ONTARIO COLLEGES AND THE INTRODUCTION OF DEGREES: MISSION DRIFT OR SUSTAINING THE MISSION?

by

Jason Galea

A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
Department of Leadership, Higher, and Adult Education
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education
University of Toronto

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Abstract

This qualitative, exploratory study focused on the introduction of the bachelor’s degree credential in Ontario colleges and whether or not offering degrees constitutes a change in the mission of Ontario colleges, as outlined in the Basic Documents and according to key college and governmental officials. The data was gathered through interviews with senior leaders at five urban colleges, senior government officials, and was focused on a ten year period (2002-2012). In addition, document analysis and the examination of available statistics were undertaken to ascertain the impact the legislative changes enacted in 2000 and 2002 have had on the college mission in Ontario.

This study found that three founding tenets of the colleges – labour market responsiveness, access for students, and an emphasis on the functions of teaching and learning – were generally being adhered to between 2002 and 2012. This study also found that the majority of college and governmental leaders believed that the introduction of degrees was a logical extension of the mission, and the progression of the mission itself was essential if colleges were to be responsive to changing labour and community needs. The leadership of two subject colleges, however, did demonstrate a desire to move beyond the original mission in the service of a perceived need for a more differentiated postsecondary education system in Ontario.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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<tr>
<td>ACCATO</td>
<td>Association of Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology of Ontario (now Colleges Ontario)</td>
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<td>ACCC</td>
<td>Association of Canadian Community Colleges</td>
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<td>AUCC</td>
<td>Association of Universities and Colleges Canada</td>
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<td>BCDQAB</td>
<td>British Columbia Degree Quality Assessment Board</td>
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<td>BOG</td>
<td>Board of Governors</td>
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<td>CAAT</td>
<td>College of Arts and Applied Technology</td>
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<td>CAQC</td>
<td>Campus Alberta Quality Council</td>
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<td>CCBA</td>
<td>Community College Baccalaureate Association</td>
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<td>CEGEP</td>
<td>Collège d'enseignement général et professionnel</td>
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<tr>
<td>CMEC</td>
<td>Council of Minister Education, Canada</td>
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<td>COR</td>
<td>Council of Regents</td>
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<td>COU</td>
<td>Council of Ontario Universities</td>
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<td>COP</td>
<td>Council of Presidents</td>
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<td>CSAC</td>
<td>College Standards and Accreditation Council</td>
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<td>CUCC</td>
<td>College-University Consortium Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>GTA</td>
<td>Greater Toronto Area</td>
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<td>ITAL</td>
<td>Institute of Technology and Advanced Learning</td>
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<td>KPI</td>
<td>Key Performance Indicator</td>
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<tr>
<td>MTCU</td>
<td>Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities</td>
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<td>MP</td>
<td>Member of Parliament</td>
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<td>MPP</td>
<td>Member of Provincial Parliament</td>
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<td>NAFTA</td>
<td>North American Free Trade Agreement</td>
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<td>OCAS</td>
<td>Ontario College Application Service</td>
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<td>OECD</td>
<td>Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development</td>
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<td>ONCAT</td>
<td>Ontario Council of Articulation and Transfer</td>
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<td>OPSEU</td>
<td>Ontario Public Service Employee Union</td>
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<td>OQF</td>
<td>Ontario Qualifications Framework</td>
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<td>OSAP</td>
<td>Ontario Student Assistance Plan</td>
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<td>OUAC</td>
<td>Ontario University Application Service</td>
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<td>PAC</td>
<td>Program Advisory Committee</td>
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<td>PEQAB</td>
<td>Postsecondary Education Quality Assessment Board</td>
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<td>PLAR</td>
<td>Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition</td>
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<td>PSE</td>
<td>Postsecondary Education</td>
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<td>SWF</td>
<td>Standard Workload Form</td>
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<td>UCAS</td>
<td>University and College Application Survey</td>
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TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Academic Discipline
Grouping of related fields of study in the college or university sector e.g., engineering, arts, architecture, business, technology, health, science and many others

Accreditation
Certification by an external agency or professional regulatory body that an educational program meets its standards
In Canada, educational programs are accredited; institutions are not accredited

Admission Requirements
An institution's specific academic and supplementary requirements for entry to the institution or to a specific program within it
May include secondary or postsecondary grades or grade point average, standardized test scores, portfolios, or other criteria depending on the institution and program

Advanced Diploma
Granted by Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology/Institutes of Technology and Advanced Learning. Typically three years (or six semesters) in length.

Associate Degree
In the United States, a two-year degree from a community college, university, college, or career school. The recipient of an associate's degree can then transfer the credits toward a four year, bachelor's degree program.

Credential
Official document recognizing completion of a program or course of study
In postsecondary education, issued by the individual college or university
In Ontario, includes certificates, diplomas, advanced diplomas, graduate certificates, bachelor's, master's and doctoral degrees
<p>| <strong>Credit</strong> | A unit of value assigned to a course for the purpose of counting its value towards a credential such as a certificate, diploma or degree |
| <strong>Credit Transfer</strong> | Acceptance or recognition of credit by an institution for courses or programs completed at another institution |
| <strong>College Degree</strong> | For the purposes of this study, a four year applied degree that includes at least one work term and awarded by an Ontario college (as distinct from all other degree-granting institutions, including American colleges) |
| <strong>Diploma</strong> | Granted by Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology/Institutes of Technology and Advanced Learning. Typically two years (or four semesters) in length. |
| <strong>Mission</strong> | A purpose, a reason for being, often why the institution was first created |
| <strong>Mission Statement</strong> | The declared purpose, business, and values of the institution |
| <strong>Receiving Institution</strong> | Institution to which a student transfers during a program or level of study; not the first institution where the student enrolled |
| <strong>Sector</strong> | Division or segment of postsecondary education; in Ontario there is the college sector and the university sector |
| <strong>Sending Institution</strong> | Institution from which a student is transferring, or in a transfer agreement, the institution where course work was completed |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
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<tr>
<td>Transfer</td>
<td>The movement of a student from one postsecondary institution to another with credit granted by the receiving institution for courses taken at the sending institution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transfer Credit</td>
<td>Credit granted by one program or institution for courses taken at another program or institution</td>
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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Focus of Study

This study focuses on the introduction of degrees to Ontario colleges and whether or not these degrees can be accurately characterized as part of the Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology (CAAT) original mission. Some scholars (Bragg and Rudd, 2012; Garmon, 2003; Hanson, 2009; McKinney, 2003; Skolnik, 2005; Walker, 2005) have argued that giving degree-granting privileges to colleges is simply a vertical extension of the colleges’ original mandate. They suggest that colleges are responding to a changing labour market, the need for degree-level education that puts a greater emphasis on teaching and applied skills, and narrow access to traditional degree-level education. Others (Eaton, 2005; Campbell, 2005; Lane, 2003; Manzo, 2001; Mills, 2003; Wattenbarger, 2000) suggest that college degrees are a horizontal expansion of the colleges’ original mandate, and, as such, weaken the basic tenets on which the colleges were established.

1.2 Background and Problem

Ontario colleges were established in 1965 primarily to educate students not headed for degree-level study at university. From the CAAT Basic Documents, the Education Minister at the time, William G. Davis reported to the Ontario Legislature that “it is not feasible, nor indeed desirable, that all graduates of our high schools should go to university.” He added, “the real needs of a very substantial number of young people lie elsewhere; they would be served poorly and fare poorly in the traditional university
programs” (1967). The CAAT’s main focus was to offer technical and vocational programs that lead to certificates and diplomas in preparation for the labour market by providing greater access to postsecondary education (PSE) for students who would otherwise be unwilling or unable to attend university. The CAATs were established for “full-time and for part-time students, in day and in evening courses, and planned to meet the relevant needs of all adults within a community, at all socio-economic levels, of all kinds of interests and aptitudes, and at all stages of educational achievement” (Basic Documents, 1967). In addition to preparing people for employment and providing greater access to PSE, the new CAATs were designed to offer programs that “encourage a learning atmosphere in which students may feel comfortable – emotionally and socially; educationally and economically” and whose educational needs in these respects were not being well-served by the universities (Basic Documents, 1967). These three components: labour market preparation, greater access to PSE, and a teaching-learner focus are basic tenets of the original Ontario colleges’ mission and have been generally adhered to for the past forty-five years.

More recently, however, following the example of British Columbia and Alberta, Ontario colleges were given degree-granting opportunities through the Post-secondary Education Choice and Excellence Act, 2000 (MTCU, 2010). Moreover, the addition of the Ontario Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology Act, 2002 (MTCU, 2010), facilitated system differentiation and enabled colleges to become more entrepreneurial. One implication of the 2002 legislation was that five colleges were renamed Institute of Technology and Advanced Learning (ITAL), and allowed to offer up to 15% of their
programming at the degree-level, compared to the 5% other colleges were permitted resulting from the 2000 Act.

According to Jones (2004), until the 1990s, there was little in the way of policy reform for the Ontario PSE system. Internationally, the 1970s and 1980s were decades that saw large-scale higher education change, but Ontario was seen as an “exception” to this trend. The policy changes in the Ontario system were “modest,” and the binary structure composed of universities and colleges had been largely unchanged for two decades. With the election of the Ontario Conservative government in 1995, however, came fundamental changes. Jones (2004, p.40) describes these changes and their impact on PSE in light of the following: “privatization and marketization; blurring boundaries of the binary structure; institutional differentiation; and system expansion” (Jones, p.40).

As for the binary structure of Ontario’s PSE system, with the introduction of the 2000 and 2002 Acts, the universities’ near-total control over degree-granting had essentially ended. As of 2010, over one hundred college degrees had been approved by the Postsecondary Education Quality Assessment Board (PEQAB), and more than sixty college degrees were on offer, (http://www.peqab.ca/index.html, 2010), which constitutes “an important blurring of the boundaries between the two sectors” (Jones, 2004, p.41). The resulting institutional differentiation and the renaming of a small number of CAATs to ITALs may or may not translate into mission drift. While 15% may not seem like a large component of programming that may be offered at the degree-level, with no cap on enrolment of the 15% for ITALs, is it a sufficiently large enough segment of the institution to have a demonstrable impact on the trajectory of, and commitment to, diploma-level programming? Moreover, renaming these institutions “signals a
hierarchical differentiation between institutions in the CAAT sector” (Jones, 2004, p.42). Whether the changes in programming and the new emphasis on degree-level education has a significant impact on the basic mission of CAATs, as outlined in the Basic Documents, is still unknown. The fact that at least two GTA colleges are attempting to reposition themselves as Polytechnic and university teaching institutions might indicate that the basic mission, at least for these colleges could be in question. Alternatively, as Skolnik (2002) suggests, perhaps the current changes in programming and increased sector differentiation are in fact a result of the CAATs fulfilling their original mission. The CAATs were in fact created to respond to changing labour, social and economic demands. The addition of the degree credential could be seen as a necessary step to meet the current demands, or fill a gap, that the universities were not necessarily eager to fill. Not to mention that the need for increased number of degree spaces came at a time when the government was fiscally challenged as a result of the economic downturn of 2008.

1.3 Rationale

Given the fact that degree-level education in Ontario colleges is a relatively recent phenomenon, little research has been done on the impact of Ontario college degrees, with the majority of studies focusing on U.S. examples. In Canada, these kinds of studies have been largely centred on Western college sectors, namely British Columbia and Alberta. Few studies on college degrees and their impact on the CAAT’s mandate have been conducted. However, key individuals involved in the creation of the CAATs remain available, and their views will help bridge the 1967 context to the current state of change and expansion underway in several Ontario colleges as a result of the passing of the 2000
and 2002 Acts. The changes associated with degree-level education in Ontario colleges could likely have unintended consequences. As such, a number of emerging issues that affect some of the basic blocks on which the colleges were originally founded, like access, labour market preparation, and learner-focused, experiential education, may not have been anticipated by the original or current policy actors and decision-makers. Their insights may help to provide some clarity around the emerging issues as many colleges head even deeper into the degree world. A deeper and clearer understanding of the introduction of college degrees and its effects on the CAAT’s basic tenets will help college leaders and governmental officials make more informed decisions around the trajectory of the college degree.

1.4 Research Questions

To what extent does the introduction of degree-granting constitute a change in the mission of Ontario colleges, as outlined in the Basic Documents and according to key college and governmental agents?

- What are the accepted ideas about the basic mission of Ontario colleges?
- What are the reasons for the degree-granting status for Ontario colleges?
- To what extent do the reasons for degree granting status intersect with the following tenets of the Ontario colleges’ basic mission: labour market responsiveness; access for students; teaching and learning emphasis?

Labour Market Responsiveness

- To what extent is the introduction of degree-granting in Ontario colleges a response to labour market demands?
Access for students

- To what extent has the introduction of degree-granting in Ontario affected access to Ontario colleges?

Teaching and Learning

- To what extent has the introduction of degree-granting in Ontario colleges affected the teaching-learning function of these institutions?

1.5 Theoretical Framework

This study is framed in social constructivism and is an exploratory approach that uses qualitative descriptive analysis. The focus of this study is on the social, political, historical and economic context of the CAATs and their expansion into degree-level education. The constructivist frame was chosen as a means to gain greater understanding of this expansionary process. It centres on the “specific contexts in which people live and work, in order to understand the historical and cultural settings of the participants” (Creswell, 2009, p.8). Moreover, the study does not begin with a specific theory but rather intends to inductively identify and develop patterns of meaning. As such, this study is harnessed through the use of grounded theory which provides flexible but systematic strategies for data collection and analysis. The study aims to “derive a general, abstract theory of action or interaction grounded in the views of the participants” (Creswell, 2009, p.13)

1.6 Scope and Limitations of the Research

The limitations of this study arise primarily from the fact that degree-granting by Ontario colleges has been only recently undertaken. As such, few in-depth studies on the
effects of introducing degree-level education in Ontario colleges have been conducted. Moreover, North American studies on degree-level education in institutions that were not originally designed with a degree-level mandate have been focused on contexts outside of Ontario, like British Columbia, Alberta and in the United States. This means that by necessity if not design, this study will be distinctive, but will not have the benefit of directly gauging its findings with studies done in the same provincial context. The purpose of this qualitative study, however, is not to generalize its findings but to seek to understand some of the effects degree-granting privileges have had on Ontario colleges’ basic mission.

This study also aims to provide some insight into the challenges that colleges face as they move further into degree-granting territory; it aims to help leaders in colleges better understand the challenges to, and opportunities associated with, the Ontario colleges’ mission posed by the recent expansion into degree-level education, with specific sensitivity to labour market issues; access issues; and teaching and learning issues.

Any form of inquiry into the social and political world will have embedded within it the worldview of the inquirer. As such, no study of this kind is void of predisposed values and assumptions. Despite every attempt to remain utterly objective, I acknowledge that my own personal, professional, and educational trajectory has undoubtedly affected my interpretation of the findings.
1.7 Chapter Outlines

This dissertation is written in six chapters. This chapter provided an overview of the study, which included the focus of the study; an introduction to the background and problem situation; the rationale for the study; research questions; theoretical framework; and scope and limitations. Chapters two and three review the literature on the three key areas identified within the research questions: labour market, access, and teaching and learning. The first of these chapters addresses the literature on the introduction of degrees in Canadian jurisdictions outside of Ontario, and the latter is grounded specifically in the Ontario context. Chapter four provides a description of the research design and methodology. Chapter five offers a presentation and analysis of the findings of this study. And, finally, Chapter six provides a summary of findings, discussion, recommendations for further research, and conclusions.
2.1 Introduction

The history of colleges offering degrees in Canada is a complicated topic to characterize because of the decentralized nature of postsecondary education (PSE), and the fact that the various jurisdictions within Canada handled their introduction differently. Education is under the jurisdictions of the provinces, and while each has a recognizably dual system of PSE divided between universities and non-universities, some, British Columbia (BC) and Alberta, for instance, have considerable institutional diversification and are multi-sectored.

In the 1960s and 1970s, many of the provinces established non-university postsecondary institutions, often by transforming already existing vocational and technical institutions. These new institutions of higher learning were mostly called community colleges, but others deliberately avoided the term. Ontario, for example, called them Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology (CAAT). Most, if not all, the literature on this subject attributes the creation of the new sector to governments intending to meet various combinations of social, economic, cultural and/or political objectives.

