



ANNUAL REPORT

2020 // 2021





COLLEGES PIVOT TO OVERCOME HISTORIC CHALLENGES

“Our colleges have demonstrated unwavering commitment to delivering results for Ontario as well as Ontario students.”

– Hon. Ross Romano
Minister of Colleges and Universities

In a year like no other, the college sector’s nimbleness and innovative spirit played a prominent role in the province’s response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Despite the many hurdles created by the pandemic, Ontario’s colleges delivered a high-quality post-secondary education that ensured students acquired the expertise and qualifications to succeed in their careers.

An online [video](#) profiled the vast range of quality programs at colleges and the sector’s many contributions to the delivery of critical care throughout the province.

As Ontario emerges from the pandemic, colleges will be pivotal to powering economic renewal.

A number of substantive policy improvements achieved in 2020-21 will bolster the strength of college education in Ontario. These include the launch of new independent nursing degree programs to fill the demand for more nurses and the expansion of virtual learning options and micro-credential retraining programs.

The following report summarizes a number of the key achievements from the most challenging year in recent memory.

COLLEGES RESPOND TO THE PANDEMIC

Ontario's colleges continued to support the front-line efforts to deliver quality care throughout the province. Colleges designed, manufactured and donated much needed personal protective equipment. They also participated in essential programs such as the mass vaccination sites provided at [Centennial College](#) and [Seneca College](#) in Toronto.

At the same time, Colleges Ontario collaborated with college presidents and leaders throughout the sector on recommendations to the government to ensure students would continue to receive high-quality post-secondary education.

This led to a quick response from the government in spring 2020 of \$25 million in emergency funding for post-secondary education, with more than half of the funding directed to colleges.

Over the longer term, the province responded to the sector's detailed research and analysis with measures to protect the quality of programs. This resulted in:

- A more than 100 per cent increase in government funding for repairs to college facilities (\$1.6 billion over the next decade).
- Approval for pilot programs in summer 2020 to allow students in select programs to return to campuses to complete required in-person training.
- Approval from the Ontario government to delay a number of routine reporting requirements.



New program fast tracks training of PSWs

Colleges also collaborated with the provincial government to create a new accelerated program to train a huge number of new personal support workers (PSWs) for long-term care homes and other facilities.

The \$115-million program [announced](#) in February 2021 aims to graduate more than 8,000 PSWs by fall 2021. It included funding to cover tuition costs and other expenses for students in accelerated programs that could be completed in six months (rather than the standard eight months) by increasing the number of study hours per week.

Applications to the accelerated programs started in March 2021 and the programs were quickly filled at a number of colleges.

“We’re proud of the excellent quality of care delivered by our college graduates,” [said](#) Linda Franklin, the president and CEO of Colleges Ontario, when the program was announced. “We were pleased to collaborate with the government to enhance the support for so many of our most vulnerable citizens.



Become a
**PERSONAL
SUPPORT
WORKER
(PSW)**
in just six months!



**New accelerated program includes
no tuition fee, funding support and
a paid work placement**

This new accelerated program at Ontario's colleges includes:


- No tuition fee and funding for expenses such as textbooks and other supplies.
- A condensed schedule that allows you to graduate with a full PSW credential in six months.
- Opportunities early in the program to get hands-on experience.
- A paid work placement in the final three months of the program.

You can start your program on April 5, May 10 or June 14.

For more information and to apply, visit
ontariocolleges.ca/psw

ontariocolleges.ca
by  OCAS

This program is being funded by the Ontario government.



PRIORITIES IN THE STRATEGIC PLAN, “ONTARIO’S COLLEGES: CATALYSTS FOR CAREER SUCCESS”

Ontario’s colleges will produce a 21st century workforce for a new age of rapid automation. More people will get the expertise that is pivotal to economic growth and successful communities.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY **1** // PUT ONTARIO AT THE FOREFRONT OF INNOVATION

Province adopts virtual learning recommendations

Detailed recommendations from Ontario’s colleges provided much of the foundation for a \$50-million virtual learning strategy [announced](#) by Colleges and Universities Minister Ross Romano in December 2020.

