

## **Free tuition marketing strategy to attract student 'customers' of post-secondary education**

Written by Paige Aarhus

Thursday, 31 August 2006 *"The Charlatan"* Carlton University Student Newspaper

Canada's first fully accredited private university is giving this year's prospective students extra incentive to enroll: a tuition-free term.

University Canada West (UCW) in Victoria, B.C., which opened its doors September 2005, is attempting to increase its student body and distribute more scholarship dollars by offering students one term in a three-term year free of charge.

"We're getting a lot of attention and enrolment," said David Strong, the president of UCW. "It's boosting awareness of our school."

Strong said the school usually offers students Founders awards of \$200 per course, totaling up to an \$8,000 remission over the course of a degree.

However, the awards are only offered to full-time students, meaning a large number of part-time students are missing out.

"We decided to take the average amount of money awarded and offer that right upfront," said Strong.

Initially Strong said he had his doubts when the suggestion of free tuition was first made, but the offer assisted the university in tripling its enrolment from 23 students to around 70.

"If you have a Porsche and no one knows how good it is, you would take them for a ride," he explained.

Strong is candid about the nature of the university, saying that since it receives no government subsidies it must use marketing and promotions to remain in operation. "Understand that we're a business," he said. "We can act like a business and we can call our students 'customers.' "

UCW offers two bachelor of commerce degree programs in technology management and general studies, as well as five bachelor of arts programs in tourism, economics, geography and communications.

The B.C. Ministry of Education, through a Degree Quality Assessment Program, allows the university to keep its accredited status with reviews on the institution taking place every five years.

Strong said the school's mandate to offer smaller class sizes, more personal attention and progressive learning will allow it to succeed among fierce competition from public universities.

"We're growing very rapidly and we're already looking to expand about 200 miles north of Victoria," he said. "Like any good business, we are very responsive to the market. We're looking for ways to distinguish ourselves from the norm."

See

[http://www.charlatan.ca/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=17540&Itemid=27](http://www.charlatan.ca/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=17540&Itemid=27)