

The NEWS and VIEWS Letter about
people and happenings at
Vancouver Community College
May, 1985

**VANCOUVER
COMMUNITY
COLLEGE** 

INTERCOM

NEW FUNDING PROVIDES BREATH OF FRESH AIR

Amid the stormy seas of restraint that have buffeted the province's community college system over the past few years, there were numerous impassioned calls to arms. There were those, throughout the system, who called on their boards to resist Victoria's dictates.

Yet boards throughout British Columbia stood firm in their resolve to reason with the government rather than confront it. As incoming Vancouver Community College president, Paul Gallagher, noted in his Vancouver Sun editorial, February 4,

"Colleges decided quite deliberately to make actions speak louder than words."

This was, he maintained, part of a three-pronged response to the situation. First, colleges carefully reviewed their operations, determining where costs could realistically be cut without detriment to students. Second, colleges determined to prove their value by responding to new conditions and needs in the community, making contributions to the province's economic recovery and development.

COURSE OF QUIET REASON

"The third strategy," Gallagher wrote, "has been to accept that sound and fury are not the only ways to produce change. Colleges noted quickly that public criticism of government often produced retaliatory criticism — with more heat than light."

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P.D. SEARCHES FOR EXCELLENCE



April 24 and 25 Langara Campus professional days focussed on the search for excellence. They looked at a number of topics, among them: teaching for thinking; faculty evaluation; will computers change the way we think; women in science and technology — why not; and what does excellence at Langara mean to me.

Day two, incoming president Paul Gallagher looked at the question of excellence and teaching. He begun by saying, that if achieving objectives was a measure of excellence then the community college system had, indeed, reached one kind of excellence. The reason the system was born 20 years ago was to create new, better, broader ranging opportunities for post-secondary education, to further opportunities.

"More students have more opportunities to learn in more ways than ever before," he said. "We effectively serve a pluralistic community."

"The principle of universality of opportunity for post-secondary education is widely accepted. It has now been accepted as part of the Canadian culture."

"The colleges of Canada — have made an outstanding contribution to the change of political and public attitudes and the change of public policy."

The other expectation for colleges, he said, was that they would be places noted for their excellence in teaching. This was to be in contrast to universities that had a research function and a public service function.

"I think it is fair to say universities have never been recognized primarily for the quality of the teaching they do."

Colleges, on the other hand, he maintained, were to be places where people from a variety of backgrounds would have a real opportunity to learn.

"On a national basis," he said, "I think there has been less emphasis on proving that case to be true than there has been emphasis on the first objective, that of accessibility to opportunity."

He went on to say that the next era of community college development needs a greater emphasis on excellence in teaching and learning.

To this end, Gallagher suggested more focus on maintaining proficiency, working at staying abreast. He conceded that this was difficult and demanding, but said it was the only means by which the college could begin to achieve teaching excellence.

Though community colleges, he observed, are not meant to be research institutes, teacher cannot teach well, nor students learn well, if there is no regeneration through research. So there ought to be legitimate research done at this level, particularly into how adults learn and into learning alternatives, such as distance learning. In the first instance the college provides an excellent research lab for looking at the question, and in the second instance, the quest has implications for the principle of accessibility.

When questioners contended that quality was being squeezed out of the system by the constraints of restraint financing, Gallagher replied that most evaluation to date focussed on what he calls input measure — class size, equipment availability, hours of teaching. They were measures of the stresses on the environment.

"What people outside the institutions are saying is:

"What is important to us is the quality of the product, or the output."

Education has not yet developed credible measures of the output of education."

He said he was sure the environment did affect the output, the student, but there was no measurable means of showing how it did so.



THE OVERSEAS EXPERIENCE

Travel to exotic lands is something most of us dream of. Some fit a taste of this life into 2 or 3 week junkets every few years. But the chance to in really live in a foreign land and work along side the people is an opportunity enjoyed by relatively few.

Chester Spink, new head of the electricity and industrial electronics department at VVI, is one. He recently completed four years in Indonesia.

The journey to Southeast Asia began when he answered an ad from the Canadian International Development agency looking for training consultants to work at a forestry and vocational school in Borneo. This was to be a centralized facility for teaching instructors, who, in turn, could teach students throughout the country.

"You have to understand," Spink explains,

"Indonesia has the base for a very healthy economy. It has extensive oil and forestry resources and, naturally, the government wants Indonesians working in these concerns."



