

**Colleges Integrating Immigrants  
to Employment  
(CIITE)**

**Phase I Final Report**  
December 2004

Submitted to the  
**Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities**



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## CIITE Project: Phase I Structure

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See **Appendix 12** for a comprehensive list of participants in Phase I of the CIITE Project.

# I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## A. Introduction

Over 80,000 immigrants come to Ontario every year with postsecondary education or other forms of training.<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately, many highly educated and skilled immigrants experience barriers that delay or prevent their entry to the labour market.

The results from a recent longitudinal survey of immigrants to Canada found that 67% planned to further their education or retrain despite arriving in Canada with high levels of education and international credentials.<sup>2</sup> This provides impetus for organizations to develop and deliver appropriate training and services for this cohort.

Colleges are well situated to provide programs and services to help internationally trained immigrants expedite their pathways to employment. Colleges are leaders in delivering employment-focused programs and services and can build on their experience and expertise in serving a diverse student population. Although the college system does not collect specific data on internationally trained immigrants,<sup>3</sup> conservative estimates for 2003 indicate that approximately 15,000 immigrants applied to colleges and 6,400 were registered as new students.<sup>4</sup>

In December 2003, Phase I of the Colleges Integrating Immigrants to Employment (CIITE) project was established with funding from the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU) to identify barriers within the college system for internationally trained immigrants, and to make recommendations for improving pathways from pre-entry through employment transition and into the workforce.

Phase I activities drew tremendous participation from the college system, with 21 of 24 colleges represented in the consultation process and over 1,300 hours of in-kind staff involvement contributed. Due to this unanticipated volume of college system engagement, the processes for consultation originally outlined in the proposal were modified. Additionally, college response to our Request for Expressions of Interest to participate in Phase 2 projects was overwhelming, with all 24 colleges expressing their interest in the

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<sup>1</sup> MTCU 2002: 133,641 immigrants to Ontario; 61% with postsecondary and other training.

<sup>2</sup> Statistics Canada, *Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada: Process, progress and prospects*. Catalogue no. 89-611-XIE, October 2003.

<sup>3</sup> For the purposes of this project, an “internationally trained immigrant” is defined to be an immigrant to Canada who brings occupational skills obtained through education or work experience in another country.

<sup>4</sup> The limitations of this data are that it may be capturing immigrant children who are not yet Canadian citizens and who apply to college directly from a Canadian secondary school (ie., with no previous postsecondary education and/or work experience), and it is not capturing immigrants who are already Canadian citizens. It also does not capture internationally trained immigrants who are enrolled in continuing education or language programs.

## I. Executive Summary

next stage. This level of engagement demonstrates that the college system truly supports and wants to undertake changes that will deliver increased service levels to internationally trained immigrants, provided that government financial support for implementation is present.

Following extensive consultation with college representatives and key stakeholders, the CIITE Project identified barriers for internationally trained immigrants in Ontario colleges and the challenges faced by colleges in trying to serve them. Informed by these findings, the CIITE Project developed a vision and concept model for the college system, and a list of priority projects for implementation in Phase 2, subject to funding.

While Phase I was underway, the Ontario government commissioned the Review of the Design and Funding of Postsecondary Education in Ontario, chaired by Bob Rae. The CIITE project encourages the provincial government to consider the findings and recommendations from Phase I of the Colleges Integrating Immigrants to Employment Project in responding to the final report of the Postsecondary Review.

This final report on Phase I of the: Colleges Integrating Immigrants to Employment Project is presented in five sections, with a separate document including the Appendices:

- |                                    |  |
|------------------------------------|--|
| <b>I. Executive Summary</b>        | Provides a summary of the methodology, recommendations and key findings in Phase I.  |
| <b>II. Introduction</b>            | Sets out the purpose, context and methodology for the work undertaken in Phase I.  |
| <b>III. Vision</b>                 | Articulates a vision for expediting the pathway of internationally trained immigrants through an Ontario college to employment, and defines a concept model featuring the components necessary for a model college system. |
| <b>IV. Implementation Strategy</b> | Proposes an implementation strategy and provides criteria for selecting priority projects for implementation in Phase 2.   |
| <b>V. Project Proposals</b>        | Recommends preliminary proposals for projects to be implemented in Phase 2, subject to funding.  |
| <b>VI. Key Findings</b>            | Documents key findings in the areas of college entry, language proficiency, delivery of education and training programs, and employment transition.  |
| <b>VII. List of Appendices</b>     | Provides a list of material included in the separate Appendices document.  |

## **B. Challenges for Internationally Trained Immigrants and Colleges**

Following extensive consultation, the CIITE Project identified barriers faced by internationally trained immigrants in the college system and challenges affecting the capacity of colleges to address them. These are presented under categories corresponding to the major stages in the progress of an internationally trained immigrant moving through an Ontario college:

- Information and advisement,
- Assessment of credentials and prior learning,
- Assessment of language and language programs,
- Delivery of programs, and
- Transition to employment, including employment preparation and workplace experience opportunities.

### **I. Information and Advisement**

#### **a) Challenges for Internationally Trained Immigrants**

The lack of comprehensive, easily accessible information about college programs and services means some internationally trained immigrants may spend excessive time and money in inappropriate programs. Others may not know about or enrol in college programs that would expedite their entry to employment.

Internationally trained immigrants often face difficulty finding a knowledgeable person to advise them about program choices, application and admission processes, and in-program academic concerns. Areas where internationally trained immigrants need advice include obtaining recognition for educational credentials or prior experience, applying for course exemption or advanced standing, identifying language training needs, and selecting the most appropriate college programs, including bridging programs or language programs.

#### **b) Challenges for Colleges**

The operating grant each college receives is based on the number of enrolled students. As a result, there is no discrete funding for providing information and advisement to individuals prior to entry into college. Each college must decide how it will allocate its operating grant between existing student services and programs, and recruiting new students. This creates a challenge for colleges in devoting resources to providing college-specific or system-wide information to meet the needs of internationally trained immigrants. It also contributes to colleges' lack of capacity to provide effective advisement services to internationally trained immigrants, especially prior to admission. Further, when internationally trained immigrants have to speak

with college staff in several departments to obtain information to answer their questions, college staffing resources are used inefficiently.

## **2. Assessment of Credentials and Prior Learning**

### **a) Challenges for Internationally Trained Immigrants**

Credible, consistent and timely evaluations of international academic credentials are essential both for the admissions process and for determining the credits individuals may receive through advanced standing or course exemption. Internationally trained immigrants are disadvantaged by the lack of consistent assessment standards and guidelines in the college system, and because assessment for advanced standing or course exemption does not take place until after admission to a college program.

Internationally trained immigrants who lack the academic credentials to justify a course exemption or advanced standing may nonetheless possess the skills and knowledge to qualify for course exemption or advanced standing. The only way to demonstrate their skills and knowledge and avoid taking unnecessary courses is to undergo a prior learning (PLAR) or competency-based assessment. However, opportunities for internationally trained immigrants in the college system to obtain PLAR assessments are limited and not well publicized.

In some regulated professions, assessments of academic credentials or PLAR that are accepted by the relevant Ontario regulatory body as equivalent to Canadian standards may not be accepted by a college, or vice versa.

In addition, by granting advanced standing based on the results of PLAR or academic credential assessment, students will need to take fewer courses and therefore may no longer need to be enrolled on a full-time basis. When a student moves from full-time to part-time status, they receive appreciably less funding from the Ontario Student Assistance Program.

### **b) Challenges for Colleges**

Ontario colleges lack consistent standards, guidelines and processes for assessing international postsecondary academic credentials, conducting assessments of prior learning (PLAR), and granting exemptions from courses, course credit or advanced standing in a program. At present, it is up to individual faculty or faculty co-ordinators to develop standards and guidelines for determining how equivalencies should be assessed for particular college credits.

In the case of PLAR, existing funding to colleges is insufficient to adequately cover the costs of providing these assessments. Some colleges do not offer or promote PLAR services because they are too costly to sustain.

While it would be helpful for assessments for determining advanced standing/course exemption to occur prior to acceptance into a college program, colleges lack the resources to provide these services to all applicants - many of whom will not enrol - at this stage.

In addition, by granting advanced standing based on the results of PLAR or academic credential assessment, students will need to take fewer courses and therefore may no longer need to be enrolled on a full-time basis. However, when a student moves from full-time to part-time status, colleges receive substantially less funding for that student. There is a financial cost to colleges in encouraging part-time study through providing students with greater access to advanced standing.

### **3. Language Proficiency**

#### **a) Challenges for Internationally Trained Immigrants**

Ontario colleges lack consistent benchmarks and assessment tools for the four language skill areas - reading, writing, speaking and listening - and for communication skills in the context of the Canadian workplace. This makes it difficult for internationally trained immigrants to be accurately placed in language programs that will give them the proficiency needed to succeed in their language training, program of instruction, bridging program or work placement, or in obtaining employment.

While English as a Second Language/French as a Second Language (ESL/FSL) programming is available in most colleges, internationally trained immigrants have expressed concern about the range of costs for language courses or programs that go beyond basic to intermediate skill levels. In addition, there is insufficient access to advanced or labour market/sector specific language training in Ontario colleges.

#### **b) Challenges for Colleges**

Ontario colleges do not have common language benchmarks. A language benchmark is a standard against which a student's language proficiency can be measured. Language benchmarks may be used as a reference point in relation to any or all of a student's listening, speaking, reading and writing skills. Some colleges, employers, regulatory bodies and language trainers are starting to use the Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB) to capture language proficiency. However, the college system does not use a standard language benchmarking system. This limits the fine-tuning of diagnostic evaluations of the language skills of internationally trained immigrants for placement into language programs, and the opportunity for internationally trained immigrants to be placed along a continuum of language training and to move among different programs and training opportunities. Since benchmarks facilitate a common understanding of shared standards for program entry and outcomes, lack of benchmarks limits the ability for colleges to share language programs.

Language assessment tools test a student's proficiency against a benchmark. Current tools test only academic language proficiency - reading and writing - rather than the four language skills needed to progress through college programs and in the workplace. As such, language assessments may determine eligibility to enter a college or be placed in language courses, but may not provide accurate feedback on an individual's ability to function in the program of instruction or workplace. Speaking and listening skills are vital for success in the classroom and workplace. However,

assessments of these skills are not often incorporated into the admissions process since the current one-on-one interview assessment technique is costly.

Language programming is delivered in different ways and is generally aimed at basic to intermediate levels of language capability. Availability varies considerably among colleges. A continuum of labour-market-focused programming from basic to advanced languages skills is required. This programming needs to be delivered as stand-alone courses or integrated into core curriculum.

MTCU considers ESL/FSL language programming to be skills development rather than postsecondary programming. As a result, this programming is funded in the tuition-short category.<sup>5</sup> Colleges receive less funding for courses delivered in the tuition-short model than for courses delivered as postsecondary programs. As a result, colleges might need to charge higher tuition or invest less in program development.

In addition there is not sufficient access to labour market-driven, sector-specific language programming in Ontario colleges.

## 4. Program Delivery

### a) Challenges for Internationally Trained Immigrants

If internationally trained immigrants are not able to take only the courses required to fill their gaps in skills, knowledge and Canadian workplace experience, either they will not attend college, or they will take more courses than they need on a full-time basis. Both these practices disadvantage the individual. The opportunity to study on a part-time basis is important for internationally trained immigrants - and other adult learners - to accommodate work and family obligations.

However, colleges do not generally allow students in a program of instruction to take only the components they need to fill their individual learning gaps. In addition, OSAP requirements disadvantage part-time students who receive less support than full-time students

Where numbers warrant, sector-specific bridging programs can be effective in helping internationally trained immigrants fill their knowledge, skills and Canadian work experience gaps. Access to bridging programs, however, is not consistently available across the province year round.

### b) Challenges for Colleges

Many colleges want to use flexible, modular delivery modes that meet the needs of internationally trained immigrants. However, developing and piloting such programs can be costly and may require special project funding. There is no incentive for colleges to provide part-time opportunities since they receive disproportionately less funding for students pursuing programs on a part-time basis than for those pursuing

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<sup>5</sup> A program generally less than 52 weeks in duration, designed to prepare students for employment or career advancement, or to provide vocational updating or academic upgrading, and which normally leads to a certificate as defined in the *Credentials Framework* (MTCU 2003).

programs on a full-time basis. For example, a college receives 100% funding if the student is enrolled in a full-time program. However, if the student changes to part-time status and takes a 60% course load, the weighted funding calculation often results in the college receiving less than 50% of the full-time funding.

While promising results have been noted from MTCU bridging programs, colleges need to build on this work to move toward institutionalizing or embedding appropriate, sustainable sector-specific bridging modules, courses and programs into college offerings. Bridging programs are funded as discrete or stand-alone programs of study, or as time-limited projects aimed primarily at regulated occupations. Without sustainable funding in place, colleges are unable to make bridging programs consistently available.

Further, bridging programs are not always connected to postsecondary programs of instruction, eliminating any possible benefit from shared curriculum components.

## **5. Transition to Employment**

### **a) Challenges for Internationally Trained Immigrants**

Employers have expressed a strong preference for hiring internationally trained immigrants who are familiar with the social and cultural context of the Canadian workplace. However, generic or sector-specific programs to provide this knowledge are not widely available in Ontario colleges. In addition, counselling services targeted to the special needs of internationally trained immigrants focused on conducting an effective job search in the Canadian labour market are not commonly offered.

Gaining Canadian work experience as part of an educational program is key for internationally trained immigrants. However, there are limited numbers of co-operative education or field placement opportunities available through college programs. This makes it difficult for internationally trained immigrants to acquire first-hand workplace experience and an understanding of Canadian workplace culture and expectations.

Student demand for co-operative education or field placement opportunities is considerably greater than the number of spaces employers have available. This disparity between supply and demand means that the competition for each co-op or field placement opportunity is very high.

### **b) Challenges for Colleges**

Twenty-one colleges currently offer Job Connect services for employment preparation. However, the Job Connect mandate focuses on the employment of youth, as opposed to adults in general or internationally trained immigrants in particular. Three colleges have not been delivering Job Connect because its model does not fit with their processes, infrastructure or emphasis on sector focus.

Although all colleges work with industry partners to develop field placement and/or co-op experience opportunities, only a limited number of these opportunities is available. As a result, colleges often have to compete with other educational

institutions to secure placements for their students. An approach to systemic change in this area must consider the competitive environment of the decentralized systems of colleges and universities.

## 6. Capacity Challenge for Colleges

As the percentage of immigrants within the Ontario workforce increases, the need for colleges to address the needs of internationally trained immigrants will become an even more pressing issue.

All 24 colleges have expressed an interest in participating in Phase 2 projects: a strong indicator of their willingness to work together to achieve system-wide solutions.

However, colleges face several challenges in serving this client group:

- Internationally trained immigrants are not a homogenous group and their needs are diverse;
- Increased flexibility is needed throughout colleges' processes, services, courses and programs, technical infrastructure, and information systems;
- The college system lacks sufficient information management systems, tools and infrastructure for gathering data that would enable them to make sound decisions on programs and services to meet the needs of internationally trained immigrants;
- New products, tools, services and processes need to be developed to support flexibility in college system responses;
- Under-funding means that colleges have difficulty sustaining their existing activities and programs. As stated in *Achieving High Expectations in Ontario's Postsecondary Education Sector: A Plan for Change*, ACAATO's 2004 submission to the Rae Review, colleges have 52% more students than 15 years ago, but receive 40% less grant funding per student in constant dollars;
- Without adequate funding, it is difficult to achieve system-wide collaboration by colleges; and
- While Ontario colleges do collaborate and operate as a system in many areas, each college must respond to local business and community needs, and in some geographic areas can be competitors for potential students.

These factors and financial constraints limit the extent to which colleges can collaborate and share best practices. Funding incentives, however, would significantly enhance the capacity of colleges to work together as a system for meeting the needs of internationally trained immigrants.

## C. Vision and Concept Model

In consultation with the CIITE Project's Educational System Advisory Committee (ESAC) and Leadership Council, a vision and concept model were developed as a framework to guide the development of initiatives which will enhance and create expedited pathways for internationally trained immigrants through Ontario colleges. The components of the Concept Model are linked building blocks which, when in place, form a viable system.

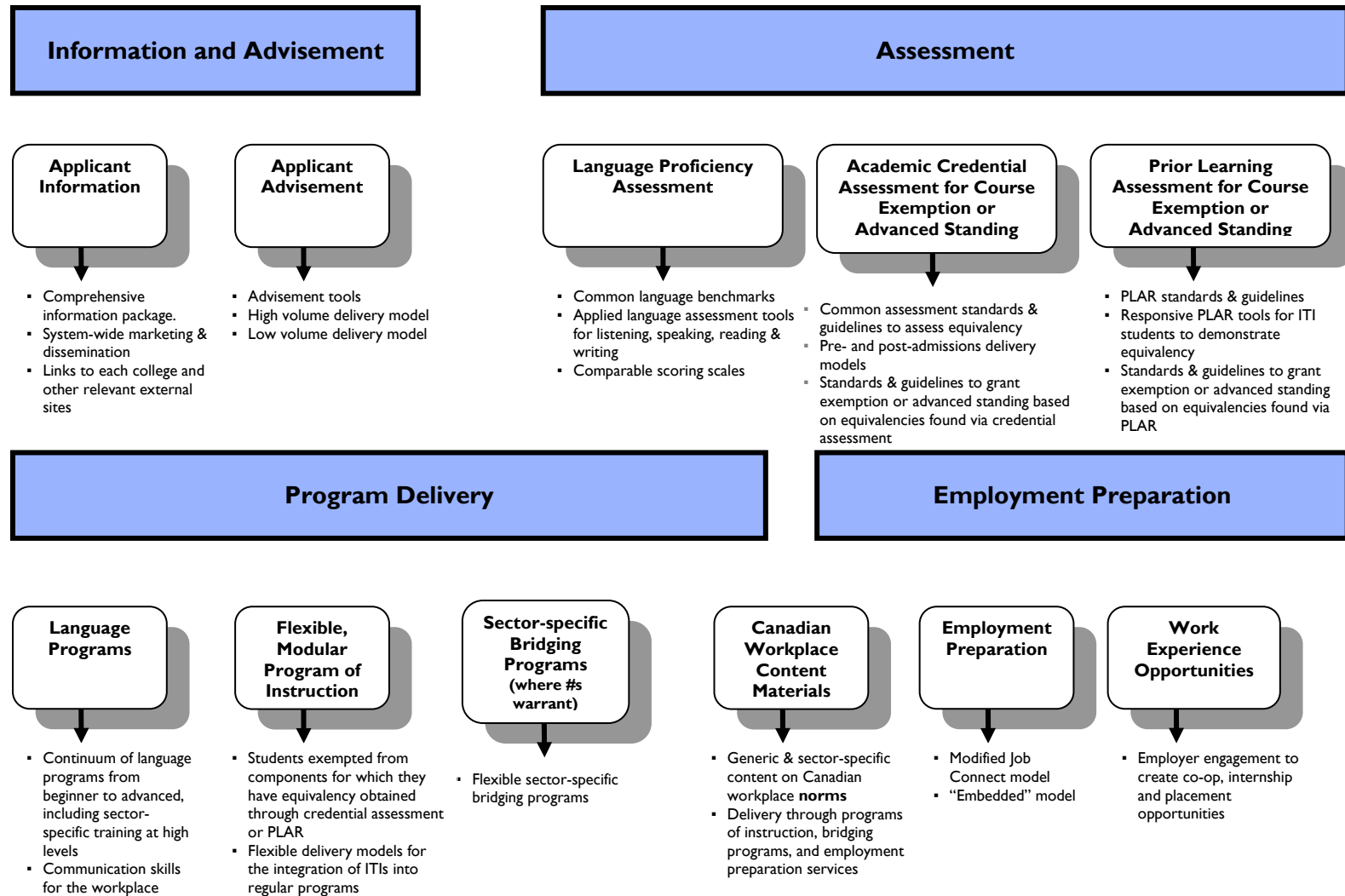
### I. Overarching Vision

**Internationally trained immigrants have access to programs and services in the Ontario college system that build on their qualifications and expedite their securing employment in their field of expertise or a related field.**

#### Key Features of the Vision

- Internationally trained immigrants have access to information, advice and services tailored to their specific education and employment needs.
- Internationally trained immigrants have access to assessments of their academic credentials, prior learning and language in a standardized, effective, efficient, transparent and timely manner.
- Internationally trained immigrants have access to language programs that assist them in attaining the level of English or French proficiency required for success in their educational programs and the workplace.
- Internationally trained immigrants have access to college programs and services, which build on their existing skills and add only the components they require, such as workplace communication and other supports as needed.
- Internationally trained immigrants have access to specialized bridging opportunities to upgrade their skills or fill skill gaps where existing programs of instruction are not appropriate.
- Employers have access to internationally trained immigrants in whom they have confidence based on their skills, experience and successful completion of college training.
- Educators, employers, regulators, community groups, service providers and governments work in partnership on solutions to improve access to employment for internationally trained immigrants.
- College funding methods and sources, financial assistance programs and government policies reflect the importance of the college system to the success of internationally trained immigrants in the labour market.
- Colleges adopt system-wide and customized solutions to serve internationally trained immigrants based on local needs.

**Figure I.0 CONCEPT MODEL: COLLEGE PROGRAMS AND SERVICES FOR INTERNATIONALLY TRAINED IMMIGRANTS**



## D. Strategy for Achieving the Vision

Phase 2 of the CIITE Project will be instrumental in moving the college system toward the vision and concept model.

### I. Approach to Implementation

Phase 2 of the CIITE Project will be instrumental in moving the college system toward the vision and concept model outlined in the previous section. The projects recommended for Phase 2 implementation need to be selected strategically in order to maximize their potential impact. The CIITE Project has taken the following approach regarding Phase 2 implementation:

- Reviewed all ideas suggested during the consultation;<sup>6</sup>
- Identified those ideas that appeared to offer the greatest potential for testing or implementing components of the concept model;
- Defined the criteria for selecting priority projects for Phase 2 implementation; and
- Applied these criteria to the list of potential initiatives to identify projects for Phase 2, and projects for implementation during future stages.<sup>7</sup>

College response to our Request for Expressions of Interest to participate in Phase 2 projects was again overwhelming, with all 24 colleges expressing their interest in the next stage. This level of engagement demonstrates that the college system truly supports and wants to undertake changes that will deliver increased service levels to internationally trained immigrants, provided that government financial support for implementation is present.

Moving toward the launch of Phase 2 following the submission of this report, the CIITE Project intends to:

- Finalize detailed project proposals through discussions with MTCU;
- Identify lead and participating colleges through discussions with colleges and MTCU; and
- Determine the occupations or sectors for the various pilot projects through discussions with colleges and MTCU; and
- Determine, and recommend to MTCU, a project management structure and resource requirements for Phase 2, arising from the structures and roles of those colleges participating in Phase 2 projects.

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<sup>6</sup> See Section VI. Key Findings

<sup>7</sup> See Section V: Project Proposals

The CIITE Project sees implementation as a logical progression of a consultative process. Before finalizing their commitment to participate in specific pilot projects, colleges need to be informed about the government's response in principle and need to understand the funding that will be available for project implementation. At the same time, government needs clarification about which colleges will be participating, their proposed roles in Phase 2 projects, and the scope of the proposed activities in each project. As a result, discussions with MTCU and colleges need to address system-wide and project-specific issues with a clear framework for funding and implementation.

This iterative approach will ensure that moving the college system toward the concept model will be manageable, and will provide an impact across the participating colleges and sectors. The sequence in which the pilot projects are implemented is important in moving the system toward significant and lasting change that will benefit internationally trained immigrants.

Following discussions with key stakeholders, the CIITE Project has developed five criteria for selecting Phase 2 priority projects:

- **Transferability:** Select projects where the learning can be shared widely and put into practice across the college system. Select at least one project with a focus on a non-regulated occupation, one on a regulated profession, and one on a trade so that successful pilots can be adapted to additional sectors in all three categories. In addition, select one or more projects including Francophone immigrants to test solutions that can be adopted by colleges who serve that community.
- **Sustainability:** Give priority to projects that will provide a lasting benefit, support colleges' collaborative work toward changing major systems; increase the capacity of colleges to continue the work by establishing innovative funding models or support structures; or keep the momentum going and shine a spotlight on progress.
- **Early Impact:** Select one or more projects that will produce an early impact for internationally trained immigrants and employers. Early successes will provide concrete benefits in the short-term while helping to build buy-in for longer-term initiatives. In addition, choose sectors for pilot testing new models based on supply and demand.
- **Leadership and Capacity:** Select projects where potential college leads have self-identified in response to the Request for Expressions of Interest. Choose colleges with the capacity and experience to undertake projects.
- **Government Partnership:** Select projects that complement provincial and federal government initiatives and priorities in order to achieve shared objectives and maximize funding potential.

## E. Priority Projects

The CIITE Project has identified several projects as priorities for Phase 2 implementation. Each priority project has specific performance indicators that can measure quantitative and qualitative outcomes.

Preliminary proposals for the recommended projects are presented below. Each proposal contains a project description, list of key activities and preliminary performance measures. The proposals also outline the potential impact on internationally trained immigrants, colleges and other students.

Following discussions with the Ministry, the CIITE Project will prepare detailed funding proposals for each Phase 2 project selected. Funding is critical to provide the capacity to conduct the projects and to facilitate collaboration on system-wide and customized solutions.

### I. Priority Area: Information and Advisement

#### **Design innovative methods to give customized advisement to new and prospective students.**

Advisement models will be developed and pilot-tested for colleges with a large proportion of students and applicants who are internationally trained immigrants, and for colleges with a small proportion of students and applicants who are internationally trained immigrants. Models will include a range of delivery methods such as one-to-one, phone, group, internet and e-mail contact. Support materials will be developed for the different models.

### 2. Priority Area: Assessment of Credentials and Prior Learning

#### **Improve how credit is granted for courses or credentials earned overseas.**

Credential assessment standards and guidelines and advanced standing processes will be designed and piloted in selected sectors. The standards and guidelines will be used to pilot pre- and post-admissions assessment process models in selected high-demand, regulated and non-regulated occupations.

#### **Explore new funding models to allow students to demonstrate their previously acquired knowledge and skills (PLAR).**

A business case will be designed for alternative funding models that can promote sustainable PLAR activities tied to regular programs of instruction. This business case

will form the basis for discussions with MTCU on funding models that would enable more colleges to offer greater access to PLAR services tied to regular programs of instruction. Since expanding PLAR will not be sustainable without new approaches to funding, the CIITE Project is recommending that additional projects in this area should only proceed once funding issues are resolved.

### **3. Priority Area: Language Proficiency**

#### **Adopt and implement more relevant testing and training for language proficiency.**

Language pilots will be conducted in selected high-demand sectors. Activities will focus on modifying, testing and adopting common language benchmarks, assessment tools and a labour-market-driven language program, all intrinsically linked. This will include assessment tools for the purposes of admission, referral and placement into programs of study. A series of symposia will be held to build a common understanding of systemic issues related to language benchmarks and assessment tools.

### **4. Priority Area: Program Delivery**

#### **Design new models for programs that help internationally trained immigrants “bridge” to employment.**

While there are many bridging projects underway, all are discrete or stand-alone projects - rather than ongoing, sustainable programs - that are not tied to postsecondary programs of instruction. Therefore, a model for sustainable bridging programs tied to postsecondary programs will be piloted.

#### **Explore new funding models so college programs can be delivered in more flexible ways.**

This project will prepare a business case for alternative funding models to promote modular, flexible delivery of programs of instruction. This will form the basis of discussions with MTCU on funding models that would allow colleges to deliver programs in ways that are more responsive to the needs of internationally trained immigrants. Since modular, flexible program delivery will not be sustainable without new approaches to funding, the CIITE Project is recommending that the additional projects in this area should only proceed once funding issues are resolved.

## **5. Priority Area: Employment Transition**

### **Design models for services that will help prepare students for employment.**

Models of employment preparation services will be piloted. One model will test the effectiveness of offering Job Connect services to internationally trained immigrants in addition to youth. A second model will test the integration of employment preparation services within college programs and services. Canadian workplace content material will be developed to support both models.

### **Work with employers to offer more workplace opportunities for college students.**

A project will be developed to work with employers and other organizations like Career Edge, which delivers Career Bridge, to identify ways to increase and enhance field placement and co-op employment placement opportunities for internationally trained immigrants and to create new types of work experience opportunities for this cohort.

## **6. Phase 2 Project Supports**

### **Establish project leadership and management structures so that the proposed projects are co-ordinated.**

The success of the Phase 2 initiatives will depend on governance and co-ordinating structures to oversee the projects, maximize linkages, co-ordinate activities and provide reports to MTCU. The CIITE Project proposes that a project management structure be funded to support successful Phase 2 implementation.

### **Provide transitional funding.**

The CIITE Project has requested transitional funding to bridge the period between the submission of this Phase 1 final report and the commencement of Phase 2. Transitional activities include selecting lead and participating colleges, identifying high impact sectors or occupations, finalizing detailed proposals and funding requirements, establishing governance and co-ordinating structures and negotiating contract details with MTCU.

### **Create ongoing immigrant issues project management structure.**

The CIITE Project will determine and recommend to MTCU a project management structure and resource requirements for Phase 2 arising from the structures and roles of the colleges participating in Phase 2 projects.

## F. Summary of Recommendations

The CIITE Project recommends that:

1. The vision and concept model set out in this report serve as a framework for designing and implementing initiatives to enhance and expedite pathways for international trained immigrants through Ontario colleges to employment.
2. The following criteria be used for selecting priority projects for implementation in Phase 2 of the CIITE Project:
  - Transferability,
  - Sustainability,
  - Early Impact,
  - College Leadership and Capacity, and
  - Government Partnership.
3. The CIITE Project returns to MTCU with detailed Phase 2 funding proposals, subject to feedback from MTCU on the project proposals set out in this report:

### **Advisement Models**

- Pilot advisement models for colleges with a large proportion of internationally trained immigrant students and applicants.
- Pilot advisement models for colleges with a small proportion of internationally trained immigrant students and applicants.

### **Credential Assessment and Advanced Standing**

- Define credential assessment standards and guidelines in selected sectors.
- Pilot a *pre-admissions* model for credential assessment and advanced standing.
- Pilot a *post-admissions* model for credential assessment and advanced standing

### **Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition**

- Prepare a business case for alternative funding models to promote sustainable PLAR models tied to regular programs of instruction and apprenticeship.
- Conduct discussions with MTCU on alternative funding structures to allow colleges to offer PLAR.

### **Language Proficiency**

- Modify, test and adopt common language benchmarks.

## I. Executive Summary

- Test and adopt language assessments tools for purposes of admission, placement and referral to and placement in programs.
- Develop/adapt, deliver and adopt labour market-driven language programs in selected sectors.
- Convene symposia to build a common understanding of language benchmarks, assessment tools, and programming.

### **Program Delivery**

- Pilot a model for sustainable bridging programs tied to postsecondary programs.
- Prepare a business case for alternative funding models to promote flexible, modular delivery of programs of instruction.
- Conduct discussions with MTCU on alternative funding structures to allow colleges to offer flexible, modular delivery.

### **Employment Preparation**

- Test an expanded Job Connect model to deliver employment preparation services with a focus on internationally trained immigrants.
- Test an “embedded model” that integrates employment preparation within college programs and services.
- Modify or develop Canadian workplace content material in selected sectors for use in employment preparation services and programs.

### **Workplace Experience**

- Work with employers and other organizations to identify ways to increase and enhance co-op and other employment experience opportunities for internationally trained immigrants and to create new types of work experience opportunities.

4. A project management and governance structure be established to ensure effective Phase 2 project management.
5. MTCU provide transitional funding to bridge the CIITE Project from the end of Phase 1 to the start of Phase 2.
6. At the conclusion of Phase 2, the CIITE Project recommends initiatives for future phases that will build on and complement the results of the pilot projects and move the college system closer to the concept model.
7. MTCU, in considering the upcoming report of the Advisory Panel, chaired by Bob Rae, for the Review of the Design and Funding of Postsecondary Education in Ontario should take into account the need for more responsive programs and services for internationally trained immigrants.

## II. INTRODUCTION

### A. Purpose

The Colleges Integrating Immigrants to Employment (CIITE) Project has been designed in three phases to recommend and implement changes in the college system to ease the entry of new immigrants to Ontario's labour market.

In December 2003, Phase I of the CIITE project was established with funding from the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU) to identify barriers within the college system for internationally trained immigrants, and to make recommendations for improving pathways from pre-entry through employment transition and into the workforce.

Through a highly consultative process, Phase I activities:

- Identified barriers to internationally trained immigrants within the college system;
- Shaped a new vision for the college system and a concept model illustrating the recommended components of the new model;
- Developed draft proposals for priority projects recommended for funding from MTCU and implementation in Phase 2; and
- Created a strategy for implementing projects in Phase 2.

Phase I activities drew tremendous participation from the college system, with 21 of 24 colleges represented in the consultation process and over 1,300 hours of in-kind staff involvement contributed. Due to this unanticipated volume of college system engagement, the processes for consultation originally outlined in the proposal were modified.

Additionally, response from the colleges to our Request for Expressions of Interest to participate in Phase 2 projects was overwhelming, with all 24 colleges expressing interest in the next stage. This level of engagement demonstrates that the college system truly supports and wants to undertake changes that will deliver increased service levels to internationally trained immigrants, provided government financial support for implementation is present.

