



# 2007 The Year in Review

As seen through the eyes of Academica's Top Ten

*by Ken Steele, Senior Vice-President Education Marketing*



Over the past year, ***Academica's Top Ten*** brought our subscribers 2,500 bite-sized news stories, ten bites at a time.

Events, announcements, controversies, statistics and cool ideas washed over us like a raging torrent. In hindsight, reflecting on the year in holiday stillness, some particularly significant events had a lasting impact on Canadian PSE, and some emerging trends may help us to predict what lies ahead.

This review is a personal one, based on a concentrated re-reading of the news stories we covered last year. I'm making observations based on recurrent themes in news items, not drawing from Academica Group's research. Others might read the same 2,500 stories and draw out very different conclusions – if you have different interpretations or observations, please do send them along to me!

To try to bring this review to closure in fewer than 200 pages, I have somewhat arbitrarily aimed for 10 top news stories, and 10 top trends (deviously allowing me to write about 20 themes in all, while retaining the "Top Ten" motif of our daily publication.) There were plenty of other interesting and important possibilities that I have omitted, but I hope you'll find this interesting and thought-provoking.

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## Top Ten News Stories

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2. Massive Capital Projects
3. Tuition Thaw in Quebec
4. Precarious Presidents
5. Coming to Terms with Islam
6. Fresh New Brands
7. Declarations of Independence
8. New Recruitment Tactics
9. Mumps and Housing Shortages
10. Don't Tase me, Bro!
11. (Bonus) Academica adds Web Technology

## Top Ten Trends

1. Focus on the Environment
2. Demographics in Decline
3. Blurring the U/C distinction
4. Aboriginal Youth a priority
5. Major Labour Shortage Concerns
6. The Rise of Social Media
7. Inklings of Web 3.0
8. Rising Parental Involvement
9. Heightened Accountability
10. Greater Federal Involvement

# 1. The Virginia Tech Massacre

On April 16, 2007, a 23-year-old English major at Virginia Tech in Blacksburg VA went on a terrifying armed rampage that left 33 dead and many others wounded, in the bloodiest school shooting in US history. Three visiting Nova Scotia Agricultural College students survived, but a former NSAC professor did not. Students, parents and educators worldwide experienced shock and mourning, with more than a quarter-million joining Facebook memorial groups within days. Emotions ran particularly high at Montreal CEGEP Dawson College, which had experienced its own tragedy just seven months earlier.

The “Virginia Tech Massacre” was a watershed event, which has had a lasting impact on attitudes toward campus security, emergency notification systems, crisis communications, and student mental health services. Within weeks, uManitoba held “sniper drills,” and UWO and others conducted emergency simulations. In September, uWinnipeg modeled the “new normal,” treating very seriously a graffiti threat scrawled in a

washroom stall: they ordered additional security, a police investigation, held multiple press conferences, restricted entry to campus, and searched all bags. Fortunately, in the end, the threat was a false alarm – as were bomb threats at UWO’s King’s University College in September, a pellet gun scare at Memorial University in November, and a fake bomb planted by an OCAD student at Toronto’s Royal Ontario Museum in December.

Although PSE administrators were traumatized by the VT massacre, students themselves were surprisingly resilient. In May, we reported that high school students were rallying behind VT, impressed by the sense of camaraderie and “Hokie Spirit” in the school’s reaction to the tragedy. *USA Today* suggested that the current generation is a “remarkably irrepressible, optimistic bunch” who have seen the Oklahoma City bombing, Columbine massacre, 9/11, the Thailand Tsunami, Hurricane Katrina, and Virginia Tech in the brutally vivid age of 24/7 news coverage.



## 2. Massive Capital Projects

Even ignoring most small announcements, the *Top Ten* tracked hundreds of announcements and openings of new facilities at colleges and universities across Canada. Many were focused on health and science facilities, or campus athletics and recreation. Some of the biggest campus construction news in 2007 included:

- uAlberta broke ground on a new \$909 million Edmonton Clinic, scheduled to open in 2011 with 140 beds and 800 student spaces.
- UBC announced “Project ReNew,” to invest more than half a *billion* dollars in renovation work across campus over the next ten years.
- uSask announced \$400 million in campus construction, half of it for the Academic Health Sciences Centre expansion and research facilities.
- uCalgary announced the construction of a \$400-million Institute for Sustainable Energy, Environment and Economy.
- In December, uAlberta opened the \$300-million Alberta Diabetes Institute and Health Research Innovation Facility, to accommodate more than 200 researchers and staff.
- In October, a \$250 million fitness complex was proposed for Simon Fraser University’s Burnaby, BC campus. It would include 2 rooftop fields and an olympic-size pool.
- Queen’s University broke ground on the Queen’s Centre, a new \$230 million student and athletics facility.
- The University of Victoria had 11 infrastructure projects underway, totaling \$156 million, including a new Ocean, Earth and Atmospheric Science Building.
- uQuebec en Outaouais announced a \$150 million project to consolidate two campuses by 2012, and add new labs for nursing, engineering and cyberpsychology.
- uOttawa unveiled a \$150-million renewal and expansion plan, beyond the \$300 million spent over the last five years, which would create new Rideau River and Alta Vista campuses, and complete the new Desmarais Building downtown.
- The University of Windsor obtained partial funding for a new \$110 million Centre of Engineering Innovation, to focus on automotive and manufacturing engineering.
- UofT’s Rotman School of Management announced a new \$100 million, 10-storey building, and squabbled with neighbouring Massey College about the shadow it would cast.

Labour shortages in the skilled trades were blamed for construction delays and cost overruns on several campuses in 2007. Cost overruns meant that McMaster University’s new football stadium would come in at \$22 million instead of \$13 million. More seriously, the Université du Quebec a Montreal was coming close to “bankruptcy,” according to the *Globe & Mail*, as its long-term debt exploded from \$15 million to \$223 million because of major construction projects, including a new office tower, 1200-student residence, parking facility and renovated bus depot.

### 3. Tuition Thaw in Quebec

The only things certain in life are death and taxes – and perhaps also the cries of student associations for lower tuition fees. In 2007, there were some creative new twists – like Laurentian students staging a eulogy and mock funeral procession for “the death of affordable PSE,” or the “hands in your pocket” parodies of Dalton McGuinty posted on YouTube by Ryerson students. But it was Quebec’s decision to end a 13-year tuition freeze that ignited a firestorm of heated opposition. Jean Charest’s Liberals campaigned on a platform of increased student aid and measured tuition increases – just \$100 per year, until 2012 when tuition would be indexed to inflation.

