

Executive Summary

Since 2009, the Ontario College system has experienced a dramatic growth in international students dramatically exceeding that of ministry-funded students at the system level; 246.0% and 11.4% respectively. Despite this growth, international students at Ontario colleges have not been the subject of studies especially as they compare to the domestic student population. Enrolment continues to grow unabated, yet colleges are struggling to understand the demographic characteristics of international students, aside from their country of origin, let alone their outcomes post-graduation.

Utilizing two provincially mandated surveys, Student Satisfaction and Graduate Satisfaction, this report answers two questions:

1. How do international and domestic students differ in Ontario colleges?
2. How does college-to-university transfer differ for international and domestic students in Ontario?

Part One includes is an analysis of the demographic characteristics of age, gender, and first language learned along with the academic characteristics of previous education, program of choice, and related skill development. Then, because of the large percentage of international students entering college with previous university, the same analysis is conducted for this sub-group. Based on the Student Satisfaction survey from 2011 to 2014 international students are older, male and are most likely to be enrolled in business. International students are significantly more likely to come with a university degree and compared to their domestic counterpart are likely to enroll in graduate certificates, are younger, and are seeking support for writing and speaking skills.

Part Two examines transfer's various components including the rate, timing of decision, sources of information, destination program and satisfaction with the experience. Based on the Graduate Satisfaction Survey from 2007 to 2015 the transfer rates for international graduates are lower than that of their peers and are declining over time. International graduates are more likely to make their decision about transfer after completing their program; report getting more transfer information from the college; and have higher levels of satisfaction with their transfer experience and academic preparation.

The growth of international students at Ontario Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology is an important trend to both individual colleges and the system. Because international students are rapidly becoming a singularly large portion of the college population, with different characteristics than their domestic peers, policy makers need to be receptive and responsive to their needs. With half of international students having completed a university degree the extent to which this reality affects pedagogy needs to be examined further. The transfer rate is dropping which suggests international students are primarily using college as a second credential and not as an automatic stepping stone to university. Finally, those students who are transferring to university are more likely to use college resources for information about transfer which should prompt institutions to examine their services in this area.