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PREPARING CEGEP STUDENTS FOR UNIVERSITY EDUCATION:
A CASE STUDY

by

Philip J. Taylor

A Thesis

Submitted to

The Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research

McGill University, Montreal, Quebec

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts in

Administration and Policy Studies in Education

July, 1995

RUNNING HEAD: CEGEP



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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to obtain a picture of the features of the Liberal Arts Honours Program at Vanier College, St. Laurent, Montreal, which contributed to students' preparation for university. The chief sources of information were drawn from students, teachers, and administrators. A questionnaire was administered to fifty-three students. An interview-protocol was also used to collect in-depth data from six first-year and six second-year students, and six teachers, and three administrators. Analysis of data suggested that 70% of students and also 80% of the majority of the participants in this study were satisfied with Vanier College's pre-university program. Students' satisfaction was due to the following factors: academic rigor, good teaching, a highly motivated student body, appropriate administrative support, encouragement from peers and the home, and a positive school climate. The study concluded that students were quite well prepared for universities, such as McGill University, in basic academic skills. The study focused on positive qualities that the Honours program possessed. This study, being the first to examine the actual operations of a successful CEGEP pre-university training program, enriches our understandings of the CEGEP system and adds to the limited amount of information on this topic.

Résumé

L'objet de cette étude fut de déterminer l'ensemble des caractéristiques qui constitue une préparation universitaire adéquate pour les étudiants du Programme D'Honneur en Arts Libéral en cours au Collège Vanier, St-Laurent, Montréal.

La source principale d'information fut tirer des impressions d'étudiants, des professeurs et administrateurs. Un questionnaire fut administrer auprès de 53 étudiants. Afin d'obtenir une donnée plus spécifique, 6 étudiants du premier niveau, 6 étudiants du deuxième niveau, 6 professeurs et 3 administrateurs participèrent à un protocole d'entrevue. L'information suggère que 70% des étudiants et 80% de tous les autres participants de cette étude furent satisfaits de leurs éducation au CEGEP. Les éléments principaux démontrant la satisfaction des étudiants se resument ainsi: a rigueur académique l'eseignement efficace, l'enthousiasme des étudiants , le soutien adéquat 'administration, la solidarité entre eux, l'encouragement au sein de la famille et un climat scolaire positif.

Cette étude conclue que les étudiants etais assez bien préparés à poursuivre leurs études à l'université tel McGill. L'objectif de cette étude relève les attributs positifs qui garantissent le succès du Pogramme D'Honneur. Cette étude fut la première à examiner les proceédures actuelles permettant le développement des compétences académiques au programme pré-universitaire du CEGEP. Elle nous a permis d'enrichir nos conaissance à l'égard du programme CEGEP et a aussi ajouté à l'information existante limitée disponible à ce sujet.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Background

This study explores ways that CEGEP students were prepared academically for university. The Liberal Arts Honours Program of Vanier College was examined as an example of pre-university training and perspectives of students, teachers, and administrators were analysed. CEGEPs (Collèges d'enseignement général et professionnel) are colleges that offer two-year pre-university education. In Quebec CEGEP is a transitional point between high school and university, and there is no passage from high school to university in Quebec without the completion of CEGEP (Henchey & Burgess, p. 10). This study focused on the role played by Vanier College in this transitional process. To measure whether students were adequately prepared I used the criteria articulated by McGill University for students entering the social sciences and humanities department. From here, I compared CEGEP education in the Liberal Arts Honours Program at Vanier College with the general characteristics required by McGill University.

I became interested in studying this issue after I became aware of the high incidence (more than 40 percent) of CEGEP graduates who are considered unprepared for the challenges of university education (Gervais, 1992, p. A-6). By the time this study was conceived, there was widespread public concern about the future of CEGEP education; the role of CEGEP and the future of Quebec were under review by a Parliamentary Commission of the National Assembly of Quebec. The Commission, since 1992, has been seeking measures

for CEGEPs to become more responsive to students' needs and act more effectively in dealing with the high dropout rate and its inadequacies in university preparation.

Are all CEGEP students unprepared for university? What are their learning and social experiences in CEGEP? This study is designed to answer these two questions.

Problem Statement and Purpose of Study

According to Michel Gervais, rector and president of the Conférence des Recteurs et des Principaux des Universités du Québec (CREPUQ), more than 40 percent of CEGEP graduates admitted to university did not have adequate language skills. Gervais criticised students' ability to communicate effectively, in that they didn't measure up to the expectations of universities. He stated: "We've resigned ourselves to admitting students who don't have adequate education [and] give degrees to those with clear flaws in fundamental areas of competence" (The Gazette, 1992, p.A-6).

McGill University has echoed these views too. A Brief (1992) directed to the Parliamentary Commission on the future of CEGEPs, writes that there is concern [at McGill University] with deficiencies in the mastery of basic skills of some significant proportion of CEGEP graduates. And whilst McGill is somewhat satisfied with science education provided by CEGEPs, it urges modification of most CEGEP programs by the Ministry of Higher Education. Meanwhile, groups representing students, such as the legislative committee of the Parliamentary Commission, said that students did not receive enough guidance about career and program choices and are asked too early to decide their educational fate

(Moore, 1992, p. A-2). And the Conseil des collèges recommended to the Parliamentary Commission that a "broad-based, solid general education for all students as a developmental priority for college education is needed" (Quebec, 1992, pp. 11-12).

It is in this context of overall CEGEP reforms, that I designed this study. I believe it is important to know how the CEGEP pre-university education takes place, and whether such training meets the needs of universities. That is, if students master efficiency in basic skills in order to succeed in their chosen fields of study.

In studying the Liberal Arts Honours Program of Vanier College, we use McGill University as a point of reference. Specifically, I studied the following characteristics of the Program:

- (a) the nature and purposes of the Honours Program;
- (b) administrative goals and priorities;
- (c) learning and living environment for students;
- (d) students' goals and their general motivation to learn;
- (e) knowledge and skills acquired, based on curriculum offered, and qualities developed in the Program;
- (f) teachers' teaching, and responsibilities of administrators.

Methodology

A case study approach was used. Yin (1981) describes a case study as an empirical inquiry into a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context (p. 23). Boundaries are not clearly evident between phenomenon and context, and a multiple source of data is used (p.23).

This study used a qualitative interpretive approach to address the problematic, that is, inadequate or "deficient" university preparation claimed by various social forces to exist. The following methods were used. First, a questionnaire concerning general information about students' pre-university training was used to collect data from students in the Honours Program. Second, an interview-protocol with open-ended and semi-structured questions was administered which took approximately 45 minutes. Permission was obtained before the project began. Those asked to take part in the interviews were six first- and six second-year students within the Honours Program in Liberal Arts; four teachers from the Humanities and Social Science areas of this Program; and three administrators. The interviews were intended to yield in-depth information, following the questionnaire. Third, informal observations were made to obtain a feeling about the learning environment. I visited Vanier College on numerous occasions to collect information from the students. As part of the research I analysed documents such as CEGEP calendar, mission statement, and program pamphlets. I also reviewed McGill University's admissions brochure and "basic competency" standards to get a sense of and what they expect of CEGEP graduates. My personal experiences as a liberal arts undergraduate at McGill University were also drawn upon. As well articles published in newspapers and magazines were used to reflect upon the current debates, proposals and concerns about CEGEPs. I obtained from an academic dean some statistics regarding the performance of Honours students.

To get a preliminary view of what direction the study might take, a pilot study was done. The interview protocol was tried with two first- and two second-year students. Meetings were held and informal observations were made with

two teachers. A meeting was arranged with an administrator as well. I interpreted the results based on the context of the Liberal Arts Program and the learning environment of the Honours Program. Throughout the study, confidentiality was assured for all persons who participated in it. Interviews and visits occurred in April through to mid-August, 1993; and data analysis were done after August 1993.

I pulled out themes from the data collected and looked at individual students' profiles and also at the students as a whole. Qualitative information was sought with a view to elaborating on themes about students' pre-university education. Numerical information provided some parameters within which to analyse the information provided by the students, teachers, and administrators, and to assess effects of the Liberal Arts Program on preparing students for university.

Finally, with regards to the research methodology, I found that use of the case study approach yielded a good range of qualitative and quantitative data. The employment of a questionnaire in combination with an interview-protocol helped me to obtain a general as well as in-depth information. Detailed analysis of the questionnaire responses yielded a multitude of information about how students, teachers, and administrators viewed the purposes of CEGEP education in relation to universities' basic requirements. The return rate on the questionnaire was a hundred percent.

Informal observation, and the interview-protocol helped to streamline data and reveal shaded areas. In interviews respondents freely express their feelings, opinions, and perspectives about CEGEP education. The use of the

case study method brought alive the dynamism, achievements, and challenges CEGEPs face in Quebec society as the year 2000 approaches.

Limitations and Importance of Study

The study focuses on one program in the Liberal Arts department of Vanier College. It is however a representative study, since students are recruited to the Honours Program from several area high schools and they display a wide range of intellectual, emotional and ethnocultural characteristics. Whilst the study is about an English-language CEGEP and may not be generalisable to French-Language CEGEPs; yet it is important to note that this study is an attempt to address part of the many questions that have been raised about the future of CEGEPs in the contemporary Quebec education environment. This study generates knowledge about what is happening in CEGEPs from the perspectives of the people involved in CEGEP education, which is essential if improvements are to be made. Information on students' aspirations, attitudes, work habits, academic achievement, indicate interesting perspectives as to how to inspire students to succeed.

Academically prepared CEGEP graduates adjust better to university education. This study benefits students, universities and individuals or groups in society by advancing knowledge on how CEGEP students are prepared for university education, and in this way the study helps especially those students who are considered by universities to be academically "deficient." A recent survey by Ducharme and Terrill (1994, Gazette) reported that many CEGEP students were apathetic and therefore required a presence of culture and a pedagogy of success. Research that focuses on how CEGEP students are

prepared in pre-university training programs may help universities anticipate how students' academic difficulties develop during their CEGEP studies. This type of data may also help universities design programs that fit in with the needs of the students. This research also helps the CEGEPs to recognise their problems and seek ways for improvement.

Chapter II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The term CEGEP is an acronym derived from the phrase *collège d'enseignements général et professionnel* which, if loosely translated, means academic and technical college (Henchey & Burgess, 1987, p. 99). In Quebec there are some more than forty such public colleges that offer 2-year pre-university programs or 3-year technical (career) programs. This study is primarily concerned with the 2-year pre-university preparatory program. CEGEPs have a special role to fulfill in bridging the academic and personal gap between high school and university. In some ways, CEGEPs' roles resemble those of universities in that both institutions seek to espouse the transmission of higher education. The main difference is that, CEGEP focuses on laying a foundation for students to conduct academic inquiry at university through offering a 2-year preparatory program. Thus, in order for CEGEPs to play a leadership role in providing higher education, their missions, teaching and basic training capabilities are of vital importance. These render that students' integration into higher education takes on a complex purpose, "much more than a simple administrative measure" would (Conseil supérieur de l'éducation, 1990, p. 97).

CEGEPs were established in 1967 in Quebec, and twenty-five years after the establishment of the first CEGEPs, their missions continue to be challenged. For example, on reviewing whether CEGEPs were meeting their objectives, Denis and Lipkin (1972) found that CEGEPs had generated a source of intense interest, pride, criticism and controversy in their efforts to accommodate all high school students who had entered CEGEP (p. 119).

Their study pointed out that CEGEPs had not lived up to their promises.

Why? The study disclosed that :

on reflection, it would seem that all of the demands placed on CEGEPs, those which emanate from the university, pose the greatest obstacles to the CEGEP fulfilling its intended purpose. It is important that CEGEPs stress overall training and development of the individual as their main purpose, and the [university] place greater emphasis on rigorous pursuit of more advanced knowledge (p. 132).

To further this point, other scholars pointed out that cultural and human life aspects of training and development, if they be served, should not be undervalued in the training and development process (Henchey, 1992).

