



FRESH  
PERSPECTIVES  
2013

**Innovation  
and Impacts  
of Applied  
Research**

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**BOWVALLEY**  
C O L L E G E



**Russ Wilde**

Director, Learning Resource Services  
and Applied Research

# A Step Forward in Applied Research

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While there have been many excellent applied research projects conducted within Bow Valley College, only a small sampling can fit in the pages of this booklet. In this, the third edition of *Fresh Perspectives*, we continue the tradition of highlighting some of BVC's varied innovative research projects and the meaningful changes to practice that have grown from them. Though these studies involve BVC faculty, staff, learners, and partners, their applicability often extends to contexts and settings well beyond the college community.

The addition of applied research to the Learning Resource Services (LRS) portfolio signalled that the conduct and support of applied research is part of our larger responsibility to the community we serve. To support the applied research going on in each of the College's departments, LRS offers a core service model capable of responding to researchers' questions and professional development needs. Through this, we are succeeding in building research capacity at BVC—many of the projects featured in the coming pages were directly supported by our Applied Research and Evaluation (AR&E) unit—and we are only getting started.

The continuing evolution of AR&E at BVC would not have been possible without the dedicated efforts of LRS staff, not to mention BVC researchers and their teams. In particular, the support of Dr. Rena Shimoni, former Dean of Applied Research; Agnes (Scottie) Ray, Applied Research Officer; and Dr. Augusto (Aggie) Legaspi, Applied Research and Evaluation Lead, have been integral to this unit's development and in shaping BVC's applied research strategy.

Today, AR&E extends research support and assistance to all members of the BVC community, including administration of the Research Ethics Board, management of the Internal Research Grants competition, and consultations, training, and workshops for new and experienced researchers. Through these activities, AR&E continues to build capacity for applied research that will have a positive impact on BVC's learners, employees, and other stakeholders.

We sincerely hope you enjoy learning about the fascinating and inspiring applied research projects going on in our College.

# Message from the President and CEO

Two eventful years have passed since the last edition of *Fresh Perspectives*. At that time we were beginning a new phase in our institutional commitment to research. Today, Applied Research and Evaluation has settled into its role as an enabler of research capacity and endeavours throughout the College community.

Applied research fosters solutions, innovations, and improvements that lead to genuine change in our work and in the experience of our learners. These changes to practice help our College fulfill its mandate to support Albertans' learning and workforce needs. Many wonderful research projects at Bow Valley College fit these criteria, and I am pleased to see that projects featured in this issue are reflective of our four research pillars: teaching and learning, foundational learning and assessment, health workforce development, and immigrant advancement.

Thanks to all of you—researchers, staff, partners, and participants—and to the staff in Applied Research and Evaluation for making this important work possible.



**Sharon Carry**  
President and CEO

# Message from the Vice President, Learning

I concluded my last message in *Fresh Perspectives* with the hope that this booklet could play a small role in inspiring others to reflect on their practice and the potential to engage in applied research. I am thrilled to say that applied research has continued to flourish at Bow Valley College.

In the past two years, our capacity for applied research has grown considerably. We have obtained eligibility for research funding through SSHRC and NSERC. We have received generous funding from public and private sources and collaborated extensively with many partners on meaningful projects. Within Bow Valley College, the recent rise in applications for Internal Research Grants and Research Ethics approvals is evidence that more people than ever are engaging in applied research.

*Fresh Perspectives* provides an opportunity to learn about some of the many projects conducted by Bow Valley College researchers which showcase how research findings are applied to practice. Let us reflect on how far we have come and look forward to how applied research informs our practice in the College and the communities we serve. Enjoy!



