

MARITIME PROVINCES HIGHER EDUCATION COMMISSION-

95% of Maritime university graduates satisfied with quality of teaching

Survey also reports on employment outcomes and financial status for those who graduated with a bachelor's degree in 2007

NOTE TO EDITORS: For more information on the study, or for an interview with Mireille Duguay, call Dawn Gordon at 506-453-2844 or e-mail mphec@mphec.ca.

The Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission released the findings of its *Two Years On: A Survey of Class of 2007 Maritime University Graduates* report today, January 18, 2011. The report examines graduate satisfaction with education, further education trends, employment, and financial status, with a focus on those who completed their first degree in 2007.

57 percent of graduates who completed their first degree in 2007 said they were satisfied with the quality of teaching, with a further 38 percent saying they were very satisfied. The survey also found that 34 percent of graduates thought their program developed their skills of independent and critical thinking to some extent, while a further 62 percent thought these skills were developed to a great extent. Mireille Duguay, chief executive officer of the Commission said, "We asked our graduates about the extent to which their university program developed a number of core skills, and also their level of satisfaction with a number of aspects of their program. The findings are telling us our graduates are transformed by their education, and that they are satisfied with the experience." Class of 2003 graduates were equally satisfied.

Six-in-ten Maritime University graduates who earned their first degree in 2007 opted to enrol in a second educational program within two years, a slight increase compared to Class of 2003 graduates. However, the reasons given for doing so remained the same: increasing employability or, to a lesser extent, self-improvement. Graduates of liberal arts and sciences programs were much more likely to go on for further study.

By 2009, 73 per cent of first degree holders borrowed money to finance their education, including the 2007 degree and/or any further

education. More than one-quarter (27%) did not borrow to finance education.

Graduates who borrowed relied on government, banks, family members and other sources, and borrowed an average of \$37, 013 by 2009, with one-third borrowing \$45,000 or more. Compared to graduates of the Class of 2003, Maritimers relied to the same extent on government student loans, but increased their reliance on other sources such as banks and borrowing from family members.

By 2009, 20 per cent of those who borrowed to finance their first degree and/or further education still owed at least \$45,000, while 21 per cent had repaid the whole amount. Compared to the Class of 2003, the proportion owing at least \$45,000 increased eight percentage points.

The employment rate of Class of 2007 first degree holders is down 9 percentage points compared to that of the Class of 2003 two years after graduation. "The Class of 2007 was surveyed in the midst of an economic recession, which probably accounts for the decreased employment rate. However, it seems to be the only employment measure affected. The number employed full-time and in highly skilled jobs was about the same compared to four years earlier." In 2009, first degree holders employed full-time earned over \$43,000, which is above the earnings of the general population in the Maritimes.

Maritime provinces are retaining about the same proportion of graduates compared to the Class of 2003. According to Ms. Duguay, Prince Edward Island retained 63% of its residents, Nova Scotia 74 percent and New Brunswick 71 percent. 29 percent of graduates who had originally come to study in the Maritimes from elsewhere in Canada or abroad, were still living in the Maritimes two years after graduating.

The vast majority of graduates said the investment in their education was worthwhile. "Two years after graduation, 83 percent of first degree holders said their university education was worth the time invested, and seven-in-ten said it was worth the financial investment," said Ms. Duguay.

Between October 18th, 2009 and January 8th, 2010, Ipsos Reid completed telephone interviews with 3,380 graduates from sixteen universities in the Maritime region. The report analysis focuses on 1,702 first degree holders. The margin of error for findings from the weighted sample of 3,380 graduates is ± 1.5 percentage points, 19 times out of 20; for the sample of 1,702 first degree holders, the margin of error is ± 2.3 percentage points, 19 times out of 20.

The Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission was established in 1974 to assist institutions and governments in enhancing the post-secondary learning environment. The commission's 20 members are drawn from the Maritime provinces, and represent higher education institutions, provincial governments and the general public.

FOR BROADCAST USE:

95% of Maritime university graduates are satisfied with the quality of teaching says a report released today January 18th.

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