

Student Mobility in B.C.'s Public Post-secondary Education System

The Student Transitions Project (STP) continues to track student mobility in the province of British Columbia. This newsletter highlights the findings, including student movement between post-secondary institutions, sectors, programs, credentials, study levels, and postal areas. The research question was:

What is the volume and flow of B.C. public post-secondary registrants among B.C. public post-secondary institutions over a multi-year period?

Student Pathways: In academic year 2007/08, there were roughly 331,000¹ students registered in B.C. public post-secondary institutions (or the system). From this population, 200,000 students were classified as continuing registrants because they also registered in the system in the previous academic year. Roughly 26,000 of the continuing registrants moved between B.C. public post-secondary institutions from 2006/07 to 2007/08, moving in multiple directions and along various pathways (see [Figure 1](#)): These student “movers” represent 13% of all students who registered in both years.

- Although the B.C. transfer system was originally designed to facilitate transfer to the research universities, the greatest movement (13,900 students) was among institutions that are not research universities². This represents 53% of all student movement in the time period.
- The next largest group, 7,000 students, moved to a B.C. research university. This includes 4,500 “B.C. College Transfer” students who normally have at least 24 transferable credits and a GPA of 2.00 or higher; and 2,500 students who moved to a research university under some other basis of admission category.
- Roughly 4,200 students made a “reverse transfer”, moving from a B.C. research university to some other B.C. public post-secondary institution, such as B.C. college, institute, university college or special purpose university.
- A further 1,200 students switched from one B.C. research university to another.

Figure 1: Student Mobility in the B.C. Public Post-Secondary Education System, 2006/07 to 2007/08.

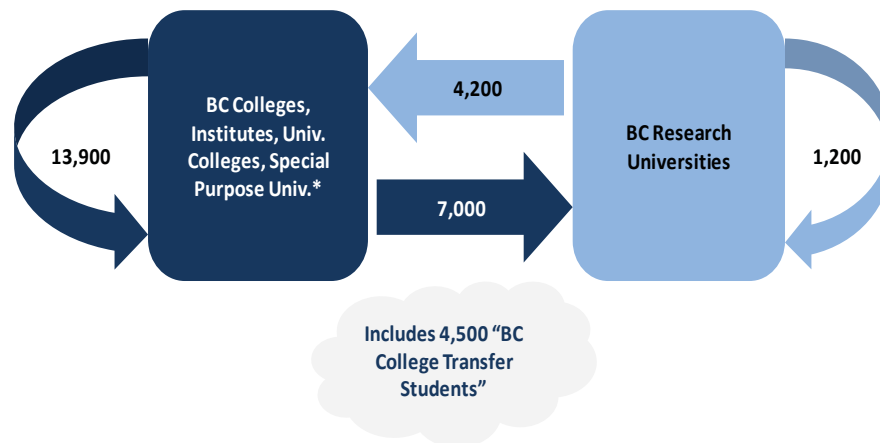


Figure 1 Notes: (a) A “B.C. College Transfer Student” is a student admitted to a B.C. Research University on the basis of their transfer credits from a B.C. community college, institute or university college. (b) Institutional designations used here are those that were in place before Fall 2008. *See institutions listed by sector at the end of this newsletter.

¹Students enrolled exclusively in community education courses were excluded.

²B.C. research universities include University of British Columbia (UBC and UBCO), University of Victoria (UVic), University of Northern British Columbia (UNBC) and Simon Fraser University (SFU).

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Student Mobility and Stability Rates

The number of students who switched from one institution to the next, taken as a percentage of the total number of all students who registered in both years, is the **student mobility rate**³. For example, 333,083 students were enrolled in B.C. public post-secondary institutions in 2006/07, of which 200,114 students remained enrolled somewhere in the B.C. public post-secondary system in 2007/08.

A total of 26,305 students (or 13.1% of the continuing registrants) switched institutions in this time period and this is the student mobility rate. Conversely, the **student stability rate** is the extent to which continuing students remained at the same institution from one year to the next. In this example, the student stability rate is 100% minus the 13.1% mobility rate, or 86.9%.

