

Accommodating Increased Enrolment

Algonquin College Academic White Paper

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Accommodating Increased Enrolment is one in a series of Academic Area white papers that includes:

- Academic Technologies
- Applied Research
- Apprenticeship
- College Programming Strategy
- Community and Business Integration
- Enrolment
- Internationalization
- Interprofessional Education
- Sustainability

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PREFACE

In 2007, Algonquin College began a five-year strategic planning process to re-think its focus and set a direction in line with current trends and future needs. In the context of that strategic exercise, the Academic Area is exploring key questions about the ways the College may sustain its reputation, enhance its educational offering, and deliver that offering consistently across all programs. The following is one of ten papers addressing specific issues that demand forward-looking consideration.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Algonquin College has gone through a consolidation of its Ottawa-based campuses at the same time that it has had steady enrolment growth. Even with the addition of two major buildings, this consolidation has severely taxed the student service area of the College and has limited the development of both academic programming and corporate training. Fall 2008 is the first semester that the College has completely taxed the available classroom and laboratory capacity. The space constraints this fall are a warning of the difficulties awaiting us in 2009-10 and beyond if we do not address this issue now. Status quo cannot be accepted in our scheduling and loading practices and alternatives to the 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. program delivery format must be found within the current Woodroffe Campus.

THE ISSUE

The availability of space for academic activity, contract activity, student services and applied research is a major obstacle to the College meeting its business plan objectives in the coming years. We have exhausted our academic space in the 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. time slot and have begun to move activity into the evening in a number of postsecondary and post-diploma programs. Most of this movement has been driven by the need to accommodate growth in programs having a high component of dedicated lab requirements. However, for the first time in Fall 2008 we have had to move into general purpose classrooms after 6:00 p.m. in order to meet scheduling requirements.

The current space limitations will not allow any future enrolment growth in the historic 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. timeslot unless changes are made to program delivery. Online/hybrid courses, split day timetables, evening/weekend and double summer delivery methods will have to be researched and implemented to accommodate any growth in postsecondary, graduate certificates and bachelor's degrees in applied studies programs.

The space concerns have limited the introduction of new programs to ones that do not require significant or in most cases even marginal dedicated space. This has caused the emphasis in program development to switch from what the market demands to what can we accommodate and from programs with higher program weights to programs with lower program weights.

While the plight of the funded academic programs has been well documented, we face the same space limitations in our apprenticeship area and in the contract activity being generated both from within the Academic Area and from Business Development. These issues will persist even after the completion of the new Trades Centre in 2011 since our major space gain from the new building will be the adaptation of the vacated space in 'A' Building, which will occur in 2012.

BACKGROUND AND CONSIDERATIONS

Fall 2008 saw the College increase our enrolments by 565 or 4.5%. This increase was only accommodated by building five new classrooms in 'A' Building, converting one lab to a general purpose classroom in 'T' Building and converting one classroom to a lab in 'T' Building to allow flow-through growth in Media programs (one classroom was lost in 'B' Building to accommodate other College needs). Even with the new classrooms, we were forced to move more general purpose activity to the after 6:00 p.m. time period. These new classrooms and the conversions used the last of the vacant space on the Woodroffe Campus. The only source of new space would be the displacing of administrative and student service space, possibly to portables or the freeing up of academic space through the suspension of programs at the end of their life cycle.

This growth of 565 students was fueled mainly by new programs and General Arts and Science (GAS), with less than 1% of the increase coming from existing programs. New programs in Fall 2008 emphasized NSDP and graduate certificate programs, resulting in very little flow through enrolments into Year 2 of any of the new programs. We will probably be faced with 70 flow-through enrolments and an estimated 150 enrolments from new programs scheduled to start in Fall 2009. For Woodroffe-based programs, this would equate to 200 hours of class time a week. With a classroom providing 50 hours of scheduling time weekly in the 8:00 a.m. to 6 p.m. time slot, we would require four additional classrooms to handle the requirements of this flow-through and new program activity. Any growth in existing programs would have to be accommodated by scheduling in the evenings or on weekends or by building more classrooms.

Again it has to be emphasized that these estimates do not take into account any potential growth in apprenticeship, contract activity or applied research.

The space restrictions facing Student Services and Business Development will also have an effect on our ability, not only to grow, but even to keep our current academic foot print. The requirement for offices continues to grow fueled by increases in the academic complement (ten in 2008), the success of Business Development, and the increased emphasis on applied research. There will be increasing pressure to solve space issues in these areas by reducing the number of general purpose classrooms. This will increase the space limitations we already face and will force us to move deeper into evening scheduling or to adopt some of the other space saving measures such as split timetables, online delivery, etc., on a more accelerated schedule.