Paul Gallagher and John Dennison (1995) identified five models of college systems across Canada. The first of these, Ontario and Prince Edward Island (PEI), intended colleges to complement universities, serving people not eligible for, or interested in, university and preparing them to enter the workforce through technical and vocational programming. In Ontario, no formal transfer function was created. The
colleges were understood to be an alternative to universities, and the two sectors operated along parallel lines with almost no coordination between them until the 1990s.

Second, Alberta and British Columbia (BC) created comprehensive community colleges, which were largely modelled on California’s system that combined university transfer with technical and vocational programming. Whereas BC community colleges provided “second-chance” opportunities for students, in Alberta “most second-chance students were still directed to government-run vocational centres established throughout the province” (Gallagher and Dennison, 1995, p.385).

Third, Manitoba, New Brunswick, Newfoundland, the Northwest Territories, and Yukon developed “the postsecondary vocational-technical college, without any transfer function and with a much stronger accent on shorter term work-entry training programs than on more advanced technological education” (Gallagher and Dennison, 1995, p.385). Newfoundland later incorporated transfer into the colleges’ mandate. It was the lesser emphasis on more advanced technological education that originally differentiated these systems from Ontario’s.

Fourth, Saskatchewan had both “colleges without walls” in rural areas and technical institutes in cities. The former operated as brokers, arranging for provision of educational services by other institutions and community agencies. This part of the model was “effectively set aside in the late 1980s when four previously independent technical institutes were reconstituted as a new multi-campus Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology and the more rural community colleges began to provide, as well as broker, educational services” (Gallagher and Dennison, 1995, p.385 – 386).
Fifth, is Quebec’s colleges of general and vocational education (CEGEPs), which is a system largely based on European experience and one of the most distinctive in North America. After grade 11, students in CEGEPs have two streams – university preparation for two years or career preparation for three years. While adult education and short-term vocational training were not part of their original mandate, Gallagher and Dennison (1995) note that they soon became active in adult education.

The current context has Ontario colleges offering degree-level programming. In fact, since the creation of the college sector, the boundaries between the college and university sectors in many other provinces have been redefined. BC, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, PEI, and Yukon colleges also have been allowed to offer applied degrees. Additionally, while colleges are still fundamentally teaching institutions, now they are much more involved in research than they have been in the past, and in recent years, there has been growth in formal articulation agreements and hybrid relationships between institutions.

It’s clear from the five models identified that Canadian colleges intended to give prominence to vocational and technical education, and this strong emphasis on occupational and career education has helped shape degrees offered by colleges in Canada, as it has done in other jurisdictions around the world. As of January, 2013, BC, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, Prince Edward Island, and Yukon colleges have approval to offer applied degrees as an additional function within their original mandates. Many governments have turned to the colleges as a perceived cost-effective solution to the demand for an increase in applied degree production in order to remain competitive in the market place. More generally, the overall trend toward non-
universities offering degree-level education is clearly on the rise, both in Canada and many other Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries.

The first applied baccalaureate offered by an associate degree-granting institution in the United States, for example, was developed in the 1970s when New York state authorized the Fashion Institute of Technology (FIT) to award its first applied baccalaureate. FIT currently offers applied baccalaureates in 22 areas. Later, in the 1990s, seven more associate degree-granting institutions in addition to FIT were provided with similar authorization – Vermont, West Virginia, Utah, Ohio, Arkansas, Georgia and Nevada – and by 2009 six more states authorized one or more community colleges to award the applied degree – Florida, Texas, Hawaii, Washington, North Dakota and Oklahoma (Townsend et al, 2009). In October of 2010, the American Association of State Colleges and Universities documented 464 community college baccalaureate programs at fifty-four institutions in eighteen states. These community college baccalaureate program totals include degrees offered by community colleges in partnership with other higher education institutions (Floyd, et al, 2012).

Dave Marshall suggests that political motivation is the most important factor in the approval of alternate degree granting institutions and most political action is based on a combination of fact and assumption (Marshall, 2008). He identified seven broad forces (summarized in the next section) that have led to the proliferation of government approval of non-university degree granting in Canada, the last of which is the college degree movement itself.
Creeping credentialism and the value of the degree: the degree has become the employment credential of choice. An increasing number of professional groups have changed their certification requirements to include a bachelor’s degree. At the college level, “many parents, students, and employers were concerned that some of the traditional college credentials were no longer sufficient for entry to the workplace” (Marshall, 2008, p.3).

Perceived elitism of the gatekeepers: to date publically funded universities have had a monopoly on degree granting. There is a perception that the traditional university degree experience has been slow to change and limits access; in turn, Canada’s economic progress and that of its citizens have been unnecessarily stifled (Marshall, 2008).

Demography demand: the size of the 18-29 age cohort is projected to rise in some parts of the country, creating greater demand for degree spaces. This demand is particularly prevalent in Alberta and Ontario where the youth population is growing, and in all provinces where Aboriginal youth are significantly underrepresented in PSE (Marshall, 2008).

Mid-career education and lifelong learning: mainstream universities have not been very responsive to the mid-career, mature learner, while the alternative degree-granting institutions have embraced this function. Athabasca Open University in Alberta, for example, has worked to meet the needs of this group through program delivery outside of the traditional eight-month, residential format (Marshall, 2008).

Degrees and institutions with special meaning: these include religiously affiliated institutions that many in faith-based communities feel meet a need that the typical publically funded university cannot. Applied degrees are degrees with “special
meaning” insofar as they add an academic component to a previously vocational credential. University of Ontario Institute of Technology (UOIT) has stated that its degrees will be workplace oriented. Thompson Rivers University in BC and Mount Royal University in Alberta were initiatives to establish instructionally focused universities. Several of Canada’s art colleges are now called universities. And there is growth in the number of “private” universities (Marshall, 2008).

A government agenda: most provincial governments have seen the option of non-universities granting degrees as a way to provide increased access to degree education with more flexibility of delivery and without some of the traditional university emphasis on research and lecturing that is the dominant pedagogical philosophy (Marshall, 2008).

The college degree movement: in many sectors across Canada there are an increasing number of colleges delivering applied and professional degrees. The college degree movement intersects with all the forces outlined above and is an example of governments’ willingness to crack the universities’ monopoly on degree-granting education (Marshall, 2008). The college degree movement encompasses both the colleges that evolved over time into university-colleges or universities, as did Victoria College in BC, and colleges that were authorized to award bachelor’s degrees while continuing to fulfill their college mission and retain their college designation.

2.1.1 Mission Drift in Postsecondary Education

Institutional change often includes the North American concept of mission drift, or its European analogue, academic drift: an idea within higher education research of the
more general notion of institutional isomorphism developed within institutional theory. While institutional theory has been prevalent for many decades, its expression as academic drift is about forty-five years old (Tight, 2015). According to Malcolm Tight, the theory of academic drift was first identified in the UK context by Pratt and Burgess in 1972 and made more succinct two years later in relation to the development of the polytechnic sector:

We had every reason to suspect that the historical process of aspiration of colleges created specifically to be different from universities would overwhelm their best intentions, and they would increasingly aspire to university status and increasing resemble university institutions (Pratt and Burgess, 1974, p.172).

In this case, the authors used the idea of academic drift to describe what happened retrospectively and in the service of predicting what will happen to the institutions in the future. At a minimum, academic drift or mission drift is a theory of institutional change.

Moreover, insofar as academic drift is often expressed using a range of comparable terms like mission drift or mission creep, there is a link between ongoing debates that are focused on institutional missions across Europe and North America (Gonzales, 2013; Jaquette, 2013; Meet et al, 1996; Morphew and Huisman, 2002; Morphew, 2009; Daraio et al, 2011; Fumasoli and Huisman 2013). The theory has been applied to the study of postsecondary institutions in many countries around the world, though mainly in the West. Tight provides a fulsome list of these countries and the associated scholars, which, in addition to European and North American countries, includes Australia and South Africa (Tight, 2015, p.89).
One of the earlier applications of the theory of academic drift was carried out by Guy Neave in 1979. In *Academic Drift: Some Views from Europe*, Neave suggested that the very concept of “drift implied a departure from a series of publically stated and accepted objectives” (Neave, 1979, p.145). As such, he argued that it is important to distinguish between policy drift, institutional drift, and academic drift (later, he would add personnel drift and drift in curricular emphasis). In keeping with Pratt and Burgess, Neave argued that policy drift is a failure in decision making at the level of government. He argued that policy drift results from “an imprecise statement of objectives or from a statement of guidelines which, because it is ambiguous, gives rise to varying interpretations and thus to contradictory responses” (Neave, 1979, p.145). Academic drift, then, “is the consequence of faulty interpretation by the institution resulting in a different series of priorities and weighting attached to the type of study available: let us say, academic and theoretical work as opposed to the development of the vocational side” (Neave, 1979, p.145).

Research in PSE institutional theory does not, however, suggest one common factor as the “cause” of drift nor does it suggest that drift is unavoidable. Neave, in applying theories of drift to three cases, for example, the French University Institutes of Technology, the Norwegian District Colleges and the Yugoslavian two-year postsecondary institutes (Vise Skole), concluded that “drift, it would seem, is a common characteristic of the ‘second generation institutes’ formed in the 1960s. So far, we have not come up with a common factor to explain this phenomenon” (Neave, 1979, p.157). More recently, Harwood examined the development of agricultural colleges in Germany at the turn of the previous century, and noted that while some of these colleges did
exhibit signs of academic drift, many others did not. He concluded that “perhaps the single most important fact about drift is that it has not been an invariant universal process” (Harwood, 2010, p.45).

The college degree movement across Canada’s provincial PSE systems provides various jurisdictional snapshots of the interplay between governmental PSE policy and institutional and/or sector change. Many jurisdictions, for example, have been creating a number of degree-granting institutions using a variety of governmental policy and institutional levers. In many cases, the “new” degree-granting institution has been established through the transformation of, or addition to, a functional institution.

2.1.2 British Columbia

The very early stages of the college degree movement in Canada began in BC with the establishment of university-colleges, even though the first specifically college degree was offered in Alberta. The rationale for the college degree movement in BC intersects with at least two of the points Marshall identified: access and applied versus academic degree programming. In the 1980s, the provincial government commissioned a review of the factors affecting degree attainment. One of the issues identified regarded the difficulties students were having completing their studies after having completed transfer programs in colleges outside the catchment areas of the universities in Vancouver and Victoria (Provincial Access Committee, 1988). As such, it was decided that third and fourth year university courses would be provided in these colleges. Initially, the courses were delivered by the college and the degree was conferred by the university. By the mid-
90s, however, the colleges were renamed “university-colleges” and were given degree-granting privileges of their own (Skolnik, 2005).

It was later recognized that degree production in the province could be increased much further and faster if other colleges were allowed to offer the degree. According to Skolnik, it was also “politically difficult to deny the colleges in the most populous region of the province the same opportunity that was given to some colleges in smaller regions” (Skolnik, 2005, p.53). As a result, two colleges nearer to Vancouver were also given permission to grant degrees, except this time the rationale had less to do with geographical access, (given the colleges’ proximity to a major urban centre) and much more to do with the idea of limiting the kinds of degrees awarded to “applied” degrees (Skolnik, 2005). Thus, what started out as an access argument for colleges offering degrees morphed into the idea of colleges offering what Marshall calls a degree with a “special meaning,” insofar as it is applied in nature. Once one college was given degree-granting privileges, the government soon after, in 2002, allowed all colleges to offer applied degrees.

In the mid-90s, however, the BC government was attempting to create a third sector of postsecondary institutions by changing some of the colleges into university-colleges. It intended to “create a new type of institution that offered the best of both university and college programs and services to the region” (University Colleges Consortium, 2000, p.3). As the name university-college implies, these institutions were to embody the characteristics of both colleges and universities. Until that time, in Canada, the term “university-college” was used mainly to refer to a college affiliated with a university. By 1999, the university colleges were offering 82 baccalaureate programs –
50 in arts and science and 32 applied or professional degrees (University Colleges Consortium, 2000). Many programs were designed to support local economic and social agendas, for example, the Bachelor of Science in Freshwater Science at Okanagan and the Bachelor of Arts in First Nations Studies at Malaspina (Skolnik, 2005). It later became clear that the term university-college proved difficult to explain. As such, a commission on PSE reported in 2007 that the public did not understand what a university-college was, and it recommended that the name be converted to university (Plant 2007). By 2008, one university-college became a campus of the University of British Columbia, and the rest had become universities. It’s worth noting that while the government rejected the name university-college, it did not reject the concept of a hybrid institution that had characteristics of both a college and a university. In fact these new degree-granting institutions were called “special focus, teaching-oriented” universities (Skolnik, 2012).

2.1.3 Alberta

Alberta was the first province to establish a community college (Lethbridge, in 1957), and, in fact, has acted before any other province in many other aspects of PSE. For example, it was the first to concentrate all teacher education in the universities; the first to establish an open university (Athabasca, in 1970); and the first to establish a comprehensive provincial mechanism to facilitate transfer (the Alberta Council on Admissions and Transfer, in 1974). Thus, believing that its transfer programs were working well, no additional universities were needed and it introduced the first applied college degrees in Canada (Floyd and Skolnik, 2005).
The applied degree in Alberta was introduced in 1995-96, and unlike BC’s originally stated access rationale for allowing colleges to offer degrees, in Alberta, degrees offered by colleges were originally “designed in response to employer demand in emerging occupations” (Campus Alberta Quality Council, 2010, p.68). Unlike, the BC government, which intended to transform colleges into university-colleges in diversifying degree delivery in the province, the Alberta government made it very clear that the colleges’ fundamental mission was to remain the same:

Public colleges and technical institutes offering applied degree programs will not become universities, nor will they confer degrees in traditional university programs….The intention of the applied degree demonstration project is to allow public colleges and technical institutes greater flexibility to fulfill their traditional mandate which is providing career and technical education and training to Albertans at the certificate and diploma level (Government of Alberta, 2003, p.2).

These programs built on the two year diploma programs that the colleges offered in the same area of study as the degree program through an additional two semesters of classroom study and two semesters of co-op or work placement. These programs were intended to provide more advance workforce preparation (Campus Alberta Council, 2010). Until 2004, proposals for these programs were reviewed by the Ministry of Advanced Education and Career Development. Colleges were required to show demand for graduates of an applied degree program beyond that of a diploma program, and that employers supported the work experience component of the program. By 2003, 27 programs had been approved at 9 of the 16 colleges and at both institutes of technology. Petroleum engineering technology and applied information services technology were the kinds of programs being offered at these institutions (Skolnik, 2012).
2.1.4 Manitoba

According to Dan Smith, Manager of Policy Development & Analysis at Manitoba’s Council on PSE, Manitoba’s postsecondary system between 1967 and 1997 was a relatively stable system. Since 1997, however, there has been considerable structural change (Smith, 2011). For example, two new private institutions were created. The first, the Canadian Mennonite University was an amalgamation of three existing private Mennonite colleges. The second was the University College of the North (UCN), which was established in 2004. UCN was based on the BC model, blending university and college programming. The new institution was established from the former Keewatin Community College, and in permitting the UCN degree-granting authority, it was removed from under the legal framework of Manitoba’s Colleges Act. Thus, with the conversion of these colleges, the first private degree-granting universities were established within the same governing framework as the public universities (Smith, 2011).

A few years later, in 2002, Booth College was given degree-granting privileges and was permitted to offer degrees in any academic area. “University-level” programming was also specifically added to the college’s mandate, which allowed Booth to use the term “university” in its advertising (Smith, 2011). Significant expansion of degree-granting powers, however, occurred in Manitoba in 2009, when degree-granting authority was given to community colleges. These amendments brought Manitoba in line with other jurisdictions in Canada where colleges offered degrees. Like other provinces, Manitoba emphasized the positive impact these degrees would have on the labour market, and one of the rationales provided by government for the addition of college degree-
granting was that they “were critical for the continued development of our skilled workforce” (Manitoba, 2009). A special feature of the Manitoba colleges was the establishment of Adult Learning Centres (ALC), and was another indicator of Manitoba’s perception of the relationship between economic development and the colleges:

Government has consistently maintained that education is central to our economic development strategy and adult learning is a vital part of this. Manitoba cannot afford to have large numbers of adults whose education does not qualify them to obtain challenging employment and participate fully as citizens. (Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, 2002)

The changing economic climate after 1997 established “an environment whereby it was acceptable, and perhaps even expected, that government would focus more on the potential of postsecondary education vis-à-vis the economy” (Smith, 2011, p.56). It is important to note, however, that Manitoba’s policy focus was greater than the economy, and included social and cultural considerations, as the establishment of the Canadian Mennonite University reveals.

