

## **Brief Summaries of Research Relevant to a Better Understanding of Non-Direct College Entrants**

Academica Group Inc. (2007). *2007 College Applicant Survey Final Report*. Colleges Ontario.  
Retrieved from <http://www.collegesontario.org>.

To Retrieve:

- Go to [www.collegesontario.org](http://www.collegesontario.org);
- Under “Research,” click “External Reports”;
- Click “College Applicant Survey 2007” to open the pdf document.

The 2007 College Applicant Survey (CAS) explores the impact of college marketing efforts, student motivations for pursuing a college education, and aspects of college reputation. It provides detailed data to support enhanced planning and strategy both for individual colleges and at the provincial research and policy level. The 2007 CAS provides specific results for delayed entry students, students who transferred to college from another post-secondary institution, and students who left or graduated from another post-secondary institution before enrolling in college, which together make up 53% of survey respondents.

This report notes that in comparison with all other types of applicants, delayed-entry applicants:

- Are least likely to be immigrants, visible minorities, and to have a first language other than French or English;
- Are most likely to be first-generation students;
- Most often identify career preparation as a major reason for applying to college;
- Make less use of college recruitment tools (including publications, presentations, and websites);
- Most often cite career preparation as a major reason for applying to college;
- Are least likely to also apply to an Ontario university;
- More often look for colleges close to home;
- Attend two-year college programs in Social and Community Services in disproportionately high numbers.

Association of Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology of Ontario. (2005). *Multiple Pathways to College: A Secondary Analysis of the 2004 College Applicant Survey*. Colleges Ontario. Retrieved from <http://www.collegesontario.org>.

To Retrieve:

- Go to [www.collegesontario.org](http://www.collegesontario.org);
- Under “Research,” click “School – College Transition”;
- Click “Multiple Pathways to College...” to open the pdf document.

This report analyzes the applicant survey data based on three distinct pathways to college: those applying directly from high school, those who have not attended high school in the previous 12 months and have no post-secondary education (termed Delayed Entry), and those with some post-secondary education or a completed post-secondary education credential. It examines these pathways in terms of demographics (including gender, income, and age), academic profile (including high school academics and college plans), and applicants’ perceptions of college.

Some Findings Relevant to Delayed Entrants:

- Financial: Delayed-entry applicants tend to have lower family incomes and are more concerned about financing their education than direct-entry applicants.
- Family Influence: Delayed-entry applicants are more likely to have a parent without a high school diploma. They are also primarily influenced by parents, friends, and other family members in deciding to which college(s) they will apply.
- Academics: Delayed-entry applicants are less likely than direct applicants to report a grade average over 80%.

Colleges Ontario. (2008). *A Profile of Non-Direct Entrants to Ontario Colleges*.

To Retrieve:

- This report is included in the package from the Connections SEM Conference.
- Alternatively, go to [www.collegesontario.org](http://www.collegesontario.org);
- Under “Research,” click “School-to-College Transition.”

This paper profiles the Ontario college applicants, registrants, and students for the 2007-08 academic year. Depending on their educational background, individuals were categorized as either direct or non-direct entrants. The latter group has been further divided into delayed entrants (no PSE experience), incomplete PSE (some college or university experience, but no credential), and complete PSE (college, trades, or university credential). The 2007 College Applicant Survey (Academica Group Inc.) was the data source for applicant information and respondents were then matched to OCAS registration files in order to profile those applicants who went on to register at a college. The 2007-08 Student Satisfaction Survey (MTCU) was the data source for college student information.

Information on non-direct entrants includes:

- demographic data ;
- applicant-to-registrant conversion rates by group;
- previous education, including high school grades and course types;
- program types and credentials being sought;
- use of college services;
- reasons for college and program selections;
- use and influence of college marketing materials;
- financial information.

Dietsche, P.H.J. (2006). "The Ontario Post-Secondary Nexus: Creating Pathways to Success." *Seamless Pathways: A Symposium on Improving Transitions From High School to College, Conference Report*. The Canadian Millennium Scholarship Foundation. Retrieved from <http://www.millenniumscholarships.ca/en/research/AllPublications.asp>.

