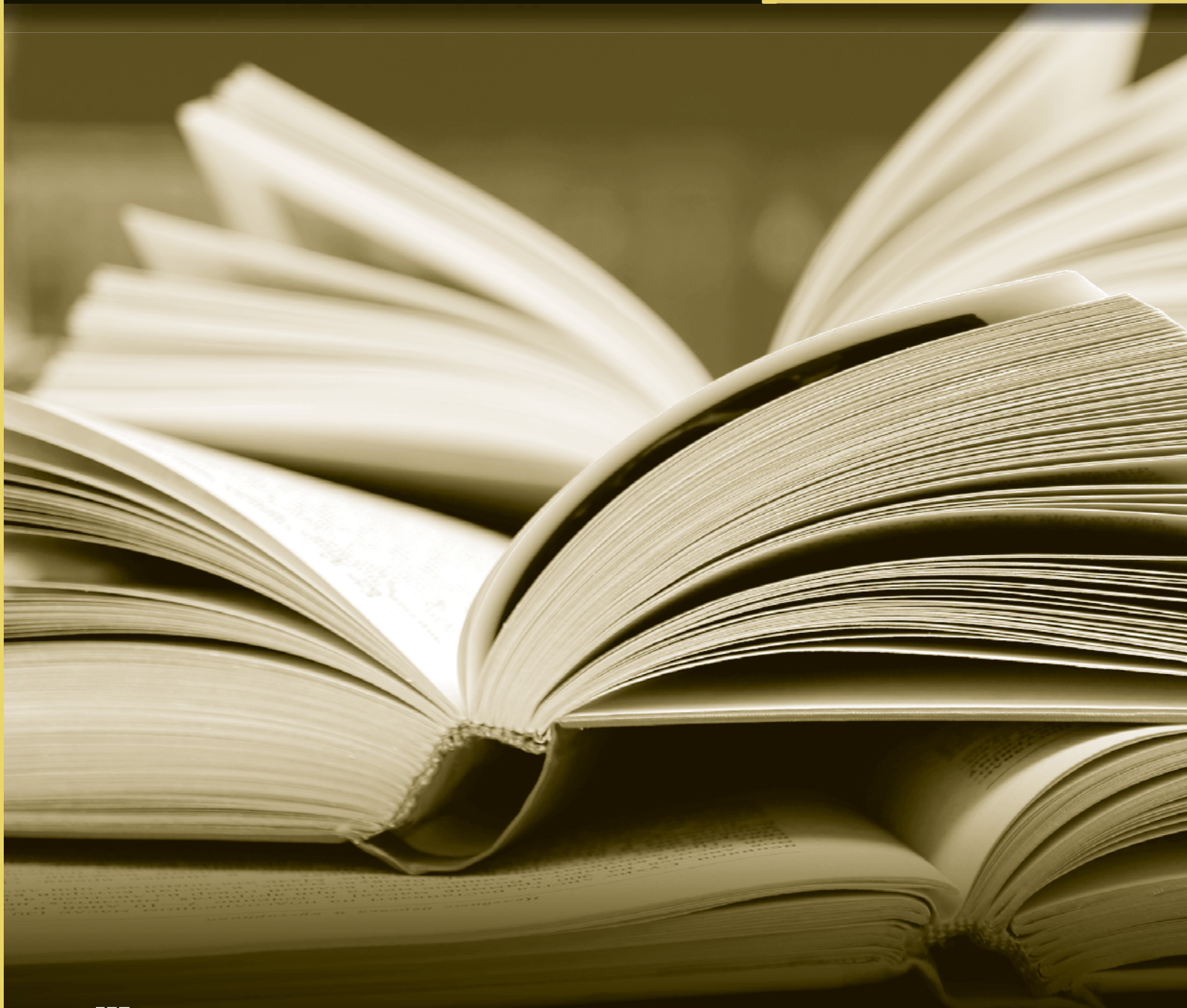# Pan-Canadian Study of First Year College Students

Report 2

The Characteristics and Experience of Aboriginal, Disabled, Immigrant and Visible Minority Students

Association of Canadian Community Colleges
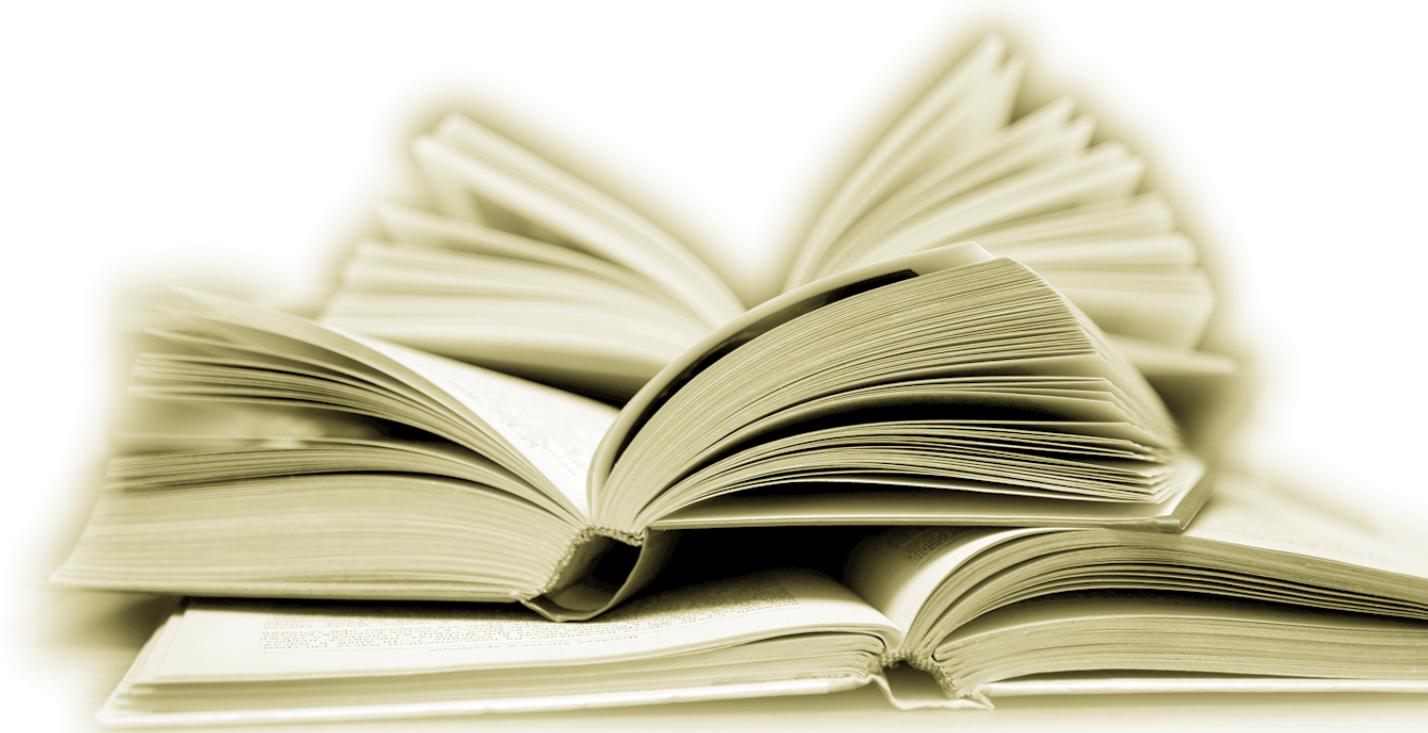Association des collèges communautaires du Canada

Canada

Pan-Canadian Study of First Year College Students

Report 2

The Characteristics and Experience of Aboriginal, Disabled, Immigrant and Visible Minority Students

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Acknowledgements

Executive Summary

Access to postsecondary education by traditionally under-represented groups is recognized as a priority by the federal government as well as provincial and territorial governments across the country. Canadian colleges and institutes have a pivotal role in postsecondary systems in this country given their extensive reach across rural and urban regions and the diverse client groups served through a wide range of programs that include basic literacy, high school equivalency, career and technical diplomas/certificates, and baccalaureate and applied degrees.

In recent years, the Association of Canadian Community Colleges has profiled the types of programs and services that colleges and institutes are offering, specifically for students from the under-represented groups examined in this report—Aboriginal, visible minority and immigrant students and students with disabilities. This report adds depth to these efforts by highlighting the perspectives provided directly by learners within these under-represented groups, as respondents to the two surveys conducted in 2005 as part of the *Pan-Canadian Study of First Year College Students:* the Survey of Student Characteristics (College Entry Survey) and the Survey of Student Experiences (End of Term Survey).

The results presented in this report confirm that colleges and institutes have significant proportions of students from each of these four groups. Results pertaining to these four groups are presented separately, rather than comparing them to each other, in recognition of the fact that students from each of these groups come from different life experiences that impact upon the educational pathways they choose and their experiences at colleges and institutes. As a result, college and institute administrators and staff who are responsible for programs and services for students from these four groups can easily consult the specific profiles and make use of the data for each group as required. Some of the key differences between respondents from each of these four groups and other students are highlighted below.

- **Aboriginal Students**

   The Aboriginal student sample represented 7 percent of respondents from the College Entry Survey and 10 percent of respondents from the End of Term Survey.

College was the first choice among postsecondary options for the majority of Aboriginal respondents, more so than those from the non-Aboriginal group. Aboriginal students were older than the non-Aboriginal respondents, a higher proportion was female and more reported having financial dependent children or adults. More Aboriginal students came from the work force than from high school.

Aboriginal students' reasons for attending a college or institute were largely career oriented as was the case for non-Aboriginal students. However a notable proportion of Aboriginal students had indicated that preparation for university and personal development were goals for college attendance. Aboriginal students reported having a strong sense of engagement in college, were committed to completing their studies and most were confident in their ability to succeed. But fewer Aboriginal students compared to other students at colleges and institutes had positive impressions of the school faculty.

Although Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students reported similar academic behaviour in high school, Aboriginal students were more likely to rate their skills proficiency in basic academic and study skills lower than non-Aboriginal students. More students within this group experienced difficulties balancing school, family and work responsibilities and were concerned about financing their education compared to others. Consequently, Aboriginal students were more likely to confirm that they would benefit from and use the support services offered by their colleges or institutes. At the end of term, more Aboriginal students also actually made use of support services such as learning skills centres and peer tutoring.

- **Recent immigrant students**

The results for recent immigrant students are based on the results of the College Entry Survey for the 1,929 students (7 percent of respondents) defined as recent immigrants because they were not born in Canada and arrived in Canada in the year 2000 or later. The report also provides some comparisons between recent

immigrants and other sub-populations, including non-immigrants, second generation Canadians, non-recent immigrants and visa students.

A larger proportion of recent immigrant students indicated that college was not their first choice for postsecondary attendance, as university was the desired option for 18 percent of recent immigrant students. Furthermore, a higher proportion was involved in advance diploma programs rather than career and technical programs. In terms of their demographic profile, recent immigrant students were more likely to be older males and to have financially dependent children or adults. As many as two thirds did not have English or French as their first language.

A higher percentage of recent immigrants than other sub-groups had a father or mother who had completed an undergraduate or graduate university degree, and they were more likely to report that it was very important to their parents that they complete postsecondary education.

In terms of recent immigrants' goals for college, although most were preparing for a specific occupation, a higher proportion than other sub-groups were preparing for university studies. More recent immigrant students expected to work while studying and a higher percentage reported being very concerned about their ability to pay for college and repay accumulated debt than non-immigrant students. A higher proportion of recent immigrant students also confirmed they would benefit from and likely use the support services offered by their institution in areas such as financial aid, language related skills and preparing for future studies. Generally, recent immigrant students indicated they were less committed to their program and institution and would have preferred to be working rather than studying, compared to non-immigrant students.

■ **Visible Minority Students**

The analysis of the characteristics and experience of visible minority students was performed on a sub-group of the visible minority population who were neither immigrants (recent or otherwise) nor visa students.

A significantly higher proportion of visible minority students confirmed that university attendance would have been their first choice for postsecondary education. Consequently, more visible minority students were attending college as preparation for university.

Visible minority students reported a higher degree of difficulty than non-visible minority students in all areas examined including balancing school, work and family responsibilities, course content and program workloads. More visible minority students expressed high levels of concern about financing their education and a lower proportion of visible minority students compared to non-visible minority students indicated that they were well integrated into college, both academically and socially. In light of these difficulties, more visible minority students reported that they would benefit from and use college/institute support services, in particular to improve language-related skills, and to secure financial aid, plan for future studies and improve study and test taking skills. Furthermore, visible minority students showed a weaker commitment to their program and institution, and were less likely to have positive impressions of the faculty.

■ **Students with Disabilities**

Nearly one in every ten respondents from both the College Entry and End of Term Surveys reported having a disability, with about 60 percent reporting that they had a learning disability, ten percent had mobility-related disabilities, six percent had sensory disabilities and 24 percent had disabilities which fell into the "other" category.

College was the first choice among postsecondary options for most students with disabilities and fewer indicated that university would be their first choice. Compared to others, students with disabilities were older, had a higher proportion of male students and were more likely to have English as their first language. Students with disabilities were also more likely to have financially dependent children or adults. Additionally, a higher proportion of disabled students self-identified as being Aboriginal and fewer reported they were from a visible minority group.

More students with disabilities compared to non-disabled students had fathers with no postsecondary education and a lower percentage indicated that their parents would consider it very important that they complete a postsecondary education. In terms of the pathways of students with disabilities into college, fewer students came directly from high school and the workplace compared to non-disabled students as more reported they had been attending college the previous year.

Students with and without disabilities reported similar academic behaviour in high school in terms of study time and homework completion. However, students with disabilities had a lower sense of social and academic integration, as fewer were interested in what they were learning and more felt like an outsider during the high school years. This lower sense of integration continued into college studies for many students, however, differences were observed between those with a physical disability and those with a learning disability. While students with a learning disability were less likely to feel academically integrated, students with physical disabilities were less likely to feel socially integrated into college life.

Most students with disabilities expressed a high educational commitment and had positive attitudes towards their institution and faculty. However, students with a learning disability were less likely than both students with a physical disability and non-disabled students to feel this way.

Compared to non-disabled students, students with disabilities were more likely to report having difficulties with program workload, knowing how to improve grades and course content than non-disabled students, and more also indicated that they were concerned about financing their education and the amount of debt they will accumulate. Accordingly, more students with disabilities indicated they would benefit from and likely use college/institute support services – in particular to cope with their disability, to secure financial aid and to improve study and test taking skills.

This report also provides some policy perspectives for the types of programs and services offered to students from these four under-represented groups. Some key policy perspectives examined include the pivotal role of support services for ensuring the success of students from these four groups, the need for better coordination between high schools and colleges and institutes with regards to orientation to postsecondary education and career options, and to the importance of developing integrated approaches across and within institutions and fostering partnerships with community organizations in order to ensure that the needs of students from under-represented groups are addressed in a holistic manner.

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1 Introduction

As recognized by the Council of the Federation, many of Canada's Aboriginal peoples, immigrants and persons with disabilities face barriers to postsecondary education, skills training and rewarding employment opportunities.[1] One of the priorities and strategies identified by the Council of the Federation is to improve access for all Canadians, in particular for the many Canadians who have been traditionally disadvantaged and under-represented in both postsecondary education and employment. To this end, the Council committed to develop strategies to encourage greater participation in postsecondary education and skills programs by Aboriginal peoples, persons with disabilities and students from low-income families, as well as to reduce the earnings gap immigrants face by providing adequate recognition of credentials and training for those requiring upgrading.

Canadian colleges and institutes have a pivotal role in postsecondary education systems across the country by enhancing access to further postsecondary education and employment. The extensive reach of colleges and institutes throughout rural Canada and in major urban centres means they are accessible to practically all Canadians. Canadian colleges and institutes facilitate access and pathways into postsecondary education and the labour market for diverse groups of learners through a wide range of programs that include basic literacy, adult basic education and high school equivalency, career-oriented certificates and diplomas, apprenticeship training, university transfer and baccalaureate and applied degrees.

Previous studies conducted by the Association of Canadian Community Colleges (ACCC) on programs and services for Aboriginal learners and immigrants,[2] and the Pan-Canadian Study of Exemplary Practices in Learning, have shown that colleges and institutes offer extensive support services and targeted education and training programs to address the specific needs of learners from such under-represented groups. Although these studies confirm that colleges and institutes offer many programs which address the needs of learners from under-represented groups, very few studies have heard directly from the learners in terms of their backgrounds, pathways into college or institute programs and their experience once in college. The *Pan-Canadian Study of First Year College Students and the College Experience* is the first survey in Canada to fill this void.

This report is composed of four distinct sections which describe the characteristics and experience of respondents from the four under-represented groups examined: Aboriginal students, recent immigrant students, visible minority students and students with disabilities. The study was conducted with funding from Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC) and implemented in collaboration with the ACCC and its member institutions.

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[1] The Council of the Federation. *Competing for Tomorrow – A Strategy for Postsecondary Education and Skills Training in Canada*, July 2006, p. 1.

[2] Association of Canadian Community Colleges. (2005). *Canadian Colleges & Institutes – Meeting the Needs of Aboriginal Learners – An Overview of Current Programs and Services, Challenges, Opportunities and Lessons Learned.*
Association of Canadian Community Colleges. (2007). *Canadian Colleges & Institutes – Responding to the Needs of Immigrants – Results of the Diagnositc Survey of College and Institute Programs and Services for Immigrants and Conclusions of the College and Institute Immigration Roundtable.*

2 Overview of the Research Program and Methodology

This study examined the characteristics and experiences of students at colleges and institutes, in accordance with the findings of an extensive literature review conducted by Pascarella and Terenzini (1991, 2005).

The overall objectives of this research program were to:

- Develop a comprehensive profile of students enrolled for the first time in certificate, diploma, degree, university transfer or post-diploma programs at a Canadian college, technical institute, cégep or university-college;

- Describe the nature of student experiences during the first year of college in terms of their attitudes, perceptions, behaviours and college interactions;

- Identify and describe any differences in the experiences of specific student groups such as Aboriginal students, recent immigrants, visible minority students and students with disabilities;

- Identify the characteristics of students, the college experience and possible interaction effects that promote learning and persistence in the first year.

This second report specifically addresses the third objective by highlighting the differences in student characteristics and college experiences of four traditionally under-represented student groups. The two fundamental questions addressed by this report are:

- What are the characteristics of students from the four under-represented groups attending Canadian colleges and institutes?

- What is the nature of their college student experience during the first year?

The survey instruments were developed and the survey was promoted with assistance of two advisory panels, the **Research Design and Instrumentation Advisory Panel** composed of experienced institutional researchers from colleges and institutes from each of the six ACCC regions of Canada (British Columbia/Yukon, Alberta/ Northwest Territories, Saskatchewan/Manitoba/Nunavut,

Ontario, Québec and Atlantic); and the **Vice Presidents Academic (VPA) and Vice Presidents Student Services (VPSS) Advisory Panel** also composed of college/institute Vice-Presidents from across the country. The ACCC would like to acknowledge and thank the members of these two advisory panels for their contribution to this study. The list of members of the advisory panels is provided in Appendix 1.

This study utilized the same methodology as Pascarella and Terenzini (1991) and involved longitudinal, repeated-measures survey instruments that were developed based on work conducted between 1992–2004 by the Principal Investigator as well as other Canadian researchers in this area. For comparison purposes, where possible, survey items that aligned with questions from Canadian national surveys (e.g. AETS, YITS) were used.

The *Survey of Student Characteristics (College Entry Survey)* measured eight basic dimensions of first year student characteristics including registration information, demographic and family background, secondary school experience and preparation, career preparation and certainty, expectations of college, financing college and attitudes. The second survey, entitled *Survey of Student Experiences (End of Term Survey)*, assessed student attitudes, beliefs, perceptions, behaviours and experiences during the first semester of college. A more detailed description of the modules of the two surveys is provided in Appendix 2.

The two survey instruments were posted at **www.wincollegetuition.com** and significant incentives were offered to encourage student participation. The Presidents/Chief Executive Officers of each ACCC member institution were invited to participate in the study by promoting the on-line surveys to first year students. The timeframe for the College Entry Survey extended from August 29 – September 30, 2005 and the timeframe for the End of Term Survey extended from November 7 – December 9, 2005.

3 Survey Sample and Limitations

Overall a total of 28,932 students completed the Survey at College Entry, from 102 participating colleges and institutes, and within this overall sample, 7 percent self-identified as being of Aboriginal or Native ancestry (First Nations, North American Indian, Inuit or Metis), 7 percent were recent immigrants having arrived in Canada in the year 2000 or later, 18 percent were from a visible minority group and 9 percent were students with disabilities.

A total of 17,642 students completed the End of First Term Survey, from 92 participating colleges and institutes, and within this total sample, 10 percent of respondents self-identified as being Aboriginal, 19 percent indicated they were from a visible minority group, and 9 percent indicated they were students with disabilities. In terms of the recent immigrants, results from the End of Term Survey for this sub-group were not available because when this survey instrument was constructed a decision was made, in view of length considerations, to not include the year of arrival in Canada. Furthermore, to differentiate between the results for visible minority respondents and recent immigrant respondents, analysis for this group was performed on a subset of the visible minority population who were neither immigrants (recent or otherwise) nor visa students.

Table 1 provides the total number of respondents from each group for both the College Entry and End of Term Surveys, and the percentage of the overall sample each group represents.

Items in the demographic module of the questionnaire were used to identify the four specific groups of students as subsets of the total population. Comparisons between the groups and the rest of the population represent cases where a statistically significant difference was observed between the target group and the remaining students as determined by the Chi square statistic. In all cases the level of significance was $p < .05$ or greater.

3.1 Limitations of the Study

As noted in the first report in this series, while a large sample of students enrolled in their first year at colleges and institutes was polled in this survey, more than two-thirds of the respondents were from Ontario. Indeed, the Ontario sample represented all public colleges and constituted 25 percent of the total first-year student population in that province. While a substantial number of institutions and respondents were obtained from the Atlantic Provinces, Manitoba and Saskatchewan, those in Quebec, Alberta and British Columbia were under-represented. For this reason, overall project findings should not be viewed as representative of first-year college students nationwide. However, until a future study captures a more nationally representative sample, the current findings are the best and most comprehensive description of first-year students in Canadian colleges, institutes, CÉGEPS and university-colleges achieved to date. The lists of participating institutions from both surveys are provided in Appendices 3 and 4.

Table 1. Respondents from Under-represented Groups				
	College Entry Survey		End of Term Survey	
Respondents from Under-represented Groups	Number	Percent*	Number	Percent*
Aboriginal Students	1,818	7	1,005	10
Recent Immigrant Students	1,929	7	–	–
Visible Minority Students (excluding immigrants)	1,668	8	1,068	9
Students with Disabilities	2,216	9	866	9
* Valid percent adjusted to account for missing responses.				

Source: College Entry and End of Term Surveys, 2005

Throughout this report there are tables which compare
the results for each of the under-represented groups
from both the College Entry and End of Term Surveys
for questions which were common to both survey
instruments. However, it is important to note that the data
in these tables cannot be considered to be longitudinal
data as the College Entry Survey respondents were not all
the same as respondents to the End of the Term Survey.

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4 Aboriginal Students at Colleges and Institutes

Colleges and institutes have played a central role in facilitating Aboriginal learners' transitions into the labour market or on to further postsecondary education. The impact of the contribution of colleges and institutes in this area is substantiated by the fact that, based on the analysis of 2001 Census data, the Aboriginal population 15 years of age and over is close to parity with the non-Aboriginal population for the completion of non university postsecondary education, which includes trades and college certification.[3]

There are several demographic factors that should be considered when assessing Aboriginal participation in postsecondary education. Firstly, the Aboriginal population is younger than the rest of Canada, which means there are a greater proportion of Aboriginal youth who have not reached the age where students have typically completed their postsecondary education. Secondly, it has been found that Aboriginal students are completing their education later in life. Thus, Aboriginal PSE completion rates at older ages are a better reflection of educational attainment. Countering this influence, however, is the legacy of an educational system which was hostile to Aboriginal people and their culture. While it is hoped that Canada has moved on from the "distant past of discredited old policies and old programs"[4] the legacy of socially inappropriate education policies continues to impact upon Aboriginal participation rates in

Canada. Holmes notes that in 1969 there were only 100 Aboriginal students attending university.[5] Thus, it is important to consider how the education system, as it relates to Aboriginal people in Canada, has changed over time. While improvements have been made from even 40 years ago, inequality with regards to postsecondary participation is still very strong.

