



Selkirk College Strategic Plan Environmental Scan

Prepared by Higher Education Strategy Associates
March 2024





Castlegar Campus

Introduction

Selkirk College (SC) is currently in the process of developing its next strategic plan. Part of this process involves assessing the college's strengths and opportunities as well as changes in its environment. The last time SC published a strategic plan, it was 2019. Since then, the COVID-19 pandemic, economic forces, social movements, and technological and political developments have combined to produce profound changes. How we think about teaching and learning, expectations around the student experience (including that of international students), the ways we consider and conduct research, provincial governmental priorities, and even expectations surrounding the role of colleges in the community have all evolved.

A strategic plan for a college needs to come from the people that make up the institution. Strategic plans are the articulation of the college's collective aspirations and priorities. A good strategic plan grounds these in a solid understanding of the college's environmental context. This environmental scan provides that context. It includes information on key postsecondary planning topics in hopes of generating more fruitful and informed discussion with Selkirk community members whose voices will play a large role in shaping the new plan. The aim of this brief is to get those participating in future consultations thinking like strategists: considering what issues, trends, and opportunities might have important implications for Selkirk College and how the college can develop aspirations and ambitions that are closely aligned with its potential. As such, it is calibrated to help prioritize and focus discussions for strategic planning.



What we hope to communicate in this scan is a story of how Selkirk College has changed as a result of recently accelerating and intensifying pressures and dynamics in its regions. Some of these changes are sources of significant challenges, none of which are unique in their nature *per se* or unique to Selkirk College even, but which require a coherent strategy to ensure that Selkirk College continues to be a real source of pride for decades to come for those work, attend, and feel a great sense of pride for everything the college does for the West Kootenay and Boundary regions.



Section 1: Selkirk College at a Glance

Before looking at the postsecondary environment in the British Columbia and across the country, there are a few key specifics that are worth considering about the college's recent history. Collectively, the people within the institution likely are aware of these dynamics, especially those with a long institutional memory. However, individually, we typically hold only a part of the information or do not have the opportunity to pause and consider the implications of these dynamics on the institution's vitality and potential. The following provides a base portrait to inform strategic planning.



Role in the West Kootenay and Boundary Region

Preliminary external consultations revealed that Selkirk College plays an important role in the development of the local economy and the flourishing of the West Kootenay and Boundary regions.

During consultations, we heard that there is a great deal of pride surrounding the unparalleled natural beauty and vibrant quality of life possible in the regions. This vibrant quality of life is due in no small part to the college's contributions to the cultural and intellectual environment, in that it brings innovation and new perspectives to the region (through e.g., the STAC lab and the Mir Centre for Peace), as well as providing a real option for people from the region to build lives in the region instead of leaving the place of which they are so fond.

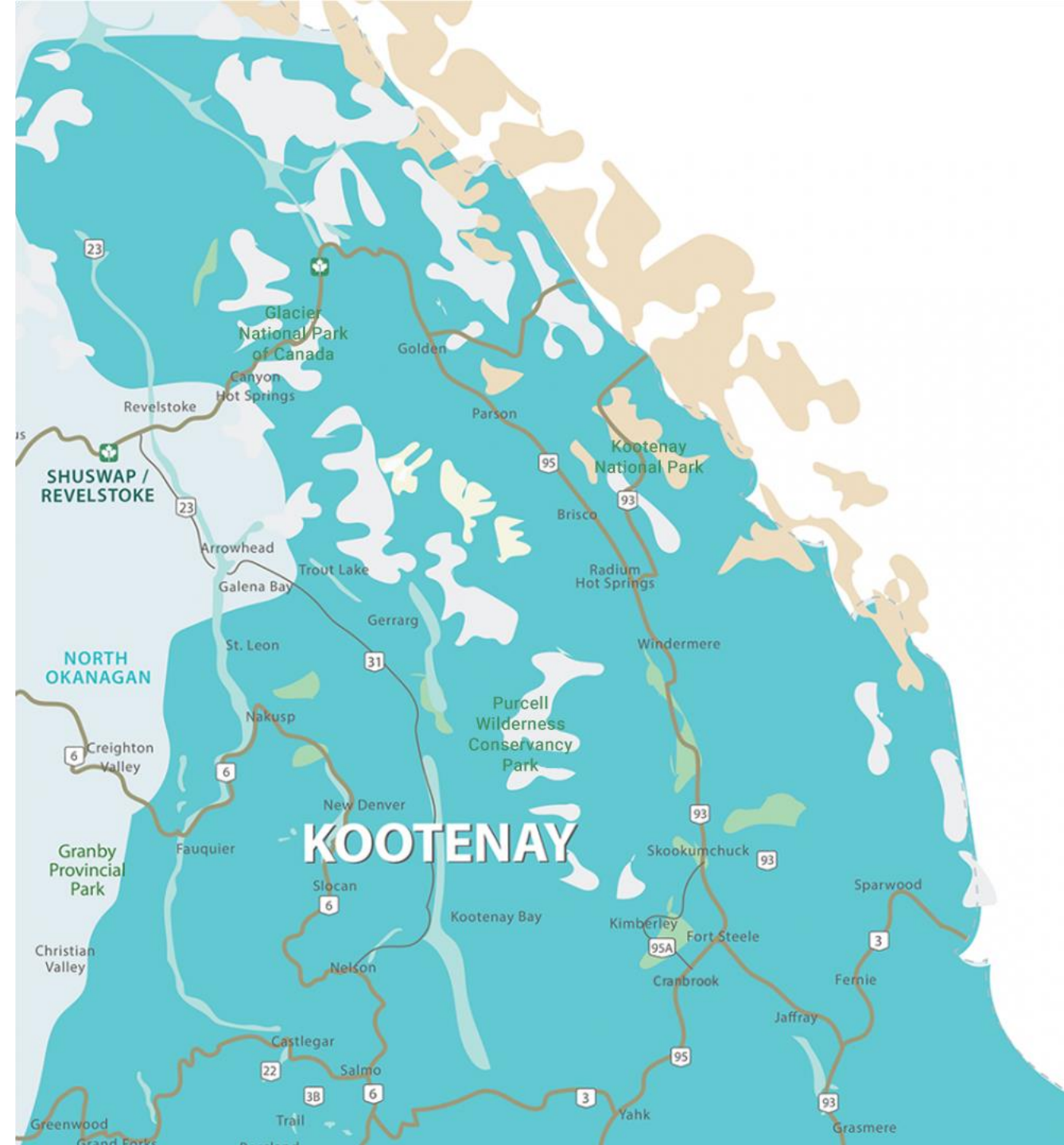
The external community linked the health and wellbeing of the region with the opportunities for education and lifelong learning that the college provides to the people of the region. Selkirk College further plays an important role in maintaining and nurturing that vibrant quality of life by training people for good jobs in high-demand fields in the region and by being an important employer for quality jobs.

The College was also seen as an important partner to businesses who wanted to hire early career or in-training professionals through funding opportunities for students to train, apprentice, and complete courses (e.g., WorkBC, StrongerBC). Employers remarked that the college has positively impacted HR policies and workplace practices: as a result of hiring educated graduates, working in co-op/WIL partnerships, and with consulting faculty overtime has improved work/life approaches. However, there is a bit of trepidation from some external interested parties that the College may not be providing enough skilled workers to sustain the region's needs: In one session, a participant cited a report indicating that the West Kootenay and Boundary regions needs 1300 graduates per year to replace the ageing workforce. However, Selkirk College, as the main provider of graduates in the region, awarded 871¹ credentials in 2021 and 869² in 2022, suggesting there is more need for talented Selkirk College graduates than the college is currently producing.

1 Selkirk College, *Student Pathways to Selkirk College (SEL) in 2020/2021 and Future Student Pathways, up to Fall 2022*
2 Calculated from Selkirk College's *Program Accountability and Sustainability Report, 2022-2023*.



Some were therefore heartened by the recent influx of international students, and particularly by enrolment in hospitality, tourism and related programs, as they provided much needed labour capacity in those sectors. Yet while international students were seen as a value-add for their contributions to the regional labour force and their support of local businesses, there is a sense that the increase in international student numbers is also adding to local pressures. For instance, while housing was largely considered affordable to the local population until very recently, the pandemic's effects on housing costs coupled with the influx of international students (who need housing) were seen as factors driving up the cost of housing and exerting downward pressure on quality of life for everyone, consequently making it harder to retain graduates in the region. However, given that Selkirk enrolled 772 FTE international students in 2018-2019 compared to 597³ in 2022-2023, this seems to be a perception less informed by data than subjective influence of a pan-Canadian narrative.



Demographics and Demand

If Selkirk College is to continue being a lead agent of social, cultural, and economic development in the region, its strategy will need to carefully consider the regional demographic context. Colleges across the country, and particularly in BC, have struggled with growing or even maintaining their enrolment levels as participation rates declined (Figure 1.1). British Columbia used to be a province where college students outnumbered university students. This was until the late aughts when several institutions switched from being colleges to universities. Selkirk College’s enrolment history reflects some of the broader provincial trend— somewhat more acutely, even. The College enrolled 2,197 students (headcount) in the 2022-23 academic year compared to 2,670 in 2019. This represents a decline in overall enrolment of 23.4%—a decline most acutely seen in the 19-21 age range (Figure 1.2).

Demand for postsecondary education is largely (but not exclusively) a function of two things: youth demographic changes and participation rates. Selkirk College predominantly attracts students in their 20s and increasingly in their 30s. It is worth considering the youth population in their teens and 20s today to anticipate what type of population-growth based demand Selkirk might recruit from in the coming years.

Figure 1.1: College Participation Rates (%) in British Columbia vs Canada, 1995-2022¹

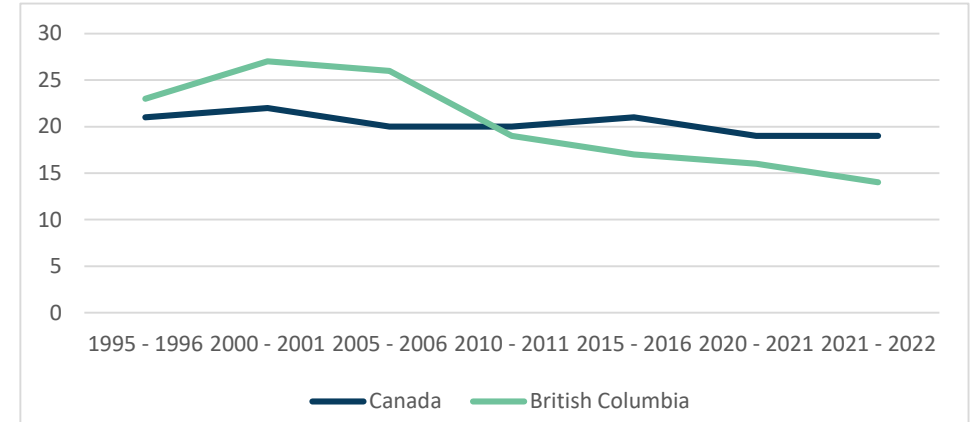
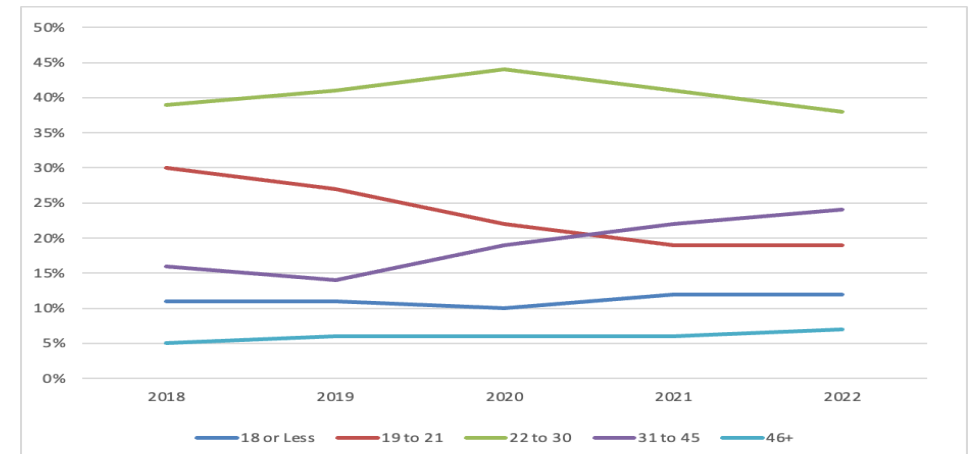


Figure 1.2: Selkirk College Student Enrollment, by Age, 2018 to 2022²



¹ Usher and Balfour (2023), *The State of Postsecondary Education in Canada*.

