

What's in a Name?

The boundaries between Ontario universities and colleges have become blurred.

By David Warrick

It is safe to say that the public is confused about the collaborative models between universities and colleges in Ontario. What are they? Why are they needed? And what is the difference between a college and a university? Here are two cases:

The Durham College and the University of Ontario Institute of Technology (DC/UOIT) and the University of Guelph/Humber (UGH) are two of many post-secondary college and university partnerships in the province.

So what's confusing about that? Well, consider that DC/UOIT is located on the same campus, shares some staff, buildings and facilities, has overlapping programs, has the same president, and is identified on the institutional DC/UOIT web-page as both a college and a university under Section 17 of the University of Ontario Institute of Technology Act 2002.

Why is this University of Ontario also called an Institute of Technology? What is the University of Ontario? Are there other campuses in other parts of the province? Well, no.

Why does this University of Ontario share the same name "Institute of Technology" with three colleges (i.e. Conestoga, Humber, and Sheridan) when it is a university? Or is it in fact a polytechnic university?

Why are Conestoga, Humber and Sheridan called Institutes of Technology and Advanced Learning (ITALs) and Georgian is an Institute of University Partnerships and Advanced Studies (IUPAS)? Why must all three institutes of technology keep the name college, and now polytechnic?

Why are these three ITALs and two other colleges of applied arts and technology now calling themselves polytechnic institutes? How can George Brown College now market itself as a polytechnic institute when it is a college of applied arts and tech-

nology (CAAT)? Confused? You are not alone. So is the Ministry.

What is the University of Guelph/Humber? Is it a CAAT or an ITAL? Well, no. Is it a university? Well, yes, but it's also like an ITAL in some ways. Why is it located at the Humber College north campus and connected with a walkway to the main Humber College campus and has as its president the president of Humber College?

Students attending this new facility report having a difficult time explaining that the facility is neither the University of Guelph, nor Humber College. It is, however, the University of Guelph/Humber, whatever that means.

Why are teachers in the college system called professors? Does a person without a degree need to be called a professor? Is a teacher of plumbing really a professor?

If professors of the college who have Ph.D.s teach courses in the university end of the campus, do they receive the same salaries, benefits and teaching allowances, for doing the same work as university professors? The answer is no.

College professors have already filed grievances on this contractual distinction. There will be many more confrontations on just this one issue leading up to the next contract.

Many students take courses in the colleges because they want to work in, for instance, daycare, sales, the construction industry or transportation. Some find positions as para-professionals. Others go on to universities to become professionals.

That was the original mandate for the colleges and it is one that over 650,000 graduates found useful. These graduates have benefited from a full college education.

But now that colleges are looking and sounding more like universities, university credentials become less valued.

- College presidents continually find ways to elevate the status of the colleges to university status.
- Lobbyists like the Association of Applied Arts and Technology of Ontario and policy-makers refer to a "more seamless web of education and skill development pathways."
- The colleges are rushing to hire more Ph.D.s so that they can claim polytechnic status and function like quasi-universities.

But the students, for the most part, remain the same.

When politicians, policy-makers, consultants, and key stakeholders listen only to presidents and the sophisticated lobbyists that represent their institutional corporate interests, huge mistakes occur. These are only a few of the many examples one finds in post-secondary education in Ontario today.

Recommendation: that the Minister of Training, Colleges, and Universities undertake a review of the nomenclature in post-secondary education in the province and establish regulations that clearly distinguish levels of post-secondary educational institutions

(Excerpt from Dr. Warrick's open Letter to The Honourable Bob Rae, Advisor, Postsecondary Review Secretariat, dated December 2, 2004. Dr. Warrick was a teacher of English in an Ontario college of applied arts and technology for 29 years. He retired in June of last year. For the full text of Dr. Warrick's letter, visit www.oqe.org.)