In 2001 approximately 16 percent of the working age Aboriginal population had a trade certificate (compared to 13 percent of the non-Aboriginal population) and 15 percent had a college certificate or diploma compared with 18 percent of the non-Aboriginal population. However, only 8 percent of the Aboriginal population had university level credentials compared with 23 percent of the non-Aboriginal population. Some of the reasons for this disparity will be considered next.

4.1 Barriers to Participation in PSE

There are a number of barriers that contribute to the under representation of Aboriginal people in PSE. Some of these barriers are common to all potential students while others apply uniquely to the Aboriginal population. David Holmes (2006) classifies these barriers into six categories.

Table 2. Educational Attainment of Aboriginal People – *Proportion of population, ages 25 to 64 (%)*

	Non-Aboriginal	Aboriginal
Trade Certificate	13	16
College Certificate or Diploma	18	15
University Credentials	23	8

Source: Embracing Differences, David Holmes

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[3] *Aboriginal Peoples and Postsecondary Education in Canada*, Michael Mendelson, July 2006, pg 10.

[4] *Aboriginal Peoples and Postsecondary Education in Canada*, Michael Mendelson, July 2006.

[5] Embracing Differences. David Holmes, February 2005.

Historical: The education system was for many years used as a tool of assimilation. Aboriginal people's experience of the residential school system continues to affect perceptions of education today. Furthermore, the inaccessibility of the education system in the past has made for fewer role models for today's Aboriginal students to follow.

Educational: High school completion rates among Aboriginal people are below the national average. In 2001, 43 percent of the Aboriginal population between the ages of 20 and 24 had not completed high school. The comparative figure for Canada as a whole was 16 percent.[6] Lack of high school credentials makes acceptance into postsecondary educational programs difficult. Additionally, many Aboriginal students in remote communities attend high schools where the quality of the education leaves them unprepared for postsecondary studies. Among other things, this has resulted in some students using college as a path to get into university.

Socio-cultural: While many institutions are beginning to incorporate Aboriginal perspectives into their learning environments, postsecondary education may still be viewed as non-Aboriginal by some within the Aboriginal community. The number of Aboriginal faculty members continues to be small in PSE institutions. Furthermore, PSE is often located in cities which may be unfamiliar and unappealing to Aboriginal students from smaller communities. Lastly, one cannot ignore the presence of racism towards Aboriginal people in Canadian society.

Geographical: Distance from postsecondary institutions adds to the cost of attending PSE and reduces participation.

Personal/Demographic: The Aboriginal population is young (with a median age of 24.7 compared to a non-Aboriginal median age 37.7)[7] and growing faster than any other population group in Canada. Despite this, Aboriginal students tend to be older and are more likely to have dependent children or dependent adult family members. The Aboriginal population also has a higher occurrence of disabilities than the rest of the Canadians, adding another difficulty to overcome for many potential students.

Economic: The cost of PSE can be a barrier for prospective students, particularly those from low income families. Aboriginal people in Canada have an average income that is 64 percent of what the rest of Canada earns on average[8]. Attitudes towards debt are less understood for Aboriginal people, however Holmes (2006) notes that aversion to debt may be greater among Aboriginal Canadians.

Despite these hurdles to postsecondary attainment, there are large returns for many who make the investment. Holmes notes that Aboriginal people have one of the highest returns to education in Canada. Furthermore, as education levels increase, the difference in employment rates for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people decreases.[9] Given that Aboriginal participation rates in college are so much higher than for university, there is a great impetus for colleges to provide educational opportunities for Aboriginal people.

4.2   ## The Aboriginal Sample

Several other factors are important to understand when considering Aboriginal participation in PSE. First, the term Aboriginal represents an incredibly diverse group of people, including First Nations, Inuit and Métis. The question posed in the Pan-Canadian Survey of First Year College Students is about Aboriginal ancestry, which captures the most broadly defined group of Aboriginal people in Canada. Theoretically it would include all those whose heritage went back to an Aboriginal person, whether or not they identify themselves as Aboriginal.[10] For instance, in 2001 4.4 percent of the Canadian population identified themselves as having some Aboriginal ancestry, while 3.3 percent of the Canadian population identified themselves as being an Aboriginal person.[11]

Other distinctions within the Aboriginal category often prove important for research as well, such as the distinction between status and non-status Indians, association with a band or not, or living on or off of a reserve. While these distinctions may result in interesting differences, that level of detail cannot be examined with this data.

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6   *Aboriginal Peoples and Postsecondary Education in Canada*, Michael Mendelson, July 2006, pg 12.

7   Embracing Differences. David Holmes, February 2005, pg. 10

8   *Aboriginal Peoples and Postsecondary Education in Canada*, Michael Mendelson, July 2006, pg 5.

9   Embracing Differences. Holmes 2005.

10   See Statistics Canada http://www.statcan.ca/english/concepts/definitions/Aboriginal.htm#1 for a discussion of the different self identifying questions.

11   Embracing Differences. Holmes 2005.

Secondly, Aboriginal people in Canada are concentrated in different geographic areas than the population as a whole. For instance, a larger proportion of Aboriginal people live in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and the North, compared to non-Aboriginal people. The Pan-Canadian Survey of First Year College Students reflects this distribution to some degree, but is also limited due to the same sample problems discussed previously—namely the under representation of Québec, Alberta and British Columbia and the large proportion of respondents who are from Ontario (Table 3).

4.3 Demographic and Family Background

The demographic and family background of Aboriginal survey respondents differed in a number of ways from non-Aboriginal respondents. This section highlights these differences based on results from both the College Entry and End of Term Surveys.

Age

Consistent with other research, Aboriginal students tended to be older than non-aboriginal students. For example, a smaller percentage of the Aboriginal students (41 percent vs. 48 percent) reported they were 19 years of age and younger. Consequently, a higher percentage of Aboriginal students were 20 to 24 years (36 percent vs. 34 percent) or were 25 years or older (23 percent vs. 18 percent).

Differences in ages can lead to different experiences of college. Older students face different challenges, have a different perspective on learning, and have a different outlook on their educational experience. Being older, a greater number of Aboriginal students are not coming into their first year of college from high school. Furthermore, older students are more likely to be married and to live with dependent children or dependent adults. Consequently, it may be difficult in places to untangle differences between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students that are the result of cultural differences rather than age differences. In some instances this analysis will attempt to control for differences caused by age. Policies that are designed to help older students or students with dependents will help Aboriginal students as well.

Gender

A higher percentage of the Aboriginal sample was female, 64 percent compared to 60 percent for the non-Aboriginal group, from both the Entry and End of Term Surveys. This figure is in line with projections by the Assembly of First Nations for Aboriginal enrolment in postsecondary education.

Dependents and Living Arrangements

More Aboriginal students reported having financially dependent children (20 percent compared to 11 percent of the non-Aboriginal population), and more reported having financially dependent adults living with them (15 percent

Table 3. Geographic Distribution of the Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal – *Population in Canada (%)*

Region	Proportion of Canadians Who Identify as Aboriginal[12]	Proportion of Aboriginal Sample in Pan-Canadian Survey		Proportion of Non-Aboriginal Sample	
		College Entry	End of Term	College Entry	End of Term
Alberta and Northwest Territories	18	6	6	8	7
Atlantic	6	9	15	10	13
British Columbia and Yukon	18	10	9	8	8
Ontario	19	65	62	68	66
Québec	8	4	5	4	4
Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Nunavut	31	7	5	3	3

Source: College Entry and End of Term Surveys, 2005

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[12] *Peoples and Postsecondary Education in Canada,* Michael Mendelson, July 2006.

compared to 8 percent). Accordingly, a higher percentage of Aboriginal students (45 percent compared to 40 percent of non-Aboriginal students) sited balancing the demands of school and family as quite or very difficult.

It is interesting to note that the Aboriginal Peoples Survey 2001 confirmed that family responsibilities was the top reason among the Aboriginal non-reserve population for not finishing postsecondary studies.

When examined by age group the differences in family responsibilities between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students becomes even more pronounced. Little to no difference existed in the number of dependent children for students 19 years of age or younger. However, Aboriginal students in the older age groups were much more likely to have dependent children and dependent adults living with them.

There were also differences between the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students in their living arrangements. A significantly lower percentage (40 percent compared to 51 percent) of Aboriginal respondents were living with parents, guardians or relatives. Higher percentages of Aboriginal students were living with a partner or spouse and children (8 percent compared to 6 percent of non-Aboriginal students), with children only (7 percent compared to 3 percent) or on their own (9 percent compared to 7 percent).

Main Activity Prior to College

The largest percentage of students (29 percent from both the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal samples) indicated they were working full time prior to beginning college. Fewer Aboriginal students were attending high school full time (27 percent compared to 30 percent of non-Aboriginal students) and a higher percentage of the Aboriginal students had been attending college full time (17 percent compared to 13 percent of non-Aboriginal students).

A higher percentage of Aboriginal students were enrolled in access and upgrading programs which enable learners to gain their high school equivalency or the prerequisites required to ladder into postsecondary level programs at colleges and institutes. This may partially account for the greater proportion of Aboriginal first year students who had been attending college full time prior to enrolling in their current program.

Education Level of Parents

As pointed out in the *Report 1: Students Characteristics and the College Experience*, parental education has a direct and indirect influence on whether young people go on to postsecondary education. The survey results show differences in the highest level of education between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students. A greater percentage of Aboriginal students had fathers and mothers with no postsecondary education (43 and 44 percent compared to 36 and 39 percent respectively for the non-Aboriginal population). In addition, when asked to report the importance that their parents attached to postsecondary education, a lower percentage of Aboriginal students (61 percent vs. 64 percent) said it was 'very important'.

Aboriginal Students with Disabilities

A higher percentage of Aboriginal students had a disability (12 percent compared to 9 percent of non-Aboriginal students). When asked to identify the type of disability the majority of students (60 percent) reported a learning disability. The disability rate for the Aboriginal population as a whole between the ages of 15 and 65 is 30 percent, which is higher than the Canadian disability rate for the same age group.[13] Aboriginal people with a disability are among the most underrepresented group in postsecondary education.

Table 4. Number of Dependents by Age Group – *Proportion of Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal Students (%)*

Activity	Age 19 and under		Ages 20 to 24		Age 25 and older	
	Aboriginal	Non-Aboriginal	Aboriginal	Non-Aboriginal	Aboriginal	Non-Aboriginal
Proportion with Dependent Children	4	3	16	7	54	40
Proportion with Dependent Adults	7	5	12	6	38	25

Source: College Entry Survey, 2005.

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13 Embracing Differences. David Holmes, February 2005, pg. 18.

Registration Characteristics of Aboriginal Students

In terms of Aboriginal students' registration characteristics, differences between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students were noted in three areas. First, at college entry, a higher percentage of Aboriginal students (21 percent compared to 17 percent of non-Aboriginal students) were not attending college for the first time. When asked about their highest level of education the majority of students (62 percent) reported high school completion or equivalent. A slightly higher percentage of the Aboriginal student sample had a certificate or diploma from a college or institute (12 percent compared to 11 percent), and fewer had a university credential (three percent compared to six percent).

The majority of Aboriginal respondents (83 percent) confirmed that their first choice postsecondary option was to attend their current college, as opposed to another college or university. Seven percent indicated they would have preferred going to university. These results are in line with those of the non-Aboriginal group. However, a higher percentage of Aboriginal students (17 percent compared to 14 percent of non-Aboriginal students) indicated they were not enrolled in their first choice program.

Aboriginal students enrolled in similar programs as non-Aboriginal students with a couple differences (Figure 1). The majority of students were enrolled in career or technical programs. However, a higher percentage of Aboriginal respondents at college entry were registered in access or upgrading programs (6 percent vs. 4 percent), and fewer Aboriginal students were registered in university preparation, advanced diploma and degree programs.

Business and health sciences were the largest fields for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students (Figure 2), but there was a higher proportion of Aboriginal students registered in community and social services programs (14 percent compared to 10 percent of non-Aboriginal students). The higher observed enrolment rates in social services programs along with the large proportion of Aboriginal students enrolled in health sciences is consistent with literature that suggests Aboriginal students are enrolling in programs which can fill a need in their communities.

Figure 2
Fields of Study of Aboriginal Students

Source: College Entry Survey, 2005

Figure 1
Registration of Aboriginal Students by Program Type
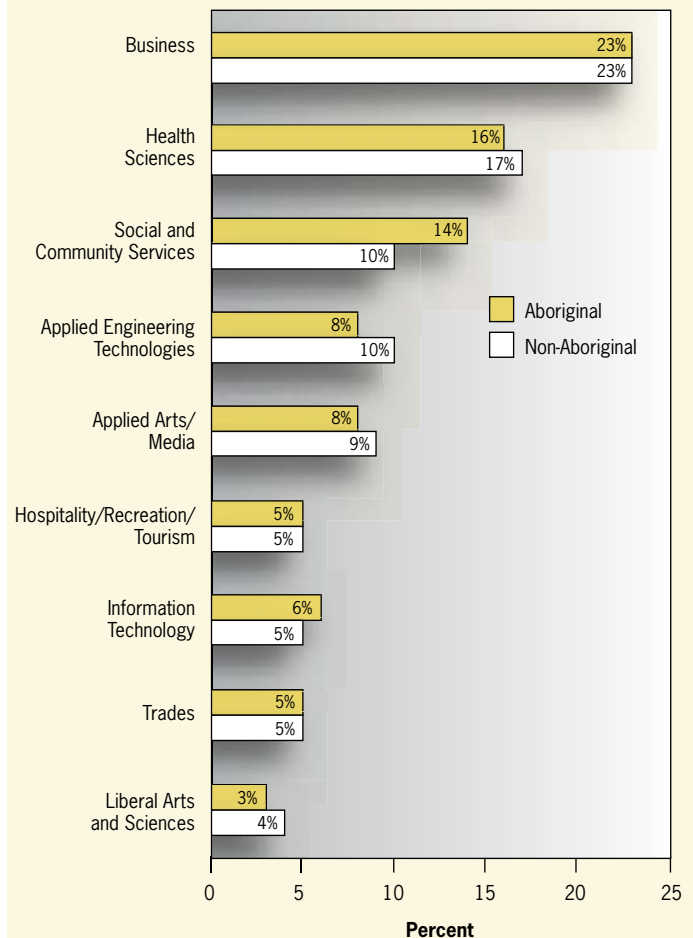
Source: College Entry Survey, 2005

4.5   High School Experience

Academic Behaviour in High School

Students in the Aboriginal sample reported very similar academic behavior in high school as the non-Aboriginal sample such as frequency of studying, attending class and homework completion. Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal respondents' high school study time was quite low as close to three-quarters of respondents indicated they spent less than eight hours per week preparing for class. However, the vast majority of Aboriginal students (84 percent) reported that they usually or always completed their high school homework assignments on time, as was the case for non-Aboriginal respondents. Skipping classes in high school was fairly prevalent, with up to 40 percent of Aboriginal students (compared to 36 percent of non-Aboriginal students) reporting that they skipped class in high school two to three times per month or more. There were generally no differences between the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students self-reported high school grades.

Sense of Academic and Social Integration in High School

The Entry Survey also explored student attitudes toward their high school experience in terms of their sense of academic and social integration, if they had recently been in school. More Aboriginal students (59 percent) had a high sense of academic integration compared to non-Aboriginal students (56 percent). In addition, the vast majority (84 percent vs. 86 percent of non-Aboriginal students) indicated they often or always got along well with teachers.

These findings suggest that the Aboriginal students who have completed high school and moved on to postsecondary education at a college or an institute had similar high school experiences as non-Aboriginal students.

4.6   Career Preparation and Certainty at College Entry

Since colleges and institutes offer mostly career focused programs, the College Entry Survey examined the frequency with which students had engaged in various career exploration and clarification activities. The results show that, similar to non-Aboriginal students, Aboriginal respondents' participation in career exploration activities was relatively infrequent. However, a higher percentage of Aboriginal respondents

reported that they met with a high school counsellor eleven times or more (18 percent compared to 14 percent of non-Aboriginal respondents). In addition, a higher percentage of Aboriginal respondents (19 percent compared to 16 percent of non-Aboriginal students) had taken a special course to gain work experience or job skills. Finally, although the most prevalent career exploration activity that occurred for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal respondents was discussions with parents, the results have shown that fewer Aboriginal respondents (30 percent compared to 34 percent of non-Aboriginal respondents) engaged in discussions with parents more than 20 times.

Aboriginal Students' Reasons for Attending Colleges and Institutes

As shown in Figure 3, the majority of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students were attending college for job related reasons. Most respondents from the Aboriginal sample indicated that they were attending college to improve their opportunities for future employment, to acquire the knowledge and skills for a future occupation, to improve their chances for career advancement or to make more money. A higher percentage of Aboriginal respondents compared to non-Aboriginal respondents were attending college to broaden their knowledge about the world and for personal development. More Aboriginal students were enrolled in college as part of a longer educational experience, as more Aboriginal students than non-Aboriginal students enrolled to prepare for university studies, to stack credentials, or to plan for future education.

It should be noted that there is some inconsistency in these findings, as a fewer Aboriginal students were enrolled in university preparation programs.

Figure 3

Aboriginal Students' Top Reasons for Attending a College or Institute

Reason	Aboriginal	Non-Aboriginal
Acquire knowledge and skills for future occupation	89%	90%
Improve chances for career advancement	63%	62%
Make more money	57%	56%
Broaden knowledge about the world	49%	44%
For personal development	47%	41%
Prepare for university	46%	41%
Obtain college diploma then university degree	45%	37%
Plan future education	42%	37%
Retrain for a new career	38%	35%
Help decide on a career	33%	34%

Percent
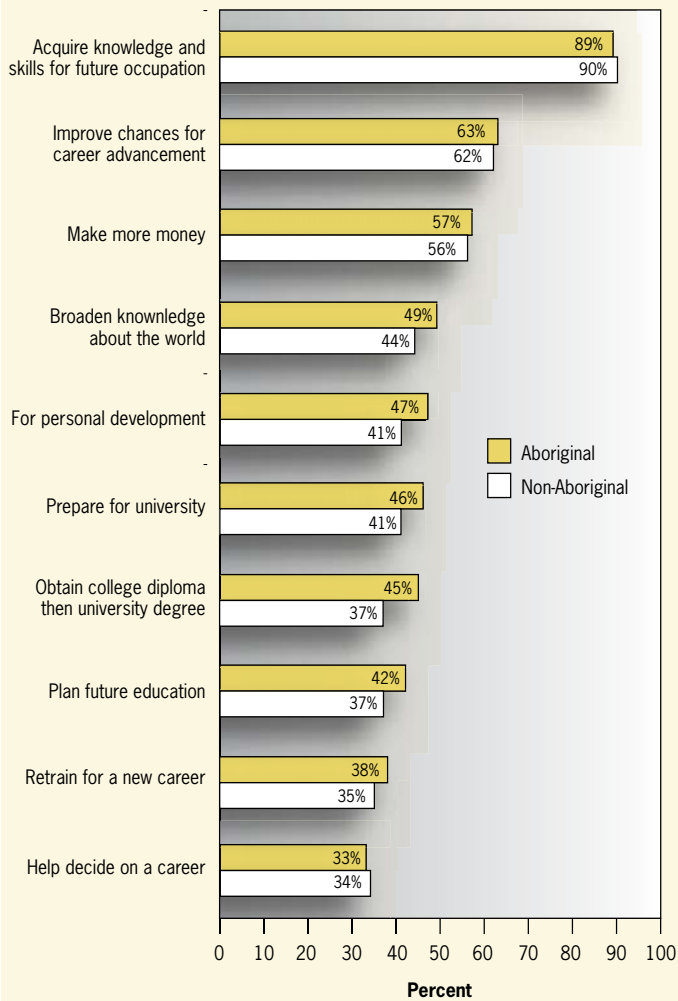
Source: College Entry Survey, 2005

4.7 The College Experience

Academic Behaviour

Academic behaviours, including attending class, studying, doing homework, and dropping courses, are factors in postsecondary students' academic performance and success. The results from this survey show that Aboriginal students in college had fairly similar academic behaviour to the non-Aboriginal students. Aboriginal respondents confirmed they were nearly as rigorous in the area of homework completion as 64 percent indicated they always completed their assignments on time and 32 percent indicated they usually did so (compared to 71 percent and 25 percent of respondents in the non-Aboriginal group).

Fewer Aboriginal students (56 percent) almost never or never skipped class during the first term (compared to 60 percent of non-Aboriginal students). At the end of the first term slightly more Aboriginal students (13 percent) had dropped a courses compared to non-Aboriginal students (10 percent).

Social Integration

Students' perceptions about how well they fit in the college or institute which they are attending can be an important indication of academic success. In this regard, there were no significant differences between Aboriginal students and their non-Aboriginal colleagues. The majority of Aboriginal students (86 percent) agreed that students they know in their program were willing to help with problems, and two-thirds of Aboriginal students agreed that student friendships in college have helped them cope with the stress of college life. In addition, almost four in five respondents agreed that they felt like they "fit in" at their college.

Participation in school activities are one way that students integrate into college life. While overall, Aboriginal students participated in school activities at a similar frequency as non-Aboriginal students, one difference was striking. Only 6 percent of Aboriginal students participated in an ethnic or cultural group on campus, compared to 15 percent on non-Aboriginal students who did.

Skill Proficiency

Aboriginal students were somewhat less likely to consider themselves very good in certain skill areas compared to non-Aboriginal students (Table 5). Proportions of Aboriginal students reporting being very good were significantly different in the language areas of comprehension, reading, and writing. There were no significant differences in the proportions reporting poor skills between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students.

Areas of Difficulty

Aboriginal students reported experiencing difficulties in several areas associated with program workload and time use. Their responses were very similar to non-Aboriginal students with only one exception. Aboriginal students were more likely to have indicated that balancing the demands of school and family were quite or very difficult (45 percent compared to 40 percent of non-Aboriginal students). This is in line with previous findings that showed Aboriginal students are more likely to be living with dependent children and adults.

Other areas that Aboriginal students (and non-Aboriginal students) found especially difficult were finding time to work and study (40 percent said this was quite of very difficult), program workload (39 percent) and knowing how to improve grades (36 percent).

4.8 Needs and Use of Support Services

Differences were observed in Aboriginal students' support service needs and their receptivity to the services (Table 6). Overall, Aboriginal students were more likely to report that they could benefit in all support areas compared to non-Aboriginal students. For both groups of students the highest reported need for support was in the areas of study skills and test taking skills. More Aboriginal students reported that they would benefit greatly from support to improve math skills, followed by reading and writing skills.

A significant proportion of Aboriginal respondents, over one third, indicated they would benefit greatly from assistance to plan for future studies, though this was no different than non-Aboriginal students. Likewise, approximately 45 percent of both groups indicated they would benefit greatly from support to secure financial aid and roughly equal proportions (approximately 33 percent) indicated that they would benefit greatly from help to select a career. Differences in Aboriginal students' family situations was once again evident, as a greater proportion compared to non-Aboriginal students indicated they would benefit support to cope with child care.

Aboriginal respondents were also more likely than non-Aboriginal students to report that they would use college services if they were provided. As with non-Aboriginal respondents, more Aboriginal students recognized they would benefit from support services than were willing to accept them, the exception being support services to deal with a disability or to cope with childcare issues.

Table 5. Aboriginal Students' Self Reported Skill Proficiency – *Proportion of Students Reporting Proficiency Level (%)*

Skill Area	Poor		Very Good	
	Non-Aboriginal	Aboriginal	Non-Aboriginal	Aboriginal
Comprehend language of instruction	1	1	54	49
Writing ability	2	2	36	31
Reading ability	1	2	46	42
Mathematical ability	8	10	27	26
Time management	6	7	21	20
Note / test taking	3	3	30	29
Study skills	5	7	18	16

Source: College End of Term Survey, 2005

Use of Support Services

Students were also asked, at the end of the term, which support services they had actually used (Table 7). Again, as general rule, Aboriginal students were more likely to have used support services during the first term as compared to non-Aboriginal students. Significant differences were observed in the proportion of students who used services for improving language, math and learning skills. Nonetheless, given the significant proportion of Aboriginal respondents who indicated they would benefit greatly from support services to improve study, test taking and math skills, it is somewhat surprising that more did not make use of the learning and math services or peer tutoring.

