

# December 2006 FPSE Campus 2020 Submission

## Introduction

The Federation of Post Secondary Educators welcomes the opportunity to participate in the Campus 2020 review of British Columbia's post-secondary education. We believe that post-secondary education will play an increasingly important role in our province's economic and social development. We are also hopeful that the Campus 2020 review will lead to policy and funding changes that strengthen the capacity of our post secondary education system to both improve access and affordability and encourage life-long learning for every citizen.

Our Federation, which represents over 10,000 faculty and staff who work in BC's post-secondary education system, shares the concern of many key stakeholders that the Campus 2020 review needs to recommend changes that address the system's most immediate problems. Problems in the public post-secondary system cannot wait for 13 years to be resolved. We need to see steps taken as early as the February 2007 provincial budget to ensure that we are dismantling barriers to access and limits on affordability. As well, we look to this process as a way to develop strong consensus amongst those stakeholders for longer-term changes that will ensure that our public post-secondary institutions remain vital contributors to BC's economic success and social equality.

## Context for Reviewing BC's Post-Secondary Education System

Forty-four years ago, British Columbia's public post-secondary system underwent fundamental change designed to improve access and affordability, increase participation and completion rates in post-secondary education, and detail the funding commitments from government necessary to achieve success on all these fronts. The catalyst for change was the MacDonald Report, *Higher Education in British Columbia and a Plan for the Future*. In addition to its recommended reforms for existing universities, the report envisioned a significant expansion of community colleges and institutes designed to not only increase post-secondary educational opportunities for more students, but also design that expansion in ways that addressed BC's diverse geography and ensured that non-metropolitan areas of the province were equal participants in new post-secondary education opportunities.

Underpinning the MacDonald Report's recommendations was the recognition that post-secondary education would play an increasingly critical role in the province's economic and social development. It's a view that, many decades later, is well supported by research showing just how important post-secondary education is to a modern, sustainable economy. Numerous studies, done provincially, nationally, and internationally (e.g. Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, Statistics Canada,

Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development), document how the contribution of post-secondary education is embedded in everything from increased labour mobility and higher productivity to closing the gender wage gap and increasing household incomes and employment security.

The most comprehensive and current summary of this research has been carefully assembled by the Canadian Council on Learning (CCL-CCA), which released its 2006 report, *Canadian Post-Secondary Education: A Positive Record—An Uncertain Future*, in early December. The report provides some valuable insights that Campus 2020 needs to consider as it begins to draft its recommendations to government. However, in terms of understanding the proper context in which government must access post-secondary education's benefits, we have included the following excerpt from the CCL-CCA report which captures the more significant benefits to both the public and to individuals.

### ***Results and Benefits of PSE***

*Participation and attainment trends and expenditure levels provide valuable evidence regarding PSE, but it is not possible to make conclusive statements about PSE quality or benefits simply by assessing its cost. Consequently, there has been increased attention in recent years to questions of results and value achieved through public and private expenditures. Later chapters explore the outcomes in greater detail.*

*Evidence worldwide clearly demonstrates that investment in post-secondary education pays unequivocal dividends—in terms of standard of living and quality of life through PSE's impact on economic growth and social cohesion, as well as particular benefits for individuals who have had the opportunity to pursue post-secondary education.*

*One useful summary of public and individual benefits associated with PSE—both economic and social—is provided in a 1998 document published by the U.S. Institute for Higher Education Policy.*

*Research in Canada provides evidence that postsecondary education plays an important role in reducing regional economic and social disparities. The studies conclude, “Roughly 50% of the differences in the growth of per capita income, and more than 80% of the relative income levels, can be explained in terms of convergence in the stocks of human capital.”<sup>2</sup>*

*A post-secondary education yields economic dividends to individuals who acquire post-secondary education credentials. The research community has calculated a “rate of return” for individuals, which helps answer the question of whether spending money to attend PSE— and giving up potential earned income had the individual worked instead of having pursued higher education—is a “good investment.”*

**Table 1.6.1 post-secondary education benefits for individuals and society**

		<b><i>Public Benefits</i></b>	<b><i>Individual Benefits</i></b>
		<i>Increased tax revenues</i>	<i>Higher wages and benefits</i>
		<i>Greater productivity</i>	<i>Employment</i>
<b><i>Economic</i></b>	<i>Increased Consumption</i>		<i>Higher savings levels</i>
	<i>Increased workforce flexibility</i>		<i>Improved working conditions</i>
	<i>Decreased dependence on government financial support</i>		<i>Personal and professional</i>