In January, the ASSE was still hoping for a completely *free* PSE system, as in some Scandinavian countries, at a cost of \$550 million. Meanwhile presidents at uLaval, McGill, uMontreal and uSherbrooke urged tuition hikes to help them be more competitive in research and infrastructure. In February, Concordia’s then-president sat down with student reporters to explain why he believed, despite recent protests, that students would support tuition increases. During the provincial election campaign, a *Montreal Gazette* poll found that 61% of students were opposed to the tuition hike.

In April, after Charest’s Liberal government won the election, thousands of Montreal students boycotted their classes and marched through the downtown for more than two hours. By May, however, the *Gazette* reported that students had largely accepted the inevitable, and the budget was approved in June. 60,000 Quebec students voted to strike in the fall, but anglophone

students at McGill and Concordia rejected the move, and a rally in Montreal drew a much smaller turnout than expected. About 100 Montreal CEGEP students were arrested in November for staging a sit-in to protest tuition.





## 4. Precarious Presidents

In January, the *New York Times* reported that university presidents were increasingly in positions of “extraordinary precariousness,” because of friction with faculty. Presidents had been turfed at Harvard, Gallaudet, Case Western Reserve, Baylor and more.

The very next month, the *Globe & Mail* profiled three high-profile resignations of Canadian university presidents: Carleton and uRegina both lost their presidents after closed-door conflicts with their boards of governors, and UQAM saw its rector resign after a \$40-million overrun in construction on a new science facility. The Canadian Association of University Teachers found the mid-term resignations unusual, and suggested that it might be a symptom of the corporatization of higher education.

Carleton University, in particular, faced a challenging year in 2007. By May, Carleton had lost its President, David Atkinson, the Dean of the Sprott School of Business, the Associate VP of Student & Academic Support Services, and Athletics Director. In September, classes were disrupted by a multi-week support staff strike.



Bishop's University, in Lennoxville Quebec, also had better years than 2007. In July, Bishop's was hit with a support staff strike, was carrying \$5 million in debt and



projecting a deficit of more than \$3 million, and forecasting a 10% decline in enrolment. Union negotiations apparently did not go well, and Bishop's locked out 280 professors, instructors and librarians, and suspended summer courses. In October, when it was announced that 26 managers would receive extra compensation for work done during the strike, members of the faculty union were “appalled by the lack of sensitivity during a financial crisis” and several withdrew donations to the university's foundation. The next month, president Robert Poupart stepped down from his post 18 months early in the face of “mounting pressure from students and faculty.”

Finally, Claude Lajeunesse announced his early departure as president of Concordia University in October, just two years into his five-year contract.



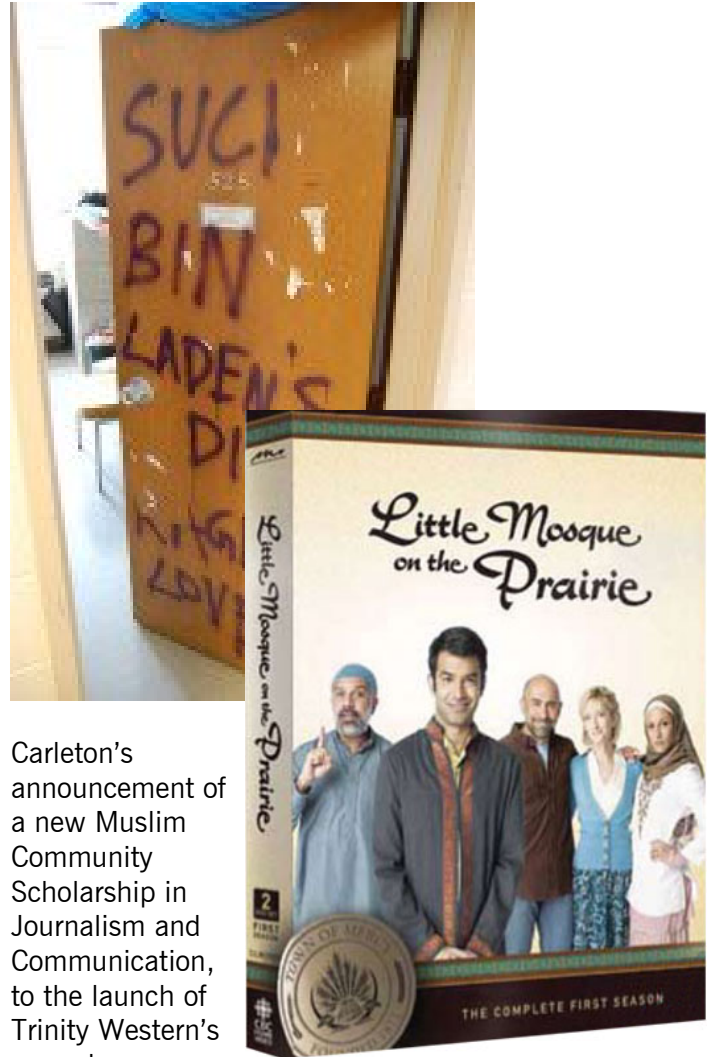
*Maclean's* observed that Lajeunesse was unpopular with students for promoting the end of Quebec's tuition freeze, and Ryerson students still appeared to resent the 50% raise he awarded himself more than a decade ago at the Toronto school. An “insider” reported to the *Montreal Gazette* that the board was “uncomfortable” for about a year.

## 5. Coming to Terms with Islam

From the premiere of *Little Mosque on the Prairie*, CBC's surprise hit, in January 2007, the year was one in which Canadians wrestled with their understanding and relationship to Islam. The year began with St. Francis Xavier professor Shiraz Dossa defending his decision to attend a controversial holocaust conference in Iran, and the "profound embarrassment" of his faculty colleagues. (Five months later, Dossa was still in the media, accusing SFX of conducting "a small Spanish Inquisition.")