² Selkirk College Quick Facts Reporting, 2022



Selkirk's home region, the Columbia Basin-Boundary Region and the Kootenay Development Region, includes 3.6% of BC's total population (of over 5 million). Selkirk College has its own distinctive demographic trends impacting potentials for student demand and college participation rates. While the region has grown since 2016, its growth has been slower than the rest of BC's. Rural population growth is also stagnant (0.5% projected growth compared to 8.7% in urban centres).⁴ Furthermore, the youth population in the region is projected to continue to decline (Figure 1.3). However, the Canadian youth population, and particularly, the youth population of BC, is projected to grow significantly (Figure 1.4). By 2035, there is projected to be over 30% more 18-21 year-olds in BC than there were in 2021. Growth is projected even more precipitous in neighbouring Alberta⁵.

Figure 1.3: Projected Youth Population to 2041 for all Columbia Basin - Boundary

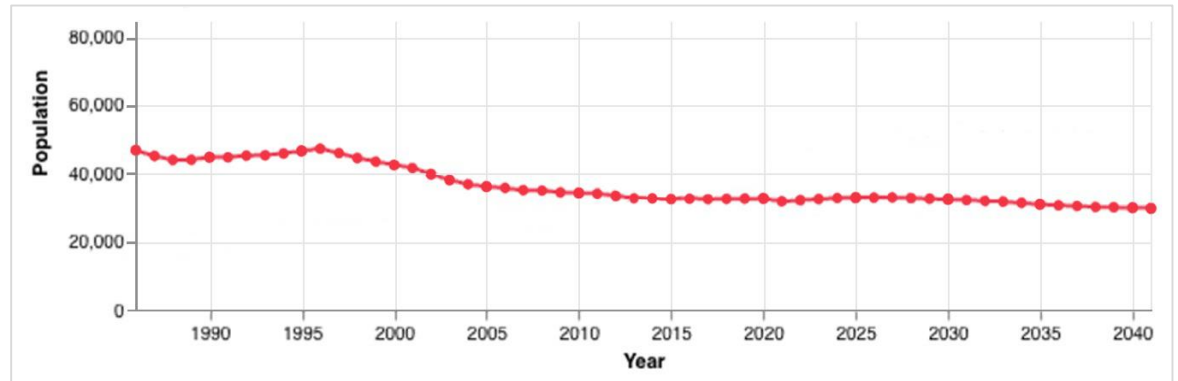
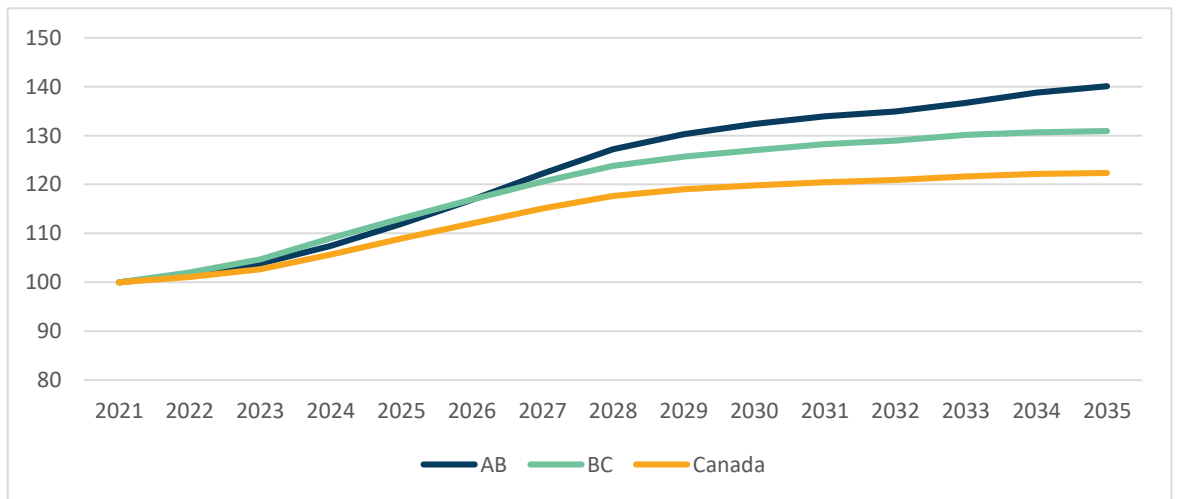


Figure 1.4: Indexed Projected Population Estimates of 18-21 Year Olds, Ontario, Alberta and Canada, 2021-2035



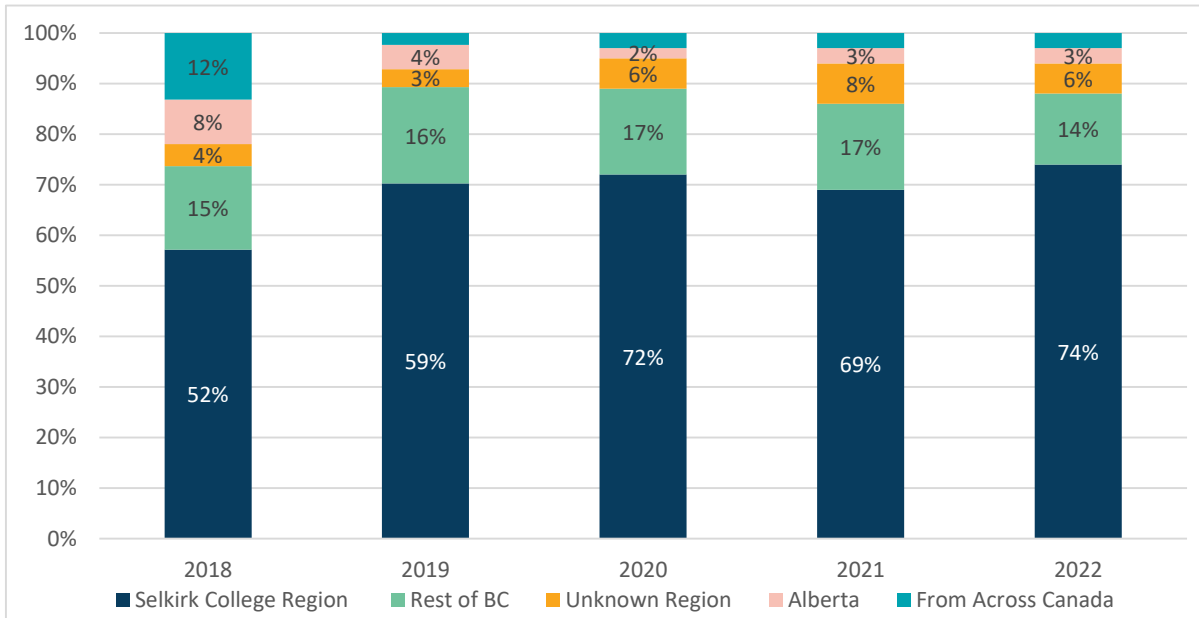
⁴ https://stateofthebasin.ca/statics/reports/SotB_SnapshotReport_2022.pdf

⁵ Statistics Canada, Projected population Projections, by Age, Table: 17-10-0057-01 (formerly CANSIM 052-0005)



A recent report by Selkirk College institutional research⁶ describes an increase in the proportion of students originating from the local Selkirk Region, increasing from 52% in 2018 to 74% in 2022 (Figure 1.5). Given that, as explained above, the population pool from which Selkirk College can recruit students is by some important metrics declining, increasing reliance on students from the immediate region suggests that future institutional enrolment sustainability is likely linked to recruitment from other regions where population growth and scarce availability of seats at their local institutions are an opportunity for Selkirk College.

Figure 1.5: Where do Selkirk College Domestic Students Come from?⁵



5 College Quick Facts Report (2022)



Student Experience

Contrasting post-secondary student experiences nation-wide, along with specific feedback from Selkirk College students offer important insights into how the college is doing in terms of attracting, retaining and supporting students' experiences. The student experience can be a strong determinant of recruitment success.

How a student experience is designed is in large part a function of college objectives and the value it places on different aspects of undergraduate, apprenticeship and experiential learning. However, Selkirk College students identified the reputation of the college (which is down 1% from 2022 and 5% from 2021), along with financial aid offerings as lesser motivating factors for choosing to attend the college. The student experience is not currently believed to be a strong enough factor to ultimately make students *choose* Selkirk college. The most common reason domestic students chose to attend Selkirk was because Selkirk is close to home (46%), whereas international students cite the affordable tuition (47 %) ¹³.

This further supports the notion that Selkirk College does not attract students because of its distinctive value proposition, but rather as a matter of local access. This is a valuable contribution, but one that might be less convincing as the population from which the college draws in the immediate region grows smaller.

46%

of domestic students cited

proximity to home

as the reason they chose

Selkirk College

47%

of International students cited

low tuition

as the reason they chose

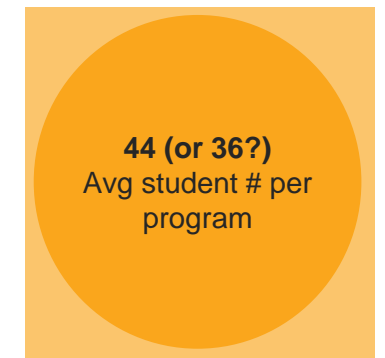
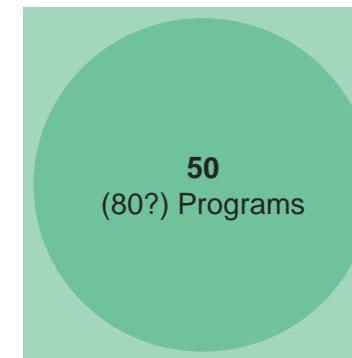
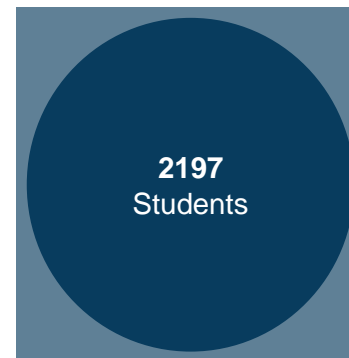
Selkirk College



Grand Forks Campus

Academic Offerings

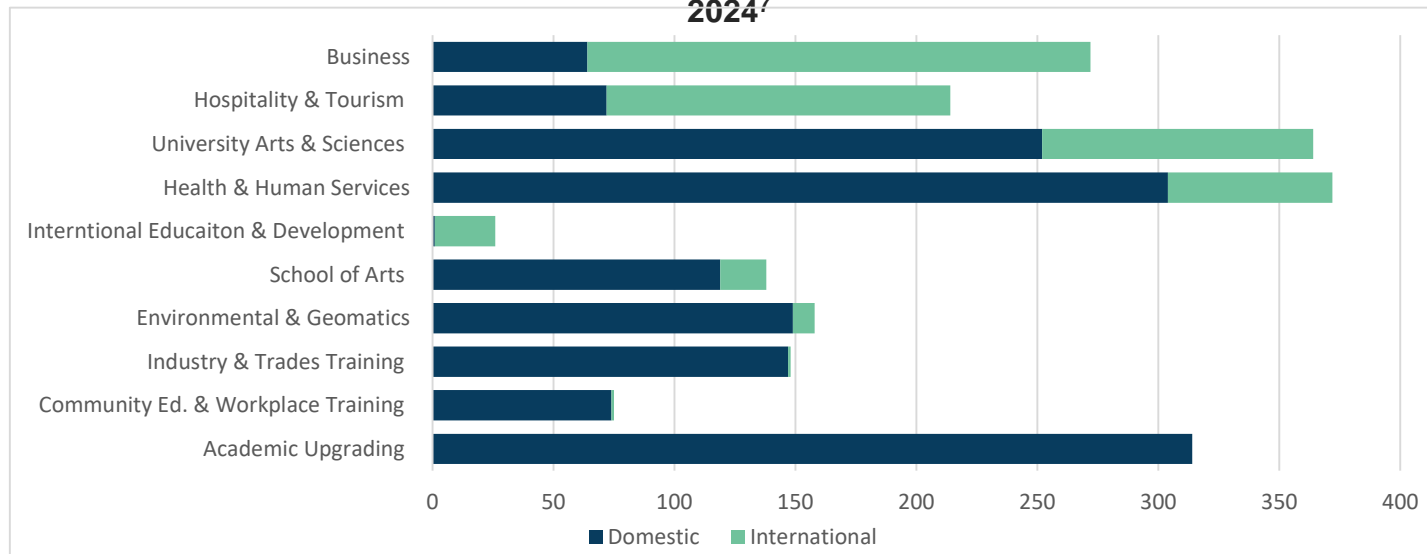
The offerings at Selkirk College are a big part of why students choose Selkirk College and so equally important in considering how the college can be attuned to regional need. A nearly equal proportion of students cite program mix (49%), affordability (47%), and geographic proximity (46%) as the reason for which they choose Selkirk⁶. With respect to program mix, Selkirk College has a tremendously vast suite of programs for a college of its size. Students are distributed across anywhere between 50 and 80 programs, meaning that the average enrolment per program is only about 22 to 37 FTEs in each program.



