

Executive Summary

The Fraser Region Consortium (FRC), including Douglas College, Kwantlen University College, University College of the Fraser Valley (UCFV) and Simon Fraser University (SFU) wanted to gain a better understanding of the further education destinations, intentions and attitudes of recent high school graduates by speaking directly to the students via a telephone survey in March, April and May of 2006. The FRC, through Malatest and Associates, surveyed roughly 2,300 Fraser Region secondary school graduates of 2003/04 who were not registered at a BC public post-secondary institution in the 2004/05 registration year.

Major Findings:

From the survey of Fraser Region students who graduated in 2003/04 and were not registered in a BC public post-secondary institution in 2004/05, we learned that:

- a) Approximately 80% of all secondary school graduates of the Fraser Region in 2003/04 pursued some form of further education by May of 2006:
 - 64% registered in a BC public post-secondary institution,
 - 8% registered in BC private institutions,
 - 2% sought additional secondary school upgrading,
 - nearly 4% left BC to attend other Canadian or American institutions, and
 - roughly 1% attended another institution.
- b) All but 2% of the respondents pursued or intended to pursue some form of further education: 13% had applied, 29% intended to apply and 57% registered.
- c) Of those who applied, 81% subsequently registered in further education somewhere; 13% have been accepted, but have not yet registered, 3% were denied admission and the remaining 3% are still awaiting a decision.
- d) Of those who registered, 27% completed their short program, 62% are still actively registered, and 11% are no longer registered.
- e) Application and registration destinations were mainly in British Columbia (50% in BC public institutions, 22% private and 5% secondary school upgrading). A further 7% applied, intend to apply or registered elsewhere in Canada, 2% in the United States, and 3% elsewhere.
- f) Only 20% of Fraser Region graduates of 2003/04 have not yet registered in a further education program:
 - 6% applied,
 - 13% will probably apply sometime in the future, and
 - only 1% will probably never apply.
- g) By integrating the survey results with prior research conducted by the Student Transitions Project (Research Question #2)¹, this study was able to quantify the

¹ The Student Transitions Project (Research Question #2) links information from students in the K-12 system to the BC public post-secondary institutions through the Provincial Education Number in a way that protects personal privacy, yet provides information on the transition of students from BC secondary school graduation to registration in a BC public post-secondary institution. More information may be found at http://www.aved.gov.bc.ca/student_transitions/welcome.htm#reports.

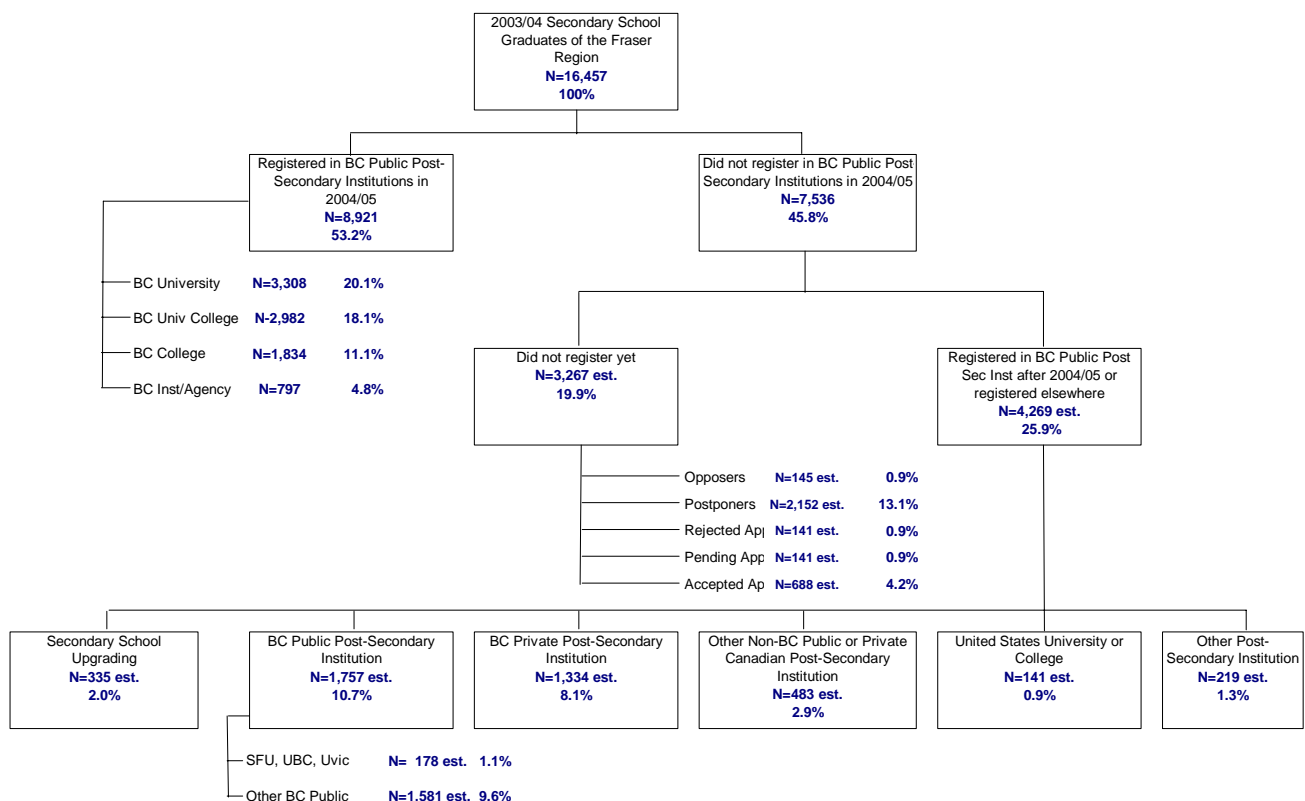
post-secondary destinations of 16,457 Fraser Region graduates of 2003/04.