During Phase 2, colleges will pilot and evaluate the priority projects that received financial support from government and recommend how these changes can be implemented across the college system.

Phase 3 will focus on promotion and system-wide roll-out of best practices from Phase 2 pilots.

## II. Introduction

This report outlines the findings and recommendations from the Phase I of the Colleges Integrating Immigrants to Employment (CIITE) Project funded by the Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU).

For the purposes of this report, an “internationally trained immigrant” is defined as an immigrant to Canada who brings occupational skills obtained through education or work experience in another country.

<b>I. Executive Summary</b>	Highlights key findings and recommendations from Phase I of the CIITE Project.
<b>II. Introduction</b>	Sets out the project’s purpose, context and methodology.
<b>III. Vision</b>	Outlines a vision for Ontario colleges with respect to programs and services for internationally trained immigrants.  Brings forward a “concept model” illustrating the recommended components of a model system.
<b>IV. Implementation Strategy</b>	Describes the approach for implementing projects in Phase 2 and includes criteria for selecting priority projects.
<b>V. Project Proposals</b>	Presents proposals for priority projects recommended for implementation in Phase 2, subject to funding, and lists projects proposed for subsequent phases.
<b>VI. Key Findings</b>	Details findings from the Phase I research and consultation, including background information and a listing of the issues, challenges and preliminary ideas for change generated during Phase I.

## B. Context

### I. Ontario's Economic Need

Ontario's aging population and declining fertility rate are driving forces behind the need for skilled immigrants to be trained and available to enter the labour force. The magnitude of this shift in workforce demographics is extensive: by the year 2011, it is estimated that 100% of Canada's net labour force growth will depend on immigration.<sup>8</sup>

Ontario attracts a high number of well-educated immigrants. Over 133,000 immigrants entered Ontario in 2002, with 61% possessing some postsecondary education or occupational training. A continuation of this trend translates into over 80,000 immigrants with postsecondary education and other forms of training coming to Ontario annually.<sup>9</sup>

Unfortunately, many highly educated and skilled immigrants experience barriers that delay or prevent entry into the Ontario labour market, and an estimated 60% of skilled immigrants entering Canada take jobs unrelated to their training.<sup>10</sup> The negative impact of this is enormous: the Conference Board of Canada estimates that between \$4.1 and \$5.9 billion is lost to the Canadian economy due to unrecognized qualifications, largely from internationally trained immigrants. Since Ontario's share of immigration to Canada is over 50%, this translates into an estimated loss of between \$2 billion and \$3 billion for the Ontario economy.<sup>11</sup>

While significant resources have been invested to create programs, services and supports to reduce and/or eliminate barriers faced by skilled immigrants, there is growing recognition that fundamental changes are needed to facilitate entry into the workforce.

In 2003, The Maytree Foundation published a ten point plan articulating the systemic changes needed to create meaningful and lasting change for skilled immigrants and Ontarians.<sup>12</sup> It refers to a critical role for colleges in creating and streamlining pathways for immigrants into all sectors of the labour force.

A recent longitudinal survey of immigrants to Canada found that 67% planned to further their education or retrain, despite arriving in Canada with high levels of education and international credentials.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> *Integrating Immigrant Skills into the Ontario Economy: A Ten Point Plan*, by Naomi Alboim and The Maytree Foundation. Toronto, Ideas that Matter, October 2003, p. 2.

<sup>9</sup> MTCU, 2002.

<sup>10</sup> *Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada*, Statistics Canada, September 2003.

<sup>11</sup> *Investing in Ontario's Workforce: Strong Colleges for a Strong Ontario*, Association of Colleges of Applied Arts & Technology of Ontario, January 2004, p.45.

<sup>12</sup> *Integrating Immigrant Skills into the Ontario Economy: A Ten Point Plan*, by Naomi Alboim and The Maytree Foundation. (Toronto, Ideas that Matter, October 2003)

<sup>13</sup> *Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada*, Statistics Canada, September 2003.

Colleges are in an ideal position to help expedite the pathway of internationally trained immigrants to employment: Colleges are leaders in delivering employment-focused programs and services. Ontario colleges have substantial experience in tailoring outreach, academic support and student services to the needs of specific groups. For example, some colleges work in partnership with Aboriginal communities, and others are pioneering work in distance education and e-learning to improve access for potential students in remote and rural communities. Colleges can leverage this expertise to create solutions that can help the growing numbers of internationally trained immigrants enter the labour market in their field of expertise.

## 2. Profile of Immigrants in the College System

Although the Ontario college system does not capture specific data on internationally trained immigrants, information collected by the Ontario College Application Services (OCAS) indicates growing numbers and percentages of non-Canadian-citizen college applicants and registrants. OCAS collects information on applicants and registrants who identify as non-Canadian citizens, and applicants and registrants whose mother tongue is neither English nor French.

These data categories, however, do not equate to “internationally trained immigrants” in the college system. Information on “immigrants” includes those who immigrated to Canada as children and have applied to college directly from high school: these are immigrants, but are not internationally trained. Further, information on non-Canadian citizens, by definition, excludes immigrants who have become Canadian citizens. Similarly, some of those whose mother tongue is neither English nor French may be children of immigrants, or immigrants without prior education or work experience. Finally, because the information is limited to full-time applicants and new registrants, it does not capture individuals enrolled in part-time studies through continuing education or in English/French as a Second Language programs.

Nonetheless, the information collected by OCAS provides some indication of the profile of immigrants in Ontario colleges. For example:

- In 2002, just over 8% (9,228) of accepted applicants were individuals who self-identified as non-Canadian citizens, including over 2,455 who sent supporting postsecondary documentation.
- In 2003, just over 10% (15,047) of college applicants identified themselves as non-Canadian citizens. Of those, approximately 25% (4,113) indicated they had a university education and 27% (4,393) sent in supporting postsecondary documents.
- The 2003 data shows a 16% increase of college applications from non-Canadian citizens and a 1.5% increase in non-Canadian citizen registrants since 1999. This contrasts to a 13.6% increase in Canadian applicants and a 10% increase in Canadian registrants over the same time frame.

## II. Introduction

- The 2003 data show a 44% increase in applicants (from 13,696 to 19,670) and a 35% increase in registrants (from 6,826 to 9,228) whose mother tongue is neither English nor French since 1999.
- In 2003, 60% of non-Canadian applicants (7,725) and 61% of non-Canadian new registrants (5,770) indicated that their mother tongue is other than English or French.

Drawing on the 2003 OCAS data, the CIITE Project has conservatively estimated that approximately 15,000 internationally trained immigrants applied to college and 6,400 were registered as new students that year.

It is important to note that the percentages of internationally trained immigrants vary significantly from one college to another, and from program to program within a college. In colleges with large proportions of internationally trained applicants and students, the impact of developing and delivering customized programs and services for this cohort is immense.

**Appendix 13** presents additional information from the OCAS data.

### 3. College System Capacity

#### a) Diversity

Colleges are ideally positioned to facilitate immigrants' entrance into employment. As the percentage of immigrants within the Ontario workforce increases, the need for colleges to address the needs of internationally trained immigrants will become an even more pressing issue.

However, the needs of internationally trained immigrants are extremely diverse. Since internationally trained immigrants cannot be defined as a homogenous block of students, their needs are hard to quantify. Even when sizable groups of students present similar learning needs within a program, group demographics can change with each new influx of internationally trained immigrants so that no one program, such as the CARE bridging program for internationally-trained nurses, can address everyone's needs. As a result, identifying trends or capturing a "snapshot" of the current demographics of internationally trained immigrants is extremely difficult.

The college student population, as a whole, is becoming more diverse. The number of adult learners in the college system is increasing, and students are more frequently demanding that their diverse needs be addressed. Systemic changes to better integrate internationally trained immigrants will benefit a wider group of students who have increasingly higher expectations that a college's services, supports and programs will address their unique needs.

## **b) Resource Issues**

Colleges have 52% more students than 15 years ago, but receive 40% less grant funding per student in constant dollars. Chronic under-funding has forced cutbacks in resources dedicated to supporting student success, including career planning, placement, financial aid, and academic and peer counselling. Development of new curriculum has been reduced. Class sizes are larger, with fewer opportunities for faculty-student interaction. Learning resources such as library technicians, library holdings and IT support are becoming increasingly inadequate, and colleges have been challenged in maintaining the currency of instructional equipment.<sup>14</sup>

Significant work is needed for colleges to provide accelerated workplace readiness and integration for internationally trained immigrants:

- Increased flexibility is needed in colleges' processes, technical infrastructure, information systems, services, supports, courses and programs.
- New products, tools, services and processes need to be developed to support a more flexible college system.

Creating the flexibility required and developing new products and processes raise significant resource issues for colleges already struggling with underfunding in sustaining existing activities and programs. Feedback from the college community indicates that the current funding models and levels of funding will be insufficient to pilot systemic change in Phase 2 or implement these changes system-wide.

## **c) System-Wide Collaboration**

In many respects Ontario colleges can be considered to be a system. Colleges are linked through established regulatory requirements, MTCU guidelines and education-related associations and affiliations. They provide similar services and programs. They participate in system-wide structures such as the Committee of Presidents, "Heads of" committees, CON\*NECT, and the Ontario College Application Services (OCAS). To the extent they can, colleges collaborate with each other on specific initiatives to meet specific objectives, such as the CIITE Project.

Notwithstanding the many linkages and similarities, each college must respond to local business and community needs and opportunities, and customize offerings for its specific market. Colleges in close proximity to each other can compete in recruiting potential students, and this sometimes limits collaboration and sharing of best practices.

Further, the range of student demographics, human resources and facilities among the 24 colleges in Ontario creates the need for flexible solutions and models for implementing standards, training and supports.

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<sup>14</sup> *Achieving High Expectations in Ontario's Postsecondary Education Sector: A Plan for Change*, ACAATO submission to the Rae Review, 2004.

Current funding structures do not provide sufficient funding for colleges to collaborate on marketing activities for prospective students or on serving the cohort of internationally trained immigrants. While colleges work collaboratively on many issues, inadequate funding means colleges often compete for students. As a result, colleges implement their business and strategic plans in a highly individualized and autonomous manner.

Increased funding would give colleges greater capacity to work together as a system in meeting the needs of internationally trained immigrants. Colleges place a priority on meeting the needs of internationally trained immigrants and they are willing to work collaboratively on solutions to meet these needs, as evidenced by the response from all 24 colleges to the CIITE Project's Request for Expressions of Interest signaling their intent to participate in a leadership or other role in Phase 2 projects.

### **d) Postsecondary Review**

The Ontario government recently commissioned The Honourable Bob Rae to review the design and funding of Ontario's postsecondary education system. The proposals outlined in Section V of this report also address design and funding issues as they affect the Ontario college system. Although the CIITE proposals have been developed to address challenges faced by internationally trained immigrants, they will benefit others in the student population as well. It is critical that the government, in considering the upcoming final report of the Postsecondary Review, take into account the need for more responsive programs and services for internationally trained immigrants as set out in this report from Phase I of the CIITE Project.

The CIITE Project would like to underscore several aspects of submission made by the Association of Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology of Ontario (ACAATO) to the Rae Review that have significance in delivering services to internationally trained immigrants:<sup>15</sup>

- Due to the fiscal realities facing Ontario's colleges, the college system is not in a position to expand capacity to the extent needed. Unless funding is improved, access to college education will be compromised, as it will not allow for the development of new approaches for creating and delivering education and skills development, and supporting a realigned delivery system.
- Organizational structures need to be established linking the Ministry of Education, especially the language training offered through school boards, and the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities. These should have the mandate to identify and address systemic barriers and improve school/college/training program pathways.
- Greater federal-provincial co-ordination and co-operation are required in program design and delivery and labour market development.

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<sup>15</sup> *Achieving High Expectations in Ontario's Postsecondary Education Sector: A Plan for Change*, ACAATO submission to the Rae Review, 2004.

## II. Introduction

- Reform of the provincial financial aid system must be a component of any strategy to increase participation from underrepresented groups who often face significant financial barriers in undertaking and completing postsecondary education.
- Establishing a student support framework must be a priority. Students obtain their postsecondary education in very different ways. An increasing number of students secure their education by attending two or more institutions and there is little reason to expect this trend to stop. Clear pathways, seamless transitions and expanded options will meet the needs of students as well as the needs of the labour market. There is increasing pressure for lifelong learning that can be accessed at many points during a career.
- Ontario needs a comprehensive credit transfer system to support these varied pathways, along with resources to improve the transfer of credits within the postsecondary sector. Pathways to higher education should include multiple entry points to facilitate access, and should recognize and value prior learning. Improving student mobility and credit transfer among postsecondary institutions will promote greater diploma and degree attainment
- A comprehensive strategy to increase participation and student success must include improved postsecondary access, pathways, apprenticeship and support, particularly for underserved and immigrant populations. It must offer career-focused education to meet the evolving knowledge and skills demands of the workplace, and it must increase participation without sacrificing quality.
- Access means more than gaining entry to college. Access also means maximizing the potential of students to successfully complete their college program and gain employment.
- Improving access to postsecondary education will have little effect if students cannot persevere and succeed in their course of study. Supports are needed to help internationally trained immigrants succeed in programs. Current funding does not allow colleges to fully address issues such as language and cultural diversity, which support success in programs.

## C. Methodology

The purpose of the CIITE Project has been to identify ways in which Ontario's 24 colleges can facilitate the progress of internationally trained immigrants toward labour market integration. This section describes the methodology used in Phase I of the CIITE Project.

The overall goal of the information gathering process was to involve the college community and key stakeholders, to the extent possible, to ensure that the data accurately reflected the realities and perspectives of the college system and key stakeholders.

### I. Project Structure

#### a) College Presidents

The presidents of Centennial College, Fanshawe College, George Brown College, and Joan Homer, CEO of ACAATO, served as lead representatives for Phase I of the CIITE Project. Regular briefings were held over the course of the year and these individuals provided strategic advice and direction to the CIITE Project, and regular project updates to the Committee of Presidents.

#### b) Steering Committee

A Steering Committee of senior college officials was established to oversee Phase I of the CIITE Project and to provide direction to the project team. The steering committee also participated in regular briefings to the lead presidents and prioritized project recommendations.

#### c) Education System Advisory Committee: Overview Group and Working Groups

An Educational System Advisory Committee (ESAC) was established to review and analyze current college structures, processes and programs, to confirm what works well, and to identify gaps and barriers.

Four subject-specific Working Groups were established to focus on college entry, language issues, program delivery and employment transition. The composition of the Working Groups facilitated information gathering from knowledgeable people in the college system, relevant government departments, industry, community agencies and other interested stakeholder groups.

The Chair of each of the four Working Groups also served as a member of the Overview Group. The goal of the Overview Group was to create a complete, integrated implementation plan and examine the final proposals being recommended to government. The findings of each Working Group were rolled up to the Overview Group who reviewed a blueprint specific to each area examined by the Working Groups.

Twenty-one of the 24 Ontario colleges contributed to the ESAC discussions. Over 140 college representatives attended ESAC Overview and Working Group meetings, with over 1,300 hours of in-kind contributions to the ESAC.<sup>16</sup> Due to this unanticipated volume of college system engagement, the processes for consultation originally outlined in the proposal were modified.

### **d) Leadership Council**

A Leadership Council was established to provide a strategic overview of college system issues and identify key considerations from other stakeholders such as employers, occupational regulatory bodies and organizations representing the interests of internationally trained immigrants.

The Leadership Council reviewed the projects proposed for funding consideration and provided advice about the criteria to be used to select projects for implementation. Their role as champion for Phase I has been critical to the success of this phase of the project.

The Committee of Presidents established the membership of college presidents on the Leadership Council: the presidents of the three lead colleges and presidents from Cambrian College, La Cité collégiale, Mohawk College and Seneca College.

## **2. Research**

Research was conducted from January 2004 to November 2004. It included a review of background reports, relevant websites and college calendars, and consultations with stakeholders. These consultations included meetings of the ESAC Working Groups, meetings of the Leadership Council, and focus groups with employers and internationally trained immigrants. Additional and supplemental data was collected through liaison with college contacts and key stakeholders, and through primary research.

## **3. Focus Groups with Internationally Trained Immigrants**

The CIITE Project conducted seven focus group sessions with a total of 60 internationally trained immigrants who had an experience with an Ontario community college. These sessions were held at ACCES (Scarborough), COSTI (Vaughan), Skills for Change (Toronto), Humber College (Etobicoke), Centennial College (Scarborough), Fanshawe College (London) and La Cité collégiale (Ottawa).

The CIITE Project also observed two focus groups, including a total of 40 internationally trained immigrants, held in October as part of the Access Centre's strategy to serve internationally trained immigrants at George Brown College.

The input from approximately 100 internationally trained immigrants from diverse countries of origin, and educational and professional backgrounds helped the project team

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<sup>16</sup> See Appendix 4: ESAC Working Groups.

better understand the immigrant perspective and confirmed the experiences of internationally trained immigrants in Ontario's college system.

**Appendix 6** lists the questions used in the focus groups with internationally trained immigrants. **Appendix 7** presents a summary of findings and recommendations from these focus groups.

## **4. Focus Groups with Employers and Occupational Regulatory Bodies**

The CIITE Project conducted focus groups with employers, including representatives from occupational regulatory bodies, human resources and recruitment professionals, and small business owners. This input cemented the CIITE Project's understanding of employer perspectives and prompted exploration of supports that would facilitate moving more internationally trained immigrants into the Ontario labour force.

**Appendix 8** lists the questions used with employer focus groups. **Appendix 9** presents a summary of findings and recommendations from the employer focus groups.

## **5. Surveys**

Surveys were distributed to all 24 Ontario colleges in April 2004 and May 2004, addressed to the college contacts representing College Entry and Employment Transition issues. Contacts representing language issues were not surveyed since a significant amount of background information was already available in this area. Program Delivery contacts were not surveyed as this area was deemed too extensive to survey within the limited resources of the project.

Sixteen completed surveys for College Entry and 11 for Employment Transitions provided data that was then supplemented by selected telephone surveys.

The College Entry survey asked college contacts, including Registrars, to outline practices relating to college entry for Canadian applicants and internationally trained immigrant applicants. The survey captured data on the basic recruitment and admissions practices. Additional data was collected through liaison with college contacts and key stakeholders.

The Employment Transition survey asked college contacts to outline the current practices of employment preparation, including Job Connect, job shadowing, mentoring, apprenticeship training and career centers, and co-op and workplace experience opportunities.

## **6. Interim Reports**

The CIITE Project submitted five progress reports to the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities. In addition, the CIITE Project submitted a *Preliminary Findings Report* in September 2004 summarizing the data gathered to that date and providing analysis to

identify key elements for systemic change. In November 2004, the CIITE Project submitted a *Scope Report* articulating key barriers for internationally trained immigrants and suggesting draft initiatives to address them.

## 7. Communication

Information about the project was provided to internal and external stakeholders through regular e-mail bulletins, presentations and briefings.

In addition to communicating to college staff through the ESAC Working Groups, the CIITE Project provided additional communication vehicles through which interested parties could learn about the project, contribute ideas or provide feedback to ESAC. The project website provided a forum for reviewing project information. The contacts identified for each college received regular e-mail updates on ESAC activities, notification when working documents were posted on the project website, and requests for feedback and input from through e-mail and web forums.

The College Student Alliance was briefed about the project in February 2004. They distributed information bulletins to their members at their annual general meeting in July 2004.

CON\*NECT provided project updates through its regular newsletter to the colleges.

**Appendix 5** presents details regarding CIITE presentations and communications materials.

## 8. Analysis of Priorities

The ESAC Working Groups delivered over 120 recommendations for suggested initiatives<sup>17</sup> to advance the college system toward the new vision and concept model. The process of moving forward from these recommendations to delivering sequenced priority initiatives included:

- Facilitated deliberation through ESAC Working Group meetings to narrow the number of suggested initiatives;
- Facilitated Steering Committee deliberation on priorities occurring in parallel with discussions on the development of priority initiative selection criteria;
- Facilitated Leadership Council review and confirmation of the eight priority initiatives and submission of suggestions for initiative-sequencing given unknown funding envelope; and
- Development of sequenced priorities into draft proposal initiatives for implementation in Phase 2.

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<sup>17</sup> See VI. Key Findings.

## **9. Requests for Expressions of Interest**

The November *Scope Report* identified a number of initiatives. CON\*NECT sent Requests for Expressions of Interest in these initiatives to all colleges to assess the level of support for, and interest in, the projects recommended for Phase 2 of the CIITE Project. All 24 colleges expressed an interest in participating in these projects.

The level of college participation in Phase I exceeded original project expectations, and resulted in process changes to key activities undertaken in Phase I to accommodate and capitalize on that interest. As an example, while ESAC was originally envisioned as having representation from the three lead colleges, 21 of Ontario's 24 colleges sent representation. The CIITE Project did not anticipate engagement at that level until Phase 3. As a result, however, this wide representation enabled ESAC to take into account input from colleges across the province.

# III. VISION AND CONCEPT MODEL

## A. Vision

A vision and concept model were developed in consultation with the Educational System Advisory Committee and Leadership Council. They form a recommended framework for designing and implementing initiatives to enhance and expedite pathways to employment through Ontario colleges for internationally trained immigrants.

The overarching vision is:

**Internationally trained immigrants have access to programs and services in the Ontario college system that build on their qualifications and expedite their securing employment in their field of expertise or in a related field.**

The key features of the vision are:

- Internationally trained immigrants have access to information, advice and services tailored to their specific education and employment needs.
- Internationally trained immigrants have access to assessments of their academic credentials, prior learning and language in a standardized, effective, efficient, transparent and timely manner.
- Internationally trained immigrants have access to language programs that assist them in attaining the level of English or French proficiency required for success in their educational programs and the workplace.
- Internationally trained immigrants have access to college programs and services that build on their existing skills and add only the components they require, such as workplace communication and other supports as needed.
- Internationally trained immigrants have access to specialized bridging opportunities to upgrade their skills or fill skill gaps where existing programs of instruction are not appropriate.
- Employers have access to internationally trained immigrants in whom they have confidence based on skills, experience and successful completion of college training.
- Educators, employers, regulators, community groups, service providers and governments work in partnership on solutions to improve access to employment for internationally trained immigrants.
- College funding methods and sources, financial assistance programs, and government policies reflect the importance of the college system to the success of internationally trained immigrants in the labour market.
- Colleges adopt system-wide and customized solutions to serve internationally trained immigrants based on local needs.

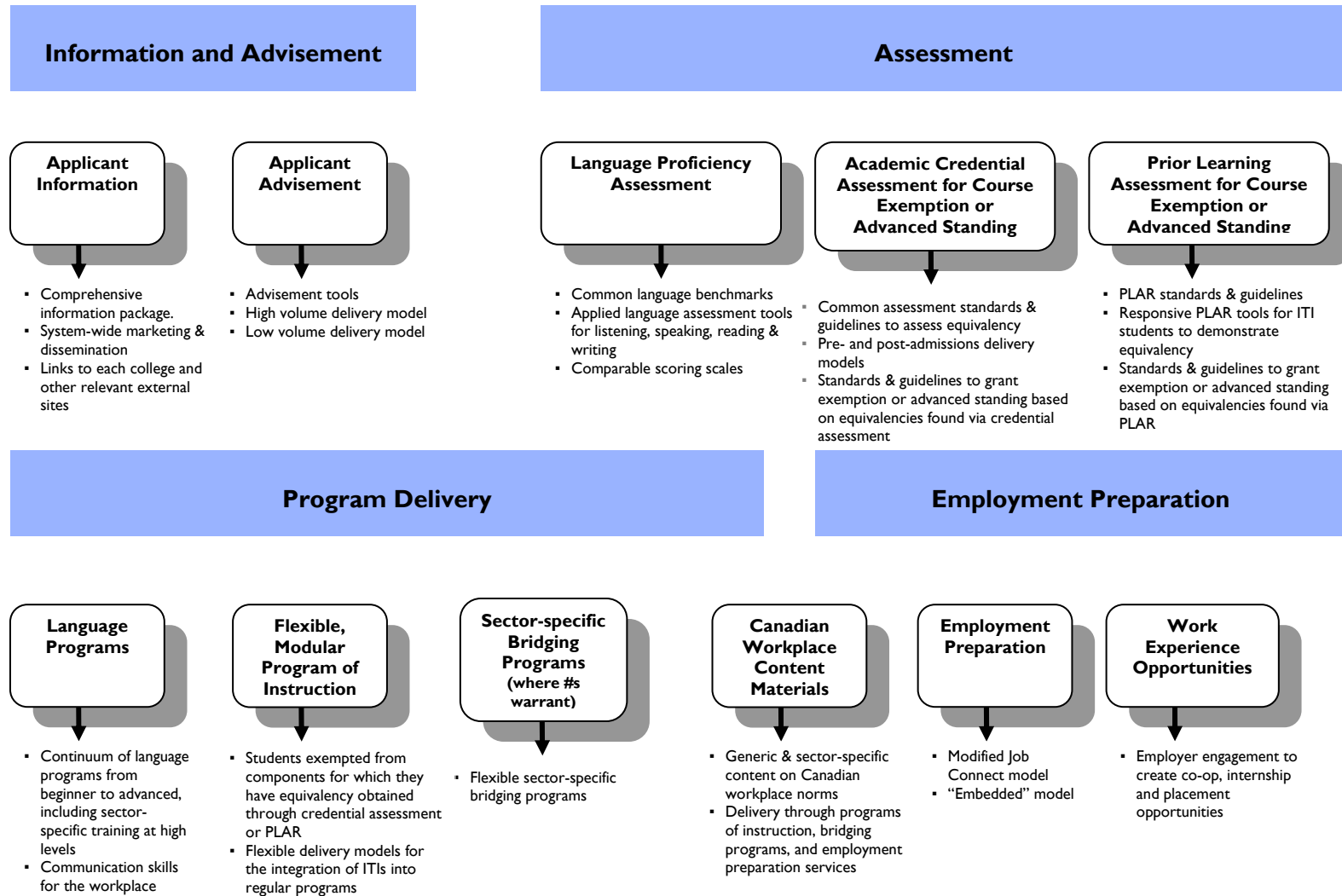
## **B. Concept Model**

The CIITE Project developed a concept model for achieving the vision for internationally trained immigrants in the college system. The components of the model are the linked building blocks required to undertake the changes that will move Ontario's college system toward the vision.

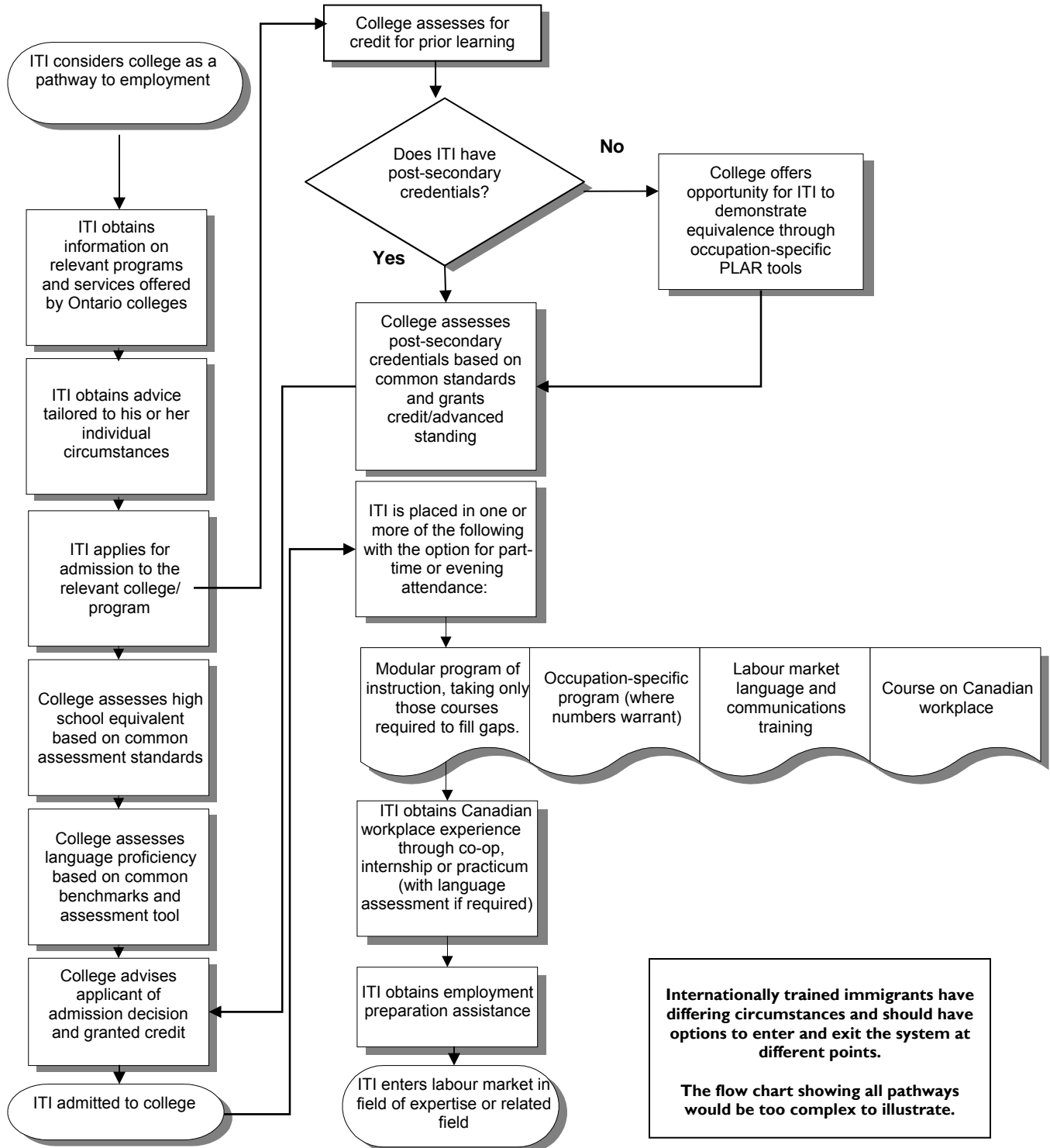
This model will be tested through the proposed projects outlined later in this report, and will be evaluated for viability and sustainability at the end of Phase 2. A staged implementation approach is a critical component to successfully moving toward the new model.

The Concept Model is presented below, along with a flow chart illustrating one example of how an internationally trained immigrant could move through the college system under this Concept Model. It should be noted, however, that internationally trained immigrants have differing circumstances and should be able to enter and exit the system at points that suit their individual circumstances. A flow chart showing all pathways would be too complex to illustrate.

**Figure I.0 CONCEPT MODEL: COLLEGE PROGRAMS AND SERVICES FOR INTERNATIONALLY TRAINED IMMIGRANTS**



**Figure 2.0 Sample Flow Chart Illustrating One Pathway Through College**



## C. Out of Scope Activities

The potential Phase 2 projects outlined in this report are all deemed to be within the scope of the CIITE Project since they are largely within the control or influence of the college system.

Initiatives determined to be out of scope for Phase 2 include:

- Addressing eligibility requirements for student loans;
- Delivering referrals to college programs and services by community organizations;
- Delivering referrals to college programs and services by occupational regulatory bodies;
- Delivering advisement services prior to immigration;
- Examining employer recruiting policies, practices, approaches and results;
- Modifying federally and provincially funded language training programs; and
- Exploring other types of support activities that can be delivered to internationally trained immigrants before they arrive in Canada.

## IV. IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

### A. Implementation Approach

Phase 2 of the CIITE Project will be instrumental in moving the college system toward the vision and concept model outlined in the previous section. The projects recommended for Phase 2 implementation need to be selected strategically in order to maximize their potential impact. The CIITE Project has taken the following approach regarding Phase 2 implementation:

- Reviewed all ideas suggested during the consultation;<sup>18</sup>
- Identified those ideas that appeared to offer the greatest potential for testing or implementing components of the concept model;
- Defined the criteria for selecting priority projects for Phase 2 implementation; and
- Applied these criteria to the list of potential initiatives to identify projects for Phase 2, and projects for implementation during future stages.<sup>19</sup>

College response to our Request for Expressions of Interest to participate in Phase 2 projects was again overwhelming, with all 24 colleges expressing their interest in the next stage. This level of engagement demonstrates that the college system truly supports and wants to undertake changes that will deliver increased service levels to internationally trained immigrants, provided that government financial support for implementation is present.

Moving toward the launch of Phase 2 following the submission of this report, the CIITE Project intends to:

- Finalize detailed project proposals through discussions with MTCU;
- Identify lead and participating colleges through discussions with colleges and MTCU; and
- Determine the occupations or sectors for the various pilot projects through discussions with colleges and MTCU; and
- Determine, and recommend to MTCU, a project management structure and resource requirements for Phase 2, arising from the structures and roles of those colleges participating in Phase 2 projects.

The CIITE Project sees implementation as a logical progression of a consultative process. Before finalizing their commitment to participate in specific pilot projects, colleges need

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<sup>18</sup> See Section VI. Key Findings

<sup>19</sup> See Section V: Project Proposals

#### IV. Implementation Strategy

to be informed about the government's response in principle and need to understand the funding that will be available for project implementation. At the same time, government needs clarification about which colleges will be participating, their proposed roles in Phase 2 projects, and the scope of the proposed activities in each project. As a result, discussions with MTCU and colleges need to address system-wide and project-specific issues with a clear framework for funding and implementation.