In March, the Canadian Federation of Students issued a report which concluded that the Muslim student experience in Ontario included discrimination and numerous obstacles, from inappropriate foods and prayer spaces, to rigid academic policies and interest-bearing student loans. (About 20 Canadian universities reportedly were offering prayer space to Muslim students.) UWO made the news for insisting that Muslim fine arts students were required to paint nude models, or would fail their program. In April, McMaster's organizer of "Wear a Hijab Day" found anti-Islamic graffiti spray-painted on her office door. In October, the Muslim Students Association at uToronto-Scarborough was lobbying for a halal-only restaurant.

In July, *USA Today* reported that many American universities were making special accommodations for Muslim students on campus, from religious foot baths at uMichigan to segregated meditation space at George Mason U. Efforts were made to encourage religious understanding on many Canadian campuses, from



Carleton's announcement of a new Muslim Community Scholarship in Journalism and Communication, to the launch of Trinity Western's annual exploration of Islam, "Faith Forward," which was also to be aired on OMNI TV.

## 6. Fresh New Brands

After a tongue-in-cheek blog by *Maclean's* editor Tony Keller pointed out the “bargains” available in unclaimed business school names, we shouldn't have been surprised to see five business school names announced in 2007: uOttawa's Telfer School of Management, uSask's N. Murray Edwards School of Business, Ryerson's Ted Rogers School of Management, NAIT's J.R. Shaw School of Business, and uRegina's Paul J. Hill School of Business.

Visually, the landscape of Canadian PSE also changed a bit in 2007 with the launch of several new institutional brand identities.



In January, SFU caused an “uproar” by replacing two crosses with two open books in their official coat of arms. The next month, SFU launched its new brand, a red logo block with the tagline “Thinking of the World.”



Also in January, Montreal's Concordia University launched its fourth new logo in 33 years, and the first bilingual one, intended to position the school as daring and contemporary.



Edmonton's NAIT launched a strikingly modern and colourful new brand identity last year, a stylized blue shield.

In August, Lethbridge College launched its colourful new brand identity as part of its 50th



anniversary celebrations. Academica Group developed the new brand strategy and creative, to convey wide horizons, environmental sustainability, and the southern Alberta landscape.



In September, uWindsor rolled out its new “Think Forward” brand, complete with a bright blue and green “wave” logo, and in October launched a million-dollar national ad campaign in national daily newspapers and student-focused websites.

By year-end, we heard that the Ontario College of Art & Design, and the University of Ontario Institute of Technology, were both seeking new names that better reflect their university status, and scope of activities.



## 7. Declarations of Independence

2007 saw the end of the Robarts Research Institute as Canada's only independent research institute, when it was absorbed into UWO's Schulich School of Medicine for financial reasons. But we also saw two university campuses move toward independence:



**Algoma University College**, the Sault Ste. Marie affiliate of Laurentian University, gained the support of city council for its independence in March, and in June the Ontario Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities announced an independent Algoma University (although critics accused him of electioneering). In July, Algoma began preparing its new charter and estimating the costs of independent student systems and library resources.



In May, the provincial government of Newfoundland and Labrador announced the future independence of **Sir Wilfred Grenfell College**, the Corner Brook affiliate of Memorial University, although reporting to the same Board of Regents. In July, the Regents reiterated their support for a single MUN, and insisted that a volunteer board governing two institutions would be "unworkable." The ministry was undeterred, despite a study that concluded an independent Grenfell would be the most expensive university in Canada to operate on a per capita basis. In December, the province was continuing to move forward with its plans.



**UOIT (the University of Ontario Institute of Technology)**, established on the Durham College campus six years ago, continued its own movement toward independence in 2007, with the appointment of separate presidents and planning for separate boards of governors. In September, the Ontario government granted UOIT "unrestricted degree-granting authority."

## 8. New Recruitment Tactics

While naturally colleges and universities across Canada generate gorgeous viewbooks, engaging websites, and scintillating advertising creative every week, we drew particular attention to some interesting new tactics in 2007, from interactive web contests to draws for free tuition:

- Memorial staged a “Rant Like Rick” contest, encouraging students to videotape a rant in the style of comedian Rick Mercer, and compete for a chance to win free tuition. It was promoted on TV, in theatres, and on YouTube.
  - Free tuition was also offered in contests by North Island College, Malaspina University College and Camosun College, while BCIT raffled off \$500 discount vouchers.
  - In June, incoming NAIT business students played Monopoly for a chance to win free tuition.
  - Arrow Truck Sales in Missisauga offered free pre-paid tuition to Humber College’s professional transportation certificate program with the purchase of a used truck.
  - Like Canadian Tire’s “More than Just Tires” campaign, the University of Guelph launched a “More than Agriculture” campaign under the slogan, “Changing Lives, Improving Life.”
  - Sault College sponsored a 30 km outdoor Adventure Challenge in May, which attracted 200 high school students from across Ontario to the Deerhurst Resort in Huntsville.
- Lakehead University followed up last year’s “Yale Schmale” campaign with a “Do Something” theme, to position the school as an ethical and socially responsible institution concerned about global issues like climate change, pollution, poverty and war.



- Wilkes University, in Pennsylvania, ran billboards, mall posters, TV spots and online ads all targeting 6 individual applicants by name. Many of them wound up enrolling, and we learned just how *personal* attention to applicants could be!



## 9. Mumps and Housing Shortages

Managing thousands of young people away for the first time in residence is always a challenge, but in 2007 Canadian universities faced some extraordinary challenges managing their residence facilities. In particular, both mumps and housing shortages appeared to be epidemic last year.



Early in the year, there were more than 500 cases of mumps in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, and even a brush with the Norwalk virus. Atlantic universities were quick out of the gate with preventative strategies for the Fall term. Dalhousie campaigned, “Dump the Mumps!” to its students. In February, Acadia held training sessions to help spread basic emergency management strategies. In July, PEI announced that it would be promoting free booster shots to students at Holland College and UPEI in the fall, and Nova Scotia announced it would re-vaccinate secondary and post-secondary students.

In November, it became clear that the mumps had headed west, with 5 confirmed cases in Lethbridge and 43 cases in Calgary. Institutions launched

mumps awareness campaigns, and Alberta Health planned to immunize 470,000 young adults. Free immunization clinics were established on most Alberta campuses, and the UC Dinos hockey team, in particular, were knocked off the ice for a time. In December, Alberta suspended the campaign after 5 reports of serious allergic reactions or anaphylactic shock.

