

# PRODUCING the **WORKFORCE** of the 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY

Ontario colleges' submission  
for the 2013 budget



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## INTRODUCTION

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The 2013 Ontario Budget will play an essential part in ensuring the province has the qualified workforce it needs for the years ahead.

The challenges facing Ontario are significant. Young people throughout the province are struggling to find meaningful work. People who have lost their jobs after years at the same company continue to seek opportunities to train for new careers.

Meanwhile, there is an increasing skills mismatch in Ontario and throughout the country, as many employers struggle to find qualified people to hire.

As Seneca College president emeritus Rick Miner predicted in his seminal report, *People Without Jobs, Jobs Without People: Ontario's Labour Market Future*, there is a growing divide between the qualifications sought by employers and the education and training of much of the workforce. Growing numbers of job seekers simply aren't qualified to fill a large number of vacant positions.

Fortunately, Ontario can meet these challenges and become a global leader in the innovation economy. Through a meaningful transformation of higher education, Ontario can produce the best-educated, best-prepared workforce in the world.

The Ontario colleges' policy submission to the province – *Empowering Ontario: Transforming Higher Education in the 21st Century* – has proposed a number of recommendations to ensure students reach their full potential through a broad array of theoretical and applied learning opportunities.

The recommendations include expanding the college sector's ability to assess and offer degree programs, strengthening the system for the transfer of completed post-secondary credits, expanding online and blended-learning opportunities, improving access to apprenticeship programs, and much more.

All of these measures will help improve the post-secondary attainment rate in Ontario. Transformation will help more students – particularly students from underrepresented groups – acquire the problem-solving abilities and the career-specific skills to succeed in today's knowledge economy.

Ontario's commitment to post-secondary education must be supported by a commitment to long-term fiscal sustainability. At the same time that Ontario seeks to find new efficiencies and improve productivity, it is essential that resources are in place to ensure students get the best post-secondary education possible.

The following document describes the many ways that colleges have used public resources efficiently and effectively to produce meaningful results. And it highlights the college sector's priorities for the 2013 Ontario Budget.

## COLLEGES ARE STRONG STEWARDS OF PUBLIC DOLLARS

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Ontario's college sector is very efficient. Colleges continue to collaborate to find administrative efficiencies and improve productivity.

For example, the sector bargains collectively with its employees. This has resulted in wage settlements over the last 10 years that are comparable to those in the broader public sector. Colleges have recently achieved a new agreement with faculty that provides no across-the-board salary increases for the next two years.

The college sector also has a single defined benefit pension plan, the CAAT Pension Plan. Defined benefit pension plans around the world have faced enormous challenges in the new millennium as a result of poor market returns, historic low interest rates and accelerating longevity. The CAAT Pension Plan has dealt with these challenges better than most plans due to:

### **1. An equal sharing of costs and risks between colleges and employees.**

### **2. Responsible plan design decisions that include:**

- Contribution rates that have more than doubled in the last decade.
- No improvements to benefits in more than a decade.
- Removal of automatic indexation for post-2007 service.
- Lack of extension of indexation for pre-1992 service.
- Opting out of grow-in benefits for involuntary terminations.

### **3. Solid financial management and governance that includes:**

- Development of a benefits and funding policy that balances competing objectives of stable benefits and contributions and inter-generational equity.
- The use of reasonable going-concern valuation assumptions.
- Regular asset mix reviews.

Other collaborative approaches that have resulted in administrative efficiencies and productivity improvements include a centralized student application service, shared support services for libraries and resource centres, and shared networks to market colleges' training services to employers and for applied research. Colleges are also currently conducting a study to look for new opportunities for shared services to achieve additional cost savings and eliminate duplication.

Colleges participate in collaborative purchasing through partnerships with other colleges and with other partners in their local community. All 24 colleges also participate in the Ontario Education Collaborative Marketplace (OECM). The college spend through OECM has almost doubled from 2011 to 2012.

Colleges are also moving beyond sharing administrative costs to sharing academic programs and services and have adopted a new policy that allows them to enter into agreements to share curriculum for common programs, while maintaining opportunities for each college to develop its areas of specialization.