Japanese Consul General Takashi Shinomiya officially presented a collection of books on Japan to Langara Campus's Pacific Rim Program. Here he is with Linda Prince, department chairman, Langara library, and Glen Witter, from the Pacific Rim Program.

ANTIDOTE TO JOBLESSNESS

KEC is home to a new program aimed at unemployed youth. The "Handiperson" program is giving 20 young people, aged 17 to 21, ten months training, combining classroom study with on-the-job experience. The initiative is funded through Employment and Immigration Canada's Youth Training Option.

"When we became aware of the program last summer," says Howard Turpin, "we figured we could put it on pretty easily. A number of the elements are common to our TRAC core. We settled on a "Handiperson" program because, after talks with the buildings and grounds department, we knew there were a number of areas around the college where we could offer work experience. And

by providing the work experience here we'd have some control over it.

We could ensure that the students were actually acquiring skills."

Turpin developed the curriculum, largely from already existing elements of other programs. CEIC gave the go ahead and early this year KEC Counsellor Lorne Houldson, the project co-ordinator, began recruiting students, through newspaper ads and service agencies.

To qualify students had to have been unemployed and out of school for at least three months, but not more than two years, at least grade 10 level reading and math skills and the ability to communicate well in English.

"We wanted people really interested in getting new job skills and change their lifestyles, if necessary," Houldson explains.

The initial recruiting brought in 60 applications, but an assessment test and personal interview reduced

the number accepted to 20, 16 men and four women, including a Japanese girl, a native Indian, two East Indian boys and a French Canadian. "Most as you might expect, come from economically disadvantaged backgrounds," he says. "Some on welfare, others on the street."

"They don't get paid for the work they do but collect a training allowance. It is \$50 a week if they live at home and \$70 if they live alone, eight get by on the \$280 a month allowance, those on U.I. or welfare can continue to collect."

In the ten month program, students started off with eight weeks in class concentrating on life and job skills, orientation to the work world, work habits and attitude, and work on their communications and inter-personal skills. They learn the fundamentals of garden and lawn maintenance, cleaning, basic plumbing, basic electrical repairs, food service and laundry.

Then there are 4 six week on-the-job training sessions as an operating engineer's helper, a security guard's helper, a cleaner's helper, a landscape maintenance helper, a mover's helper, a tool room helper, a cafeteria and food service helper, laundry helper, mailroom helper or office helper.

Between each worksession is sandwiched a week of additional life and job skills training, focused on how to keep a job, how to communicate at the work place, how to solve problems and deal with other workers.

The last two weeks of the program are spent in a directed job search.

"It is a very difficult market out there," Houldson admits. "But we hope to give them the skills needed for bridges entry level employment. We work closely with the employers through a weekly meeting. Each student has a skills passport detailing experience and skills that will be valuable to pass on to a potential employer."

"I don't have any illusions that this program is necessarily going to be their ticket to the future," Turpin says. "But if it bolsters their confidence and gives them a "foot-in-the-door" then it will have succeeded."

So there is a big push to train people."

BUILDING FROM SCRATCH

When he arrived he found what he calls an "empty shell." He had to start from the ground up, buying equipment, designing the electrical course, upgrading the skills of his four students and then teaching them the rudiments of how to teach.

"It was a terrific experience," he says. "But you had to be open to their way of life, the different culture. They weren't tied into the clock as we are. An 8 a.m. start might mean about 9:30 a.m."

"The students I worked with were selected by the Indonesian Ministry of Manpower. I'd put their level of expertise at about that of a graduate of our program here."

DIFFERENT WAY OF LIFE

Spink and his family loved Indonesia, but he admits the experience would not suit everyone. "People get frustrated by the pace, the slowness," he explains. "They can't adjust to the different priorities. It drives them crazy. And, you don't have the services available there that you do here. To see a doctor was a real journey for us. And we were right on the equator so the heat was intense."

"On the other hand," the local people were just marvelous. They are very warm with a real love of family. They adore children.

"Education is revered. You would see children coming out of shacks in the morning in immaculate white uniforms all ready for school. As a teacher you are accorded the greatest respect."

BIT OF COLONIALISM

There are still vestiges of colonialism in Indonesia with garden parties and dinners for foreign dignitaries.

"It is quite different from the day-to-day existence of a teacher in Canada," Spink says. "We really enjoyed it."