It is also interesting to examine support service use across various age groups (Table 8). Differences in support service use between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students was most evident for students who were 20 to 24 years old, as well as those who were over 25 years old in the first year of their program. For instance, participation in support services for learning skills was no different for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students 19 years old or younger, but was 8 percentage points higher for Aboriginal students over the age of 19 years.

Table 6. Perceived Level of Benefit from Extra Support and Receptivity to Support Services

Area of Development	Could Benefit Greatly from Extra Support (%)		Highly Likely to Accept Extra Support (%)	
	Aboriginal	Non-Aboriginal	Aboriginal	Non-Aboriginal
Study habits	47	45	37	34
Financial aid	45	46	41	41
Test taking	41	40	35	32
Math skills	38	33	31	27
Planning for future studies	37	33	34	30
Selecting career	33	32	40	41
Reading skills	28	23	23	19
Writing skills	26	23	23	21
Improve in a second language	23	19	20	16
Improve in language of instruction	19	15	18	15
Coping with a disability	11	8	12	8
Coping with child care issues	12	8	12	8

Source: College Entry Survey, 2005

Table 7. Aboriginal Students' Actual Use of Support Services – *Proportion Who Used Service at Least Once (%)*

College/Institute Support Service	Non-Aboriginal	Aboriginal
Personal counseling	16	18
Career counseling	23	23
Language/writing support services	16	19
Math skills services	15	19
Learning skills services	18	22
Peer tutoring	17	22
Career resource centre	31	32

Source: End of Term Survey, 2005

These findings suggest that Aboriginal students who are not coming to college directly from high school have a different educational experience from younger Aboriginal students as well as from non-Aboriginal students of the same age.

When asked about their perceptions of their colleges and institutes and the support services provided, Aboriginal students were very positive—78 percent of Aboriginal students compared to 76 percent of non-Aboriginal students indicated that their college/institute had the necessary services to support student learning. Overall it seems that more Aboriginal students were aware of and made use of the support services offered on campuses, and that these supports are being utilized most regularly by older students.

Financing Education

There are various support programs in place aimed at increasing Aboriginal participation in postsecondary education and improving their experiences once there. One type of support offered is financial assistance for postsecondary students. The federal government provides student support through two programs, the Post-Secondary Student Support Program (PSSSP) and the University College Entrance Preparation Program (UCEP). Nearly 100 percent of this funding is administered by individual First Nations bands; therefore, students must be associated with a band in order to receive this funding. There are also a variety of grants and scholarships made available for status Indians and Inuit by all levels of Governments and private organizations. Funding for Métis and other non-status Indians is not as

prevalent and most of these students are left to the regular channels to find support. The result is that some students who are identified as Aboriginal have access to grants to help fund their postsecondary education, while others must rely on loans and their own sources.[14]

As noted above, lower income levels among Aboriginal people can be a significant barrier to enrolment in a college or institute. The results of the pan-Canadian college survey showed a picture of surprising similarity between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students' sources of financial support and their attitudes towards finances, with a few notable exceptions.

Similar to the non-Aboriginal students, money from personal savings and loans were the two most frequently sited sources of funding for college, although fewer Aboriginal students cited personal savings than did non-Aboriginal students (Table 9). Aboriginal respondents were also less likely to have received money from parents, but they were more likely to report that they received money from other people which they did not have to pay back, as well as money from scholarships, awards or prizes, and money from grants and contributions. Loans were accessed just as frequently by Aboriginal students as by non-Aboriginal students.

Examining students' primary source of funding shows a similar picture of Aboriginal education financing (Table 10). Both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students most often reported that loans were their primary source of funding. It was somewhat surprising that loans were being utilized by Aboriginal students in the same proportion as non-Aboriginal

Table 8. Support Service Use by Age Group – *Proportion who Used Service at Least Once (%)*

Support Service	Age 19 and under		20 to 24		25 and over	
	Non-Aboriginal	Aboriginal	Non-Aboriginal	Aboriginal	Non-Aboriginal	Aboriginal
Personal counselling	14	17	16	19	20	23
Career counselling	21	22	22	24	25	26
Writing	16	17	14	20	18	22
Math	14	17	13	21	15	22
Learning skills	17	17	15	23	21	29
Peer tutoring	15	18	14	22	21	24
Career resources	29	30	30	31	31	36
Coping with a disability	6	8	7	12	10	11

Source: College End of Term Survey, 2005

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[14] Embracing Differences. David Holmes, February 2005, pg. 12-13. Also see Redressing the Balance. David Holmes, 2006, pg. 13.

students, given the existence of funding programs designed to provide support to Aboriginal students. This does confirm evidence that there are issues with coverage provided by these funding programs. No differences were observed between the two groups regarding the type of loans being accessed, with the majority being government sponsored student loans.

Parents' support was the second largest source of funds for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students, however, both parents and personal savings from work were less likely to be a principal source for Aboriginal as compared to non-Aboriginal students. This was true for younger as well as older Aboriginal students. Scholarships, grants and bursaries were the largest source of funding for only a small proportion of students, with Aboriginal students being somewhat more likely to have used one of these as their primary source of funding.

It is interesting to note that a larger proportion of Aboriginal students cited other sources as their primary source of funding. It is unclear if some of this represented money received from First Nations.

Financial Concern

The Pan-Canadian Survey of College Students also asked student's to indicate their level of concern with various aspects of financing their college education. Almost half of Aboriginal respondents (49 percent compared to 47 percent for non-Aboriginal students) reported being very concerned about having enough money to pay for college studies and living expenses for the year.

Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal respondents reported similar levels of concern regarding debt accumulation and repayment. At college entry 40 percent of Aboriginal respondents (compared to 43 percent of non-Aboriginal students) were concerned about the amount of debt upon completion of their postsecondary studies and 30 percent (compared to 33 percent of non-Aboriginal respondents) reported being very concerned about their ability to repay their accumulated debt within a reasonable time.

It is interesting to note the similarity in attitudes between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students with regards to debt. It has been noted in the literature that higher aversion to

Table 9. Sources of Funding Cited by Aboriginal Students – *Proportion that Used Source (%)*

Sources of money to fund college studies	Non-Aboriginal	Aboriginal
Money from parents	40	32
Money from other people that you don't have to pay back	7	13
Money from loans, including those from government, family or a bank	57	57
Money from personal savings	71	56
Money from scholarships, awards or prizes	30	34
Money from grants and contributions	21	26

Source: College Entry Survey, 2005

Table 10. Primary Source of Funding for Aboriginal Students – *Proportion Reporting Source (%)*

Sources of money to fund college studies	Non-Aboriginal	Aboriginal
Parents	29	21
Spouse or partner	2	2
Other people	1	2
Loans	37	37
Personal savings from working	21	13
Scholarships, awards or prizes	2	2
Grants or bursaries	2	5
Other sources	5	15

Source: College Entry Survey, 2005

debt among Aboriginal people may be a significant barrier to PSE attendance. Nonetheless, since our sample includes only those who have undertaken PSE and does not record actual debt levels, it is inappropriate to draw conclusions about how funding has impacted the decision whether or not to attend a college or institute.

Comparing student's responses between college entry and the end of term survey revealed an inconsistent picture of students' financial situation. Fewer Aboriginal students were very concerned about finances by the end of the term as compared to at college entry (37 percent at end of term compared to 47 percent at entry). However, fewer Aboriginal students at the end of term reported that paying for school was not going to be a problem (42 percent at end of term compared to 52 percent at college entry), and a higher proportion of Aboriginal students at the end of term reported that difficulties financing their studies may force them to leave college (27 percent compared to 18 percent at college entry). Despite this inconsistency, these results were in line with the non-Aboriginal students.

4.10 Student Attitudes and Educational Commitment

Aboriginal students were very similar to non-Aboriginal students in several areas that measured students' educational commitment and impressions with their program and institution. Areas examined included educational commitment, preference for a job, occupational uncertainty, levels of confidence, perceived value of their education, and impressions of faculty, school, and program. Differences were noted in only two areas—educational commitment and commitment to program.

Value of Postsecondary Education

The vast majority of Aboriginal student respondents confirmed that they valued postsecondary education and

saw benefits in their college/institute programs in terms of creating a foundation for future learning, and developing abilities to think critically. For example, 86 percent of Aboriginal respondents at the end of the first term agreed or strongly agreed that their program was providing them with the skills and knowledge they need to succeed. Furthermore, 79 percent of Aboriginal respondents at the end of first term confirmed that they thought their college education enhances students' understanding of themselves. These responses were not statistically different from those of non-Aboriginal students.

Educational Commitment

Aboriginal students revealed a lower commitment to continue their education. At the end of the first term fewer Aboriginal students (80 percent compared to 84 percent of non-Aboriginal students) indicated that they will continue at their current college/institute next semester, and more Aboriginal students (14 percent compared to 10 percent of the non-Aboriginal students) were undecided about their plans.

Commitment to Program

A smaller proportion of Aboriginal students indicated that they were happy with their choice of program. Fewer Aboriginal students indicated that they would recommend the program to other students with the same educational goals (81 percent compared to 84 percent of non-Aboriginal students). However, similar to non-Aboriginal students, 11 percent of Aboriginal students were undecided on whether they would continue and 12 percent confirmed that their program is not what they wanted.

Confidence in Success

Though there was a tendency for fewer Aboriginal students to agree or strongly agree that they have the ability to succeed in college, the differences were not large (Table 11).

Table 11. Aboriginal Students' Level of Confidence in Succeeding – *Proportion who Agree or Strongly Agree (%)*

	At College Entry		At the End of Term	
	Non-Aboriginal	Aboriginal	Non-Aboriginal	Aboriginal
I have the ability to succeed in college-level studies	93	91	91	90
I am well prepared to be a successful student	86	84	82	80
I am capable of a B+ average of 78 percent or better	83	80	82	81

Source: College Entry Survey, 2005 and End of Term Survey, 2005

Furthermore, these perceptions were relatively unchanged between the beginning and the end of their first term of studies.

Attitudes towards College

Aboriginal students' attitudes towards their college or institute were also very positive, particularly in the areas of student support services. In fact, there was no meaningful difference between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal responses regarding the quality of their college or institute. For instance, approximately 83 percent of both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students agreed that their college or institute is concerned with helping students succeed, and approximately 83 percent of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students did not agree that their institution treats students like a number in a book.

Perception of Faculty

While Aboriginal students' perceptions of faculty were very positive, fewer Aboriginal students than non-Aboriginal students reported favourable impressions. For instance, 73 percent of Aboriginal students reported that they felt that most/all faculty showed an interest in helping students, compared to 78 percent of non-Aboriginal students. Furthermore, while close to three-quarters of Aboriginal students agreed or strongly agreed that they received extra help from faculty and developed a good relationship with at least one faculty member, fewer Aboriginal respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the faculty in their program were willing to help with course-related programs (79 percent compared to 82 percent of non-Aboriginal students). It should be noted that there were a number of questions related to students' perceptions of their faculty, and many of these showed no significant difference between the population sub groups. It could be that a low prevalence of Aboriginal faculty members was a factor in poorer student-faculty interactions.

As with the non-Aboriginal group, interactions with faculty impacted on a significant proportion of Aboriginal students as over half indicated that interactions with faculty helped them better understand their future job, and outside class discussions with faculty influenced their interests and ideas.

Differences between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students were not evident in many of the areas examined by the Pan-Canadian Survey of College Students. While there is ample evidence that Aboriginal students experience postsecondary education differently than non-Aboriginal students, it is encouraging that Aboriginal students are finding a great deal of success at colleges and institutes.

The 2001 Census Analysis Series, Education in Canada, Raising the Standard (2003) showed that Aboriginal learners have a greater tendency to be back to postsecondary education later in life.[15] The registration and demographic characteristics of Aboriginal students confirmed this tendency, as more Aboriginal respondents were not attending their college/institute for the first time and Aboriginal respondents tended to be older than non-Aboriginal respondents. Furthermore, fewer Aboriginal students were attending high school full time prior to college compared to the non-Aboriginal group.

Aboriginal Peers and Faculty Interaction

The lack of role models with postsecondary credentials within Aboriginal communities has been identified as an important factor impacting negatively on Aboriginal participation in postsecondary education. A higher percentage of Aboriginal respondents to the College Entry Survey had fathers and mothers with no postsecondary education. Furthermore, Aboriginal students were less likely to have positive interactions with college and institute faculty. Colleges and institutes have developed some interesting approaches to addressing this issue including the involvement of Aboriginal college/institute students and graduates in recruitment activities in Aboriginal communities, hiring more Aboriginal faculty and staff and offering the services of Elders on college/institute campuses.

Pathways to Colleges and Institutes

Colleges and institutes have emphasized the importance of informing Aboriginal students about postsecondary and career options as early as grades 8 and 9 to ensure that students take the high school courses that will give them the prerequisites needed for college or university programs. Recruitment activities in Aboriginal communities are viewed as a key measure for ensuring that high school students

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[15] 2001 Census: Analysis Series, Education in Canada, Raising the Standard, March 2003.

have information about their postsecondary options. This study has confirmed that more Aboriginal students reported that they met with a high school counsellor when choosing their college/institute program compared to non-Aboriginal students. However, as was the case for non-Aboriginal students, the most prevalent career exploration activity was discussions with parents, although this was not as prevalent as it was for non-Aboriginal respondents. There would be benefits for colleges and institutes and school boards serving Aboriginal communities to increase and coordinate their efforts on recruitment and career development.

Policy Perspectives

The 2005 ACCC study on college/institute Aboriginal programs and services helped to explain how these institutions are structured in order to address the specific needs of Aboriginal students. The process model presented below was developed based on the input and perspectives of professionals working in Aboriginal program and services delivery, from 61 colleges and institutes from across Canada, who responded to an on-line survey. This process model is included here to provide an overview of the types of Aboriginal services and programs offered at colleges

Figure 4
College/Institute Process Model for Aboriginal Learning

College/Institute Process Model for Aboriginal Learner Access, Labour Market Participation, and Aboriginal Community Development

Aboriginal Student Recruitment
– Begins at Grade 8 & 9 so students have prerequisites
– Enables students to make Informed program choices
– Helps assess readiness for PSE
– Increases awareness of college/institute support services
– Provides information about future career & jobs

Assessment Services
– College entrance/academic testing
– Adult basic education assessments
– Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition
– English and French language assessment
– Individual assessment approaches
– Faculty involvement in assessment

Support Services for Student Retention & Program Completion:
– Academic, personal, financial & anti-discrimination counseling
– Tutoring
– Aboriginal gathering place at mainstream Institutions
– Learning centres short-term financial Assistance
– Support to find housing
– Resident Elder & community Elder support
– Facilitate access to daycare Services
– Mentor programs
– Health services

Education and Training Programs
– Access Programs/Upgrading, Adult Basic Education & Pre-trades
– Career/Technical Programs: Aboriginal and not Aboriginal-specific
– Trades & Apprenticeship
– University Prep
– University Transfer
– Distance Education
– Part-time programs

Community-based and On-reserve Programs
– Aboriginal-specific Access, Pre-trades, Adult Basic Education/ upgrading and career/technical programs developed and delivered based on community needs assessments
– Contract training with First Nations Bands, Aboriginal and Metis Organizations

Partnerships
– Between Aboriginal & mainstream institutions
– First Nations Governments, Bands, Tribal Councils, Metis organizations
– Aboriginal School Boards
– Industry/Employers
– Universities
– Municipalities
– Provincial & federal government departments

Support Services for Labour Market Participation
– Work placements/internships/co-op
– Career/employment counseling/Job search support, cv prep
– Mentor programs/involvement of Aboriginal student grads

Aboriginal Labour Market Participation   **Aboriginal Community Development**

and institutes. Although not all colleges and institutes are offering the gamete of services and programs identified in the process model, it does illustrate how these institutions are reaching out to Aboriginal learners and facilitating their transitions into college/institute programs through pro-active recruitment efforts and assessment services, as well as how they are structured for the delivery of education and training programs and support services both on campus and through community-based approaches. This helps to explain to some degree, why Aboriginal learners are more likely to chose colleges and institutes rather than universities to meet their postsecondary education goals.

This study provides some insights into Aboriginal learners' perspectives on their pathways into college/institute programs and their experience while attending these institutions, as confirmed directly by Aboriginal learners themselves. This certainly has helped to add depth to ACCC's initial efforts at understanding how colleges and institutes can best meet the needs of Aboriginal learners.

The process model also identifies some areas of support which were not included in the College Entry and End of Term Surveys but which have been identified by colleges and institutes as important for Aboriginal student success. First, the importance of assessment services, including PLAR, is evident given that more Aboriginal students are older, had attended a college or institute previously and had work experience. This study confirmed that most Aboriginal students were not aware that they could apply for academic

credit for prior experience. It is clear that more could be done to increase the awareness of Aboriginal students about such programs. Colleges and institutes consulted for the 2005 ACCC report also confirmed that culturally appropriate assessment approaches and tools must also be used to effectively address the needs of Aboriginal students. These approaches should be holistic in nature in order to take into account Aboriginal learners' learning history, educational challenges, high school experience and perceptions on practical and hands-on learning and work. The other key types of support services that must be acknowledged are support from Elders working on college and institute campuses and support to find housing and transportation for Aboriginal learners. The support of Elders is considered central to offering a more welcoming environment for Aboriginal students. Some institutions have resident Elders however due to limited resources most engage Elders from the community to assist with counselling services and to help develop more culturally appropriate programming. Housing and transportation support are also essential since many Aboriginal learners face geographic barriers because they live in rural and remote areas and thus have long commutes or have to relocate to attend their college or institute. Some colleges and institutes have begun to provide transportation for Aboriginal students in certain programs, however the high costs of such services make it very difficult for most institutions to offer this.

5 Recent Immigrants at Colleges and Institutes

Recent immigrants make up a sizeable proportion of Canadians. In 2001 recent immigrants (those who came to Canada in the previous five years) accounted for over 3 percent of all Canadians. Despite having many similarities to the rest of the population they have some remarkable differences that set them apart from both the Canadian born and longer established foreign born Canadians. As Canada increasingly looks for immigrants to fill the skill shortages, it will become increasingly important that postsecondary education be responsive to the learning needs by providing relevant programs and support services that facilitate their integration into the labour market.

Canada's immigration system has undergone two significant changes in the last couple decades. First, Canada is admitting a higher proportion of immigrants with post secondary education. In 2001 more than 40 percent of the immigrants admitted to Canada had a bachelors degree or higher. This compares to only 22 percent with similar qualifications admitted in 1991.[16]

The second change is that the country of origin of these immigrants is now less likely to be European or North American. Between 1991 and 2001 nearly half of the immigrants to Canada came from Eastern, South-East, or Southern Asia.[16]

5.1 Participation in Postsecondary Education

It is important to examine immigrant participation in college within the context of overall PSE participation. When one does this, several findings become clear.

The first is that, while fewer immigrants reported having a certificate or diploma from a college or institute, the overall PSE participation levels are actually higher for immigrants. For the non-immigrant population between the ages of 25 and 44, 57 percent have some form of completed PSE. For the immigrant population in the same age group this figure is over 60 percent.

Secondly, male immigrants are more likely to have some form of completed PSE (62 percent) than are females (60 percent). For non-immigrants the reverse is true, with 55 percent of males having completed PSE compared to 59 percent of females. In both cases these differences are driven by university completion.

Thirdly, the age at which an immigrant comes to Canada is an important factor affecting PSE attainment. Immigrants who come to Canada later in life more often have university level credentials, due to Canada's selective immigration policy. Canadians who immigrated at younger ages have

Table 12. Educational Attainment among the Immigrant and Non-Immigrant Population
Proportion of Immigrant and Non-Immigrant Population (%)

		Non-Immigrant Population	Immigrant Population
Total 25 to 44 years of age	Non-University	35	26
	University	22	34
Male 25 to 44 years of age	Non-University	35	26
	University	20	36
Female 25 to 44 years of age	Non-University	35	26
	University	24	33

Source: 2001 Census

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[16] Immigrants: Settling for Less. Diane Galarneau and René Morissette (2004).

[17] Census, 2001.

college credentials at a similar proportion to the Canadian born population, and have university level credentials more frequently. However, immigrants who come to Canada around the time that they are making their PSE decisions show lower PSE attainment levels, particularly at the university level.

5.2 Recent Immigrants and the Labour Market

Several studies have highlighted the differences in wages between recent immigrants to Canada and the rest of the Canadian population. Immigrants to Canada have often found employment in jobs for which they are overqualified, particularly when their education was obtained in their country of origin.

One explanation that has been given a lot of attention is lack of foreign credential recognition. However, Ferrer and Riddell (2004) find that credential recognition of immigrants is not as important in explaining over qualification.[18] Rather than credentials, they find that years of schooling are rewarded less in the labour market if they occur in a foreign country. Sweetman (2004) confirms that years of schooling are rewarded differently depending on where the education occurred. He finds that if the years of schooling occurred in a country that had a lower quality educational system, as measured by international standardized tests, the Canadian labour market rewarded those years of education less than if they had come from a high quality education

system.[19] He also finds that immigrants were able to increase the returns to their years of schooling if they obtained a mix of foreign and Canadian credentials. Furthermore, the difference in the return to years of schooling for immigrants and non-immigrants was no longer evident if the immigrant had arrived before the age of ten.

These findings suggest that immigrants may find it advantageous to undertake further education in Canada in order to gain more recognition for their previous investments in education. It also suggests that immigrants from countries with a weaker education system will have a greater incentive to take further education.

It is not surprising, therefore, that the Pan-Canadian Survey finds that recent immigrants in their first year of college are more likely to have previous post-secondary education. A limitation of the college survey data is that it does not indicate where a student's previous education had occurred.

Perhaps the largest obstacle that immigrants face when coming to Canada, which then limits their labour market opportunities, is learning English or French. Research suggests that language is often a factor in explaining over qualification. Language can also be an obstacle to continued learning for immigrants whose first language is not English or French. However, like other disadvantages associated with immigrants, there is evidence that shows this obstacle disappears with time spent in Canada.

Table 13. Educational Attainment and Age at Immigration – *Proportion of Age at Immigration (%)*

Age at Immigration	Non-university PSE	University PSE	Total PSE
0-4	33	31	64
5-12	33	28	61
13-19	31	23	54
20-24	27	24	51
25-29	24	40	64
30-34	21	46	67
35-39	19	50	69
40-44	16	54	70
TOTAL	**26**	**35**	**61**

Source: 2001 Census

18 Education, Credentials and Immigrant Earnings. Ferrer and Riddell (2004).

19 Immigrants Source Country Education Quality and Canadian Labour Market Outcomes. Arthur Sweetman. Statistics Canada 2004.

The Pan-Canadian Survey asked students to indicate their first language. Just over one-quarter of recent immigrant students indicated that English or French was there first language learned, the remainder having first learned a non-official language. Fifty-five percent of non-recent immigrants and 17 percent of second generation Canadians first learned a non-official language.

5.3 The Recent Immigrant Sample

The sample of recent immigrants was defined as those who were not born in Canada and who arrived in this country in the year 2000 or later as an immigrant. Results for the recent immigrant group are similar to those for the visible minorities sub-group as there is some overlap in group membership.

Of the total sample, 1,929 students or 7 percent were defined as recent immigrants. Of this number, 97 percent were enrolled as full-time students. The results reported below focus on the key differences observed between this group and the other respondents. In some cases the categories will be expanded to include an analysis of other relevant groupings. For these cases the analysis will compare the educational experiences of the following additional sub-populations: non-immigrants, second generation Canadians, non-recent immigrants, and visa students.

Citizenship and Year of Arrival

Table 14 shows the immigration breakdown for first year college students. A large majority of students (73 percent) were born in Canada with at least one Canadian-born parent. Ten percent of respondents were second generation Canadians, defined as those who were born in Canada but with neither parent born in Canada. Five percent of respondents are recent immigrants, accounting for one third of all immigrants, and two percent are attending college as a visa student.

Table 15 details the year of arrival for immigrants. Only a small percentage (3 percent) arrived before 1980. Seventeen percent came to Canada in the 1980s and almost half (44 percent) came in the 1990s. Just over a third of the respondents are recent immigrants to Canada, having arrived between 2000 and 2005. Though not shown, the largest percentage of recent immigrants arrived in 2005; however, the distribution was relatively flat for the period 2000–2005.