This iterative approach will ensure that moving the college system toward the concept model will be manageable, and will provide an impact across the participating colleges and sectors. The sequence in which the pilot projects are implemented is important in moving the system toward significant and lasting change that will benefit internationally trained immigrants.

## B. Assumptions

Using a consultative process, the CIITE Project made the following assumptions in developing the recommendations:

- The project goal is to eliminate barriers facing internationally trained immigrants in the college system at every stage from pre-entry to employment transition;<sup>20</sup>
- Internationally trained immigrants are not a homogeneous population. They need flexibility to access customized training to suit their individual work experiences, occupations and life situations;
- A system-wide effort needs to be undertaken to provide the necessary programs and services to optimize employability for internationally trained immigrants in their field of expertise or in a related field;
- Colleges need to commit to improving service standards for internationally trained immigrants;
- Colleges need to structure delivery programs services and supports to best suit the local needs of internationally trained immigrants. Solutions that work for colleges serving a large proportion of internationally trained immigrants, for example, may not be feasible or desirable in colleges serving a smaller proportion;
- Integrating internationally trained immigrants into regular programs and adapting or building on the effective components of these programs is preferred over segregating internationally trained immigrants into programs designed specifically for them. Integration into regular programs offers exposure to Canadian culture, language practice, a diverse set of peers and communication norms. There are, however, circumstances in which learning outcomes can be achieved more effectively by offering specialized bridging programs to internationally trained immigrants;
- Pursuing possible opportunities for partnership will facilitate providing optimal services for internationally trained immigrants. Possible partners include other colleges, other educational institutions, community organizations, representatives from the private sector and occupational regulatory bodies; and
- Each Phase 2 project will include a data management component and specific performance indicators that will measure quantitative and qualitative outcomes.

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<sup>20</sup> For the purposes of this report, “pre-entry” is defined as any time prior to a student being registered in a specific college program.

## C. Selection Criteria

The CIITE Project recommends the following approach to selecting priority projects for implementation:<sup>21</sup>

### 1. Sustainability

- Give priority to projects that:
  - Will provide a lasting benefit;
  - Support the collaborative work of the colleges to change major systems;
  - Will increase the capacity of colleges to continue the work by establishing innovative funding models or support structures; and
  - Will maintain momentum and provide a spotlight on progress.

### 2. Transferability

- Select projects where the learning can be shared and utilized widely across the college system.
- Select at least one project that includes a non-regulated occupation, one that includes a regulated profession, and one that includes a trade so that successful pilots can be adapted to other occupations in all three categories.
- Select one or more projects that include Francophone immigrants to test solutions that address their special needs and that can be adapted by colleges serving that community.

### 3. Early Impact

- Select one or more projects that will produce early impact for internationally trained immigrants and employers. Quick successes will provide concrete benefits in the short-term while helping to build buy-in for longer-term initiatives.
- Choose sectors for pilot testing new models based on supply/demand.

### 4. Leadership and Capacity

- Select projects where colleges have self-identified as potential leads through the Request for Expressions of Interest process.
- Lead means willing to take leadership and management of the project

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<sup>21</sup> See V: Proposed Projects: those recommended for Phase 2 implementation, and those to be implemented at a later stage.

#### IV. Implementation Strategy

- Active means would like to actively participate in project activities but do not want to assume a leadership role.
- Interested means want to assign a representative to participate in information-sharing activities only.
- Select colleges where capacity and previous experience exist to undertake the project or where new demand requires a college response.

### **5. Government Partnership**

- Select projects that complement provincial and federal government initiatives and priorities in order to achieve shared objectives and maximize funding potential.
- Encourage collaboration and involve all relevant stakeholders since both levels of government play important roles in areas such as credential recognition, information provision, and language programs.

# V. PROJECT PROPOSALS

## A. Context

The CIITE Project has prepared preliminary proposals for projects recommended for implementation as pilot projects in Phase 2. Following discussion with MTCU, the CIITE Project will submit detailed proposals and budget estimates for each pilot project.

Additional discussion with colleges and MTCU will help identify lead and participating colleges, and the occupations or sectors for the pilot projects. Preference will be given to establishing pilots in sectors or occupations that are in high demand by internationally trained immigrants and are experiencing labour market shortages.

Each preliminary proposal includes:

- **Description:** A brief description of the recommended pilot project;
- **Rationale:** The rationale for the pilot project based on CIITE findings about challenges for internationally trained immigrants and for the college system;
- **Links to Selection Criteria:** How the pilot project meets the selection criteria, including an indication of the number of colleges interested in leading or participating in the pilot;
- **Scope of Potential Activities:** The key activities anticipated for the pilot project, and which will be refined further in the detailed proposals. Activities common to each proposed project include:
  - Establishing the pilot project infrastructure and team;
  - Identifying linkages with other internal and external projects, organizations and stakeholders;
  - Creating communication structures and processes to facilitate collaboration and sharing of findings;
  - Defining processes for data gathering, management, evaluation and reporting on performance measurements;
  - Sharing learning, practices and support materials that can be modified or adopted more broadly across the system; and
  - Recommending next steps and future initiatives that will build on the outcomes of the pilot projects and will lead the college system further toward the concept model.
- **Potential Impact:** The potential impact of the project on internationally trained immigrants, colleges, and other students; and
- **Performance Measures:** Preliminary ideas for performance measures to evaluate success.

## **B. Advisement Models Proposal**

### **1. Description**

This initiative entails pilot testing two models for delivery of advisement services: one in colleges with a large proportion of internationally trained immigrant applicants and students, and the other in colleges with a small proportion of internationally trained immigrant applicants and students. The models will include a range of delivery methods such as one-on-one, group, phone, internet and e-mail contact.

### **2. Rationale**

Internationally trained immigrants often have difficulty finding a knowledgeable person to advise them regarding program choices, application and admission processes, and in-program academic concerns. Areas where internationally trained immigrants need advice include obtaining recognition for educational credentials or prior experience, applying for course exemption or advanced standing, identifying language training needs, and selecting the most appropriate college programs, including bridging or language programs.

Because the operating grant each college receives is based on the number of enrolled students, there is no discrete funding for providing information and advice to individuals prior to college entry. This contributes to the lack of capacity colleges possess to provide effective advisement services to internationally trained immigrants, especially prior to admission. College staffing resources are used inefficiently when internationally trained immigrants have to contact college staff in several departments to obtain information to address their questions and concerns.

Different colleges have different populations of internationally trained immigrant pre-applicants, applicants and students. As a result, developmental work is required to design and implement efficient, cost-effective and flexible models for delivering advisement services that address the differences in college populations.

### **3. Links to Selection Criteria**

#### **a) Transferability**

Advisement models can be modified and adopted by other colleges.

#### **b) Sustainability**

Colleges will develop increased capacity through cost-effective models for delivering advisement services.

### **c) Early Impact**

Internationally trained immigrants will locate the correct pathway more quickly.

### **d) Leadership**

The RFI responses indicated the following number of colleges with an interest in participating in this area: Lead: 4 Active: 6 Interested: 4.

## **4. Scope of Potential Activities**

### **a) Gather Data**

- Gather details on existing advisement processes, self-assessment tools and college web-based supports that are relevant to pilot advisement models.
- Review current college websites to determine their usefulness in providing information for and answering questions specific to internationally trained immigrants.
- Make recommendations about the feasibility of online advisement based on this review.

### **b) Develop Support Materials**

- Develop materials and tools for advisement services that will provide specific information to help internationally trained immigrants with entry to and progress through the college, and these materials may be able to be used with other applicants and students.
- Develop training materials and supports for the pilot advisement models to help college staff implement and sustain these advisement models.

### **c) Establish Project Teams to Develop Advisement Delivery Models**

- Identify members of project teams to develop the two advisement delivery models: one for colleges serving large populations of internationally trained immigrants, and one for colleges serving small populations of internationally trained immigrants.
- Develop and pilot two models for delivering advisement services using the above products: one pilot in one or more colleges with a large proportion of internationally trained immigrant applicants and students, and the second in one or more colleges with a smaller proportion of internationally trained immigrant applicants and students. Provide a range of delivery methods such as one-on-one, phone, internet and email contact.
- Confirm participation of other organizations, such as community agencies, that provide advisement services to immigrants to better identify and track co-

ordination opportunities with these organizations. Co-ordination could differ among communities or regions.

#### **d) Share Results and Tools**

- Based on pilot results, finalize and provide access for all colleges to the online applicant advisement guide(s), training for front-line staff and a guide to the delivering the different models.
- Develop prototype training materials and supports for rollout of pilot advisement models to other colleges.
- Develop recommendations on how the continuum of advisement supports can be maintained, modified and adopted college-wide.
- Identify the funding needed to deliver these new advisement models on an ongoing basis.

### **5. Potential Impact**

#### **a) For Internationally Trained Immigrants**

- Trained and knowledgeable college staff will be available to help internationally trained immigrants determine the college programs and services that best meet their needs, and identify the steps required to participate in them.
- Enhanced advice delivery will reduce the time and money that internationally trained immigrants spend in investigating and participating in programs that are inappropriate to their needs, will help internationally trained immigrants make more informed decisions about college programs, and will lead to higher success rates.

#### **b) For Colleges**

- Colleges will have access to models for delivery of cost-effective advisement services in settings with large and small proportions of internationally trained immigrants. Better advisement can potentially direct internationally trained immigrants to college programs more appropriate to their education, experience and employment needs. This will help each college better focus its enrolment strategy, and colleges will experience improved KPI results and graduation rates.

#### **c) For Other Students**

- Enhancing capacity for advisement services can potentially benefit any college applicant or student.

## **6. Performance Measurements**

Potential performance measurements include:

- The satisfaction levels, as reported by internationally trained immigrants, with the advisement services provided during the pilot period; “satisfaction” to be defined with input from internationally trained immigrants; and
- The number and percentage of “advisees” who register for a college course or program and their success rates, including persistence from one semester to the next semester, and rate of program completion.

## **C. Credential Assessment and Advanced Standing Proposal**

### **1. Description**

This proposal entails defining standards and guidelines for assessing international academic credentials, and processes for determining advanced standing and course exemption.

The standards, guidelines and processes will be used to pilot a pre- and post-admissions assessment model and an advanced standing process model in selected regulated and non-regulated occupations that are in high demand.

### **2. Rationale**

Credible, consistent and timely evaluations of international academic credentials are essential for the admissions process and for determining credits individuals can be granted through advanced standing or course exemption.

Internationally trained immigrants are disadvantaged by the lack of consistent assessment standards and guidelines in the college system, and because assessment for advanced standing or course exemption does not take place until after an applicant is admitted to a college program. At present, individual faculty or faculty co-ordinators are left to develop standards and guidelines for determining how equivalencies should be assessed for college credit.

While it would be helpful for assessments to occur prior to acceptance into a college program, colleges lack the resources required to determine advanced standing/course exemption for all applicants during the admissions process. Many applicants apply to several colleges or programs, and it is cost-prohibitive to carry out multiple assessments for those who do not enrol.

Granting advanced standing based on the results of a Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR), or academic credential assessment, means a student will be able to take fewer courses and may no longer be enrolled on a full-time basis. However, when a student moves from full-time to part-time status, colleges receive proportionally less funding for that student. This produces a financial disincentive for colleges since increased access to course exemptions may lead to part-time enrolment at the expense of full-time enrolment.

Another barrier exists in some regulated professions, where academic credentials that are accepted as equivalent to Ontario standards by the relevant occupational regulatory body may not be accepted by a college, or vice versa.

### **3. Links to Selection Criteria**

#### **a) Transferability**

Standards and guidelines can be adapted in non-regulated occupations, regulated professions and trades. Other colleges wanting to institute pre- or post-admissions processes will be able to adapt the pilot assessment models.

#### **b) Sustainability**

This project will support increased collaboration since colleges must work together, and this will lead to system change. New cost structures that will facilitate sustainability will be documented and available to all colleges.

#### **c) Early Impact**

With enhanced credential recognition and reduced duplication of previous learning for the occupations in the pilot models, more internationally trained immigrants will be able to pursue employment sooner.

#### **d) Leadership**

The RFI responses identified the following number of colleges indicating an interest in participating in this area: Lead: 4 Active: 4 Interested: 4.

### **4. Scope of Potential Activities**

#### **a) Gather Data**

- Gather data from existing college-based bridging programs to identify best practices and costs associated with credential assessments.
- Compile existing resources, including online, CD-based and paper-based, and identify opportunities to provide colleges with access to consistent resource and reference materials regarding credential assessment, and granting of advanced standing and course exemption.
- Define the scope of, and create standards and guidelines for, credential assessment, and processes for granting advanced standing and course exemption.
- Build on established national and international standards to develop college standards about the timing and process for credential assessment.
- Develop guidelines on how and when external service providers can help with all or part of the credential assessment.
- Develop minimum service level agreements across the college system to ensure accessibility and quality of assessments, and determine timeframes for delivery.

- Develop training and supports for college personnel, such as admissions staff and academic personnel, involved in the credential assessment process.
- Work with one or more occupational regulatory bodies to agree on joint assessment standards that will be accepted by the college system and the regulatory body.

#### **b) Test a Pre-admissions Pilot Assessment Process**

- Design and test assessment processes that can be used prior to admission so candidates can determine which courses can be omitted from their program of instruction before they enter college.
- Gather data on cost structures and implementation issues.

#### **c) Test a Post-admissions Pilot Assessment Process**

- Design and test assessment processes that can be used after the admission process is completed.
- Gather data to compare cost structures and implementation issues with those of the pre-admissions pilot.

#### **d) Evaluate Results and Expand Models**

- Evaluate how the students involved in the pilot assessment processes are progressing in their programs in order to validate the credit granted.
- Document the cost structures, sustainability issues and implementation guidelines for using the pre-admissions and post-admissions models for other occupations and programs.
- Expand the models to other colleges and occupations, drawing on the results from the test pilots.

### **5. Potential Impact**

#### **a) For Internationally Trained Immigrants**

- Internationally trained immigrants will have access to improved, fair, timely and transparent processes for obtaining course exemptions and advanced standing. This will prevent duplication of learning and expedite their pathway to employment.

### **b) For Colleges**

- Colleges will have an increased capacity to assess academic credentials and grant exemptions and advanced standing to internationally trained immigrants. They will be able to use a pre- or post-admissions<sup>22</sup> model.
- Processes for credential assessment and credit granting will enable colleges to make progress toward improving credit transfer/recognition between institutions in response to growing demand.
- Colleges, regulators and employers will have increased confidence in the equivalency between international credentials and Ontario standards.

### **c) For Other Students**

- Improved, transparent credential assessment and course exemption processes will create a significant benefit for all students who have academic credentials from other colleges, universities, provinces or countries. The basic principles of evaluating equivalencies for postsecondary programs are the same regardless of the origin of those credentials.

## **6. Performance Measurements**

Potential performance measurements include:

- The number of internationally trained immigrants, faculty and employers who have greater confidence in the quality of credential assessments.
- The increased number of internationally trained immigrants who are granted individual credit, course exemption or advanced standing.

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<sup>22</sup> For the purposes of this document, “pre-admissions” is defined to be any time prior to admission to a college.

## **D. Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) Proposal**

### **1. Description**

This proposal entails preparing a business case for alternative funding models to promote sustainable models of Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR).

Informed by the business case, discussions with the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities will focus on how the funding structure could be modified to encourage colleges to increase access to and delivery of PLAR.

Based on the outcomes of these discussions, the next stage will be to propose initiatives to identify and pilot PLAR models, methodologies and tools that will be responsive to the needs of internationally trained immigrant.

### **2. Rationale**

Internationally trained immigrants who lack the academic credentials to justify a course exemption or advanced standing may, nonetheless, have the skills and knowledge equivalent to one or more of the courses in the program. The only way to demonstrate their competence, and thus avoid taking unnecessary courses, is to undergo a prior learning/competency-based assessment. However, opportunities for internationally trained immigrants in the college system to obtain prior learning assessments are limited, and not well publicized.

Ontario colleges lack guidelines and updated tools for conducting prior learning assessments. In some instances, the tools used in conducting a prior learning assessment are not sufficiently responsive to cultural factors or the level of language proficiency.

The most significant factor, however, is that existing funding to colleges is insufficient to adequately cover the costs of providing prior-learning assessments. Some colleges do not offer or promote PLAR services because they are too costly to sustain.

The CIITE Project recommends preparing a business case and engaging in discussions with MTCU on modifications to the funding structure to remove disincentives for engaging in prior learning assessments as an essential first step, rather than proposing the development of guidelines, tools or pilots at this time. This avoids developing and piloting prior learning assessment processes which would be unsustainable under the current funding structure.

### **3. Links to Selection Criteria**

#### **a) Sustainability**

Establishing alternative funding models will give colleges more capacity to address PLAR needs. PLAR activities are not sustainable without changes to the funding model. As a result, discussions about funding alternatives need to precede development of pilot PLAR models and tools.

#### **b) Government Partnership**

Colleges will collaborate with government on funding models to promote PLAR activities.

#### **c) Leadership**

The RFI responses identified the number of colleges indicating an interest in participating in this area: Lead: 5 Active: 8 Interested: 5.

### **4. Scope of Potential Activities**

#### **a) Prepare a Business Case for Alternative Funding Models**

The business case needs to identify alternative funding models that promote sustainable PLAR processes and are tied to regular programs of instruction.

- Identify cost structures of PLAR processes used in current programs.
- Conduct a cost-benefit analysis of using PLAR methodologies in programs for which PLAR is in high demand.
- Recommend how sustainable funding and support for PLAR can be institutionalized where warranted.

#### **b) Initiate Discussions about Feasibility of Possible Alternatives**

- Explore, with MTCU, modifications to the funding structure to encourage colleges to engage in PLAR.
- Engage in discussions with the Colleges Branch of MTCU about modifications to the funding structure to allow colleges to engage in PLAR.

#### **c) Recommend PLAR Projects for Subsequent Implementation**

Depending on the outcomes of the discussions with MTCU, recommend future projects that include:

- Developing supports and tools for internationally trained immigrants and staff in conducting PLAR (e.g. course in portfolio development);
- Designing a process for updating PLAR tools;

- Piloting test PLAR models in high demand sectors; and
- Preparing a practical guide for colleges on the use of PLAR.

## **5. Potential Impact**

### **a) For Internationally Trained Immigrants**

- Internationally trained immigrants will gain a forum where they can demonstrate their skills and knowledge in order to be granted a course exemption or advanced standing.

### **b) For Colleges**

- Colleges will have an increased capacity to provide cost-effective, sustainable PLAR services. Colleges will have access to better information on the PLAR methodologies that are most effective.

### **c) For Other Students**

- Enhancing PLAR capacity means all adult learners will benefit from opportunities to obtain recognition and credit for prior learning.

## **6. Performance Measurements**

Potential performance measurements include developing a funding model that allows colleges to deliver PLAR.

## E. Language Proficiency Proposal

### 1. Description

This proposal entails testing and adopting common language benchmarks; modifying, testing and adopting language assessment tools for purposes of admission, placement and referral; and testing and adopting new approaches to labour market language programming. In addition, a series of symposia will be convened to build a common understanding of language benchmarks, assessment tools and programming.

### 2. Rationale

The lack of consistent benchmarks and assessment tools for all language skill areas - reading, writing, speaking, listening - makes it difficult for internationally trained immigrants to be placed in language programs that will help them acquire the proficiency needed to succeed in their language programming, program of instruction, or bridging program. The lack of communication skills in the context of the Canadian workplace makes it difficult for internationally trained immigrants to obtain work placement or employment.

While basic through advanced levels of ESL/FSL programming are available in most colleges, internationally trained immigrants have expressed concern about the range of costs for language courses or programs.

The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities considers ESL/FSL language programming to be skills development rather than postsecondary programming. As a result, MTCU funds ESL/FSL programming in the tuition-short category.<sup>23</sup> Colleges receive less funding for courses delivered under the tuition-short model than for postsecondary programs. This means colleges may need to charge higher tuition to cover the costs of these courses, or they may invest less in developing ESL/FSL programming, such as creating or expanding sector-specific language training.

In addition, there is not sufficient access to labour market-driven or sector-specific language programming in Ontario colleges.

Ontario colleges do not use common language benchmarks. A language benchmark is a standard against which a student's language proficiency can be measured. Language benchmarks may be used as a reference point in relation to any, or all, of a student's listening, speaking, reading and writing skills.

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<sup>23</sup> A program generally less than 52 weeks in duration, designed to prepare students for employment or career advancement or to provide vocational updating or academic upgrading, and normally leads to a certificate as defined in the Credentials Framework (MTCU 2003).

However, some colleges, employers, regulatory bodies and language-program deliverers are starting to use the Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB) to capture language proficiency. Red River College in Manitoba, for example, has used CLB extensively for second language assessment, curriculum development, and in describing occupational language proficiency requirements. As well as benchmarking the college's own language placement tests, researchers at Red River College have established benchmarks of the language proficiency required for some of its vocational programs and corresponding occupations and workplaces.

Ontario colleges have generally not adopted the CLB system and generally lag colleges in other provinces in applying CLB in programming, particularly in the postsecondary area. Colleges vary widely in their knowledge of, and capacity to review and apply, the CLB to ESL programming.

The lack of a standard language benchmarking system affects Ontario colleges because:

- It limits the fine-tuning of diagnostic evaluations of the language skills of internationally trained immigrants, thereby affecting their placement in language programs;
- It limits opportunities for internationally trained immigrants to move among different language training programs opportunities; and
- It restricts the ability of colleges to share language programs, since benchmarks facilitate a common understanding of shared standards for program entry and outcomes.

Language assessment tools test a student's proficiency against a benchmark. Current tools test only academic language proficiency (reading and writing) rather than the four language skills needed to progress through college programs and move into the workplace. As such, language assessments may determine eligibility to enter college or be placed in language courses, but may not provide necessary feedback about the individual's ability to function in the program of instruction or in the workplace. Speaking and listening skills are essential to success in the classroom and workplace. However, assessments of these skills are not often incorporated into the admissions process since the current one-on-one interview assessment technique is costly

Language programming is delivered in different ways, and is generally aimed at basic to intermediate levels of language capability. Availability varies considerably among colleges. A continuum of labour-market-focused language programming from basic to advanced language skills is required. This programming needs to be delivered as stand-alone courses or integrated into core curriculum.

### **3. Links to Selection Criteria**

#### **a) Transferability**

Benchmarks, assessment tools and language programs can be adapted by many colleges in many sectors. The symposia will provide opportunities for colleges to learn from the outcomes of other language projects.

#### **b) Sustainability**

The tools and programs will provide a lasting benefit as colleges will be required to work together to effect major change system-wide. The symposia will build momentum and provide a spotlight on progress.

#### **c) Early Impact**

Internationally trained immigrants in the occupations selected for pilot programs will more quickly acquire the language skills they need for success in their course of study and employment.

#### **d) Government Partnership**

This work complements provincial and federal government language initiatives and priorities on developing and delivering skills assessment and sector-specific language training.

#### **e) Leadership**

The RFI responses indicated the following number of colleges with an interest in participating in this area: Lead: 9 Active: 7 Interested: 3.

### **4. Scope of Potential Activities**

#### **a) Test Common Language Benchmarks**

- Collect and review existing research on language proficiency benchmark systems;
- Develop criteria to analyze the efficiency and effectiveness of current language proficiency benchmark systems;
- Adopt/modify common language benchmarks based on Canadian Language Benchmarks to determine entry requirements into language programs and programs of instruction. These entry requirements will include the four language skill areas, and will focus on those skills required to successfully progress through the programs in three to five colleges selected for the pilot tests.

- Educate program deliverers in the selected colleges to ensure their understanding of how using the benchmark system correlates with student success, and to leverage their knowledge of and support for benchmarks to promote their use throughout the college system.

### **b) Modify, Test and Adopt Language Assessment Tools**

- Analyze the assessment tools currently being used. This analysis will help in developing and testing a score-correlation process that will lead to common understanding of proficiency levels. Existing tools may be modified and adopted, where appropriate, to facilitate correlation with the language assessment process being piloted.
- Identify shortcomings of the language assessment tools/systems in use, and recommend modifications to improve consistency among colleges.
- Modify, test and adopt an assessment tool, based on CLB, that focuses on the general language skills needed in the workplace, and on the applied skills required for success that could be used in identified high-demand program areas.
- Pilot the generic workplace-focused/applied assessment at three to five college locations with selected programs across the college experience continuum, in collaboration with program deliverers and language experts. Include assessment:
  - For admissions purposes;
  - For referral to appropriate programs; and,
  - For post-admissions for placement.
- Provide web-based supports, such as illustrative samples of writing, comprehension, speaking and reading levels, for the generic workplace-focused/applied assessment.
- Conduct a feasibility study of administering full or partial assessment electronically/online.

### **c) Test Labour Market-driven Language Programs**

- Develop and test employment-focused, sector-specific language curriculum at CLB levels 7 and above in all skills areas, and all of the programming supports required. Include the communications skills required for success in Canadian workplaces.
- Develop program content in consultation with employers and stakeholders.
- Examine a variety of delivery options with different funding structures and implications.
- Examine the lessons learned from previous language programming pilots or bridging programs.

#### **d) Convene Language Symposia**

- Building on the activities described above, convene a series of symposia to help build a common understanding of CLB, assessment tools and best practices in language benchmarking, assessment and programming.
- Design the symposium discussions and activities to identify issues, potential costs, and opportunities for moving toward consistency within the college system

#### **e) Transfer the Knowledge**

- Analyze the piloted models and document the results in a practical guide for implementation and application in other program areas.
- Develop and deliver training to program deliverers in a way that fits with their program structure.
- Initiate discussions with the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities to review the funding eligibility criteria that may need to be modified in order to remove any financial barriers that might prevent colleges from offering labour market language programming using a variety of delivery mechanisms.
- Work with colleges during the pilot programs to define the correlation between the piloted activities and ESL/FSL student success outcomes.
- Determine the costs and change management issues arising from the pilot results.

### **5. Potential Impact**

#### **a) For Internationally Trained Immigrants**

- Internationally trained immigrants will be assessed and placed correctly in the language programming continuum so as to improve their language proficiency and communication skills to help them achieve success in college programs and the workplace.
- Access to sector-specific language programming will be improved.
- Correlated scoring will reduce duplication of language assessments among different programs and colleges.

#### **b) For Colleges**

- Colleges will have a common benchmarking process and efficient language assessment tools.
- Scores from different tests will be correlated with each other for more efficient placement of students into language programs and postsecondary programs.
- Colleges will be in a better position to share language-related course content.

- Colleges will have access to new language course content that can be used in corporate training opportunities to provide additional revenue.

### **c) For Other Students**

- Improved language assessment and programming will benefit all ESL/FSL students, including immigrants who are not internationally trained or educated, and international students.

## **6. Performance Measurements**

Potential performance measurements include:

- Satisfaction levels of college staff with the piloted language assessments;
- Completion rates in the programs receiving students assessed using the pilot assessments;
- Qualitative feedback from internationally trained immigrants about whether the language programming helped them build skills and increase their confidence in workplace-focused/applied communication;
- Satisfaction levels of employers with the language skills of internationally trained immigrants who have taken the piloted language programming;
- Grade results and completion rates of internationally trained immigrants in language and postsecondary programs; and
- Reduction in the time taken to achieve specific standards of language proficiency.

## **F. Program Delivery Proposal**

### **1. Description**

This initiative entails pilot testing a sustainable bridging program that is tied to postsecondary programs.

In addition, a business case will be prepared for alternative funding models to promote flexible, modular delivery models for regular programs of instruction. The business case will inform discussions with the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities on modifications to the funding structure in order to support flexible, modular delivery.

### **2. Rationale**

#### **a) Flexible, Modular Programs of Delivery**

Internationally trained immigrants need the flexibility to take only the courses required to address their gaps in skills, knowledge and Canadian work experience. If this is not possible, either they will not attend college – which is a loss for the individual and the college – or they will take more courses than they actually need in order to enrol on a full-time basis. Internationally trained immigrants - and other adult learners - need the opportunity to study on a part-time basis in order to accommodate work and family obligations.

Flexible and modular program delivery is not generally available in Ontario colleges, despite colleges' interest in broadening delivery options. Developing and piloting flexible, modular delivery can be costly, often requiring special project funding.

There is no incentive for colleges provide part-time opportunities since they receive disproportionately less funding for students pursuing programs on a part-time basis than for those pursuing programs on a full-time basis. Ontario Student Assistance Program requirements can also disadvantage part-time students.

Therefore, as a first step, the CIITE Project proposes preparing a business case for alternative funding models to promote flexible, modular delivery for regular programs of instruction. The business case will inform discussions with MTCU on modifications to the funding structure that will support flexible, modular delivery. Depending on the outcome of the discussions, recommendations for pilot testing flexible, modular program delivery will be brought forward.

Flexible, modular delivery will not be sustainable without changes to the funding model. Funding discussions need to take place before moving ahead with developing delivery pilots or tools.

### **b) Sector-specific Bridging Programs**

Where numbers warrant, sector-specific bridging programs can be effective in helping internationally trained immigrants address gaps in their knowledge, skills and Canadian work experience. However, college bridging programs are funded as stand-alone programs or as projects within a limited time frame aimed primarily at providing the required technical skills and filling gaps in the internationally trained immigrant's learning or experience for regulated occupations. Without sustainable funding, colleges are unable to make bridging programs consistently available on an ongoing basis for high-demand programs or occupations.

While promising results have been noted from the bridging programs funded by the Access to Professions and Trades Unit, MTCU, colleges need to build on this work to move toward institutionalizing or embedding sustainable appropriate sector-specific bridging modules, courses and programs into college. Bridging programs connected to postsecondary programs of instruction would benefit from shared curriculum components as well as components specifically geared to internationally trained immigrants.

## **3. Links to Selection Criteria**

### **a) Transferability**

Outcomes of bridging programs can be adapted for other occupations and in other locations.

### **b) Sustainability**

Bridging programs provide a lasting benefit and require colleges to work together to achieve major system change. Alternative funding models will increase the capacity of colleges across Ontario to provide flexible, modular delivery.

### **c) Early Impact**

Internationally trained immigrants in the occupations selected for pilot programs will be better prepared to pursue their course of study and able to seek employment sooner.

### **d) Government Partnership**

Colleges will collaborate with government on determining funding models that will promote flexible, modular program delivery.

### **e) Leadership**

The RFI responses indicated the following number of colleges with an interest in participating in this area: Lead: 7 Active: 7 Interested: 3.

## **4. Scope of Potential Activities**

### **a) Develop Funding Models to Support Flexible, Modular Delivery**

- Prepare a business case outlining alternative funding models that will promote flexible, modular delivery models for regular programs of instruction.
- Engage in discussions with MTCU on modifications to the funding structure to support flexible, modular program delivery.

### **b) Recommend Flexible, Modular Delivery Projects for Subsequent Implementation**

- Depending on the outcome of discussions with MTCU, recommend pilot projects to test flexible, modular delivery models that will meet the needs of internationally trained immigrants in regular programs of instruction.
- Include the development of delivery options, supports, services and curriculum changes in the piloted models.
- Include the development of guidelines and tools to support and encourage wider application of flexible, modular delivery within Ontario colleges.

### **c) Pilot a Sustainable Bridging Program Tied to Postsecondary Programs and Apprenticeships**

- Review current bridging programs to identify promising practices, cost structures, opportunities for institutionalization, learning supports, data capturing and gathering processes and staff training to determine what can be modified and rolled into pilot programs.
- Create a sustainability plan outlining how the program could be offered on an ongoing basis where the numbers of internationally trained immigrants warrant.
- Use the pilot results to create a guidebook on how to develop and sustain sector-specific bridging programs in colleges.

## **5. Potential Impact**

### **a) For Internationally Trained Immigrants**

- The flexible, modular delivery approach will help internationally trained immigrants avoid taking courses that duplicate previous learning, will help them avoid loss of income while upgrading.

- This initiative will maximize the benefits internationally trained immigrants will receive from academic credential assessment and PLAR processes leading to advanced standing and course exemption.
- Internationally trained immigrants will have increased access to sector-specific bridging programs where numbers warrant.

### **b) For Colleges**

- This initiative has the potential to achieve major systemic change in the way colleges provide training through flexible and modular delivery geared to helping internationally trained immigrants fill their skill/knowledge gaps. The intent is to move toward mass customization by customizing the delivery models in existing regular programs to accommodate internationally trained immigrants with varying backgrounds. For this initiative to be successful, issues of funding and data management need to be resolved.

### **c) For Other Students**

- Flexible, modular program delivery will benefit all students who possess postsecondary credits and who need to work while attending college or have other obligations requiring a non-standard timetable.

## **6. Performance Measurements**

Potential performance measurements include:

- Satisfaction levels and success rates of internationally trained immigrants who participate in the flexible, modular program delivery pilots.
- Qualitative feedback from college faculty and staff involved in the pilot programs on the administrative and logistical feasibility of flexible, modular program delivery.

## **G. Employment Preparation Proposal**

### **1. Description**

This initiative entails testing two models for the delivery of employment preparation services:

- One pilot will test an expanded Job Connect model to deliver employment preparation services in college settings.
- The second pilot will test an embedded model that integrates employment preparation within college programs and services.

In addition, Canadian workplace content material will be adapted or developed for use in employment preparation services and programs.