In the latter half of 2007, the *Top Ten* reported almost a dozen stories focused on student housing shortages in the prairies and western Canada. SAIT, uCalgary and uAlberta issued pleas for student accommodations in Edmonton and Calgary. Saskatoon’s mayor, and the presidents of SIAST, SIIT and uSaskatchewan, asked city residents to take in about 4,000 student boarders, and launched a multimedia ad campaign touting the benefits. Students at uVictoria faced a 0.8% vacancy rate in September.

Hot rental markets in BC and Alberta were exacerbated by construction delays on residences for SAIT and Quest University. Quest’s inaugural class spent two months living in local hotels. In October, uCalgary considered building a new \$50-million student residence, and the government of Manitoba announced funding for a new 178-unit housing complex at uWinnipeg. Things look still more bleak for student housing in Calgary in 2008. In December, an external auditor called on uCalgary to demolish or significantly renovate 5 residence towers containing 454 beds.

## 10. Don't Tase me, Bro!

On September 17, a 21-year-old telecommunications student at the University of Florida in Gainesville was tasered and forcibly removed from a public forum, where he was attempting to ask questions of US senator John Kerry. Within two days, YouTube video of the altercation had received 2.6 million page views, “tase” had been added to the *New Oxford American Dictionary*, and the *Yale Book of Quotations* had designated “Don’t tase me, Bro!” as the most memorable quote of 2007, featured on thousands of t-shirts. (uFlorida does not plan to change its tagline, however.)

The catchphrase has heightened awareness of the dangers of tasers on campus. Almost a year earlier, in November 2006, YouTube video witnessed UCLA campus police tasing an unfortunate student at least five times, because he could not produce identification in the campus library. The news hit was over within two weeks, in part because the victim did not utter as catchy a phrase.

Amnesty International says tasers have been associated with at least 70 deaths in Canada and the US since 2001. In October, US student groups protested the use of tasers on campus.



# 11. Academica adds Web Technology

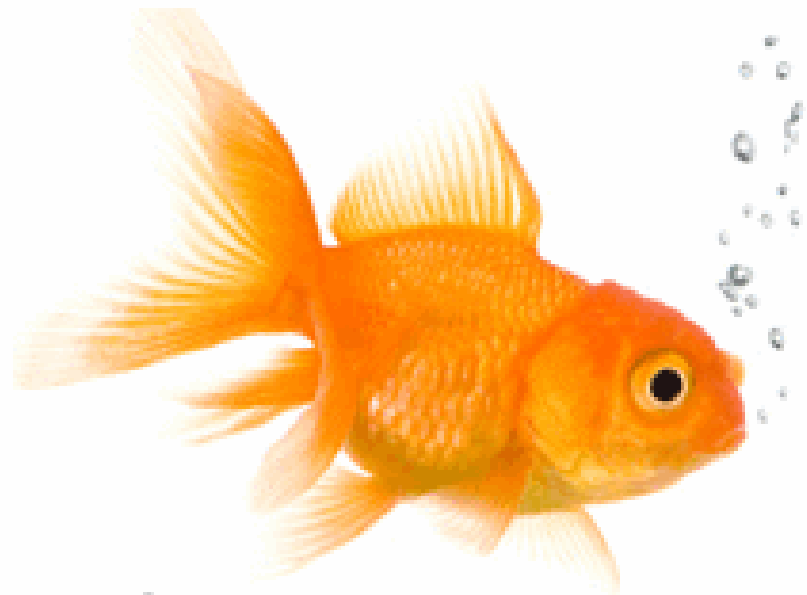
Regular readers of *Academica's Top Ten* know that, from time to time, we slip in an *eleventh* story about something near and dear to our hearts at Academica Group. Call it advertising or self-promotion if you like, but often it's news that our team and our clients really want to know. This year in review wouldn't be complete without one item highlighting our own accomplishments.

2007 was a busy year for Academica Group, starting with the launch of the award-winning *Perspectives* DVD we created for the Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation and the BC Ministry of Advanced Education, for use in grade 10 classrooms across the province. Later in the year, we were also pleased to announce that we were appointed as a graphic design agency of record for the Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities and the Ministry of Education.

But the real news began in July with the announcement that Academica Group was acquiring Toronto-based web technology company x2idea corporation, an interactive marketing agency in the forefront of the open-source movement. In September, Philip Bliss was appointed our first Chief Operations Officer, and David Beyer was appointed Senior Vice-President, Creative Director. In September, we launched our own new brand identity, and a completely re-engineered website built using our x2clicks™ Drupal CMS.

Then in October, we launched SkoolPool™, a Facebook app for prospective college and university students worldwide to indicate the institutions they are considering, applying to, or accepted by, and to facilitate discussion with their friends and the institutions themselves. Young people worldwide have started adding SkoolPool to their Facebook profiles, and a real-time dashboard on our website shares some basic data being gathered.

We're looking forward to another year bringing you *Academica's Top Ten*, and more innovative technologies to advance university and college recruitment. As always, thanks for reading!



**SkoolPool**  
2K0016001



# 1. Focus on the Environment

The environment became a widespread theme in new programs, research projects, and campus initiatives across Canada last year. The Sustainability Report Card found McGill, UofT and UBC worthy of B grades. In June, UNBC trademarked the phrase “Canada’s Green University.” In September, the *Chronicle of Higher Education* observed that sustainability was a growing trend at business schools, and that MIT, Stanford, and others had rolled out MBAs focused on sustainable development. In December, the *Toronto Star* observed that Canada’s business schools were “falling over themselves” to attract prospective students with eco-friendly curricula.

Science and engineering schools announced a plethora of new research projects concentrated on the environment, including some of the largest research grants in Canada:

- The \$160-million Ocean Tracking Network, announced by Dalhousie, will track fish and marine life in 14 strategic ocean locations around the globe.
- \$150 million was announced for projects in honour of International Polar Year, to be led by uManitoba.
- The \$112-million Neptune Canada observatory on the Pacific floor, led by researchers from uVictoria, will “plug the ocean into the internet” with robotic vehicles, video cameras and seismometers.

