Throughout 2017, Ontario celebrated a huge milestone in the province’s history – the 50th anniversary of the college system.

It was 50 years ago that Ontario colleges first got their start in the province to give more people access to post-secondary education. Before 1967, high school students had relatively few options and only a handful went on to university.

Former premier William G. Davis set out to change the education landscape in the 1960s when he envisioned a system that would offer technical, technological and practical programs that could lead to rewarding careers.

Colleges have grown and evolved throughout the years while enhancing their core strength: providing people with the qualifications and expertise to find meaningful employment in tune with the economy’s needs.

In year three of its current strategic plan, Fuelling Prosperity, Colleges Ontario and the 24 colleges made strides on policy measures and initiatives that will see greater numbers of students attain a post-secondary education that effectively prepares them for meaningful employment.

Of particular note in 2017-18, the Ontario government announced significant investments in upgrades and new programs that bolster the colleges’ leading role in tackling climate change.

As well, the government agreed to help colleges deliver more work-related opportunities that allow graduates to secure employment.

Finally, Colleges Ontario – in collaboration with student associations and the university sector – has championed the importance of enhancing the supports and services for students with mental health challenges.

The following are the highlights of how the sector continued to fulfil its goals in 2017-2018.

Environmental leadership gets green light

Colleges have been leaders in addressing Ontario’s Climate Change Action Plan by pushing for and adopting significant measures to reduce carbon emissions on campuses.
In February 2018, following successful lobbying efforts by the colleges, Advanced Education and Skills Development Minister Mitzi Hunter and Environment and Climate Change Minister Chris Ballard (a Humber College graduate) announced an investment into a comprehensive strategy to significantly reduce carbon emissions throughout the college system.

In 2017-18, Ontario invested $100 million in grants and made available up to $100 million in interest-free loans to retrofit college facilities through the Greenhouse Gas Campus Retrofit Program.

These significant investments will support a range of capital construction and retrofit projects, as well as new programs to produce more graduates for careers specific to the clean economy.

**Applied research gets boost**

In February 2018, Research, Innovation and Science Minister Reza Moridi announced a $13-million investment in 61 applied research projects at 22 colleges.

The colleges’ applied research partnerships with businesses provide opportunities for students to participate in projects that produce real-world results, such as the creation of innovative new products that can be taken to market.

The projects announced in early 2018 included a Sheridan College study of the use of virtual humans in health-care training and a project at Mohawk College that allows students to study the use of drones to survey buildings.

**Innovation fund launches graduate initiatives**

The William G. Davis Innovation Fund was launched last year as part of the celebration of the Ontario colleges’ 50th anniversary in 2017.

As a tribute to the former premier’s vision in creating Ontario’s college system, the fund encouraged students and alumni to submit proposals for creative projects that would make an impact within the province or beyond in the areas of entrepreneurship, health, welfare, arts and culture, or community.

More than 80 innovative proposals were submitted and promoted online. In November 2017, a panel of third-party judges awarded two prizes. DSW Cooperative, a proposal from Algonquin College graduates, received a $15,000 first prize for its internet venture that aims to transform the current model of care by more effectively matching patients and developmental services workers.

A researcher at Sheridan’s Screen Industries Research and Training Centre wears a facial rig in preparation for performance capture, which will translate to a virtual human character.
The $5,000 second prize went to Ripple Farms Inc., a pilot project from two Seneca College graduates, which may one day revolutionize farming by growing plants using recirculated water fertilized by fish.

Throughout the year, the contest attracted significant attention on social media. News stories about the fund also appeared in the Hamilton Spectator, the North Bay Nugget, the Sarnia Observer and on CTV News in northern Ontario.

**Colleges showcase creativity at Queens Park**

As part of the annual College Day celebrations at Queen’s Park, a new morning exhibit was created that showcased real-life examples of innovation and creativity at the colleges.

Aptly named the Creativity Zone, the March 2017 event allowed MPPs and civil servants to witness examples of the excellence and ingenuity that exists throughout Ontario’s colleges.

Among the exhibits were an award-winning table designed using a 3D CAD system from Conestoga College; a full-body exo-skeleton power suit for firefighters from Georgian College; a Sheridan College drone used to inspect residential power lines; an early-warning tool for at-risk students from Collège La Cité; and an interactive ‘super taster’ exhibit from George Brown College that demonstrated sensory profiling.

As many as 200 MPPs and Queen’s Park staff engaged with the exhibits and college representatives throughout the morning. Successful initiatives such as the Creativity Zone have helped elevate College Day to one of the largest and most popular stakeholder events at Queen’s Park.

