

## Challenging Thinking for Challenging Times: Board Retreats & Campus Presentations

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*At a time when many colleges and universities stand at the crossroads, and higher education faces the prospect of unprecedented political, economic, social, and technological change, a new perspective can stimulate innovative thinking and out-of-the-box decision-making.*

More than 8,000 subscribers get a daily dose of Ken Steele's perspective through *Academica's Top Ten*, a daily round-up of news, trends, and research findings shaping the Canadian higher-education sector. Ken has become a fixture at dozens of regional, national and international conferences, delivering keynote addresses that put the broader sector in context and weave together emerging trends and data from a wide variety of sources. In recent years, campus leaders across Canada have benefited by adding Ken Steele's perspective and provocative ideas to board retreats, academic planning sessions, enrolment management committees, and other strategic and professional development events.

“Our executive relies on Ken for an amazing birds-eye view of the PSE landscape.”

Facilitation for:

- Board Retreats
- Strategic Planning
- Enrolment Management
- Academic Strategy
- Marketing Committees
- Program Review
- PD Day Programs
- Department Meetings
- Conference Keynotes

## Current Topics

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Every meeting, retreat, and conference is unique, and Ken works with you to customize his presentation and the day's agenda to suit your institution, your group, and your current priorities. Still, the following 5 topics are perennial favourites, and Ken is continually revising and updating his material, which includes vibrant multimedia. Each topic can be tailored to between 1 and 3 hours in length, and Ken frequently presents 2 or 3 talks to a variety of campus audiences in the course of a single day. Often, a presentation acts as the opening keynote to a half-day or full-day strategic planning retreat.

### “Emerging Trends”

Ken presents a fast-paced, wide-ranging synthesis of the latest research on the higher education marketplace, trend forecasts, new strategies and emerging trends including: economic pressures, government funding shifts, budgeting strategies, labour unrest, demographic projections, gender balance, immigration patterns, student diversity, internationalization, Millennial students, helicopter parents, rising careerism, increasing competition, student guarantees, aggressive marketing tactics, media evolution, social media strategies, multinational for-profit and online competitors, emerging “open” models of education, celebrity lecturers, and much else. The “Trends” presentation is a synthesis of 4 years worth of news from the *Top Ten*.

### PSE “AdSpotter”

Over the past 15 years working with hundreds of colleges and universities, Ken has seen first-hand many innovative marketing efforts and best practices, and of course volumes of market research. He has also made a hobby of gathering hundreds of unique, shocking, and/or inspiring samples of higher education advertising from Canada, the US, and worldwide – many of which are available at his YouTube channel, [www.YouTube.com/AcademicaGroup](http://www.YouTube.com/AcademicaGroup). Marketing communications professionals can learn a great deal from those that have gone before, and will see some of the clear trends pointing to future directions for higher education marketing.

“Provocative ideas that challenge existing paradigms.”

### Market Research

For 15 years now, Academica Group has conducted the most comprehensive survey of postsecondary applicants in North America, the *UCAS Applicant Study*. With hundreds of questions and millions of data points, Ken can present relevant market data on a wide range of topics, and interpret it with insight and humour. If your institution has participated in the *UCAS* or other Academica Group studies, Ken can present and interpret your own institution-specific data. Otherwise, Ken can present high-level findings on a range of intriguing findings from Academica and other research sources.

### PSE Branding

Institutional reputation, strategic positioning, or brand strategy – whatever you call it, higher education brands are becoming more professional, focused, and assertive. Ken has helped dozens of institutions develop a campus-wide consensus about branding, a data-driven understanding of their current institutional reputation, and a strategic approach to creating a strong differentiated position that attracts students and faculty from a distance. Ken can speak on institutional positioning theory, trends in college and university branding in general, or guide a strategic retreat or summit to resolve your institution's positioning strategy.