In addition to green curricula and research, Canada’s universities were swept up in a global trend toward the greening of campus facilities. The Association for the Advancement of

Sustainability in Higher Education tracked more than 600 environmental sustainability projects at North American colleges and universities in 2006, and projected even more activity in 2007. Later in the year, more than 500 college and university presidents pledged to make their campuses “climate neutral,” to set a good example for society.

In Canada, UBC gained international commendations for ECOTrek, the largest water and energy retrofit in any Canadian university. Through the year, we also noted green campus investments at Acadia, St. Lawrence College, NSCC, Brock, uCalgary, York, Laurentian, UWO and MacEwan.

Students launched the Campus Climate Challenge at 21 Canadian universities, and the *Globe & Mail* reported unprecedented numbers of students applying to environment-related university programs in science, engineering, sustainability, resource management, environmental policy, and green tourism. Various pundits announced that “green teens” would be the trendsetters of the Millennial generation, and were committed to solving global warming.

Yet at the same time, surveys were finding only 38% of teens concerned about the environment, and only 15% “very interested” in doing something about it. Enrolments were down sharply at agricultural colleges and faculties of forestry across the country, at Lakehead and UNB Fredericton, and particularly at BCIT (which was closing its programs). And a survey of 400,000 Canadian teens in December found that 90% did not see the fate of the environment improving within the next 20 years.

## 2. Demographics in Decline

Celebrated demographer David Foot is well known for proclaiming that “demographics is destiny.” In 2007, Canadian colleges and universities focused a great deal of attention on demographic shifts that would pose particular challenges.

Overall, StatsCan predicted declines in Canadian PSE enrolment over the next two decades. AUCC countered with projections that university enrolments would increase by as much as 150,000 over the next decade, because of increased university participation rates – but these projections may well spell a different sort of crisis for Canada’s colleges and technical institutes.

What became crystal clear to all observers, too, was that Canada’s young population is increasingly concentrated in 5 of the 6 largest cities: Toronto, Vancouver, Ottawa, Calgary, and Edmonton. (Montreal, the second-largest city, is flat.) Universities in the **GTA** expressed concerns about a looming enrolment crisis, as the youth cohort is forecast to increase 24% by 2031, and university applications to increase as much as 50%. Scrambling to accommodate as many as 75,000 new students in the next 6 years, UofT, York and Ryerson were discussing growth, satellite campuses, or even the creation of a fourth GTA university.

Meanwhile, what I like to call the “GTA feeding frenzy” spread to encompass institutions from across the country, and Ontario universities were creating satellite campuses nearby: Trent in Oshawa, Algoma in Brampton, Lakehead in Orillia, Laurentian in Barrie, and Laurier and Nipissing in Brantford.

Across **Ontario**, the “double cohort” completed their undergraduate programs in 2007, and scrambled to find convocation halls sufficiently large to accommodate their parents. Universities complained about significant growth in enrolment but declines in per-capita funding, and the imminent need for more graduate student spaces. Schools complained about booming class sizes and threats to academic quality, and several institutions faced budget deficits and massive deferred maintenance.

The picture wasn’t much different in **Alberta** last year. Despite a booming economy and the lowest PSE participation rates in the country, Alberta universities were overwhelmed with record numbers of applications because of booming youth populations in Calgary and Edmonton. As many as 10,000 students were turned away from Calgary institutions. Atlantic universities in particular were aggressively pursuing the overflow. The big difference between Alberta and Ontario: a government investing in massive expansion projects across the province.

In **British Columbia** last year, we saw plenty of news stories forecasting declining enrolments, and steep budget cuts at SFU and UNBC. BC was seeing a dwindling youth demographic, and a proliferation of new PSE institutions. In the fall, BC’s universities reported meeting or exceeding their enrolment targets, but observers claimed it was not without significantly lowering admission requirements.

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In Atlantic Canada, there were two solitudes in 2007. Overall, MPHEC observed 13% higher enrolments at East coast universities from a decade earlier – but warned that the pattern would reverse over the next few years. PSE participation rates in New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and PEI are already far higher than the national average, and enrolment was projected to drop as much as 14% over the next decade.

In **Newfoundland & Labrador**, a newly oil-rich province with plenty to invest in PSE, there was talk of independence for MUN's Grenfell College campus, the second-lowest tuition rates in the country, and the lowest student loan interest rates to boot. Since 2001, Newfoundland cut tuition 23% — clearly winning the “price war.” Although youth demographics are declining in Newfoundland, in the past 7 years Memorial has increased its share of students from other Maritime provinces *ninefold*.

By contrast, **Nova Scotia** colleges and universities seemed clearly to be struggling with enrolment last year. With the highest tuition rates in Canada, the province rolled \$29 million into a new tuition freeze, rebates and tax breaks. Nonetheless, almost half of low-income Nova Scotians reported that family members were financially unable to pursue PSE. Last fall, Nova Scotia colleges and universities experienced a decline of 870 students, the largest in years. Effects were particularly acute at Acadia University, which saw a 9.7% decline in enrolment (and also faced a bitter three-week faculty strike). Good news came from two institutions in the province, Cape Breton University and Nova Scotia Community College, which reported increases in enrolment.

**New Brunswick**, also facing declining youth demographics, was home to the most sweeping proposals for PSE change in Canada last year. In April, UNB floated an ill-received but quickly-forgotten suggestion of a possible merger with St. Thomas and Mount Allison Universities. This was just prologue to the firestorm ignited in May, when the provincial higher education commission released its recommendations to convert UNB-St. John and two satellite campuses of uMoncton into polytechnics. (The proposal caused considerable dissent, even among provincial Liberals themselves, and the government has reiterated its commitment to UNB-SJ.)

In 2007, AUCC, MPHEC, and provincial governments all observed that Atlantic institutions were necessarily recruiting students from away. The challenge with this strategy also became apparent in a number of studies and reports last year that emphasized the *decreasing* mobility of young people, whether because of rising tuition fees, closer connections with family, or the cultural attitudes of immigrants and first-generation applicants.

In September, the *National Post* reported that 75% of freshman students will commute to university instead of experiencing the full residential experience. In October, the *Globe & Mail* reported that 46% of first-year students are choosing to stay at home, and suggested that living away from home is increasingly seen as a “risk or personal challenge” rather than an adventure. The *Toronto Star* reported in October that 58% of Toronto’s “twentysomethings” live with their parents, increasingly until age 34. GTA kids simply can’t believe they could afford to live on their own.