Finally, the Denis and Lipkin study also suggests that CEGEPs could be said to occupy a key position in the province's pursuit of the twin aspirations of the modern era, that is, economic development and social justice (p. 120). This means that the quality and content of CEGEP education must mean more than a strict vocational (career) preparation. What constitutes a pre-university education was greatly discussed at McGill University in the 1960's (Edwards, 1990), but there exists no study that specifically examines the subject of how CEGEP students are prepared for a Liberal Arts education in order to choose fields of study at the university level. To set a theoretical and conceptual framework for this study, I reviewed literature that deals with the following areas: (a) the historical context of the CEGEP's purpose in Quebec; (b) the purposes of English-language CEGEPs in Montreal, namely, Dawson, John Abbott and Marianopolis Colleges; and (c) ways students are prepared for university education in light of admission standards required by universities.

The Historical Context of the CEGEP's Purpose in Quebec

The purpose of the CEGEP should be viewed in the context of educational reforms instituted under the Lesage government in the 1960's. The intention of these reforms was basically to democratize education by making it more accessible to youths and to encourage them to stay in school longer. New institutions were created, such as the comprehensive secondary schools (écoles polyvalentes); for these purposes Classical colleges (collèges classiques) where the traditional classical curriculum was offered and normal schools were abolished and CEGEPs or post-secondary colleges were made into law in 1967. According to the findings of the Parent Commission, the fundamental purpose of the CEGEP was, "for everyone to complete his studies in the field which best suits his abilities, tastes and interests, up to the most advanced level he has the capacity to reach" (Quebec, 1966, pp. 3-4). But what were some of the events that led up to the institution of CEGEPs? One of them is the 1954 Report of the Royal Commission on the Inquiry of Constitutional Problems (The Tremblay Report). The Report had identified public education as a major cause of problems in Quebec society. The Report and other studies made many Quebecers believe that their education was not well suited to a changing modern Quebec. Pressure from many sources, including the church itself, demanded urgent reforms, and during the 1960's, following many years of benign neglect, the government eventually acted to modernize and reform the province's educational system.

There were also many other popular criticisms of the poor state of public education that had prevailed during the 1950's (Magnuson, 1980). Magnuson states that no discussion of the critical literature would be complete without

mention of the runaway bestseller, Les Insolence du Frère Untel which was written by an anonymous teaching brother in 1960. The author, later identified as Jean-Paul Desbiens, accused church and school of inculcating blind authority in the public mind. The book was published under the English title, The Impertinences of Brother Anonymous (LeBlanc, 1972). The question of how to modernize an anachronistic educational system in the 1960's was as current a topic then, as questions raised today, about how CEGEP education could be adapted to the realities that would prevail in the year 2000 (Conseil des collèges, 1992).

The period of the Quiet Revolution of the 1960's was marked by a revolution of ideas or mentalité (Magnuson, 1980). For example, the notion of ruralism and its glorification was rejected. The idea of big business, often represented by "English interests", was rejected too. The dominant role of the church in Quebec society was not spared the fate of rejection either. Its place was taken by the state which would "take care of French-speaking interests." Prior to 1960, the educational system was adjudicated a disaster. For example, only forty-eight out of a hundred students reached grade 8 from grade 2 in Catholic Quebec. Most students had to pay school fees and the school leaving age was 14 years. The reforms later raised the school leaving age to 15.

La Grande Charte or the Magna Carta of education (1961) involved raising the school leaving age to 16, with monthly allowances provided to those of 16 and 17 years still in full-time attendance, and free textbooks and bursaries being made available to students in the upper years of collège classique. The establishment of the Royal Commission of Inquiry on Education (Parent Commission) had far-reaching consequences for the Quebec educational

system even though, as Magnuson (1980) points out, the Commission was set up to placate the church as a political gesture. This then was the kind of background that led to the creation of CEGEPs in Quebec.

The idea of CEGEP was generated largely from neighbouring New York and also from California. With the birth of CEGEPs, Quebec students wishing to pursue their studies beyond secondary levels could attend either a public college or a private institution offering similar programs. With the opening of CEGEPs, tuition became free for all students. A number of private colleges offered a limited range of equivalent programs and charged tuition (Henchey & Burgess, 1987, p. 237). As a consequence of the institution of CEGEPs, between 1967 and 1983 enrollment at the college level (the equivalent of grades 12 and 13) increased by 150 percent (Blackburn, 1984). In 1967, only 16 percent of young people of college age actually were in post-secondary institutions. By 1988 this rate had risen to 63 percent (Potter, 1993, p. B-2).

Subsequently the 1970's and 1980's were periods of expansion, development, adjustment and analysis for college education in Quebec (Henchey & Burgess, 1987, p. 101). The adjustment for English-language institutions was different, but in some ways more difficult than French institutions. For example, because direct passage from secondary school to English universities was favoured, the creation of CEGEPs was seen as needless intrusion into a structure that was working well. Also, there were no institutions like the Classical colleges (*collèges classiques*) from which English colleges could be created. So, it was not until late September, 1969 that Dawson College opened its doors to students as the first English-language CEGEP (Edwards, 1990, p. 173). Dawson College, situated in downtown Montreal, was

the largest college in Quebec. It was followed by Vanier College in suburban St-Laurent, John Abbott on the West Island and Champlain, a regional college with campuses in St-Lambert, Lennoxville, and Quebec City. At present, programs are offered in the French public colleges in Gaspé and Hull: Heritage College (Edwards, 1990). The location of this study, Vanier College, had some of its staff members selected from Dawson to its first campus, Ste-Croix, St-Laurent (Keller, 1990, p. 282).

The establishment of these colleges didn't always meet with mass approval. There were demonstrations, strikes and occupations of institutions that had only recently opened (Henchey, 1972; Denis & Lipkin, 1972; Edwards, 1990). There was much anxiety about the number of places available in Quebec universities for college graduates. Henchey (1972) observed that though colleges had survived "the orgy of self-examination," their naiveté had certainly been tempered. On October 15, 1968, fifteen French CEGEPs were under occupation, seven more were on strike; students at the University of Montreal were boycotting classes and McGill students were moving resolutions in support. After a great deal of Senate debates, Bill 21 legalized student membership on the Board of Directors (but in practice ignored their opinion in contradiction of the Parent Commission's recommendation, namely, Regulation 3). This regulation dealt with questions of students' attendance, uniform evaluation and curriculum (Edwards, 1990, p. 171). Questions of who and what to teach at the pre-university level became the battleground for the working out of democratization. Nonetheless, college equivalence for college streams of 2 years of pre-university education (E1 and E2), received final acceptance by McGill University from 1969 onwards.

The Quiet Revolution therefore was a time of change in ideas and may not be as quiet as its name implies. The creation of the Royal Commission of Inquiry on Education in 1964 proved to be one of the major events of Quebec's political and social revolution (Buteau, 1972, p.189). The purpose of the CEGEP today has evolved to a mission that seeks to ensure that the youth and adult population receive "such education that contributes positively to develop Quebec society" (Conseil des collèges, 1992). Today, CEGEPs continued to be an important part of the Quebec educational scene.

**The Missions of English-Language CEGEPs in Montreal:
Dawson, John Abbott, and Marianopolis Colleges**

In its mission statement Dawson College (1993) declares that it is aware of its responsibility to contribute to the intellectual, economic and social development of Quebec society and that it is equally important to prepare students for further academic education and for immediate employment. Dawson College therefore commits itself to maintaining standards of excellence essential "to our students' future success and to providing appropriate programs, services and technology to ensure that any student admitted has the opportunity to develop skills necessary to achieve these standards."

Marianopolis College on the other hand dedicates itself "to work together so that each student may experience the fullest personal growth and enjoy academic excellence." And one of its goals is to serve each student by maintaining a dynamic learning environment which promotes critical thinking, communication and social interaction.

John Abbott College is a community college [CEGEP] which primarily serves the population and society of Quebec by providing them with

opportunities to achieve through appropriate education, a more fulfilling life. And one of the objectives derived from its philosophy is to promote academic and professional excellence, love of knowledge, personal growth and the development of the individual. The belief in individual and collective rights and responsibilities of all members of its community, is also part of its educational purpose.

Thus, a brief look at some of the general purposes, goals and objectives of Dawson, John Abbott, and Marianopolis Colleges reveal a rather similar yet diverse set of basic beliefs that should guide their policies and practices. Concepts like a more fulfilling life, individual rights and responsibilities, the love of knowledge, personal growth, intellectual, economic and social development of our society, prospects for employment, communication and social interaction, do form key elements in the purposes of these CEGEPs.

Having then taken a glimpse at some Montreal area CEGEP's missions and goal statements, the question arises as to whether the CEGEPs fulfill its goals of preparing students for their university education. It therefore is necessary to examine how students are actually prepared at CEGEP in pre-university training that match with performance criteria articulated by universities.

**Ways CEGEP Students Are to be Prepared for University Education
In Light of Admission Standards and Academic Requirements
Established for Quebec CEGEP Graduates**

If there is indeed a close relationship with what is intended in the CEGEP's mission as regards pre-university education, then CEGEP education ideally should match university admission criteria for a successful university

education. To recall, more than 40 percent of CEGEP graduates are claimed to be inadequately prepared for university education (Gervais, 1992, p. A-6). In our study Vanier College and McGill University are selected for comparison of CEGEP students' goals and needs in relation to McGill University's academic requirements in its Social Sciences and Humanities Departments. During the recent National Assembly hearings, universities including McGill, expressed confidence in the system and satisfaction with the work CEGEPs were doing. They did however recommend that CEGEPs raise the requirements for language skills and this will certainly be a major focus of changes in the CEGEP curriculum (Gazette, 1993, p. B-2).

In its brief to the National Assembly, McGill University expressed its interest in "modestly" becoming involved in narrowing the gap between CEGEP pre-university education and its admission requirements (1992, p. 14). What does this statement mean to CEGEP graduates? At the same Parliamentary hearings, McGill urged that programs be modified [at CEGEP] to (i) improve students' writing skills and primary research skills; (ii) to improve French-language skills of the graduates of English-language CEGEPs; (iii) to include a mathematics requirement for students in the social sciences. McGill University (1992, p.1) noted that within the pure and applied science departments at McGill, there is general satisfaction with the science preparation students receive at the CEGEPs; there is however much less satisfaction with CEGEP students' education in the humanities and social sciences. The Brief (1992) goes on to say that this dissatisfaction is present not only across faculty members in the social sciences and the humanities, but to a lesser extent also across those teaching pure and applied sciences. Among some faculty in the social sciences

at McGill there is also dissatisfaction with the fact that CEGEP social science and humanities programs contain no required courses in the natural and biological sciences. The same brief also argues for a general education that includes a continuing exposure to scientific issues and methods (p. 2).

The need for rigorous preparation of CEGEP graduates has also been underlined by the Minister of Higher Education, Lucienne Robillard (Quebec, 1992). The Dean of the Faculty of Arts at McGill, John McCallum, in an interview published in the Faculty of Arts and Science Newsletter (1992), acknowledged that his faculty had had great students and over the past few years had increased the entrance requirements to the point where "we may be more demanding than any other Canadian university." It is thus important for CEGEPs and their graduates to be aware of the increasingly higher entrance requirements of McGill University.

At McGill the Diploma of Collegial Studies (DEC) is the basic admission requirement for entry to the Bachelor of Arts degree (McGill, 1988, p. 4). About 70 percent of full-time undergraduate degree candidates are Quebecers (McGill, 1992b). A minimum overall average of 70 percent or better is expected of students during their years of CEGEP studies, and most programs have considerably higher grade requirements than a grade of 70 percent. In all cases particular attention is paid to the grades obtained in pre-requisite courses (McGill, 1992c, p. 7). Of the graduates in the Faculty of Arts in 1991 roughly 14 percent were students who had studied at Vanier College (McGill, 1992b). So, CEGEP graduates are an integral part of the Arts Faculty at McGill University.

What direction does McGill provide to CEGEPs for pre-university training in the social sciences? There is concern about what courses students should

take in social science and indeed in all CEGEP programs. And there is concern expressed by universities about the mastery of certain basic skills which they consider indispensable to students' university education. Competence in basic skills is especially important (McGill, 1991a, p. 4). For this writing in a grammatically adequate fashion in either English or French is recommended, effective writing marked by coherence and persuasive argument is encouraged (p. 5). To motivate the development of writing skills, McGill expresses the wish that a significant part of final grades in most CEGEPs' humanities and social science courses be based on written work rather than multiple-choice examinations, and that all DEC recipients pass a written proficiency test (and McGill University is considering introducing such a test).