Of course, students are not distributed equally across programs due to several reasons, ranging for seat capacity to student preferences. On the latter, for example, there distinct program enrollment patterns between domestic and international students. While most international students were overwhelmingly enrolled in the business and hospitality/tourism programs, domestic students were predominantly enrolled in academic upgrading programming, followed by health and human services, university arts and sciences programming, as well as smaller but significant numbers in environmental and geomatics, industry / workplace training.

Smaller numbers of domestic students are also enrolled in hospitality and tourism programming and business programs. International students often are required to enrol in programs that are at a minimum of 2 years in length to qualify for a post- graduate work permit, which is a likely explanation for why there are negligible numbers of international students in Industry & Trades Training programs, as despite these being fields for which there are many well-paying jobs and are in high-demand in the region the training is typically much shorter than two years.

Figure 1.6 Domestic & International Students, by Headcount, by Program of Study, Winter 2024⁷



Operational Costs

Although funding for British Columbia postsecondary institutions has increased relatively steadily over the past two decades, BC colleges remain one of the lowest for provincial transfers when compared to other institutions across Canada⁷. BC continues to see the disparity between post-secondary operating grants as increases in operating expenses outpaces grants across the province. Selkirk College’s operating grants have increased by 13.3% over the past 10 fiscal years, while operating expenses have increased by 35.1%. Naturally, the college has therefore been incentivized in the last decade to diversify its revenue sources to attend for that gap, most visibly by increasing international enrolment, which has thus far only help slow the widening of the gap. Ensuring the long-term financial sustainability of Selkirk College requires a concerted effort to focus efforts to close the gap between operating grants and expenses.

⁷ Usher, A. and J. Balfour (2023). *The State of Post-Secondary Education in Canada*. Higher Education Strategy Associates

Figure 1.7: Selkirk College, Operating Grants v Operating Expenses, in Millions, 2014-2023

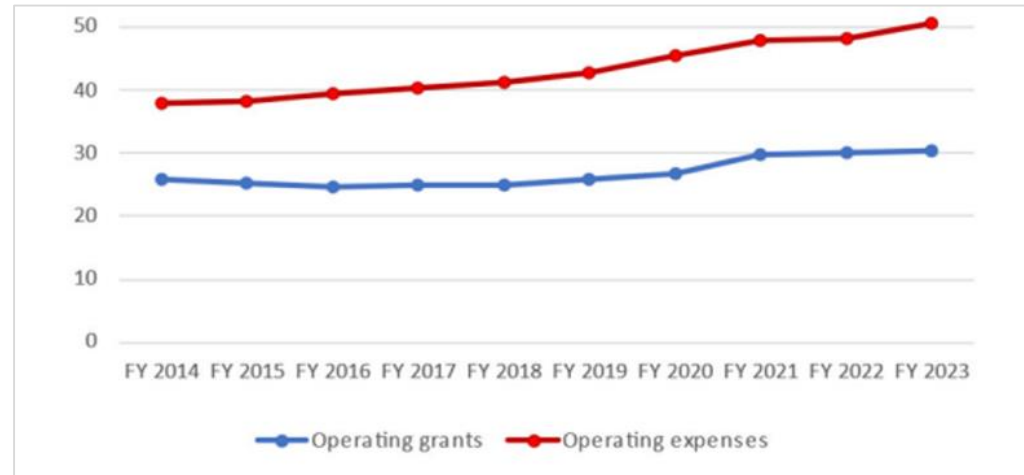
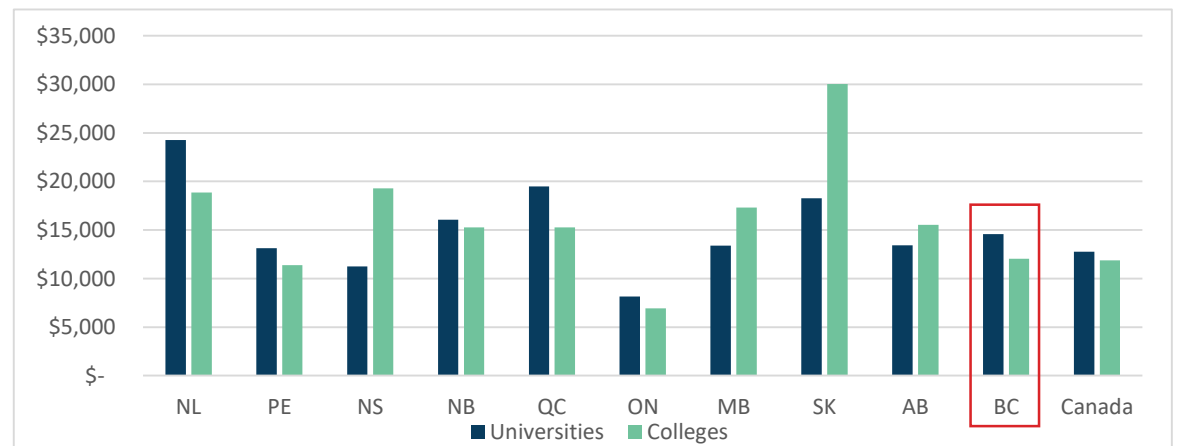


Figure 1.8: Provincial Expenditures per FTE Student, 2022/23



International Students

International students are key to a vibrant campus culture, enriching the intercultural experience and adding much appreciated diversity to the region. As mentioned previously, they also represent an important source of revenue for an institution. Institutions have benefited tremendously from revenues gained through increased international student enrolment, delaying the harmful impacts and difficult decisions resulting from public funding levels that have failed to keep pace with increasing operating expenses. International student enrolment at Selkirk college represents 37% of total enrolments, which is above the average across BC (the average in 2021 was 28% across all BC colleges)⁸. Their contributions have been instrumental to making up for some of the shortfall between operating grants and operating expenses. However, there are no guarantees that Selkirk will be able to recruit as many international students as previously to its campuses in the future, particularly given recent international political tensions, and Minister Miller’s IRCC announcement in January 2024 to place cap on international student visa applications.

8 Usher, A. and J. Balfour (2023). *The State of Post-Secondary Education in Canada*. Higher Education Strategy Associates
 9 Selkirk College Headcount Internal Reporting
 10 Usher, A. and J. Balfour (2023). *The State of Post-Secondary Education in Canada*. Higher Education Strategy Associates

Figure 1.9 Domestic & International Students, by Headcount, 2017/18-2022/23⁸

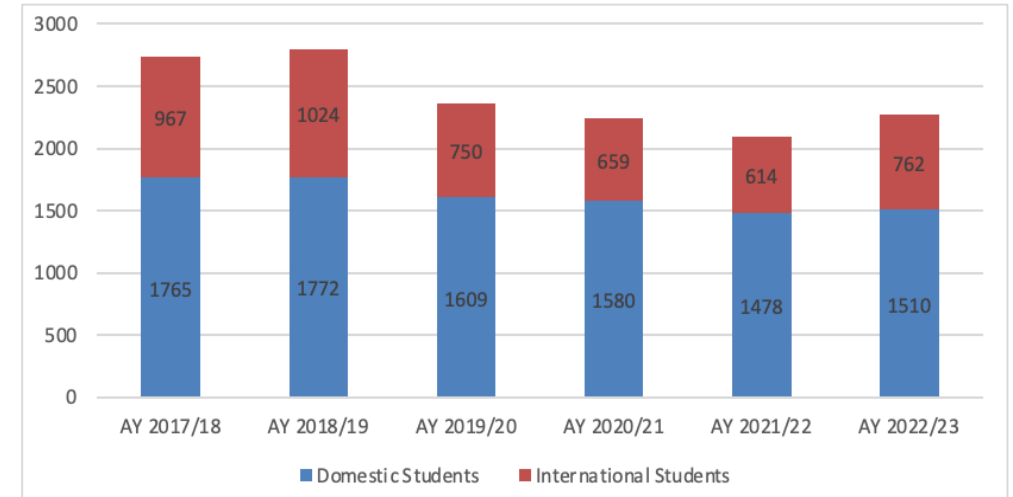
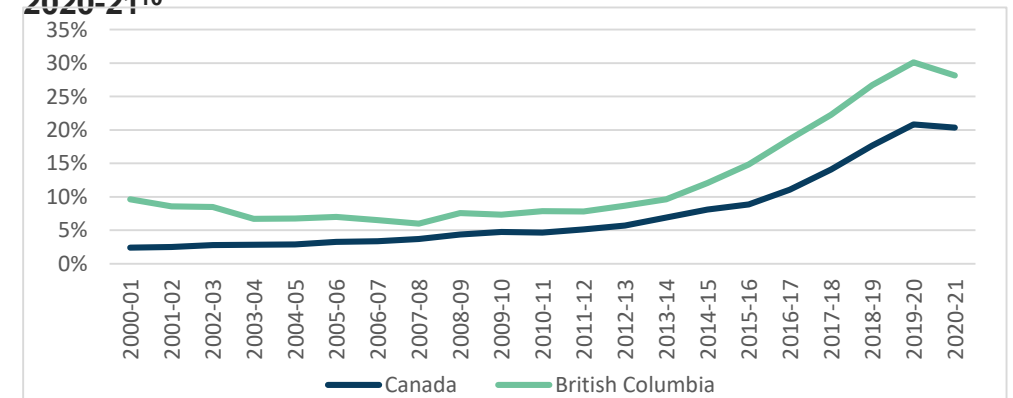


Figure 1.10: International Students as a Percentage of Total College Enrolments, Canada vs. British Columbia, 2000-01 to 2020-21¹⁰



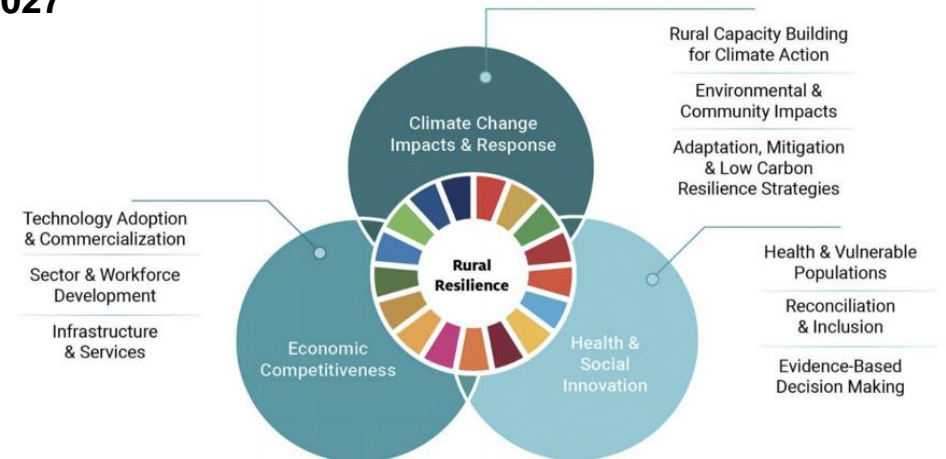
Research

High performance in research is widely understood to be the recognized way to measure post-secondary reputation and national standing. Selkirk College has a history of funding and strategic investments in innovation that support areas of commercialization efforts and a demonstrated commitment to applied and social innovation invested in fostering rural resilience. As a result of the cumulative investments made by Selkirk College since the early 2000s, the college performs better than might be expected at first glance in areas of applied research and innovation compared to other, larger colleges in BC. Selkirk College is ranked 30th on the *Canada's Top 50 Research Colleges* list in 2023¹¹ (up from #49 just 5 years ago, largely due to NSERC funding in advanced manufacturing), and is one of only three BC institutions to make the list that year. The college has steadily moved-up in the rankings since 2019.