### 3. Blurring the U/C Distinction

For years the distinction between universities and colleges has varied by jurisdiction, with university-colleges and 2+2 programs widespread in BC and Alberta, but relatively unknown in Ontario. Last year, the arbitrary distinction between college and university – what is known in Europe as the “binary divide” – came into question like never before.

We saw a series of stories about the growth of partnerships between colleges and universities to offer hybrid programs and joint degrees, and the creation of hybrid institutions like the University of Guelph-Humber and York@Seneca. Humber College president Robert Gordon’s called publicly for the adoption of 2+2 strategies in Ontario, but simultaneously others were calling for BC’s college system to return to its vocational roots. BC’s *Campus 2020* report seemed to propose that colleges stop offering degrees.

Last year we also documented the growing polytechnic movement, and the growth of Polytechnics Canada. In Ontario, 5 community colleges were pushing their brands toward a polytechnic position (Humber, Sheridan, Conestoga, George Brown, and Seneca), while Red River College’s new academic plan clearly promoted a polytechnic model, and the New Brunswick PSE commission recommended the creation of new polytechnic institutions.

As colleges become polytechnics and launch applied research programs, universities are also closing the gap by offering more applied and professional programs. In December, Clive Keen’s report to CAUBO encouraged universities to offer more applied, employment-focused programs to appeal to aboriginal, first-generation and lower-income students.

As colleges and universities bridge the gap in the binary divide, PSE students are consequently seeing college and university as a continuum of educational options. Many university graduates are turning to post-degree diploma programs at college before entering the workforce, and many college-bound students fully expect to go on to university afterwards. (An ACCC survey found that 42% of college students view college as a “stepping stone” to university.)

Last in 2007, Academica Group decided to combine its long-running national surveys of college and university applicants, to create the *UCAS Applicant Study*, which will allow growing numbers of cross-applicants to complete a single instrument, and allow participating institutions to compare themselves with competitors of all varieties.

## 4. Aboriginal Youth a Priority

Throughout 2007, reports and studies appeared emphasizing the urgent need to address Aboriginal and First Nations participation in PSE. In February, First Nations University of Canada professor Blair Stonechild published *The New Buffalo*, a comprehensive look at PSE policy as it affects Canadian aboriginal peoples, in which he argued that underfunding has caused First Nations enrolment to drop by 5,000 over the last five years. Also early in the year, a Society for the Advancement of Excellence in Education report found that just 9.3% of Waskaganish youth proceed to PSE, compared to 46.9% of the general Quebec population. In April, Saskatchewan's PSE Accessibility and Affordability Review made 45 recommendations, calling for targeted support to increase access and affordability, and dialogue with aboriginal peoples to develop non-financial strategies to encourage PSE participation. In June, the Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation reported that Aboriginal youth were twice as likely to drop out of PSE, or to skip PSE entirely, comparing 54% participation among Aboriginal students to 73% in the general population. Late in the year, Assembly of First Nations national chief Phil Fontaine said that, although there are 30,000 aboriginal youth in Canada's PSE system, another 10,000 are barred by financial limitations – and that \$2 billion in new federal funding is required. Finally, Ottawa's Centre for the Study of Living calculated that aboriginal drop-out rates will cost Canada as much as \$71 billion in lost productivity and labour growth over the next decade.

Last year we also saw numerous announcements of government initiatives and funding to support aboriginal education. Early in the year, former prime minister Paul Martin announced a pilot project in Thunder Bay to improve high school completion rates among aboriginal youth. In April, Saskatchewan invested \$4.2 million to create 180 new seats for First Nations learners in PSE, and Alberta announced \$2 million for the First Nations College Access Grant. BC announced a \$65 million Aboriginal PSE strategy, including scholarships, research, and campus gathering places. A new aboriginal college was announced at the University of Winnipeg, and we mentioned new aboriginal programs at Lakehead University and the University College of the Fraser Valley. In November, the University of Saskatchewan appointed a special advisor on Aboriginal Initiatives, and in December the city of Regina signed an agreement to create an urban educational reserve for the Star Blanket Cree Nation.

Twenty university presidents met in Winnipeg for the Aboriginal University Education Roundtable, to discuss issues of First Nations, Metis, and Inuit access, retention and success. The roundtable culminated in a commitment to accelerate efforts to increase graduation rates, to listen and respond to the needs of these students and their communities, and to build relationships of mutual respect. In October, the Association of Canadian Community Colleges (ACCC) held its second annual conference, "Strategies for Meeting the Educational Needs of Aboriginal Learners in Rural and Remote Communities," in Timmins Ontario.



## 5. Major Labour Shortage Concerns

Throughout 2007, employers, educators and government repeatedly sounded the alarm: Canada is about to experience a critical shortage of skilled tradespeople, agricultural specialists, medical practitioners – and university professors.

In BC, the technology industry predicted a huge skills shortfall within a year. The mining industry forecast a need for 81,000 new workers in the next decade. The construction industry in Nova Scotia warned that 12,000 new workers will be required over the next decade, and the Canadian Construction Association said forget *future* shortages – Canada is *already* short as many as 60,000 construction workers. The Canadian IT industry said it will need 89,000 skilled workers by 2012.

Early in 2007, Ontario announced 800 no-cost pre-apprenticeship spaces, Alberta invested \$15 million to create 3,000 apprenticeship spots, and Newfoundland & Labrador invested \$44 million to increase skilled trades seats at the College of the North Atlantic. In May, NAIT was running at 200% capacity and line-ups for apprenticeship programs were 500 long by 5:30am.

Interest in agriculture programs was reported to be in decline. NAIT dropped its agricultural program offerings entirely, while uSask repackaged programs such as “bioresources” and took elementary school students on farm visits as part of a “Real Dirt on Farming” campaign. Some analysts hoped opportunities in biofuel research might rejuvenate the field.