2.1.5 Maritime Provinces, The Territories, Saskatchewan and Quebec

As of January, 2013, degree production in the colleges in the remaining provincial jurisdictions was practically absent, with a few exceptions. Holland College, the only college in Prince Edward Island, had only recently received approval for its first degree program. While colleges in New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Newfoundland & Labrador had developed transfer functions and had varying articulation agreements established with the universities, degree-level education remained largely within the purview of the universities. Northwest Territories colleges do not offer degrees, however, Yukon college
now offers one degree program on its own in addition to the several in which it collaborates with other institutions that actually grant the degree (CICIC, 2012). In December 2012, Saskatchewan approved degree-granting authority for its colleges with the introduction of the Degree Authorization Act (www.aeei.gov.sk.ca/degree-granting, 2013). The system of higher education in Quebec significantly differs from that in other Canadian provinces. PSE begins not at traditional colleges and universities, but at collegiate-level institutions, CEGEPS, where students choose either a vocational or classically academic course of study (CICIC, 2012).

2.2 Chapter Summary and Preview

This chapter reviewed degree granting by colleges in a Canadian context and what has been characterized as the college degree movement. It considered the history of degrees offered by colleges in British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Quebec, the Maritime Provinces and the Territories. The history of colleges offering degrees in these provinces and territories may be broadly characterized as an intersection of the following factors: the original vocational and technical focus of the colleges; a response to perceived labour market demands; challenges related to access to degree-level education; a desire for greater instructional focus at the degree level; and an efficient way to increase degree production. Importantly, “special meaning” degrees were only part of a larger response to some of these factors. Since the 1990s, many Canadian jurisdictions have been creating a variety of degree-granting institutions; among them are faith-based, private, university-college and polytechnic institutions, for instance, along with a host of various credentials.
The next chapter reviews the literature on college degrees in the province of Ontario and is generally organized around the key areas identified within the research questions: mission, labour market, access, and teaching and learning. Chapter four provides a description of the research design and methodology employed in this study. Chapter five presents the findings of the research and their analysis. Chapter six provides a summary of the findings, discussion, recommendations for further research, and presents conclusions.
CHAPTER THREE: COLLEGE DEGREES IN THE ONTARIO CONTEXT

3.1 Introduction

Skolnik (2010) points out that the original decision on the mission of the Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology (CAAT) was one of the most controversial decisions in the history of higher education in Ontario, yet relatively little analysis on that decision has been published. The two exceptions are Fleming (1971) and Dennison and Gallagher (1986). Also available are a few unpublished theses (Bartram, 1980; Hamblin 1984; Murphy, 1983; Smyth, 1970; and Stoll, 1993). As such, constructing a detailed conception of the CAAT’s original raison d’être poses some challenges.

In the 1960s, there was a consensus in Ontario that the educational system needed to expand (Skolnik, 2010). According to Fleming (1971), the main reason for expansion was that those who did not acquire the skills and knowledge required by new technology would be cut out of the new economy, and a labour force with a shortage of the requisite knowledge and skills threatened to undermine the economic development of the whole province. In his address to the Ontario Legislature in 1965, almost a full two years before the first Ontario college opened its doors, William Davis, the Minister of Education, referred to the “knowledge explosion,” the “technological revolution” and the “population explosion” underway, and the need to be proactive participants in this new reality by affecting large-scale change in the postsecondary education (PSE) system – the introduction of the CAATs (Davis, 1965, p.8-10). The new college sector was not only intended to emphasize vocational and applied education, but also to provide greater access to PSE than had been previously made available by the universities. It was
believed that a PSE sector that promoted an open-access philosophy would help to equip the rising Ontario population with the skills and knowledge required to be successful in the new economy, regardless of one’s past educational trajectory. Moreover, the CAAT’s intended focus on teaching and learning would provide an alternative to the traditional lecture-style pedagogy that had dominated university classrooms around the world since the Middle Ages.

On this basis, Dennison suggested that community colleges could be characterized in five ways: open-door access; community orientation; emphasis on teaching; comprehensiveness; and responsiveness to societal needs. While not everyone agrees that all of these characteristics accurately describe the Ontario colleges, (e.g., Skolnik, 2002), generally speaking, it is reasonable to conclude that the CAATs were largely born out of a response to Ontario’s social and economic needs as they were understood in the 1960s. Moreover, it is often suggested that one of the CAAT’s greatest assets is its ability to rapidly respond to social forces, the most recent being globalization.

3.2 Governance

The Canadian constitution allocates final authority for PSE in Ontario to the provincial government. The responsibility lies with the Minister of Training, Colleges, and Universities who is a member of the Executive Council of Ontario (or cabinet) reporting to the Premier and held accountable by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. The ministry has responsibility for administration of laws relating to PSE and skills training in Ontario.
The authority to establish CAATs is set out in the *Ontario Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology Act, 2002* (MTCU, 2002). The Act identifies each as a corporation without share capital and consisting of members of its board of governors (BOG). Thus, all Ontario colleges are subject to the same provincial legislation, which provides direction on how they conduct their business in the same way as other corporations within the province, except where limited by the *Ontario Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology Act, 2002*. Each BOG governs each college on behalf of the public, and, as such, is responsible for ensuring that it is effectively and appropriately managed to achieve its provincially established mandate:

To offer a comprehensive program of career-oriented, postsecondary education and training to assist individuals in finding and keeping employment, to meet the needs of employers and the changing work environment and to support the economic and social needs of their local and diverse communities.

In carrying out its objects a college may undertake a range of education and training related activities including, but not limited to:

a) entering into partnerships with business, industry and other educational institutions;

b) offering its courses in the French language where the college is authorized to do so by regulation;

c) adult vocational education and training;

d) basic skills and literacy training;

e) apprenticeship in-school training;

f) applied research

(MTCU, CAAT, Binding Policy Framework, 2003)

The Governance and Accountability Framework for the CAATs states that a BOG’s responsibilities include establishing internal or institutional governance structures, including hiring the CEO (i.e., President); setting the college vision and strategic direction within the context of governmental laws, policies and community
needs; approving the college’s annual business plan, budget and annual report; and ensuring appropriate corrective action when necessary (MTCU, 2003).

This unicameral governance system of CAATs, where the BOG is the single governing body responsible for both administrative and academic matters, is in contradistinction to the bicameral governance of most Ontario universities. In most Ontario universities, the corporate charter delegates authority over institutional decision making to two legislative bodies: a governing board which usually appoints the president and is responsible for the administrative and financial elements of the university; and, an academic senate or a university/education council with responsibilities for academic matters of an educational/academic nature that affects the university as a whole (Hogan, 2006). Canadian provinces university charters are in the form of Acts, the York University Act, for instance and the Act enables the university to offer degrees at the undergraduate and graduate levels.

3.3 College Degrees and Differentiation in Ontario PSE

Through the passing of the Post-secondary Education Choice and Excellence Act, 2000 (MTCU, 2000) and the Ontario Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology Act, 2002 (MTCU, 2002), ITALs were also permitted to offer up to 15% of their programming at the degree level and the remaining colleges up to 5% of their programming at the degree level. In a 2000 consultation paper produced by Diane Cunningham, Minister of Education, the two overriding reasons for the “new approach” to degree-granting in Ontario – that is, allowing non-universities to grant baccalaureates – were “changing expectations from employers and increasing demand from students for more choice”
(MTCU, 2000). The consultation paper indicated that the legislative and policy approach unnecessarily limited access to degree-level education in Ontario. Some of the barriers cited included the sole reliance on universities to provide degree opportunities; colleges not allowed to demonstrate the degree quality of their programs, even in areas where a degree would be of greater value than a diploma to graduates; student demand for convenient part-time study, online access and degree completion opportunities not being met; and some professions increasing their entry-to-practice qualifications (MTCU, 2000). Almost all of these reasons intersect with Marshall’s assessment of the forces that drove increased degree granting in non-universities across the country. Generally speaking, the motivations for the new pathway to degrees in Ontario, as outlined in Cunningham’s consultation paper, would seem to uphold the tenets of the colleges’ original mission. Indeed, the Ontario government, much like the Alberta government, clearly intended that “the primary role of Ontario colleges will not be altered by the applied degree” (MTCU, 2000).

Until this point, there had been few changes to the PSE system in Ontario. As such, the two sectors, university and college, remained divided between those that had degree-granting privileges and those that did not. The two sectors remained primarily separated and disconnected with relatively few formal articulation or transfer agreements established. A full decade before the Post-secondary Education Choice and Excellence Act of 2000, Charles Pascal’s Vision 2000 (1990) report recommended the creation of a new degree-granting institution, but only if the universities did not address the issue of CAAT credit recognition and student mobility. While Cunningham lists many reasons for the introduction of degree-level study in Ontario colleges, a catalyst for the Ontario
government’s move to offer college degrees also seems tied to the universities’ non-response to Vision 2000 in 1990 and subsequent calls in 1993 (Pitman), 1995 (CMEC), 1996 (CUCC), and 1999 (Port Hope Accord) for college credit recognition at the degree-level, and adequate accommodation of college student transfers to universities.

This was not surprising. As Gallagher and Dennison pointed out in their first of five Canadian college models, Ontario colleges were not set up with a transfer function and were intended to be complementary and parallel to universities. In this way, Ontario colleges were distinctly unlike BC colleges and community colleges in the United States that award associate degrees. In these jurisdictions, colleges had an explicit transfer function as part of their mandate. In the United States, for example, the explicit transfer structure was intended to provide for student mobility from an associate degree to an undergraduate degree. The transfer challenge is not a new one for Ontario higher education. In fact, the issue is addressed directly in the Basic Documents of 1967. Minister Davis outlined an expectation that a transfer agreement between colleges and universities would be eventually created in an effort to provide for greater student mobility within the Ontario system. “We will set up a committee of representatives […] to determine the conditions and procedures under which universities may grant admission to outstanding students who have completed successfully an appropriate program at one of our Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology” (Basic Documents, 1967). To date, no system-wide agreement has been brokered, and only recently, in 2011, did the government of Ontario release a policy statement on an Ontario Credit Transfer System:
Ontario will have a comprehensive, transparent and consistently applied credit transfer system that will improve student pathways and mobility, support student success and make Ontario a postsecondary education destination of choice. The credit transfer system will assist qualified students to move between postsecondary institutions or programs without repeating prior, relevant learning (MTCU 2011).

The above statements indicate that the government intended to systematically address the issue of credit transfer in Ontario. In the same year, the government created the Ontario Council on Articulation and Transfer (OnCAT), whose mandate is to provide a guide to transfer opportunities among Ontario's colleges and universities for postsecondary applicants and students, and the faculty and advisors who assist them.

More than a decade after the 2000 Act was passed, a 2012 report entitled “Commission on the Reform of Ontario’s Public Services” (The Drummond Report), argued for the curtailment of college degree programming in the name of institutional differentiation. Drummond suggested that when colleges offer degree-level programming they blur the distinction between colleges and universities, which results in duplication of programs and inefficiencies in the system. While there may be some basis for concern about programming duplication and efficiency in the province, Skolnik points out that Drummond’s recommendation focuses exclusively on only one of many characteristics that may differentiate postsecondary institutions in Ontario, namely, the academic credentials that they award. Skolnik (2012) provides several additional criteria on which institutions are differentiated:

- College programming is more focused on specific occupations than universities
• College emphasis is on **applied and experiential learning**
• Colleges are more **teaching** oriented
• Colleges serve a **different clientele** than universities

In many ways, these factors are more important sources of differences between colleges and universities than whether or not colleges award degrees. Indeed, if one focuses on these rather substantive characteristics that are central to student success and engagement, then there continues to be considerable differentiation between colleges and universities regardless of the credentials each sector or institution awards (Skolnik, 2012).

Skolnik adds (2012, p.17), “the fact that colleges and universities both offer baccalaureate programs does not necessarily mean that there is duplication of programs.” This argument hinges on the very fact that institutions are differentiated by the kinds of themes outlined in the list above. Because colleges are more focused on issues of access, labour market preparedness, and teaching, even if the colleges are offering degrees in the same areas as the universities, the details of the program and the student experience are sufficiently different between the two sectors. As such, Skolnik concludes that there is more duplication between degree programs in universities than there is between university and college degree programs in Ontario.

The 2012 Drummond Report, which addresses the Ontario government’s need to reduce spending, urged that there needs to be a better balance between teaching and research, and expressed concern about many university research centres “effectively taking money from undergraduate tuition revenues to further support research” (Commission on the Reform of Ontario’s Public Services, 2012, p.242). On this point,
Clark, et al provide a rather convincing argument in favour of government purchase of degree teaching without at the same time purchasing the equivalent increase in research. The authors suggest that the present funding arrangements for universities do not enable the implementation of this type of government purchasing preference, and therefore, should be changed (Clark, et al, 2011). An alternative is the government could increase degree production without an equivalent increase in expenditure on research if it directed a portion of its growth in expenditures to degree-level teaching in colleges (Skolnik, 2012). Generally speaking, it would seem that without some substantial change in the current funding model, Ontario cannot expect substantial change in its postsecondary system, if that is in fact what is desired.

It is well-documented (Clark et al., 2009; 2011; Jones & Skolnik, 2009) that relative to many other jurisdictions of comparable size and economic development, Ontario has been slow to move in the direction of substantial change when it comes to diversifying its PSE system and degree production, in particular. Indeed, Ontario still heavily relies on research-oriented universities for production of undergraduates despite the important legislative changes at the turn of the 21st century. It seems to be the case that the government is repeating decisions made in the past, in light of the reports that it intends to establish three new university campuses to meet the deficit in degree graduates in Ontario (Richardson, 2011). Moreover, the fact that the Ontario government is considering the creation of three new campuses while at the same time considering a restriction on degree programming in the colleges seems to work at cross purposes, when one considers the trend toward softening hard binary postsecondary structures.
While it’s true that much of PSE outside of Ontario remains entrenched in a binary system of universities and non-universities, there is considerably more variation within each of the two sectors, especially within non-university sectors than there is presently in Ontario. In fact, even within Canada there is much more differentiation within the non-university sector. One could argue, for example, that Alberta has six sectors. 1) The “old” universities became known as comprehensive academic and research institutions, while 2) the “new” universities became degree and applied studies institutions. 3) The Northern and Southern Alberta Institutes of Technology (NAIT and SAIT) became known as polytechnics, while 4) the rest of the community college system became known as comprehensive community institutions. 5) Religious (independent) institutions and 6) specialty institutions (like Alberta College of Art and Design) also received their own separate designations (HESA, 2012). In Alberta’s case, the main innovation was the development of a framework that recognized the proliferation of higher education missions and types of institutions and credentials while tying institutions as much as possible into particular roles.

In this light, the Drummond Report seems to simply reflect the longstanding position of the Ontario government with regards to higher education: two separate and distinct sectors is the preferred postsecondary infrastructure, where the activity in which an institution may engage is restricted by its sector rather than, say, its potential strengths relative to labour, community and student needs. Such a hard binary system suffers from inflexibility and a lack of responsiveness to the diverse needs of an increasingly diverse Ontario population. For Skolnik, “the real issue [in Ontario] is not whether an increase of three or four college programs a year is too many, but whether it is too small a movement
toward diversification on the production of degrees (Skolnik, 2012, p.21). The fact is that the addition of the college degree in Ontario may have resulted in a change in perception of PSE, but when one looks at the number of college degree programs created relative to overall degree production in the province, the degree-seat shortage, labour demands, and what other jurisdictions have accomplished with regards to institutional differentiation, the change in degree-granting is a modest one, albeit with the potential for a much greater impact on Ontario’s hard binary PSE system.

3.4 LABOUR MARKET

3.4.1 Labour Market Demand for College Degrees

Kenneth Walker, founder of the Community College Baccalaureate Association (CCBA) in the United States, has argued that interest in the community college baccalaureate is a response to economic and social needs. Historically, colleges have been responsive to globalization and the knowledge economy through effective diploma-level programming. He argues that college degrees are a vertical extension of the colleges’ basic mission. College degrees are “those which have been specifically created to meet identified workforce demands such as teacher education, nursing, culinary arts, electronic technology, information systems technology, computing and business administration” (Walker, 2005, p17). Many of the programs mentioned are currently being offered by Ontario colleges. Walker suggests that adapting degree-level study to a college environment is a natural outgrowth for colleges and is fundamentally a response to changing local and international workforce needs.
Skolnik (2005, p.52) reports that Canadian “college spokespeople have long expressed concern that diplomas are not internationally recognized and do not represent the level and content of the programs.” Most countries around the world have a binary system of education insofar as they are usually divided into two sectors: universities and non-universities (Skolnik and Floyd, 2005; Jones, 2004). Yet, given the breadth and scope of the non-university sector around the world, it’s not surprising that the Ontario diploma credential would not be as well recognized as the universal degree credential. That said, “many college leaders believe that what [diploma] graduates have achieved is almost equivalent to a baccalaureate, though with different content than a typical university degree program” (Skolnik, 2005, p.52).

