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A SNAPSHOT OF ALBERTA'S UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES: STUDENT ENROLMENT IN REHABILITATION AND RELATED PROGRAMS

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for

Workforce 2010

**March 2005
(rev. July 2005)**

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INTRODUCTION

This report was prepared by The Vocational and Rehabilitation Research Institute as one portion of the WORKFORCE 2010 initiative. The vision of WORKFORCE 2010 is to develop a comprehensive and effective human resource strategy for the future of professional support to persons with developmental disabilities in Alberta. This document paints a picture of future professionals in the rehabilitation field by outlining student enrolment patterns in Alberta's post secondary institutions. Emphasis is on rehabilitation and related fields.

This profile makes use of data from Alberta Advanced Education's Enrolment Reporting System. This system is a compilation of enrolment data from each of Alberta's post-secondary institutions (see <http://www.aecd.gov.ab.ca/systemdata/enrolment.htm>).

At the time of writing this report, data was available up until the 2003/04 school year. However, the 2003/04 data was partial in that numbers for some of the larger institutions had not been finalized. For this reason, this report is based on enrolment data for the 1998/99, 1999/00, 2000/01, 2001/02 and 2002/03 school years.

The measurement of enrolment used in this report is a count of the total number of full and part time student records for the year. This number is not a "headcount" but an exact count of student records in the fall, winter and spring/fall semesters. Using this calculation, an individual student may be counted up to three times in one year (e.g., once in the fall, once in the winter and once in the spring/summer). Unduplicated headcounts (i.e., each student record is counted once, regardless of the number of semesters the student is enrolled in) were available for some configurations of the data. Where this measure has been used, it has been specified. For the years included in this report, unduplicated headcounts were, on average, 56.9% of the total number of student records, i.e., 100 student records likely represent about 56 or 57 unique students.

The report is organized into three areas. First, it presents general enrolment trends in Alberta's post secondary institutions. Second, it presents enrolment data for rehabilitation related programs (i.e., health, education and community and social services). This information is included because graduates from these general program areas will either work in auxiliary roles with persons with developmental disabilities or would be good candidates for employment in the rehabilitation field. Third, enrolment data for rehabilitation specific programs in Alberta is presented. The report concludes by briefly discussing the implications of the student enrolment trends for the rehabilitation field.

STUDENT ENROLMENT IN POST SECONDARY INSTITUTIONS

Student enrolment in post secondary institutions is a key indicator of the trained and skilled workforce of the future. Recent accounts indicate that student enrolment in rehabilitation programs has not kept pace with enrolment in other faculties. Decrease in student enrolment exacerbates the already critical shortage of skilled labour in the rehabilitation sector. As part of the Workforce 2010 initiative, enrolment trends in rehabilitation and related programs in Alberta's colleges and universities were analyzed based on data obtained from Alberta Advanced Education's Enrolment Reporting System website, and are presented here for the period 1998/99 to 2002/03.

General Post Secondary Enrolment in Alberta

Enrolment in Alberta's post secondary institutions is clearly on the rise. Between 1998/99 and 2002/03, total enrolment (in unduplicated headcounts) grew by 19.5% from 205,575 students in 1998/99 to 245,642 students in 2002/03 (Table 1).

Table 1: Enrolment in Alberta's post-secondary institutions, 1998/99 to 2002/03

Measure	1998/99	1999/00	2000/01	2001/02	2002/03	Total	% change 1998 to 2003
Unduplicated Headcounts	205,575	217,358	221,737	230,769	245,642	1,121,081	+19.5 %
Student Records	369,358	385,026	387,084	400,552	429,960	1,971,980	+16.4 %

The unduplicated headcount is, on average, 56.9% of total number of student records.

During this time, female students consistently outnumbered males (Table 2). From 1998/99 to 2002/03, total enrolment consisted of 55.7% female records and 44.0% male records. While the proportion of female students relative to male students increased slightly from 1998/99 (55.3% female records) to 2002/03 (56.1% female records), the number of female records increased by 18.1% compared to a 14.6% increase in male records.