Table 14. Immigration Status of First Year College Students

	Percent
Born in Canada with one or both parents born in Canada	73
Born in Canada and neither parent born in Canada	10
Established Immigrant	10
Recent Immigrant	5
Visa student	2

Source: College Entry Survey, 2005

Table 15. Year of Arrival in Canada of Immigrants (%)

Year of Arrival	Proportion of Immigrants (excludes Visa Students)
Before 1980	3
1980 to 1989	17
1990 to 1999	44
2000 to 2005	36

Source: College Entry Survey, 2005

Results for the recent immigrants sub-group are not available for the End of Term because the year of arrival was not asked in the end of term survey. Thus, only a limited analysis can be conducted using the End of Term Survey.

5.4 Demographic and Family Background

A number of differences were observed between immigrants and non-immigrants in demographic characteristics and family background, including age, gender, parental education and educational expectations, activities prior to college and number of financial dependents. These are explained in greater detail below.

Age of Recent immigrant Students

When the age distributions were compared across the immigrant sub-populations, recent immigrants were found to be the oldest students at college. Table 16 shows the distribution of the immigrant sub-population across age categories. Overall, the average age for the recent immigrant sample was 24.9 years compared to 21.8 years for the non recent immigrant students.

Gender of Recent Immigrants at College

While women formed the majority of students for both the immigrant and non-immigrant populations, immigrants were more likely to be male than were non-immigrants. Forty-four percent of immigrants were male compared to only 37 percent of non-immigrants and 42 percent of second generation Canadians. Visa students were the only group for which a majority of students were male.

Education Level of Parents

A significant difference was observed in the highest level of education achieved by the fathers and mothers of the recent immigrant student group. When compared to the rest of the students, this group was more likely to have fathers who had an undergraduate university degree (19 percent compared to 8 percent), a post-graduate/ advanced diploma (12 percent compared to 6 percent) or a graduate degree (17 percent compared to 6 percent). Similar results were observed when the maternal educational level of both groups was compared.

Table 16. Age Distribution of Recent immigrants (%)

Immigration Status	Age Categories		
	19 and under	20-24	25 and over
Non-Immigrant (3rd gen +)	50	33	17
2nd generation Canadian	49	35	16
Non-recent Immigrant	41	39	20
Recent Immigrant	27	32	41
Visa Student	24	52	25

Source: College Entry Survey, 2005

Table 17. Immigration Status and Gender (%)

	Female	Male
Non-Immigrant (3rd gen +)	63	37
2nd generation Canadian	58	42
Non-recent Immigrant	56	44
Recently Immigrated	56	44
Visa Student	42	58

Source: College Entry Survey, 2005

In addition, when asked to report how important it was to their parents for them to continue with their education after high school, a higher percentage (75 percent compared to 63 percent) of the recent immigrant students reported it was 'very important'.

Visible Minorities

When students were asked if they considered themselves to be a member of a visible minority, a higher percentage of the recent immigrant students (60 percent vs. 14 percent of the remaining students) indicated they did so. The difference became more pronounced when additional categories were examined.

Table 19 shows that, consistent with general trends in immigration, over one-quarter (27 percent) of students in the recent immigrant group were Chinese, followed by South Asian (23 percent), Black (18 percent) and Other (10 percent).

Number of Dependents

Since recent immigrants tended to be older, it is not surprising that a higher percentage of this group reported children and adults who were financially dependent upon them (Table 20). Approximately 14 percent of recently immigrated students had one financially dependent child living with them and 11 percent reported that one financially dependent adult lived with them. Consistent with these results was the finding that a lower percentage of the recent immigrant group (35 percent compared to 51 percent) reported living with parents/guardians or relatives while a higher percentage indicated they were living with a partner/spouse and children (18 percent compared to 5 percent).

Table 18. Visible Minority Status of Immigrants (%)

Immigration Status	Proportion who indicated belonging to a Visible Minority
Non-Immigrant (3rd gen +)	3
2nd generation Canadian	50
Non-recent Immigrant	57
Recently Immigrated	62
Visa Student	59

Source: College Entry Survey, 2005

Table 19. Specific Minority Groups among Recent Immigrant Students (%)

Visible Minority Group	Recent Immigrants
South Asian	23
South East Asian	3
Arab/West Asian	6
Black	18
Chinese	27
Japanese	1
Korean	4
Filipino	6
Other	10

Source: College Entry Survey, 2005

5.5 Registration Characteristics and Reasons for Attending

The registration characteristics of recent immigrants differed in a number of ways. A difference between recent immigrants and other students was observed in their first-choice for postsecondary attendance. As shown in Table 21, while the first choice majority (72 percent) was to attend the college they were registered at, a higher percentage of recent immigrant students (18 percent compared to 7 percent of others) cited university attendance as their first choice.

In addition, when asked whether they were enrolled in their first choice program at college, a higher percentage (18 percent of recent immigrant students compared to 14 percent of the others) said they were not.

When asked which type of program they were enrolled in, fewer recent immigrants reported that they were in a career or technical program (44 percent compared to 59 percent) and a higher percentage said they were enrolled in a post-diploma or advanced diploma program (26 percent vs. 12 percent). As was previously mentioned,

it is likely that many of the students enrolled in post-diploma or advanced diploma programs were adding Canadian credentials to complement their foreign education.

In terms of registration by fields of study, higher percentages of recent immigrant students were registered in a business program (33 percent vs. 22 percent) or an applied/engineering technologies program (18 percent vs. 9 percent). Fewer in this group were enrolled in a two year program with higher percentages (31 percent vs. 22 percent) enrolled in a three year program. A significantly higher percentage of recent immigrants (34 percent vs. 23 percent) were also enrolled in a co-op program as compared to the non-recent immigrant students.

Reasons for Attending College or Institute

Colleges and institutes play a significant role in facilitating transitions into the labour market including for recent immigrants who often face significant challenges and barriers with integration into the labour market in Canada. As shown in Figure 6, the top three reasons recent immigrant students indicated for attending college were related to career advancement. Survey results confirmed that very high percentages of recent immigrants reported attending

Table 20. Number of Dependents: Recent Immigrants (%)

Number of Financial Dependents	Dependent Children		Dependent Adults	
	Recent Immigrants	Others	Recent Immigrants	Others
None	78	88	81	92
One	14	6	11	4
Two	5	3	4	2
Three	2	2	2	1
Over three	1	1	2	1

Source: College Entry Survey, 2005

Table 21. First Choice Postsecondary Education Activity for Recent Immigrants (%)

What was your first-choice option in attending a postsecondary institution this year?	Recent Immigrants	Others
Attending this college	72	83
Attending another college	6	6
Attending a university	18	7
Attending a postsecondary institution was a last-minute decision	2	2
Other	2	2

Source: College Entry Survey, 2005

college for the purpose of training for a career, with 86 percent of recent immigrants indicating that their main reason was to acquire the knowledge and skills for their future occupation. This was consistent with the results for the other students. In addition, the recent immigrant students were much more likely to report that they were at college because they could not find the job they wanted and about 40 percent indicated that one of the reasons for attending was to retrain for a new career.

University preparation was also identified as a major reason for attending college for a significant proportion of recent immigrants. In fact, higher percentages of recent immigrants had university preparation as a major reason for attending college: 51 percent compared to 41 percent of others; and the intention for 45 percent (compared to 31 percent) of recent immigrant respondents was to obtain a college diploma and then continue in a university degree program. It is also interesting to note that 13 percent of recent immigrants (compared to 8 percent of other respondents) indicated that they were attending college because they could not get into a university.

Figure 5
Registration of Recent Immigrants by Program Type

Source: College Entry Survey, 2005

Figure 6
Recent immigrant Students' Top Reasons for Attending a College or Institute

Source: College Entry Survey, 2005
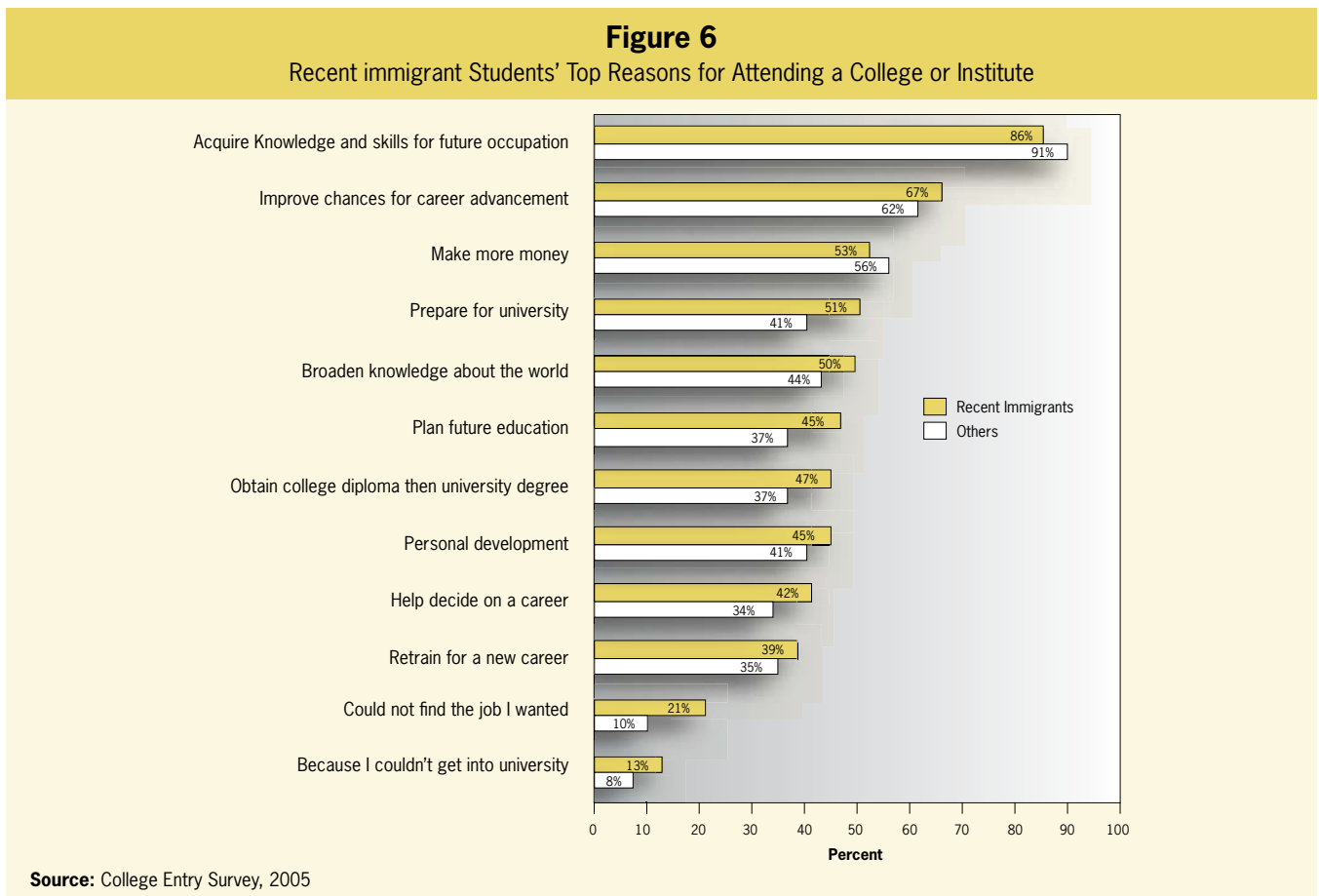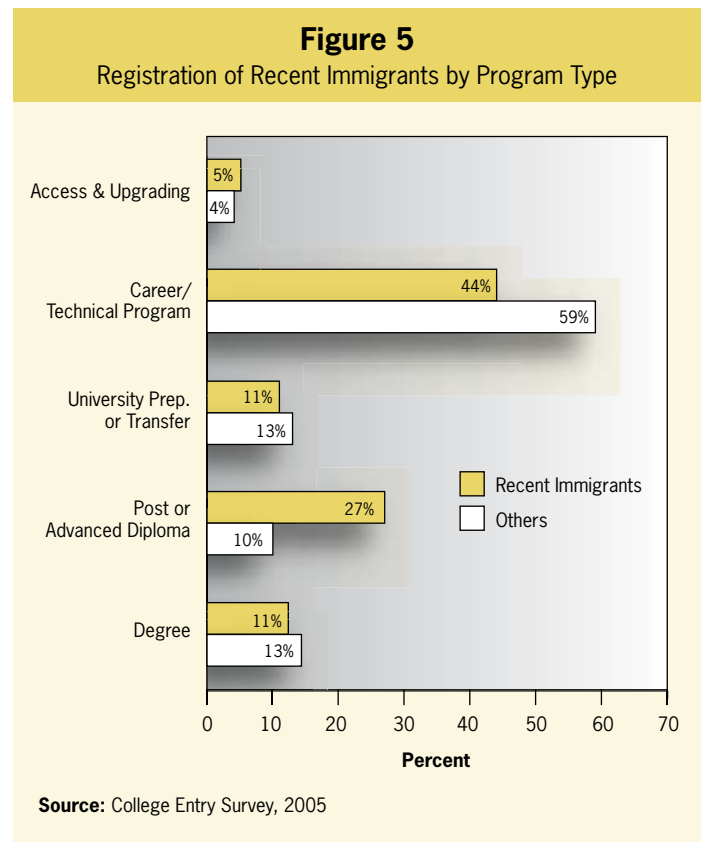
5.6 Education and Activities Prior to College

When asked to report on their main activity for the twelve month period prior to attending college, a higher percentage of the recent immigrant group said they were attending college full-time (22 percent vs. 12 percent) and fewer reported they were attending high school full time (22 percent vs. 30 percent) or that they were working full time (20 percent vs. 30 percent). These results were consistent with the responses of this group regarding their program type. As discussed earlier, a significantly higher percentage of the recent immigrant group reported that they were enrolled in a post-diploma or advanced diploma program. Admission to this type of program normally requires the applicant to possess a diploma or degree.

Academic Background and Preparation for College

The College Entry Survey examined first year students' academic background through questions related to highest level of education attained, secondary school background, including self-reported high school grades, academic behaviour, social and academic integration in high school and self-perceived skills proficiencies.

Educational Attainment of Recent Immigrant Students

Recent immigrants were much more likely to have held an undergraduate university degree (20 percent compared to 4 percent) or a post-graduate/advanced diploma (5 percent compared to 0.3 percent) than were other students. These results suggest that many of the recent immigrant students were foreign trained professionals and were attempting to upgrade their skills in order to integrate into the labour market in their field or access university via a college program. Indeed, an analysis of level of credential by age for this group of students showed that those who held an undergraduate or post graduate credential were 30 years of age or older. However, because this study did not collect information on where the undergraduate degree was obtained, this interpretation cannot be confirmed.

5.7 High School Experience

The College Entry Survey assessed various aspects of the respondent's secondary school experience if it had been five years or less since they last attended. A lower percentage of the recent immigrant student group (61 percent compared to 77 percent) met this criterion. The results presented below, therefore, are based on a sample of 1159 recent immigrant respondents.

High School Leaving Average

Recent immigrant respondents were more likely to report a higher secondary school leaving average than other respondents. For example, almost one-quarter (24 percent) of the recent immigrant group reported an average of between 80 percent and 100 percent, whereas less than one-fifth (16 percent) of other respondents did so.

When reported as letter grades, almost one-third (30 percent) of the recent immigrant students said that they had obtained an A average in their final year of high school whereas only 21 percent of the other students did. Moreover, a higher percentage of the latter group reported a C average than did the recent immigrant students (23 percent compared to 18 percent).

Academic Behaviour in High School

Recent immigrant respondents were more likely to report that they studied longer hours in high school than other students. For example, over one-half of the group (54 percent) said they studied for eight or more hours per

Table 22. Highest Level of Education Attained (%)

Immigrant Status	HS or Less	Some College or University	Completed College or Trades	University and Post-Graduate
3rd + generation Canadians	66	18	12	4
2nd generation Canadians	63	20	11	6
Non-recent Immigrants	62	19	12	7
Recently Immigrated	55	10	11	24
Visa Students	46	16	12	27

Source: College Entry Survey, 2005

week in high school while just over one-quarter (27 percent) of the other respondents said they did so. Similar differences were also observed in high school class attendance and in frequency of homework completion. In the former case, almost twice as many recent immigrant students (32 percent) reported that they never skipped class. Likewise, over half of recent immigrant students (54 percent) reported that they always completed homework assignments on time compared to 41 percent of other students.

Sense of Academic and Social Integration in High School

The College Entry Survey also examined the degree to which students were academically and socially integrated into the secondary school experience. Recent immigrant students were more likely to report that they never "did as little work as possible' (38 percent compared to 33 percent), more likely to say that they were 'always' interested in what they were learning in class (31 percent compared to 11 percent), but were less likely to say that they 'often' got along well with teachers (35 percent compared to 40 percent). They were also much more likely to say that they 'never' thought school was a waste of time (64 percent compared to 42 percent). In addition, a higher percentage reported that they 'always' received extra help from their teachers if they needed it (27 percent compared to 20 percent).

In the area of high school extracurricular activities, recent immigrant students were less likely (18 percent compared to 29 percent) to report they did not participate in such activities. Rather, a higher percentage of this group reported participating in extracurricular school clubs and teams between one and three hours (31 percent compared to 23 percent) or four and seven hours per week (19 compared to 17 percent).

5.8   Career Preparation and Certainty

Survey items assessing career exploration activities and participation in career guidance during high school also showed differences between recent immigrant students and others. A higher percentage of recent immigrant respondents reported that they 'never':

- had someone teach them about jobs/careers (19 percent compared to 12 percent);

- met with a school counsellor (27 percent compared to 18 percent);
- completed a questionnaire about job interests (30 percent compared to 22 percent); or
- participated in classes on career planning (41 percent compared to 29 percent).

On the other hand, a higher percentage had visited an internet site sixteen times or more (26 percent compared to 12 percent) and had spoken with their parent/guardian about future careers more than 20 times (40 percent compared to 33 percent) during high school.

5.9   Needs and Use of Support Services

When asked to indicate the degree to which they could benefit from support to deal with academic and learning skills as well as personal needs while in their college studies, a higher percentage of the recent immigrant respondents said they could benefit in all areas except study and test taking skills.

The most significant difference between recent immigrants and other respondents regarding their use of college support services was in the area of languages skills. Over half of recent immigrant students (52 percent) indicated that they would benefit from support to improve their English or French as a second language, compared to just 17 percent of other respondents. Recent immigrants also indicated that they would be more likely to accept extra support for second language skills, as 47 percent of recent immigrants indicated that they were highly likely to accept such support, compared to just 14 percent of other students. Recent immigrant students reported very similar results for support to improve in the language of instruction.

Another significant difference between recent immigrants and other students was in the area of planning for future studies. Well over half of recent immigrants indicated that they would benefit from support in this area and were highly likely to access the extra support. This is not surprising given the higher occurrence of recent immigrants with goals of pursing more postsecondary education after college.

When asked to report how many hours per week they planned to spend preparing for class in order to be successful in their program, a higher percentage of the recent immigrant group said they would spend more than 20 hours (26 percent compared to 12 percent).

5.10 Financing College

Respondents were asked to indicate which sources they planned to use to fund their studies (Table 24). An examination of the results showed some large differences between recently immigrated students, visa students and the other students. Recent immigrant students were less likely to indicate that they were receiving money from parents that they did not have to pay back (19 percent compared to

over 30 percent for all other groups), but were more likely to state that a spouse or partner was a source of money (13 percent compared to 4 percent of non-immigrants). A smaller percentage of this group (56 percent compared to over 70 percent for non-immigrants) indicated that money from personal savings was a source of funding while a slightly higher percentage said that they would be using money from scholarships (36 percent) and grants (31 percent).

When asked about the primary funding source for their college studies (Table 25), a larger proportion of the recently immigrated students relied on loans as a source of funds (53 percent compared to less than 40 percent of non-immigrants).

Table 23. Perceived Level of Benefit from Extra Support and Receptivity to College Services by Recent Immigrants at College Entry

Area of Development	Confirmed Benefit for Extra Support (%)		Highly Likely to Access Extra Support (%)	
	Recent Immigrants	Others	Recent Immigrants	Others
Planning for Future Studies	55	32	52	29
English/French as a Second Language	52	17	47	14
Financial Aid	52	46	50	40
Study Habits	47	45	38	34
Improve in Language of Instruction	48	13	45	13
Selecting Career	46	31	41	27
Reading Skills	42	22	37	18
Test Taking	41	40	37	32
Writing Skills	40	22	37	20
Math Skills	38	33	32	27
Disability	20	11	23	12
Choosing Course/Program	18	10	19	12
Child Care	14	8	14	8

Source: College Entry Survey, 2005

Table 24. Proportion reporting as a source of funds (%)

	Parents	Partner	Other people	Loans	Savings	Scholarships	Grants
Non-Immigrant (3rd gen +)	40	4	9	57	72	31	21
2nd generation Canadian	46	4	5	50	72	28	22
Non-recent Immigrant	32	6	5	61	66	31	25
Recently Immigrated	19	13	4	71	57	36	31
Visa Student	74	10	10	27	43	30	17

Source: College Entry Survey, 2005

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Pan-Canadian Study of First Year College Students
Report 2 **The Characteristics and Experience of Aboriginal, Disabled, Immigrant and Visible Minority Students**

It is interesting to note that only 15 percent of the recently immigrated students used money from parents as their primary source, while over three quarters of visa students indicated that money from parents was their largest source of money for school. The careful reader will also see that a larger proportion of visa students indicated that parents were their primary source of funds than had indicated using parents as a source of funds. It is possible that there was some confusion among students answering these two different questions as there were a small proportion of students from every background that had indicated a primary source without also identifying it as a general source.

There were also differences in the type of loans being accessed (Table 26). Visa students did not access government loans as often as others and instead relied on loans from family and from banks. Recent and non-recent immigrants were the most likely to use a government loan and the least likely to use a loan from a bank.

A difference was observed between the two groups in expected hours of part-time work while studying. While almost one-quarter of the recent immigrant group (23 percent) reported that they would not be working while studying (compared to 28 percent of other students), a higher percentage reported they would be working 20 hours or more (35 percent compared to 30 percent).

Financial Concern

Recently immigrated students were most likely to be very concerned about having enough money to finish their education (Table 27). They were also the most likely, along with the non-recently immigrated students, to be concerned about the amount of debt they were accruing and their ability to pay it back. Visa students were the least likely to be concerned about finances.

Table 25. Primary Source of Funding (%)

	Parents	Spouse or partner	Loans	Personal savings from working	Scholarships, awards or prizes, grants or bursaries	Other
Non-Immigrant (3rd gen +)	27	1	37	21	4	7
2nd generation Canadian	36	1	30	23	3	5
Non-recent Immigrant	26	3	40	21	4	5
Recently Immigrated	15	9	53	15	3	3
Visa Student	77	2	6	6	5	2

Source: College Entry Survey, 2005

Table 26. Type of Loan Used – *Proportion of those accessing loans (%)*

	Government	Bank	Family
Non-Immigrant (3rd gen +)	63	27	10
2nd generation Canadian	66	17	17
Non-recent Immigrant	76	12	13
Recently Immigrated	88	6	6
Visa Student	38	20	41

Source: College Entry Survey, 2005

Furthermore, nearly one third (31 percent) of all recent immigrants indicated that difficulties with finances may lead them to have to quit their studies, compared to 15 percent of other students.

5.11 Student Attitudes and Commitment to Education

The College Entry Survey also examined seven dimensions of student attitudes, these being: occupational uncertainty, financial concern, educational commitment, confidence in success, preference for a job, value of education and institutional commitment. A comparison of responses by recent immigrant students and others showed significant differences in educational commitment, preference for a job, institutional commitment, and financial concern (noted previously).

Educational Commitment

The responses from the recent immigrant group across all four items that measured this construct indicated that they were somewhat less committed to their college studies. For example, a lower percentage of this group (65 percent compared to 77 percent) strongly agreed that they were determined to finish their college education and similarly fewer strongly disagreed that they may not continue with their studies next semester (55 percent compared 66 percent). In addition, a lower percentage strongly disagreed that they may quit their studies before finishing their program (62 percent compared to 73 percent). Finally, a lower percentage of this group (72 percent compared to 78 percent) strongly agreed that it is important to complete their program and obtain a diploma, certificate or degree. Two factors may contribute to these findings. First, recent immigrants were on average older than other students, and secondly, more recent immigrants expressed a preference for university level studies.

