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Marshalling Resources for Change

S stem-Level Initiatives to Increase Accessibilit to Post-secondar Education

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The approach to higher education funding policies during this period has been labelled “more is problematic” (Maassen et al., forthcoming, p.6). Governments began to question the real contribution of post-secondary education to national economic development. Funding strategies in the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and some continental European nations began to emphasize the demand side of the equation (Salmi & Hauptman, 2006). Private (tuition fee) costs were increased in Canada, the U.S., Australia and New Zealand and student financial assistance mechanisms were viewed as key elements of government access policies. Several OECD nations combined input-based funding formulas with elements of output-based performance funding. Australia introduced tuition fees in 1986 and performance-based funding for under-represented groups in 1994. In North America the practice of performance funding grew rapidly in one-third of U.S. states and in the Canadian provinces of Alberta and Ontario; the share of performance-funding in total public funding stabilizing at a low level of less than four per cent (Lang, 2006; Council of Ontario Universities, 2001).

By the end of the 1990s, governments had become increasingly aware that some populations had less access to post-secondary education than others, and some governments took steps to increase access while paying attention to these differences. For example, the United Kingdom created its

t t t t to increase access to higher education for groups with low socio-economic status and under-represented ethnic minorities, and Australia examined issues of under-representation in several reports and initiated a review of equity groups. The approach to higher education funding policies has been described as “more but different,” where “gradually the policy discourse has shifted from focusing on problems (and costs) of over-education to the need t(anada, H-263(t(i82(F)36(op d))20(eated347(i))2d(eated347(/n.ieatgs20 Tc T[(s)11(the)-9(en5p2ooe)-105(fu-3

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OECD nations use a variety of financial aid tools to improve accessibility of under-represented groups, including need-based grants, subsidized loans and merit scholarships. The research literature on student financial assistance and accessibility to post-secondary education addresses several major themes: the role

Income-Contingent Loans in England

In England, the 2003 funding reforms included regulated tuition fees, income-contingent loans and non-repayable grants for poorer students. The new income-contingent loans are available to all students without income-means testing; they are interest-free but indexed to inflation. The threshold for repaying the loans was increased; interest charges should not exceed nine per cent of the income, and after 25 years the remaining liability is forgiven. The higher fees and larger debts are expected to be offset by grants for low- and middle-income students. About one-third of all students are expected to receive these grants (Wellen, 2004).

are tied to the individual's income after graduating. In the research literature supporting income-contingent loan mechanisms, this type of funding is often called "smart" funding (Wellen, 2004), first, because it allows more public funding to be used in expanding the system and less funding for student financial assistance, and, second, because contributions are scaled to the students life-cycle thus making the system "beneficiary-financed" rather than "user" or "parent-financed."

There was some movement towards implementing a national income-contingent loan program in Canada in 1994 (Fisher et al., 2006). Several student organizations argued that income-contingent loans were frequently accompanied by major increases in tuition fees (such as in Australia) and led to increased student debt. Some post-secondary institutions feared that governments would decrease the level of funding for institutions as they increased expenditures on a new national student funding initiative. Income-contingent loans were not introduced in Canada, though some observers argue that elements of income-contingency can be found in the Canadian student loan system in the form of loan forgiveness, interest relief (deferring payments on student loans during periods of underemployment), and debt reduction policies. Canada may be the only country that uses student loan debt reduction as a mechanism for providing students with financial assistance (Junor & Usher, 2004). However, not all eligible students participate in these income-contingent programs (see Berger et al., 2006, p. 11).