With increased institutional differentiation within Ontario’s PSE system, and in particular, within the college sector, the college presidents suggest that they provide a “clear and cost effective solution” (New Vision, 2010, p.8) to the increased pressure for more degrees in Ontario. The colleges provide breadth and depth of programming to their local communities, and as such, some are more focused on degrees while continuing to provide a broad range of options. In other words, adding degree programming to college curricula is a natural extension of the colleges’ undertaking to meet the community’s educational and workforce needs. On this view, one could reasonably assume, then, that the Ontario college presidents do not see the college-degree as a threat to the basic mission of the colleges.

Part of the challenge to the stated purpose of meeting labour market needs by introducing the college degrees in Ontario is that degree-level study has traditionally not been perceived to be directly and necessarily associated with labour market preparation.
On the assumption that degrees are typically associated with Ontario universities, then it’s not surprising that employers may be unsure of the goal of college degrees. As some scholars have noted, the goals of universities, and by implication, degree-level education, are ambiguous: teaching, research, service to the local community, administration of scientific installations, support for the arts, and solutions to social problems (Baldridge, Curtis, Ecker and Riley, 1986).

3.4.2 Labour Market Perception of College Degrees

College leaders have been facing the issue of how an “applied” degree is perceived in the larger context of PSE provincially, federally and internationally. And while recent changes in Postsecondary Education Quality Assurance Board (PEQAB) regulations have allowed colleges to drop the “applied” portion of college degree titles, and not its applied content, it is not clear what impact this change will have on stakeholders’ perception of the college degree. Is a college degree regarded by the labour market as being equivalent to, but different than, a traditional university degree, in the way Canadian college spokespeople have claimed? Despite the fact that PEQAB has detailed standards for applied degrees, and outlined the differences between college and traditional university degrees (www.peqab.ca, 2010), the very concept of a college degree may continue to be ambiguous for employers and other stakeholders, especially students. This perspective on college degrees ties the quality of the degree to negative marketplace perception.

Barbara K. Townsend (2005) points out that some scholars of higher education, (Manzo, 2001; McKee, 2001; Wattenbarger, 2000) feel the community college degree is
not respected by the market and is seen as inferior. Ironic, given that the college degree is specifically intended to prepare people for the labour market. If employers regard them as mere extensions of what colleges have been doing for the past fifty years in Ontario, then they may have an unchanged opinion of college graduates – regardless of whether or not those opinions are positive or negative. On the other hand, the Ontario college degree is relatively new, which may leave some employers hesitating to provide opportunities for college degree graduates. While the literature seems to indicate that the applied degree is partly a response to challenges arising from globalization and the knowledge economy (Walker and Floyd, 2005; Clark, Moran, Skolnik and Trick, 2009), it is not clear whether there is really strong demand by employers for graduates of an applied degree program in a profession that also accepts diploma graduates, albeit at lower entry-level positions. Moreover, what effect will overlapping credentials have on the value of the diploma credential? Will it spur a decreased entrance-to-practice salary for diploma graduates? The long-term career prospects for these graduates are unclear.

These issues raise the question of whether the introduction of the college degree in Ontario is born of actual employer and economy-based needs, or perceived but unsubstantiated employer and economy-based needs. In Cunningham’s consultation paper of 2000, she clearly cites “changing expectations from employers” as a key reason for providing degree-granting status to the colleges, but how college degree programs meet the “changing expectations from employers” and what they contribute to local and national economies that diploma and traditional university programs do not is not entirely clear.
3.5 ACCESS

3.5.1 Postsecondary Education Participation Rates

One of the often cited priorities for the introduction of degree-granting privileges in Ontario colleges is to widen access to PSE generally and degree-level study in particular. Improving accessibility to PSE is important not only to the individual lives affected but to the social and economic well-being of the province. The fact is much is known about accessibility and the barriers that individuals from underrepresented groups have to contend with, but clear solutions to the associated challenges are not abundant. There is even less known, however, around the impact college degrees have had on PSE accessibility in Ontario.

With respect to college degrees, the issue of access is made more complex by the fact that Ontario has moved from a mass to universal system of higher education. Using Martin Trow’s delineations (1973), some point out that Ontario’s movement from an elite to mass system of higher education, which Trow defines in terms of a minimum of a 50% participation rate, generally coincided with the creation of the CAATs in 1967 (Clark et al., 2009). In 2011, the Ontario government set a 70% postsecondary attainment rate as its target, which is an 8% increase from where it was previously. It’s worth noting that postsecondary attainment rates in Ontario are among the highest in the world. Over 80% of secondary school students enrol in some type of PSE before the age of 21, and more than half of this group goes to university, with the remainder enrolled in college, apprenticeship and private training programs (Norrie and Zhao, 2011). Nonetheless, an increase of 8% is a substantial growth target, and part of the pressure put on access to PSE will come from rising participation rates. In order for Ontario to reach its attainment
target, the graduation rate in PSE has to be about 85% of the 80% that enroll in some form of PSE. Accounting for the fact that students who stop out of a program may enrol in another institution at a later date, the graduation rate in 2011 is more accurately somewhere around 82%, and as such, Ontario is in a good position to achieve its overall attainment rate of 70% but will require net gains in the stock of PSE credentials (Norrie and Zhao, 2011).

3.5.2 Who Participates in Postsecondary Education

One of the often stated rationales for institutional differentiation in PSE is that it provides more choice for students, as Minister Cunningham specified in her 2000 consultation paper. Allowing colleges to award degrees adds an element of choice to the Ontario system that didn’t exist before the legislative changes of 2000 and 2002. The applied nature of college programs, the teaching-oriented setting, and the more flexible admission policies, may attract many students who would not be admitted or attracted to university programs. In turn, these students may perform better in a college environment than they would in a university setting. For those students who would not have considered enrolling in a degree program in a university, the existence of a college degree program could result in a net increase in the number of degree-educated Ontarians in the workforce.

That said, there really isn’t much data on how many students who enrolled in a college degree program would have enrolled in a university degree program if there had been no college program available. One 2012 study completed by Higher Education Strategy Associates (HESA), commissioned by Higher Education Quality Council of
Ontario (HEQCO), suggested university and college degree students may to some extent constitute different populations. According to the HESA report, data from the provincial key performance indicator (KPI) survey “suggest that college degrees serve a different demographic than do universities” (HESA, 2012, p.25). The report stated that compared to university students, students in college degree programs were more likely to be older, male, and 80% indicated that preparing for employment was their main reason for enrolling in the program. The HESA report also indicated that almost none of the students enrolled in a university program would have been interested in enrolling in a college program. The authors of the report acknowledge that these particular responses from students already enrolled in a university program may simply be self-serving. As such, without some way of triangulating these data, their accuracy and utility in this context is difficult to gauge.

These results seem to be supported by a study done by Colleges Ontario in which it collated the data from the 2011 University and College Applicant Survey (UCAS) with data from Ontario College Application Services (OCAS). In college degree programs, just over 21% of the students were not born in Canada; nearly two-thirds were working full or part-time; and one-third indicated that their ethnicity was other than Caucasian/White (Skolnik, 2012). In addition, compared to universities, colleges have historically attracted more students from lower income families, more new Canadians or minorities, more students who have been less successful in previous academic experience, and students who live in areas where there is no university (Clark, et al, 2009). However, whether the college sector can continue to attract, and presumably,
service, underrepresented groups while continuing to increase and diversify its degree production, if necessary, is unclear.

While postsecondary participation rates in Ontario are high, they are not evenly distributed over the population. Norrie and Zhao (2011) present these rates grouped by demographic and socioeconomic characteristics. In all there are 22 student characteristics, representing 9 categories.

Table 1: Participation Rates Grouped by Demographics (Adapted from Norrie and Zhao, 2011):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Total PSE</th>
<th>University PSE</th>
<th>Other PSE</th>
<th>No PSE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All</td>
<td>81.9</td>
<td>45.5</td>
<td>36.4</td>
<td>18.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>75.7</td>
<td>36.3</td>
<td>39.4</td>
<td>24.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>88.2</td>
<td>54.7</td>
<td>33.5</td>
<td>11.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Income</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$5-25K</td>
<td>72.4</td>
<td>38.7</td>
<td>33.7</td>
<td>27.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$25-50K</td>
<td>75.1</td>
<td>34.2</td>
<td>40.9</td>
<td>24.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$50-75K</td>
<td>79.4</td>
<td>42.7</td>
<td>36.7</td>
<td>20.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$75-100K</td>
<td>84.3</td>
<td>47.8</td>
<td>36.5</td>
<td>15.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;$100K</td>
<td>92.9</td>
<td>61.9</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>7.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental Education</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents No PSE</td>
<td>69.2</td>
<td>25.7</td>
<td>43.5</td>
<td>30.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents Some PSE</td>
<td>87.2</td>
<td>53.7</td>
<td>33.5</td>
<td>12.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aboriginal Identity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aboriginal</td>
<td>56.5</td>
<td>17.8</td>
<td>38.7</td>
<td>43.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Aboriginal</td>
<td>82.6</td>
<td>46.2</td>
<td>36.4</td>
<td>17.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disability Status</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disability</td>
<td>68.3</td>
<td>22.1</td>
<td>46.2</td>
<td>31.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Disability</td>
<td>83.7</td>
<td>48.5</td>
<td>35.2</td>
<td>16.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigration Status</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st Generation</td>
<td>88.5</td>
<td>58.4</td>
<td>30.1</td>
<td>11.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd Generation</td>
<td>85.9</td>
<td>54.7</td>
<td>31.2</td>
<td>14.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Immigrant</td>
<td>79.1</td>
<td>39.2</td>
<td>39.9</td>
<td>20.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language Group</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French Minority</td>
<td>82.5</td>
<td>39.5</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>17.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-French Minority</td>
<td>81.9</td>
<td>45.8</td>
<td>36.1</td>
<td>18.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geography</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>73.2</td>
<td>28.6</td>
<td>44.6</td>
<td>26.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>83.7</td>
<td>48.8</td>
<td>34.9</td>
<td>16.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Status</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single Parent Family</td>
<td>77.5</td>
<td>36.4</td>
<td>41.1</td>
<td>22.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two-Parent Family</td>
<td>83.2</td>
<td>47.7</td>
<td>35.5</td>
<td>16.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
These rates clearly illustrate that access to PSE in Ontario varies with population characteristics. Gender is an important factor in understanding PSE access. The percentage of males not having enrolled in PSE by the age of 21 is more than double that of females, 24% and 11.8% respectively. The data also showed that males were more likely than females to opt for other forms of PSE than university.

Family income is also an indicator of PSE participation insofar as the rate increases consistently with family income. However, family income is also a factor in determining the type of PSE chosen. The percentage of the population going to university rises with family income, but family income is not a significant factor for decisions to participate in other types of PSE.

Parents’ education is a significant factor in explaining PSE choices. A first-generation student is defined as one whose parents did not attend any PSE. The percentage of first generation respondents not attempting any form of PSE was almost 2.5 times higher than the reference group. There is also a notable contrast in the type of PSE chosen. Only a quarter of first generation students go to university, compared to over half for those with parents who have some form of PSE.

The picture of Aboriginal people and PSE is alarming. Only 56% of Aboriginal respondents had attempted PSE by the age of 21, compared to nearly 83% of non-Aboriginal people. Importantly, this is the largest participation rate gap between an underrepresented group and its reference group for all 9 categories. Aboriginal people who did go to PSE were much less likely to attend a university: 17.8% compared to 46.2% of non-Aboriginal people.
The participation rate for people with a disability is equally concerning. The percentage of persons reporting a disability that had not attempted any type of PSE was nearly double that of those who reported having no disability. Those with a disability who did access higher education were less than half as likely to choose university.

PSE choices vary by immigration status, but not in the way that is often imagined. A first generation immigrant is someone born outside of Canada, and a second-generation immigrant is someone born in Canada but with at least one parent born outside the country. Almost 89% of first-generation immigrants and 86% of second-generation immigrants went on to PSE compared to 79% of non-immigrants. Immigrants were also more likely to choose university than their native-born counterparts; whereas, the non-immigrant population is about evenly divided between university and other PSE.

Education choices by Francophones correspond closely to those made by other Ontarians. The percentages for Francophones and non-Francophones going on to PSE were nearly equal. There was some difference in where they went. Francophones were slightly less likely to choose university and slightly more likely to choose other types of PSE.

Geography clearly plays a role in the participation rate in Ontario PSE. 73.2% from rural areas went on to PSE compared to 83.7% for those from urban areas. Those from rural areas who did pursue higher education were much less likely to opt for university and more likely to choose other forms of PSE.

In the last category, family status, PSE participation varies. From a single-parent family, 78% chose to proceed to PSE compared to 83.2% of those from a two-parent
household. For those in this category that did access PSE, they were less likely to choose university, and more likely to choose other forms of PSE.

These findings in the Norrie and Zhao study were consistent with a 2008 study, *Access, Persistence, and Barriers to Postsecondary Education: A Literature Review and Outline of Future Research* (ACCESS), that identified these and other underrepresented groups in Ontario’s PSE system. This study acknowledged the contested nature of the term access, and, much like the Norrie and Zhao study, focused on Anisef’s *et al* (1985) Type II notion of access, “the who – the composition of the participants in postsecondary study and their relationship with the overall population” (ACCESS, 2008, p.2).

Clifford Adelman (2007) reassessed the definition of access into four possible definitions: threshold access (i.e., access is achieved by walking through the door of a postsecondary institution); recurrent access (i.e., access to multiple and sequential programs including graduate/professional programs); convenient access (i.e., access to PSE at a time and place of one’s choosing); and distributional access (i.e., access to one’s personal choice of program). Adelman argued that threshold access is the most important definition of the four because “the other definitions contaminate the problem of access with other issues such as institutional capacity and individual preferences” (ACCESS, 2008, p.3). The three remaining definitions of access, however, are also useful in assessing issues of access as they intersect with college degrees. Candidates of the college degree are people who potentially are not able to relocate or are on limited incomes. Widening access to the college degree for this group, for example, aligns with Adleman’s “convenient access” definition. Others are not willing or able to attend a university because of limited transfer options. Adleman calls this a “recurrent” access
issue. The college degree would also be an option for those who do in fact qualify for university admission, but prefer the college environment. This Adleman calls “distributional” access. This last point is partly substantiated by the fact that college students who reported already completing a degree before going to college increased from 7.5% in 1999-2000 to 9.8% in 2009-2010 (Kerr, et al, 2010). Thus, while threshold access is generally the more significant, and perhaps, revealing, access issue, the other definitions are also useful reference points in the context of college degrees.

3.5.3 Barriers to Postsecondary Education

The data provided by Norrie and Zhao indicate that two characteristics associated with underrepresentation – Aboriginal identity and no parental PSE – represent the two largest negative effects on PSE participation in general. “Their effects are only slightly reduced when all variables are considered together, meaning they have strong independent influences” (Norrie and Zhao, 2011. P.34). If this interpretation is correct, then important policy implications emerge and simply throwing money at the problem will not likely produce the desired effect of increased participation rates for these groups. Degree-granting policy initiatives will need to find ways to provide the advantages that non-Aboriginals and students who have parents with PSE enjoy.

This partly involves addressing the three broadly defined access barriers raised in the ACCESS report of 2008: “information/knowledge/motivation, academic, and financial” (ACCESS, 2008, p.9). These are further subdivided in many ways in the report; however, it’s worth noting that but for a few unclear relationships all the underrepresented groups identified above face all three access barriers. For example,
when considering the first of the three identified barriers, information/knowledge/motivation, it can be seen to cut across all groups. Access to information – about programs, admission standards, costs and benefits of postsecondary participation, and future prospects – can be the cause of non-participation. Motivation is another important and related factor influencing participation. “Motivation is tied up with other factors, such as parental income, and individuals from lower income families are more likely to report not being motivated to go on to PSE” (ACCESS, 2008, p.12).