Success in research has the potential to pay dividends in multiple ways for the institution, including the ability to attract more high-performing researchers, reputational gains from research success extend across Selkirk College as quality in one area communicates proficiency across the institution, and opportunities for symbiotic partnerships with more industries as Selkirk College's expertise becomes increasingly coveted.

¹¹ For more information on the Canada's Top 50 Research Colleges, see link: <https://researchinfosource.com/top-50-research-colleges/2023/list>

Figure 1.11: Selkirk Innovates Strategic Plan, 2023-2027



Section 2:

Close Competitors at a Glance

Whereas the previous section outlined some key changes in enrolment patterns and regional demographics with respect to Selkirk College, this section outlines some key facts and activities related to neighbouring colleges, including College of New Caledonia, College of the Rockies, and Okanagan College. These colleges all face similar challenges and often compete for the same or very similar pools of students to choose their institution. Finding a niche to distinguish between colleges is a sound approach to garner more local interest.

The State of the Columbia Basin-Boundary region¹² reporting offers some important insights into regional changes in college domestic and international student

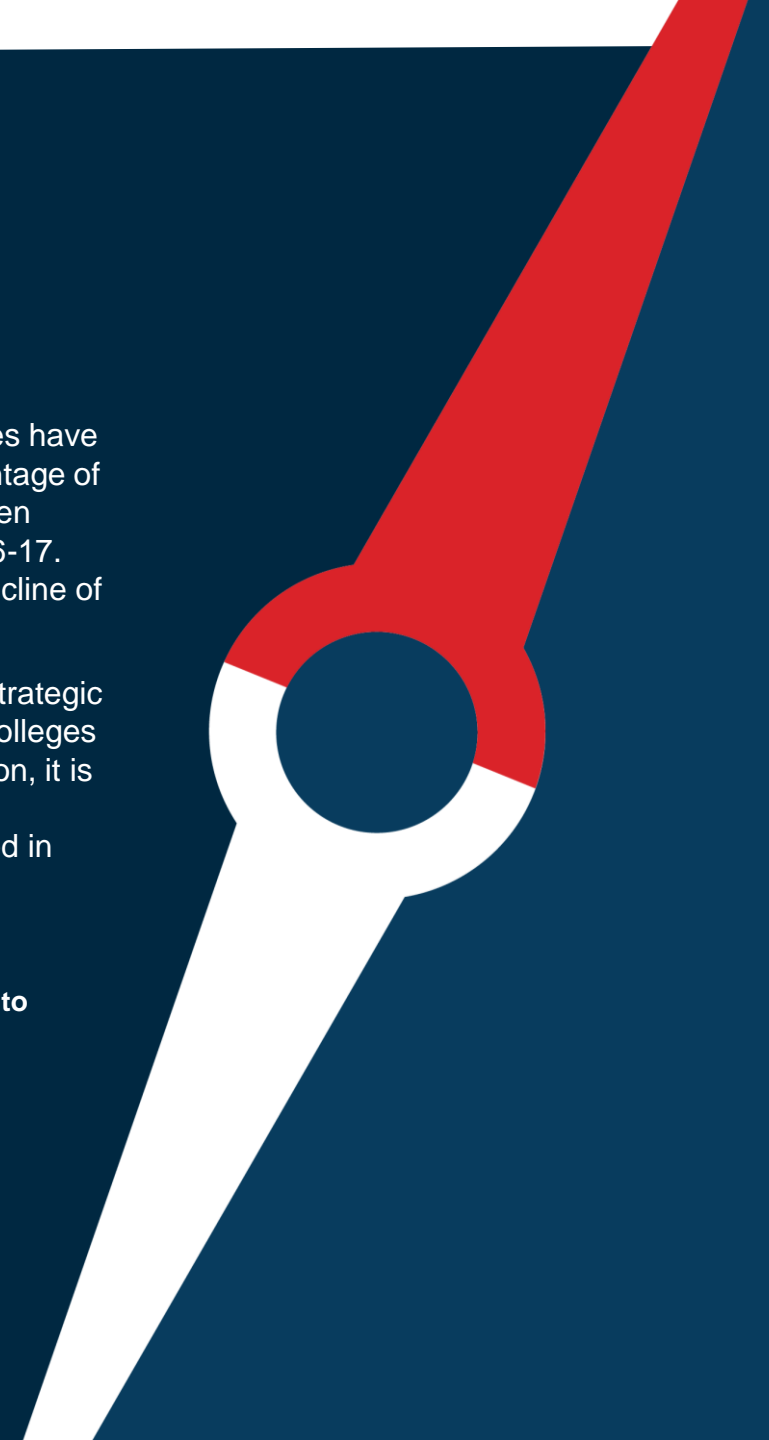
enrolments (headcounts). Not all regional colleges have shared the same five-year changes in the percentage of international student enrollments, but all have seen declines in their domestic headcounts since 2016-17. Selkirk College has seen the most precipitous decline of all four institutions.

If Selkirk College is to set a bold and ambitious strategic direction that will help differentiate it from other colleges in the region and increase its profile and reputation, it is worth considering what types of activities and investments these institutions have been engaged in recently.

Table 2.1: Headcount for Colleges with Campuses in the Columbia Basin-Boundary Region, Five-Year Change, 2016 to 2021

Institution	Domestic Headcount	International Headcount
All BC Post-Secondary Sector	-8.2%	37.6%
College of New Caledonia	-25.1%	23.5%
College of the Rockies	-10.0%	-32.5%
Okanagan College	-19.2%	2.4%
Selkirk College	-28.7%	2.6%

¹² BC Ministry of Post-Secondary Education and Future Skills. (2023, August 22). *Domestic and international student headcount by economic development region and institution*. Link: <https://stateofthebasin.ca/society/education/college-enrolment>



College of the Rockies (est. 1975)

Location of main campus: Cranbrook

Other Campus locations: Cranbrook – Gold Creek, Creston, Fernie, Golden, Invermere, Kimberley

Catchment Area: East Kootenay (population: ~83,000)

Total Headcount: 9,875 (2022-23)

FTE Students: 2,341 (2022-23)

Total Programs: 60. (Credentials offered: 830+)

Full-time Employees: 313

Tuition: \$3,580 to \$14,106 (2023)

International Tuition: \$15,555 to \$25,479 (2023)

Scholarships: Over \$50,000 to domestic students starting full-time programs, directly from high school. Up to five, \$2,000 scholarships for international applicants.

Research Funding Highlights: In 2022/23, \$102,000 in grants for applied research including a Living Lab to reduce the College's carbon footprint, a student-led business opportunity case, and a Youth Entrepreneurship project in partnership with Selkirk College and the Kootenay Association for Science and Technology.



Description

COTR positions itself as preparing graduates for the job market and for the next stage in their academic journey. In its marketing materials, COTR highlights advantages such as:

- A wide variety of programs with low tuition fees
- Small classes with extra support from instructors and staff
- Credits transferable to many universities across Canada and internationally
- Campuses located in small, safe and friendly communities
- Lots of fun events throughout the year
- The Kootenay Rockies, which provide the opportunity to blend lifestyle and learning in one of the most spectacular places on Earth

Students who begin their studies at College of the Rockies are completing university with some of the highest grade-point averages in the province. Students who transfer from College of the Rockies to a university are scoring among some of the highest graduation rates of post-secondary institutions throughout BC (BCCAT, 2020).

Interpretation of Strategic Ambitions

CoTR's strategic plan is framed around "Ready, Set, Go" pillars. These correspond to the following priorities:

- ▶ **READY: preparing for continuous change**
 - Smart Planning: Responsive to needs, data-driven, sustainable
 - Truth And Reconciliation: With Indigenous partners
 - Home Advantage and World Stage: Leverage our unique Rocky Mountain brand
- ▶ **SET: anticipating and addressing the needs of our students;**
 - 21st Century Learning: Ready to work; ready for change
 - All Points Access: Learning options for every career stage
 - Health And Wellbeing: Become a health promoting College
- ▶ **GO: serving as an education leader in our region.**
 - Education Leadership in Our Region: Information hub & wayfinding partner
 - Open For Business: Market-focused learning opportunities
 - Respect Champion: Equity, diversity and inclusion for all

The College has initiated a Strategic Enrolment Management planning process to ensure alignment of education and skills training with labour market needs and the economic plans of BC. High demand careers for health, social, technology, and trades are all priorities and opportunities for expansion and/or new programming.

Recent Investments:

- ▶ The College plans to expand its Cranbrook campus, adding modern labs and facilities to support the growing nursing and healthcare programs.
- ▶ A secondary access road, funded by the Province, will allow the College to host larger community events at the Cranbrook campus (event size was limited due to possible traffic congestion on the current single-access road.)

Recent Partnerships:

- ▶ COTR has completed an expansion at its Invermere campus, which shares space with a secondary school. COTR took over the school's art room and modernized it to meet the College's needs for skills training programs. In return, COTR constructed a new art room for the high school. The project received \$2.8M from the Government of British Columbia.
- ▶ In the Spring of 2023, the College secured over \$200,000 in CEWIL grants to support students in healthcare programs in accessing practicums and work-integrated learning experiences. The College is also expanding its WIL experiences using Riipen, a subscription service funded through the RBC ReachUP Program. Projects will turn theoretical assignments into ones that support small and medium-sized businesses. This will create 400 WIL experiences.



Okanagan College (est. 1963)



Location of main campus: Kelowna

Other Campus locations: Salmon Arm, Penticton, Vernon

Catchment Area: From Osoyoos and Princeton in the south and west to Mica Creek and Revelstoke in the north. (Population: ~400,000)

Total Headcount: 17,685 (2022-23)

FTE Students: 8,192 (2022-23)

Total programs: 136

Full-time Employees: 1,298

Tuition and Fees: \$4,600-\$14,000 (2024)

International Tuition: \$16,000-\$32,000 (2024)

Scholarships: \$1,000,000+ to over 850 students/year

Research Funding Obtained: Data not available

Description

OC is the largest college in the BC interior. It describes its advantages as cultural diversity, small class sizes, industry-experienced professors, hands-on learning, co-op and practicum opportunities and affordable tuition. OC's recruitment materials also tout the region's lifestyle amenities, including wineries, world-class ski resorts, and golf courses. For international students, OC positions itself as providing "pathways to top-tier universities in Canada".

In addition to the standard suite of college programs, OC highlights engineering technologies, food, wine, and tourism. Its 28 program advisory committees and more than 1,300 co-op employers help OC to keep programs current with skills needs and provide students with WIL opportunities.

The College has been recognized as one of B.C.'s top employers (2024).

Interpretation of Strategic Ambitions

Okanagan College highlights its commitment to empowering individuals and communities in the region to make positive change through exceptional learning experiences, applied research, and innovation. "Students and their communities are at the centre of everything that we do."

