

B.C.'S RESEARCH UNIVERSITIES  
PUTTING DEGREES TO  
**WORK**

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SECOND ANNUAL REPORT



A COMPREHENSIVE STUDY  
OF STUDENT OUTCOMES  
2008-2012

DECEMBER 2015

# SUMMARY

All across Canada, university students are in classrooms, receiving instruction and setting the groundwork for their futures; but with Canada's uncertain economy, nagging questions may linger in the background. If I get my degree, will I be able to find a job in my chosen field? Where will it be? How much can I expect to earn?

British Columbia's research universities (*University of British Columbia, Simon Fraser University, University of Victoria, University of Northern British Columbia, Royal Roads University, Thompson Rivers University*) have answers to many of those questions in this second installment of *Putting Degrees to Work*, a comprehensive review of student outcomes.

This study reveals that B.C. university graduates are well positioned to succeed in today's economy and have a proven ability to prosper, even during times of economic uncertainty. This should reassure students, and their parents, as the study confirms that graduates are finding good jobs in their chosen fields and they are earning competitive salaries.

These findings are fueling B.C.'s prosperity in an increasingly competitive global economy. On this point, the results are clear: B.C.'s research universities are providing the highly-trained and highly-educated workforce that is helping to propel innovation and to diversify our economy.

As this report shows, this is not just occurring in cities like Vancouver and Victoria. Graduates from B.C.'s research universities are putting their degrees to work in regions all across B.C.

## JUST TWO YEARS AFTER GRADUATING:

- The median salary for the Class of 2012, the most recent surveyed, was **\$50,000**, considerably higher than the average income for young people entering the workforce.
- **83 per cent** of graduates found their university degree either useful or very useful to their job and **92 per cent** of university graduates were satisfied or very satisfied with their education.
- A significant majority of graduates who attended the *University of Northern British Columbia, Thompson Rivers University and the University of British Columbia Okanagan* are living in the communities where they graduated.



# INTRODUCTION

The British Columbia government has forecast there will be about one million job openings throughout the province over the next decade. In a report released last fall, it was estimated that 68 per cent of those openings will come as a result of retirements, with the remaining 32 per cent as a result of economic growth.

The challenge this poses is obvious. Filling these jobs in every region of the province will require a workforce with the right skills, education and training. Workers are needed in the North or the Okanagan just as much as they are on Vancouver Island or in the Lower Mainland.

Despite the clear need for a skilled workforce – from health care workers and architects to engineers and scientists – many Canadians have concerns about the future. Recent polls indicate a top concern for students is whether they will be able to find a good-paying job after graduation.

This report tracks the outcome of students who graduated from B.C.'s six research universities – *the University of British Columbia, Simon Fraser University, the University of Victoria, the University of Northern British Columbia, Royal Roads University and Thompson Rivers University*. Did students find good-paying jobs in their chosen fields? Did they have to leave their region to find employment? Were they well equipped to enter the workforce?

In summary, the multi-year survey indicates a pattern of success. Two years after graduation, the majority of degree holders are working in their chosen profession, they are earning good wages and they are living in the communities where they were educated. These findings even held true for graduates from the Class of 2008, who entered the workforce during the global economic meltdown.

Every year, BC Stats surveys students two years after they graduate to learn more about how they are doing, providing valuable insights into the value of a university degree. Are they earning good salaries? Where are they living? Are they working in fields that are relevant to their degrees? Are they satisfied with the education they received?



## **Not only are students finding work in these communities, they are finding their education to be directly relevant to the workplace.**

This report combines five years of survey findings providing the most complete picture yet of how university graduates fare in the first 24 months after earning their degrees. The combined survey results include:

**CLASS OF 2008, SURVEYED IN 2010**

**CLASS OF 2009, SURVEYED IN 2011**

**CLASS OF 2010, SURVEYED IN 2012**

**CLASS OF 2011, SURVEYED IN 2013**

**CLASS OF 2012, SURVEYED IN 2014**

The results for each class are consistent over time. Whether students graduated in 2008 or 2012, two years after they graduated they were succeeding in the job market, starting careers, and earning good salaries. The results underscore the value of a university education, with graduates supporting the economic prosperity of the province.

