

Overview of the University Credit Program of NWCC

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NWCC is in its 24th year of offering University Credit (UC) courses in the Northwest. These include "stand-alone" courses for UC students that ultimately transfer to another University or College to complete a degree. Other courses are part of a number of integrated certificate and/or diploma programs that utilize such courses in combination with non-UC courses to provide a Technology Program for NWCC students. The model of integration has proven very useful because it increases utilization of UC courses, and such courses serve a dual or even multiple purpose. An example is English 151 that is taken by Early Childhood Education, Natural Resource Management (NRM), Applied Computing Technology, Integrated Human Services (IHS) and University Credit students. Many of these programs allow for block transfer to other institutions such as U. Vic., UNBC, and U. of A.

The size of the UC program is driven by the size of community it serves and by the role these courses play in their given context, i.e. stand-alone or integrated program. Enrollments have increased dramatically over the past 10 years. At present, Terrace and Prince Rupert have a stand-alone UC program with a full first year Arts & Science Offering and limited offerings in Arts and Science in second year. "Full offering" is a term, which merely describes the option for a student to enroll in 10 courses over an academic year, which constitutes a full time course load. By no means does NWCC offer a comprehensive array of courses comparable to a large urban college. However, given that first year UC is quite general for most disciplines, a core program as offered in Terrace and Prince Rupert does serve the need of a great number of students.

The problem with second year offerings is specialization. As course content becomes more specific in upper level courses, small institution like NWCC have to select "common" courses needed by a broad group of majors. As an example, a course such as Organic Chemistry is a second year requirement for students majoring in all areas of Chemistry, Biology, Biochemistry, Genetics, Botany, Zoology, Pharmacology or transferring to Pharmacy, Medical School or Veterinary Medicine. The College has to make choices when offering such second year courses and try to establish a course combination that will serve the most common demand for students in our region, predominantly students coming out of first year at NWCC. Also, if the College wants to offer a UC program to full-time students, a minimum of 10 courses have to be available to a second year student.

Most full-time students will not stay in the region if only part-time enrolment at NWCC is possible. There is, however, a number of courses at the second year level that are frequently taken by part-time students for various reasons. Some professionals from the forestry sector for example come to NWCC to upgrade skills in GIS (Geographics Information Systems), others to increase their skill level in Computer Science or Technical Writing. Yet other part-time students take first or second year Arts courses

such as Art History, Philosophy, Sociology, Geography or Psychology out of personal interest, to pursue a teaching certificate or as part of their integrated program, such as IHS.

Access to University Education for the residents of the Northwest is an extremely valuable commodity. Success rates for first year students in mastering the transition from high school to University is significantly higher at a local, small institution compared to direct transferring students to large Universities as measured by the drop out percentage in first year. The success is proven to carry on once these students transfer to other Universities and achieve a high rate of degree completion as monitored in the student outcome survey by the Ministry. The most likely reason for this success is the low student/instructor ratio and personal attention by faculty possible only in a small institution. For parents of UC students, NWCC offers a more affordable education than a University outside of our region. The savings due to lower tuition (NWCC and other small Colleges charge less than 50% of the tuition at most Universities) and the students not needing expensive housing and transportation outside the Northwest, make a difference of approximately \$7,500/year. The opportunity to complete two years at a Community College can make a tremendous financial difference in easing the burden of expenses or debt from a student loan for a young graduate entering the work force.

For some students, NWCC is the only option due to financial reasons or failure to be accepted at overfilled BC Universities in the South. Other students enter University directly at first year. Some students simply want to leave home and the region and can afford doing so. Others are sent away because it is felt that Universities offer a superior education compared to their local College. This is an unfortunate situation that must be addressed by all of us associated with NWCC. Our faculty and quality of instruction are not inferior to any other post secondary institution. Academic Faculty hold a comparable level of credentials and are engaged in research and scholarly activities during the summer months. As an example, I encourage you to visit the website at NWCC.BC.CA and look up the science departmental home page in Terrace, where the research publications and other activities are documented. We all have to work on improving the image NWCC has in the Northwest and prove to the public that our College is an excellent alternative to BC Universities for the first two years of study. We are putting in efforts towards this goal by visits to the high schools, liaison with councilors and staff at the schools, offering seminars to the public, our web-sites and on-line English Journal.

