

Research Results

April 2009

Where Did They Go?

Findings from a Survey of 2005/06 BC High School Graduates

Co-funded and prepared by The Canadian Council on Learning

Approximately half of British Columbia high school graduates transition to public post-secondary education in BC within one year of graduation.¹ The post-secondary destinations and outcomes of these high school graduates can be monitored via the Student Transitions Project (STP) and BC's public post-secondary institutions' student outcomes surveys, but information about high school graduates who do not register at public post-secondary institutions in BC is scarce. Where do these graduates go? How many of them pursue post-secondary studies at private institutions? How many leave the province to pursue post-secondary studies? How many go straight into the labour market and what kinds of jobs do they find? What factors influence their post-secondary decisions?

In order to address these—and other—questions, the BC Council on Admissions and Transfer and the Canadian Council on Learning co-funded *Where Did They Go?*, a survey of BC high school graduates from the 2005/06 cohort who had not registered at a public post-secondary institution by the end of the fall term of 2007. The High School Graduate Survey Subcommittee adapted a survey originally developed by the Fraser Region Consortium to examine the post-secondary destinations, intentions, and attitudes of 2003/04 high school graduates.²

Survey Methodology & Sample

The BC Ministry of Education provided the high school graduate data necessary to conduct a random sample for the study, and in March 2008, R.A. Malatest and Associates Ltd. contacted and surveyed 2,018 respondents from across the province.³ These respondents were sampled within six regions of BC in proportion to the geographic distribution of high school graduates from the 2005/06 cohort who had not transitioned to BC public post-secondary education, with an oversampling of respondents from the North (see Table 1).

*This newsletter is available at www.bccat.ca/pubs/rr_apr09.pdf.
See also the full report at www.bccat.ca/pubs/wheredidtheygo.pdf*

Highlights

By March 2008, or nearly two years since high school graduation, an estimated 78.4% of 2005/06 BC high school graduates had transitioned to public or private post-secondary education at institutions within BC or elsewhere. The rate of transition to BC public post-secondary institutions alone was 62.1%.^a

Although they had not transitioned directly to public post-secondary studies in BC, most survey respondents (96%) were pursuing or were interested in pursuing further education: only 4% indicated that they had no intention of ever pursuing post-secondary studies.

An estimated 6.9% of 2005/06 high school graduates had enrolled at private post-secondary institutions in BC and 6.2% had left the province to pursue their studies elsewhere in Canada. Among transitioners outside of the BC public system, students with high GPAs tended to leave the province, while students with lower GPAs were more likely to be found in BC private post-secondary institutions.

^a This is consistent with preliminary STP information extracted in November 2008: 61.9% of 2005/06 BC high school graduates had transitioned to BC public post-secondary education within two years of graduation.

Table 1: Provincial Distributions of the Survey Sample

Regions and College Regions	Number of Survey Respondents
North	199
New Caledonia	115
Northern Lights	35
Northwest	49
North Fraser Valley	394
Douglas	214
Fraser Valley	180
South Fraser Valley	367
Kwantlen	367
Southeast	443
Okanagan	293
Rockies	43
Selkirk	15
Thompson Rivers	92
Vancouver	276
Capilano	124
Vancouver/Langara	152
Vancouver Island	339
Camosun	148
Malaspina	97
North Island	94
TOTAL	2018

With some minor exceptions, the demographic profile of survey respondents matches the profile of the overall population of non-transitioning BC high school graduates from the 2005/06 cohort. Aboriginal graduates were somewhat underrepresented in the sample, making up 6.6% of the non-transitioning cohort and just 4.7% of the sample. Graduates from non-standard school types (alternate, continuing education, etc.) were also underrepresented, making up 4.9% of the cohort and just 1.1% of the sample.

Post-Secondary Pathways

Although they had not transitioned directly to public post-secondary studies in BC, most survey respondents (96%) were pursuing or were interested in pursuing further education:

- 49% had registered at a post-secondary institution, of which:
 - » 9% attended BC public institutions after the Fall of 2007;
 - » 16% attended a BC private institution;
 - » 15% registered elsewhere in Canada; and
 - » 3% registered outside of Canada;⁴
- 13% had applied for admission to a post-secondary institution;
- 34% had postponed their post-secondary studies but were interested in pursuing further education in the future, of which:
 - » 11% intended to apply within the next year; and
 - » 9% intended to apply within one to two years.⁵

By extrapolating the survey results and integrating them with prior research conducted by the STP, this study was able to estimate

the post-secondary destinations of the 44,978 BC graduates of 2005/06. Overall, 78.4% of 2005/06 graduates had registered for some form of post-secondary education by March 2008 (see Figure 1).

