

Synopsis of Environmental Scan

For Academic Plan

Key findings from the various documents that were assembled during the environmental scanning are reported here, along with the page numbers in the source documents for further information.

*This synopsis is intended as a discussion started, not as final conclusions. A companion document, **Analysis of the Environment**, poses a series of questions and begins answering them by drawing extensively on the environmental scan documents. It also is intended as a discussion starter.*

I. Statistical Portrait

A. Statistical Overview

1, 3 Our enrolment has been soft for several years

Possible implications: We're facing a structural change, not a temporary downturn, and therefore need qualitative changes at the College to meet enrolment targets. However, Douglas is located in a growing region of the province, especially among the 25 and older age group. Also, it's hard to assess the impact a strong labour market has had on our enrolment, and whether the impact will persist after the economy has cooled.

2 FTE growth has been mainly in Health, Arts, and Child, Family & Community Studies

Possible implications: Should decide whether further growth in these areas is possible or desirable. Arts may be the most difficult to evaluate, given that it serves multiple purposes, including the potential to serve older students who enroll for lifestyle and personal development reasons.

7 Large number of female students reflects the general trend towards the feminization of postsecondary education.

Possible implications: More attention to recruiting and retaining males. Given the current availability of jobs for relatively unskilled workers in the construction industry, both the need and the feasibility of enrolling more males is debatable.

- 13 Grade distribution and course success rates differ considerably in limited enrolment areas than in open enrolment areas.

Possible implications: Identify which best practices from each area might be applicable to the other area. Determine whether the differences are even a problem.

- 15 Former student ratings of Douglas College are high, but nothing special compared to other BC colleges.

Possible implications: Don't rest on our laurels. Build on our strengths.

B. Student Profile and Perceptions Survey

- 3 22% of our students are age 25 and older

Possible implications: Given that the youth population is static or shrinking in various parts of the province, a goal could be to increase the number of older students at Douglas (it already is discussed in the College's strategic plan). However, given the variety of life situations and aspirations of adult students, one size probably will not fit all.

- 9 The permanent address of most students is local

Possible implications: Could seek to recruit from farther away, but that would be contrary to the pattern of most community college enrolment. Except for destination programs, concentrate on ensuring we attract an appropriate share of students from within a 45 minute commute to campus. Where we have distinctive programmatic niches, promote them more widely.

- 11 Half our students had a childhood language other than English

Possible implications: This characteristic of the student body is both a resource on which to build and a challenge in ensuring language and cultural competency. Draw upon existing expertise within the College to offer progressive programming.

- 13 Up to a third of existing students are open to some weekend, summer and compressed format course schedules.

Possible implications: Experiment with different schedules. Determine which types of delivery are most appropriate of different types of students.

- 15 Almost all students have home computers with high speed internet. 85% have cell phones.

Possible implications: Students are tech savvy in terms of electronic communication, so we should take advantage of these communication channels. Revisit past discussions, such as whether all students should have notebook computers, in light of changing conditions.

C. Community College Survey of Student Engagement

Forthcoming. An initial glance at the data suggests Douglas does a lot less with incoming students during their first weeks at college in terms of educational planning/advising and placement assessment than American institutions. There seems to be a bit less student contact at Douglas with instructors outside of class and perhaps a general weakness in the extent to which our college deals with students as whole people. We seem to be weak in helping students develop numerical skills. Overall, many of our results seem in line with what's happening at other colleges.

D. CISO Former Student Survey

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39% of respondents who continued their education did so at SFU, compared to 12% going to UBC and 8% to BCIT

Possible implications: Maintain strong curriculum and partnership linkages with SFU. Seek to make other close neighbours, Kwantlen and BCIT, partners rather than competitors.

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34% of respondents said developing skills in math, and 27% said developing computing skills, was not applicable to their situation

Possible implications: Promote importance of Academic Signature competencies in quantitative reasoning and technological literacy.

II. Other Documents

A. Environmental Scan for Douglas College Strategic Plan

Enrolment Outlook

C3, 4 Grade 12 enrolment projections: flat in Douglas region, down 5% provincially

Possible implications: More competition for the same pool of students. Need to be proactive in Maple Ridge and Pitt Meadows in light of the new bridges across the Fraser and Pitt rivers.

- C9 Updated information shows that around three quarters of BC high school graduates enter public postsecondary education within four years of high school graduation

Possible implications: Limited opportunity to further increase transition rates into postsecondary education from high school. Work to maintain market share in Douglas region districts.

- C10 Once students come to Douglas, many leave having only ever taken a handful of courses.

Possible implications: There may be a good opportunity to increase retention rates. Many factors are being the College's control, however, and some strategies may be resource intensive, so be selective about retention efforts.

- C14 Enrolment competition: Lower university admission requirements and greater capacity, government is encouraging private institutions, and there are growing numbers of degree programs in colleges.

Possible implications: Students need a compelling reason to choose Douglas College. This may not mean coming up with new reasons so much as explicitly articulating what we hope prospective students and their parents already know.

- C15 Burnaby is by far the largest city in the Douglas region, but many institutions are located close by. Coquitlam is the second largest city, but really has good access only to SFU and Douglas.

Possible implications: Protect market share in Coquitlam, strategically work on increasing share from certain areas of Burnaby (e.g. south Burnaby, along Skytrain)

Student Characteristics

- C13 Varying levels of academic preparation. Twixters: living in parental home, tend to jump laterally in jobs, difficulty in making transition into adult roles (see also Boomerangers on C31 and NEETs on C32). Lack of engagement in commuter college. Tech savvy, entitlement philosophy, skepticism about benefits of education.

