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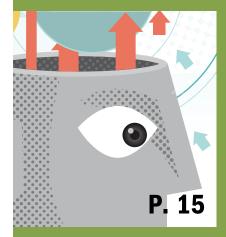
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Academic Matters

OCUFA'S JOURNAL OF HIGHER EDUCATION LA REVUE D'ENSEIGNEMENT SUPÉRIEUR D'UAPUO

Academic Matters is published two times a year by OCUFA, and is received by 17,000 professors, academic librarians and others interested in higher education issues across Canada. The journal explores issues of relevance to higher education in Ontario, other provinces in Canada, and globally. It is intended to be a forum for thoughtful and thought-provoking, original and engaging discussion of current trends in post secondary education and consideration of academe's future direction.

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Erica Rayment

Copy Editor:

Melissa Goldstein

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Editorial Board

Melonie Fullick, Glen Jones, Vinita Srivastava

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Sales Manager:

Beth Kukkonen, bkukkonen@dvtail.com Phone (905) 886-6640 ext. 306

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Letters to the Editor

On "Harper's attack on science: No science, no evidence, no truth, no democracy", by Carol Linnitt

I am the editor of Sustainablelivingmagazine.org, and we have found an alarming reduction in access to information from Canadian climate scientists at a time when information about climate change is critical. One of the responsibilities of a democratic government is to collect and share information that enables informed decision making. The Harper Conservatives' attempt to gag the scientific community seems to be somewhere between an immensely misguided political strategy or a heinous conspiracy to keep the Canadian public in the dark. One of our journalists called it the "ostrich syndrome," where the government believes that if they hide the facts from the public that the facts will just disappear. I have discussed this issue with other journalists and found their experience to be the same. The fact that we don't have access to our own government science some say represents one of the most dramatic affronts to democracy in the history of our nation.

GARNET MCPHERSON, SUSTAINABLE LIVING MAGAZINE

This is a great and informative article. It saddens me that this is happening in Canada. I spent a great 18 months in Vancouver and love the country and people. I can't believe this is accepted by Canadian citizens. I have read a lot about climate/policy/government change and continue to do so. I feel though as if I have nothing to offer to the world in terms of power or contribution. By reading these articles, I feel it brings fear to our next generation. The new generation has to breed the next revolution. We have all become complacent, we all have to shoulder the blame and we all have to share the consequences. Money is power at the end of any deal be it political or social. Only when greed is driven from the world will people live up to their duties as guardians of this planet.

RICKY BARRINGTON

On "The MOOC Bubble and Higher Education", by Aaron Bady

It's as if people (learners) have no will. However one defines a "traditional course", "MOOC", etc. learners have and have always had a choice in how they interact with course content. It's easy to use terms like "traditional education", "cMOOCs", and "xMOOCs" and generalize to specific educative contexts, but in reality, it's more complex than that.

Let's compare CCK08 to a "xMOOC" of today. The only main difference is that xMOOCs are attempting to implement summative assessments, which have nothing to do with the learning process. If we removed all of the CCK08 chatter about how to participate in the course (as opposed to actually discussing course content), I'd be surprised if there were really much of a difference between the two learning designs. Put another way...those who were successful in learning course content in CCK08 could do exactly the same in an xMOOC if they had the will to do so. Also, the same learners who were successful in CCK08 who had to take a "traditional" course also can choose to interact with course content in ways that perhaps are seen as being less "traditional". Educators and institutions (of democratic nations) don't have nor have they ever had that kind of control that forces learners into ways that limit how they interact with course content.

BENJAMIN L. STEWART

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Life beyond the PhD

Jennifer Polk

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NOT-FOR-PROFIT

Breaking up with academia is hard to do. But what if your interests lie elsewhere?

Il est difficile de rompre les liens avec le monde universitaire. Mais qu'advient-il si vos intérêts vous entraînent ailleurs?



s a recent history PhD, I've been asked many times variations of the same question: "Are you going to teach?" The version that prompted this piece was, "Why did you decide not to pursue a tenure-track position?" These questions assume PhDs, and perhaps humanities PhDs in particular, desire academic jobs above all else. It's an assumption that reigns supreme both within and without academia, and makes it difficult to give a simple and honest answer of, "I don't (know if I) want to be a professor." Yet why else would I have done a doctorate, many people wonder? Let me explain.

Education is highly valued in my family. My parents met while they were young students at Carleton University in Ottawa. Decades later, I happily did my first two degrees there. My dad spent the majority of his working life teaching seventh grade. My mom returned to Carleton later in life to complete her honours degree and then earned an MA after retiring from the civil service. My sister has a university degree and a college diploma.

I started my master's degree in history in the fall of 2002, right after finishing my undergraduate degree in European and Russian studies. On my first day, my supervi-

sor handed me a stack of materials to get me started on my thesis. I shared an office with the other MA students, had good relationships with the instructors for whom I graded papers, and learned lots about all sorts of things, including the practice of history, how to think like an intellectual, and about my chosen field. I spent many hours at the library, the National Archives, and the Canadian Red Cross' national office. For me, this was fun. Doing my master's thesis over the course of 2003-04 was both the hardest and most rewarding thing I'd ever done. I was incredibly proud of the finished product. I still am!

It's no wonder a PhD was my next step. I was accepted by the University of Toronto's history department with funding (as are all doctoral students), the enthusiastic support of my family, and what felt like the entirety of Carleton's history and Russian studies departments cheering me on. It was exciting to be moving to Toronto to keep working on a topic I loved alongside a new supervisor who was warm, friendly, and a brilliant writer. At the time, not beginning a PhD would have struck me as madness. And so off I went, thrilled to keep learning, researching, and writing.

Also important was the financial reality of beginning a PhD. Many people view grad school as a money-losing proposition. I took a different view. Enrolling at the University of Toronto in September 2004 was akin to signing a job contract with guaranteed pay and benefits for 5 years. I had no other job offers, or serious ideas about jobs I might apply to. What I might do after my doctorate was a non-issue for me. (At least, I can't remember thinking about it.) I was 24 and moving out of my parents' home for the first time. I was doing what was right for me.

The PhD—all seven-and-a-half years of it—had points high and low.

In year one I ran tutorials for the first time and put out a newsletter for graduate students in my department. By year two I was elected president of the student society, prepared for comprehensive exams, and took in many free talks at the Munk Centre. In my third year I joined Massey College and delighted in archival research trips, which were great fun.

welcomed and valued. I knew nearly nothing about music, but soon my personal blog became one of the go-to sites for news and reviews of the local scene. An acquaintance from the indie scene cajoled me into co-hosting a podcast with him, and two years later we'd produced fifty of them, each one featuring songs by local bands, sometimes ones you couldn't hear anywhere else. I didn't abandon my dissertation, but I certainly didn't tell my committee members when I was covering major, multi-day music festivals.

During my final years as a PhD student I wasn't in love with academia anymore. I remember being particularly struck by a moment at one departmental meeting. The chair announced that 50 per cent of the department's PhD graduates ended up in tenure-track jobs, a statistic that seemed to please the assembled professors; I, however, was shocked.

Half! Of course, I know now that 50 per cent really is a good number. But what about the other half, I wondered? What would they (we?) do?

The chair announced that 50 per cent of the department's PhD graduates ended up in tenure-track jobs...

The next year was highlighted by putting together a lecture series, co-organizing a graduate student conference, and writing my first dissertation chapter. In the meantime, I'd won prestigious external awards and presented at international conferences.

But by the start of my fifth year as a PhD student, I'd found a new passion not at all related to my dissertation or the university: Toronto's independent music scene. Up to this point I could claim to have been a model graduate student, but the reality of dissertating was upon me, and suddenly school wasn't as much fun anymore. Painstakingly reading and dealing with my sources, and putting everything together into a coherent, factually correct, and analytically respectable narrative—what a slog! It was second only to grading papers as the absolute worst part of graduate school. Shows were my solace, and late-night concerts became crucial to my well-being.

How did an almost literal poster person for higher education—a picture of me with a fellow graduate student actually appeared on widely-distributed cards advertising U of T student services—end up trading in committee work and academic events for \$5 concerts in dingy, dank bars? The short answer is that I found a new community where I felt

Fast-forward to early 2010. I'd stopped investing so much time and energy in the music scene and was looking for a new hobby. A friend and fellow graduate student who knew of my growing disillusionment recommended me to a former colleague of hers, an independent consultant in need of occasional assistance. I became a virtual assistant, performing light administrative work, conducting internet research, carrying out stakeholder interviews, and helping out in other ways. It was good to receive pay for work performed, to feel appreciated, and to contribute to larger team projects.

The late dissertation period is prime time for seeking out instructor positions and venturing into the academic labour market for the first time. When most people in my cohort were applying for academic jobs, I wasn't sending out CVs. Dissertating and freelance work—along with the occasional research or conference trip—took up most of my time, and thanks to good scholarships and cheap living, I didn't feel financial pressure to seek full-time work after graduation. I could afford to put off job applications. I felt some shame about this, but I didn't frequent my department and spent little time on campus, thus avoiding otherwise inevitable job market conversations. I figured I would start the hunt for tenure-track employment later.

Later never came. I handed in the final draft of my dissertation in the fall of 2011. The entire finishing process, before and after, was emotionally draining. My supervisors were supportive and my defense went well. But on the whole, the process was exhausting.

My saving grace, in addition to actual savings, was my freelance work.

My clients liked me, and continuing my work with them became the obvious next step for me. Really, it wasn't a next step: I was already doing it, and carried on doing it past my defense, final submission, and graduation in the summer of 2012. Freelancing proved far from perfect (or financially lucrative), but I believed I could improve my situation.

By the fall it was clear that my hopes to take on more challenging work weren't panning out. I felt I'd barely progressed. My post-PhD job prospects seemed poor and my self-esteem was suffering. When friends and acquaintances asked me what I was up to, I would tell them (only half-

I found many similarly-minded folks online, especially on Twitter. My self-discovery and career exploration efforts continued, and little by little, I zeroed in on my strengths, values, and passions.

In time, I realized that having my own business really was ideal for me, just not as a virtual assistant or researcher-for-hire. I wanted more responsibility, more control over what projects I took on, and greater interaction with clients. After all, there's a reason I spent so many years in graduate school working on my own projects and determining my own schedule! The longer I worked with my coach, the more I thought I would enjoy becoming one myself, and in late May I signed up for my first coaching class. Going back to school (sort of) was one of the best decisions I've ever made.