Student Mobility Trends

The student mobility rate (13.1%) for the time period 2006/07 to 2007/08, represents a 1.2 percentage point drop from 14.3% calculated for the period four years earlier, 2002/03 to 2003/04⁴. The declining student mobility rate is coincident with the expansion of degree completion opportunities in other post-secondary institutions, such as colleges, institutes and university colleges (now special purpose universities). These changes allow more students to remain at different kinds of institutions to complete their degree without transferring to a university. The STP mobility data provides evidence of the impact of these changes on student mobility when the period 2006/07 to 2007/08 is compared to the period 2002/03 to 2003/04. The following changes in student flows between B.C. public post-secondary institutions are evident:

- 7% fewer students moved **out of Community Colleges** to attend other institutions,
- 15% fewer students moved **out of University Colleges** to attend other institutions,
- 5% more students moved **into University Colleges** from other institutions, and
- 2% fewer students moved **into Research Universities** (SFU, UBC, UNBC, UVic) from other institutions.

Background and Methodology

This newsletter is an update and enhancement to research released by STP in February 2009. This study tracks the year-to-year movement of all¹ graduate, undergraduate and developmental program registrants in B.C. public post-secondary institutions over a six-year period, from 2002/03 to 2008/09². Because of these improvements in the methodology for tracking student mobility within B.C., the findings in this newsletter are not directly comparable to the results reported in February, 2009.

The following enhancements are included in this analysis:

- a) Adjustments were made to accommodate changes in post-secondary institution names, such that students are not classified as movers if their institution changed its name or sector designation.
- b) Term-based enrollment data has allowed STP to distinguish between sequential and simultaneous enrolments.
- c) Similar to the previous study, students who enrol in multiple institutions and/or programs in a single academic year are assigned to a single institution. This year, however, each student's single institution and program record is selected on the basis of the timing of their enrollment (sequentially first in the year) and a set of prioritized program-based sequencing rules.
- d) Graduate enrolments have been added to the analysis this year.
- e) The classification of Instructional Program (CIP) code, provided for the majority of student enrollment records across all institutions, has allowed STP to look at student program mobility.

¹ Students enrolled exclusively in continuing education programs are excluded from this study wherever possible. STP recognizes that continuing education across B.C.'s public post-secondary institutions is not universally defined, nor is it consistently classified at each institution, but work is underway to improve data quality over time.

² Academic year 2008/09 includes Fall 2008 only and does not include a complete year due to the mid-year timing of STP data collection from post-secondary institutions.

³ The student mobility rate is limited to student movement within the B.C. public post-secondary education system only. Students that move in/out of the B.C. public post-secondary system via B.C. private institutions, or other provinces or countries, are not accounted for in this student mobility rate.

⁴ Refer to Background and Methodology information box for information on changes and enhancements to this research which have resulted in changes to the student mobility and stability rates, compared to those rates reported in February, 2009.

Student Transitions Project Highlights

Student Mobility by Institution Last Attended in 2006/07

A summary of all student mobility for the two-year period, 2006/07 to 2007/08, is provided in [Figure 2](#). Overall, the most popular post-secondary institution destination for movers in

this period was BCIT, with 15% of all movers transferring to BCIT. This is consistent with last year's findings.

Figure 2: Top Three Destinations of "Movers" in 2007/08 by Institution Last Attended in 2006/07