### **2. Rationale**

Employers have expressed a strong preference for hiring internationally trained immigrants who are familiar with the social and cultural context of the Canadian workplace. Generic or sector-specific programs providing this knowledge, however, are not widely available in Ontario colleges.

Counselling services are not targeted to the special needs of internationally trained immigrants in conducting an effective job search in the Canadian labour market. Twenty-one of twenty-four colleges currently offer Job Connect services for employment preparation. However, the Job Connect mandate focuses on youth employment, rather than on adults in general, or internationally trained immigrants in particular. Three colleges have not been delivering Job Connect services because this model does not fit with their processes, infrastructure or emphasis on sector focus.

### **3. Links to Selection Criteria**

#### **a) Transferability**

Colleges with on-site Job Connect services can adopt/adapt the expanded Job Connect model; colleges who wish to embed employment preparation services in their operations can adopt/adapt the embedded model. The material on Canadian workplace content can be adopted in or adapted to a variety of college settings.

#### **b) Sustainability**

Widening Job Connect funding to provide services to adults will increase the colleges' capacity to serve its diverse student population.

### **c) Early Impact**

Internationally trained immigrants in the colleges selected for piloting the models will benefit from the new delivery models and Canadian workplace content.

### **d) Leadership**

The RFI responses indicated the following number of colleges with an interest in participating in this area: Lead: 6 Active: 9 Interested: 4.

## **4. Scope of Potential Activities**

### **a) Modify/develop Canadian Workplace Content Material**

- Review existing research on employer requirements for targeted occupations in specific sectors.
- Modify/develop generic Canadian workplace content materials that can be applied in targeted sectors.
- Identify generic content relevant to Canadian workplaces to be included such as résumé preparation, preparing for interviews, job search techniques, networking (with assistance for introductions), cold calling, work ethics, Canadian business norms, terminology, employment standards, health and safety considerations, union membership, among others, to help increase internationally trained immigrants' understanding of preparing for employment in Canada.
- Determine the degree of focus on the topics included, taking into account the occupational field and skill level of target applicants.
- Pilot the content material and supports in various formats and using different delivery mechanisms.
- Include delivery of the content material in the models discussed below, and identify additional methods for delivery such as within a college course, by service providers, or as a stand-alone workshop or module.
- Ensure that licensing requirements are included in the employment preparation content for regulated professions.

### **b) Test an Expanded Job Connect Model**

- Survey colleges on the current methods of delivering Job Connect services to internationally trained immigrants whether directly or through partnerships with community organizations to determine what could be changed to improve service to internationally trained immigrants.
- Pilot an expansion of college-based Job Connect to target and serve internationally trained immigrants at two or three colleges already offering Job Connect services. Pilot activities may include:

- Determining the nature and scope of expanding Job Connect either through adding additional Job Connect sites within college system, or enhancing current methods of delivery at existing sites more effectively support internationally trained immigrants.
  - Reviewing existing Job Connect content material on employment preparation to determine possible models and content for pilot activities targeted at internationally trained immigrants.
  - Sharing the work being done on Job Connect pilots with colleges and organizations to determine what other supports, content material and employment preparation currently exists within co-op or other programs.
- Work with Job Connect to expand and develop an employer network in the regions served by the colleges participating in the pilots, and strengthen relationships with regulatory bodies.
  - Investigate the feasibility of developing an employer databank at the Job Connect site based on desired skill sets.
  - Develop capacity to market Job Connect to internationally trained immigrants within pilot sites.
  - Increase awareness among employers about the expanded client group of Job Connect.
  - Create a database that includes employers and internationally trained immigrants to facilitate job-matching.
  - Modify/develop/share hardcopy materials about various occupations that can be used at any Job Connect site.
  - Modify the existing data tracking system to include internationally trained immigrants as a distinct client group.

### **c) Test an Embedded Model of Employment Preparation**

An embedded model will integrate employment preparation for internationally trained immigrants within the college experience.

- Pilot an enhanced employment transition process by embedding the employment preparation programming and supports within postsecondary programs of instruction.
- Evaluate the issues related to adding course content to existing programs of instruction; co-ordinating activities with career counselling departments, co-op programs, mentoring, existing language proficiency processes, etc.; and addressing requirements for additional funding.
- Identify occupations that are in high demand by internationally trained immigrants and are experiencing labour market shortages.

- Determine the sector-specific employment preparation activities that currently exist, and determine if any match the identified areas of demand.
- Develop materials to educate employers on how to maximize the integration of internationally trained immigrants into the workplace, using appropriate dissemination venues.
- Identify promising practices from existing programs.
- Explore the need for and feasibility of providing additional resources for internationally trained immigrants, such as resource centres, increased physical space, computers, infrastructure, and virtual workplaces; and modify/develop the additional resources required.
- Increase awareness among employers about the benefits of hiring internationally trained immigrants.
- Modify/develop and deliver training to college employees to create competency in serving culturally diverse college graduates.
- Adapt performance measures currently used by Job Connect, including a data tracking system to monitor changes in employment rates.

## **5. Potential Impact**

### **a) For Internationally Trained Immigrants**

- Internationally trained immigrants will be better prepared for Canadian workplaces in high-demand sectors and for employment in their field or in fields related to their expertise.
- Internationally trained immigrants will have access to employment preparation services and supports to prepare for a successful job search in targeted employment sectors. These services and supports would include relevant information about health and safety, human rights, employment standards, marketing skill sets and knowledge, résumé writing, interview skills, networking, cold calling, workplace norms, etc.

### **b) For Colleges**

- Colleges will enhance their capacity to prepare internationally trained immigrants for the workplace and to match skilled individuals to employers seeking specific skill sets.
- Colleges will benefit from enhanced relationships with industry and community organizations by better preparing internationally trained immigrants for the workplace.

### **c) For Other Students**

- The content material can benefit other students by helping them understand the requirements of, and prepare for, the job search process.

## **6. Performance Measurements**

Potential performance measurements include:

- The number of internationally trained immigrants satisfied with employment preparation services and supports provided on campus through Job Connect pilots and pilots involving embedded content;
- Employment rate of internationally trained immigrants involved in the pilots.

## **H. Workplace Experience Proposal**

### **1. Description**

This initiative entails working with employers and other organizations to identify ways to increase and enhance placement/internship/co-op employment opportunities for internationally trained immigrants and to create new types of work experience opportunities.

### **2. Rationale**

Gaining Canadian work experience as part of an educational program is key for internationally trained immigrants. Although all colleges work with industry partners to develop work experience opportunities, the availability of co-operative education or job placement opportunities through college programs is limited. This makes it difficult for internationally trained immigrants to acquire first-hand workplace experience and an understanding of Canadian workplace culture and expectations. Student demand for co-op or job placement opportunities is considerably higher than the number of spaces employers have available. This disparity between supply and demand means that competition for each co-op or job placement opportunity is very high. It also puts colleges in the position of having to compete with other educational institutions to secure placements for their students. An approach to systemic change in this area must consider the competitive realities of the decentralized systems of colleges and universities.

### **3. Links to Selection Criteria**

#### **a) Transferability**

Best practices in working with employers can be modified/adopted by additional colleges and programs.

#### **b) Sustainability**

Expanded or new workplace opportunities will provide a lasting benefit for internationally trained immigrants seeking their first Canadian workplace opportunity. This should correlate with increased graduate employment rates which will motivate colleges to continue these activities.

#### **c) Leadership**

The RFI responses indicated the following number of colleges with an interest in participating in this area: Lead: 3 Active: 6 Interested: 7.

## **4. Scope of Potential Activities**

- Work collaboratively with employers and other organization, such as Career Bridge, to identify ways to increase the number and quality of placement and co-op employment opportunities for internationally trained immigrants and to create new types of work experience opportunities.
- Review existing research on employers, such as that collected by the Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council, to investigate incentives that would motivate employers to create more workplace experience opportunities and hire internationally trained immigrants.
- Conduct research through an employer survey or other methods to identify incentives that would motivate employers to create workplace opportunities and hire internationally trained immigrants.
- Identify, and liaise with, employers who will advocate for/champion the project, possibly starting with employers who are members of Program Advisory Committees.
- Connect with ethno-specific businesses and businesses that have an international presence.

## **5. Potential Impact**

### **a) For Internationally Trained Immigrants**

- Internationally trained immigrants will have a greater chance of obtaining Canadian work experience in their occupation or in a related field.
- Employer confidence in the ability of internationally trained immigrants to contribute effectively in the workplace will be enhanced when an internationally trained immigrant can demonstrate Canadian employment experience.

### **b) For Colleges**

- Colleges will increase their capacity to offer workplace experience opportunities to students in partnership with employers.
- Colleges will be better able to understand and address the needs of employers.
- College programs with workplace experience opportunities will be more desirable to all students.
- Colleges will benefit from enhanced relationships with employers.

### **c) For Other Students**

- All college students will benefit if more employers offer more workplace opportunities

## **6. Performance Measurements**

Potential performance measurements include:

- The number of employers who agree to new placement or co-op opportunities;
- The number of internationally trained immigrants employed in occupations linked to their prior experience; and
- Increases in employer, student and graduate satisfaction rates.

# **I. Project Management**

## **1. Leadership and Oversight**

The success of the Phase 2 initiatives will depend on governance and coordinating structures to oversee the projects, maximize linkages, coordinate activities and provide reports to the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities.

## **2. Transitional Funding**

On November 24, 2004, CON\*NECT submitted a request for a funding extension on behalf of the CIITE Project. The purpose of this funding extension is to bridge the project from the end of Phase 1 - the submission of this report - to approval and funding for Phase 2 activities.

During this transitional period, the CIITE Project will work with MTCU to finalize the contractual framework for Phase 2, and will establish governance and project management structures. The transitional period will also include the selection of lead and participating colleges for the funded Phase 2 projects.

The funding extension is critically important at this stage of the CIITE Project to ensure continued momentum, build on the knowledge from Phase 1 and provide a smooth transition to Phase 2.

## **3. Recommend Future Project to Manage Phase 2 Initiatives**

Upon receiving confirmation of type and scope of projects to be funded, and identification and roles of college partners in Phase 2, the CIITE Project recommends creating an ongoing Immigrant Issues Project Management Structure. Activities would include:

- Identifying opportunities and activities that will require management and advocacy during future phases of college change projects; and
- Implementing management structure based on research and consultation in the interim phase.

## J. Linkages Among Phase 2 Projects

Phase 2 Projects	Linkages
<p><b>Advisement Models</b>  <b>AND</b>  <b>All Other Projects</b></p>	<p>Enhanced advisement services will deliver customized information to internationally trained immigrants to help them to identify the most suitable college pathway. As such, individuals will be aware of, and better able to utilize, applicable programs and services developed through other projects, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Credential assessment leading to course exemption/advanced standing;</li> <li>▪ PLAR leading to course exemption/advanced standing;</li> <li>▪ Language Proficiency (assessment and training);</li> <li>▪ Flexible, modular programs of instruction or sector-specific bridging programs;</li> <li>▪ Employment preparation; and,</li> <li>▪ Workplace experience opportunities.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Credential Assessment</b>  <b>AND</b>  <b>Prior Learning Assessment (PLAR)</b></p>	<p>PLAR initiatives complement credential assessment by providing an alternative for individuals who possess the knowledge, skills and abilities, but cannot present the academic credentials, to determine equivalencies to college courses.</p> <p>Credential assessment and PLAR share the need for complementary processes for granting course exemption and advanced standing based on the assessment results.</p>
<p><b>Credential Assessment / PLAR</b>  <b>AND</b>  <b>Program Delivery</b></p>	<p>Students who receive advanced standing/course exemption following assessments of academic credentials or prior learning need opportunities to access only the courses or modules necessary to address their learning needs and fill gaps in knowledge, skills and abilities. Programs of instruction need to be structured and delivered so as to maximize the effectiveness of the advanced standing/course exemption granted.</p>

<b>Phase 2 Projects</b>	<b>Linkages</b>
<b>Credential Assessment / PLAR AND Workplace Experience</b>	The results of credential assessments and PLAR must be credible with, and accepted by, employers and occupational regulatory bodies as proof that the knowledge, skills and abilities have been acquired. This will help internationally trained immigrants gain the confidence of employers, and licensure if required, in order to gain access to workplace opportunities.
<b>PLAR AND Employment Preparation</b>	The cognitive reflection and articulation of experiences used during the PLAR process can be applied to employment preparation activities, such as résumé and interview preparation to help internationally trained immigrants better market themselves.
<b>Language Proficiency AND Program Delivery</b>	<p>Language benchmarks and assessment tools will help determine an individual's eligibility for, and increase the probability of, success in programs of instruction and sector-specific bridging programs.</p> <p>Faculty experts from program areas will need to collaborate with ESL/FSL experts to accurately determine, and generate buy-in for, the benchmarks as predictors of success in their programs.</p> <p>The language training component will complement programs of instruction and bridging programs by providing labour-market language curriculum.</p>
<b>Language Proficiency AND Employment Preparation</b>	<p>Language benchmarks and assessment tools will help determine an individual's eligibility for, and increase the probability of, success in employment preparation programs and services.</p> <p>Language programming will support employment preparation by providing language skills to support the job search.</p> <p>Employment preparation curriculum needs to be developed in partnership with ESL/FSL experts, and may be offered as a module within labour-market language programs.</p>

V. Project Proposals

<b>Phase 2 Projects</b>	<b>Linkages</b>
<b>Language Proficiency AND Workplace Experience</b>	Language initiatives can increase employer confidence in workplace communication skills, and thereby increase access to workplace opportunities for internationally trained immigrants
<b>Program Delivery AND Employment Preparation</b>	For colleges that adopt the embedded model of employment preparation, Canadian workplace content developed in the employment preparation project will be delivered through programs of instruction and sector-specific bridging programs.
<b>Program Delivery AND Workplace Experience</b>	Relationships cultivated with employers in Program Advisory Committees during modifications to programs of instruction can help increase workplace experience opportunities.
<b>Workplace Preparation AND Workplace Experience</b>	Effective Canadian workplace content and employment preparation services will help internationally trained immigrants to secure workplace experience opportunities.

## **K. Project for Future Consideration: Comprehensive Information**

The CIITE Project proposes that a project on comprehensive information be considered for implementation in subsequent phases.

Although comprehensive information is a component of the concept model, the CIITE Project has not recommended a Phase 2 project in this area. The federal “Going To Canada” portal and other initiatives are already underway, and no colleges self-identified as willing to lead initiatives on comprehensive information. However, the CIITE Project recommends that this initiative be considered for implementation in future phases in alignment with the rollout of the federal government portal.

### **1. Description**

This initiative entails gathering existing content and generating new content about Ontario colleges, and then marketing this system-wide information package to internationally trained immigrants.

### **2. Rationale**

Internationally trained immigrants need accessible, comprehensive information on how college programs and services can help them on their pathway to employment, and the steps they need to take. Without such information, many internationally trained immigrants will remain unaware of this route to expedite their path to employment. Those who do, however, will have limited success selecting the college and program or service that is most appropriate to their needs, and will continue to experience difficulty determining the steps they need to take to gain access to relevant college programs and services. The information to be developed and distributed will help internationally trained immigrants make the best use of Ontario college programs and services.

### **3. Scope of Potential Activities**

The CIITE Project has identified a preliminary list of activities within the scope of this project. The list will be refined as more detailed proposals are developed for future phases.

#### **Compile a Comprehensive Information Package**

- Compile information to promote the role of colleges within the Ontario educational system as a preparation vehicle for employment. The information will raise awareness of college entry requirements.

- Include practical information about the college system, including the value of a college education in the context of Ontario's postsecondary environment and programs, services and processes geared to internationally trained immigrants, such as assessments of language, academic credentials and prior learning.
- Group and sort information to better link college programs and services with employer demand and Ontario labour market needs.

### **Delivery**

- Identify possible delivery vehicles such as the "Going to Canada" immigration portal website planned by CIC, and MTCU's Labour Market Information website.
- Investigate and/or implement links to other resources such as online self-assessment tools and online discussion capability.
- Investigate non-website access and determine how to best disseminate information to users without online access.

### **Develop a Maintenance Plan**

- Identify ongoing maintenance requirements and opportunities to update online and print mechanisms.
- Define a strategy to update and maintain the information annually. This may include online update facilities so colleges and other stakeholders can maintain information specific to their organization.

### **Develop a Marketing Strategy**

- Produce an external marketing strategy, in partnership with a community organization, that includes piloting the information package with a sample of college applicants who are internationally trained immigrants. This would be carried out prior to large-scale dissemination and linkage to government information portals.
- Produce an internal marketing strategy targeted at college staff to share the content of, create awareness of, and reinforce the importance of developing communication materials that target internationally trained immigrants. Use various channels and media to reach college staff, such as college intranet, college website, staff e-mail, newsletters, workshops, and meetings of senior management, among others.

## **4. Potential Impact**

### **For Internationally Trained Immigrants**

- Internationally trained immigrants will have the information necessary to make informed decisions about college programs and services, thereby expediting their pathway to employment.

- Enhanced, accessible information will help reduce the time and money internationally trained immigrants spend in enrolling inappropriate programs, and will lead to more informed decisions about college programs and higher graduation rates.

### **For Colleges**

- Colleges can use the information package as a tool to provide advisement services. This may reduce college staff time now spent answering basic and frequently asked questions from internationally trained immigrants.
- While colleges will continue to individually market their programs and services, this centralized information and marketing strategy will make it easier to target information to internationally trained immigrants across Ontario.
- Appropriate information can potentially attract more internationally trained immigrants to Ontario colleges, helping to maximize institutional enrolments and leading to improved KPI results such as graduation rates.

### **For Other Students**

- Other student applicants will benefit from the information package if they have an academic credential from another college, province or country, or if their first language is not English or French.

## **5. Performance Measurements**

Potential performance measurements include:

- Qualitative feedback from internationally trained immigrants about how the information helped them to identify college programs, services and next steps on their path to employment in Ontario.
- Reduction in the number of frequently asked questions that college admissions and advisement staff spend time answering.
- The number of internationally trained immigrants who access the information through the CIC portal or other vehicles, and other standard website evaluation metrics.

## L. Other Initiatives for Future Consideration

Although the CIITE Project has recommended Phase 2 projects in all concept model areas other than comprehensive information, the additional activities set out in the table are recommended for consideration in future phases.

Proposed Initiatives	Potential Future Activities
<p><b>Advisement Services</b></p>	<p><b>Self-Advisement Tools</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Identify self-advisement tools currently in use, such as the web-based tool- <a href="http://www.careercruising.com">www.careercruising.com</a>, and determine applicability to models being piloted.</li> <li>▪ Modify a self-advisement tool for use by applicants on their own and with advisement staff.</li> <li>▪ Develop an on-line self-advisement tool.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Credential Assessment</b></p>	<p><b>Advanced Standing Database</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Compile a database of advanced standing granted for use by college staff including admissions office, college Registrar and individual program areas.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR)</b></p>	<p><b>PLAR Models</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Identify one or two promising PLAR models currently in use in the college system.</li> <li>▪ Pilot elements of the PLAR models in participating colleges in high-demand sectors.</li> <li>▪ Identify how colleges can connect with potential PLAR candidates, such as communicating with students in college ESL/FSL courses, or through advisement processes.</li> <li>▪ Ensure that course outcomes are sufficiently articulated and that the PLAR tool(s) can demonstrate whether internationally trained immigrants have achieved these outcomes.</li> <li>▪ Identify activities to help academic personnel clearly define course descriptions, including performance indicators, to objectively reflect the outcomes to be achieved.</li> <li>▪ Ensure that course outlines are available to applicants</li> </ul>

Proposed Initiatives	Potential Future Activities
	<p>prior to college entry so internationally trained immigrants can carry out a preliminary self-assessment to determine whether they have the competencies taught in the courses.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Provide training or guidance to internationally trained immigrants about their role in demonstrating competency.</li> <li>▪ Identify guidelines and recommendations with respect to recording PLAR results on student transcripts.</li> </ul> <p><b>PLAR Tools and Supports</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Identify existing PLAR tools and supports that may be adapted or modified</li> <li>▪ Develop or modify supports and tools for internationally trained immigrants and college staff, including academic personnel, registrar’s office, and front-line staff, among others, in conducting PLAR, such as a course in portfolio development.</li> <li>▪ Recommend processes for updating PLAR tools so they remain current and relevant.</li> <li>▪ Analyze the pilot results and prepare a practical guide for other programs or colleges on how and when to conduct PLAR. Include information on precedents, best practices, tips, pitfalls to avoid, cost, etc.</li> <li>▪ Assess PLAR methodologies.</li> <li>▪ Conduct a cost-benefit analysis of PLAR methodologies.</li> </ul> <p><b>External PLAR Activities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Identify the types of PLAR activity that could be promoted and supported by organizations outside the college system, such as community organizations and other entities such as Job Connect.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Language Proficiency</b></p>	<p><b>Language Benchmarks</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Develop benchmarks for entry to programs of instruction, and recommend adherence as part of admissions criteria.</li> <li>▪ Engage Registrars and program deliverers in discussions to ensure that exit benchmarks from</li> </ul>

<b>Proposed Initiatives</b>	<b>Potential Future Activities</b>
	<p>language programs meet admissions requirements for programs of instruction.</p> <p><b>Language Assessment Tools</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Complete a feasibility study for conducting language assessments on-line.</li> </ul> <p><b>Language Programs and Supports</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Prepare a practical guide on language programming.</li> <li>▪ Complete an inventory of current English and French language curriculum offered through colleges and community-based organizations.</li> <li>▪ Develop language content, including materials, resources and supports, for sector-specific bridging programs.</li> <li>▪ Provide staff training so that core instructors can integrate language supports, resources and training within core curriculum.</li> </ul>
<b>Program Delivery</b>	<p><b>Sector-Specific Bridging Programs</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Create a guidebook for colleges on implementing sustainable bridging programs.</li> <li>▪ Pilot flexible, modular delivery models for regular programs of instruction.</li> <li>▪ Determine the part-time options, such as evening, weekend and distance learning opportunities, that can be implemented as part of the pilots.</li> <li>▪ Investigate unique delivery methods, such as the Aboriginal Educational Institute near North Bay that works in partnership with Cambrian College where students are brought into the Institute for instruction one week per month and receive the remainder of the course delivery on-line and by e-mail.</li> <li>▪ Determine the logistics of offering modules on a flexible basis, including mechanisms for tracking and managing the administration of students.</li> <li>▪ Develop supports and training for academic personnel undertaking pilot activities.</li> <li>▪ Begin modifying the systems required to facilitate</li> </ul>

Proposed Initiatives	Potential Future Activities
	modularized, course-based registration.
<p><b>Employment Preparation</b></p>	<p><b>Employer Database</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Create a database of employers and internationally trained immigrants to facilitate job matching.</li> <li>▪ Develop a collaborative employment services model focusing on activities with community groups. Using the Canadian Workplace content materials, pilot a collaborative model that focuses on employment preparation delivered by or in conjunction with community agencies that provide services to internationally trained immigrants.</li> <li>▪ Pilot a model referral arrangement between a college and a local community organization that has been successful in delivering employment preparation services and supports for skilled immigrants. The college would refer internationally trained immigrants to the organization for employment preparation activities. The pilot would evaluate partnership agreements including roles, responsibilities and funding requirements for co-ordination activities. The pilot might modify/develop/share materials about occupations that could be used at by any deliverer of employment preparation services.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Workplace Experience</b></p>	<p><b>Projects for Presentation to and Discussion with Program Advisory Committees</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Develop a college-specific business case and document success stories regarding the value of work placements and the contributions of internationally trained immigrants to the workplace.</li> <li>▪ Develop and implement a communications strategy to target employers.</li> <li>▪ Create an employer recognition program.</li> <li>▪ Develop guides and “tips” for colleges on how to work with employers through existing mechanisms, such as Program Advisory Committees, to establish workplace opportunities in sector-specific bridging programs and programs of instruction, and to enhance existing co-op or work placement components.</li> </ul>

V. Project Proposals

<b>Proposed Initiatives</b>	<b>Potential Future Activities</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Identify opportunities and activities that will more fully build on alumni connections and mentoring possibilities.</li> </ul>
<b>Project Management</b>	<p><b>Create Ongoing Immigrant Issues Project Management Structure</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Identify opportunities and activities that will require management and advocacy during future phases of college change projects; and</li> <li>▪ Implement management structure based on research and consultation in interim phase.</li> </ul>

## VI. KEY FINDINGS

### A. Introduction to Findings

The following sections of this report describe findings made by the CIITE Project in four areas of investigation:

1. College Entry,
2. Language Proficiency,
3. Program Delivery and
4. Employment Transition.

These findings formed the basis for much of the analysis and many of the recommendations in this report.

Each section contains the following components:

- **Ministry Policy:** Describes existing policies or directives that affect the subject area;
- **Current College Practices:** Describes the range of practices currently in use within the college system;
- **Issues and Challenges:** Describes issues and challenges based on research and consultation with key stakeholders including college staff, internationally trained immigrants, employers, community organizations, and occupational regulatory bodies. This component includes:
  - **Barriers, Gaps and Challenges Experienced by Internationally Trained Immigrants:** Describes the barriers and issues from the viewpoint of internationally trained immigrants interacting with the college system.
  - **College Challenges:** Describes the challenges and issues from the colleges' perspective.
  - **Challenges Experience by Employers:** Describes how the challenges and issues faced by internationally trained immigrants and colleges affect employers.
- **Background Information:** Provides additional contextual information about outside organizations, projects or practices.
- **Preliminary Ideas for Change:** Outlines ideas for change as suggested by stakeholders.
  - **Stakeholder Ideas:** Presents ideas from stakeholders in general.

## VI. Key Findings

- **Ideas from Internationally Trained Immigrants:** Sets out preferences articulated by internationally trained immigrants within Ontario colleges.

## B. College Entry

Investigation of issues relating to college entry for internationally trained immigrants includes:

1. Information provision: This includes information sources on college programs, outreach, recruitment, and marketing of college material;
2. Advisement: This includes college services to provide advice to prospective students, applicants and confirmed applicants;
3. Admissions: This includes practices of the Ontario College Application Services (OCAS); and
4. Assessment: This includes standards and procedures for assessing international academic credentials and prior learning; and for granting advanced standing or course exemption.<sup>24</sup>

### I. Information Provision

#### a) Ministry Policy

The policy directive from MTCU on Admissions Criteria requires that each college make a central admissions publication available to the public: “The publication is to include the college’s current admissions criteria and selection procedures for each postsecondary program of instruction to be offered by the college.”<sup>25</sup>

MTCU policy further states that individuals should have “convenient access to appropriate information...essential for individuals to make informed choices to achieve their education and training goals.”<sup>26</sup>

MTCU policy does not prescribe the content or processes for providing information beyond admissions criteria. While colleges have discretion in determining the information they publish, there is no separate pool of funding for information provision.

#### b) Current College Practices

All Ontario colleges use calendars for information provision and recruitment purposes. All college calendars present information about college services;

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<sup>24</sup> Language assessment can be conducted for college entry, program placement or employment readiness. See IV. Key Findings, Section C: Language Proficiency.

<sup>25</sup> Ministry of Training, Universities and Colleges, “Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology Policy Framework” Admissions Criteria, April 1, 2003, p. 5.

<sup>26</sup> MTCU, “Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology Policy Framework” Admissions Criteria, April 1, 2003, p. 2.

postsecondary programs of instruction, including certificate, diploma and applied degree programs; continuing education; admissions requirements and application procedures. College calendars do not include information specifically targeted to internationally trained immigrants.

Ontario colleges use their individual websites to provide college calendar and program information for recruitment purposes. College websites have recently become the major source of information for potential students and are updated regularly with college calendar and program information. While college websites do not have sections targeted to internationally trained immigrants, they contain information and/or links intended for use by international students.

Ontario colleges focus their recruitment and marketing strategies primarily at Ontario high school students. Marketing activities include presentations, developing and distributing print materials, and internet recruitment. Four colleges report that they engage in partial targeting of internationally trained immigrant students using marketing materials that factor in a diverse client base.

Table A shows the nine Ontario colleges that currently include marketing/recruitment activities targeting diverse populations.

**Table 1.0: College Recruitment of Diverse Student Populations**

<b>College</b>	<b>Address diverse client base through marketing material/recruiters</b>	<b>Recruit diverse populations through presentations at community organizations</b>
<b>Algonquin College</b>		✓
<b>Centennial College</b>	✓	✓
<b>Conestoga College</b>		✓
<b>Fanshawe College</b>		✓
<b>George Brown College</b>		✓
<b>Humber College</b>	✓	✓
<b>La Cité collégiale</b>	✓	
<b>Mohawk College</b>		✓
<b>Seneca College</b>		✓
<b>Sheridan College</b>	✓	✓

### c) Issues and Challenges

#### **Barriers, Gaps and Challenges Experienced by Internationally Trained Immigrants**

- There is a lack of comprehensive, targeted marketing and recruitment materials and practices tailored to internationally trained immigrants.
- Information available through college calendars and websites contains college-specific terminology that may require explanation for internationally trained immigrants and persons whose first language is not English or French.
- It is difficult to match previous learning and learning needs to the programs available in the college calendar.
- Information is lacking about the value of an Ontario college education for employment purposes. Further, internationally trained immigrants are unclear about the differences between Ontario colleges and universities.
- Internationally trained immigrants lack information to make informed decisions about selecting programs and preparing for college entry. As a result, they may enter college with an incomplete perception of what the college offers. For example, they lack information regarding:
  - The importance of college for transition to the workplace;
  - The value of college programs to upgrade skills and fill gaps in qualifications;
  - Specific programs and services offered and how to access them;
  - Entry requirements;
  - The cost of college and related expenses;
  - The necessary first steps to take, such as credential verification, PLAR or language assessment; and,
  - The process for obtaining advanced standing.
  - Information is not directed or distributed to sources relied on by internationally trained immigrants, such as family, friends, ethno-cultural media and community groups involved in immigrant settlement. As a result, internationally trained immigrants who rely on these sources may receive information that is inaccurate.
- On-line data does not currently meet the information needs of internationally trained immigrants.
- Obstacles in obtaining the information internationally trained immigrants need are created by the volume of detail provided by multiple college sources, language and communication challenges, the

difficulty of comparing offerings of different colleges, other educational institutions, and community agencies.

- College information lacks specifics about the relationship between the education/training received in college programs and appropriate preparation for job opportunities in specific industries and sectors.
- Information and advice concerning financial aid can be difficult for internationally trained immigrants to access and understand.

### **College System Challenges**

- There are some paper-based and online information sources, such as the OCAS website, that provide internationally trained immigrants with general information about colleges and the Ontario educational system. However, there is no centralized or ongoing collaboration among colleges and other information providers to ensure internationally trained immigrants receive the information they need to expedite their pathway to employment through the college system.
- It is cost prohibitive for each college to apply resources to educating internationally trained immigrants about Ontario colleges and about the range of services and programs offered that may target or be appropriate for internationally trained immigrants. The operating grant each college receives is based on the number of enrolled students. Since there is no discrete funding to provide information to applicants prior to entry into college, each college must decide how it will allocate its operating grant between delivering existing services/programs and recruitment activities. As a result, colleges focus on their own website and marketing strategies to attract applicants, rather than on contributing to, or concentrating on, system-wide marketing initiatives.
- While some data is available from Citizenship and Immigration Canada on immigration patterns and trends, there has been insufficient data available to the college system on the numbers, source countries, languages and program needs of potential internationally trained immigrant applicants to a particular college. This hampers the ability of colleges to market to internationally trained immigrants and to plan for effective programs and services.

### **Challenges Experienced by Employers**

- No specific challenges were identified.

## d) Background Information

### Government of Canada's Portal Project

Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) and Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC) are leading the Government of Canada's "Going to Canada Immigration Portal" initiative. This online service is designed to provide prospective immigrants and new immigrants with information to facilitate immigration decision-making and integration to life and employment in Canada. From December 2003 to March 2004, the CIC-HRSDC team conducted research to develop concept models for the portal. These were then tested through surveys and focus groups.

The portal project is being implemented in a phased approach over five years. Development in the next two years includes preparing and implementing:

- Additional information to assist in acquiring Canadian postsecondary credentials;
- A self-assessment tool that will allow immigrants to determine their language skill levels in reading, writing, speaking and listening in relation to the Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB) and the Standards linguistiques canadiens (SLC);
- A tool that identifies forms and documentation that must be completed in order to work in one's preferred occupational and geographical areas; and
- A language self-assessment tool, based on CLB, to help internationally trained nurses prepare for the Canadian English Language Benchmarks Assessment for Nurses.

Future developments include:

- On-line roadmaps for occupations;
- Tailored labour market information specific to immigrants; and
- Language assessment and training tools.

### ACCC Research on Referrals to College<sup>27</sup>

The Association of Canadian Community Colleges (ACCC) has determined that there are three key methods used by immigrants in deciding to research and register in college programs: word of mouth, CIC/HRSDC referrals and community organization referrals. Research<sup>28</sup> by ACCC identified that:

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<sup>27</sup> The Association of Canadian Community Colleges (ACCC) is the national, voluntary membership organization created in 1972 to represent colleges and institutes to government, business and industry, both in Canada and internationally.

<sup>28</sup> ACCC, *Responding to the Needs of Immigrants: Final Report*. Ottawa. March 2004, p. 17.

