

MEDIA RELEASE

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SIAST president calls for research support

National panel examines future of applied research in Canada

June 8, 2010 – The federal government should follow the cue of the private sector in leveraging the contributions of colleges to economic innovation, says Dr. Robert G. McCulloch, president and CEO of SIAST.

A keynote presenter today at the national conference of the Association of Canadian Community Colleges (ACCC), Dr. McCulloch noted that private investment in college sector applied research ventures increased 10-fold between 2006 and 2009. Federal government support in the same time period dropped \$1 million.

“The federal government took a step in the right direction with expanded support for the College and Community Innovation (CCI) program in the 2010 budget,” Dr. McCulloch says. “But to really capture the benefits of college expertise and connections, the government needs to move further, and it needs to expand the scope of its investment.”

In the 2010 budget, the federal government committed \$30 million annually to CCI. ACCC had called on the government to increase funding to \$50 million per year, while contributing the same amount annually to college-based technology centres.

“Traditionally, the federal government has tended to support pure research at universities,” Dr. McCulloch said, citing an ACCC report. “That research may produce long-term benefits, but it will not typically offer the near-term commercial gains available through applied research joint ventures between the private sector and colleges. Investing in applied research now will give us the economic strength to benefit from pure research later.”

Dr. McCulloch was one of three panellists during a session on the future of science, technology and innovation in Canada. Co-presenters were Paul Charette, chairman of the board of Bird Construction, a \$1-billion Manitoba firm, and Denise Amyot, president and CEO of the Canada Science and Technology Museum Corporation.

SIAST became eligible to apply for Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council (NSERC) funding last year and this year became eligible to apply for Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) funding.

The CCI program is managed by the NSERC in collaboration with the Canadian Institutes of Health Research and SSHRC.

SIAST is Saskatchewan's primary public institution for post-secondary technical education and skills training, recognized nationally and internationally for its expertise and innovation. More than 14,000 students were enrolled in SIAST programs in the most recent academic year; additionally, the organization drew almost 30,000 individual course registrations. Through program and course registrations, SIAST served almost 26,000 distinct students with programs that touch every sector of the economy. SIAST operates campuses in Moose Jaw, Prince Albert, Regina and Saskatoon, and provides a number of courses and programs through distance education.

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