A total of 8,921 (54.2%) entered BC public post-secondary institutions in 2004/05 and a further 25.9% registered later or registered in post-secondary institutions elsewhere, including 10.7% in BC public post-secondary institutions, 8.1% in BC private institutions, 2.9% elsewhere in Canada, 2.0% in a BC secondary upgrading program, 0.9% in the United States and 1.3% elsewhere. In other words, 3.8% of the Fraser Region's secondary school graduates left the province to pursue their further education. Students with high GPA's (above 85%)

were often found among those who left BC to attend other institutions in Canada or the United States (see Figure A).

- h) Although a high proportion of respondents applied or registered for further education, less than one-third took an academic route to graduation, completing English 12 and at least three other academic courses. Only half of all respondents were interested in what they were learning in class and an equal proportion felt they did not have a clear academic direction. The main reasons why some have not applied for further education yet include financial reasons, procrastination and general uncertainty of what they want to do.

Figure A: Post-Secondary Destinations of 2003/04 Secondary School Graduates of the Fraser Region



Notes:

- Where N's are indicated with "est.", the values have been estimated from the 2,136 students who were surveyed in May/June of 2006, of whom 1,210 registered in a post-secondary institution.
- 53.2% of post-secondary destinations occurred in the 2004/05 academic year in BC public post-secondary institutions; the remaining post-secondary transitions occurred in the 2004/05 academic year in institutions other than BC public post-secondary institutions, such as BC private or non-BC public and these transitions occurred up until the time of the survey in April/May of 2006.
- All %'s are expressed as a proportion of the 2003/04 population of Fraser Region graduates.
- Although the STP research question #2 included graduates of both public and private secondary schools, the survey only included one private secondary school graduate.

Source: Student Transitions Project, Research Question #2, June 2006 and 2006 Survey of 2003/04 Fraser Region Non-Transitioning Students.

- i) Trades, apprenticeship and industry training programs were surprisingly popular program choices among many survey respondents, especially among those who postponed their further education to sometime in the future (29%) or applicants accepted to programs that have not yet begun (33%). By comparison, more than 40% of active and former registrants pursued academic programs in Arts/Social Sciences, Business or Science, with only 10% seeking trades training.
- j) Several regional variations in survey responses were found:
- Compared to Douglas and Kwantlen regions at 76%, secondary school graduates in the Fraser Valley region were less interested in pursuing further education after high school (71%). These same graduates in the Fraser Valley districts also felt less strongly about the importance of further education to their future goals (84% versus 88 to 89% for the other two regions).
 - Fraser Valley secondary school graduates felt they were doing well without further education. Proportionately fewer graduates from this region were active registrants (25%), compared to the more urban regions of Douglas and Kwantlen at 36% and 39% respectively. As a result, a larger share of the Fraser Valley high school graduates has deferred their further education (35%), compared to graduates from the Douglas or Kwantlen regions (28% and 26% respectively).
 - Slightly more graduates from the Fraser Valley region were employed (87%), compared to 82% for each of Douglas and Kwantlen regions.
 - Grade 12 graduates from the Kwantlen College region were less sure of what and/or where to study.
 - More of the Douglas college region respondents would prefer to do other things right now and they are more concerned about finding a job when they finish school.