It is generally assumed that needs-based student financial assistance in the form of grants or loans remove barriers for low and middle income students and increase access to post-secondary education. Merit-based aid is regarded as more regressive relative to targeted aid since students from families with higher income and educational backgrounds have greater opportunities to receive higher grades. American research addresses the redistributive effect of merit-based aid programs funded by state lotteries (with greater numbers of tickets bought by low-income earners) and negative effects of increased costs of college for non-recipients of the scholarship

Georgia's HOPE Scholarship and Grant Program

The State of Georgia (U.S.) created the HOPE Scholarship and Grant Program in 1993 to provide financial incentives and support for outstanding Georgia students taking their first degree or diploma program, and to help students complete their programs within the recommended time periods. The program pays tuition and mandatory fees, and provides a modest book allowance for eligible students. Only students who have achieved a certain GPA and SAT score are eligible. While some studies found that this scholarship increased first-year enrolment for both white and black applicants (Cornwell, Mustard & Sridhar, 2006; Dynarski, 2000), it is also acknowledged that the program widened the racial and income attendance gaps (between black and white students and low- and high-income students).

(private colleges in Georgia, for instance, responded to the introduction of the HOPE (Helping Outstanding Pupils Educationally) scholarship by increasing tuition fees (Dee & Jackson, 1999; Dynarski, 2002; Heller, 2001; Long, 2004)).

On the other hand, the experiences of a dozen U.S. states show that broad-based merit-aid programs with low threshold of access generally increase access and reduce racial gaps. According to Dynarski (2002) in order to access such a program in Arizona, students should have a grade-point average of 2.5 on a four-point scale, and 60 per cent of high school graduates in U.S. exceed this level. She also argues that the widened gap in participation between white and black populations in Georgia could be explained by a provision that reduced HOPE scholarships for federal needs-based grants recipients who are disproportionately black. Canadian research studies have demonstrated that needs-based assistance programs

among the Canadian provinces than tuition fee policy: low university tuition and no tuition fees in the CEGEP sector have been longstanding com-ponents of Quebec government policy, while Ontario and British Columbia have both experimented with tuition freezes and, at different times, forms of fee deregulation. Manitoba and Newfoundland and Labrador have decreased tuition fees, and this was a major recommendation in a 2007 review of affordability to post-secondary education in Saskatchewan. The international experience is equally varied. For example, the United Kingdom has recently introduced fees, and Ireland has abolished them.

Recent comparative and Canadian studies on enrolment rates show that overall participation rates have continued to increase regardless of whether governments have frozen, increased or eliminated fees (Swail & Heller, 2004; Wellen, 2004, Finnie, Laporte & Lascellas, 2004). However, the relationship between fee levels and accessibility is nuanced and complex. As David Stager noted two decades ago (1989), while students are somewhat influenced by tuition levels when they make decisions about post-secondary education—what is often called price-sensitivity—the key question is whether under-represented groups are more sensitive than others. It could be argued that higher fees allow higher education systems to provide more spaces. When introducing fees in 1998, the U.K. government reasoned that instead of subsidizing well-off students via public funding it would be fairer to increase access for under-represented groups. At the same time, studies examining low-income, part-time students or black students have found that these groups may be more price sensitive than the population as a whole (Finnie, Laporte & Lascellas, 2004; Swail & Heller, 2004; Wellen, 2004).

It is also important to remember that decisions to attend post-secondary education are influenced by a wide range of factors in addition to the level of tuition costs. Recognizing the interplay of tuition fees, available student aid programs, costs of living and public grants to institutions provides a more accurate international comparative picture (Usher & Cervenan, 2005). Some authors suggest that labour market conditions, increasing private returns to post-secondary education and social and cultural influences provide strong incentives for individuals from low-income groups to access higher education (Wellen, 2004; Swail & Heller, 2004). Davies and Quirke (2002) found that the rate of participation by students from low-income backgrounds grew, despite increasing tuition fees, for several reasons: the demand for university credentials remained high because they were seen as a major way to access better jobs, the value of lower credentials, like the high school diploma, is declining, and the shift towards a service-oriented labour market reduced manual or blue-collar opportunities for those without post-secondary education. At the same time, while participation of low-income students increased as well, they are not likely to choose high-tuition fields.

