Something to Think About

By 2050 – Canada will be a seventy-five million person, multicultural society challenged by the doubling of our population in less than two generations. Large numbers of climate and war refugees place enormous pressures on Canadian Cities. Vancouver, Montreal and Toronto, the traditional first choices on new immigrants, filled rapidly. The spill over effect caused Regina and Saskatoon’s population to double and redouble. How will the Universities Regina and Saskatchewan respond to this pressure?

Change may be managed in a number of ways. Recently the One Thought To Start Your Day Blog published by Alex Usher blogged on new enrolment data on a post entitled Field of Studies (Oh the Humanities!). Alex looked at total enrolment by field and trends in enrolment over time. He concluded that enrolment shifts have profound consequences to universities and we are currently undergoing one of the biggest – if not the biggest – in history. It is surprising that we are not having more open conversations about the effects.

I have issues with Alex. He proposes a short-term band-aid solution. The simplistic nature of data presented is offensive. The last point is Alex completely missed the decade of the sixties. It was a time that new universities sprang up on every corner and existing institutions doubled in size to accommodate the boomer generation.

Might I suggest we borrow a page from BlackBerry’s business plan? They were the early industrial giant that was felled by Apple, the iPhone and all of the screen touch devices. BlackBerry’s hand held business was dead, however, their core business was innovation and their culture was one of creativity. They identified their core strength, repositioned the company and are rising from this near death experience to become a force in driverless cars and secure communications. Patience, planning and a belief in their innovative culture paid off.

What does this have to do with Universities? Everything and nothing. Universities improve the quality of life for Canadian because educated citizens are better citizens. In 2050 there will be more citizens. Will they be better citizens?

(Something to think about over a beer.)

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