

## **LOOKING FOR “QUALITY” AT UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES?**

### **TRY THIS:**

**THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 7, 2006.** As young Canadians start classes at university and college, they may be wondering about the quality of education they’re about to receive. Eleven universities are refusing to participate in one of the country’s most popular guides to picking schools, Macleans’ annual ranking issue. They say the magazine’s analysis is “oversimplified and arbitrary”.

It’s no surprise students and their parents need help to choose a university or college. After a decade of upheaval – massive cuts, now reinvestment -- government funding in most provinces is still below the pre-cut era. What has this done to the quality of education? What policy changes can be made to encourage institutions to strive for excellence while not restricting access to students who can’t afford it?

A new report from CPRN suggests some answers. In *Fostering Quality in Canada’s Post-secondary Institutions*, Ron Saunders, Director of CRPN’s Work Network, proposes a transparent quality improvement process. He suggests provincial governments:

- publicly state their goals for the post-secondary system;
- develop indicators that reflect the goals;
- allow universities and colleges the flexibility to define their own quality improvement objectives and process, taking into account the system goals;
- monitor institutions to ensure quality improvement and transparency are taken seriously.

For their part, colleges and universities would be bound to:

- make public their missions and objectives;
- publicly report their plans to achieve their objectives and progress made against them;
- report tuition rates, class sizes, faculty-student ratios, retention rates, and graduation rates, by program.

For more information on *Fostering Quality in Post-secondary Institutions*, visit our home page:  
<http://www.cprn.org>

CPRN is a national not-for-profit research institute whose mission is to create knowledge and lead public dialogue and debate on social and economic issues important to the well-being of Canadians, in order to help build a more just, prosperous and caring society.

A weekly e-mail service, *e-network*, provides short updates on research projects or corporate activities. Visit [www.e-network.ca](http://www.e-network.ca) to subscribe.

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