The strategy adopted the colleges’ recommendations to support the development of alternate course delivery models and to invest in areas such as software upgrades and more training for faculty and students. The virtual learning strategy will be run by eCampusOntario, which launched an application process for eligible projects in January 2021.

The government also responded to advocacy by the colleges and others for an expansion of broadband capacity, especially in smaller and remote areas where it can be more challenging for students to access online learning.

Starting in 2021-22, the government is providing an additional \$21.4 million over two years to expand the access to high-quality, in-demand, globally competitive virtual education.

This is in addition to the \$50 million announced in December 2020. It will improve the student experience and ensure more graduates acquire the expertise to contribute to Ontario’s economic recovery.

Colleges leap forward in innovation and entrepreneurship

Ontario colleges partner with over 1,300 businesses each year on applied research projects that help those businesses become more innovative and efficient, fuelling economic growth and excellent returns on government investments.

Examples of recent successful partnerships included:

- **Lambton College** in Sarnia collaborated with a California-based plant on breakthrough technology that creates new products from plastic bottles and containers. This led to the construction of a \$40-million oxidation plant in Sarnia.
- **Sheridan College** in Oakville and an Ontario-based telehealth company designed a device that diagnoses pneumonia in low-resource settings. The device determines whether someone needs more care without requiring children and adults to visit hospital emergency rooms.
- Students at **Cambrian College** in Sudbury worked with a company on research to convert powertrains to run on electric batteries rather than diesel fuel. The company was so impressed with the students' work that it hired one of the students as a full-time employee.
- **Durham College** students in Oshawa have developed two new systems for local business ConnexHealth. These new systems, involving AI, create more access to much-needed health-care services online, particularly for vulnerable people. ConnexHealth recently launched these new services, which also respond to growing needs created by the pandemic.
- **Fleming College** in Peterborough is working with Quantwave Technologies Inc. to investigate the capability of an early-warning system for COVID-19 outbreaks in wastewater.



Colleges will deliver improved access to quality programs to ensure everyone has the opportunity to fulfil their ambitions.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY **2** // **ADVANCE LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL**

New capital funding for colleges

The [2021 Ontario Budget](#) tabled in March 2021 included investments to sustain quality programs at colleges.

The budget announced an extension of funding for capital repairs at colleges and universities, representing a \$144-million investment in 2021-22, a \$178-million investment in 2022-23 and \$171 million in 2023-24. The province also [announced](#) the college equipment renewal fund was being extended until 2023-24 at \$20 million a year.

The increased funding will help Ontario's colleges address the ongoing need for the maintenance, renovation and modernization of facilities.

Strides in mental health

Ontario's colleges have continued to champion measures to improve the supports for students dealing with mental health and addiction challenges.

In response to advocacy by the colleges and their partners in the universities and student associations, Colleges and Universities Minister Ross Romano announced \$7 million in additional funding to expand post-secondary students' access to mental health services in 2020-21.

The additional funding responded to the increased pressures created by the COVID-19 pandemic. It was part of a larger investment of \$147 million to increase access to supports across the general population.

Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) work continues

Colleges continued to make progress responding to the recommendations from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's calls to action.

New provincial funding was secured, expanding content on the Ontario libraries' learning portal, which is a resource website for all college students and faculty. The expansion is a collaborative project between the sector's Indigenous Peoples Education Circle (IPEC) and College Libraries Ontario (CLO).

Other advancements included Centennial College and Seneca College in Toronto partnering on new construction projects that are guided by Indigenous principles and talent, as was written in [Now magazine](#) and [Blog TO](#).



\$144 million

investment in 20/21
for capital repairs



\$7 million

investment in 20/21
to increase mental health
support



Increased funding

for Indigenous resource
materials

Colleges will create new opportunities for people to strengthen their qualifications and expertise

STRATEGIC PRIORITY **3** // REVITALIZE COLLEGE EDUCATION IN ONTARIO

Colleges launch independent nursing degrees

Ontario's colleges have launched new independent nursing degree programs in 2021 that will help fill the demand for more nurses.