### Social Media

Communications and public affairs practitioners often encounter significant campus resistance to the use of social media tools, because of perceived legal, political, and reputational risk. Academica Group's technology division has consulted with leading colleges and universities for years on social media strategies, and the *UCAS Applicant Study* has explored student perceptions and attitudes toward social media platforms and interactions with schools. Ken has presented to conferences, faculty committees, communications and marketing professionals, enrolment management teams, and senior administration on social media, success stories and cautionary tales.

## Background

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### *Ken Steele*

**Ken Steele** is co-founder and Senior Vice-President of Academica Group Inc., which now has offices in London Ontario, Toronto, and Boston. Ken's area of consulting practice is institutional brand strategy and recruitment marketing, and he has led major projects in recent years for Lethbridge College, the University of the Fraser Valley, Mount Royal University, and the University of Saskatchewan, among others.

Four years ago, as a service to Canada's higher education community, Ken founded a free daily newsbrief, *Academica's Top Ten*, which summarizes important events, emerging trends, research findings and aspects of youth culture for more than 8,000 subscribers, including college and university presidents and senior executives, government policy analysts, faculty, high school guidance counselors, and national media editors. (Ken is now very grateful to have a full-time associate news editor, Katherine Fletcher, to ensure the *Top Ten* continues to be daily, despite his travel schedule.) Ken has written numerous articles and white papers on institutional marketing and strategy, a syndicated column on graphic design, and a regular blog on higher education issues, and now manages a YouTube channel featuring notable higher education commercials.

**“Engaging, stimulating, and provocative... guaranteed to make audiences think about the future of PSE.”**

Ken is a “recovering academic,” who was an award-winning PhD candidate in English Literature at the University of Toronto, before leaving academia to found a regional advertising agency in 1990. Ken and his team developing branding, marketing, and advertising campaigns for dozens of corporate, non-profit, and education-sector clients throughout the 1990s, before merging the agency to form Academica Group in 2005.

**“True leader and visionary... professionalism, sage counsel, and lively discussion.”**

### *Academica Group:*

Academica Group is the leading source of research insight and marketing innovation for North American higher education. With offices in Toronto, London, and Boston, Academica Group offers integrated services in four practice areas:

**RESEARCH:** Our applied research division surveys more than 250,000 college and university applicants every year, on behalf of hundreds of college and university clients, education ministries, and government agencies. 15 years ago, we pioneered the application of consumer research to higher education recruitment with the *UCAS™ Applicant Study*, which has grown into the largest and most comprehensive international syndicated survey of college and university consumers in the world.

**CONSULTING:** Academica's consulting team facilitates institutional strategic planning, positioning and brand strategy, strategic enrolment management, marketing audits and integrated marketing communications planning. Our international partnership with SEM Works brings depth and breadth of Strategic Enrolment Management consulting to our clients.

**CREATIVE:** Our creative studio develops award-winning brand identities, print materials, online and offline marketing campaigns for clients ranging from the Ontario Ministry of Education to the Smithsonian Institution in Washington DC. Academica's creative director is a leader in the Native American design community, and our team has decades of experience in the education and technology sectors.

**TECHNOLOGY:** Academica's technology division combines expertise in information architecture and user interface design with an experienced open source web development team. Our social media strategists have worked with scores of institutions, and experimented with the first cross-platform social media application for higher education applicants running on Facebook and MySpace. *RealityCampus™* is a new turnkey solution to bring interactive video testimonials to a recruitment website or microsite.

