

From University to College: Untold Stories of College Baccalaureate Students

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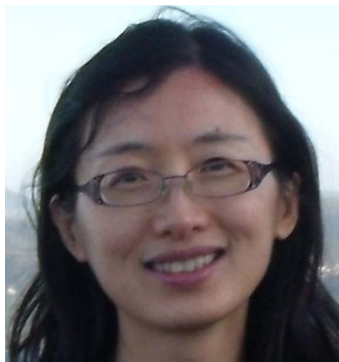
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The College Baccalaureates Project

OHCRIF-funded

Key areas of investigation include:

- perspectives of policy makers, college leaders and faculty members;
- students' perspectives;
- the curriculum of college baccalaureates;
- the role of college baccalaureates in the labour market

Major sources of data:

- Individual interviews with institutional leaders, faculty and **degree students**;
- Quantitative student data;
- Curriculum documents;
- Policy documents and institutional websites.

This session

- Background
- Questions for inquiry
- Conceptual framework
- Data source
- Five cases: Untold stories of college baccalaureate students
- Interactive discussion
- Implications

Background

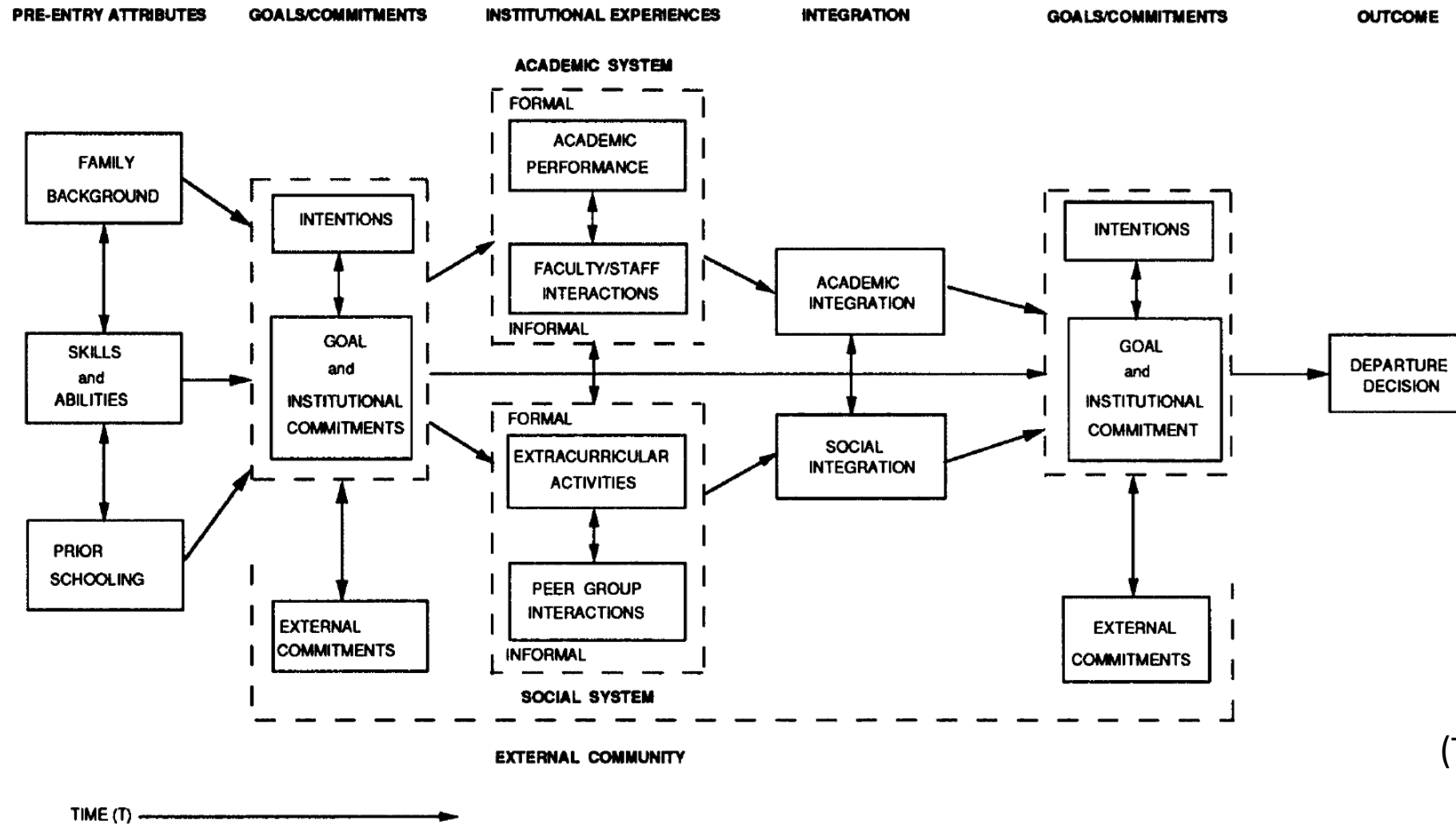
- The degree completion rate of undergraduate students of 1996-2006 entry cohorts at Ontario public universities, on average, approximated 77%.
- 2015-16 college Student Satisfaction Survey: Nearly 15% of college baccalaureate students in Ontario had some prior educational experiences at universities; 4% had earned a university degree.

