

6 Accountability / Results / Perceptions

Ontario college students receive education and training that is internationally recognized. They are taught by faculty that have extensive experience, strong academic credentials and teach in well-equipped labs.

The colleges deliver results, as confirmed by independent research. More than 90 per cent of graduates find employment within six months of graduation. More than 93 per cent of employers report being satisfied with the quality of the graduates hired.

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1.0 Introduction

Performance measurement has taken on heightened importance in colleges as the need increases for graduates equipped with the skills and abilities to build an adaptable, competitive workforce.

This section outlines accountability measures and processes that ensure responsible investment of public funds, demonstrates results achieved through reporting on Key Performance Indicators, and examines perceptions of applicants, students, graduates and employers.

Accountability framework

Ontario colleges are responsive to students, employers and the public and have processes and measures built into their structure to demonstrate their accountability to the community, government and to the public. Accountability processes include:

- Developing a strategic plan, business plan, and an annual report including financial statements, which are submitted to government following approval by their respective board of governors.
- Creating fiscal, enrolment and other annual audits. In 2006/07, colleges reported undergoing more than 200 different audits.
- Reporting to the community through respective boards of governors, whose members include business and community leaders.
- Each college reports to program advisory committees that are comprised of community employers.
- Complying with more than 100 program standards developed in cooperation with employers, labour, professional and regulatory bodies and educators, as well as compliance with the province's credentials framework, which also sets out program level outcomes, curriculum standards, and essential employability skills requirements.
- Reviewing programs regularly to ensure ongoing quality relevancy, and currency.

- Undergoing arm's-length audits that ensure quality assurance mechanisms are effective and consistent with international best practices.
- Reporting to the public on Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).

2.0 Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

2.1 KPI overview

Ontario college reporting of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) on graduate outcomes, graduate satisfaction and employer satisfaction began in the fall of 1998. Beginning in 2000-01, KPIs have been included in the government funding decisions for a portion of the allocations to colleges. The amount of performance funding has remained constant for the last six years at \$16.4 million and is distributed to each college according to a formula that reflects the institution's size and its KPI scores. Student satisfaction data has also been collected since 1998-99, but is not tied to funding distribution. All students are surveyed beyond their first semester, and graduates and employers are surveyed six months after student graduation.

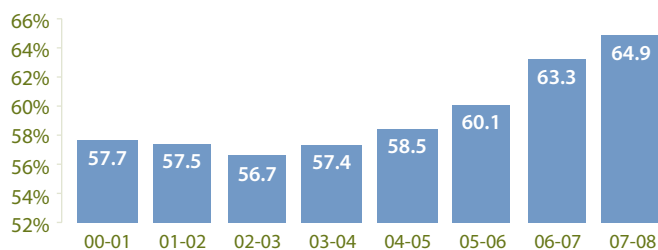
2.2 Trends in Key Performance Indicators

Over the past year, there have been positive gains in all overall ratings. The graduation rate increased by 1.6 per cent over the past year alone and the trend over time shows continued improvement (figure 1). Over the past year, smaller increases were reported in the satisfaction rates (figure 2) [F1](#) [F2](#):

Figure 1

F1

Trends in graduation rates, 2000-01 to 2007-08 *

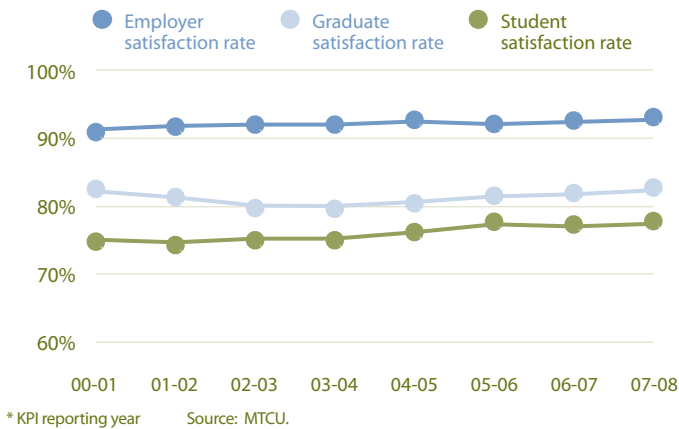


* KPI reporting year Source: Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU).