Provision of easy to understand and accurate information on the costs and benefits of pursuing PSE; assistance in understanding PSE options; and guidance on how to navigate the complex application and registration process are all considered to be key to improving access to PSE generally for all underrepresented groups. While the overall participation rate is poor for Aboriginal students and those whose parents have no PSE, the proportion of students from these two groups that access colleges is much higher than those who attend a university. The clear gender and disability difference in PSE participation may also be partially addressed through the introduction of the college degree in Ontario. The gender gap in PSE largely reflects females’ preference for university over college. One way to increase the number of male degree-holders in the province is to leverage the fact that males are more likely to attend a college than a university. The same kind of argument may be extended to persons with disabilities.

These and like-arguments are bolstered by a number of findings reported in a 2010 study on transfer between colleges and university (Kerr, et al, 2010). For example, even though Ontario’s PSE system was not originally designed for movement between colleges and universities, “the number of students continuing their education by
transferring between colleges and universities has increased of the last decade” (Kerr, et al, p.35, 2010). 7.7% of college graduates furthered their education in a degree program in 2008-2009. This figure is up from 5.3% in 2001-2002. Moreover, when looking at university applicants, students from underrepresented groups are more likely to be college transfer students than direct entry students (Kerr, et al, 2010). These data taken with the data from the same report that suggest students who enrol in a program and intend to pursue further education are more likely to remain, and would prefer to stay, in the same institution than move on to another institution, suggest that increasing the availability of the college degree may address some of the barriers to degree-level education faced by underrepresented groups.

Along with these transfer barriers, financial barriers to access will need to be addressed directly if the addition of college degrees is to have a positive impact on participation rates. Given that colleges attract more students from low-income environments combined with the fact that college degrees are as costly as comparable university degrees, how the financial burden or the “sticker price” of PSE is mitigated for college degree seekers is unclear. As the data indicate, the colleges have fared much better than universities in attracting students from all income and education ranges. However, without addressing the systemic underrepresentation of these groups, the college degree programs may simply pose the same kinds of challenges as their university counterparts; especially, when one considers that the bulk of college degrees are being offered by colleges that are mainly situated in urban centres where the cost of living tends to be higher than in rural areas.
Relatedly, information about the financial costs relative to the financial benefits of PSE is not reaching Canadians; and Canadians tend to overestimate the costs of education as well as underestimate the benefits. Even more interesting is the fact that this “misestimation grows inversely with income” (ACCESS, 2008, p.11). For example, young Ontarians whose parents have no PSE and are on low incomes are less likely to recognize that few, if any, investments an individual makes will produce returns as high as those attained through PSE. In terms of gender, for example, the authors reported that unemployment rates for men without a high school education grew by 7% between 1971 and 2005, compared with an increase of less than 1% for degree holders (ACCESS, 2008, p.19). They also suggest that “the earnings gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians is smallest among those who have completed a degree….the largest gap exists among those who completed a certificate or diploma below the bachelor’s level” (Berger, et al, 2009, p.16). The relationship between employment, earnings and higher education is clear: postsecondary graduates are more likely to be employed and earn more than those who did not continue past high school (Berger, et al, 2009). Moreover, when one considers earning potential between credentials, there is no question that the value of a degree is higher. According to the 2006 census, compared to high school drop outs, college diploma holders earn 15% more, but those with degrees earn almost 50% more (Berger, et al, 2009).

Another challenge worth considering is how the colleges manage the rate of growth in the college degree stream. In 2009, Colleges Ontario called for an expansion of the range of degree programs available at colleges. The authors point out that a “greater numbers of students in Ontario are seeking to pursue degrees and demand will continue
to grow over the next decade” (Colleges Ontario, 2009a, p.4). Moreover, there will be particular “pressure in the GTA and the universities’ enrolment plans will not be sufficient to meet the demand” (Colleges Ontario, 2009a, p.4). Based on these, what is clear is that Ontario is facing increased pressure to provide greater access to degree-level education.

Colleges Ontario also called for an elimination of the “ban that prohibits colleges from offering programs that compete with career-related university programs” (Colleges Ontario, 2009a, p.6). If the Ontario government were to lift the ban, the college degree growth rate, at least at some urban colleges, would likely increase sharply. Trow (1973) maintains that growth of higher education reveals itself in the rate of growth, the size of systems and institutions, and the proportion of relevant age of students. Connecting the first of these three, the rate of growth, with the introduction and possible expansion of college degrees in Ontario may provide some insight into the potential challenges ahead. For example, if a large proportion of new entrants to colleges are degree-students, they can “threaten to overwhelm the processes whereby recruits to a more slowly growing system are inducted into its value system and learn its norms and forms” (Trow, 1973, p.2). While making degree-level programming available in the colleges to an increasing number of people who would not otherwise participate in degree-level study may be a way of democratizing degree education, if done too quickly it may also have unintended consequences for the educational culture of these colleges and undermine the very reason for offering degree-level study in an Ontario college instead of the traditional university. This issue may be of particular relevance to ITAL colleges, which are permitted to offer up to 15% of programming at the degree level.
Another argument to ease the pressure on the demand for degree spaces is through the Ontario funding formulas for PSE. Berta Vigil Laden (2005) uses the categories of funding, program development and facilities, faculty, students, and culture and identity to frame some of the possible and real consequences of introducing degrees in Ontario colleges. She points out that “funding was an overriding theme that cut across every category” (Laden, 2005, p.162). Given the perceived shortfall in degree funding with which colleges have had to contend, some colleges may have drawn on resources originally allocated for diploma study. In other cases, diploma programs have been scaled back or cancelled altogether with the addition of degree-level programming in the same subject. At least two GTA colleges, for example, replaced a three-year diploma program with a two-year diploma program based on the addition of the four-year degree in the same subject. At these same colleges, with the launch of another new degree program, the diploma program intake for the same subject was reduced by half. Perhaps, diploma students are simply choosing to enrol in the degree version of the now smaller, or cancelled, diploma program, as college degree admission requirements may be more “flexible” than university requirements. On the other hand, some could-be diploma students may fall into the gap that separates, on the one hand, a decrease in diploma program accessibility due to diploma-downsizing, and, on the other hand, the higher entrance requirements, including financial ones, necessary for the degree version of the program. Thus, it’s not clear whether colleges that increase degree production at the expense of diploma programming are ensuring that adequate transfer and/or laddering options are made available – especially to underrepresented groups.
3.5.4 Student Mobility

As discussed in Chapter Two, in the 1960s many provinces created a college sector, largely by transforming what were previously specialized institutions. All the colleges were vocational and technical institutions; however, the provinces had different ideas about the role and function of these new institutions in light of the expanding nature of the education system.

In Quebec, for example, they “performed an intermediary role between secondary school and university as well as offered vocational programs” (Jones, 2009, p.375). They also performed a key transfer function, they were regional, and high-access institutions insofar as they did not charge tuition fees. In British Columbia and Alberta, the colleges more closely resembled the California model. “Students could attend a local community college to take the first two years of university credits; or they could enrol in a 2-year career oriented diploma program” (Jones, 2009, p.376). These colleges, like the CEGEPs in Quebec, also performed an important transfer function. In Ontario, however, the government did not build into the college structure an explicit transfer function. The government did not provide students with an explicitly alternative route to university, and therefore, degree-level study. This has created concerns that systemic issues are preventing student mobility between sectors, and has generally limited access to degree-level study. Cunningham’s consultation paper of 2000 cites “increased demand from students for more choices” as a main reason for expanding access to college degree programs in Ontario. What was not addressed in the paper, however, was the issue of transfer from college to university, a subject that has received much attention throughout the history of the CAATs, and in particular since the Vision 2000 report of 1990.
The student mobility debate in Ontario colleges has increasingly focused on the issue of degree mobility since the introduction of the college degree. For students currently enrolled in Ontario college degree programs, the perceived cross-purpose of at once preparing people for the labour market through vocational and technical programming, while also providing the breadth of higher learning associated with degree-level study has meant limited access to Ontario graduate schools. This challenge is not surprising when one considers, for example, the distinction between an academic and applied degree against the kind and size of institution that is delivering the degree.

Does an applied degree in a small Ontario college have a curriculum that allows for breadth of study traditionally included in the definition of a baccalaureate? Underlying this issue are longstanding perceptions about educational philosophy that in Western societies reaches as far back as Ancient Greece and Rome. In his discussion about the development of community colleges in the United States, Ignash points out that “occupational/technical degrees were often considered lesser degrees than transfer academic degree because they were terminal, a term that, it has been argued, should have been laid to rest years ago” (Ignash, 2012). In the United States, however, students have been transferring successfully from applied associate degrees programs into baccalaureate program, for decades (Ignash, 2012).

Moreover, providing appropriate breadth courses has been and will continue to be more difficult for Ontario colleges that offer few degree programs and are applied in nature; even larger colleges may be inclined to blur the traditional definition of breadth in degree education in an effort to more efficiently utilize their established technical and human resources. At the diploma level, for example, there are several examples of
colleges delivering entirely vocational content in courses coded as general education (Galea, 2012). At this point, there is reason to believe that this practice will also drift into degree-level study. A key issue for students intending to transfer to a university undergraduate or graduate program is often about whether or not the breadth and generic skills outcomes have been achieved by the college degree holder. After all, graduate (and professional) schools have built programs based on the assumptions that the traditional degree breadth outcomes have been already achieved rather than repeating those outcomes.

Dave Marshall suggests that “the more immediate access the credential gives to higher levels of study (graduate and professional schools), the higher is its mobility value” (Marshall, 2005, p.3). High mobility value of a degree, and perhaps, any credential, is its usefulness in setting the holder apart from other individuals, and it also gives the holder the flexibility to pursue further education and change careers. The current mobility value for Ontario college applied degrees with regards to graduate school seems poor relative to other jurisdictions, and seems to have only marginally improved since their introduction. The mobility value of college applied degrees with regards to career advancement or change is far more unclear.

As Ontario strives to meet its PSE attainment targets together with the increased demand for more degree spaces in the province, offering the college degree may be one way of both supporting the need for growth and democratizing PSE. While PSE attainment rates in Ontario are comparatively already one of the highest in the world, the uneven demographic distribution of access to PSE in this province remains. The colleges have historically been more successful than universities in providing access to higher
education for underrepresented groups. While not great, the success rate of colleges attracting Aboriginals, males, students with disabilities, and first generation students, for example, is significantly better than that of their university counterparts. These students are finding advantages in the college sector that are not as readily available in the university sector.

However, entrance requirements, including tuition fees and associated financial burdens in pursuing a college degree are at about parity with the universities’ entrance requirements. This in itself is an access barrier that likely requires mitigation. Because the ‘sticker price’ of a college degree is not so different than the cost of a university degree, for example, one of the only real savings might potentially be those costs over and above the sticker price, like the savings associated with not having to relocate to attend a degree-granting institution. The bulk of college degrees, however, are currently being offered mainly by colleges that are situated in urban centres where the cost of living tends to be higher than in rural areas, as is the demand for degree level education. The long-term financial benefits of completing a degree are well documented, but just what the short-term financial benefits students derive from college degrees is unclear.

How the growth in college degrees is managed is equally pressing. While the notion of increasing college degrees may be in principle a democratic one, if degree growth in this sector is not strategically managed it may have an undermining effect on the culture and identity of the colleges, and therefore, undermine the very function of a college degree – one that is both applied in nature, instructionally focused, and accessible.
Student mobility in Ontario PSE has long been of great concern. The lack of a system-wide, transparent transfer credit and degree policy is a contributing factor when it comes to accessing various sectors and programs within PSE in Ontario, particularly as the knowledge economy often requires people to engage in lifelong learning. While the Ontario government has begun to take systemic steps to address this issue through the establishment of the Ontario Council on Articulation and Transfer (OnCAT), for example, Ontario still seems to be a long way from the kind of degree mobility between sectors and professions that is present in other jurisdictions. Despite PEQAB having one of the most rigorous processes for degree-level programming in the country (Skolnik, 2005), Ontario college degree holders seem to be struggling for direct access to graduate studies in Ontario. These college degree programs are eight semesters of study, with at least one full-time work term of 14 weeks, and at least 20 percent of the courses must be “non-core” courses. The application process includes a site visit and an assessment report written primarily by university professors. Almost all college degree assessments have been positive (www.peqab.ca, 2010).

3.6 TEACHING AND LEARNING

3.6.1 Faculty Credentials

The addition of degree-level studies in Ontario colleges raises several challenges to the teaching-learner focus of these institutions. In the researcher’s experience as a college faculty member, Program Coordinator, and Associate Dean, faculty and administrators alike have expressed mixed feelings about the increased emphasis on degree-level study. Of the more than seventy part-time and forty full-time faculty
members in the department, several have expressed anxiety over the college’s steady migration into degree territory. Some perceive institutional pressure to acquire or hire PhDs and are uneasy over the possibility of a two-tiered faculty.

Faculty credentials indicate the level and quality of academic preparation and add prestige to the institution; and, with the introduction of college degrees in Ontario, the issue of faculty credentials has become a key topic. PEQAB maintains that faculty in a college degree program hold a credential at least one level higher than the programs in which they are teaching – at least a master’s degree. In addition, it is expected that “at least 50 percent of the faculty teaching in these programs will have a PhD. in the discipline they are teaching in” (www.peqab.ca, 2010; Laden, 2005). Some faculty feel that a master’s degree is lacking in the current organizational atmosphere. Part-time faculty, for example, have indicated that they believe a master’s degree is insufficient to make them a viable candidate for a full-time position. The fact that colleges continue to hire PhDs supports this view. A recent full-time college teaching posting, for example, supports the belief that a PhD may be needed to gain teaching employment, particularly at some of the larger colleges. In this case, the primary teaching responsibilities articulated in the job-posting were focused on diploma-level programming, yet a PhD. was required, likely due to anticipated demands for degree-level teachers at the institution. The potential result is a culture of haves and have-nots – those who have opportunity to teach degree-level courses and those who do not. There are a host of related issues here: difficulty finding “niche specific” PhDs; salary expectations beyond what colleges can pay according to collective bargaining; and PhD. holders resisting teaching diploma courses, for instance (Laden, 2005). Moreover, PhD. holders were
educated in an environment that promotes the traditional lecture-style approach to teaching. As such, many of these faculty are also underprepared to teach in what are primarily teaching institutions, where the emphasis is on experiential and applied learning.

3.6.2 The Research Agenda

A new emphasis on research has also emerged in many Ontario colleges. There seems to be a correlation between increased offerings of college degrees and increased research funding for colleges (Skolnik, 2005). Thus, questions concerning increased research activity are intensified by the fact that access to research funding by the colleges is improving. In 2004, the Canada Foundation for Innovation Research Grants awarded 27 colleges research funding, with 7 colleges receiving more than a million dollars each (Laden, 2005). Despite the fact that these figures are small when compared to the universities’ research funding, it is evidence that research is on the rise in colleges.

The concern around expanded research initiatives at the colleges is also tied to a larger issue: a possible shift in the focus of these institutions from teaching to research as a result of adopting a teacher-researcher model. If the colleges adopt the teacher-researcher model, then the prevalence of part-time teachers doing the bulk of the “lower-level” teaching that is present in many universities may rise. That said, nationally, 86% of college faculty agree that research would have a positive effect on their college and 77% believe that research would have a positive effect on their responsibilities as faculty (Fisher, 2008). Yet, there is much evidence to suggest that teachers “who are not active researchers are no more or less effective in the lecture hall or classroom” (Clark, et al,
Perhaps, one of the key statistics in Fisher’s report on research in Canadian colleges is that 80% reported that they were interested in research related to teaching and learning.

### 3.6.3 Workload

Increased emphasis on degrees and research has also resulted in faculty asking for more preparation time and reduced teaching loads reflected on their Standard Workload Form (SWF). These two reasons were also cited in Fisher’s 2009 report as the biggest reasons for not participating in research. The 2003-05 collective agreement negotiations contained a letter of understanding to create a Joint Workload Taskforce. The taskforce met with several procedural challenges, and wasn’t finalized until June 2008 (Rayner, 2009). The taskforce submitted its final report in March 2009, which contained several modest recommendations. In fall 2009, a new collective agreement was in place that some faculty suggested still did not adequately address workload issues, in particular the workload implications of introducing the degree programming in Ontario colleges. One might expect that with the introduction of degrees, class sizes are growing at Ontario degree granting colleges; however, given the structure of the workload formula, the increase in class size leads to a decrease in the hours available to teach other courses. For example, taken from a student number perspective, two hundred students spread across four classes instead of five classes, creates no significant difference in a teacher’s workload. Bigger class sizes, however, often translate into a possible decrease in student-faculty interaction inside the class, and a decrease in prompt feedback.
3.6.4 College Culture

The programming, facilities, and culture of college departments were developed in and for diploma-level education. Some college departments that were asked to deliver and support degree programming with no or little change to the resources or facilities in use for diploma programming; and, in some cases, new resources were being allocated to degree-level programming, while diploma programs were being asked to continue to deliver quality outcomes. These kinds of inequities, whether actual or perceived, may ultimately affect the overall quality of teaching and learning at the institution, if other measures are not put in place. If teachers are distracted with a perceived lack of support for their in-class and curriculum-based activities, then their attention will be diverted from where it is most needed, which is student learning. After all, “what is taught is at least as important as how it is taught” (Chickering and Gamson, 1987). Also at the heart of this issue is how students experience education at different levels within the same institution sharing the same resources and facilities.