Further Education Attitudes, Actions and Intentions – Classifying Respondents

Each of the 2,136 respondents to the survey were classified into one of eight mutually exclusive post-secondary states or respondent groups, depending on their further education attitudes, actions and intentions derived from the survey responses. These eight groups of respondents are defined in the text box on the following page.

The attitudes, actions and intentions of each of these respondent groups in relation to their further education activities and other activities beyond high school graduation are described in greater detail in this report, but the prominent similarities within and differences between these groups are summarized here.

Opposers:

Opposers are a male-dominated group of 41 high school graduates with somewhat unfavourable views and experiences in high school. While many in this group disliked

school, the majority did not take an academic course load in their grade 12 year and they were the least interested group in further education beyond graduation. Their fathers or male guardians had relatively low

participation rates in further education and they were less likely to consult their parents or attend a recruiting/advisor information session for further education advice.

Since completing high school, virtually all of these graduates were employed full-time in relatively well-paying jobs, mainly in the trades, business or the sales/service sector, earning \$15.30 per hour. The vast majority (91%) of opposers are satisfied or very satisfied with what they are doing, so much so that 42% expect to still be working in the same job five years from now – the most stable group of respondents in terms of employment. As a result, they are least likely at 28% to agree that education is important to achieving their future goal.

**Respondent Groups –
Post Secondary States (N=2,136)**

1. Opposers – Never seriously considered enrolling in further education since graduating from high school and probably never will (N=41 or 2%).
2. Postponers – Considered or might consider enrolling in further education at some point in the future, but did not apply (N=610 or 29%).
3. Rejected Applicants – Applied for further education, but not accepted for admission (N=40 or 2%).
4. Pending Applicants – Applied for further education, but still awaiting acceptance or denial of admission (N=40 or 2%).
5. Accepted Applicants – Applied and accepted in a further education program, but did not register (N=195 or 9%).
6. Former Registrants – Pursued further education, but did not complete the program and no longer attending (N=137 or 6%).
7. Active Registrants – Pursued further education and still attending (N=751 or 35%).
8. Completed Registrants – Pursued and completed a further education program (N=322 or 15%).

Postponers:

The postponers are a male-dominated group who considered or might consider enrolling in further education at some point in the future, although they have not applied anywhere. This group of 610 high school graduates was somewhat motivated in school, but took relatively few academic courses in grade 12. Ultimately, they encountered some academic challenges and were not completely satisfied with their high school grades.

While opting out of attending school for now, the overwhelming majority of these respondents are currently employed in sales and service, trades and business occupations, earning an average wage rate of \$11.30 per hour. Earning lower wages than opposers, the postponers are less satisfied with their current employment, such that many see themselves working in another job or attending school within five years, with the vast majority (91%) agreeing that further education is important to their future goals.

These respondents primarily attribute financial reasons and a lack of academic direction or personal motivation as the reasons for postponing their further education. When they are ready to apply for further education, about a third will apply to trades/apprentice or industry training programs, likely at the British Columbia Institute of Technology (BCIT).

Rejected applicants:

The group of 40 rejected applicants wanted to pursue further education after graduation, but applied and were not admitted to a post-secondary institution. These primarily male students had a clear academic direction and, although they had some academic difficulties and achieved the lowest GPA on average among all respondent groups (75.7), they were not discouraged from applying for further education. Very few of these students

actually took an academic course load in high school and they typically did not consult their parents, siblings or friends about their education plans. These students applied mainly to three institutions for trades and apprentice programs at BCIT, Douglas College and Kwantlen University College.

Since they were denied admission, the majority of these graduates are now working in sales and service jobs or trades occupations, earning an average of \$12 per hour. They are least satisfied of all respondent groups with their current situation and the most likely to say they'll be attending school in five years. If these rejected applicants eventually do get accepted and register for further education, they look forward to the benefits of increased self-esteem and the acquisition of new skills, knowledge and credentials, although they are concerned about the additional workload and stress.

Pending Applicants:

The small group of 40 pending applicants are still waiting to find out if they were accepted or denied admission to a post-secondary institution. These applicants had very positive academic experiences in secondary school and typically consulted their parents, siblings and recruiter/information sessions about further education options.

While they wait for an admission decision, the vast majority of these graduates are working in sales, service, trades and clerical positions, earning an average of \$11.30 per hour, but only two-thirds are satisfied with this situation. These respondents do not view their current employment as a permanent situation and feel strongly that further education is important. These applicants mainly applied to Kwantlen, BCIT, Douglas and UCFV in trades, business and medical/dental programs. Unfortunately,

while they waited for a decision on their application, 17% have changed their mind about further education and do not expect to register.