Figure 2

F2

Trends in student, graduate and employer satisfaction rates (percentages very satisfied / satisfied), 2000-01 to 2007-08*

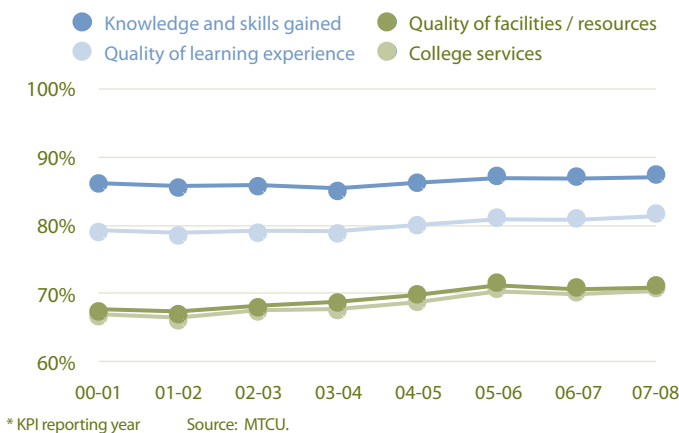


Student satisfaction rate: This rate is calculated from the average of four key questions on the *Student Satisfaction Survey*: the students' program is giving them the knowledge and skills that will be useful in their future career; overall quality of the learning experience; overall quality of facilities/resources; and the overall quality of services. The average satisfaction rate for students in the 2007-08 academic year was 77.9 per cent, a slight increase from 77.4 per cent in the previous year (figure 3) (F3).

Figure 3

F3

Trends in student satisfaction KPI results (percentages very satisfied / satisfied) 2000-01 to 2007-08*

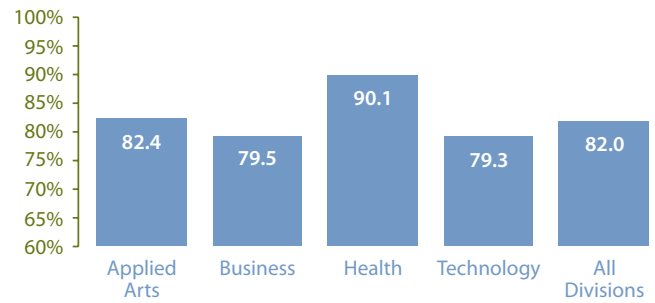


Graduate satisfaction rate: This is determined from the percentage of graduates who are very satisfied/satisfied with the usefulness of their college education in achieving their goals after graduation. For the 2006-07 graduates, 82.8 per cent were satisfied or very satisfied, up from 82 per cent in the previous year. By division, Health Sciences students had the highest overall satisfaction rate (figure 4) (F4).

Figure 4

F4

Graduate satisfaction by division (2005-06 graduates, six months after graduation; percentages very satisfied / satisfied)



Source: 2007 Employment Profile, MTCU.

Employer satisfaction rate: In the *Graduate Satisfaction Survey*, respondents are asked to provide their employers' contact information; the employers are then surveyed. The employer satisfaction rate is determined from the employers' overall satisfaction with their employees' "college preparation for the type of work he/she is doing." When compared to results from the previous year, the rate increased slightly, going from 92.6 per cent to 93.1 per cent.

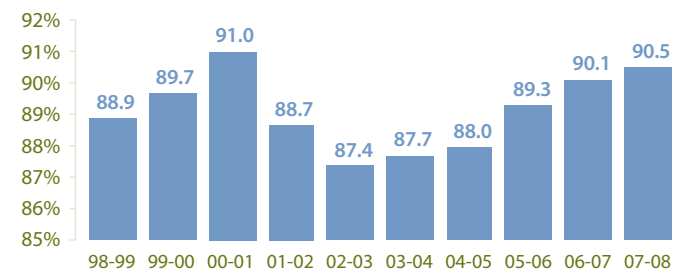
Graduation rate: The KPI graduation rate is based on the proportion of students who completed one-year programs within two years, two-year programs within three years, and three-year programs within five years. For example, the 2006-07 KPI graduation rate is based on students who started one-year programs in 2005-06, two-year programs in 2003-04, and three-year programs in 2001-2002, and who had graduated by 2006-07. It increased from 63.3 per cent last year to 64.9 per cent this year (figure 1) (F1).

