

the weekly  
**STAT**

# *the weekly STAT* Round-Up 2023

Excerpts from the past year's insights

# Research that Supports Student Success

At Brainstorm we support student success.

Our mission is to enhance the work of the professionals who support students through their post-secondary education, career development, and the start of their careers.

For the past 20 years, we have been studying and reporting on Canadian students' career interests and post-secondary experiences.

Over that time, more than 300,000 college and university students have participated in our research – making it the largest longitudinal study of its kind in Canada. Our 2023 survey closed in July with more than 21,000 candid responses from students across the country.

The survey results provide an in-depth and unbiased look at the mindset of Canadian post-secondary students with regard to the services and support they require from their educational institutions to succeed in their studies and prepare for their careers.

Topics explored include:

- Reasons for choosing post-secondary education
- Confidence in their choice of school and major
- Clarity of career path and the likelihood of graduation
- Financial aid requirements and sources
- Quality of experiences with faculty, student services and others
- Top sources of stress
- Career goals and aspirations
- Social media and job search habits
- Co-op and internship experiences
- Career planning and its relation to academic success

- Skills development
- Job and workplace readiness
- Influencers and career decision factors
- Impressions of their school's priorities
- Employer and industry preferences

*The weekly STAT* (an acronym for Students' Thoughts and Trends) features excerpts from our most recent survey responses that are sent directly to our email subscribers every Tuesday morning.

The STATs included in this document were shared with our *weekly STAT* email subscribers between the fall of 2022 and the spring of 2023.

Starting in August, we'll be providing insights from the 2023 edition of the Student Interests Report.

To receive *the weekly STAT* in your inbox every Tuesday, [subscribe here](#).

We hope that these insights will help you support your students' success, as it has for so many others.



**Graham Donald**  
*President & Founder  
of Brainstorm Strategy  
Group Inc.*



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# Are your students in the right majors?

# 63%

of students agree or strongly agree,  
“if I had to do it all over again, I would  
select the same major.”

Of course, this means that 37% of students are indifferent or would have picked a different major. When broken down by post-secondary institution type, 64% of university students agree with this statement while only 58% of college students agree with it.

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## Discussion Question

How do you suppose students' affinity towards their school and the post-secondary experience is affected by their dissatisfaction with their chosen major?

# Do international students pick the right schools?

# 60%

of international students agree or strongly agree that if they had to do it over again, they would still pick the same school.

A full 17% appear to regret their choice of school and a further 24% feel indifferent.

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## Discussion Question

What are the implications to school brand and alumni affiliation when so many students are not happy with their choice?

# Why do students enrol?

# #1

students rank “to prepare for a job or career” far ahead of any other criteria as their top reason for choosing to enrol in college or university.

While this may not be surprising to some, what is remarkable is how much more important it is than other considerations. Given the option to choose three criteria from a long list, 61% selected “to prepare for a job or career” while the second choice, at 38%, was a tie between “to increase my knowledge in an academic field” and “to increase my earning potential”.

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## Discussion Question

Does your institution adequately support students’ career transition or is the responsibility delegated to an under-resourced career office?

# Are you missing out on co-op students?

# #1

The availability of a co-op program is the top criteria prospective co-op students seek in a college or university.

A full 50% of students in co-op programs say the availability of co-op was their top criterion when choosing a school.

While it may seem obvious that students wanting to pursue a co-op program will only choose schools that offer such programs, it may surprise some to learn that this is far more important than the school's reputation, program quality, or location.

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## Discussion Question

Are you missing out on top potential students by either not offering co-op or not promoting these programs enough?

# International students hope to earn more

# #2

International students indicate that the opportunity "to increase my earning potential" is the second most important reason that they choose to attend university or college.

This aspect of post-secondary education is far more important to international students than it is for domestic students who rank it fourth.

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## Discussion Question

Do you promote greater earning potential in your communications with prospective international students?



# Why are some students unhappy with your school?

# 12%

of students say they would not enrol at their school if they had it to do over again.

A further 19% are neutral regarding the statement, "If I had to do it all over again, I would still enrol at my school."

The remaining 69% agree or strongly agree with this statement.

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## Discussion Question

How well do you understand the students that are not happy with your school?

# Do clear career paths lead to happier students?

# 28%

of students who are unhappy with their school indicate that they are unclear about the career paths available in their program of study.

This number (those who are unclear about career paths) drops to only 12% among students who are happy with their choice of school.

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## Discussion Question

Would helping students understand the possible career paths from their program improve their satisfaction with your school?

