

Tri-City News

College prez has big plans for Douglas

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Douglas College wants to be the biggest college in the province and intends to reach that target in four years, according to college president Scott McAlpine

McAlpine made the rounds of Metro Vancouver city councils in late 2010, touting his five-year strategic plan to make Douglas the "largest and most progressive baccalaureate degree-granting college in British Columbia" by 2015.

His last stop was Port Moody city hall, where he presented council his ambitious six-point strategy, laying out how the college plans to appeal to the Lower Mainland's older and foreign-born residents to meet its enrolment goals as the province's largest college.

Reaching out to this "non-traditional" college demographic was just one facet of the school's plan.

"There will be less demand overall for post-secondary seats in B.C. among traditional post-secondary participants (age 18 to 29) as this population is at, or near, peak," read part of the plan.

To attract those outsider students, Douglas' six-point strategy involves streamlining the admissions process to allow a broader variety of courses or credits to count towards enrolment, encouraging diversity in teaching and allowing labour-market demand to dictate curriculum.

Other initiatives outlined in the plan include "internationalizing" the school to appeal to a wider demographic, increasing "experiential learning" opportunities such as co-op programs, promoting social responsibility and upgrading student gathering and work environments.

"We're at 10,000 students at the moment and we hope to grow another 10% at least in the next few years," said Hazel Postma, Douglas' associate vice president of external relations.

Douglas College currently offers nine degree programs and many diplomas and certificates across its Coquitlam, New Westminster and Surrey campuses.

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