Employment rate: The KPI employment rate is the percentage of graduates who are working full or part time within six months of graduation. It excludes those who are in school full time, or are not actively looking for work. It increased from 90.1 per cent in 2006-07 to 90.5 per cent in 2007-08 (figure 5) (F5).

Figure 5

F5

Trends in graduate employment rates (percentages employed six months after graduation) over the last 10 years*



* KPI reporting year Source: MTCU.

3.0 Perceptions of high school students

In 2005-06, Alan King and colleagues at the Social Policy Evaluation Group at Queen's University conducted a survey of Ontario high school students to examine their perceptions of postsecondary education and colleges in particular. Highlights of the survey were previously reported in the 2007 *Environmental Scan*. The full report, *Transition to College: Perspectives of Secondary School Students*, was released in November 2006, and is available at www.collegesontario.org.

Over the past year, no new data are available at a provincial level. However, the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) conducted a survey of 105,000 students from Grades 7 to 12 and published their findings in *Research Report: 2006 Student Census, Grades 7-12: System Overview*. The report was released in October 2007. Despite the fact that the study was conducted locally, highlights are included below because the information concerning students' future plans was gathered from such a large number of participants.

For the study, students from Grades 7 to 12 in 289 schools were asked to complete an in-class survey about a wide range of topics, including their future postsecondary education plans and expectations. The response rate was 92 per cent for the Grades 7 and 8 students, and 82 per cent for the Grade 9 to 12 students. The complete report, including details on the methodology, is available from the following website: http://www3.thestar.com/static/PDF/2006studentcensus_overview.pdf.

3.1 Future education plans and expectations

Students were asked about postsecondary school plans, and their perceptions of their parents' expectations. Responses from Grades 7 and 8 students revealed a close match between students' plans and their perceptions of their parents' expectations regarding colleges and universities:

- More than half of students planned to go to university, and 18 per cent to colleges.
- Nearly 20 per cent of students indicated they were unsure of their postsecondary plans and 23 per cent perceived that their parents were not sure about postsecondary expectations.

Results for the same questions in the Grades 9 to 12 group revealed:

- The proportion of undecided students dropped to 13 per cent and the proportion who perceived their parents were unsure dropped to 14 per cent.
- The percentage of students who planned to go to university rose to 60 and the percentage who indicated this was their parents' expectation rose to 67 per cent. Fifteen per cent indicated they planned to go to college and approximately the same percentage perceived their parents expected them to go to college.
- Three per cent of high school students indicated they planned to pursue apprenticeship, and only one per cent indicated this was their parents' expectation.

When the results of the TDSB study are compared with those of the 2006 King study, the results are similar, despite the fact the King study surveyed students in Grades 11 and 12 and those completing a fifth year, while Grades 9 to 12 were surveyed in the high school segment of the TDSB study. Both studies report relatively the same percentage of high school students planning to go to college. For students planning to go to university, the TDSB study revealed that 60 per cent of high school students planned to go while the King study reported that 50 per cent planned to go either directly or after time off school. Overall, just under 60 per cent of students in the King study indicated their parents wanted them to attend university, compared to over 65 per cent of students in the TDSB study.

4.0 Perceptions of college applicants

The *2007 Ontario College Applicant Survey Final Report* by Academica Group contains the results of their fifth annual survey. The report contains demographic and other data for applicants to Ontario's 24 colleges, including their perceptions of colleges and the factors influencing their college choices. In comparison to other years, the 2007 survey has a greater focus on the use and influence of colleges marketing materials and recruitment techniques. Completed surveys were received from 14,775 English and 763 French respondents of the 53,922 applicants surveyed, representing a 28.8 per cent response rate. By comparison, the 2006 response rate was 26 per cent. Highlights of the report are included below. For more detailed information, the complete report can be obtained from the Colleges Ontario website:

<http://www.collegesontario.org>

The report classifies applicants into four different types according to their previous education for comparison purposes. The categories and corresponding percentages of the total number of responses are listed below.

Direct Entry - those who applied directly from high school, representing 46 per cent of applicants who responded.

Delayed entry - applicants who had left or graduated from high school at least one year prior and had no postsecondary education (PSE) experience, representing 15 per cent.

