

Adaptech Explores eLearning in Canadian Colleges & Universities

The Adaptech Research Network <<http://www.adaptech.org>> is well underway with the first phase of a three-year Canadian study examining the accessibility of eLearning for students with disabilities in higher education. Here, eLearning refers to the range of information and communication technologies that professors use when teaching in the classroom, online, or partially in the classroom and partially online. eLearning includes, but is not limited to, the use of the Internet (e.g., course web pages, lectures delivered live online), CD-ROMs, and presentation tools (e.g., PowerPoint, electronic whiteboards).

In Phase One, our goal is to get a broad notion of current and future trends regarding the various forms of eLearning that postsecondary education institutions are using and planning to use, and its accessibility, or lack thereof for students with disabilities. To accomplish this, we are currently conducting English and French key informant interviews with: faculty who have had students with disabilities in courses where they have taught using some form of eLearning; professionals on campus who provide disability-related accommodations to students with disabilities; vendors of eLearning products targeted at the higher education community; individuals who hold some form of accountability for driving/supporting eLearning innovation on campus; and students with a variety of disabilities who have had the experience of using some form of eLearning as part of a course.

This research is part of the "Disability and Information Technologies (Dis-IT) Research Alliance <<http://www.dis-it.ca>>, a group of more than 30 researchers and partner organizations examining how information technologies can enhance the well being and inclusion of Canadians with disabilities in postsecondary education, workplaces, retail and public services, and on-line consultations. Dis-IT is funded by a grant to Deborah Stienstra of the University of Manitoba by the Initiative on the New Economy program of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

Canadian organizations NEADS (National Educational Association of Disabled Students) and CADSPPE (Canadian Association of Disability Service Providers in Post-Secondary Education) are partners in the research. For more information on our eLearning study email Jennison Asuncion asuncion@alcor.concordia.ca or Catherine Fichten catherine.fichten@mcgill.ca

The Canadian Association for Community Service-Learning Established

Connecting academic research and study to the life of local communities is recognized by a growing number of countries as a key to improving social conditions across the globe. In Canada, funds recently have been secured from the J.W. McConnell Family Foundation to establish the Canadian Association for Community Service-Learning

(CACSL). This developing national association of faculty and professional staff from post-secondary institutions is dedicated to providing support for community service-learning (CSL) programs across our nation. These innovative programs are designed to connect the resources of universities, the energy and intellect of university students and the front line experience of community agencies, in order to better understand and address critical social issues in local neighbourhoods.

Known by a variety of terms, (e.g., service-learning, community-based learning) community service-learning (CSL) integrates service experiences within academic courses or extra-curricular programs. With a strong emphasis on inclusive partnerships between universities and non-profit community organizations, clear objectives are set for both the student learning that occurs and the resulting benefits to the community. Effective CSL programs help students connect real-life experience to more theoretical classroom study and develop their individual values, sense of social responsibility and leadership skills.

Dr. Margo Fryer, Director, UBC Learning Exchange and Chair of the CACSL Steering Committee explained, "The support of the J.W. McConnell Family Foundation for CSL nationally is incredibly timely for both established and new CSL programs in Canada. Their support will enable this approach to experiential education to really take root in our country." Cheryl Rose, CACSL's interim Executive Director commented, "It is tremendously exciting to see that CSL in Canada is positioned to grow. CACSL has a lot to do in our first year! Currently we have developed a web based clearinghouse for information and resources; are providing program development assistance and support to institutions, students, and community organizations engaged in CSL; and have begun to build Canada's CSL research capacity. We will offer resources to all partners involved in community service-learning through a variety of means, including a series of five regional conferences planned in May and June 2005. Visit our website for more information: www.communityservicelearning.ca

For Further Information: Canadian Association for Community Service-Learning (CACSL)

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