Institution Where Registered in 2006/07	Post-Sec Code	2006/07 to 2007/08 Student Mobility Rate*	2007/08 Institution Destinations of "Movers"								2007/08 Movers		Total Reg'd 2006/07 & 2007/08			
			Most Popular Destination		Second Most Popular Destination		Third Most Popular Destination		All Other Destinations Combined		Total Movers	Total %				
British Columbia Institute of Technology	BCIT	11%	JIBC	339	15%	DOUG	284	13%	VCC	273	12%	1,340	60%	2,236	100%	19,817
Camosun College	CAM	18%	UVIC	713	55%	TRU-OL	96	7%	BCIT	82	6%	408	31%	1,299	100%	7,294
Capilano College	CAP	24%	SFU	298	23%	UBC	248	19%	BCIT	192	15%	540	42%	1,278	100%	5,284
College of New Caledonia	CNC	17%	UNBC	225	48%	TRU-OL	50	11%	TRU	34	7%	162	34%	471	100%	2,804
College of the Rockies	COTR	13%	UVIC	22	13%	TRU-OL	19	11%	JIBC	18	10%	117	66%	176	100%	1,372
Douglas College	DOUG	22%	SFU	654	28%	BCIT	446	19%	VCC	211	9%	1,001	43%	2,312	100%	10,373
Emily Carr Institute of Art and Design	ECIAD	15%	BCIT	64	24%	LANG	49	19%	UBC	31	12%	118	45%	262	100%	1,763
Institute of Indigenous Government**	IIG	100%	NVIT	37	36%	SFU	17	17%	DOUG	12	12%	37	36%	103	100%	103
Justice Institute of British Columbia	JIBC	13%	BCIT	393	34%	DOUG	76	7%	TRU-OL	69	6%	609	53%	1,147	100%	8,585
Kwantlen University College	KWAN	20%	SFU	524	24%	BCIT	393	18%	UBC	266	12%	978	45%	2,161	100%	10,544
Langara College	LANG	28%	UBC	652	29%	SFU	401	18%	BCIT	326	15%	855	38%	2,234	100%	7,893
Malaspina University-College	MALA	11%	BCIT	102	16%	UVIC	90	14%	TRU-OL	85	13%	356	56%	633	100%	6,011
North Island College	NIC	15%	MALA	98	31%	CAM	37	12%	UVIC	32	10%	153	48%	320	100%	2,102
Northern Lights College	NLC	16%	CNC	20	13%	TRU-OL	20	13%	OKAN	19	12%	96	62%	155	100%	947
Nicola Valley Institute of Technology	NVIT	33%	TRU	21	30%	TRU-OL	10	14%	UVIC	6	9%	33	47%	70	100%	213
Northwest Community College	NWCC	21%	UNBC	46	19%	CNC	26	11%	TRU-OL	23	9%	151	61%	246	100%	1,193
Okanagan College	OKAN	12%	UBCO	196	36%	BCIT	52	9%	TRU	45	8%	255	47%	548	100%	4,616
Royal Roads University	RRU	5%	JIBC	26	29%	BCIT	19	21%	TRU-OL	10	11%	35	39%	90	100%	1,650
Selkirk College	SEL	14%	UVIC	32	13%	OKAN	28	12%	TRU-OL	25	11%	153	64%	238	100%	1,696
Simon Fraser University	SFU	8%	BCIT	292	19%	DOUG	237	15%	UBC	233	15%	812	52%	1,574	100%	20,343
Thompson Rivers University	TRU	14%	TRU-OL	381	41%	BCIT	83	9%	UBC	59	6%	402	43%	925	100%	6,425
Thompson Rivers University - Open Learning	TRU-OL	28%	UVIC	259	15%	SFU	170	10%	BCIT	157	9%	1,175	67%	1,761	100%	6,205
University of British Columbia	UBC	5%	BCIT	455	25%	LANG	260	14%	SFU	189	10%	935	51%	1,839	100%	35,809
University of British Columbia (Okanagan)	UBCO	13%	UBC	165	39%	OKAN	73	17%	BCIT	26	6%	161	38%	425	100%	3,394
University College of the Fraser Valley	UCFV	10%	SFU	138	17%	BCIT	118	15%	KWAN	85	11%	460	57%	801	100%	7,722
University of Northern British Columbia	UNBC	13%	TRU-OL	80	22%	CNC	68	19%	UBC	34	9%	183	50%	365	100%	2,722
University of Victoria	UVIC	9%	TRU-OL	284	23%	CAM	268	22%	UBC	188	15%	494	40%	1,234	100%	14,015
Vancouver Community College	VCC	15%	BCIT	398	28%	DOUG	245	17%	LANG	184	13%	575	41%	1,402	100%	9,219
Overall Student Movement		13%	BCIT	3,837	15%	SFU	2,862	11%	UBC	2,694	10%	16,912	64%	26,305	100%	200,114

* Student Mobility Rate is the % of students enrolled in both 2006/07 and 2007/08 who switched from one B.C. Public post-secondary institution to another (from 2006/07 to 2007/08).

Sector Mobility

Among those 26,000 students who switched institutions from 2006/07 to 2007/08, [Figure 3](#) shows the volume of students who moved between each of the sending and receiving sectors. Values on the main diagonal of this matrix show that 5,256 students (roughly 20% of movers) remained in the same sector while switching institutions, and therefore, 80% of all students who switched institutions, also switched sectors. The single largest student movement between sectors involved 4,370 students who moved from a community college to a research university, representing 17% of all student movers.

