

of students and rampant grade inflation as professors succumb to the constant pressure for high marks. In other words, quality is sacrificed in the name of access. And while the authors build a pretty good case – through labour force statistics, survey results, grade distributions and the like – for their argument, it's still a pretty bitter pill to swallow.

Côté and Allahar go to great lengths to assure us that “there are no identifiable bad guys or good guys in the story we are telling” and, yet, there is subtle finger-pointing throughout, directed largely at the students themselves, and their parents. After chapters dedicated to “The Professor as Reluctant Gatekeeper,” “The Student as Reluctant Intellectual,” and “Parents as Investors and Managers,” the authors turn to policymakers with some advice. But instead of focusing on what could change in universities to promote student engagement and learning, Côté and Allahar's fixate on a system of “hard sorting” of students to weed out those who shouldn't be there. By this point, they have built a very powerful, well intentioned, and, indeed, caring case to reduce enrolment in Canadian universities. They are not mean; they simply believe that many students have been misled and poorly prepared and that there are better options for these young people. And yet their conclusions are strangely unpalatable, unsettlingly cynical.

Contrast this approach with Derek Bok's *Our Underachieving Colleges* – a much more reasoned, accessible and balanced examination of what's gone wrong with undergraduate education. Yes, it is American and, yes, Bok is a former President of Harvard, hardly a typical institution. And still this book fuels my daily work.

After deftly establishing that there is indeed a problem in undergraduate education, Bok sets forth the six tendencies in faculty attitudes that have given rise to this crisis – among them, the neglect of the extracurriculum. “Faculty members who review the undergraduate program...prefer to confine their deliberations to the formal educational program of the college, leaving the dean of students and other administrative officials to worry about the extracurriculum.” Administrators (that's us!), says Bok, have brought about most the important innovations in undergraduate education over the past few decades. He calls, however, for more faculty involvement in these endeavours: “[S]tudent experiences inside the classroom and out are often too closely intertwined to be kept separate in this way.”

The remainder of the book is structured around eight “purposes” of an undergraduate education, offering a pragmatic approach to change in each area: learning to communicate, learning to think, building character, preparation for citizenship, living with diversity, preparing for a global society, acquiring broader interests and preparing for a career.

In reading *Our Underachieving Colleges*, you will, occasionally, have to filter out context, trends and practices that are uniquely American or that are not applicable to your particular institutional mandate. But the same can be said for *Ivory Tower Blues*, in which my own institution is singled out as being unusual in its resistance to grade inflation.

I suggest reading both: *Ivory Tower Blues* because it represents the most significant critique of Canadian undergraduate education in decades and helps explain, if not resolve, the issues of student malaise and disillusionment we witness daily; *Our Underachieving Colleges* because it offers hope, purpose and direction to those of us concerned with ending the disillusionment.

# What Happens to Junior/Community College Students with Disabilities After They Graduate?

BY MARIA BARILE, CATHERINE S. FICHTEN, SHIRLEY JORGENSEN, ALICE HAVEL

Skeptics often ask, “Why should we support the students with disabilities in postsecondary education? The cost is too high! Does the extra cost produce results?” The Adaptech Research Network's findings provide some answers.

## What happens to students with disabilities after they graduate?

In 2005 we conducted a survey of graduates from three of Quebec's largest junior/community colleges, about 10 months after they obtained their diplomas (see Fichten et al., 2006 for additional details). We asked graduates what they were doing now and, if they were employed, how closely their job was linked to their program of studies. About 1/3 of the graduates, comprised of 1486 individuals from both career/technical and pre-university programs, completed the survey. Twelve percent (182) self-identified as having a disability. Of these, 24 (13%) had registered with their college for disability related services while the remaining 158 (87%) had not. Approximately 60% of graduates with and without disabilities had been enrolled in a two year pre-university program while the remaining 40% had enrolled in three year career/technical programs, such as nursing, mechanical engineering technology, and graphic design.

