

Get smarts



The carefree days of summer are coming to an end with the annual back-to-school ritual upon us. In the past decade or so some interesting trends in education have developed,

giving new meaning to back-to-school. Top on the list:

Not just a beautiful place, British Columbia is home to one of most educated populations.

In 2006, only 12 per cent of British Columbians (aged 25 to 64) had less than a high school education, the lowest proportion of all Canadian provinces. Over six-in-ten (62 per cent) of B.C. adults had completed some form of post-secondary education, and one-quarter (24 per cent) had a bachelor's degree or higher.

Enrollment in Canadian universities is hitting record highs. Enrollment has increased each year for the past six years, in contrast to the 1990s when university enrollment was on the decline. While the increase is largely due to the echo-boom generation – that is: children born to baby boomers – this generation tends to be more educated than their older counterparts.

FACT: Seventy-two per cent of parents of school-aged children report that homework often is a source of household stress.

Women are outnumbering men in universities. While college attendance rates are about the same for young men and women, women now account for approximately 58 per cent of all university undergraduate students. Studies explain that the gap is largely due to differences in academic performance in high school and study habits. Many teenage boys would rather do anything else but homework!

Foreign students are adding to the ranks in our schools. Over seven per cent of the university student bodies across Canada are students from other countries, nearly double the proportion a decade earlier.

Raising the bar: colleges are being given university status. With the growing demand for university education, many colleges have added degree programs to their curriculum, creating two tiers of universities, the traditional universities with research and development capabilities and now this new sector of community universities.

The left brain versus the right brain: enrollment at the university level is falling in mathematics, computer and information sciences. Instead a record number of students are registered in social and behavioural sciences and law, surpassing business, management and public administration for the third time since 2002.

Expanding one's horizons with experiential learning is becoming popular. Post-secondary students are increasingly keen to spread their school experience over both sides of the Pacific. An example is SFU's Dual Degree Program in which students graduate with two degrees that are recognized in the East and the West.

B.C. trade apprentices increase for the fourth straight year. Reversing a decline in the past, there now are growing numbers enrolled in training for such occupations as carpentry, plumbing and electronics according to Industry Training Authority (ITA) stats. This is where universities are losing some male students to, since 86 per cent of those currently planning to pursue an apprenticeship are male.

Never too late to go back to school as adult workers are returning to school in record numbers. The notion that formal education ends when you enter the labour market is increasingly outdated. Adults are returning to mostly community colleges and trade or vocational schools, but executive MBA programs also are increasingly popular. Most continue to work, so squeezing those extra hours in an already busy schedule is challenging, but stats show that these adult students are rewarded with higher earnings after completion. **VLM**



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