PSE transfer - those planning to transfer directly from another postsecondary education institution, representing 25 per cent.

Former PSE students - applicants who left or graduated from a postsecondary institution at least one year prior to their planned enrolment in college, representing 13 per cent.

Highlights of the survey findings are given in the following sections.

4.1 Marketing influences

Applicants were given a list of sources and were asked to identify the sources they used to select their first choice college. They were also asked to identify the most influential source of college information. Websites were both the most used and the most influential sources for applicants.

Almost all (95 per cent) respondents indicated they had visited college websites and considered them very influential, and 42 per cent of all applicants surveyed visited four or more.

Three-quarters of applicants used print materials such as viewbooks, calendars, and program brochures, making this the second most influential source of college information. The mean influence rankings for sources of information are given in figure 6 (F6).

English-language and French-language applicants rated sources as equally appealing, but English-language applicants were more likely to report more positively on helpfulness of calendars and viewbooks than French-language applicants.

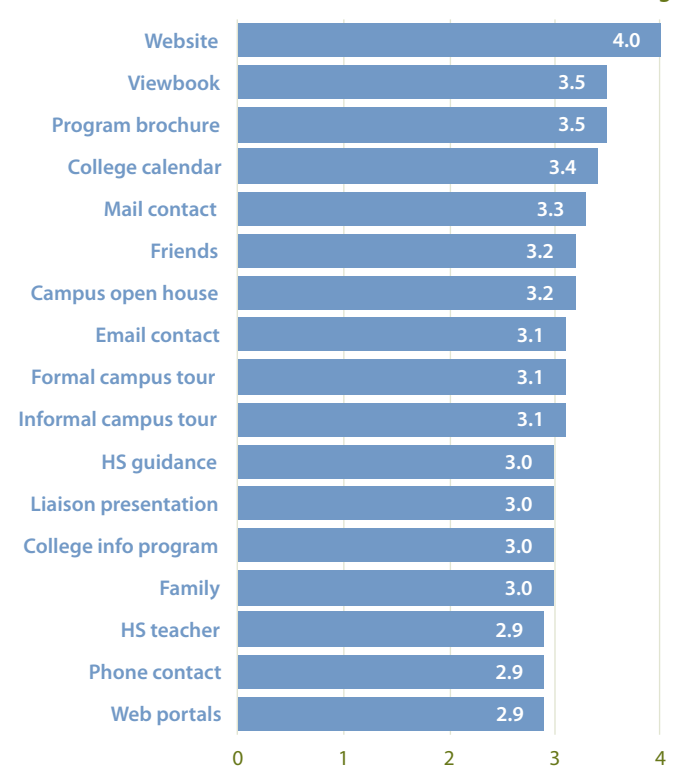
When rating helpfulness of first choice college resources, applicants considered viewbooks to be more helpful than calendars.

Websites

When asked about available website features for their chosen college, just over 50 per cent of applicants spent the most time

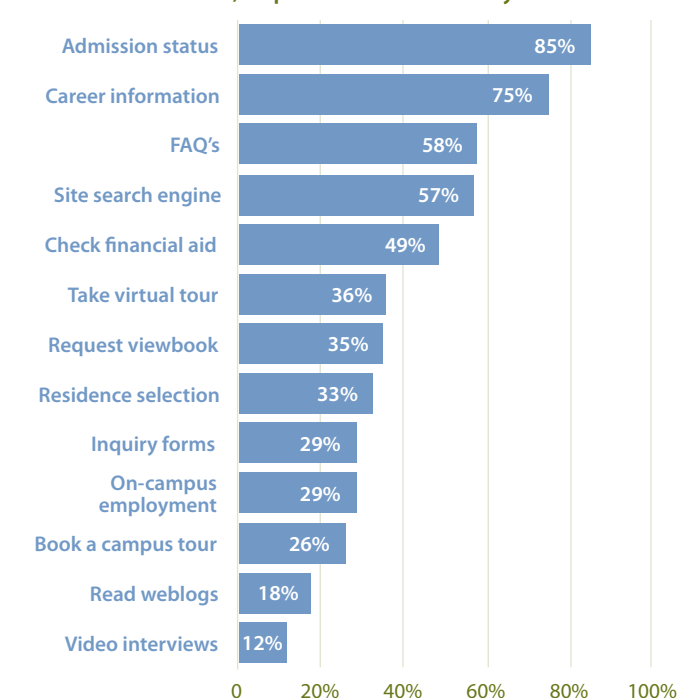
on the prospective student pages and 25 per cent chose the faculty pages. Figure 7 lists the most popular website features for applicants who indicated websites were a source of influence when selecting a first choice college (F7).