Unfortunately due to financial restraints, NWCC decided to terminate the Entrance Scholarships in 1997, which attracted students with a high grade- point average from our high schools by reducing their tuition. This is a very regrettable move by the College, because not only have we lost some good students to other institutions, but also often their friends. It is a well-known fact, that students often make choices in groups, and within their circle of friends. Therefore, if we attract a critical number of students, they will attract a significant additional group with them, and vice versa, if we lose them, they will certainly take others with them. Re-establishing an even modest Entrance Scholarship will be very valuable and even economical for NWCC.

As Academic Faculty, we are in direct contact with the students of NWCC on a daily basis and see their needs and demands. Based on the population distribution, NWCC has a stand-alone UC program in Prince Rupert (population ca. 17,000) and Terrace (pop. ca. 21,000), which also draws a number of students from Kitimat (pop. 14,000). There is much room for improvement of the Terrace campus to attract Kitimat students and to improve NWCC's reputation in the Southern Region. The Eastern region (Bulkley Valley, Hazelton to Houston, population ca. 18,000), has a number of UC courses integrated into other programs, mainly the Natural Resources Management Program integrating Biology, Geography, English, and Anthropology courses. With additional stand-alone courses offered in Smithers, UC students could enroll in a full-time first year utilizing these courses. This option is most realistic to first year arts students that can use the Biology and Geography courses as their Science elective. It is also feasible to offer selected second year Arts courses on a one-time basis such as Creative Writing or Anthropology, which would be available to part-time students who have achieved the prerequisites in prior years. Such offerings have to be planned carefully. Input from faculty who teach in that region is imperative in planning subsequent offerings.

It is the faculty that has daily contact with prospective students, and such academic planning has to start from faculty via the Academic Head and the Center Director. At this point it does not seem feasible to offer a first year Science program in the Eastern Region which would require stand-alone Mathematics, Physics, and Chemistry courses and suitable lab facilities. Since 1997, NWCC offers six selected stand-alone courses in Kitimat per academic year. Part time students from that community take these courses. The lectures are scheduled at night in three-hour blocks, which makes it feasible for members of the community as well as Kitimat students taking courses at the Terrace campus to enroll in these courses. After offering a selection of first year courses over a three-year period, there should be a foundation to offer selected second year courses to former students who now have the proper prerequisites. Again, faculty can gauge the demand for such offerings by their personal contact with the students.

Academic planning should consider all these factors and arrange offerings in a logical sequence, planned well in advance and advertised so that students can plan their education. This aspect can't be overemphasized: people need to be able to rely on their local College and have to know well ahead of time (one to two academic years) what the College has to offer. Short term cuts or changes will not serve a community member with an educational plan but rather foster a mistrust of NWCC and a severe loss of credibility.

Academic Faculty have discussed and worked on an academic plan for the next three years. In part, this plan is a response to the recent Arts Program Review and the Murphy Report. Both these documents recommended an increase in variety and an expanded offering in the Eastern and Southern Region, and long term academic planning in coordination with UNBC. Such a plan shall assist the Colleges' Strategic Planning, create a stable UC program for students, councilors and faculty, and promote NWCC

across the province to maximize enrollments from within the Northwest and from across British Columbia. Furthermore, Academic Planning on both sides is essential for a functional cooperation between UNBC and the College towards offering degree completion in the region. In order to complement each other in first/second year and third/fourth year offerings, we ought to have a common Academic Plan well in advance that allows the Institutions to be prepared for course delivery and the prospective students to plan their education. The essence of such an **Academic Plan** is as follows:

For the **Western Region**, continued offering of a stand-alone first year Arts and Science Program with limited second year offerings is recommended. Second year courses, in the Sciences in particular are integrated in the NRM Program (Geography, Biology, and Oceanography) and are also open to part-time UC students of the region. These second year science courses are a welcome, recent addition to the offerings due to the Coastal Integrated Resource Management option of the NRM Program. Second year arts courses should be rotated from year to year and provide a variety of options over several academic years without increasing the net number of courses. A modest growth is recommended, and a minimum number of second year courses is essential to allow full-time students to stay at NWCC for their second year. The Western region, as well as all other regions, offer Arts courses as part of the Integrated Human Service program delivered across the entire College region.

For the **Central Region**, continued offering of a stand-alone first year Arts and Science Program with limited second year offerings is recommended. Second year courses, in the Sciences in particular are integrated in the NRM Program (Geography, one non-lab Biology) and are also open to UC students of the region. At present, Terrace has only six second year science courses: four are part of the NRM program and two (Geography 225/6) are non-lab sciences. This course number is insufficient for full time UC student who needs a total of 8 courses minimum with 2 arts electives for a full course load.

Terrace science faculty are currently examining the development of a Fresh Water Science and Biotechnology program, modeled after Okanagan University College and BCIT, respectively. These two-year Diploma Programs will make use of a full first year Science offering and integrate existing UC and technical courses in their second year. Some courses will be shared with the NRM program and be complemented with a pair of Inorganic, Physical and Organic Chemistry courses. These programs are to be developed over the summer of 1999, and advertised to start in 2000/1. Since the first year is a standard UC science year, intake into second year can commence at any time. Proper advising in the prior year will be crucial to guide prospective students in the appropriate course selection. This program will mean a modest growth of course offerings, and external support for this new Technological Education will be sought over the summer/fall of 1999. The Biotechnology program development is a response to the challenge from Biotech Canada Human Resource Council Inventory made available to all post-secondary Institutions in the country in November 1998.

Second year arts courses should be rotated from year to year and provide a variety of options over several academic years without increasing the net number of courses. At present 13 second year Arts courses are available in Terrace (History, Anthropology, Psychology, English, and Sociology). An increase to 15 courses is recommended for the upcoming three-year period. This modest growth is recommended as suitable selection for full time students to stay at NWCC for their second year. New courses offered in September 1999 are Anthropology 203/4, First Nation's of Northwest Coast as well as Art 152, Art History and Phil 102 Moral Philosophy. It is also recommended to resume offering of first year French. There is a significant number of French Immersion Students in Terrace and Francophone parents whose Children seek University French courses. We have received numerous requests and even petitions asking for such a course.

For the **Southern Region**, it is recommended to maintain the offering of six courses over the academic year, to rotate topics and include second year courses periodically. These courses will have to be limited to arts and non-lab sciences such as Geography 111/2 (Human Geography), Geography 225/6 (Geography of BC and Canada), and Biology 211 (Ecology).

For the **Eastern Region**, it is recommended that in addition to the integrated UC courses of the NRM program, additional courses be offered to allow students to take a full first year UC in the Bulkley Valley. Such additional courses are English 101/2 and Psychology 101/2. It is also recommended to periodically offer second year courses in English, Anthropology, and Geography, which will be available to students who have earned the required prerequisites.

In **summary**, it is essential for the Northwest that NWCC offers a strong, comprehensive and stable University Credit course selection. For a small College it is also vital that these courses are integrated into Certificate and Diploma programs as much as possible to achieve most effective use of these courses. People in the Northwest must be offered this minimal access of face-to-face post-secondary education, and should not be left with distance education, whether it is through correspondence or web-based delivery. People in the Northwest deserve the same access to post-secondary education as residents in urban areas of British Columbia.