Preference for a Job

Recent immigrants differed in their responses to a number of questions on students' preference for work rather than college attendance. For example, fewer recent immigrants agreed that they would decide to remain in college even if offered a full-time job (68 percent compared to 77 percent). In addition, fewer recent immigrant students disagreed that if they had the chance to have a full-time job, they would take it and leave college (50 percent compared to 62 percent). Overall, the recent immigrant group appeared to be more ready to leave college, supported by the fact that a higher percentage (16 percent compared to 10 percent) confirmed that they would rather be working full-time than studying.

Institutional Commitment

Four items were used to examine a student's institutional commitment, as measured by the degree to which students' perceived their college in a positive light. On all four items, the recent immigrant group of students was somewhat less positive than other students. For example, a lower percentage of this group strongly agreed that:

- college staff they have had contact with care about helping students with problems, and that their college was concerned with helping students succeed (35 percent compared to 39 percent);
- they consider this to be an excellent college/institute (38 percent compared to 43 percent); and
- college staff care about helping students with problems (29 percent compared to 33 percent).

It should be noted that students responded to these questions after only a brief period of interaction with college staff, approximately four weeks at the most. Some additional information can be gained by examining the end of term survey responses for recent immigrants who responded to

Table 27. Level of Concern with Finances – *(% very concerned)*

	Having Enough Money	Amount of Debt	Ability to Repay Debt
Non-Immigrant (3rd gen +)	46	42	31
2nd generation Canadian	47	45	36
Non-recent Immigrant	53	53	43
Recently Immigrated	56	52	45
Visa Student	40	26	26

Source: College Entry Survey, 2005

both surveys. As previously mentioned, the end of term questionnaire is unable to distinguish recent and non-recent immigrants. However, the end of term responses for recent immigrants who answered both surveys may be used to provide additional information (Table 28). Doing so confirms the lower perceptions of their institutions held by both recent and non-recent immigrant students. Therefore, the following table refers only to recent immigrants who responded to both the entry and end of term surveys.

Concluding Remarks

Colleges and institutes, whether they are located in high or low immigrant settlement areas, are strategic partners in municipal and provincial immigrant settlement initiatives. Most colleges and institutes have relationships and partnerships with community settlement organizations, municipal and provincial governments and private sector firms involved in the integration of immigrants.

PLAR services are offered quite extensively at colleges and institutes and are often cited as a key method for facilitating foreign credential recognition (FCR). Half of recent immigrants did not know about PLAR type services, one third knew about them but did not apply, and 17 percent had received recognition for prior experience. The ACCC study in immigrant programs and services found that many institutions would like to offer more PLAR services but cannot due to high delivery costs. In some case, students are required to pay for such services which may explain why few tend to actually use them.

Of particular interest was the finding that recent immigrant respondents were less committed to their college since this measure essentially reflects positive or negative perceptions of their institution based on interactions with staff. For example, a lower percentage of the group strongly agreed that the staff they had contact with cared about helping students or that staff were friendly and welcoming. It would seem that recent immigrant students may be less aware of the services available to them at their college, however additional research would be required to confirm this conclusion.

Policy Perspectives

ACCC developed a College Institute Process Model for the Integration of Immigrants based on a diagnostic of immigrant programs and services conducted in 2004 and updated in 2008 with the results of focus groups and interviews with over 200 immigrant students, graduates and employees at colleges and institutes.[20] This model is provided below in order to provide an overview of the type of programs and services colleges and institutes offer to immigrant students.

Through the focus groups, immigrant students gave a clear message that there is a need to reduce the time it now takes for immigrants to access the relevant training that will give them the Canadian credential and work experience they require to transition more quickly into the labour market. The process model highlights the key

Table 28. Institutional Commitment (%)

	The faculty showed an interest in helping students	The faculty is very good	The faculty had a good relationship with students	The institution showed a commitment to student success
Non-Immigrant (3rd gen +)	83	78	74	87
2nd generation Canadian	74	74	69	76
Non-recent Immigrant	72	67	66	74
Recently Immigrated	71	71	69	80
Visa Student	79	79	73	79

Source: End of Term Survey, 2005

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20 Focus groups were conducted as part of project funded by the Government of Canada's Foreign Credential Recognition Program. The final report for this project entitled: *Colleges and Institutes Supporting the Integration of Immigrants into the Canadian Labour Market,* is available on the ACCC website at: http://www.accc.ca/english/publications/studies_reports_papers.htm.

elements colleges and institutes should have in place to facilitate immigrants' transition into the labour market including:

- Clearer and more timely information about learning opportunities and coordinating information with other service providers;

- More supportive assessment, entry advising and admissions policies and procedures,

- Wrap-around support services which address social and cultural integration challenges and address the mix of barriers immigrants face;

- Education and training programs which provide immigrants with Canadian work experience through work placements, internships or volunteer opportunities; and

- Partnerships colleges and institutes much engage in to more effectively deliver programs and services for immigrants.

The assessment process is a key factor for the effective integration of recent immigrants into appropriate programs and to identify the types of support services they would benefit from most. One of the most significant challenges related to the delivery of more effective assessment services, in particular for students from groups such as recent immigrants, are the high costs required to offer

such services and the limited resources many institutions face for the delivery of these services. There would be benefit in examining further how PLAR approaches can be improved and delivered in more cost effective ways. From the perspective of the recent immigrant students, consideration should also be given to the types of supports and assistance that can be provided to enable them to cover the costs of such services.

In addition to highlighting the types of programs and services offered, this model also identifies how the capacity of institutions can be enhanced to deliver immigrant programs and services more effectively. For example, the development of integrated support systems across departments and college services was identified as key measure to enhancing college/institute capacity in this area. Some colleges and institutes have developed such integrated services by creating a central office which offers support services directed to immigrant students including for example free workshops to develop language skills, test taking or arranging services such as mentoring or tutoring through the college learning centre. Such approaches could help to make immigrants more aware of the services available to them, and thus enhance their overall experiences at their colleges and institutes.

Figure 7

College/Institute Process Model for Recent Immigrants

SUPPORTIVE MANDATE, POLICY FRAMEWORK, ADMINISTRATIVE & FUNDING STRUCTURES

INFORMATION & PROMOTION
- College/Institute information on Government of Canada Immigration Portal
- Coordination of info & brochure distributed overseas & in Canada through government departments & community partners
- Promotion & coordination with public libraries
- Immigrant graduates as "ambassadors" for promotion
- Make info on college/institute websites more accessible

ASSESSMENT SERVICES, ENTRY ADVISING & ADMISSIONS POLICIES
- Overseas & In-Canada Assessment Services:
  - Communication/Language Skills
  - Competencies/Professional Work Experience
  - Credentials (streamlined, less costly & culturally appropriate)
  - Prior Learning Assessment & Recognition (PLAR)
- Entry Advising Services
- Open & supportive admissions policies and procedures

ENHANCE COLLEGE/INSTITUTE CAPACITY
- PD & cross-cultural training for faculty
- Enhance counselling services with immigrant counsellors
- Extend length of cultural adaptation courses
- Enhance ESL/FSL programs to include more workplace prep, & integrated within institution
- Develop modules for regular programs on ESL/FSL & Canadian workplace culture
- Mainstream Bridging Programs for wider access
- Enhance integration support for International Students
- Recruit immigrant employees to reflect diversity of students & have support systems

WRAP-AROUND SUPPORT SERVICES FOR IMMIGRANT STUDENTS

Immigrant-specific Orientation Activities

Multilingual Services

Diversity/Immigrant Integration Office

Academic advising & counselling

EDUCATION AND TRAINING PROGRAMS
- English and French as a Second Language Training
- Occupation-Specific Language Training
- Support integration into Career/Technical/Applied Degree or University Transfer Programs
- Bridging Programs
- Workplace Training
- Community-based Training

Learning skills supports

Informal discussion groups

Personal, diversity, cross-cultural & anti-discrimination counselling

ESL/FSL Peer Helpers or Mentors

Daycare

Transportation info

Financial assistance information

Immigrant student Info in Library

Peer Helpers & Mentors with Immigrants/Alumni

Networking with potential employers

Job search support, resume prep
Career/employment counseling

ENHANCED PARTNERSHIPS
- Immigrant Organizations
- Immigrant Serving Agencies
- Employers
- Labour Organizations
- Municipal development committees
- Provincial/territorial governments
- Federal government
- Educational Institutions
- Regulatory bodies & academic assessment organizations
- Community service providers
- Industry Sector Councils
- Professional Associations

CANADIAN WORKPLACE EXPERIENCE THROUGH WORK PLACEMENTS, INTERNSHIPS OR VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

INTEGRATION INTO THE CANADIAN LABOUR MARKET

6 Visible Minority Students at College and Institutes

The College Entry and End of Term surveys asked first year students whether they considered themselves to be a member of a visible minority group. To differentiate the results of the visible minority section from those of the recent immigrants, analysis of the visible minority sample was performed on a subgroup of the visible minority population who were neither immigrants (recent or otherwise), nor visa students. This group accounted for approximately 40 percent of the visible minority students who responded to the college entry and end of term surveys. Comparisons will be made with the non-visible minority students who were likewise neither an immigrant nor a visa student. This subgroup accounted for approximately 91 percent of the non-visible minority students.

Therefore, the findings presented below pertain to 20,054 non-immigrant students who answered the college entry survey, of whom 1,668 (8.3 percent) students indicated belonging to a visible minority group; and 12,230 non-immigrant students who responded to the end of term survey, of whom 1,068 (8.7 percent) indicated belonging to a visible minority group.

6.1 Demographic Background of Visible Minority Students

Differences between visible minority students and others were observed for a number of demographic variables. These include age, gender, first language, father's level of education, parental emphasis on post-secondary education, citizenship status and year of arrival in Canada, activity prior to college and the number of financial dependents.

Visible Minority Groups

The college entry and end of term surveys asked students to indicate if they were a member of a visible minority group defined as "a group, other than Aboriginal peoples, who are because of their race or colour, a visible minority in Canada." Students who indicated yes to this question were also asked to identify a specific minority group to which they belonged. Their responses are summarized in Table 29. The largest group of students, over one-quarter, who had indicated being a visible minority also indicated being black. They were followed by Chinese and South Asian students.

Table 29. Specific Minority Groups at Colleges and Institutes (%)

Visible Minority Group	Member of Visible Minority Group
Black	27
Chinese	15
South Asian	14
Filipino	8
South East Asian	6
Arab/ West Asian	5
Korean	2
Japanese	1
Other	22
Visa Student	26

Source: College Entry Survey, 2005

Age of Visible Minority Students

Half of all students in their first year of college were 19 years or younger when they began their programs. This was no different for visible minority students; however, visible minority students were somewhat less likely to be over the age of 25 than were non-visible minority students. The results are summarized in Table 30 below.

Gender

A higher proportion of the visible minority students were male compared to non-visible minority students. Women still accounted for the majority of visible minority students (58 percent), but this was below the proportion of non-visible minority students who were women (62 percent).

First Language

A greater proportion of visible minority students confirmed that their first language was not English or French. At college entry 14 percent of visible minority students indicated that a language other than English or French was their first language. This compares to only one percent of the non-visible minority students.

Family Background

Just over one quarter of visible minority students who were born in Canada also had one or both of their parents born in Canada, while the majority (73 percent) had parents who were not born in Canada. Conversely, 93 percent of non-visible minority students who were born in Canada had one or both parents also born in Canada.

Dependents

An equal proportion of the visible minority and non-visible minority respondents indicated having dependent children (11 percent of both groups at college entry). This is in contrast to results from immigrant students who were much more likely to indicate having children. However, the occurrence of children is also dependent on age, and little

difference was found between visible minorities and non-visible minorities who were born in Canada. On the other hand, visible minority students are more likely to indicate living with an adult who is dependent on them (10 percent compared to 7 percent of non-visible minority students).

Education Level of Parents

Studies have shown the importance of parental education on encouraging participation in post secondary education. Visible minority students showed a tendency to have parents with university credentials as opposed to other forms of post-secondary education. Results from the College Entry Survey show that close to one quarter of visible minority students had fathers who had completed either an undergraduate university degree, a post-graduate diploma, or a graduate degree (23 percent compared to 18 percent of non-visible minorities). Fewer visible minority students indicated that their father had a college certificate or diploma (14 percent compared to 18 percent of non-visible minority students) and fewer indicated completed training in the trades (5 percent compared to 9 percent of non-visible minority students). It is worth mentioning that a greater proportion of visible minorities reported not knowing what their fathers education level was (15 percent compared to 7 percent of non-visible minority students).

The case of mother's education was similar, as a slightly higher proportion of visible minority students indicated that their mother had completed university (19 percent compared to 17 percent), but fewer had completed college (22 percent compared to 25 percent of non-visible minority students). A similar proportion had training in the trades (approximately 2 percent). Once again a greater proportion of visible minority students stated that they were unaware of their mother's level of education (9 percent compared to 4 percent of non-visible minority students).

Table 30. Age Distribution of Visible Minority Students (%)

Age	Non-Visible Minority	Visible Minority
19 and under	50	49
20 - 24	33	37
25 and over	17	14

Source: College Entry Survey, 2005

When asked how important it was to their parents that they continue with their education after high school, a higher percentage (76 percent compared to 59 percent of non-visible minority students) reported that it was 'very important' to their parents.

Education and Activities Prior to College

In terms of visible minority students' main activity for the twelve month period prior to attending college, the results from the college entry survey show that a higher percentage of visible minority students were attending school full time prior to beginning their current program. Thirty-three percent were in high school full time, 13 percent were attending college and 6 percent were attending university full time (compared to 30 percent, 11 percent, and 4 percent respectively for the non-visible minority students). A smaller proportion of the visible minority group had been working full time prior to enrolling in their current program (24 percent compared to 31 percent of the non-visible minority group).

Results for students highest level of education were very similar for visible minority students and their non-visible minority classmates (Table 31).

6.3 **Registration Characteristics of Visible Minority Students**

The registration characteristics of visible minority students differed from those of non-visible minorities in a number of ways. Firstly, at college entry there were differences in student's first-choice for postsecondary attendance. While the first choice of both groups was to attend the college in which they were registered (76 percent of visible minority students and 85 percent of non-visible minority students), a higher percentage of the visible minority students had

university attendance as their first choice (12 percent compared to 6 percent of non-visible minority students). In addition, when asked whether they were enrolled in their first choice program at college, a higher percentage of visible minority students compared to non-visible minority students said they were not (18 percent compared to 13 percent of non-visible minority students).

In terms of enrolment by program type (Figure 8), fewer visible minority students were in a career or technical program (54 percent compared to 62 percent) and a higher percentage said they were enrolled in a post-diploma or advanced diploma program (14 percent compared to 8 percent).

Figure 8
Program Registration of Visible Minority Students

Source: College Entry Survey, 2005
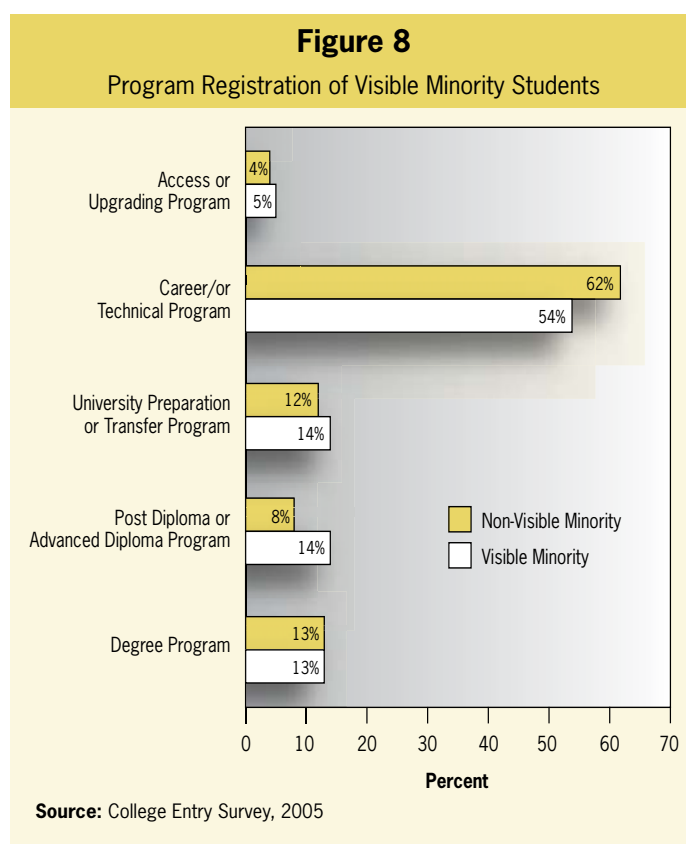
Table 31. Highest Level of Educational Attainment for Visible Minority Students (%)

Age	Non-Visible Minority	Visible Minority
Less than high school completion	3	4
Completed high school or equivalent (GED)	63	61
Some college/university credits completed	18	20
College certificate/diploma completed	11	9
Undergraduate university degree	4	6

Source: College Entry Survey, 2005

Few differences were observed in the enrolment of visible minority students by field of study compared to the non-visible minority respondents (Figure 9). A higher percentage of visible minority students were registered in a business program compared to other students, (25 percent compared to 21 percent). The other differences were small.

The College Entry Survey captured information on various aspects of respondents' secondary school experience including their self-reported high school leaving average, academic behaviour in high school, and their sense of

academic and social integration in high school. The results for visible minority and non-visible minority students are summarized below.

Academic integration and high school leaving average

Visible minority students reported a lower high school leaving average when compared to non-visible minority students. For example, 26 percent of visible minority students reported a high school leaving average of 80 percent or better, compared to 38 percent of non-visible minority students who reported an average of 80 percent of better.

Students' responses regarding their academic integration in high school were mixed. Visible minority students were just as likely to report that they often or always did as little work as possible to get by (approximately 15 percent). Furthermore, the same proportion of students (8 percent from both groups) reported that they often or always felt that what they were learning in class was a waste of time. On the other hand, a significantly lower proportion of visible minority students indicated that they were often or always interested in what they were learning (49 percent compared to 54 percent of non-visible minority students). Visible minority students were also less likely to report that they always or often got along well with their teachers (82 percent of visible minority students compared to 87 percent of non-visible minority students).
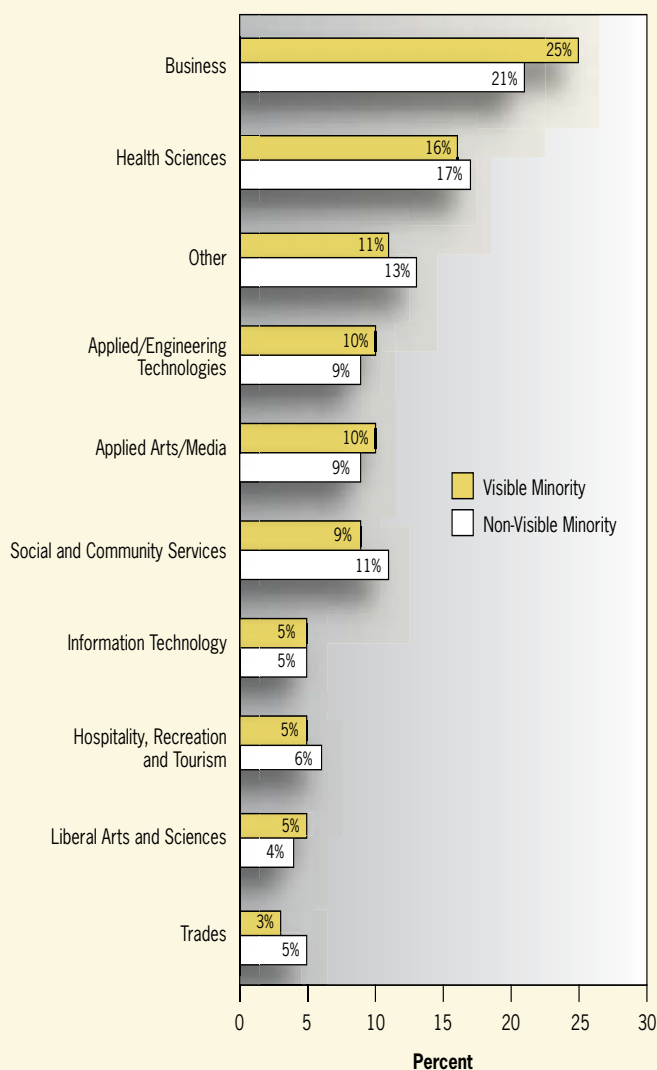
Social Integration

There were no differences in students' sense of social integration in high school, as approximately 9 percent from both groups reported often or always feeling like an outsider at high school. While this does indicated that high school can be a difficult time for many students, it did not seem especially difficult for one group over the other.

Self-reported Skill Proficiency

Students from both groups responded very similarly to questions about their self reported skill level in areas important to academic success (Table 32). In language, writing, reading, mathematics and study skills, visible minority students indicated similar skill levels as compared to non-visible minority students. Noteworthy differences were only present in the areas of time management skills and note taking ability.

Figure 9
Fields of Study of Visible Minority Students

Business — Visible Minority: 25%, Non-Visible Minority: 21%
Health Sciences — Visible Minority: 16%, Non-Visible Minority: 17%
Other — Visible Minority: 11%, Non-Visible Minority: 13%
Applied/Engineering Technologies — Visible Minority: 10%, Non-Visible Minority: 9%
Applied Arts/Media — Visible Minority: 10%, Non-Visible Minority: 9%
Social and Community Services — Visible Minority: 9%, Non-Visible Minority: 11%
Information Technology — Visible Minority: 5%, Non-Visible Minority: 5%
Hospitality, Recreation and Tourism — Visible Minority: 5%, Non-Visible Minority: 6%
Liberal Arts and Sciences — Visible Minority: 5%, Non-Visible Minority: 4%
Trades — Visible Minority: 3%, Non-Visible Minority: 5%

Percent

Source: College Entry Survey, 2005

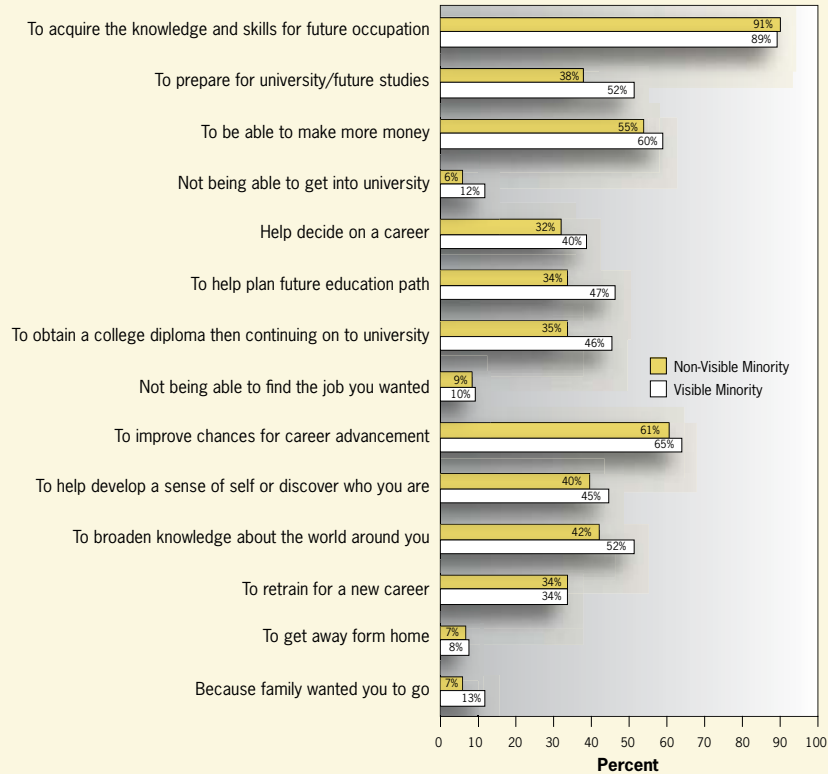## 6.5 Reasons for Attending Colleges and Institutes

The reasons for attending a college or institute were largely focused on career development and advancement, for both groups of students. A large majority, 89 percent of visible minority students, indicated their major reason for attending college was to acquire the knowledge and skills for their future occupation. The next largest reason sited was to improve chances for career advancement.