Key values articulated in OC's strategic plan: Reconciliation; Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Social Justice; Sustainability; and Effectiveness and Efficiency.

OC's strategic priorities are:

- ▶ Transforming lives through inclusive and equitable access and through individualized life-long learning partnerships.
- ▶ Improving student success and engagement by individualizing the life-long learning journey, placing the student at the center, and demonstrating compassion for the holistic well-being of students.
- ▶ Transforming regional communities through integration and focus, amplifying the College's impact by integrating and focusing teaching and research efforts on areas that will ease challenges, strengthen opportunities, and enable current and emergent economic and social sectors in the region.

Recent Investments

On-campus housing: Additional student housing is scheduled to open at the Kelowna, Vernon and Salmon Arm campuses in fall 2024. This will raise OC's on-campus housing capacity from 144 beds to 520. overall funding of \$67.5M (\$30M Loan, \$36.5M Grant, \$1M OC funded).

Childcare centre at OC's Vernon Campus (anticipated opening Fall 2024)

Centre for Food, Wine and Tourism: Funded with \$44.8 million from the Province, the Centre will include modern teaching spaces, food labs, beverage research and development facilities, and common spaces. It will allow OC to expand culinary enrolment by over 125 students / year, and hospitality and tourism enrolment by 450 students / year.

Recreation and Wellness Centre: OC has launched a \$14 million campaign and has received \$5 million from the Folk family and \$1 million from Cliff and Lois Serwa.

Okanagan College's Civil Engineering Technology Program received a \$75,000 gift aimed at modernizing the program.

Recent Partnerships

Nearly 30 short-term skills training courses will be supported through the Province's StrongerBC: Future Ready Action Plan, which provides \$3,500 per person grants to students.

OC has partnerships with 37 schools in 18 countries across the world, including Asia, Europe, the Americas and Australia.

College of New Caledonia (Est. 1969)

Location of main campus: Prince George

Other Campus locations: Quesnel, Vanderhoof, Mackenzie, Fort St. James, Burns Lake

Catchment Area: Regional districts of Fraser-Fort George, Cariboo, and Bulkley-Nechako,

(~117,500 square kilometres, about 12% of the province). The area holds three school districts: Quesnel, Prince George, and Nechako Lakes. :

Total Headcount: 6,837 (2022-23)

FTE Students: 3,307 (2022-23)

Total Programs: Over 80

Full-time Employees: More than 600 employees (FTE N/A)

Tuition: \$4,985 - \$13,372 (2023-24)

International Tuition: \$11,650 - \$23,650 (2023-24)

Scholarships: Over \$23,000 in entrance awards (\$750-\$2000) for students entering in Fall 2024. Over 300 individual scholarships, bursaries, and awards from \$100 to \$2000.

Research \$ obtained: Data not available



Description

In describing its value proposition, CNC highlights job-readiness and student support. Its recruitment materials centre on four themes:

- ▶ **Workforce Driven:** Over 90 programs, relevant to current and future labour markets
- ▶ **Quality Education:** Delivered by experienced faculty and upheld by a deep commitment to student support
- ▶ **Community & Belonging:** Small class sizes, allowing for one-on-one attention from instructors and fostering a caring student support network
- ▶ **Employer Approved:** Our qualified and connected graduates are consistently sought after by employers: students graduate career ready.

Interpretation of Strategic Ambitions

CNC is midway through its 2021-2026 strategic plan, *lhulh whuts`odutel`eh - Learning Together*. The plan focuses on four main pillars: learning across a lifetime, student success-focused education and training, organizational strength and agility, and community engagement and partnerships.

The 2022-2027 Academic Plan itself articulates four pillars:

- ▶ **Access and Flexibility:** We provide flexible programming options that meet students where they are and get them where they want to go.
- ▶ **Quality:** We provide quality experiential learning in a community college context.
- ▶ **Relevance:** We provide programming that responds to regional workforce and community needs. Graduates are knowledgeable, practice-ready, technologically literate, environmentally aware, culturally competent, resilient, and future-flexible.
- ▶ **Academic Culture:** We provide an innovative, collaborative, and supportive educational environment.

Strategic Enrolment Management (SEM) is an institutional priority for CNC. The college's SEM structure includes committees on Recruitment and Marketing, Student Success and Retention, Academic, and Data. CNC is presently developing a strategy to integrate its international and domestic recruitment plans.

In 2023-24, the college will develop a plan to formalize EDI work with a goal of ensuring adequate resourcing and support and building EDI into college structures and processes.

Recent Investments

- ▶ CNC's library received a makeover in 2022, removing nearly half of library shelving to make way for modular furniture to support collaborative learning.
- ▶ A modernization of CNC's wired and wireless networks is being implemented at all six campuses.
- ▶ Planned upgrades to the exterior of the Prince George main campus will make it more energy efficient and extend its life.

Recent Partnerships

- ▶ CNC, UNBC, and School District 57 have launched Technology Exploration Dual Credit (TekX), a program that gives Grade 11 students a new way to explore career paths in technology while they earn postsecondary credits. TekX will provide students with 300 hours of hands-on learning in areas of study such as computer hardware, cybersecurity, 3D printing, and drones.
- ▶ In the remote community of Kwadacha, CNC has partnered with Kwadacha Education Society and Aatse Davie School to support new high school graduates with their transition to college. This program provides in-community training for one year for new graduates, allowing them to adjust to college-level course work while remaining connected to the supports in their community.
- ▶ Improved satellite internet access made it possible for students to attend synchronous online courses taught by instructors located in Kwadacha, Mackenzie, and Prince George.
- ▶ Emergency student financial aid has received funding from a bequest. A region-wide effort to assist students in early childhood care and learning was supported via Canfor's "Good Things Come From Trees" initiative. The Dillon Adey Memorial Golf Tournament provided funding for a wide range of equipment and student awards.
- ▶ CNC's Applied Research & Innovation team has partnered with CNC's Research Forest to establish a forestry research partnership. Industry partners, including the Research Forest Society, CNC's Natural Resources and Forest Technology (*NRFT*) program, and Indigenous communities represent crucial relationships for continued mutual growth, and provide lifelong opportunities for students. Research outcomes themselves will also serve to inform CNC's current and future programming.



Coast Mountain College (est. 1975)

Location of main campus: Terrace

Other Campus locations: Prince Rupert, Smithers, Hazelton and Haida Gwaii

Catchment Area: North-western BC, encompassing the North Coast and Nechako economic regions and 34 communities, of which 21 are First Nations communities.

Total Headcount: 2,785 (2022-23)

FTE Students: 1,302 (2018-19)

Total Programs: 113

Full-time Employees: 221 FTE (2019-20)

Tuition: \$3,700-\$9,400 (2023-24)

International Tuition: \$14,000 - \$24,500 (2023-24)

Scholarships: \$186,552 plus Emergency Bursaries (\$85,520),

Adult Upgrading Grant (\$40,601), Technology Fund Bursary (\$24,000)

Research Funding: Data not Available



Interpretation of Strategic Ambitions

Description

The College markets itself as providing students with innovative programs that lead to sustainable careers for people in the north. CMTN “aims to be the college of choice for experiential, place-based learning allowing students to learn both in the classroom and in the spectacular outdoor spaces that are so unique to this part of Canada.”

CMTN offers college access programs; small class sizes; health and human services programs; online programs; university credit programs, trades foundation and apprenticeship programs. Coast Mountain College also offers innovative and flexible mobile training, reaching communities beyond its campuses.

The latest CMTN strategic plan is from 2017. A refresh of this plan is underway in 2024. It is guided by a “BHAG (Big Hairy Audacious Goal): By 2027, we will be the college of choice for experiential, place-based learning.” The 2017 strategic plan expresses its priorities in terms of three core “values”: **adventure, transformation, and integrity**. “Our purpose is to create adventurous pathways to transform lives. This purpose is framed by our core values of adventure, by exploring and taking risks to engage in learning; transformation, by enriching lives through learning; and integrity, by being respectful, transparent, accountable, and inclusive in our work with students, each other, and the communities we serve.”

CMTN continues to **diversify recruitment of international students with a new focus on the Philippines**. The 2022/23 year saw students from the Philippines comprise 16.1% of the College’s international student population – up from 11.3% in 2021. Conversely, CMTN is reducing its dependence on international students from India from a high of 94.6% (2018) of its international student population to 76.1% (2022). The College welcomed students from 18 different countries in 2022.

CMTN sees itself as well positioned to serve industry needs within the region through the mix of programs offered. However, the region’s demand for **skilled information technology workers is an area for future program development**. New proposed programs include the Mountain Adventure Certificate, and programs aimed at supporting the needs of the natural resource sector by responding to the demands of the professional, scientific, and technical service industries.

The Strategic Enrolment Plan (2021–2023) set ambitious goals **to increase enrolment of new students; diversify the number of programs offered in remote communities; raise awareness of Indigenous ways of knowing, learning, and living through curricula and services; increase opportunities for all students to participate in EPBL and WIL**; and, increase access to and use of curricular and co-curricular student support services in a distributed learning environment.

Recent Investments

- ▶ The library's \$4-million renovation was completed in 2023 and includes new space and an Indigenous reading circle.
- ▶ In 2021, a new student housing complex (Wii Gyemisga Siwilaawksat) opened at the Terrace campus, adding 108 residence beds. The College states that this has been instrumental in supporting the health, wellness, and academic success of students who move to Terrace for their education. The college hopes to have additional student housing available at other campuses in the future.

Recent Partnerships

- ▶ CMTN continues to collaborate with the Northern Health Authority, the University of Northern BC (UNBC), and the College of New Caledonia (CNC) to strategize about how to enhance access to the Northern Collaborative Baccalaureate Nursing Program (NCBNP).
- ▶ CMTN and the Northern Health Authority offered six sections of the Health Care Assistant Program in centres across the College's region. The College and Northern Health have established a Northwest Simulation Partnership for CMTN Health programs.
- ▶ CMTN has reached out to other institutions for course material and information-sharing for programs it is seeking to develop. These include the rural and remote pre-medical program (with Selkirk).
- ▶ CMTN is collaborating with Camosun for courseware development for its new mental health and addictions certificate program.
- ▶ The College collaborated with UNBC and Clean Energy BC in organizing a Northern BC Clean Energy Forum in April. The College is also working on a research project with UNBC to understand clean energy education needs and gaps in Northern BC.
- ▶ Students in the Hairstylist Foundation program will now receive a certificate as Sustainable Beauty Professional when they complete the program. CMTN's Salon has been designated as a Green Circle Salon.
- ▶ Coast Mountain College and Marinduque State College (MSC) of Philippines have signed a Memorandum of Understanding to facilitate collaboration between the two colleges in areas such as student and faculty exchanges; cross-cultural activities; joint research initiatives; and knowledge, technology, and information exchange. The partnership will also include visiting lecturers and support for research.

Conclusion

As population trends do not favour colleges outside large urban areas in Canada, these colleges are encouraged to act as regional development assets, to entice populations from elsewhere to choose them, and to curry favour with potential supporters (governments, philanthropists, alumni). As a result, colleges are trying to position themselves as distinctive in an effort to secure their viability.

We can think of colleges as being one or a combination of five types (most tend to be a combination): Traditional, Integrated, Distinctive, Expansive, and Distributed. See Table 2.2 for their characteristics.

