



MARITIME PROVINCES HIGHER EDUCATION COMMISSION – Study: Student background, time-to-degree and graduate outcomes are linked

October 19, 2017

Fredericton (NB) — The Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission today released a study exploring links between students' background, the time it takes to complete a bachelor's degree and graduate outcomes. The study, the first of its kind in the region, was based on graduate survey data linked to university administrative data.

According to the study, 63% of all graduates finished their degree within four years.

That percentage increased to 74% for those who did not work full-time during their studies, whose parents provided one of the top two funding sources for the degree, and who had at least one university-educated parent. This group of graduates was also much less likely (32%) to borrow money than the average for all graduates (60%).

By comparison, 39% of graduates who reported working full-time during their studies and whose parents were neither university educated nor identified as a top source of educational funding, completed their degree within four years. They were also much more likely to borrow to finance their education (89%).

"We learned in our previous research, based on data from the universities, that switching fields of study and/or transferring to another university prolongs the time it takes to finish a bachelor's degree. By linking the university data to the rich information collected in our graduate surveys, we are able to explore the influences of students' backgrounds on time to degree as well as these interactions with graduate outcomes," said Catherine Stewart, Interim CEO of the Commission.

The study's findings also showed that employment outcomes such as the rate of full-time employment and earnings were not influenced by time-to-degree. However, those who took five or more years to complete their degree were less likely (49%) to pursue further education than their peers who completed within four years (69%).

"One of the most interesting things we learned is that the educational level of one's parents does influence the time it takes to complete a degree, but only through interaction with other factors," noted Ms. Stewart.

Analysis was conducted using a data file linking graduates' responses from two Maritime university graduate surveys (Classes of 2007 and 2012, each surveyed two years after graduation), with the graduates' corresponding student records from Maritime university student administrative data. Linkage of survey data to administrative student records was done only for those survey respondents who provided their consent for the linkage. 95% of survey respondents agreed to the data linkage. The data file contained a total sample of 3,063 first degree holders (bachelor's graduates who enrolled in their degree on a full-time basis and were 19 years of age or less in December 31st of their first year enrolled). Analysis of borrowing patterns was limited to Class of 2007 data linked to student data.



MPHEC
Maritime Provinces
Higher Education
Commission

CESPM
Commission de
l'enseignement supérieur
des Provinces maritimes

The infographic can be found on the Commission's website: www.mphec.ca

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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