- Immigrant-initiated access to college programs is very common, whether from other immigrants in the community, ethno-cultural organizations or from immigrant contacts in their home country.
- A recent survey of preparatory ESL students by Centennial College found that 50% confirmed they found out about the program through word of mouth.
- First year immigrants are accessing LINC or equivalent programs at the four colleges delivering these programs through referrals from CIC.
- Colleges and institutes which do not offer LINC-type programs have also received some referrals from CIC for regular ESL/FSL programs.
- Across Canada, about 50% of the colleges and institutes indicated participating in the survey reported receiving referrals from HRSDC to support immigrants entering either ESL programs or career-focused programs after the first year of settlement. These referrals are often funded through HRSDC project-based funding aimed at integrating immigrants, or through the employment insurance program.
- Almost 50% of Canadian colleges receive referrals from community immigration settlement organizations, and colleges refer immigrant students to these organizations for counselling and settlement support.

## **e) Preliminary Ideas for Change**

### **Stakeholder Ideas**

#### ***Information Content***

- Establish a central, easily accessible database of information, including entry requirements, for new internationally trained immigrants;
- Provide information, through ACAATO or another centralized source, on the role of colleges, and include information on programs especially relevant to internationally trained immigrants;
- Identify what college system-wide information, as well as college-specific information, can be provided. System-wide information can include labour markets targeted by colleges, and the difference between universities and colleges within the Ontario educational system; and
- Provide a guide explaining what internationally trained immigrants can expect from the Canadian academic environment.

#### ***Information Vehicles***

- Use a range of media to target communications to internationally trained immigrants, conveying messages that are easily understood by ESL speakers and new Canadians;

- Work through ACAATO to be involved in the internet portal being developed by CIC and ACCC;
- Make better use of Chambers of Commerce and Sector Councils to provide current labour market information;
- Provide college information sessions targeted to the needs of internationally trained immigrants using counsellors/advisors trained to work with this client group;
- Create and implement on-line counselling or an “Internationally Trained Immigrant Hotline” for individual colleges;
- Develop partnerships with community groups, using their expertise to improve the capacity to provide college-related information to internationally trained immigrants; and
- Further develop relationships with community groups and settlement organizations in order to provide information to, and recruit, internationally trained immigrants.

### **Ideas from Internationally Trained Immigrants**

- Distribute information through channels that internationally trained immigrants can easily access, and compile the information in easily understood formats;
- Provide a centralized system of information provision, such as the CIC Immigration Portal;
- Provide access to college information through CIC and through those who handle refugee claims; and
- Make better use of settlement and community organizations and community networks to get information to internationally trained immigrants.

## **2. Advisement Models**

### **a) Ministry Policy**

MTCU does not prescribe the advisement services colleges must provide to applicants or students.

### **b) Current College Practices**

In general, pre-entry advisement<sup>29</sup> to prospective students is geared to the general student population and does not focus on the unique needs of diverse student

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<sup>29</sup> For the purposes of this report, “pre-entry advisement” is defined as the process of providing information and advice to individuals (prospective students, applicants and confirmed applicants) prior

populations. Colleges provide advisement services in different ways. For example, Mohawk College offers weekly group information sessions for pre-entry advisement with individual follow-up as requested, whereas Fanshawe College offers evening counselling.

### **c) Issues and Challenges**

#### **Barriers, Gaps and Challenges Experienced by Internationally Trained Immigrants**

- Internationally trained immigrants need advice on how to tailor a college education to their particular circumstances. Areas for advice include:
  - assessing the equivalency of international academic credentials or prior learning,
  - applying for course exemption or advanced standing,
  - assessing language training needs, and
  - identifying the most appropriate college program of instruction, bridging program or language program.
- Individual college contacts do not always have the answers to student queries.
- Internationally trained immigrants will often contact several college staff until they connect with a person they feel is knowledgeable and sympathetic to their concerns.
- There is often no human face to provide guidance through the college application process. When potential students contact the college, there may be no single person who has the answers to all their questions. Where their calls get directed appears to have a huge impact on the answers potential students receive.
- Without proper guidance, internationally trained immigrants may not be admitted to the programs they need due to their lack of understanding about the admissions process. As a result, they may enrol in inappropriate programs.
- Personal service may be lacking when college staff cannot personally answer phones, or when their voicemail message is difficult to understand.
- It may be difficult for internationally trained immigrants to communicate effectively using e-mail where the nuances of questions can be missed and it takes more time to convey intent.

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to registration. Advisement can start prior to a student being registered in a course or admitted into a program.

- College staff do not always provide correct information or refer internationally trained immigrants to relevant community services or resources.
- Internationally trained immigrants have found it difficult to access and understand information and advice about financial aid.
- Insufficient pre-entry advisement or ineffective advisement services during college programming can frustrate internationally trained immigrants and waste their financial resources.

### **College System Challenges**

- The operating grant given to each college is based on the number of enrolled students. Since there is no discrete funding for advisement prior to enrolment, each college must decide how it will allocate its operating grant between existing student services/programs and advising prospective students.
- Colleges are challenged to find affordable, cost-effective and sustainable ways to provide pre-entry advisement for an increasingly diverse student population. Advisement services vary among colleges and some currently lack the capacity to sufficiently serve internationally trained immigrants, especially prior to admission.
- Customized advisement for special student groups can be too expensive for individual colleges to support. As such, colleges often lack the capacity to conduct pre-entry advisement for internationally trained immigrants except where funded through bridging programs.
- Many colleges do not have a sustainable process model for responding to the diverse questions posed by internationally trained immigrants. As a result, internationally trained immigrants may need to speak with college staff in several departments to determine the best source of information to address their questions. When an internationally trained immigrant has to use a number of access points across the college to acquire information, college staffing resources and the individual's time are used inefficiently.
- Privacy legislation limits the ability to provide information or advice through a spouse or family member who may have a better command of English or French than the applicant.
- In general, college recruiters and advisors have not received training in meeting the needs of diverse student populations.
- Colleges differ in the proportions and mixes of their population of internationally trained immigrant applicants. There has been no developmental work designing and implementing cost-effective and flexible models of advice provision for differing college environments.

### **Challenges Experienced by Employers**

- No challenges were identified.

### **d) Background Information**

There is no additional information to conceptualize this section apart from the policies and practices described earlier.

### **e) Ideas for Change**

#### **Stakeholder Ideas**

##### ***Advisement Models***

- Increase the capacity of colleges to provide advisement services specifically targeting internationally trained immigrants through telephone hotlines, electronic/web advising, drop-in-centres and information evenings;
- Create advisement models that can be replicated or customized by individual colleges, such as:
  - A case management approach,
  - Bi-weekly information sessions,
  - An advisement centre staffed with knowledgeable resources,
  - A buddy/mentorship advisement process that would last throughout the college experience, and
  - A regional hub of advisement within Job Connect centres.
- Modify funding structures and college system-wide supports to support advisement processes, such as investigating a weighted funding system based on the number of internationally trained immigrants enrolled at the college.

##### ***Advisement Staff***

- Create a position for a Coordinator/Advisor who possesses cross-cultural and referral skills to serve internationally trained immigrants in colleges with significant populations of internationally trained immigrant; and,
- Provide training for recruiters and advisors targeted at meeting the special needs of internationally trained immigrants.

##### ***Advisement Tools***

- Develop self-advisement tools that internationally trained immigrants can access through the Internet. These would be available to potential immigrants and could help identify language or skills upgrading that could be completed while waiting to immigrate; and,

- Develop service standards to provide consistent college-system information and levels of service to internationally trained immigrants.

### **Ideas from Internationally Trained Immigrants**

- Offer one-on-one advisement services from knowledgeable staff to help internationally trained immigrants determine their education and career goals.
- Provide dedicated staff to deliver advice to internationally trained immigrants and other applicants to help them compare their previous learning with their employment goals, and to then match applicants to the appropriate program.
- Provide dedicated advisors at ESL-delivery locations to help students make decisions about the right classes and paths.

## **3. Admissions Practices**

### **a) Ministry Policy**

The Admissions Criteria policy of the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities requires that colleges “establish specific admissions criteria and procedures for all full-time or part-time postsecondary programs of instruction.”<sup>30</sup> Admissions criteria state that program requirements shall be established by each college on a program-specific basis, and must be relevant to the program of instruction. Each college and program can set individual program admissions requirements.

MTCU policy further states that college admissions processes must be fair, equitable, transparent and open to an appeal process. Admissions requirements first determine system eligibility, then program eligibility. Selection takes place from among all program-eligible applicants to oversubscribed programs.<sup>31</sup>

System eligibility requirements for postsecondary certificate and diploma programs include an Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD) or equivalent, mature student status (19 years of age or older) or any lesser minimum admissions requirements as established by a college on a program-specific basis. System eligibility requirements for Ontario Graduate Certificate programs include a university degree or college diploma, or mature student status with experience in a related field.

MTCU applicant selection policy currently states that applicants to oversubscribed programs will be accepted according to the following preference: residents of Ontario, residents of other provinces and territories in Canada, and other applicants.

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<sup>30</sup> MTCU, “Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology Policy Framework” Admissions Criteria, April 1, 2003, p 1.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

## **b) Current College Practices**

The Ontario college application process is standardized through the use of the Ontario Colleges Application Services (OCAS). OCAS is the centralized clearinghouse of applications for the college system by agreement of Ontario colleges.

OCAS processes the applications for most postsecondary and post-diploma programs in Ontario and forwards them to the colleges. Most part-time (continuing education) programs and full cost-recovery programs (corporate training, and some ESL training) have direct application processes in which individuals submit applications directly to individual colleges.

Individual colleges are responsible for determining if applicant qualifications meet admissions requirements and delivering admissions decisions to applicants.

## **c) Issues and Challenges**

### **Barriers, Gaps and Challenges Experienced by Internationally Trained Immigrants**

- Providing additional documentation, such as translated transcripts, for entry can be costly for internationally trained immigrants.
- The OCAS application does not clearly explain to persons unfamiliar with Ontario college terminology how an applicant may apply for advanced standing or course exemptions.
- All international documents for applicants applying to college programs through OCAS are assessed by an organization, under contract to OCAS, for a mandatory, non-refundable fee. The application guides do not explain options about how the applicant can use existing credential assessments or other credential assessment services which may be the preference of some colleges. [See section below on Assessment of International Credentials.]

### **College System Challenges**

- Delays occur in the admissions processes due to the need for internationally trained immigrants to provide documentation about academic credentials and language proficiency. Often applicants do not have the documents and must send for them or wait to have them translated.

### **Challenges Experienced by Employers**

- No challenges were identified.

### **d) Background Information**

In addition to OCAS, two key organizations are involved in college admissions: the Committee of Registrars Admissions and Liaison Officers (CRALO), and the American Association of College Registrars and Admission Officers (AACRAO).

CRALO is the provincial college committee responsible for providing leadership on admissions, registration and recruitment practices and reports to the Coordinating Committee on Student Services through ACAATO. CRALO ensures that emerging issues in admissions are discussed and acted upon. When necessary, CRALO acts in collaboration with MTCU admissions liaison representatives and/or OCAS.

AACRAO is a professional association with representation in over 35 countries. AACRAO provides professional development, guidelines and voluntary standards to be used by higher education officials concerning best practices in areas such as records management, admissions, enrolment management, administrative information technology and student services. ACCRAO also serves as a discussion forum on initiating, developing, interpreting and implementing policy.

### **e) Preliminary Ideas for Change**

#### **Stakeholder Ideas**

- Standardize the admissions process across Ontario colleges;
- Create responsive technology and infrastructure that will quickly accommodate and capture all details of changes to student records and admissions processes; and,
- Connect college management information systems to the CIC database to download information/transcripts to their college information systems. This would reduce duplication of activities, such as providing academic credentials, during the immigration and college application stages.

#### **Ideas from Internationally Trained Immigrants**

- Create admissions processes that mirror university admissions processes in order to simplify and accelerate the admissions process. These require only transcripts and credential evaluation and do not require admissions tests.

## 4. Assessment of International Academic Credentials

### a) Ministry Policy

MTCU Admissions Criteria state that a Secondary School Graduation Diploma (SSGD) equivalent will be an accepted college admissions requirement. MTCU determines an SSGD equivalent to be “a secondary school graduation diploma, such as the General Education Diploma (GED), from another jurisdiction, or documentation, as determined by the college, that supports the applicant’s claim of having completed the learning outcomes of an SSGD.”<sup>32</sup>

This policy allows colleges some flexibility in determining equivalencies, and autonomy in conducting credential assessments.

MTCU policy does not prescribe standards and processes for the granting of advanced standing or course exemption.

### b) Overview of Current Policies and Practices

#### Assessment for College Entry

The Ontario Colleges Application Services (OCAS) application guide states that OCAS assesses all out-of-country transcripts received in support of college applications. OCAS sends the international documentation it receives to the International Credential Assessment Services of Canada (ICAS), a private service, for evaluation of equivalency to Ontario secondary school graduation diploma.

ICAS has contracted with OCAS to provide assessments for admissions purposes of international credentials earned by college applicants. The ICAS evaluation requires certified true translations of educational transcripts, including the GPA of high school subjects and the level attained. If necessary, the ICAS evaluation also provides colleges with copies of international postsecondary education documentation certified to be a true translation. The ICAS evaluation enters the GPA for required postsecondary core entry subjects, such as mathematics, sciences, or English, into the colleges’ information systems.<sup>33</sup>

Applicants with international documents who submit their documentation to OCAS must pay a non-refundable \$50 fee, with an additional non-refundable \$10 fee for the return of their documentation.

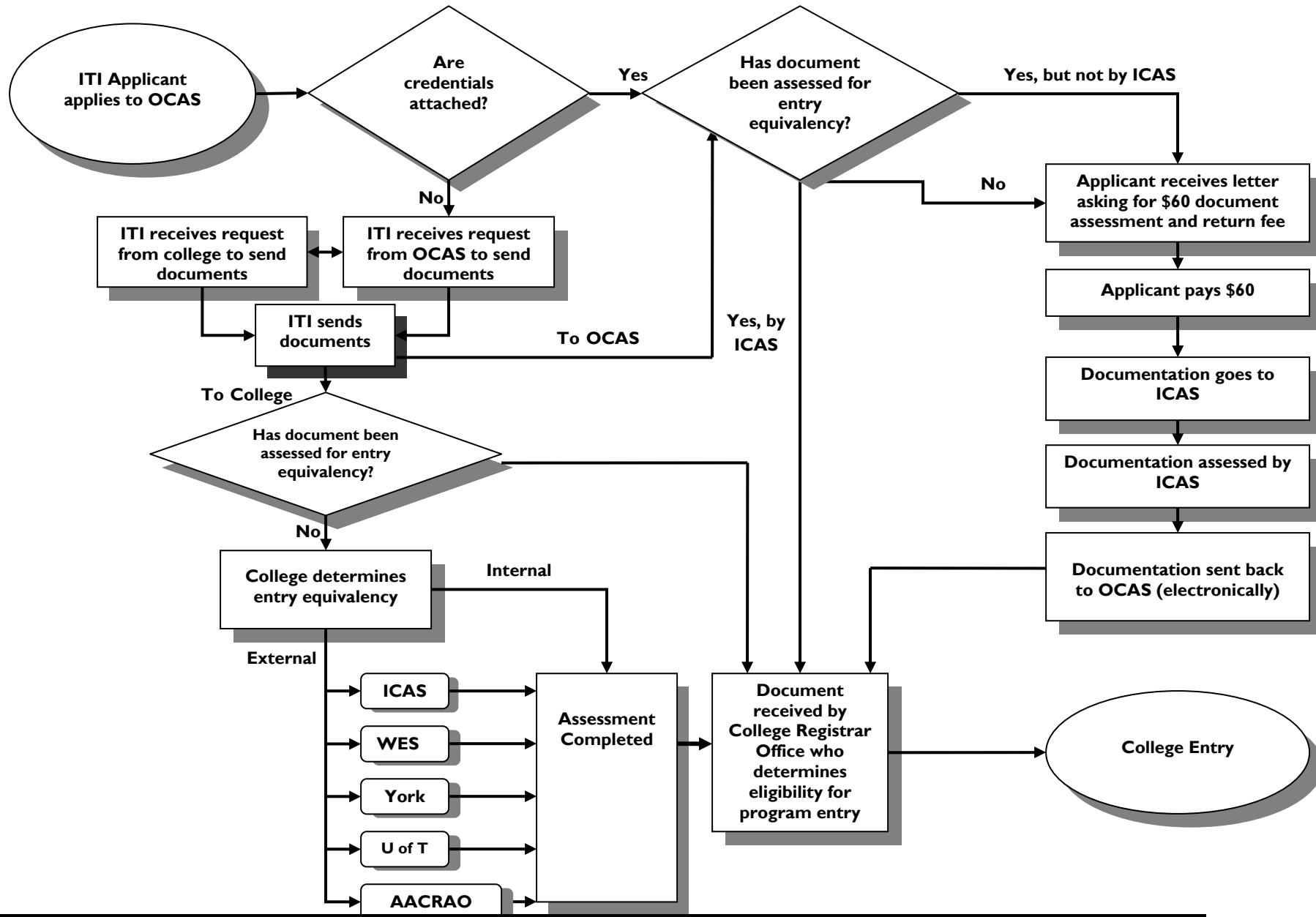
Figure 3.0 illustrates the current practice for credential assessment.

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<sup>32</sup> MTCU, “Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology Policy Framework” Admissions Criteria, April 1, 2003, p 3.

<sup>33</sup> “Banner”, for example, a computer application used by several Ontario colleges that retains student information.

**Figure 3.0 Credential Assessment (College Entry) – Current Practice**



### **Advanced Standing**

As set out above, internationally trained immigrants are assessed for high school equivalency/program prerequisites during the postsecondary admissions process.

Prior postsecondary education is not commonly assessed for advanced standing at this point since the Office of the Registrar does not typically have the capacity to fully assess international credentials.

Applicants who wish to receive advanced standing must indicate on the OCAS application that they would like to be considered for admission beyond semester one. Applicants are required to pay the advanced standing assessment fee to the college, which ranges from no charge to \$100. Fees are not generally required if advanced standing is being applied for by applicants re-entering a program of study at the same institution. Applicants must supply supporting documentation, including course outlines and transcripts from their home countries.

Program Coordinators/Faculty/Chairs may conduct evaluations to determine advanced standing and for entry to post-diploma programs. External evaluation services may assist in this process by providing background data. External providers of assessment services include:

- International Credential Assessment Service of Canada (ICAS),
- World Educational Services (WES),
- Comparative Education Service, University of Toronto,
- Academic Credentials Evaluation Service (ACES), York University,<sup>34</sup>
- Foreign Education Credential Service, American Association of College Registrars and Admission Officers (AACRAO).

Assessment fees vary. University of Toronto charges \$100 - \$300 for international credential assessments. York University (ACES) charges \$80 per assessment, while AACRAO charges \$75 for a basic evaluation and \$190 for a course-by-course evaluation. WES charges fees ranging from \$100 to \$200, with a course-by-course evaluation including GPA and course-levels for \$150.

Twenty colleges currently use or accept ICAS foreign credential assessments. Nine colleges also use or accept WES evaluations of foreign credentials. Four colleges use internal processes to evaluate foreign credentials, two of which use ICAS for evaluations if it is deemed necessary to bring in an outside evaluator. Four of the 20 colleges that use ICAS also accept evaluations provided by the University of Toronto and three colleges will accept

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<sup>34</sup> York University's Academic Credentials Evaluation Service (ACES) is no longer in operation as of November 30, 2004.

## VI. Key Findings

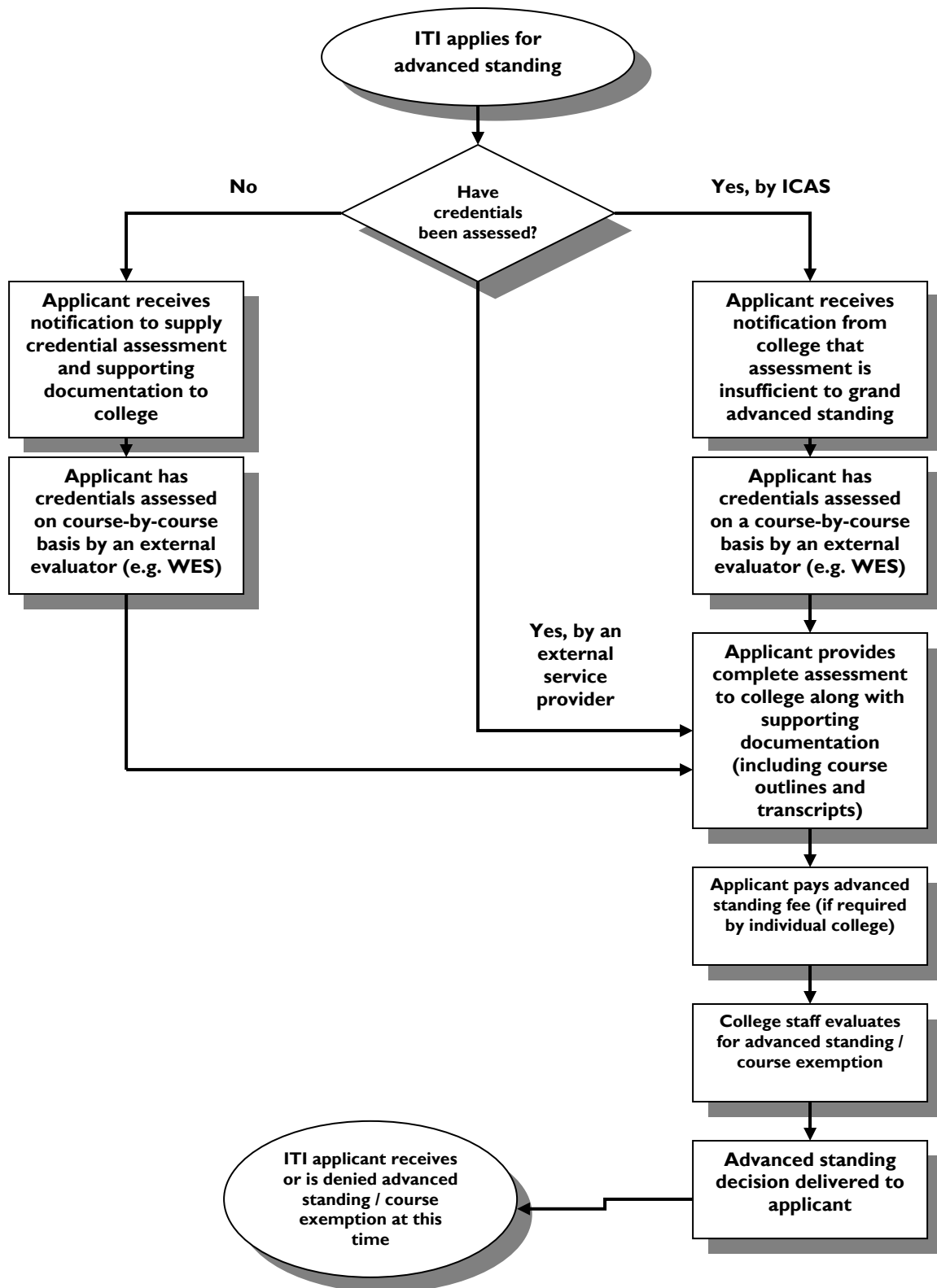
assessments performed by York University<sup>35</sup>. Only one college uses AACRAO for foreign credential assessment purposes. Additionally, two colleges reported that they use other services when necessary.

Figure 4.0 illustrates the Advanced Standing process.

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<sup>35</sup> York University's Academic Credentials Evaluation Service (ACES) is no longer in operation as of November 30, 2004.

**Figure 4.0 Advanced Standing Process**



## d) Issues and Challenges

### **Barriers, Gaps and Challenges Experienced by Internationally Trained Immigrants**

#### ***Standards and Guidelines***

- There are no consistent standards or guidelines within colleges for evaluating international academic credentials for the purposes of granting advanced standing/course exemption. As a result, internationally trained immigrants may receive inconsistent and subjective assessments of their credentials.
- The lack of standards or guidelines for evaluating international credentials can result in duplication of effort and resources for both the college and the internationally trained immigrant, who maybe required to undergo repeated assessments.

#### ***Assessment for College Entry***

- International documents are assessed for a mandatory, non-refundable fee for applicants applying to programs through OCAS which contracts ICAS to complete this service. The application information does not explain options about how internationally trained immigrants can forward existing assessments or use other credential assessment services, such as WES or U of T (which may be preferred by some colleges), to support their application.
- Individual internationally trained immigrants may not receive a copy of the assessment from ICAS for personal use, which limits their understanding of Ontario standards and the needs of potential employers.

#### ***Assessment for Advanced Standing***

- Colleges require assessment of international credentials to determine Grade 12 equivalency for admission to the entry level of a postsecondary program. If an internationally trained applicant is applying for advanced standing (for entry beyond semester one), the process for determining transfer credits or exemptions often takes place after admission to the program at many colleges. However, some colleges do grant acceptance directly into semesters other than semester one.
- Internationally trained immigrants may need documentation that they do not have, such as detailed course outlines from their home countries, to meet program and process requirements. In addition, some internationally trained immigrants find themselves having to duplicate processes, such as assessing credentials with different service providers to complete their exemption request;

- Some colleges require credentials to be reassessed through specific organizations, despite documentation of an assessment by an equivalent service provider. This can result in additional costs for internationally trained immigrants and delays in processing applications.

### **Regulated Professions**

- In regulated professions, the academic credential assessment accepted by an occupational regulatory body as equivalent to Canadian standards may not be accepted by a college in some instances, or vice versa. However, in some professions such as nursing, colleges and the occupational regulatory body do collaborate and accept assessed credentials as equivalent to Canadian academic and occupational standards.
- Internationally trained immigrants may find the differing requirements confusing, and they may be frustrated that they must meet different requirements to prove they have acquired the knowledge and skills for entry to college programs and licensure.

### **Affordability**

- Fees for credential assessments and advanced standing are a potential barrier to internationally trained immigrants who may not have the resources to bear additional costs.
- Internationally trained immigrants who may be eligible for credits and need to study part time may face a dilemma since part-time student status may reduce their eligibility for financial assistance.

## **College System Challenges**

### **Standards and Guidelines**

- Ontario colleges lack consistent standards and processes for assessing postsecondary international academic credentials and granting exemptions from courses or advanced standing in a program.
- It is up to individual faculty or faculty co-ordinators to create their own standards and guidelines for determining how international credentials should be assessed for college credit.
- International postsecondary academic credentials are inconsistently recognized for admissions and course exemption/advanced standing. Results can vary depending on the program staff or external agencies conducting the evaluations.

### **Assessment Services**

- International academic programs/courses may be organized and described differently than Ontario programs. This can make it difficult to compare acquired credentials to Ontario course outcomes, and to

provide verification that an internationally trained immigrant possesses the required equivalency.

- OCAS practice has been to accept only ICAS assessments. It is unclear why assessments from other services are not accepted. Many colleges, however, require a more extensive assessment than that provided by ICAS for purposes of advanced standing/course exemption.

### **Funding**

- The granting of advanced standing/course exemption may increase the number of part-time students. If credential assessment results in a student moving from full-time to part-time status, colleges receive proportionally less funding for that student.
- A change from full-time to part-time status also reduces a student's OSAP eligibility because there is proportionally less OSAP funding available for part-time students.

### **Timing of Assessment for Advanced Standing**

- Internationally trained immigrants, as well as other student groups such as adult learners, want to have credential assessment for advanced standing purposes take place prior to acceptance in programs. This does not happen currently because colleges do not have the resources to determine the advanced standing/course exemption status for all applicants during the admissions stage. A college could have over 20,000 applicants, only 6,000 of whom may ultimately enrol. Completing the credential assessment process for all eligible applicants would be impossible for most colleges given existing staff and resources.
- Although it is not cost effective for colleges to provide wide-ranging credential assessments prior to acceptance, colleges recognize that pre-entry academic assessment can be an attractive marketing tool and that there is a growing demand for this service. However, colleges who wish to consider implementing a pre-entry academic assessment process lack a sustainable model.

### **Challenges Experience by Employers**

- Employers may not want to accept college graduates who have been granted advanced standing through a process of academic credential assessment they do not understand or trust.
- The academic credential assessments that a college accepts may not be accepted by an occupational regulatory body as equivalent to Canadian standards. This can potentially limit the pool of available employees.

### **d) Background Information**

Colleges are moving from locally developed and monitored quality assurance processes to a system-wide framework and a provincial audit of quality assurance processes. Components include a Credential Framework and a Credential Validation Service (CVS) to monitor consistency in college program outcomes, titles and credentials.

Implemented in 2003, the Credential Framework defines, in terms of learning outcomes, the level of education leading to each credential and its relevance to the workplace.

Subject to funding, the system-wide program standards assurance processes overseen by the Credential Validation Service will be in place by 2005.

A proposed Program Quality Assurance Process has been approved in principle by the Committee of Presidents and implementation planning is under way.

These quality assurance initiatives give colleges the authority and responsibility to respond quickly to emerging workforce development needs while ensuring a level of province-wide program consistency.<sup>36</sup>

### **e) Preliminary Ideas for Change**

#### **Stakeholder Ideas**

##### ***Timing of Assessments***

- Conduct assessments up-front for both entry and advanced standing purposes; and,
- Arrange for overseas assessment of the credentials held by internationally trained immigrant to save time and money after immigration.

##### ***Assessment Tools***

- Work with experts, such as WES and ICAS, to develop an on-line self-assessment tool;
- Create a transfer credit inventory (block and course) to determine and monitor those programs where the majority of assessment activity currently takes place; and,
- Implement student information systems that can process and track international transcripts automatically for admissions purposes and transfer credits.

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<sup>36</sup> *Accountability in Ontario's Colleges – ACAATO Working Paper #11*, Richard Hook, October 2004, p. 10.

### **Assessment Standards**

- Establish a system for consistent assessment of academic credentials across the province, including an expanded database of evaluated courses and programs that all colleges could access. This could be undertaken in partnership with existing assessment service providers with the requisite expertise;
- Develop inter-college standards, policies and processes for credential assessments involving transfer credits. Standards should include a clear description of the process and the level of detail provided by the assessment, and staff training on the standards and guidelines; and,
- Pilot the standards and optimal partnership models in coordination with service providers, such as ICAS and WES, and regulatory bodies.

### **Transfer Credit Process**

- Grant block transfer credits for more appropriate (advanced) program placement and to minimize duplication of already-completed technical courses and to help “fast-track” individuals through their program.
- Market/promote the value and benefit of advanced standing for internationally trained immigrants.

### **Ideas from Internationally Trained Immigrants**

- Provide a more transparent, standardized system for academic credential assessment and the granting of advanced standing.
- Provide information and assistance to help internationally trained immigrants understand what is required to gain advanced standing or course exemptions.
- Advise internationally trained immigrants who have completed a postsecondary education about the credits they will receive through advanced standing/course exemption before they accept an offer of admission to and pay fees for their college program.

## 5. Assessment of Prior Learning (PLAR)

Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) offers learners the opportunity to earn credit for college courses based on formally demonstrating prior learning acquired through study, work and other life experiences.

Credit for prior learning can be granted through successfully completing a challenge process or portfolio development. The challenge process is a method of assessment that measures demonstrated learning through written tests and skills demonstration. Portfolio development is a method of assessment that evaluates an organized collection of materials that records an applicant's achievements.

### a) Ministry Policy

MTCU policy requires PLAR to be available in all colleges. However, MTCU does not prescribe the processes colleges must adhere to. Instead, MTCU provides suggested or best practices for colleges to follow.

MTCU has suggested that candidates for PLAR should meet the college general admissions requirements and that a candidate need not be enrolled in a college program of instruction to be considered. MTCU has also suggested that individual colleges establish residency requirements and that assessments be conducted within a reasonable period of time.

MTCU's "Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology Policy Framework" Tuition and Ancillary Fees Reporting Operating Procedure requires that fees for PLAR fall in the range from \$5 minimum to a maximum of \$127. Colleges are to establish PLAR fees at any level between the minimum and maximum for the applicable year.<sup>37</sup>

The PLAR funding rate for colleges provides that 100 completed assessments equals 1 FTE (full-time equivalent) funding unit of approximately \$4800.

### b) Current College Practices

Currently there is no systematic application of PLAR in colleges. Individuals are responsible for applying for PLAR. PLAR is conducted by a variety of college departments including continuing education, advising departments and individual program departments. PLAR is currently assessed by a variety of individual assessors including program co-ordinators, PLAR experts, subject experts and faculty. The duration of a PLAR assessment can vary from college to college, depending upon the needs of the applicant and the resources within the college.

Individual colleges decide on how they apply their PLAR fee formula. In 2003-04, fees for PLAR applications within the college system ranged from \$77/course to over \$120/course.

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<sup>37</sup> Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities "College of Applied Arts and Technology" Tuition and Ancillary Fees Reporting Operating Procedure, April 1, 2003, p. 20.

At Mohawk College, for example, fees are assessed based on the course hours and cost. PLAR is usually set at one-half of the course fee:

- A 35-hour course that costs \$199.60 will require a PLAR fee of \$99.80.
- An 18-hour course that costs \$99.80 will charge a PLAR fee of \$49.90.
- If a course fee is less than \$99.80, then the fee for PLAR is the same amount as the course fee.
- There is a maximum \$127 fee if the course fee exceeds \$250.

The PLAR fee structure at Sault College charges different fees for the challenge process and portfolio development.