Questions for Inquiry

Why did students with prior university background enrol in college degree programs to complete their baccalaureate studies?

What were the considerations for their decision to choose a college to complete their baccalaureate education?

Conceptual Framework – Tinto's integration framework



(Tinto, 1993, p. 114)

Fig. 4.1. A longitudinal model of institutional departure.

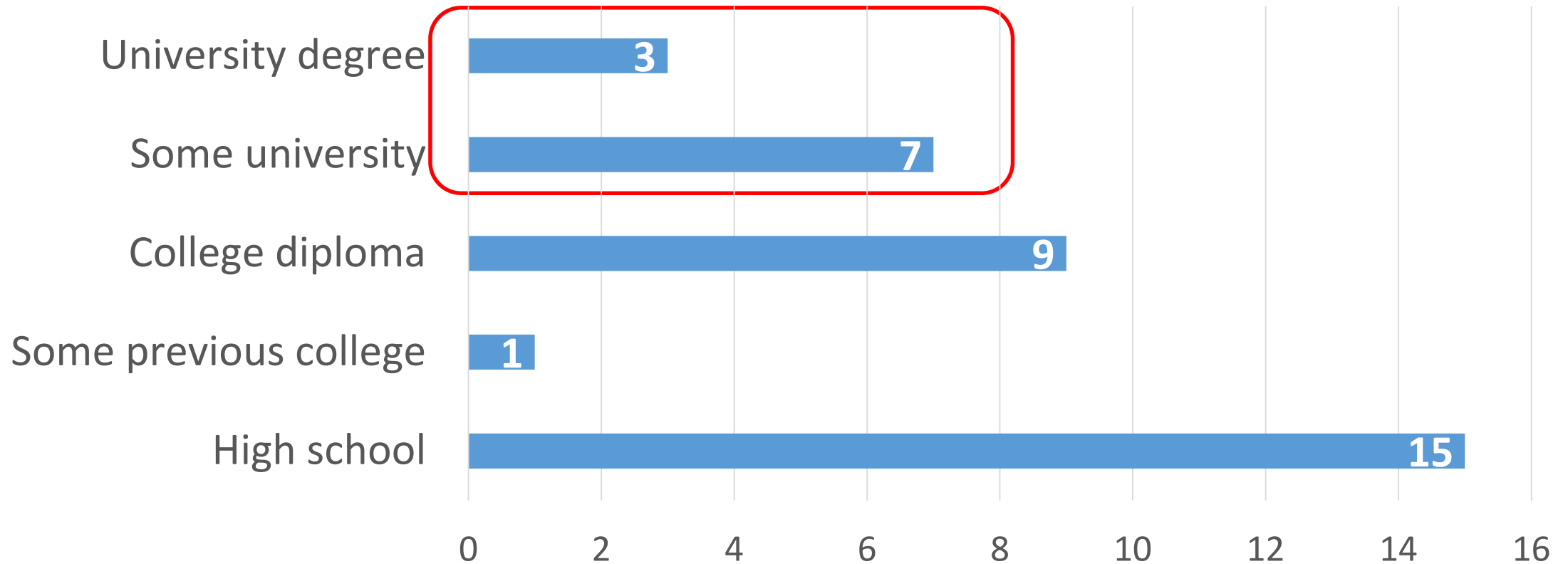
Conceptual Framework – Ideal type of PSE choosers