Figure 6 Mean influence of information sources to select first choice college



Source: 2007 College Applicant Survey.

Figure 7 Website features used, respondents influenced by website



Source: 2007 College Applicant Survey.

College print materials

Three-quarters of applicants used print materials and one-third considered them more than somewhat influential. About 50 per cent of applicants reported high school guidance counsellors as the primary source for print materials.

Most applicants scanned two of each type of publication, and younger applicants were more likely to use multiple viewbooks and calendars. All applicants considered viewbooks to be more helpful to decision-making than calendars, and applicants with postsecondary education experience were more likely than those with high school backgrounds to rate calendars as helpful.

Personal recommendations

At least three-quarters of applicants used personal recommendations from friends or family to select their first-choice college. While high school guidance counsellors and teachers exerted less influence, one-quarter of applicants rated guidance counsellors as quite or very influential, and one in five rated high school teachers similarly.

College liaison activities

When communicating with high school applicants, colleges carry out a variety of liaison activities including mail, email, phone contact, high school visits, and campus tours. About three-quarters of high school applicants reported using the post-application mail contact to help them choose their first-choice school, almost as many used email contact, and just over half used phone contact. Those who were influenced by personal contact considered mail or email to be more influential than phone contact.

Over half of the applicants used campus visits as sources of information. When asked about the use and influence formal campus tours, open houses and informal tours, applicants rated them similarly, with one in five applicants finding them quite or very influential.

4.2 Decision to attend college

The survey reported on applicant responses to a series of questions to elicit more detailed information about applicants' decision making processes.

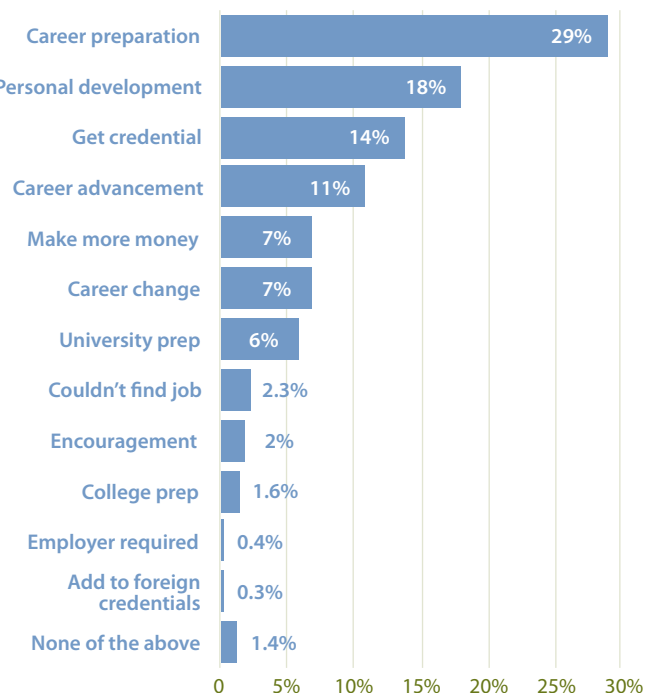
Reasons

When asked to select the single most important reason for deciding to apply to a college, 29 per cent of the applicants selected career preparation. Figure 8 lists respondents' main reasons (F8).

Figure 8

F8

Main reasons for deciding to apply to a college



Source: 2007 College Applicant Survey.

When the results were analyzed by applicant type, personal development was a particularly important reason to those categorized as *direct entry* and *delayed entry*, while career change was most likely to be selected by respondents in the *former PSE* category.

Type of institution

Over 70 per cent of applicants applied only to college and 13 per cent applied to both college and university. When dual applicants were categorized by type, approximately 17 per cent fell in the *direct entry* category and, in contrast, only five per cent were classified as *delayed entry*.