As well, colleges collaborate in online education through OntarioLearn, a consortium that has the participation of all 24 colleges. Partner colleges select courses from the OntarioLearn inventory that complement their existing offerings. This allows colleges to rationalize resources and avoid duplication while increasing online learning opportunities for students.

Other cost savings and efficiency measures include energy-efficiency projects and energy-savings initiatives such as the Centre for Alternative Waste Water Treatment at Fleming College; the creation of the campus eco-system restoration at Niagara College; and the installation of green roofs at several colleges. The college sector continues to employ measures to better manage energy utilization. The expansion of this energy-management system continues to be a priority.

Such efficiencies help free up resources that can then be used for other purposes – for example, to provide programs and services for students at risk.

## **COLLEGES ACHIEVE RESULTS WITH CONSTRAINED RESOURCES**

The fiscal challenges facing the province cannot be ignored. The annual deficits facing the province are significant and Ontario is committed to getting back to balanced budgets. This will have impacts throughout the province.

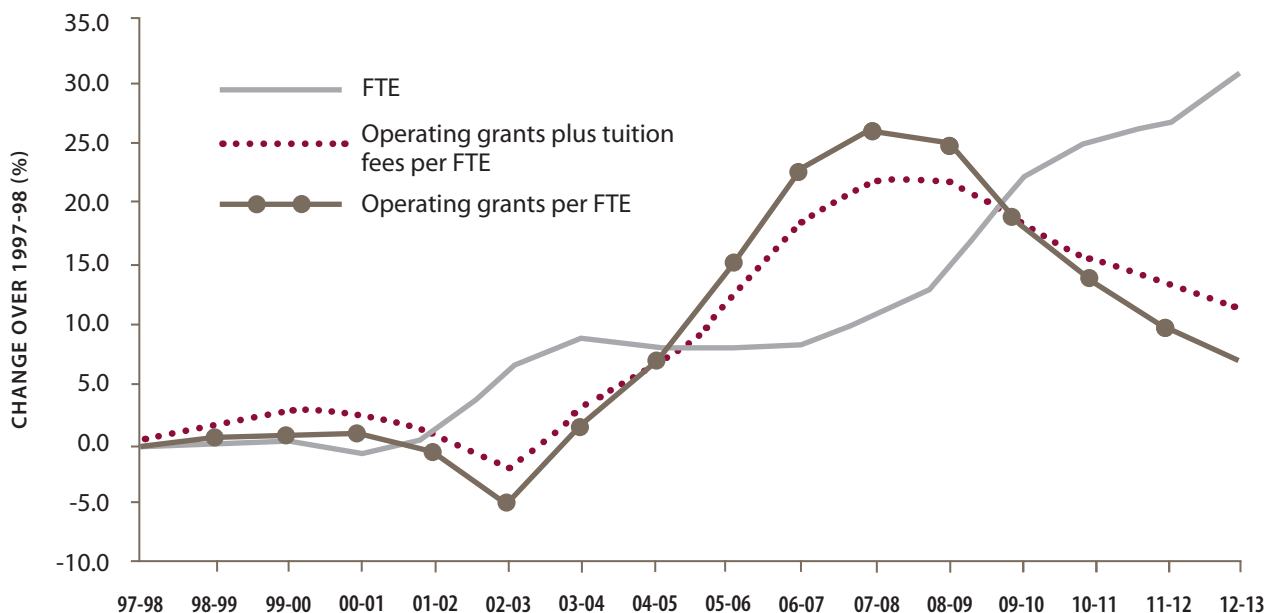
However, as the government looks to address its deficits, it is important to remember that not every partner in the broader public sector is starting from the same base in terms of efficiency and productivity. The college system is already quite lean.

The efficiency of the college system has been particularly important as funding to the system has been constrained.

Real operating grants to colleges increased little from 2007-08 to 2012-13 – less than one per cent. By contrast, full-time equivalent (FTE) enrolment in the colleges increased 19 per cent. As a result, in 2012-13, real operating grants per student are about \$880 lower than they were five years earlier.



**Figure 1. Enrolment and revenue changes, 1997-98 to 2012-13 (indexed to 1997-98)**



Sources: Ontario Ministries of Finance and Training, Colleges and Universities, Statistics Canada and Colleges Ontario.