Governments frequently use funding formulas as a mechanism to stimulate enrolment growth, and while these formulas and funding mechanisms are regarded as efficient tools for increasing student spaces, they are not designed to meet the specific needs and recognize the additional costs associated with educating certain groups of students (Salmi & Hauptman, 2006). Demand-side mechanisms that directly fund students—such as grants, scholarships and students loans—are viewed as more effective mechanisms to

contribute to increasing access and success, and they are better at addressing the learning and community needs of particular ethnic groups. Some of these institutions have been very successful in recruitment and achieving high rates of graduation. However, it is

groups of population in PSE—Aboriginal students, students with disabilities, first-generation students, and Francophone students—and allocates special-purpose grants to institutions, largely based on enrolment numbers. England and Scotland pay premiums to institutions for students from geographic areas with historically low participation rates. Ireland increased the share of funding provided to institutions through vouchers for disadvantaged students. Australia defines equity groups and uses performance funding to address access and persistence of under-represented groups.

Governments also co-fund access programs and community programs for under-represented groups (see below) and use legislation to target particular forms of accessibility. For example the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) has built-in accountability requirements that require institutions to make their buildings more physically accessible to students with disabilities. Institutions are required to report on how they are going to use capital funding to achieve physically accessible facilities. Major policy challenges in addressing the needs of under-represented groups deal with identifying and defining the neediest groups of population, and surpassing the

given the small share of overall funding allocated through these mechanisms. On the other hand, there can be serious problems if the share of performance funding is too large. South Carolina initiated a performance funding system in 1996 and was expected to allocate all funding by 1999–2000. The experiment is generally viewed as a failure because there were too many indicators and standards, and the signals to institutions were mixed and confusing (Bruneau & Savage, 2002). The system has been revised to ensure that no more than five per cent of total funding is distributed using performance indicators.

Another concern with the use of performance funding to support accessibility is the failure to account for institutional differentiation. System-wide benchmarks in a highly diversified system (rural vs. urban institutions, large vs. small, comprehensive versus specialized) may lead to the inequitable treatment of institutions. A number of jurisdictions have attempted to address this problem. For example, in New Jersey the graduation rate for high-risk students became a separate indicator. South Carolina divides its 33 institutions into four categories, and Alberta makes the distinction between research and non-research institutions (Council of Ontario Universities, 2001).

More recently governments in many jurisdictions have started using a new form of performance agreement with institutions called performance contracts. Typically these are not legalistic contracts, but rather agreements that take into account differences in institutional mission and provide some funding stability (such as the multi-year agreements in Ontario and France). Performance contracts frequently involve agreements over enrolment, and they can include expectations to increase enrolment of previously under-represented populations (such as in the new arrangements in Ontario). While performance contracts are a relatively new funding and accountability mechanism, they have already been used in a range of jurisdictions, including Austria, Denmark, Finland, Spain, two Canadian provinces (Ontario and Quebec) and severnuTsanat4nnlcan states. There has been little research on the role of performance contracts in terms of accessibility to post-secondary education.

information on the costs and benefits of receiving a post-secondary education, and distance to post-secondary institutions. In the same way, these studies suggest that increasing access requires a range of policy measures, including student financial assistance, community involvement, improving information on costs and student aid, system design, and the need for additional data in order to understand inequities in opportunity.

However, there continue to be a number of important gaps in the research on funding policy instruments and their impact on access. Canadian studies on access focus on university participation rather than college participation, and on the general population rather than particular groups. There has been little research on how the level of tuition fees and borrowing influence the participation of under-represented groups. There is also a need for more research on policy instruments designed to increase access for Aboriginal populations, to increase regional access, and to address the special needs of new immigrant populations in large metropolitan areas.

Governments and post-secondary institutions are not the only agents in expanding access. Many other

developed by inter-sectoral partnerships between residents, literacy and other community-based learning providers, Community Adult Learning Councils, regional consortia, post-secondary institutions, schools, libraries, Parent-link centres, businesses, and others in a specified geographic area" (p. 19). Provided with such a mandate, local, provincial, and federal governments may fund and support community-based programs that address these identified needs.