Table 2.2- Most Prominent Features of Contemporary College Positioning Models ¹³

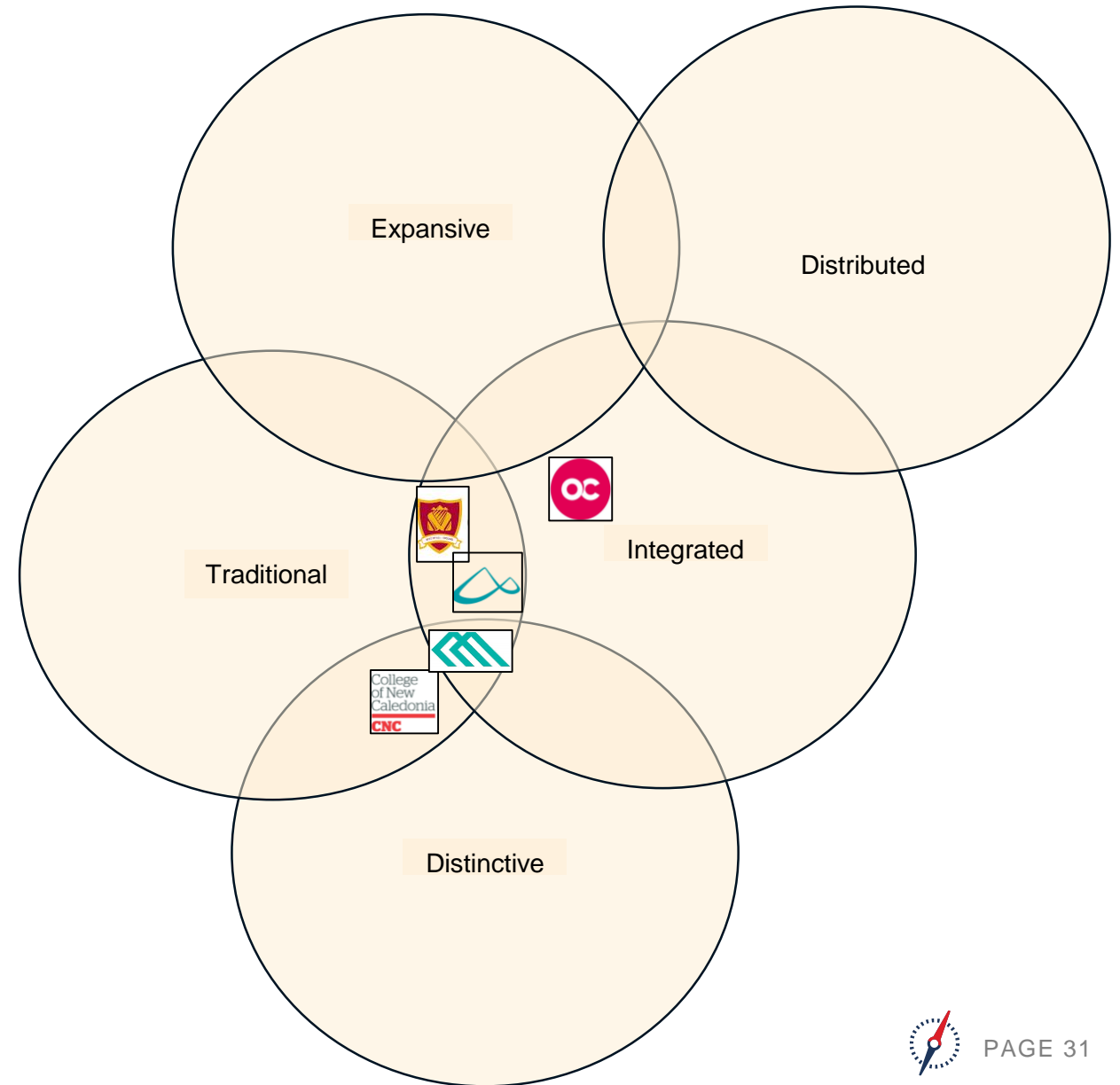
TRADITIONAL	Strengths in traditional disciplinary or professional programs found at the college level. Usually garners reputation through time in the space locally. May have a few stand out programs in the sector.
INTEGRATED	Increased breadth of programs (usually professional programs that align with existing strengths) to supplement existing offerings.
DISTINCTIVE	Common student experience across all programs is developed. The premise is not evolving what is being taught but how and is enveloped in institutional identity. Often values-driven.
EXPANSIVE	Market-driven for scale and reach (usually includes online teaching, new campuses outside of catchment area). Popular programs drive decision-making.
DISTRIBUTED	Low cost, distributed over a large geographic area, aggressively adding new programs, delivered in multiple modalities- low residency requirements.

Broadly speaking, The first three models typically find success because of their strong and reliable reputation whereas the latter two are largely market-driven (the market can, to a degree, consider local needs in the case of expansive programming, but the distributed model necessarily considers the market to be geographically broad). This allows us to map the regional college landscape.

Figure 2.3- Interior BC College Models

While considering how colleges position themselves using this model, it is helpful to remember that in the context of colleges in BC, expanded geographic presence is not necessarily a function of a desire to increase market share. Instead, geographic dispersion is a function of social mission and government mandate (e.g., to serve underserved communities) and might in fact be expensive (e.g., augmenting distance learning with local mentorship and social supports in Indigenous communities). Delivery models are typically in part decided based on assets an institution has to draw from, and what mandates it needs to satisfy.

The result is that, particularly for those who are not familiar with the college ecosystem of the interior BC (and even for some who are), it can be difficult to distinguish institutions and their value proposition as they in many ways are very close to one another in their strategic approaches. In particular, the ways in which Selkirk College is positioned makes it difficult to articulate a strong rationale for students from outside the region to consider Selkirk over its regional competitors.



Section 3: Selkirk College within the Postsecondary Sector at a Glance

There are many pan-sectoral issues and opportunities that have either direct or tangential effects on Selkirk College's future. In many instances, Selkirk College has already made strides in addressing these.



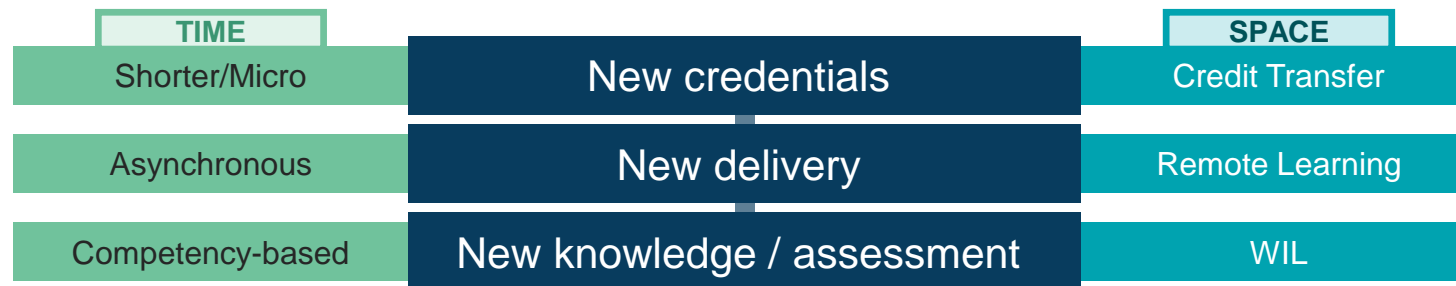
Proliferation of New Credentials

For the past few decades, many of the biggest developments in higher education have been about moving away from education being a solid-block full-time commitment at a single institution, with the classroom/laboratory as the physical locus of knowledge exchange. At the same time, work-integrated learning (WIL) and remote/online education have somewhat moved the classroom away from the centre.

Research conducted by HESA in collaboration with The Strategic Council showed that employers indicate a high level of interest in micro credential courses that provide the skills upgrading or acquisition they want, that update existing skill sets that are becoming outdated, and that are much shorter and more highly focused than existing programs. This provides an opening that many institutions are taking up in offering new, in-demand skills.

In Fall 2023, the BC government introduced the future skills grant (through StrongerBC) to much success, which provides up to \$3,500 in eligible short-term skills training at public post-secondary institutions to British Columbians. The goal is twofold: firstly, incentivize the rapid, stackable training of British Columbians so they can be equipped with skills adapted to current and future labour market needs and the new global economy; secondly, provide opportunities for the increasing number of learners who want a *credential* without the trade-off of delaying their participation in the labour market or who otherwise would be unable to commit to a solid block of education.

The success of the program in meeting the needs of underserved populations make it an attractive proposition for institutions looking to burnish their reputation as an accessible institution and serve their constituencies in new, in-demand ways.



Technological Developments

Over the past few decades, technological change has focused on computing power and programming algorithms. While machine learning and artificial intelligence will continue to drive change, opportunities for innovation are shifting more toward the fields of energy and materials science.

The introduction of renewables at scale is starting to induce significant declines in the price of energy. This trend is combining with improvements in battery technology which not only reinforce the renewables revolution, but also allow the make it practical to port renewable energy to a wider range of mobile devices such as cars, e-bikes, robots, etc. Thus, changes in the energy sector may also herald significant shifts in manufacturing.

Another area of significant innovation is health care. New areas of research such as gene synthesis, gene therapy and brain-computer interfaces may not end up having a great deal of consumer impact in the next decade but R&D investments in these areas seem likely to increase significantly in the short term.

These trends could impact Selkirk College in several ways. Technology could certainly continue to change course delivery and pedagogy. Government and private sector research priorities may change. And changes in the structure of the economy may alter student demand across fields of study. No one can predict any of this with certainty but keeping various possibilities in mind is an important part of any planning exercise.



Indigenization, Indigenous Success, and Reconciliation

In some respects, provincial governments have given the responsibility of Indigenization and reconciliation to postsecondary institutions. Selkirk has been an active participant in fostering Indigenous success and reconciliation. The college has active MOUs with regional First Nations and Metis Nation. Of note is that the college is located on unceded lands. Selkirk College's work on Indigenization and reconciliation are outlined in the colleges' *Our Journey Together: Land, Life, Learning: Indigenization Plan (2019)*, which addresses governance/policy, curricula and programming, and supports and services for students. Much of Indigenization work is geared towards creating campuses that are welcoming and accessible to prospective Indigenous students as well as foster

Indigenous student success. Reporting from the college indicates that 10.1% of current (2022/23) full-time equivalent students (FTEs) and 8.3% of the total headcount are Indigenous learners. Of the total population of the Columbia Basin-Boundary Region, 7.3% identify as Indigenous.

As the Indigenous population is poised to grow faster than the non-Indigenous population¹⁵, Selkirk College's work with respect to Indigenization and reconciliation is certain to be ongoing if it intends to continue to serve its local constituencies.

Selkirk College MOUs with First Nations & Metis Nations

2021 – MOU with Okanagan National Alliance

2016 – MOU with Ktunaxa Nation Council

2016 – MOU with Colville Confederated Tribes

2014 – MOU with Metis Nation British Columbia

Partnership with En'owkin Centre

Partnership with Nicola Valley Institute of Technology



15 <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/220921/dq220921a-eng.htm?indid=32990-2&indgeo=0>

Increase in Mature and Professional Students

While many students in Canada attend postsecondary institutions directly out of high school, they do not represent all college and university students. Some delay going on to college or university, while others may return for skills upgrading later in life or to pursue further postsecondary credentials. There are growing pathways and requirements for mid-career learners to update their skills and knowledge. International mature students now account for nearly 25% of all new study permit approvals. One study conducted by HESA and the Strategic Counsel during COVID found that mature students were actually more likely to appreciate some of the changes brought by the sudden shift to online learning, suggesting that greater use of online platforms may meet the needs of mature students, who in many cases have more complex family and work obligations than younger students, a trend worth noting as Selkirk College's student population trends older than in previous years.



Conclusion

- ▶ Changes in the postsecondary education environment pose urgent challenges to BC colleges.
- ▶ The potential future relevance and vitality of Selkirk College is intimately tied to who attends college, when, why, and even how.
- ▶ In many parts of Canada, including Selkirk College's immediate region, the student population is getting older, more diverse, and relating to college credentials differently than in previous generations. Meanwhile, the needs of the local West Kootenay and Boundary regions are similarly great. Selkirk College is at an inflection point. How it adapts to these changes given its current state, will play a big role in determining its future success.



Section 4: Examples of Institutional Innovation

The substantial pressures colleges across the continent are facing have consequently generated new ideas and creative responses to the difficulties encountered. Because some of these are still in burgeoning stages, which ones will constitute fundamental new ways to offer college education sustainably and which will prove less viable remains to be determined. This section describes several colleges and universities that, despite challenges similar to Selkirk College's, such as limited budgets, unique environmental or demographic contexts, enrollment constraints and increasingly competitive educational landscapes, have made bold strategic moves in an attempt to secure their survival. These institutional case studies are provided to insight, ignite new ideas for fostering growth and potential ways to differentiate Selkirk's offerings and identity within the post-secondary sector.