**Anna Kae Todd**  
Vice President, Learning



*To learn about the impact services have on learners justifies the work you do. We all know why we work so hard —we want students to be successful—but it helps to have concrete results.*

**- Julie Cook**

# Connecting Retention Practices to Results

## RESEARCHER

Julie Cook

## DEPARTMENT

Learner Success Services

## PROJECT

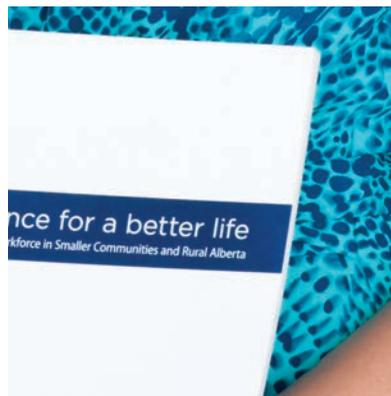
Understanding Student Retention Practices and Impacts at BVC

*With the understanding that engagement is a pillar of learner success, Julie Cook sought to examine whether BVC retention practices were having their intended effect.*

A major part of the work of Learner Success Services (LSS) involves organizing and delivering programs and services to address learner needs in and out of the classroom. The principal goal of these strategies is to facilitate student academic and personal success, one indicator of which is student retention. Julie's research explored this concept by looking at participants' awareness, use, and perceived effectiveness of LSS practices.

Anecdotal evidence suggested that learners valued existing LSS retention strategies. However, Julie wanted to explore the effectiveness and perceptions of these strategies more formally, especially considering some had been newly implemented. In search of evidence regarding the impacts of retention practices, she designed an applied research project to obtain input directly from past and present students. Through surveys and focus groups, Julie learned about learners' experiences with and impressions of a range of BVC retention practices. She also compared withdrawal rates between students who had and had not attended New Student Orientation, a daylong event designed to help familiarize incoming students with BVC and raise awareness of available supports.

In general, current students and alumni felt that retention practices they had participated in had a positive impact on their academic and personal success. Specific to New Student Orientation, withdrawal rates of learners who had not attended were two to three times higher compared to those who had attended. This trend was observed for nearly every semester since 2010, a promising finding for the future of this new event. Julie's exploration of these retention practices has helped raise the profile of retention throughout BVC. The project has also spurred interest for similar research into other services offered by LSS. Through learning more about the impacts of their services, LSS and the College community can better help learners achieve their potential.



*I met many interesting people and was honoured to share their immigration stories with a larger audience. Using applied research to shape program offerings, based on information from immigrants themselves, was a very rewarding process.*

**- Vanessa Lodermeier**

# Enriching the Rural Immigrant Workforce

*Newcomers to Canada arrive with an ambitious and singular determination to succeed; however, transition to the Canadian workforce is seldom a seamless process. Along with her dedicated team, Vanessa Lodermeier set out to learn how BVC could improve the employability of immigrants living outside Calgary.*

Similar to immigrants living in urban settings, rural immigrants need and want to find work; however, the work they find is often unrelated to their experience and education. Immigrants living in small towns may also lack access to a variety of support services and resources. Ongoing skills shortages in Alberta amplify the urgency to ensure all workers can contribute according to their full potential. Aware of these wider issues from previous research into communities surrounding Calgary, BVC Regional Stewardship now aimed to better understand the situations of immigrant workers in small communities.

With funding from Citizenship and Immigration Canada, the Government of Alberta, and Bow Valley College, Vanessa and her team engaged immigrants, employers, and service providers across ten communities in southern Alberta. First, they took part in community consultations and reviewed relevant literature to inform the direction of the project. Next, participants shared their stories through more than 100 interviews, a focus group, and questionnaires—bringing to life the issues and challenges they experienced. Over 85% of immigrants interviewed had some level of post-secondary education, yet were underemployed relative to their backgrounds. While community connectedness and links between service agencies in the communities were very strong, access to language training, foreign qualification recognition, and public transportation often posed a challenge.

In response to her findings, Vanessa helped develop the Workplace Communication for Rural Immigrants program, which BVC has delivered since late 2012. The innovative program focuses on soft skills and cultural differences, blending an online course with face-to-face mentoring in learners' communities. The flexibility and accessibility of this program is a reflection of BVC's dedication to providing diverse and targeted learning options for those who call rural southern Alberta home.