		<i>mobility</i>
<b>Social</b>	<i>Reduced crime rates</i>	<i>Improved health/life expectancy</i>
	<i>Increased charitable giving and volunteering</i>	<i>Improved quality of life for children</i>
	<i>Increased civic engagement</i>	<i>Increased personal status</i>
	<i>Stronger social cohesion/appreciation of diversity</i>	<i>Increased leisure activities/hobbies</i>
	<i>Improved ability to adapt to new and emerging technologies</i>	<i>Better consumer decision-making</i>
	<i>Less reliance on health-care system</i>	<i>Better ability to cope with stress</i>

Source: The Institute for Higher Education Policy. *Reaping the Benefits. Defining the Public and Private Value of Going to College.* (Washington DC). 1998. 9

2 Coulombe, S. & Tremblay, J.F. (2001). *Human Capital and Regional Convergence in Canada.* *Journal of Economic Studies*, Vol. 28, No. 3, pp. 154-180.

3 Junor S. & Usher A. (2004). *Price of Knowledge. Access and Student Finance in Canada.* Millennium Research Series. Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation. Canada. The rate of return is usually measured by determining the "internal rate of return" (IRR) associated with an individual's investment in education. The IRR analyzes the lifetime stream of benefits and costs of education to come up with an annual "return" on education similar to that which permits comparison of investments in human capital with other types of investment. There are generally two types of rate of return discussed: the "private rate of return," which accrues to the individual and the "total rate of return" which increases the value of the GDP (assuming that an increase in workers' income reflects an increase in the value of the marginal product of labour) relative to the resource cost of education. p. 323.

**Table 1.6.1 college and university graduate private rates of return in the 1990's**

	<b>Rate of Return</b>
College	15-25%
Male	15-28%
Female	18-26%
University	12-20%
Male	12-17%
Female	16-20%

Source: Boothby D. & Rowe G. (2002). *Rate of Return to Education.* Human Resources Development Canada. Ottawa, and Vaillancourt F. & Bourdeau-givng, and lower crime rates. CCL's Composite Learning Primeau S. (2001). *The Returns to Education in Canada: 1990 and 1995.* Centre de recherche et développement économique (CRDE), Université de Montréal.

**Table Source:** Junor S. & Usher A. *Price of Knowledge. Access and Student Finance in Canada.* Millennium Research Series. Millennium Scholarship Foundation. Canada. 2004.

University graduates represent 16.1% of the population, provide 33% of income tax, and consume 9.1% of government transfers such as employment insurance or social assistance. Those with less than a high-school education represent 19.2% of the population, provide 8.8% of income tax, and consume 35.1% of government transfers.

**Canadian Post-Secondary Education: A Positive Record—An Uncertain Future, p. 9-10.**

One of the more pressing questions for the Campus 2020 review is to assess the extend to which provincial policy and funding choices are improving participation and completion rates and properly funding the operation and expansion of the public system. Our concern as post-secondary educators is that many of the significant policy and funding changes made over the last five years have either stalled or reversed progress on these issues.

There is no question that whatever choices are made by government to the public post-secondary system, those choices cannot be sustained if they do not enjoy a broad base of support. The most reliable measure of that support can be found in public opinion research. In September 2006, our Federation contracted with Ipsos Reid to survey public support in some of the key areas of post-secondary education policy. These results are summarized below. They show that on the important issues of affordability and access, the government's current policy is decidedly unpopular.

- 62% agree that tuition fees at BC's colleges, universities and training institutes are too high. This same question has been asked in previous polls. In 2003, 43.8% said tuitions were too high. In 2005, the number climbed to 55%.
- 70% agree that high tuition fees are preventing young people from getting the degrees and diplomas they need to get ahead.
- 74% agree that many young people can't get the courses or programs they need to complete their post-secondary education.
- 74% think that students in colleges, universities and other post-secondary institutions are taking on an unfair burden of debt to pay for their education.
- 81% agree that student debt is making it harder for students to complete post-secondary education and training.

British Columbians think that the provincial government needs to do more to ensure that post-secondary education is more affordable and accessible for all.

- 90% agree that one of the best ways to solve BC's current skills shortage is for the provincial government to invest more in public colleges, universities and training institutes.
- 80% support the idea of reducing tuition fees.
- 84% think that the provincial government should increase public funding to post-secondary institutions to support more course options and higher enrolments.
- 87% support an increase in student grants.

