



Review of Recruitment and Admissions Processes Impacting Non-direct Entrants

Top 10 Barriers

Revised
9/4/07

Introduction

Based on the input from 21 colleges and a summary of all available research on Non-Direct Entrants, the Working Group on this project identified 10 Barriers that have the greatest inhibiting effect on increasing enrolment from the Non-Direct entrant pool.

The Barriers are categorized into:

- A. Prospective Student (3) – barriers that must be addressed to meet Prospect needs
- B. College Level (4) – processes that colleges can improve
- C. System Level (3) – constraints within the college system

A. Prospective Student Barriers

Colleges have identified the following Barriers as being very significant for Non-Direct Entrants. These observations are supported by research (*The Price of Knowledge 2006-07, Barriers to Post-Secondary Education and the Class of 2003, The Millennium Scholarship Foundation*).

Although the Barriers have been separated into 3 areas, the research identified the notion of Interacting Barriers (*The Class of 2003*), which necessitates interconnected solutions for First-Generation students and Aboriginal students.

Strategies to increase enrolment at individual Colleges must consider how to address these Barriers. Many Colleges are not well organized to address these Barriers to meet the needs of the Non-Direct Entrants.

Currently, the Working Group is deciding which of these Barriers it can effectively help Colleges address.

The Barriers are as follows:

1. Challenges with career focus and information

This Barrier encapsulates the combined forces of Prospects' uncertainty about their future or capabilities with the rather daunting and confusing array of colleges/program choices and the application/admissions requirements and processes. The Non-Direct prospect group is much more likely to need pre-application help before deciding to apply. There is often low awareness, understanding and belief that PSE, in particular Colleges, can improve their income and life circumstances.

There are three related stages within this Barrier:

- The need for career exploration and understanding of the value of PSE, in particular colleges, in achieving career aspirations
- The need for transition support and information (how to apply, what is required, building confidence)
- The need to access information easily to facilitate decision making about programs and colleges.

From *Barriers to Post-Secondary Education*, of those who did not pursue PSE 31% mentioned a lack of career focus, 13% stated a lack of interest and, fully, 38% mentioned at least one or the other. Further, it has been well documented that career commitment increases student persistence and performance.

2. Challenges associated with academic preparation or language skills

Interconnected with the uncertainty in career focus and the confusion about "how to get started", colleges report that many Non-Direct entrants are not well organized for application to college, lacking the necessary pre-requisites and documentation. A large group has difficulty with English, as it is not their first language (Internationally Trained Immigrants; 16.5% of PSE Graduates applying to Colleges did not have English or French as their first language). Some simply don't have the admission requirements and are uncertain of their options. The lack of understanding of what is needed to apply and qualify can result in these applicants, many of whom applied late in the cycle, encountering further barriers as they miss out on preferred programs and become de-motivated.

The Price of Knowledge supports this input from colleges; 27% of non-participants in PSE stated that course and grade requirements discouraged them from pursuing PSE. Further, 50% of respondents with grades of less than 60%, as well as, 27% of those with grades in the 60-69% range reported academic difficulties in gaining entry to PSE.

3. Financial concerns

One of the most significant barriers, it is related to the perception and reality of the cost of college and available financial resources. From the *Price of*

Knowledge we know that 30% had not pursued PSE due to financial issues, which were categorized into Debt Aversion, Cash Constraints and Price Constraints. The later category relates to the belief of some who did not pursue PSE, that earning a PSE credential will not improve their income significantly enough to justify the cost.

From the Colleges' input, we know that Non-Direct entrants often over-estimate the true cost of attending college and many are not aware of the financial resources available. This can be further compounded by the complexities of the OSAP application process; eligibility is not known until well into the admissions cycle and part-time studies are usually not eligible.

B. College Level Barriers

Colleges and the Working Group identified the next four Barriers as processes that are not well developed and/or can be improved. In general, there are many more process obstacles for Non-Direct entrants than for Direct Entrants. These obstacles can inhibit growth potential. The Working Group has identified the processes that will likely have the greatest potential, if improved, to increase enrolment with Non-Direct Entrants.

4. Marketing and Recruitment directed to Non-Direct Entrants is very challenging for Colleges

Raising awareness of Colleges and their value, as well as providing easy access to comprehensive information remains a challenge for Colleges. It is difficult and expensive to connect with Non-Direct Prospects. Colleges are already using outreach, such as liaising with Adult schools, a variety of agencies, community groups, events, job fairs, universities and internal marketing to reach potential students. Some Colleges have invested in marketing and recruitment campaigns geared to this group, however, the vast diversity of this Prospect pool, combined with many of the other Barriers, makes investing to build enrolment in this pool an even greater challenge. This group is not as driven by dates and deadlines as the Direct from Secondary School group making it very difficult to find ‘captive audiences’.

Most colleges report insufficient research and data specifically related to the Non-Direct entrant pool. There is great interest in a summary of pertinent research, as well as, access to college specific data that could inform marketing and recruitment strategies, student services and academic development.

5. Admissions testing can be intimidating and discouraging for Non-Direct Applicants

Often insufficient academic achievement and/or documentation necessitate admissions testing. Every College has its own approach. This can make it necessary for students to take tests at several Colleges, a time consuming, expensive and discouraging process (fees are often charged, travel costs and time off work). Previous attempts to unify testing and create a centralized database of test results has yielded limited success due to the variability in academic requirements.

6. Obtaining and evaluating transcripts for admission and transfer credit can be difficult and discouraging for Non-Direct Entrants

Unlike Direct Entrants, who experience seamless, electronic transfer and evaluation of Secondary School transcripts, Non-Direct Entrants can face significant obstacles, delays and additional costs to obtain transcripts and have them evaluated. Obtaining transcripts from years ago or from foreign countries, including translation, can be particularly difficult and costly. Once received by a college, transcripts can take longer to process (than Direct Entrants) as individual

and cross-departmental decision-making may be required for admission or course exemption. This can cause further delay and frustration for the Applicant.

7. The overall cost of applying and qualifying can be high and create a disincentive to apply or to drop out of the admissions process

As noted in Barriers 5 & 6, the Non-Direct Entrant can face much greater costs to apply and qualify. In total, the cost of applying, obtaining transcripts, translation and evaluation of transcripts combined with potential admissions testing costs can add up to a significant amount of money (estimate to follow). If an individual applies to several colleges, it could multiply the cost. With no certainty of admission, this could be a significant financial outlay for an entrant group which has identified financial concerns as a major Barrier to PSE (refer to Barrier #3).

C. System-wide Barriers

Colleges and the Working Group identified the following Barriers as system-wide issues that this project will have more limited ability to affect; however, they could be areas for Colleges Ontario and individual Colleges to consider further.

8. Systemic constraints inhibit the ability to react to market demands and deliver responsive programming

Non-Direct Entrants often need more flexible options to meet their family and work responsibilities. Constraints created by the funding formula and established practices related to the collective agreement make it very difficult for Colleges to provide flexible delivery and student services that combine day time and night time/weekend options to meet the needs of many Non-Direct students. Faster completion options are also difficult to deliver. Private colleges are much more responsive in offering fast completion and flexible timetables.

9. Part-time funding is not as attractive as Full-time funding

Many of the Non-Direct prospects are looking for part-time study options to support their family life and work. However, the funding for colleges does not encourage colleges to enroll part-time students.

10. Colleges have limited incentive to facilitate transfers

When a College transfer a student it loses the Funding Unit, plus the KPI Graduation Rate calculation regards a transfer to another college as a lost student – thus further penalizing the transferring college.