## RESEARCHER

Vanessa Lodermeier

## DEPARTMENT

Regional Stewardship and  
TOWES/Career Advancement Centre

## PROJECT

A Chance for a Better Life: Development  
of the Immigrant Workforce in Smaller  
Communities and Rural Alberta



*The program is ever-evolving.  
I don't ever want it to be  
stagnant, so we try to evolve.  
It is a living entity.*

*- Karen Mercer*

# Responsive Programming for Aboriginal Learner Success

*Collaboration. Consistency. Culture. Connections. Community. Celebration. Through a selected literature review, Karen Mercer, April Bellegard, and Alice Charland gained a new appreciation for these themes as keys to learner success in the Aboriginal Upgrading Program.*

Karen, April, and Alice were initially unsure as to why learners were leaving the program in its last semester. In speaking with colleagues, they understood that some of these learners might need additional support, intervention, or other strategies to complete the program. The three, along with other contributors at various stages in the project, joined together to find out the best ways to meet this need. Each researcher took turns selecting literature for the group to review, drawing from their combined expertise in Aboriginal learning and student services. This process gave them an appreciation for each person's point of view and provided focus and direction to take action. The review of themes and best practices emphasized a holistic approach for examining how the program can meet learner needs—spanning mind, body, spirit, and heart. Given the potential of learners' past experiences posing a barrier to completing their program, the team wanted to nurture and support each learner's individual strengths and gifts as part of their pathways to learning.

The group's findings set in motion a whirlwind of innovations: a collaboration with Learner Success Services and the Office of the Registrar to provide a designated counselor and career advisor for the program; the promotion of Aboriginal culture within program activities and through instructor training; consistency in staffing to emphasize relationship-building and trust; developing a sense of community by bringing together learners at different stages in the program; and celebrating learners' accomplishments throughout the program.

Implementation of best practices continues through the planning of a peer mentorship program to acclimate learners to their program and to College services. As well, a greater variety of cultural activities are becoming part of the program, including weekly workshops and other events. The researchers' goal is for the program to continue progressing to meet the needs of learners in all aspects of their lives.

## RESEARCHERS

Karen Mercer  
April Bellegard  
Alice Charland

## DEPARTMENT

Centre for Excellence in  
Foundational Learning  
and Learner Success Services

## PROJECT

A Selected Review for Adult  
Learner Success in the Aboriginal  
Upgrading Program

*To be honest, I don't think we would have received the proposal if we had done it individually. I don't think the end product would have been as good and I don't think we would have had this much fun.*

**-Avril Colenutt**



*What a learning experience conducting research for another organization! It was an honour to be invited to travel to Toronto to work with Frontier College and to Winnipeg to attend the Critical Crossroads conference.*

**-Margaret Toye**

# Skills for a Brighter Future

*Through exploring the intersections between youth, literacy, and the criminal justice system in Canada, Margaret Toye and Avril Colenutt discovered some promising directions while realizing just how much was left to learn.*

In 2011, Frontier College, a national literacy organization, requested proposals for a literature review on the topic of literacy among youth in the criminal justice system. Both Margaret and Avril were interested in the challenge presented by the project, but did not yet know each other well. They soon found their differing skill sets—Margaret having a PhD in Linguistics, Avril having an LLB and a legal background—provided the ideal complement for this project.

The literature review found little Canadian research related to criminally involved youth and literacy, compared to a wealth of research from the United Kingdom and the United States. In these settings, youth literacy programming in the criminal justice system was found to be effective, even in short time spans. Employment training was also useful and helped demonstrate the importance of literacy to learners' futures. The need for holistic services and assessment was evident; the research suggested that counselors, probation officers, community, family, and social workers should all be part of the process. Similarly, individuals should be assessed for the possibility of learning, emotional, or behavioral disorders so that learning opportunities can be tailored appropriately. The review concluded that there is a need for the Canadian legal system to be more aware of links between literacy and youth during assessments, and that more Canada-specific research would help put best practices from abroad into context.

Avril and Margaret's research stimulated a nationwide discussion of literacy programming and services for youth at risk. Frontier College invited the pair to a national conference on the topic, where their findings served as a focal point for a keynote panel discussion. The panel brought together high-ranking officials and other experts in literacy, social services, and the justice system. Taken together, the research, conference, and continuing discussions are building momentum toward finding and implementing literacy solutions for criminally involved youth in Canada.