Note: Revenue figures are in constant 2002 dollars. Figures represent regulated tuition fees and exclude the tuition set-aside, collaborative and second-entry nursing, and clinical education funding for collaborative nursing.

While tuition increases have offset some of this decline, combined revenues from net tuition fees and operating grants per student are still almost \$650 lower than they were in 2007-08. Meanwhile, college expenses have increased about five per cent per year, higher than the rate of inflation.

Ontario's colleges provide quality post-secondary education at a lower per student cost to government than any other Canadian province. As shown in Figure 2 (page 5), Ontario colleges are the least expensive education sector for government on a per student basis. Since tuition fees at colleges are also lower than universities, the direct cost to students is also less.

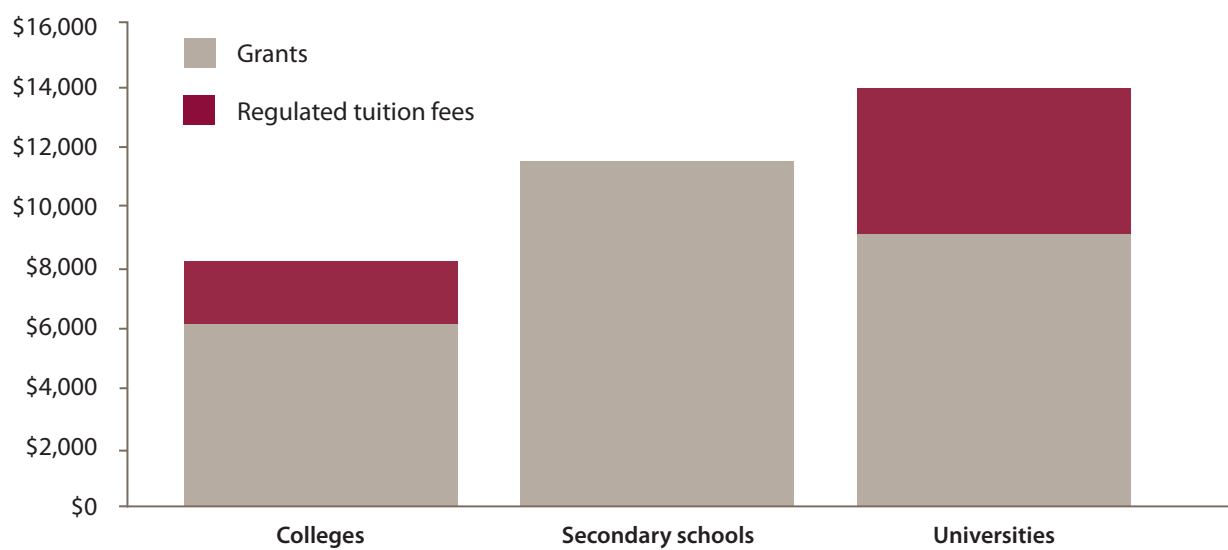
Ontario colleges also operate efficiently compared with the United States. If Ontario is included among the 50 U.S. states, taking into account per student funding from both government grants and tuition fees, Ontario would rank among the 10 lowest.

Ontario's colleges operate with less space per student than universities and are increasingly using their facilities year-round to ensure that buildings are used effectively.

Not only are colleges serving larger numbers of students in the face of stagnant operating grants and rising costs, but they have enhanced existing programs and services and added new programs to meet student demand and employer needs. Examples of new college programs developed since 2010 include:

- **Mobile Application Development**
- **Medical Robotics and Automation**
- **Biofuels and Bioprocesses Technician**
- **Electro-Mechanical Engineering Technician – Robotics**
- **Wind Turbine Technician**
- **Digital Cinematography**
- **Airframe Assembly**
- **Aviation Technician - Aircraft Structures**
- **Diagnostic Medical Sonography**
- **Aquaculture**
- **Solar Photovoltaic System Planning and Installation**

**Figure 2. Operating funding and regulated tuition fees per student, Ontario education sectors 2011-12**



Sources: Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities and Ontario Public School Boards Association.  
 Note: Figures for colleges exclude the tuition set-aside and collaborative and second-entry nursing and clinical education funding for collaborative nursing.