Table 2: Student records by gender, 1998/99 to 2002/03

Gender	1998/99	1999/00	2000/01	2001/02	2002/03	Total	% change 1998 to 2003
Female	55.3%	55.9%	55.6%	55.7%	56.1%	55.7%	+18.1%
- Frequency	204,330	215,059	215,027	223,215	241,268	1,098,899	
Male	44.4%	43.8%	44.1%	44.0%	43.7%	44.0%	+14.6%
- Frequency	163,927	168,616	170,652	176,390	187,856	867,441	
Unspecified	0.3%	0.4%	0.4%	0.2%	0.2%	0.3%	-31.7%
- Frequency	1,101	1,351	1,405	947	836	5,640	
Total	369,358	385,026	387,084	400,552	429,960	1,971,980	+16.4%

The unduplicated headcount is, on average, 56.9% of total number of student records.

From 1998/99 to 2002/03, the majority of students (53.6%) were 18 to 24 years old; 2.0% were under 18, 23.8% were 25 to 34 years old and 18.2% were 35 years or older (Table 3).

Table 3: Student records by age, 1998/99 to 2002/03

Age	1998/99	1999/00	2000/01	2001/02	2002/03	Total	% change 1998 to 2003
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Under 18 years	2.0%	2.0%	2.0%	1.9%	2.0%	2.0%	+11.8%
- Frequency	7,559	7,541	7,567	7,605	8,454	38,726	
18 - 24 years	51.9%	53.0%	53.8%	54.4%	54.8%	53.6%	+23.0%
- Frequency	191,567	204,190	208,426	218,056	235,550	1,057,789	
25 - 34 years	23.1%	23.8%	23.7%	24.1%	24.3%	23.8%	+22.6%
- Frequency	85,142	91,699	91,584	96,362	104,351	469,138	
Over 34 years	17.9%	18.7%	18.1%	18.3%	18.2%	18.2%	+18.7%
- Frequency	65,942	72,154	70,190	73,228	78,298	359,812	
Unspecified	5.2%	2.5%	2.4%	1.3%	0.8%	2.4%	-82.7%
- Frequency	19,148	9,442	9,317	5,301	3,307	46,515	
Total	369,358	385,026	387,084	400,552	429,960	1,971,980	+16.4%

The unduplicated headcount is, on average, 56.9% of total number of student records.

In every year from 1998/99 to 2002/03, business and related programs were those most frequently chosen, with 13.6% of the enrolment in all programs and 57,413 student records in 2002/03 (Table 4). This was followed by enrolment of unclassified students (i.e., those who had not yet declared a program major) at 10.9% of the student body, enrolment in humanities and social sciences (9.7%), health related programs, not including M.D. (8.1%), and general sciences (7.6%). The greatest growth from 1998/99 to 2002/03 was witnessed by health related programs (+48.8%), followed by unclassified programs (38.0%), general sciences (33.2%) and humanities/social sciences (27.8%), while enrolment in general arts and sciences dropped by 15.6%.

Table 4: Student records by selected programs, 1998/99 to 2002/03

Program	1998/99	1999/00	2000/01	2001/02	2002/03	Total	% change 1998 to 2003
Business and related	14.1%	13.8%	13.7%	13.3%	13.4%	13.6%	+10.6%
- Frequency	51,916	52,968	52,996	53,143	57,413	268,436	
Unclassified	9.6%	10.7%	11.1%	11.5%	11.4%	10.9%	+38.0%
- Frequency	35,632	41,195	43,113	45,934	49,164	215,038	
Humanities and social sciences	9.5%	9.3%	9.5%	9.7%	10.4%	9.7%	+27.8%
- Frequency	34,932	35,898	36,964	38,862	44,655	191,311	
Health related programs	6.9%	8.2%	8.0%	8.3%	8.9%	8.1%	+48.8%
- Frequency	25,605	31,590	31,052	33,225	38,110	159,582	
General sciences	7.3%	7.2%	7.5%	7.6%	8.4%	7.6%	+33.2%
- Frequency	27,099	27,662	29,118	30,520	36,083	150,392	
General arts and sciences	7.2%	6.7%	7.0%	7.0%	5.2%	6.6%	-15.6%
- Frequency	26,674	25,891	27,029	27,893	22,509	129,996	
All programs	369,358	385,026	387,084	400,552	429,960	1,971,980	+16.4%

The unduplicated headcount is, on average, 56.9% of total number of student records.