## RESEARCHERS

Margaret Toye  
Avril Colenutt

## DEPARTMENT

School of Health, Justice,  
and Human Services

## PROJECT

Critical Crossroads: Youth,  
Criminal Justice, and Literacy

*I wanted to pursue and learn about the role  
modernity plays for these women, how they  
balance modernity with traditionality.*

**- Kakoli Mitra**



# Bringing Culture Home

*Kakoli Mitra has been looking at the negotiation between tradition and modernity—an issue that highly educated women immigrants from South Asia must face on the road to integration into the Canadian workplace.*

Through her research, Kakoli is reaching out to highly educated immigrants from India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. In the first phase of her study, completed in 2011, she conducted a literature review that pointed to the underemployment of these women relative to their skills and education. With this second phase, she decided to go further to learn about how this comes to be.

Kakoli conducted interviews and focus groups to delve deeper into the cultural barriers these women face in finding employment in Canada. A notable influence on some of the women's employment decisions was not a lack of recognition for skills or educational credentials, but rather the effect of traditional, culturally specific gender roles. These women did not adhere to traditional caregiving roles in their home countries, many having held high-level employment. Here in Canada, however, they lack the support systems that helped make it possible for them to pursue a career. With fewer options for culturally specific childcare and education, the women turn to their cultures' traditional concepts of gender and family. These cultural memories have guided them to the more traditional caregiver role, and the women put their own careers on hold while their husbands focus on theirs. Further to being their families' primary caregivers, these women view themselves as stewards of their culture.

If these cultural barriers were overcome, the Canadian economy would benefit from the contributions of more educated immigrants' skills and experience. As Kakoli continues with her applied research, her focus is shifting to what can be done to help women overcome these challenges. She is also preparing to write a book about the stories she has heard and research she has conducted. By making their voices heard, Kakoli hopes to help female immigrants to Canada realize themselves professionally as well as personally.

## RESEARCHER

Kakoli Mitra

## DEPARTMENT

Human Resources

## PROJECT

The Underemployed Educated Immigrant Women from South Asia: Cultural Memories and Dynamics of Integration



*It's interesting to move from your practitioner head to a researcher head. It has been a powerful experience for practitioners on the research team. We must be very reflective, and question our biases to listen to what research participants say.*

*-Audrey Gardner*

◀ Bottom left (L to R)

Audrey Gardner    Sue Phillips  
Candice Jackson    Candace Witkowskyj  
Marnie Schaetti    Penny Worden  
Lorene Anderson

# Getting to the Root of Literacy Learning

*The concept of progress in adult literacy and essential skills (LES) is multifaceted and contextual. Marnie Schaetti, Candice Jackson, and their team of collaborators embraced the complexities in studying how stakeholders understand progress in their settings.*

Commissioned by the Government of Alberta, the *Learner Progression Measures* project aims to understand how people conceive of and measure progress in LES. To meet this aim, Audrey Gardner of BVC's Centre for Excellence in Foundational Learning brought in Marnie and Candice as part of a team of researchers with literacy expertise. The team included representatives from Alberta Workforce Essential Skills and the Further Education Society of Alberta—and with them, vast networks with LES programs and partnerships throughout the province. Further to this, the project is one half of a larger applied research initiative from the Government of Alberta, coupled with a related study on effective practice frameworks in LES learning conducted by NorQuest College and Literacy Alberta.

To account for the diversity of programs and services, the team explored approaches, practices, and resources for measuring progress in communities, workplaces, post-secondary institutions, and other education and training contexts. The team began to unpack the concept of progress through interviews with LES learners, practitioners, and funders. Preliminary results confirmed what the researchers' own experiences had suggested: measuring progress is complex. Learners perceive their progress through qualitative and individual measures rather than only through test scores. In addition, each learning context is in itself complex and specialized to the needs of the learner and of the workplace or learning environment.