### **c) Issues and Challenges**

#### **Barriers, Gaps and Challenges Experience by Internationally Trained Immigrants**

##### ***Availability of PLAR***

- Internationally trained immigrants may lack the academic credentials to justify a course exemption or advanced standing, but may nonetheless have the requisite skills and knowledge. Also many internationally trained immigrants, like other adults, have knowledge and skills derived from work experience that exceeds their academic credentials. For such individuals, a prior learning assessment is the only way they can demonstrate their competence and avoid taking unnecessary courses. However, there is limited availability for internationally trained immigrants to obtain PLAR in the Ontario colleges.
- Without effective PLAR, potential students do not get credit for the value of their experience and skills, because admissions staff, faculty and employers cannot properly evaluate their competencies within the Canadian context. This creates frustration for the students.
- PLAR services tend not to be advertised, or explained/offered in a meaningful manner. Many internationally trained immigrants are not aware that PLAR is available.
- Credit for prior learning and experience avoids wasting valuable resources in duplicating learning. However, many internationally trained immigrants are unaware that the process exists at their college.

### ***PLAR Processes***

- PLAR is a challenging process that can be made more complex when there are language issues and when learning and skills have been gained in a non-Canadian context.
- The current portfolio assessment process is often so complicated that many internationally trained immigrants find it easier to take the course than to attempt to gain credit through the PLAR process.
- Challenge tests may not be sensitive to other cultures. A lack of understanding of the nuances of language, rather than lack of technical skills, may create hardship for internationally trained immigrants.

### ***Faculty and Staff Training***

- Internationally trained immigrants who apply for PLAR assessments may be denied because faculty and staff lack the training and expertise to conduct the assessment, resulting in duplicated learning and wasted financial resources for internationally trained immigrants.

### ***Affordability***

- Internationally trained immigrants may be unwilling to pay the costs of the assessment. As a result, advisors often do not push for PLAR. The fees for PLAR and related preparation courses, such as portfolio development workshops, are not covered by OSAP loans. This often makes PLAR unaffordable for internationally trained immigrants.
- If PLAR results in a student moving from full-time to part-time status, it can negatively impact a student's OSAP eligibility because there is proportionally less OSAP funding available for part-time students.

### ***Credibility with Employers***

- Internationally trained immigrants have expressed fears that employers may not recognize credentials assessed through PLAR.

## ***College System Challenges***

### ***Standards and Guidelines***

- The college system does not use consistent methods, standards or tools for PLAR.

### ***PLAR Processes***

- PLAR is a complex process made more complicated when immigrants do not have the language skills to explain their international experience adequately.

### **Funding**

- In the 1990s, preparatory work was begun to develop PLAR, but developmental activity has not been sustained and cannot be built upon due to the removal of dedicated PLAR funding. The biggest barrier to providing PLAR is that the funding colleges receive is insufficient to adequately cover the costs of providing PLAR assessments. Government funding for PLAR does not recognize the time and resources spent in advising each student, the development of assessment methods and the actual evaluation of learning. Some colleges do not promote PLAR services because they are too costly to provide.
- Insufficient funding means that resources, such as staff time and training, have not been allocated to maintain and enhance PLAR tools. As a result, the tools available have become dated and have not been modified to meet the needs of internationally trained immigrants, especially with respect to approaches that are culturally sensitive and ensure language proficiency does not affect the result. Adequate funding is required for faculty training and evaluation time.
- There is a question about how PLAR is recognized in the workload formula for faculty. Costing PLAR as overtime work for faculty adds to the total cost of providing PLAR services.
- In some occupations, tests of “demonstration of skills” may be the only way to conduct PLAR assessments, especially in trade occupations. This adds significant cost implications.
- The current funding infrastructure does not encourage colleges to provide PLAR services. If PLAR results in a student moving from full-time to part-time status, colleges receive proportionally less funding for that student.

### **Data**

- While some tracking of PLAR exists, statistical figures for internationally trained immigrants receiving PLAR are not available because there is no tracking system for this client group.
- Internationally trained immigrants are not required to self-identify during the PLAR process.

### **Challenges Experienced by Employers**

- Employers may not want to accept college graduates who have been granted advanced standing through a PLAR process they do not understand or trust.

## d) Background Information

Extensive research has been conducted on the subject of PLAR in Canada:

- The Canadian Labour Force Development Board has prepared a report entitled *Reaching Our Full Potential: Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition for Foreign-Trained Canadians*.
- In 2000, the Canadian Association for Prior Learning Assessment (CAPLA) published a report entitled *Developing Benchmarks for Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition-Practitioner Perspectives* to supply guidelines to providers of PLAR services.<sup>38</sup>
- Catherine Laurie, a senior policy analyst for the APT Unit, prepared a paper in December 2000 for The Maytree Foundation entitled *Competency Based Assessment Programs for Internationally Trained Professionals*.
- In 2001, the Conference Board of Canada produced *Brain Gain - the Economic Benefits of Recognizing Learning and Learning Credentials in Canada* which stated that recognizing prior learning would amount to an additional \$4.1 billion to \$5.9 billion in income annually.

In co-operation with the Ontario PLAR Strategy Group and the ACCC Recognition of Learning Affinity Group, CAPLA will be presenting a Fall Focus Workshop on Integrating Recognition Systems. Work in this area will continue to be undertaken by interested parties.

Colleges in other provinces have also done much research and development of PLAR processes.

## e) Preliminary Ideas for Change

### Stakeholder Ideas

#### **PLAR Funding**

- Develop a revised funding model for PLAR to include additional time for more comprehensive reviews of equivalencies for internationally trained immigrants.

#### **PLAR Information**

- Provide key information to internationally trained immigrants prior to immigration about PLAR and the need to provide all relevant material before departure from their home country;
- Provide information about transfer credits and PLAR processes prior to enrolment; and

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<sup>38</sup> *Developing Benchmarks for PLAR*, Canadian Association for Prior Learning Assessment.  
[online] <http://www.capla.ca/News.php>.

- Compile information on courses and program elements that are “PLAR-able”.

#### ***PLAR Studies and Methodologies***

- Develop PLAR standards for the college system.
- Develop a common approach for testing and assessing the skills and experience of internationally trained immigrant for high demand occupations.
- Include portfolio development within a language training course.
- Conduct a feasibility study on the optimal way to conduct PLAR assessments in the college system, including an investigation of creating a central PLAR resource.
- Identify optimal PLAR models and how best to implement them taking into account a college’s infrastructure, resources and student demographics. This would help colleges and MTCU better understand and address the funding and sustainability issues for PLAR services.

#### ***PLAR Training***

- Train internationally trained immigrants in the usage of common terminology relating to learning outcomes, experience and, specifically, reflective learning; and
- Train internationally trained immigrants in how to articulate prior learning experiences and develop a portfolio.

#### ***Ideas from Internationally Trained Immigrants***

- Provide more information to internationally trained immigrants about the PLAR option; and
- Provide an open, transparent and affordable PLAR process.

## C. Language Proficiency

Language proficiency includes two main areas:

1. **Assessment:** This includes language benchmarks or standards against which a student's language proficiency can be measured. It also includes assessment tools used for admission, placement into courses, post-placement diagnostic and program exit.
2. **Language Programs and Supports:** This includes providing courses in English/French as a Second Language (ESL/FSL), and English/French for Academic Purposes (EAP/FAP). It also includes language supports such as peer tutoring.

### I. Language Assessment

#### a) Ministry Policy

MTCU mandates specific vocational outcomes, general education outcomes and general employability skills outcomes for each of the more than 600 college programs it funds. The purpose of this standardization is to ensure that all stakeholders in college programs, including students and employers, can expect graduates to have achieved the same outcomes, including language-related skills, no matter which program they have taken or which college location they attended.

However, MTCU does not mandate the pathways that students enrolled in college programs must follow to reach these sets of outcomes. Consequently, structure and organization vary considerably across the province for the same program offered by different colleges. MTCU does not require all students in college programs to take a language course.

MTCU does not prescribe minimum language requirements for the purposes of admission to college programs. Nor is there a standard instrument for assessing English or French proficiency for admission or other purposes. Colleges are permitted flexibility in the standards and tools they use to determine language proficiency. As a result, an internationally trained immigrant may have to complete multiple language assessments if applying to more than one institution. Language requirements for admissions are articulated in each college's full-time calendar.

#### b) Current College Practice

All aspects of language education, including the nature, variety, duration, and curriculum of courses, and the institutional structures that deliver them, vary from college to college across the system, and from program to program within colleges.

Some colleges may require a particular language course for all students in postsecondary programs. Other colleges may fulfill MTCU's general employability skills and general education outcomes that relate to language proficiency by other

means, such as including language-related material in courses that focus primarily on vocational content - in other words, by embedding language education in program courses.

Colleges make their curricular and programming choices for language education as part of the delivery of postsecondary programs, and within the framework of the funding they receive from MTCU. As a result, individual colleges establish their own policies and practices relating to the assessment of applicants' and enrolled students' language proficiency. Since these operational policies and practices are not mandated by MTCU, they vary from college to college.

### **Assessment for Admission**

College applicants identify their first language when they apply to Ontario colleges using the Ontario College Application Service (OCAS). Applicants who indicate that English or French is not their first language are requested to provide proficiency test results. Applicants may include English or French proficiency test scores with their OCAS application, or send documentation directly to colleges. Colleges contact applicants for whom this information has not been received.

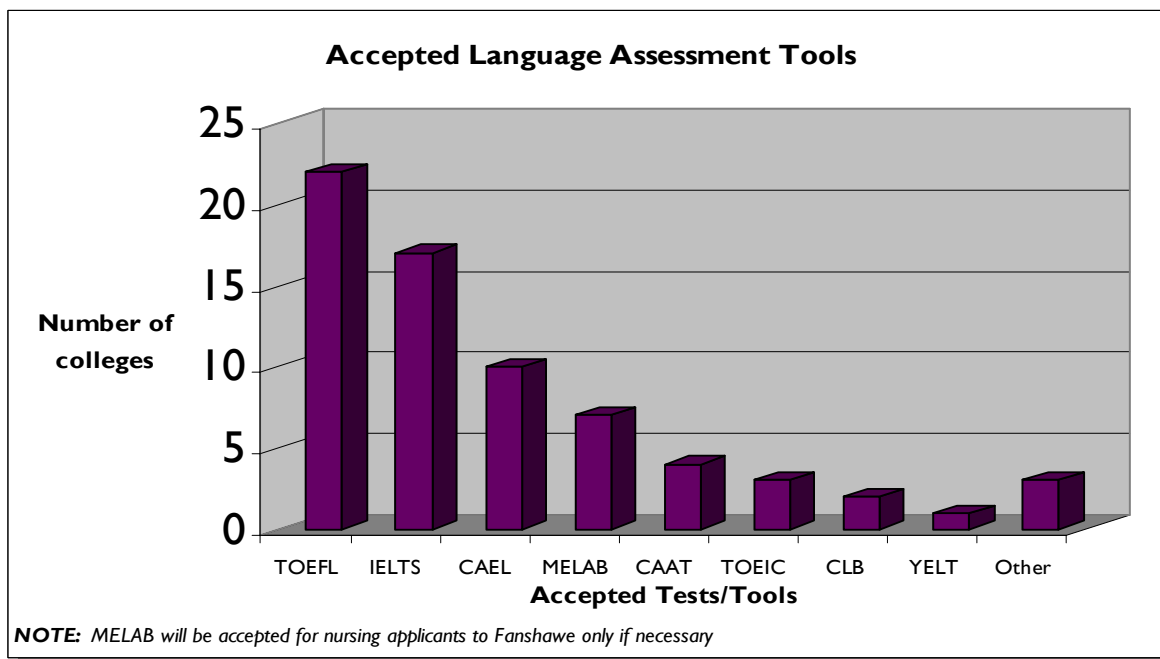
Applicants may be exempted from admissions language proficiency English or French if they have completed a degree or diploma at an institution where the language of instruction was English or French, or if they can demonstrate four years of study in Canada.

For secondary school graduates, colleges typically require one of two Grade 12 English/French credits: 12C (College) English/French for diploma programs, and 12U (University) English/French for degree programs. Even for students accepted on the basis of Grade 12 English/French academic background or other accepted equivalents, colleges may have to conduct language proficiency assessment for placement into postsecondary programs.

Figure 3.1 shows the range of tests commonly accepted for admissions purposes for Anglophone colleges. These tests include:

- TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language), is used across the system,
- MELAB (Michigan English Language Assessment Battery),
- IELTS (International English Language Testing System) and
- CAEL (Canadian Academic English Language assessment).

TEF (Test d'Evaluation de Français) is the most commonly used assessment tool used to assess French language proficiency for Collège Boréal and La Cité collégiale, Ontario's two Francophone colleges.

**Figure 5.0 Accepted Language Assessment Tools**

There is a range of acceptable scores for TOEFL, the most widely accepted standardized test. The variance is small for admission to postsecondary programs: between scores of 500 and 550 on the TOEFL paper-based-test (pbt) or from 173 to 213 on the computer-based test (cbt). As colleges individualize their program offerings, a few institutions have identified TOEFL 560 (pbt) or 220 (cbt) as the admission standard for applied degree programs, and TOEFL 580 (pbt) or 237 (cbt) as the admission standard for post-diploma programs.

While TOEFL is the standardized test most widely accepted by Ontario colleges, it may be more difficult for internationally trained immigrants to access TOEFL preparation courses in Ontario than in their home countries, where these courses could be offered more frequently and more economically.

Developers of standardized tests such as TOEFL are working to update test mechanisms in order to extend the range of skills tested and the language tasks required, but standardized tests often test knowledge of language (language competence) rather than use of language (language performance).

Colleges do not generally require evidence of oral proficiency for admission to college programs. Mechanisms that test speaking and listening skills are too time-consuming or costly to administer. Consequently, some internationally trained immigrant students with high TOEFL scores that meet admissions standards cannot communicate or work effectively in English in the classroom, or on work placements where listening and speaking skills are essential. Results

of admissions tests, including specifics of performance strength or weakness, are not available to program or language instructors.

Some colleges or programs are reluctant to accept students at low language levels due to the challenge of teaching classes with too many language levels or with levels of language comprehension that are too low.

On the other hand, some institutions may accept students at low language levels to meet enrolment targets, or to avoid bias or creating barriers. This practice can create unrealistic expectations and eventually discourage internationally trained immigrant learners who encounter difficulties in the course, work placement or workplace because their level of language proficiency is not adequate.

### **Pre-Entry Language Assessment for Placement**

Students applying to and enrolling in postsecondary programs at Ontario colleges typically face a number of assessments of their language skills at the beginning of their college experience. The process begins with assessment of language proficiency for admission purposes or demonstration of equivalent language credentials, and often continues through assessment for placement into language courses. Additional diagnostic assessments may be necessary if the internationally trained immigrant does not appear to have the language skills required for the level at which they have been placed.

After admission, colleges may administer a language placement test to students who have been admitted to college programs in order to identify students' levels of language proficiency and direct them to appropriate language classes or levels. Students are advised that they must complete placement testing before registration and an overview of test length, structure, and purpose may be available.

Some internationally trained immigrants are unprepared to learn that their English or French is not sufficient for them to succeed readily in college or be hired by employers.

Generally, placement testing mechanisms focus on general literacy levels and academic writing skills, rather than on the applied or sector-specific language skills required for program and employment success. These mechanisms lack sufficient capacity to identify or predict those learners who will be able to succeed over the duration of a program as language use becomes more complex and applied.

Instruments used for language assessment placement vary widely. Some colleges, such as Humber, administer a standardized computer test. For students whose test performance indicates a need to examine their language proficiency more closely, this test is followed up by a paragraph-length writing sample.

Some colleges use other standardized tests, such as CAT (College Achievement Test), or CAAT (Canadian Academic Achievement Test).

Generally, these standardized tools test for knowledge of grammar and vocabulary, and some test for reading comprehension. They are not designed for second language learners.

Some colleges use placement tools developed in-house, which are modifications of standardized-type tests. These tests may not be designed for ESL/FSL students.

Some colleges administer a writing sample test to assess writing skills. Students are typically asked to write an essay on a general interest topic that promotes content and structure of a certain type, such as classification or comparison. Such tests distinguish ESL/FSL from non-ESL/FSL writers, and categorize general skill levels that correspond to college-level English/French or ESL/FSL courses.

The degree to which college language placement tests measure formal knowledge of English or French, rather than the ability to use language in context, varies. No language placement test currently in use tests for workplace-related language knowledge or language application.

Time, volume and cost of administration are relevant considerations for colleges in placement testing practices. Colleges use or modify standardized tools that have proven to be cost-effective and efficient to administer.

Not all students who are admitted to college programs are tested for language placement. For example, colleges may have designed equivalency tables to show correspondences between standardized admission test scores and college course placement or admissions policies regarding language proficiency equivalencies, such as four years study in Canada, or a degree or diploma from English-language institution. Students possessing the required equivalencies can be placed directly into language courses without completing language placement testing.

### **Post-Placement Diagnostic Assessments**

Language testing for admissions and placement generally has limited predictive or diagnostic value for student success in program or language courses. Admission testing represents an arbitrary standard for gaining entry to college programs. Placement testing represents a sorting of students into language courses according to the organization of the college curriculum.

Therefore, after admission and placement, many colleges follow up with a some type of diagnostic assessment activity of students' language proficiency. This diagnostic activity typically occurs during the first week of classes and is conducted by the classroom English/French or ESL/FSL instructor. It may be more focused in relation to course content or approach, such as writing a composition in response to a reading selection. This allows language instructors to predict where students will have difficulty in meeting course outcomes, diagnose difficulties for students to work on independently, and recommend language course transfer and placement.

## VI. Key Findings

Diagnosis of students' language difficulty often does not take place until the first graded assignment in a program or language course, by which time it is too late to arrange language course transfer or provide additional language supports.

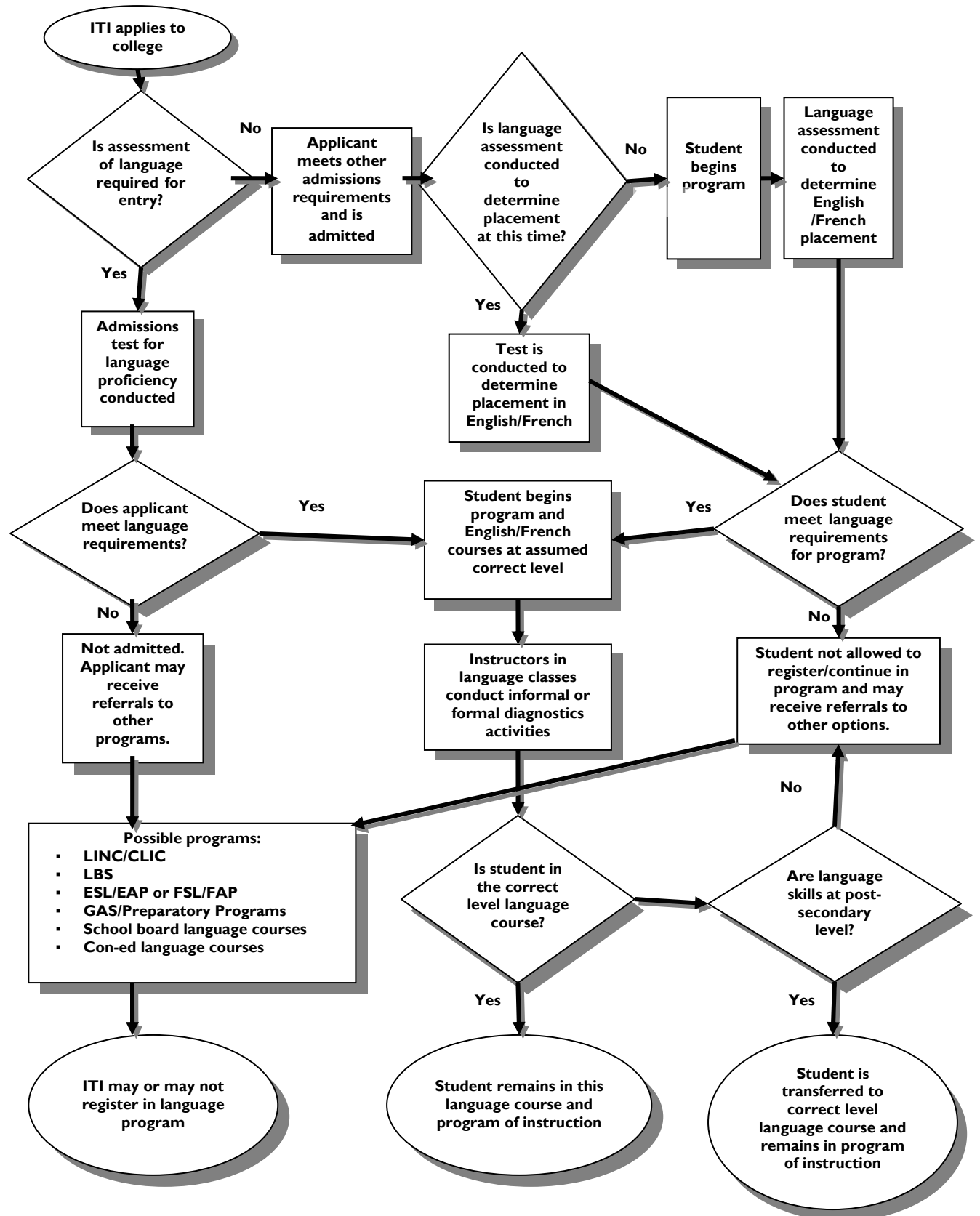
Diagnostic activities may also reveal previously undiagnosed first-language learning disabilities that create additional difficulties in language learning. If diagnosis occurs after students have started their programs, it may be too late for proper accommodation.

Some colleges in southern Ontario that conduct diagnostic activities with students report that they have no follow-up service to offer, such as tutoring or computer labs with ESL/FSL software, or no separate language classes into which to stream students.

No diagnosis of speaking proficiency takes place for students in postsecondary programs. Only part-time or non-postsecondary courses or programs typically conduct oral proficiency assessment. Seneca College, for example, uses a short question-and-answer oral interview assessment in their part-time course placement. LINC, a non-post secondary program for landed immigrants and refugees offered at five Ontario colleges, places students into LINC levels on the basis of Canadian Language Benchmarks Assessment scores that include listening and speaking proficiency. However, this interactive test is cumbersome to administer and can last up to three hours in order to assess all four language skill areas: listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

Refer to Figure 6.0 Language Assessment Timeline.

**Figure 6.0 Language Assessment Timeline**



### **Language Assessment for Program Exit and Employment Readiness**

There is no common practice in Ontario colleges for formally assessing language skills at the end of a program. Final examinations in language courses and program courses may only test for general or academic language skills, not for sector-specific or applied language ability.

Learners whose language skills are appropriate for entry to college and for completion of required language and program courses may still find their skills, such as speaking and listening, inadequate for success in the workplace.

### **Use of Language Benchmarks**

A language benchmark is a standard against which a student's language proficiency can be measured. Language benchmarks may be used as a reference point in relation to any or all of a student's listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills.

Standardized test scores are only one kind of benchmark of a student's language proficiency, and such scores typically do not provide a reliable prediction of how students will perform in college language or program courses. Colleges rely on established correspondence between standardized test scores, such as a TOEFL score of 520 approximates an IELTS score of 6.5, to make admissions decisions. Generally, the less commonly a standard test such as CAEL is used, the less meaningful its standard is outside the few schools using this tool.

## **c) Issues and Challenges**

### **Barriers, Gaps and Challenges Experienced by Internationally Trained Immigrants:**

- Internationally trained immigrants may be confused by different language requirements for entry to different programs and by requirements to undergo multiple assessments.
- Admissions testing for entry represents an arbitrary college-specific standard for internationally trained immigrants to meet. This causes confusion and duplication for internationally trained immigrants applying to more than one college.
- In some cases, there may be complex layers of language assessment or multiple language assessments of the same learner.
- There are many testing processes and many variables that affect the likelihood of internationally trained immigrants being placed in language education courses that effectively fit their circumstances.
- The use of placement test instruments that are not designed for ESL/FSL students, and the lack of oral proficiency assessments, mean that internationally trained immigrant learners often enter language

courses that are only loosely suited to their language learning needs. For example, they may focus on only one or two areas of language skill, or focus on academic writing instead of writing that is relevant to the workplace.

- There is little standardization in how, if, and when classroom instructors conduct diagnostic activities with their students. Since diagnostic activities may be conducted more or less formally or systematically, internationally trained immigrant students may still not be appropriately assessed, placed and taught.
- If diagnosis occurs too late, or results in inappropriate initial placement, students may miss key deadlines to transfer to appropriate language courses or levels, or may find their course of study elongated. They may miss important material at the start of a course during the transfer period. These factors may be further complicated if students do not register or begin to attend classes in a timely way, such as, for example, because their financial supports are not in place.
- Students who have been admitted and placed in English/French or ESL/FSL courses on the basis of a college's testing processes are reluctant to transfer to other such courses or levels, especially if the transfer takes them in a downward (pre-course) direction that complicates or extends their progress towards program completion.
- When program exit language assessment does not take place, students may be unaware that their language skills – while sufficient for the program – may not be sufficient for the workplace.

### **College System Challenges**

- The lack of appropriate diagnostic activities results in student language course transfers and necessitates additional language supports. This places additional strain on college resources.
- There is no standard diagnostic activity that is transferable across the college system, and this causes duplicate assessments.

### **Challenges Experienced by Employers**

- The lack of standardized program exit language assessments can limit the number of internationally trained immigrants who have achieved the appropriate level of sector-specific and/or applied language ability.

## **d) Background Information**

Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) has been a leader in developing a national standard of language proficiency benchmarks. This work was driven by the lack of consistent correspondences among existing systems of describing language proficiency in testing and programming for immigrants, and the lack of meaningful descriptions of learners' abilities.

Through a multi-year process of development, CIC has drafted, tested and revised an elaborate set of language proficiency benchmarks. While language training programming funded by CIC is largely settlement oriented for recent immigrants, the Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB) describes the full range of second-language proficiency from the earliest beginning stages to near-native fluency at the most advanced stage.

The CLB describes all four areas of language skill - reading, writing, listening, and speaking - and takes into account factors such as the type and length of language performance (e.g., face-to-face communication or a text of three pages), the social context of the performance (e.g., formal or group interaction), and the proportion of errors.

For example, the Canadian Language Benchmarks 2000 indicates that as one of several competencies at Writing Benchmark 8, a person can write a paragraph to relate or explain information in a table, graph, flow chart or diagram. At Speaking Benchmark 8, one aspect of competency in group-interaction is to express doubts and concerns, or oppose or support a stand or a proposed solution.

The Canadian Language Benchmarks 2000 is a familiar reference for testing and curriculum in the CIC-funded Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada/Cours de langue pour les immigrants au Canada (LINC/CLIC) programs for adult newcomers, including those in colleges. However, at the postsecondary level the college system in general is less familiar with this tool. While some institutions encourage the use of the CLB, these benchmarks are not common currency for describing students' language proficiency across Ontario colleges. While the CLB are known among non-postsecondary ESL teaching faculty and may be applied to curricula in varying degrees, they are much less known in postsecondary program delivery. The CLB are sometimes assumed to relate only to low-level language proficiency or to be irrelevant to postsecondary programs funded by MTCU.

Ontario colleges are generally behind colleges in other provinces in applying the CLB in programming, particularly in the postsecondary area. For example, Red River College in Manitoba has used CLB extensively for work in second language assessment and curriculum development, and in describing occupational language proficiency requirements. As well as benchmarking the college's own language placement tests, Red River College researchers have established the benchmarks of language proficiency required for a variety of its vocational programs and in corresponding occupational workplaces. A report on these activities recognizes that: "Knowing the language levels needed to perform a job safely, effectively, and successfully enables non native speakers of English to access employment in the areas that best utilize the skills, knowledge and experience that they bring."<sup>39</sup>

This implementation of the CLB in Manitoba presents a model that the college system in Ontario may find useful and instructive.

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<sup>39</sup> *Canadian Language Benchmarks - A Summary of Courses, Programs, Occupations and Tests that have been Benchmarked in Manitoba*, September 2003.

## e) Ideas for Change

### Stakeholder Ideas

- Implement a standard general proficiency assessment tool that incorporates all areas of language skill and as many proficiency components, such as socio-cultural competency, as possible as the CLB assessment tools do. Since more employers are incorporating the CLB to identify the required language skills in their sectors, the CLB would provide a consistent measurement system between college outcomes and industry requirements;
- Develop ways to determine how scores on different language assessments relate to a common standard;
- Ensure that diagnostic processes do not screen internationally trained immigrants out of programs, but rather provide the necessary supports;
- Conduct symposia to share information and best practices, and to encourage a shared understanding of CLB; and
- Establish a centralized assessment centre that tests for certification and competencies, including language, to provide employers with greater confidence in internationally trained immigrants.

### Ideas from Internationally Trained Immigrants

- Create consistent, system-wide processes and tools to assess written and verbal second-language skills for admissions and placement purposes; and
- Language proficiency tests should be administered to all applicants, regardless of the first language spoken.

## 2. Language Programming and Support

### a) Ministry Policy

MTCU develops, maintains and reviews program standards to ensure that Ontario colleges deliver a wide range of postsecondary programs that provide graduates with skills to gain entry-level positions in various vocational fields.

MTCU's *Framework for Programs of Instruction* contains a directive that general employability skills outcomes must include language skills "relevant to the particular industry, field of study, business or profession."<sup>40</sup> The Framework does not specifically define such language skills or provide a protocol for setting levels.

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<sup>40</sup> Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities "College of Applied Arts and Technology" Framework for Programs of Instruction, April 1, 2003, p.15.

Language training programs - groups of inter-related courses delivered in a full-time package - do not deliver “vocationally specific learning outcomes.” As a result, they do not meet the requirements of the vocational standard to qualify for funding as postsecondary programs under the MTCU parameters for the general purpose operating grant. Only individual language courses that are part of postsecondary programs qualify for funding through the general operating grant.

Most full-time ESL/FSL programming falls into non-postsecondary activity and is funded through full-time tuition-short funding. The maximum fee for this activity is set by the Ministry and based on prorating the full time-post secondary fee, so the tuition charged to students is no different than for postsecondary programs. However, the grant that colleges receive for this activity is significantly less than that for postsecondary activity, based on a long-standing formula that distinguishes between the workload of postsecondary and non-postsecondary faculty. This smaller grant makes it less possible for colleges to offer full-time non-postsecondary ESL/FSL.

## **b) Current College Practices**

Language courses at Ontario colleges cover a wide range of purposes, levels and outcomes. According to the ACCC, ESL or EAP is offered at 19 Ontario colleges, and FSL or FAP at two Ontario colleges. Although language education is offered system-wide, the courses and supports available vary considerably.

Adult upgrading programs are full of ESL/FSL students because there are no other options in the many Ontario communities that lack the necessary supports.

### **ESL/FSL Courses in Full-time College Programs**

All colleges must meet required vocational program outcomes, general employability skills outcomes and general education outcomes as mandated by MTCU. However, the configuration of courses, including language courses, and the path to the outcomes is left up to individual institutions.

All students who have been accepted into full-time college programs must successfully complete any English/ESL or French/FSL course(s) that are required as part of their program of study. These courses are funded through postsecondary funding mechanisms: the general operating grant each college receives from MTCU).

Some colleges, such as Mohawk, Humber, and Centennial, offer ESL in English or Communications “service” (or support) courses that are part of postsecondary programs. Other colleges, such as Sheridan, Durham, and Algonquin, do not require discrete language or communications courses for any postsecondary students.

In some cases, a college may offer pre-courses to assist students for whom placement assessment has indicated that they will have difficulty meeting the outcomes of a required English/French course. Some pre-courses may be streamed for second-language and non-second-language students (often called “native speakers”). Some pre-courses may be non-credit; others may be for

credit. No matter how many pre-courses a student may be recommended or required to take, he or she must still successfully complete any required language course in the college program. Some college programs require a certain grade in a required English course for students to participate in co-op, internships and field placements.

The degree of workplace-related content in required English/French or ESL/FSL courses varies dramatically. For example, some colleges focus on workplace-related writing, such as memos and reports, in all pre- and required language courses from the beginning of a student's program. Other colleges emphasize general academic reading and writing skills in pre- and required language courses, and confine workplace-related language to upper-semester language courses.

Generally, assessment for admissions purposes generally occurs separately from assessment for placement into language courses. Therefore, students may be admitted into a postsecondary program, tested for language course placement during enrolment and then required to complete one or more English/ESL or French/FSL pre-courses on the way to fulfilling their program's English/French requirement.

Some colleges, such as Mohawk, Humber and Centennial, offer ESL courses in a stream that parallels required English courses and pre-courses, including ESL versions of elective English courses, such as literature courses, that are part of program requirements.

Administrative structures covering the delivery of English/French courses also vary across the college system. At some colleges, English/French and ESL/FSL courses in full-time programs are offered through English/French or Communications departments that have varying degrees of connectedness with program areas, such as business, technology, or health sciences. At other colleges, English/French and ESL/FSL courses are offered by teaching faculty who are members of program areas such as business, technology or health sciences. Consequently, the degree of curricular input from program areas into English/French courses varies considerably. Similarly, some colleges, like Humber, actively promote "Language Across the Curriculum": giving attention to language skills in both program courses and language courses.