The programs were developed after colleges won provincial approval in 2020 to offer independent bachelor of science degrees in nursing. Prior to the policy change, colleges wishing to offer such programs were required to find a university partner.

The decision to allow colleges to offer their own independent programs was endorsed by the Colleges of Nurses of Ontario in late 2020 and two new independent programs were announced in 2021. Students have been applying to programs at Humber College in Toronto and St. Lawrence College in Kingston that begin in fall 2021.

"This will change the face of health care in our province for years to come," Premier Doug Ford said at a news event in March 2021 to officially mark the launch of Humber's program.

Expanding micro-credential retraining opportunities

The Ontario government's fall budget released in November 2020 recognized the colleges' successes delivering micro-credential retraining programs.

Micro-credential programs are short-term retraining and upskilling programs that train people for new careers within a short time span.

A white paper commissioned by Ontario's colleges in 2020, called [The Future of Ontario's Workers](#), emphasized the importance of the colleges' programs. The paper, by the StrategyCorp Institute of Public Policy and Economy, called for new investments to expand micro-credential programs.

Ontario's colleges also provided a number of [detailed recommendations](#) to Colleges and Universities Minister Ross Romano during consultations in summer 2020 on modernizing post-secondary education.

In response, the government's fall budget announced \$59.5 million to expand micro-credential retraining and identified the public colleges as primary deliverers of the programs.

"This is a positive step in the province's plan to promote economic renewal," [said](#) Linda Franklin, the president and CEO of Colleges Ontario. "The government clearly recognizes the value of upskilling and retraining in the new economy."

“The new funding will allow more unemployed people to quickly acquire specific skills that equip them to return to the workforce.”

The expansion of the micro-credential programs was further enhanced in March 2021 when Minister Romano announced that students in nearly 600 micro-credential programs would be eligible for grants and loans under the Ontario Student Assistance Program (OSAP).



Speakers

One of the highlights of the year is the annual [Higher Education Summit](#). One of Canada’s premier conferences on post-secondary education, the annual event organized by Colleges Ontario attracts marquee speakers from across the globe and a typical audience of more than 800 delegates.

In 2020, the in-person event was unable to proceed due to the global pandemic. However, Colleges Ontario ensured post-secondary leaders and others continued to hear insights from recognized speakers on many of today’s most topical issues.

In November 2020, Colleges Ontario ran its first-ever virtual speaker series, entitled [Striving and Thriving: New insights for unprecedented times](#).

The free series was open to all and featured four sought-after speakers for one-hour webinars over four consecutive days.

Activist and author Desmond Cole kicked off the series. Cole has been a leading figure in the struggle for Black liberation in Canada. His book, “The Skin We’re In,” was named one of Indigo’s 10 best books of 2020.

Another featured speaker was David Frum, an author, political pundit and staff writer at The Atlantic. He analyzed the results of the U.S. election and what it means for Canada. The other featured speakers were Wired magazine editor-in-chief Nicholas Thompson and personal-resilience expert Garry Watanabe.

The series received extremely positive feedback and each session had anywhere from 650 to 1,100 IP addresses tune in (the number of attendees could have actually been even more).

PARTNERS

The Ontario College Quality Assurance Service (OCQAS)



Ontario College Quality Assurance Service

Service de l'assurance de la qualité des
collèges de l'Ontario

The Ontario College Quality Assurance Service 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 at the program level and the college quality assurance audit process at the institutional level.

A report describing the activities of the credential validation service can be found online in [English](#) and [French](#).