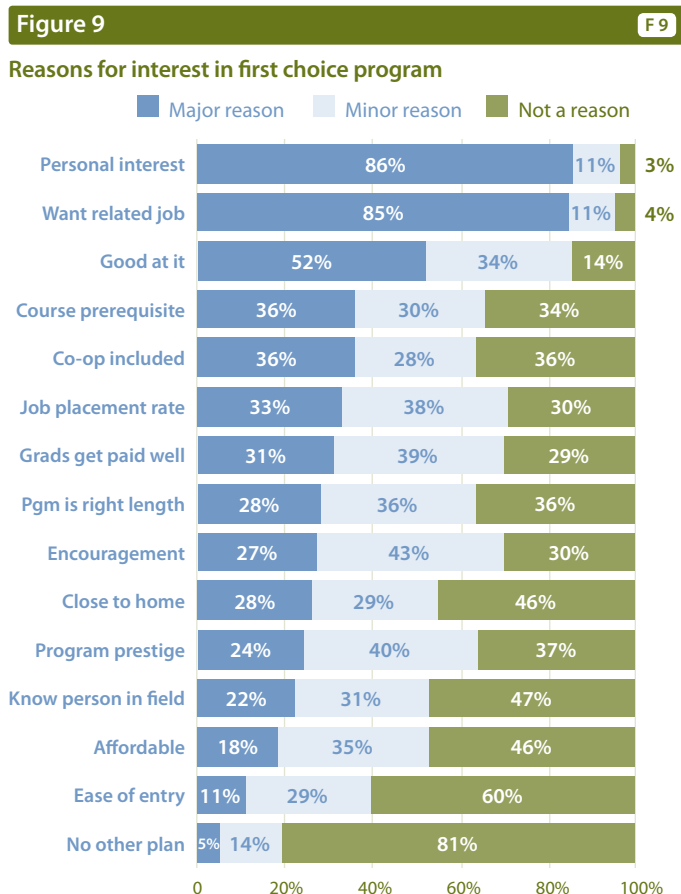
Type of credential sought

When asked about the type of credential they intended to obtain, approximately 45 per cent of applicants indicated their intent to obtain a diploma, more than one-quarter intended to obtain an advanced diploma, 10 per cent intended to obtain a certificate, and nine per cent a joint college-university degree. French-language applicants were slightly more interested in applied degrees and joint college-university programs than were English-language applicants.

Choice of program

Overall, a majority of applicants indicated an interest in health science programs. When analyzed by language, there were some minor variations noted.

Most applicants indicated the major reasons for their interest in first-choice program were personal interest and the desire to obtain a related job. Figure 9 shows the list of reasons presented and their classification as major, minor, or not a reason by applicants (F9).



Source: 2007 College Applicant Survey.

Living arrangements

When asked about living arrangements for their first-choice college, 60 per cent of applicants responded that they did not intend to relocate, 18 per cent said they intended to live in residence and 19 per cent intended to rent off-campus. Analysis by applicant type revealed that direct and delayed entry applicants were the most likely groups to relocate, with 28 per cent in the direct entry category and 17 per cent in the delayed entry group indicating they would live in residence.

Financial considerations:

When asked if they planned to apply to the Ontario student aid program to finance their college education, 62 per cent responded that they planned to apply, six per cent had already applied, and 32 per cent did not plan to apply. Predictably, 78 per cent of applicants from low-income households (under \$30,000 per year) planned to seek financial assistance, compared to 30 per cent of those from high income (greater than \$150,000) households. Less than 50 per cent of direct entry applicants report that they will have access to parental savings, compared to 28 per cent of applicants categorized as delayed entry, 32 per cent categorized as PSE transfer students, and 19 per cent in the former PSE category.

Using data from the questions on funding sources, the 2007 report estimated the overall average debt load for the first year of college to be \$6,685, reflecting a four per cent increase over the 2006 estimate.

When asked if they were concerned about their ability to repay debt incurred for college education, two-thirds of respondents were somewhat or very concerned.

5.0 Perceptions of college students

Student Satisfaction Survey

Since 1998-99, all Ontario college students beyond their first semesters have been surveyed in class about their satisfaction with four key areas:

- How learning experiences in their programs relate to their future careers (knowledge and skills obtained).
- Overall quality of the learning experiences.
- Quality of facilities/resources in the colleges.
- Quality of services in the colleges.