I've been coaching clients of my own for a few months now. I mainly work with graduate students who are working on theses and dissertations, and PhDs (and ABDs) seeking

The late dissertation period is prime time for seeking out instructor positions and venturing into the academic labour market for the first time.

joking) that I was freelancing but that basically, "I'm a loser."

They'd laugh and disagree, but the facts of the matter suggested otherwise.

Not long thereafter I decided to make changes. I attended job search workshops and got serious about setting up informational interviews.

Most importantly, I hired a career coach, a job I never knew existed. I just knew I needed help.

During our first conversation, I told my coach where I was at, giving her my standard post-PhD narrative, which included the "I'm a loser" bit. She stopped me and pointed out that it takes a while for people to make career transitions. Instead of being slow on the uptake, she said I was, "right on schedule!" (She specializes in academic transitions, so I believed her.) I immediately felt better about my situation.

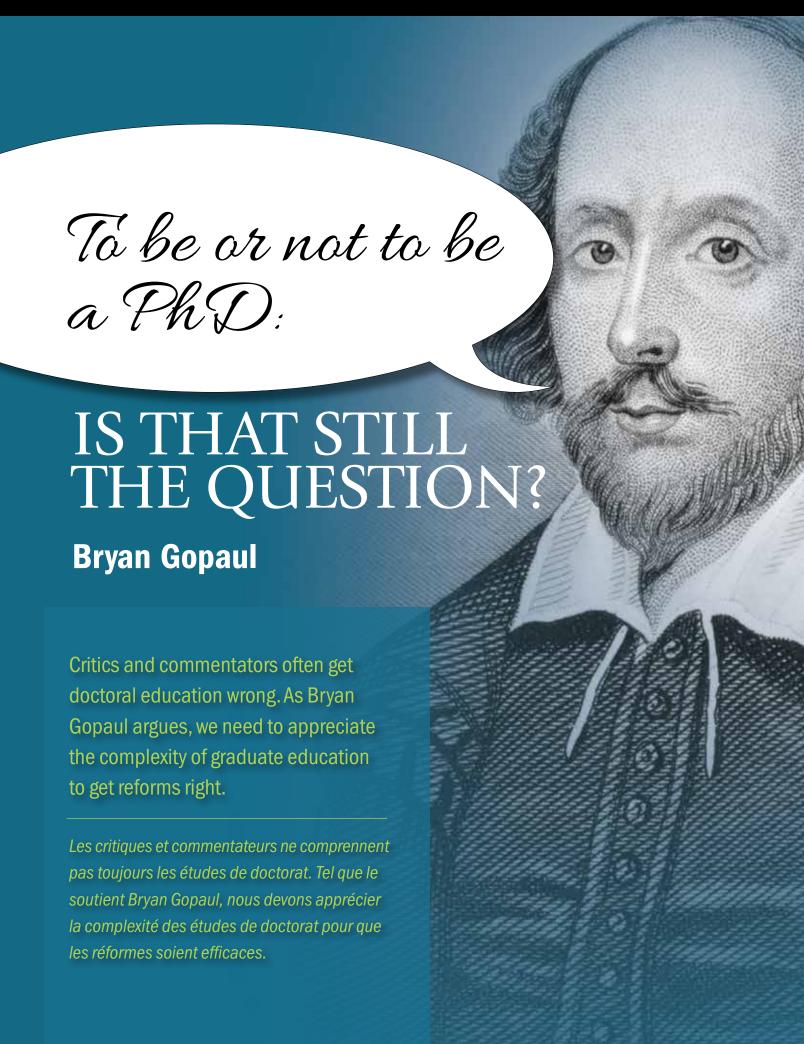
With my coach's support, I embraced my transition, got ever clearer about what I wanted, and focused my job search efforts. In December, wanting to help other PhDs on the non-academic track, I started a new blog, "From PhD to Life." I also learned to love informational interviews, and one of them inspired me to begin a "transition Q & A" series on my website; there are now more than 25 of them up there. The blog was (and is) a sign of my new sense of purpose, and

employment beyond the tenure track. It's wonderful to talk with them, ask big questions, learn about their successes, investigate their frustrations, and help them set goals and move forward in their lives on their own terms. My services so far include one-on-one coaching and weekly group sessions, all over the phone or online. My clients, who are based in Canada, the United States, and beyond, inspire me to keep learning and exploring. They find me via my website, my blog—now hosted by University Affairs magazine—social media, and through referrals.

As I write this, many of my friends and former graduate school colleagues are on the academic job market, teaching a new crop of students, and applying for postdoc positions. Once again, I'm taking no part.

Instead, I'm opting in to a different track: to my goals, my career, and my life. It isn't easy, but I'm passionate about supporting students through the challenges of dissertating, and helping PhDs find their way in the world beyond the Ivory Tower. It's wonderfully rewarding, incredibly important work. And, if you know someone in need of a coach, send him or her my way. MM

Jennifer Polk is a writer and career coach based in Toronto.



niversities have a long history of providing citizens with education and training, which together contribute to the vitality of society. The relationship between education and employment—often buffered by ideas about skill sets, competencies, and the state of the labour market—has been central to recent discussions about the role, quality, and efficiency of postsecondary education. Historically, much of this conversation has been focused at the undergraduate level. Scholars and policy makers are debating and exploring the workforce readiness or employability of first-degree graduates of higher education institutions. Across jurisdictions, considerable research and angst has been generated by competing ideas about what type and how much education (and which resulting skills and competencies) are necessary to achieve the optimal (and perhaps fictitious) employability sweet spot. Given the increasing numbers of students attending colleges and universities and the need to develop an educated and productive workforce, the imperative to explore the relationship between education and employment becomes stronger. As such, it is reasonable to extend this debate to discussions of graduate education. But graduate education is not undergraduate education; the parameters that define it and the contours that shape it have their own particular nuances.

The nuances of graduate education prove helpful in understanding how the relationship between education and employment is structured and enacted in higher education generally. My goal here is to explore this dual illumination; how the construction of the connection between employment and education in undergraduate education informs our understanding of graduate education, while the nuances of graduate study allow us to better understand dynamics within the broader university sector. The impetus for this reflection is the recent conversation in various Canadian and American media outlets, which have cast graduate education—as a system and as a pursuit—as seriously flawed and seemingly pointless. I enter into this conversation not only as someone who is deeply passionate about higher education, but also as a recent PhD graduate from Canada who currently works at a private, research-intensive university in the US, and whose research interests and professional commitments are rooted in the structure of doctoral education, the experiences of doctoral students, the nature of academic work, and the changing academic profession.

Before proceeding, it is important to make a distinction between graduate education at the master's degree level and doctoral education. Generally speaking, master's education has not received the scholarly and policy attention that doctoral education has garnered. Over the last decade, master's degree offerings have proliferated, but most of that increase has been concentrated in disciplines more closely aligned with professions—for example, nursing, business, social work, and education. Education in the professions includes accreditation and input from professional councils, and this

shapes the demand for additional credentials beyond the baccalaureate. For the sake of simplicity, this article will focus explicitly on doctoral education and leave the complexities of master's education for another paper.

My research has been driven by two key questions: a) what is doctoral education; and b) what does it mean to do a doctorate? Additional questions persist—for example, who pursues (and hopefully completes) a doctoral degree? And for what purpose do they pursue it? For me, all of these questions are illuminated by considering the influence of discipline and of research imperatives, as is the relationship between education and employment at the doctoral level.

Disciplinary understandings are critical to any discussions of doctoral study. For instance, public policy and scholarly conversations have questioned the high percentage of students who do not complete doctoral study and the lengthy amount of time that is required to complete the various milestones of a PhD. It has been observed that doctoral students in science-based disciplines tend to be more successful at completing their degrees and do so in shorter timeframes than their counterparts in the social sciences or humanities. Completion rates and time-to-degree do vary considerably across disciplines, and much of those differences are rooted in the nature of the disciplines themselves. Yet public conversations around doctoral education do not explicitly recognize the significance of disciplinary conventions to many aspects of doctoral study. The demands and contours of the disciplines require different things from doctoral students. For example, the successful completion of comprehensive exams (or qualifying exams, depending on context) signals a critical moment for many PhD students. But the requirements to complete these exams vary considerably. The humanities employ a canonical structure where particular works or texts that are foundational to understanding the discipline must be mastered prior to the exam. Similarly, there might be language proficiency requirements that must be met, and as anyone who has ever attempted to learn a second language knows, this is not a straightforward or quick process. These sorts of requirements naturally lengthen the time to degree completion for some disciplines, yet are often absent in discussions about the low completion rates and long time-todegree realities for some doctoral students.

The influence of discipline is also felt in doctoral student supervision and supervisory relations. The role of faculty member supervision is critical to the experiences of doctoral students. The engagement of supervisors with doctoral students includes not only thesis supervision, but also concerns broader aspects such as feedback, socialization, mentorship, and guidance. Given the nature of research and the lengthy time required to complete a dissertation, the experiences of doctoral students often hinge on the quality of their relationships with supervising faculty members. While supervision is significant in all doctoral study, the nature of individual disciplines introduces a great deal of variability and nuance to the experience. For instance,

doctoral students in the sciences and engineering disciplines experience a supervision model that might seem more like an employment contract—where students' interactions with their supervisors mirrors an employee-employer dynamic, with a laboratory environment that more closely resembles a conventional workplace. Doctoral students might arrive to the lab at 9 or 10 a.m. and then leave the lab around 5 p.m., thereby mirroring traditional employment schedules although many students work well beyond 5 p.m. Many of these doctoral students will have opportunities to interact with fellow students and with the supervisor during this work day, which facilitates feedback, advice, and guidance about research activity and about academic life. Doctoral students in the humanities experience a very different supervision structure, with implications for engaging in research and interaction with faculty members. For these individuals, the experience is much more independent—even isolated compared to their colleagues in the sciences, especially during the dissertation writing phase. This means fewer mentorship and supervision opportunities for many students in the humanities and social sciences. Supervision, mentorship, and guidance definitely exist for humanities doctoral students, but in a much more unstructured way that depends on the initiative of the student and the availability of the professor.

