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Ministry of Advanced Education

ONLINE LEARNING STRATEGY TO OPEN UP HIGHER EDUCATION

VICTORIA – The government is expanding online learning with the creation of BCcampus to coordinate distance and online education programs offered by B.C.’s post-secondary institutions, Advanced Education Minister Shirley Bond announced today.

“We are honouring our New Era commitment to strengthen our network of colleges, institutes and online learning to improve post-secondary access and opportunities for students,” Bond said. “Online learning is more efficient and more flexible, and we are committed to using that technology to benefit B.C. students. BCcampus will help us move post-secondary education into the 21st century and pave the way for a more integrated, efficient and responsive system – one that will increase access, flexibility and choice for all students.”

BCcampus, a collaboration of B.C.’s colleges, university colleges, universities and institutes, will build on existing programs and services, reducing costly duplication within the system and improving efficiency for students. It will provide a single access point for learners who want to take post-secondary courses and programs by distance. Students will also be able to receive online career counselling and educational advising services.

When fully operational, BCcampus will offer:

- Access to distance and online education courses and programs available throughout B.C.’s public post-secondary system.
- A range of essential student support services – including online application, course registration and 24-hour help desk services.
- Easy transfer of courses from one institution to another.
- Flexible learning through a broad range of programs, schedules, courses and delivery formats.
- Professional development for faculty.
- Student “lounge” or “chat” areas to enhance networking and peer support.

“BCcampus will bring together the expertise and resources of all of B.C.’s public post-secondary institutions into a new collaborative model for distance education,” Bond said. “By strengthening our distance and online learning system, we make education available to all students, particularly those living in rural and remote communities, and those whose lives demand a more flexible schedule for their education.”

As well as encompassing programs from the province’s post-secondary institutions, the new system will include some programs currently housed at B.C.’s Open Learning Agency, including the Open College and Open University.

Open College and Open University programs will continue to be delivered through the Open Learning Agency until they are transferred to another public post-secondary institution. This will ensure there is little disruption to students during the transition period.

An implementation steering committee comprising representatives from B.C.'s public post-secondary institutions, students, industry and experts on distance education will guide the development of BCcampus. It will be phased in over the next two years.

“Historically, distance education has been a vital part of the post-secondary opportunities available for Canadians, whether through extension programs or correspondence courses,” said Skip Bassford, president of the University College of the Fraser Valley and a member of the BCcampus implementation steering committee.

“Today, the Internet allows students who need or prefer to learn at a distance to do so without the isolation from fellow students and faculty they previously faced. BCcampus is an important step in increasing the range of effective educational options for students throughout this province.”

Visit the province's Web site at <http://www.gov.bc.ca/> for online information and services.

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