

University graduates at college

by Warren Clark

Though most university graduates with bachelor's degrees go from school to work, those who continue their studies usually enroll in a master's or a professional program soon after graduation. Others, however, pursue studies at community colleges or technical institutes. During the 1990s, full-time postsecondary enrolment at Canada's publicly-funded colleges grew. Part of this growth was the result of young people with bachelor's degrees hoping to improve their career prospects by learning more job-specific skills at the college level.

According to the 1997 National Survey of 1995 Graduates, about 46% of people who had earned a bachelor's degree in 1995 had gone back to school within two years of graduating.¹ About 5% of bachelor's graduates entered a college program.² The evidence suggests that in subsequent years, even more members of the class of 1995 will pursue a college education. In an earlier group of university graduates, the class of 1990, the percentage who had enrolled in college programs after graduation doubled from 6% in 1992 (two years after graduation) to 13% in 1995 (five years after).

That university graduates may wait several years before enrolling in a college course is also suggested by data from other sources. The 1998 Adult Education and Training Survey shows that university attendance drops off quickly after age 24. In 1997, 41% of young bachelor's degree-holders under age 25 were still enrolled at university; the proportion fell to 14% of those aged 25 to 34, and stood at 6% for those aged 35 to 44. In contrast, the attendance rates of bachelor's

graduates enrolled in college programs, although small (3%), remained steady from age 25 to age 44.

College attendance of bachelor's graduates on the rise

In recent years, the percentage of university graduates who subsequently obtain a college diploma (within five years of university graduation) has doubled, from 3% of the Class of 1982 to 7% of the Class of 1990. This growth suggests that more young university graduates are supplementing their education with additional, and perhaps more marketable, skills obtained at college.

CST What you should know about this study

It is often difficult to assess the school-to-work transition of graduates who pursued additional studies within two years of graduation. At that time, many have had only a brief opportunity to find a full-time, high-paying, high-level job. For this reason, the 1995 Follow-up of 1990 Graduates Survey (FOG) was used to compare the labour market experience of two groups of graduates five years after graduation: the 2% of bachelor's graduates who obtained a college diploma within two years of getting their bachelor's¹ and the 36% of bachelor's graduates who did not pursue further studies after graduation. Statistics Canada conducted this survey of nearly 31,000 university, college and trade/vocational graduates during 1995, on behalf of Human Resources Development Canada.

1. Bachelor's graduates who obtained a college diploma within two years of obtaining their bachelor's degree would have had nearly three years to find a good job by the time they were interviewed for the FOG survey.

1. Includes graduates who have taken at least 20 hours of instruction between graduation and survey interview in 1997.

2. College programs include postsecondary level programs at community colleges, Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology (CAATs), CEGEPs, technical institutes, non-degree granting colleges of art, hospital schools of nursing or radiology, and private business schools.

1990 bachelor's graduates from the social sciences (16%), health professions, sciences and technologies (15%) and agriculture and biological sciences (14%) were the most likely to pursue further studies at college. Even 10% of engineering graduates pursued a college education, usually taking business, computer science or engineering technology courses. Of 1990 university graduates continuing to college, most chose programs in commerce, management or business administration (22%), data processing or computer science (14%), nursing (9%) or medical lab technologies (8%).

The reasons cited by those who continue their education at the college level are usually labour market-related: to find a job, to get a better one or to improve their performance in their current job.

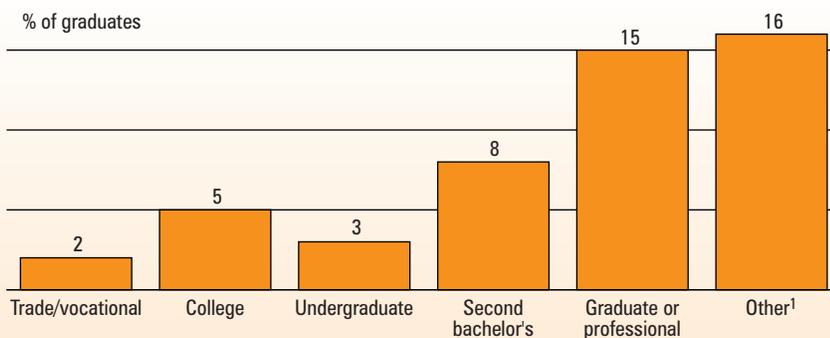
Does a college diploma help university graduates?

Many factors influence a young university graduate's success in the labour market: field of study, previous work experience, the demand for labour and job search skills. After accounting for differences in age, sex, field of study and previous education, 1990 bachelor's graduates who had obtained a college diploma by mid-1992 were just as likely to have a high income (top quartile) and a high-level job by 1995 as graduates who did not pursue further studies.³ Also, the odds of working full-time were about 1.4 times higher for bachelor's graduates who had received a college diploma than for those who did not pursue any studies after graduation.

Although these results indicate that a college education

may be helpful to some university graduates, there is no doubt that a university degree is much more valuable to college graduates. College graduates who subsequently obtained a bachelor's degree were much better off in the labour market than their college-educated colleagues who did not pursue further education. After accounting for several socio-demographic and education factors,⁴ the odds of being in the top income quartile were about 1.6 times higher, of being in a high-level job about 2.1 times higher and of working full time about 1.9 times higher than those of college graduates who did not pursue further studies.

CST 1995 bachelor's graduates who continued their studies usually returned to university

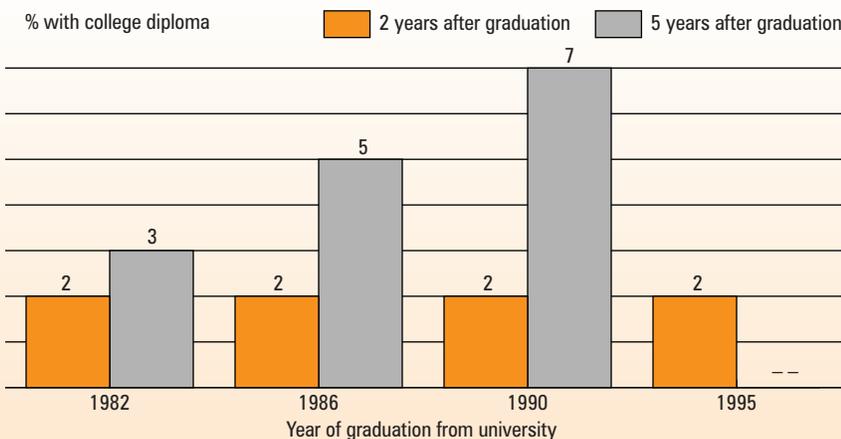


Note: 55% of bachelor's graduates did not pursue further studies.

1. Includes certification with a professional association (e.g., accounting, banking, insurance) and other training such as continuing education courses, first aid, fitness training, sign language and CPR.

Source: Statistics Canada, National Survey of 1995 Graduates, 1997.

CST A growing proportion of bachelor's graduates is obtaining a college diploma



-- Not available.

Source: Statistics Canada, National Graduates Surveys and Follow-up of Graduates Surveys.

3. High-level job refers to the six highest categories of the Pineo-Carroll-Moore socioeconomic classification of occupations including self-employed and employed professionals, semi-professionals, technicians, and senior and middle managers.

4. Age, sex, marital status, presence of children under age 5, field of study and education before entering the program.



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