This research will produce a critical review of literature on progression measures, findings from 58 stakeholder interviews, and a paper of considerations for policy development on LES progression measures. Together, these documents will help inform and guide the Government of Alberta on proceeding with the province-wide initiative, *Living Literacy: A Literacy Framework for Alberta's Next Generation Economy*. The research team will continue examining their wealth of data to inform practice and policy, keeping the voices of learners and practitioners at the forefront.

## RESEARCHERS

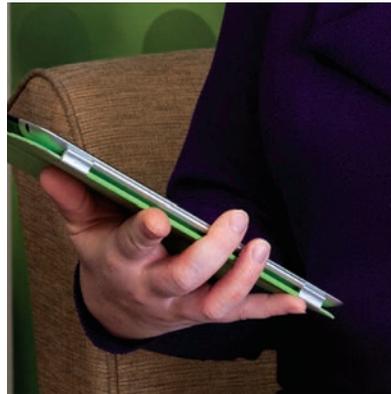
Marnie Schaetti  
Candice Jackson

## DEPARTMENT

Centre for Excellence in  
Foundational Learning

## PROJECT

Learner Progression Measures



*To me, research is a way to be a critical, reflective practitioner. You take a step back and you look objectively. To me, that is the best way to grow because it challenges me and my assumptions going in.*

*- Karen Fiege*

# Going the Distance for Online Learning

*With the proliferation of online learning, many questions are still being asked regarding how best to support online learners. Karen Fiege, who provides essential support for teaching and learning throughout BVC, has been contributing to the search for answers.*

An increasing number of programs and courses are being offered online as BVC implements its vision for anytime, anyplace, any path, any pace learning. At the same time, the College continues to support a diverse learner population, including many who are English language learners. These learners may face challenges distinct from or in addition to those faced by native English speakers, ranging from language and communication issues to confusion over course requirements and expectations. Concerned that such challenges could play a role in learners not completing their courses, Karen investigated retention practices in the online learning environment.

Karen’s research was supported by BVC’s Strategic Enrollment Management (SEM) Committee who funded a grant for applied research on learner retention and engagement at the College. Karen was able to combine this institutional approach to the topic with her own experiences working with faculty. First, she reviewed literature pertaining to retention in online learning in general, and retention of English language learners in particular. While there was considerable information on classroom retention practices for English language learners, practices specific to online learning were limited. The literature did, however, provided direction on course design principles to encourage retention. Next, Karen interviewed instructors of online courses about their retention practices, and found that strategies used were often not specific to English language learners. The question of prioritizing retention in online environments led to discussion of online learning models, class sizes, and other considerations.

Karen plans to present findings, recommendations, and implications of this study at a future meeting of the SEM Committee. As the group moves forward with plans for College-wide retention strategies, her research will play an important role. This knowledge, along with new technologies and course design options available to College programs, positions BVC to make a difference in the experience of online learning.

## RESEARCHER

Karen Fiege

## DEPARTMENT

Learning Resource Services

## PROJECT

Retaining Non-Native English Speaking Learners in Online Learning



*When you're doing a research project, it really helps you to revisit your own practices within your programs. Doing the project helped us improve our own practices.*

*-Laurel Madro*

# Clearing the Path to Meaningful Work

*Bow Valley College not only fosters learning within programs, but also supports learners' transition to meaningful and appropriate employment. Laurel Madro's applied research is one of many initiatives to ensure BVC is properly honouring its commitment.*

The Test of Workplace Essential Skills (TOWES) is used in educational settings across Canada, including in BVC's Corporate Readiness Training Program (CRTP). The CRTP, which serves internationally educated professionals who are transitioning into the Canadian workplace, has used TOWES as one of many diagnostic tools to ensure the program is serving learners appropriately. Though learners' TOWES scores regularly informed program planning, they had not yet been associated with measures of adjustment or success in the workplace. Because the program regularly collected data from both TOWES and learners' work placements—and because partners had expressed interest in the relationship between TOWES and workplace outcomes—Laurel decided to formally pursue this opportunity.

