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UNEVOC

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Welcome to the latest edition of the UNESCO-UNEVOC newsletter for North America!

Maximizing Opportunities for Disadvantaged and Low-skilled Learners - Exemplary Practices of College and Institute Programs and Support Services

The theme chosen is access for disadvantaged learners, whether due to physical disability, mental disability, or simply due to the fact that they could not follow the “normal” path of a young person.

This inspired us, and we hope it will be the case for you too. We have been developing innovative programs that help North Americans acquire relevant skills for decent employment and thus participate in today’s economy. This is where colleges and institutes play an important role as they reach out to under-represented groups and those who may not otherwise have access to a post-secondary education. Many disadvantaged learners are simply unaware of the types of programs available at their local colleges or institutes, or that they can acquire a high school equivalency in college.

We must also never forget that our mandate goes beyond training. The objectives of our work are broader and include education, citizenship and sustainability.

I had the chance to contribute to the implementation of programs opening up access to education for disadvantaged citizens. I lived close to those falling in the category of disabled youth. The professional satisfaction was immense, and it also taught me humility.

This newsletter demonstrates how colleges and institutes are committed to offering innovative programs that help marginalized youth develop relevant employment skills so they can participate fully in today’s economy.

Colleges and Institutes Canada is proud to publish a comprehensive publication on the subject. It is available on-line as of mid-October at www.collegesinstitutes.ca.

Happy reading!

Marie-Josée Fortin

New Skills for Local Employment

Through its Employment Skills Access (ESA) Program, Selkirk College serves disadvantaged and low-skilled learners and has been delivering relevant workplace training to meet local employer and learner demand in the West Kootenay region of British Columbia for the past five years.

More than 300 participants have benefited from this program. Its components include college support through academic and personal counselling, ongoing coaching/mentoring and financial support through work study positions and campus food banks.



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Bridge Program for Immigrant Youth

The Bridge program at Bow Valley College is designed for immigrant youth aged 18-25 with interrupted formal education who are no longer eligible to study in a high school setting. They all have goals and aspirations.

Bridge focuses on developing learners' language skills and giving them strategies to help them succeed in academic context and project-based learning is a critical part of the program.

Funded by the Government of Alberta and Citizenship and Immigration Canada, the goal of the program is to help learners improve their literacy and life skills in order to transition to the next step in their educational and employment pathways.

Math and Science ASKS for Mi'Kmaq Students

Studies at all levels indicate that Indigenous people are not enrolling in science and math programs and are typically not working in employment sectors that require math and science. Nova Scotia Community College believes this must change.

NSCC has developed a program that will provide Indigenous learners with preparation for studies in academic math and science. Academic Skills for Success (ASKS) is an eight-week preparatory

program using project-based learning to engage students in math, computer and science curriculum to refresh and review foundational concepts and skills.

The anchor course is Transition to College Learning and addresses academic skills, personal wellness and goal setting. Each student produces a personal Adult Learning Plan to guide his or her future learning dialogue.

Humber's Aspie Nation

There has been tremendous growth in the number of students with Asperger's syndrome (AS) enrolling in Ontario post-secondary institutions in recent years. Although these students have a high aptitude for learning and a capacity to succeed, they have difficulty adjusting to the social demands of college and need proper support.

To address some of these challenges, Humber College Institute of Technology and Advanced Learning created an Asperger's Support Group in fall 2010 with the support of Jeff Szmyr, a disability consultant. Topics covered in the group sessions include organization and time management, making conversation, handling group work, healthy relationships and dating, managing stress, dealing with feelings of depression and employment preparation.



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Education – A Window to Freedom

For many years, prisoners in Canada were only able to continue their primary and secondary studies through individualized modules, with no interaction among learners. In 1973, CÉGEP Marie-Victorin (CMV) started offering credit courses for federal penitentiary prisoners in Quebec.

College training is now available to groups, and detainees identify themselves more as students than as prisoners.



Transferring transferability: the international journey of an innovative social practice

For nearly ten years, the Carleton-sur-Mer campus of Cégep de la Gaspésie et des Îles (a UNEVOC centre since 2007) has been offering an introductory module to scientific research for its students enrolled in natural science and humanities: MAC, module of assistance to communities.

Through the development of research projects on issues related to sustainable development, students have the opportunity to apply the skills and integrate the knowledge acquired during their studies, while bringing a positive contribution to the socio-economic challenges that affect their community.

The MAC is indeed about to be transferred in the Caribbean region and aims at developing a skills-based education program. It will also be presented at UNESCO-UNEVOC's World Forum, Skills for Work and Life Post-2015, and bears the name "Environmental sustainability practices". This transferable approach shows that education, employment, sustainable development and innovation can go well together.

A Canadian student has the unique chance of visiting the UNEVOC centre in Bonn

Isaak Chamberland had the unique opportunity to visit the UNEVOC centre in Bonn in June 2014, and he grabbed it. He was most impressed with the humility and the professionalism of the people who work there. A truly life-enriching experience.

There are a few of his impressions:

"On June 4th, 2014, I was warmly greeted by this group of people trying to make a difference in the world of education. I met wonderful people, who were easy to approach."

"If I had an extraordinary day, it is also because I grabbed the opportunity which was offered to me and for which I have worked."

"Regardless of our age, it is good to show that we have an opinion as long as this is done respecting others."

"If I then have the chance to only be a small screw which contributes to the operation of a bigger machine, it will remain a most unique and rewarding experience for me!"

From the USA: The Disability Support Services Group of the American Association of Community Colleges

The Disability Support Services Directory was compiled by the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) in an effort to update information collected in 1992 about services for community college students with disabilities. Nine categories of disabilities were surveyed: visual impairment or blindness, deafness/hard of hearing, orthopedic/mobility disabilities, speech/language disorders, learning disabilities, mental retardation, emotional/behavioral disorders, head injuries, and chronic illness and other.

Read about this survey and the directory, about the students concerned, the support provided the special features, the technology involved, and the outcomes by going directly to the AACC's web-site.

The AACC was founded in 1920, and is headquartered in the National Center for Higher Education in Washington, D.C. It is the primary advocacy organization for community colleges at the national level.

The Canadian Commission for UNESCO would like to congratulate the Colleges and Institutes Canada for their leadership and support in sharing successful Canadian initiatives in professional and technical education with UNESCO UNEVOC network. This sharing opportunity will not only benefit to the research initiated at the College of Gaspésie, but will enrich all the exchanges.