



An Examination of the Academic and Professional Success of Nipissing University's Bachelor of Commerce College Partnership Program (BComm-CPP)

**Executive Summary
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Nipissing University's Bachelor of Commerce College Partnership Program (BComm-CPP) began in 2009 with three college partners – Algonquin College, Fanshawe College and Sheridan College. Since that time, the program has grown to include six college partners (at seven campuses). The most recent addition, Lambton College, was added in September 2013. The BComm-CPP is a 90-credit business degree designed specifically for graduates of three-year business diploma programs from Nipissing's partner colleges. With the marketplace increasingly demanding university credentials, the College Partnership Program (CPP) has a lot of potential for continued growth. Nipissing also offers a 120-credit Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA) on its main campus in North Bay, as well as the 90-credit Bachelor of Commerce degree via distance learning (BComm-Distance).

The purpose of this study is to investigate the academic and professional success of graduates of the BComm-CPP compared to that of graduates of Nipissing's other business programs. Academic success is measured by grade point averages (GPAs), graduation rates and length of time to complete the degree. Professional success is measured by employment rates, annual income, length of time taken to find employment after graduation, and the relevance of employment to the program of study.

Highlights

Our findings suggest that the academic performance of students in the BComm-CPP program is on par and in some areas better than those students in the BBA and BComm-Distance. Professionally, BComm-CPP students appear to be experiencing the same degree of success in the job market in comparison to their BBA counterparts.

For the 2011 intake cohort, the mean university GPA of BComm-CPP students was higher than that of BBA students and that difference is statistically significant. BComm-Distance students had the lowest mean university GPA for that cohort. However, BComm-CPP students take a greater proportion of second-year level courses, so the performance of students in core courses that are common to both degrees and for more cohorts was also compared. When comparing the overall GPA for core courses common to the BBA and BComm degree, the overall core course mean GPA tends to be lower for students in the BBA program. While BBA students and BComm-CPP students had comparable grades in the majority of core courses, there were a handful of courses for which BComm-CPP students significantly but not consistently outperformed their BBA counterparts. In terms of entry GPA being a good predictor of university GPA, across all programs there was a weak positive relationship between entry and university GPA. The correlation was strongest for the BBA (0.518) and weakest for the BComm-CPP (0.354).

In terms of withdrawal and graduation rates, we compared the rates for students who had completed the second year of the BBA to incoming students in the BComm-CPP (specifically, the 2009 intake cohort for the BBA was compared to the 2011 intake cohort for the BComm-CPP). Not surprisingly, the graduation rate is higher for the 12-month BComm-CPP (77% compared to 74% of students that had completed the second year of the BBA). The BComm-CPP had a 16.3% withdrawal rate for the 2011 intake cohort. The withdrawal rate was 8.6% for the students who had completed the second year of

the BBA for the 2009 intake cohort. Historically, the BBA has its highest withdrawal rate between the first year and second year of the program.

One hundred and ninety-one graduates participated in the Graduate Academic and Professional Success Survey, with the majority indicating that they had graduated from the BBA program. The overwhelming majority of graduates surveyed indicated that they had completed their program of study in their expected time frame, and this was consistent across the three programs under study. Analysis of the employment indicators suggests comparable employment success between BBA and BComm-CPP graduates in terms of employment rates, the length of time to find employment after graduation, the percentage of graduates with permanent positions, and the percentage of graduates with positions related to their field of study. BBA graduates were slightly more likely than their BComm-CPP counterparts to earn an income over \$40,000. BComm-Distance graduates, who tended to be older, were more likely to be in the higher income brackets. Across all three programs, about one-third of graduates surveyed indicated that they had continued their education at the post-secondary level, with the largest group doing this in order to acquire professional certification by a licensing body.

Our results suggest that BComm-CPP students are performing as well academically if not better than BBA students. Further investigation into the relationship between course delivery method and subject matter is required in order to understand the impact of the unique type of blended delivery method offered by Nipissing University on student success. Given the comparable employment success between graduates of the BComm-CPP and BBA programs, a survey of employers may be useful in terms of understanding how the marketplace distinguishes between graduates of the two programs. A follow-up graduate professional success survey should be conducted in 3-5 years in order to determine if there are differences in the long term employment experiences of graduates from the various programs. Over the next year, the BBA will be available to College Partnership and Distance students. The analysis of student and graduate performance between these programs will be simplified as the progression and core requirements will be more uniform.