Figure 3: Sector Mobility Matrix, 2006/07 to 2007/08

2006/07 Sector	2007/08 Sector					Grand Total
	Community College	Institute	Research University	Special Purpose University	University College	
Community College	2,373	2,041	4,370	932	963	10,679
Institute	1,572	896	495	414	441	3,818
Research University	1,765	1,206	1,202	742	522	5,437
Special Purpose Univ	654	415	875	566	266	2,776
University College	973	794	1,283	326	219	3,595
Grand Total	7,337	5,352	8,225	2,980	2,411	26,305

Types of Student Mobility

In addition to the student movement between institutions or sectors, there are other types of student movement that STP has identified. These mobility rates are summarized below for the 200,114 continuing registrants from 2006/07 to 2007/08:

- 22% switched their credential sought, such as a diploma to bachelor's degree,
- 20% switched broad program areas⁵, such as Arts and Sciences to Health Programs,
- 13% switched institutions, such as Langara College to UBC,
- 11% switched sectors, such as community college to research university,
- 6% of students with a B.C. postal code switched their local mailing address⁶,
- 4% switched study levels, such as undergraduate to graduate.

Why Do Students Switch Institutions?

Since the results from this study were not derived from a survey of student movers, the STP database cannot provide the specific reasons why these students switch post-secondary institutions in B.C., but student registration patterns do provide reasonable clues to their rationale for moving from one institution to another⁷.

If we focus exclusively on the 26,305 movers (or 13% of continuing registrants) who moved from one institution to another from 2006/07 to 2007/08, we find that students who switch institutions have higher program-related mobility rates than all other registrants combined. Among those who switched institutions:

- 85% also switched their credential sought, such as a diploma to bachelor's degree,
- 80% switched sectors, such as community college to research university,
- 69% switched broad program areas, such as Arts and Sciences to Health Programs,
- 27% of students with a B.C. postal code switched their local mailing address,
- 9% switched study levels, such as undergraduate to graduate.

These mobility patterns suggest that students switch institutions and sectors primarily for credential and program-related reasons. This is especially evident when these patterns are compared with non-movers. Students who remain at their institution from one year to the next are much less likely to change their credential (12%) or program (13%) or study level (3%)⁸.

Student Mobility and Movement Between Study Levels

Among the 26,305 students who switched institutions from 2006/07 to 2007/08, a total of 2,336 students (or 9%) switched study levels. The matrix in [Figure 4](#) shows that the largest volume of students (1,006 or 43% of study level switchers) moved from developmental programs to undergraduate programs and half as many students switched from undergraduate to developmental programs or from undergraduate to graduate programs (515 and 558 students respectively).

Figure 4: Study Level Switching by Students Who Switched Institutions, 2006/07 to 2007/08

2006/07	2007/08			Total
	D	U	G	
Developmental (D)	138	1,006	10	1,154
Undergraduate (G)	515	23,783	558	24,856
Graduate (G)	3	244	48	295
Grand Total	656	25,033	616	26,305

Note: In some programs, the study level classification (developmental versus undergraduate) tends to vary across institutions.

⁵In this study, individual student programs were identified by their Classification of Instructional Program (CIP) Code. These CIP's were aggregated into eighteen major program areas and the program mobility rate is based on students moving between these broad program areas. STP cautions that not all institutions were consistent in their CIP coding practices, such that the program mobility rate (calculated at 20% between broad program areas) is fairly insensitive to the micro-level inconsistencies; however, ongoing improvements in program coding by post-secondary institutions are currently underway and STP hopes to provide better program mobility information in future.

⁶Changes to a student's local mailing address were based on changes to the first three digits of the postal code, or Forward Sortation Area (FSA), from one year to the next.

⁷This STP study is not a survey, however a number of student outcomes surveys are conducted in B.C. which can provide further information to readers, such as the BC Diploma, Associate Degree, and Certificate Student Outcomes (DACSO), BC Apprenticeship Student Outcomes (APPSO), the BC Developmental Student Outcomes (DEVSO), BC Baccalaureate Graduate (BGS) Outcomes Survey, and Short Stay and Early Leavers Student Outcomes (SSELSO).

⁸Program labeling within institutions is inherently more consistent than program labeling between institutions and this potentially inflates program mobility rates of students who switched institutions.

Student Transitions Project Highlights

Student Mobility from Bachelor's Degree Completion to Master's Degree Sought

This year for the first time, STP collected student enrollments in graduate programs. This allowed STP to track student movement from undergraduate to graduate programs in the B.C. public post-secondary education system. Here are some of the findings:

- The largest movement of students from undergraduate to graduate programs was from a Bachelor's to a Master's Degree⁹. A total of 3,429 registrants in 2006/07 completed a Bachelor's Degree in 2006/07, of which 455 students (13%) immediately enrolled in a Master's program in the B.C. public post-secondary education system in 2007/08¹⁰.
- Two-thirds of the 455 Master's program seekers completed their undergraduate degree in an Arts and Sciences program, of which the majority (65%) also sought a Master's Degree in this same broad program area.
- Roughly 21% (or 95 of the 455 Master's program seekers) switched institutions to enroll in a graduate program. Students who completed a Bachelor's Degree at Thompson Rivers University or University of Victoria were much more likely (at 64% and 29% respectively) than Bachelor's Degree completers at other large B.C. institutions to switch institutions to pursue a Master's Degree (see *Figure 5*).