If provincial governments are continually balancing their investments in education and healthcare, one no-brainer is to invest

in health-care education. And in 2007, that’s exactly what we saw happening. In March, while reports bemoaned the brain drain of 1 in 9 doctors and 1 in 10 nurses to the US, the province of BC committed \$40 million to double the number of doctors in medical school, Manitoba funded 100 new nursing student spaces, and Ontario directed \$224 million into nursing programs. In June, UNB-St John announced its new medical school would open in September 2009, and Saskatchewan directed \$18 million to create 112 new healthcare seats. In August, Alberta announced \$30 million to create 258 new healthcare seats across the province, and of course the billion-dollar Edmonton Clinic began construction in September, aiming to rival the world-famous Mayo Clinic. In November, Memorial announced it would increase medical school seats by 50%, and nurses called on Saskatchewan to offer free tuition to nursing students.

2007 was the year to push skilled trades, medical training, and graduate studies. Early in 2007, the C.D. Howe Institute insisted that Canada needs more grad students to be globally competitive, and OCUFA warned that Ontario universities did not have sufficient faculty to supervise the imminent move of the double cohort to grad school – a surge estimated to be 37,000 for the fall of 2007. Brock University announced its new Faculty of Graduate Studies, and in the fall UOIT launched its graduate studies program and Ryerson appointed its first postdoctoral fellows. In November, AUCC predicted that Canadian universities will require 35,600 new professors by 2016.

## 6. The Rise of Social Media

Without a doubt, 2007 was the year in which virtually all of us became conscious of “social media” like Facebook, YouTube, and MySpace. Parents, relatives, and employers started asking young people to become their Facebook friends. Early in the year we cited several US studies that found 43% of high school seniors had online profiles, and that 70% of teen girls belonged to social networking websites – but by mid-summer, studies were citing 96% or more. At the beginning of the year, US studies found 85% using MySpace compared to just 7% using Facebook – but by July, Facebook’s tiered privacy settings were rapidly winning over young people. In Canada, Facebook always enjoyed a huge lead over MySpace, but in 2007 Facebook rose from #5 to the #1 website of any kind.

Some consultants were still emphasizing that online communities are viewed as “student-only spaces” and that colleges and universities should tread lightly, but in fact Facebook and MySpace were both open to the general public throughout 2007. With the public launch of the Facebook application platform in May, and new segmentation capabilities announced in August, Facebook became even more fertile ground for marketers.

In March, the *New York Times* reported that hundreds of “Class of 2011” groups were emerging on Facebook, as places to meet future classmates. And of course in October, Academica Group launched SkoolPool, the Facebook app that allows thousands of post-secondary applicants to share their decision process with their friends, learn more about institutions, and discuss their choices.

Last year, plenty of students, and a handful of administrators and faculty, got into hot water because of online postings. In February, five students at Long Island University were removed from residence staff and faced a disciplinary hearing because they posted a YouTube video mimicking a terrorist hostage situation with the school mascot. In May, a student at Millersville University was denied her education degree because of a MySpace photo promoting underage drinking. By July, officials at the University of Oxford were disciplining and fining students based on photos posted on Facebook. In August, college housing officials reported to *USA Today* an increase in roommate re-assignment requests because of party-related content on Facebook profiles. A Facebook group falsely accusing Dalhousie University of killing “dogs and puppies” was removed from the site twice. And finally, the president of Maryland’s Salisbury University was publicly embarrassed by her vacation photographs on Facebook.

Institutional websites started getting interactive too. uVictoria created a Flickr group and invited students to submit their photographs of campus. Memorial’s “Rant Like Rick” encouraged students to post their video on YouTube. Queen’s University started pushing video to its own iTunesU channel.

An informal survey of college marketers at the AMA Higher Education marketing symposium found that 90% were using email marketing, and 76% planned to use social network marketing. The “Web 2.0” trend is still gaining momentum.

## 7. Inklings of Web 3.0

As Web 2.0 became mainstream, emerging technologies started to suggest the way forward to Web 3.0: 3D simulation, and the mobile web.

Throughout 2007, Linden Labs' virtual world, Second Life, gained in prominence among academic users, for distance education, simulation and scientific visualization – but also for marketing purposes. Last year, SL surpassed 10 million visitors, added voice capability, and expanded the capacity of its “grid” tenfold. When an October episode of *CSI: New York* featured a SL crime scene, it became clear that SL had gone mainstream. Second Life also became a lot more like *real* life in 2007, with virtual terrorist bombings and at least one virtual campus deleted for unacceptable behaviour by its residents. More than one virtual real estate developer became a real-world millionaire on SL, and regulations were established to ban in-world gambling. Technology analysts began to speculate that 3D virtual worlds, like Second Life and Google Earth, might represent the next major step in the evolution of the web, and IBM was reputedly working on software to allow avatars to wander between websites.

By August, more than 300 colleges and universities had established some sort of SL presence. We noted that LaSalle College and Loyalist College were conducting virtual classrooms and simulations on SL, and the McMaster University library had established a reference desk in SL. Last year we also encountered virtual campuses for Seneca, Humber, Fanshawe and Mohawk Colleges, UOIT, Princeton, Harvard, Columbia and NYU. In September, NAIT's

president attended an open house at the Edmonton school's SL campus, and used SL as a teaching tool. In October, 20 institutions signed up for a virtual college fair in SL.

Second Life is not without problems, of course. The platform is resource-intensive, and can be buggy. Nuisance behaviours can be unpredictable. And no matter how beautiful the architecture and landscaping, your virtual campus will appear dead unless you have dedicated staff and students populating the site with their avatars. So far, SL is intriguing as an accessible way to experience one possible vision of web 3.0 or 4.0 – but so far it is probably a bit ahead of its time.

Far more inevitable is the emergence of mobile technology and applications. As toddlers start using handheld electronics, and 90% of students have cellphones, naturally Apple's iPhone became the hottest must-have tech toy in 2007. The epitome of MoSoSo (MOBILE Social networking Software) is Twitter, a micromedia form of blogging that shares 140-character “tweets” with a user's network, often many times a day.

Colleges and universities began to evaluate their websites for compatibility with mobile browsers, and Athabasca University launched a pilot project in cell-phone-based “M-learning” or “mobile learning.” Studies were also finding laptops a major distraction during class, hindering rather than helping many students in the learning process. But there can be little doubt that the seductive lure of mobile technology, and its genuine utility, will inevitably move the web into the palms of our hands.