**Highlighting leadership in the community**

Another highlight during the colleges’ 50th anniversary celebrations was the Amazing 50 Speaker Series – a TED Talks-styled initiative to bring leading speakers to the participating college’s community. The campus-wide events attracted sizeable audiences and generated local media coverage.

A number of colleges featured speaking events with long-time TVO host and author Steve Paikin. Paikin discussed his most recent book, *Bill Davis*, about the former Ontario premier and his role in establishing the Ontario college system.

Other speakers included Sean Conway, the former Ontario cabinet minister; Merilyn Simonds, author of *The Convict Lover*; Silken Laumann, the Canadian champion rower; and Tricia Logan, education and outreach co-ordinator for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.
Future leaders attain executive training

In 2017, the College Centre of Excellence – a joint venture of Colleges Ontario and the College Employer Council – created College Leadership Excellence (CLE), a program to support colleges’ succession planning through new training opportunities for future leaders.

Designed as a two-year pilot plan, the CLE program provides on-track individuals in senior middle management with specific knowledge and skills to prepare them for future senior executive positions. In its introductory year, over 40 college staff enrolled in the program.

Participants receive certificates upon completion of mandatory and elective sessions in areas such as understanding college financial statements, leadership accountability, achieving diversity on boards, and risk management.

CLE takes advantage of some of the offerings of the College Centre of Board Excellence (CCBE), a 2012 joint initiative of Colleges Ontario and the College Employer Council that provides leadership and governance training to members of college boards and staff that work with the boards. To date, 962 people have participated in the CCBE program.

Enhancement of student learning

The Ontario government formally recognized the importance of the colleges’ 50th anniversary celebration with the announcement of $50 million in one-time funding to strengthen the student experience on campuses.

A sum of $48 million went towards major college initiatives that enhanced student learning, such as the purchase of specialized software for teaching, new lab and shop equipment, and technology to modernize existing classrooms.
The remaining $2 million supported the Northern Colleges Collaboration, a partnership between colleges in northern Ontario to improve student access to education in the north.

**Promoting fiscal sustainability**

Responding to lobbying by Colleges Ontario and the colleges, the provincial government announced in its 2017 budget that it was providing $10 million to support college sustainability in 2017-18, which would increase to $16.5 million in 2018-19 and beyond. While there is more to be done to ensure colleges remain fiscally viable, the budget announcement recognized the challenges facing the sector.

As part of its budget commitments in 2017, the provincial government also announced about $3 million in funding increases per year over three years to strengthen the programs and services at colleges for students with mental health issues.

This new funding included $100,000 per college to allow each college to hire counselling support, along with funding to support the Centre for Innovation in Campus Mental Health and the Good2Talk/Allo, j'écoute mental health helpline, which provides direct counselling and referral services 24 hours a day, seven days a week in English and French.

**Advocacy to help graduates land careers**

Without work-related experience, many graduates find it challenging to land their first job.

Responding to recommendations from Ontario’s colleges and other stakeholders, the provincial government committed $190 million in 2017 to create 40,000 new work-related learning opportunities for students through its Career Kick-Start strategy.

The strategy provides investments to create and expand experiential learning activities and career readiness programs for elementary, secondary and post-secondary students, as well as recent graduates of universities and colleges. Through the strategy, post-secondary students also have free access to high-quality, skills-focused online learning through Lynda.com.

**Addressing the deferred maintenance backlog**

Extensive advocacy by Colleges Ontario over some years led to a 2017 report by the Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development that recommends significant enhancements in capital funding for colleges.
Based on evidence provided by Colleges Ontario and the Council of Ontario Universities, the report recommends that funding for deferred maintenance in the post-secondary sector be quadrupled to $255 million annually from $60 million in 2017-18.

The report also calls for the college equipment renewal fund to be doubled to $16 million a year and that a new classroom and technology modernization fund be established at an annual $30 million a year. As well, the report said a formal approval and planning process should be developed for major capital projects.

The report bolsters the colleges’ efforts to pursue enhanced provincial funding for capital projects.

Launching an apprenticeship web portal as a one-stop location for all apprenticeship information and resources.

Ontario’s colleges continue to urge the government to build on the expertise that is already in place by expanding the Ontario College Application Service to include applications to apprenticeship programs. The colleges can play a key role in registering apprentices, promoting apprenticeship training and working with employers to connect them with apprentices.

Streamlining program approvals

Advanced Education and Skills Development Minister Mitzie Hunter is reviewing recommendations from a joint ministry/Colleges Ontario 2017 working group that would streamline the approvals process for college programs.

The recommendations include a proposal to speed up the approvals process for new degree programs at colleges by allowing the Postsecondary Education Quality Assessment Board to assess applications that align with a college’s strategic mandate agreement without seeking the minister’s approval.
Meeting the needs of at-risk students

Ontario’s colleges continued to be champions for some of the province’s most vulnerable students.