3.7 Chapter Summary and Preview

This chapter reviewed relevant literature on college degrees in Ontario. It considered college degrees in the context of postsecondary institutional and program differentiation, along with the key areas identified within the research questions, framed around mission, labour market, access, and teaching and learning. Relative to other jurisdictions, Ontario has been slow-moving when it comes to diversifying its postsecondary system and increasing degree production. Moreover, by introducing college degrees, the Ontario government did not intend to change the traditional applied
focus of the CAATs, and much of the literature reviewed supports this position. That said, there is also evidence to suggest that the CAAT’s mission itself may be changing: higher entry to practice requirements, college degree goal ambiguity, perceived reductions in diploma programming and resources, two-tiered faculty, and increased focus on theory and research, for instance, are indicative of the changing nature of some Ontario colleges.

Chapter four provides a description of the research design and methodology used in this study. Chapter five provides a presentation and analysis of the findings. Chapter six offers a summary of the findings, discussion and implications of findings, recommendations for further research, and conclusions.
CHAPTER FOUR: METHODOLOGIES AND PROCEDURES

4.1 Introduction

This qualitative, exploratory study is focused on whether or not the introduction of degree-level programming in Ontario colleges can be accurately characterized as part of the Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology (CAAT) original mission. The college degree in Ontario is a relatively recent development. As such, little research on its merits, outcomes, and implications for the college sector’s mandate has been completed. An environmental scan indicates that the college degree is not only firmly established within a few colleges but is gaining momentum throughout the sector. A deeper and clearer understanding of its effects on the CAAT’s basic tenets, including its implications for advanced diploma-level study, can help college leaders and governmental officials make increasingly informed decisions around the trajectory of the college degree and its implications for the Ontario colleges’ basic mission.

4.2 Research Questions

To what extent does the introduction of degree-granting constitute a change in the mission of Ontario colleges, as outlined in the Basic Documents and according to key college and governmental agents?

- What are the accepted ideas about the basic mission of Ontario colleges?
- What are the reasons for the degree-granting status for Ontario’s colleges?
- To what extent do the reasons for degree granting status intersect with the following tenets of the Ontario colleges’ basic mission: labour market responsiveness; access for students; teaching and learning emphasis?
Labour Market Responsiveness

- To what extent is the introduction of degree-granting in Ontario colleges a response to labour market demands?

Access for Students

- To what extent has the introduction of degree-granting in Ontario affected access to Ontario colleges?

Teaching and Learning

- To what extent has the introduction of degree-granting in Ontario colleges affected the teaching-learning function of these institutions?

4.3 Research Design and Methodology

The approach of this study is exploratory in nature, taking a qualitative descriptive view, which acknowledges that the historical establishment of both the original mission of the CAATs and subsequent policy reforms occur within a social, political, and economic context. This is evidenced by the introduction of the college sector itself in 1967, and by the introduction of the Postsecondary Choice and Excellence Act, 2000 and the Ontario Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology Act, 2002. All of these were partly a response to changing social, political, and economic conditions, with the former legislative changes providing the legal authority for degree-granting to Ontario colleges.

Much of the data for this study was gathered through interviews with key decision-makers and policy actors at both the institutional and governmental levels. Along with the data collected from these interviews, key primary source documents and
available statistics were reviewed and analysed to help determine the current understanding of the CAAT’s basic mission and its original 1965 conception, and whether the policy reforms beginning with the Acts of 2000 and 2002 align with, or constitute a change to, the basic mission. The impact of the Acts and subsequent reforms on five colleges during a ten-year period (2002 – 2012) were explored.

4.3.1 Phase 1:

This phase involved a qualitative content review and analysis of documents, in which topics and issues were identified for further study. Through the qualitative review, key decision-makers and policy actors were identified. In this phase, lists of questions (Table 2) organized under each of the four categories that underpin the research questions were used to assist with identifying and guiding the collection of relevant documents and related statistical data. A research diary was also created and maintained in this phase, primarily to facilitate the recording of the collection of documentary data.
Table 2: Sample questions used to identify and guide the selection of documents.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mission</th>
<th>Access</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• What are the accepted ideas about the mission of the CAATs?</td>
<td>• To what extent are rising provincial participation rates in PSE affecting the CAAT’s participation in degree-granting?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Does the college degree fit within the accepted ideas about the mission of the CAATs?</td>
<td>• To what extent is the introduction of the college degree affecting the culture and identity of the CAATs?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Does the college degree fit within the accepted ideas about the character of the CAATs?</td>
<td>• To what extent has resourcing for diploma-level study been affected by the introduction of degrees in the CAATs?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Does the idea of a college offering a degree conflict with the idea of a bachelor’s degree?</td>
<td>• How does the introduction of degrees in the CAATs address the well-documented challenges that underrepresented groups face in PSE?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Is there an essence to the CAATs that has remained constant since their inception?</td>
<td>• To what extent has resourcing for diploma-level study been affected by the introduction of degrees in the CAATs?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Does the college degree signal a movement away from the binary structure of PSE in Ontario?</td>
<td>• How does the introduction of degrees in the CAATs address the well-documented challenges that underrepresented groups face in PSE?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Labour Market</th>
<th>Teaching and Learning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• To what extent is the introduction of degrees in the CAATs a response to labour market demands?</td>
<td>• What impact are college degrees having on the morale of faculty?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• What is the evidence to suggest that applied degrees and not diplomas were/are better suited to current labour market demands?</td>
<td>• Has the master’s degree become a second class credential since the introduction of college degrees?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• In what ways does the labour market perceive college degrees?</td>
<td>• Is conflict inevitable between preparing students in applied programs for the workforce and preparing them for further education i.e., graduate studies?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• How does the labour market perceive the college degree compared to college diplomas?</td>
<td>• Are there significant differences in the way that students experience an academic degree program in college compared to a university?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• How does the labour market perceive the college degree compared to university degrees?</td>
<td>• Are there associated differences in student learning and retention between similar programs at the two types of institutions?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• What are the long-term career prospects for college degree graduates?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.3.2 Phase 2:
This phase involved semi-structured qualitative interviews with governmental decision-makers and policy actors. Sample selection was based on occupancy of key senior roles in government associated with the degree planning and development process at strategic points in time, relevant to the time period covered in this study. Four high-impact provincial governmental leaders were interviewed in this stage: two former Deputy Ministers, Diane Cunningham and William G. Davis (see Appendix A, Request for Interview, and Appendix D, Possible Interview Questions).

4.3.3 Phase 3:
This phase included semi-structured qualitative interviews with senior institutional decision-makers and policy actors drawn from the five colleges on which this study is based. These participants were/are associated and/or employed by the colleges and collectively have held multiple institutional-level positions. (see Appendix A, Request for Interview, and Appendix D, Possible Interview Questions).

4.3.4 Phase 4:
This phase focused on triangulating the data from interviews, governmental and institutional decision-makers and policy actors, key documents and the examination of statistical data.
4.4 Site and Participant Selection

In order to develop key points of reference and provide cogency to this qualitative study, five Ontario colleges with varying levels of commitment to offering degrees were identified. All five colleges are urban colleges, and four of the five colleges are members of Polytechnics Canada. College “A” “B” and “C” have moved relatively quickly in adding degree-level education to their program offerings, and are members of Polytechnics Canada. All five institutions, collectively, offer a significant proportion of all Ontario college degrees. Colleges “D” and “E” offer markedly fewer degrees than colleges “A” “B” and “C”. College “D” is a member of Polytechnics Canada, and college “E” is not a member. These colleges seem to have taken a more cautious approach to the introduction of degrees.

The interview sample consisted of fifteen persons, though interview requests were made of seventeen persons. Two government persons did not respond to requests for interviews. The sample size was chosen on the basis of the size of the study and location of the colleges. The sample selection was based on the occupancy of key roles in institutions and government, and on participant availability. The interview sample was drawn from the following participant categories: Two key persons from four colleges, and three key persons from one college, who were/are directly involved in decisions about the offering and scheduling of new college degree programs. These individuals hold or have held the following positions: President, Vice President, and Associate Vice President. The interview population also included two key, senior governmental agents: former Deputy Ministers with the Ontario government, and two influential governmental leaders: William G. Davis, former Minister of Education 1962 – 1971, and Premier of
Ontario from 1971 to 1985, and Dianne Cunningham, former Minister of Education from 1999 to 2003. Given Davis’ leadership in establishing the CAAT sector in Ontario, with its unique three-year advanced diploma credential, an opportunity to include his first-hand account of the rationale for the colleges’ original mission was deemed to be vital to providing a richer and deeper context for this exploratory study. The same can be said for the interview with Dianne Cunningham, the Minister who introduced the legislation that provided Ontario colleges with degree granting authority.

All data collected were analysed and searched for themes and patterns (e.g., key words, key phrases, content analysis and comparison analysis). A lexical coding system was also used to analyse the interview population’s responses and develop a series of nine themes which were used to organize and triangulate the data, all of which is reported in this thesis while maintaining the anonymity of the participants, including the institutions with which they are associated.

4.5 Data Collection, Recording, and Related Ethical Issues

This study used a qualitative approach for two reasons. First, PSE in the Ontario college sector was developed as a response to changing social, political, and economic factors. As such, human agency underpins the data that is most relevant to this study. Second, the time and place specificity of this study precludes any generalizations, and therefore, aims at descriptive analysis.

The interviews for this study were conducted both during and after the collection and initial analysis of the relevant literature and related key documents. This was done to help identify key decision-makers at the institutional and governmental levels from which
to draw an interview sample. This interview methodology also helped to provide for prior knowledge (gained from the review and analysis of literature) which enabled more in-depth interviewing and respondent-specific questioning. Documentary and statistical evidence provided for validity checks of the interview data, and the ability to seek clarification during the interviews if and where necessary. Part of the purpose of the interviews was to supplement the information gathered with respect to decisions around the introduction of college degrees.

Ethics review approval was obtained before any contact with the interviewees was made. Whenever possible, interviews were conducted face-to-face at a mutually convenient time and location; telephone interviews were also utilized, when necessary. The interviews were about one hour and thirty minutes in length. The interviews were voice-recorded with the permission of the participants, and transcripts were sent to the participants for review within three weeks of the interview, at which point they were able to correct any errors, and delete any comments that they did not want to be included in the study. Participants were asked to return the transcript within fourteen days to the interviewer in a stamped self-addressed envelope or electronically. All interviews were conducted on a voluntary basis, and all participants had the right to withdraw and/or not answer questions without penalty.

4.6 Qualitative Reliability

The method of data collection and analysis for this study aimed at reliability by adhering to the suggestions laid out by Yin (2003), Gibbs (2007) and Creswell (2009). Yin drew attention to the importance of documenting in fine detail as many steps as
possible, and both Gibbs and Creswell suggested many “reliability procedures” (Creswell, 2009, p.190). For instance, in order to ensure the reliability of the findings presented in this study, transcripts were checked for accuracy during and after transcription. To ensure no drift in the definitions used, a glossary of key terms and definitions was developed to assist in maintaining stable meanings and accurate descriptions. Triangulation of the data presented was done through participant interviews, high impact governmental leader interviews, through analysis of key documents, and examination of available statistics. As much as possible, rich detailed descriptions to convey findings were used. Where appropriate, the perspectives of those who were either participants in this study or associated with the colleges and college degrees have been presented in their own voice, through the provision of extended quotations. At times, this resulted in the presentation of negative and discrepant information.

4.7 Methodological Assumptions and Limitations

I am employed by Humber College in Toronto, Canada. There was bias in the selection of the topic itself, due to an interest in the transformational change potentially underway in Ontario colleges resulting from offering degree-level education. The social constructivist worldview that I bring to this study, like all worldviews, embeds assumptions and, by implication, limitations therein. This study is largely inductive, as it generates meaning from the literature reviewed, documents analysed, statistics examined, and persons interviewed. It is for this reason that the research questions are open-ended. That said, this study can ultimately only offer likelihoods and probabilities, and can make no claim to complete certainty. Moreover, given the time and place specificity of this
study, together with its descriptive nature, no generalizations or future predictions are possible. Finally, the majority of Ontario college degrees are being offered by urban-based institutions, and this study is limited to five urban-based colleges. As such, this study does not aim to offer any probable claims about all Ontario colleges.

4.8 Summary and Purpose of the Research

The research is focused on the introduction of degrees in the Ontario college sector and the impact they are having on the original mission of the colleges. Ontario colleges were established primarily to educate students not headed for degree-level study at university. The CAAT’s main focus was to offer technical and vocational programs that lead to certificates and diplomas in preparation for the labour market by providing greater access to PSE for students who would otherwise be unwilling or unable to attend university. Three components, labour market preparation, greater access to postsecondary, and a teaching-learner focus are seen to be basic tenets of the original Ontario colleges’ mission and have been generally adhered to for the past forty-five years.

With the introduction of the Post-secondary Education Choice and Excellence Act, 2000 and the Ontario Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology Act, 2002, the universities’ near-total control over degree-granting had essentially ended. Whether the changes in programming and the new emphasis on degree-level education in some colleges have had a significant impact on the basic mission of the CAATs, as outlined in the Basic Documents, is still unknown. Perhaps the current changes in programming and increased sector differentiation are in fact a result of the CAATs fulfilling its original
mission. Perhaps the CAATs mission itself has changed. The establishment of the college degree may be simply an example of the colleges’ traditional mandate and practice of being responsive to occupational and economic needs. In other words, the introduction of the college degree may be only an extension of the college mission.

Given the fact that degree-level education in Ontario colleges is a relatively recent phenomenon, little research has been done on the subject, with the majority of studies focusing on examples outside of Ontario. In Canada, these kinds of studies have been largely centred on Western college sectors. Few studies on college degrees and their impact on the CAATs’ mandate have been conducted. Moreover, key individuals involved in the initial development of the CAATs and subsequent degree introduction are available, and their views will help link the 1967 context to the current state of change and expansion underway in several Ontario colleges as a result of the passing of the 2000 and 2002 Acts. Their insights, together with the analysis of key documents and statistics will help to provide some clarity around the emerging issues, as they relate to the colleges’ original mission.
CHAPTER FIVE: PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

5.1 Introduction

Chapter five consists of four main sections, beginning with a statement on the purpose of the study and a review of the research questions. A description of the methods of analysis is provided, which includes statements on respondent transcript analysis, key document analysis and statistical analysis. This is followed by a brief description of the selection criteria used to identify the five subject colleges and the participants interviewed. The last section of this chapter addresses the results and analysis of the data. This last section is further divided into nine sections or themes that resulted from the examination of respondent transcript analysis.

5.2 Purpose of Study

The changes associated with degree-level education in Ontario colleges are many. As such, a number of emerging issues that affect some of the basic blocks on which the colleges were originally built, like labour market preparation, access to postsecondary education (PSE), and a teaching and learning focus may not have been anticipated by the original or current policy actors and decision-makers. The purpose of this study is to describe some of the impact on the mission of the colleges that have resulted from degree-granting privileges. Toward this end, the main research question focuses specifically on the extent to which the introduction of degree-granting constitutes a change in the mission of Ontario colleges, as outlined in the Basic Documents and according to key college and government agents. Accepted ideas about the basic mission
of Ontario colleges and the reasons for college degree-granting status are explored. With these questions in mind, the extent to which the reasons for degree granting intersect with labour market preparation, access to PSE, and teaching and learning focus are isolated and investigated. To what extent is the introduction of degree-granting in Ontario colleges a response to labour market demands? To what extent has the introduction of degree-granting in Ontario affected access to Ontario colleges? And, to what extent has the introduction of degree-granting in Ontario colleges affected the teaching-learning function of these institutions?