To Retrieve:

- Go to [www.millenniumscholarships.ca](http://www.millenniumscholarships.ca);
- Click "Research";
- Click "Publications" (in left-hand column);
- Click "All Publications";
- Titles are listed in reverse chronological order. "Seamless Pathways..." is from July 2006.

Presentations were given at this symposium on various aspects of the transition from Ontario high schools to community colleges. The report includes key findings for various stakeholders from Ontario community colleges and school boards. Dr. Dietsche's presentation specifically addresses delayed-entry students from across Canada.

Some Findings Include:

- Why They Returned to College: The major reason for attending college was to acquire knowledge and skills for a future occupation.
- Need for Support: Many students felt that they would benefit from support when they began their college program, including help with writing skills, study habits, and test-taking.
- Career Planning: The research cited demonstrates students' need for more assistance (during high school and after) in planning their education and career direction.

Georgian College Institute for Applied Research and Innovation (2005). *Students with Dependents: Common Practices in Post-Secondary Education Institutions in Canada and the United States*. The Canadian Millennium Scholarship Foundation. Retrieved from <http://www.millenniumscholarships.ca/en/research/AllPublications.asp>.

To Retrieve:

- Go to [www.millenniumscholarships.ca](http://www.millenniumscholarships.ca);
- Click “Research”;
- Click “Publications” (in left-hand column);
- Click “All Publications”;
- Titles are listed in reverse chronological order. “Students with Dependents...” is from April 2005.

This study compiles an inventory of current practices for students with dependents at post-secondary institutions in Canada and the United States, including 39 Canadian and six American colleges and universities. The study identifies 10 key practices of institutions and attempts to explain how these practices affect attraction and retention rates of institutions, the culture of the institution, and the general well-being of students and staff.

10 Key Practices:

- **Child Care Services and Support Programs:** Formal child care programs, babysitting services, and both formal and informal emergency child care are among the programs offered by participating institutions.
- **Counselling and Family Support Programs:** Counselling services are sometimes offered outside the traditional counselling department in areas such as the family centre, women’s centre, student family residences, health care centre, financial resources office, career services, cultural centres, etc.
- **Family Housing and Accommodation:** Many of the larger colleges and universities offer family housing. Aside from the apartment unit itself, family housing offers support groups, social programming, playgrounds, and other supports.
- **Student Associations, Services, and Cultural Centres:** Organized groups and associations (such as women’s centres, adult services centres, mature student associations, and non-traditional student associations) provide students with support, resources, and physical space.
- **Food Banks and Services:** Some institutions run campus food banks or affordable food programs which particularly benefit students with dependants.
- **Health Care Services:** Most institutions make health plans available to dependants on an “opt-in” basis. Health care services for dependants are available on campus at some larger institutions.

- Financial Support: Most institutions offer emergency bursaries for students in need.
- Transportation Programs: Many institutions offer ride-matching services or posting forums. Other institutions have their own transportation systems or work with their communities to offer transit passes.
- Lactation Centres and Diaper Changing Tables: These amenities benefit not only students, but also staff and visitors, and their children.
- Academic Programming and Scheduling: Distributed learning and continuing education programs help students whose family demands make it difficult for them to attend traditional classroom-delivered programs. Options such as full- or part-time enrolment, fast- or slow-track programming, and choices in assignments or grade composition are useful for many types of learners and can benefit students with dependants.

Hango, Darcy. (2008). *Taking Time Off Between High School and Postsecondary Education: Determinants and Early Labour Market Outcomes*. Statistics Canada. Retrieved from <http://www.statcan.ca/english/freepub/81-004-XIE/2007005/article/10501-en.htm#i>.

To Retrieve:

- Go to <http://www.statcan.ca>;
- Under “Find Statistics” (in left-hand column), click “By subject”;
- Under “Statistics by Subject,” click “Education, training and learning”;
- Under “Subtopics,” click “Educational attainment”;
- Under “Resources,” click “Analytical studies”;
- Titles are listed in reverse chronological order. “Taking time off between high school and postsecondary education” is from January 7, 2008 – scroll through list to locate article.

This analysis is based on the 2004 Youth in Transition Survey. In it Hango explains the background characteristics of young adults who delayed going directly to post-secondary studies following high school, including demographic characteristics, province of high school, family characteristics, and educational characteristics during high school.