# INCOME



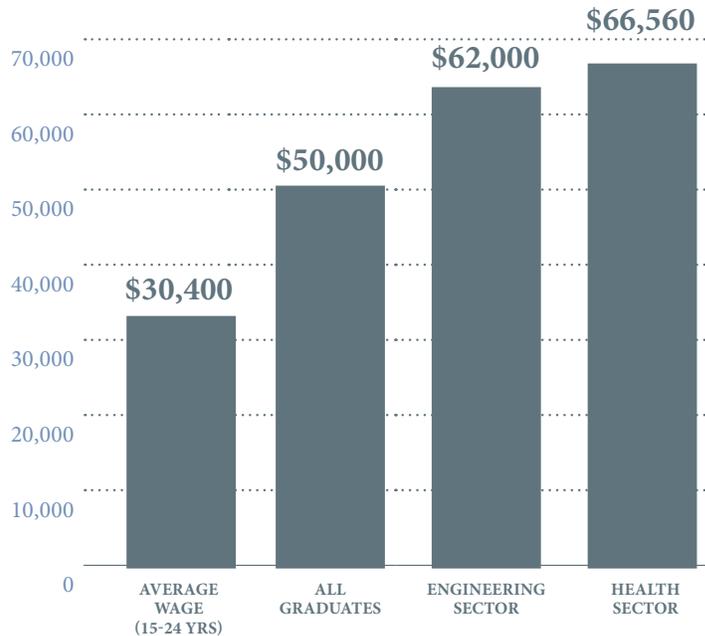
**For the Class of 2012 – the most recent surveyed – the median salary was \$50,000 per year.**

For the Class of 2012, the most recent surveyed, the median salary two years after graduation was \$50,000. The highest salaries were attributed to those students who graduated with degrees in Engineering and Health.

Health graduates were earning an average of \$66,560 per year, closely followed by Engineering graduates who were earning an average of \$62,000 a year.

For graduates in the Arts and Sciences and Visual and Performing Arts, the salaries were lower, but still well above the average youth salaries. By comparison, Stats Canada estimates the average annual wage of youths entering the workforce, between the ages of 15 and 24, to be \$30,400. (*Statistics Canada, June 2015*)

These statistics indicate that over their lifetime, the earnings of those graduates will accelerate at a much faster pace than for those who did not go to university. By the time they are 55 to 64 years old, university graduates can expect an average salary of about \$63,000. For post-baccalaureate degree holders these long-term incomes rise to \$78,360.





The skills and knowledge university students gain through education are valuable in the job market.

INCOME BY DEGREE EARNED  
CLASS OF 2012, SURVEYED IN 2014

AVERAGE ALL PROGRAMS	<b>\$50,000</b>
 Arts & Sciences	\$42,000
 Business & Management	\$50,000
 Education	\$46,000
 Engineering & Applied Sciences	\$62,000
 Health	\$66,560
 Human & Social Services	\$54,000
 Visual & Performing Arts	\$36,000



# OCCUPATIONS

Two years after earning their degrees, the vast majority of students from all six research universities are earning good salaries.

But how much of their success can they attribute to the hard work they put in getting a university degree?

In the past, some critics have said the kinds of skills and knowledge acquired attending university are not necessarily beneficial to an economy that puts a higher value on specific, technical skills.

However, 83 per cent of graduates from all six research universities believe their degrees are useful to their jobs. This belief is supported by the survey which finds that 61 per cent of business students were working in finance and 85 per cent of students with health-related degrees were in the health sector. Arts and Science graduates are more evenly distributed across a range of fields, but here too the majority work in social services, education, business or government.

The skills and knowledge that students gain through their university education are valuable in the job market.