Satisfaction with academic components specific to teaching and learning experiences have been rated highly:

- Eighty-seven per cent were satisfied or very satisfied that their programs provided them with skills and abilities specific to their chosen careers.
- Eighty-six per cent were satisfied or very satisfied that their programs included topics relevant to their future success.

- Eighty-six per cent were satisfied or very satisfied with their teachers' knowledge of subjects.
- Eighty-four per cent were satisfied or very satisfied that their teachers were up-to-date/current in their fields.
- Eighty-three per cent were satisfied or very satisfied that their programs developed their ability to work with others.

The quality of other key areas of facilities/resources and services that impact students' experiences, however, have not been rated as strongly. Of those students who made use of these services:

- Fifty-seven per cent were satisfied or very satisfied with their colleges' special skills services.
- Fifty-seven per cent were satisfied or very satisfied with their colleges' employment/placement/career services.
- Fifty-four per cent were satisfied or very satisfied with their colleges' bookstores.
- Forty-nine per cent were satisfied or very satisfied with their colleges' cafeteria/food services.

6.0 Perceptions of graduates and employers

College graduates

Some highlights from the *2006-07 Graduate Satisfaction Survey* include:

- Eighty-five per cent were satisfied or very satisfied with their colleges' preparation for the type of work they were doing.
- Ninety-one per cent were satisfied that the course material in their programs was up to date.
- Eighty-nine per cent were satisfied with the course content and 88 per cent with the overall quality of instruction.
- Eighty-nine per cent of college graduates would recommend their programs to someone else, and 96 per cent would recommend their colleges.

Perception of graduates' skills and abilities by graduates and employers

In the *Graduate Satisfaction Survey*, employed graduates are asked to provide the contact information of their employers. More than 7,000 employers were surveyed to collect information regarding their satisfaction with the 2005-06 graduates they employed. Results revealed that 85 per cent of graduates

were satisfied or very satisfied with their colleges' overall preparation for the type of work they were doing, compared to 93 per cent of employers who were satisfied or very satisfied with the colleges' overall preparation for the type of work the graduates were doing.

On both the graduate and employer satisfaction surveys, respondents were asked the same set of questions about the graduates' various skills and abilities. Table 1 shows how college graduates' self-evaluations and employer evaluations compared [\(T1\)](#).

Table 1

T1

Graduate and employer satisfaction with graduates' educational preparation for various skills and abilities (percentage very satisfied and satisfied)

| | Graduate satisfaction | Employer satisfaction |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| A. Specific job-related knowledge | 84 | 89 |
| B. Specific job-related skills | 86 | 90 |
| C. Oral communication | 90 | 91 |
| D. Written communications | 88 | 89 |
| E. Comprehension | 92 | 94 |
| F. Math skills | 72 | 81 |
| G. Computer skills | 82 | 89 |
| H. Critical thinking | 90 | 88 |
| I. Problem solving | 90 | 88 |
| J. Research and analysis | 81 | 74 |
| K. Teamwork | 92 | 94 |
| L. Organization and planning | 90 | 89 |
| M. Time management | 88 | 88 |
| N. Quality of work | 91 | 94 |
| O. Productivity | 89 | 91 |
| P. Creative and Innovative | 81 | 81 |
| Q. Adaptable | 89 | 94 |
| R. Responsible | 93 | 95 |

Source: MTCU.

Some highlights include:

- Ninety-four per cent of employers and 92 per cent of graduates were satisfied or very satisfied with the highly valued skills of teamwork.
- Ninety-four per cent of employers and 91 per cent of graduates were satisfied or very satisfied with the quality of work.
- Ninety-four per cent of employers were satisfied or very satisfied with their new employees' ability to adapt to new situations and demands by applying and/or updating their knowledge and skills.
- Ninety-one per cent of employers were satisfied or very satisfied with their new employee's productivity.