## What do the results tell us?

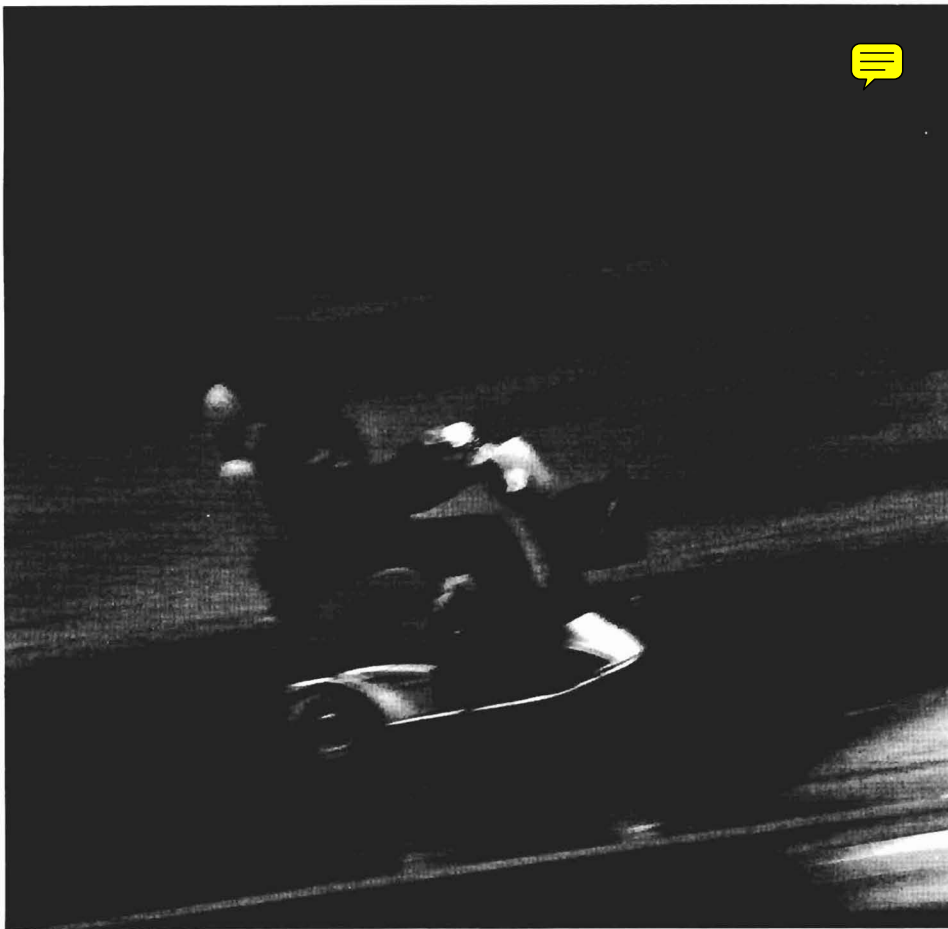
Our findings, detailed in Table 1, show that over 80% of pre-university graduates, both with and without disabilities, continued their studies following graduation.

The findings on career/technical program graduates again show few differences between graduates with and without disabilities. Approximately half of both groups were working full-time, whether they had a disability or not. An additional fourteen to fifteen percent were working part-time, and almost a third of both groups were continuing their studies.

Our findings about the employment and after graduation outcomes of individuals with disabilities paint a very positive picture. The majority of junior/community college graduates in pre-university programs continue their studies. About half of the graduates of college career/technical programs are working full-time and an additional 14%-15% are working part-time. In addition, approximately 1/3 are continuing their studies. These outcomes are consistent with our findings on graduates without disabilities. Our findings about what happens after graduation are also similar to the results of a recent survey of Quebec university graduates (AQICEBS, 2006), which found that 2/3 of 61 graduates who had registered for disability related services were employed.

## Obstacles and facilitators of academic studies

Now we can answer the skeptics. However, it is also important to know about the obstacles and facilitators these graduates faced during their studies. To find out more



about this we asked the same 1486 graduates to name the three most important factors that made their studies easier and the three that made it harder as well as to indicate three things that could have been done to make their academic lives easier. We coded their responses into 65 Facilitators and 65 Obstacles.

Graduates with and without disabilities noted virtually all of the same important facilitators. Examples are: good teachers, the college environment, one's motivation, one's program of studies, friends, good finances, good transportation, good courses, one's personal situation, and a good schedule. Overall, graduates with disabilities indicated that their classmates and the services provided by their college for students with disabilities were important facilitators while nondisabled graduates noted that their academic preparation was an important facilitator. These appear to be the only exceptions between the two groups. On other items there were no significant differences between graduates with and without disabilities.

Similarly, the most important obstacles were also shared. Examples are: difficult and boring courses, poor teachers, the college environment, poor schedules, one's personal situation, having to work at a job, poor finances, too many courses, and one's program of studies. Exceptions were that graduates with disabilities noted that their family posed an important obstacle as did poor motivation and the impact of their disability/impairment. On the other hand, slightly more nondisabled graduates, noted that inadequate availability of computers and their academic schedules posed problems.