In general, visible minority students were more likely than their non-visible minority colleagues to indicate all reasons as important in their decision to go to college (Figure 10).

Figure 10
Reasons for Attending a College or Institute given by Visible Minority Students
Proportion who indicated as a major reason (%)

Reason	Non-Visible Minority	Visible Minority
To acquire the knowledge and skills for future occupation	91%	89%
To prepare for university/future studies	38%	52%
To be able to make more money	55%	60%
Not being able to get into university	6%	12%
Help decide on a career	32%	40%
To help plan future education path	34%	47%
To obtain a college diploma then continuing on to university	35%	46%
Not being able to find the job you wanted	9%	10%
To improve chances for career advancement	61%	65%
To help develop a sense of self or discover who you are	40%	45%
To broaden knowledge about the world around you	42%	52%
To retrain for a new career	34%	34%
To get away form home	7%	8%
Because family wanted you to go	7%	13%

Source: College Entry Survey, 2005

Table 32. Self Reported Skill Proficiency of Visible Minority Students – *Proportion (%)*

	Non-Visible Minority				Visible Minority			
	Poor	Fair	Good	Very Good	Poor	Fair	Good	Very Good
Comprehend the language of instruction	<1	5	39	56	x	6	40	54
Writing abilities	1	14	49	36	2	16	51	32
Reading abilities	1	9	44	46	x	11	45	43
Mathematical abilities	8	30	39	23	9	32	38	22
Time management skills	4	24	48	24	7	28	44	21
Note and test taking skills	3	18	53	26	4	22	50	25
Study skills	5	30	50	15	7	32	46	15

Source: College Entry Survey, 2005

Several of the largest differences between the two groups were related to university participation—for example because they could not get accepted to university, to prepare for university. Also of interest is that nearly twice as many visible minority students indicated that pleasing a family member was an important reason for attending their college or institute.

6.6 Academic and Social Integration in the First Term of College

The End of Term Survey asked students about their academic and social behaviours during the first year in their program. There were some indications that visible minority students were less engaged in their studies and had a more difficult time academically than non-visible minority students. For instance, a larger proportion of visible minority students spent 3 hours or less studying and preparing for class in a typical week than did non-visible minority students (18 percent compared to 12 percent). Conversely, only 18 percent of visible minority students spent 15 hours or more a week in class preparation and homework compared to 24 percent of students in the non-visible minority group. Similarly, fewer visible minority students always finished their assignments on time (63 percent compared to 73 percent of non-visible minority students).

On another measure of academic performance visible minority students had very similar results to the non-visible minority group. Thirty-one percent of students from both groups almost never skipped class, and 27 percent of visible minority students (compared to 29 percent of non-visible minority students) never skipped classes.

Dropping courses is a typical indicator of students having difficulty with the academic demands of college. The end of term survey found that a greater proportion of visible minority students (14 percent compared to 9 percent of non-visible minority students) had dropped at least one class already this semester. Furthermore, an additional 4 percent of visible minority students indicated that they probably would drop a class by the end of the term (4 percent compared to 2 percent).

When students were asked directly about how well they fit in to their college or institute both academically and socially, significant differences were found in several areas (Table 33). Academically, a greater proportion of visible minority students did as little work as possible during the term, and fewer visible minority students indicated that they were interested in what they were learning. Also, fewer visible minority students indicated they got along well with the faculty. On the social side, a greater proportion of visible minority students indicated that they often or always felt like an outsider.

Participation in Campus Activities

Students' participation in campus activities is also a good indicator of students' integration into campus life. Results from the End of Term Survey show that visible minority students were more likely to participate in cultural or religious activities, but were somewhat less likely to participate in non-structured activities, such as spending time at the pub, in the cafeteria or playing sports (Table 34).

While the pub and cafeteria are traditional places where students congregate to socialize and relieve the stress of college studies, it is unclear whether the lower levels of minority student participation contributed to the lower levels of social integration discussed above.

Table 33. Academic and Social Integration – *Proportion reporting often or always (%)*

	Non-Visible Minority	Visible Minority
I did as little work as possible; I just wanted to get by	3	5
I was interested in what I was learning in class	87	78
I got along well with faculty/instructors	94	89
I felt like an outsider or that I was left out of things	4	7

Source: End of Term, 2005

Difficulties Experienced in the First Term of College

The End of Term Survey also asked students to rate the difficulty of various tasks/issues in their college experience (Figure 11). Overall, visible minority students reported a significantly higher degree of difficulty in every area examined. The greatest differences between visible and non-visible minority students were seen in finding ways to balance study, work and family responsibilities, but large differences were also evident in the academic areas such as in course content, knowing how to improve, and meeting with faculty outside of class. There is also a notable difference in visible minority students' degree of career certainty, as one third indicated that they found identifying a career path was quite or very difficult. Results from this area also support the findings that visible minority students were less socially integrated, as a greater proportion of visible minority students indicated they found knowing who to talk to about a problem quite or very difficult.

These results are in line with visible minority students' self-reported skills proficiency, as fewer visible minority students rated their time management skills as being good compared to non-visible minority students. These findings are relevant for the types of support services that students would benefit most from at their colleges and institutes. It is clear that visible minority students would benefit from support to improve study-related skills, as well as career counselling, and that more proactive approaches to promoting the support services to this group of students could help them enhance their experience and attain their objectives.
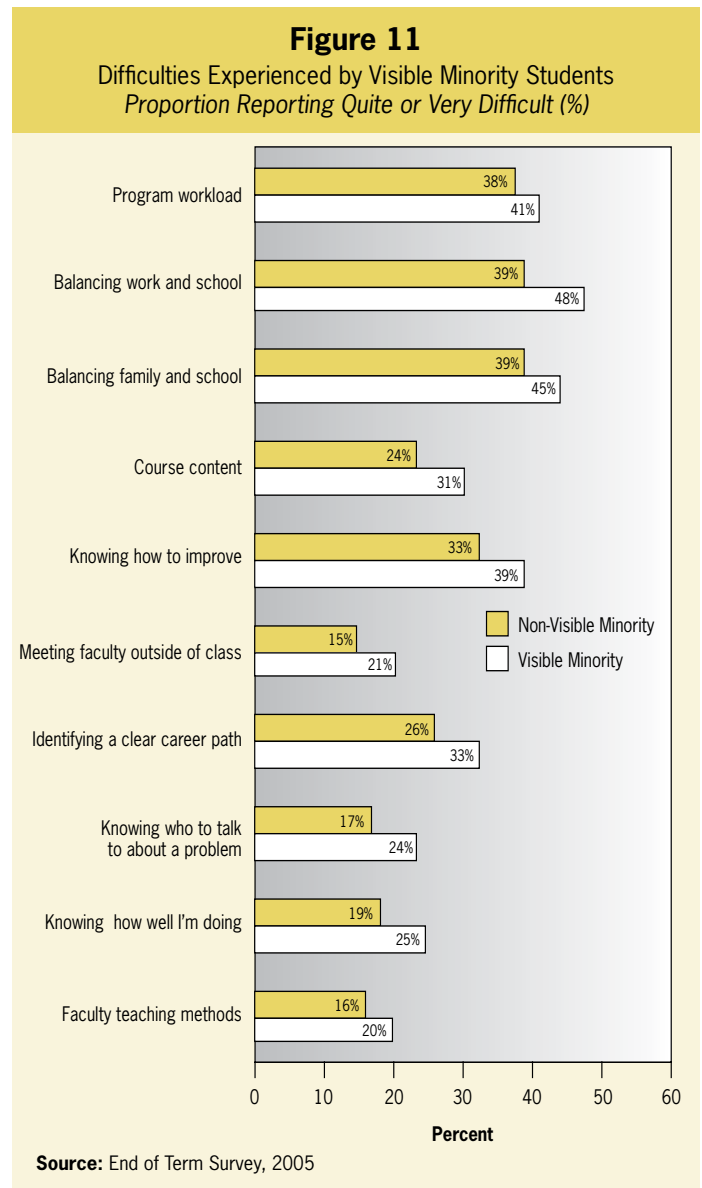
Figure 11
Difficulties Experienced by Visible Minority Students
Proportion Reporting Quite or Very Difficult (%)

Difficulty	Non-Visible Minority	Visible Minority
Program workload	38%	41%
Balancing work and school	39%	48%
Balancing family and school	39%	45%
Course content	24%	31%
Knowing how to improve	33%	39%
Meeting faculty outside of class	15%	21%
Identifying a clear career path	26%	33%
Knowing who to talk to about a problem	17%	24%
Knowing how well I'm doing	19%	25%
Faculty teaching methods	16%	20%

Source: End of Term Survey, 2005

Table 34. Participation in Campus Activities by Visible Minority Students
Proportion who indicated participating at least once (%)

Campus Activity	Visible Minority	Non-Visible Minority
Religious group	10	6
Ethnic/cultural group	11	4
Special interest club	13	13
Student pub, games room	52	56
Hanging out in cafeteria	78	83
Interacting with peer mentor	23	23
Informal Athletics	27	29

Source: End of Term Survey, 2005

6.7 Needs and Use of Support Services

Students were asked whether they felt they could benefit from extra support to accommodate their needs and whether they would use college services if they were offered (Table 35). A higher percentage of visible minority students reported that they could benefit greatly from extra support in all areas examined (though not all differences were statistically significant). This was especially true for obtaining help in planning future studies, which was indicated by 42 percent of visible minority students as being beneficial (compared to just 29 percent of non-visible minority students). This is consistent with visible minority students' likelihood to use college as a path to further education. Large differences were also observed for support services aimed at study skills and test taking, as well as in specific subject areas such as mathematics, reading and writing.

It is interesting to note that a greater proportion of visible minority students indicated that they would benefit from and would accept support in mathematics when visible minority students assessed their abilities in this area at approximately the same level as non-visible minority students.

Actual Use of Support Services during the First Term

Despite indicating that they were more likely to accept support services, visible minority students were no more likely than non-visible minority students to indicate at the end of the term they had actually used the services provided in any of the specific areas (Table 36). Perhaps visible minority students were less likely to use these services due to cultural barriers.

Table 35. Perceived Level of Benefit from Extra Support and Receptivity to College Services by Recent Immigrants at College Entry

Area of Development	Confirmed Benefit for Extra Support (%)		Highly Likely to Access Extra Support (%)	
	Visible Minority	Non-Visible Minority	Visible Minority	Non-Visible Minority
Study habits	54	44	40	32
Financial aid	51	44	45	39
Test taking	45	38	39	31
Planning for future studies	42	29	37	27
Selecting career	37	30	33	25
Writing skills	27	20	26	18
Math skills	39	32	32	26
Reading skills	29	20	24	16
Improve in language of instruction	16	11	14	12
English/French as a second language	17	15	27	14
Disability	10	8	9	8
Child Care	10	7	9	7

Source: College Entry Survey, 2005

Financing College

Students were asked to indicate which sources they planned to use to fund their program of studies at their college or institute. For this question students were able to indicate multiple sources. Visible minority students were more likely to report that they were receiving money from their parents. A greater proportion of visible minority students also indicated that they had received a scholarship or grant to attend college (Table 37).

Some of the differences noted above disappeared when students were asked what their primary source of funding would be. However, other differences became more apparent. For instance, visible minority students were more likely to use money from parents as their primary source of money for college, while non-visible minority students were more

likely to use loans. Considering only students who did receive a loan, visible minority students were more likely to indicate using a government student loan (71 percent compared to 62 percent of non-visible minority students), more likely to use a loan from a parent of family member (15 percent compared to 11 percent), and less likely to use a loan from a private institution (14 percent compared to 27).

There were also some noticeable differences between visible minority and non-visible minority students regarding the level of concern students had towards their finances (Table 38). At college entry, visible minority students were more likely to be very concerned regarding three different measures of financial concern: having enough money to pay for college studies and living expenses, the level of debt they will have accumulated at the end of their postsecondary

Table 36. Use of College Services by Visible Minority Students
Proportion that Used Service at Least Once (%)

College Services	Visible Minority	Non Visible Minority
Personal counselling	16	15
Career counselling	22	21
Language writing service	13	14
Math skills services	13	14
Learning skills services	15	16
Peer tutoring	15	15
Career resource centre	29	28
Disability resources	8	7

Source: End of term survey, 2005

Table 37. Sources of Financial Support for Visible Minority Students

	Source of Funds		Primary Source of Funds	
Financial Sources	Visible Minority %	Non-Visible Minority %	Visible Minority %	Non-Visible Minority %
Money from parents	44	40	33	27
Money from other people that you don't have to pay back	5	8	1	1
Money from loans, including those from government, family or a bank	55	57	33	37
Money from personal savings	70	72	21	21
Money from scholarships, awards or prizes	33	30	2	2
Money from grants and contributions	25	20	2	2

Source: College Entry Survey, 2005, and End of Term Survey, 2005

education, and their ability to repay their debt upon completion. The same differences were evident in the End of Term survey as well.

Students were also asked if financial difficulties may lead them to quit their studies. A larger proportion of visible minority students strongly agreed that it could. At college entry 19 percent of visible minority students (compared to 12 percent of non-visible minority students) indicated this. At the end of term survey one in four visible minority students (compared to 19 percent of non-visible minority students) indicated finances may lead them to quit.

It is interesting to note that in each area of financial concern, a smaller proportion of students in the end of term survey indicated concern compared to the entry survey. However, when asked if finances may force them to leave their studies a larger proportion of the end of term respondents indicated that it may. This suggests that while financial concerns had subsided for many students, it also intensified for those students facing the most difficulty.

One other measure of student finances revealed a significant difference between visible minority and non-visible minority students. At the beginning of the term visible minority students were more likely to indicate that they would be working during the school year. Approximately 78 percent of visible minority students expected to work some hours during their studies while only 71 percent of non-visible minority students expected to be working. Furthermore, a higher proportion of visible minority students expected to be working more than 20 hours a week (29 percent compared to 25 percent of non-visible minority students).

6.9 Student Attitudes and Educational Commitment

In the seven dimensions of educational commitment examined in this study—commitment to graduation, confidence in success, occupational uncertainty, preference for job, financial concern, perceived value of PSE, intent to change program/leave, peer interaction, faculty interaction, perception of institution and perception of program—visible minority students showed a tendency to be less committed to their institution and their course of studies. They were also less likely to have a positive opinion of their faculty. The results for specific areas are summarized below, with those areas with insignificant differences omitted from the discussion.

Educational Commitment

With regard to their level of educational commitment, visible minority students indicated that they were somewhat less committed than non-minority students. For example, a lower percentage of this group (90 percent vs. 93 percent at college entry) indicated that they were determined to finish their college education. Similarly, a higher percentage of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they may quit their studies before finishing their program (7 percent VS. 5 percent). It is possible that this is in part a result of greater preference to be attending university among visible minority students.

Levels of Confidence in Succeeding

Although very high percentages of visible minority students expressed confidence in their ability to succeed in their college/institute programs, they were somewhat less

Table 38. Visible Minority Students' Concerns about College Finances

Percentage 'very concerned' about college finances	College Entry		End of Term	
	Visible Minority (%)	Non-Visible Minority (%)	Visible Minority (%)	Non-Visible Minority (%)
Having enough money to pay for college studies and living expenses	50	45	43	37
The amount of debt accumulated at the completion of postsecondary education	48	42	44	38
Ability to repay accumulated debt within a reasonable period of time	39	31	35	25

Source: College Entry Survey, 2005 and End of Term Survey, 2005

assured than non-visible minority students (Table 39). In general, students were also less confident in their success at the end of term survey, with the difference between visible minority students and non-visible minority students increasing. Significant differences were observed between visible minority students and non-visible minority students in the proportion of students who were confident that they had the ability to succeed and in the proportion who felt well prepared for college studies. Visible minority students were less likely to indicate that they were capable of achieving a B+ average only in the end of term survey. Results are summarized below.

Preference for a Job

At the end of the first term, in response to the item "I would decide to remain in college even if offered a full-time job", a lower percentage of visible-minority students agreed or strongly agreed—60 percent compared to 64 percent for non-visible minority students.

Visible Minority Students Commitment to their Program and Institution

Visible minority and non-visible minority students exhibited differences in their degree of institutional commitment, which was exhibited in the degree to which students' perceived their college and faculty in a positive light. The results presented are from the end of term survey.

Fewer visible minority students agreed or strongly agreed that their institution is committed to students' success (76 percent compared to 86 percent). Furthermore, a higher proportion of visible minority students agreed or strongly agreed that their institution treats students like a number in a book (22 percent compared to 15 percent of non-visible minority students).

Visible minority students were also less likely to have a favourable opinion of their program. There were slightly more visible minority students who indicated that what they were learning was useless (13 percent compared to 10 percent), and fewer visible minority students who thought their programs were interesting (79 percent compared to 88 percent). Additionally, a smaller proportion of visible minority students agreed or strongly agreed that what they were learning was directly related to their work (70 percent compared to 74 percent of non-visible minority students).

Perceptions of Faculty

Visible minority students were less likely to agree or strongly agree that the college staff cared about helping students with problems (71 percent compared to 81 percent of the non-visible minority students). Visible minority students were also less likely to have established a good relationship with at least one faculty member (66 percent compared to 75 percent) or to agree or strongly agree that the staff were "very good" (72 percent compared to 77 percent). Finally, visible minority students were less likely to agree or strongly agree that their institution is excellent (75 percent compared to 84 percent of non-visible minority students).

Intent to Change Program or Leave at the End of First Term

Not surprisingly, given the less favourable impressions that visible minority students had regarding their institution, program and faculty, visible minority students also exhibited significantly higher responses on items measuring their intent to change program. For example, a lower percentage of visible minority students indicated that they were determined to finish their program (90 percent compared to 93 percent)

Table 39. Visible Minority Students' Level of Confidence in Succeeding
Proportion who Agreed or Strongly Agreed (%)

	At the College Entry		At the End of Term	
Student Perceptions	Visible Minority	Non-Visible Minority	Visible Minority	Non-Visible Minority
I have the ability to succeed in college-level studies	92	94	87	93
I am well prepared to be a successful student	75	81	61	73
I am capable of a B+ average of 78 percent or better	75	77	67	74

Source: College Entry Survey, 2005 and End of Term Survey, 2005

and 7 percent of visible minority students (compared to 5 percent of non-visible minority students) indicated that they may quit college before completing their program.

6.10 Concluding Remarks for Visible Minority Students

As Tinto (1975) has pointed out, the two key spheres of the college experience are the academic and social contexts. Data from this study has indicated that visible minority students were less well integrated in both these areas. Furthermore, these results are corroborated by visible minority students' academic performance, as they spent less time studying, completed homework on time less often, and were more likely to have dropped a course during their first term.

A number of differences were also observed in the attitudes visible minority and non-visible minority students had toward their education. Visible minority students' responses on educational commitment and preference for a job were complementary—a lower percentage of the visible minority sample was strongly committed to their education while a higher percentage expressed a preference to be working. Similarly, visible minority students were less likely to agree that college staff cared about helping students.

These findings, regarding the academic behaviour of visible minority students, contrast with research conducted by Victor Thiessen of Dalhousie University and the HRSDC funded Canadian Labour Market and Skills Researcher Network. Thiessen conducted analyses of data from the Youth in Transition Survey (YITS) to examine differences between population groups. He concludes that Canadian-born visible minorities tended to perform the best academically and to hold the highest educational aspirations. Theissen also observed that Canadian-born visible minority students were the most likely to enrol in university rather than college studies.

Thiessen's analysis also identified some key contributing factors that facilitate high school students' move on to university level studies. The first was whether they took the language and math courses required to qualify for university programs—immigrant and Canadian-born visible minorities were more likely to have taken such courses. Secondly, these two groups had defining attributes that led them to better educational pathways – for immigrant visible minorities it was higher academic effort in their courses and for Canadian-born visible minorities it was high educational aspirations, though both groups were also backed by strong family support.

Although career preparation is the primary mandate of colleges and institutes, it must also be recognized that many have university preparation streams, articulation agreements with universities and increasing numbers of colleges and institutes are offering baccalaureate and applied degree programs. Given visible minority students' expressed preference for university level studies, there is a need to increase general awareness and improve information on the postsecondary options available through colleges and institutes, including the university preparation, transfer and degree programs available. This implies a need for more collaboration between secondary schools and colleges in order to enhance students' understanding of the postsecondary options available to them.

7 Students with Disabilities at Colleges and Institutes

This section provides an overview of the profile and experience of students with disabilities, based on the results from both the College Entry Survey and the End of Term Survey, and highlights the differences in the characteristics, perceptions, needs and experiences of students with disabilities compared to those who are not disabled.

Nearly one in every ten respondents reported having a disability—2,160 respondents at college entry and 1,276 respondents at the end of first term. In terms of the types of disabilities reported the results were generally the same in both surveys, with the majority of students indicating a learning disability. The complete breakdown of disability type is shown below.

Respondents of the survey were only able to indicate identification with one of the four categories of disability types listed above, which somewhat limits the analysis as many disabled people report more than one type. Advancing the Inclusion of People with Disabilities, a report by Human Resources and Social Development Canada, notes that in fact only 18 percent of Canadians who reported a disability reported only one. While the categories available in the Pan-Canadian Survey of First Year College Students are fairly broad, thus eliminating some of the multiple responses, it is still reasonable to expect that a percentage of First Year College Students had more than one type of disability.

Perhaps many students used the "other" category to indicate multiple disabilities, as it accounts for nearly a quarter of the student with a disability.

Since the sample size for different types of disabilities is relatively small, analysis for each of the types was not possible. However, one would expect students with learning disabilities to have different experiences at their college or institute than those with a mobility or sensory disability. Therefore, some additional analysis has been done separating students with learning disabilities from those with mobility, sensory or other disabilities, which will be referred to as physical disabilities. These two groups provide sample sizes of students with a learning disability and students with a physical disability of 1298 and 873 students respectively from college entry; and 790 and 523 students respectively from the end of term.

The Participation and Activity Limitation Survey (PALS) was a survey conducted by Statistics Canada as a follow up to the 2001 Census. It asked a range of questions about the daily activities of people with and without disabilities. The survey found that 12 percent of Canadians live with some form of disability.

Information from PALS indicates a much different distribution over disability types for the Canadian population as a whole (Table 41) than what was observed in the Pan Canadian College sample. The proportion reporting a learning

Table 40. Students with Disabilities at Colleges and Institutes (%)

	Entry Survey	End of Term
Proportion of Students		
Frequency	2,160	1,276
Percent	9	9
Type of Disability		
Learning	60	60
Mobility	10	11
Seonsory	6	5
Other	25	24

Source: Pan-Canadian Entry and End of Term Surveys, 2005

disability is particularly striking, as only 13 percent of disabled Canadians reported a learning disability, whereas 60 percent of the disabled students in the Pan Canadian survey of First Year College Students reported a learning disability. Multiple responses were accepted in PALS.

In addition to the type of disability, there can be a wide range of experiences depending on the severity of the individual's disability. PALS identifies four levels of severity of the disability, depending on the frequency and intensity of the disability. Under this classification 34 percent of disabled Canadians over the age of 15 had a mild disability, 25 percent had a moderate disability, 27 percent had a severe disability, and 14 percent had a very severe disability. While the Pan-Canadian Survey of First Year College Students did not capture this variation, it is important to consider that educational experiences will differ with severity.

7.1 **Participation in Postsecondary Education**

People with disabilities face barriers to education that other prospective students do not. While many students are overcoming these barriers, participation in postsecondary education remains below the Canadian average.

As of 2001 a greater proportion of the population with disabilities had attained a college diploma or trades certificate than had the overall population (Table 42). However, people with disabilities are less likely to have gone to university. The result is that almost 48 percent of people with disabilities have obtained a post-secondary credential, but this is below the Canadian average of 53 percent. These results are similar to what was observed in the Aboriginal population in that colleges seem to be more accessible to both groups than university education.

