



research reveals...

an update on gambling research in ALBERTA

About The Alberta Gaming Research Institute

The Alberta Gaming Research Institute is a consortium of the Universities of Alberta, Calgary, and Lethbridge. Its primary purpose is to support and promote research into gaming and gambling in the province. The Institute's identified research domains include bio-psychological and health care, socio-cultural, economic, and government and industry policy and practice. The Institute aims to achieve international recognition in gaming-related research. It is coordinated by a Board of Directors working in collaboration with the Alberta Gaming Research Council. The Institute is funded by the Alberta government through the Alberta Lottery Fund.

OUR MISSION:

To significantly improve Albertans' knowledge of how gambling affects society

Your comments and queries are welcome either by e-mail abgaming@ualberta.ca or phone 780.492.2856.

FOCU5—The Institute's 5th Annual Report will be available in September

THE INSTITUTE'S 2004-2005 ANNUAL REPORT is scheduled for publication in September 2005. As in previous years, an electronic copy will be posted on our website (www.abgaminginstitute.ualberta.ca) and paper copies will be distributed by mail. Extra copies are available upon request (780-492-2856).



Photo credit: Creative Services, University of Alberta

The Hub: Facilitating Gambling Research Excellence

By Rhys Stevens

The Alberta Gaming Research Institute's administrative hub is located on the University of Alberta campus in Edmonton, Alberta. For those unfamiliar with the term, a "hub" is considered to be a centre of activity, the point of origin from which things—such as ideas or influences—originate. This description seems particularly apt when considering the research facilitation and coordination initiatives developed by the Institute's Board of Directors and its Executive Director, Ms. Vickii Williams. They have been tireless in their efforts to foster a research environment that facilitates high-quality academic research related to gaming and gambling. Such efforts have been indispensable in ensuring that all aspects of the Institute's activities are coordinated in as seamless and effective manner as possible.



Photo courtesy of Catherine Anley

“I would very much like to continue working in the area of university administration and welcome the opportunity to continue learning about and being involved in academic research projects and perhaps move into a research coordinator’s position.”

Catherine Anley Administrative Assistant

Those who have been associated with the Alberta Gaming Research Institute for any length of time will certainly be familiar with the meticulous work of the personable Catherine Anley. She has been employed as the Institute’s Administrative Assistant since 2001 and regularly undertakes tasks over and above those that are solely administrative in nature. Anley assists with the operation of the hub by providing valuable input on issues relating to the implementation of Institute processes, procedures, and document production. As one of only two employees at the administrative hub, Anley’s multi-dimensional abilities have proven most beneficial.

In addition to the experience she gained from a number of administrative positions at both McGill University and the University of Alberta, Anley has earned a BA (Anthropology) and is nearing completion of a MA in Comparative Literature. Thanks to her varied employment and educational background, Anley brings a unique perspective when meeting the demands of working at the research institute. When asked about her post-MA career aspirations, Anley says that, “I would very much like to continue working in the area of university administration and welcome the opportunity to continue learning about and being involved in academic research projects and perhaps move into a research coordinator’s position.”

EDITOR’S NOTE: Catherine Anley has recently accepted a position with the Office of Human Rights at the University of Alberta and will assume her new role in early September. On behalf of the Institute, we would like to thank Catherine for her contribution to the achievements of the Institute and wish her every success in her future endeavours.

Vickii Williams Founding Executive Director

Williams first assumed the role of Executive Director in April 2000 on a part-time basis; in April 2001 it became a full-time position to further develop the newly created Institute. Williams’ extensive knowledge of the province’s educational and governmental landscapes was developed while working both in and with post-secondary institutions. With a BA (Sociology), PD/AD (Elementary Education), and a Master of Library and Information Science (MLIS), all from the University of Alberta, Williams spent the first 11 years of her career as a professional librarian with the Learning Resources Centre, Alberta Vocational College (now Norquest College). She then joined Alberta Advanced Education and Career Development (now Alberta Advanced Education) as the “Issues Coordinator” within the System Funding and Accountability Division. From there, she assumed the position of Executive Assistant to the Provost and Vice-President, Academic,

University of Lethbridge, with special responsibility for government and inter-institutional liaison. The experience Williams gained was invaluable in providing her with the skills necessary to be successful in her role as the Institute's Executive Director.

As the founding director of the Institute, Williams called upon her array of organizational and planning skills to set up and develop the Institute's programs and business processes. According to Williams, these activities included "everything from negotiating for office space to developing a peer review process to ensuring that the full intent of the tri-university consortium arrangement was realized." At the same time, she is quick to commend the planning that was done prior to her arrival. She points out that "Special recognition needs to be given to the foresight and thoroughness demonstrated by the universities' representatives and government funders in establishing an independent, multi-disciplinary, tri-university research Institute."



Photo courtesy of Vickii Williams

Continuing to build upon a foundation of success

One of the trends that Williams has noticed in her role as Executive Director has been a move toward greater gambling research collaboration and cooperation among Canadian and international jurisdictions. Not surprisingly, Williams herself has been one of the driving forces behind this collaboration and has been instrumental in coordinating the Institute's participation. "The natural migration from individual researcher projects to expanded, inter-university, and inter-jurisdictional collaborative initiatives can be attributed to growing provincial, national, and international recognition for the Institute's research," says Williams. She foresees that such partnerships could ultimately see the Institute playing a key role in investigations that are international in scope.

According to Williams, it has been the Institute's tri-university partnership approach—involving the Universities of Alberta, Calgary and Lethbridge—that has been a major factor in the success the Institute has enjoyed during its first five years of operation. Specifically, "the concentration of research talent and expertise available in the partner universities, I believe, represents a unique opportunity to support and develop gambling-related research programs from a range of disciplinary perspectives." It is also this range of disciplines and topics that continues to captivate Williams' interest in the field of gambling studies. She comments that "a very satisfying result of my exposure to such a diversity of research perspectives has been the opportunity to meet many very committed and dedicated researchers. It is my hope that the Institute's support has contributed to solidifying their interest in the field of gambling research." Likewise, Williams has been a significant player in the establishment of a successful gambling research environment in the Province of Alberta.

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Thanks to a combination of the distinguished scholarship produced by funded investigators, the commitment and direction of the Institute Board of Directors, and the effective research infrastructure, the Institute has developed a solid reputation for research excellence. By means of illustration, Williams points to the encouraging results of the Institute's January 2005 international experts' review mandated by the university partners. She says that, "[its] primary focus was to examine the research merit and productivity of Institute supported research... and my role entailed working closely with the University officials to identify potential external reviewers from which to make their final selection and, subsequently, to determine the types of background materials that would be most informative in preparation for an effective site visit."

When asked to provide a highlight of recent Institute research activity, Williams cites the Institute's longitudinal study, also known as the 'Leisure, Lifestyle, Lifecycle Project,' which seeks to provide an in-depth examination of the gambling behaviors of five different age cohorts. She mentions that "the piloting phase [of the project] is complete, and the major study is planned to commence in the fall. To date, four other Canadian provinces have indicated their interest in participating in associated projects."

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