Hango defines “gappers” as youth who delayed starting post-secondary studies for more than four months after graduating from high school. According to this analysis, gappers account for 30% of the study group.

Some key findings include:

- Gender: Males and females are equally as likely to delay their entry into post-secondary education.
- Geography: Those who delay entry into post-secondary education are equally as likely to come from urban centres as rural areas. Youth from Quebec are much less likely to follow a “gapper” pathway than youth from other provinces. Hango notes, however, that the trend in Quebec is most likely due to the structure of the education system in Quebec.
- Family Characteristics: Gappers are more likely to be from step-parent families, to have parents who themselves did not complete their post-secondary studies, and to have parents who feel that post-secondary education is “not at all” important.
- Educational Characteristics: Gappers are less likely to have had average marks above 80% in high school, and are more likely to have worked over 20 hours per week in their last year of high school.

MacFadgen, L. (2008). *Mature Students in the Persistence Puzzle: An Exploration of the Factors that Contribute to Mature Students' Health, Learning, and Retention in Post-Secondary Education*. Canadian Council on Learning. Retrieved from <http://www.ccl-cca.ca>.

To Retrieve:

- Go to [www.ccl-cca.ca](http://www.ccl-cca.ca);
- Scroll down on homepage to "What's New" to locate document.

MacFadgen's research project examines the factors that affect adult learners' persistence through their first year of post-secondary studies with the ultimate aim of informing institutional student retention policies and practices. For the purpose of this study, mature students are broadly defined as individuals who are 25 years of age or older and who typically have adult life roles and circumstances, flexible enrolment status, and varied educational goals and intentions. The majority of the students surveyed were enrolled in full-time studies.

- **Previous Experience:** Mature students are highly goal-directed; therefore more importance should be assigned to students' specific educational goals. In addition, acknowledging and reinforcing students' strengths, skills, and extensive life and learning experience may be effective in helping students manage the transition to post-secondary education.
- **Balancing Life and School:** Students' ability to balance school with other life commitments is directly related to the nature and extent of support they receive from external sources. As a result, mature students should have ongoing access to education-planning resources to help them realistically assess and plan for the impacts on family and financial resources. Financial affordability, small class sizes, responsive admission processes, course availability, and scheduling flexibility all contribute to mature students' ability to realize their educational goals. Mature students surveyed also highlighted the need for on-campus health and wellness resources to address their specific health challenges (including caring for dependents, and finding a physician if they are new to the community at large). Additionally, mature students require retention policies and practices that are flexible, holistic, and reflective of their multi-faceted lives.
- **Student Satisfaction:** Supportive and helpful relationships with professors have a positive impact on mature students' satisfaction levels and their feelings of academic competence. Thus institutions should create classroom and campus conditions that facilitate peer and faculty interactions. Mature students are more satisfied than traditional-age students with teaching methods that encourage student participation and classroom involvement. Faculty teaching skills – specifically teaching organization, preparedness, and clarity – have direct positive effects on students' social integration and their subsequent institutional commitment.

This report summarizes the activities of OntarioLearn for the 2007-2008 academic year. OntarioLearn.com is a consortium of Ontario community colleges who have partnered to develop and deliver on-line courses. This partnership approach has allowed member colleges to optimize resource use, avoid duplication and, more importantly, increase the availability of on-line learning opportunities for their students. Through this virtual classroom environment, students can pursue their educational goals. This type of learning could be very attractive to non-direct entry students, allowing them to take courses, or even an entire diploma/certificate at an Ontario community college without having to make a major life change like quitting a job or moving to a new community.

#### 2007-2008 Activities:

- **Enrolment:** Enrolment reached 48,557 students, which is a 15.9% increase over the 2006-2007 academic year.
- **Community College Partners:** Twenty-one community college partners hosted OntarioLearn courses this year, with 6 colleges responsible for over 84% of these courses.
- **Course Offerings:** In total, nearly 1000 different courses were offered in a wide variety of academic areas. Many of the OntarioLearn partner colleges have designed programs which consist of courses offered through the consortium. Some of the certificates/diplomas are comprised entirely of courses available online through OntarioLearn, while others may also require courses offered outside the consortium.

