

## TRENT UNIVERSITY AND SIR SANDFORD FLEMING COLLEGE: NEXT STEPS TOWARDS AN ENHANCED PARTNERSHIP

### **BACKGROUND**

Over the past decade, and most particularly in the last three years Trent University and Sir Sandford Fleming College have undertaken initiatives promoting cooperative relationships between the two institutions. These include:

- Three *Joint Programs* established in the early 1990s in Geographic Information Systems, Museum Management and Curatorship and Nursing.
- Approval of *seven new degree-completion programs* in the Environmental and Resource Studies area and Business Administration during the past two years.
- Development of an integrated, collaborative program leading to the degree of *Bachelor of Science, Nursing* that will have its first intake of students in Fall 2001.
- Development, with the assistance of a \$2.8 million Ontario Superbuild grant, of a *technology link* that will provide students and faculty with access to the electronic data resources of the two institutions through a broad band network, which will also facilitate distance-based delivery of some elements of collaborative academic programs.
- Collaborative activities in *research*, including co-sponsorship of the Watershed Science Centre (with the Ministry of Natural Resources), participation by Fleming faculty in Instruct, a CIDA-supported research project at Trent to provide environmental remediation in two Latin American watershed areas, and participation by Trent faculty in the development of a research infrastructure project related to Healthy Aging, supported by the Canadian Foundation for Innovation.

Ontario is now entering an era of change with the advent of Applied Degree opportunities for the Colleges and the introduction of a new secondary school curriculum. There are at least some indications that governments at both the federal and provincial level are beginning to recognize the need for more resources to support research, ensure faculty renewal and prepare for a growth in demand for post-secondary education. While it is most important from Trent's perspective that we monitor the success of current joint activities, in the context of these external developments there is the prospect of some new targeted funding in support of enhanced university-college relations which may provide new opportunities for cooperative initiatives between the two institutions.

Trent and Fleming have an essentially complementary range of academic programs, distinctive strengths, and a shared commitment to students. Trent University is nationally recognized as an institution that focuses on close faculty-student contact and small group learning; and it is also

the most research-intensive of the small universities in Canada with selective graduate programs of international stature in fields such as Environmental Studies and Canadian Studies. Sir Sandford Fleming College offers a wide range of career-oriented diploma and post-diploma programs in areas such as Environmental Resources, Community Development and Health, and Management Studies. Together, the two institutions have a combined economic impact of \$270 million annually on the region encompassing Peterborough and the Kawarthas, whose graduates pursue careers not only locally but across Canada, and both are involved in community development activities such as the Trent Centre for Community Based Education and Fleming's program for student placements in Community Development and Health organizations.

Both Trent and Fleming are committed to maintaining their respective core missions as the central focus of their operations. At the same time, we are both open to exploring further opportunities that will benefit our students and research collaboration among faculty. To these ends, we will continue to build on areas of successful linkages, identify new areas of mutual and complementary strength for potential cooperation, and contemplate innovative initiatives that will enhance both partners and their community.

### ***NEW DIRECTIONS***

There are four areas in which we can see the possibilities for new initiatives and/or further development of existing linkages: (1) *new degree-completion and post-degree diploma opportunities* for students; (2) *collaboration in development of Applied Degrees* at Fleming; (3) *shared research opportunities*; and (4) other areas of *potential resource sharing* or collaboration (e.g., in library collections, information technology, professional development, counselling and other student services, etc.) As the relationship evolves, we may anticipate the emergence of other areas of cooperative development stemming from the interaction of faculty and staff, new student interest and demand, and new opportunities for funding by public and private sources. Of course, any new initiatives involving cooperation in academic activities would go through all the appropriate review and approval processes of the two institutions, which in Trent's case would include the Academic Development Committee, Faculty Board and Senate.

#### ***(1) Joint Programs (Degree Completion and Post-Degree Diplomas)***

At this point, the focus of relations in this area is necessarily on ensuring that current articulations are developing as they should and on monitoring them in terms of quality and effectiveness. Looking to the future, since we have a template developed for articulations in Environmental Studies and Business Administration, we are in a position to explore more systematically where there may be good opportunities for other degree-completions at Trent. *Computer Studies/Sciences* is one area of potential development; The CS program has been developing an articulation with Durham College, based in part on the kind of template developed in other areas with Fleming. Looking beyond this point, it may be useful to undertake an analysis of the current trends among students transferring to degree programs at Trent (not just from Fleming) to identify areas of preference that may be developed into more full-fledged articulations.

It would also be useful to review in a more systematic way the kinds of choices Trent graduates may be making (or may be interested in having available) in terms of career-oriented diploma programs. Based on this analysis, there may be several routes that could be followed to facilitate and enhance the development of combined programs that would enable students to complete both programs in a timely manner. This could include setting up a "block semester/year" at Fleming similar to the GIS/Museum Management model, making more use of video-conferencing and distance education capabilities to deliver courses on-line, or perhaps eventually identifying a Fleming program as a "Minor" in a Trent degree program. One area of potential interest may be in *Aquaculture*, and another in *Conservation of Artifacts* (related to the Museum Management program).