Table does not list all programs; column percentages will not add up to 100%.

Enrolment in Rehabilitation Related Programs

This section presents enrolment data in rehabilitation related programs, i.e., (i) health and related programs (not M.D.), (ii) education and related programs, and (iii) social and community services programs. Graduates in these programs are likely to work in auxiliary roles to the rehabilitation field,

or be good candidates for providing direct services to persons with developmental disabilities. Data specific to rehabilitation programs is presented in the next section.

Students in health and related programs constitute 46.6% of the student records in the three rehabilitation related programs (Table 5), followed by those in education and related programs (37.3%) and in social and community service programs (16.1%). Student enrolment in rehabilitation related programs has increased by 28.9% from 1998/99 to 2002/03. The largest growth, as mentioned previously, was in health and related programs (48.8%), which was significantly higher than the growth of 16.4% seen across all programs. Growth in education and related programs (16.2%) was comparable to overall growth rate, while social and community services lagged behind with a growth of only 9.0% over the five years.

Table 5: Student records for rehabilitation related programs¹, 1998/99 to 2002/03

Program	1998/99	1999/00	2000/01	2001/02	2002/03	Total	% change 1998 to 2003
Health and related	42.7%	46.6%	46.2%	47.1%	49.3%	46.6%	+48.8%
- Frequency	25,605	31,590	31,052	33,225	38,110	159,582	
Education and related	39.7%	36.7%	37.6%	37.3%	35.8%	37.3%	+16.2%
- Frequency	23,789	24,877	25,300	26,329	27,640	127,935	
Social and community services	17.7%	16.6%	16.2%	15.6%	14.9%	16.1%	+9.0%
- Frequency	10,589	11,265	10,893	10,966	11,541	55,254	
Total	59,983	67,732	67,245	70,520	77,291	342,771	+28.9%

The unduplicated headcount is, on average, 56.9% of total number of student records.

Note 1: Includes health and related (not M.D.), education and related, social and community services.

In each of the three program areas, women consistently outnumbered men, accounting for 76.0% of the student population for all three program areas over the 1998/99 to 2002/03 time period (Table 6). However, the trend shows that an increasing number of men are choosing to enroll in these areas: there were 17,664 male student records in 2002/03 compared to 13,149 in 1998/99—a growth of 34.3%, compared to a corresponding growth of 28.1% in female student records.

Table 6: Student records by gender for rehabilitation related programs¹, 1998/99 to 2002/03

Gender	1998/99	1999/00	2000/01	2001/02	2002/03	Total	% change 1998 to 2003
Female	77.3%	76.3%	74.4%	75.1%	76.9%	76.0%	+28.1%
- Frequency	46,392	51,658	50,013	52,970	59,439	260,471	
Male	21.9%	22.9%	24.7%	24.7%	22.9%	23.4%	+34.3%
- Frequency	13,149	15,503	16,618	17,411	17,664	80,345	
Unspecified	0.7%	0.8%	0.9%	0.2%	0.2%	0.6%	-57.5%
- Frequency	442	571	614	139	188	1,955	
Total	59,983	67,732	67,245	70,520	77,291	342,771	+28.9%

The unduplicated headcount is, on average, 56.9% of total number of student records.

Note 1: Includes health and related (not M.D.), education and related, social and community services.

Overall, students in rehabilitation related programs tended to be slightly older compared to students in all post secondary programs (Table 7). From 1998/99 to 2002/03, 45.5% of students in rehabilitation

related programs were 18 to 24 years old (compared to 53.6% of all students), 25.4% were 25 to 34 years old (compared to 23.8%), and 21.0% were over 34 (compared to 18.2%).

