

For immediate release

PRESS RELEASE

French Immersion: keeping our facts straight!

Edmonton (June 9, 2016) - While recent studies show the many cognitive benefits of learning two languages from an early age, we, at Campus Saint-Jean, are surprised that in a country where French and English are the two Official Languages, articles like the one recently published in *The Globe and Mail* by Margaret Wentz still have their place.

We should recall that across Canada, and particularly in Alberta and British Columbia, the immersion programs are increasingly popular. This can be attributed to Canadian Parents for French whose significant contribution was recently recognized on the national stage by the Commissioner of Official Languages who awarded them the Award of Excellence - Promotion of Linguistic Duality.

Campus Saint-Jean is a prime example of one of the many benefits to learning a second language. "The 500 to 600 students who come from the immersion programs, who alongside the 200 to 250 francophone students, are determined to pursue their university studies in French in a minority setting community and are currently enrolled at Campus Saint-Jean of the University of Alberta in a wide range of programs, are a testimony that French immersion does work and is a success," said the Dean of Campus Saint-Jean, Pierre-Yves Mocuais.

"The only hurdle to these students' studies is the fact that, though committed to the vision of linguistic duality, they remain the poor cousins of their fellow students in other Faculties," he adds.

According to the dean, the real debate should rather be about the need to train more teachers to meet the growing demand from schools so that they can offer quality French immersion programs. "This kind of article needlessly inflames the issue when what is mostly needed is for the training of capable French immersion teachers in greater number, something which Faculté Saint-Jean at the University of Alberta endeavors to do.

In fact, it is important to highlight that the University of Alberta's Institutional strategic plan, "For the Public Good", acknowledges the unique role of Campus Saint-Jean within the institution and beyond. Indeed, one of its strategies is to: *"Highlight and strengthen the role that Campus Saint-Jean plays in reflecting and reinforcing the linguistic duality of Canada as well as the worldwide multi-ethnic Francophonie, by positioning the university locally, nationally, and internationally as a destination of choice for francophone and bilingual students, and by progressively improving Faculté Saint-Jean students' and applicants' access to French-language services."*

Source:

Étienne Alary

Senior Coordinator, Public Outreach

Phone : (780) 465-8763 alary@ualberta.ca