

JAC 20/20

Food for Thought

Innovative Initiatives Run the Risk of Distracting us from our Core Mission

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The current draft version of the Strategic Plan proposals contain objectives that are both ambitious and eclectic, ranging from international cross-cultural exchanges (orientation #203), to a language school (#211), to a becoming a center of excellence for applied research (along with pedagogical research) (#223). While all these initiatives would enrich college life each in their own ways, we need to ask important questions about whether they can be properly undertaken without compromising our main mission—to provide quality education to DEC students, particularly in an era of government cutbacks.

Even though many of these auxiliary initiatives appear to be motivated and designed by the desire to cover the funding shortfall due to government cutbacks, their net impact on our ability to carry out our core work may not be necessarily positive. This is because they would require the diversion of non-monetary resources such as physical space and administrative support. Moreover, as our experience with non-credit, international students has taught us, using day-time courses to earn supplemental income does not come without its own costs. Our teachers have regularly reported lack of student motivation, inadequate language and academic skills as recurring problems with certain aspects of the non-credit program; this subsequently affects their ability to deliver quality education to our regular daytime students.

The consultations are about to enter their final round, where the entire college community, excluding students, will get to vote for the top eight of 31 orientations and corresponding mechanisms. Based on the information gathered from their personal involvement and that of other teachers, there is growing doubt amongst JACFA executives that the consultation process is capable of incorporating teachers' real preoccupations and priorities; it is more likely to result in a document that largely legitimizes current government priorities of commercialization and fragmentation the CEGEP system, as advocated by the *Demers Report* and the current government demands in the collective agreement negotiations. (More details to come on the latter in the upcoming **JACFA News...**)

Nonetheless, the JACFA executive would like to encourage all teachers to send in feedback on the current proposals, through both the official process—the pending Omnivox poll, and through unofficial channels such as letters and emails to the office of the Director General. Please feel free to carbon copy jacfa@johnabbott.qc.ca.