Figure 5: Student Movement Between Institutions – 2006/07 Bachelor's Degree Completers Seeking a Master's Degree in 2007/08

PSI of 2006/07 Bach Degree	PSI of 2007/08 Master's Degree Sought										Switched PSI's
	MALA	RRU	SFU	TRU	UBC	UBCO	UCFV	UNBC	UVIC	Grand Total	
RRU		3								3	0%
SFU			53	1	7			1	2	64	17%
TRU	2		1	5	1	1		1	3	14	64%
UBC	3		15		200	1			7	226	12%
UBCO		2	1		1	14				18	22%
UNBC					1			22		23	4%
UVIC		3	5		17				60	85	29%
Other	1	1	5		11		2		2	22	86%
Grand Total	6	9	80	6	238	16	2	24	74	455	21%

Notes: (a) Refer to Figure 2 for the names of post-secondary institutions that correspond with each institution code.
(b) Other includes BCIT, ECIAD, KWAN, MALA, UCFV.

⁹Numerous pathways, although less common, can also be made from undergraduate studies (i.e. Bachelor's Degree, Associate Degree, Undergraduate Certificate or Diploma or First Professional Degree) to graduate studies (i.e. Doctoral or Masters Degree or Graduate Certificate or Diploma).

¹⁰This analysis focused exclusively on student movement from one year to the next in the B.C. public post-secondary education system. Therefore, students who sought graduate programs outside of B.C. or stopped out for a year or more after completing their Bachelor's Degree before seeking a graduate credential are excluded. As a result, the rate at which all B.C. Bachelor's Degree completers ultimately seek a graduate credential is understated here.

Student Mobility from Community Colleges to Research Universities

As shown previously in *Figure 3*, a total of 4,370 students moved from a community college in 2006/07 to a research university in 2007/08. Before switching to a university, nearly half (47% or 1,719) of these students were classified by their community college in 2006/07 as being registered in a Diploma program; a further 24% (or 872 students) were in an Associate Degree program and the remaining 30% or 1,092 students were seeking some other credential (or no credential). It is important to note that many college students, especially Arts and Science students, register in a Diploma or Associate Degree program as a stepping stone to a four-year degree.

Figure 6 shows the credential destinations of the 4,370 students who moved from a community college in 2006/07 to a research

university in 2007/08. The vast majority (84%) of these community college students who moved to a B.C. research university enrolled in a Bachelor's Degree at the university in 2007/08. Students classified as College Diploma or Associate Degree students by their community college were more likely to pursue a university Bachelor's degree (93% and 89% respectively) than students enrolled in other college credentials (71% combined). A further 6% of students who switched from a community college to a BC research university sought a First Professional Degree, while 2% sought graduate-level studies (Masters, Graduate Diploma or Doctorate) and 7% sought other credentials.

Figure 6: Distribution of Students Who Switched from a B.C. Community College in 2006/07 to a B.C. Research University in 2007/08, by Credential Sought

Community College Credential Sought or Completed in 2006/07	University Credential Sought in 2007/08						Total Who Switched to a BC Research University	
	Bachelor's Degree		First Professional Degree		Other Credential			
DIPLOMA	1,719	93%	41	2%	87	5%	1,847	100%
ASSOCIATE DEGREE	872	89%	44	4%	65	7%	981	100%
BACHELORS DEGREE	49	31%	94	59%	15	9%	158	100%
DEVELOPMENTAL	116	75%	11	7%	27	18%	154	100%
CERTIFICATE	75	58%	10	8%	44	34%	129	100%
Other/None	852	77%	80	7%	169	15%	1,101	100%
Grand Total	3,683	84%	280	6%	407	9%	4,370	100%

Student Transitions Project Highlights

Reverse Transfer of Bachelor's Degree Completers

As shown in *Figure 1*, roughly 4,200 students made a “reverse transfer” from a B.C. research university in 2006/07 to another B.C. public post-secondary institution in 2007/08. Among this group, 18% (or 769 students) were Bachelor's Degree completers. These students subsequently sought another credential in 2007/08 outside of the research university sector, with roughly one-third seeking a certificate or diploma (see *Figure 7*).