"My daughter was nine when we went over and she studied through the B.C. correspondence program. I think it benefited her terrifically. She learned self-discipline that way."

Canadians, he says, are very welcome in Indonesia. "They aren't as keen on the Dutch or the English," he says, "A bit of a holdover from the colonial days."

"I had a quick language course at UBC before I left, but mostly we just picked up the language as we went along."

Indonesia has a population of about 170,000,000," Spink says, "with more than 3,000 different dialects, but the government is moving to promote the use of just one language. There is no welfare state. Indonesians live in extended families with the family as the support system. Though oil, forestry, rubber and tin are important resources, much of the economy is based on agriculture."

"Going to Southeast Asia was the best move I ever made."

BUILDING CONSTRUCTION MOVES ON

The VVI's building construction program recently completed the transfer of their operations from the old Raymur St. premises to a new site at North Vancouver's Capilano College.

The move came at the Ministry of Education's instigation. In an effort to pare costs, the ministry requested that programs no longer use leased premises, but find accommodation in college facilities. The construction programs need for a large space could not be accommodated at the VVI, so Victoria suggested the move to an unoccupied building on the Capilano College campus. The 16,000 square foot building had been built in anticipation of that college getting the go ahead for training in auto mechanics and welding. When this didn't happen the building was left empty.

Building construction got new quarters, and the program's students got invaluable on-the-job experience converting the building to their use. From early March until the last week in April, when most of the renovations were completed, the 60 students worked, tearing down concrete block offices, doing steel assembly, building cabinets, framing, drywalling and painting.

"It was a terrific experience for them,"

says Jay Strachan, operations supervisor for the buildings and grounds department. "They can tell employers they have actual experience working on a fairly major project."

"It was of tremendous benefit to the college too. There is no way we could have had a facility this good without the student labor contribution. Our \$75,000 budget could never have stretched as far."

At any one time there were about 30 students on the project, in two shifts. VVI's electricity program and welding program both came to building construction's assistance, providing help with the steel construction and the wiring.

Strachan says the program, though located at Cap still remains as part of VVI.

"The people at Capilano have been very cooperative," he says. "We have an excellent working relationship with them."



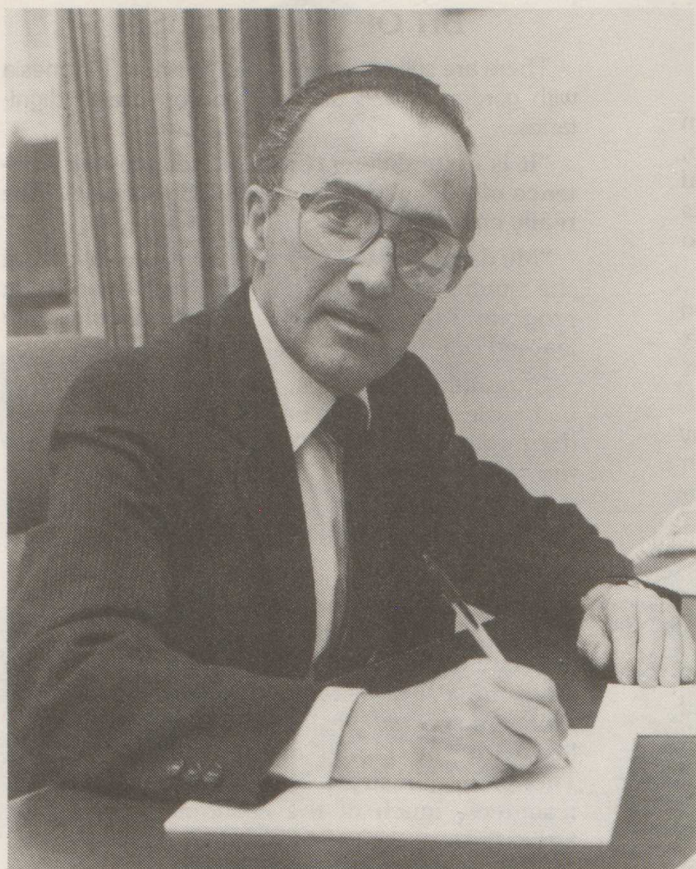
The move to Cap meant extensive renovation and construction work for the students.



New floors were put in.



The rewards of a job well done.



A NEW ERA . . .

