

For Immediate Release

April 27, 2007

Low Enrolment threatens Heritage Computer Science Program

At noon yesterday, Heritage College held a special press conference to let the community know about the serious situation it is facing concerning its Computer Science program.

In fact, the future of the Computer Science program at Heritage College could be in jeopardy. The number of fully-qualified applicants for first-year entry into the Fall 2007 semester of this traditionally popular career program is at an unprecedented low. Even though the College has made special efforts to encourage enrolment and to keep the program going, it may have no choice but to suspend the first year of Computer Science for the next academic year if this situation cannot be turned around within the next few weeks. “The College clearly doesn’t want to go down that road,” said Director General Claude J. Chénier. “That is why we are appealing to the community. If we can get 10 qualified students by June, we can retain the first-year of the program. That is the minimum needed to make it sustainable.”

Computer Science Program Coordinator Anne Hamilton pointed out, “There is a perception that there are no jobs out there since the dot.com bubble burst, but there are now 35,000 more jobs in IT [in Canada] than there were at the height of the boom. This [misconception] is not just a local problem. There has been a 50-70% decrease in enrollment across Canada.” A recent industry study predicts that, conservatively, there could be 89,000 IT jobs available in Canada over the next three to five years. In the same time period, it is forecast that there will be only 35-45,000 qualified college and university graduates across the country to fill those jobs.

Citing herself as living proof that another common myth about IT being for “nerdy” males working in isolation is not true, Ms. Hamilton stressed that the program at Heritage seeks to produce well-rounded graduates by teaching communications and presentation skills as well as team-building, qualifications which are highly valued in the current IT job market. Heritage Computer Science students also have access to paid co-op work experience opportunities. In fact, there are more than twice as many of these opportunities as there are students. When those students graduate, their experience gives them a definite advantage.

Second-year Heritage Computer Science student Robert Turnbull talked about his experiences going to local high schools to talk to students about the program and his upcoming participation in the Career Program Showcase taking place in the College library on Monday, May 7 from 3:00 p.m. to 8 p.m. “You don’t need to know a thing about computers to be in the program or even have good typing skills,” he noted, “and we have an avid social life with potlucks, pizza lunches and barbecues [during the year].”

T.J. Sekhon, an Account Executive with CGI Information Systems and an award-winning graduate of the Heritage College Computer Science program, was on hand to speak about his experiences, both in Computer Science program and in the industry. “My experience with

Heritage was absolutely phenomenal. The faculty is very supportive and can give students more attention because of the small class sizes,” he said. “I encourage anyone who is considering a career in IT to consider Heritage College. I fully support Heritage and will continue to do so.” Of his experiences in the industry, he noted, “I don’t know of many jobs out there now that IT doesn’t touch somehow.”

Heritage College is the only English cégep in western Quebec. Tuition is free for Quebec residents and very affordable for non-residents. With access to strong IT and government job markets in the Outaouais and National Capital regions, Heritage’s highly qualified Computer Science graduates, with their valuable co-op experience, are in high demand!

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