Attention to disciplinary variation is needed if we are to understand how powerful differences exist in the lived experiences of doctoral students. The variations across disciplines must be considered when evidence such as low completion rates, long completion times, and the difficult academic labour market are marshaled to comment on the efficacy of doctoral study. The conventions and norms of disciplines affect the amount of time students need to finish each requirement of doctoral study and to successfully complete doctoral study. This is not to suggest that the sciences and engineering disciplines are easier than humanities related disciplines, but rather that the arguments invoked in popular discussions about the efficiency of doctoral study do not fully articulate the variability and diversity of doctoral education.

The disciplines also act as prisms through which we can explore the relationship between education and employment for doctoral students. This disciplinary framework introduces two powerful ideas: a) the uncompromising commitment to research as central to doctoral study; and b) the different ways that this emphasis on research affects students across disciplines.

With only slight variations, a doctoral degree is, fundamentally, a research degree. Many of the experiences, relationships, and tasks within doctoral study are built around establishing research acumen. This includes mastering the literature in one's field of study, writing publishable manuscripts, and presenting at academic conferences. Students are taught how to read scholarship, how to write for academic audiences, and how to produce knowledge to the standards of the academy. This explicit focus on research is a

crucial element in defining the significance of doctoral study within the contemporary university. Across jurisdictions, universities seek to increase their prestige and reputation by attracting star faculty and promising students. One way this prestige is acquired is through the research activity of departments and individuals. Universities have long been judged on their ability to produce high quality academic publications and their record of securing external funding to support ongoing research. In both the global and domestic higher education landscapes, the perceived quality of a department or institution is deeply tied to research activity. When prospective doctoral students seek out programs of doctoral study, the quality of faculty members, the strength of the program or department, and/or the overall research reputation of the institution are crucial factors. Also, there might be specific disciplinary expertise (measured through research) that is found in an institution that might not otherwise be considered a top-tier research university; however, the quality of its disciplinary focus would entice doctoral students to apply to the program. For undergraduate students, research profile is less important in deciding where to study. For doctoral students, this concern is central, and this is another defining nuance to consider when discussing graduate education.

Some of this might implicitly support critiques of doctoral education, which suggest that it is too narrow and that graduates will most likely never work in academic settings, despite the clear expectations—of both students and faculty—that graduates will work as professors upon graduation. However, the points I have raised demonstrate the inherent complexity of doctoral study. This complexity defies the simplified discourse presented in most media critiques, and makes it difficult to draw firm conclusions about the connections between doctoral study and employment. The foregoing discussion also illuminates important entry points into re-framing the experiences of doctoral students, expectations amongst faculty members and doctoral students, and the programmatic scope of departments, disciplines, and institutions. This reframing identifies the pressing need to implement reform efforts to encourage the successful completion and employment of doctoral graduates, reforms that go far beyond the critiques and conclusions contained within the popular discourse.

As a higher education researcher, I have the wonderful, yet complicated, privilege of exploring and reflecting on the contexts in which I am embedded. As a doctoral student, I studied the experiences of doctoral students, and now I study the nature of academic work and the changing academic profession—a profession in which I plan to spend the rest of my career. This sort of reflective gaze on my embeddedness was extremely helpful in identifying and responding to expectations during doctoral study. Unfortunately, many doctoral students across disciplines are not afforded similar opportunities to reflect on and to engage with their own

Attention to disciplinary variation is needed if we are to understand how powerful differences exist in the lived experiences of doctoral students

experiences. As such, I encourage doctoral students to act as agents—both as individuals and in coalition with their colleagues—to suggest and to implement particular perspectives and activities that support continuous improvement of doctoral programs.

This focus on student agency to diversify and differentiate traditional activities in doctoral study also needs to be supported, nurtured, and legitimized in the departmental, disciplinary, institutional, and broader academic culture in which such student advocacy occurs. Multiple initiatives have begun to address the need for reform in doctoral education, and, recently, the comprehensive efforts at Stanford University focusing on the humanities represent a crucial step toward this important goal. Central to these efforts has been the need to decrease the time to degree completion and to diversify the curriculum to address non-academic careers for doctoral graduates in the humanities. The first element involved curricular and cultural changes in the department that introduced regular and frequent meetings and forums for doctoral students to engage with peers and faculty members where feedback, guidance, and mentorship could readily occur. The second element included the BiblioTech initiative, which emphasizes employment opportunities for humanities doctoral graduates in technology industries, specifically within Silicon Valley. These types of broad reforms could be implemented in other disciplines at other institutions, but need a coordinated strategy amongst departments, faculty members, and doctoral students. One potential area of reform in doctoral education is to re-engineer what research actually means in the context of learning particular skills that are relevant to different careers post-graduation. Writing for academic audiences involves a particular prose and tone, yet the need to understand research and to articulate a cogent, critical argument are competencies needed beyond the narrow walls of academe. Government agencies, consulting firms, policy offices, and non-governmental organizations all desire individuals who are critical thinkers and can communicate competently and efficiently. The ability to recognize and support these diverse career trajectories for doctoral degree holders is paramount, as more graduates either are unable to enter academe due to the limited job openings or are unwilling to engage with many of the elements of a professorial life that simply aren't attractive to many graduates.

A parallel notion is to recognize that academic employment does not equal professorial employment. There are many offices and divisions within colleges and universities that need well-educated and articulate individuals. For many doctoral graduates, career options within higher education institutions but outside of professorial pursuits might be more gratifying, sustainable, and productive—but these realities may be difficult to articulate within the current expectations of doctoral study.

There has been considerable attention to and debate about doctoral education and the future of doctoral degree holders. In the context of the relationship between education and employment, doctoral study occupies a strange tension—a complicated space between reform and maintenance. Doctoral education needs to change as enrolments increase, yet many doctoral degree holders are not exposed to the diverse skills that enable greater marketability in a changing labour market. Many graduates do not enter professorial employment because stable tenure-track jobs simply are not available, or the life of a professor does not seem desirable (in the short-term). But, there is no alternative form of training or no other source of labour that provides the professoriate of the future. The only place future professors are created is through doctoral study. Soay, there's the rub—in many ways, the question is no longer "to be or not to be" a doctoral student, but rather "what are the priorities and purposes of doctoral education?" And, perhaps more intriguing, who gets to define them? Continued attention and debate is needed to advance clear and comprehensive strategies, expectations, and curricula to ensure the successful completion and employment of doctoral degree holders. M

 $Bryan\ Gopaul\ is\ a\ Post-Doctoral\ Research\ Fellow\ at\ the\ University\ of\ Pennsylvania.$

Deciding on a career in the college sector **Linda Muzzin**

Tenure-track positions in Canadian universities are getting harder to find. But recent research suggests that many full-time career opportunities exist in Canada's colleges.

Les postes qui mènent à la permanence dans les universités canadiennes deviennent plus rares. Cependant, des recherches récentes suggèrent qu'il existe de nombreuses offres de carrière à plein temps dans les collèges du Canada.

t is well known that obtaining a tenure-track position in Canadian universities these days is a challenge. The proportion of contingent faculty replacing fulltime, tenure-track faculty in universities has been rising. Contingent faculty provide labour market "flexibility" in the current situation of uncertain funding for post-secondary educational institutions. Arguably, there is no shortage of contingent teaching positions in most large urban universities. As Michael Skolnik (2009) argues, where enrolments have risen constantly (such as in Ontario) there

is a need to provide teaching relief for research facultyperhaps two or three contingent teachers for each research faculty member supported by core university funding. Thus, there are jobs—just not good jobs—in the university precariat. It's a difficult life, perhaps "freeway-flying" from teaching one course to another, or living from contract to contract. So master's and doctoral degree graduates should be forgiven for looking beyond the university to obtain a full-time academic position. They might already have been cobbling together sessional teaching at a university



with teaching a course or two at the local community college, even though from the perspective of elite universities and the logic of the academy, college teaching is lower in the pecking order. But what do full-time employment opportunities in the colleges look like?

A research note in the most recent issue of the Canadian Review of Sociology hints that many students already consider the colleges when looking for a full-time faculty position. After examining 135 websites to determine where the degrees of Canadian assistant professors of sociology had been obtained, the authors concluded that those with Canadian doctorates were not disadvantaged overall. Of 156 assistant professors for whom they could locate data, two-thirds were Canadian trained. There was a hitch, however: a lower percentage was hired at what Macleans calls medical/doctoral universities. A much higher percentage was hired at comprehensive and primarily undergraduate universities. Finally, almost all of those hired by colleges were trained in Canada. The authors looked at only seven mostly private colleges, and left the 152 public community colleges in Canada largely unexamined. But sampling issues aside, the data does indicate a kind of hierarchy in the hiring of Canadian PhD-holders in sociology.

What are the chances of getting hired in other disciplines by a college on a full-time basis? The answer to this question is that it matters very much who you are, in what field(s) you have credentials, where you are willing to work, and whether research or teaching is most important to you. For example, since colleges are considerably more dispersed geographically than universities, it matters whether you are willing to work in the north or in smaller centres in the south.

In a recent study of college faculty on 50 Canadian campuses, my co-author and I discovered that colleges have been picking up the slack of excess doctorates for many years. For example, a top administrator at a feeder college for a nearby medical/doctoral university told us that he just missed getting a faculty position in the hiring frenzy that took place at new Canadian universities during the 1960s. But after a short time as a contingent college teacher, he happily taught in his field and did union work for decades as a full-time college employee. Since the 1960s, there has been such a huge growth in the number of campuses and enrolments that community colleges now claim almost half

the post-secondary pie.² The general perception that colleges typically hire faculty with a master's degree dates back to the historical practices of central Canadian colleges, where only a master's degree in one's teaching area was required, much as it was in

vocational programs in universities such as pharmacy or dentistry. But things have changed. In the rest of Canada, a teaching credential such as a master's degree in education is now also required for most full-time college faculty, and doctorates are sought in specific fields.

This is because the college sector has been undergoing a remarkable transformation over the past decade. The sector has differentiated into its own pecking order of colleges feeding prestigious universities; polytechnics; university colleges; and special purpose universities, in addition to the more traditional community colleges that still only grant certificates and diplomas. Select programs in BC, Alberta, Manitoba, and Ontario now lead to what are called applied baccalaureates (as opposed to academic baccalaureates offered by universities), and all of these have recruited master's and doctoral graduates to teach. So the timing of the new postgraduate credential holder is propitious for locating such an opportunity.