The Conseil des collèges has raised the possibility of including some mathematics into the core component of a "curriculum idéal" (1992, pp. 145-146). Statistical skills and a more basic level of mathematical skills that are required in the health and pure and applied sciences, are suggested too. McGill also underscores the latter requirement and wants students to have some courses that require them to practice and enhance their capacity to seek and compile information from diverse primary sources (p. 8). English-language CEGEPs are encouraged to examine programs with the intent of upgrading the French-language skills of its graduates.

In conclusion, this review of literature notes the formative effects of the history of Quebec society on the development, evolution and ongoing growth in all CEGEPs. I summarized the main purpose of CEGEP education, and discuss universities', such as McGill's, expectation of students.

Chapter III

GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF STUDENTS AND THE LIBERAL ARTS HONOURS PROGRAM AT VANIER COLLEGE

The Honours Program in Liberal Arts at Vanier College consists of a small community of fifty-three students and their teachers. This unit forms part of a larger CEGEP population of more than sixty thousand students. When I conducted research at Vanier College, I observed that the Honours students appeared to be an enthusiastic group of young adults. They were keen on exchanging their college experiences, about ways they were being educated at CEGEP. Ninety-eight percent of their average age were between 16 and 20 years, with the majority being in the 16 to 18 age range. Most seemed quite serious about their classes, research papers, examinations, readings, student clubs, councils, or other activities they were involved in.

The Honours Program is a two-year pre-university program which had 29 first and 24 second year students enrolled. Originally about 75 students registered in it, later, about 20 students left: some had withdrawn, some had transferred to a General Social Science program at Vanier College, and some left the program to join the workforce and a small number were unaccounted for, because there had been no opportunities at that time for a follow-up study.

Seventeen of the first-year students were female and 12 male; for the second year 14 were female and 10 male. This made the ratio of female to male three to two. All students attend on a full-time basis. Table 1.0 represents the general characteristics of students in the Program.

Table 1.0General characteristics of students in the
Liberal Arts Honours Program at Vanier College

Characteristics	Numbers	Percentage
Student Status		
Full-Time	53	100
Part-Time	0	
Year		
First Year	29	54.7
Second Year	24	45.3
Age		
16-20	52	98.1
41-50	1	1.9
First Year		
Female	17	32.1
Male	12	22.6
Second Year		
Female	14	26.4
Male	10	18.9

n=53

In their spare time 12 of the 53 students work at part-time jobs. Students are drawn predominantly from Montreal area high schools and possess the Quebec Secondary School Leaving Certificate as the basic entrance requirement for admission into CEGEP. In addition, students are required to have a 75 percent grade average. Students contribute a rich resource of intellectual, emotional, and ethnocultural diversity to the learning and living environment. Most use English as their first language and the students receive instruction in English. Languages other than English or French, such as Mandarin, Cantonese, Tamil, and Italian also form a part of students' linguistic

diversity. Indeed the students are a microcosm of the cultural diversity that is such an outstanding feature of the Vanier St-Croix campus.

Though the student body was a young one, they did display a rather mature attitude toward their program. Seventy-two percent of the students responded positively and 28 percent negatively when asked whether it is the academic rigour offered in the program that attracted them. Table 1.1 shows the result:

Table 1.1

Is it academic rigor that attracts you to the Program?

Yes	38	72%
No	15	28%

n = 53

During interviews with students, many expressed satisfaction with the rigorous style of the program, while a small body of students hoped for a narrower focus in the Humanities courses, and a few others wanted a much broader perspective. Ninety-four percent of students expressed intentions of going to university within 6 to 12 months of graduation from CEGEP. One student wanted to go to university within 12 to 24 months, another not at all; and one student was undecided (see Table 1.2). Female and male students were nonetheless equally positive about on their intentions to proceed to university within 6 to 12 months of graduation from CEGEP.

Table 1.2Students Planning to Go on to University After Graduation

	Number	Percentage
Within 6-12 months	50	94
Within 12-24 months	1	2
Not at all	1	2
Undecided	1	2

n = 53

How did the Honours Program originate? What makes it attractive to students? To respond to these questions I now turn to examine the nature of this program.

The Nature of the Liberal Arts Honours Program at Vanier College

The Liberal Arts Program is based on the belief that disciplined learning is the road to opportunities and autonomy in the individual's career and personal life. In tradition, liberal arts focus on these areas: grammar, logic, and rhetoric known as the trivium and followed by the quadrivium of arithmetic, geometry, music, and astronomy, with the goal to cultivate the mind and create a shared community of learning. In modern times, liberal arts are differently conceived, but they pursue the same tradition of ordered learning to cultivate the mind.

In the Montreal area, to recapitulate, Dawson College was the first CEGEP that admitted students in 1969. In fact, Dawson College was the first to develop an honours program in Liberal Arts. Vanier College was the second

CEGEP to open its doors to students. The Honours Liberal Arts Program at Vanier started admitting its students in 1991. Its program was to a certain extent influenced by the Dawson program in that some of its staff were recruited from Dawson. But the Liberal Arts College of Concordia University had made the greatest impact on the Vanier program, because of the program coordinator's past connection with Concordia University.

"The Liberal Arts Honours Certificate Program: a Pre-University Certificate Program" (1992) stated that the program was aimed at ambitious students, and was to be taken as an enhancement of the Social Science, Language and Literature, or Creative Arts Programs at Vanier. It elaborated:

Students in the Liberal Arts Program do not take more courses than other students. However their studies are unique in two ways. First, Liberal Arts students take all their courses together as a community. Second, they receive a carefully designed, sequential, and integrated curriculum focused on Western Civilization and Culture in a world context. This includes law, philosophy, politics, history, literature, and language, and the fine arts. These subjects are combined in a survey course of cultural endeavour, through key texts, ideas and works of art, from the Ancient Greeks and the Hebrews to the present.

Furthermore, the program claims to offer the following benefits: superior preparation, special recognition from the college, dedicated teachers, a rich academic life, and cultural development. Two special features of the program were an "integrated" course of studies and a focus on a "world context." By the term "integrated" was meant that the program wanted to ensure coherence, whereby Liberal Arts courses could reinforce each other. Teachers would

consequently would be prepared to understand not only subject matter of their own courses, but the relation of their courses to the program as a whole. To further this goal, an Integrative Seminar that summed up the entire program, was made a course requirement. A "world context" meant a focus on Western Civilization, whilst courses such as, "Alternative Traditions" and "Modernism and Post-Modernism" also examine the limits of the West and the achievements of other cultures and civilizations

Program enrollment is limited, the college states, because of the need to ensure individual attention to students. Therefore each year only 40 applicants are accepted. The qualities sought in students are a genuine interest in the program's curriculum and philosophy, an average of 75 percent or above. However all students who are committed to excellence are also encouraged to apply. Students in the program are automatically pre-registered in its required courses, and take courses together.

The curriculum consisted of the following courses: four program courses in the first two terms. The courses for the first term are: "The Legacy of Athens and Jerusalem, Introduction to English Literature (for Liberal Arts), Origins of Philosophy, and Western Civilization." For the second term the courses consist of: "Introduction to Arts and Music, Survey of Western Literature, Ethics, and Modern History." The three third term courses are: "Science and Civilization, Alternative Traditions, Political Regimes or Modern Political Ideas." And the two courses in the in the fourth term are: "Integrative Seminar, Modernism and Post-Modernism." The curriculum consists of a Humanities and English core program as set out in Table 1.3.

Table 1.3**The Curriculum**

First Term	Second Term	Third Term	Fourth Term
The Legacy of Athens and Jerusalem	Intro. Art and Music	Science and Civilization	Integrative Seminar
Intro. to English Lit. (Liberal Arts)	Survey of Western Literature	Alternative Traditions	Modernism and Post-Modernism*
Origins of Philosophy (Philosophy)	Ethics (Philosophy)	Political Regimes or Modern Political Ideas (Political Science)	
Western Civilization	Modern History		

In addition, each student select at least one language course, at his or her own level. Whenever possible, students are given special tutoring that included classics in English translation. Furthermore the program encourage options in Music, Creative Arts and Communications, and Mathematics that complemented the program. Special independent studies and seminar options are provided to ensure program continuity and student initiative.

If the above outline of the program describe its contents, the purpose of the program can be further illustratrated by three informative interviews conducted with teachers who have been actively involved in its conception and application. The following tries to capture the essence of their views.

Origins and Purpose of the Liberal Arts Honours Program

From the very beginning the Honours Program was based on a "Great Books in Western Civilization" approach, similar to the one originated at Columbia University, New York. The Liberal Arts teachers at Concordia

University had drawn inspiration from this orientation, I was told. A founding teacher of the Honours Program had filled a position in the Liberal Arts Department at Concordia University, and he decided to build up a similar program at Vanier. He explained:

I filled a position in the Liberal Arts Department at Concordia. I did my best and did very well to acquaint myself with their program. I spent nights reading to build up my knowledge in the humanities area. Thus, I got a good sense of how the liberal arts program functions at Concordia. I felt that a liberal arts program should have a Humanities and English core with a common curriculum. So I worked to set up a special program.

It was hoped that the program would "turn out better students". There was a lot of disagreement, however, as to how to design a program that is elitist in terms of its curriculum and also in its attempts to recruit the best students, without neglecting other students. This position appears to have been a paradox considering that admission to the program was a grade point average of more than 75 percent!

The "Great Books" approach enabled the students to get to the core of knowledge in the course of their undergraduate years, the program's founders believed. Its major limitation was that it did not give students enough time for reflection, for it required a lot of reading within a quick frame of time. Such an approach particularly suited students who had the capacity to read a lot in a fairly short period of time. The idea behind this strategy was that it was not always necessary to understand a text in its entirety. It was important to *read* and later in life the text would come back for reference. It was the aim of the

Honours Program to transmit to students the Western Liberal Arts culture which they may not have acquired so quickly otherwise.

The aim of the Honours program is one of academic excellence. The program also sought to create a shared community of learners in which teachers would get to know students, help them along, follow up on their progress, and give advice. The notion is that "education is key to building citizenship, inculcation of independence of thought, and the development of individual interests", as the researcher was informed.

Some teachers had called for greater accessibility to the program, because they feared that the "best" students would be siphoned off from the general student body, thereby resulting in the creation of an elite program. A teacher critically remarked:

I don't like elitism in institutions – a little coterie of snooty, snobby kids who think they're better than others. I loved teaching a class where they did not develop a profile thinking they were better than others. Learning should be a shared experience.

To counter charges of elitism and cultural bias levelled against the creation of an honours program, a teacher, who was responsible for its content and structure, claimed that a minimum of 75 percent was not very high for an honours program, and that such a grade entry requirement in fact was a concession to the group of teachers who felt it not right that mainly the top students would be drawn to it. The teacher confided:

We nonetheless do turn out top students amongst Vanier College's Social Science students. The courses in the program are more difficult, more reading is required. There is more rigour in this sense in the

Honours Program. Some students enter with 75 percent and leave with 70 percent. Others enter with 75 percent and leave with an improved average. Those in the high 80s (depending on their private lives not falling apart) maintain high 80s.

The importance of liberal arts training for CEGEP students is advocated, for example, by McGill University's Dean of the Faculty of Arts, John McCallum (1992) who strongly recommended that: "an interconnected and developmental sequence or coherence of CEGEP courses in history and philosophy, for example, would better prepare a student for a university program in political science. The substantive nature of courses and ways they train students' thinking abilities and knowledge, should be an important consideration for admitting CEGEP students in university." The Honours Program seems to move toward this direction. Another concern about the program was its Western tradition bias. "What about other cultures?" was the question. The same teacher commented,

I acknowledge that not everything out there originated in ancient Greece; for instance mathematics began with the Arabs. But world culture was too vast an area to cover. People in the West furthermore should be aware of their own cultural background before trying to understand the world.

Despite this, teachers are making endeavours to make the program more inclusive to the diverse student body enrolled in the program. One teacher explains:

We make no bones about it being Western, not because we believe in the inherent superiority of the West. I would be delighted with an Eastern program with courses that look at works of Lao Tse, classic poets, China, India, Buddhism. This could have an appeal.

In sum the Honours Program is characterized by a high admission standard, a focus on the benefits of a Western liberal education that recognizes the contribution of other world cultures, an intention to connect teachers and students in a shared environment. That the program only accepts students with a 75% grade average needs to be discussed. Students with grades with less than 75% are excluded. Steps need to be taken to remove elitist tendencies from programs like the Honours Program so that CEGEP is accessible to all students, that it is really public and free.