The goals of these community-based access programs vary. Some programs are designed to prepare students for admission to post-secondary education. Another approach is to help admitted students persist and succeed in post-secondary education, or to work towards strengthening an individual's or community's relationship with post-secondary education in the interest of promoting lifelong learning (Swail & Perna, 2002; Dougherty, Reid, & Nienhusser, 2006). The changing structures of these programs also reflect a shift in thinking on student access. There is now a recognition that admission means little if students cannot succeed in and complete their post-secondary education (Lambert, Zelman, Allen & Bussière, 2004). These shifts draw broadly on research that relates the importance of academic and social integration into post-secondary education to access and success (Astin, 1993; Tinto, 1987). The historically low graduation rates associated with many high-access programs has led to an increased focus on sustained support beginning early in the student's secondary education and continuing through their post-secondary experience. It has also led to engaging the support of the student's community (Myers et al., 2004; McElroy & Arnesto, 1998). By improving social and academic integration through sustained support and community involvement, community-based access programs can contribute to the widening of participation in post-secondary education.

Students, community members, and local industry all have a vested interest in expanding access to post-secondary education in their local communities.

A study of young Canadians by the Canadian Research Policy Networks (de Broucker, 2006) analyzes current and prospective students' perspectives on access to post-secondary education. The students involved in this study indicated a desire for locally-oriented programming and resources, asking policy-makers to "root schools and post-secondary institutions in their communities…. Schools or colleges in each community should be seen not simply as places where you take courses, but more broadly as centres for

students, the broader public also desires increased coordination of post-secondary institutions at the system level (p. 7). Many also indicate a desire for post-secondary institutions to "serve as pillars of regional economic growth and of global competitiveness" (p. 1), focusing on local and regional economic and social priorities (p. 9; see also Livingstone & Hart, 2001).

Within communities, particular groups, especially those who do not feel that they have been well-served by post-secondary education, may be a particularly strong voice for improving access. These groups can provide particularly important input for community consultations and community-based access programs.

The primary goal of local industry, in expanding access to post-secondary education, is to ensure a supply of well-trained and properly-credentialed

students about learning options, train workers for jobs in these particular industries in partnerships with post-secondary institutions, and can provide enhanced employment opportunities upon completion of the program.

Local businesses and industries are also invested in expanding access to post-secondary education in the interest of general regional economic growth. More training and educational opportunities mean a large pool of skilled workers from which to hire. The development of technology clusters, for example, demonstrates a mutually beneficial relationship

are initiated by particular institutions and community

potentially deal with some of the systemic issues that underscore some of these educational disadvantages (Swail & Perna, 2002).

Concurrent outreach programs work with students from under-represented groups in the period immediately preceding application to a post-secondary institution and provide support while they attend the institution. These programs often include: recruitment (to post-secondary education and to the program itself); assistance with the post-secondary application process; and social, academic and limited emergency financial support throughout an otherwise standard academic program. Concurrent outreach programs also may admit students to the post-secondary program according to adapted admissions standards, and may provide a slightly modified curriculum (including additional courses or a modified progres-

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- Help students who might not have otherwise considered post-secondary education. Dual enrolment courses provide students with an example of the expectations of post-secondary work and their ability to succeed in a post-secondary classroom.

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Campus Saskatchewan is an online service that allows individuals to locate and register for courses and programs offered online and through correspondence. Like similar services in Manitoba, B.C., and Quebec, Campus Saskatchewan allows students to identify distance courses offered at all of Saskatchewan's post-secondary institutions and, in accordance with the regulations of the institution through which students are registered, earn credit towards a credential. Campus Saskatchewan also hosts the Saskatchewan Transfer Guide, which allows students to see

Community-based access programs and the engagement of local populations with post-secondary institutions complement financial and institutional programs to promote post-secondary access and success for under-represented populations. By addressing both the immediate social and academic needs of students, and enhancing community-institution relationships, the best such programs can offer lasting improvements in opportunities to pursue post-secondary education for community members.

As we have already noted, accessibility can be addressed through a variety of approaches and mechanisms, including the ways in which governments fund and steer post-secondary institutions, and through linkages between governments, post-secondary institutions, schools and communities. Another approach is to rethink the "system" in terms of questioning the existing boundaries between educational sectors, reconsidering the roles of different institutional types, and restructuring the mechanisms for system governance or coordination.