## HOW USEFUL WAS A DEGREE TO MAIN JOB?

Very Useful: **83%**

## WHERE DO GRADUATES FIND EMPLOYMENT?

Professional occupations **56%**

Technical and skilled occupations **21%**

Intermediate occupations **14%**

Management **7%**

Labouring and elemental occupations **2%**



## OCCUPATIONS BY DEGREE

DEGREES	OCCUPATION						
	BUSINESS & FINANCE	NATURAL, APPLIED SCIENCE	HEALTH	SOCIAL SCIENCE, EDUCATION, GOV'T	ART, CULTURE, RECREATION & SPORT	SALES & SERVICE	TRADES, TRANSPORT
ARTS & SCIENCE	25%	10%	4%	31%	10%	17%	2%
BUSINESS & MANAGEMENT	61%	5%	1%	6%	6%	17%	2%
EDUCATION	3%	1%	1%	90%	2%	4%	0%
ENGINEERING & APPLIED SCIENCE	4%	72%	2%	8%	3%	5%	2%
HEALTH	2%	3%	85%	6%	1%	2%	0%
HUMAN & SOCIAL SERVICES	7%	1%	6%	74%	4%	6%	1%
VISUAL & PERFORMING ARTS	14%	3%	1%	20%	38%	20%	2%
<b>OVERALL</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>33%</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>2%</b>

# STUDENT SATISFACTION

In grading their educational experience, graduates are overwhelmingly positive.

Two years after graduating, students were asked about their educational experience. The vast majority said they were satisfied, or very satisfied, with their education and they gave top marks to the quality of instruction they received.

This speaks to the relevance of their studies and the excellent education they experienced at B.C.'s research universities.

MORE THAN **90 PER CENT** OF RESPONDENTS ARE SATISFIED,  
OR VERY SATISFIED, WITH THEIR EDUCATION

Satisfied / Very Satisfied

**92%**

# QUALITY OF INSTRUCTION

**93 PER CENT** OF RESPONDENTS RATED THE QUALITY OF THEIR INSTRUCTION  
AS GOOD OR VERY GOOD

Satisfied / Very Satisfied

**93%**

# LOCATION



**A majority of graduates who studied in the North and Southern Interior are living in the communities where they were educated, bringing valuable skills to the local economy which are driving innovation and economic growth.**

The British Columbia government has worked hard to ensure high-quality post-secondary education is available to all parts of the province. Policy leaders believe students should not have to leave their region to further their educational goals. This approach allows graduates to continue to contribute to their communities, boosting the dynamic and diversified B.C. economy. For example, if nurses are trained in the North, the hope is that most of them will stay in the region and contribute to the local health care system.

Two years after graduating from schools in the Okanagan, the Interior and in the North, where are graduates choosing to work and live?

The numbers show that a majority are staying in the communities where they were educated, bringing valuable skills to the local economy and helping drive innovation and economic growth across the province.