5.3 Methods of Analysis

Qualitative research assumes the view that “reality is constructed by individuals interacting with their social worlds. Qualitative researchers are interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed” (Merriam, 1998, p.6). It deals with the experience of the individuals who have lived it and who have opinions and thoughts about it. In this study, fifteen interviews were conducted with individuals who were/are key decision-makers at their respective institutions or governmental ministries. Each interview was analysed according to the four general categories that underpin this study’s research questions: CAAT’s mission, access to PSE, labour market responsiveness, and an emphasis on teaching and learning. Each interviewee had a number of responses to each question, all of which were considered. The answers to each question were analysed from the perspective of these individuals, based on their experience and position. A lexical coding system was used to determine similarities, differences, key words, key phrases and patterns. The responses were organized according to the four aforementioned
categories and subsequently analysed according to a series of nine themes that were generated through the lexical coding system. The themes are Mission and Accepted Ideas; Change to Mission; Reasons for College Degree; Access for Underrepresented Groups; Transfer Options; Response to Labour Market; Capacity to Prepare for Labour Market; Teaching and Learning Emphasis; Institutional Culture and Identity. Individual responses that were particularly characteristic of a number of responses and special perspectives are presented. The qualitative analysis provides depth to the perspectives exposed in this study.

Key documents, including Legislative Committee transcripts and the Basic Documents, for instance, along with many other government commissioned publications were analysed. College annual reports, business plans, strategic plans, college websites, and other available institution-level documents and data, all of these were examined through the framework established by the nine themes that emerged through the lexical word analysis of the interview transcripts. In light of the analysis, some documents that were referenced in the literature review were included and further analysed in this section.

In addition to examining interview responses and various key documents, an examination of available statistical data was conducted on a range of topics that emerged within several of the nine themes isolated through the lexical word analysis. These were used to provide context and further insight into the responses and literature reviewed.
5.4 Selection Criteria

The five colleges selected for this study are situated in urban locations. The researcher considered these five urban colleges for this study because, together, they offer a significant portion of available Ontario college degrees. And, while all of these colleges now offer degree-level programming, they did not enter the degree market at the same pace or at the same point. They were, therefore, considered to be a prime target for research into the potential impacts the introduction of degrees may have on the colleges’ mission. All five colleges are members of Colleges Ontario and Association of Canadian Community Colleges or ACCC (now Colleges and Institutes Canada) and four of these colleges are members of Polytechnics Canada.

In addition to interviews with William G. Davis, former Minister of Education and Premier of Ontario from 1962 to 1985, and Dianne Cunningham, former Minister of Education from 1999 to 2003, the interview population consisted of thirteen respondents based on the occupancy of key roles in subject institutions and government. The sample size was chosen on the basis of the size of the study and location of the colleges. These respondents were drawn from the following categories: two key persons from four colleges, and three key persons from one college, who were/are directly involved in the decision-making process around planning and delivery of college degrees. These individuals held positions like President, Vice President, and Associate Vice President. Two key governmental persons involved in the reforms of 2000 and 2002 and/or associated with the subject-relevant governmental policy on PSE in Ontario. These individuals held senior positions within the Ministry.
5.5 Results and Analysis

5.5.1 Mission and Accepted Ideas

All thirteen respondents stated that preparation for employment is a basic aspect of the colleges’ mission. Nine pointed to the colleges’ focus on applied skills training and education, and being responsive to societal and community needs. Eight responses identified an emphasis on teaching and learning (e.g., class sizes, professional hands-on faculty, and experiential learning) as basic to the colleges’ mission. Seven indicated the colleges’ comprehensive programming. Eight responses also reflected that access, generally, was fundamental to the mission. Various topics within “access” were highlighted; for example, five talked about access for mature students and lifelong learning; three discussed college opportunities for students with fewer financial resources; and two, students with poor academic records.

The notion that the CAAT’s *raison d’etre* is to prepare Ontarians for the labour market was either explicitly or implicitly included in much of the literature related to a college education and, specifically, college degrees. Moreover, the responses emphasized applied skills, community responsiveness, teaching and learning, and access: all of which are entirely consistent with the literature reviewed in chapters 2 and 3.

In an interview with William G. Davis on April 24, 2013, he mentioned many of the above points when discussing the college sector’s priorities. He made particular mention of the fact that colleges were intended to be nimble and responsive to community and labour needs when they were conceived. He also focused on the teaching and learning functions of the colleges. “They [the colleges] are more flexible. They are open to new ideas that don’t upset the cart. I think there is greater flexibility within the
faculty community at the college level. You had people lecturing or working in the college system who may have had only a high school diploma and today it’s a different story, but still there are teachers in programs who don’t have a PhD.” These and other comments made by the former Premier are indicative of what was shared on this subject by the interviewees for this study and in the available literature. Moreover, subsequent re-articulations of the colleges’ mandate as reported in Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU) documents continue to focus on the three tenets outlined in the original mission.

Vision, mission, and value statements, along with strategic plan documents available at each of the five colleges from which senior administrators were drawn for this study support the seven priorities attributed to the colleges: labour market responsiveness; applied and technical skills development; responsive to societal and community needs; an emphasis on teaching and learning; comprehensive programming; and access. All five college vision, mission and value statements make reference to at least five of these priorities.

5.5.2 Introduction of College Degrees: Mission Change

Eleven respondents said that no fundamental change to the Ontario colleges’ basic mission had resulted from the introduction of degree programming. Below are several responses that address, and are indicative of, the range of perspectives on the idea that the colleges’ mission did not negatively change due to offering college degrees.
Respondent #1:

“I do think that there has to be a price to pay for any organization to extend a set of responsibilities, in terms of institutional focus and energy and it’s bound to cause some movement away from the traditional client group. Whether that’s good or bad to me is a very different question. The access mandate has been very strong, and so while degrees are really only a big part of the reality at two or three colleges, those colleges that are doing some extent of degree granting are certainly still involved in apprenticeship activity, and still obviously a healthy set of diploma programs.”

Respondent #2:

“Was this a good or appropriate response to the needs of Ontarians for postsecondary education at this point in history? I’d say that generally, yes. I think colleges have a contribution to make to postsecondary education through degree programming. But, I think it would be unfortunate if it drifts, if what this is leading to is colleges wanting to be universities.”

Respondent #4:

“College degrees respond to workplace needs and an expansion of degree admission to practice, this new role is justified and consistent with the CAAT’s historical mandate. I would stress that colleges should adopt any vertical extension in their mandate that keeps them and their programming at the forefront of the professional and economically-relevant training and education being demanded at the time.”

Respondent #6:

“I believe in some smaller communities, the numbers of students that were looking for those additional steps were not as high as they were in other colleges, therefore, they remained constant. If you think about the mission as being access and responsiveness to the needs of their community, they could stay true to that by not offering degrees; whereas for us to stay true to that we needed to offer degrees.”
Respondent #7:  
“We still wanted to be a college that is comprehensive and offers learning opportunities to the student population we were serving – the potential for earning degrees, diplomas, and certificates in a broad spectrum of vocationally relevant programs […] the sense was we still needed to be an open access (for a want of a better word) institution, in terms of access for students who may not have the academic grades or the financial resources to go to university – in other words the original mandate of the colleges in the basic documents was never questioned”

Respondent # 9: 
“I don’t believe that Davis or the legislature intended the mission to be the credential. I think they intended the mission to be meeting the needs of the economy that were not currently being met. I really do think that when the college mission was developed in the ‘60s, it was designed to meet an existing problem. I think that problem has changed over time, that gap that colleges were designed to fill has changed over time and it would not make sense to me for the colleges in the 2000’s to have stayed with programming that met a 1960s gap.”

In an interview with Dianne Cunningham on November 14, 2013, the Minister of Education who introduced Bill 132 in 2000 and, with that, college degrees, felt that the introduction of college degrees has improved the college mission without compromising its core objectives. According to Cunningham, “it [the college mission] has been enhanced, but the part that is unchanged is very simple and that is colleges want to make sure that they have the graduates who are working in certain careers and they still do. Colleges are responding, finding solutions to provide the necessary skills training and standards so that Ontario and Canada will be economically competitive.”

While a few respondents (4) expressed trepidation around the possibility of moving off mission if college degrees were not carefully integrated into the current college culture, the majority felt that the introduction of degrees was an appropriate response to labour and community needs. When asked if the introduction of college
degrees would compromise or change the original mission of the CAATs, Davis felt that the addition of the credential was in fact positive.

I think it’s encouraging. I think you still go back to the results that have been produced: the graduation and employment rates throughout the years have been consistently high. Evolution of the institution, that’s the theme now […] I think it was predictable that the success of the college system has lead to some growth in terms of what is being offered and I think I would have been really surprised and probably a little disappointed if change hadn’t happened.

Several reservations expressed by respondents were also consistent with the literature reviewed, like the concern that colleges would be motivated to become universities or less vocationally oriented upon receiving degree granting approval. This concern is not without justification. Particular examples from other Canadian jurisdictions, notably, BC and Alberta, made it clear that without clear governmental policy and directives, college degree-granting power can motivate institutions to shift priorities and move beyond their traditionally established, vocational mandates. In this context, it’s worth noting that the vision statement for one college in this study clearly indicates a desire to become a teaching focused university, albeit one that purports to uphold the basic tenets of the colleges’ original mandate as framed in this study and articulated in the Basic Documents.

Two respondents expressed concern that the colleges’ mission had in fact been negatively affected by the introduction of degrees and has compromised the mission of the college sector.
Respondent #3:

“It’s the degree route we have taken […], I think that has taken us off mission. We sort of lost our way in terms of them [degrees] being as practical as they should be and the integration of industry and experience with the theory and practice.”

Respondent #8:

“There has been drift. I think it’s been driven by the communities the colleges find themselves in. So, what happens in the GTA relative to other communities is going to be different by the very nature of the communities, numbers of people, etc. So each college probably will define slightly different mandates, missions, depending on what they have determined are the important principles in their communities.”

Respondent #8’s answer is indicative of the fact that a few of those interviewed did not strongly adhere to the notion that the CAATs, as a unified system of colleges, share a common mission or mandate, but, rather, each college establishes its mandate based on those parts of the government-prescribed mandate, which are tied to, say, the community it serves, partnerships formed, or the resources available to it. This is a distinction that was not sufficiently covered in the literature reviewed. While the literature on the subject did contain a great deal on the colleges’ ability to respond to changing labour and community needs in a relatively quick fashion, or to the fact that the colleges have been quite entrepreneurial, particularly over the last decade since the passing of the Colleges Act in 2002, the notion that an institution’s interpretation of mission may be at odds with the intended governmental mission established for it was not obviously present in the literature. As such, when asked about whether or not the introduction of college degrees constituted a change or drift in the original mission, the answers given were often grounded in this presupposition of an institutional mandate layered upon various elements of a shared, system-wide mandate. This is central to the
PSE differentiation discussions that have been increasing over the last few years in Ontario, according to the literature covered in chapters 2 and 3.

5.5.3 Introduction of College Degrees: Reasons

The top reason for the introduction of degrees in Ontario colleges, with twelve replies, was labour market response. Eight cited college presidents lobbying government as a main reason for colleges receiving approval to offer degrees. Seven referenced limited university transfer options and student demand as key reasons. Five felt that credential recognition and global trends were important factors. In addition to pointing out that more university graduates are attending college and access for underrepresented groups, four cited PSE competition as a reason for introducing college degrees. The four respondents who cited PSE competition were all from College E and D, and according to OCAS enrolment data, both have the lowest number of degree students representing about 11% of all college degree students at the five colleges from which the participants were drawn.

It is perhaps not surprising that the most often cited reason for the introduction of college degrees was labour market response, in light of the fact that all of the interviewees claimed that labour market response is central to the colleges’ basic mission. What was not clear in the literature reviewed was the direct influence of the college presidents and their coordinated efforts to push the government to degree granting for colleges. When asked why the colleges elected to offer degree level education, the second highest response provided was college presidents’ lobbying government. In her unpublished thesis of 2011, entitled Policy Windows and Changing Arrangements: An
Analysis of the Policy Process Leading to the Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology Act, 2002, Anne Charles provided commentary on the extensive lobbying efforts that were being made by the COP in the service of “advanced credentials.” In fact the issue of degree granting was on the COP’s agenda as far back as 1998, when it was decided that a task force of CAAT presidents would prepare a strategy paper, as they hoped to press their case for more autonomy and higher credentials at the COP meeting on January 26, 1998, at which Minister Johnson was scheduled to attend. The Minister was advised of the colleges’ position at that meeting. By the next month, February, an applied degree granting working group had been established and by March, the COP had developed a strategy to push for applied degrees first, and tackle the associate degree credential afterward (Charles, p.213). Here is what was reported in the Summary for the Meeting of the COP Meeting for March 9 and 10, 1998: “Following a discussion, COP agreed to pursue the Associate Degree issue once the provincial government declares itself on the Applied Degree. It appears that the provincial government is open to discussion around the Applied Degree.” By this time, a new Association of Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology of Ontario or ACAATO (now Colleges Ontario) advocacy and communications plan was in place. In addition to having BOGs develop key messages that demonstrate the importance of the colleges locally, provincially, and nationally from a social and economic perspective, voicing the message through various other outlets was also encouraged, including newspapers, TV and radio. Presidents were also asked to provide features, and guest columns to press the need for applied degrees, and the strategy also included face-to-face meetings with government officials, business and
community leaders, and other education partners. The lobbying efforts of the presidents was confirmed, for example, by Respondent #9’s statements on the subject

I do think the interest in degrees was triggered to a great extent by presidents. One can speculate on all the reasons why they might want to be the president of an institution that offers degrees, but regardless of what those reasons were […] I do think that the current CEO of the college at the time was very interested in raising the profile of [the college]. S/he saw degrees as a way of doing that.

In an interview with Dianne Cunningham, she confirmed that college presidents were in fact lobbying the government for degree granting privileges when she took office in 1999.

What they told the government, all governments, for a long time was that they would be hopeful that they could work more directly with credentials that would allow these students to get education and training that they needed for specific jobs. So, they were really interested in the economics of their community, providing an education where young people (students) and, by the way, part time people could get the credentials that they needed for manufacturing, you know, for some working with the unions on the trades and to be competitive.

This aligns with the majority of those who spoke to this issue. They framed the presidents’ efforts in terms of what the presidents felt was best for the college they lead and the community they served; however, three felt that personal ambition was at least an equally motivating force for some presidents. Indeed, in an interview with a former senior member of government it was confirmed that at least one college president explicitly said that s/he would like to be the president of a university and degree granting authority was the first step toward that goal.
The next two most often cited reasons for the introduction of degrees in Ontario colleges were the limited university transfer options for college graduates and global trends around credential expectations. For example, here is some of what Cunningham said when asked about reason for the introduction of college degrees:

It was very difficult to obtain degree granting at any existing postsecondary institutions. A committee of Presidents at universities was responsible for making recommendations. We used a more international process with outside experts to advise us on the OCAD. York had great programs, of course, but the government decided that Toronto should have another Arts Degree granting university to meet new and expanding careers. So again, the mandate was applied degrees in arts and design education and research, contributing significantly to the fields of arts and design, as well as local and global cultural initiatives and knowledge and innovation across a wide range of disciplines.

The emphasis on limited transfer options and credentials trending upward was not surprising and is consistent with the literature; however, limited transfer options did not seem to be as big a driver toward college degrees in other Canadian jurisdictions as it has been in Ontario. This is partly due to the fact that Ontario colleges were not set up with an explicit transfer function as in other jurisdictions; and, according to more than half of the respondents, poor transfer options for college graduates are due to a lack of coordinated PSE system planning by government.

5.5.4 Access for Underrepresented Groups

Eight respondents indicated that access for underrepresented groups was addressed in the initial planning stages to offer college degrees. Of these, five pointed to
the need for greater access to degree-level education for underrepresented groups. Four of
the respondents specified responding to student demands around degrees and
underrepresented groups. Of the four who discussed targeted funding, none felt that a
sufficient amount of funds were made available to the colleges for underrepresented
groups. Three also said that underrepresented groups were not addressed sufficiently or at
all in the initial planning stages. Two discussed the special admission provisions which
were either introduced or maintained for these groups.

Generally speaking, while more than half of the respondents indicated that access
for underrepresented groups was addressed in the initial planning process, the sense was
that even in these cases this topic was not central to the process. In fact, the majority of
respondents felt that it was simply assumed that because colleges have been traditionally
more accessible to underrepresented groups than universities, this function would simply
extend into degree programming. Ms. Cunningham, for example, also stated that access
to PSE through colleges was a core priority and intended it to remain a basic tenet of the
colleges’ mission, as it had been since their inception.