Table 7: Student records by age in rehabilitation related programs¹, 1998/99 to 2002/03

Age	1998/99	1999/00	2000/01	2001/02	2002/03	Total	% change 1998 to 2003
Under 18 years	1.0%	0.9%	1.0%	1.0%	0.8%	1.0%	+6.0%
- Frequency	618	635	679	689	655	3,276	
18 - 24 years	45.1%	44.8%	46.1%	46.0%	45.8%	45.6%	+30.7%
- Frequency	27,072	30,311	30,977	32,421	35,392	156,173	
25 - 34 years	24.5%	25.0%	25.0%	25.5%	26.6%	25.4%	+40.2%
- Frequency	14,683	16,902	16,817	18,011	20,582	86,995	
Over 34 years	24.3%	24.3%	25.5%	26.4%	26.2%	25.4%	+39.1%
- Frequency	14,555	16,444	17,149	18,594	20,240	86,982	
Unspecified	5.1%	5.1%	2.4%	1.1%	0.5%	2.7%	-86.2%
- Frequency	3,055	3,440	1,623	805	422	9,345	
Total	59,983	67,732	67,245	70,520	77,291	342,771	+28.9%

The unduplicated headcount is, on average, 56.9% of total number of student records.

Note 1: Includes health and related (not M.D.), education and related, social and community services.

Enrolment in Rehabilitation Specific Programs

Nine of Alberta's universities and colleges offer rehabilitation specific programs:

- Grande Prairie Regional College, Grande Prairie
- Grant MacEwan College, Edmonton
- Lakeland College, Lloydminster
- Lethbridge Community College, Lethbridge
- Medicine Hat College, Medicine Hat
- Mount Royal College, Calgary
- Portage College, Lac La Biche
- Red Deer College, Red Deer
- University of Calgary, Calgary

Of these, University of Calgary offers the only undergraduate 4-year Bachelor of Community Rehabilitation degree program in the province. Other schools offer either 1-year or, mostly, 2-year diploma programs.

The total number of records for students enrolled in rehabilitation programs in Alberta decreased steadily from 1,451 in 1998/99 to 1,164 in 2002/03 (Table 8). This decrease of 19.8% is in stark contrast to the general trend towards increasing enrolment in post secondary institutions in the past five years (+16.4%), and in the surge in growth in health and related programs (+48.4%).

Enrolment in rehabilitation specific programs across the post secondary institutions varied widely: the program at Medicine Hat College ceased to exist altogether, while Lethbridge College's enrolment more than doubled from 1998/99 to 2002/03. The University of Calgary, Red Deer College, Grant MacEwan College and Mt. Royal College have had the largest proportion of enrolment in rehabilitation specific programs in Alberta from 1998/99 to 2002/03, with a total of 4,614 of the student records out of 6,449 province-wide (71.5%). By 2002/03, Lethbridge College had joined the ranks of these "large" programs, with 16.2% of the student records registered there, just a few short of Mt. Royal College.

Overall, though, it is clear that enrolment in rehabilitation specific programs has suffered considerably, especially in light of overall increases in student enrolment in post secondary institutions in the past 5 years. This drop in enrolment is a clear signal that the rehabilitation sector is a “career of choice” for fewer and fewer young individuals—adding to the labour crisis already prevalent in this field.