Appendix 1

A 1

Ontario Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology - Key Performance Indicators 2000-01 to 2007-08 *

| Reporting year | 2000-01 | 2001-02 | 2002-03 | 2003-04 | 2004-05 | 2005-06 | 2006-07 | 2007-08 |
|--|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Graduate employment rate (%) | 91.0 | 88.7 | 87.4 | 87.7 | 88.0 | 89.3 | 90.1 | 90.5 |
| Graduate satisfaction rate (%) | 57.7 | 57.5 | 56.7 | 57.4 | 58.5 | 60.1 | 63.3 | 64.9 |
| Very satisfied/satisfied | 82.6 | 81.4 | 79.8 | 79.7 | 80.5 | 81.6 | 82.0 | 82.8 |
| Neither | 9.3 | 9.7 | 11.0 | 10.5 | 10.3 | 9.9 | 10.0 | 10.0 |
| Very dissatisfied/dissatisfied | 8.0 | 8.9 | 9.1 | 9.8 | 9.2 | 8.5 | 8.0 | 7.2 |
| Employer satisfaction rate (%) | | | | | | | | |
| Very satisfied/satisfied | 90.9 | 91.7 | 92.0 | 92.0 | 92.7 | 92.1 | 92.6 | 93.1 |
| Neither | 6.3 | 6.0 | 6.0 | 5.4 | 4.6 | 5.1 | 4.8 | 4.2 |
| Very dissatisfied/dissatisfied | 2.9 | 2.4 | 2.0 | 2.6 | 2.7 | 2.9 | 2.6 | 2.7 |
| Student satisfaction rate (%) | | | | | | | | |
| Very satisfied/satisfied | 74.9 | 74.4 | 75.1 | 75.1 | 76.3 | 77.8 | 77.4 | 77.9 |
| Neither | 17.6 | 18.6 | 17.9 | 17.8 | 17.1 | 16.2 | 16.4 | 16.2 |
| Very dissatisfied/dissatisfied | 7.5 | 7.0 | 7.0 | 7.0 | 6.6 | 6.1 | 6.1 | 5.9 |
| Knowledge and skills gained (%) (question 14) | | | | | | | | |
| Very satisfied/satisfied | 86.2 | 85.6 | 85.8 | 85.1 | 86.3 | 87.3 | 87.2 | 87.5 |
| Neither | 9.2 | 10.3 | 9.8 | 10.4 | 9.7 | 8.8 | 9.0 | 8.8 |
| Very dissatisfied/dissatisfied | 4.6 | 4.1 | 4.3 | 4.5 | 4.0 | 3.9 | 3.8 | 3.7 |
| Quality of learning experiences (%) (question 26) | | | | | | | | |
| Very satisfied/satisfied | 79.1 | 78.6 | 79.0 | 78.9 | 80.1 | 81.2 | 81.1 | 81.8 |
| Neither | 14.7 | 15.7 | 15.2 | 15.3 | 14.5 | 13.7 | 13.7 | 13.4 |
| Very dissatisfied/dissatisfied | 6.2 | 5.8 | 5.8 | 5.9 | 5.4 | 5.1 | 5.2 | 4.8 |
| Quality of facilities/resources (%) (question 44) | | | | | | | | |
| Very satisfied/satisfied | 67.5 | 67.1 | 68.1 | 68.8 | 70.0 | 71.7 | 71.0 | 71.3 |
| Neither | 22.6 | 23.5 | 22.5 | 22.2 | 21.4 | 20.5 | 20.9 | 20.8 |
| Very dissatisfied/dissatisfied | 9.9 | 9.4 | 9.3 | 9.0 | 8.6 | 7.8 | 8.0 | 7.8 |
| Quality of college services (%) (question 45) | | | | | | | | |
| Very satisfied/satisfied | 66.8 | 66.2 | 67.5 | 67.7 | 68.9 | 70.8 | 70.3 | 70.9 |
| Neither | 24.0 | 25.0 | 23.9 | 23.5 | 22.9 | 21.7 | 22.2 | 21.8 |
| Very dissatisfied/dissatisfied | 9.3 | 8.8 | 8.6 | 8.7 | 8.2 | 7.5 | 7.5 | 7.3 |

* Graduate data for the KPI reporting year refer to graduates of the previous academic year.

Source: MTCU.

Web sites of interest

| Organization/Subject | Website |
|---|---|
| Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities | http://www.edu.gov.on.ca |
| KPI Section of MTCU Site | http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/postsec/colindicator.html |
| Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation | http://www.millenniumscholarships.ca/en/main.html |
| Human Resources and Skills Development | http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/ |