Students' Overall Evaluation of the Program

In our survey, eighty-four percent of students find the Program quite fair in its expectations. Eighty-one percent "enjoy" the program and 78 percent say the program instills a sense of patience in them. Only 55 percent, however, are satisfied with the level of investigative thought or inquiry taught in the program.

Students are attracted to the learning environment for its abundance of intellectual stimulation, opportunity for cooperation, and care and consideration as exhibited by teachers. Teacher- student contact time is a positive feature that all students mention. Students also rely on themselves for motivation. As students said:

For me, success is to be happy with what I do; it is not dependent on grades, it is accomplishing my self-expectations, that is to say, reaching my goals. I really learnt something and am living up to my potential doing as well as I can. My activities are not organized exclusively around study. I feel the more activities I do in and out of school, the better it is for my progress. But I concentrate on what I have to do and do the job one step at a time. I love life and all aspects of my life are important. Education is important, but it is not the only important thing. It helps to be involved in other things, because it helps cultivate the parts of my personality which end up helping you.

I expect a lot of myself. I have the capacity to think in college. Even though I am shy and quiet and not popular, here I can choose what I am interested in. English class interested me. Oh yeah there is lots of room for self-discovery at CEGEP. You can talk to the teachers about intellectual things.

Extracurricular activities help me to have an open mind. It is very important. Academic instruction and cultivation of personal attributes contribute to my success.

I developed my goals to succeed during the year. My parents also influenced me.

From the remarks made above, it appears that personal interests, enthusiasm, having a vision of college life's promises and challenges, a sense of self-contentment, hard work and self-discipline, form part of the dynamics of students' lives while studying in the Honours Program.

Students' Forecasts of Chosen Disciplines at University

Regarding their choices for future university study, the top three ranking university subject choices were Law, Psychology, and Language and Literature, selected by 10, 8, and 7 students respectively. There was also a fairly even spread of other liberal arts disciplines elected by students to be one of their top choices, such as History, Political Science, Philosophy, Fine Arts. A few students mention Cinema, Economics, Italian, Cultural Studies, Public Relations, and Sociology as their top or possible choices. (see Table 1.4)

Table 1.4

Choices:	First:	Second:	Third:
Cinema	1		
Classics	2	1	
Commerce/Accounting	2	1	
Communications	1	1	
Cultural Studies		1	
Economics		1	
Education	4	3	1
Fine Arts	4		3
French	1		
Geography		1	
History	2	7	5
Italian		1	
Journalism	2	1	
Law	10	4	
Liberal Arts	2	1	
Literature & Language	7	9	
Philosophy	3	4	5
Politics	1	3	9
Psychology	8	6	1
Public Relations		1	
Social Work			1
Sociology		1	

n = 53

Students seem to feel a certain level of confidence about their pre-university education. But what factors account for this confidence? To get a fuller view of what students learnt at CEGEP in order to prepare themselves for university requirements, I turn to an examination of this topic in the next chapter (IV).

CHAPTER IV

WHAT STUDENTS LEARN IN THE HONOURS PROGRAM THAT PREPARES THEM FOR UNIVERSITY

In its brief to the Parliamentary Commission of the Quebec National Assembly on the Future of CEGEPs (1992a), McGill University recommended that students improve general skills competencies with which first-year university students have experienced difficulty. In the Humanities and Social Sciences area, McGill claimed that students lacked appropriate language skills and proper work habits. In this regard how well did the Vanier Liberal Arts Honours Program do? And seventy percent of the students express satisfaction with their program, which of its elements have led to such satisfaction? To get an idea, I examined the experiences of students. More specifically, the following areas were investigated: (i) cognitive and thinking skills and other qualities gained in the Program; (ii) students' use of time; (iii) general competencies acquired; and (iv) the learning and living environment in which students are educated.

Introduction

CEGEP graduates need to have taken specific courses for admission into different McGill programs. Admission to an Honours Program in the Faculty of Arts and Science at McGill University requires a high degree of specialization and the maintenance of high academic standing (McGill, 1992c, p.1). Furthermore, students should demonstrate abilities to think clearly and logically and write and speak persuasively.

Fifty-three first and second year students were surveyed on whether they felt adequately prepared for university in their chosen field of study. Seventy percent responded in the affirmative to the question, 30 percent

answered negatively. It was therefore necessary to delve deeper into the answers in order to find out what accounted for the difference of opinion among students. Data derived from interviews with students, teachers, administrators, threw considerable light on CEGEP students' academic preparation. For the sake of convenience and clarity I present the findings based on student response to the above question in this chapter; and roles that teaching and administration played in students' education will be studied in Chapter V. I am hoping that by investigating what students learnt, how they used their time, the general competencies they acquired, and ways the learning and living environment affected them, I will reveal the process through which students are prepared. I will look at this from the perspective of teachers and administrators as well as from the students, in order to obtain a more complete picture.

By academic preparation I meant scholarly training of specific cognitive and affective knowledge and thinking skills required by universities.

Students' Perspectives of Pre-University Education in the Honours Program: Their Goals and Motivation to Learn

Many students told me that the program provides good education. A student stated:

The Honours Program gives us good education. Having chosen fields of study which interest me, like Literature and Language, and History, have helped me to recognize my abilities. The well-roundedness of the program is to be thanked. I feel confident that I can succeed in completing a degree.

Students claimed that the Honours Program provides them with valuable experiences. They include the opportunity to learn to conduct efficient

analysis of different texts; exposure to different fields of study; substantial supplementary readings as part of learning which helps them to write scholarly papers; background preparation for various fields; and finally, opportunity to learn to think logically and rationally.

The students felt that the program provided them with an enriched education which allowed them to pursue a career in the area of law, journalism, psychology, or whatever program they choose to enter. The Honours Program also prepares them for modes of learning at university. They have learnt much in areas ranging from psychology to Shakespeare's plays to Plato's philosophy. However, not all students were satisfied. A student commented:

While seventy percent of students are satisfied with training in this program, and I myself feel prepared for university, obviously some people don't. It depends on the individual. I don't know how you fix all those individual differences. Due to the diversity in CEGEP and our society, many students do not fit into the "standard mould". But the whole system is geared to people who can fit. Dropouts have as much to give. They learn in different ways and they are ignored, because they are different.

Students explained why they were not satisfied with the program :

CEGEP has been very hard for me . . . though the Liberal Arts Program was not too demanding, I did not have a chance to choose my preferred courses. I'm a first-year student here and I haven't experienced or learnt all I would like to before going to university. I do not feel I learnt a lot about cultural literature. The courses offered in the Liberal Arts Program are so different that it is very hard to fully grasp one particular area of study. Restricted access to English courses beyond obligatory courses poses a problem for me.

Also, there was a great amount of paperwork. The course load was heavy and I need to do catch up work in the field of Literature. I do not have appropriate study skills . . . we should have the opportunity to do more on the subjects that we are planning to go into at the university level.

Students' Learning Experiences

Across a wide spectrum of students' learning experiences, students noted that they learnt a variety of things. A student noted that a serious attitude to learning was very important. Another shared the experience that using self-discipline to balance college life resulted in effective management of her time. Students felt that there was a free climate to express ideas in the program. That teachers in the program were friendly and professional; they encouraged efforts and excellence. Overall in the program there was a community of shared learning and it was not tantamount to conforming to authoritative thought. In their constant debates and dialogue many different points of view were allowed to co-exist. In all, the program provided for intellectual as well as emotional development.

Students valued the subjects they learned in the program as well as appreciated the manner and atmosphere within which learning occurred. They noted that philosophy teaches them about different types of thinking. Some students enjoyed the way in which courses were sequenced and pre-arranged. Others enjoyed courses on women's studies. An alternate literature course helped a student "change her thinking and organizational skills." History class helped students see that in interpreting historical events there was not a "single truth."

A commonly held view amongst students was that the Humanities courses covered so wide a ground that a focus on fewer things in greater detail would have been more favourable. Students enjoyed poetry class which dealt with works by Keats and Wordsworth, while they found Shakespeare "difficult."

Overall they reported that their learning of high level skills are facilitated by learning subjects in a dynamic interpersonal environment.

Students' Viewpoint on the High Failure Rate of Quebec CEGEPs

Students have much to say with regards to the high failure rate of CEGEPs. Some students suggested that those who failed five or more courses might not have wanted to be at CEGEP in the first place, but attended because CEGEP is free and therefore take it for granted. Others felt that CEGEP cannot cater to everyone's goals or learning styles in its present composition, for its main purpose is to serve as a transitional body to university for college-bound students.

A student wondered if it has been exaggerated that 40 percent plus students fail:

I would say that about 25 percent of students failing is more accurate. Or it would have been more accurate to say that roughly 5 percent don't care about coming to classes and the other 20 percent have genuine troubles. Therefore 25 percent of students need more tutoring and teacher performance needs to be upgraded.

There is a lack of structure at CEGEP, the students reported. Students who are too used to high- school organizational structures are faced with a big change from the spoonfeeding experience in high school to the academic freedom at CEGEP, which many people can't handle. "CEGEP is too free. No one's on your back – you've got to be in control of what you're doing. And teachers don't go running after to you to comply with your homework requirements," the students said. The new freedom led some to spending too

much time on card playing, skipping classes or not doing homework. In sum, the students pointed out that more structure and guidance are needed for students to fit in. In looking at their own program, students held that despite that students need 75 percent to enter the program, this does not guarantee that they are all into their study. Many priorities and interests compete for students' attention. This, together with some students having low academic skills or making little efforts in their study, may explain partly why the failure rate so high.

After a closer look at the students' comment, it appears first-year students needs quite some time to come to grips with the advantages or disadvantages of the program and their feelings are at best tentative. For second-year or graduating students I found their conclusions to be firmer in perspective.

Cognitive and Thinking Skills Students Acquired in the Honours Program

In the McGill brief it was made clear that CEGEP students have to learn to think clearly and logically. In my interviews with the students they felt that their thinking abilities were indeed challenged by the program:

You really have to start thinking for yourself (a quality not encouraged in high school). Course requirements are designed with the purpose of challenging thinking on various levels. The challenge can be hard too, depending on individual strengths or weaknesses. From the start it was the teacher's style that challenged my thinking abilities. The teacher puts in as much as she expects from you.

Students noted that the program had an atmosphere that encourages independent thinking, with courses that are stimulating, and interested teachers

who communicate to students a sense of belonging. All these contribute to the students' feeling that they learn in the program:

Teachers' comments on my work facilitated a two-way communication, which is very cooperative. She offers her opinion and acknowledges your ideas. From class discussions, personal conversations and our formal writing, she knew if we were doing the readings, you knew she was really taking note of what you had to say. In group work she got people involved and 'into it'. The Liberal Arts program is unique in that students are working with those who want to be there, not with students who don't care. People are behind you and there is a real sense of belonging, and knowing that there's a place for you and people care always helps.

However, only about half the students felt that they had developed appropriate ability to think clearly and logically (Table 2.0).

Table 2.0
Ability to Think Clearly and Logically

	Number	Percentage
Very well	29	47
A little	23	42
Not at all	1	1

n=53

Twenty three students or 42% of them, felt that they learn only some thinking skills in the program. This obviously presents a gap between what students felt and the teachers' indication that they strive to make demands upon students' thinking abilities (Chapter V). The explanation might be that it takes a long time for one to develop sophisticated thinking skills, and it is only natural that students feel unsure of themselves only two years after high school.

When students were questioned about whether they thought that

requirements in courses were difficult to meet, 51 percent replied, "just right", 13 percent stated "easy", and 36 percent indicated some levels of difficulty (see Table 2.1).

Table 2.1
Students Evaluation of the level of difficulty of their courses

	Number	Percentage
Easy	7	13
Just right	27	51
A little hard	17	32
Difficult	2	4

n=53

This points to the need for teachers and guidance counsellors to match students' expectations with course requirements more closely. Also CEGEP handbooks and departmental information should spell out more clearly the kinds of pre-requisite skills, attitudes, and mastery levels courses that are needed for students to succeed in the Program.