Post-Secondary Status

Based on a classification system developed by the Fraser Region Consortium, each of the 2,018 respondents was categorized into one of eight mutually exclusive post-secondary status groups. These groupings reflect respondents' post-secondary experiences, attitudes, and intentions at the time of the survey.

Active Registrants (n = 656, 33%) had pursued post-secondary studies and were still attending at the time of the survey. These respondents reported that they were motivated students in high school, completed their assignments on time, had a clear academic direction, and expected to continue on to post-secondary education directly after graduation. These respondents were more likely than any other group to have taken an academic route through high school and to have achieved a university eligible GPA. Although they were less likely than other respondents to be employed, earned lower wages, and often worked as retail sales staff or restaurant staff, most of these respondents were satisfied with their current situation.

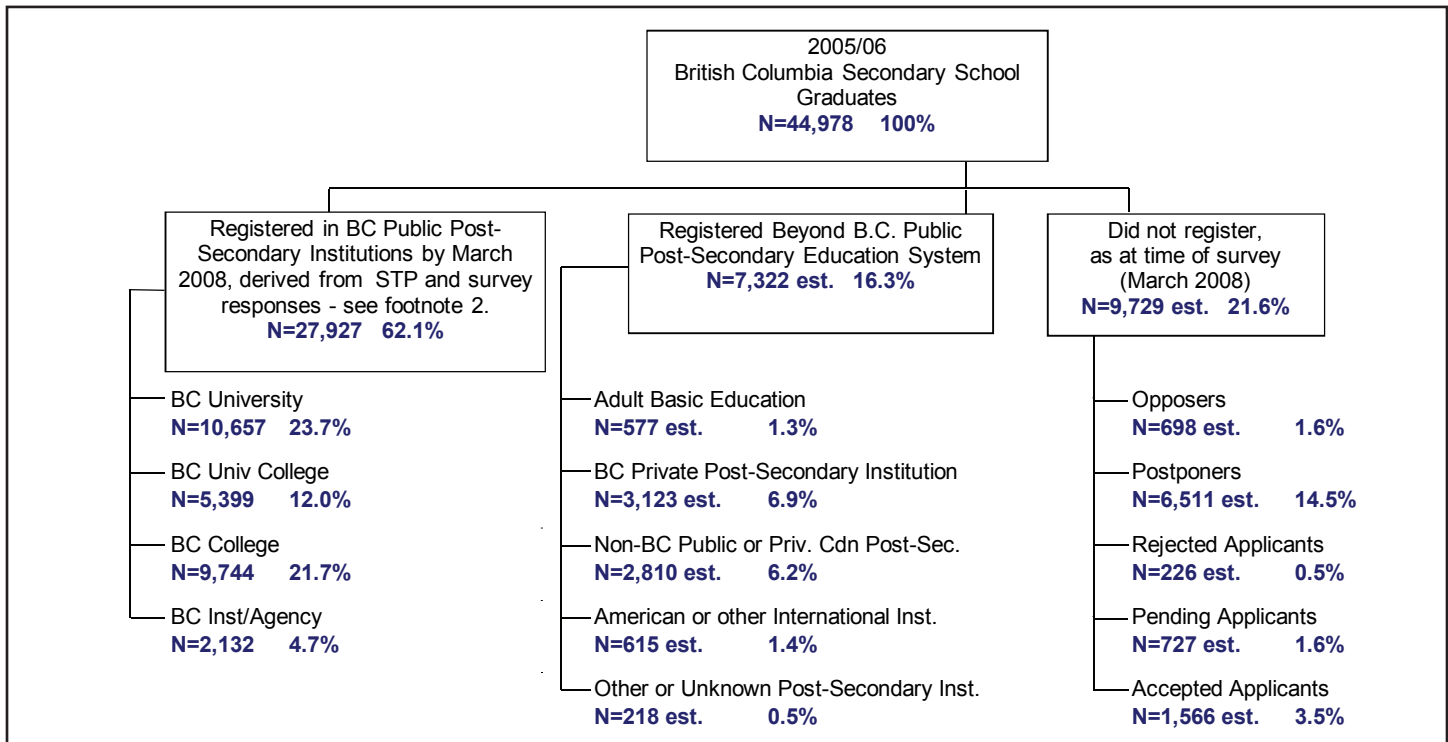
Completed Registrants (n = 244, 12%) had completed a short post-secondary program. Most of these respondents were employed full-time, but over a quarter were still studying. This group did not express particularly high satisfaction levels with their current activities and one-third anticipated a change within the next year.

