Prince samples college wines

Niagara College prepared a wine sampling that was literally fit for royalty as Prince Charles participated in the recent opening of the college’s Wine Visitor and Education Centre.

“We’ve been drinking wine already,” the prince joked as he entered the centre, alongside Niagara College president Dan Patterson and other dignitaries.

The visit to the college was part of the prince’s tour of Canada earlier this month. In addition to taking part in the opening of the centre, Prince Charles also toured the college’s teaching vineyards and attended a wine industry reception.

“This is an historic day for the students, faculty and staff of Niagara College,” Patterson said. “This visit offers an extraordinary opportunity to showcase our students, our college, and the important work all Canadian colleges do in preparing skilled, job-ready graduates who drive our key industries.”

Lorraine Snihur was one of the Niagara College students leading the vineyard tour.

“It was supposed to be scripted but he had lots of questions,” Snihur told the St. Catharines Standard. “It wasn’t like you were speaking to royalty, but someone who is genuinely interested.”

The $3.6-million Wine Visitor and Education Centre is a unique state-of-the-art industry centre set in the college’s teaching vineyards. The centre will showcase and promote the Ontario and Canadian wine industry, provide wine tourism information services, and feature academic and wine industry programming. It is part of the college’s $90-million campus re-development plan.

“The centre serves as a model for responsive, industry-linked applied education,” said Patterson. “Our graduates enter the workforce with real-world industry learning and experience.”

New institute tackles social justice issues

Centennial College in Toronto has launched a new institute to bolster the research it does on international issues such as institutionalized racism and discrimination against women.

“We’re very proud of this initiative,” Centennial president Ann Buller said of the college’s new Institute for Global Citizenship and Equity. “It helps students to better appreciate the role they can play in addressing the serious challenges in the world today.”

Currently, all full-time students at Centennial already take a mandatory course in global citizenship, as part of the college’s Signature Learning Experience initiative that began five years ago. The course covers such topics as discrimination in politics, economics, religion and other areas.

The new institute will build on this program through expanded research opportunities. Scholars will be able to apply for grants to do more in-depth analysis into issues such as homophobia and racism.

The institute will also allow Centennial to host scholars through the United Nations’ Scholars at Risk Network, which allows people from strife-ridden nations to complete their studies in Canada when they cannot do so in their own country. Centennial is the second postsecondary institution in Canada to join the network.

As well, the institute will publish an online peer review journal and has created an internal magazine, Global Citizen Digest. Academics such as Dr. Moain Sadeq, a visiting professor at the University of Toronto, spoke at the launch of the institute last month. He talked about the cultural legacy of the ancient Middle East.

“We want to equip our students with the critical thinking skills necessary to work together in today’s multicultural and multinational business environment,” said Buller. “It is expertise that employers both large and small have told us they are looking for in our graduates.”
Province acts on apprenticeship changes

The Ontario government has adopted recommendations from business and college leaders that will help improve apprenticeship training in this province.

“As the baby boomers retire, Ontario will need to produce greater numbers of skilled labourers,” said Ian Howcroft, vice-president of the Ontario division of Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters. “We’re pleased the province is taking steps to make apprenticeship training available to greater numbers of people.”

His comments follow a recent announcement by Premier Dalton McGuinty of new supports for apprentices.

One of the key changes is that apprentices now have the option to complete more of their in-school training up front if work placements are temporarily unavailable. This change allows more people to proceed with apprenticeship training during the recession, when there are fewer opportunities in the workplace.

As well, the premier announced grants of up to $2,000 to apprentices and $1,000 to employers when training is successfully completed.

These recommendations were proposed by the colleges’ apprenticeship task force and by Ontario’s Workforce Shortage Coalition, a coalition representing more than 100,000 employers that has been raising awareness of the impending skills shortage. Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters is part of the coalition, as are Ontario’s 24 public colleges.

In the years ahead, Ontario will face a shortage of skilled employees as the baby boomers retire and there are fewer new workers due to slowing population growth.

Linda Franklin, president and CEO of Colleges Ontario, said it is important for government to act now to produce greater numbers of skilled employees.

“Apprenticeship must be a central part of the strategy to produce a stronger workforce,” Franklin said. “The changes announced by the premier represent an important step forward.”

UN project improves water quality

Fleming College in Peterborough has collaborated with the United Nations to develop a new tool to improve water sanitation.

Subwet 2.0, a software program developed by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and by Fleming College, will be used by experts to design constructed wetlands to treat waste water and improve water quality.

“This is a significant step forward toward the UN’s Millennium Development Goal target to reduce by half the proportion of the 2.6 billion people who do not have access to basic sanitation by 2015,” said Dr. Brent Wootton, the director and senior scientist at the college’s Centre for Alternative Wastewater Treatment.

“Fleming College can be proud of its role in producing this tool,” Wootton said.

Constructed wetlands or treatment wetlands are an environmentally sound method of using plants to treat waste water. Science and engineering principles are used to study problems and provide solutions.

Subwet 2.0 is an upgrade of original Subwet software that now allows for applications in cold and warm climates. The software will be used by water resource managers, engineers, and regulators around the world and in Canada’s far north.

Briefs

Goodyear to speak at Seneca

Science and Technology Minister Gary Goodyear will speak Nov. 27 at Polytechnic Canada’s annual Science and Technology Showcase at Seneca College in Toronto. The theme of the event is Igniting Innovation.

Record set for lecturer nominations

TVOntario recently announced it has received a record-breaking number of nominations from colleges and universities for its 2010 Best Lecturer Competition. In 2009, the competition was won by Prof. Rod Carley from Canadore College. The winner of the 2010 competition will be announced April 17.

Students address homelessness

About 15 students from Algonquin College in Ottawa slept in a downtown park for 24 hours recently to learn about people’s attitudes toward homelessness and to raise funds to help get homeless kids off the streets. More than $2,000 was raised by the students.

Toews visited Humber

Award-winning author Miriam Toews visited Humber College in Toronto earlier this month for a reading and question-and-answer session. Toews is the author of three novels, including A Complicated Kindness, which won the 2004 Governor General’s Award for fiction. She has previously taught writing courses at Humber.

Boréal unveils wireless system

Collège Boréal in Sudbury recently unveiled a state-of-the-art videoconferencing system that will allow greater numbers of people to study from home.

The system, developed with various private and public sector partners, adds to the 28 videoconferencing classrooms Collège Boréal already operates in 13 Ontario cities.

Centennial president honoured

Centennial College president Ann Buller will be honoured later this month by Toronto City Council for her work improving women’s access to non-traditional careers. Buller will receive the Constance E. Hamilton Award, named after the first woman elected to municipal council in Toronto.

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