In terms of specific cognitive abilities and thinking skills developed in the Program, responses are quite mixed. I asked students to indicate the cognitive abilities they have developed. Table 2.2 shows the percentages of responses:

Table 2.2
Students' ratings of specific cognitive and thinking skills developed in the program

Skills	Percentages (ratings)
1.Inquiry	55
2.Reason	84
3.Analysis	85
4.Recognition	55

5.Recall	60
7.Organization	73
8.Comprehension	92
9.Problem-solving	30
10.Reflection	77
11.Synthesis	75
12.Judgment	67

n=53

The table indicates that the majority of students learn to analyze problems, comprehend materials, make arguments and synthesize ideas. Many learn how to make judgments and inquire about an issue. Overall, students demonstrate a fairly strong degree of satisfaction with cognitive skills they learn in the Program. However, less than one third of the students felt that they learned a very important skill- problem-solving, and about 40 percent of students feel that they have difficulty retaining the knowledge they have come in contact with. And about a quarter to one third of students experience various degrees of difficulty in such cognitive skills as organization, comprehension, synthesis, and judgment.

To explain, a teacher said: "CEGEPs perform the function of a midwife, in that they help students to find out about themselves before going on to university." Relating to this, this researcher felt that unevenness of students' responses might be related to different abilities in the students, and their particular perceptions of what they consider to be cognitive skills and abilities imparted to them by the Program. Students also come to CEGEP with different high school experiences, which might cause some learning difficulties. An administrator suggested that having a more inclusive core program may provide for differences in students' abilities.

Attitudes and Feelings Students Developed in the Honours Program

Students tell of certain qualities they obtain in the Program. Table 2.3 represents the qualities students say they obtain from the Program.

Table 2.3
Attitudes and Feelings Acquired or Developed
in the Program

<u>Attitudes and Feelings</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
1. Positive mental attitude	45
2. Patience	78
3. Sense of fairness	84
4. Pleasure	81
5. Sense of belonging	71
6. Sense of humour	67
7. Belief in self and others	57
8. Anxiety	19
9. Courage	48
10. Sense of endurance	63

n=53

Sixty- three percent indicate they develop a sense of endurance. Forty-five percent say the Program instills a positive mental attitude in them, but about 55 percent disagrees. Eighty-four percent of students acknowledge there is a sense of fairness or equity of treatment of students in the Program. There is quite a high sense of "belonging" for 71 percent of students. This feeling was quite vigorously shared in interviews by both teachers and students and also witnessed by me during a limited period of classroom observation.

Having a sense of humour is also considered by 67 percent of students a good medicine for swallowing some of the hardships of learning. Fifty-five percent develop a belief in themselves and others. There is a very low anxiety level among the students, as only 19 percent of the students indicated it as a

result of being in the Program. Courage is identified by 48 percent of students as an area of growth in the Program.

Thus, on average, 56 percent of students believe that the program cultivates in them qualities that enhance academic learning. The fact that 44 percent of students give no indication of acquiring such qualities calls for further research.

Problems Encountered by First-Year Students

In terms of choices in the Program, students feel that they need more options in the first year, that is, to keep the focus broader in the first year. Some were lost. As a student commented:

The new social science (1993) program limits choices. You have to take a certain number of courses. The purpose of CEGEP is for us to see what we want and then concentrate in our second year on a specialization of courses. I'd be more interested in courses if I had more choices; courses were simply assigned to me in the Honours Program.

Students, freshly out of high school, don't really know what is available to them at CEGEP. Therefore CEGEP might cooperate better with high schools if such liaison starts at the grade 9 level. The cooperation should go beyond only one visit annually to the guidance department in high school. First-year students should not be pressured about making major decisions which they might later regret. They need to explore more before they are ready for the demands of the personnel and academic requirements of a college. Counselling should start at high school and go through CEGEP for these students.

Time Spent on Study and other Activities

A newspaper columnist criticised students for not quite having had the maturity to cope with the academic freedoms of CEGEP life. In an exchange with a student in the audience she was addressing, the following encounter occurred.

Student: [CEGEP] "It's sort of time out . . . to fool around and find yourself before getting serious at university."

Columnist: "Pretty expensive time out."

Student: "Whaddya mean? CEGEP is free," she replied.

Columnist: "It costs taxpayers about \$6500 a year to educate a student at CEGEP."

What is the reality then of how students used their time at CEGEP? Comments made by some first-year CEGEP students indicated there might be a certain level of misunderstanding between their perception and the goals of CEGEP.

The average amount of time the Honours students spent on study, including class time and extracurricular activities, are shown in Table 2.4 and 2.5, respectively. Study time is defined as the approximate total number of hours per week students said they spent on classes, homework, reading, and studying for tests and examinations. The term Extracurricular Activities denotes leisure, or other "non-academic" experiences students participate in outside Study Time.

Table 2.4
Average Amount of Time Spent on Study

Time spent on study (hours)	Number of students	Percentage
1-30	10	25
31-49	19	48
50-60	9	24
60+	1	3

n=39

Table 2.5
Time Spent on Extracurricular Activities

Numbers of hours per week spent on extracurricular activities	Number of students	Percentage
1-10	25	33
11-20	10	25
21-30	3	7
31-40	2	5

n=40

To take a look at these two tables, we find that of the 39 students who responded to the question on the amount of time spent on study, 29 students or 75 percent, spend from 31-60+ hours studying. Yet 63 percent of students spend from 1 to 10 hours per week on extracurricular activities; and 25 percent of use between 11 and 20 hours per week on such activities. The table seems to confirm public criticism that a fair number of people, that is, about 25 percent of students do not spend enough time on their studies. In this instance, there are 10 students who devote an average of 11 to 20 hours per week on extracurricular activities.

More females spend 50-60 hours than males on study, and students' favourite activities in school include swimming, being with friends, dancing, exercise, sports, music, reading, and writing.

Some students claimed that they liked the program because it made them work more. In fact they do slightly better overall than other non-Liberal Arts and general CEGEP students, I was informed by an academic dean. In the call for CEGEP reform, Ducharme and Terrill warn:

Our findings seem to prove that if there is one field in which colleges should intervene mainly, it is on the battlefield of study time. In fact, anything that keeps students at school longer - studying in the library, participating in clubs or sports - seem to improve students' chances of doing well (1994, p. A-1).

There are several factors that affect students' effective use of time in CEGEP (Ducharme & Terrill, 1994). According to Ducharme and Terrill, the more work the program demands, the higher the students' marks would be. Part-time jobs, may lead to lower marks, because the job takes time away from the students, particularly weak students. An administrator of the Honours Program confirmed that students who worked some thirty hours a week or more, have difficulty meeting objectives in examinations, projects, and courses. This was also true for students with excellent grades from high school, were faced with a much greater volume of work which required many more hours of work than in high school. Females did better than males. Ducharme and Terrill found that female students spent an extra amount of time doing homework, visiting libraries and reading in spare time. The President of the Federation of CEGEP stated that too many

college students did not do much homework, were not motivated enough and did not see college as a stimulating environment to be in (Gazette, May 18, 1994, pp. A1-2). "What's more is that CEGEPs have not created a culture, a pedagogy of success". Researchers found that most college students don't study much at all. They watch an average of two hours of television per day, go out for two hours a night and spend two hours a day on sports activities. Ducharme said he was "astounded" at the number of students in the survey, one-third of those surveyed said the limited amount of time they dedicate to homework was enough to meet teachers' expectations and get good grades. And he comments:

We're going much more in the direction of tolerance, a natural acceptance of young people's lifestyles. If a student says, 'I can't write a 20-page report, I only have time for 10 pages' we let it go. And at the end of the line, everybody does 10 pages, including the best students.'

In response a reform of the college curriculum which is already under way will provide a sort of upward pressure that students need, by requiring them to master a broader range of courses and demonstrate their knowledge in province-wide exams (Leduc, 1994).

How do students in the Honours Program compare? How do they use time in and out of school? On reviewing the Honours Program I found that although the majority of students' time use was quite well-balanced, too many, or about 25 percent, spend less than 30 hours per week on study, which is quite minimal. Activities outside school occupy an important place in students' lives. Twenty-five percent of students work part-time. Ducharme and Terrill's study surveyed fifty thousand high school students just after they were admitted to CEGEP in

the spring of 1992 and 1993 with a view to finding motivators for students' success at college. Both their study and this one seem to indicate that study time, part-time work that did not impede study commitments, motivation to succeed, number of courses taken (the more the better), and gender (female students spend more time on homework, library visits, reading) are the most influential factors predicting students' success potentials.

General Competencies Students Acquired in the Program

The McGill University Brief to the Parliamentary Commission of the Quebec National Assembly on the future of CEGEPs expressed concern about deficiencies in CEGEP graduates' mastery of basic skills. A survey question in this study asked Vanier College students whether they had been informed through all their CEGEP courses about university requirements in such basic competencies as language, reading, writing and research. Fifty-six percent of the students responded in the affirmative and 46 percent negatively. This implies that there is a discrepancy between the message universities convey and the amount of information that reach CEGEP students. The McGill brief (1992a, pp. 13-14) thus argues for closer liaison between itself and CEGEPs. The purpose of such liaisons was intended not only to including "brighter" students by exposing them to more difficult work, but also that "arrangements serve as a useful conduit of information between CEGEPs and McGill about the nature of university level work and performance expectations" (1992a, pp. 13-14). (This would include an established practice of admitting small numbers of Secondary V students into their courses). More needs to be done by universities

and CEGEPs about informing students about universities' basic skill requirements.

In our study students were asked to rate how well they are aware of universities' requirements on basic competencies and how they believed CEGEPs prepare them for university in specific skill areas. More than 70 percent of students acknowledged awareness of university requirements on such basic abilities as English language skills. Table 2.6 provides the specifics.

Table 2.6

CEGEP students' awareness of universities' academic requirements.

	Number	Percentage
Language:		
Writing	41	77%
Reading	38	72%
Research	37	70%

n=53

Students were asked to rate their competencies in basic language skills, research, and basic science abilities. The latter abilities are required for all pre-university programs by virtue of Bill 83, the law that has reformed CEGEP education. Under the heading Language, I considered their preparedness in writing, reading, listening, and speaking, second language, research, and basic science abilities. The results are presented in Table 2.7.

Table 2.7Language, Research, Basic Science Abilities

	Number	Percentage
<u>Language:</u>		
Writing	48	91
Reading	48	91
Listening	49	92
Speaking	46	86
<u>Second Language</u>	39	74
<u>Research</u>	37	70
<u>Basic Science Abilities:</u>		
Mathematics	25	47
Natural Sciences and Biology	10	19

n=53

Ninety-one percent of students said that they could demonstrate adequate writing skills. The result was strikingly the same, 91 percent, for reading skills students had obtained in the Program. Similarly 92 percent indicated that they had learnt appropriate listening skills. And 86 percent of students showed satisfaction with speaking skills they had developed. It was therefore clear that students were quite confident in ways that the Program provided them with basic language skills.

Seventy-four percent of students stated they felt proficient to carry on their university education in a second language, mainly French. Naturally this is a highly desirable skill to possess in Montreal's bilingual university environment. To look from a different angle, we may say that twenty-six percent of students demonstrate weaknesses in a second language. Seventy percent of students considered they had sufficient training in research methods. And in the teaching of basic science abilities, only 47 percent felt confident about their mathematical

abilities. The difference of 53 percent is undoubtedly too large a discrepancy to maintain even though the Program is a liberal arts and not a science program. One of Bill 83's aims is to make students more prepared to interact with data from a more "scientific" orientation; hence the need for students to take Mathematics, Natural Sciences, and Biology courses.

The fact that only 19 percent indicate preparedness in Natural Science and Biology indicates that the Program is not capable of delivering adequate Science education, and that more opportunities need to be negotiated between Liberal Arts and Science departments to permit students to expose themselves more to these subject that the Liberal Arts Program be empowered with more science teachers. The students' responses confirmed the Parliamentary Commission's concerns about the CEGEP students' weaknesses in the basic areas of mathematics and science which are so very necessary in order to succeed at university.