### **Part-time ESL/FSL Courses**

A wide variety of ESL/FSL courses suitable for internationally trained immigrants are available through continuing education or part-time study areas within colleges. Typically, these courses are offered by colleges in cost-recovery mode. Since there must be sufficient demand for a course for it to be scheduled and conducted, there is a gap between those courses that may be published or promoted as available at a given college, and those that are actually being run. Last-minute changes to course availability and scheduling are common.

Some part-time courses may be evening or weekend offerings of required English/French courses that are part of postsecondary programs. Other part-time courses are sector-specific ESL/FSL courses, such as workplace communication for health care or customer service workers, or speaking and listening skills for business professionals.

Some part-time ESL/FSL courses are stand-alone academic preparation courses such as writing or reading workshops. Some are more general courses, such as everyday conversation for second-language speakers. Some may be preparation courses for admission tests such as TOEFL.

In many colleges, part-time language courses are administered separately from courses offered through full-time day postsecondary programs. Generally, part-time courses - sections of required college English/ESL or French/FSL courses, or stand-alone course offerings - are taught by faculty who are not full-time members of the college. While colleges do all that they can to ensure consistency in course delivery, the last-minute scheduling exigencies of cost-recovery funding mean that faculty in part-time language courses vary in their familiarity with the curriculum and the policies and practices of the college.

In some instances, students may be referred to part-time courses as the only available avenue to prepare for required English/French courses in postsecondary programs. In some instances, students may even be referred outside a college altogether, such as to Board of Education part-time courses, to prepare for college language courses.

### **Full-Time Non-Postsecondary ESL Programs**

#### ***LINC: Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada***

#### ***CLIC: Cours de langue pour les immigrants au Canada***

LINC/CLIC is intended to assist recent immigrants in developing their language proficiency for settlement purposes. It is funded by the federal government through CIC.

Eligible applicants are landed immigrants and convention refugees. Canadian citizens are not eligible. LINC is tuition-free to eligible students, and other economic supports, such as child-minding and transportation costs, may also be available.

Currently, only five Ontario colleges offer LINC: Algonquin College, Centennial College, Sir Sanford Fleming College, Mohawk College and Sheridan College. La Cité collégiale offers CLIC training, as does Collège Boréal in Hamilton, which offers CLIC levels 3, 4 and 5 to Francophone speakers.

LINC/CLIC is also offered through Boards of Education, private providers, and community agencies. Students who apply to postsecondary college programs may have previously attended a LINC/CLIC program at a college or another type of program provider. LINC/CLIC is not intended to provide direct or adequate preparation for postsecondary programs.

There are five levels of LINC/CLIC curriculum. LINC/CLIC is an outcomes-driven, rather than time-bound, program. Students remain in a LINC/CLIC level until the Benchmark outcomes of that level have been met. A student may be enrolled in LINC/CLIC for a period of years until the outcome benchmarks are met.

The LINC/CLIC curriculum has been revised to correspond to the *Canadian Language Benchmarks 2000*. The curriculum has an immigrant settlement focus, with thematic units relating to language use in everyday contexts, such as shopping or transportation. In units relating to education and employment in college LINC/CLIC programs, higher-benchmark learners may address topic outcomes relating, for example, to college financial aid forms and applications, and they may listen to presentations by speakers representing postsecondary programs. These specific activities are less likely to be available through non-college program providers, although the global benchmarks outcomes of LINC/CLIC programs are consistent.

The LINC/CLIC curriculum was not originally designed to prepare immigrants for postsecondary college programs, nor were its funding levels designed for college environments. However, the improved language proficiency and social integration that LINC/CLIC fosters are indirect preparation for success in the Canadian workplace.

### **EAP: English for Academic Purposes**

Some colleges may offer English for Academic Purposes courses or programs to prepare second-language students, including internationally trained immigrants, for success in postsecondary college programs.

EAP programs may be multi-level. As an example, one college offers three levels of full-time (25 hours/week) EAP from basic to advanced over three semesters. Students must successfully complete at least two semesters, one of which is Semester Three, to graduate. In the final semester, students complete a general education elective, which is a college credit course that can be applied in a full-time program at that particular college, and at other colleges.

In other colleges, EAP is offered as a single language course as part of a postsecondary program.

### **English/French as Second Language Programs**

Opportunities for students to study full-time, non-postsecondary ESL/FSL as domestic fee-payers are rare because only a few colleges offer full-time, non-postsecondary ESL/FSL programs that are funded as tuition-short programs. Full-time tuition-short ESL programs are offered at four colleges: Algonquin, George Brown, Sheridan and Mohawk.

More commonly, full-time, non-postsecondary ESL is offered to international students who pay much higher fees than domestic students.

- Centennial offers a 25 hour/week program over 12 weeks at a variety of levels, targeted to international students and visitors to Canada.
- Seneca offers a series of levels of ESL for international students through a Language Institute.
- Collège Boréal and La Cité collégiale offer FSL training at a variety of levels for immigrant and international students.

Beyond the classroom, colleges sometimes offer non-credit workshops and activities to assist ESL/FSL students in improving their language proficiency.

Currently, there is no standard in the college system for determining and providing non-course supports for second-language students. The supports that currently exist are available on an ad-hoc basis, sometimes conducted by peer volunteers.

### c) Issues and Challenges

#### **Barriers, Gaps and Challenges Experienced by Internationally Trained Immigrants**

- Students may be affected by college policies regulating the number of times a student may enrol in the same course, and also by the number of courses that are covered by tuition fees. As a result students must pay for additional pre-courses or required courses, or meet the required level of learning by study elsewhere, such as in Board of Education ESL courses.

#### **Workplace Language**

- There are very few sector-specific or workplace-oriented language courses and sometimes limited integration of language curriculum within program curriculum. In many programs, development of language curriculum occurs in isolation from development of program of instruction curriculum. “Language Across the Curriculum” is not widely practiced in most colleges.
- Internationally trained immigrants graduating with high academic conversational skills, and with confidence in using them, may not have sufficient preparation for employment purposes.
- Internationally trained immigrants need to develop a comfort level with the terminology and language requirements of specific fields and occupations, as well as the Canadian workplace and job search process, such as language skills to enable them to perform tasks such as cold-calling potential employers.
- Students who must take, or re-take, pre-courses may encounter difficulty in scheduling the courses they need, often needing to take courses in a part-time (continuing education) mode at night or on weekends, or in intensive format, or in the summer semester.

- For the internationally trained immigrant who is eager to enter the Canadian workforce and who is already well prepared in many areas, the lack of a clear and seamless path toward the goal of adequate language proficiency for suitable employment is especially time-consuming and frustrating.

### **Language Supports**

- The lack of other types of language supports, such as ESL software in computer labs, mentors or conversation groups, results in lower success rates for internationally trained immigrants in college programs, difficulty in accessing and succeeding in program workplace placements, and difficulty in finding and maintaining employment because of inadequate workplace-readiness language skills.

### **Cost**

- There is a lack of reduced-tuition or tuition-free language programs. Internationally trained immigrants who have financial constraints may not be able to pursue the language education required to succeed in college-level programs.
- LINC graduates seeking enhanced tuition-free language training may be inappropriately placed in LBS classes (where ESL/FSL and sector-specific language needs are not met by the curriculum), since it is the only free option. Enrolment in these classes increases the length of time it takes to progress to graduation and employment.
- Students may be affected by college policies regulating the number of times a student may enrol in the same course and also by the number of courses that are covered by tuition fees. As a result students must pay for additional pre-courses or required courses, or meet the required level of learning by study elsewhere, such as in Board of Education ESL/FSL courses.

### **College System Challenges**

- Without grant funding that adequately covers language programs, colleges tend to offer language education courses on a cost-recovery basis only: when a critical mass of students can be registered into a course to cover all delivery costs. Because the grant colleges receive from MTCU for this activity is significantly less than that for postsecondary activity, only a few colleges offer full-time non-postsecondary ESL/FSL programs, and these are funded as tuition-short programs.
- There are many gaps in institutional culture, structure, practices, curriculum links and curriculum focus that hinder colleges from offering effective ESL/FSL courses and programs.

- Colleges are mandated to educate the whole person and not just the employee-to-be. Each set of general employability skills outcomes and general education outcomes has a claim on program time. There is little immediate incentive for college programs to re-allocate program time (student contact hours) related to MTCU's required vocational outcomes for language skill development. This is the case even though a lack of contact hours devoted to language instruction contributes to internationally trained immigrant graduates being unprepared to communicate successfully in their job search or employment.
- Upgrading programs such as LBS are not designed for ESL/FSL speakers. However, they are being used by internationally trained immigrants with ESL/FSL training needs.

### **Challenges Experienced by Employers**

- Internationally trained immigrants need to have better language skills, including soft and sector-specific language training, in order to better fulfill the needs of employers.
- During the interview stage, employers are not always willing or able to perform skills competency exams, including language skills exams, to ascertain the skills levels of potential employees.

### **d) Background Information**

The *2004 Ontario Heads of Language General ESL Survey* provides a preliminary source of information about available language supports and identifies the many additional supports that are needed. For example, workshops such as those that teach ESL speakers how to read quickly and absorb vital pieces of information would be valuable.

Peer mentoring or tutoring, conversation groups, pronunciation workshops, and computer labs with language practice software are other supports that can benefit internationally trained immigrant students.

### **e) Preliminary Ideas for Change**

#### **Stakeholder Ideas**

##### ***Integrated Language Programs***

- Where possible, integrate sector-specific language and workplace language skills throughout postsecondary programs of instruction; and
- Develop formal systems and informal practices that integrate applied language skills into college programming.

### ***Workplace Language***

- Create and deliver high-level language training programs with a sector-specific focus prior to enrolment in postsecondary vocational programs;
- Tailor language education options to meet the language skills employers require; and
- Develop and deliver additional language courses within programs that simulate the work environment and require students to communicate on-the-job. Activities might include practicing conversation using technical language, doing presentations, role play and writing submissions.

### ***Advisement***

- Deliver pre-entry advisement about the length of time needed to become proficient in second-language communications.

### ***Continuum of Programs***

- Focus on language interventions that start early and continue throughout a student's association with the college. This may involve changing expectations regarding adequate performance in courses, and includes the ability to communicate knowledge in a variety of delivery methods; and
- Continue to provide college language supports during co-op and work placements.

### ***Faculty Development***

- Promote faculty expertise in college programs in teaching second-language students. Without modification of teaching methods, internationally trained immigrant students may not learn as effectively as possible; and
- Provide supports for upgrading instructors to address the diverse needs of ESL/FSL and native speakers who share a classroom. This is particularly essential for northern Ontario which has not been designated as a primary location for language programming.

### ***Funding***

- Change funding to support more full- and part-time ESL programming as part of postsecondary programs of instruction; and
- Advocate for changes to eligibility to the Ontario Special Bursary Program OSBP to include second-language speakers enrolled in LBS.

**Partnership**

- Undertake work with LBS deliverers to determine how to modify services and programming to support the needs of internationally trained immigrants.

**Ideas from Internationally Trained Immigrants**

- Include sector-specific terminology and workplace communication skills in language classes;
- Offer services such as one-on-one English mentoring programs that would involve internationally trained immigrant students speaking English;
- Provide support services such as pronunciation practice, interactive language learning software and speaking-practice groups;
- Provide informal opportunities for internationally trained immigrant students to practice language skills; and,
- Facilitate the involvement of internationally trained immigrants in volunteer-sector work, such as in nursing homes, where they could practice conversational skills.

## D. Program Delivery

Program delivery includes three main areas:

1. **Postsecondary Programs of Instruction**, including part-time or full-time.
2. **Specialized Bridging Programs** for internationally trained immigrants.
3. **Planning and Evaluation**, including key performance indicators (KPI) and data collection.

### I. Postsecondary Programs of Instruction

#### a) Ministry Policy

MTCU directs Ontario colleges to “to offer a comprehensive program of career-oriented, postsecondary education and training to assist individuals in finding and keeping employment, to meet the needs of employers and the changing work environment and to support the economic and social development of their local and diverse communities.”<sup>41</sup>

One of the principles in the *Framework for Programs of Instruction* states that colleges and the programming they provide should play a major role in the achievement of prosperity within the province through the provision of programs of instruction that prepare graduates to meet the needs of the workplace, the economy and society.

The *Framework* does not mandate delivery of specific curriculum, but rather sets the scope of required program outcomes. To qualify as a funded postsecondary program of instruction, programs must be delivered to meet provincial standards where they exist, and must include vocational/technical outcomes relevant to the focus industry, field of study, business, or profession, and applicable outcomes for generic employability skills and general education.

Postsecondary programs of instruction under MTCU’s directives lead to one of the following standard credentials: Ontario College Certificate, Ontario College Diploma, Ontario College Advanced Diploma, or Ontario College Graduate Certificate (or the French-language equivalents).

Standards for applied degree programs established by the Postsecondary Education Quality Assessment Board (PEQAB) are applied by PEQAB when it makes recommendations to the Minister under the authority of the *Postsecondary Education Choice and Excellence Act, 2000*.

In order for an individual to receive accreditation from a college, he or she must fulfill the institutional residency requirement. This requirement is the minimum number of

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<sup>41</sup> MTCU. Ontario College of Applied Arts and Technology Act, 2002, S.O. 2002, Chapter 8, Schedule F, 2 (2).

credits, or length of time, that must be completed under the direct supervision of faculty of the credential-issuing college. The common practice of Ontario colleges is to enforce a 25% residency requirement. From the college perspective, it is necessary to have a residency requirement in place to prevent someone with postsecondary education from applying for accreditation from an institution without completing any courses there.

It is also necessary for each program of instruction or cluster of related programs to have a Program Advisory Committee (PAC) comprised of a diverse range of individuals who are external to the college and who have a direct interest, experience and expertise in the subject area.

### **Funding for Part-Time Program Delivery**

In addition to full-time programs, colleges can deliver programs to students on a part-time basis, and can provide courses through continuing education. For the purposes of this report, “part-time” includes students enrolled in a full-time program (pursuing a full-time credential), but taking less than a full course load (i.e. less than 70% of the student contact hours, or less than 2/3 of the program course load). “Part-time” also includes students enrolled in courses but not registered in a full-time program, such as those in continuing education.

Colleges can be financially disadvantaged by offering part-time options to students instead of enrolling students in full-time course loads. Colleges receive less funding for part-time students, and the reduced funding is not proportional to the course load. As an example, if a student takes a 60% course load, the funding the college receives is less than 60% of a full-time funding unit.

Figure 7.0 demonstrates the difference in the college course-hour funding calculation between part-time and full-time enrolment.<sup>42</sup> The difference between the current college part-time funding model and the university part-time funding model is also shown below.

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<sup>42</sup> The funding formula is complex. It is based on student contact hours (SCH): the number of hours x the number of students. The funding calculation for a business program [25% of SCH divided by 700 then multiplied by the average program weight (for that college)] plus [75% of SCH divided by 1120 then multiplied by 1.1]

### Figure 7.0 Example of Financial Impact

#### Funding for Full-time Program Enrolment

The student is taking a full-time business program, where the program weight is 1, and the average number of student contact hours (SCH) per year is about 700, in a college with average program weight of 1.0. The approximate allocation of funding to the college for the full-time student is **\$4,800**.

#### Part-time Enrolment

A student is considered part-time if taking less than 2/3 of a full course load or 70% of the student contact hours. This student is enrolled in 6 of 10 courses (assuming 420 SCH out of 700) and is registered/enrolled in the business program.

In the first calculation, the calculation is based on the current college part-time model. The second example calculates the funding based on the university part-time model when the part-time student is registered in a program but taking courses on a part-time basis. (The university receives funding based on proportion/% of course-load taken)

#### Current Funding for Continuing Education or Part-time Enrolment at Colleges

In the colleges' current continuing education or part-time model, the student takes only the courses he/she needs to gain employment in his/her chosen field = 6.

$$\begin{aligned}
 \text{FTE calculation:} &= (25\% \text{ SCH} / 700 \times \text{avg program weight for the college}) + ((75\% \text{ SCH} / 1,120) \times 1.1) \text{ FTE} \\
 &= (.25 \times 420 \text{ hours} / 700 \times 1) + ((.75 \times 420 / 1,120) \times 1.1) \\
 &= .15 + .31 \text{ FTE} \\
 &= .46 \text{ FTE} \\
 \text{Funding:} &= .46 \text{ FTE} \times \text{Funding Unit } (\$4,800) \\
 &= \$2,208
 \end{aligned}$$

#### Proposed Funding for Part-time Enrolment (Based on "University" Model)

In the university model, the student is pursuing the full-time business credential, but while registered in a program, that institution can include the student in its enrolment counts, on a proportional basis. Percentage of course load taken =  $6/10 = 60\%$ .

$$\begin{aligned}
 \text{FTE calculation} &= \% \text{ course load} \times \text{program weight} \\
 &= 60\% \times 1 \\
 &= .6 \text{ FTE} \\
 \text{Funding:} &= .6 \text{ FTE} \times \text{Funding unit } (\$4,800) \\
 &= \$2,880
 \end{aligned}$$

**In this example, in the current model, the college realizes 14% less funding (or \$672) for this part-time student, than would be received under the proposed "university" model.**

### **Current College Practices**

Colleges currently deliver courses funded at the postsecondary level in various modes:

- Full-time programs of instruction leading to a college credential are offered through a range of delivery models:
  - Regular postsecondary programs leading to certificates, diplomas, or applied degrees,
  - Specialized bridging programs funded by the Access to Professions and Trades unit of MTCU,
  - Fast-track programs of instruction modified to provide advanced standing to students with postsecondary education and/or relevant experience, and
  - Post-diploma programs designed for students with postsecondary education and/or relevant experience.
- Part-time programs of instruction leading to a college credential; and
- Courses through continuing education either leading, or not leading, to a college credential.

### **Issues and Challenges**

#### **Barriers, Gaps and Challenges Experienced by Internationally Trained Immigrants**

##### ***Flexibility***

- Most programs that an internationally trained immigrant might need to complete to prepare for employment are currently offered as full-time, classroom-based programs of instruction during daytime hours. There is little flexibility in the way programs are delivered.
- Internationally trained immigrants are divided on preferences for enrolling on a part-time as opposed to full-time basis. Focus group participants value both the opportunity to finish the program more quickly if they enrol full-time, and the chance to continue working while pursuing their programs part-time or in continuing education.
- Internationally trained immigrants in the focus groups were also divided with respect to enrolling in a regular program of instruction that would allow them to learn in an environment integrated with domestic students, or in enrolling in bridging programs specially designed for internationally trained persons.
- The residency requirement means that internationally trained immigrants having to complete at least 25% of their courses at the college, regardless of their demonstrated levels of competency entering

the programs. This could lengthen the time in school and force the individual to duplicate previously learned skills.

- Without a financially viable way to deliver courses more flexibly, there will continue to be a lack of options for part-time learning and continuing education. Many internationally trained immigrants have financial and family commitments that require them to remain employed while enrolled in a college program. The lack of options outside full-time enrolment causes some individuals to not pursue careers that require additional postsecondary training.
- With OSAP rules requiring enrolment in full-time programs to determine full loan eligibility, there is a disincentive to register as a part-time student, since part-time students are eligible for significantly less financial aid.

### ***Accelerated Programs***

- Internationally trained immigrants may not need to complete a program of instruction on a full-time basis to be ready for employment. In some cases they need only relevant pieces to fill current gaps. However, there is a shortage of accelerated programs teaching only the content an individual requires. This means internationally trained immigrants have had to complete the standard full-time program instead of a program that builds on previously acquired education and experience.

### ***Program Supports***

- Internationally trained immigrants have needs that may be different to the traditional college cohort of recent high school graduates, such as requirements for specialized assistance with transition to college, more counselling on mature student issues, assistance with student rights and advocacy, language supports, and financial aid for new immigrants to support students with families, among others.
- Without effective in-semester supports, there is an increased likelihood that internationally trained immigrants will not complete their studies or graduate from the program.

### ***Responsiveness***

- Some tests may be culturally influenced and may not be designed or delivered in a way that is sensitive to how students have been prepared or taught in other cultures or languages. The way a test is designed may result in an assessment of the individual's understanding of the nuances of language rather than technical skills. This can produce higher failure rates for internationally trained immigrants.
- Courses do not always follow published outlines. This creates difficulty for those whose first language is not English or French and who want to prepare for courses in advance.

## College System Challenges

### **Responsiveness**

- The college student base is becoming increasingly more diverse. The number of adult learners in the college system is large: 56% of KPI survey respondents identified as being 21 years of age or older. Fully 18% of college students possess some college and/or university education, and 15% of college students speak a first-language other than English or French (28% within the Greater Toronto Area colleges only).<sup>43</sup> College programs originally designed to address the needs of a relatively homogenous group of Canadian high school graduates do not adequately address the needs of internationally trained immigrants or other diverse student groups.
- Often colleges do not have the critical mass of students required to cost-effectively develop, deliver and sustain separate programs and supports designed specifically for internationally trained immigrants. Colleges are looking for ways to develop a mass customization model of delivery for a non-homogenous group of students and methods of integrating and customizing supports into regular programs.

### **Flexibility and Funding**

- Most colleges want to use flexible delivery modes that meet the requirements of internationally trained immigrants. However, the development and piloting of flexible delivery modes is costly and often requires specific, additional funding.
- Flexible programming cannot be sustained under the current funding architecture of the college system. Funding structures limit the ability of colleges to easily develop new programs, offer additional supports, provide flexible course selection and allow adequate financial assistance to part-time students.
- Under the current weighted funding formula, a college is financially disadvantaged if a student decides to enrol in a program on a part-time instead of a full-time basis. For example, the college receives 100% funding if the student is enrolled in a full-time program. However, if the student changes to part-time status and takes a 60% course load, the weighted funding calculation often results in the college receiving less than 50% of the funding for a full-time student.
- If the funding formula for part-time students mirrored the formula that is in effect at Ontario universities, colleges would be less financially disadvantaged by offering part-time options to students who are registered in a full-time program but taking less than a full course load.

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<sup>43</sup> See Appendix I3.

### **Program Supports**

- At present, programs of instruction do not provide supports or adequate language skills programming - conversational, technical, and workplace sector-specific - for speakers of English/French-as-a-second language to develop workplace skills. Internationally trained immigrant students placed in first-year classes with technically untrained freshman students may excel at the core curriculum but lag in other areas because they do not receive specialized learning supports such as applied language programming.

### **Faculty Development**

- There is a need for customized teaching and testing methods and enhanced faculty training to respond to the needs of internationally trained immigrants. As an example, faculty may not receive training on cross-cultural diversity and sensitivity. Without this training, faculty may have a harder time identifying learning issues which may result from many factors including English/French as a second language, cultural differences, learning disabilities and students who are not used to taking courses or tests in a Canadian setting.
- There is a lack of consistent training for staff on developing appropriate programs and services for, and interacting sensitively with, students from diverse backgrounds. This can produce an internationally trained immigrant cohort who is not appropriately served by the programs, teaching styles/methods or student of their college. It can also produce lower success/graduation rates for internationally trained immigrants enrolments.

### **Challenges Experienced by Employers**

- No challenges were identified.

## **d) Background Information**

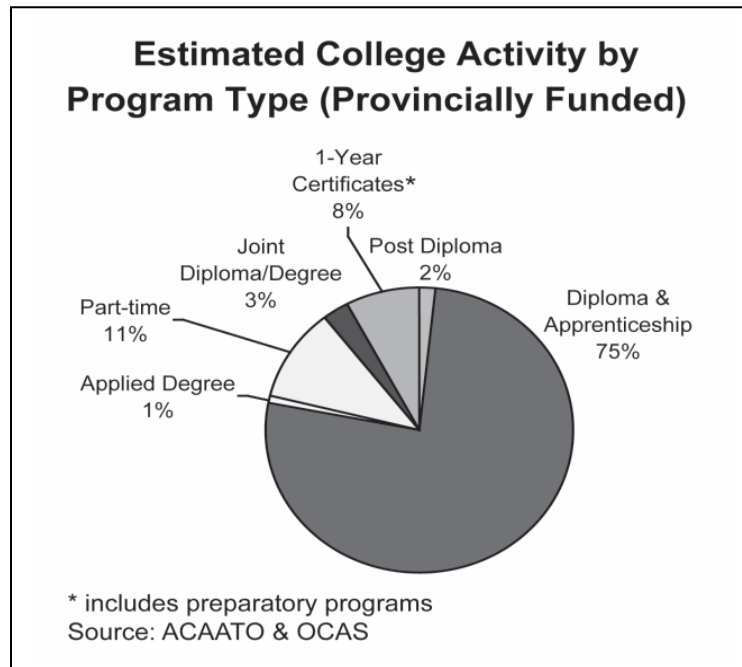
### **Ontario College Programming**

Ontario colleges offer programming that provides many learning options for students. Figure 8.0 Estimated College Activity by Program Type shows that the overwhelming majority of students are pursuing their learning in diploma and apprenticeship activities.<sup>[1]</sup> The next most popular form of college learning occurs in part-time activities.

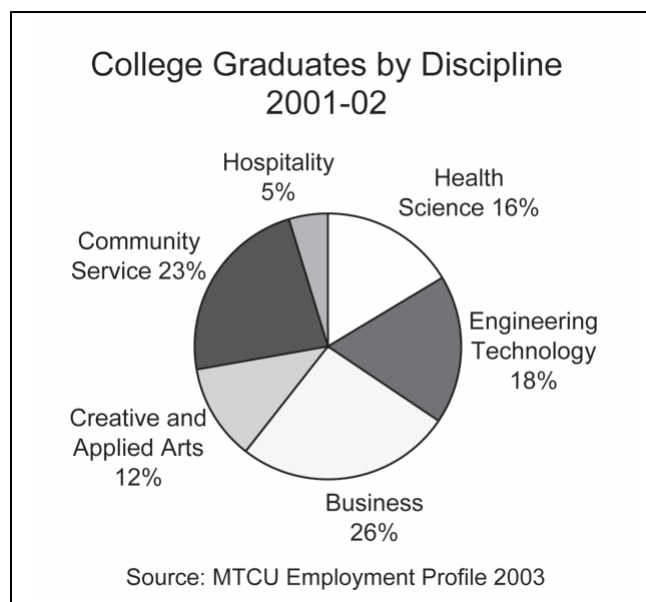
Figure 9.0 College Graduates by Discipline, shows that 26% of college graduates in 2001-02 were prepared for careers in business, while 18% specialized in engineering technology. The most popular discipline for

internationally trained applicants for the years 1999-2000 to 2003-2004 continues to be technology. **Appendix 13** presents application details.<sup>44</sup>

**Figure 8.0 Estimated College Activity by Program Type**



**Figure 9.0 College Graduates by Discipline**



<sup>44</sup> ACAATO. "Achieving High Expectations in Ontario's Postsecondary Education Sector: A Plan for Change" November 2004, p. 14, 2.

### **Ontario Student Assistance Plan (OSAP) Eligibility**

To qualify for full provincial and national funding under the consolidated OSAP and Canada Student Loan programs, students must be enrolled as a full-time student taking at least 60% of the program's course load. Students taking less than the full-time course load may qualify only for the Part-time Canada Student Loan.

Changes to OSAP announced in July 2004 included a relaxation of the 12-month Ontario residency requirement. This expands the range of eligible individuals to include protected persons, and provides access to those determined to be refugees. This does not affect the provincial residency requirements for landed immigrants who must still meet the 12-month Ontario residency requirement for full loan eligibility.

### **e) Preliminary Ideas for Change**

Stakeholders in the CIITE Project have suggested the following ideas for change in the responsiveness and flexibility of delivery of programs of instruction to internationally trained immigrants:

#### **Stakeholder Ideas**

##### ***Philosophy for Program Delivery***

- Adopt a guiding principle confirming that it is preferable to integrate internationally trained immigrants into regular programs and to modify or build on that which is most meaningful, positive and effective in these programs. This is preferred over segregated programs designed specifically for internationally trained immigrants, except where learning outcomes could not be achieved in existing programs. The rationale for this guiding principle is that it:
  - Provides internationally trained immigrants with access to a broader range of program opportunities;
  - Recognizes that the needs and preferences of internationally trained immigrants are not homogeneous;
  - Recognizes that internationally trained immigrants are one of the many diverse segments of the college student population now considered "mainstream"; and
  - Acknowledges that the culture and context of each college may vary, so that successful bridging programs may not necessarily be replicated at every institution.

##### ***Funding***

- Ensure that part-time and continuing education delivery receive the same proportional funding as the full-time program delivery model;

- Initiate a simulation/modelling project to identify how best to re-engineer program delivery. Include the identification of how a modified funding structure could support internationally trained immigrants, and a best practices template for modifying and modularizing programs;
- Advocate for changes to OSAP provincial residency requirements to accommodate the circumstances of internationally trained immigrants; and,
- Recommend revisions to financial assistance programs to increase access and additional funding for individuals who are studying part-time, in continuing education, or in specialized bridging programs.

### ***Program Content***

- Focus curriculum on the Canadian employment culture and accepted norms, including the underlying requirements for success in the workplace.

### ***Program Supports***

- Provide written notes for lectures where appropriate, enabling students - who might be struggling with higher level language issues - to focus on key elements of the instruction instead of taking notes;
- Offer additional preparation and supports for internationally trained immigrants to prepare for exams for regulated professions, especially in regard to sector-specific terminology;
- Increase the range of in-semester supports to meet the needs of internationally trained immigrants;
- Add complementary and co-ordinated services, such as buddy programs, provided by student councils/advocates for internationally trained immigrants;
- Deliver mentoring programs that team new internationally trained immigrant students with successful students, who are either internationally or Canadian trained;
- Offer programs with trained coaches to help internationally trained immigrants with language, labour market information, referrals to community resources, interviewing and self-marketing;
- Provide informal opportunities to develop a comfort level with, and increase practice of, the conversational skills that employers require; and
- Develop programs to provide information and assistance with navigating the college system, such as obtaining a library card, and accessing services in the community, such as transportation or day care.

### **Flexibility**

- Provide modularized courses, and part-time and/or flexible delivery modes for required technical subjects to minimize having to take curriculum previously learned outside of Canada;
- Include more options for fast-track learning that recognize prior postsecondary education and experience. This will minimize repetition of technical courses already completed, and will help ensure that internationally trained immigrants take only the upgrading needed, along with courses in Canadian workplace culture and employment readiness;
- Provide alternative delivery options to full-time programs of instruction. Programs should be responsive and accommodate credit for previous learning. Options include:
  - Allowing students to complete their programs on a part-time basis or through continuing education;
  - Offering distance delivery, including web-based options;
  - Modularizing curriculum, and subsequently revising credit structures; and
  - Developing bridging programs that offer only those components needed by internationally trained immigrants
- Include more effective and widespread use of electronic and other distance learning delivery methods for curriculum delivery and provision of classroom information and resources to increase accessibility for internationally trained immigrants;
- Provide additional opportunities to “bring learning to learner” using models such as the mobile campuses of Alberta’s Northern Alberta Institute of Technology to increase accessibility for internationally trained immigrants; and,
- Condense programs/courses offered into the minimal number of weekdays to provide opportunities for internationally trained immigrants to continue with, or seek, part-time employment during college.

### **Faculty and Staff Development**

- Provide faculty and staff supports and training so that learning issues of internationally trained immigrants are more quickly identified. As an example, there may be a combination of issues to identify such as poor literacy level in one’s first language, English language difficulties, cultural differences, or learning disabilities masked by poor English/French skills, among others;

- Focus faculty supports on designing and delivering programs that have language training and other supports integrated into the courses; breaking down unintentional barriers; and cultural diversity training; and
- Create or assign a central resource to assist colleges in program design and delivery to support diverse student populations.

### **Ideas from Internationally Trained Immigrants**

- Provide flexible programs of instruction and bridging programs that will be recognized by employers; and
- Offer programs that provide a workplace experience component.

## **2. Bridging Programs**

### **a) Ministry Policy**

MTCU Bridging Projects are currently funded through the Access to Professions and Trades Unit in the Skills Development Branch.

### **b) Current College Practices**

Some colleges are developing and delivering bridging programs: accelerated programs for internationally trained immigrants seeking alternatives to regular programs of instruction. Bridging programs target specific industry sectors with unmet employer demands and a large supply of immigrants with education or training in the field or related fields. The MTCU-funded programs have been provided primarily in regulated occupations and are designed to provide the required technical skills to fill the gaps in knowledge, skills and Canadian experience.

Where numbers warrant, sector-specific bridging programs can be effective for internationally trained immigrants. However, college bridging programs tend to be funded as discrete or stand-alone programs of study or time-limited projects aimed primarily at regulated occupations in order to provide the required technical skills and fill gaps in learning or experience. As such, internationally trained immigrants do not have consistent and widespread access to sector-specific training programs and supports that address diverse professional development needs.

Some bridging programs also include ESL programming and supports.

### **c) Issues and Challenges**

#### **Barriers, Gaps and Challenges Experienced by Internationally Trained Immigrants**

- Bridging programs tend to be discrete or stand-alone programs rather than a systemic solution that addresses the needs of internationally trained immigrants. This means that there is lack of consistent and widespread access to appropriate accelerated programs and supports.

## VI. Key Findings

- Current bridging funding and delivery structures focus on well-identified homogenous segments of the internationally trained immigrant population. Internationally trained immigrants, however, are a diverse population and many cannot find programs and supports that address their needs.
- Additionally, OSAP requirements disadvantage part-time students relative to the support received for full-time students.

