

# Cap College to become a university

## Province will redesignate four colleges

James Weldon

[jweldon@nsnews.com](mailto:jweldon@nsnews.com)

**NORTH Vancouver will soon be a university town.**

That's the word from the province in the wake of an announcement this week that Capilano College is to be redesignated a university.

Premier Gordon Campbell made the announcement to a packed room of students, faculty, officials, media and other onlookers at the college's sportsplex Friday morning.

The institution will be renamed Capilano University, he said — a promise greeted with cheers from the audience.

"Get used to saying that: 'Capilano University,'" said Campbell over a burst of rock music and confetti cannons. "This is something that will touch the lives of literally thousands and thousands of people in the future."

The upgrade is one of several granted by the province this week to post-secondary institutions. The University College of the Fraser Valley, Kwantlen University College in Surrey and Nanaimo's Malaspina College have all been marked for redesignation as universities. A similar announcement for Vancouver's Emily Carr Institute of Art and Design is expected Monday.

The move comes at the end of a year-long campaign by Capilano to have itself redesignated.

Its efforts began in the wake of the province's April 2007 Campus2020 report, which recommended that colleges be banned from offering degrees. The document, submitted by former attorney general Geoff Plant to British Columbia's advanced education minister, made 52 recommendations to improve the province's post-secondary education system. Among them was the suggestion that colleges no longer grant the certificates, in order to "restore (their) primary focus."

At the time, Capilano College was already offering degrees in a

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NEWS photo Mike Wakefield

**PREMIER Gordon Campbell announces Capilano College's designation as a university at the institution's North Vancouver campus Friday. The upgrade is one of several to be granted by the province to post-secondary colleges this week.**

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variety of areas including business, tourism, jazz studies and music therapy, and it had another eight in the works. But Plant's plan, if adopted, would have seen that come to an end and the college increased its lobbying for university status.

Capilano's upgrade is a necessary adaptation to the realities of the modern workplace, said college president Greg Lee.

"The world has changed dramatically since that day (when the college opened)," said Lee. "By all measures the world has become more complex."

Post-secondary education has increasingly become a necessary tool for young people both to get hired and to perform their jobs, he said. The university label can only improve their chances.

The change should also help attract international students, who currently contribute some \$20 million to the college's budget, added Lee.

Current students were on board with the idea, said fourth-year student Stephanie Wood, who gave a short speech at the event. "I'm proud to say I'll be graduating from Capilano University," she said. "What was just a dream is now a reality."

When, exactly, the upgrade will take effect is not certain. The legislature must first amend British Columbia's University Act, and the college will likely have to make some changes in order to meet requirements, such as hiring faculty with PhDs to head up certain programs. "We know there's a lot of work ahead and we can hardly wait to get going," said Lee.

Students who graduate from Capilano's degree programs after the redesignation has been implemented will receive university degrees; those who graduate beforehand will get college degrees or diplomas. However, if they request an academic transcript in the future, the institution will be described on it as a university, said Lee.

The college is expecting no rise in tuition as a result of the

change, he added.

Capilano's redesignation comes the same week other colleges announced downsizings as a result of provincial cuts. Vancouver Community College said Thursday it would be cutting programs, eliminating student spaces and laying off as many as 80 faculty to make up for a \$5.8-million shortfall. Malaspina College laid off seven faculty members the same day.

But at a media scrum after the Capilano College event, Campbell painted the funding cuts as more of a reallocation of resources, saying the province had actually added \$68 million to post-secondary spending this year.

"We want to make sure resources are going to things that are in demand," he said.