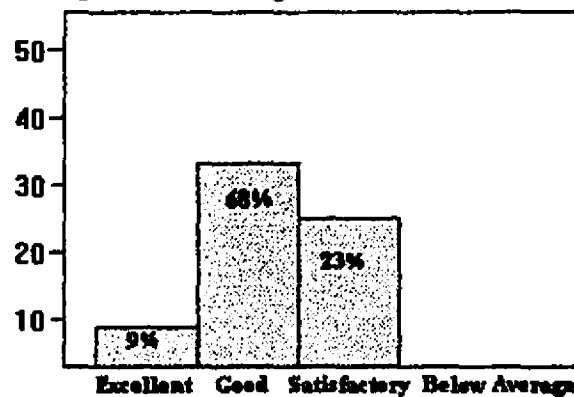
Overall the Program does well in beginning to train students in skill areas that would stand them in good stead at university. I must however stress that such training can best be regarded as an introduction, and therefore only an initiation into competencies universities require of them. It is clear though that universities should do more to make known to students what some of these pre-requisite skills are, in a more direct manner. For instance, the idea of establishing greater liaison between them and CEGEPs for purposes of spelling out the abilities, attitudes, and qualities they seek in students, is both highly desirable and necessary.

The Living and Learning Environment for Students

All students in the Honours Program rate their living and learning environment positively (see Fig. 1).

Figure 1

The Living and Learning Environment for Students



n=53

That is, a fairly high degree (64 percent) of intellectual stimulation, care, respect, and consideration (41 percent) and cooperation (61 percent), speak account for students' high degree of satisfaction with the learning and living environment of the program (Table 2.8). But personal safety, aesthetic appeal, and competition rank low in students' estimation.

Table 2.8
Outstanding Environmental Characteristics of the Honours Program

Characteristic	Numbers	Percentage
1. Personal Security	8	15
2. Aesthetic Appeal	6	11
3. Intellectual Stimulation	33	64
4. Care, respect, and consideration	22	41
5. Cooperation	32	61
6. Competition	10	19

n=53

The majority of students find contact time with teachers to be an important source of reference for assessing their academic progress and gaining access to a personalized face of individual or group learning

Table 2.9
Students' Response to Contact with Teachers

	Number	Percentage
A lot	13	26
Often	19	35
Sometimes	18	33
Seldom	2	4
Hardly ever	1	2

n=53

Eighty-one percent of students point to their peers as their most frequent source of help they receive in the program. Outside school, family and community forms another important support mechanism (51 percent). In addition, teachers and to a lesser extent, administration and other professionals provide help (Table 3.0).

Table 3.0
Help Students Receive From

	Number	Percentage
Fellow students	43	81
Teachers	26	49
Administrators	2	4
Counsellors	4	8
People outside school	21	51

n=53

Students maintain that a highlight of the program is the help and encouragement they get. Indeed they assert that the direction is there and people are behind them:

There is a real sense of belonging. In this program, there's a place for you and you know people care. Teachers are very supportive too. You're not just a stranger. As students we all know each other. Teachers in the Liberal Arts program are always there for you and always make time. They're always there to help you. All the teachers know you and you can go to them if you have problems. The staff is a close unit. They encourage you; they don't abandon you.

Teachers keep you on your toes. Tests and other means are employed to check whether you are keeping abreast with the readings required in a course. The Program provides counselling for academic and personal problems, but only a small percentage of the students take advantage of these services (some people are just shy or lazy). I like to solve problems myself. I am a very positive person. Liberal Arts joins people together.

Liberal Arts has taught me to learn more about myself. I developed personal qualities. I am not afraid of students in class. I have found out it's more important to pay attention to one's inner conflicts than conflicts you have with other people. And teachers always welcome students even for personal problems. Teachers are very understanding. It's good to have the knowledge that there's little to fear and that teachers try to help as much as they can.

In summary, teachers are an integral part of this positive learning and living environment. A highly positive environment with good and caring educators, and a sensitive, capable and hardworking student body, plus diverse extracurricular interests, make the program one that prepares students academically for university. In this regard, the news media has a problem in tarring all CEGEPs with the same brush, neglecting CEGEP programs like the Vanier Liberal Arts Honours Program. Students experience different learning experiences in CEGEP, and areas of weakness in CEGEP should be looked at on a program by program basis.

The Honours Program evinces patterns that reflect to a large extent the "right stuff" students require in mastering basic skills. As the students said:

The Honours Program is more challenging than the regular program and I did as well as I could. We are prepared by the Honours Program, because we do more work. I don't know if I can speak for Science and other English students, but I believe that my program does train me for university. I have achieved my goals. Personally I feel prepared for taking law at university. It's you who succeed and not only the program. I developed goals to succeed in the program, but my parents too influenced me to succeed.

The degree of readiness varies by the year the student is in the program:

As a first-year student, I don't feel ready yet, but I hope that by my second year of studies I hope that I'll be better prepared for university. Up to now I haven't worked to my potential. I'm achieving as well as I can, but there's more to education than classes you take at CEGEP. I enjoy other aspects of life that are part of my education and that are fun and important.

It is student involvement that has led to high satisfaction with the program. When surveyed on if they had appropriate opportunities to participate in their

program, 96 percent of students replied "Yes." They are involved in Liberal Arts Club, meetings, seminars, bake sales and other activities. Their teachers always involve them by asking for feedback or new ideas.

Further, a strong feature of the program was that teachers tried to involve the students in making decisions about the content of class instruction, getting students to participate in class discussions, making efforts to listen to voices in classes and in class presentations. These foster in students a sense of importance and inclusion. The program aroused students' academic interests with many diverse means. Placing students at the centre of learning, led 94 percent of the students to indicating active participation in all aspects of the program.

Participation and Leadership Skills

One question our study asked about was the role played by college administrators in conveying the meaning and purpose of CEGEP education. Sixty-eight percent of students indicate satisfaction with ways administrators link the mission of CEGEP with their (students) education. Eighty-two percent say that they get "a good sense of where they were going in their program", because of the efforts of the student-coordinator and other administrators.

Most students felt that it was important for students to be involved (Table 3.1).

Table 3.1
Importance of Students' Participation in the Program

	Number	Percentage
Very much	26	49
Some	22	41
A Little bit	4	7
Not at all	0	0

n=52

For almost half of the students, an atmosphere that encourages participation is very conducive to the achievement of goals they set for themselves. However about half of the students believe that it would not make a big difference.

When students were asked about leadership skills taught in the program, they appear to gain much of their skills from the classroom and other school-related activities. It is important to note that the majority of students acknowledge themselves to be the benefactors of leadership skills learnt directly or indirectly from the program and other places such as in cultural associations, church, the militia, and so on.

In conclusion, then, a majority of students surveyed confidently asserted that they had achieved their goals in the program. Though students found the program fun they do voice concerns over their role in major administrative decisions made by CEGEPs that affect them. They feel a sense of inclusion in the consultative processes that take place in the classroom, their clubs, departments, and student committees. However, they believe major decisions are kept out of their involvement. They would like to see some honour students represented on the board of governors. They want more contact between

themselves and administrators, who however argue that teacher unions don't encourage student involvement in major decision-making at CEGEPs.

Summary of Students' Responses

To sum up the above findings, it is interesting to note that 70 percent of the students surveyed, and 83 percent interviewed, indicate that the Honours Program helps to prepare them for university. Indeed they believe themselves to be well prepared to succeed at whatever program they decide to pursue. And the overwhelming number of students (50 out of 53) intended to go on to university within six to twelve months of graduation. One can but hope that universities are as eager to accept these students. Evidently some programs CEGEPs have improved their capacity to train students for university today.

Students are satisfied and they learn and can demonstrate acquisition of a substantial amount of new knowledge. The Program provides a constructive experience to students with its academic rigour, intellectual stimulation, diverse teaching methods, involvement of students in the program. As a result, many students developed important cognitive skills and acquired a sense of fairness and belonging. Extracurricular activities also help to enhance their academic learning and performance outcomes. Generally speaking, more than half of the students spent an adequate amount of time on their studies.

The program also has its own problems. For example, only 57 percent of students indicate clear thinking abilities were developed as a result of study in the program; twenty-two percent said they were challenged only a little. An average of 41 percent of students report that requirements in courses are just

right, therefore a good portion of students experience some level of difficulty in their CEGEP courses.

The majority are pleased with contact time they received from teachers. Intellectual stimulation, cooperation, care, respect and consideration were ranked by students as the most outstanding characteristics of the learning environment of Vanier College. All the students considered the learning environment satisfactory. Program rigor and individual efforts are supported by parental influence. That is, parental involvement is considered by a number of students to be an important component of their success at CEGEP.

A 70 percent majority of students therefore indicated satisfaction with the role played by CEGEP. In this process, what roles do teachers play specifically? How do administrators perceive their function? To throw more light on these questions, I examined data gathered from interviews (Interview Protocol, Appendix B) with teachers, administrators, and a teaching-support person, and what I found out is presented in Chapter V of this thesis.

CHAPTER V

TEACHERS AND ADMINISTRATORS' ROLES IN PREPARING
CEGEP STUDENTS ACADEMICALLY FOR UNIVERSITYIntroduction

This chapter examined the roles teachers and administrators played in shaping CEGEP students' learning experiences. Exploring why universities complain that CEGEPs inadequately train large numbers of students, I conducted in-depth interviews with teachers and administrators to obtain a view as to how education professionals work toward their mission. The mission of Vanier College states that:

Vanier College is a publicly-funded English-Language CEGEP which strives to prepare its students to participate fully in Quebec society. Our mission is to make pre-university education accessible while maintaining the highest possible standards of teaching and learning.

The mission also states that Vanier College commits itself to providing a welcoming and caring environment so that individuals achieve their academic, career and personal objectives. Students in such an environment will develop yearning for life-long learning, and appreciation and respect for the rich cultural and ethnic diversity of the students and staff. The faculty, staff and administrators would work cooperatively and continuously to enrich the learning environment.

How is this mission statement translated into practice? To examine what actually happened in the Honours Program, we used an interview and a questionnaire to gather data from teachers and administrators with regards to the following:

- (a) help and encouragement provided for students;
- (b) cooperation amongst teachers;
- (c) administrative goals and opportunities for students' participation in decision making
- (d) the achievement of the CEGEP's mission;
- (e) prospects for change in CEGEP education.

In the following section I look at how teachers help students achieve their academic and personal goals and prepare them for university. I also examined whether administrators provide educational leadership that is needed for the students to learn.

Teachers' Judgement of Students' Academic Preparation for University

In our interviews, teachers noted that in their opinion the majority of students were ready for university, but a few would have difficulties. The majority of Liberal Arts students performed from good to very good. The teachers further noted that they prepare students not only for university, but also for important life experiences.

The teachers pointed out that some students came to CEGEP with major shortcomings in their pre-education. This problem is not unique to Quebec, but common in North America. However, in Quebec CEGEPs have been singled out as having serious problems. The teachers acknowledged that many students with deficiencies in language and writing were brought into CEGEP, and there

was a trend that students are admitted with lower qualifications, and so are the universities. CEGEP students fail partly because of poor preparation at elementary and high school, in literacy skills particularly, the teachers observed. Primary and secondary schools and CEGEP need to facilitate an openness in communication and improve students' readiness so that the rate of failure be reduced. The problem, the teachers maintained, is not a simple one; and simply raising admission requirements and marking tougher, would only result in an even higher failure rate.

How Teachers Challenged Students' Thinking

How did the teachers in the Honours Program help students to succeed at CEGEP in meeting their pre-university goals? Teachers noted that they have adopted several approaches.

One approach is smaller classes which lead to personal involvement and therefore a more intimate learning environment. Getting across to students about what, why, and how things happen is a challenge. A teacher said that she used a combination of lectures, discussions, and theme activities to foster critical thinking. Videotape and other visuals are also used to aid learning.

Another approach is to require students to write term papers which emphasize clear writing. This emphasis, as is evident in courses on women's studies, readings of African-American and aboriginal writers, helps stimulate students' thoughts. Choosing course materials that are challenging and that help students to reflect on their worldview, thereby urging students to raise questions throughout their reading, and using a journal that required students to imagine and find out how things fit together, are also ways used to help with students' learning.

A third approach is to use seminars to break down anonymity and loneliness and challenge students to overcome their limitations. High expectations, in all, link all these up, and diversity runs through all approaches and personal philosophies.

What Teachers Said of Honours Students' Use of Time

Liberal Arts students tend to make good use of their time, but tend to slack off a bit after staying in the program for some time, the teachers said. Students in the program come from public, private, and semi-public schools. Because failure means eviction from the program, not many students sit around and not work. Students have a sense of direction, therefore they are less likely to give up, as are students in social sciences, communication arts, and so on.