Further, it helps to have a postgraduate degree, particularly in the so-called "professionalizing" fields in both universities and colleges. A good example is nursing, where after cuts to the health care system during the Klein-Harris era, many provinces are faced with shortages of nurses and by extension, nursing teachers (Muzzin & Limoges, 2008). This is true for baccalaureate-level nursing where teachers with less than a master's degree are being phased out, and nurses with doctorates who can do research are in demand. In collaborative nursing programs—those in which the first years are taught in colleges and the last one or two years are taught in universities, master's degrees are necessary (notionally to be one degree ahead of the students), and doctorates may be preferred. This is not an insignificant academic workforce, since nurses are the largest profession in the healthcare system, and health is usually the largest item in provincial budgets. Nurses are only one cadre of a growing number of feminized fields that are professionalizing, such as midwifery, dietetics, dental hygiene, physiotherapy, occupational therapy, and so oneach looking to hire professionals in colleges and universities with advanced degrees.

Another place where science master's and doctorate holders might find a full-time teaching position is in the new 'polytechnics' sector.

Urban colleges are more likely to hire contingent faculty than other colleges, so this is a consideration for graduate students in search of employment. In contrast, some colleges in the north may be willing to pay for part of your advanced degree (which you might obtain by distance education). Further, while all colleges recruit administrators, colleges building their infrastructure may be particularly keen to recruit full-time administrators who have advanced degrees and administrative experience.

But what options exist for a postgraduate degree holder outside of a recognized profession? Another place where there are opportunities appears in the arts and science faculties of colleges that offer university transfer programs. There are not many of these institutions outside Quebec. Those that exist seem to remake themselves in the image of the uni-

versities they feed, since the quality of courses taken in the first years of a baccalaureate must be acceptable for transfer credit to the targeted university programs. This is a good deal for students, since college fees are usually much lower than university fees, and those from lower socioeconomic strata get a break on the cost of their post-secondary degree for the first year or two. The teachers we talked to in these elite colleges (outside Quebec) were gen-

erally happy with their full-time work and benefits, as well as with the substance of their work. As it turns out, this kind of position can be quite rewarding if your passion is teaching.

College students enrolled in certificate (one year) or diploma (two year) college programs in technology need inspired teachers to prepare them for the work they will be doing. For their part, college instructors in chemistry, physics, and environmental science spoke to us about how much they enjoyed being in a post-secondary environment where good teaching mattered. They also spoke about the "rat race" to get a tenure stream position at universities and the challenging lifestyle accompanying the constant push to get large grants, keep on top of one's field, obtain equipment, and commercialize their findings-not only to get tenure, but also to keep up with the demands of teaching and research. A few expressed their pleasure at being able to sidestep such a university career by taking a college position.

Another place where science master's and doctorate holders might find a full-time teaching position is in the new polytechnics sector. This includes both brand new and longstanding institutes of technology or applied technology, some of which have formed an organization called Polytechnics Canada (with members including BCIT, NAIT, SAIT, SIAST, Red River, Humber, Algonquin, Conestoga, Sheridan and George Brown colleges). According to their spokesperson, they offer the full range of college programs, including the skilled trades, with programs "laddered" (transferring credit upwards) so that students can pursue their training in modular fashion.3 A parallel laddering also



university and who were relieved to be able to sidestep the university science research treadmill. Several issues at these institutions around intellectual property and professional development need to be ironed out—in general, the colleges rather than faculty own intellectual property, and colleges are funded for teaching not research, limiting scholarly opportunities. Still, a lucky few were provided laboratories and engaged in research both independently and as part of their instructional duties. In this case, student/faculty discoveries could potentially be adopted by industries involved with the colleges. And we heard from some potential inventors that they were happy to donate their discoveries to their college communities (university faculty would ordinarily question this practice).





Master's and PhD holders in the Arts also told us how relieved they were to find a full-time position (with benefits) in a college after failing to find anything beyond part-time

work in the university sector. These included individuals with postgraduate degrees in the humanities and social sciences, as well as professional fields such as journalism. The best stories were told by humanities and social science majors with postgraduate credentials who were hired in the recent conversion of former colleges into university colleges, and later, in most cases, to universities. These institutions include Vancouver Island University (formerly Malaspina College), Thompson Rivers University (formerly Cariboo College), Kwantlen University, Capilano University, and Fraser Valley University (all in BC); Grant MacEwan University and Mount Royal University (in Alberta); and Cape Breton University (in Nova Scotia). In the north of Canada, newly formed institutions include University College of the North (in Manitoba), and Nipissing University and Algoma University (in Ontario).

For those with a passion for teaching indigenous culture and politics, especially those who are themselves Aboriginal with postgraduate credentials, northern colleges such as University College of the North and Arctic College (in Nunavut) have recruited in recent years. Anova Scotia Community College has been proactive in hiring black faculty. And if you live in Toronto, and are a person of colour with an advanced degree, local colleges are proactive hirers too (though we suspect that they have been more successful in hiring staff and contingent faculty of colour.) One Toronto college reports 35 percent of staff as self-identified members of a racial minority, but full time faculty are not separately identified in their data.

In Canada, only a relatively few colleges are feeders, polytechnics, university colleges or special purpose universities. These institutions, along with centrally-administered eastern college systems such as those found in Nova Scotia and Newfoundland and Labrador, are trying hard to shake their image as trades or vocational schools. While it is true that for many colleges in Canada, the largest enrolments are in the trades and literacy development programs, it should be noted that there may also be an opportunity for interdisciplinary academic positions here. Trades

programs require instructors, and we found science majors who also had journeyman's papers teaching in colleges. Degree holders without trade certifications often teach courses ancillary

to trades. In fact, the more interdisciplinary your credentials, the greater your chances of cobbling together a full-time position or contract in trades programs in more remote areas where enrolments are low.

All of this merits a few caveats. In Quebec, there is enrolment growth in the anglophone feeder colleges (which includes private colleges) in Montreal, but the work supported by this increase in students may be primarily contingent. Further, the elite colleges and fields we have been discussing should be distinguished from the use of general arts and science programs as a way to provide general education diplomas to students who either cannot enter or who fail in the vocational or academic fields of their choice. This can include students at colleges where the local university has refused to enter into transfer credit agreements with specific college programs because of concerns over lack of equivalence. This is unfortunate, as university-college program differences—particularly in vocational fields—often disappear when similar professional programs are examined in detail. A related issue is that there is a tendency in some colleges to place human service vocational programs such as early childhood education (ECE) and child and youth worker programs (both feminized) in the continuing education part of the college, which means in practice that their faculty are treated as contingent faculty. As a result, job seekers in these areas need to be cautious and check out the local status of the field. In one city we found the ECE program plunked into a continuing education unit in one large college, while in another it was laddered into an applied degree. The former program attracted students who could not afford day tuition fees.

In addition, the difference between university and college vocational programs, when it appears, has to do not with their vocational (or hands-on components) but with their so-called liberal arts content. In our research, in each case of a college in Canada seeking university status, the importation of PhD level faculty, liberal arts content, and policies protecting academic freedom were all focal points in the transformation to a degree-granting institution. Thus,

the relatively sharp distinction between universities as the bastion of the liberal arts and colleges as sites for vocational training (high tech or otherwise) continues. Further, even though I have argued here that there are full-time positions in colleges, no one has done a tally of how many contin-

the university sector.



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gent faculty there are and the precarity of their work situations. For example, one instructor in a northern college held a doctorate in medieval English, and obtained two appointments in disparate fields, with final confirmation coming just before the course began. The last-minute nature of many appointments is another characteristic of contingency experienced in both colleges and universities. Literacy teaching positions tended to be mostly contingent everywhere, although instructors took great pride in their work. The reason for the contingency in the north, of course, is not to support a research enterprise, but to remain flexible in the case of low enrolments in rural or remote areas. A final situation to be cautious about is the service teaching position in large colleges, where the teacher teaches 15 versions of a communications, math or computer software course across all programs. But even in these situations, we found arts doctorate holders who, like their

Overall, in a tight academic job market, colleges are emerging as a teaching-focused employment option that many graduate students have not considered. With some cautions, there are indeed jobs-and good jobs-in the college sector. M

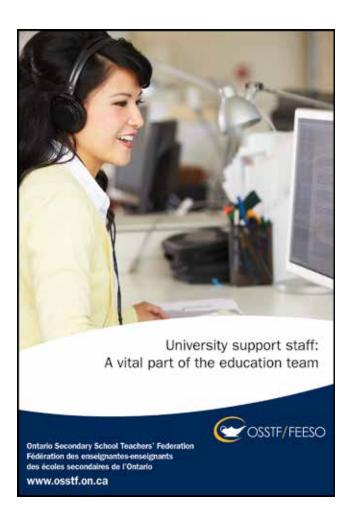
science counterparts, enjoyed the college atmosphere of collegiality and the challenge of teaching students with needs and backgrounds different from many students in

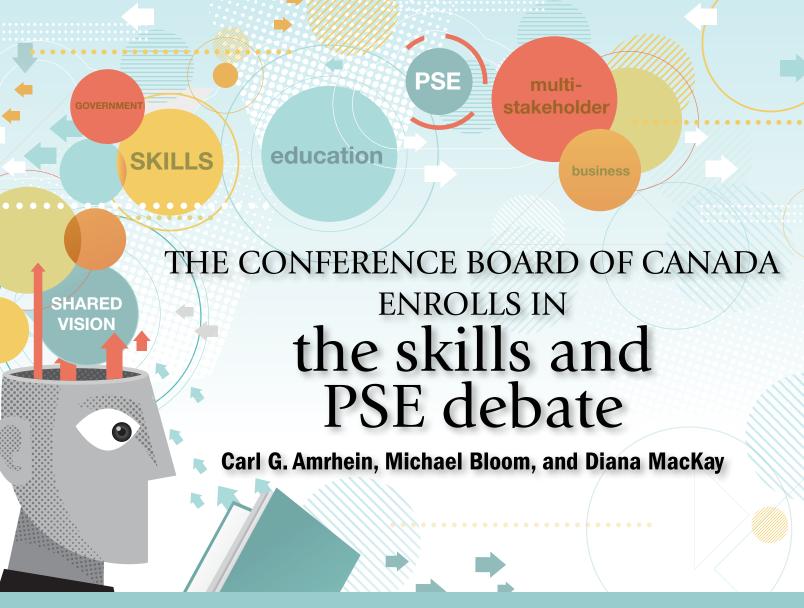
Linda Muzzin is an Associate Professor at the Ontario Institute for the Study of Education at the University of Toronto.