Thirty-seven CRTP learners had their TOWES scores tracked at the beginning and end of the in-class portion of the program. Following learners' six-week work experience, their employers completed feedback questionnaires. The pre-test TOWES scores were then compared to ratings of workplace performance. Laurel found that there was indeed a relationship between the skill-based and task-based measures of performance. Learners who scored higher on the TOWES received more positive reports from employers. The comparison of TOWES and workplace data also gave an indication of where skills gaps might be, and identified tasks with which some newcomers struggle.

This research was an opportunity for Laurel and her team to break new ground in serving CRTP learners and in using TOWES data. As a result of this project, the department revised its learner and employer surveys to better match program objectives. The program has also been using data to target and train skills gaps prior to work placement. The use of TOWES in this context has even helped inform a national study, with the Association of Canadian Community Colleges, to develop and evaluate interventions for essential skills for industry.

## RESEARCHER

Laurel Madro

## DEPARTMENT

TOWES/Career Advancement Centre

## PROJECT

TOWES, Internationally Educated Professionals, and Workplace Success



*I feel quite motivated now to customize teaching and learning for English language learners, as even the simplest adjustments should mean a great sense of inclusion and safety for them.*

*- Workshop participant*

◀ Bottom left (L to R)  
 Hana Taleb Imai  
 Rita Whitelaw  
 Coralie Marcucci  
 Linda Pasternak

# Culturally Competent Teaching for All

*The Centre for Excellence in Immigrant and Intercultural Advancement (CEIIA) saw the opportunity to support internationally educated learners through the development of continuing cross-departmental collaborations for professional development.*

Clare Myers, along with Hana Taleb Imai, designed a project to bring English Language Learning methodology to faculty practice. They set out on this applied research with the expectation that the results would help not only English language learners, but all learners. The initial motivation was learners transferring from the CEIIA to the School of Health, Justice, and Human Services (HJHS) to complete their Practical Nursing program; however, the team quickly realized that faculty in all programs could benefit from intercultural training.

Clare led a collaboration between the CEIIA, HJHS, and Teaching and Learning Enhancement, who advised the group during the project. After reviewing information on faculty development models in general, Clare narrowed her scope to the development of nursing faculty through intercultural communicative competence. She interviewed faculty, coordinators, and administrators to determine the form of professional development that would work best for the program. She then developed and tested professional development materials through a series of pilots. The materials were piloted with a community of practice made up of faculty identified by a coordinator. From their input, Clare refined the model and conducted two more sessions open to all HJHS faculty. The 12-hour course focused on raising awareness of intercultural communicative competence in a way that would support faculty in their delivery and development of lessons.

Faculty response to the professional development workshop was overwhelmingly positive. Participants particularly liked modules that focused on strategies that could be applied within the classroom, but also appreciated the self-reflection components of the course. Clare, Hana, and others in CEIIA are now planning a more generalized model for developing cultural awareness and understanding, which could be adapted with program-specific components to make it useable college-wide. This pilot has been a successful first step toward a vision of accessible cultural training opportunities for both students and faculty.

## RESEARCHER

Clare Myers

## DEPARTMENT

Centre for Excellence in Immigrant and Intercultural Advancement

## PROJECT

Intercultural Communicative Competence:  
A Professional Development Model for  
College Nursing Faculty



*Research is about looking at practice in a different way. It re-energized me in terms of realizing what I'm doing is making a difference. It's a chance to positively influence one tutor and one student at a time.*

**- Belle Auld**



# Gathering Strategies for Success

*Belle Auld saw there were limited resources available on literacy strategies for persons with developmental disabilities. She decided to address the gap by creating her own.*

*Answers May Vary* is an apt title for this applied research project, as it acknowledges the reality that learners are individuals—a strategy that works for one learner may not work for another. As such, there is a need for a repository of potential strategies; a toolbox tutors and other practitioners can draw from to help each of their learners. As a starting point for meeting this need, Belle interviewed tutors from the Speech Assisted Reading and Writing (SARAW) program to learn about the strategies and resources they found most useful in teaching reading and writing skills to adults with developmental disabilities.

