

Pathways to Competency-based Assessment and Recruitment

By Bruce Millar



The Association of Ontario Land Surveyors (AOLS) has managed an exciting and important project over the past four years. “*The Pathways to Fairness and Equity*” Project will end March 31st, 2012. An extension has been applied for but, as of this date, no approval has been received.

At the AOLS Annual General Meeting a presentation was made regarding recruitment. Nigel Day, Chair of the Geomatics Recruitment and Liaison Committee (GRLC) offered a perspective on directions and approaches that are being taken and considered at the Committee level. These efforts are important and urgent, because the AOLS membership reflects the demography of society. Baby boomers are leaving in ever increasing numbers and the addition of new members is not keeping up with current attrition.

There are only a few sources of new surveyors. The traditional high school graduate who chooses to enter Canadian university programs in Geomatics continues to be an important element. The GRLC is taking steps to increase awareness and participation with this group. Nigel outlined efforts in this area in his lively speech to the assembled group.

In addition to young Canadian university Geomatics

Program graduates, there are some other sources of potential new surveyors. These sources include adults migrating from other professional disciplines to the Surveying profession; or adults at different levels of the Surveying profession (i.e., technologists and technicians) who wish to “up-skill” and secure an OLS designation. Finally, there are Internationally Educated People (IEPs) who are already recognized surveyors in other countries, who are aspiring to become OLSs.

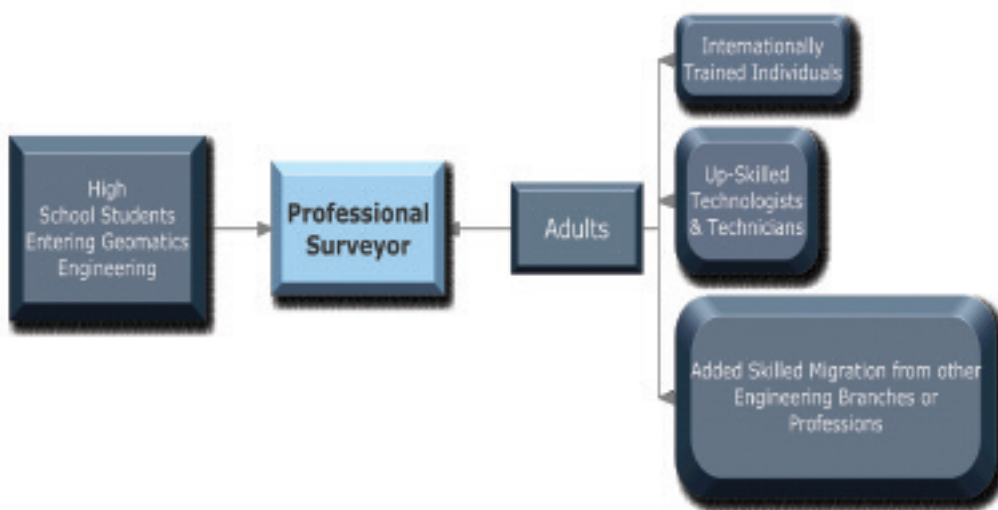
This article addresses the Pathways Project’s usefulness in the area of recruiting adults of all profiles to the Surveying Profession.

The first element that needs to be understood is the problem with only using credential-based assessment. Credentials are the main products of post-secondary institutions around the world. There are in excess of 19,000 universities and colleges worldwide. The variety of course content, emphasis, rigour and instructional skill is a huge issue. Even in Canada, different university programs have differences and trying to compare programs and the credentials

given to Learners who successfully graduate from the programs is enormously difficult. Furthermore, with a few exceptions (nursing in Ontario), there is no synchronization or harmonization between college level programs and university level programs.

Adding a Competency-Based Assessment (CBA) process to the assessment platform of the AOLS has produced significant benefits. First and foremost is the development of a “competency framework” or “Continuum”, which defines all of the skills/competencies that an OLS may be required to use in the course of his/her practice. It

Sources of New Surveyors



should be noted that “incompetence” is listed as one of only two elements that can cause an OLS to lose his/her licence (the other being ethical misconduct). This implies that a solid list of competencies is a required item for all OLSs.

Secondly, those adults wishing to enter into the profession through immigration, migration from other professions or “up-skilling” from technical levels can self-assess where their strengths and “gaps” are. They are then in a position to decide whether they should start the long and rigorous licensure process.

Finally, CBA as developed by the AOLS has a formidable array of support services. The tools and resources developed during the Pathways Project ensure that the way forward for all adult candidates is supported, rigorous and fair.

Adult learners have very different needs than regular university students. Many have families to support, children and spouses to deal with and are employed full time. All of the elements of the Pathways Project have been built on Adult Learner Friendly Principles. These principles minimize the problems associated with attending regular university programs. The AOLS now offers, through its own resources, six courses. These courses are either e-correspondence or “Blended”. Blended delivery allows learners the choice to be physically present or to participate remotely using the Internet and appropriate software.

In addition to the listings of all competencies, each competency has resources listed to assist with self-study. Because of the CBA and associated support and delivery systems, adult learners are more likely to attempt the migration, up-skilling or adjustment to an Ontario environment.

The Project team is optimistic that the competency framework will continue to be expanded, honed and refined in the coming years. They are working to add Geographic Information Management competencies; to determine how the use of CBA relates to the Internal Agreement on Trade; and to provide advanced standing into university programs for college graduates, working technologists and technicians. To that end, York University, in partnership with the AOLS, will continue to work on making the York University program consistent with the approach and elements of the Pathways project, over the next three years.

The Pathways Project can and should assist with recruitment and the elements developed could help significantly with Continuous Professional Development efforts.



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