Perhaps the greatest Canadian example of reforming an entire higher education system occurred in Quebec during the Quiet Revolution under Lesage, and the creation of a Ministry of Education. Gérin-Lajoie followed his secularisation of the educational system with the creation of the ' t t (CEGEPs), the elimination of year 12 at the high school level and the elimination of one year of study to earn a Bachelor's degree (Durocher, 2007). At the same time, the Quebec government created the new multi-campus University of Quebec system and restructured the governance of its existing French-language universities.

Some of the most dramatic reforms to higher education have taken place outside North America over the last few decades. The mass expansion of higher education in the United Kingdom and many other European countries required major changes in system structures and governance arrangements. The current dramatic expansion of higher education in China is a function of major changes in how the system is coordinated, funded, and defined. In other words, these major transformations are not simply a response to changes in how governments fund institutions: they have usually involved rethinking the educational system.

Many of these reforms are idiosyncratic to the specific contexts, problems and challenges associated with the particular system, though three types of reforms illustrate different ways of rethinking the system in order to facilitate greater accessibility to post-secondary education: K–16 initiatives, adjusting the roles of institutions and reforming governance structures.

of the most challenging issues associated with accessibility to post-secondary education involve student transitions from one sector or institution to another, and these transitions often involve leaping over the chasms between educational islands.

Tafel and Eberhart (1999) indicate that state-wide school-college partnerships in the United States take many forms, though most focus on early outreach and college preparation programs. For example:

- Minnesota's *t* *!* Targets under-represented minority students and their families as early as Grade 4, whereas the Georgia initiative provides supplementary academic readiness to middle and high school students at risk.
- Florida encourages school-college collaboration with its Partnership in Education Excellence, which focuses on collaborations between colleges of education and school districts. In Virginia, the pre-collegiate awareness program funds academic activities on post-secondary campuses for students in grades 8 to 11.
- In Missouri, the K–16 coalition focuses on increasing mathematics performance in grades 11 and 12 as well as year 13 and 14 in colleges.

The authors highlight what they believe are necessary conditions for successful initiatives based on detailed analyses of programs in three states. They argue that successful programs require: explicit goals; a state-wide organizational framework; incentives to sustain partnerships; a comprehensive data system to identify system gaps and inform new policy; a communication system to disseminate information and encourage public engagement; and mechanisms to identify substantive issues that require immediate attention.

Advanced Placement courses and International Baccalaureate programs, like the dual enrolment initiatives described in section 3, provide students with opportunities to obtain credits that will later be recognized by post-secondary institutions. These initiatives have traditionally served to fast-track elite students.

A number of studies and commissions in the United States have argued in favour of a K–14 perspective that would lead to a rethinking of grade 12 as the final year of secondary school. In its 2001 preliminary report, the National Commission on the High School Senior Year (2001b) noted a major gap in communication between education system participants in dealing with the transition between school and post-secondary

The Co-reform of Teacher Education in Georgia

Georgia's P–16 initiative has involved ongoing collaboration with the Office of School Readiness, the Department of Education, the Department of Technical and Adult Education, and the University System of Georgia, educators from the P–12 and post-secondary institutions, school board members, youth advocates, legislative and business leaders. There is a state P-16 council as well and local and regional councils; recommendations move from local councils to the state council, and then to proper authorities and government structures. One of the objectives of the initiative is the "co-reform of teacher education, advanced educator preparation programs, and public schools toward practices that result in all children meeting high academic standards" (Zimpher, 1999, p. 4). In 1996, a P–16 teachers and teacher education sub-committee was appointed to identify areas of change and make recommendations. The sub-committee recommended a new framework for teacher education, increased availability of alternative teacher preparations programs, and changes to strengthen traditional programs. The state's Professional Standards Commission and Board of Regents acted on the recommendations and in 1997 the Innovative Program Rule was passed to expand alternative teacher preparation programs, the first of which was approved in 1998. A new policy on teacher preparation was in place in the fall of 2000 (Zimpher, 1999).

