

Labour shortage hits U.S.

As governments seek to promote economic recovery, it continues to be clear that Ontario will need a more highly skilled and better-educated workforce in the years ahead, says Linda Franklin, president and CEO of Colleges Ontario.

“We cannot rely on unskilled labour to the extent we have in the past,” Franklin said. “The workforce of the future will require higher levels of problem-solving abilities and technical skills.”

In fact, the shifting demands of the labour market were highlighted in a recent New York Times article about the manufacturing sector in the U.S.

The article said manufacturers accelerated the move toward greater automation during the recession, and laid off their lowest-skilled workers to achieve savings. Now that manufacturers are hiring again, they are looking for people who can operate sophisticated computerized machinery, follow complex blueprints and demonstrate higher math proficiency than was previously required of the typical assembly line worker.

“That’s where you’re seeing the pain point,” Baiju R. Shah, chief executive of



BioEnterprise, told the Times. “The people that are out of work just don’t match the types of jobs that are here, open and growing.”

The article also said a 2009 survey by the National Association of Manufacturers and the accounting and consulting firm Deloitte found that of 779 American industrial companies, 32 per cent of companies reported “moderate to serious” skills shortages.

Ontario will experience similar shortages, as greater numbers of people in this province will not have the appropriate skills and education to fill many jobs.

In a report released earlier this year, Seneca College president emeritus Dr. Rick Miner predicted Ontario faces a major unemployment crisis. In many cases, he said work that can be done by unskilled labour today will require skilled employees in the years ahead, due to new innovations and technological changes.

The report predicted more than 700,000 people in Ontario will be unemployable by 2021 due to inadequate skills and education. This is in addition to the five per cent of the population that is traditionally unemployed; meaning more than one-million people will be unable to find work.

Improving supports for aboriginal students

Ontario’s colleges and universities have made significant progress in developing support programs for aboriginal students, according to a report by the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario (HEQCO).

“We’re clearly moving in the right direction,” said Dr. Harvey P. Weingarten, president and CEO of HEQCO. “There’s still more progress to be made, but the research indicates that improvements are taking place in providing programs for aboriginal students.”

The study, Promising Practices: Increasing and Supporting Participation for Aboriginal Students in Ontario, reviewed more than 40

programs designed to help postsecondary institutions attract and educate aboriginal students.

The report found virtually all colleges and universities in Ontario have some form of support program for aboriginal students. This is

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in contrast to five years ago, when many programs in Ontario were only in the formative stages.

The report says much of the information available is qualitative and there is a need for more quantitative research on the programs

offered.

Nonetheless, the report said the findings that are available are promising. For example, there has been an increase in both the number of courses being offered in native languages and in the number of aboriginal teachers available to teach and serve as role models.

The report does say there is a need for colleges and universities to do more to promote the programs available to aboriginal students. It said there were cases where spaces had been reserved for aboriginal students but were never filled.

“It’s important that we continue to see these types of programs in order to continue to see improvements for aboriginal students in post-secondary education,” said Weingarten.

College encouraged G20 dialogue

Never mind the burning police cars and the broken windows – some people preferred the “kindler, gentler” debate of G20 issues offered by Centennial College in Toronto.

In the run-up to June’s summit and during the Toronto event, the college hosted an online Shadow Summit that debated the global economy in a peaceful way.

The summit was “a kindler, gentler summit where people can have their voices heard without shouting past barricades and riot shields,” said Centennial College president and CEO Ann Buller.

From June 21 to June 30, the college utilized its social media website, Humanracebook.com, and ran a print advertising campaign that promoted a peaceful discussion of the issues. The ads showed police holding foam pool noodles and inflatable toys in place of truncheons and shields.

The website included live blogs, videos and polls on topical issues. The college also hosted a live discussion of the issues on the Thursday before the G20 summit, which was attended by more than 160 students, staff and members of the community.



The Shadow Summit was part of Centennial’s ongoing initiative to teach global citizenship to all its students. The college has implemented a Signature Learning Experience as part of each student’s education, which includes a required course called Global Citizenship, From Social Analysis to Social Action.

“We encourage our students to become not just exceptional graduates, but global citizens ready to make a difference in the workplace and the world,” Buller said.

New app tracks buses

Anyone who’s ever waited for public transit will appreciate Aaron McGowan’s new innovation.

McGowan, a student at Fanshawe College in London, has developed a free application device for the BlackBerry that tells London commuters exactly where their next bus is.

“I was fed up with never knowing where the buses were,” said McGowan, 21, who is studying to be a computer programming analyst. “I just thought I could make my life easier by making an app that told me where they were.”

The application, which is available for free, uses a real-time GPS locator to determine where the next London Transit bus is currently located. Soon, the application will include the time of the next arrival.

“Lots of people really like it,” said McGowan,

adding the media jumped all over the story when the application was launched. He said it was not very difficult to create the application as the data was available through the London Transit System.

Anyone can download the NextStop app from McGowan’s website, www.amcgowan.ca. He launched the application in June at a conference in Stratford that examined the future of digital media.

While the application is currently only available for the BlackBerry, McGowan has been hired as a work-study student by Fanshawe to develop it for the iPhone. He said it has been a fun project.

“People ask me what I do for a hobby and it’s programming. I love it. I do it for fun. I do it for school.”

Colleges Ontario has moved

Colleges Ontario has moved to a new location in Toronto at 20 Bay Street (near Queen’s Quay) – a location that is more accessible for visitors. The new phone number is (647) 258-7670.

James enters Hall of Fame

Angela James, the senior sports co-ordinator at Seneca College in Toronto, is one of the first females to be inducted into the Hockey Hall of Fame. James has been a leader in women’s hockey in Canada and was a member of the women’s gold medal world championship teams in 1990, 1992, 1994 and 1997.

Registrations begin for conference

Registrations are now being accepted for Colleges Ontario’s annual conference, the Higher Education Summit. The conference runs Nov. 21 and 22 in Toronto and featured speakers include CBC-TV’s Peter Mansbridge. To register, visit www.highereducationsummit.ca.

Fleming grad meets the Queen

Jason Boylan, the first person to enrol in 2008 in the province’s Second Career retraining program for unemployed workers, has dined with the Queen.

Boylan, who graduated in June from the culinary management program at Fleming College in Peterborough, was invited by Premier Dalton McGuinty to sit next to the Queen at a formal lunch in Toronto last month. “It was a pretty surreal opportunity,” Boylan told the Peterborough Examiner.

Fundraising goal surpassed

George Brown College in Toronto has surpassed the \$5-million fundraising target for its Centre for Hospitality and Culinary Arts. The funds have gone toward the renovation of two buildings, including The Chef’s House training restaurant.

Talking to Townshend

James Cullingham, a broadcast journalism professor at Seneca College, recently interviewed rock legend Pete Townshend for a documentary movie. The documentary is about the life of John Fahey, a musician known as the father of American primitive guitar. Cullingham, who has been making award-winning documentaries since 1989, is producing and directing the film.

College Voice
Published by Colleges Ontario
20 Bay Street, Suite 1600
Toronto, ON M5J 2N8

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