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Higher Education
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MARITIME PROVINCES HIGHER EDUCATION COMMISSION – High-school students choose a university education with an eye to their long-term careers, with most planning more than one degree to achieve their goal

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When Grade 12 students in the Maritimes choose to go to university (as almost half of them are doing) they have an eye to the long-term, according to a survey done by the Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission (MPHEC). The Commission has released an infographic exploring what drives Grade 12 students' university-education expectations and choices.

“Grade 12 students approach their university education with a very practical turn of mind” said Commission CEO, Mireille Duguay. Seven in ten say that career is the most important reason behind their choice, whether they are wanting to prepare for a specific career, gain certain skills and knowledge, or looking at their earning potential. That’s three times as many as those who cite learning (23%) as their principal motivator.

“What may be surprising to some is how much planning Grade 12 students have put into their future success” Duguay continued. Even before they leave high school, six in ten students are planning to pursue a second degree after they finish their first. “We’ve known for some time that a majority of first degree holders were pursuing a second degree; many thought students were making that choice because they were unable to find the right kind of work. What this survey is telling us is that this path is established long before students ever sit in a university classroom, that it is part of a long term plan”.

“And our young people in the Maritimes think that their educational investment will pay off” Duguay added. “More than nine out of ten have some expectation that they will be able find a job related to what they learn in their university program, and, 63% **definitely** expect it. What’s more, nearly seven in ten expect to find that job in their home province.”

The survey also provides information about the people helping students to make these long term plans. Notably, students who come from the most highly educated families are more than twice as likely to plan to attend university as those whose parents have a high school diploma or less (66% versus 27%). Students with less educated parents choosing university are much more likely to cite influences from external sources on their choice to go to university – be it teachers, guidance counsellors, friends, or even the media.

In choosing a particular university, half of students look for program availability, while another 32% mentioned a university’s good reputation. A further 21% said being offered financial help/scholarships was one of the top three reasons to choose a particular university.

“This is important information for our key stakeholders, as they design their programs and decide how to market their offerings to high-school students in a way that allows our young people and their



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families to make the most appropriate choices when they invest in education. Through our ongoing research initiatives, MPHEC provides high-quality and timely data to assist students, post-secondary institutions, and provincial governments with decision support and to inform the public of key trends and emerging issues,” Duguay concluded.

The Commission designed the survey in collaboration with the departments of Education in the three Maritime Provinces. Data collection was conducted by MQO Research from May 9 to June 11, 2014 in 175 Maritime high schools. Surveys were administered online by participating schools, and were available in English and French. The total sample of 5,219 represents 25% of the total grade 12 population of 20,805. The margin of error for the survey is $\pm 1.4\%$, 19 times out of 20.

An infographic with highlights of the survey results is available on the Commission’s web site at www.mphec.ca. This infographic includes data on university-bound students only, who comprise 46% of all survey respondents, or 2,413 individuals.

The MPHEC was established in 1974. The MPHEC is an arm’s length organization accountable to the ministers responsible for postsecondary education in the Maritimes. The Commission comprises 20 members representing universities, the public-at-large (including students), and the three Maritime governments. The Commission’s primary orientation in carrying out its duties is to give first consideration to improving and maintaining the best possible service to students as lifelong learners.

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