education. The solution, according to the Commission's final report, "is to 1) improve alignment [K–14], (2) raise achievement and (3) provide more (and more rigorous) alternatives [to students]" (p. 20). For example, the Commission argued for an increase in the number of Middle College Schools, such as LaGuardia's Middle College High School, a high school on a college campus for students at risk of dropping out. These types of institutions could deal with years 11–14 or 12–14. (p. 30). This institutional model is obviously very similar to the Quebec CEGEP.

treated by others. The end result is a transparent process where students have access to a transfer guide that provides them with information on credit transfer within the province. Alberta was the first province to create a transfer council, and it has now developed a number of structures and arrangements associated with its Campus Alberta initiative.

Unit du continuum de l'apprentissage en langue fran aise, Ministr of Education, Ministr of Training, Colleges and Universities, Ontario

Although several jurisdictions across Canada, the United States and Europe have created Ministries or Departments of Education that addressed JK–20 education, in July 2007, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities of Ontario announced a restructuring of the French language policy and program branch (FLEPPB) of the Ministry of Education (K–12). This is a first initiative to rethink the educational governance structures for an underrepresented group, in this case Ontario's French first-language official minority. The Assistant Deputy Minister responsible for French-language education (K–12), through the director of the FLEPPB (K–12), would assume responsibility for a third unit dedicated to French-language postsecondary programs and policy called the French-language continued learning unit. Transferring responsibility of this new unit to the FLEPPB creates a JK–20+ perspective for policy development and implementation, and creates an official dialogue space for policy-makers and governing bodies regarding French-language education in Ontario.

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Developing new, sophisticated approaches to collecting data on accessibility and monitoring the success of the higher education system cannot be accomplished quickly or in an ad hoc fashion. Higher education system reforms have often led to the development of strategic approaches to research and data collection. In complex systems of higher edu-cation, a strategic approach requires the involvement of multiple parties operating at the institution and system level, and investments in the development of research tools and in the dissemination of findings.

In September 2007, the Canadian Council on Learning published - *t t t t-* *t*, "as a comprehensive plan for gathering and utilizing information that is required to make possible the sustained success of the PSE in Canada" (p.1). They identified three types of short term objectives:

1) "ongoing and adequate funding for the essential data instruments;
2) comprehensive data on special and salient issues in each of the eight priority areas for the PSE sector discussed; and
3) immediate implementation of a unique student identifier, collection and reporting of faculty numbers for colleges, data on adult education and data on private providers (p. 1)".

The eight priority areas addressed by their data strategy are:

1. A skilled and adaptable workforce
2. Innovation, knowledge and knowledge transfer
3. Active, healthy citizenry
4. Quality PSE
5. Access and opportunity for Canadians
4. Participation and success for under-rep70(of)]rep3 ideoe8Tk[(str)10tem 531( )]TJT[(of)-adiifc TCouingn C success Quali

Quality PSE

must be less than five per cent of the total funding to the institution. The literature suggests that this level is sufficient to produce change in institutional behaviour without destabilizing the system in the event that institutions do not meet their targets. Finally, punitive systems are less effective than reward systems when tying performance indicators to funding.

There is considerable evidence that the transitions between programs, institutions, and sectors can be difficult, including the transition from secondary school to post-secondary institution, and the transitions within the higher education system as students shift programs or institutions, or return to seek further education. A number of the approaches described in this paper offer ways of facilitating these transitions by involving community members and organizations in support programs, adopting a K–16 perspective, and strengthening the arrangements for credit transfer within the post-secondary system. Some of these approaches are challenging because they involve linkages between very different institutions (universities, colleges, school boards) and communities, and there are sometimes issues of territoriality and concerns about institutional autonomy. However, it is important to emphasize the importance of taking steps that are in the best interests of our students.

There is an increasing national and international dimension to the discussion of transition, transfer and credential recognition. Students move between institutions in different provinces, or transition between institutions in different countries. National discussions on this topic are challenging in Canada given our unique federal arrangements. Some attention must be paid to clarifying the respective responsibilities between the federal and provincial governments in improving transitions and student mobility.