College of the Redwoods,
Humboldt and Del Norte
Counties, of northern California
coastal area - Est. 1964

Institutional Snapshot:

- Public college offering Associate Degrees for Transfer, Associate Science and Art Degrees, as well as career and technical certificates of achievement and recognition, across a range of programs including liberal arts, geomatics, business, technology, nursing, trades, redwood ecology, conservation, and sustainable forestry.
- Approximate enrolment: 3,686 undergraduate students⁹.
- The college is committed to its vision of creating and sustaining conditions that will enable all students to experience an educational journey that is intellectually, socially, and personally transformative. The college further inspires participatory citizenship grounded in critical thinking and an engaged student body.



Challenge: In more recent years, the college faced declining enrollment due to several factors, including competition from larger universities and a shrinking high school graduating class in the region. Reflecting on Board Meeting minutes, the college needed to pick-up a further 300 FTE students and adopted some new approaches to programming to increase enrollment, according to minutes from its November 2023 Board of Trustees meeting.





Responses: The institution developed new ways of reaching local populations to increase enrolment.

- Diversify Student Recruitment: In line with objectives of increasing participatory citizenship and social justice, the college opted to increase access to its programming to underserved populations, in their case particularly by increasing enrollment and retention of incarcerated populations at Pelican Bay (through a program existing since 2015).
- Expand Pathways and Partnerships: The college also expects to expand pathways to regional institutions, including California Polytechnic and Humbolt
- Increase Retention: The college plans to develop more joint program options of its existing programs to retain students at the college for longer, promoting the new options as aligning with objectives of producing job-ready graduates, for living-wage jobs.

Value Proposition: The college also opted to capitalize on their unique location and the incredible natural resource of the Redwood Forests. It does so through a few initiatives:

The Redwood Canopy Learning Initiative, which is designed to attract students passionate about environmental stewardship. This program offers immersive, hands-on learning experiences focused on redwood ecology, conservation, and sustainable forestry. Courses, such as Redwood Ecology & Conservation, Sustainable Forestry Practices, and Indigenous Knowledge & Forest Management were introduced, along with curriculum that offered more access to field trips, research projects, and volunteer opportunities within the redwoods. The program relies heavily on collaborations with local environmental organizations, forestry companies, and Native American communities allowing students to learn from diverse perspectives and gain real-world experience

Conclusion: The college increased enrollment by embracing its unique location, partnerships within the region and leveraging the iconic redwoods as a destination for students interested in programming associated with nature. College of the Redwoods demonstrates how smaller colleges can creatively address environmental pressures while leveraging its location, and commitments through innovative and location-specific approaches that cater to specific student and industry interests, designed to address local environmental, social and health concerns.





Lakehead University,
Thunder Bay and Orillia,
Ontario
Est. 1965

Institutional Snapshot:

- Lakehead University is a public-funded institution offering both undergraduate and graduate degrees across two rural campuses.
- Approximate enrolment: 8,646 total students (by headcount)¹⁶.
- The university is now known for its expertise in environmental sciences, particularly focusing on the boreal region, and its strong Indigenous community partnerships. The college offers a diverse range of programs in areas such as, business administration, education, engineering, health sciences, natural resource management, social sciences, humanities, law, science and environmental studies.
- The mission of the school is to foster students to be exceptional and unconventional, as well as have strong connections with environmental justice and completing an education to make an impact.

Challenge 1: Lakehead University faced declining domestic enrollment due to demographic shifts and competition from larger institutions. Additionally, its northern location presented challenges in attracting students, leading to increased fiscal constraints. It was also, however, a unique opportunity.

¹⁶ <https://www.lakeheadu.ca/faculty-and-staff/ppm/facts>





Responses: The institution leveraged its location to appeal to those from outside of the region with ties to the region.

- Expanded recruitment: The university expanded its recruitment radius, targeting students from outside the region to consider Lakehead. The university hired a marketing firm and invested in a full rebranding exercise designed to leverage its geographical natural beauty, location to northern outdoor / recreational activities, as well as taking inspiration from one of its historically popular programs - outdoor recreation.
- Leveraging Local Facilities: Thunder Bay acts as the center of a vast recreational and cultural area offering access to a wide variety of sports and activities. With two Alpine and Nordic ski centres in the area, as well as excellent curling and hockey facilities. Summer activities include sailing, windsurfing, water-skiing, rock climbing, swimming, jogging, cycling, camping, fishing, hiking and golf which abound in and around numerous lakes in the area. Lakehead made access to a four-season array of activities a defining feature of their identity.
- Targeted Campaign: Lakehead launched a campaign targeting families (and prospective students) who were from outside their immediate catchment area, but with a familiarity and intimate historical ties with the region (through vacation and recreation), in this case, from the Greater Toronto area (and beyond). Lakehead targeted these families to sell the quality of their educational programming in outdoor recreation, environmentalism, along with being within 15-minutes of all these recreational activities. The marketing centered around a notion of being “superior by nature” and also tied into important aspects of the uniqueness of the “boreal connections” (local ecosystems / environment).
- Strategic Program Alignment: Over time, the university was able to expand an environmental, sport and recreation focus into many of their other programs (ex. Business, health, sciences, etc.) to become known as a university offering a great lifestyle, deeper connections with nature and Indigenous cultures, while supporting academic success.
- Meeting housing Needs: As part of its wraparound services, the institution guarantees on-campus housing to incoming students, making the cost of living knowable when choosing the institution.



Challenge 2: As an institution in Northern Ontario and where a high number of Indigenous peoples live, the institution continues to be guided by its commitment to provide a culturally supportive environment to better serve Indigenous students and communities (which has allowed the university to draw from the growing Indigenous youth population and northern reserve populations).

- Transition program for Incoming Indigenous Students: Summer Indigenous Institute for Indigenous students entering university. Launched in July, 2019, the program offers Indigenous students an academic transition to their undergraduate studies, along with matching students with Elders and Indigenous services to help with transitions. The program allows Indigenous students an advanced look at university life while also giving them a head start on their credits, which supports ease of post-secondary transitions.
- In community Programming: Development of Nijjii Indigenous Mentorship Program: Lakehead delivers educational programming and a hands-on experience to thousands of Indigenous youths throughout Northwestern Ontario. Nijjii matches experienced university students (at the undergrad, graduate and postgraduate levels) with Indigenous high school students from all across the Thunder Bay region to create a positive connection that both inspires and assists the high school student in thinking about post-secondary through learning about science and culturally based activities.
- Co-op and Internships for Indigenous Students: The university has several partnerships with local industry to offer all students access to co-op and placements for experiential learning, but also specifically has an Open Text (a multinational tech company) Indigenous Internship program - offering Indigenous students work placements with the company to increase support and promotion of mentoring Indigenous students into computer science careers.
- Wraparound cultural, linguistic, and medicinal services available to students on campus.

Conclusion: By embracing its unique location and leveraging the natural resources of the boreal region, Lakehead University demonstrates how smaller institutions can develop distinctive programs that cater to specific student interests while addressing environmental and social challenges. This unique approach not only bolsters their enrollment but also fosters a sense of responsibility and understanding of the boreal region, its challenges, and its rich cultural heritage.



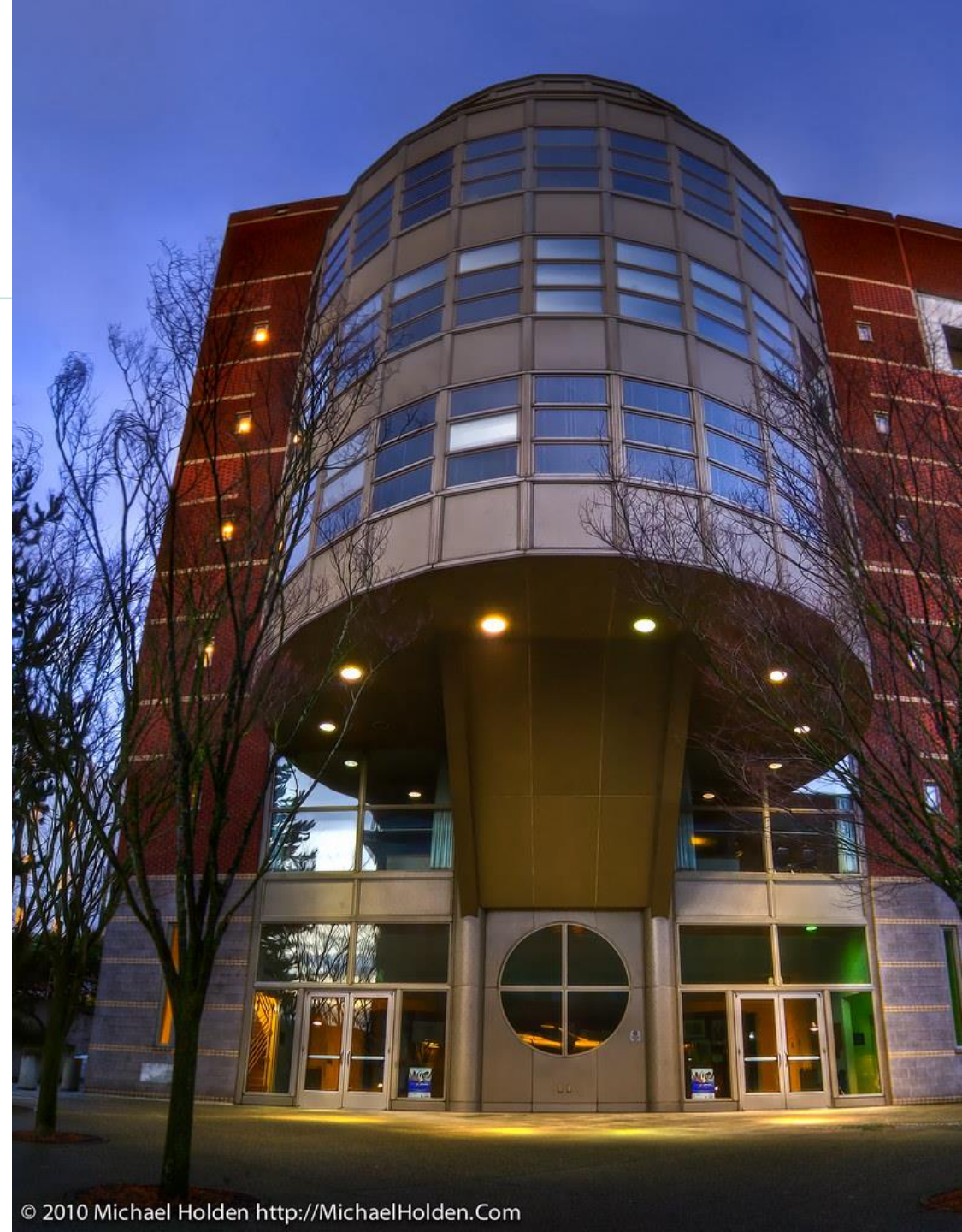
Seattle University
Seattle,
Washington, Est.
1891

Institutional Snapshot:

- Seattle University is a smaller private, Catholic university offering degree granting programs
- Approximate enrolment is 7,286 undergraduate and graduate students, with almost 80% studying full-time¹⁷.
- The university offers programming in a wide variety of disciplines such as, science, math, business, IT, health, biology, liberal arts, as well as unique programs in Urban Studies, Environmental Science, and Theology & Religious Studies.

Challenge: Seattle University, which is located in the heart of a vibrant and diverse city, faced declining domestic enrollment, but saw a large potential group of local students who were first time and/or first-generation college students, many from equity-deserving communities. Competition from larger institutions and a national trend of declining enrollments presented significant challenges, so the university invested in strategies specifically designed to target more regional, first-generation commuter students.