Accepted Applicants:

Accepted applicants have applied and been accepted in a further education program, but have not registered, mainly because their program has not yet begun accepting registrations (75% said this was one of the reasons; 10% are on a waiting list). This group of 195 applicants, dominated by females, had fairly positive non-academic experiences in secondary school (friendships, teachers, desire for further education), but they also experienced a number of academic challenges with their homework, grades, motivation and academic direction.

The vast majority of these applicants are employed in sales, service, trades and clerical positions, earning \$11.60 per hour, on average. They do not view their employment situation as permanent and they feel strongly that further education is important to their future goals. Once registered, these students will be primarily attending BCIT, UCFV, other BC private institutions, Kwantlen University College and Douglas College. Approximately one-third will be in a trades/apprentice or industry training program and the remainder will primarily be in arts, social sciences, business and general studies.

Former Registrants:

Former registrants had registered in a further education program, and although they did not complete their program yet, they are no longer attending. They often mentioned academic difficulty, financial issues and changing their institution or program as the reasons for leaving early. Like accepted applicants, these 136 respondents had a positive non-academic experience in secondary school (enjoyed friendships, got on

well with teachers), but they had some academic difficulties with learning, motivation, homework and academic direction. Almost one-third of former registrants pursued an academic program in high school, achieving an average academic GPA of 75.7. Nearly 10% achieved a university-eligible GPA and just over 6% registered at a BC university. Other institutions attended were mainly other BC private post-secondary institutions (i.e. Trinity Western University and bible colleges), UCFV, Kwantlen University College and Douglas College and some secondary school upgrading. Former registrants were less inclined than the other non-registrant groups to register in trades or apprenticeship programs – they were more often found in business, arts, social sciences and general studies.

Since leaving their further education program, 89% of former registrants are currently employed, but compared to all respondents they are less satisfied with this activity. These high school graduates with some further education are earning a median hourly wage of \$11.30 (about \$1 per hour more than active registrants) and are mainly working in sales, service, trades and clerical positions.

Active Registrants:

Active registrants comprise the largest group of respondents to the survey. These students had the strongest desire of all respondents to pursue further education after graduation. They had a positive academic experience in high school and the majority consulted their highly educated parents and attended post-secondary recruitment sessions in planning their further education. In preparation for further education, nearly half (46%) of active registrants pursued an academic route to high school graduation, achieving the highest average GPA of all respondent groups (78.0) and the highest proportion (28%) with

university eligible GPA's. This group also had the highest representation at other non-BC institutions (15% went to a public or private post-secondary institution elsewhere in Canada and 4% in the United States). These students are primarily registered in four program areas: arts and social sciences, business, science and trades training.

Given that these students are attending school, it is not surprising that they have lower rates of employment and higher rates of part-time work. They are also earning the lowest median wage rate at \$10.60 per hour for sales, service, trades and clerical jobs and they are more likely than any other respondent group to think they would change jobs within the next five years.

Completed Registrants:

Completed registrants graduated from high school less than three years ago and subsequently finished a short-term further education program. While in high school, almost one quarter of these 322 respondents took an academic course load and 10% achieved a university eligible GPA, averaging 73.4. The vast majority of these completed registrants attended a private institution in BC, including bible colleges. This is by far the largest proportion of any other registered respondent group to enrol at a private BC institution (52% of completed registrants versus 23% of former registrants and 19% of active registrants). Roughly one-fifth of this group completed a secondary school upgrading program and the remaining 10% completed programs at BCIT, UCFV, Douglas College and Kwantlen University College. Many of the completed programs were in personal care, science, computer science, travel, tourism restaurant and hospitality. Now that they have completed a further education program, they are concerned about paying for their education. They also have less positive views about school and

studying and are not certain about their ability to succeed if they pursued more education.

Having completed their programs, ninety percent of these respondents are now

employed and earning a median wage rate of \$11.10 per hour, working mainly in sales, service, trades and clerical jobs. They are about as equally satisfied with what they are now doing as all other respondents, at 81%.

It is hoped that results from this survey will provide valuable information to the Fraser Region Consortium, post-secondary institutions, parents, school districts and the BC Ministries of Education and Advanced Education in helping them gain a better understanding of the further education destinations, intentions and attitudes of recent high school graduates in the Fraser Region. A number of additional questions may be raised by readers of this report. Some such questions may be answered from the survey responses directly and others will require additional research. The Fraser Region Consortium welcomes any questions or comments on this research. Please contact:

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