Paul Gallagher

As the college sits poised on the threshold of its twentieth anniversary, a new chapter in its history is about to unfold as Paul Gallagher takes over as Vancouver Community College's president and chief executive officer.

Gallagher brings more than 30 years as an educator to his new post. Twice before he had headed community colleges. He has taught teachers, college students and high school students. He was a Quebec school superintendent and the head of a major educational foundation.

During these days, when the province's educational system is undergoing a major realignment, what made him leave the principal's office at Capilano College, to come across the water to take charge of British Columbia's oldest and largest college?

"There were several reasons," he explained, at an interview a few weeks before he left for his new job.

"I think the individual and the organization both benefit from an occasional change in viewpoint and perspective."

I look around and I see so many tremendously talented people who have relatively little opportunity for advancement. Here I'm opening up at least one.

"Actually I look forward to the new challenges. Though Capilano and VCC share a number of things in common, they are quite different too. Capilano serves a more homogenous community and doesn't have the broad range of programming that VCC does. For instance there's a relatively small vocational training or English language component at Cap."

pick up hed — leading role

"I, personally, am a great believer in rationalization, of looking at the educational system as a whole. The diversity at VCC attracted me. I think the college has a leading role to play. Each college is no longer an island unto itself. We have to meet the needs of an increasingly pluralistic society and we have to do so with fewer resources. The future of the system, its viability, depend on cooperation to ensure these resources are put to the best use for the greatest number of people. We want to complement one another, not compete with one another. This holds true within the walls of the college as well."

What does he say to charges that the system is growing too large and unwieldy, that it is on its way to being monolithic?

"I realize very well the difficulties in trying to personalize education within a large institutional framework."

But we must strive to do so, to be responsive. There's only one test of our success and that is how well our students do.

"You have to balance concerns about size against the benefits it can bring. Economies of scale permit us to have services for our students that we could never have were the college divided into small entities."

RESPOND TO COMMUNITY

What does he see the role of president and CEO to be?

"I see my job as one of creating a climate to encourage innovation in education and managing resources so that the college can continue to respond to needs in the community."

It's my job to ensure this can happen. You know sometimes people come here to Capilano and they'll be looking for my office. They will stop a student and ask where Paul Gallagher's office is. Usually the student says, 'Gallagher? Who's he?' And that's the way it should be. The important people to the students are their instructors."

GENERIC SKILLS

Where is community college education going to have to move in the future?

"I still see the most emphasis at colleges on traditional methods. Many haven't looked very far toward non-traditional methods — distance learning, for instance, or continuous entry. Our society changes so rapidly it is a given fact that people must continue to learn throughout their lives. So I think the onus is on colleges to facilitate that.

"I see less emphasis on specific training, on learning job skills, and more emphasis on providing students with generic skills. I see business and industry doing more job specific training. This training will change of necessity as the economy evolves in different directions, but the pool of generic skills provide a base to work from."

The education system is trying to meet growing needs and it has fewer resources at its disposal. Can we do more with less?

"I've lived and worked in other parts of Canada and, as I see it, B.C. has gone from relatively affluent circumstances to circumstances much like those other parts of the country have been coping with for some time.

"I don't believe it is inevitable that the quality of education must deteriorate in these circumstances. Here I think we must make a distinction. There are two kinds of quality: that of the workplace and that of the product. Now there is no doubt the quality of the workplace has been affected. All of us are working longer hours, classes are larger. But the quality of the product, the students we teach, I can't say that has been affected."

How did he come to establish a career in the community college system?

After four years of teaching high school in the early fifties, Gallagher moved into the teaching of teachers. For 12 years, through to 1967, he was an instructor and dean of studies at a teachers college. From there he moved to the job of school superintendent for a year and a half. In 1969 he became director general of Quebec's first and largest English language community college, Montreal's Dawson College.

"Particularly when I was at the teachers college I was concerned about the lack of educational opportunities for those who didn't have money.

I saw people becoming teachers for the sole reason that it was the only avenue of social mobility open to them."

DEMOCRATIZE THE SYSTEM

"In the sixties a major government commission led to the development of a community college system. the creation of these institutions greatly expanded the opportunities open to people. It was a great democratization of the system. in Quebec anyone headed to post-secondary education passes through the community college. There is a great chance for people of vastly different backgrounds and aspirations to rub shoulders.