## Testimonials

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**“Ken's unique perspective on the Canadian post-secondary sector was evident at every step -- in the one-day Positioning Summit he facilitated with more than 100 Mount Royal participants; the focused market survey Academica Group conducted within our market; and the results, analysis and recommendations contained in his comprehensive White Paper.”**

- Dr. Dave Marshall, President,  
Mount Royal University

**“Ken is an excellent speaker who can engage a variety of audiences from faculty through to Board members on topics including emerging trends, branding, competitive marketing positioning, etc. Ken always includes provocative ideas that challenge existing paradigms and cause audiences to walk away with lots to think about.”**

- Tracy Edwards, President & CEO,  
Lethbridge College

**“Ken Steele hurts my head — but it's a good hurt.”**

**“Ken Steele has a truly remarkable command of current developments in the world of post secondary education, both in Canada and beyond. His presentations on such developments are engaging, stimulating, and provocative -- and delivered in a manner guaranteed to make audiences think about the future direction of PSE and the ways in which their own institutions might make the most of them. I recommend him highly.”**

- Provost and Vice-President Academic,  
An Ontario university

**“In one word, Ken's presentation was 'OUTSTANDING.' He was strategic, informative, engaging and entertaining. In our formal evaluation of our planning session, Ken's presentation was ranked the highest, receiving an average score of 9.6 out of 10. We will definitely be using Ken's services in the future.”**

- Dr. Gordon Nixon, Vice-President Academic,  
SAIT Polytechnic

**“Ken Steele delivers current and relevant insights into the world of higher education through a strategic enrolment management lens. He has the unique ability to engage meaningfully with individuals at all levels in our organizations — boards, senior management, faculty, administrators and staff — and his presentations are sure to be transformational in any organization.”**

- Stefanie Ivan, Associate Vice-President Student  
Services, Grant MacEwan University

**“Ken is a lively and engaging presenter who brings his material to life through anecdote and compelling visuals. More than that, though, he is an evangelist for university communications and a subject matter expert.”**

- Richard Fisher, Chief Communications Officer,  
Development & Alumni Engagement, UBC

**“Our executive relies on Academica's Top Ten for its succinct presentation of 'stuff they need to know' – an amazing bird's eye view of the PSE landscape. No college exec has the time or resources to fly that high – so we're very glad of your wingspan and flight speed.”**

- David Sovka, Associate Director, College &  
Community Relations, Camosun College

**“Ken is an energetic speaker who uses vivid images and compelling data to stretch the thinking of his audience. His presentation prompted engaging discussion about the future of our field and our place in it.”**

- Tracey Taylor-O'Reilly, Director, Centre for  
Continuing Education, McMaster University

**“Our positioning summit was thought-provoking, yielding great depth and greater clarity for the senior management team. Ken and his team are true leaders and visionaries. Their professionalism, sage counsel, and lively discussions were extremely well received. Not only did we benefit strongly from this exercise, we enjoyed working with such a great team.”**

- Kate McBrearty (Former) Director, Marketing &  
Communications Office of External Relations,  
Mount Royal University

**“It's not a Canadian university PR/marketing/ web conference without a @kensteele presentation!”**

- Ryan McNutt, New Media Officer,  
Dalhousie University, on Twitter

# Recent Presentations

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Every year, Ken makes more than 50 presentations – from keynotes and workshops at regional, national and international conferences, to research presentations and professional development sessions on college and university campuses. Some recent presentations include:

## ***Board Retreats***

Red Deer College (*Jan 2010*)  
Carleton University (*Oct 2009*)  
University of Regina (*Oct 2009*)  
Wilfrid Laurier University (*Sep 2009*)  
Concordia University College (*Aug 2009*)  
University of Alberta (*Jul 2009*)  
UOIT Board of Governors (*Jun 2009*)  
University of Saskatchewan (*Oct 2008*)

## ***Strategic Sessions***

SAIT Academic Division Planning (*May 2010*)  
University of Alberta (*Jan 2010*)  
Grant MacEwan University (*Dec 2009, Jan 2010*)  
Laurentian University (*Apr 2009*)  
Algonquin College (*Mar 2009*)  
University of Victoria (*Jan 2009*)  
St. Clair College (*Dec 2008*)  
Brescia University College (*Dec 2008*)  
University of Calgary (*Oct 2008*)  
University of the Fraser Valley (*Jul 2008*)  
Queen's University (*May 2008*)  
York University (*Nov 2007*)  
Sault College (*Oct 2007*)  
Seneca College (*Oct 2007*)  
Cambrian College (*Aug 2007*)  
Mount Royal University (*Jun 2007*)

