

Study finds education advantage

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News Writer

As Alberta's job market continues to heat up, high-school students throughout the province are tossing aside their textbooks and putting on their work gloves. However, according to a School-Work Transitions Project study, the values of a high school diploma and postsecondary education pay off in the long run.

The study, led by Dr Harvey Krahn and a team of researchers from the University of Alberta, followed more than 2600 students from 58 high schools in the province-wide graduating class of 1996 using follow-up surveys to track their career progress. The last survey, conducted in 2003, showed better pay, benefits and job satisfaction for young people with advanced education.

While the Gateway was unable to reach Krahn for comment, Students' Union Vice-President (Academic) Amanda Henry said the results of the study reiterate how a high school diploma can open up opportunities for advancement and job security.

"[A] high-school education is really important in guaranteeing accessibility as you get older," said Henry. "[Students today] require a high school diploma to advance, and I think it's really important to have that basic piece of education, especially in Canada with its current move towards the knowledge economy.

"It's been proven that students with university degrees make more in terms of a cumulative total in their life, and they're more likely to get into higher management positions," she added.

Taddes Korris, a Grade 12 student at



HANNA NASH

DROPPIN' LIKE ITS HOT Higher education pays off in the long run, says Henry.

Archbishop MacDonald High School, plans to study either classical music or environmental sciences at a post-secondary institution. He agreed with Henry's assessment.

"By not finishing high school you close a lot of doors and opportunities," Korris said.

According to Statistics Canada, Alberta currently has the lowest high school completion rate in the country, with a three-year high school completion rate of 69 per cent and a five-year completion rate of 75-77 per cent. The 2003 survey for the School-Work Transition Project showed 88 per cent of graduating students enrolled in postsecondary education sometime between the age of 18-25.

The drop out problem is somewhat of an anomaly in Alberta, as data from Stats Canada also shows 68.7 per cent of Alberta dropouts finding jobs over the last three years as compared to

67 per cent of Canadian high school graduates finding jobs.

According to Henry, university enrolment hasn't been affected by lower high school graduation rates. But she said U of A Administration have recognized low high-school completion rates as part of a broader issue and said that they're working with the provincial government to explore ways of reversing the trend.

However, Henry also asserts that the choice between school and work is largely a personal matter, and is highly influenced by the high schools and communities themselves.

Korris finds the push evident in high school, with positive and negative effects.

"Many schools are pushing [students] towards postsecondary education, but it's almost too much of a push. Not all students are able to or interested in meeting the requirements," Korris said.

Canadians want better school accessibility: survey

SURVEY • CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

"They understand that we have to have education and training in place, if for no other reason [than] to support [economic] growth, to keep Canada as a prosperous country. Beyond that, there is a major concern over access to postsecondary study," LeDrew said.

Samantha Power, Students' Union President, agreed accessibility was an issue, and that the results of the survey reflected a widely held belief.

"You see a lot of arguments that say that education gives a private benefit to the individual, therefore the individual should be paying for their education. As long as you finance it properly and you have the proper financial aid, then it is acceptable to go through the process with a large debt load. So, it's refreshing to see that 92 per cent of Canadians believe that education should be accessible to all and that finances shouldn't be a barrier," Power said.

She also said that the information in the survey would strengthen the position of the SU's advocacy efforts.

"It was really positive to see a comprehensive survey that supported so many of our positions. We felt it was a good definition of how people viewed education [in Canada]," she said. "It definitely will back up a lot of the things that we put forward."

The study questioned people on their opinions of the quality of education provided by their institutions. When this information was broken down into regions, he noted that respondents in the prairie regions had a very high opinion of their postsecondary institutions, with 20 per cent listing their service as "excellent," compared to just ten

per cent of participants in Ontario.

"The number of people in the Prairies to rate the schools there as being 'poor' was also very low," LeDrew said.

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**BOB LEDREW,
CANADA COUNCIL OF LEARNING**

The CCL is a not-for-profit organization set up to study the state of education in Canada, from formal education systems like high schools or postsecondary institutions, to less formal and recognized forms of learning such as occupational training. The attitude report was done as part of a larger review of learning across Canada, to be released on 7 December—the first of its kind, according to LeDrew.

"This report that we're releasing in December is the first comprehensive, national look at postsecondary education. Because education has traditionally been a provincial responsibility, there has been no [study of] 'Education Canada,' so to speak," he said.

The attitude survey can currently find the data on CCL's website as www.ccl-cca.ca.

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