## STUDENTS WORKING IN COMMUNITIES WHERE THEY GRADUATED

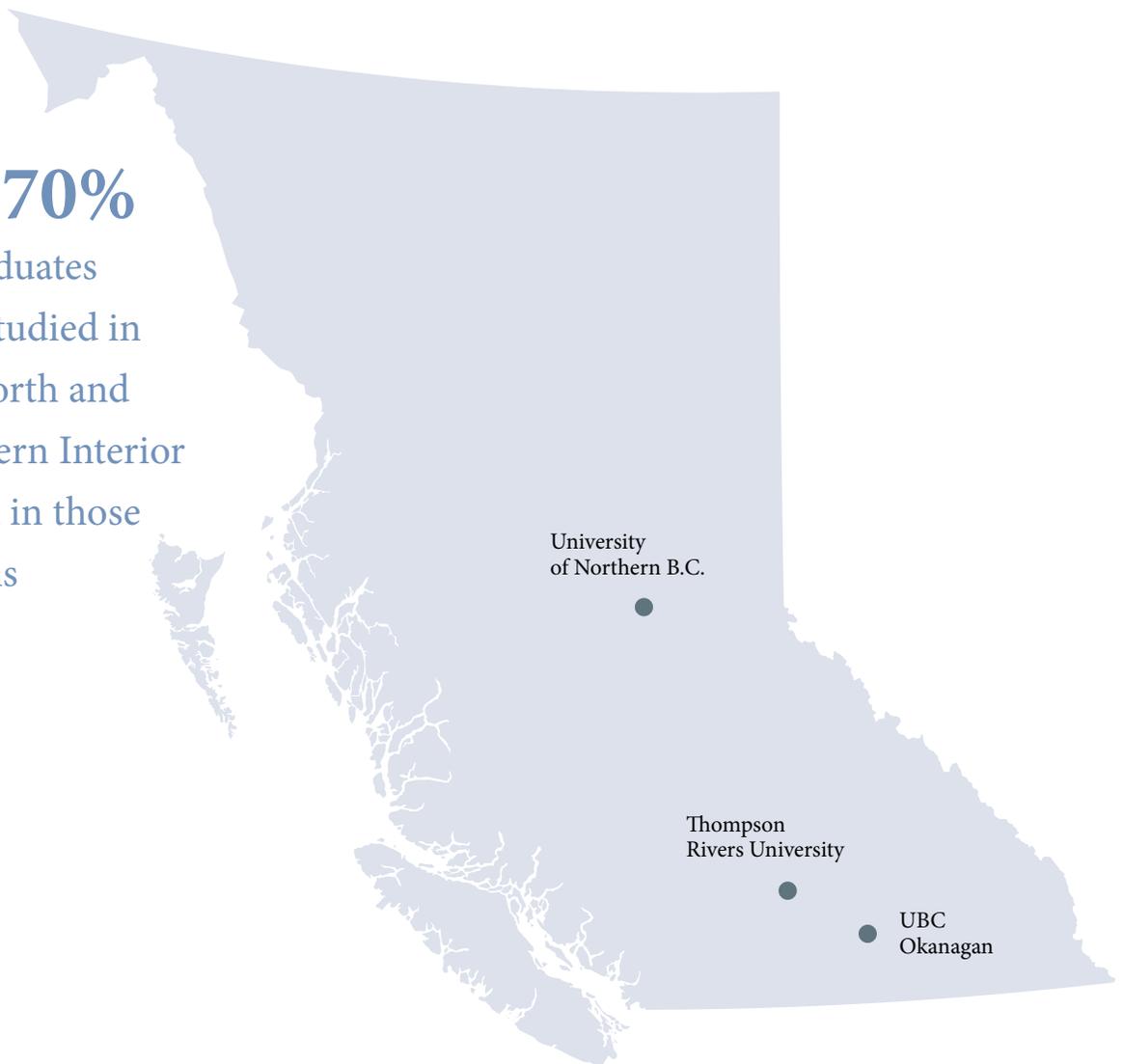
- **69 per cent** of graduates from the University of Northern British Columbia (UNBC) are living in the North.
- **65 per cent** of Thompson Rivers University (TRU) graduates are living in the Southern Interior.
- **60 per cent** of graduates from UBC Okanagan are in the Southern Interior.

Not only are students finding work in these communities, they are finding their education to be directly relevant to their employment and are immediately putting their degrees to work.

For example, 78 per cent of graduates from UNBC said they believed their job was related to the program they graduated from at university. At TRU, 77 per cent said they saw a similar direct connection between their education and their jobs.

Students also overwhelmingly reported that they found the knowledge and skills they acquired during their education to be “useful” in their jobs they were doing just two years after graduating. This was true of 89 per cent of UNBC graduates, 87 per cent of TRU graduates and 82 per cent of those who graduated from UBC Okanagan.

**60-70%**  
of graduates  
who studied in  
the North and  
Southern Interior  
stayed in those  
regions



# CONCLUSION

## **In a fast changing economy, one thing remains constant: The value of a university education.**

Years of graduate surveys over years show a consistent pattern - baccalaureate degree holders secure the jobs they want and in the communities where they prefer to live. The surveys also show that graduates begin their careers with good salaries, which escalate over their lifetime.

These figures validate the importance, and hard work, of pursuing a university degree. The time and investment pays off for students and for B.C.'s economy and is evident through the contributions made by nurses, engineers, teachers and business leaders. These graduates are working in cities and towns across British Columbia, strengthening communities and helping to diversify the economy.

Skilled graduates are in high demand by employers as they compete in a rapidly-changing economy. That demand will only accelerate in the coming years, with a million job vacancies anticipated over the next decade and B.C.'s research universities are producing graduates with the breadth of knowledge and skills to meet the current and future employer demands. Additionally, graduates have proven flexibility and creativity to thrive during times of economic uncertainty.

Together, the skills, knowledge and creativity fostered today by B.C.'s research universities are the critical ingredients for a more prosperous tomorrow for all British Columbians.



400-880 DOUGLAS ST

VICTORIA BC V8W 2B7

TEL: (250) 480-4859

[HTTP://WWW.RUCBC.CA](http://www.rucbc.ca)