OPPORTUNITIES

The academic community has the following options available to it; many of them have been brought forward in either Alternative Growth Strategies Working Group Reports or by individual presenters. The one thought to keep in mind while reviewing these options is that a *quality student timetable and a fulfilling college experience must be maintained.*

Scheduling and Delivery

Move appropriate activity from Daytime to Evenings or Weekends to increase capacity. Look at moving one year certificate programs to a two consecutive summer delivery with the fall/winter off.

Pros

- These changes would yield immediate benefits in Fall 2009.

Cons

- Support systems would have to be adjusted to ensure adequate service during these time slots.
- Significant movement into the evening may affect SPTS operations.
- Collective agreement restrictions will have to be observed which may cause additional scheduling constraints.
- Student demand for programs scheduled in consecutive summers will need to be determined.

Increase target utilization in open classrooms and open computer labs.

Pros

- Immediate benefits in Fall 2009 (Scheduling staff have indicated that they may, in fact, not be able to increase utilization any further).

Cons

- Will affect quality of student timetables.
- Will require the stability of student timetables to be abandoned.
- Part-time academic constraints may have to be tightened which could affect the hiring of qualified staff.

Increase scheduled utilization in dedicated labs and classrooms by restricting non-scheduled activity to off-hours in the evening and on weekends.

Pros

- Would increase the utilization of dedicated labs.

Cons

- Could affect course delivery effectiveness.

Examine split day timetables, split week and other methods of revising course scheduling to free up space.

Pros

- Immediate benefits in Fall 2009 (exact returns need to be calculated – may be minimal).
- Possibility of moving some scheduling to Saturdays.

Cons

- Only some programs would fit the requirements.
- Could impact the ability to hire part-time academics.
- Collective Agreement implications and possible overtime for weekend deliveries.

Work with the Registrar's Office to review current scheduling practices in all academic departments to see if changes can be made to improve the efficiency of the scheduling.

Pros

- Removing age old scheduling mandates may allow more efficient use of College space.

Cons

- Optimizing when to turn on and off student options such as section drop/adds may help utilization but hurt students' ability to build a good timetable.

Increase the use of online/hybrid delivery.

Pros

- Every 50 hours that could be moved to this delivery modality could provide approximately one room to the College for future growth.

Cons

- Requires PD development and program changes.
- Significant impact on scheduling may be three years off.

Suspend programs that have reached the end of their life cycle.

Pros

- Space and other resources are released to pursue new initiatives.
- Board of Governors mandated subsidization targets maintained if the program is below the 25% contribution target.

Cons

- Usually one to two year lag between suspension and the return of classroom space.
- Allocated department costs of Department, School, Faculty and VPA assumed by remaining programs in the school that may hurt their ability to reach the 25% contribution target.

Facilities

Lease space off-campus for Fall 2009

- To ensure adequate facilities, the lease would have to be long enough to warrant investing in proper leasehold improvements.
- Moving whole areas such as GAS and possibly Career and College Preparation (CCP) would allow us to duplicate a college experience to a point.
- This connection to the College could be enhanced with shuttle service between the leased facility and the main campus with the possibility of lab space at Woodroffe being included in the students' timetable. The question of whether this alternative gives a fulfilling college experience must be answered.

Install portable structures

- Consideration should be given to moving administrative functions to the portable and reclaiming the vacated space for academic delivery.
- To benefit Fall 2009, a decision would have to be made within the next three months to ensure that a structure could be installed; we may have to go with a specific type based on delivery time.
- The type of structure will determine its effect on the classroom experience for the student.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Scheduling initiatives

1. Move all dedicated space to be listed as primary access, unless there is sensitive equipment, so that back fill opportunities are available.
 - Consider additional tech support for these areas.
2. Eliminate the timetabling of unsupervised time in dedicated labs and classrooms during daytime hours.
 - Consider alternate uses of dedicated labs within schools for backfilling.
3. Examine the scheduling of CCP and the Language Institute to free up excess capacity.
4. Set the utilization rate for General Purpose classrooms and labs at a maximum of 85% to help preserve some quality in timetables.

Ensure that PD support and the required funding are in place to achieve the targets within three years.

5. Share successes in non-traditional hybrid course delivery such as English II in the School of Business.

Programs will extend their delivery into the evenings and weekends to ensure short-term space requirements are met and to allow the enrolment growth required.

6. This must be done in collaboration with the School of Part-time Studies to ensure minimal disturbance of their programs.
7. Evening delivery will move to 10:00 p.m. as required and academic departments will be consulted for the appropriate courses to move.

Serious consideration must be given to the use of portables or the leasing and development of a local high school for specific program delivery.

8. In the case of portables, the first use should be for groups of staff not providing front-line service to the student body.
9. Care must be exercised, when backfilling academic space into vacated offices, that this is not a temporary move to be reversed in a number of years.

Review programming options:

10. Plan for January intakes, “summer” programs, and additional weekend college offerings.