

University of Lethbridge
First Nations' Transition Program
Faculty of Arts and Science

First Nations' Transition Program (FNTTP) 2006/2007

The success of the Pilot program prompted the University of Lethbridge to propose a three-year extension of the program, with a program enhancement that established a Health Sciences stream, opening opportunities for study in the field of health sciences. The request for government funding was successful, though word came in late Spring and made recruitment and program planning difficult. The target for ongoing funding is 24 FLEs (FLE: Full load equivalent). The recruitment target (30 – 35 students) allows for some attrition.

Recruitment activity began in May 2006 and was handled by the Recruitment Office in conjunction with Admissions, the Native Student Advisor, and the Case Worker hired by the Faculty of Arts and Science. The Program attracted 62 applicants from a diverse group of First Nations' communities in southwestern Alberta. The cohort admitted in Fall 2006 totalled 32 students; 30 are registered in Spring 2007 (see Appendix V). During the transition year, students admitted to the FNTTP are B.A. with Major "Undeclared."

Registration and Additional Services

Students admitted to the FNTTP were required to attend a 3-day orientation prior to the beginning of classes (Aug. 29 – 31, 2006), New Student Orientation (September 5, 2006), and Study Skills Workshops offered by Counselling Services (ROSS). The orientation involved the Registrar's Office, Advisors from Arts and Science and Health Sciences, Elders, the FNTTP Case Worker, the University of Lethbridge Native Student Advisor, and others. One session was set aside for Registration: each student was assisted by an Arts and Science Advisor on a one-on-one basis. Students were given separate Program Planning Sheets for each semester, with full program details and Timetable information. Students in this program do not have access to the Web registration system; course sections/labs/tutorials are open only to students in the FNTTP, and all registration is handled manually.

Curriculum

The curriculum for 2006/2007 carried on from the Pilot, with some changes based on that experience.

Three new courses were added:

1. WRIT 0100 – Essentials of Reading and Writing

- Offered in Fall 2006. Students need two semesters of writing/reading, but most come with low grades in high school English and need two full semesters before being prepared to undertake Writing 1000. The not-for-credit 0100-level course served as a prerequisite for WRIT 0500, developed for the Pilot.

2. HLSC 0500 – Introduction to Health Sciences

- Offered Spring 2007. The course was developed by the School of Health Sciences and required for students in the Health Science stream, though it can be taken as an elective by any FNTTP student.

3. BIOL 0500 – Biology Skills

- Offered in Spring 2007. This course was developed as a required course for students in the Health Sciences stream but also serves as an elective for others in the program, enhancing the science offerings.

For 2006/2007, we established a Required Core for all students, comprised of 6 courses covering key areas:

- Information Literacy (LBSC 0500)
- Math Skills (MATH 0100* and 0500)
- Effective Writing Skills (WRIT 0100* and 0500)
- Kainai Studies IDST 0500

*Not-for-credit courses.

As was the case in the Pilot, students were required to register in 3 core courses in each semester and were allowed a maximum of 4 courses in each (for a total of 8). Students who chose the HLSC stream were required to take 9 courses: the required core plus CHEM 0500, BIOL 0500, and HLSC 0500.

Tutors were provided for MATH 0100 and 0500 and for WRIT 0100 and 0500.

A lab was scheduled for CHEM 0500.

Timetabling of courses is carried out with appropriate attention given to student needs, child care, commuting times, sufficient individual study and library access time, opportunities for tutorial help, and common “spares” to allow for Study Skills workshops, registration workshops, and so on. Classes are scheduled 5 days a week, running between 9:00 and 4:00 p.m. on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, and between 9:25 and 4:20 on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

As had been the case for the Pilot, students were encouraged to make use of services provided by the First Nations’ Case Worker, the Native Student Advisor, and the Arts and Science Student Program Services Office. Elders regularly visited the FNTTP classes. A one-day field excursion to Sundial Medicine Wheel provided an opportunity for Elders, instructors, and students to interact in a setting outside the classroom and to draw on features of the natural landscape, as well as historical, cultural/spiritual attributes of the platform on which First Nations have existed for millennia.

In late Spring 2006, with the promise of continuing government commitment to the program, the FNTTP coordination team was selected, with representatives from the Faculties of Arts and Science, Management, and Education, and the School of Health Sciences; the Registrar’s Office (including Recruitment, Admissions, and Student Counselling), the Library, and the Vice-President Academic’s Office. The body has met regularly to oversee coordination of various aspects of the program and to ensure a manageable and seamless transition into the academic programs of the Faculties/School involved.

Academic Progress and Program Outcomes

Once admitted to the Faculty of Arts and Science, students in the FNTTP are governed by program and degree requirements and academic policies of the Faculty of Arts and Science and have access to all the student program services the Faculty provides. The Arts and Science Student Program Services Office assists with course registration, program planning, and other academic concerns. Academic records are reviewed at the end of each semester.

Final grades for Spring 2007 are not known as yet. We will again be documenting the outcomes of the

program by way of student exit surveys, review of individual student performance, and regular meetings of the FNTP steering committee to explore new opportunities, make improvements, and address issues which may arise.

First Nations' Transition Program, 2007/2008 and beyond

For the second year of the program, the goals for the FNTP remain the same and the guiding practices (small class sizes with enrolment restricted to FNTP students, careful selection of instructors, provision of tutors [for MATH 0100, MATH 0500, WRIT 0100 and WRIT 0500], involvement of Elders in the classrooms and on field excursions, services provided by a First Nations' Case Worker) remain in place.

The timetable for Fall 2007 is in place, and course offerings for Spring 2008 have been determined. As was the case in 2006/2007, the program requires that all students take a core of six courses, but, based on previous experience, a new skills course – Computer Science 0500 (Fundamentals of Computer Use) – will be introduced. The required core will now consist of CPSC 0500, LBSC 0500, MATH 0100*, MATH 0500, WRIT 0100* and WRIT 0500.

(*not-for-credit prerequisite courses).