



President's Newsletter

MAY 6, 2020

Dear Colleagues,

Thank you

I want to begin by recognizing, on behalf of the College, the hard work, care and patience that many of you have exhibited since the COVID-19 pandemic began. I know a significant amount of work has been completed in extremely challenging and difficult circumstances. Your ability to rapidly shift to alternate ways of teaching and working, where possible, has helped to keep the College, students and our communities safer during the pandemic and is greatly appreciated. Thank you.

The following newsletter is meant to provide information on some of the measures being taken across the College to support students, employees and the community during this time, as well as to update you on decisions and processes in progress.

Sincerely,

John Bowman

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Supporting Students

Student Services employees have spent much of the last two weeks reaching out to 600 registered students to prepare for the digital delivery of Spring/Intersession courses starting on May 4. The phone-a-thon was designed to ensure students are ready for digital delivery and to refer them to the wide range of supports available, including financial aid and emergency funds.

Graduation and Orientation Events

Plans to recognize our graduates in June and create a digital Orientation for students in the fall are underway. More information will be on NIC's website, as plans are finalized.

Return to Campus Planning

Spring /Intersession — Faculty, the Senior Education Team (SET) and a Return to Campus Advisory Committee are working to determine the safest way to bring students back to campus. The first groups include trades students completing exams and health care assistant students completing labs in the Comox Valley, whose classes were suspended in March. Individual safety plans for each student cohort, employee group and campus are also being developed. [COVID-19 General Safety Protocols](#) have been developed to align with provincial health guidelines.

Events Rescheduled — The Public Health Officer's requirement to cancel events with more than 50 participants has also forced the College to postpone the Year End Employee Celebration, in which Emeritus recipients are announced and employees are celebrated. The Senior Leadership Team (SLT) is currently considering alternate dates, with the hope of possibly rescheduling the event later this year.

Fall 2020 — The Ministry of Advanced Education, Skills & Training (AEST) is asking each public post-secondary institution to share its return-to-campus plans as we plan for the Fall term.

Faculty and SET are considering alternative forms of instructional delivery to meet the needs of the wide range of students and programs.

These include a combination of:

1. full digital delivery for programs that can accommodate it;
2. a blend of applied on-campus learning and digital delivery; and
3. delaying programs that must be delivered on campus.

The move to digital delivery has been stressful for many of us. Faculty and administrators have worked extremely hard to provide students the opportunity to complete the Winter Term, ensure digital Spring/Intersession Terms go ahead as well as prepare for a viable, successful and safe Fall delivery plan and timetable.

Thank you for all of your work, which has allowed students and the College the ability to transition through these uncertain times more successfully.

Office of Global Engagement

As of April 24, the Office of Global Engagement has 224 students registered for Spring and Intersession courses, a 22% increase over the same date last year. Most of these continuing students are registered in the 14-week term. The Spring intake of new students was deferred until the fall, due to international travel and safety restrictions.

In addition to participating in a phone-a-thon to ensure all continuing NIC international students are supported, the Office of Global Engagement distributed [weekly newsletters](#) and social media challenges, providing students with key support and information, while engaging with the team and each other.

Congratulations to NIC student Georgia Rodgers, BC's only college-recipient of the spring 2020 [Stories from Abroad: BC Study Abroad Scholarship](#) for her blog submission based on her student exchange experience in Germany.

Student Awards Applications

The Office of Advancement has had a busy few months as the student awards deadline for the NIC Foundation Awards concluded last week. Every year, the Office receives more applications than it has funds available and 2020 was no exception with 580 applications submitted for 530 awards.

Where specific awards lack qualified applicants, the Office works with front-line admissions, advising and student recruitment ambassadors to support as many students as possible.

The College is grateful for the support we are able to provide to students in their time of need.

Board of Governors Highlights

On April 23, the Board of Governors met via video conference to discuss urgent and important college business including the impacts of the pandemic, our responses, and early planning to address the related implications and issues. The following approvals were made at the meeting.

2020/21 Pre-COVID-19 Budget Approved —

The Board approved a balanced budget for 2020/21 (pre-pandemic budget), as recommended by AEST. The pre-pandemic budget includes:

- the anticipated costs and funding of new collective agreements;
- a smaller than expected impact from the less one-time only program funding; and
- an increase in funded capital amortization costs for major capital projects.

SLT will be updating the Board monthly (May 28 and June 25 meetings) regarding the effect of the pandemic on the College's overall fiscal situation.

Indigenous Fluency Certificate Approved —

The Board approved the Indigenous Language Fluency Certificate, which was previously approved by Education Council. The new program was developed by Sara Child, NIC's Aboriginal Education Facilitator, in direct response to the 'Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC): Calls to Action' and with the support of First Nations communities in the region. It consists of 10 courses and an internship, which will provide students with the ability to communicate and function effectively within real life, intergenerational, cultural and place-based settings. The certificate will be piloted with a Kwak'wala focus at the Mixalawila campus in Port Hardy, when in-person classes can resume. Once the program is operating successfully, it will be expanded to the West Coast (Nuu-chah-nulth), in consultation with the West Coast Regional Advisory Committee.

College Plan20-25 Timelines Revised

The latest draft dated May 5, has now been [posted](#) to the website. It will be reviewed by the College Plan Committee, who will meet by video conference on May 13 and by the Board of Governors at their meeting on May 28.

A final draft of College Plan20-25 will be presented at the Board meeting on June 25 for approval.

Student Housing in Progress

The College's Business Case for the Housing Commons at the Comox Valley campus is now under review by AEST.

Despite the impact of the pandemic on government operations, government representatives have advised that the review of the business case is progressing. The Housing Commons Business Case reflects a tremendous amount of research and consultation with the entire College community, including students, employees, community members and partner organizations.

Project Scope — When completed, the Housing Commons will transform the Comox Valley campus from a solely commuter campus to a home for 217 people (including 157 single students and 20 families) and provide new common spaces for all students at the campus. It will be located on College-owned land next to the Comox Valley Aquatic Centre, close to the daycare centre and other community amenities along Ryan Road and Lerwick Avenue.

Goals — The business case plans for a multi-generational, Indigenous living-learning neighbourhood with five central goals:

1. increase the participation rate and diversity of adult learners in the NIC region by reducing barriers to a safe, secure and supportive living environment;
2. create living-learning communities that support student learning;

3. with the guidance of the NIC Indigenous Education Council and K'ómoks First Nation, strive to meet the TRC Calls to Action and the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples through the Indigenousization of the project;
4. promote stewardship of the natural environment; and
5. achieve a financially self-sustaining housing operation.

More information and Next Steps — Please see the [Housing Commons at NIC Fast Facts](#) and [Executive Summary](#) for additional details.

Next steps will be published once we have further details from the provincial government.

Designs Approved for Aboriginal Gathering Place - Campbell River

Designs have now been approved for the Aboriginal Gathering Place in Campbell River.

The College, in consultation with representatives from local First Nations, Elders, Indigenous organizations, Chief and Councils and students, have worked with Alfred Waugh from Formline Architecture to create a welcoming space for Indigenous students and community.

The site is adjacent to the existing Aboriginal Student Lounge. [Interior](#) and [exterior](#) design plans are now available online. NIC will continue to work with the Gathering Place subcommittee and First Nations to identify artists that will participate in the project. Construction is expected to begin in 2020/21.