Table 8: Student records in rehabilitation programs, 1998/99 to 2002/03

Institution	1998/99	1999/00	2000/01	2001/02	2002/03	Total	% change 1998 to 2003
Grande Prairie Regional College	4.2%	5.4%	3.8%	2.9%	0.8%	3.5%	-85.2%
- Frequency	61	76	46	35	9	227	
Grant MacEwan College	12.5%	14.8%	17.2%	18.9%	19.5%	16.4%	+24.7%
- Frequency	182	206	211	229	227	1,055	
Lakeland College	5.4%	6.4%	8.1%	7.0%	3.3%	6.0%	-51.9%
- Frequency	79	89	99	85	38	390	
Lethbridge College	5.8%	7.8%	10.4%	13.3%	16.2%	10.4%	+123.8%
- Frequency	84	109	128	161	188	670	
Mt Royal College	18.7%	14.2%	15.6%	16.0%	16.5%	16.2%	-29.2%
- Frequency	271	198	191	194	192	1,046	
Red Deer College	13.0%	18.1%	18.0%	18.3%	18.5%	17.0%	+14.4%
- Frequency	188	253	220	222	215	1,098	
Portage College	4.5%	6.2%	3.4%	5.9%	6.2%	5.2%	+10.8%
- Frequency	65	86	42	71	72	336	
Medicine Hat College*	13.0%	1.6%	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%	3.3%	-100.0%
- Frequency	189	22	1	0	0	212	
University of Calgary	22.9%	25.6%	23.4%	17.8%	19.1%	21.9%	-32.8%
- Frequency	332	357	287	216	223	1,415	
Total	1,451	1,396	1,225	1,213	1,164	6,449	-19.8%

The unduplicated headcount is, on average, 56.9% of total number of student records.

* Medicine Hat College lists two sets of numbers for separate rehabilitation programs; data have been amalgamated

Not surprisingly, rehabilitation programs were dominated by female students from 1998/99 to 2002/03, with a total of 93.5% female student records reported (Table 9), compared to 55.7% female records for all programs and 76.0% for rehabilitation related programs. As well, while male enrolment in post secondary institutions grew by 14.6% and by 34.3% in rehabilitation related programs over the same time period, rehabilitation specific programs saw male enrolment decrease by 28.7%, with only 67 male student records (5.8%) reported for 2002/03.

Table 9: Student records in rehabilitation programs by gender, 1998/99 to 2002/03

Gender	1998/99	1999/00	2000/01	2001/02	2002/03	Total	% change 1998 to 2003
Female	93.5%	93.1%	92.9%	94.1%	94.2%	93.5%	-19.2%
- Frequency	1,357	1,299	1,138	1,141	1,096	6,031	
Male	6.5%	6.9%	6.9%	5.8%	5.8%	6.4%	-28.7%
- Frequency	94	97	85	70	67	413	
Unspecified	0%	0%	0.1%	0.1%	0%	0%	n/a

- Frequency	0	0	2	2	1	5	
Total	1,451	1,396	1,225	1,213	1,164	6,449	-19.8%

The unduplicated headcount is, on average, 56.9% of total number of student records.

Like students in post secondary institutions overall, the majority of students in rehabilitation specific programs from 1998/99 to 2002/03 were 18 to 24 years old (Table 10), although there was a slightly higher proportion of 18 to 24 year olds in rehabilitation specific programs (57.4%) than in the general student population (53.6%) or in the rehabilitation related programs (45.6%). There was also a slightly higher proportion of students aged over 34 years old in rehabilitation specific programs (20.7%) compared to the general student population (18.2%).

Table 10: Student records in rehabilitation programs by age, 1998/99 to 2002/03

Age	1998/99	1999/00	2000/01	2001/02	2002/03	Total	% change 1998 to 2003
Under 18 years	1.9%	1.0%	1.2%	0.2%	0.3%	1.0%	-85.2%
- Frequency	27	14	15	3	4	63	
18 - 24 years	56.7%	55.2%	61.2%	58.4%	55.9%	57.4%	-20.8%
- Frequency	822	771	749	708	651	3,701	
25 - 34 years	21.9%	21.3%	20.1%	20.6%	20.7%	21.0%	-24.2%
- Frequency	318	298	246	250	241	1,353	
Over 34 years	19.6%	22.4%	17.4%	20.8%	23.0%	20.7%	-5.6%
- Frequency	284	313	215	252	268	1,332	
Total	1,451	1,396	1,225	1,213	1,164	6,449	-19.8%

The unduplicated headcount is, on average, 56.9% of total number of student records. Student enrolment in degree vs. diploma programs

The only degree program in community rehabilitation is a 4-year Bachelor of Community Rehabilitation (B.C.R.) offered through the University of Calgary (U. of C.). The other eight colleges offer either 1- or 2-year diploma programs.