And colleges continue to get strong results for students, as was seen in the 2011 Key Performance Indicators. Even in the difficult economy, more than 80 per cent of Ontario college graduates find work within six months of graduation.

**TABLE 1. 2011 KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS**

	Per cent
Graduate employment rate	83%
Employer satisfaction rate	92.8%
Graduate satisfaction rate	78.9%

Growing numbers of students are pursuing the career-specific programs offered at colleges. In fact, full-time enrolment in the colleges is at a record level this year, with the highest-ever first-year enrolment at more than 123,000 – an increase of about five per cent over the previous year. And there has been a 40 per cent increase in the number of university graduates applying to college since 2007.

Colleges are preparing greater numbers of people for success. A recent report by the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario (HEQCO), called *The Productivity of the Ontario Public Postsecondary System*, noted there has been a 50 per cent increase in the number of college graduates over the last eight years.

## INEQUITIES IN THE 2012 ONTARIO BUDGET

While Ontario's colleges are effective stewards of public resources, the sector does face significant cost pressures as it strives to produce more graduates to strengthen the economy.

This is particularly true given the inequities in the 2012 Ontario Budget. The reductions to post-secondary education funding in the 2012 budget were inappropriately allocated to colleges compared with universities. The pressures on colleges will be exacerbated if these inequities are not addressed.

The expenditure management measures in the 2012 budget included the international student recovery fee, policy levers, and the elimination of the Small, Northern and Rural Grant for seven colleges. In addition, the government has discontinued the Enrolment Bridging Grant (EBG) that helped bridge the gap between enrolment recognized by the College Funding Framework and more recent growth.

Together, the expenditure management measures and the elimination of the EBG amount to a total reduction of \$145.9 million for the post-secondary sector by 2014-15. Colleges were asked to absorb \$67.9 million of the reduction, or 46.5 per cent.

**TABLE 2. FUNDING REDUCTIONS BY 2014-15 COMPARED TO 2011-12 BASE**

	Colleges	Universities	Total
Enrolment Bridging Grant	(\$12.2 M)		
Policy levers	(\$25.5 M)	(\$55.5 M)	
International Student Recovery	(\$19.1 M)	(\$17.3 M)	
Small, Northern and Rural Grant (eliminated for 7 colleges)	(\$9.2 M)		
Other	(\$1.9 M)	(\$5.2 M)	
Total cuts	(\$67.9 M)	(\$78.0 M)	(\$145.9 M)
Share of cuts	46.5%	53.5%	

The college sector's share of the reductions must be aligned with its share of the total operating funding allocation for the post-secondary sector, which is 28.7 per cent. If the reductions had been proportionately allocated, the reduction to the college sector would have been about \$42 million – or about \$25 million less than the actual reduction in the budget.

This unfair burden on colleges will create undue hardship for many institutions and will hurt their ability to serve their students.

There are also challenges with the distribution of the operating funds that were provided to colleges.

The budget committed to increase college operating funding by an average of one per cent per year by 2014-15, compared with the 2011-12 base. However, the colleges estimate that just six colleges will see their funding increase by an average of one per cent or more per year by 2014-15. Eleven colleges will experience funding decreases and seven will receive funding increases averaging less than one per cent per year.

The government must address the cuts to the college sector. Otherwise, the ability of colleges to serve their students – especially higher-needs students – will be severely constrained.

Colleges play a major role in educating students who, without college services, would not access and succeed in post-secondary education because of a range of barriers and challenges that they face.

These students may have weak academic preparation or have learning, physical or other disabilities. Or they could be from underrepresented groups that typically have low levels of post-secondary attainment. Due to their unique individual circumstances, they often face multiple risks to completing their credentials, unless they receive additional supports through college programs and services.

A recent report by Deloitte concluded that college programs and services for students at risk increase graduation rates among those students by about 35 per cent. This helps provide more skilled graduates to support an expanding economy. It also provides those individuals with higher incomes, and produces returns to government through higher income taxes and reduced social assistance costs.

However, the report also found that colleges are allocating substantial funds each year from their operating budgets to support such students. The report found the colleges spend more than \$100 million each year above the funding earmarked to support students at risk.