# Who doesn't worry about money?

# #1

Finances are "the biggest source of stress among students."

While things such as parental pressure, social media, social life, and relationships are often talked about as sources of stress, these are each listed by less than 8% of students as being among the top 3 sources of stress. Meanwhile, 53% of students indicate that finances are a top source of stress.

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## Discussion Question

Does your school have a strategy to reduce students' financial worries?

# What South Asian university undergrads are looking for

# #1

The availability of co-op/internship programs is the most important factor when South Asian international undergrad students choose their university.

In fact, the availability of co-op/internship programs is much more important than the school's reputation or low tuition when South Asian international undergraduate students choose their university.

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## Discussion Question

If your school offers co-op programs, do you emphasize them enough in your international student marketing? If you don't have co-op programs, do you have comparable options you can promote?

# Are college students happier than university students?

# 70%

of college students feel their school did a good job of supporting students through the pandemic.

70% of college students agree or strongly agree, "my school is doing a good job of supporting students through the pandemic."

Among university students, on the other hand, only 45% of students agree with this statement.

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## Discussion Question

What made colleges so much more successful than universities at meeting their students' expectations through the pandemic?

# Financing education for Indigenous students

# 64%

of Indigenous students list finances as one of their top sources of stress.

While finances are the top source of stress among all students, Indigenous students are the most likely to raise this concern (64%), followed close behind by students with disabilities (63%) and Black students (60%).

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## Discussion Question

Does your school have sufficient financial assistance for Indigenous students?

# Are schools committed to student success?

# 54%

of university students believe "that faculty and staff at my school are committed to helping students find a rewarding career."

Only 54% of university students agree or strongly agree with the statement, "I believe that faculty and staff at my school are committed to helping students find a rewarding career."

Among college students, on the other hand, 73% agree or strongly agree with this statement.

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## Discussion Question

Given that preparing for a career is the #1 reason that students choose to enrol in post-secondary education, could your school do more to express its commitment to their career success?

# What do older undergrads want?

# 30%

of older undergrads are seeking specific career-related programs when they choose their school.

Undergrads of all ages indicate that the school's reputation is most important when they choose their university or college. However, other selection criteria vary dramatically depending on the student's age.

Older undergrads (27 and up), are much more likely to choose their school based on specific career-related programs than younger undergrads.

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## Discussion Question

Do you adapt your marketing and recruitment messaging for students in different age groups?



# What South Asian international college students are looking for

# #1

The overall quality of academic programs drives South Asian international students choice of college.

South Asian international college students prioritize the overall quality of academic programs when selecting a prospective school – far more than international students from other regions.

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## Discussion Question

Does your school focus on the quality of your academic programs when marketing to international students in South Asia?

# Top social media platforms

# 80%

of students have an account on Instagram.

More students have accounts on Instagram than any other social media platform. Tiktok is far behind at 41%.

It's worth noting that usage of social media varies significantly by different diversity groups and areas of study.

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## Discussion Question

Does your school use the right social channels for the students you are trying to reach?

# International students on LinkedIn

# 79%

of international students are  
on LinkedIn.

International students are far more likely to be on LinkedIn than domestic students. In fact, among international students, LinkedIn is tied with Instagram as their #1 social media channel.

Interestingly, international students are far less likely to be on TikTok than domestic students.

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## Discussion Question

Does your school use the right social channels to reach international students?

# Are work experiences a part of school?

# #1

Students say that providing "real experience in the workplace" is the best way that schools can better prepare them for the world of work.

When asked, "what should your school teach or provide more of to better prepare you for the world of work?" students' top answer is "real experience in the workplace."

Although this option by definition must happen outside of school, it was selected more than twice as frequently as "problem-solving," "critical thinking" or many other things typically associated with an in-school experience.

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## Discussion Question

Could more of your programs provide students with real work experiences that are relevant to their studies?



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Upcoming STATs will be based on our most recent research, the 2023 edition of the Brainstorm Student Interests Report, featuring the thoughts and preferences of more than 21,000 university and college students from across Canada.

Thoughts or comments? [Let us know.](#)



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The *Brainstorm Student Interests Benchmark Report, 2022*. The 2022 edition of The Brainstorm Report is based on a survey of more than 20,500 Canadian students from colleges and universities across Canada.

For more information, contact us at [info@brainstorm.ca](mailto:info@brainstorm.ca) or visit [www.brainstorm.ca](http://www.brainstorm.ca).