winery – the open-concept, state-of-the-art 1,500 square



foot teaching brewery will allow students to brew their own craft beer on campus.

Students will brew a variety of beer, including lagers, ales and wheat beers. The first brew will include summer ale or pale ale-style beer. Fittingly called First Draft, the beer will eventually be sold at the Niagara-on-the-Lake campus.

The first group of students will graduate from the new two-year Brewmaster and Brewery Operations Management program in 2012.

The program will become a key element in Niagara College's Canadian Food and Wine Institute – a unique educational model that combines food, wine and beer education.

Kevin Sommerville, the program coordinator and a brewing ingredients professor, said there are many people who are eager to work in the industry.

"Recruitment was definitely not an issue," he said. "We had over 180 applicants for the 24 available spots."

College enrolment rises

Enrolment at Ontario's colleges continued its strong upward trend this school year with a 5.9 per cent increase over the previous year. More than 210,000 full-time students enrolled in Ontario college programs this year, up from about 198,000 students last year.

Accessing college experts

A new online booklet produced by Ontario's colleges has made it easier for journalists to access expert advice on everything from art history and acute care nursing to viral marketing. Launched this month, The College Book of Experts (www.collegebookofexperts.org) is searchable by an individual's name, college or area of interest.

Donation supports trades centre

Lake Shore Gold Corp. has donated \$500,000 towards the new Centre of Excellence for Trades and Technology at Northern College in Timmins. The money will help provide technology and equipment at the centre, which opened in September.

Student aid streamlined

The Ontario government announced last month it has streamlined the process for people applying for student aid. The province says there are fewer forms to be completed. And starting this month, recipients of the Ontario Access Grant and Distance Grant will have their aid directly deposited into their bank accounts.

New campus boosts economy

Municipal officials in Pembroke say the new Algonquin College campus being built in the city's downtown will play a significant role in promoting economic development. Officials told the Pembroke Observer the campus will create demands for student housing and provide opportunities for businesses that cater to students.

The 80,000 square foot campus, to be built near the city's waterfront, opens in fall 2012.

Investing in new equipment

Cambrian College and Collège Boréal in Sudbury recently received \$441,600 in provincial funding for new equipment. "The students of today will be using the most up-to-date technology in order to be prepared for the jobs of tomorrow," said area MPP Rick Bartolucci, who announced the funding.

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