From 1998/99 to 2002/03, the B.C.R. degree program accounted for 21.9% of all student records in rehabilitation specific programs in Alberta (Table 11), with the rest (78.1%) being in college diploma programs across the province. While overall enrolment in rehabilitation programs decreased from 1998/99 to 2002/03 by 19.8%, the decrease in enrolment in the U. of C. degree program was far more substantial (32.8%) compared to the decrease in enrolment in college diploma programs (15.9%). In 2002/03, there were only 223 student records for the degree program and 941 for the college programs.

Female student records accounted for 94.6% of the enrolment in the degree program and 93.2% in college diploma programs (Table 11).

Table 11: Student records by gender in degree vs. diploma programs, 1998/99 to 2002/03

Type of program	1998/99	1999/00	2000/01	2001/02	2002/03	Total	% change 1998 to 2003
U. of C. 4-year degree program							
Female	92.8%	93.6%	95.5%	97.7%	95.1%	94.6%	-31.2%
- Frequency	308	334	274	211	212	1,339	
Male	7.2%	6.4%	4.5%	2.3%	4.9%	5.4%	-54.2%

- Frequency	24	23	13	5	11	76	
Sub-Total	22.9%	25.6%	23.4%	17.8%	19.2%	21.9%	
- Frequency	332	357	287	216	223	1,415	-32.8%
College diploma programs							
Female	93.2%	92.8%	92.1%	93.2%	93.9%	93.2%	-15.7%
- Frequency	1,049	965	864	930	884	4,692	
Male	6.2%	7.1%	7.6%	6.5%	5.9%	6.6%	-20.0%
- Frequency	70	74	72	65	56	337	
Unspecified	0%	0%	0.2%	0.2%	0.1%	0%	n/a
- Frequency	0	0	2	2	1	5	
Sub-Total	77.1%	74.4%	76.6%	82.2%	80.8%	78.1%	
- Frequency	1,119	1,039	938	997	941	5,034	-15.9%
Total	1,451	1,396	1,225	1,213	1,164	6,449	-19.8%

The unduplicated headcount is, on average, 56.9% of total number of student records.

The students in the university degree program are, on average, older than those in the college diploma programs (Table 12). From 1998/99 to 2002/03, 33.4% of the students in the degree program were 18 to 24 years old compared to 64.1% of the students in the college diploma programs; 33.1% of the degree students were 25 to 34 years old compared to only 17.6% of the college diploma students. Interestingly, from 1998/99 to 2002/03, while there was an overall decrease in enrolment in both settings, there was a 37.9% increase in enrolment of students over 34 years old in college diploma programs. Although the reasons for the increase in enrolment cannot be verified with the present data, it may be due to women who wish to return to the workforce after child-rearing and who want to obtain the skills necessary to work in a caring profession without investing the time or money to attend a university degree program.

Table 12: Student records by age in degree vs. diploma programs, 1998/99 to 2002/03

Type of program	1998/99	1999/00	2000/01	2001/02	2002/03	Total	% change 1998 to 2003
U. of C. 4-year degree program							
Under 18 years	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	n/a
- Frequency	0	0	0	0	0	0	
18 - 24 years	28.3%	31.7%	32.4%	37.5%	40.8%	33.4%	-3.2%
- Frequency	94	113	93	81	91	472	
25 - 34 years	32.2%	33.3%	34.1%	31.9%	33.6%	33.1%	-29.9%
- Frequency	107	119	98	69	75	462	
Over 34 years	39.5%	35.0%	33.4%	30.6%	25.5%	33.6%	-56.5%
- Frequency	131	125	96	66	57	475	
Sub-Total	22.9%	25.6%	23.4%	17.8%	19.2%	21.9%	
- Frequency	332	357	287	216	223	1,415	-32.8%
College diploma programs							
Under 18 years	2.4%	1.3%	1.6%	0.3%	0.4%	1.3%	-85.2%