## **(2) Applied Degrees**

At this time, there is no great interest at Trent in developing its own "Applied Degrees," but we may be prepared to work with Fleming in some specific areas, in the development of Applied Degree curricula that could incorporate required or elective classes at Trent, participation by Trent faculty in delivery of some courses, and consideration of a model that could allow students at Trent to take courses in Applied Degree programs. From Trent's perspective, of course, there is an interest in initiatives that could provide new opportunities for our students to complement their work in our core academic programs, possibly through joint or combined degree options in the future.

There are several areas where Fleming has a strong interest in developing an Applied Degree, where Trent participation and support could be useful. The most immediate area for development is in *Environmental Risk Assessment*, and there have been some discussions among faculty on both sides about this area. A second area is *Health Systems Management (Long Term Care Administration)*, and current cooperation in both the Business Administration and Nursing/Health areas may facilitate development. A third area identified by Fleming, in the *Law and Justice* field may not be one where Trent has a strong current interest, but there is certainly the opportunity for cooperation in identifying specific curricular linkages and faculty involvement.

Building on the existing joint program in *Geographic Information Systems*, there are some ongoing discussions that could expand offerings in the GIS area, combined with Business Administration in a GIS-Business Applications program, and a GIS post-diploma program in Cartography. These are not, strictly speaking, in the Applied Degree area, but this is a field where there is a long-standing commitment from both institutions, that can lead to some interesting new initiatives.

Looking beyond the immediate future, there may be opportunities for developing programs in the Community Health/Gerontology field, related to the Nursing program, and also in Social Work and Education (Early Childhood Education and Learning Technology), which are areas of interest to Fleming. At this point, Trent does not have its own Education program, but if there are new developments in this area, this may be worth revisiting.

### ***(3) Research***

Trent has a well-developed research infrastructure, and it is prepared to work with Fleming as it develops its areas of applied research. The *Watershed Science Centre* may be a good starting point for collaborative initiatives, as there is a tripartite set of arrangements in place and an infrastructure capability in an area that has a significant policy role at this time: while the Centre's mandate sets limits on the areas for direct collaboration, there is the potential for more wide-ranging arrangements beyond the water management level. In the Environmental area, there are some interesting possibilities in aquaculture and animal DNA identification.

There is a new proposal coming forward at Trent to strengthen the GIS/Geomatics area by developing a *Geomatics Centre* based on new software building on the Fleming linkage and the Ministry of Natural Resources network; this could link up with new educational programs and also enhance the capability of both institutions in providing research services to the region.

*Health Studies* has been identified at Trent as an area for research emphasis, and there is a group of faculty at both institutions who have identified this as an area for potential research collaboration, building on the Healthy Aging project; the development of the Nursing program with a community-health orientation may converge with emerging interest in this area.

### ***(4) Other Resource Sharing Opportunities***

The "Link 2000" (Superbuild) project and the Task Force on Investing in Students have stimulated interest beyond the academic faculty community in looking at opportunities for resource sharing. There is no question that in the *Library and Information Technology* areas, there are significant opportunities for exploiting the technological linkages that are being developed, to foster more cooperation in collections development, data base development and sharing of information and ideas in the area of learning technologies — and there are individuals in both institutions who are very interested in pursuing these opportunities.

Most recently, the Human Resources Department at Trent has expressed an interest in developing training modules in collaboration with Fleming in skills areas particularly related to technology and management upgrading that would be beneficial for staff at Trent. The Student Affairs Office at Trent is also interested in possible resource sharing in the counselling and careers field and in Special Needs (where Trent has a strong emphasis based on funded joint programs with Nipissing University and Canadore College). While there is not much potential for savings in terms of direct resource sharing (except possibly in some limited areas related to Human Resources), there are some substantial benefits to be gained through a sharing of training and educational capabilities across the institutions.

## *NEXT STEPS*

Trent and Fleming already have developed an organizational structure to monitor and maintain our relationship. A *Steering Committee* of key individuals from senior administration in both institutions meet monthly to discuss on-going developments and to trouble-shoot current problems. The *Associate Dean of Arts & Science at Trent* has a mandate to develop and maintain collaborative arrangements with Fleming (and other Colleges), and the Registrar's Office at Trent has a staff position designated specifically to deal with articulations and transfer credits. The Fleming has set up a *Partnership Development Officer* (Tom Phillips) to focus on College-University relations, particularly with Trent. The "Link 2000" project will allow for regular communications among faculty and students across both institutions.

As noted above in this paper, the most immediate tasks are to ensure that our existing programs are working effectively in terms of finances and quality. We should also undertake to identify on a more systematic basis the areas where there may be potential for cooperation in the longer term, which will also enable us to respond to prospective new funding opportunities for joint initiatives. As Fleming develops its plans for Applied Degrees, Trent will be interested in discussing possible areas of cooperation in curriculum development, teaching and research — again, with the recognition that any such developments would proceed through established governance processes at both institutions. We should encourage exploration of opportunities for cooperation in administrative areas that may be of benefit to Trent. The main goal will continue to be to foster relations that will help students and promote the teaching and research capabilities of both institutions as they pursue their distinctive core missions.

At this point it may be useful to establish "Working Groups" in the four areas identified in this paper: these groups would focus on both immediate and longer-term development, and would report regularly to the Trent-Fleming Steering Committee with an expectation that they would bring forward specific recommendations within the next six to nine months. These recommendations would then be referred to respective bodies within each institution for action, as appropriate. We may wish to discuss this further at the next meeting of the Steering Group.

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