"I'd had a great deal to say at the time the government was soliciting opinion and, as a consequence, I was asked to head Dawson. I stayed there for two terms. At that point I wanted to get some employment experience outside Quebec, to experience the rest of the country. I went to Toronto to head the Canadian Studies Foundation.

"The objective of the foundation was to foster a better understanding of Canada among our young people. We brought teachers from across Canada together to develop a curriculum."

In 1977, Dr. Gallagher came to British Columbia to head Capilano College. "While I was with the foundation I had a tremendous opportunity to see what happening in education all across the country. Before I came here I knew Capilano had a national reputation as a dynamic and politically active campus.

"In my years here there is no question that I found the faculty to be the college's greatest strength. They are tough politically and educationally. I see very few people here who are just passing through. That is, most of them are firmly committed to what they do. They have a tremendous personal investment in the college. We were also able to develop a strong management team. I think we have a real sense of who we are and what we are doing."

NEW BOARD MEMBERS

At its April 24 meeting the announcement was made of two new members to the Vancouver Community College Board. Langley lawyer Tony Saunders and Vancouver business consultant Hope Wotherspoon were appointed by order-in-council.

The two new members replace Barry Irvine, who has gone to Calgary as president of Genstar Structures Ltd., and Virginia Giles, who has left to become a member of the National Parole Board.

INTERCOM

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So it was that the college system set out "to inform, to convince, and to demonstrate their effectiveness." Board chairmen and representatives met with the minister of education and his officials. The B.C. Association of Colleges, the system's provincial voice, actively lobbied the government for increased support.

As VCC board member, Dr. John Chapman, noted at the board's April 24 meeting this quiet, rational, behind-the-scenes manoeuvring succeeded.

The Ministry of Education has made supplementary funding available to the province's colleges through four new sources.

FIRST, is a one percent lift in operating grant made to the whole college system. At VCC this translates into \$381,000. College executive committee has distributed this money to the centres, where it is slated to be used for areas of critical need, either directly for instruction or for support services. For instance, the additional \$35,000 operating grant going to the computer centre is going to hire additional staff, so the centre can more effectively service the growing number of micros and terminals used in instruction.

RENEWAL

The **SECOND** pool of money is through the institutional renewal fund. This one time source of dollars is not part of the base operating budget. Just as the name implies, this money is to give colleges an opportunity for new initiatives, developing new curricula or acquiring equipment to keep a program current. At VCC this fund provides an additional \$545,000.

The **THIRD** source of funds is an operating capital grant. In the case of VCC, this amounts to \$152,000. Again, this is

to be used for updating antiquated equipment or acquiring new. This money does not disappear at the end of the fiscal year. It can be carried into next year if circumstances dictate.

ECONOMIC REGENERATION

The **FOURTH**, and most innovative fund, is one for local economic renewal and development. The government is providing \$5.8 million to the province's colleges and institutes, on a project basis, to fund initiatives that encourage British Columbia's economic renewal and development, that, in short, will put people to work.

In announcing this fund Minister of Education Jack Heinrich said: "There is no doubt in my mind that the colleges and institutes form a network capable of acting as the co-ordinating element for the engine of British Columbia's economic growth."

I have enormous respect for the talent and potential that exists within the institutions and I intend to tap that reservoir of expertise in determining the allocation of nearly \$6 million."

"I intend to put as few restrictions on you as possible. Any proposal that does not infringe upon the private sector — that can show potential to build the infrastructure of this province, that will put our unemployed back to work, that will give our province the needed competitive edge in global trade, will be considered."

Elements throughout VCC are gearing up to meet the project proposal deadline in June.



Vancouver Community College women's basketball team, 1985.

SOMETHING TO CHEER ABOUT

In a year where Vancouver Community College reasserted its pre-eminence in the province's Totem Conference, there was a good deal to cheer about when it came time to recognize the year's outstanding athletes.

Taking the honours for the women were Sue McPherson and Leah Ellis from the basketball team. The team lost the national championship by one point in overtime. McPherson was named to the all-Canadian team, making her one of the ten best women players in the country. Ellis was named to the all-star team at the nationals.

Again, basketball players headed the list for men's athletics. Named outstanding athletes were Marty Lutz and Jay Derksen. Lutz was named to the all-Canada team at the national championships, while Derksen was named to the tournament all-star team.

Reduced funding brought cuts to the college's participation in the Totem Conference. But athletics co-ordinator Duncan McCallum says he hopes to see an expansion next year, reviving the college's volleyball teams.