

Harris Gets 'Green Light' by David Chilton

School creates new training program to upgrade professionals in rapidly changing music and media industries.

It seems entirely appropriate given the speed of change in the music and media industries, that government approval for the Harris Institute's new training program came as quick as a flash.

John Harris, president and founder of Toronto's Harris Institute says the go-ahead for the new online and in-class training arrived from the provincial Ministry of Culture at "rocket speed." Harris submitted his interest in offering the program last November and got the official green light in February.

The institute's new program is backed by the Ministry of Culture's Ontario Media Development Corp. set up to help entertainment and creative ventures in the province. It's a \$7.5 million affair, with 12 projects, including Harris's approved for Phase 1.

"What we're doing now is offering professional upgrading to people who are active professionals," Harris says. "The reality is that a lot of things that we were teaching 10 years ago are now obsolete. Even our former graduates will get value out of this. What we're doing is creating a new

The new courses are in addition to the college's one-year diploma programs in Producing/Engineering and Recording Arts Management.

On site instruction is expected to start this summer, Harris says, with six hours of classes held Saturdays and Sundays. Online learning, some-

thing the Harris Institute has never done before, will be underway by November or December.

Most courses will be available on site or online, although a few, because they are hands-on, can only be taught



The Hon. Caroline Di Cocco, Minister of Culture, announces the recipients of the OMDC's Partnerships Fund at Harris Institute on February 15, 2007.

at the Institute's Toronto campus. "The focus of the courses is music business, audio, film, television and digital media," Harris says. "It's a range of business and technical courses. It's things like music marketing, artist management, music production, multimedia (and) music and film.

The institute is offering the courses in partnership with Amperea Software, PodChannels and LiveWire Remote Recorders. Harris adds that the Toronto school will also work with music & media trade associations to market the new program, offering their members a 25% discount on tuition fees.

As for the size of the fees, Harris says nothing's finalized but in any event they will be moderate. "we haven't actually worked them out. That's going to take a while because we don't have a complete handle on what the costs of developing and implementing are. Our focus will be to make them accessible." Harris puts course cost at between \$300 and \$500 each, depending on whether it's business or a technical subject the student is studying.

Still with money, Harris is also pleased to point out new figures show the Harris Institute with a zero student loan (OSAP) default rate. The only other career college with no defaulters is the Medix School. The average default rate for the sector was 16.8% versus 13.6% for public colleges and 5.7% for universities.

Like the tuition fees, class sizes for the program will also be smaller than larger. In the first year, because, as Harris says, it will be a "prototype period," numbers will be kept down, even those offered online. And, as he points out, for courses taught in a studio, numbers must be restricted to six or eight students at a time. Harris also anticipates high international interest in the new program so he has to ensure the 18-year old college's academic standards are adhered to. Speed, after all, will only take the college so far.