

The Co-op Advantage: The Impact of Participation in Co-op Education on Class of 2012 Graduate Outcomes in the Maritime Provinces

The Canadian Association for Co-operative Education (CAFCE) Atlantic Research Committee has released an infographic summarizing research conducted to investigate whether completing a co-operative education program (co-op) provided an advantage to Maritime University Bachelor level graduates' employment and income level, and resulted in increased satisfaction of the overall educational experience. The infographic can be found on the CAFCE Atlantic website: <http://cafceatlantic.com>

Highlights of the research indicate that 15% of graduates reported participation in a co-op program as part of their studies. Graduates of Applied and Professional programs, Commerce and Administration were more likely to have completed a co-operative education program. *The researchers explored whether the results were dependent on the students' discipline of study, but found that the pattern of more positive outcomes among those who participated in a co-operative education program applied to students in all areas of study.*

85% of co-op graduates indicated that their undergraduate program prepared them for the workplace to either a great or some extent compared to 64% of all other graduates. A significantly higher percentage of co-op graduates compared to all other graduates also felt their program provided them with the skills for a particular job.

Two years after graduation, 91% of co-op graduates were working *full-time* compared to 83% of other graduates. 68% of co-op graduates occupied jobs that required a university education or were at the management level compared to 52% of all other graduates. A significantly higher proportion of co-op graduates (53%) reported being satisfied with their current financial situation, compared to other graduates (42%). 70% of co-op graduates felt university was worth the investment while 61% of other graduates felt the same.

"The results of this research are exciting. These findings suggest that there are demonstrable benefits to a co-operative education in terms of level of readiness for the workplace and employment outcomes, two years after graduation," said Anna Cranston, Director of Management Career Services in the Faculty of Management at Dalhousie University and member of the CAFCE Atlantic Research Committee.

The results were drawn from data collected by the Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission (MPHEC) in their 2014 survey of 2012 Maritime university graduates. The total sample of 2,892 respondents represents 25% of the total Class of 2012 bachelor's graduate population in 14 Maritime universities. The results have a margin of error of $\pm 1.8\%$, 19 times out of 20.

CAFCE Atlantic is a member-based group comprised of co-operative education practitioners, faculty members and employers engaged in the delivery of co-operative education throughout Atlantic Canada.

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