Tutors used a variety of learner-centred strategies, focused on identifying and meeting each learner's goals. Belle found that the most effective resources and strategies were those that emphasized relevance to learners' everyday lives and those that learners felt were fun and engaging. Practices that integrated literacy-building skills into daily activities were also successful. The tutors recognized another component of their program that was already working—the SARAW software itself. In an age where computer technology is continuously revised and replaced, this award-winning software (created in 1990) remains a staple of the program because it epitomizes best practice: easy to use, relevant to daily life, and enjoyed by learners.

The varied answers Belle received to her research questions have helped inform and individualize the strategies she uses during tutor training. At the same time, she has continued to document successful strategies for working with adults with developmental disabilities at particular reading levels. She plans to compile these strategies into a guidebook, which will help address the need for resources among practitioners. Although designed for her tutors, Belle believes any practitioner working with this population could use such a guidebook. Moving forward, Belle will continue to develop and apply the knowledge base of literacy learning to help BVC educators help learners.

## RESEARCHER

Belle Auld

## DEPARTMENT

Centre for Excellence in Foundational Learning

## PROJECT

*Answers May Vary: Literacy Strategies, Resources, and Effective Practices for Adult Learners with Developmental Disabilities*



*It's crucial that the individual, employer, or training program can have confidence in the assessment results, because they can affect people's lives. We have done our very best to create accurate, reliable tools.*

**-Melissa Gardner**

# A New Option in Skills Assessment — TOWES Prime

*Venturing into the world of software development for adult literacy and essential skills (LES) assessment, Melissa Gardner realized the challenges and rewards of applied research.*

The paper-based Test of Workplace Essential Skills (TOWES) has been used in Canada for over 15 years and is a fine example of the commercialization of applied research. The move to create a web-based equivalent to TOWES was driven by market need for an LES assessment that would increase the availability of TOWES and address some of the inefficiencies of pen-and-paper tests. The completion of the project will make reliable, affordable LES assessment more accessible to clients nationwide and eventually worldwide.

The process of creating an adaptive, web-based complement to TOWES was demanding—both for Melissa’s committed team at BVC and for the LES and software design experts from across Canada who collaborated on the project. The web-based assessments require constructed responses, where the test taker must generate an answer rather than choose from a list of options. Creating software to score constructed response tests with the accuracy and consistency of a computer—and the perspective of a human—required time and careful consideration to account for all acceptable answers. Validation of assessments involved extensive research, multiple layers of analysis, and comparison of data with that from paper-based assessments.

The TOWES Prime suite of assessment products was developed through this applied research. The products each have a particular purpose for LES assessment and will be commercialized in stages. *Foundation*, created to help lower literacy learners, assesses four of the basic components of reading. *Focus* (the product most similar to the paper-based TOWES) assesses the skills of reading text, document use, and numeracy. *Focus* will be the tool of choice for measuring learning. A third assessment product, known as *Sharp*, will be developed for use in high-stakes settings, such as employment and certification testing. The efforts of Melissa and the entire team have resulted in products that respond to the evolving needs of LES learners and trainers; however, they know this is just the beginning of their adventure.

## RESEARCHER

Melissa Gardner

## DEPARTMENT

TOWES/Career Advancement Centre

## PROJECT

Read to Succeed

# Partnerships are a Foundation for Success in Applied Research

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The applied research that reaffirms BVC's commitment to lifelong learning often depends on support from organizations with areas of expertise that complement those of BVC. Our College has been fortunate to collaborate with many committed and enthusiastic people and organizations: from communities, service agencies, employers, post-secondary institutions, and the three levels of government. These partnerships strive to meet the needs of learners, their communities, their employers, and of Alberta's economy.

A range of collaborations has been integral to several of the studies described in these pages. Partners have been invaluable throughout the research process, including:

- **Identifying areas where applied research can be most valuable**
- **Seeking or providing funding for applied research**
- **Assisting throughout the research process**
- **Informing the interpretation of results**
- **Applying research findings to practice settings**

The College continually works with organizations who share our vision for excellence in applied research and adult education. Here is a sample of three recent partnership-based projects:

## ***Certified Management Accountants (CMA): Business Communication Support Course and Internationally-Trained Professionals in CMA Programs***

**Partners:** BVC Centre for Excellence in Immigrant and Intercultural Advancement (CEIIA), CMA Alberta, Calgary Region Immigrant Employment Council (CRIEC), BVC Applied Research and Evaluation.