If colleges have to absorb the cuts identified in the 2012 budget, the flexibility to use such funding to serve students at risk will be significantly reduced.

### **Reducing the international recovery fee**

The amount of the international recovery fee to be levied against college operating grants for the number of international students that colleges enrol in Ontario must be reduced.

Colleges receive less per student revenue from international students than universities. The estimated average fee for international students is \$12,000 at colleges compared with the university average of \$16,000. The flat-fee approach that has been used by the province means colleges have to absorb a larger hit on their operating grants than universities. If institutions raise international fees to compensate for the reduction in operating grants, college-bound students would have to pay a higher share of the international recovery fee.

### **Rescinding the international recovery fee for offshore activity**

Students abroad do not have access to equivalent services and facilities as students who come to Ontario to study. Therefore, the international recovery fee should not be applied to offshore activity.

Programs abroad range widely in terms of fees, length, credentials, and contractual partnership arrangements. Many of the overseas markets, partner institutions and funding models cannot support a major fee increase. As a result of

the recovery fee, many of the overseas partnerships – which provide a pathway for students to come to Ontario – will end, and the flow of students would be negatively impacted.

### **Lowering the policy levers applied to colleges**

Included among the expenditure control measures in the 2012 budget were cuts through additional policy levers that amount to \$25.5 million for the college sector by 2014-15.

To ensure that colleges do not have to absorb a disproportionate share of the overall funding reductions, the province should lower the amount of the additional policy levers to be applied to colleges.

Equity between colleges and universities has to be a key tenet of the post-secondary system. To address this issue, the government must:

- Reduce the amount of the international recovery fee to be levied against international college students in Ontario.
- Rescind the intent to apply the international recovery fee to offshore activity.
- Lower the amount of the additional policy levers to be applied to colleges.

## **THE FUNDING PRESSURES FACING COLLEGES**

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There is a significant gap between the funding pressures facing Ontario's public colleges and the anticipated provincial funding.

The outlook for college system costs and revenues for 2013-14 is shown in Table 3. System-wide costs (for post-secondary-funded activities) for compensation, utilities, maintenance and taxes, supplies and general administration, furniture and equipment and other items are expected to be \$92 million higher in 2013-14.



**TABLE 3. ANTICIPATED INCREASES IN COLLEGE SYSTEM COSTS AND REVENUES IN 2013-14**

Projected increases in system-wide costs*	\$92 M
Projected increase in tuition revenue**	\$35 M
Funding gap	\$57 M

\* Costs are prorated to reflect only the portion that can be attributed to post-secondary enrolments.

\*\* Does not account for enrolment growth. Assumes that the current tuition framework is extended.

While anticipated increases in tuition fee revenues will help offset the cost increases, the college system faces a net cost pressure of \$57 million in 2013-14. And that is assuming the current tuition-fee framework is extended and that colleges can increase fees by an average of five per cent each year.

The estimated \$57-million shortfall does not include any costs related to enrolment pressures and the hiring of additional staff. It also does not account for significant local costs that vary by college.

Ontario's colleges are urging the province to invest in specific measures to ensure the sector produces the graduates needed to meet the demands of the new innovation economy. As shown in Table 4, the colleges are calling on the province to address the following areas in the 2013 Ontario Budget: operating funding; capital funding; and applied research.

**TABLE 4. COLLEGE SECTOR FUNDING NEEDS FOR 2013-14**

Area of investment	Amount
<b>Operating</b>	
<u>Existing and/or committed</u>	
• Enhancements related to enrolment, including enrolment-sensitive special purpose grants	\$32 M
<u>New request</u>	
• Core operating funding	\$57 M
• Technology-enabled learning	\$3 M
<b>Capital</b>	
<u>Existing and/or committed</u>	
• Instructional equipment (CERF and AEF)	\$20 M
<u>New request</u>	
• Infrastructure renewal (net of existing investment of \$8.7 M)	\$61 M
<b>Other</b>	
<u>Existing and/or committed</u>	
• Applied research (CONII)	\$2.1 M

## Operating funding

The 2012 Ontario Budget committed to provide colleges with enrolment-related funding enhancements for the college funding framework and enrolment-sensitive special purpose grants totalling \$32 million in 2013-14. The province must ensure that commitment is honoured. Furthermore, the province must address the \$57-million shortfall in operating funds that colleges face in 2013-14. In its 2010 throne speech, the government said it planned to move forward with technology-enabled learning in higher education. Technology-enabled learning was also identified as a priority in the Ontario government's consultations on post-secondary education in 2012.