On the subject of the government's intended imposition of a \$50 fee on each course failed by students, some teachers said reform efforts must address the context the students come from. Penalizing failure does not provide a substitute for students' needs for structure and resources that enable them to learn, and won't change the situation for students who are at risk. Other problems such as students' literacy level, problems in the family, the intrusions made on their time by television, are also to be dealt with concurrently.

The teachers were sympathetic with students who fail, but underline it as the reality of any form of education. One teacher felt it reasonable to impose a fine if it were enforced in the second semester, given that students have been given time for realizing their responsibilities at CEGEP.

High expectations on students is built into the Honours Program, the teachers said, which push students to work harder and therefore develop fuller

use of their potentials. Teachers in this respect maintained that it is important for students to emulate examples of hard work.

Positive Factors in the Environment Which Helped Teaching

Teachers share the view that a good teacher needs to consider whom one is teaching. The teachers and students in the Honours Program in fact form a cooperative, each knowing the other. They give room for discussion of issues so that students feel included and are inspired by teacher's enthusiasm. As teachers, they felt a great sense of satisfaction when they see students use their minds and become confident of their thinking abilities. "There is a faith in each other and a commitment to teaching. There is a feeling of community, with students' interest at the forefront of this learning community. There is dialogue going on in the Honours Program," a teacher noted. The teachers feel that while it is very important to make learning exciting, stimulating, it is also crucial to place high expectations on students, which require efforts drawn from various sources. As they put it:

Vanier College is a community of more than six thousand people. People bring with them many resources. With access to the greater Montreal community, the many sports facilities of St. Laurent, a large Francophone student population and operation of bilingual programs, Vanier College is an attractive place. Because the college supports language learning and also has a strong science university preparatory program its reputation is well-known overseas.

Help and Encouragement Teachers Provided for Students

in the Honours Program helped students to learn in many ways. Good teaching is the goal, which is achieved by sensitivity toward what engages

students, by teaching what is relevant with students' lives and cultural background. Multicultural studies and women's studies, as well as some independent projects are programs where students can find out what interests them and conduct research in the area. Facing the fact that 11 percent of students in the Honours Program encounter problems with writing and communicating ideas, teachers try to teach literacy with many diverse means - a comic book, Black literature, aboriginal literature, and so on, "I can find out from the class what they want to read and get them busy doing that," a teacher said.

Cooperation Among Teachers

Teachers in the program work together. They consult and discuss with each other and share their feelings about conflicts and problems they encounter. However, some teachers prefer to work on their own. The students said that teachers in the program are very dedicated people, they make great efforts to work together to make the program a success. And this sense of cooperation is carried across to the students as well.

Helping First-Year Students Overcome Difficulties

This is a primary area where teachers in the Honours Program said that they have put in great effort, in order to help students achieve a smooth transition into CEGEP. Since many new students are not able to make meaningful selections of courses, teachers gave them suggestions as to what to choose from the available courses. For instance, by sitting down with them during teacher-students meetings or talking informally on other occasions like Open House and other opportunities outside the formal class lessons.

Ways to Help Students With Problems

In our research, we also surveyed the teachers on an important question which dominated the news media in 1992-1993. The question was whether a major overhaul of CEGEP was needed to create the desired changes that would reduce the high failure rate and therefore improve its educational results.

Teachers' response was mixed.

For instance, a teacher felt that indeed there is such a need, while another felt that would throw the baby out with the bath water. A third was opposed to such a notion. The following are their own words:

Yes in a general sense Quebec needs a more demanding, focused educational system. A provincial not a nationalistic curriculum is desirable. Humanistic education should not be confined to political reactionism. Upgrading teaching standards is a very important priority for change. Systematic evaluation of teachers is a good way to Student teacher training would be a good form of formative evaluation for teachers coming into CEGEP to teach.

Overhaul is a bad word. Instead, an exiting examination should be added before we graduate students for universities, like the French language exam required by students going on to university (in France).

I'm not sure of the need for a major overhaul of CEGEPs. Madame Robillard's (the then Education Minister for Higher Education, Science and Technology), approach is so terribly wrong. There are some problems, but the case was not made for major overhaul - overhaul is not justified. Governments have a tendency to encourage crisis environments in education and kill with a sledgehammer to maintain power.

And, finally, when asked whether CEGEPs were achieving their purpose to prepare students academically for university, the response was positive. In the Honours Program teachers felt generally pleased with students' progress. "I feel that this group has learnt a lot," one teacher beamed proudly.

Administrators' Roles in CEGEP Students' Academic Preparation for University

In our survey administrators were asked questions about their roles in helping to with students' pre-university education. We interviewed the Dean of the Faculty of Arts, the Student-Coordinator, and the Dean of Social Sciences. Briefly, the Dean of Arts is the officer who is responsible for the administration of the Honours Program. The actual daily operations of the Program, however, is the task of the Student-Coordinator. The Dean of Social Sciences' role is one that straddles many disciplines, but he also acts as Registrar for Social Science students and administers an Honours Program in Social Sciences.

When I interviewed the Dean of the Arts Faculty, he had just been recently appointed to his post. He defined his role as one of providing leadership and motivation to students. He informed that he had little to do with the daily running of the Program. He further stated that his goal was to prepare the students for a broader range of university programs. Putting the focus on students was important, he added. In order to accomplish this objective, he advised that the CEGEPs have to improve themselves first in order to improve students' performance. His role, he clarified, included the power and responsibility for running the college's academic program. With regard to students' involvement he stated:

Students don't have the power or responsibility, or have to bear consequences of running the college. Students have votes on academic councils to bring motions regarding the program. Their votes count only as a percentage of the total vote.

As a dean he has to listen closely to students' concerns. He explained,

I hear about problem cases where students are not succeeding in college. I don't interact with students en masse, because union-management

formality doesn't encourage student involvement in decision-making. And this is because teacher contracts simply do not permit this level of involvement in decision-making on the part of students. I do realize that students would like to have a greater presence in the administration of college affairs.

The latter situation, he added, would only become a reality if, for example, teachers wanted a faculty dean to sit in their classes.

He concluded that: "Administrators do act on students' behalf when they appear at review boards to have appeals heard on academic matters." Even though he was fulfilling a new role, he felt that he was "enjoying academic administration and dealing with students more as a family." Despite what was said, it was clear to me however that the Student-Coordinator formed a bridge between the Dean and students, teachers, and the Program.

The Student-Coordinator's role required him to perform many different functions including teaching the students. He said:

I plan events for students, plan for teachers' learning resources, arrange meetings with faculty for the Arts sectors, maintain contact with the Dean, recruit students and welcome them. I organize events such as Open House, museum visits, trips to art galleries.

He was responsible too for procuring funds for the Program. He was pleased to report on the high degree of success of the many tasks he orchestrated, despite limitations of time. And he noted that the Dean was solidly behind his efforts to carry out his role effectively.

Administrators in the Program aim at preparing students to adjust better to study and life in a university. The administrators we surveyed expressed the wish that students become free and responsible citizens who could think independently. Thus, they set their aims for students to receive broad training in

Liberal Arts, and to achieve this aim, they see their role as consisting of coordination, motivation, and leadership.

Administrators agreed that the teachers in the Honours Program strive to help students achieve goals. The failure rate in the Honours Program is not very high. But for 15-20% of social science students who failed courses, a program had been designed by the Faculty of Social Sciences. This so-called "Advantage Program" helps students with low performance or low interest to catch up. According to the Dean of Social Sciences there were roughly one hundred and fifty students participating in the "Advantage Program", where every act of progress students made, is acknowledged, and students received individualized support. Unfortunately however, many students did not take advantage of the program.

The Dean of Social Sciences maintained that the CEGEP educational system needed reassessment. The government, he stated, had not properly assessed resources required to equip students for life in society. CEGEP, he believed, should rather be seen as more of a finishing school (after high school). Low performing students needed to be more thoroughly trained, to more clearly defined objectives.

The Dean observed that more resources are needed to release the "amazing potential" in students, because good students were being pulled down low performers who are not motivated, or who need time to do much catching up. On a more general level, the Dean is being critical when stating that societal objectives are misconstrued.

We don't need as many students going to university to become doctors, engineers, and so on. Some students need to be channeled to the

technological subjects. Rather than targeting the need for an improved resource base at CEGEP, the Reform Commission aimed at language objectives with which I do not agree. Other factors include students' poor study habits. Sometimes students are also not sure of what they want from CEGEP, even though some have reached as far as they can get.

Administrators indicated that they do the best they can to encourage students to concentrate on their studies. Unfortunately all too often their hands have been tied by outmoded government regulations that unwittingly reinforce the difficulties that some CEGEP students experience. Thus, when the government acted to impose a penalty of \$50 for each course a student fails, such measure has not always won administrators' unanimous approval.

The Dean of Social Sciences also felt that there were several other factors that contributed to student failure. Students, he stated, were affected by dysfunctional familial conditions such as alcoholism or substance abuse, battered syndrome, and other personal problems. Therefore making students pay twice because of inequalities that exist outside CEGEP's reach, was unreasonable. But, learning to manage time, most administrators agreed, was a part of the maturing process, and the fine put on failed courses might motivate students to work harder. Middle-class students could get more financial help from parents than "disadvantaged" students. Therefore it is in the interests of both students' and CEGEPs that measures be applied that reconcile the need for discipline and an understanding attitude towards students who fail courses in order that the high failure rate be reduced.

Administrators noted that parents need to cooperate with CEGEP and that government has to provide more resources. A group of the parents of CEGEP students provides support too. Many students fail to read the information that is provided to help them pick their choices at CEGEP and parents should help their

children in this respect. The orientation process or session d'accueil suggested by the CEGEP Reform Commission does not provide adequate funding for adjusting students to CEGEP studies. As an administrator put it: "In our Social Sciences Access Program or the "Advantage Program" students get access to faculty mentors and enroll in special courses to help them. But with a total of \$70,000 provided by government in the session d'accueil program, what can you do with it?"

About teachers' effectiveness and curriculum choices, the administrators were quite open. In their assessment students give frank evaluations. They reported that students were generally very pleased even though they don't like certain courses, teachers, or learning approaches. Administrators did however maintain that: "Overall, students are very pleased with our teachers" Regarding choices, an administrator urges that:

There need to be many choices even in a structured program. The General or Social Science program, for example, has far too many restrictions. Minimum course requirements are a problem too, and there is also far too much rigidity in the first semester. We believe we know what's better training. Students do need less restrictions in the first semester so that they can see various options available to them.

Hence, it is clear that this administrator's role is manifold in his attempts to maximize the use of scarce resources present in the CEGEP's milieu. His function is often a delicate balancing between fiscal wizardry and too few initiatives which make it likely that he can act decisively to stem the tide of student failure at its earliest inception. He pinpointed that another serious handicap to the administrator's role is the fact that universities are obsessed with a grade point average (GPA) and are not looking at courses students take.

He believed that interconnected, developmentally sequential courses are more important than just a student's GPA.

Is Reform of CEGEP Education Needed?

Administrators believe that overhaul of CEGEP was needed.

Administrators define the mission of college as one of providing motivation to preparing students for higher education. They acknowledge that the Honours Program is achieving its goals. An administrator asserted that Liberal Arts Honours students were at the top of their faculty. Some reservations were expressed though about Vanier's educational mission. For instance, an administrator said that students are not developing their self-awareness in instruction, as the emphasis is on academic training. He recommended that greater emphasis be placed on the interpersonal interaction that occurs between human beings during the learning and living process.

"There is a general complaint about not having too much work and not getting enough feedback, which is our job and not anyone else's," another administrator agonized. "But parents need to cooperate." For example, a survey was conducted by the Social Sciences Program regarding students' goals and directions, but only about 8 percent of the parents surveyed replied!