¹⁷ <https://datausa.io/profile/university/seattle-university>





Responses: The institution catered to local populations, creating a vibrant space fostering intellectual development and stimulating learning

- Development of community through Collegia Space: The university made major investments in building (and providing resources) for “Collegia” or Collegium spaces for students. The Collegia Program provided much needed space for students to congregate and create community. Collegium spaces are thematic student communities designed to foster intellectual engagement, community building, and personal growth alongside academic pursuits but also recreating the residential space on campus, embodying the university’s commitment that it will ‘meet you where you are at and will get you through¹²’. The philosophy behind these collegium spaces was to not only foster student experiences but also the social justice values of the school - offering an education where “innovation meets humanity”.
- The Urban Immersion Program: Developed with local first-generation students and from newcomer families (with traditionally lower rates of post-secondary engagement or higher rates of attrition), the program features a number of unique and relevant courses centered around local issues, such as Urban Sustainability & Policy, Social Justice & Advocacy in the City, and Entrepreneurship in the Urban Landscape. These courses were designed to attract students with interests in exploring current issues while being offered fieldwork placements with local non-profits, community agencies, and businesses providing students with hands-on experience and a chance to apply their knowledge to real-world problems. The program also strengthened the university's community partnerships with local institutions.

Conclusion: By embracing this twofold - Urban Immersion Program and Collegia spaces - approach, its urban location and capitalizing on the city's resources, Seattle University demonstrates how smaller colleges can utilize their unique environments (and purpose-built spaces) to offer relevant and immersive learning experiences, inclusive student services and relevant curriculum to attract local first-generation (and commuter) students. This approach not only addressed enrollment challenges but also contributed to shaping students who are engaged, responsible, and prepared to thrive in the complex urban landscape.

¹² <https://www.seattleu.edu/>





Evergreen College Olympia Washington, Est. 1971

Institutional Snapshot:

- Public, liberal arts college with a reputation for an innovative curriculum focused on interdisciplinary studies and student-designed majors. The college offers some pre-built pathways to degree programs, as well as customizable degree programs.
- Approximate enrolment: 2,116 full and part-time students¹⁸.
- Areas of study include a broad range of disciplines, such as math, physical and computer science, political economy, business, global studies, environmental justice, visual, film and media arts, as well as zoology, gender and sexuality studies, Indigenous studies, and African American studies. The idea behind these diverse and dynamic curriculum choices is to allow every student an opportunity to craft a truly unique study plan and pathway.

Challenge: Evergreen College struggled as a smaller college in Washington State to differentiate from other regional post-secondary institutions. Most of the regional colleges offered similar programs, so the college sought to deepen its commitments to interdisciplinary, truly self-directed learning in hopes of maintaining and increasing its enrollment.

¹⁸ <https://datausa.io/profile/university/the-evergreen-state-college>





Responses:

The college adopted a strategy of personalizing learning for students relying mainly on three initiatives:

- Curiosity-Based Learning through Interdisciplinarity: The college adopted a mission to offer every student the “Freedom to Explore Your Interests and Create Your Own Unique Education”. The college does not adhere to traditional boundaries of majors and minors, opening new opportunities to inspire more creative pedagogical interconnections between traditionally unrelated curriculum, courses and programs.
- Variably weighted courses: Not only can you create a pathway based on courses of interest, but the college also curated credit options that could be more flexible, with some courses being 2 credits and others 9 credits, some with more depth and requirements compared to others. This variable weighting further enriched the customization of course offerings for students and allowed flexibility for all learner schedules.
- Flexible delivery: The college was also an early adopter of co-ed residences and alternative modes of delivery to further support every student's unique educational goals.

The College also adopted an institutional identity that aligns with its values:

- Sustainable living: This area in Washington attracts students who are advocates for ‘going green’, promoting sustainable living and seeking more ecological literacy as part of their education. As a result, the college also invested in being an environmentally friendly, sustainable and “green” campus – fitting for a college that calls its students “Greeners”.
- Environmental offerings: The college offers a diverse range of courses in environmentalism, but also imbues all subjects with connections to sustainability and climate consciousness. This commitment to sustainability goals is also interconnected with the college's commitments to social justice and equity, diversity and inclusion.



Conclusion: Having adopted and developed alternative programming the college was able to brand itself to prospective environmentally conscious students both locally and nationally, who were looking for more self-directed, interdisciplinary learning and program delivery, while studying on a “green” campus committed to environmentalism and climate change.





Institutional Snapshot:

- Private university with five campuses, across Northern Shenandoah Valley and Northern Virginia. Offering a variety of programs including: business, health (nursing, physiotherapy, occupational therapy), social sciences, technology, fine and media arts, as well as humanities.
- Although Shenandoah is in proximity to Washington D.C. and Baltimore, Maryland, allowing students opportunities to explore diverse metropolitan regions, the university campuses are all situated in smaller more rural towns, allowing students to take advantage of the four season recreational / outdoor opportunities of the Shenandoah Valley's rivers, caves, rural vista, and hiking and biking trails.
- The university enrolls approximately 4,287 undergraduate and graduate students across more than 200 areas of study in six different schools.
- Shenandoah describes itself as the "*Big Little University Rising*" and markets their "creatively charged campuses" to prospective students looking to access high-quality arts education alongside rigorous academics.

Challenge: Shenandoah was keen to improve the value equation to students while increasing the University's financial viability in a changing educational marketplace. Strategic Planning focuses on how they can maintain and grow enrollment at their institution, while competing with other larger institutions within the region, the state (and beyond). Their strategy focused on students who would be attracted to Shenandoah over other bigger, colleges and universities with more distinct reputations within the neighbouring regions of Washington, Maryland, Alexandria and Annapolis

Responses:

Shenandoah invested its focus on retaining its unique regional history, while cultivating its reputation as a leading art-based institution offering students opportunities to blend educational interests.

- Celebrating Unique Campus Options: The university offers a variety of programming across five diverse campus locations, each with its own unique history, infrastructure and program offerings. The university promotes that there are “six schools, but one university” and believes in the value of each student being able to find “an environment that suits you”.
- Blending Arts and Academics: They further invested in their arts programming and the Shenandoah Conservatory, to boost high-quality arts education alongside rigorous academics. The Conservatory is home to thirty music, theatre and dance ensembles, with ties to national and international artistic communities. Investments are focused on attracting prospective students looking to benefit from talented faculty, rigorous arts curriculum, and the modern facilities, studios, equipment and technology integrated into all programming. Students with a history of arts involvement can come to deepen career aspirations in a diverse range of fine arts, dance, music, composing, musical theater, film and media. To promote differentiation the university designed curriculum elements to support the more commercial elements of pursuing arts-based careers (ex. business, marketing and technical innovation for creative industries), along with some very unique blended courses such as environmental science documentary filmmaking, technical sound design, dance and art therapy combined into occupational therapy or mental health counselling, etc.
The university also enjoys a reciprocal and engaged relationship with the local region by offering performances (up to 300 annually), concerts and studio access for local artists, while being supported by the local (national and international) artistic community to offer experiential learning opportunities to students. This has resulted in a vibrant art scene within the region.
- Preservation of Regional History: Shenandoah is proud of its legacy in Winchester as being the city where George Washington held his first elected office, home to many civil war historical sites and start-ups in the industrial revolution, as well as being where the Emancipation Proclamation was first implemented. The university is located near and works in partnership with a number of museums, and shares the preservation of, and access to an extraordinary array of archives and local historical societies. The university brands these investments by promoting how students can come to “study history where history was made”.

Conclusion: By strategically integrating arts-based programs within a well-rounded academic framework, the university was able to foster a creative learning environment, attract students and establish themselves as cultural hubs within the region.



Dakota Wesleyan University,
Mitchell, South Dakota, Est. 1885

Institutional Snapshot:

- Private Methodist university focused on teacher education to provide new teachers for school districts, and nursing and allied health programs address the continuing need for health care professionals in rural South Dakota.
- The university enrolls approximately 904 across 40 undergraduate and graduate programs online and on campus.
- While the institution focuses on student employability, it champions the importance of creativity and adaptability as essential to personal and professional goal attainment.



Challenge: Like so many colleges in rural communities in the early 2000s, DWU was in slow decline. Demographic trends did not favour the college with the decline of HS graduates estimated to be up to 20% in the coming years and only 60% of high school graduates in the region attend 2- or 4- year colleges. In the late, aughts, enrolments reached a low of 550 students, retention rates were low, and the institution had a glaring budget shortfall. Additionally, Its faculty relationship with the then-president was characterized as highly tenuous and the university was deemed “without focus”.





Responses: The university conducted a thorough market analysis to determine the best way to position the university and focus its efforts. The result was to be ultimately relevant to community, region, and state. Its articulated vision is to be “recognizes as a national model of higher educations’ innovation and impact on rural America.

- Stop Apologizing: Organizational culture matters, and so DWU embarked on a mission to celebrating what it does well. Finding nobility, the things it does well energized the institutional community. The institution identified faculty who believed in the mission and the strategic initiatives that supported it, investing in faculty success while honouring the ethos of the region. The university also provided professional development aligned with strategic priorities.
- Pursue Innovative Partnerships: The institution stopped being a university **IN** the community and be a university **FOR** the community. Highly entrepreneurial, DWU built energy around innovative partnerships that connected it to regional business and employment pipelines, being an active partner in a *rural renaissance* that celebrate the local spirit of innovation. The region needed a university equipped to demonstrate engagement and responsiveness to emerging needs.
- Centre for Rural Impact: DWU is developing an applied research laboratory for four cornerstones of rural renaissance: economic development, health care, ministry/non-profit administration, and education.
- New Targeted Online Programs and Innovative Delivery of Existing Programs: The institution developed mission-aligned online programs to meet regional labour-force demands. This simultaneously had the benefit of diversifying the institution’s revenue streams. This includes rethinking how to deliver healthcare, support rural education, and strengthen rural communities.

Conclusion: The institution’s radical commitment to the region and its needs, engaging in every activity through the lens of how it supports the region allowed it to secure significant philanthropic and collaborative resources. It further became an institution enticing to students, as students could be joining a movement or collective project of rural revitalization in the Great Plains region. The proportion of faculty and staff giving to the annual fund almost doubled. The institution secured more the \$40M in gifts, and the institution is now running surpluses.



GENERAL PERCEPTIONS

1	Did anything you read in the environmental scan surprise you?	open
QUESTIONS RESPONDING TO SPECIFICS		
3	Some external interested parties indicated that the College may not be providing enough skilled workers to sustain the region's needs (Slides 6-7). To what extent do you believe the college needs to prioritize its strategies to respond to this regional need?	5 point likert
4	Selkirk College's domestic student population is increasingly made up of students from the immediate region and there has been a decrease in students choosing Selkirk College from other parts of Canada (Slide 10). Why do you think that is, and what do you recommend Selkirk College do to increase enrolments from other regions?	open
5	Reading through the profiles of regional competitors (Slides 18—29), which institution is doing something inspiring or admirable in your opinion?	Select one Okanagan CNC CMC COTR None.
6	Why did you to choose that institution?	Open ended.
7	In what ways would you like Selkirk College to differentiate itself from its regional competitors? (Slide 31)	Select one: More traditional More Integrated More distinctive More Expansive More Distributed None.
8	Section 3 (Slides 33-37) describes some of the changes in the post-secondary sector that will require Selkirk College to adapt. Which change is Selkirk College currently <u>best</u> equipped to meet?	Choose 1: Proliferation of New Credentials Technological Development Indigenization, Indigenous Success, and Indigenous Reconciliation Increase in Mature and Professional Students Other:
10	Which one of these changes will be the most challenging to address for Selkirk College?	Choose 1: Proliferation of New Credentials Technological Development Indigenization, Indigenous Success, and Indigenous Reconciliation Increase in Mature and Professional Students Other:
12	When considering the institutional innovations of other colleges described, which example was most compelling to you? Think of how it could inspire innovation at Selkirk College	Select up to 2: 1. College of the Redwoods 2. Lakehead University 3. Seattle University 4. Evergreen State College 5. Shenandoah University 6. Dakota Wesleyan University 7. None
13	What lessons do you think Selkirk College can learn from the institution(s) you chose?	1. open