Table 41. Types of Disabilities in Canada – *Proportion of disabled population ages 15 and over*

Disability Type	Proportion (%)
Mobility	72
Pain	70
Agility	67
Hearing	30
Seeing	17
Psychological	15
Learning	13
Memory	12
Speech	11
Developmental	4
Unknown	3

Source: A Profile of Disability in Canada, 2001

Table 42. Highest Level of Education for Canadians with a Disability *Proportion of the Canadian Population ages 25 to 64*

	Disabled	Total Population
Less than High School	25	25
High School Diploma	27	22
Trades	13	13
College	20	18
University	14	23
Total PSE	**48**	**53**

Source: PALS 2001, Census 2001

Demographic Characteristics of Students with Disabilities in Colleges and Institutes

Differences were observed over several different demographic and background characteristics between students who reported a disability and those who did not. The areas that showed a statistically significant difference are discussed below.

Age of Students with Disabilities

Rates of disabilities change over the life course. Mostly they become more prevalent as people get older, but for some a disability may come and go. PALS indicated that 3.9 percent of the 15-24 year old population self identified as having a disability. This grew to 7 percent for those between the ages of 25 and 44, and exceeded the Canadian average (12.4 percent) by the ages of 45 to 64, at 17 percent. Disabilities affected over 40 percent of the population over the age of 65.

The percentage of college students indicating a disability (9 percent) was much higher than the youth disability rate in Canada (3.9 percent).

Students with disabilities in the Pan Canadian Survey of First Year College Students tended to be older than students without. However, the age difference is driven solely by students who have indicated a physical disability. Students with a learning disability are more likely to be less than 25 than are students without a disability. However, 46 percent of students with a physical disability are 25 years of age or over, compared to just 18 percent of students without a disability and less than 16 percent of students with a learning disability.

Gender

While women made up the majority of disabled students at college, a higher proportion of students with disabilities indicated they were men compared to non-disabled students. About 45 percent of students with disabilities were men, compared to only 39 percent of the students without disabilities who were men. There were no significant differences in gender between the different types of disabilities.

According to PALS, slightly more women report a disability as compared to men. The disability rate for women between the ages of 15 to 24 is 4.0 percent while for men in this age range the proportion is 3.8 percent. For those between the ages of 25 and 44, 7.5 percent of women indicate a disability compared to 6.6 percent of men. Thus, it is not clear why a higher proportion of men with disabilities were going to college.

Aboriginal Students with Disabilities

Ten percent of students with disabilities identified themselves as a person of Aboriginal or Native ancestry, compared to 7 percent of the non-disabled group. This is in line with results presented in section 4 on Aboriginal respondents that confirmed that a higher percentage of students in the Aboriginal group reported having a disability.

Visible Minorities and Immigration Status

Fewer students with disabilities self-identified as being members of a visible minority compared to the non-disabled group (14 percent compared to 18 percent of students without a disability). Furthermore, more students with disabilities (69 percent) were born in Canada and had both parents born in Canada, compared to the non-disabled group (61 percent). In keeping with this trend, fewer students with disabilities reported having a language other than English or French as their first language (8 percent vs. 13 percent).

Financial Dependents and Living Arrangements

Students with disabilities were more likely to report having a financial dependent, including both children and adults.

Table 43. Age Distribution by Type of Disability (%)

Age Group	No Disability	Learning	Physical
19 years and under	47	49	25
20 to 24	35	35	29
25 and older	18	16	46

Source: College Entry Survey, 2005

For example, 83 percent of students with disabilities reported they had no financially dependent children compared to 88 percent of the non-disabled group. Similarly, a lower percentage of students with disabilities (85 percent vs. 92 percent) reported they had no financially dependent adults living with them.
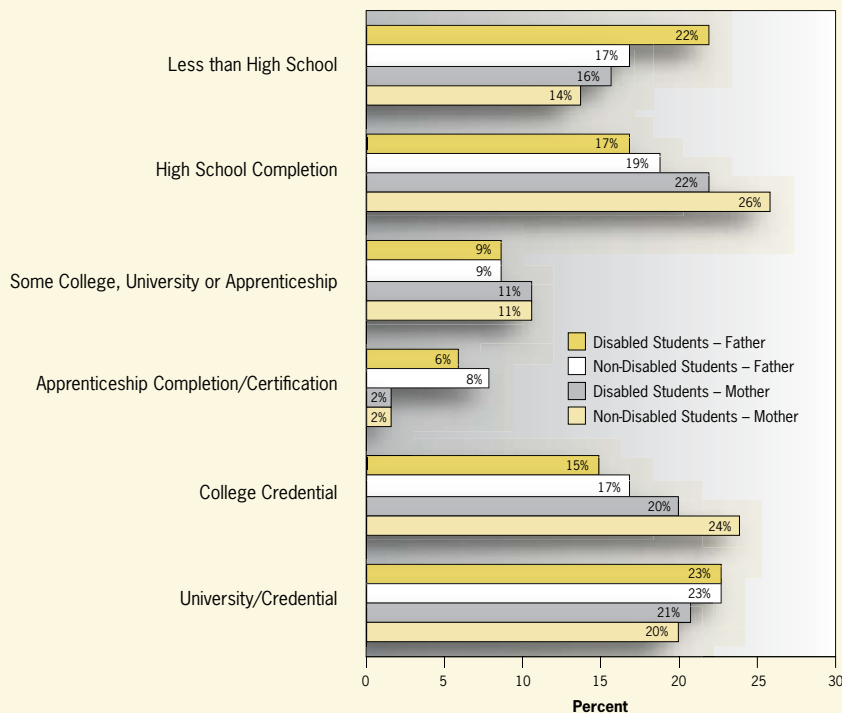
Education Level of Parents

Students with disabilities were somewhat less likely to indicate that their fathers had completed post-secondary education (Figure 12). Thirty-nine percent of students with disabilities (compared to 36 percent of non-disabled students) had fathers with high school completion or less as their highest level attained. On the other hand, a greater proportion of students with disabilities indicated that their mother had completed some form of post-secondary education (62 percent compared to 60 percent of non-disabled students). In addition, when asked to report the importance their parents attached to continuing their education beyond high school, a lower percentage of students with disabilities (57 percent compared to 64 percent of non-disabled students) said it was 'very important'.

7.3 Registration Characteristics of Students with Disabilities

There were a number of differences in the registration characteristics of disabled and non-disabled students. First, at college entry, a higher percentage of students with disabilities (26 percent compared to 17 percent) reported that they were not attending their college for the first time. When asked to indicate why it was not their first time, 39 percent had partially completed a program and left college, 39 percent had already completed a program and 22 percent had attended previously as a part-time student.

Fewer students with disabilities were attending their college or institute directly after high school (28 percent compared to 30 percent of the non-disabled group), and fewer students with disabilities reported that they had been working (20 percent of students with disabilities compared to 30 percent of the non-disabled group). On the other hand, more students with disabilities reported that they had been attending college full time prior to beginning their current college/institute program (17 percent compared to 12 percent of the non-disabled group).

Figure 12
Levels of Education Attained by Parents of Students with Disabilities

Legend:
- Disabled Students – Father
- Non-Disabled Students – Father
- Disabled Students – Mother
- Non-Disabled Students – Mother

Category	Disabled – Father	Non-Disabled – Father	Disabled – Mother	Non-Disabled – Mother
Less than High School	22%	17%	16%	14%
High School Completion	17%	19%	22%	26%
Some College, University or Apprenticeship	9%	9%	11%	11%
Apprenticeship Completion/Certification	6%	8%	2%	2%
College Credential	15%	17%	20%	24%
University/Credential	23%	23%	21%	20%

Percent

Similar to non-disabled students, the majority of students with disabilities (83 percent) indicated that their first choice for postsecondary education was to attend their current college. However, fewer students with disabilities indicated their first choice would have been university—6 percent compared to 8 percent of the non-disabled group.

Finally, when asked to report what type of program they were registered in a higher percentage of students with disabilities were registered in access or upgrading programs (6 percent vs. 4 percent), as well as in career or technical programs 63 percent compared to 59 percent (Figure 13). Fewer students with disabilities were enrolled in university preparation programs (8 percent compared to 13 percent of non-disabled students) or in degree programs (12 percent compared to 14 percent of non-disabled students).

There were also differences between students with disabilities and those without regarding the fields of study in which students were registered (Figure 14). Similar to Aboriginal students, a higher percentage of students with disabilities were registered in community and social services programs (15 percent vs. 10 percent).
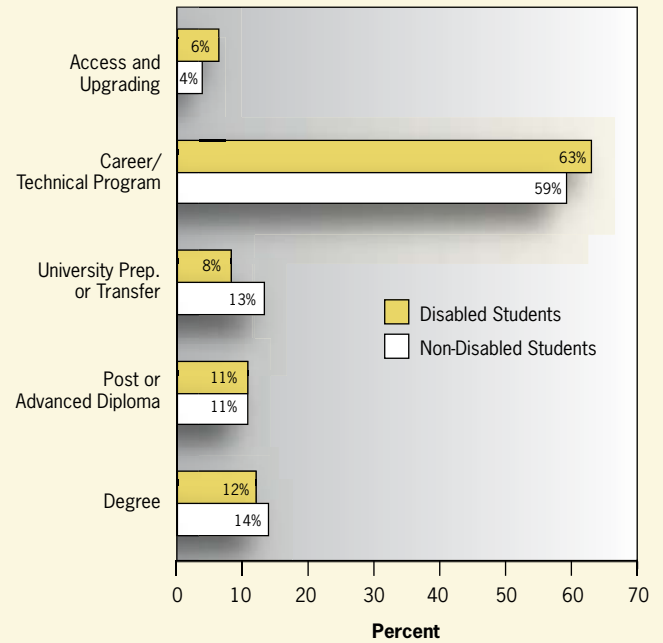
7.4 Reason for Attending

As with all students, the majority of students with disabilities were attending college to improve their opportunities for future employment: that is to acquire the knowledge and skills for a future occupation, improve their chances for career advancement, or to make more money. There were, however, several differences between the two groups of students (Figure 15). A higher proportion of students with disabilities were attending college for personal development and to broaden their knowledge about the world compared to non-disabled students. In addition, more students with disabilities were at college to retrain for a new career (43 percent compared to 34 percent of non-disabled students) or because they could not find the job the wanted (15 percent compared to 10 percent of non-disabled students).
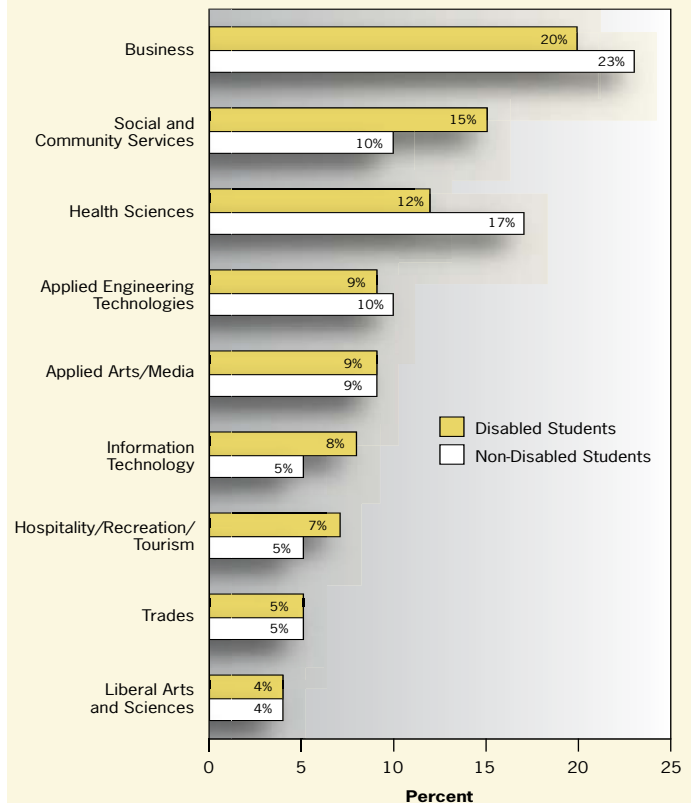
Career Exploration

Since college/institute programs are largely career-oriented, the College Entry Survey assessed how first year college/institute students engaged in career exploration and clarification activities, such as courses, workshops, high school guidance services, career exploration questionnaires, computer programs and websites and discussions with parents.

Figure 13
Registration of Students with Disabilities by Program Type
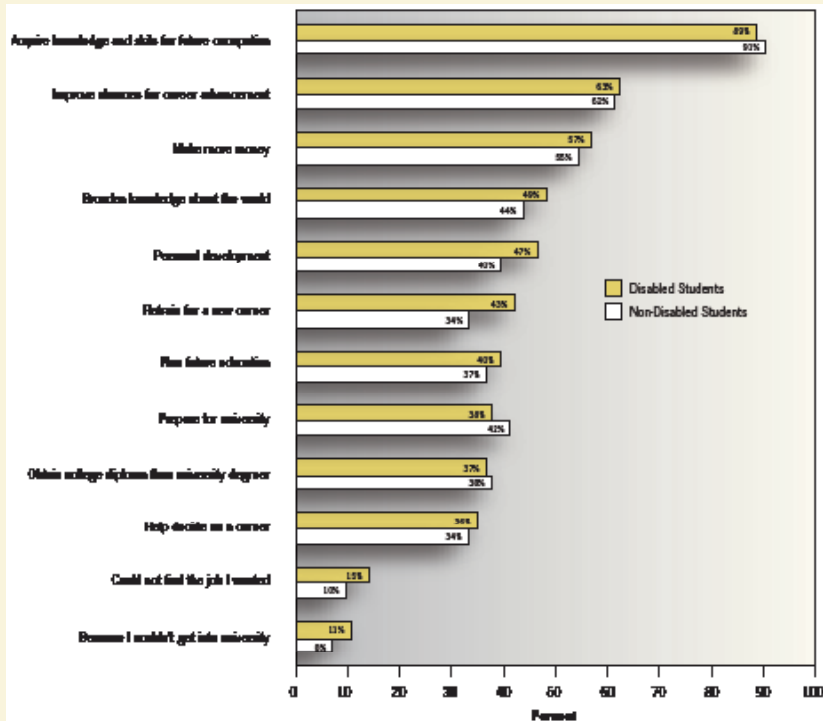
Source: College Entry Survey, 2005

Figure 14
Fields of Study of Students with Disabilities

Source: College Entry Survey, 2005

Figure 15
Students' with Disabilities Top Reasons for Attending a College or Institute

Just as for the non-disabled group, students with disabilities did not frequently engage in career exploration activities. However, a higher percentage of students with disabilities reported that they had met with a high school counsellor eleven times or more (19 percent compared to 13 percent of the non-disabled group) and that they had taken a special course in order to gain work experience (49 percent compared to 40 percent of non-disabled students). The most prevalent career exploration activity that occurred was discussions with parents, as the majority of students had spoken with their parents about their career goals and over one third of respondents from both groups indicated that they talked to their parents/guardian more than 20 times.

7.5 High School Experience

The College Entry Survey explored student attitudes toward their high school experience in terms of their sense of academic and social integration and their academic performance. Overall, students with disabilities confirmed that they had a lower sense of academic and social integration during their last year of high school in comparison to the non-disabled group.

Fewer students with disabilities (53 percent compared to 56 percent of students without a disability) were interested in what they were learning in class and a higher proportion of students with disabilities thought school was a waste of time (10 percent compared to 7 percent of the non-disabled group).

More students with disabilities indicated that they had done just enough to get by, as 42 percent sometimes or often did so, compared to 37 percent of the non-disabled group. Fewer students with disabilities reported that they usually or always completed their homework on time (80 percent compared to 86 percent of the rest of the students). It is not surprising, therefore, that students with disabilities reported lower high school leaving averages than non disabled respondents. For example, 38 percent of the non-disabled group reported an average of between 80 and 100 percent, whereas slightly less than one-third (31 percent) of the disabled group did so.

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Although the majority of students with disabilities (82 percent) often or always got along well with teachers in high school, more respondents from the non-disabled group (86 percent) did so. On the other hand, more students with disabilities (53 percent vs. 49 percent of students without a disability) indicated they often/always received extra help from their teachers if required.

Social Integration

Students with disabilities also were less socially integrated in high school, as fewer disabled students (56 percent) indicated that they never or rarely felt like outsiders or that they were left of things at school compared to 75 percent of the non disabled group that felt this way. Nonetheless, students' with disabilities rate of participation in extracurricular activities were more or less the same non-disabled students.

7.6 Integration and Academic Performance at College

For many disabled students the feeling of being less socially integrated during high school continued into their studies at their college or institute. Disabled students are by no means the only students who have found fitting in at their college or institute difficult. However, disabled students, more than Aboriginal, visible minority or recent immigrant students, found difficulty with integrating into college life. The Pan-Canadian Study of First Year College Students showed that, while the majority of disabled students had found friendships that supported them in their education, a large proportion found social interaction difficult.

One quarter of students with disabilities (compared with 16 percent of students from the non-disabled group) had difficulty to meet and make friends with other students. Fewer disabled students indicated that their friendships helped them cope with the stress of college life (62 percent agreed/strongly agreed compared to 68 percent from the non-disabled group) and fewer also felt they "fit in" at their college (69 percent vs. 78 percent). The majority of students with disabilities (83 percent) felt that students they knew were willing to help each other with problems, however this was once again fewer compared to respondents in the non-disabled group (87 percent) who felt this way.

Participation on Campus

There were also notable differences between students with disabilities and non-disabled students in their participation in campus activities. Fewer students with disabilities participated in student association sponsored events (25 percent compared to 30 percent of non-disabled students), interacted with a peer mentor (25 percent compared to 34 percent of non-disabled students), or belonged to a special interest club (14 percent compared to 18 percent of non-disabled students).

Academic Behaviour during the First Term

Slightly more students with disabilities spent more time studying than non-disabled students, with 58 percent confirming that they spent 8 hours or more studying in a typical seven day week, compared to 55 percent of the non-disabled group. As was the case with most students, a greater number expected to study more than eight hours per week than actually did – in the case of students with disabilities at college entry, 71 percent expected to spend more than eight hours per week studying however 58 percent actually spent this much time studying.

Despite spending more time studying and doing homework, fewer students with disabilities routinely completed homework assignments on time during the first term, as 63 percent always completed their assignments on time and 30 percent indicated they usually did so (compared to 72 percent and 25 percent of respondents in the non-disabled group). A difference in assignment completion also existed between different types of disabilities, as a smaller proportion of students with a learning disability usually or always completed their assignments on time compared to students with a physical disability (91 percent of students with a learning disability compared to 95 percent of students with a physical disability).

Fewer students with disabilities skipped class during the first term than those in the non-disabled group—63 percent almost never or never did so compared to 60 percent of the non-disabled group.

Students with disabilities indicated that they were much more likely to have problems academically than non-disabled students. At the end of the first term 17 percent of students with disabilities reported they had dropped courses and an additional 4 percent indicated they probably will. This compares to 9 percent of the non-disabled group who had dropped courses and 2 percent who reported they probably would.

When academic and social integration measures were examined for the different types of disability important

distinctions emerged (Table 44). In areas of academic integration there were few differences between students with a physical disability and students with no disability, although students with a physical disability were the most likely to indicate they had problems with social integration. On the other hand, students with a learning disability were less integrated both socially and academically.

A study by Dawson College on student outcomes and graduation rates found that students with physical disabilities had similar outcomes to non-disabled students, while students with learning disabilities had slightly poorer outcomes, and students with other disabilities had slightly better outcomes than non-disabled students. The graduation rates of students with both physical and learning disabilities were virtually identical to those of non-disabled students, although students with disabilities took about one semester longer to graduate.

The Pan-Canadian Survey of First Year College Students showed that students with disabilities reported averages below those of non-disabled students[21]. Thirteen percent of students with disabilities reported a school average of 69 percent or lower compared to only 6 percent of non-disabled students. However, well over half the students with disabilities reported an average of 80 percent of higher.

Self-reported Skill Proficiency

In measures of self reported ability, students with a learning disability were the most likely to indicate poor ability (and the least likely to indicate strong ability) in a number of different skill areas, ranging from reading and writing ability, to time management and test taking ability (Table 45). Students with a physical disability were often somewhere in between students with learning disabilities and those with no disability in their likelihood to rate their ability as poor.

Table 44. Academic and Social Integration – *Proportion reporting by Disability Type (%)*

	No Disability	Learning Disability	Physical Disability
Never or rarely did as little work as necessary to get by	83	77	83
Often or always interested in what was being learned	86	82	89
Often or always got along with faculty	92	86	91
Rarely or never felt like an outsider	79	65	55

Source: End of Term Survey, 2005

Table 45. Self Assessed Skill Proficiency of Students with and without a Disability
Proportion reporting Poor and or Very Good

Skill Area	Poor (%)			Very Good (%)		
	No Disability	Learning Disability	Physical Disability	No Disability	Learning Disability	Physical Disability
Comprehend the language of instruction	< 1	3	x	55	31	49
Writing ability	1	9	X	36	15	35
Reading ability	1	10	2	47	20	43
Mathematical ability	7	24	12	28	15	25
Time management	5	12	11	21	15	20
Take notes and tests	2	16	7	31	12	27
Study skills	4	15	6	18	8	18

Source: End of Term Survey

x – denotes a frequency too small to report

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[21] School averages have been self-reported by survey respondents.

Difficulties Experienced by Students with Disabilities

Results from the end of term survey revealed that students with disabilities found certain areas of college life more difficult than did students without a disability. While this is far from surprising, it does show that there is more work to be done to accommodate students with disabilities at their college or institute.

Areas where students experienced the most difficulty were different for students with learning disabilities, physical disabilities, or no disabilities (Table 46). Non-disabled students reported finding the most difficulty with finding time to work and study (18 percent). This was also a common area of difficulty for students with a learning disability (20 percent) and with a physical disability (17 percent), but these students also found other areas either more, or just as difficult, such as balancing school and family (21 percent and 23 percent respectively compared to 14 percent for non-disabled students). Identifying a career path was particularly difficult for students with a physical disability, whereas program workload and knowing how to improve academically was particularly difficult for students with a learning disability.

7.7 Needs and Use of Support Services

The results of the Pan-Canadian Inventory of Exemplary Practices in College Student Learning[22] confirmed that the majority of colleges and institutes offer specific services for students with disabilities. Of 61 participating institutions, nine in ten confirmed that they offer services specifically for students with disabilities.

Services to students with disabilities are provided for the most part through a centralized office with a specific mandate to do so. Smaller institutions that serve less than ten students with disabilities tend to provide services on a case-by-case basis and typically through the student services offices intended for all students, with or without disabilities. These services work towards removing institutional barriers, both physical and attitudinal, and ensure that the students receive the necessary accommodations whether they be academic or physical, which enable students to pursue their programs in an environment of equality.

According to a survey by the National Educational Association of Disabled Students (NEADS)[23] most postsecondary institutions can accommodate students in all seven of the disability type categories which they identified: blind/visually impaired, learning, mobility, neurological, deaf/hard of hearing, mental health, or medical. It must be noted that these services are for students who are registered to receive disability accommodations and services, however many students with a disability choose not to self-identify. Through this survey, NEADS identified the various types of services which may include:

- academic accommodations or modifications, including extended exam time;

Table 46. Areas of Difficulty for Students with Disabilities – *Proportion Reporting Very Difficult (%)*

	No Disability	Learning Disability	Physical Disability
Program workload	10	19	15
Finding time to work and study	18	20	17
Balancing school and family	14	21	23
Course content	5	12	7
Knowing how to improve grades	9	18	12
Meeting faculty outside of class	5	9	6
Identifying a career path	9	10	13
Knowing who to talk to about a problem	6	10	9
Knowing how well I am doing	5	9	9
Faculty teaching methods	4	8	9

Source: End of Term Survey, 2005

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22 http://www.accc.ca/english/publications/epl/index.htm

23 Working Towards a Coordinated National Approach to Services, Accommodations and Policies for Post-Secondary Students with Disabilities. David Hubka and Emer Killean, National Educational Association of Disabled Students 1999.

- links to other departments and offices on campus to provide students with points of contact to foster a broader awareness of access issues;

- assessment of students' needs and providing counselling on types of accommodation and assistance;

- classroom relocation accommodations;

- arrangement of rooms and times for exams when students require accommodation;

- assistance with grants for special devices and equipment;

- assistance to access financial assistance including student loan programs and grants and bursaries that enable students to meet their disability related costs;

- provision of adaptive technology and equipment, including computer technology;

- arrangements for interpreter services;

- administration of learning and academic support services such as note-taking;

- provision of talking books and alternative format material;

- contribution to the development of policies and procedures on accommodations;

- provision of advice and counselling on learning problems;

- centralized access to a range of adaptive technologies;

- tutoring and peer tutoring services.

