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Maritime Provinces Higher
Education Commission

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Commission de l'enseignement supérieur
des Provinces maritimes

MARITIME PROVINCES HIGHER EDUCATION COMMISSION – University or college? High-school students share the expectations that drive their choices

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Fredericton (NB) - Whether Grade 12 students in the Maritimes choose to go either to university (as almost half of them are doing) or to college, they expect that a quality education will provide them with tangible value and many options, according to a survey done by the Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission (MPHEC). The Commission has released an infographic exploring the similarities and differences between the expectations of those who are university-bound or heading for college.

It may come as a surprise to some, but the expectations of university-bound vs college-bound grade 12 students are very similar. “We have already released information about how Grade 12 students approach their university education with a very practical turn of mind,” said Commission CEO, Mireille Duguay. “And those who choose college are focused on the same drivers.”

Whether they are university or college bound, Grade 12 students are looking for in-depth knowledge (university-bound 77%, college-bound 68%), a chance to earn a good income (university 59%, college 58%) and to learn skills for a job (77% of the college-bound, 70% of university-bound students). Other reasons to attend post-secondary institutions include finding a path in life and improving decision-making ability.

Where the two groups start to diverge is in the areas of personal and skills development: the university-bound have higher expectations. Almost two-thirds of them expect university to prepare them for further study, and more than 60% want a rich intellectual learning experience and to develop critical thinking, compared to responses consistently in the 40s range for those questions among college-bound respondents. And only 15% of those headed for college expect to improve their writing skills, for example, whereas more than twice as many of the university-bound have that goal in mind.

“What MPHEC’s research provides, as always, is high-quality and timely data to assist students, post-secondary institutions, and provincial governments with decision support, and to inform the public of key trends and emerging issues. Certainly this snapshot of which paths our high-school students are choosing, and why will generate fruitful dialogue among our stakeholders,” concluded Duguay.

The survey was conducted by MQO Research on behalf of the Commission, and in collaboration with the departments of Education in the three Maritime provinces, between May 9—June 11, 2014 in 175 Maritime high schools. Surveys were administered online by participating schools, and were available in English and French. The total sample of 5,219 represents 25% of the total grade 12 population of 20,805. The margin of error for the survey is $\pm 1.4\%$, 19 times out of 20. All statistics presented have been generated from weighted data; data were weighted on the basis of school board within each province to adjust to proportional representation in the population.



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An infographic with highlights of the survey results is available on the Commission's web site at www.mphec.ca.

The MPHEC was established in 1974. The MPHEC is an arm's length organization accountable to the ministers responsible for postsecondary education in the Maritimes. The Commission comprises 20 members representing universities, the public-at-large (including students), and the three Maritime governments. The Commission's primary orientation in carrying out its duties is to give first consideration to improving and maintaining the best possible service to students as lifelong learners.

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