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Dear Mr. Schieman,

The report, *Improving the Knowledge of Different Post Secondary Pathways for High School Students*, analyzes the current post secondary resources for high school students.

The data was collected through an online survey from past and current high school students. The findings of the report reveal gaps in post secondary resources for high school students, with many students making uninformed decisions on the basis of the reputation of the universities without considering whether it is right for them. Many questions are left unanswered such as student life, tuition cost, financial aid and choosing a major. Although there are in-person resources such as high school counselors and university fairs, there are many questions left unanswered regarding student life, tuition cost, financial aid and choosing a major.

The recommendations identify improvements to the current post secondary resources to benefit graduating high school students to make informed choices.

Thank you for taking the time to read the report. Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions or concerns at guevarrajunelie@gmail.com

Regards,

Junelie Guevarra

**Improving the Knowledge of Different Post Secondary Pathways
for High School Students**

For
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ABSTRACT

Once high school students enter Grade 11 and Grade 12, there is an expectation to know what degree to pursue and which university to attend to gain specialized knowledge in a specific field. However, the transition from high school to post secondary is intimidating and with limited and biased resources results in uninformed choices about post secondary pathways.

To address this issue, the formal report investigates the effectiveness of current post secondary resources and identifies the gaps of those post secondary resources. The majority of survey participants agreed that high school counselors were the least helpful resource in learning about post secondary institutions. Survey respondents found university fairs to be the most helpful resource when learning about post secondary institutions. Survey respondents were more influenced by the well-known reputation of universities, peers and family members to choose a university. However, 34.5% of survey participants were confused about choosing a major. Other concerning factors are not knowing how to access financial aid, student life and tuition cost. The report identifies recommendations to improve the knowledge of different post secondary pathways such as having a Q&A session with representatives from universities and colleges with presentations regarding student life. Similarly, an article recommends similar options such as having presentations with topics regarding prerequisites for specific programs, student loans and tuition costs as insightful resources for graduating high school students (Radcliffe and Bos 139). In addition, high school students shadowing current post secondary students for a day allows students to visualize what a typical day in post secondary would look like. By implementing these recommendations, high school students are better equipped to make informed decisions regarding their post secondary education.

INTRODUCTION

A. Definition of Post Secondary Pathways

In British Columbia, post-secondary pathways relate to educational options to students after completing high school. These pathways include college, university, and trades apprenticeships.

Universities offer undergraduate degrees, master's and doctoral programs ("University vs College Canada: Difference between College and University in Canada"). The top three universities in British Columbia are the University of British Columbia, Simon Fraser University and University of Victoria (Abdi).

The top three colleges in British Columbia are Camosun College, Coast Mountain College and Langara ("Colleges in British Columbia: Top Colleges in British Columbia for International Students"). Most colleges offer certificates or an associate's degree which can take 2 years to obtain compared to a 4 year bachelor's degree. Many colleges provide an option to transfer to a university in your second or third year to complete a bachelor's degree. ("Colleges in British Columbia: Top Colleges in British Columbia for International Students"). There are alternative post secondary pathways such as trades apprenticeships which are intensive training for specific careers such as carpentry, construction, electrician and automotive fields ("BCIT Programs - Trades & Apprenticeship"). These post secondary pathways in British Columbia offer unique opportunities for students to pursue their academic and career goals.

B. Gaps in Knowledge of Post Secondary Pathways for High School Students

The transition from high school to post-secondary institutions can be an overwhelming and complex process for many high school students. With various options, including university, college and trade apprenticeships, it can be challenging to make informed decisions and learn about different pathways. High school students aspire to study at the top universities in Canada

such as University of British Columbia (UBC), Simon Fraser University (SFU), McGill University and University of Toronto. Post secondary resources provided by high schools do not exhibit accurate and unbiased information for graduating high school students. Based on a Youth in Transition Survey from Statistics Canada, 16 percent of all first year undergraduate students across Canada drop out within their first year (Wray). Statistics Canada highlights various reasons which contribute to the dropout rate such as managing deadlines, choosing the wrong program, feeling academic and tuition cost (Wray). If students are not given accurate information, they are likely making uninformed choices which impact their post secondary experience.

C. Purpose of Report

There is a pressure to perform, compete and choose the top universities without realizing that colleges can be a realistic and affordable pathway. High school students are blindsided by the prestigious reputation of universities. Secondly, resources about post secondary options are more favorable towards universities than colleges.

D. Description of Data Sources

The primary source will be obtained through online surveys to assess the types and quality of post secondary resources. Secondary sources will include news articles related to the differing opinions between colleges and universities.