The public's response to the question of BC's looming skills shortage is particularly noteworthy. Citizens share the same concern as many policy analysts and even the Minister of Finance's Forecast Council: our provincial economy is at risk if we don't take steps now to encourage higher levels of post-secondary participation and completion. Unfortunately, most of the policy and funding choices made over the last five years run

counter to the needs of our province and the urgency of addressing the looming skills shortage.

How has this fiscal and policy disconnect taken shape? Two specific choices made in 2002 have been the largest contributors to undermining our ability to address the skills shortage. (For a more detailed discussion of this point we recommend that Campus 2020 review submissions made by the FPSE and its member faculty associations to the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Public Services public hearings that we held throughout the province in September and October 2006. Copies of those submissions are available at our website: [www.fpse.ca](http://www.fpse.ca).) The first was the deregulation of tuition fees and the second was the systematic under-funding of real per-student operating grants to public post-secondary institutions. The cumulative effect of both made post-secondary education more expensive, less accessible, and less accommodating to the needs of existing and potential students. At a time when demographic data tells us we need to be opening doors for more students to enter and complete post-secondary education, those policy and funding choices are moving BC in the opposite direction.

The only good news in all this is that the broader public now stands squarely on the side of making significant new investments in public post-secondary institutions as a first step in addressing the skills shortage. When 90% of British Columbians agree that “one of the best ways to solve BC’s current skills shortage is for the provincial government to invest more in public colleges, universities, and training institutes,” government would be remiss in ignoring that strong opinion. Moreover, the government’s current and forecast budget surpluses mean that it has the fiscal capacity to make those investments.

The extent of chronic under-funding has been well documented by our organization of the last five years. We will not repeat points that we have made many times to the Minister of Finance on this issue other than to note that while there have been nominal increases in the budget for the Ministry of Advanced Education, those increases fall far short of meeting core needs in the post-secondary education system. In very simple terms, the Ministry’s budget has not even kept pace with inflation over the last five years (CPI up by 12.9% compared to the Ministry’s budget up by 9.6% over the same period).

On a per-student basis, the funding crunch looks even more dismal. In constant dollars, per-student funding to the post-secondary education system has fallen every year since 2001-2002. In fact, it will not be until 2007-2008 that real per-student funding will actually exceed 2001 levels. Later in this submission (Creating Opportunity), we will discuss the merits of a recent report on funding by Perrin, Thorau, and Associates Ltd. which deals with the specific issues of funding, infrastructure, and on-going problems in the measurement of both “targeted” and “mandated” FTE’s and the associated issue of utilization rates across the public system.

However, in terms of context, our Federation believes that the funding and affordability crunch that has taken root over the last five years has undermined some of the basic principles that the MacDonald Report used to envision the expansion of post-secondary education in this province forty-four years ago. Deregulated tuitions have biased access

in favour of family income/wealth. Chronic under-funding has diminished the capacity of many post-secondary institutions, especially community colleges and university colleges, to offer a broad range of programs that would support higher participation and completion rates. Our expectations are that the recommendations of the Campus 2020 review will begin to correct these biases and set in place policies and funding commitments that are more consistent with the public's opinion of what should be provincial priorities should be for post-secondary education.

## Understanding the Future

We agree with the position advanced by various stakeholders (e.g., BC College Presidents) that BC's post-secondary education system will play a critical role in providing the skills and innovation that our province needs to grow and prosper. Our caution at this point is that the current policy and funding priorities of the provincial government are far too exclusionary when it comes to building those skills and fostering that innovation.

As we noted earlier, the urgent need to develop post-secondary skills (degrees, certificates, diplomas, completed apprenticeships) is a recurring theme in submissions to government. Business, labour, and the other stakeholders have repeatedly warned that reversing the skills shortage will require new investments by government and far more supportive policies for current and potential students. We know, for example, that even without regard to the current and forecast shortage of skills in both white and blue collar occupational categories, BC has a serious skills gap that must be closed. According to the BC Business Council, 59% of the workforce has some form of post-secondary education (degree, diploma, completed apprenticeship), yet 73% of all new jobs will require some form of post-secondary education.

We also know that BC's track record over the last five years in addressing that skills gap has been seriously deficient. According to the Association of Chartered Accountants of BC's latest *BC Check-Up*, our educational attainment is lower than the Canadian average, Alberta and Ontario, all important comparators for the provincial government. As well, BC's rate of increase in educational attainment is the lowest of any jurisdiction in Canada.