In Empowering Ontario, the colleges' submission to the government consultations on post-secondary education, the colleges made a commitment to create the best technology-enabled, flexible-learning environment in the world – an environment that opens up opportunities for all students, allowing higher education to be accessed by learners anytime and anywhere.

To move toward this goal and to strengthen technology-enabled learning, Ontario must invest \$10 million over three years. That would include an expansion of the number of online programs and courses, and would also provide seed funding for a series of innovative college pilot projects to transform the delivery of programs.

## Capital funding

Using instructional equipment that meets industry standards to teach students is critical if colleges are to maintain the currency and relevance of their programs.

The 2012 Ontario Budget provided \$20 million for instructional equipment for 2012-13 through the College Equipment Renewal Fund and the Apprenticeship

Enhancement Fund. In 2013-14, it is recommended the government maintain the same level of funding for instructional equipment.

The province must also commit to provide multi-year investments for instructional equipment. Instructional equipment needs to be refreshed on a continual basis, and an ad hoc approach to funding undermines the ability of institutions to plan for the cyclical renewal of equipment.

For colleges to successfully meet their mandates and deliver relevant programs and services, college facilities need to be maintained and renewed on a continual basis. If the facilities are not appropriately maintained, colleges can face a range of risks.

The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities' Facilities Renewal Program (FRP) provides \$8.7 million annually to address the ongoing need for the maintenance, repair, renovation and modernization of existing facilities. As shown below, this amount is clearly insufficient.

In his 2010 report, the auditor general said the deferred maintenance backlog at Ontario's colleges is in the range of \$568 million to \$745 million, with more than \$70 million worth of capital repairs falling in the critical category.

Ontario's colleges require an investment of \$70 million (an increase of \$61 million over the FRP funding) in 2013-14 just to address these critical capital repairs. It should be noted this amount will not address the deferred maintenance backlog.

## Applied research

The province must continue to focus on applied research activity in smaller- and medium-sized companies that helps businesses to grow, take new products to market, and creates new economic opportunities and new jobs.

The research that Ontario's colleges conduct in partnership with businesses and industry is central to Ontario's success in this area. Colleges help businesses and industries get access to research facilities and expertise that can help improve the viability of the businesses. This helps promote economic growth and new jobs.

In 2011, the Conference Board of Canada released a report that said college-based research activity is a catalyst for driving innovation and productivity, particularly for businesses that don't have the resources to conduct the research on their own.

The applied research partnerships between colleges and businesses lead to innovations in a wide range of areas, from the creation of new computer software to innovations in 3-D technology, biotechnology and the health sciences. Applied research partnerships between businesses and colleges also provide students with unique opportunities to get hands-on experience in the development of real-world innovations.

The 2009 Ontario Budget provided \$10 million over three years to CONII, a network of 22 colleges dedicated to connecting businesses to the applied research and commercialization expertise of Ontario's colleges. In 2013-14, the colleges are calling for an annual investment of \$2.1 million into applied research.

## PRODUCTIVITY SAVINGS TO OFFSET PROVINCIAL INVESTMENTS

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For a significant portion of the investment proposals outlined in this submission, government funding is either already being provided or has been previously committed.

In cases where new funding is required, the colleges believe it is possible to offset the investments through many of the policy recommendations in the colleges' Empowering Ontario submission.

For example, significant savings can be achieved through improvements in the provincial system to help university and college students transfer completed credits to another Ontario institution. A report by the Centre for Spatial Economics estimated the province could save as much as \$61 million per year once an improved credit-transfer system is fully implemented. That is in addition to the savings for students who would graduate and enter the workforce sooner.

## A NEW TUITION FRAMEWORK FOR COLLEGES

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Operating grants and tuition fees are two key revenue sources that enable colleges to provide broad access to quality education and training programs. In its budget deliberations, the government must consider the combined impact of its decisions on both operating grants and tuition fees.