## ***Campus PD Presentations***

Grande Prairie Regional College (*Aug 2010*)  
Mohawk College (*Jun 2010*)  
Bow Valley College (*Mar 2010*)  
Lethbridge College (*May 2009*)  
University of Western Ontario (*Feb 2009*)  
University of Saskatchewan (*Jan 2009, Oct 2008*)  
Alberta College of Art & Design (*Oct 2008*)  
Loyalist College (*May 2008*)

## ***Conference Keynotes***

Colleges Ontario Recruiters (*Sept 2010*)  
Canadian PSE Web Conference (*May 2010*)  
2009-2010 SEMM Forums  
(*Toronto, Calgary, Halifax, Vancouver, Boston*)  
CAUCE Deans & Directors (*Ottawa, Feb 2010*)  
CACEE Ontario (*Toronto, Dec 2009*)  
AACTI System Conference (*Edmonton, Oct 2009*)  
ICE Synergy III (*Toronto, Sep 2009*)  
COU Liaison Workshop (*Aug 2009*)  
WARUCC Conference (*Edmonton, Jun 2009*)  
AARAO (*Charlottetown, Jun 2009*)  
CALL Languages Conference (*London, May 2009*)  
NAUBCS Conference (*Winnipeg, May 2009*)  
COU Secretaries Conference (*Toronto, Feb 2009*)  
OURA Conference (*Ottawa, Feb 2009*)  
CRALO (*Oakville, Nov 2008*)  
ARUCC National Conference (*Halifax, Jun 2008*)  
AARAO Interchange (*Halifax, Jun 2008*)  
AARAO Annual Conference (*Jun 2006*)  
CCAEO Ontario Branding Workshop (*Mar 2006*)

## Details

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### ***Speaking Fee***

To be fair to all institutions and conferences, Ken's *per diem* for speaking or facilitating has been consistently \$3,500 plus HST, travel and accommodation expenses (although this fee may be subject to future change). In special circumstances, where association conferences are concerned for example, Academica Group may consider waiving a portion of Ken's fee in return for sponsor recognition at the event.

### ***Included Services***

For a single *per diem* fee, Ken includes a preliminary call to discuss the audience and priorities, up to 4 hours of preparation time, travel time within Canada, and up to 6 hours of campus presentations.

Facilitation of some retreats or strategy sessions may require more extensive preparation and are therefore estimated individually. Some sessions benefit from the creation of a custom white paper for circulation to participants in advance.

Ken will provide a PDF of any presentations after the fact, which can be distributed within your institution, and institutions can opt to record his presentations for viewing by internal audiences.

### ***Scheduling***

Ken's travel schedule is often booked several months in advance, so please contact him as early as possible to pencil in your board retreat, committee meeting or campus event. Ken will take into account travel schedules from London, Ontario when determining feasible timing for events – often it is advisable to arrive the evening before to ensure that no travel delays create an emergency on the day of the event.

### ***Technical Requirements***

Ken makes extensive use of visuals and multimedia clips in his presentations. For optimal results, the institution or conference organizer should provide a data projector, cable, and screen, dimmable lighting, wireless lapel microphone and audio connection for Ken's laptop.

### ***Billing***

Upon execution of a letter of agreement, Academica Group will invoice your institution 50% of the total speaking fee to cover up-front travel costs. The balance, including detailed travel and accommodation expenses, will be invoiced upon completion of the engagement. HST or appropriate sales taxes will be included.

**“In one word, Ken’s presentation was ‘OUTSTANDING.’ He was strategic, informative, engaging and entertaining.”**

*To discuss the possibility of scheduling Ken Steele at a conference, campus event or board retreat, please don't hesitate to contact him directly:*

### **Ken Steele**

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