### **College System Challenges**

- Current bridging funding and delivery structures focus on well-identified groups of internationally trained immigrants with similar/identical needs. This prevents colleges from providing equitable access to needed supports.
- While promising results have been noted from the APT bridging programs, colleges need to build on this work to move toward institutionalizing or embedding the appropriate sector-specific bridging modules, courses and programs into college offerings in a sustainable manner.
- Bridging programs tend to be funded as discrete or stand-alone programs rather than through a systemic approach to addressing the needs of internationally trained immigrants. This means that colleges do not have the ability to program bridging into their long-term business plans.
- Internationally trained immigrants - and other adult learners - often need flexible delivery methods to accommodate work and income obligations. However, given the disproportionately lower level of funding for part-time students, there is a disincentive for colleges to provide part-time opportunities

### **Challenges Experienced by Employers**

- No challenges were identified.

### d) Background Information

**Table 2.0 MTCU-funded Bridging Projects Within the College System**

<b>Bridging Projects Funded through MTCU (APT Unit)</b>	<b>Partners / Program Deliverers</b>
Bridges To Employment (Precision Machining and Tooling)	Georgian College
Access and Options for Foreign-Trained Health Care Professionals	The Michener Institute for Applied Health Sciences George Brown College
Health Informatics and Financial Services - Bridging Project: Computer Program Diploma	George Brown College
Preparation for Registration for Foreign-Trained Medical Laboratory Technologists	Mohawk College
Preparation for Apprenticeships, Trades & Technology (PATT)	Fanshawe College
Three Choices: New Options for Foreign-Trained Nurses Seeking Employment in Ontario	Algonquin College
Creating Access to Regulated Employment (CARE) for Nurses Project	Centennial College George Brown College Ryerson University WoodGreen Community Centre Kababyan Community Centre Yee Hong Centre for Geriatric Care St. Michael's Hospital Sick Children's Hospital Sunnybrook & Women's College Health Sciences Diversicare

<b>Bridging Projects Funded through MTCU (APT Unit)</b>	<b>Partners / Program Deliverers</b>
	Mt. Sinai Hospital College of Ontario Nurses

**Table 3.0 APT Bridging Projects not affiliated with a College**

<b>Bridging Projects Funded through MTCU (APT Unit)</b>	<b>Partners / Program Deliverers</b>
Career Bridge	Toronto City Summit Alliance
Bridging for Internationally Trained Teachers	Ontario College of Teachers Ontario Teachers Federation Skills for Change Local Agencies Serving Immigrants (LASI) World Skills
Options – Choosing the Optimal Route to Success (Engineering/Applied Science Technologies)	Centre for Language Training and Assessment (CLTA) Ontario Association of Certified Engineering Technicians and Technologists (OACETT)
International Midwives Pre-Registration Program	Ryerson University Continuing Education Department College of Midwives of Ontario Midwifery Education Programme – Ontario Consortium (Laurentian, McMaster and Ryerson Universities)
International Pharmacy Graduate (IPG Program)	Faculty of Pharmacy, University of Toronto College of Pharmacists
Alternative Teacher Accreditation Program for Teachers with International Experience	Queen’s University, Faculty of Education (lead) Ottawa-Carleton District School Board Local Agencies Serving Immigrants (LASI)

<b>Bridging Projects Funded through MTCU (APT Unit)</b>	<b>Partners / Program Deliverers</b>
	World Skills
Vitesse Biotechnology Bridging Program for Foreign-Trained Professionals	Vitesse Re-skilling Canada Inc. Local Agencies - Serving Immigrants (LASI) World Skills  Canadian Bioprocess Institute  Ottawa Life Sciences Council
Pathways-Employment Experience Program for Internationally Trained Engineers	Ontario Society of Professional Engineers (OSPE)  Professional Engineers Ontario  Consulting Engineers of Ontario (CEO)  Workplace Training and Services Inc. (WTS Inc.)  Progress and Associates (P&A) (Division of Progress Career Planning Institute)  Speakwell  Archer Resource Solutions Inc.  Multicultural Business Solutions  Walsh & Co. Accountants

### e) Preliminary Ideas for Change

#### Stakeholder Ideas

- Focus bridging programs on niche areas for skills upgrading in sectors with strong and ongoing employer need.
- Facilitate easier transfers from bridging programs to other programs within the college system.

#### Ideas from Internationally Trained Immigrants

- Include a mandatory work placement in bridging programs in order to gain Canadian experience.

### 3. Planning and Evaluation

#### a) Ministry Policy

As part of the *Governance and Accountability Framework*, MTCU directs colleges to participate in the collection and publication of key performance indicators (KPI): specific information related to student, graduate and employer satisfaction levels, and related to student graduation and graduate employment rates. MTCU links certain KPI results - graduate employment, graduate satisfaction and employer satisfaction - to performance-based funding.

#### b) Current College Practices

Without college-wide information collection processes in place, colleges individually collect data and statistics on registered students and graduates. The competitive nature of the colleges can inhibit progress on development of collaborative data collection processes.

Some statistical information on applicants, including college applicants and registrants, is available from OCAS, but the OCAS data cannot be used to plan for, and track the outcomes of, the internationally trained immigrant student population.

OCAS data on “immigrants” include persons who immigrated to Canada as children and have applied to college directly from high school (i.e. they are immigrants but not internationally trained). OCAS data on non-Canadian citizens excludes immigrants who have become Canadian citizens. Similarly, data on persons whose mother tongue is not English or French does not apply exclusively to immigrants. Finally, because OCAS data are limited to applicants and new registrants, they do not capture individuals enrolled in part-time studies through continuing education or in English/French as a second language programs.

#### c) Issues and Challenges

##### **Barriers, Gaps and Challenges Experienced by Internationally Trained Immigrants**

- The lack of system standards can result in providing inconsistent and inappropriate services to internationally trained immigrants across the college system. As a result, internationally trained immigrants, other external stakeholders and some colleges have advocated for minimum service standards in both academic programming and services for this cohort. This would enable internationally trained immigrants to anticipate and receive consistent and appropriate levels of service at any institution across the province

### **College System Challenges**

- The college system lacks sufficient information management systems - tools and infrastructure - to make sound decisions on programs and services to meet the needs of internationally trained immigrants. For example, data is not easily available on:
  - The number of internationally trained immigrants in the college system and in specific colleges or programs;
  - Demographics for internationally trained immigrants in the college system, such as years of work experience, economic circumstances, or language background, among others;
  - Rates of retention, success, graduation, and employment for internationally trained immigrants; and
  - Internationally trained immigrant patterns, such as how language assessment results correlate to program and service uptake.
- Without sufficient data, collection processes, and technology it is difficult to:
  - Plan, develop and market programs and services to internationally trained immigrants.
  - Prepare cost estimates or build the business case for new initiatives, program changes and pilots; and
  - Evaluate programs, services and pilots.
- There is also no computer infrastructure to accommodate changes to electronic data collection. Software improvements are also required to register individuals in a subset of modules as opposed to an entire program of instruction, for example, or to track progress.
- To successfully move internationally trained immigrants through the college system and into employment, college personnel must understand, be sensitive to and accommodate the needs of diverse populations. Across the system, there is a lack of standards for training staff on developing appropriate programs and services for, and interacting sensitively with students of diverse backgrounds.

### **Challenges Experienced by Employers**

- No challenges were identified.

#### **d) Background Information**

There is currently no additional information to provide context to this section apart from the policies and practices noted above.

#### **e) Preliminary Ideas for Change**

Stakeholders in the CIITE Project have suggested the following ideas for change in the planning and evaluation of programs and services for internationally trained immigrants:

- Issue a statement of priority or commitment from senior management, and include a focus on internationally trained immigrants in college business plans;
- Include internationally trained immigrants as a population to serve in the MTCU mandate;
- Develop an individual college self-assessment in regard to all college components as outlined in the concept model proposed earlier in this report;
- Centralize data collection to improve program planning and evaluation of programs and services for internationally trained immigrants, with dedicated resources to ensure easy access and maintenance;
- Create diversity training and supports for faculty and staff;
- Develop system-wide standards of programming and services for internationally trained immigrants; and,
- Establish a central repository body that provides curriculum delivery information for all colleges.

## E. Employment Transition

Employment transition denotes college activities that help to move internationally trained immigrants to employment in their field. It includes three main areas:

1. **Employment Preparation:** This includes courses on preparing for the employment search and the workplace; these are offered in some programs as part of formal curriculum. It also includes employment preparation services and supports delivered in the college outside the program of instruction.
2. **Workplace Experience:** This includes formal workplace experience gained through co-op, internship or field placement opportunities.
3. **Employer Relationships and Engagement:** This includes engaging key employer representatives to improve the employment preparation component of college programs and services, generate workplace opportunities, and encourage the employment of internationally trained immigrants.

### I. Employment Preparation

#### a) Ministry Policy

As part of the MTCU mandate for programs of instruction, Ontario colleges are required to provide students with employment training and programs related to industry that will help students successfully enter the workforce.<sup>45</sup>

#### b) Current College Practices

Employment preparation content is designed to provide students with a realistic view of their job area. It may include résumé writing and interviewing skills, sector-specific labour market information, Canadian workplace expectations and ethics, networking skills and opportunities, and guest speakers.

Colleges deliver employment preparation as part of program curriculum and also as an optional service to students that is independent from the academic stream. Students within the Centennial College Business Accounting program are required to take an employment preparation course as part of their academic program before entering their co-op position. At Humber College, students have the opportunity to attend workshops offered by the HRSDC-funded Employment Resource Centre to help them prepare for employment.

The content and duration of employment preparation modules that are part of program curriculum vary greatly from program to program and from institution to institution. Employment preparation content can be offered as a separate course

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<sup>45</sup> Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities “College of Applied Arts and Technology” Framework for Programs of Instruction, April 1, 2003, pp. 1,3.

within a program of instruction or can be integrated directly into individual course work. When delivered as a separate course within a program of instruction, modes of delivery range from one to three hours/week for 15 weeks, as at Centennial College and Humber College, to more condensed, intensive models of two hours/week for seven weeks, as at Seneca College.

Alternatively, co-operative education students at St. Clair College are required to participate in a Pre-Employment Preparation and Career Development Workshop, included in their co-op fee, prior to their first work term. The workshop focuses on the job search/maintenance techniques necessary for students to secure placements. In addition, the workshop touches on topics including developing a job search plan, résumé writing, cover and thank-you letters, interview techniques, networking, marketing and employer contacts. The workshop is offered outside the students' program course timetable, but is available at various times to accommodate student schedules. It is not considered acceptable for students to miss an academic class to attend the workshop.

At Conestoga College, the employment preparation workshops provided for all students through the Career Centre can be tailored to specific programs and industry sectors at the request of faculty.

Colleges run employment or career centres, independent from the academic stream, that deliver services, supports and programs to students. Job fairs, networking events, co-op coordinators, information provision and one-on-one counselling focusing on résumé writing and interview skills all help students address job-related issues. These centres are usually operated as a part of the college infrastructure and are staffed internally. Staff structures in these centres can range from the five full-time staff at Algonquin College serving their student population to one full-time career consultant and one full-time co-op/career consultant at Cambrian College. These centres can serve from 600 to over several thousand students each year. Some colleges, such as Algonquin College, provide information aimed at helping internationally trained immigrant students, but do not have specific services or programs targeted to that client group.

### **Job Connect**

Many colleges also provide Job Connect services. Job Connect is a program mandated by MTCU to help unemployed youth in Ontario find full-time or summer jobs. Services provided to clients at most college Job Connect sites include:

- labour market information provision;
- materials on job searches and interviews;
- access to exclusive job postings;
- consultation with career counsellors to help determine training needs; job-search strategies and career goals;

- help in finding placements, developing a training plan and engaging in a job trial.

There are currently 128 Job Connect sites in Ontario, including sites in colleges and community organizations such as the YMCA. When offered at a college site, Job Connect is integrated into the college infrastructure, and the Job Connect centres are staffed by college personnel. Twenty-one of Ontario's 24 colleges offer Job Connect services:<sup>46</sup> a total of 58 sites are located on main college campuses and satellite campuses throughout the province. College service providers deliver 45% of all Job Connect programs and services..

The Job Connect College Sector (JCCS) served 13,000 clients in 2002/2003. The 21 colleges in the JCCS are actively involved in helping unemployed youth learn more about apprenticeship and matching them with apprenticeship employment opportunities.

The primary focus of Job Connect services is unemployed youth between the ages of 15 and 24. MTCU permits Job Connect sites that target youth to make exceptions to this, including the age limit, for up to 10% of the targeted client base served at individual locations.

There are 29 sites across Ontario that are funded to serve adults as well as youth. Three of these sites are at colleges: two at Conestoga, and one at Fleming.

Three sites have been established to serve internationally trained immigrants in Ottawa, Mississauga and Etobicoke. However, most Job Connect sites are not currently able to serve most internationally trained immigrants because the 10% exception level is too low. Many Job Connect deliverers, though, report that they provide services to more internationally trained immigrants than their percentage limit allows.

As part of the services available, Job Connect clients can receive a \$200 college-issued cheque or in-kind donation to help in their job search. These funds can be used to cover costs of babysitting services, transportation tickets, interview clothes and supplies, among others. Clients who are apprentices are eligible for up to \$400 to help in their job search. Additionally, internationally trained immigrants who are served within the 10% exception provision are eligible for up to \$400 to help in their job search. This is provided through Job Connect funding rather than college funding. Job Connect monitors client employment and placement status every three months and has targeted a 65% success rate.

Job Connect also arranges job trials, which are one- to two-week paid work placement where Job Connect clients have the opportunity to see what it is like to work in a field of their choice. If a client completes a job trial and is interested in continuing in that setting, some Job Connect locations will work

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<sup>46</sup> Job Connect is not offered at Canadore College, George Brown College and Humber College.

to provide a training incentive to the employer for the client to remain in the placement for up to 12 weeks.

Although Job Connect helps clients secure placement opportunities, no formal, long-term commitments have been forged between Job Connect and employers to provide ongoing placements. However, employers have individual agreements with Job Connect to receive training funds for individual clients. The actual amount of funding depends upon the type of employment. Employers can receive a maximum of \$4,000 per client over 26 weeks.

Job Connect reports monthly to MTCU, and its reports include: the number of clients served, the types of clients served, the number of placements, and a comparison of actual to budget costs.

### **Centre for Foreign Trained Professionals and Tradespeople**

While Humber College does not host a Job Connect program, it does offer the Centre for Foreign Trained Professionals and Tradespeople in partnership with COSTI, a community organization.

The Centre provides specialized job search preparation for newcomers to Canada, but is not intended for use by Humber students. Participants are instructed and guided through the process of identifying career goals and marketable skills, and developing techniques to organize and carry out a job search. Participants may also be selected for mentoring or unpaid work placement upon program completion.<sup>47</sup>

## **c) Issues and Challenges**

### **Barriers, Gaps and Challenges Experienced by Internationally Trained Immigrants**

- There is a lack of consistency among and within colleges in the development and delivery of curriculum related to Canadian workplace skills, expectations, norms and standards. Employers look to the colleges to prepare students prior to their co-op and work placements. Without this preparation, internationally trained immigrants are challenged in their employment search and in the workplace.
- Internationally trained immigrants often lack knowledge of Canadian corporate culture and employment norms that would facilitate success in the workplace. This can limit their success in job search and interviews. College programs often do not specifically address these topics and internationally trained immigrants may be unaware of subtleties such as body language, workplace terminology, and acceptable or common workplace practices. Some internationally trained immigrants are accustomed to highly directive work

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<sup>47</sup> Humber College Institute of Technology and Advanced Learning [on-line]  
<http://www.gcr.humberc.on.ca/>

environments, or environments that stress modesty and discourage self-marketing.

- Internationally trained immigrants may not understand the importance of building business networks or do not have the personal contacts or opportunity to do so.
- Internationally trained immigrants may lack information about the range of employment search supports available to college graduates.
- A number of internationally trained immigrants in focus groups reported dissatisfaction with pre-employment classes. Many felt that the classes provide no tangible benefits, as they believed they already possessed the skills to write respectable résumés and perform well in interviews.
- Tests offered to determine student readiness for the workplace, such as the Test of Workplace Essential Skills (TOWES) and regulatory exams, may not be sensitive to other cultures and consequently may not adequately test the skills of internationally trained immigrants. An internationally trained immigrant may fail the test due to an inability to understand the nuances of questions and terminology, rather than a lack of required technical skills.
- Internationally trained immigrants report difficulties in conducting a successful job search and interview process because they lack the requisite language skills. Such skills are critical for effective communication in the workplace.
- Internationally trained immigrants report dissatisfaction with the quality of pre-employment and employment supports in Ontario colleges regarding sector-specific language skills, workplace culture and interview skills.
- College staff and employers believe that emphasis on improving conversational skills needs to increase to better prepare internationally trained immigrants for employment. The language skills of some graduates are not sufficient for employment purposes, despite high vocational skill sets and reading and writing skills.

### **College System Challenges**

- While Job Connect services are offered at 21 colleges, its current mandate focuses on youth, not adults. College-based Job Connect services do not adequately serve internationally trained immigrants.
- Selected individual colleges and community partners are working on Canadian workplace content material for the same industry or sector. Efficiencies and better linkages could be created if colleges and their partners, such as community agencies, employers and employer associations, were supported in developing and sharing sector-specific

content material including workplace language skills and nuances with respect to working in a Canadian environment.

- Services and programs delivered by organizations outside the college system, such as community agencies and private trainers, may duplicate some college-based employment support activities.
- It is difficult to track the success of employment preparation programs and services. Lack of data on success rates creates challenges for colleges in determining and promoting best practices.

### **Challenges Experienced by Employers**

- Some employers have reported that internationally trained immigrants are not language- or culture-ready for the workplace, whether for a work placement opportunity or a job.

## **d) Preliminary Ideas for Change**

### **Stakeholder ideas**

#### ***Workplace Culture and Norms***

- Create content materials for developing knowledge and skills needed in Canadian workplaces and an awareness of Canadian norms. Pilot delivery modes such as distance education, blended delivery, and e-learning; and,
- Provide workplace cultural training to address employment functionality and workplace norms to meet employer expectations.

#### ***Workplace Language***

- Provide sector-specific language training that includes technical terminology and workplace norms; and,
- Include language assessments at point-of-exit to ensure that graduates possess the required language ability to succeed in their employment search and in their workplaces.

#### ***Job Search and Interview Skills***

- Provide training to improve the ability of internationally trained immigrants to translate their work experience and skills into something employers will understand and value;
- Build sector-specific interview preparation and job search skills into college programming;
- Increase supports and training for business networking and job search, such as developing an inventory of employers who are themselves internationally trained immigrants and who can provide business contacts; and,

- Implement self-development and entrepreneurship training modules to assist in job searches.

### **Partnerships**

- Involve community agencies in developing content for materials on understanding the Canadian workplace;
- Create stronger partnerships with external organizations and services to help internationally trained immigrants connect with employment services. Use their expertise and resources to provide specialized training and services to internationally trained immigrants for résumé writing, mock interviews and employment preparation. Provide referrals to services they provide and in which they have expertise;
- Advocate for increased community supports for social and networking purposes; and,
- Work with regulators to ensure that licensure exams are culturally sensitive, and develop courses to prepare internationally trained immigrants for the exams.

### **Mentoring**

- Develop mentoring programs. Team new internationally trained immigrant students with successful students or alumni. This could include providing links to labour market information and referrals to other community resources for employment preparation; and
- Encourage alumni services to provide ongoing support to internationally trained immigrants in networking and job searches.

### **Job Connect Services**

- Recommend that Job Connect broaden its mandate to include resources focusing on internationally trained immigrants; and
- Remove Job Connect age restrictions in order to serve adults and internationally trained immigrants.

### **Alternatives to Job Connect**

- Develop alternative models for employment preparation to support internationally trained immigrants in those colleges where Job Connect does not fit with their processes or infrastructure.

### **Programs**

- Recommend that LBS training broaden its mandate to include resources focusing on internationally trained immigrants;
- Increase the focus in all career-related programs on the effective use of information technology for networking and job search; and

- Expand successful pre-employment programs, such as Career Bridge, to provide Canadian experience for internationally trained immigrants.

#### **Data**

- Recommend that government consider using relevant KPIs as indicators to help determine the levels of support colleges receive. Providing internationally trained immigrants with appropriate support may result in programs that feature higher graduation and employment rates (better KPIs); and
- Create and implement a tracking system so that the progress of internationally trained immigrants in the workplace can be monitored, and revisions to programs can be made where necessary.

#### **Ideas from Internationally Trained Immigrants**

- Develop more sector-specific employment preparation for delivery within programs of instruction rather than using outside counsellors;
- Provide employment preparation content early enough to prepare students for their co-op or work placement search as well as their job search; and,
- Create content material that covers Canadian workplace knowledge, skills and norms, with a focus on résumé writing and interviewing requirements for the relevant field.

## **2. Workplace Experience**

### **a) Ministry Policy**

MTCU mandates colleges to offer a comprehensive program of career-oriented, postsecondary education and training to assist individuals in finding and keeping employment, and to meet the needs of employers and the changing work environment in support of the economic and social development of their local and diverse communities. MTCU recommends that colleges provide students with employment preparation, employment experience, or both as a means to fulfill this objective.

### **b) Current College Practices**

All colleges work with their industry partners to develop work placement opportunities as described below.

#### **Co-operative Education Work Placement**

One of the employment experience options MTCU suggests for colleges is to provide students with co-operative work placement opportunities. MTCU defines co-operative education work placement as scheduled hours of activity intended to give students hands-on experience in the workplace, and for which students receive remuneration from the employer for the work performed.

While MTCU defines co-op as paid work experience, some programs offered by colleges deliver co-op as a volunteer opportunity.<sup>48</sup>

Co-op instructional experiences are conducted over a period of time that is normally one-half, and not less than one-third, of the time spent in academic study in the classroom. Work placement does not replace academic curriculum, but is intended to build on classroom learning while exposing students to practical experience to help clarify career goals and acquaint them with the norms of a Canadian work environment. For employers, it provides an opportunity to be part of the education of potential employees and contribute to the advancement of their workforce.

Colleges currently offer a variety of programs with a co-op component. Some colleges offer as few as two co-op programs while others offer as many as 35. Colleges do not guarantee that students will secure co-op positions, nor will they secure positions on students' behalf. However, advisors are commonly made available to help students find a program-related co-op position.

### **Field Placements or Internships**

Field placements or internships provide hands-on experience in the workplace for which students receive no salary or wages. Activities in these placements typically include those that are integral to the program curriculum and are required for graduation.

### **Apprenticeship Training**

In addition to co-operative education and placements, colleges provide students with employment experience through apprenticeship training. MTCU defines apprenticeship as learning a skilled trade by combining college courses with paid on-the-job training.

Employers or individuals register interested applicants through the local Apprenticeship Branch Office of MTCU. A completed application form must be submitted to an Ontario college along with proof of education transcripts and the registration fee. Applicants may be required to submit documented evidence of previous experience in the field. Once an applicant has met these requirements and has been accepted, he or she will be asked to undertake a contract of apprenticeship with MTCU.

Once the process has been completed to this point, an applicant will be scheduled to attend the college program. Individuals who qualify for apprenticeship programs work with a qualified tradesperson/journeyperson until they pass the required exams and complete their workplace training. Apprentices then earn a Certificate of Qualification (C of Q) that allows them to work on their own at a higher rate of journeyperson's pay.

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<sup>48</sup> "Funding Approval of Programs of Instruction Procedures," MTCU, April 1, 2003, p.8.

Apprentices are charged a fee for their in-school training in government-funded and -approved apprenticeship programs at Ontario colleges. This fee must be paid to the college before each level of training. An apprentice's contribution to the cost of his/her classroom training varies depending on the duration of each level.

Colleges in Ontario offer from one to 27 programs for apprentices. All 24 Colleges offer at least one apprenticeship program and there are more than 130 skilled occupations in Ontario's college-based apprenticeship training system.

### **c) Issues and Challenges**

#### **Barriers, Gaps and Challenges Experienced by Internationally Trained Immigrants**

- There are a limited number of college programs offering co-op or job placement opportunities. Student demand for co-op or field placements is considerably higher than the number of spaces employers have available.
- The disparity between supply and demand means competition for each co-op or field placement is very high. This makes it difficult for internationally trained immigrants to acquire first-hand workplace experience and an understanding of Canadian workplace culture and expectations.
- Many programs offered by colleges require students to meet certain language standards before being allowed to begin their placement opportunity. This lengthens the time to employment, especially if the language training is only offered as a training opportunity separate from the core program of instruction.

#### **College System Challenges**

- It is a challenge for colleges to find employers willing to provide the number of co-op positions and field placements.
- Given the limited number of co-op and field placement opportunities, colleges often have to compete with several educational institutions to secure placements for students. Since gaining Canadian work experience as part of an educational program is key for internationally trained immigrants, the approach to systemic change in this area must consider the competitive realities of the decentralized college and university system.

#### **Challenges Experienced by Employers**

- Employers may doubt the workplace communication skills of internationally trained immigrant candidates even if they possess acceptable skills and experience.

#### **d) Preliminary Ideas for Change**

##### **Stakeholder ideas**

- Increase the number of programs offering co-op placements, internships and field placements to target students who are internationally trained immigrants;
- Pilot internship and co-op models in specific sectors with appropriate employer and student supports;
- Seek funding to offer as subsidies to employers of field placement or co-op students;
- Provide incentives to employers to hire internationally trained immigrants in co-op and internship programs;
- Pre-screen candidates to verify credentials and ensure a minimum level of language skills (e.g. CLB 8);
- Use web-based matching with employers to select candidates; and,
- Offer support to employers who select internationally trained immigrants for field placements and co-op employment.

##### **Ideas from Internationally Trained Immigrants**

- Increase the number of paid work placement positions that have the potential for students to make connections for future employment opportunities;
- Work with employers to create consistent, formalized structures and guidelines for paid and unpaid work experience opportunities to ensure experiences provide value to the students;
- Increase the availability of formalized assistance to support students seeking co-op and work placement positions; and,
- Create or expand job developer positions within college departments to assist in making contacts between the college and employers to increase the number of co-op and field placement positions available and help in the facilitation of relationships between co-op and field placement students and potential employers.

### **3. Employer Relationships and Engagement**

#### **a) Ministry Policy**

MTCU directs the Board of Governors of each college to ensure an advisory committee is established for each program of instruction or cluster of related programs offered by the college. The Program Advisory Committee must include a cross-section of individuals who are external to the college and have a direct interest in, and a diversity of experience and expertise related to, the occupational area addressed by the program. The Board of Governors must establish in by-law the structure, terms of reference and procedures for Program Advisory Committees.

To receive program funding, MTCU policy dictates that Program Advisory Committees (PACs) be consulted and be in agreement that the program is needed to prepare individuals for employment in their industry.

Additionally, MTCU recommends that colleges and college programs create interdependent relationships with key representatives in their areas of study. By actively engaging in these relationships, employers can help ensure that students, and graduates seeking employment, possess appropriate skills to succeed. Moreover, colleges will acquire advocates who support the hiring of their graduates.

#### **b) Current College Practices**

Colleges use their program advisory committees in different ways and to different extents. Practices range from limited engagement of the PAC, to consulting with PAC on curriculum recommendations, to PACs that actively promote programs to potential students and promote relationships with industry.

PACs are not the only vehicles for colleges to foster relationships with employers. Most colleges actively seek partnerships within their local business community and make connections with employers at faculty and Presidential levels.

Other relationships with employers include offering employer guarantees. At Durham, for example, employers are given a guarantee that they will be satisfied with the skills a graduate possesses in relation to the program completed, or they can send the graduate back to complete an additional course at no charge within the first six months after graduation.

Some colleges provide employment guarantees for graduates. At Boréal, for example, a graduate who is not satisfied after six months of employment can access another program free of charge.

### **c) Issues and Challenges**

#### **Barriers, Gaps and Challenges Experienced by Internationally Trained Immigrants**

- A lack of employer engagement with colleges results in lower numbers of job placements or work experience opportunities for all students, including internationally trained immigrants.

#### **College System Challenges**

- Employers see colleges as one of the suppliers of their human resource requirements. Many expect colleges to provide quality control of graduates without involving employers in the development, delivery or maintenance of programs.
- Program Advisory Committees do not always provide the level of support and input their program needs. Colleges need to find ways to leverage existing groups, structures and organizations to better engage and support employers.

#### **Challenges Experienced by Employers**

- Most employers are not actively engaged or involved in the employment of internationally trained immigrants.
- Employers may not see the business case for hiring internationally trained immigrants, or recognize the value of their previously acquired skills and work experience. They may consider it a greater risk to hire an internationally trained immigrant when qualified, Canadian-trained candidates are available.
- There is a lack of support or incentives from colleges offered to employers who hire internationally trained immigrants.
- Some employers report they do not have sufficient supports from colleges after hiring college-trained internationally trained immigrants.
- College needs and activity timelines do not always correspond with the needs and timelines of employers.
- Hiring practices within a company or organization often lack cohesion. Some may be well-informed about the value of hiring internationally trained immigrants while others are not.
- Some employers may lack the experience or resources to manage a diverse workforce.

## **d) Background Information**

### **Job Clubs**

Job Clubs are a structured series of information-intensive, interactive, motivational, goal-oriented, hands-on workshops sponsored by HRSDC and offered in partnership with various community organizations across Ontario.

Their goal is to help clients find meaningful employment in the shortest amount of time by helping them to develop effective self-marketing and employment search skills for the Canadian workplace. Activities are group-centered and client-directed in order to meet individual needs.

To be eligible, clients must have received Employment Insurance (E.I.) benefits within the past five years and must commit to group participation and active job search for the purpose of employment during the three-week program. These requirements make Job Clubs generally unavailable to internationally trained immigrants since most have not been able to complete the necessary number of hours in the Canadian workplace to qualify for E.I. benefits.

### **Education at Work Ontario**

Education at Work Ontario (EWO) advocates and facilitates co-operative education in postsecondary locations while providing services and supports to its stakeholders. The over 200 co-op educators who are members of EWO work with more than 40,000 co-op students at 21 colleges and 15 universities. Its mandate includes:

- A commitment to the on-going professional development of co-operative education practitioners who are accountable, supportive, and sensitive to the current needs, issues and education of its stakeholders;
- Promotion of ethical and professional standards for co-operative education programs in Ontario; and
- Responsibility for the relevance and integrity of EWO's purpose, goals and objectives.

### **Co-operative Education Tax Credit for Employers**

The co-operative education tax credit provided by the Ontario Ministry of Finance helps create employment opportunities by providing employers operating unincorporated businesses with a refundable tax credit for hiring postsecondary education students.

A qualifying co-operative education work placement must be a minimum of ten weeks and may reach a maximum of 16 months. A full 16-month work term could constitute four separate qualifying work placements for the purposes of the tax credit, with each work placement qualifying for the lesser of \$1,000 or 10% of eligible expenditures paid for each qualifying work placement.

To be eligible, employers must:

- Have a permanent establishment in Ontario,
- Be subject to Ontario income tax, and
- Incur eligible expenses associated with hiring co-op students enrolled in an Ontario university or college, or students or apprentices enrolled in qualifying leading-edge technology programs in an educational institution in Ontario.

Eligible employers must present certified documentation from an eligible educational institution confirming that they have provided a co-operative education placement to a student in a qualifying program. They must also provide documentation containing the name of the student, the employer, the term of the co-operative education work placement and the name/discipline of the program area.<sup>49</sup>

## e) Ideas for Change

### Stakeholder ideas

- Promote the value of internationally trained immigrants and increase the responsiveness to job-readiness requests, such as those to improve language skills, from employers;
- Provide supports to employers to hire internationally trained immigrant students and graduates;
- Create an education and support program for employers to help them better understand and make use of the skills and experience an internationally trained immigrant can contribute;
- Develop an inventory of employers who are themselves internationally trained immigrants, and who can articulate the business case for hiring internationally trained immigrants;
- Use all tools available to promote internationally trained immigrants to employers, such as tax incentives or financial subsidies;
- Develop cross-cultural competency and diversity training for interested employers;
- Provide a recognition program for employers who are leaders in this area. Larger employers have indicated that this could be a valuable form of support.

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<sup>49</sup> Ministry of Finance “Tax Legislation Bulletin Co-operative Education Tax Credit in Respect of Ontario Students” [online] <http://www.gov.on.ca/FIN/english/tax/2000/tb96e2r2.htm>

**Ideas from Internationally Trained Immigrants**

- Actively promote the value of internationally trained immigrants to potential employers by developing a business case.
- Improve college relationships with employers in order to better facilitate or increase co-op and work placement opportunities and improve the value of the experience for students.

## **VII. LIST OF APPENDICES**

The Appendices to the CIITE Project are presented in a companion volume.

- Appendix 1: Listing of Ontario's 24 Colleges**
- Appendix 2: College Initiatives**
- Appendix 3: CIITE Project Committee Structure**
- Appendix 4: ESAC Working Groups**
- Appendix 5: CIITE Communications Activities**
- Appendix 6: Internationally Trained Immigrants Focus Group Questions**
- Appendix 7: Internationally Trained Immigrants Focus Group Summaries**
- Appendix 8: Employer Focus Group Questions**
- Appendix 9: Employer Focus Group Summaries**
- Appendix 10: College Entry Survey Questions**
- Appendix 11: Employment Interfaces Survey Questions**
- Appendix 12: Projects Contacts List**
- Appendix 13: OCAS Data**
- Appendix 14: Glossary**
- Appendix 15: Bibliography**