Ontario's colleges believe it is important to recognize the significant differences between tuition-fee levels at the colleges and universities. The cost for a typical college program is about \$2,400 per year, compared with a typical tuition cost of about \$5,400 per year for university arts and science programs.

The difference in the tuition levels becomes more pronounced when the government applies uniform tuition-fee increases across the entire post-secondary sector. Because universities have higher tuitions than colleges, a fixed percentage increase represents a greater dollar-value increase for universities over colleges – creating a wider gap between the systems.

College programs are also of a much shorter duration than university programs, with the majority being two-year programs. Fewer students leave home to attend college than to attend university, thus fewer college students face the high costs associated with living away from home.

Combined with lower tuition fees, this means college students are generally under less financial pressure than their university counterparts.

The 2013 Ontario Budget must establish a tuition-fee framework that is distinct to colleges and is part of a long-term effort to ensure fiscal sustainability for the college sector.

The new college sector tuition framework must provide adequate revenues for colleges while maintaining accessibility for students. For colleges to continue to enrol a larger number of students in the current fiscal climate, and to ensure those students have access to a broad-range of high-quality programs, colleges need a steady stream of tuition fee revenues. Since students also derive a personal benefit from post-secondary education – one that extends beyond the societal gain – students need to pay a fair share of the cost of their post-secondary education.

Thus, colleges are recommending the government maintain the current tuition framework for the college sector. Maintaining the current framework will result in a tuition fee increase of approximately \$110 for full-time basic regular college programs in 2013-14.

Furthermore, colleges are assuming the government will not implement any changes to the technical elements of the tuition framework that were the subject of the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities' recent consultations with the post-secondary sector, including flat fees and deferral fees.

It will be very difficult for colleges to absorb additional revenue reductions as a result of ministry policy changes related to these "technical" fee issues. The colleges' preliminary analysis suggests the system would suffer a revenue reduction of approximately \$26 million if the ministry were to eliminate deferral fees and were to require colleges to move away from program-based to course-based fees for students who take a reduced load, but more than two-thirds of the full load. Any changes to ministry policy that result in revenue losses for colleges would erode the ability of colleges to provide programs and services for their students.

## RESULTS

Without additional funding, it will be difficult for many colleges to deliver on their mandates and fully contribute to the provincial goals for post-secondary education. The results that colleges can achieve with improved funding are provided in Table 5. Achievement of these targets is dependent upon the colleges receiving adequate operating and capital funding.

**TABLE 5. SECTOR GOALS FOR 2016-17**

	2011-12	2016-17
<b>Post-secondary enrolment</b>	189,300	210,000
Immigrants	32,200	38,000
Students with special needs	23,500	28,000
Aboriginal students	6,200	7,000
<b>Number of graduates*</b>	78,931	86,000
<b>Graduation rate (%)</b>	65%	70%
<b>Graduate employment rate (%)</b>	83%	90%

Source: OCAS (FTE's across the three semesters for total full-time, funded post-secondary enrolment). Other population subgroup data are estimates based on the average per cent representation of each subgroup in the recent College Applicant Surveys (immigrants and aboriginal students) and the KPI Student Satisfaction Survey (students with special needs). Figures for population subgroups are not mutually exclusive.

\* KPI data are based on the 2011-12 reporting year (i.e., data represents graduates of the previous academic year).

## CONCLUSION

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Ontario needs greater numbers of post-secondary graduates. The province must provide higher education to greater numbers of students with a broad range of interests and aptitudes. And it must ensure that students throughout the post-secondary education system get improved access to career-specific training as part of their education.

The province has made significant gains in recent years but there is much more to do. Improvements in higher education must be anchored by a commitment to sustainable funding. The priorities identified in this document will help the province fulfil its goal to become a global leader in higher learning and to produce a stronger province with opportunities for all.



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COLLÈGE BORÉAL  
CAMBRIAN COLLEGE  
CANADORE COLLEGE  
CENTENNIAL COLLEGE  
CONESTOGA COLLEGE INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY AND ADVANCED LEARNING  
CONFEDERATION COLLEGE  
DURHAM COLLEGE  
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