- 1. This research was supported by SSHRC grant 410-2006-1180.
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The Conference Board of Canada has turned its attention to the debate around education and skills. What are the implications for graduate students and faculty?

Le Conference Board du Canada a tourné son attention vers le débat sur l'éducation et sur les compétences. Quelles seront les conséquences pour les étudiants des cycles supérieurs et pour les professeurs? n March 6, 2012, after serving twelve years as Dean of the Sauder School of Business at UBC, Dr. Daniel Muzyka was named President and CEO of The Conference Board of Canada. Soon after taking office, Dr. Muzyka launched a multi-year initiative to develop a national strategy for skills and post-secondary education (PSE). The Conference Board has considerable experience in such initiatives, having tackled other significant challenges to Canada's prosperity. Recent examples include developing a national food strategy (Centre for Food in Canada), addressing the unsustainability of health care financing (Canadian Alliance for Sustainable Health Care), and improving firm-level innovation performance (Centre for Business Innovation).

With a similar multi-stakeholder, research-driven approach, the Conference Board's new Centre for Skills and Post-Secondary Education (SPSE) is convening stakeholders from governments, business, and PSE institutions, with the goal of building a shared vision and plan for graduating more people with advanced skills and promoting world-

PSE institutions since the turmoil of the sixties.

class PSE institutions in Canada. Ultimately, the initiative will be successful if it helps achieve a more competitive national footing within a rapidly evolving global economy.

The Conference Board is an independent, evidencebased, not-for-profit applied research organization. With a staff of 200 and a mandate to investigate and share insights on the biggest issues facing Canada, our research findings carry weight with leaders in government, business, and the general public. More than other not-for-profit organizations in Canada, the Conference Board has a capacity to convene leaders and key decision-makers to discuss and take action on major economic, social, business, and policy challenges facing Canada. We recognize the value and contribution of Canada's PSE system, but believe that there are challenges to the system's viability that require attention and opportunities to enhance its performance both at home and on the world stage.

Both faculty and graduate students will be deeply interested in our effort to assess and enhance Canada's system for advancing skills development, and blending that objective with the competitiveness of our PSE institutions.

CHALLENGES

PSE in Canada, as elsewhere, faces many challenges. In fact, this may be the most challenging period for PSE institutions since the turmoil of the sixties. Student demographics are changing, and the number of non-traditional PSE learners (part-time, mid-career professional, adult, and lifelong students) in North America has never been higher.1 Global competition is also increasing for top faculty and international students. Domestically, students and their families, as well as some governments, are resisting further increases in tuition and fees. In short, the needs of learners are changing and competition for the people and resources to address those needs is rising.

There are also widespread concerns and debate about skills mismatches and the implications for both employers and graduates looking for well-paid, meaningful work. The Conference Board's own work reveals that, although there is not yet an economy-wide aggregate shortage of skilled workers, there are critical skills shortages in key sectors and regions affecting about one-fifth of occupations.2 Others suggest that the the issue is overblown.3 Still, even these skeptics argue that "there is some evidence of mismatch across certain occupations and provinces" and that "delaying appropriate actions to maximize labor market efficiency until a 'burning platform' emerges is ill-advised and imprudent."4

As if all of this was not sufficient to keep academic leaders busy, governments and industry are urging PSE institutions to better align their activities with other key government priorities, such as productivity and competitiveness, sustainable health care, and innovation. There are concerns about a disconnect between student enrollment and the needs of the economy, and a perceived failure of curricula to teach the skills necessary for students to obtain jobs on graduation. This second shortcoming is seen to exist at both the undergraduate and graduate level (and perhaps even the post-doctoral level). Misalignment is also evident in the alleged lack of support universities offer to commercialization and new company creation.

Data from Statistics Canada indicate that almost 70 per cent of Canadians with doctorate degrees do not find full employment in traditional academic jobs. 5 North America alone produces almost fifty thousand doctoral graduates a year, and competition for the relatively small number of academic vacancies is global. If Canada's universities continue to produce PhDs at such high rates, they need to come to terms with the reality that the majority of doctoral graduates will need preparation for employment in non-academic settings. This is a point raised frequently by graduate student organizations in discussions with graduate deans. As Dr. Douglas Peers, history professor, Dean of Arts at the University of Waterloo, and Past President of the Canadian Association for Graduate Students, notes in an interview with University Affairs magazine: "There have always been fewer jobs [in academia] than there are PhDs, so PhD students have always had to adapt them-

selves. Where we have been slow as institutions is in recognizing what we can do to help them adapt, and I think it is a role that more and more of us are taking on."6

GOVERNMENT

SKILLS

In the face of these many challenges, how will the Centre for Skills and Post-Secondary Education help to address them?

THE KEY PLAYERS

One of the features of the Conference Board initiative is its big tent approach. The stakeholder group is deliberately defined very broadly—including universities, colleges, polytechnics, employers, industry, and other sectors of the economy, cities and communities, and governments at all levels. Traditionally, many of these stakeholders have tended to be insular in their activities relating to the advancement of knowledge and skills. But for the development of a Canadian strategy for skills and PSE, the Conference Board proposes to integrate the contributions of each into a cohesive whole. The extent to which graduate students and faculty in Canada's PSE institutions see these connections and build on them during the period ahead will be important.

EMERGING IDEAS

In preparation for its National Summit on Skills and Post-Secondary Education—the first major SPSE event, held in Toronto on November 6 and 7, 2013—the Conference Board conducted over seventy consultations with academic leaders in universities, polytechnics, and colleges, as well as groups such as the Association of Universities and Colleges Canada, the Canadian Association for Graduate Studies, the Association of Community Colleges Canada, and Polytechnics Canada. We met with government officials from across Canada, leaders in industry, and student leaders, and will continue to engage people in academia, government, and the private sector in the months and years ahead.

We have heard many concerns, ideas, and proposed solutions for the PSE system as a whole, as well as some major themes directly relevant to graduate studies. There is a complex landscape of institutions offering master's and doctoral degrees, emerging interest on the part of other institutions (such as some colleges and polytechnics) to do so, and a diversity of concerns among all stakeholders. Prominent themes emerging frequently in conversations include:

1. There is a need for the Canadian PSE sector to define a clear and consistent message to the world about the content and value of a Canadian degree in general, and a postgraduate degree in particular.

This need arises from an increasingly competitive global environment for postgraduate talent. We heard that Canada needs to make clear the value of a Canadian postgraduate degree in order to continue to attract students and to enable graduates to compete for postdoctoral positions; employment in industry, government, and other sectors of the economy; and the academy in other countries.

- 2. There is a need to create more opportunities for students to acquire the skills needed in diverse employment settings. Whether they are called soft skills, employability skills, essential skills, and/or transferable skills, they include effective communication (writing and speaking), teamwork, critical-thinking and problem-solving, basic business administration, entrepreneurship, and resumewriting and interview skills for non-academic settings.⁷ A variety of avenues offer these skills in for-credit and not-for-credit environments.
- 3. There is a need to create opportunities for graduate students to develop their problem-solving skills in interdisciplinary settings. Canada produces extremely effective and competitive graduate students, but we are less successful in encouraging these students to work across disciplines. Yet, the non-academic settings in which most graduates find themselves require interdisciplinary teamwork. At the doctoral level, graduates are frequently called on to lead such teams.
- 4. There is a desire on the part of many students to experience multi-institutional settings as part of their programs. For example, a student in environmental policy at a school in Toronto might benefit from a period of residency at an institution in Newfoundland, British Columbia, or Alberta as part of a doctoral program. Joint degrees, sandwiched degrees, and dual degrees are increasingly common as part of international partnerships. Some universities have clear guidelines and policies on these arrangements (such as the

multistakeholder

University of Alberta's Shared Credentials Policy). In some institutions, there are already provisions for professors from different universities to join doctoral supervisory committees. There are also provisions for students to visit other institutions as part of their programs. Overall, there is a sense

that greater flexibility and cooperation among Canadian institutions would benefit students heading into nonacademic settings.

There are many questions and details that need to be sorted out (including accountability arrangements for programs offered in cooperation with institutions outside of a given jurisdiction). But, if such arrangements can be successfully implemented with foreign partners, one might assume we should be able to reach similar arrangements within Canada.

5. Building on the idea of joint degrees, Canada should explore the creation of a post-baccalaureate free mobility zone. Modeled on the European Erasmus program, this mobility zone would allow students to move among a set of institutions in a consortia in which admission is reciprocal, and access to data, equipment, and peers is part of an organized program of exchange. Students would still be registered at a single institution, but their academic program would be flexible, and could be designed from the outset to produce graduates ready to work in non-academic settings.

6. Finally, there is a need for post-baccalaureate students to have significant exposure to non-academic settings-including placements in industry, government, or NGOs-as part of education and training in their fields of specialization. There are models in other countries that feature this type of experiential learning. As with undergraduate initiatives (such as co-ops, community service learning, internships, study abroad opportunities, etc.), these experiences may give students a leg up upon graduation.

RESEARCH AND DIALOGUE

The ideas and suggestions outlined above have emerged from a set of preliminary discussions with key players. Whether any of the ideas makes sense for Canada is unclear. A key aspect of the Conference Board's research agenda in the months ahead will be to explore the relevance and feasibility of such ideas and their connection to the larger challenges and opportunities facing the PSE system. Following a review of the state-of-the system and the economic impact of the existing structures of PSE in Canada, a phase of needs assessment research will be undertaken. Critical in this phase will be discussions with leaders of the graduate student community, Deans of the Graduate Schools, and international officers.

A great deal of work lies ahead to determine whether these and other proposals make sense and whether they can and should be implemented, either in whole or in part. In order to continue to serve our graduate students effectively, Canada needs to understand the changing employment situation confronting our students as they approach graduation, and make collective decisions to serve them better. Clearly, there are many ideas that need to be investigated and discussed and the Conference Board looks forward to further engaging with the academic community and others to ensure that we identify the right measures to enhance Canada's world-class PSE system. M

Carl G. Amrhein is the Provost and Vice-President (Academic) of The University of Alberta, and Visiting Executive at The Conference Board of Canada. Michael Bloom is the Vice President, Organizational Effectiveness and Learning, at The Conference Board of Canada. Diana MacKay is the Director, Education & Immigration, at The Conference Board of Canada. For more information about the Centre for Skills and Post-Secondary Education, please visit www.conferenceboard.ca/spse.