R.A. Malatest & Associates Ltd. (2007). *The Class of 2003: High School Follow-Up Survey*. The Canadian Millennium Scholarship Foundation. Retrieved from <http://www.millenniumscholarships.ca/en/research/AllPublications.asp>.

To Retrieve:

- Go to [www.millenniumscholarships.ca](http://www.millenniumscholarships.ca);
- Click “Research”;
- Click “Publications” (in left-hand column);
- Click “All Publications”;
- Titles are listed in reverse chronological order. “The Class of 2003...” is from June 2007.

This report examines the extent to which various factors limit access to post-secondary education and how these barriers interact. The three types of barriers explored are Informational/Motivational, Financial, and Academic. More specifically, the study presents the impact of multiple barriers on “first-generation students” and explores the post-secondary education aspirations, attainment, and barriers of Aboriginal students. This report does not distinguish between direct- and non-direct entry students, but focuses on those who go directly to post-secondary education in contrast with those who, two or three years after graduating from grade 12, have still not pursued post-secondary education of any kind. It also includes a discussion on those who leave post-secondary education after starting a program.

First-Generation Students:

- Did not report notably more barriers to post-secondary education than did children of parents with some post-secondary education experience;
- Were twice as likely as non-first-generation students to rely on government student loans to finance their education;
- Were more likely to face academic barriers (i.e. report grades of less than 80%) than youth whose parents had some post-secondary education.

Aboriginal Students:

- Were less likely to participate in post-secondary education based on various factors, including geographic, financial, and social barriers.

According to the survey, the most important factors in explaining post-secondary attainment are:

- High school grades: Having an average of 80% or higher virtually assures participation in post-secondary education.
- Dependents: Caring for dependents reduces the likelihood of students pursuing post-secondary education.
- Parents’ education: Having at least one parent with some post-secondary education increases students’ likelihood of enrolling in post-secondary education.
- Support from parents or other role models: Parents are the most influential group in terms of post-secondary decisions.
- Gender: Females are more likely to attend post-secondary education than males.
- Aboriginal status: Aboriginal people are less likely to pursue post-secondary education.
- Disability: Individuals who identify as having a disability are much less likely to enter the post-secondary education system.

R.A. Malatest & Associates Ltd. (2008). *Survey of Canadian Career College Students, Phase II: In-School Student Survey*. The Canadian Millennium Scholarship Foundation in partnership with HRSDC and the National Association of Career Colleges. Retrieved from <http://www.millenniumscholarships.ca/en/research/AllPublications.asp>.

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- Click “Publications” (in left-hand column);
- Click “All Publications”;
- Titles are listed in reverse chronological order. “Survey of Canadian Career College Students: Phase II” is from March 2008 – scroll down to locate article.

This study surveyed students from 384 private career colleges across Canada to ascertain socio-economic background, factors influencing selection of the private college system, debt levels, students’ satisfaction, work and education transition plans.

Private career college students generally delay entry into the post-secondary education system. Some important findings include:

- Gender: A high proportion of students entering the private system are female.
- Age: Private career college students tend to be older, with a mean age of 29, and thus more likely to have dependants under the age of 18.
- Visible Minorities: 25% of students were born outside of Canada; therefore many private career college students have prior post-secondary education credentials which are not recognized in Canada. Slightly higher proportions of private career college students identify as a person of Aboriginal or native ancestry or a visible minority compared with students in the public system.
- Income: Household incomes are generally low among private career college students. These students are significantly more likely than their counterparts enrolled in public colleges to utilize a student loan to finance their education.
- Full-time status: Nearly all students surveyed (97%) attend full-time programming.
- Appeal: The private college system appeals to those looking for workforce skills with limited time investment (private career college programs are, on average, 7-12 months in length).
- Optimism: Students express high levels of confidence that they will obtain employment related to their field of study after they graduate.

Tomkowicz, J. & Bushnik, T. (2003). *Who Goes to Post-Secondary Education and When: Pathways Chosen by 20 Year-Olds*. Statistics Canada. Retrieved from <http://www.statcan.ca/english/research/81-595-MIE/81-595-MIE2003006.pdf>.