E. Scope of this Inquiry

To evaluate how to improve quality and accessibility of resources regarding colleges and universities for high school students, the report reviews six areas of inquiry:

- I. What biases of major universities and colleges are displayed towards high school students?

- II. What post secondary resources are given to high school students as they approach graduation?
- III. What are some areas of concern when applying to a university or college?
- IV. How knowledgeable are students about financial assistance?
- V. Do counselors set a realistic expectation regarding student life at post secondary?
- VI. How has the stigma surrounding colleges further placate success for students?

DATA SECTION

A. Current Post Secondary Resources for Graduating High School Students

Post secondary resources refer to various tools graduating high school students to be able to support the transition from high school to post secondary. These resources include high school counselors, university fairs, post secondary institutions’ brochures, official post secondary institutions’ websites, peers, teachers, and social media. These resources enable students to make informed decisions regarding the final decision of choosing the right post secondary option for them.

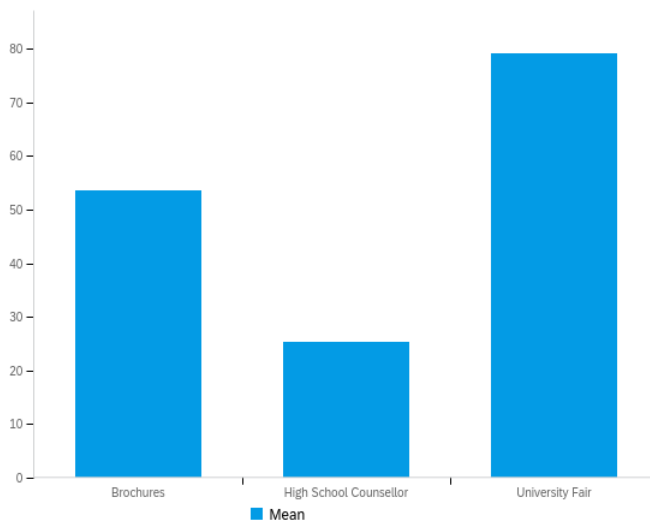


Figure 1. Graph representing the mean percentage of how effective were these three resources in gaining more knowledge about post secondary pathways.

While counselors are found to be at high schools more frequently than University Fairs, the data collected reveals the efficacy of accessible resources at school. Figure 1 compares three resources — brochures, high school counselors, and university fairs. Based on the findings, high school counselors, on average, were found to be 25.4% helpful in aiding students to gain knowledge about post secondary institutions. In comparison, university fairs were the most effective resource, with an average rate of 79.2%.

The consumption of media and influence from parents and peers can impact which school a high school student chooses to attend. Social media such as Instagram, Reddit and TikTok enables students to view what student life at different campuses can look like. The official websites of different post secondary institutions allow more insight to admission requirements, faculty and a tuition breakdown. Various factors can contribute to shaping a student's perspective and expectations regarding post secondary pathways.

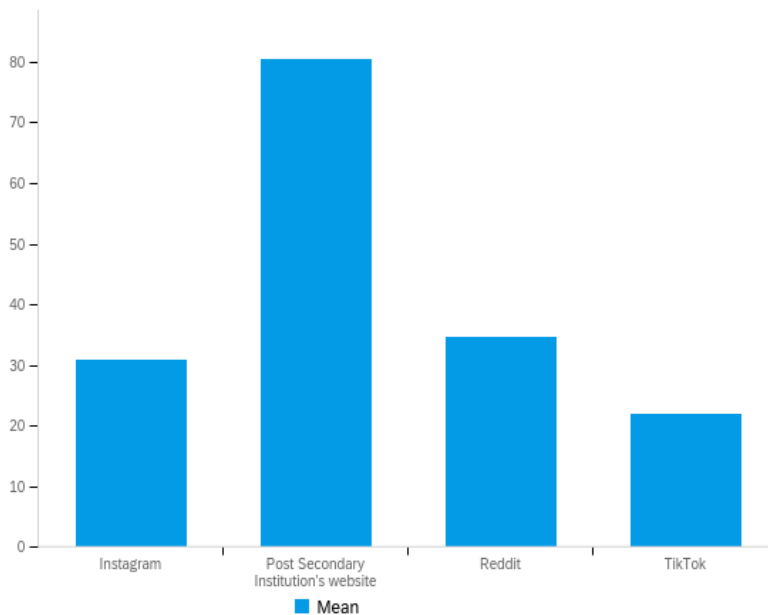


Figure 2. Graph representing the mean percentage of how effective were these 4 resources students looked at independently.