#### Registering for disability related services

Twenty-four (13%) graduates had registered with their college for disability related services while the remaining 158 (86.8%) did not. It can be seen in Tables 3 and 4 that while there were many similarities between the two groups' perceived facilitators and obstacles, there were also important differences. In particular, graduates who had registered for disability related services noted that disability related accommodations were important facilitators for them while those not registered noted other types of facilitators, such as the college environment, their classmates, friends, family, finances, study skills, and personal situation in general, as well as good transportation and library facilities.

**Table 1 Activities After Graduation – Pre-University Graduates**

Pre-University Program Graduates	Sample Size	Working Full Time	Working Part Time	Looking for Work	Studying	Unavailable For Work	Total
With A Disability	90	10%	4%	1%	83%	1%	100%
Registered for Disability Related Services	12	0%	0%	0%	92%	8%	100%
Not Registered for Disability Related Services	78	12%	5%	1%	82%	0%	100%
No Disability	752	8%	5%	2%	84%	2%	100%

**Table 2 Activities After Graduation – Career/Technical Graduates**

Pre-University Program Graduates	Sample Size	Working Full Time	Working Part Time	Looking for Work	Studying	Unavailable For Work	Total
With A Disability	86	51%	15%	1%	30%	2%	100%
Registered for Disability Related Services	11	36%	9%	0%	55%	0%	100%
Not Registered for Disability Related Services	75	53%	16%	1%	27%	3%	100%
No Disability	540	49%	14%	3%	31%	3%	100%

**Table 3. Commonalities: Important Facilitators: Graduates Registered And Not Registered For Disability Related Services**

<b>Graduates Registered For Disability Related Services</b>	
teachers*	52%
services for students with disabilities	43%
motivation*	17%
support, help*	13%
note taker	13%
program of studies*	9%
courses*	9%
schedule*	9%
easy courses*	9%
computers*	9%
learning center, tutor	9%
sensitization & info. about disabilities	9%

**Graduates Not Registered For Disability Related Service**

teachers*	55%
college environment	22%
motivation*	18%
friends	15%
program of studies*	15%
finances	15%
transportation	14%
personal situation	10%
interesting courses*	10%
schedule*	8%
classmates	8%
easy courses*	6%
family	6%
library	6%
support, help*	5%
computers*	5%
study skills	5%

\*Common to both groups. Important facilitators and obstacles are those noted by at least 5% of participants.

It can be seen in Table 4 that graduates registered for disability related services were likely to see their disability/impairment, their health, and poor access to computers as important obstacles while graduates with disabilities who did not

register did not note these as obstacles. They did, however, note that their course load and program of studies posed obstacles along with transition issues, transportation problems, their family situations and a low level of motivation.

**Table 4. Commonalities Between Obstacles: Graduates Registered And Not Registered For Disability Related Services**

**Graduates Registered For Disability Related Service**

personal situation*	22%
disability, impairment	22%
boring courses*	17%
teachers*	17%
job*	13%
difficult courses*	9%
college environment*	9%
schedule*	9%
finances*	9%
study skills*	9%
computers	9%
health	9%

**Graduates Not Registered For Disability Related Service**

difficult courses*	26%
boring courses*	20%
teachers*	15%
college environment*	15%
schedule*	13%
job*	12%
personal situation*	12%
many courses	11%
finances*	10%
program of studies	9%
transportation	9%
transition	6%
study skills*	6%
family	6%
motivation	6%

\*Common to both groups. Important facilitators and obstacles are those noted by at least 5% of participants.

**Changes graduate would like to see.**

Changes suggested by all graduates included: better schedules, improving the college system and programs, better teachers, more available computer technologies, more support and help as well as improvements to the physical environment of the college. A slightly larger proportion of graduates with than without disabilities suggested the need for easier courses, better building accessibility and more government support.

**Conclusions**

Students with and without disabilities not only graduate at the same rate as nondisabled students (Jorgensen et al., 2005) but they also have very similar post-graduation outcomes. They also identify similar obstacles and facilitators with one exception: disability related barriers and supports. Disability related accommodation was among the most important facilitators reported by students with disabilities

So... to answer the skeptics, we can say, with confidence, that investing in the educational future of young people with disabilities is a profitable and worthwhile investment.

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