Although some elements within the business community believe that BC can overcome the skills problem with an easing of federal immigration rules (allowing for increased use of guest workers), we believe this approach is both flawed and unprincipled. Canada has always maintained immigration policies linked to full citizenship rights. A 'guest worker' policy runs contrary to that principle. More realistically, the real answer to current and forecast skill shortages is significantly increasing the opportunities for post-secondary education within the ranks of the current population who, for various reasons, have either never considered that option or have been unable to complete their post-secondary education.

When you consider that close to 40% of British Columbians do not have any form of post-secondary education, the real challenge for policy makers is to craft new points of entry into post-secondary education for those citizens. Throughout the 1990's, modest steps were taken to open those opportunities. However, even those modest undertakings were eliminated with the changes introduced in 2001-2002.

Consider, for example, the barriers that were put in place for adult learners in 2001-2002. Many of these students were trying to either complete their high school graduation or were trying to upgrade their high school pre-requisites in order to enter new or existing post-secondary programs. Many of these students required intensive support. They were part of the Adult Basic Education (ABE) system within our post-secondary institutions. Through the later part of the 1990's, ABE programs were tuition-free. That changed in 2001-2002, and with it, the opportunity for ABE students to access post-secondary education was vastly reduced.

It's also important to recognize that ABE programs are a significant stepping stone for many post-secondary students. In some of our institutions as many as 80% of ABE students go on to complete post-secondary education (i.e. receive a degree, diploma, certificate or completed apprenticeship). For these students the opportunity that ABE provided made all the difference in terms of reaching their educational goal. When funding and policies limit access to ABE, they ultimately undermine those opportunities.

The problem was further compounded by policy changes that prevented anyone receiving provincial income assistance from also enrolling in post-secondary education. In early 2006, our organization submitted a detailed paper to the Ministers of Advanced Education and Human Resources outlining how these changes are punitive and short-sighted. Some of the recommendations in our report have been reflected in new program initiatives, but there are still major funding and policy barriers that have not been addressed and need to be reversed if BC hopes to increase participation and completion rates in post-secondary education. We encourage Campus 2020 to review our report (*Opening Doors, Building Confidence: Proposals to Strengthen Adult Basic Education in British Columbia*) and consider how those recommendations could be incorporated into the larger policy review that Campus 2020 has been tasked to provide.

The problems confronting ABE students today are very similar to those that English as a Second Language (ESL) students face. Inadequate funding within the post-secondary education system for ESL programs, as well as policy and funding confusion between the federal and provincial governments on how best to support ESL programs for new Canadians are just some of the problems that have led to fewer ESL programs delivered within the public post-secondary education system.

When you consider the need that exists for ESL programs, it seems dangerously short-sighted for the provincial government to allow ESL programs to fall so far behind. Within the next ten years, for example, we know that the cultural diversity of BC's largest metropolitan centre—the Lower Mainland—will increase enormously. Yet many of the post-secondary institutions in this region are being forced to cut back rather than

expand their ESL programs. It is not enough for the provincial government to talk about the importance of ESL and ABE; it must take the necessary steps to properly fund those programs at a level that begins to meet the current and forecast need.

One final point on understanding our future has to do with the roles of trades training and apprenticeships. BC's public post-secondary institutions had, until 2002-2003, played an integral role in the delivery of both Entry Level Trades Training (ELTT) and Apprenticeship Programs. The reforms made in 2003 with the launch of the Industry Training Authority (ITA) have put that role into serious doubt. The ITA has "under delivered" in terms of increasing the number of completed apprenticeships. But of greater concern, the ITA has developed an abrupt and contentious relationship with public post-secondary institutions. The ITA seems more interested in dictating directives to post-secondary institutions rather than working collaboratively with these institutions. The best example of that contentious approach has been the on-going disagreement over funding of ELTT. The ITA's directive will affect all public post-secondary institutions, but it will severely disadvantage smaller, rural institutions and will eventually undermine the capacity of those institutions to put on either ELTT programs or apprenticeship programs. The confounding part of this problem is that ITA's directive is supposed to lead to more apprenticeship programs. What the ITA fails to understand, however, is that for smaller institutions especially, ELTT funding helps supply the critical mass necessary at those institutions to also provide apprenticeship programs. When the ELTT funding falls short, apprenticeship programs also suffer.

If the ITA had a more representative and inclusive governance structure (e.g., included representation from post-secondary institutions as well as representatives from labour), these policy missteps could be avoided. However, ITA's Board is dominated by employer representatives whose understanding of the entire post-secondary system and its role in supporting trades training is obviously insufficient. We look forward to the Campus 2020 review as a first step in correcting that problem.