Survey respondents identified post-secondary institution websites as the most useful resource in comparison to other social media platforms such as Instagram, Reddit, and Tiktok (See Appendix A). Results indicate students prefer to acquire information directly from the post secondary institutions instead of basing their opinions on other individuals' posts on social media with an average of 80.5%. The data from **Figure 1** and **Figure 2** indicates that university fairs and post-secondary institution websites provide more specific and relevant information about individual institutions. The results demonstrate that students value the opportunity to have their questions answered directly and to obtain detailed information about the programs and resources available at a specific institution.

B. Factors Impacting Post Secondary Decisions

Based on the survey data, parents and friends were an influential factor in the decision making process of post secondary schools. Parents can impact their child's decisions through guidance and expectations for their academic career. An institution's ranking was another impactful factor. The reputation of post-secondary institutions and their programs, for example, UBC and the Sauder program played a key role in influencing the decision to apply for UBC. However, the combination of these three factors will influence an individual to pursue their choice. While the survey data indicates UBC, SFU and Langara as the top choices. Survey respondents often stated that Langara was a "back-up choice" if the other two universities did not accept their application.

C. Top University/College Choices

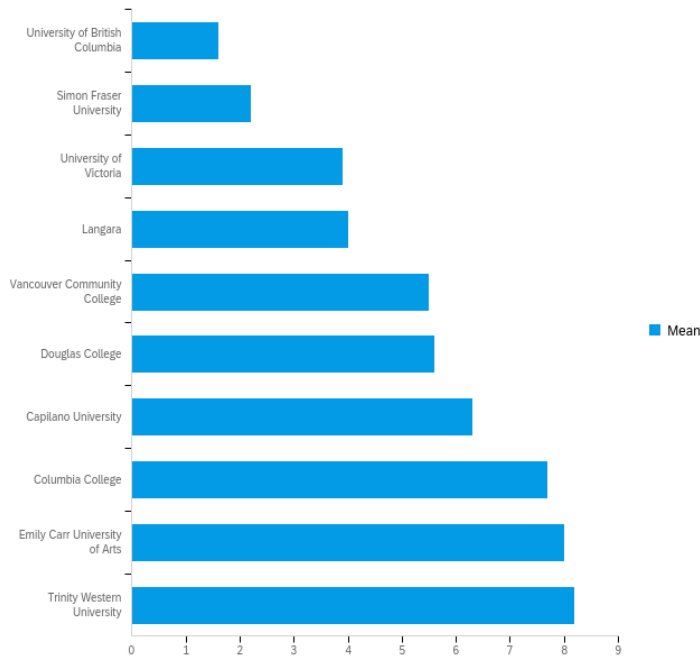


Figure 3. Rating of universities and colleges with 1 being the best option and 10 being the least popular option.

According to Figure 3, UBC was rated as the top pick followed by SFU and UVIC. The fourth to sixth spots were held by colleges such as Langara, Vancouver Community College and Douglas College. All the colleges are found to be in the middle range in the rating of various universities and colleges. In correlation to Figure 3, survey respondents reveal the reputation of the post secondary institutions influence the decision to attend the post secondary institution.

D. Persistent Confusion on Post Secondary Topics

What are some post secondary topics that still create confusion after accessing these resources?

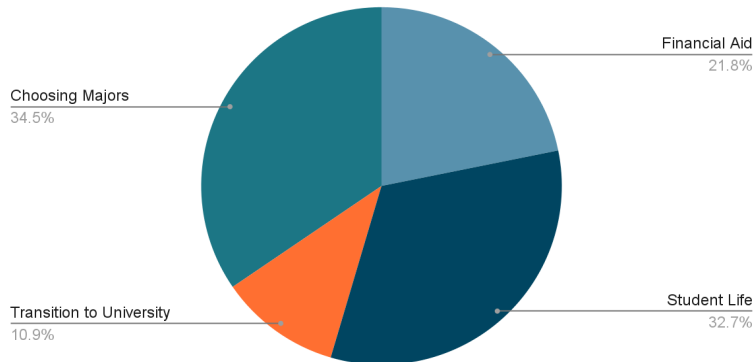


Figure 4. Topics which still created confusion after accessing online and in-person resources.

Despite the availability of brochures, university fairs, and high school counselors offering general information on post-secondary pathways, students still experience confusion on specific topics such as student loans, transitioning from college to university, selecting a major and student life. According to Figure 4, 34.5% of respondents were uncertain about choosing a major, while 32.7% of survey participants identified student life as the second area of confusion. Based on the findings of Figure 4, it is evident that despite accessing in-person and online resources, students still have unresolved questions regarding post secondary institutions.