Accepted Applicants (n = 166, 8%) had applied for admission to a post-secondary program but had not registered. Most of the respondents (56%) were on waiting lists or were waiting for their programs to start; a few (14%) had changed their minds; others (10%) had financial reasons for not registering in programs to which they had been accepted. Most of these respondents had expected to take a break between high school and post-secondary studies. They reported fewer failing grades in high school than other respondents but very few of these respondents achieved university eligible GPAs. Most of these respondents were employed full-time but more than half expected to be doing something different within the year.

Pending Applicants (n = 77, 4%) had applied for admission to a post-secondary program and were still waiting for an admissions decision. These respondents reported a mix of positive and negative high school experiences: they were less satisfied with their grades and less likely to complete their homework assignments, but they were less likely to face learning difficulties. These respondents were in flux: nearly two-thirds expected to be doing something different within the year.

Rejected Applicants (n = 24, 1%) had applied and were denied admission to a post-secondary program. These respondents were less satisfied with their current circumstances than any other group. This group did not perceive learning in high school to be difficult,

Figure 1: Post-Secondary Destinations of 2005/06 BC High School Graduates



Notes:

1. Values indicated with "est." have been estimated from the 2,018 students who were surveyed in February/March 2008, with values scaled up to the total population of BC grade 12 graduates.
2. According to STP, 50.8% of 2005/06 BC high school graduates registered in BC public post-secondary institutions in 2006/07 and 6.9% in Fall 2007. According to the survey, a further 4.4% enrolled in the B.C. public post-secondary education system by the time of the survey. This brings the total to 62.1% of graduates who enrolled in B.C. public post-secondary education. The remaining post-secondary destinations are estimated from the survey of non-transitioners.
3. All %'s are expressed as a proportion of the 2005/06 population of grade 12 graduates from the Province of British Columbia.
4. High school graduates from all regions of the province are included.

but did not generally enjoy their high school experiences: they were bored, unmotivated, and less likely than others to get on well with their teachers or to complete their homework assignments. Most expected to be doing something different within one or at most two years.

Former Registrants (n = 87, 4%) had pursued post-secondary studies but left before completing their program. A small number (20%) of Former Registrants had left because of financial, health, or family issues, but most (56%) had dropped out because of academic difficulties or because they wanted to change programs or institutions. These respondents reported relatively low levels of satisfaction with their current circumstances. While the majority expected their circumstances to change within a year or two, fewer than one-third planned to resume their post-secondary studies. These respondents had relatively good grades in high school but, while the majority expected to pursue post-secondary studies immediately after high school, they were less likely than others to consult guidance counsellors or teachers for information about post-secondary education.

Postponers (n = 690, 34%) had not applied for admission but had considered it or might consider it at some point in the future. Many of the respondents (37%) had put off applying to a post-secondary program because they were unsure of what they wanted to study or were not ready to commit to a post-secondary pathway. Others (20%) preferred working and felt they did not have time for studies,

while others (19%) had financial reasons. Men outnumbered women almost two to one in this group. The majority were employed but earning relatively low wages. They were less likely than others to be working in the skilled trades and more likely to be working as retail sales staff.

Opposers (n = 74, 4%) had never applied for admission, had never considered doing so, and probably never would. Most of this group (71%) was composed of men. These respondents reported negative high school experiences: they were bored, uninterested, and unmotivated. Many had a difficult time learning course material, had failing grades, and lacked a clear academic direction, and few expected to pursue further education after high school. In contrast to their mostly negative attitudes toward education, this group of respondents was generally very satisfied with their current situation and felt that they were doing well without any further education. Most were employed and the majority were earning at least \$13 per hour. Many were employed in the trades, and they were less likely than others to be employed as restaurant or retail sales staff.

Post-Secondary Destinations

In this survey of high school graduates who initially deferred their post-secondary education, or enrolled outside of the BC public post-secondary education system, the top five most popular destinations were: Trinity Western University, BC Institute of Technology, The Art Institute of Vancouver, the University of Calgary, and McGill

University. Among those who had enrolled at private institutions in BC, the most popular destinations were: Trinity Western University, the Art Institute of Vancouver, Blanche MacDonald Centre, Sprott Shaw Community College, and Columbia Bible College. Among those who had left BC to pursue post-secondary studies elsewhere in Canada, the most popular destinations were: the University of Calgary, McGill University, the University of Alberta, Queen's University, and the University of Toronto.

Post-secondary destinations were tightly linked to courses taken and grades achieved during high school. Students pursuing their studies at public Canadian post-secondary institutions outside of BC generally had GPAs of at least 80%, while students at private post-secondary institutions generally had lower GPAs or had not taken an academic route through high school (and did not have an academic GPA; see Figure 2).