## **Creating Opportunity**

Throughout this submission we have stressed the importance of improving funding, access, and affordability of post-secondary education. The submission from the Canadian Federation of Students spells out very clearly how deregulated tuition fees have affected affordability and student debt. We will not repeat those concerns here, but we will emphasize that, in terms of equality of access, higher costs for students means lower income families have fewer opportunities, a loss that creates inequalities instead of removing them.

The question of proper funding for the post-secondary education system has also been reviewed in a recent report by Perrin, Thorau and Associates Ltd. This report was initially commissioned by the Ministry of Advanced Education to try and resolve funding inequities between post-secondary institutions. However, the report's analysis provides an important references point for Campus 2020.

Although there are several recommendations in the Perrin report that FPSE finds problematic (e.g. Perrin believes block funding should continue to be used as the basis of funding colleges and university colleges), we find much of the analysis useful to understanding why post-secondary institutions are struggling to improve access and expand programs. For example, Perrin suggests that there should be a shift from actual to mandated FTE's as a primary performance measure. Our concern is that while we agree that FTE counts are a flawed measure of performance which often fails to capture specific conditions at individual institutions, we see merit in the suggestion that the objective of funding should be to support teaching capacity at the institutional level.

Our experience with actual FTEs, certainly over the last five years, has been that they are an ineffective way to offset broader problems brought on by tuition fee de-regulation and system-wide under-funding of operating grants. It has been particularly hard for smaller rural colleges whose potential student base has been discouraged by rising tuition costs, the prospect of fewer program options or long wait-lists for preferred programs. In many respects, the government's policy choices have, for some institutions, created a downward spiral in which actual FTE counts become contributing factors to a spiralling down even further.

Of course, not all post-secondary institutions have suffered the same ill-effects from higher tuition fees and real declines in per-student operating grants. Certainly BC's two largest universities have been better able to withstand any adverse effects. Their fund raising capacity far exceeds that of other post-secondary institutions in the province. As well, the majority of their student base is drawn from households capable of adjusting to rising tuition costs.

One of Perrin's more important contributions to the analysis of post-secondary institutions' fiscal crunch comes from his assessments of how inflationary pressures have been consistently under-funded. In combination with his analysis of the problems with FTE measurements, his report makes a strong case for increasing core funding for colleges and university colleges. His recommendations call for an immediate 5.6% or \$25.8 million increase in the operating grants of colleges and university colleges for the 2005/06 budget year. He also notes that special adjustments need to be made for rural colleges whose size and operating conditions require added base support from the provincial government.

FPSE supports Perrin's conclusions that core funding for colleges and university colleges needs to be improved immediately. As well, we also support the recommendations from the BC College Presidents that the \$132.3 million in federal transfers to BC for post-secondary education should be allocated directly to BC's post-secondary institutions as part of a broader strategy to restore funding and operating grants.

Immediately implementing Perrin's improved funding recommendations would be an important first step. However, Campus 2020 should also review the provincial government's proposed training tax credit program to ensure that the \$90 million

allocated to that program effectively supports broader objectives such as increased participation and completion rates. In our submission to Finance Minister Carol Taylor on the proposed tax credit we noted that the ITA's track record hardly warrants the kind of fiscal support that this program entails. In fact, ITA's performance so far raises serious concerns about whether the so-called 'new model' for trades training is working. We urge Campus 2020 to take a critical look at the new model and offer some meaningful reforms that would ensure better continuity and cooperation between the ITA and public post-secondary institutions.

## **Understanding the Purpose**

Campus 2020 needs to anchor much of its recommendations for change to its assessment of why post-secondary education is important. In the opening section of this submission we highlighted some of the important work done by the Canadian Council on Learning on this very question. The CCL-CCA's most recent report captures much of the important research done on the social and economic values of post-secondary education.

Our concern on this question is to not repeat those points, but to emphasize the importance of *public* in any assessment of post-secondary education. Unfortunately, one of the consequences of policy and funding choices over the last five years has been the steady and deliberate encouragement of private post-secondary institutions and trainers. The provincial government has, in many respects, gone out of its way to encourage the expansion of those institutions without any substantial regard for the uneven policy and regulatory consequence of that preference.

Our fundamental concern is that private post-secondary institutions have none of the accountability mechanisms that are well-established features of our public system. Basic governance, for example, in the private institutions is a closed book. Board meetings have no provisions for public, community or student input. The concept of Education Councils, which are mainstays of every public institution in BC, are unheard of at BC's private institutions.