In October 2017, a report was released by Deloitte Canada that raised awareness of the cost pressures at colleges for essential supports and services for at-risk students. The report said colleges face a shortfall of more than $160 million a year.

The report said colleges were diverting dollars from college operations and academic programming to address the shortfall but that approach isn’t sustainable.

The Deloitte report generated prominent coverage in the Toronto Star and other Ontario newspapers. Former Advanced Education and Skills Development minister Deb Matthews responded that she had “clearly” heard the message and the province would continue to work with colleges to improve the accessibility and quality of mental health supports for students.

Tackling student mental health

Following on its advocacy efforts with the Deloitte report, Colleges Ontario joined forces with the College Student Alliance, the Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance and the Council of Ontario Universities to push for improved supports for post-secondary students with mental health issues.

The associations produced a series of recommendations to government in a report titled *In It Together*, which called for a whole of community approach by government, health-care providers, community agencies, student associations and post-secondary institutions.

The report was launched in November 2017 at a breakfast at Queen’s Park that was attended by 80 MPPs. The report attracted enormous political support and was cited during debates in the legislature. It also garnered significant media coverage, including a front-page story in Metro Canada, prime-time interviews on CBC News Now, and a Canadian Press story that appeared in the National Post, the Hamilton Spectator, the Waterloo Region Record and elsewhere. The report also received prominent coverage in a later column in the Globe and Mail.

As well, all three provincial parties pledged to improve support for mental health services. In March 2018, the government announced a $2.1-billion investment in a whole of community approach to mental health services that will see improvements to student mental health supports.
Provincewide 50th anniversary trailer tour

One of the biggest highlights in the 50th anniversary celebrations in 2017 was the provincewide fall tour of a fully decked 42-foot trailer emblazoned with the anniversary’s Amazing 50 logo.

The trailer toured across Ontario, making stops at the colleges to coincide with many anniversary activities taking place on campuses. Students, alumni, faculty and community members were invited to visit the trailer to learn about the initiatives of their local college.

The trailer offered a social media wall displaying real-time tweets from people using the hashtag #Amazing50. Visitors could also go head-to-head playing an interactive trivia game about the colleges or vote for their favourite William G. Davis Innovation Fund submission.

The trailer tour and related activities generated favourable attention in news media throughout the province, including stories in the London Free Press, the Waterloo Region Record, the Windsor Star, the Thunder Bay Chronicle-Journal, the Peterborough Examiner, the Timmins Daily Press and many others.

Annual conference motivates colleges

Colleges Ontario’s annual conference, the Higher Education Summit, received praise from attendees for its celebratory tone and interest-packed agenda.

Among the highlights was a motivational speech by Book of Awesome author Neil Pasricha, a deep look at space with NASA’s former chief scientist, Ellen Stofan, and a discussion about the future of technology by Wired magazine editor Nicholas Thompson.

The 2017 conference also included an expanded area for 40 exhibitors called the Next 50 Expo, featuring a number of innovative technology products and several inspired student displays. Delegates had...
opportunities to visit the 42-foot trailer from the 50th anniversary provincewide tour and were entertained by acrobats and aerialists at a 50th anniversary celebration on the Sunday evening.

The 25th annual Premier’s Awards gala celebrating the achievements of Ontario’s college graduates was held on the final night of the conference. About 800 people attended the event, which applauded college graduates’ successes in Ontario and throughout the world.

The Premier’s Awards winners in 2017 included sexual-trafficking victims advocate Natasha Falle, EllisDon Corporation global director Andrew Bowerbank, and Emmy Award-winning casting director Stephanie Gorin.

College Week gets official proclamation

As a tribute to the 50th anniversary of the colleges, Queen’s Park officially proclaimed the week of April 3 as College Week in Ontario.

Throughout the province, college students took part in clean-up days, tree plantings, meal preparations for people in need, and other student volunteer events to support college communities. As well, Colleges Ontario chair Fred Gibbons delivered a luncheon address to the Canadian Club of Toronto that explored the need to rethink college education in the fourth industrial revolution.

Politicians from all three parties paid tribute to the sector in speeches in the legislature. College presidents and board chairs also joined with Premier Kathleen Wynne and former minister Deb Matthews for a commemorative photo with former premier William G. Davis, the founder of the college system.
Our partners

The Ontario College Quality Assurance Service (OCQAS)

The Ontario College Quality Assurance Service (OCQAS) is the oversight body for the college’s self-regulatory system that was established in 2005. OCQAS operates two quality assurance services for the colleges: the credentials validation service (CVS) at the program level; and the college quality assurance audit process (CQAAP) at the institutional level.