The emphasis in 2020-21 was on adaptability, continuous improvement and connection:

- a) The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted higher education and OCQAS' college quality assurance audit process (CQAAP) was no exception. To be able to conclude the CQAAP of the colleges that had audits scheduled in the 2019-2020 academic year, OCQAS developed and implemented guidelines and protocols in summer 2020 for virtual site visits.
- b) OCQAS engaged in a stakeholder review of the credential validation service (CVS), which received very valuable feedback. The organization also developed a plan to implement positive changes in response to the suggested areas of improvement and continue to provide timely and constructive feedback to the Ontario college system in all program submissions to uphold value in the services provided.
- c) OCQAS moved to OCAS for the development and hosting of its CVS online anytime/anywhere tool. In turn, the tool is more stable and OCQAS now has a team of developers supporting its efforts.
- d) OCQAS applied and received full recognition from the International Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education as an agency that follows [Guidelines of Good Practice](#).
- e) The organization did a [virtual tour](#) of the 24 colleges to acquaint or re-acquaint it with the quality assurance teams at the colleges. The tour provided the opportunity for OCQAS staff to meet many new faces, provide updates on what is happening at OCQAS and to learn about what is new and upcoming from the colleges.

The combined value of these strategies allowed OCQAS to engage all stakeholders in activities that are relevant in their potential, future or current work with OCQAS by making sure the workings of the unit are always under review, are transparent and continue to serve the needs of users.



Ontario College Application Services (OCAS)

As an organization, OCAS leaves its mark on the world every day, providing the pathways and support that help over 250,000 individuals each year as they take the first step toward a brighter future. As a shared services and technologies 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.

Like many organizations, OCAS' focus for 2020-21 was on adapting to meet the unprecedented challenges presented by the global pandemic, while also supporting college partners during this trying time. The organization's strategic growth and effective transition to temporary full-time remote work allowed OCAS to centre its efforts on building its shared services and technologies in areas that directly benefit the colleges.

For example, OCAS' tier 1 customer support and outbound calling services saw significant growth in 2020-21. Six colleges now take advantage of this service, which allows colleges to offload calls to OCAS during busy periods and focus on responding to more critical or nuanced challenges in service to students. In total, the OCAS contact centre handled over 100,000 incoming calls and made nearly 10,000 outbound calls across 26 campaigns on behalf of its partner colleges in 2020.

Building on the success of last year's website services projects, OCAS lent its expertise in 2020-21 toward designing and developing three college websites. Having already created two microsites for St. Lawrence College (SLC) in late 2019, SLC turned to OCAS again to refresh its core website. The new [St. Lawrence College website](#) provides a modern, responsive experience for students that allows them to find information quickly and easily. In late 2020, Conestoga College reached out to OCAS to create microsites highlighting its applied research and continuing education departments. Work on these microsites is well underway, with both projected to launch in 2021.

Finally, one of the year's noteworthy successes for OCAS was the launch of Apply – a new domestic application experience designed to make the application process easier and more engaging for learners. Launched in the summer of 2020, the refreshed application experience was developed in close collaboration with college partners and built entirely in-house, making it faster, easier and more cost-effective to maintain.

In the year ahead, OCAS will work on exciting initiatives in key areas, including continuous learning, micro-credentials and an all-new research publication series. With the challenges of the pandemic still being felt in 2021, OCAS will also continue to explore opportunities to extend its shared services and technologies to support the ongoing needs of colleges, organizations and initiatives across the higher education ecosystem.



FINANCIAL STATEMENTS SUMMARY

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

March 31, 2020, with comparative figures for 2019

Assets	2020	2019
Current assets	6,762,716	7,191,804
Long-term assets	–	500,924
Capital assets	7,228,879	6,248,204
Total assets	13,991,595	13,940,932

Liabilities and net assets

Current liabilities	4,353,914	4,503,677
Deferred capital contributions	3,259,675	3,098,963
Long-term liabilities	3,247,054	3,330,609
Net assets	3,130,952	3,007,683
Total liabilities and net assets	13,991,595	13,940,932

STATEMENT OF CHANGES IN NET ASSETS

Year ended March 31, 2020, with comparative figures for 2019

Net assets, beginning of year	3,007,683	2,706,271
Excess of revenue over expenses	123,269	301,412
Balance, end of year	3,130,952	3,007,683

STATEMENT OF OPERATIONS

Year ended March 31, 2020, with comparative figures for 2019

Revenue	10,898,477	10,142,427
Expenses	10,775,208	9,841,015
Excess of revenue over expenses	123,269	301,412