Some of the services listed here are similar to those included in the end of term survey. In many cases, offices for students with disabilities would typically refer students to learning skills centres and counselling services, in addition to making arrangements for the specific accommodations students require. Based on the results of the end of term survey, it is clear that more students with disabilities are aware of the mix of services available to them and are actually using them to meet their specific needs, even if they seem unrelated to their specific disability.

Table 47 summarizes the responses of students from the College Entry Survey with regard to their perception of the usefulness of support services and their receptivity to using these services. Overall, students with disabilities were more likely to report that they could benefit greatly in all support areas. Not surprisingly, the support services needs varied by the type of disability.

With only a few exceptions, students with a learning disability were more likely to benefit greatly from support services in a given area. In services to help secure financial aid and in services to help learn a second language, students with a physical disability were more likely to benefit greatly from support and were more likely to use these services than were students with a learning disability.

Table 47. Attitudes towards College and Institute Support Services

Support Area	Would Benefit Greatly From (%)			Would Likely Use (%)		
	No Disability	Learning Disability	Physical Disability	No Disability	Learning Disability	Physical Disability
Study habits	45	53	45	33	45	38
Financial aid	46	46	49	40	42	46
Test taking	39	51	44	32	44	40
Math skills	33	41	36	27	34	31
Planning for future studies	33	37	34	30	36	34
Selecting career	32	32	32	27	30	32
Reading skills	23	39	25	18	32	24
Writing skills	22	33	27	20	31	25
Improve in a second language	19	18	20	16	17	18
Improve in language of instruction	15	19	16	15	20	19
Coping with a disability	5	49	44	5	44	42
Coping with child care issues	8	9	11	8	11	11

Source: College Entry Survey, 2005

It is also interesting to note that less than 50 percent of students with a disability indicated that they would benefit greatly from services for coping with a disability. This finding suggests a need for either more services appropriate for students with a disability, or a need to educate students on the types of services available.

In addition to asking students about their perceived benefit from support services, the end of term survey also asked students about the services they had actually used. Generally speaking, a similar pattern as above was evident, though with participation rates somewhat lower (Table 48). It is interesting to note that a higher proportion of students at the end of the term had used services for students with a disability than had indicated them as being greatly beneficial.

7.8   Financing College

There are several government programs in place to help students with disabilities finance their post-secondary education as well as many scholarships and grants offered by schools and private foundations. Government assistance is offered through the Canadian Student Loan program, which provides flexibility to disabled students in its eligibility requirements and repayment terms. Additionally, the Canadian Access Grant for students with Permanent Disabilities provides a non-repayable study grant of up to $2000 a year for full time and part time students. Despite these resources, financing college studies remains a problem for many students with disabilities.

The results on how disabled students are funding their college education differed from those of the non-disabled group (Table 49). Disabled students were less likely to identify their parents, loans and personal savings as sources of money; however they were more likely to report that money from other people they did not have to pay back and from grants and contributions were sources of funding for their college studies. In terms of the types of loans, most students from both groups were receiving government sponsored loans.

Table 48. Actual Use of College/Institute Support Services – *Percent who Used Service during Term (%)*

Variable	Mean		
	No Disability	Learning Disability	Physical Disability
Personal counselling	14	36	31
Career counselling	21	35	30
Language/writing support services	15	30	18
Math skills services	14	21	16
Learning skills services	16	41	24
Peer tutoring	16	27	22
Career resource centre	30	36	29
Services for students with disabilities	4	53	45
Academic advising/counselling	29	49	43

Source: End of Term Survey, 2005

Table 49. Sources of Funding for Students with Disabilities – *Proportion Indicating Use (%)*

Source	No Disability	Disability
Money from parents	37	32
Money from other people that you don't have to pay back	7	9
Money from loans	55	53
Money from personal savings	69	60
Money from grants and contributions	19	26

Source: College Entry Survey, 2005

There were also some notable differences in the type of funding being used by those with learning disabilities and those with a physical disability. These differences exhibit themselves most strongly when the primary source of educational funding is considered (Table 50). Sources that only a small number of students reported using were omitted.

Money from parents was student's primary source of funding most often for those with a learning disability and least often by students reporting a physical disability. It is likely that the older age of respondents with a physical disability is the cause of at least some of this difference. Personal savings, though used less frequently by students with both types of disabilities, was also used least often by students with a physical disability. In contrast, loans were used more often by students with a physical disability than by students with a learning disability, though students reporting no disabilities relied on loans as the primary source of their educational funding most frequently. It is also interesting to note that grants and bursaries as well as other sources were used more often as the primary source for students with either type of disability; however, they were reported most often by those with a physical disability.

Additionally, when asked to indicate the number of hours they would be working while studying, a higher percentage of students with disabilities (40 percent compared to 30 percent) reported they would not be working at all.

Level of Concern with Finances

The results from college entry and end of term surveys (Table 51) showed a mixed picture about the level of concern that students with disabilities had regarding the financing of their education. At the time of the entry survey an equal proportion (about 50 percent) of disabled and non-disabled students indicated that paying for their education would not be a problem. By the end of the term the proportions who indicated this had decreased for both groups, but more significantly for disabled students.

On the other hand, the proportion of students indicating that difficulties financing their education may lead them to leave college increased both for students with disability and those without, by the end of the term. The increase was largest for students with a disability. Furthermore, at both college entry and at the end of term, a greater proportion of disabled students indicated that they could

Table 50. Primary Source of Funding For Students with Disabilities – *Proportion (%)*

Variable	Disability		
	None	**Learning**	**Physical**
Parents	28	34	17
Loans	37	32	35
Personal savings from working	21	18	13
Grants or bursaries	2	3	6
Other sources	6	7	20

Source: College Entry Survey

Table 51. Financial Concern for Students with Disabilities – *Proportion who Agree or Strongly Agree (%)*

Student Attitudes	College Entry		End of Term	
	Non-Disabled	Disabled	Non-Disabled	Disabled
I could benefit greatly from special help in securing financial aid for my education	58	62	63	66
Difficulty financing my studies may mean that I will have to leave college	16	20	23	29
Paying for my education is not going to be a problem for me this semester	49	48	40	36

Source: College Entry Survey, 2005 and End of Term Survey, 2005

benefit greatly from special help to secure financial aid. There were no real differences in financial concern between those with a learning disability as compared to those with a physical disability.

These findings point to differences in funding needs and options available to students with disabilities and between students with different types of disabilities. This is not surprising given that costs and resources will vary according to the type and severity of the disability.

Concern with Debt

Only small differences were observed between the different groups of students regarding their level of concern with debt and their ability to repay their debt after school. For instance, approximately 43 percent of all students at college entry indicated that they were very concerned about the amount of debt they will have to pay upon completion of their studies. However, examining only those students who reported using loans as a source of money to finance their education revealed that students with disabilities were somewhat more likely to be very concerned about their ability to repay their debt within a reasonable time frame (48 percent of non-disabled students compared to 52 percent of students from both disability types).

Results from the end of term survey revealed a similar disparity. More students with disabilities were very concerned

about the amount of debt they will accumulate (43 percent compared to 39 percent), as well as their ability to repay their debt upon completion (32 percent compared to 27 percent of the non-disabled group). Students with a physical disability were more likely to indicate being very concerned, with 44 percent reporting being very concerned about the amount of debt they will have accumulated compared to 41 percent of students with a learning disability.

7.9 **Student Attitudes and Educational Commitment**

Students with disabilities showed differences to non-disabled students across several dimensions of their attitudes towards their education. Students with a learning disability were the least confident about their ability to succeed and were the least sure of the relevance of their programs. On the other hand, students with physical disabilities were very similar to non-disabled students. The results are discussed below and summarized in Table 52.

Educational Commitment

The vast majority of students with disabilities who responded to the surveys at college entry and the end of term confirmed a strong educational commitment, although the level of educational commitment of respondents with a disability at the end of term was slightly lower than for

Table 52. Student Attitudes at End of Term – *Proportion who Agree or Strongly Agree (%)*			
	No Disability	**Learning**	**Physical**
Educational Commitment			
I may quit before I finish my program	5	9	7
I am determined to finish college	92	88	94
Preference for a job			
I would remain in college even if offered a job	63	61	57
I would rather be working full time	13	16	17
Occupational Certainty			
My program is directly related to my future work	73	70	75
Levels of Confidence in Succeeding			
I have the ability to succeed	94	85	91
I am well prepared to be successful	87	77	80
I am capable of B+ Average	84	68	77
Commitment to Program and Value of Education			
Many of the things I am learning are useless	11	14	12
I find my program interesting	86	82	86
Source: End of Term Survey, 2005			

students with no disability. For example, while students with a physical disability were the most likely to indicate that they were determined to finish college, students with a learning disability were the least likely.

Preference for a Job

Some college/institute students experience tension between persisting in a college/institute program and leaving for a full-time job. Overall respondents from both the disabled and non-disabled groups confirmed that they preferred to be studying rather than working. However, a smaller proportion of students with a physical disability indicated that would remain in college even if offered a full time job compared to students with a learning disability and students without a disability. Furthermore, students with a physical disability were the most likely to indicate that they would rather be working. However, it is likely that the age of the respondents has influenced these results.

Occupational Uncertainty

Occupational certainty is a factor in student persistence and completion in postsecondary programs, particularly for career-focused programs offered by colleges and institutes. The majority of students with disabilities agreed that their program was directly related to their work after graduation, confirmed by 75 percent of students with a physical disability and 70 percent of students with a learning disability. Approximately 73 percent of students without a disability did so.

Levels of Confidence in Succeeding

Students' confidence in their academic abilities differed between students with learning disabilities, students with

physical disabilities and students with no disability. General speaking, students with a learning disability were the least likely to indicate being confident of their success, followed by students with a physical disability. Students without a disability were the most likely to indicated being confident in their studies.

Value of Postsecondary Education

Overall, students with disabilities valued postsecondary education and considered that their college/institute programs helped to create a foundation for future learning. However, students with a learning disability were less likely to find their program content interesting or useful than were students with a physical disability or with no disability.

7.10 Student Attitudes towards their Faculty and Institution

The End of Term Survey also asked students about their perceptions and attitudes towards the faculty and their institution in general. The results are summarized in Table 53.

Faculty Interaction during the First Term

Although the results for disabled and non-disabled students were similar in that the majority of respondents confirmed positive interactions with faculty, fewer students with learning disabilities agreed/strongly agreed that faculty in their program showed an interest in helping students succeed or had a good relationship with students. They were also less likely to indicate that faculty were very good teachers. Students with a physical disability showed virtually no difference in their perceptions of faculty to students without a disability.

Table 53. Perceptions of Faculty and Institution at End of Term – *Proportion who Agree or Strongly Agree (%)*

	No Disability	Learning Disability	Physical Disability
Perception of Faculty			
Faculty showed an interest in helping students to succeed	79	71	78
Faculty are very good teachers	76	69	75
Faculty had a good relationship with their students	73	68	72
Perception of Institution			
Institution was interested in helping students to succeed	84	80	84
Institution treated students like a number in a book	18	25	18
Institution has programs to help students adjust to college life	66	56	64
Institution is excellent	82	78	80

Source: End of Term Survey, 2005

Students with Disabilities' Perceptions of their College/Institute

Students with a learning disability were less likely to indicate a positive response regarding the institution's attitude towards the students and its ability to provide useful services to the students. Students with a physical disability were somewhat less likely to indicate that the institution provided programs to help students integrate into college life or that their institution was excellent.

7.11 Concluding Remarks for Students with Disabilities

Participation on Campus

Student participation in campus activities provides a good measure of student engagement in college. Generally, just as for non-disabled students, students with disabilities spent more time just hanging out in the cafeteria, at the student pub and games room and in the library. However students with disabilities were more likely to have interacted with a peer mentor, to be involved in student association activities or in special interest clubs, but less likely to participate in intramural or varsity sports. NEADS has developed a very useful guide entitled "Making Extra-curricular Activities Inclusive – A Guide for Campus Programmers" which identified the benefits of participation in extra-curricular activities for personal growth, health and wellness, skills development and to increase students' sense of belonging and commitment to their institution and academic achievement. This guide also identified some of the barriers these students face that prevent them from participating in extra-curricular activities, including lack of transportation to and from the events, lack of accessible material formats, inaccessibility to the location and the modes of advertising events that do not consider the needs of students with disabilities so they are often unaware of campus activities. This guide would be helpful for college and institute staff responsible for services for students with disabilities, in particular for efforts to enhance disabled students engagement at colleges and institutes.

Financing Education

The significance of financial difficulties for students with disabilities was also substantiated in an environmental scan on the health and learning challenges of young adults conducted by ACCC in 2006 for the Health and Learning

Knowledge Centre of the Canadian Council on Learning. This environmental scan also examined the health and learning challenges of young adults with disabilities and confirmed that disability stakeholders identified adequate funding as the biggest barrier students with disabilities face for accessing postsecondary education given the disability related costs many incur. The Canada Student Loans Program, Canada Study Grants and provincial student financial assistance programs are recognized as key sources of funding to ensure access for students with disabilities, as well as for equipment and services costs related to accessing academic materials in formats of choice. However, a study conducted by Dawson College and NEADS found that students with disabilities had significant concerns over the cost of adaptive, computer and information technologies and were generally unaware of government programs they could apply to for assistance to pay for computer and adaptive technologies.

In order to address the financial challenges students with disabilities face, it will be important for colleges and institutes to have information on funding opportunities available to share with students with disabilities. These would include not only sources such as the Canada Student Loans Program and Canada Study Grants, but also government programs they could apply to for assistance for, as an example, adaptive or computer technologies which have been confirmed as beneficial and in many cases essential for students with disabilities. It would also be important that colleges and institutes include technologies for students with disabilities in their overall computer and information technology planning.

The most effective means for meeting the needs of students with disabilities is to have a central service office which facilitates access to information, coordinates accommodation and accessibility requirements of disabled students and helps to develop and implement accommodation policies. In the case of smaller institutions which do not have the resources to staff a centre, it would be important to have a designated person within the student services team responsible for coordinating the services for students with disabilities and help them connect to appropriate services within the college or the community if necessary.

8 Concluding Remarks

This, the second report of the Pan-Canadian Study of First Year Students, has highlighted the characteristics and experiences of students from four under-represented groups: Aboriginal students, recent immigrant students, visible minority students and students with disabilities. The results confirm that colleges and institutes have a significant role in the postsecondary education of students from each of these groups. In particular, colleges and institutes play a large role in the postsecondary education of Aboriginal students and students with disabilities. Furthermore, colleges and institutes are important for providing Canadian credentials for recent immigrants, and as a pathway to further education, which was especially valuable to both recent immigrants and visible minority students.

It is hoped that the results presented in each of the profiles will help to increase our understanding of the pathways that students from these underrepresented groups have taken to get to college, their attitudes and perceptions towards their learning experiences and needs, and the support services these students would benefit most from in order to overcome barriers, enhance their experience at college and contribute to the successful completion of their programs. The results also help to inform colleges and institutes in order that they may increase the effectiveness of services and programs offered to students from these under-represented groups. Furthermore, this report contributes to the growing research that will allow provincial and federal governments to create policies and programs for increasing access to postsecondary education.

It is clear that support services are key to ensuring the success of students from under-represented groups, as confirmed by the survey responses of students from these groups as well as previous work of ACCC and other stakeholders in examining how programs and services are delivered to Aboriginal students, immigrant students, and students with disabilities. It is also important for institutions to develop integrated approaches across college/institute departments and services and to foster partnerships with community organizations and service providers so that the varying needs of the students from under-represented groups can be met in an effective and more holistic manner.

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Appendix 1

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f.   Mr. Ted James, Dean, Student Services, Douglas College; BC

g.   Mr. Bob Priebe, V.P. Academic, Camosun College; BC

h.   Ms. Kim Tysick, V.P. Academic, Cégep Heritage College; QC

i.   Mr. Ken Webb, V.P. Academic, Red River College; MB

Appendix 2

Pan-Canadian Study of First Year College Students Survey Instruments

Survey of Student Characteristics (College Entry Survey)

Eight basic dimensions of new student characteristics were measured via the first survey. The modules making up this instrument and the variables contained within each are listed below.

Module 1: College & Respondent Identity and Status
- 12 items including: enrollment status, program length, program choice level

Module 2: Demographic & Family Background
- 18 items including: age, gender, Socio-Economic Status (SES), first language, minority status, citizenship status, number of dependents, activity prior to college, residence type

Module 3: Academic Background & Preparation
- Nine items including: highest level of education, college preparatory workshops, basic skills proficiency

Module 4: Secondary School Variables
- 12 items including: self-report high school average, attitudes on high school learning, high school academic behaviour

Module 5: Career Preparation, Selection & Certainty
- Seven items including: high school career guidance experience, career exploration, college program certainty/clarity

Module 6: Expectations of College
- 46 items including: hours working while studying, support needs and receptivity, college goals

Module 7: Financing College
- 13 items including: financing postsecondary education (PSE), family support for PSE, use of loans, financial concerns

Module 8: Attitudes
- 25 items including: confidence in success, perceived value of PSE, preference for job, commitment to graduation, career certainty

Module 9: Open ended Items
- Two items in this module allowed respondents to write their own comments on what their college could have done better and did to make the beginning of their studies easier

Survey of Student Experiences (End of Term Survey)

The modules making up this instrument and the variables contained within each are listed below

Module 1: College & Respondent Identity and Status
- 12 items including: enrollment status, program length, program choice level

Module 2: Demographic & Family Background
- 15 items including: age, gender, SES, first language, minority status, citizenship status, number of dependents, activity prior to college

Module 3: College Finances
- Four items including: financial concerns, highest level of education, college preparatory workshops

Module 4: Skills Self Assessment and Academic Behaviour
- 19 items including: self-reported basic skills proficiency, courses dropped, overall college average, study hours, class attendance, homework completion, college prep workshop

Module 5: College Academic Experiences

■ 63 items including: support needs and receptivity, difficulties in college, frequency of group study, perceptions of faculty and institution, frequency of faculty interaction

Module 6: Attitudes re: Confidence, Commitment and Certainty

■ 60 items including: hours financing PSE, confidence in success, perceived value of PSE, preference for job, commitment to graduation, career certainty, perception of program, value of PSE, intent to leave

Module 7: Time Use, Extracurricular Involvement and Service Use

■ 28 items including: use of time on campus, participation in extracurricular activities and frequency of college service use.

Module 8: Open Ended Items

■ This module contained four text-box items allowing students to make extensive comments related to their college experience, including challenges and aspects that went well during the first term.

Appendix 3

Survey at College Entry–Participating Colleges and Institutes

College Name

British Columbia/Yukon

Camosun College
Capilano College
College of New Caledonia
College of the Rockies
Columbia College
Douglas College
Emily Carr College of Art and Design
Kwantlen University College
Langara College
Malaspina University-College
Nicola Valley Institute of Technology
North Island College
Northern Lights College
Northwest Community College
Okanagan College
Selkirk College
Thompson Rivers University
Vancouver Community College

Alberta/Northwest Territories

Alberta College of Art and Design
Bow Valley College
Grande Prairie Regional College
Grant MacEwan College
Keyano College
Lakeland College
Medicine Hat College
Mount Royal College
NorQuest College
Northern Alberta Institute of Technology
Olds College
Southern Alberta Institute of Technology
Aurora College

Saskatchewan/Manitoba/Nunavut

Cypress Hills Regional College
North West Regional College
Northlands College
Parkland Regional College

Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies
Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology
Southeast Regional College
Assiniboine Community College
Collège universitaire de Saint-Boniface
Red River College
University College of the North
Winnipeg Technical College

Ontario

Algonquin College of Applied Arts and Technology
Cambrian College of Applied Arts and Technology
Canadore College of Applied Arts and Technology
Centennial College of Applied Arts and Technology
Collège Boréal
Conestoga College of Applied Arts and Technology
Confederation College of Applied Arts and Technology
Durham College
Fanshawe College of Applied Arts and Technology
George Brown College of Applied Arts and Technology
Georgian College of Applied Arts and Technology
Humber College Institute of Technology & Advanced Learning
La Cité collégiale
Lambton College of Applied Arts and Technology
Loyalist College of Applied Arts and Technology
Mohawk College of Applied Arts and Technology
Niagara College
Northern College of Applied Arts and Technology
Sault College of Applied Arts and Technology
Seneca College of Applied Arts and Technology
Sheridan College Institute of Technology and Advanced Learning
Sir Sandford Fleming College
St. Clair College of Applied Arts and Technology
St. Lawrence College
The Michener Institute for Applied Health Sciences

Québec

Cégep André-Laurendeau
Cégep de Drummondville
Cégep de Jonquière
Cégep de l'Outaouais
Cegep de Saint-Hyacinthe
Cégep de Saint-Laurent

Cégep de Sainte-Foy

Champlain Regional College

Collège André-Grasset

Collège de Rosemont

Collège Mérici

Collège Shawinigan

Dawson College

Heritage College

John Abbott College

Marianopolis College

Vanier College

Atlantic

CCNB - Campbellton

CCNB - Dieppe

CCNB - Edmundston

CCNB - Péninsule Acadienne

Collège Communautaire du Nouveau Brunswick

NBCC - College of Craft & Design

NBCC - Miramichi

NBCC - Moncton

NBCC - Saint John

NBCC - St. Andrews

NBCC - Woodstock

College of the North Atlantic

Nova Scotia Agricultural College

Nova Scotia Community College

University College of Cape Breton

Holland College

Société éducative de l'Île-du-Prince-Édouard

Appendix 4

Survey at End of First Term–Participating Colleges and Institutes

College Name

British Columbia/Yukon

Camosun College
Capilano College
College of New Caledonia
College of the Rockies
Douglas College
Justice Institute of British Columbia
Kwantlen University College
Langara College
Malaspina University-College
Nicola Valley Institute of Technology
North Island College
Okanagan College
Selkirk College
Thompson Rivers University
Vancouver Community College

Alberta/Northwest Territories

Alberta College of Art and Design
Bow Valley College
Grande Prairie Regional College
Grant MacEwan College
Lakeland College
Medicine Hat College
Mount Royal College
NorQuest College
Northern Alberta Institute of Technology
Olds College
Red Deer College
Southern Alberta Institute of Technology
Aurora College

Saskatchewan/Manitoba/Nunavut

Cypress Hills Regional College
North West Regional College
Prairie West Regional College
Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology
Southeast Regional College
Red River College
Assiniboine Community College
Nunavut Arctic College

Ontario

Algonquin College of Applied Arts and Technology
Cambrian College of Applied Arts and Technology
Canadore College of Applied Arts and Technology
Centennial College of Applied Arts and Technology
Collège Boréal
Collège d'Alfred
Conestoga College of Applied Arts and Technology
Confederation College of Applied Arts and Technology
Durham College
Fanshawe College of Applied Arts and Technology
George Brown College of Applied Arts and Technology
Georgian College of Applied Arts and Technology
Humber College Institute of Technology & Advanced Learning
La Cité collégiale
Lambton College of Applied Arts and Technology
Loyalist College of Applied Arts and Technology
Mohawk College of Applied Arts and Technology
Niagara College
Sault College of Applied Arts and Technology
Seneca College of Applied Arts and Technology
Sheridan College Institute of Technology and Advanced Learning
Sir Sandford Fleming College
St. Clair College of Applied Arts and Technology
St. Lawrence College
The Michener Institute for Applied Health Sciences

Québec

Cégep André-Laurendeau
Cégep de Sainte-Foy
Cégep du Vieux Montréal
Cégep Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu
Champlain Regional College
Collège Ahuntsic
Collège André-Grasset
Collège de Sherbrooke
Collège François-Xavier-Garneau
Collège Mérici
Collège Shawinigan
Heritage College
Institut de technologie agroalimentaire, campus de La Pocatière
John Abbott College
Vanier College

ATLANTIC

CCNB - Campbellton
CCNB - Dieppe
CCNB - Péninsule Acadienne
NBCC - College of Craft & Design
NBCC - Fredericton Centre
NBCC - Miramichi
NBCC - Moncton
NBCC - Saint John

NBCC - Woodstock
College of the North Atlantic
The Fisheries and Marine Institute
Nova Scotia Agricultural College
Nova Scotia Community College
University College of Cape Breton
Holland College
Société éducative de l'Île-du-Prince-Édouard