Contingent choosers	Embedded choosers
Finance is a key concern and constraint	Finance is not an issue
Choice uses minimal information	Choice is based on extensive and diverse sources of information
Choice is distant or ‘unreal’	Choice is part of a cultural script, a ‘normal biography’
Few variables are called up	A diverse array of variables are deployed
Choice is general/abstract	Choice is specialist/detailed
Minimal support (social capital) is used	Extensive support (social capital) is mobilised
Ethnic mix is an active variable in choosing	Ethnic mix is marginal or irrelevant to choice
Choosing is short term and weakly linked to ‘imagined futures’—part of an incomplete or incoherent narrative	Choosing is long-term and often relates to vivid and extensive ‘imagined futures’—part of a coherent and planned narrative
First-time choosers with no family tradition of higher education	‘Followers’ embedded in a ‘deep grammar of aspiration’ which makes higher education normal and necessary
Narrowly defined socioscapes and spatial horizons—choices are ‘local’/distance is a friction	Broad socioscapes and social horizons—choices are ‘national’/distance is not an issue
Parents as ‘onlookers’ or ‘weak framers’/ mothers may give practical support on families making the choice	Parents as ‘strong framers’ and active participants in choice

(Source: Ball, Reay, & David, 2002, p. 337)

Degree student participants

Prior education (n = 35)



Untold stories

Five college baccalaureate students from four Ontario colleges

Alicia

- Spent one year at an Ontario university in a social work program
- Found the program was not what she had expected
- Grades: B
- Took a personality test for reorientation
- Decided to study human resources
- Looked for other options for PSE – the importance of co-op and location
- Enrolled in a human resources program at a college
- Transferred all her credits from the university to the college

Alicia

What was important to her decision making:

- The field of study and career prospects
- Availability of experiential learning opportunities (co-op)
- Location of the school: being close to home

Betty

- Initially an “embedded chooser” for PSE
- A top student in high school
- Spent 1.5 years at a Maritime province for a political science program
- Grades considerably dropped: GPA < 2.0
- Came back home, looking for other options
- Inspired by a TV commercial, decided to pursue an early childhood education degree at a college
- Got first into the diploma program and then enrolled in the degree program
- Worked as a research officer at the same place as she did her internship
- Applied for a master’s degree program

Betty

Why didn't she complete university education?

That program for me was too broad and too big. I was not able to focus my studies in any direction. ... So I got really lost in the program that was quite general. There is no specialty and I was learning about the Canadian political system. It was too broad for me and I couldn't grasp onto anything.

Being away from my parents, I had no home to go over the weekend. I lived in residence and was surrounded by parties. It was appealing to a young person. I had full autonomy to decide what I did. It turned out to be part of a problem.

I found the class was too big – I was one of the 100 kids in the classroom. I didn't feel personal enough. It was easy to get distracted and it was easy to feel I was just a number and didn't feel I was cared about. I felt if no one cared about how I was doing academically, I am not going to care about it.

What was important to her decision making:

The field of study | Learning environment | Low grades

Cameron

- Spent two years at an Ontario university in a health-related program
- Did not find the learning environment conducive to his learning
- His grades dropped to C+/D-; not able to get into another university program
- An acquaintance suggested he go to a college
- Degree offering was an attraction for him
- Achieved more than he could have expected
- Completed his master's degree and pursuing his doctoral degree
- Became a strong advocate for college baccalaureates

Cameron

What was important to his decision making:

- The learning environment;
 - The program: “very unique” and “very individualized”
 - Constraint: his overall grades
- *I was not used to the style of learning there. It was more of a cultural shock – large classroom – I was not familiar with that. I cannot go to somebody for help or ask questions... It was not conducive to my learning. I felt isolated.*
 - *If you have some sort of difficulty, the professors there will ask you what is that you don't understand or how you don't understand. They will sit with you and find where the problem is and provide the solution. You could approach them right away without feeling embarrassed.*