OCQAS operates within the values of accountability, transparency and consistency. The first annual report marks an important milestone in reflecting these values. It captures all the activities and processes OCQAS undertakes to service and support the colleges in their continuous work towards enhancing their quality assurance mechanisms.

Ontario College Application Service (OCAS)

OCAS is lucky enough to leave its mark on the world every day, providing the pathways and support that help over 200,000 individuals every year as they take the first step toward a brighter future. As a shared service provider, OCAS also leverages the power of data, people, and partnerships to deliver leading-edge systems, dependable technology, and cost-effective solutions across the higher education sector.

2017 was a big year for OCAS, as the organization celebrated 25 years of serving applicants, partners, and stakeholders. Drawing on the strength of a new brand, and a growing suite of shared service offerings, OCAS continued to deliver on its commitment to providing high-quality service and support to its customers.

Looking to the heart of its business, OCAS introduced a new look and feel for the ontariocolleges.ca and collegesdelontario.ca websites, making it easier for prospective applicants to explore and connect with Ontario’s colleges and their programs. Along with a refreshed design, the applicant-facing websites were enhanced with a more robust program search tool and enriched college profiles, featuring messaging, images and videos straight from the colleges themselves.

In honour of its 25th year, OCAS launched the ontariocolleges.ca Changing Tomorrow Award to help applicants on the next phase of their journey to a brighter future. The award gives 25 college applicants the opportunity to receive $1,500 toward their college tuition. In order to enter, applicants were asked to share what their tomorrow looks like, and how a college education will help them achieve their dreams. After receiving over 1,000 submissions, a team of OCAS staff members is currently working to review the entries and determine the 25 winners, who will be announced in May 2018.
Following the successful launch of the international college portal in 2016, OCAS rolled out its complete international application service (IAS) – a platform designed to simplify international application and admissions processes for Ontario’s colleges, applicants and agents. The IAS helps colleges save time and money, while significantly improving the speed and quality of service for applicants. To date, seven colleges have signed on to use the OCAS international application service.

In 2017, OCAS expanded its tier 1 customer support service, partnering with Lambton College to provide phone support to its students during the busiest periods of the academic year. The OCAS customer contact centre also utilized its outbound calling capabilities as part of a collaboration with Georgian College, reaching out to Georgian students to gain data and understanding of the drivers behind their student retention. Two more colleges – Niagara and St. Clair – have recently signed on to take advantage of this opt-in service offering.

Leveraging the technology behind its existing custom-branded application, OCAS collaborated with the Ontario Council on Articulation and Transfer (ONCAT) to develop a new application pathway for students interested in transferring from college diploma to college degree programs. With the addition of Apply Now links to the ONTransfer.ca website, students can begin their application, with one click. OCAS has also partnered with the makers of the myBlueprint Education Planner to create a similar experience for high school students using the career development platform.

Finally, 2017 also saw the formation of a new partnership between OCAS and the Ontario Student Assistance Program to simplify the process of applying for financial aid for college applicants. As a result of this new endeavor, college applicants can apply to receive financial aid right from their college application, and view estimates of the amount of funding they can expect to receive based on their program selections.

With many new projects already underway, OCAS will continue in 2018 to focus on providing the high level of service their college partners have come to depend on, while also growing and exploring new partnerships with organizations in the higher education sector.
Financial statements summary

**STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION**
March 31, 2017, with comparative figures for 2016

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assets</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2016</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Current assets</td>
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<td>7,545,548</td>
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<tr>
<td>Capital assets</td>
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<td><strong>Total assets</strong></td>
<td><strong>8,247,767</strong></td>
<td><strong>7,780,523</strong></td>
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**Liabilities and net assets**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Liabilities and net assets</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2016</th>
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<tr>
<td>Current liabilities</td>
<td>5,705,934</td>
<td>5,356,742</td>
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<tr>
<td>Net assets</td>
<td>2,541,833</td>
<td>2,423,781</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total liabilities and net assets</strong></td>
<td><strong>8,247,767</strong></td>
<td><strong>7,780,523</strong></td>
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**STATEMENT OF CHANGES IN NET ASSETS**
Year ended March 31, 2017, with comparative figures for 2016

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Net assets, beginning of year</th>
<th>2,423,781</th>
<th>2,329,929</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Excess of revenue over expenses</td>
<td>118,052</td>
<td>93,852</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Balance, end of year</strong></td>
<td><strong>2,541,833</strong></td>
<td><strong>2,423,781</strong></td>
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**STATEMENT OF OPERATIONS**
Year ended March 31, 2017, with comparative figures for 2016

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<tr>
<th>Revenue</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Excess of revenue over expenses</strong></td>
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<td><strong>93,852</strong></td>
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