## 8. Rising Parental Involvement

While university administrators have complained about so-called “helicopter parents” since about 2002 – even developing the more extreme label, “black-hawk parents,” for parents who seem particularly confrontational – in 2007 the concept hit the mainstream.

Helicopter parents started to organize, as evidenced by the National Survey on College Parent Experiences, released in March by the College Parents of America. And they are reassuring each other that frequent contact with their kids on campus is perfectly normal: 30% talk daily, 73% talk 2 or 3 times a week, and 70% visit campus at least once per term. Another March survey found that two-thirds of parents of high school seniors are very involved in the school search, and most demand inclusion on campus visits. “Helicopter parents cum laude” don’t even cut the apron-strings when their kids enter the workforce, but instead hand out their children’s resumes at career fairs and accompany them to job interviews.

Institutions responded to helicopter parents in 2007 by installing VendSmartt campus vending machines that not only provide healthy snack options, but also send emails to parents tracking their child’s purchases. Others implemented multi-day parent orientation programs – “parent o-weeks” – to help ease the college send-off.

The *Chronicle of Higher Education* observed that the majority of PSE students now have Generation X parents, who bore substantially heavier tuition burdens than their boomer parents. Gen X parents are expected to regard colleges with a much more critical eye, and will be demanding rigorous accountability from PSE, as they have from elementary and secondary education.



## 9. Heightened Accountability

Whatever the cause, a major and sustained trend throughout 2007 was the intensifying expectation of transparency and accountability from colleges and universities in a range of areas, from statistical disclosure to ethical investing.

Associated Press called 2007 “a year of dishonesty in American PSE.” MIT’s outspoken dean of admissions resigned after admitting she had falsified her résumé. One of the biggest education news stories of the year was the investigation of kickbacks from Sallie Mae, Citibank and other student lenders to the nation’s colleges. New York’s attorney general obtained multi-million-dollar settlements, and the \$25-billion-dollar sale of Sallie Mae was scuttled. Then in August, college arrangements with study-abroad companies came under scrutiny, also for alleged kickbacks and perks. Finally in October, the University of California was accused of accepting commissions for referring continuing education students to Capella University.

The US education secretary Margaret Spellings called for increased information from PSE institutions, and Microsoft chairman Bill Gates urged the creation of a national education data centre. In Canada, by February it was already clear that demands for accountability were on the rise: *University Affairs* examined calls for heightened transparency from the Canadian Council on Learning, the Educational Policy Institute, *Maclean’s* and others, and reported on renewed efforts to establish a common dataset for comparison of key statistics, instead of commercial rankings.

Many Canadian universities had boycotted the *Maclean’s* rankings, leading to a flurry

of access to information requests and a redesigned rankings formula that leaned more heavily on public data. In the US, where there are literally hundreds of commercial rankings from *US News & World Report* to *CosmoGirl*, colleges seemed to take inspiration from Canada and by June more than 80 had boycotted the *US News* rankings as well, instead opting to create a common dataset.

*University Business* observed a trend last year toward increased student concern for the ethical, moral, and environmental ramifications of endowment investments. Sure enough, in March we saw Queen’s University instruct its fund managers to divest its holdings in two Chinese petroleum companies operating in Sudan, because human rights advocates linked them to financing genocide in Darfur. In April, the University of Toronto was the first Canadian university to announce that it would divest \$10.5 million in tobacco industry stock, bowing to pressure from student petitions and following the example set by 23 US institutions. Later in the year, McGill announced that it would likewise divest itself of \$4.5 million in tobacco industry stocks.

In 2007, worldwide concern about the accountability of Canadian colleges and universities was heightened by several scandals involving private PSE institutions. Eight private colleges in BC were ordered to close, and 45 had their registrations suspended, but many continued advertising and registering students. Vancouver University Worldwide and Rutherford College were found to be granting illegal degrees. The governments of China, South Korea and India published warnings about the quality of Canadian education.



## 10. Greater Federal Involvement

As Ottawa's coffers burgeon with surplus tax revenues, many inside colleges and universities are pleased to see funding increasing. Early in 2007, Stephen Harper's Conservative government promised \$800 million in additional funding for Canada's colleges and universities, to be transferred to the provinces once unspecified accountability measures are in place. COU and AUCC were pleased by the federal budget, but CAUT and several student organizations preferred to see a dedicated PSE transfer to the provinces.

In 2007, many expressed concern about the survival of the Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation, whose original mandate ends in 2009. Since its creation in 1998, CMSF has distributed more than \$2.2 billion in grants and bursaries to PSE students. In 2007, we saw the federal government undertake research to evaluate CMSF's impact and effectiveness. In May, Auditor-General Sheila Fraser conducted a thorough review and found CMSF "well-managed." In November, a second review by the Treasury Board found CMSF to be "achieving results" and to be "efficient." Other reports on student impact are pending. Facing the prospect of a "looming \$350 million hole in Canada's financial aid system," seven student alliances including OUSA and CASA began calls in October to extend the CMSF mandate. (Only the CFS is asking for a new model for dispersing funds to students.) In December, CMSF publicly hoped for a second ten-year mandate.

Of course, Canadian colleges and universities can expect more than just financial involvement from the federal

government. Just as there are calls for a national education database in the US, in September the Canadian Council on Learning voiced concerns that Canada was unable to provide data for 57 of the 96 PSE-related indicators gathered by 39 other countries for the OECD *Education at a Glance* report, and several provincial reports emphasized the need for better data to guide PSE. In October, the Canadian Federation of Students called for a federal department of PSE research, and *Maclean's* asked if Canada should perhaps have a federal Ministry of PSE. In December, CCL called for a nationwide system of student ID numbers, to improve tracking of dropout rates, transfers between schools and across regions. Canada, apparently, is the only developed country without a federal education office.

And beyond statistics gathering, last August we saw Canada's provincial ministers for higher education leaning toward establishing national degree standards, according to *University Affairs*. Canada is one of the few OECD countries with no standardized national policy regarding degree quality or accreditation, and the rise of private and distance PSE providers has made accreditation a growing concern, particularly in BC. Several Canadian institutions have already sought out American or international accreditation, including Kwantlen College, Capilano College and Athabasca University.

Expect to see more discussion of accreditation and federal standards in the years ahead, as Canadian institutions battle negative PR overseas caused by the failures of several small private colleges.

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