CMAA and BVC have recently partnered on two applied research projects. Together, CMAA and CEIIA developed a course for the CMA Strategic Leadership Program. The course assisted Internationally-Trained Professionals (ITPs) with communication skills to help them succeed in earning the CMA designation. In a separate study, CMAA and CRIEC joined with BVC to determine challenges and supports for ITPs pursuing their professional designation.

## ***Meeting the Needs of Diverse Students Engaging in e-Learning: Collaborative Policy Development to Enhance Online Learning***

**Partners:** Government of Alberta, eCampusAlberta, Bow Valley College, Lethbridge College, Northern Alberta Institute of Technology, Red Deer College, NorQuest College, Northern Lakes College, Olds College, and Portage College.

In this second phase of a large applied research project, post-secondary institutions collaboratively developed policies to enhance online and distance learning. This initiative has become increasingly important as a greater diversity of learners engage in e-learning.

## ***Community and Human Resource Profiles***

**Partners:** BVC Regional Stewardship, adult learning service providers, government, and business in 11 Southern Alberta communities.

Through these extensive partnerships, Regional Stewardship has developed detailed profiles for each of these communities. The profiles integrate grass-roots research with provincial and national data in order to serve as decision-making tools for community organizations, local and provincial government, BVC, and other post-secondary institutions.

## Additional Approved Internal Research Grants, 2011-2013

RESEARCHER(S)	PROJECT TITLE	DEPARTMENT
Abbie Lovatt	Qualities of an effective clinical instructor.	HJHS
Amy Knippshild Loren Voice Diane Valiquette	Pharmacy technician transition certificate study.	HJHS
Brett Bergie	Promising approaches to strategic planning in post-secondary education that promote organizational vitality.	President and CEO Office
Emily Gidden	Current trends in co-designing successful post-secondary educational plans with adult learners living with FASD: a literature review.	LSS
Kaesy Russnak Laurel Madro	Supporting the success of Bow Valley College career program learners through essential skills training interventions.	TOWES
Margaret Toye	Factors affecting PN graduates' success and failure in the Canadian Practical Nurse Registration Examination (CPNRE).	HJHS
Wendy Buck Damien Mustaphi	Classroom on Demand (BVC on iTunesU).	LRS

## Projects to Watch

### *Essential Skills for Immigrants*

Funded by Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC), the TOWES department is developing a workshop and one-on-one coaching program for prospective immigrants. These initiatives have been offered at Canadian Immigrant Integration Project offices in China, India, and the Philippines with the aim of better preparing migrants by starting the training and integration process before immigration.

### *On Target! 2: Phase One – An Exploration of a Canadian Language Benchmarks Assessment Strategy*

The Centre for Excellence in Immigrant and Intercultural Advancement, with funding from Alberta Human Services, is working to produce *On Target! 2*, a web-based version of the *On Target!* instructional resource. Based on the Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB) framework, the resources assess literacy skills of English language learners. To do this, the Centre will draw on the expertise of the English Language Learning community in Canada, the CLB, and the needs of their learners.

### *WriteForward*

*WriteForward* is a multi-year project funded by HRSDC that aims to define six writing levels composed of concrete skills which can be practiced and mastered. The Centre for Excellence in Foundational Learning (CEFL) will ultimately develop an instructional resource with the goal of helping adults who do not have the writing skills needed to be successful in the labour market, their communities, and their everyday lives.

### *Stories from the Field*

With funding from Alberta Enterprise and Advanced Education, the CEFL is compiling *Stories from the Field*. The applied research project will report on current issues, challenges, and innovative work occurring in the field of adult literacy and essential skills throughout Alberta, with a focus on teaching and learning of reading, writing, numeracy, and technology.



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To learn more about these projects, visit:  
**[bowvalleycollege.ca/applied-research-evaluation](http://bowvalleycollege.ca/applied-research-evaluation)**

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