To Retrieve:

- Go to <http://www.statcan.ca>;
- Under “Find Statistics” (in left-hand column), click “Publications”;
- Under “Find Statistics Canada Publications,” click “Search the online catalogue”;
- Under “Search by category,” click “Subject”;
- Under “Subject,” click “Culture and leisure”;
- Scroll down to find and click “Culture, Tourism and the Centre for Education Statistics - Research Papers: Product main page”;
- Under “Information by format,” find and click “Chronological index”;
- Titles are listed in reverse chronological order. “Who Goes to Post-Secondary Education and When” is from July 4, 2003 – scroll down to locate.

This study uses data from the Youth in Transition Survey to examine the three different pathways taken by high school graduates by the age of 20. These pathways are: participation in post-secondary education right after high school (right-awayers), delayed post-secondary education (delayers), and non-participation in post-secondary education (no-goers). The study reveals specific demographic, school-related, and post-secondary financing factors which differentiate between right-awayers and delayers.

These factors include:

- Province of Residence: Students living in Quebec are much less likely to delay their post-secondary enrolment, while those living in Newfoundland and Labrador, Manitoba, or Alberta were more likely to delay their post-secondary education.
- Involvement in the Social and Academic Aspects of School: Not being socially involved in high school increases the likelihood of delaying post-secondary education.
- Overall Grade Average: Students with lower high school grade averages are more likely to delay entry into post-secondary education.
- Participation in Part-time Work During High School: The more hours students work for pay in high school, the more likely they are to delay their entry into post-secondary education.
- Scholarships Received for Funding Post-Secondary Education: A lack of scholarships or grants awarded can encourage students to delay their entry into post-secondary education.

It is interesting to note that this study refutes claims made in previous research that other demographic factors (such as gender, or having dependents) and family-related factors (including parental education and influence) affect students’ decisions to delay post-secondary education.

Wignall, R. (2005). *School-to-College Transition in Ontario: A Review of Relevant Research*.  
The Association of Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology of Ontario.

To Retrieve:

- Go to [www.collegesontario.org](http://www.collegesontario.org);
- Under “Research,” click “School – College Transition.”

This report examines the transition from secondary schools to colleges in Ontario, with a particular focus on the direct school-to-college pathway. It focuses on three objectives: to identify and review recent research (including published reports and internal research) that sheds light on the transition from Ontario secondary schools to colleges in the province; to create a foundation report for policy advice to government, colleges, and/or secondary school partners; and to identify opportunities for further research.

Wignall provides answers to the following questions based on the current research:

- What does the research suggest as a profile of students making the transition from secondary school to college in Ontario?
- What does the research suggest is involved in the transition from secondary school to college in Ontario?
- What factors have been identified as influencing the transition from secondary school to college in Ontario?
- What programs/services/approaches have been found to support students as they make the transition from secondary school to college in Ontario?
- What is the current state of research on the topic of transition from secondary school to college in Ontario?

While Wignall does not explicitly address non-direct entry students, they do enter into the discussion in specific areas (including the section on students who identify as having a disability), and this report provides a comprehensive summary of the research on the secondary school-to-college transition in Ontario.

Wihak, C. (2006). *State of the Field Review: Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR)*. Canadian Council on Learning. Retrieved from <http://www.ccl-cca.ca>.

To Retrieve:

- Go to [www.ccl-cca.ca](http://www.ccl-cca.ca);
- Under “Browse by Topic” select “Post-secondary learning”;
- Scroll down and click on “State-of-the-field review: A review of the most recent literature on post-secondary education with an emphasis on access and learning”;
- Scroll down and click on “Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition: Report.”

This report examines the existing literature on Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR). Greater understanding of PLAR and its potential benefits could increase the number of delayed-entry students returning to post-secondary education.

Some findings include:

- **PLAR and Work:** Few Canadian workers are aware of the existence of PLAR and how it might benefit them.
- **PLAR and Diversity:** Immigrants potentially have much to gain from PLAR but are largely unaware of the process or how to access it. Aboriginal students are underrepresented among PLAR users in mainstream community colleges, although Aboriginal educational institutions and organizations are active in PLAR.

A large portion of the report discusses the need for further research into PLAR in order to draw conclusions and define practical implications for institutions.