- Frequency	27	14	15	3	4	63	
18 - 24 years	65.1%	63.3%	69.9%	62.9%	59.5%	64.1%	-23.1%
- Frequency	728	658	656	627	560	3,229	
25 - 34 years	18.9%	17.2%	15.8%	18.2%	17.6%	17.6%	-21.3%
- Frequency	211	179	148	181	166	885	
Over 34 years	13.7%	18.1%	12.7%	18.7%	22.4%	17.0%	+37.9%
- Frequency	153	188	119	186	211	857	
Sub-Total	77.1%	74.4%	76.6%	82.2%	80.8%	78.1%	
- Frequency	1,119	1,039	938	997	941	5,034	-15.9%
Total	1,451	1,396	1,225	1,213	1,164	6,449	-19.8%

The unduplicated headcount is, on average, 56.9% of total number of student records.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE REHABILITATION SECTOR IN ALBERTA

Though enrolment in Alberta's post secondary institutions is on the rise, the number of students in rehabilitation programs is declining. This is especially problematic given that rehabilitation programs tend to be relatively small. For example, in 2002/03 there was a count of only 1,164 records for students enrolled in rehabilitation programs in Alberta. Given that, on average, the unduplicated headcount is 56.9% of the total number of student records, 1,164 student records likely represent about 662 students. It is also likely that many of these students were not members of the graduating classes of 2002/03. As such, in any given year, there are very few professionals with post-secondary credentials entering the rehabilitation field. Given the trend towards diminishing enrolment, this problem is likely to become more pronounced.

The problem of low enrolment in rehabilitation programs is compounded by the rise in persons with developmental disabilities seeking community-based services (VRRRI, June (1) 2005). As long as over 5 years ago, AARC (1999) had estimated an annual need for 2,000 new staff in the rehabilitation sector, with 80% of these required for front line positions. Also in a 1999 survey of rehabilitation agencies, AARC found that 46.5% of new hires were less qualified than the individual they were replacing. The most recent survey of rehabilitation employers (VRRRI, April 2005) confirms that lack of availability of well trained and qualified new staff continues to be a chronic issue; declining enrolment only serves to exacerbate this situation.

Of additional concern are the differences in demographic characteristics of rehabilitation students and individuals accessing PDD services. For example:

- Women in rehabilitation programs largely outnumber men. This is in contrast to the population of Albertan's seeking services from PDD, where males currently outnumber females, and the ratio is expected to increase in the future (VRRRI, 2005).
- While the population of seniors with developmental disabilities is rising (VRRRI, 2005), the majority of students in rehabilitation programs are between 18 and 24 years of age. Turnover is also highest for younger employees (Kinash, 2001; VRRRI, 2000).

Differences in demographic characteristics raise the following concerns:

- What is the capacity of rehabilitation students, most often young women between the ages of 18 and 24, to understand the support needs of a client base in which the numbers of men and seniors are increasing?
- If enrolment in rehabilitation programs continues to decrease, rehabilitation agencies will have to increase their reliance on under-qualified staff. Given the complex needs of elderly clients, it will become increasingly important to consider the capacity of these staff to support clients with complex needs.

The rehabilitation field in Alberta is currently dealing with a skill shortage. Based on the student enrolment data in this report, this is a growing problem. One option is to recruit individuals with training in related fields. In the case of rehabilitation, graduates from health, education or social and community services programs are likely candidates for employment. Though there is above average growth in enrolment in these areas, this growth is limited to health related programs. It is unlikely that the rehabilitation sector will be able to recruit graduates from health and related programs because of predicted skill shortages (Alberta Human Resources and Employment, 2003) as well as better paying employment opportunities in other sectors. Skill shortages have also been predicted for community and social services (Alberta Human Resources and Employment, 2003).

In conclusion, the demand on PDD services is undoubtedly going to increase in the coming years. The enrolment data presented in this report suggests that there are not enough professionals coming into the field to absorb this need. As well, given skill shortages in the health, and social and community service sectors, and in the labour market in general, it appears that the rehabilitation sector will not be able to deal with its own skill shortage by recruiting from these areas unless there are significant changes in the trends observed so far, or in the types of motivators that the rehabilitation field can draw on in order to become a more attractive career location for young workers.

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