

CONCLUSION

Post-Secondary Participation:

The findings from the Follow-up Survey of June 2001 High School Graduates were very encouraging. Not only had a high percentage of June 2001 high school graduates (71%) engaged in post-secondary studies in the fall after graduation but a further 93% of graduates surveyed who were not attending post-secondary at the time of survey expressed a desire to attend sometime in the future.

The largest percentage of high school graduates in post-secondary studies chose to attend Memorial University (56%) while 25% were in attendance at the College of the North Atlantic, up from 17% attending the public college in 1996. However, smaller numbers of high school graduates attended private colleges in Newfoundland and Labrador in 2001 - only 6% of the June 2001 high school graduating class enrolled in a private college compared to 18% of the June 1996 graduating class.

Additionally, a large number of the 2001 graduates currently engaged in studies at one of the Province's post-secondary institutions have resolved to attain higher levels of post-secondary credentials in the future. At the College of the North Atlantic and the Marine Institute where graduates are generally enrolled in vocational diploma granting programs, 37% and 41%, respectively, stated that they look to attain a degree after completion of their diploma programs. For the June 2001 high school graduates currently attending Memorial University in degree programs, 35% indicated that they have set their sights on furthering their education with a Masters or Doctoral degree or a professional designation.

The majority of the June 2001 high school graduates not pursuing a post-secondary education at the time of survey were employed in full-time or part-time low-skill positions in retail sales and restaurant/fast food establishments and their wages reflected the absence of a formal post-secondary education. With increased technology and the future labour market demanding that workers have post-secondary credentials, the harsh reality is that these students will remain in low-skill, low income jobs unless they increase their educational attainment.

Barrier to Post-Secondary Education:

The greatest obstacle to post-secondary education participation for the June 2001 high school graduate was indecision on a career path. Many of those not entering a post-secondary institution directly out of high school, but with plans of pursuing post-secondary in the future, felt they needed more time to explore and decide on a course of study. Inadequate entrance grades hampered some graduates from entering post-secondary, however 9% of non-post-secondary high school graduates were actively upgrading their high school marks at the time of survey and it is expected that these graduates will eventually enter post-secondary.

While financial constraints, such as a lack of financial resources and a fear of too much debt, continues to be a barrier for 19% of non-post secondary high school graduates, it is anticipated that changes to the government student loan program, implemented in August, 2002, will address many of these concerns.

Additionally, consistent with previous findings, the decision to attend a post-secondary institution was associated with parental education levels. The graduates of 2001 were no exception - three quarters of graduates having one or more parent with a post-secondary education attended post-secondary while more than half of those with no post-secondary plans had parents with no post-secondary education.

Career Guidance

What is most apparent in the findings is the role of the family in shaping the future of students. Graduates attending post-secondary indicated that they were largely influenced by their parents or relatives to do so. The survey also revealed that graduates consider teachers and guidance counsellors as important sources of advice on career information. Therefore, timely and accurate information on post-secondary options, including details on programs and institutions, government student loans and labour market information, must be made available not only to the students themselves through guidance and career education programs offered within the school, but also to parents and family members who many students ultimately look to for direction. The interaction of students within their high school environment is also an important factor in helping student's realize their post-secondary ambitions.