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Canada's sluggish labour market and the myth of the skills shortage

Jim Stanford

Universities—and graduate programs in particular—are often criticized for failing to match graduates with labour market needs. But as Jim Stanford argues, the idea of a "skills mismatch" just doesn't add up.

Les universités, et les programmes des cycles supérieurs en particulier, font souvent l'objet de critiques en raison de leur incapacité à préparer leurs diplômés pour les besoins du marché du travail.

Toutefois, comme le maintient Jim Stanford, l'idée du « déséquilibre des compétences » ne tient pas debout.



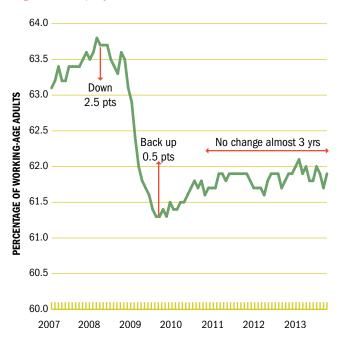
Figure 1. Employment Rate

anada's federal politicians are fond of trumpeting that Canada's economy has performed better than almost any other jurisdiction, and that we should be thankful for their "prudent economic management." In actual fact, however, the hard numbers indicate that Canada's jobs performance has been ho-hum at best-and isn't getting any better.

Part of the confusion stems from how labour market performance is measured. The government emphasizes absolute growth (or growth rates) in total employment. They boast that Canada has created over a million net new jobs since the worst of the recession: a statement that is correct, but misleading. Remember, any economy with a growing population must create many jobs each year just to keep up with population growth. In Canada's case, our working-age population grows relatively rapidly: by over 350,000 persons per year (one of the fastest growth rates in the OECD). In other countries (like Germany or Japan), population is stable; hence the labour market can attain a much stronger balance between demand and supply with little or no absolute growth in the total number of jobs. Any increase in absolute employment levels must be considered relative to the supply of available potential workers.

The best way to measure labour market performance, therefore, is to measure employment as a proportion of the working age population. Economists call this ratio the employment rate. It is also a better performance measure than the official unemployment rate. The unemployment rate is commonly reported in the media, but it is also highly misleading: it excludes individuals who are not working, but are not sufficiently active in their job search to qualify as being truly in the labour market. In Canada's case, there are almost 400,000 of these "discouraged workers." Conveniently for the politicians, they disappear from the official unemployment statistics.

Measured by the employment rate, Canada's labour market fell off a cliff with the financial crisis and subsequent recession of 2008-09 (see figure 1). Employment declined by 2.5 percentage points of the working-age population in a matter of months-the fastest fall-off in employment since the 1930s. Luckily, thanks largely to aggressive stimulus efforts in Canada and around the world, that decline was halted by the summer of 2009, and a modest recovery began. For the first 18 months of that recovery, new jobs were created at a decent pace—enough to offset about one quarter of the damage done in the downturn (rebuilding the employment rate by just over one-half of a percentage point).



Since then, however, there's been no subsequent sustained progress in recouping the damage done by the recession. Net new job creation has barely kept pace with population growth, and the employment rate has been stagnant for almost three years-languishing far below its pre-recession highs. No wonder it still feels like a recession in the labour market; by this key measure, we are hardly any better off than during the darkest days of the financial crisis. The gradual decline in the official unemployment rate since the end of 2010 has been largely due to declining labour force participation, as discouraged workers exit the formal labour market in droves.

Officially, unemployment is 1.4 million—but that's just the tip of the iceberg. Declining labour force participation corresponds to nearly 400,000 more invisible workers. Other forms of hidden unemployment (including involuntary part-time and other precarious positions) takes the total tally well above 2 million-pushing the true unemployment rate above 12 per cent. The clear constraint facing our labour market is a shortage of jobs (demand), not the availability of willing workers (supply).

Internationally, too, the weakness of Canada's performance becomes readily visible when the data is reported correctly. Table 1 reports the cumulative change in the employment rate in 34 different OECD countries, from 2008 (when the recession began) through 2012. Of the 34 countries, Canada ranks 20th (well in the lower half of industrial countries), with net job creation lagging 1.4 points behind population growth. Countries like Turkey, Germany, and Korea have done far better at creating sufficient jobs for their respective populations. Canada has nothing to boast about.

Table 1. Cumulative change in the employment rate

| RANK | COUNTRY | 2008 | 2012 | CHANGE |
|------|-----------------|------|------|--------|
| 1 | Israel | 59.8 | 66.5 | 6.7 |
| 2 | Chile | 57.3 | 61.8 | 4.5 |
| 3 | Turkey | 44.9 | 48.9 | 4 |
| 4 | Germany | 70.2 | 72.8 | 2.6 |
| 5 | Luxembourg | 63.4 | 65.8 | 2.4 |
| 6 | Hungary | 56.7 | 57.2 | 0.5 |
| 7 | Poland | 59.2 | 59.7 | 0.5 |
| 8 | Austria | 72.1 | 72.5 | 0.4 |
| 9 | Korea | 63.8 | 64.2 | 0.4 |
| 10 | Mexico | 61.3 | 61.3 | 0 |
| 11 | Czech Republic | 66.6 | 66.5 | -0.1 |
| 12 | Switzerland | 79.5 | 79.4 | -0.1 |
| 13 | Japan | 70.7 | 70.6 | -0.1 |
| 14 | Sweden | 74.3 | 73.8 | -0.5 |
| 15 | Belgium | 62.4 | 61.8 | -0.6 |
| 16 | Netherlands | 75.9 | 75.1 | -0.8 |
| 17 | France | 64.8 | 63.9 | -0.9 |
| 18 | Australia | 73.2 | 72.3 | -0.9 |
| 19 | Italy | 58.7 | 57.6 | -1.1 |
| 20 | Canada | 73.6 | 72.2 | -1.4 |
| 21 | Finland | 71.3 | 69.5 | -1.8 |
| 22 | United Kingdom | 72.7 | 70.9 | -1.8 |
| 23 | Norway | 78.1 | 75.8 | -2.3 |
| 24 | Estonia | 69.7 | 67.2 | -2.5 |
| 25 | Slovak Republic | 62.3 | 59.7 | -2.6 |
| 26 | New Zealand | 74.7 | 72.1 | -2.6 |
| 27 | United States | 70.9 | 67.1 | -3.8 |
| 28 | Iceland | 84.2 | 80.2 | -4 |
| 29 | Slovenia | 68.6 | 64.1 | -4.5 |
| 30 | Denmark | 77.9 | 72.6 | -5.3 |
| 31 | Portugal | 68.2 | 61.8 | -6.4 |
| 32 | Spain | 65.3 | 56.2 | -9.1 |
| 33 | Ireland | 67.9 | 58.8 | -9.1 |
| 34 | Greece | 61.9 | 51.3 | -10.6 |

OECD cross-country comparisons use a different definition of working age population than Statistics Canada. As a result, the absolute level of employment rates indicated in this table are not comparable to figures in the graph on the previous page.

In this context of chronic un- and under-employment, it is jarring that so many employers, business lobbyists, and politicians continue to complain about a supposed shortage of available, willing, and adequately skilled workers. Employers routinely claim they can't find qualified Canadians to perform

even relatively straightforward jobs. They can't entice Canadians to move from depressed regions, to areas with jobs. They can't elicit desired levels of effort, discipline, and loyalty.

According to this worldview, the biggest challenge facing our labour market is adjusting the attitudes, capabilities, and mobility of jobless workers. The question of whether there are any productive, decent jobs for those workers to fill is downplayed or ignored altogether. The problem, in other words, is not with unemployment. The problem is with the unemployed.

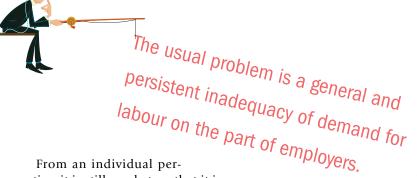
For example, within minutes of his appointment last summer as Canada's new Minister of Employment and Social Development, Jason Kenney took to Twitter to map out his approach. Mr. Kenney tweeted optimistically, "I will work hard to end the paradox of too many people without jobs in an economy that has too many jobs without people."

That short message spoke volumes about his view of Canada's labour market. It confirmed that his government will continue to downplay job creation as an economic priority. Instead, Mr. Kenney confirmed he fully accepts the mismatch theory: namely, we must focus on matching up unemployed Canadians with employers anxious to use their services. Help employers find the right workers, in the right place, at the right price, and presto! The problem is solved.

This approach implies that the unavailability of skilled and willing workers is significantly constraining Canada's recovery. It's been invoked to support many Conservative policy thrusts, from the scandal-ridden Temporary Foreign Worker Program (which Mr. Kenney oversaw in his last portfolio), to repeated cuts in Employment Insurance eligibility, to the new Canada Jobs Grant initiative which has been roundly criticized by education and labour market experts from coast to coast.

But the mismatch theory is wrong, both theoretically and empirically. Except in very rare circumstances, the labour market almost never runs out of workers. The usual problem is a general and persistent inadequacy of demand for labour on the part of employers. That's especially obvious today, four years into an economic "recovery" that has left millions of Canadians parked on the economic sidelines.

In fact, OECD evidence confirms that more Canadian workers have post-secondary training (over 50 percent of all workers) than any other industrialized country. Millions of those well-trained Canadians don't remotely use their existing skills to their full potential. And while public investments in more training always make sense, there is no credible evidence of a general skills shortage in Canada.



From an individual perspective, it is still surely true that it is better to have more education rather than less. But that so-called return to education largely reflects the impact of credentials in improving an individual's chances of winning the competition for every scarce vacancy. It is what economists call a queuing effect: higher credentials help individuals push their way to the front of the line of job seekers.

From a social cost-benefit perspective, however, this does not imply that education can somehow collectively solve the unemployment problem. Indeed, if every unemployed Canadian got more training, learned to compile a stronger resumé, signed up for LinkedIn, and did all the other things employment counsellors recommend, no new jobs would be created to absorb those ever-more capable job seekers (with the exception, perhaps, of a few resuméconsultants and LinkedIn programmers). Credential inflation and job search skills can help an individual find work, but they cannot fix mass unemployment.

