

Help shape the direction of your college

*When we first started this column last month, we indicated we would keep you posted on new events happening at the college. This week, Heather Stewart writes about a new exciting project called “**Designing our Future**”. Here’s your chance to help shape the direction of your college.*

Fresh with a new mandate and direction, Okanagan College is seeking to involve communities, employees and students in creating a shared vision for the region’s future education and training needs. By involving as many stakeholders as possible in this consultation process, the College seeks to develop a vision that represents the communities and individuals it serves.

Over the next few months there will be a number of opportunities for community members throughout the College region to participate in consultation sessions that will help shape a new vision, mission and values for Okanagan College through a process called “Designing our Future.” These two-hour sessions will provide participants with the opportunity to talk about their vision for the future of Okanagan College.

Today’s community colleges are not only in the business of developing young minds, but are also playing a large role in the development of their local economies. As the demand for skilled employees continues to increase across the country, colleges are taking the lead in developing education and training programs that answer employers’ needs. In BC, it is estimated that of the 695,000 new jobs expected to be created between 2001 and 2011 – 44 per cent of those will require a community college education while only 29 per cent will require a university education.

In our region, Stats Canada reports that more than 22,400 full-time jobs have been created over the past year, pushing the unemployment rate for August 2005 to a record low of 5.2%. Local employers are finding it increasingly difficult to find skilled employees, and to continue training their current employees. They are looking to their local college to provide graduates who have both the practical and “soft” skills needed to perform the diverse variety of jobs being created in our region.

Watch for details on upcoming sessions in the North Okanagan region on our website at www.okanagan.bc.ca/designingourfuture and through advertisements in local media. For more information about the Designing Our Future process, contact Heather Stewart, Project Director, at 250-545-7291, ext. 4736, or Jennifer Gorman in Vernon at 545-7291 ext.4736.