The administrators recognized students' lack of power and responsibility for running college, and expressed wishes to increase the possibilities of a greater level of interaction with CEGEP students. This would mean addressing the question of whether teachers want administrators to sit in their classes. Extended partnerships also need to be forged amongst students, teachers, administrators, parents, and all sectors of society working together to fulfill

ongoing tasks of an education for training free, responsible, and intellectually independent citizens. Such a challenge could not be placed on the shoulders of administrators alone.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In conclusion, our research demonstrates that the Liberal Arts Honours Program, in terms of preparing students for university, is achieving its goal. Data gathered from questionnaires and interviews do reveal that the program is unique and successful in many aspects. The study shows that the causes leading to the success of the program are "academic rigour" flowing from good teaching, a highly motivated student body, appropriate administrative support, encouragement from the home environment, a positive school climate, and a collegial culture in the learning community. These variables are all interrelated. It is the complementary nature of a highly motivated student body coupled with good teaching where the primary source of success resides.

It is clear that CEGEP programs may be administered and carried out quite differently from college to college, still we may draw lessons from the strengths of the Honours Program in Liberal Arts at Vanier. The program dictates elements that might be used to start addressing the problems and challenges presented by the high failure rate of CEGEP students.

In the following, we are going to give some consideration as to what the elements are. Enthusiasm and hard work go hand in hand in terms of bringing out the best in students, because for them to learn in a program setting like the Liberal Arts Honours Program, with its concomitant dynamism of intellectual challenge, diversity of student body, rich cultural atmosphere, is a decided advantage. Dedicated teacher, demanding curricula and courses, are positive features. The program, however, cannot deny an elitist approach. It has to deal

with this problem so that quality learning could become accessible to more students.

The open climate that exists between students and teacher allows for debates and dialogue, which enhances thinking. Opportunities to have contact with teachers give them opportunities to communicate ideas, thoughts and feelings. Within this learning culture, students are able to achieve mastery of a wide variety of knowledge, thinking skills, and acquire the basic competencies universities require and appreciate. Nonetheless there are still a small segment of the student body in this program that requires help in the mastery of basic skills and competencies.

There is narrow discrepancy between what the Honours Program teaches and qualities that universities require of CEGEP students even though students' knowledge of universities' academic criteria was uneven. Students demonstrated a high level of confidence (ninety-four percent) about their readiness to go to university within twelve to twenty-four months of graduation from CEGEP. They generally choose typical Liberal Arts disciplines like Law and Political Science (also History, Philosophy, Psychology) with Law being their top choice. Overall though in the Humanities, thirty percent of students selected to major in Language and Literature, Fine Arts, and so on. Broadness in training is evidenced in students' choice of university subjects. The fact that this program offers intellectual stimulation and cultivates students' interests, results in its meeting universities' academic requirements. Students report that:

The program makes you feel comfortable in a classroom, because it makes it much easier for you to be open. You are more likely to perform to the level of the competition in such an environment. There is not a

drastic range in the group, but the program is dynamic, interpersonal and intercultural, and of a high academic quality".

However 30 percent of students express some reservations on the program. They report:

Courses challenged me a bit, but they could have challenged me more. There was a lot of permissiveness and courses could have been a little more "structured". Teachers agree with us, because they wanted to please us so we could use more of our potentials.

If everyone else pushed themselves a bit more, they would learn even more. CEGEP could be an enjoyable and developmental experience for students. If it is more structured I could have used more of the extra time for study. I could have pushed myself to get more reading done on time and be more organized.

Teachers and administrators played an important role in the students' educative process. They acknowledged that CEGEP has developed over the past twenty-five years, but that there needs to be support, on a continuous basis, from parents and government. Administrators felt somewhat hamstrung by limitations placed on their time. They really wanted more time to mingle with and to get to know students better.

Need for Future Research

1. Further research needs to be conducted in English-language CEGEPs to address the issue of poor study habits in students who are failing their courses. The aim of such research would be to help students deal with time management, interpersonal skills, goal setting, and program design.

2. The top achievers of this study were female participants who spent more time on study than males. (Similar results were established by Ducharme & Terrill (1994) in examining the work habits of 150,000 students.) Hence, further

investigation should be made to reveal similarities and differences between the student groups of different sexes at the CEGEP level.

3. Furthermore what factors motivate female students to work harder than their male counterparts, requires further study.

4. The teaching of problem solving techniques needs to be developed more extensively, because 70 percent of students said such skills were not taught in the Program.

Recommendations

1. Research needs to be done to study how to incorporate successful elements of the Honours Program into non-elitist, regular programs so that more students benefit from CEGEP education.

2. High schools should liaise more with CEGEPs to find ways to help students adjust to the CEGEP academic environment, especially during the first year of study.

3. Universities and CEGEPs should become more aware of the current content of elementary and secondary education in order to predict what factors cause students to become academically deficient before entering both institutions, so as to better prepare to deal with challenges facing them.

4. CEGEPs ought to develop better screening procedures and techniques to delineate, but not to frustrate the process by which students select programs in academic, technological, vocational, or professional subjects.

5. More support be provided for students in need of a variety of emotional or socio-economic interventions, particularly those faced by students with low

performance. Parents need to be partners in such intervention programs to help raise students' self-esteem.

6. For "dropout" rates to decrease, class size must be smaller. Therefore more teachers should be hired to handle training in basic literacy skills (reading, writing, research, mathematics, biology, physics) universities require of students.

7. Teachers go beyond lecture method to make learning a more fulfilling, involved, and stimulating experiences; thereby making attempts that instill an atmosphere of "success" for "dropouts"

8. More enrichment activity should be made accessible to students in the way of independent projects as well as collective activities involving CEGEPs and the society.

9. Prospective employers and labour associations in general should be encouraged to commit themselves to providing students with training in cooperative employment projects which contribute to students' knowledge and experience of living in an increasingly complex technologically-oriented environment.

10. The news media should be urged to promote positive achievements made by CEGEPs without overemphasizing or downplaying difficult challenges that face CEGEPs and other educational systems in Quebec.

11. The best experience of the Honours Liberal Arts Program could be used, where appropriate, to guide the design and implementations of potential or actual cases of students who fail CEGEP courses.

12. CEGEP should function as a finishing school whilst at the same time training students academically for university or other career choices.

In conclusion, this study was not intended to be a final "answer" on CEGEP education. Rather it is an endeavour to get information, understand feelings, reveal authentic voices. The study does not also imply that CEGEP education is a panacea for all personal ills, or societal blights that students might encounter. Much change depends on home and environment, on many other segments of society like government, industry, commerce, and other similar groups or individuals who have an interest in the improvement of CEGEP education. We believe the important role that supportive teachers, administrators, and all who help CEGEP students accomplish their goals, dreams, career plans, should be acknowledged, not underestimated.

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Consent Form

I _____, consent to participating in the study that Philip Taylor is conducting at Vanier College. I understand and have been fully informed that the Honours Program is selected as an example of pre-university education in order to determine ways that students are academically prepared for university education.

I am aware that the aim of the study is to assist students, teachers, and administrators in bringing about a closer match between their goals and needs and the universities' admission and performance criteria .

The primary methods this study will use are a questionnaire, an interview-protocol, and informal observations about the learning atmosphere of the learning environment of Vanier College. Throughout the course of this study, my right to confidentiality and any access to personal information divulged by me, is assured by Philip Taylor.

If, at any time, I want to withdraw my participation from this project, I may do so without incurring a penalty.

Data collected will be organized in such a way that no inference or reference can be made to my performance, competence, and character.

Date:

.....

Signature

Part I: General

1. Are you a full-time or part-time student in the Honours Program?

full-time ____

part-time ____

2. Which year of study are you in now?

First ____

Second ____

3. Which age range are you in?

16-20 ____ 41-50 ____

21-30 ____ 51- ____

31-40 ____

4. Your gender is?

Male ____ Female ____

Part II: The Honours Liberal Arts Program

1. Is academic rigour one of the reasons you chose to register in the Honours Program at Vanier College?

Yes ____ No ____

2. Which subject areas are you enrolled in?

Humanities ____

English Language/Literature ____

Philosophy/Political Science ____

History ____

3. Indicate a fair estimate of time that you devote to your studies (classes, readings, assignments, and studying for tests).

more than 60 hours ____ 30-49 hours ____

50-60 hours ____ less than 30 hours ____

4. Upon graduation from Cegep, do you intend to go onto university within the next?

6-12 months ____ 12-24 months ____

not at all ____

5. Which university Humanities/Social Sciences area do you intend to apply to upon graduation? (indicate 1st, 2nd, 3rd choices).

law ____

history ____

philosophy ____

literature and language ____

politics ____

fine arts ____

if other (fill in 3 possibilities possibilities):

6. Overall do you feel that you are prepared in your program for your chosen field of study in a university? Yes ____ No ____

Give some reasons for your answer (6 above):

Part III: Thinking Skills, Time Commitments, and Basic Competencies

1. On a scale of 1-10 (1 is lowest, 5 is average, and 10 is highest), show what relative weight is given to the following learning modes in your program?

Thoughts:

inquiry ____

interest ____

reason ____

observation ____

analysis ____

synthesis ____

recognition ____

judgment ____

recall ____

curiosity ____

flexibility ____

independence ____

organization

understanding ____

problem-solving ____

applying new concepts ____

reflection ____

Attributes:

excitement __	sensitivity __
energy __	contentedness __
endurance __	passion __
humour __	patience __
courage __	skepticism __
belief __	empathy __
hope __	fear __
faith __	fairness __
belonging __	pleasure __
discontent __	imagination __
idealism __	

2. In this program do you feel that your thinking abilities are challenged?

Yes __ No __

3. Do you gain new kinds of thinking abilities in this program?

Yes __ No __

4. Other than studying at college, what activities do you spend most of your time in?(in hours).

Activity

Time

5. Which of the above activities do you like to do the most?

6. Are you informed through all of your courses about certain basic skills that are required by universities? (check the skills that apply).

language __	reading __
writing __	research __

7. Do you find that the courses you take provide you with ability to think clearly or logically? very well __, a little __, not at all __.

8. Do you think requirements in courses are difficult to meet? easy __, just right __, a little hard __, difficult __.

9. Place a number from 1-10 (1=lowest and 10= highest) that correctly indicates how well you are prepared for university education in the following skill areas?

language ____	writing ____
research ____	speaking ____
listening ____	second language (French for English-language Cegeps) ____
basic mathematics ____	natural sciences and biology ____

Part IV: Living and Learning Environment for Students

1. How often are you able to make contact with your teacher in a course?

a lot ____	often ____
sometimes ____	seldom ____
hardly ever ____	

2. In your view, which of the following characteristics make Vanier College stand out as a learning environment? (check those that apply).

personal security ____	aesthetic appeal ____
intellectual stimulation ____	care, respect, and consideration ____
cooperation ____	competition ____

3. When you have difficulties, to whom do you turn for help and support?

fellow-students ____	teachers ____
administrators ____	counsellors ____
people outside school ____	

4. Overall I think my learning environment is?

excellent ____, good ____, satisfactory ____, below average ____.

Part V: Administrative goals and priorities

1. Do you think that college administrators convey to you the meaning and purpose of your program?

Yes ____ No ____

2 Do you get a sense of where you're going in your program?

Yes ____ No ____

3 Do you think you've been given appropriate opportunities for participation in your program?

Yes ____ No ____

state in which areas of 3 (above):

4. How important do you think such participation is in your academic achievement?

very ____, a little ____, only slightly ____, not at all ____.

5. Where do you learn leadership skills (for example, in the classroom, in sports activities, in debating club, in cultural/social activities). Please specify:

6. Do you get such kind of motivation (leadership) from the program?

Yes ____ No ____.

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR COMPLETING THIS SURVEY. IF YOU FEEL THAT YOU WISH TO PROVIDE MORE INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR CEGEP ACADEMIC PREPARATION, KINDLY CONTACT ME

... AT : telephone 637-7237

Appendix B

Interview Protocol

The following questions were addressed to students, administrators, teachers, and a teaching-support person subject to suitable rephrasing of the form of the questions without changing their substance.

1. What have you learnt in CEGEP this year?
2. What are the reasons for the high student failure rate (more than 40%)?
3. Which thinking abilities have you cultivated at college?
4. Which factors motive you to achieve?
5. Do you receive help and encouragement?
6. Do teachers help students accomplish goals?
7. Do teachers work together to deliver the program?
8. Do CEGEP students feel prepared to handle university education?
9. Are first-year students mature enough to cope with the academic freedoms of CEGEP?
10. Have you achieved your goals in the Honours Program?
11. What other factors help you to succeed at CEGEP?
12. Are the administrative purposes of CEGEP being met?
13. Are students given opportunities to participate in administrative decisions?