Denise

- First-generation student
- Finished her high school with honours
- Enrolled in an Arts program at an Ontario university for two years; she enjoyed it.
- Quit because “just couldn’t afford it”
- Worked full time for a few years
- Enrolled in an early childhood education program at a college in the same region
- Financial constraint; took on part-time jobs while studying

Denise

What was important to her decision making:

- The cost
- The location
- An “honours degree” program

Ethan

- A smart student in high school; highly motivated
- Enrolled in an engineering program at an Ontario university for 2.5 years
- Studied really hard; failed courses in two semesters; stressed out
- Worked full time for 1.5 years in different fields for different positions: “Curiosity got me going.”
- Determined to attend a college to complete his engineering education
- Liked the curriculum delivery at the college

Ethan

What was important to his decision making:

- Learning environment: instructional style and student-faculty interactions;
- Accreditation status of the program
- Low grades

Ethan

I don't like the idea that my bachelor degree is from a college but I know I will get the iron ring. It is quite different from getting a diploma. ... If they don't provide the iron ring, I would not have come here.



Getting a bachelor degree from [the college] will be a problem in the future job search. I will have to fight my way through but I can show them if I've got an interview that I have the skills and motivation. I know getting an interview will be a lot difficult for me because no one knows we exist.

Altogether ...

Student	Importance of factors for decision-making
Alicia	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Field of study;● Experiential learning opportunities;● Location of the school
Betty	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Field of study;● Learning environment● Low grades
Cameron	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Learning environment;● The “unique” program;● Low grades
Denise	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● The cost;● The location;● An “honours degree” program
Ethan	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Learning environment;● Accreditation status of the program● Low grades

Altogether ...

Factors for decision-making	Alicia	Betty	Cameron	Denise	Ethan
Field of study	●	●			
Learning environment		●	●		●
Experiential learning opportunities	●				
The “unique” program			●		
Accreditation status of the program					●
Location of the school	●			●	
Low grades		●	●		●
Cost				●	

Interactive discussion

- What could be done on the university side to support undergraduate students in their academic and career success?
- What could be done on the college side to support undergraduate students in their academic and career success?

Implications

- Student pathway in the PSE system: not linear like a “educational pipeline” (Hilton & Lee, 1988) but there is reverse transfer, swirling or recycling.
- Contrast between college and university learning environments.
- The study supports Tinto’s student integration framework.

Implications (cont'd)

- College baccalaureates have widened student access to baccalaureate education.
- “contingent choosers” for PSE.
- Student development: The “detour” turned out to be valuable life experiences.

References

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For more information

[https://www.oise.utoronto.ca/pew/Current Projects/CAAT Baccalaureates.html](https://www.oise.utoronto.ca/pew/Current%20Projects/CAAT%20Baccalaureates.html)

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Ontario's CAAT Baccalaureates

Applied baccalaureate degrees have only recently entered the Canadian higher education landscape. The first applied degrees were offered in British Columbia in the 1980s. Applied degrees are now offered in five Canadian provinces.[1] Applied baccalaureates, more so than traditional undergraduate degrees, are designed with the labour market in mind. Graduates combine high-level knowledge embodied in a traditional baccalaureate with work-relevant, hands-on skills and experiences.

It has been almost fifteen years since Ontario's Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology (CAATs) began offering baccalaureate degrees. How are these newcomer degrees impacting students, employers, colleges, and the Ontario post-secondary sector as a whole? Funded by the Ontario Human Capital Research and Innovation Fund[2] The CAAT Baccalaureates Project is investigating outcomes to date for these newer Ontario degree offerings.

The PEW team launched this study in the fall of 2016. We will look at how applied degrees are developed and administered in Ontario colleges. Interviews with policy makers, college leaders and instructors will yield insights and perspectives on the successes, challenges, and future prospects of applied baccalaureates. The research team will also interview present students of degree programs, learning about their career trajectories, and their reasons for pursuing an applied degree. Finally, the project will draw on statistical data to analyze the uptake of applied degrees in the Ontario labour market since 2010.



Thank you for your participation!

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