The unfortunate fact is that the less transparent and accountable a private institution becomes, the more likely it is that problems will arise and that students will be adversely affected. That is certainly the case at Kingston College where questionable practices have left students short-changed (some have lost as much as \$8,000 in tuition fees). Of far greater concern, however, is that the black mark against Kingston becomes a black mark against the reputation of BC's entire post-secondary education system.

How many more Kingston Colleges are there? No one knows. In fact, the current 'self-regulating' approach for private post-secondary institutions raises concern that Kingston College was far from an isolated incidence.

A the very least, we expect Campus 2020 to have some substantial recommendations on how to move private post-secondary institutions up to the same level of transparency and

accountability that we see in the public system. Anything less than that would be a serious oversight that would penalize students and certainly undermine the quality and purpose of post-secondary education in BC.

## **Defining Quality and Measuring Success**

The Perrin report's analysis of how to improve the usefulness of current FTE measures should be incorporated into Campus 2020's review of this issue. As was noted earlier, the problems associated with actual and mandated FTE counts have added to the funding problems of colleges and university colleges. The fact that Perrin's report acknowledges those funding shortfalls and recommends immediate steps to reverse them will hopefully put the entire system on a better track for meeting their commitment to students and communities.

On the broader question of defining quality and measuring success, we suggest that Campus 2020 include recommendations that incorporate other important measurements. We would expect that increased participation and completion rates would be standard measures. However, it's also important that those measures are consistent across all socio-economic cohorts. We need to know, for example, that post-secondary education participation is improving for low-income households, across all minority groups, for both men and women and for BC's aboriginal communities.

Our concern at this point is that post-secondary education not be viewed as a privilege, but rather as a right to which all citizens have equal access and opportunity. Against that backdrop, the emphasis needs to shift to removing barriers and creating equal opportunities for all.

## **Supporting Innovation**

For much of BC's post-secondary institutions innovation has been interpreted as a shift to on-line learning. FPSE believes that on-line learning is an important component of post-secondary education, but should never be viewed as a substitute for classroom or one-on-one student contact. Our experience across the institutions where our faculty members work shows the same consistent results; on-line programs have higher drop-out rates and lower completion rates than programs delivered in a classroom.

On-line learning can work, but only for a select sub-group of students. Typically, these students are well-motivated, 'self starters' with strong study habits. To design on-line programs that assume more students fit that profile is misplaced and will not yield the outcomes we are looking for.

Incorporating aspects of on-line learning into classroom settings is a more viable way to support innovation. Instructors increasingly rely on web-based teaching aids to ensure

course material are readily available, assignments deadlines are met and external resources are properly researched and included in both lesson plans and assignments.

Supporting innovation also means ensuring that the institutions have the necessary—and current—technology and infrastructure to provide the best possible classroom experience for students. For many of the trades and technical programs, funding shortfalls over the last five years have meant that classrooms are not equipped with the latest technology, a development that limits the full teaching potential for those disciplines.

The Perrin report recommendations will help alleviate some of that problem. However, we look forward to Campus 2020's assessment on this point and hope their conclusions will expand on Perrin's initial suggested changes.

Supporting innovation also means providing colleges and university colleges with better access to research grants. The current system is biased in favour of universities. One way to address this imbalance would be to have dedicated research funding for applied research projects that can be undertaken by colleges and university colleges. The potential for innovation at that level is significant and would position our institutions to both attract new talent as well as motivate our students.

One final point on innovation: there needs to be a permanent mechanism established that brings together faculty representatives and senior administrators to advise the Ministry on critical policy questions facing the public post-secondary education system. Although there is a Minister's Advisory Committee already in place, our recommendation on this point would be to establish a more autonomous, bi-partite advisory body to encourage greater collaboration across the post-secondary education system. This kind of arrangement would certainly have the capacity to resolve system-wide problems earlier and, in so doing, would increase the system's capacity to innovate to changing conditions.

## **Conclusion**

BC's public post-secondary education system can continue to play an integral role in BC's economic and social development but only if we take steps now to reverse policy and funding choices that are undermining access and affordability. The urgent need for change is heightened by a skills shortage that, if left unchecked, will undermine economic prospects for our province. BC has the fiscal capacity to make the necessary new investments in our public post-secondary education system to begin reversing these policies. The challenge for Campus 2020 will be to provide government with an immediate action plan for making these new investments as well as a longer term strategy for ensuring that the opportunity for participation in and completion of post-secondary education is well supported in all communities across our province.