In 2011, Statistics Canada began issuing a monthly report on job vacancies, based on a survey of employers. This is a useful and overdue addition to our labour market database. The most recent data indicate barely 200,000 reported job vacancies in the entire economy. That number has declined (not grown) as our lacklustre recovery stumbled along after 2011. The number of vacancies is very small relative to the overall economy (equivalent to barely one per cent of the labour force).

Moreover, even the best functioning labour market must have a certain stockpile of vacancies at any point in time (simply because it takes time to advertise, receive applications, and hire). Employers can even subjectively declare that a position is vacant, when in fact they are just waiting in hopes of recruiting someone to work at a lower wage or salary. Considering the normal time lags in advertising, interviewing, and filling positions, the number of jobs truly unfilled because of a genuine lack of qualified applicants is surely less than 100,000.

Even officially, then, there are more than six unemployed Canadians for each job vacancy (1.4 million officially unemployed compared to slightly over 200,000 vacancies). Practically, the ratio is over 20-to-1: *true* unemployment in excess of two million, compared to under 100,000 *unfillable* vacancies.

Focusing on job creation should occupy 95 per cent of Mr. Kenney's attention as Employment Minister. Instead, he

will likely focus on social engineering: toughlove efforts to adjust the expectations, attitudes, and flexibility of the unemployed, rather than trying to create jobs for them. In this regard, it is not surprising that Mr. Kenney added the term "Social Development" to his portfolio. This further telegraphs his intentions to blame the unemployed, not unemployment, for the continuing weakness in Canada's labour market.

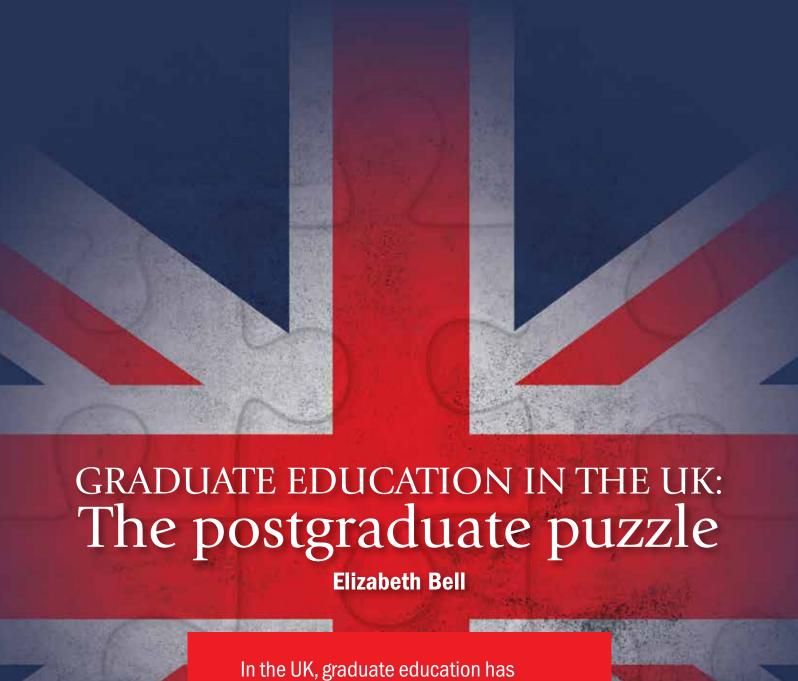
Stagnation in real wages provides further evidence that there is no generalized constraint on the supply side of the labour market. If skilled workers were genuinely in short supply, their services should be becoming more expensive (as eager employers try to snap up scarce candidates). To the contrary, median hourly wages in Canada have been growing less than one per cent per year since 2010—lagging far behind inflation.

It's time to put the so-called skills mismatch in perspective. Yes, Canada should invest heavily in public education and training—not just because it's important to economic productivity, but because it's essential to a democratic society. Yes, Canada should dedicate significant resources to job placement and adjustment services, to help willing workers find positions that use their skills and offer meaningful, secure work. On this score, Canada's actual commitment to active labour market programs pales beside the rhetoric of politicians: according to the OECD Canada spends less on active labour market services than almost any other industrial country. Yes, we could do a better job of matching new graduates with industrial requirements—by emulating, for example, the successful approach of the German apprenticeship system.

But none of this should divert our collective attention from what is by far the most important challenge facing our labour market: stimulating demand and creating new work so that Canadians (more skilled and productive than ever) can support themselves and contribute to our prosperity.

A more appropriate, and hopeful, pledge from an incoming Employment Minister would go something like this: "I will work hard to use every available policy lever to spur job creation, both private and public, so that every willing Canadian can work and support their family." That's a pledge that would warm the hearts of our two million unemployed.

Jim Stanford is economist for Unifor, the new Canadian union formed through the merger of the Canadian Auto Workers (CAW) and the Communications Energy and Paperworkers (CEP) unions. Follow him on Twitter at @jimbostanford.



In the UK, graduate education has taken a backseat to undergraduate learning. But as Elizabeth Bell explains, postgraduate programs there face significant challenges.

En G.-B., les études avancées ont cédé la place à l'enseignement postsecondaire.

Mais, comme l'explique Elizabeth Bell, les programmes d'enseignement universitaire supérieur font face là-bas à des défis de taille.

raduate education in the UK has long been seen as a peripheral issue. Over the past 25 years, successive governments have focused their efforts on reforms to undergraduate education. Postgraduate education has often been an afterthought, or not even a thought at all. Many commentators have levelled criticisms at the recent Browne review, which devoted just a single page to the issue in its 60 page report, and concluded that, "Postgraduate Education is a successful part of the higher education system and there is no evidence that changes to funding or student finance are needed to support student demand or access." But how true is this assertion? With around 500,000 taught postgraduate students there is little doubt that postgraduate education in the UK is successful; the key question is how we maintain that success going forward. Postgraduate education in the UK is interesting in that, other than international students, it is perhaps the first and only example that we have of a free market in higher education. Fees

> for master's-level programs are unregulated and have been for some time. Institutions are free to charge whatever fee they think the market will bear. And they do. Fees at UK institutions range from £3,400 to £27,522 (between \$5,600 and \$45,700 CDN), and these have increased by around 60 per cent over the past decade. This marketization also means that only a minimal amount of state

funding is offered to institutions to support the cost of taught postgraduate provision and no state funding goes to students to help with tuition and living costs.

This leaves the provision of postgraduate education in a very vulnerable position in the UK. For the first time ever, we have seen a decline in demand from UK domiciled applicants for postgraduate-level taught programs. Although many link the dip in demand with an increase in the undergraduate tuition fee, evidence to support this has yet to be seen. It is simply too early to tell. There are also other factors at play; the global economic downturn has undoubtedly had some effect on demand for master's programs. Studies tell us that in a recession, university enrolments will tend to increase as fewer jobs are available in the labour market or as

people try to "recession-proof" themselves through higher qualifications. But as economic commentators have been at pains to point out, this is not a typical recession. It has lasted much longer and has had a much deeper effect than any downturn since the beginning of the last century. Perhaps the initial recession effect has already taken place, and the residual effect is that people can simply no longer afford a master's degree.

It is this question of affordability that creates much of the debate around the decline in demand. The UK government's social mobility tsar, Alan Milburn, recently described postgraduate education as a "social mobility time bomb". At the undergraduate level, students are eligible for a comprehensive financial support package-composed primarily of loans—which covers both the cost of tuition and living costs. At the postgraduate level, there is no government-backed or subsidised financial support package. Students must have the funds to pay up front for their tuition and to cover their living costs whilst studying. Those who do not have the means to pay are not able to access postgraduate study. The UK higher education system is rooted in what has become known as the Robbins Principle: higher education should be accessible to all those who have the academic ability and the desire to undertake further study. At the undergraduate level, the Robbins Principle is evident throughout govern-

ment policy. Considerable progress has been made in widening access to higher education and in encouraging those from non-traditional backgrounds to enter a university or college. The concern then at the postgraduate level is that we are regressing.

Access to postgraduate study is constrained by the student's ability to access non-government sources of funding: savings, family support, or funds from commercial lenders. But more and more occupations require a postgraduate-level qualification. This is particularly true for accessing high-paying occupations such as law or architecture. In addition, so-called credential inflation means that occupations that may have traditionally recruited first degree graduates are now

using a postgraduate qualification

However, the recruitment of international students

has been challenged by recent changes to UK immigration policy.

as a further filter. We have seen a rise in the number of students obtaining a postgraduate degree in the belief that it will differentiate them in an increasingly competitive employment market. In fact, over the past decade we have seen the proportion of the UK's working population with a postgraduate qualification almost double, from 4.4 per cent in 2001 to 7.9 per cent in 2011. So if the most sought-after, highly-paid occupations are now calling for a postgraduatelevel qualification, what does this mean for those who can't afford it? Income inequality in the UK has risen over the past 30 years, and according to the Equality Trust the UK is one of the most unequal countries in the developed world. Whilst mass expansion at the undergraduate level has broadened access to higher education, access to postgraduate study has become more restrictive. In this light, Alan Milburn's "social mobility time bomb" seems like a very real possibility.

The final piece of this postgraduate puzzle is the issue of international students. Much of the rapid growth in postgraduate student numbers up to 2011 was driven by enrolments from students outside of the UK and European Union, which grew by 98 per cent between 2003 and 2011. Over the same period, home and EU student numbers grew by just seven per cent. International taught postgraduate students now make up around a third of the total postgraduate population. This has masked some of the problems that exist in relation to demand from UK domiciled students. However, the recruitment of international students has been challenged by recent changes to UK immigration

policy. The current UK government has set itself a target to reduce net migration from more than 250,000 to the tens of thousands by 2015. Unfortunately for universities, and for the international students who make up a relatively large proportion of total enrolment, the UK has become a lessdesirable location for individuals from abroad. Changes to immigration policy have specifically affected international students in a number of ways, including more stringent entry criteria; reduced entitlements during study, which include the ability to bring dependents; and a

reduction in the poststudy work options available to help pay for their studies.