These certificates and diplomas were primarily in Business and Health programs and the primary institution destination was BCIT (45% of the 769 students registered at BCIT in “unknown” programs, suggesting that these students likely enrolled in single courses of interest, or single courses toward an accounting designation, for example, rather than enrolling in a full academic program.)

Figure 7: Institution and Credential Mobility of 2006/07 Bachelor's Degree Completers at Research Universities Who

2006/07 Bachelor's Degree Completed at ...	Credential Sought at Other Institutions in 2007/08												
	Advanced Diploma	Apprenticeship	Associate Degree	Bachelors Degree	Certificate	Developmental	Diploma	Masters Degree	None	Other	Post-Degree Diploma	Short Certificate	Grand Total
SFU	3		3	7	25	1	36	1	49	54	1	7	187
UBC	5		3	27	55		85	3	75	123	3	14	393
UBCO			2	1	8		5	2	20	9			47
UNBC		2	2	4	8				7	2		2	27
UVIC			1	5	15	2	19	3	38	31	1		115
Grand Total	8	2	11	44	111	3	145	9	189	219	5	23	769

Conclusion

This STP research demonstrates that students move between B.C.'s public post-secondary institutions in multiple directions and along multiple pathways, but the vast majority of registrants remain at the same institution from one year to the next. Roughly 1 in 8 students who continue their studies in two consecutive years will do so at another institution. B.C.'s credit transfer system was established to facilitate student movement, and movement is indeed occurring. Students who do switch from one institution to another primarily switch from one sector to another and make changes to their program, credential or study level at the same time.

Possible Next Steps

The reasons why students move between institutions and the extent to which student movement follows effective and efficient pathways towards post-secondary credential completion is not completely understood. Although college transfer students, credential completers, students in progress and early leavers have frequently been surveyed in B.C., a survey targeted specifically at the 26,000 students who move between institutions each year has not yet been conducted. A survey of this population might provide useful information to post-secondary planners, advisors and enrollment managers on the experiences of student movers.

About the STP

The STP is managed by a steering committee with representation from the two education ministries, public institutions and B.C. Council on Admissions and Transfer (BCCAT). Three subcommittees are established to address key areas of research: mobility of transfer students, data management and applicant research. The ministries and institutions are equal partners in this undertaking.

- Devron Gaber, STP Chair, Associate Director, BCCAT.
- Bob Cowin, Director, Institutional Research, Douglas College.
- Gerald Morton, Director, Information Department, Ministry of Education.
- Patty Beatty-Guenter, Director, Information and Data Management Branch, Ministry of Advanced Education and Labour Market Development.
- Walter Sudmant, Director, Planning and Institutional Research, University of British Columbia.

Where to find more information

This newsletter focused on student mobility at a provincial level and only touches on the surface of the knowledge that we have gained from the collaborative data sets built by the Student Transitions Project. A wealth of additional information on student mobility is also available to institutions seeking more detailed information on student movement within and between specific institutions, programs, credentials and study levels.

STP Highlights newsletters and reports are available on the public Student Transitions Project website at:

http://www.aved.gov.bc.ca/student_transitions/

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Special Thanks

STP would like to thank the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Advanced Education and Labour Market Development and the B.C. public post-secondary institutions for collaborating in this research effort. Without their co-operation and data contributions, this research could not have been accomplished.

The following B.C. public post-secondary institutions are included in this study and grouped by institution designation in 2006/07 and 2007/08:

Community Colleges:

Camosun College, Capilano College, College of New Caledonia, College of the Rockies, Douglas College, Langara College, North Island College, Northern Lights College, Northwest Community College, Okanagan College, Selkirk College, Vancouver Community College.

University Colleges

Kwantlen University College, Malaspina University-College, University College of the Fraser Valley.

Institutes

British Columbia Institute of Technology, Emily Carr Institute of Art and Design, Institute of Indigenous Government, Justice Institute of British Columbia, Nicola Valley Institute of Technology.

Special Purpose Universities

Royal Roads University, Thomspson Rivers University, Thompson Rivers University - Open Learning.

Research Universities

Simon Fraser University, University of British Columbia, University of British Columbia, Okanagan, University of Northern British Columbia, University of Victoria.