Possible implications: Qualitatively different student body isn't predisposed to traditional college practices and values. Provide opportunities for faculty to discuss the changing characteristics of their students and to share strategies for serving different types of students.

Labour Market

- C21 Retirement: Forthcoming wave of retirees will lead to a talent shortage rather than a general labour shortage, i.e. it will mainly affect certain industries and occupations

Possible implications: Look for curricular niches, building in some instances on curriculum already offered at Douglas. In some instances retooling employees with some previous relevant knowledge and skills in condensed programs may be effective.

- C43 US job growth is predicted to be largest in service and professional occupations

Possible implications: Don't need to expand Douglas' program mix to serve goods producing and primary industries.

- C47 Many of the occupations with the fastest projected rates of growth are in the health and selected IT fields

Possible implications: Build on health strengths, be selective in the types of computing education. These are occupations that have been cyclical in BC, so ensure core offerings are sustainable.

- C48 Expanding role of First Nations and Asia Pacific in BC economy. (See also C54: Douglas region has an above average proportion of visible minorities, mainly Asian, in its population.)

Possible implications: Attend to cultural components of the curriculum. Governments will be receptive to funding programs and services for First Nations.

- C48 While the majority of all job openings will require some form of postsecondary education, only a minority will require a university education

Possible implications: There may be opportunities to expand certificate and diploma level programming, and for laddering programs.

Educational Research and Best Practice

- C34,36 Best practices in undergraduate education and in student affairs: a number of principles are well researched and generally accepted

Possible implications: Make these priorities at Douglas College. Individual employees frequently follow these practices; provide structures and supports that make it easy for all to do so.

- C39 The overall rigour of high school courses a student chooses to take is a better predictor of academic success than test scores or correlations with individual high school courses

Possible implications: Focus less on particular prerequisite courses and more on the type of student the program wants to attract. Look at previous education holistically as a source of information about a student's motivation and goals.

B. Adult Learners Literature Review

- 2 Career goals are important motivators, but older students want more than just utilitarian training

Possible implications: Include both liberal education and applied components in programs; it needn't be an either/or situation. Use career enhancement as a hook to attract the attention of prospective students, and then show how the broader education Douglas College provides will help them not only to enter a new job but will also provide the generic skills to progress in a career path.

- 3 Adults often have intermittent and disjointed learning in a variety of formal and informal settings

Possible implications: Credit banks and recognition of prior learning, educational advising and planning, and the use of cohort models that don't force stopouts to become dropouts are important. Recognize that retaining older adult students is a challenging task.

- 5 Large portions of the population need basic skills, English language training and college preparatory learning

Possible implications: Opportunity for Douglas to build on existing curricular strengths. Is this a competitive advantage for us?

- 8 The oncoming wave of retirees has different needs and characteristics than previous retirees. Some retirees are task oriented, seeking new part-time careers. Others are looking for personal development and community.

Possible implications: Start thinking how and to what extent Douglas wants to serve the various sub-populations of retirees.

- 10,11 Because of the diversity of adult learners, a variety of delivery methods, and online and self paced study options, are used by older students

Possible implications: Broaden the range of delivery options, rather than replacing existing options. Partnerships with other institutions may be needed to gain the critical mass of students to sustain a delivery method in a particular program to a particular clientele.

C. History of BC Postsecondary Education

- 9 BC colleges were established with a clear and distinctive educational philosophy

Possible implications: Determine the extent to which this philosophy should guide Douglas College in the coming years in our changing environment. Find ways in which scholarly activities can reinforce the original college system values, rather than dilute them.

15-19 BC has a complex and changing postsecondary system

Possible implications: Monitor what is happening in neighbouring institutions because changes there can have a profound impact on Douglas College. Douglas may have to be nimble to benefit from the changes.

27 Expansion of degree programs in BC

Possible implications: Danger of saturating the market. Be strategic and selective about degree-level offerings.

D. Strategic Enrolment Management

Forthcoming

E. Campus 2020

Some themes in the report:

25 Need better planning and coordination, including regional coordination (p. 69)

Support:

29 - Good planning with good information

33 - Teaching and learning innovation

36 - Aboriginal learners

42 - Workplace learning

Possible implications: Regardless of how the government responds to the report's specific recommendations, these themes are likely to persist in one form or another.

F. Miscellaneous Documents (added during the planning process)

2 High school teachers and postsecondary instructors have different perceptions about the academic preparation of entering postsecondary students

Possible implications: Need more dialogue and joint problem solving across sectors. This type of dialogue is time consuming, however.

7 Education is associated with higher levels of civic and social engagement

Possible implications: Ensure aspects of the Academic Signature that promote community involvement and personal development remain vibrant

- 19 85% of Douglas’ recent high school graduates were not university eligible when they entered Douglas College

Possible implications: Ensure pathways are available for all types of students: the academically strong, those seeking academic upgrading, and the less academically oriented. Publicize that we can take students “where they are” and not only make them university eligible, but also successful at university.

- 21 Attempts to provide the “right” number of program graduates to meet labour market needs may be based on a number of misconceptions

Possible implications: Focus less on curricular details and more on the fostering well rounded, adaptable lifelong learners. Labour market planning is more important in licensed occupations.

- 23 Admissions tests predict about 25 percent of subsequent grades. Factors such as student motivation, effort and study habits – what a student does after entering college – are generally more important than what they bring to college.

Possible implications: Focus more effort on doing the best we can with the students we have than on trying to recruit the “right” students

- 26 One quarter of Douglas’ regular faculty is age 56 or over

Possible implications: Strengthen recruitment, retention and succession planning. Retain disciplinary expertise and history by encouraging gradual departures from the college. Mentor and support growing numbers of new hires.