With over 40 per cent of international students coming to the UK to study in master's-level programs, it is unsurprising that postgraduate students have been the most affected by these reforms. In 2011 the UK saw a four per cent fall in international students coming to study in master's programs. In comparison, in the three preceding years, the annual growth rate was between seven per cent and 15 per cent per annum. International tuition fees are a significant source of income to UK universities, bringing in over £3 billion (\$5 billion CDN) each year, so any drop in enrolment will have serious financial implications. But the damaging effects of the changes to immigration policy go far beyond university balance sheets. The growth in international student numbers has generally been concentrated in a handful of subject areas. These have tended to be science, engineering, mathematical and computing sciences, and business. In these areas, international students now make up more than 50 per cent of total enrolment. In fact, there are undoubtedly programs across the UK which are only financially feasible because of the number of international students enrolled in them. The restrictive UK immigration policy has the potential make some areas of university provision at the postgraduate level extremely vulnerable.

So where do we go from here? Postgraduate students are vital to the UK economy. By 2020, experts estimate that one in every three jobs in the UK will be at a professional and managerial level. Business and industry value the high-level skill, specialist knowledge, and critical thinking that postgraduate-level qualifications bring. Research has shown that the private benefits to individuals with a postgraduate level qualification are high. Researchers from the London School of Economics found that those with a master's-level qualification earn around 15 per cent more than those with an undergraduate degree. Unemployment rates for those with postgraduate qualifications are around two percentage points lower than the rate for those with a first degree. Yet we

have seen growth of just seven per cent over the past decade in the number of UK graduates going on to postgraduate study. So there is clearly a mismatch somewhere. Some commentators have suggested that the problem lies in the information-or lack thereof-available to those who might go on to postgraduate study. Do students understand the benefits of postgraduate study, and are they able to find enough information to help them make decisions about enrolling in these programs? There is unlikely to be a definitive answer to this question, although arguably, those with a first degree should have developed research skills that would enable them to find at least some of the necessary resources. Perhaps a bigger challenge-and this is certainly one that has captured the attention of policy-makers, students and universities alike-is the availability of and access to financial support. There is a widespread belief that by removing this barrier to access we would begin to solve the problems with demand. But this is not a straightforward solution, particularly if we return to the earlier discussion about postgraduate students being the only truly marketized aspect of UK higher education. The UK government currently provides loans to undergraduate students to support tuition and living costs. The total value of the outstanding loans is around £40 billion (approximately \$66 billion CDN) and this is expected to rise beyond £100 billion (approximately \$165 billion CDN) by 2030. The UK government simply cannot afford to finance an expansion or extension to the current outlay on student loans. Even in the event that the government did agree to the introduction

Given that the policy thrust at the moment is towards deregulation and more freedom for universities, this is likely to be an unpopular solution.

So the postgraduate puzzle continues to play on the minds of policy-makers and university leaders. There is simply no perfect solution to the current dilemma, but it is unlikely that postgraduate education will fall from the UK policy agenda just yet. Not least because the issues around postgraduate education, and the possible solutions that are debated, provide fascinating insight into what a deregulated market-based system for all students could look like in the longer term. M

Elizabeth Bell is Senior Executive Officer to the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Greenwich. Previously, she worked on graduate education policy for Universities UK.



of a subsidized loan scheme for postgraduate students, it would have to come with some caveats. It would almost certainly mean the introduction of controls on both the

number of students that could study at the postgraduate level and the tuition fee that universities could charge.

Humour Matters

Steve Penfold

The long, slow bus ride to the future

ALL THIS TALK of innovation. transformation, and inspiration has got me thinking of bus rides. Universities today swim in a sea of overwrought rhetoric. They trumpet their patents, their entrepreneurship, their empowering humanities research; they build transformative community synergies and interdisciplinary partnerships; they link up with business and government to produce ground-breaking research.

And it's not enough to exaggerate faculty accomplishment. Supercharged bluster and transformative bombast now infect graduate school and flow down to the greenest first year student. I mean, it's not enough to just be a smart PhD student anymore. Everything you do has to be groundbreaking and original, and if you want a major award you'd better add leadership and civic engagement to the list. Big surprise that every applicant wants to sound like Gandhi reincarnated. "Oh, sure, he's got publications, but has he brought down the British Empire?"

And don't get me started on undergraduates. One Toronto-area school (I'll leave its name for you, Google, and the NSA to find out) runs slick television commercials in which undergraduate students proudly herald their anticipated future accomplishments.

"2032," one announces over an important-sounding piano score, "I oversee the development of the first lunar space port."

"I will develop something the world has never seen," declares

another, who looks suspiciously attractive and non-dorky. All this under the tag line, "This is my time," a rather incongruous sentiment when all the imagined accomplishments lie more than a decade away.

That last complaint may sound like mocking the Rebel Alliance from the comfort of the Death Star. But I'm a graduate of that unnamed institution and hold it in high regard and deep affection. Indeed, as a graduate student, I spent thousands of hours riding a bus to and from its rather unfortunate location. That was our time, and we cursed that commute and hoped against hope that a subway might, one day, relieve our suffering. Building a moon port would have seemed, to us, a tad premature. Cue the piano: "2017, a subway saves us 12 minutes and marginally reduces our discomfort. This is my time."

To this day, however, I remain convinced that every lurching, uncomfortable bus-riding minute was worth it. That university did not transform me into a font of innovation—my own self-branding goals might be summed up as "boundless mediocrity" (a phrase that, sadly but appropriately, I didn't even think of myself)—but it's possible that I left it just a little bit smarter than when I arrived. Those overcrowded bus rides didn't hurt either. When you're standing about four inches from your lurching neighbor, you inevitably get to talking about thesis research, and by the end of the ride, you might know just a little bit more about an unfamiliar topic.



Surely that form of learninglittle bits of knowledge spread around, face-to-face, to many somewhat smart people—is a more laudable academic purpose than trumped-up transformation. Absent a few historical flashpoints, human progress has been a long, sometimes agonizing, always inefficient process of small incremental gains. Universities have played host both to dramatic change and the more creeping picayune process of improvement. We should probably recognize that the latter always outnumbers the former, and that we depend on the middling improvements more than the sexy, epochal ones. I mean, even Gandhi needed someone to proofread his footnotes.

Granted, "making our middlerange students seem marginally less idiotic" will not win many awards for public sector branding. Nor are we likely to attract donors with ukulelescored videos with unattractive students declaring, "This is my B minus". And "Raising the bar on mediocrity" might not please many neo-liberal governments or Silicon Valley visionaries. But surely there's as much merit in thousands of small gains as there is in one big one, and just as much value in a bus ride as a space port. M

Steve Penfold is Academic Matters' humour columnist. He moonlights as an Associate Professor of History at the University of Toronto.

Editorial Matters Graeme Stewart



WE ONLY DO an issue of Academic Matters if we think the topic is important, timely, or relevant to the current state-of-play for higher education. But I have to admit that this graduate student issue has a special importance for me.

That's the effect of having a bit more skin in the game, I suppose.

As you may have learned from my byline (and perhaps I'm flattering myself here thinking that people actually read my byline), I am myself a graduate student at the University of Toronto. I'm an odd breed within academia—a part-time PhD candidate who works full-time at, among other things, editing a magazine. I pay all of the fees, and do all of the work, but according to Massey College (who won't let me in), SSHRC (who won't fund me), and, one suspects, my colleagues, I'm not a "real" graduate student. My one-foot-in, one-foot-out approach seems like dilettantism, the cardinal sin of the serious scholar. I have no illusions of securing full time employment as a professor, a fact that sets me apart from my more optimistic peers. I'm exaggerating slightly, but there's no denying that I don't fit the "conventional" mode of graduate study.

Of course, this begs the question, "who is a conventional graduate student?" As my own experience suggests, this is becoming a harder question to answer. The old model, of steady, sustained study followed by a rewarding career on the tenure track, seems outdated. Students now go to graduate school for a variety of reasons, and many now find that the promises of the old model are illusory. Full-time jobs in academia are becoming scarce. Economists tell us that Canada needs more PhDs

outside of the academy, but there is little attention paid to the world of non-academic work in a typical PhD program. Programs are changing to meet student demand, with many master's and PhD degrees now offered in fields outside of the traditional humanities, social sciences, and hard sciences. The demographics of grad study are also shifting, as students from a variety ages and backgrounds turn to graduate education to satisfy their personal and career goals. It's not your grandfather's grad school, that's for sure.

In this issue of Academic Matters, we're trying to get to grips with the changing world of graduate education. Jennifer Polk writes a personal reflection on her own journey away from academia, painting the decision to pursue a career outside of the academy not as failure, but as liberation. Bryan Gopaul interrogates the narrative that suggests that grad school is futile or irrelevant to the needs of the modern economy. Critics get grad school wrong, he suggests, because they fail to pay attention to its nuances. For her part, Linda Muzzin looks at an often-overlooked career path for newly minted PhDs-teaching in Canada's many community colleges and polytechnics.

At the policy level, Carl Amrhein, Diana Mackay, and Michael Bloom provide an overview of the Conference Board of Canada's research into post-secondary education and the skills needs of the Canadian economy. In their article, they pay special attention to the implications of this research for graduate students and faculty members. As a counterpoint, Unifor economist Jim Stanford looks

critically at the so-called "skills gap" and finds little reason to believe that our universities are producing graduates unsuited to the labour market. To add some much-needed international perspective, Elizabeth Bell provides a fascinating overview of the policy issues facing graduate education in the United Kingdom.

Obviously, this isn't a complete account of the issues facing graduate education today. Such a project would require several issues, if not several books, to complete. But we hope we've given you a jumping-off point for discussion. There is no question that grad school is an important part of the university landscape. As our economy continues to shift and the intellectual needs of our society evolve, graduate education will only become more essential to our long-term economic and social success. It is therefore vital that we begin discussing the challenges and opportunities facing graduate students today, so we can help ensure a promising future tomorrow.

Those of us with skin in the game will certainly appreciate the consideration.

As always, we're interested in what you have to say about the articles in Academic Matters, or about the magazine generally. You can leave a comment on our website, www.academicmatters.ca, where you can also find web exclusive articles and blog posts. If you prefer the personal touch, feel free to email me directly at gstewart@ocufa.on.ca.

Thanks for reading. AM

Graeme Stewart is the Editor-in-Chief of Academic Matters, Communications Manager for the Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations, and a PhD student at the University of Toronto.

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