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NEWS RELEASE

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Training the trainers - Vanier College and John Abbott College bring teaching expertise to India

Montreal, April 25, 2011. Chennai, India may be more than 13,000 km from Montreal, but when it comes to education, teachers have similar needs no matter where they are. So when the state government of Tamil Nadu, India, started reforming their education system to make it more student-centred, teachers in Montreal knew they could help. Why? Because student-centred learning is a subject that cegeps know a lot about.

One expert is Kevin Lenton of the Vanier Physics Department. His presentation last fall at the SOMECE conference in Mexico on improving student participation in the classroom was very well received. So Kevin knew he had something to offer when John Abbott College asked him to join two of their teachers, Phoebe Jackson and Gary Johnson, and give a series of workshops on Problem Based Learning to Indian polytechnic teachers in India.

The training sessions, held in early March, aimed to help the teachers develop techniques to involve students in their own learning. Sessions covered three topics: Assessment, Peer Instruction and Problem Based Learning.

In Problem Based Learning (PBL), students work in small teams to solve complex problems. Studies show that students learn better through PBL than in traditional learning environments, in part because they are more motivated. The workshop Kevin Lenton gave explored how to apply PBL in the polytechnic classroom.

The workshops constitute Phase I of a joint project between John Abbott College, Vanier College and the Tamil Nadu Polytechnics. In Phase II, Indian teachers will visit Montreal colleges in September 2011. Then in Phase III other Cégep teachers will travel to Tamil Nadu.

“In general I found that we are asking the same questions and finding the same solutions about making our pedagogy more student-centred,” says Kevin Lenton. “Our Indian colleagues were very open to new ideas, and came up with interesting and creative problems. One participant described me as the *Creator and Destroyer of Problems* which I am adopting as my moniker!”

-30-

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