CONCLUSION

A. Summary of Findings

There is a disparity between the reputations of colleges and universities reflecting how eager students will apply. Reputation is not the only factor that needs to be considered when applying to a post secondary institution. High school students also emphasized that parents and peers were also influential factors. The survey respondents chose UBC, SFU and UVic as the top three choices of post secondary institutions to apply to. However, counselors were deemed as the least

helpful resource to reach out to when learning more about post secondary institutions compared to brochures and university fairs. University fairs were found to be 79.2% helpful which demonstrates a demand for post secondary institutions to provide direct outreach targeted towards high school students. There is a disparity between the current resources and unresolved questions surrounding post secondary institutions such as student life, financial aid, choosing a major, and transitioning to university.

B. Recommendations and Feasibility Discussion

Despite accessing multiple resources, high school students still encountered confusion regarding post secondary pathways. Students still had questions regarding transitioning from a college to a university, choosing a major, applying to financial aid and student life.

One way to support students in their transition to post secondary pathways is to implement a Q&A session with current post-secondary students from different universities and colleges. This will enable graduating high school students to ask questions and gain more insight into the experiences of what student life is at each university. Additionally, a campus tour to various universities and colleges could be beneficial. A tour would allow students to learn about different programs and faculties, learn more about the student life and community. A combination of these solutions can mitigate the risk of raising more confusion about the overall experience of post secondary institutions.

Similarly, Radcliffe and Bos recommend that attending presentations hosted by college students can increase post secondary preparedness (139). Conducting outreach presentations for high school students is mutually beneficial for both the institutions and high school students. Post secondary institutions gain more prospective students while high school students make better informed decisions about their academic career. Hosting specific presentations from

representatives from colleges with topics surrounding student loans, registering in college, prerequisites to specific programs and tuition costs would be beneficial (Radcliffe and Bos 139). By answering questions regarding tuition cost, prerequisites to specific programs and the application process can make the transition from high school to post secondary less intimidating. Allowing high school students to observe a student in post secondary's day in addition to the campus tour allows for a personal experience to see what student life is about (Radcliffe and Bos 138). The evidence suggests accessing these services can develop a positive experience with post secondary institutions in the pursuit of higher education.

APPENDICES

A. Survey Questions

Q1. What grade are you in?

- Grade 8
- Grade 9
- Grade 10
- Grade 11
- Grade 12

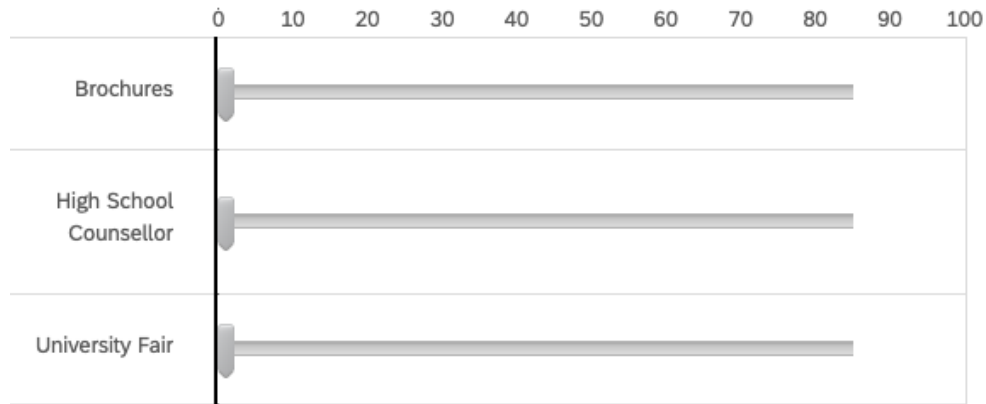
Q2. Please list your top 3 choices for post-secondary schools

Q3. In point form, what are 3-5 reasons for choosing those 3 post secondary options?

Q4. What resources were accessible in high school to explore post secondary options?

- Brochures
- High school Counsellor
- University Fair

Q5. How helpful were these resources in gaining more knowledge about post secondary institutions?



Q6. What resources did you access independently to look at post secondary options?

- Instagram
- Post Secondary Institution’s website
- Reddit
- TikTok

Q7. How helpful were these resources in gaining more knowledge about post secondary institutions?



Q8. What are some post secondary topics that still create confusion after accessing these resources?

Q9. Rate these post secondary options from 1 to 10 (1 being the best choice and 10 being the least popular choice)

- Capilano University
- Columbia College
- Douglas College
- Emily Carr University of Arts
- Langara
- Trinity Western University
- University of British Columbia
- University of Victoria
- Simon Fraser University
- Vancouver Community College

Q10. What are some factors which influenced your decision of post secondary options?

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