Canada has high participation rates in post-secondary education, but some groups and populations have lower access than the population as a whole. If Canada is to increase accessibility to post-secondary tha158(f6(is)mtha158()12(om58(-0.-)-86(be)-ns)-427(cr)30p)1idc

identifying what data are already collected by institu-

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This discussion paper was one of four prepared for an international conference entitled “Neither a Moment Nor a Mind to Waste: Strategies for

environment where policy is informed by the research. The working group discussion focused largely on ways to move the access agenda forward at the system-level, including specific recommendations.

The group identified a number of key considerations and policy issues that must be considered in any attempt to initiate system-level change in this policy area. Access issues are multi-faceted and extremely complex; they are "wicked problems" in that they are difficult to define and that no clear solution may exist. There are also substantial differences by province in demographics, levels of access, access policies, and system structures. While increasing access to post-secondary education should be a Canadian priority, there is no simple, national solution. Increasing access means bringing together governments, institutions, business and communities to find approaches that recognize national, provincial, and local contexts.

However, the group noted that there are a number of key problems that must be addressed in order to move forward. One is that there is no clear sense of agency or urgency. The issue involves multiple governments, institutions and stakeholders with little sense that the problem is "owned" by anyone There is limited recognition of its importance. There is a need for leadership and for greater clarity in terms of who is responsible for what. The second problem is goal ambiguity. There is a need for greater clarity in establishing goals and priorities for accessibility to PSE. Finally, our capacity to define and address access issues has become limited by an extremely inadequate data and research infrastructure supporting policy development in this area. We simply do not have the national data and research infrastructure necessary to make informed policy decisions on post-secondary education.

In the concluding session, working group members were asked to articulate specific recommendations for moving forward on the agenda of increasing access to post-secondary education. In order to obtain some sense of the magnitude of support for each recommendation, the facilitator asked group members to vote on each recommendation, a process that led to the group abandoning some recommendations and reworking and rethinking others. A group secretary took extensive notes of these deliberations on flip charts. The group leader and facilitator carefully reviewed these notes and prepared a summary of the group's recommendations. These recommendations were later reviewed in a plenary session by the conference. The feedback from the working group suggested that these recommendations, discussed below, were a fair representation of its conclusions.

1.

The first important step in moving forward is to develop goals and to send a clear message that increasing access to PSE is an issue of national importance. We also need to work towards increasing student success by establishing goals for post-secondary completion. This is an issue of economic development, social justice, and empowering our citizens. Governments, institutions, business and communities can all play a role in increasing accessibility to PSE. Moving this issue forward will require bold leadership, role clarity, and collaboration.

2.

The working group concluded that it is important to develop a "culture of evidence" where access policy is informed by research. Our current data and research infrastructure is clearly adequate. We need to strengthen our capacity for policy development by ensuring that we have a policy research infrastructure that will support informed decisions and further the level of public debate. A possible starting point for moving forward on this issue might involve supporting a comparative analysis of other national data systems, and creating a national panel to make recommendations on strategy and approach.

Many access problems involve difficulties in transition, including student transitions between school levels within the school system, between schools and post-secondary institutions, between different post-secondary institutions, between post-secondary institutions and the labour market, and between the labour market and post-secondary institutions. Early intervention initiatives in our schools are extremely important. Schools, universities, and colleges are often separate silos. It is important to "rethink" the educational system, perhaps by including strategic P-20 solutions in order to develop solutions that look across existing components in order to develop more holistic approaches. We need to strengthen the system's capacity for accessibility by developing transparent arrangements for articulation and transfer, revisiting the roles of existing institutions, considering the creation of "open" post-secondary institutions and ensuring that appropriate resources are in place.

A great deal of federal and provincial support to access is provided through universal programs, but given limited public resources it may be time to shift the balance between universal student financial assistance (through tax credits and savings programs) and targeted student financial assistance programs. Initiatives that provide a small level of support to

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