Post-Secondary Applicants

Among the 267 respondents (13%) who had applied for admission but never enrolled at a post-secondary institution, the majority applied to public institutions in BC. BCIT was the single most popular choice among this group of applicants: 18% of applicants across the province and 46% of those from Vancouver applied to BCIT. Among the remaining unregistered applicants, the most popular institutions were Thompson Rivers University, Camosun

College, Kwantlen University College, Douglas College, and Okanagan College.⁶

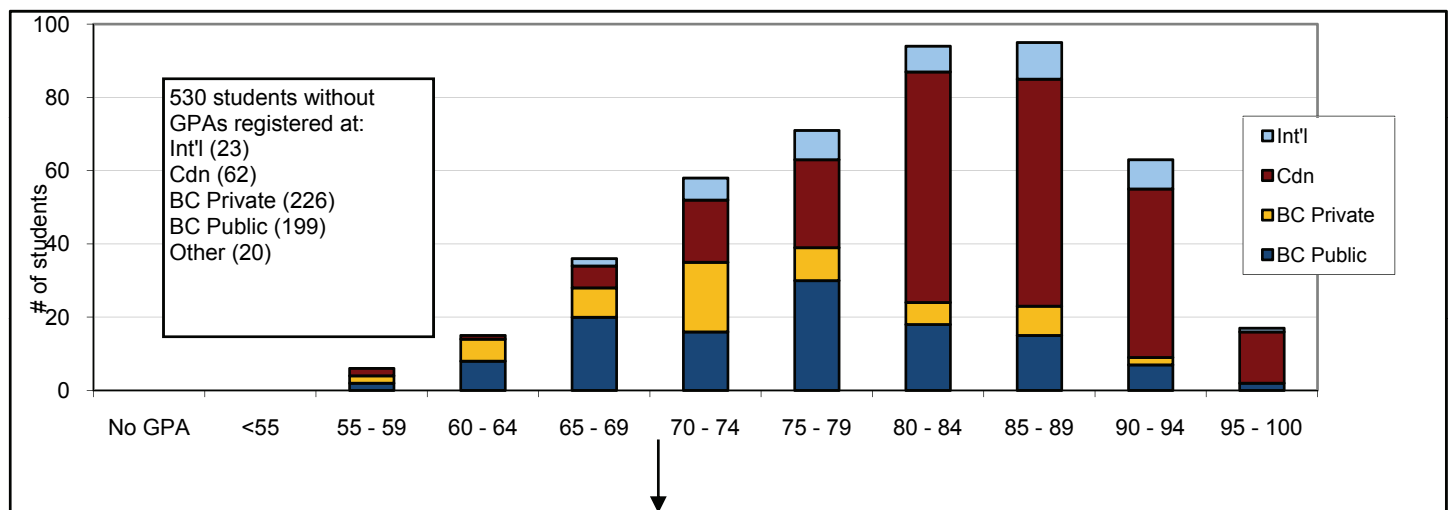
Conclusion

The data derived from the Where Did They Go? survey of 2005/06 BC high school graduates who did not transition into BC public post-secondary education by the end of the fall of 2007 provide new information about post-secondary pathways. The overall pattern of survey responses indicates that many of these "non-transitioners" had, in fact, transitioned into private institutions in BC, into institutions outside of BC, or via delayed transition into BC's public post-secondary system. Taking all post-secondary activities and intentions into account, only 4% of this sample of non-transitioners did not ultimately intend to transition into post-secondary studies. Among those who have not transitioned into the post-secondary system, a number of factors are associated with delaying or opting out of higher education, including: negative high school experiences, uncertainty regarding future plans, and financial concerns.

High School Graduate Survey Subcommittee

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Figure 2: Post-secondary Destinations of Students by Grade Point Average



¹ Heslop, J. (2008). Research Results from the Student Transitions Project. www.aved.gov.bc.ca/student_transitions/documents/stp_highlights_june08.pdf

² Heslop, J. (2006). Destinations and Aspirations of Fraser Region Secondary School Graduates of 2003/04 who did not Pursue Public Post-secondary Education in 2004/05 in British Columbia. www.sfu.ca/irp/provincial/frcsurvey/index.html. Accessed December 22, 2008.

³ The sample size allows for analyses at the provincial level with reasonable confidence levels, but results at the regional level are generally not statistically significant.

⁴ The remaining 6% did not specify a post-secondary institution or indicated they had attended a public post-secondary institution in BC by fall 2007.

⁵ The remaining 14% intended to apply in three or more years, did not know when they would apply, or had no firm intentions to apply but would consider it at some point.

⁶ The names of post-secondary institutions used here reflect the names in use at the time of the survey.