The main point here is that the mission of colleges was
always to serve as many students and communities, both in
providing job ready graduates in a postsecondary
environment, over a reasonable time frame for training,
knowledge and job entry. This was meant to be practical
for students studying closer to home, at reasonable cost and
inspired by teachers who were experienced in their trade or
profession, and opportunities for work experience and part
time employment for students.

Despite this shared perspective, it’s not clear what, if any, directed effort was made in the
service of several of the mentioned underrepresented groups, and additional groups not
articulated here, when planning for college degrees. The other central issue of access to
degree level education, transfer options, the second highest response under this theme,
also cuts across a previous theme, (reasons for college degrees), and is the following
theme.

5.5.5 Transfer Options

Twelve respondents indicated that the introduction of college degrees had
affected, or were affected by, student transfer options. Seven cited poor government
policy around transfer. Five responses focused on student demand for greater PSE
mobility and the credential recognition challenges associated with a diploma and
“applied” degree. Four focused on internal pathways. Three respondents discussed the
complex and labour intensive transfer and articulation development process. And, two
referenced Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC) membership and
the universities’ monopoly over degrees.

The second and third most prevalent issues, behind labour market response, raised
by those in support of college degrees in the legislative committee transcripts for Bill 132
were in fact “access for underrepresented groups” and “transfer options.” These themes
were raised in various contexts – mature students, lifelong learning, geographical
location, and access to the degree credential, for instance. Brian Tanblyn from Georgian
college made the following point regarding the lack of access to degree level education in
Georgian’s catchment area situated just north of the Greater Toronto Area (GTA):
Georgian serves a catchment area of over 30,000 square kilometers in which there is no university. In this catchment area, the proportion of the population with university degrees is significantly below the provincial average. The lack of access to a university is seen as a possible explanation for this situation. We're very enthusiastic about exploring all avenues that will be provided by this legislation to open up access to degree-level post-secondary education opportunities to the over 660,000 people in our catchment area (Standing Committee Transcripts, Nov. 20, 2000).

Access to degree-level education was a common theme throughout this study and often the point about inaccessible degree-level education for Ontario college graduates was framed by respondents and in available literature in terms of the universities’ non-cooperation with the colleges and the universities’ unwillingness to give reasonable consideration to the quality and outcomes of a college diploma. Here is the former President of Humber College, Robert A. Gordon, speaking at the committee meetings, referencing the longstanding challenges that the college sector has faced in this regard:

[...] one of the big problems of the CAAT system for 35 years has been the fact that, as we now integrate so many things, the CAAT students, of which I would suggest there are probably about a million Ontario graduates at this point and growing every year, are essentially blocked from age 21 or whatever year they graduate-obviously some are older-from returning to any institutional credential which would allow them to keep their lives moving at the pace they require to upgrade. In other words, they're eligible to return to colleges, but most of them probably want to upgrade their college credential into a university one, and they find tremendous blockages (Standing Committee Transcripts, Nov.22, 2000).
Gordon suggested that the main reason for the “tremendous blockages” is the binary structure of the Ontario PSE system that was established when the CAATs were introduced in 1965:

 [...] my point would be to not repeat the mistakes of the past, which is essentially having a two-tier system which never speaks and which has disenfranchised and made, I believe, Ontario weaker. If you remember, the colleges were established 35 years ago to fill a gap between high school graduates and the few university graduates to provide a middle level infrastructure for the economy, but the economy has changed and now we're looking at lifelong education where people need to have the opportunity to upgrade. You simply have to see the number of MBA programs that are offered in a flexible manner to understand that point. It is quite clear that more education will bring a better chance for Ontario to compete internationally, which is where we are today (Standing Committee Transcripts, Nov. 22, 2000).

One senior administrator from College A at the time degrees were being introduced framed the issue of access to degree level education for college graduates this way:

A lot of people said, “Well fine, if the universities will not offer these opportunities to our students, we need to lobby for them. We need to advocate to the government on behalf of this kind of opportunity for graduates and if the universities are not going to offer them then maybe we need to do it ourselves.”

The fact is that the issue of cooperation between the colleges and universities, and specifically, transfer options between the two sectors, has been a longstanding concern. In the Basic Documents, William G. Davis stated that the newly formed CAAT sector would be distinct from the universities in that their focus was applied, vocational training and education, and they would not take up the role of Junior College in the American
fashion. The government intended that there be two separate and distinct options within the PSE system for Ontarians (Davis 1967). That said, the Basic Documents also make it clear that the two sectors were expected to be collaborative around the issue of student transfer – particularly those wanting to transfer to a university with a college credential:

[...] Nevertheless, no able and qualified student should be prevented from going on from a COLLEGE OF APPLIED ARTS AND TECHNOLOGY to a university, and indeed such a pattern exists today for able graduates of our institutes of technology, as you may know. The university doors should always be open to capable and ambitious young men and women. We will set up a committee of representatives from my department and of the universities to determine [...] the conditions and procedures under which universities may grant admission to outstanding students who have completed successfully an appropriate program at one of our COLLEGES OF APPLIED ARTS AND TECHNOLOGY and who have demonstrated that they are prepared to undertake university work (13-14, Basic Documents, 1967).

In a 2013 interview with William G. Davis, he reiterated the importance of the universities and colleges working collaboratively on these and other issues. He commented that despite the fact that the CAATs were deliberately not set up with an explicit transfer function as was done in California, the expectation was that college students would have clear and effective transfer opportunities into university, the sole purveyors of degree-level education at the time the colleges were established. For example, in addressing the subject of Institute of Technology and Advanced Learning (ITAL), the college designation introduced through the passing of the Ontario Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology Act, 2002, Davis commented, “It’s not what they [colleges] call themselves in the long run that matters, as long as they don’t lose sight of what their objectives are and their objectives are becoming broader, more sophisticated,
etc. They were never intended to be in direct competition with universities.” He also made several comments about the misconception that continues to prevail around the universities public opposition to the creation of the CAATs. Here is one:

It wouldn’t be fair to say that they were opposed [to the CAATs]. The universities in my view were worried because they were concerned that there were only limited funds and that they would be receiving less because of this […] no one who did the research could escape the fact that this would be a growing system. So, it was not welcomed with enthusiasm, but there was no real public objection to it. I heard from every university president of course, but it was never a public debate. I can say with some degree of objectivity, I don’t think the universities were short-changed because of it.

While the universities were not publically opposed to the establishment of the CAATs, the issue of student mobility between the sectors had not been adequately addressed at the time the CAATs were created nor was it rectified in subsequent years. Then, twenty-one years after the establishment of the CAATs, in 1988, Lyn McLeod, Minister of Colleges and Universities, launched Vision 2000. The review, chaired by Charles Pascal, then Chair of the Council of Regents, initiated extensive consultation and undertook a major research process to assess the mandate of the college sector. It was an enormous undertaking with 33 members on the steering committee, 5 study teams, 39 working papers and 40 recommendations. Not surprisingly, of the 40 recommendations the vast majority were focused on issues related to access and to teaching and learning. The report also cited obstacles to advanced training, particularly the lack of articulation arrangements between colleges and universities (Pascal, 1990). Recommendations 25 through 27, specifically propose seamless pathways from college to university in the form of a new provincial institute “without walls” that would facilitate credit and
credential transfer and would see the colleges and universities sharing the delivery of
degree-level curriculum or vest the institute with degree granting privileges if an
agreement was not reached within an 18 month period:

Recommendation 25
The government should establish a provincial institute “without walls” for advanced training to:
• facilitate the development and coordination of arrangements between colleges and universities for combined college-university studies;
• offer combined college-university degree programs, with instruction based and provided by colleges and universities;
• recommend, where appropriate, to the College Standards and Accreditation Council the development of college-based programs of advanced training with unique credential at the post-diploma level

Recommendation 26
A formal agreement of association between the Institute and one or more Ontario universities should be established, providing for the associated universities to grant their degrees to graduates of programs conducted under the auspices of the Institute.

Recommendation 27
In the event that an agreement between the Institute and one or more universities cannot be reached within eighteen months, the government should vest degree-granting authority in the institute itself (p.172-3, Pascal, 1990).

These and many of the other recommendations proposed in the Vision 2000 report were never implemented. Again, in 1993, The Task Force on Advanced Training, chaired by Walter Pitman, examined the difficulties that students experienced moving between postsecondary institutions. Much like Vision 2000 did in 1990, the report argued that Ontario needed more effective student mobility if it hoped to be competitive by ensuring a workforce that was knowledge-based and technologically prepared to meet emerging labour and economic needs. Included in the seven recommendations provided by the Task Force was the creation of an Ontario Institute for Advanced Training with degree-
granting power, including the power to provide credit for previous education and work experience. This response from the University of Waterloo’s senate gives a sense of how the report was received by the university community:

It would be a mistake to try and institute a system where advanced credit is automatically given for work experience and previous education. Transfer credit toward a degree should only be granted for previous experience which is an appropriate substitute for some component of a student’s university program (Redmond, 1993).

The issue of college-university transfer was often expressed by respondents as an unending frustration, and the available data confirms this perspective.

Graduates of colleges were hitting their head on a ceiling, whatever it might have been made out of – and that was the lack of opportunity to move from a diploma to a degree to a master’s to a doctorate degree. In other words, there was not that clear ladder in postsecondary education that existed in almost every other jurisdiction in Canada and the United States.

These statements from Respondent #13 are generally indicative of the sentiments that were expressed in this study.

The issue of transfer from college to university for graduates seems to persist even though degree-level education has been firmly established in the colleges. For example, in a study entitled *Evaluation of Degrees in Applied Areas of Study*, by Malatest and Associates (*Evaluation Report*), commissioned by the MTCU in 2010, those students who were currently enrolled in their college degree programs were asked about their plans upon completion of the program. Not surprisingly, 70% indicated that they intended to pursue employment, with the next highest intended plan being the pursuit of a university program, 20% (See Figure 1).
Figure 1: Main activity plan to pursue after graduating (according to college degree students)

Evaluation Report: n=719 Student Survey: F1: What is the main activity that you plan to pursue after graduating from your current program?

However, the percentage of students who intended to pursue a university (or graduate) degree upon graduation was reportedly 12% in the 2009 Colleges Ontario annual report (Colleges Ontario Environmental Scan, 2009). It is worth noting that at the time this survey was conducted, the economic situation may have been a contributing factor to these responses. In 2010, while the economy was recovering from the 2008 financial crisis, it was a very slow recovery with employment numbers still well below where they were before the downturn. The authors of the Evaluation Report inquired further and found that of those who intended to pursue a university degree program, the majority of students indicated that they planned to enroll in a Master’s program.

Table 3: Plan to enroll in a Master’s program at a university

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t Know</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Evaluation Report: n=136. Student Survey: F2: Do you plan to enroll in a Master’s program at a university?
In order to track the conversion from intent to action, graduates of college degree programs were asked if they had applied to complete a Master’s program at a university. Just over 10% of the graduates had applied to a Master’s program. Of those who said that they had applied to a Master’s program, over a third (36%) indicated that their degree had not been recognized by the admissions office of the university they had applied to (Evaluation Report, 2010). According to the literature reviewed, a concern that was raised by colleges that offer college degree programs was the struggle that their students face in getting their degrees accepted in Ontario universities when they apply to pursue graduate studies in these institutions. According to Floyd, Felsher, and Catullo in the United States, “the acceptance of community college applied workforce baccalaureate degrees by university graduate level programs has not been adequately vetted by academics and policymakers” (Floyd, et al, 2012). They argue that little attention has been given to graduate-level, articulation design issues for a community college applied baccalaureate. The same can be said about the Ontario college degree. What seems clear is that despite the introduction of college degree-level programming, college degree graduates are perceived to be facing similar challenges as diploma graduates when attempting to transfer to an Ontario university.

5.5.6 Response to Labour Market

Ten respondents stated that there was consultation with industry leaders in the initial planning stages and in the subsequent design, development and/or delivery of college degrees. Seven cited the higher entry-to-practice requirements in an increasing number of sectors and markets. Six reflected the challenges associated with credential
recognition regarding the college diploma and college “applied” degree. Six also referenced emerging labour market trends, and relatedly, five discussed the rise of the knowledge economy. Three talked about the Program Advisory Committees’ (PACs) influence over the introduction of college degrees. Three also mentioned the need for graduates that are able to do some research and development, particularly for the small business sector.

Ms. Cunningham’s comments align with those of the respondents in confirming the active participation of labour market representatives in the planning, development and delivery of college degrees.

The labour market was significant in assisting colleges in the establishment of these applied degrees. We were aware of the concern of the universities – mission creep – standards – attracting students away from universities. We were also aware of the concern of unions. Five of the initial 12 programs approved were for Business, but all had specific program specialties. Thus labour market was closely involved: supply chain, finance, automotive, electronic business, financial services management, environment […] if labour market is focusing and assisting with applied degrees at colleges, (funding facilities and the establishment of programs, assisting apprentices and other specialist students) they must openly support them.

Moreover, each of the five strategic plans for the colleges on which this study is focused make clear that labour market responsiveness and attention to their capacity to prepare students for the labour market was addressed.
5.5.7 Capacity to Prepare for the Labour Market

There was a spread of comments by respondents on this issue. In terms of how the introduction of degrees has affected the colleges’ capacity to prepare graduates for the labour market, seven referenced the colleges’ advanced facilities, and five highlighted the continued involvement of PACs in college programming at the degree and diploma levels. Four felt that an applied degree rather than a diploma made graduates more competitive internationally and more likely to be promoted. Four responses also indicated that the introduction of degrees has had little effect on the colleges’ capacity to prepare students for the labour market. Three highlighted the increased emphasis on research skills for students as a result of degree level programming. Two expressed concern about breadth programming in college degrees.

That the majority of responses were focused on labour market when respondents were asked why college degrees were introduced is consistent with the originally established mandate for the CAATs and the fact that the colleges are acknowledged by the respondents and the available literature as being adaptive to societal and economic needs. Here is Mr. Davis on this issue:

In 1967 it wasn’t obvious that the computer would become such a dominant force in the academic world – you cannot expect the college system or the university system to stay in 1967 for the next 40 years. They were going to go with not just a number, but a concept of what was taught, how it was being taught […] the colleges were offering a program, Automobile Mechanics – a mechanic in 1967 didn’t need to know what a mechanic does today. Everything has altered in terms of the programs and I don’t think they have lost the basic idea that they are there for a specific purpose and it wasn’t to be the same as the university. The employment record demonstrates that it has been successful.
Again, since the majority of responses focused on labour market when respondents were asked why college degrees were introduced, and given the colleges’ focus on their capacity to prepare for the labour market, it is not surprising, for example, that a strong 12 of 15 reported consulting with labour market leaders in the planning and development of college degrees. Key document analysis bore this out.

For example, while all of the nine themes were addressed to a greater or lesser extent in the Standing Committee meeting transcripts for Bill 132, the most often mentioned reason for the introduction of degrees found in the transcripts and legislative report fits within the theme “response to labour market.” Consistent with the literature on the subject and with those interviewed for this study, most of those who spoke at the committee meetings in favour of the introduction of college degrees explicitly refer to the labour market need and colleges’ capacity to meet these needs. For example, while the majority of the presentation made by Douglas Robson, President and COO of the Ontario Chamber of Commerce focused on the private degree granting institutions, which was also included in Bill 132, he was clear to emphasize the rapidly changing labour sectors and the need for a more advanced work force:

Accelerated growth within the high-tech sector and the rapid pace of innovation and advancement has meant that businesses of all kinds have had to update their own skills and re-educate their employees about newer methodologies. At the OCC, we believe that this trend will continue and more and more members of the labour force will be looking to upgrade their skills. The rapid convergence of sectors demands ongoing, lifelong learning to retain a competitive edge (Standing Committee Transcripts, Nov. 20, 2000)
The point was later reemphasized by Colin Lock, Process Development Manager for Visteon Automotive, when he illustrated the need for college degrees by way of example:

Colleges have been particularly adept at addressing the rapidly changing industry requirements […] I'm just going to pull some things from my pocket which I carry all the time. A few years ago a pager was not commonplace. I have my personal digital assistant, which wasn't that commonplace last year. Even for a simple thing such as getting into my car, I have a remote keyless. Even to start my car, my key has a transponder in here which is keyed to a module inside my car. If I don't have the right key, my car won't start. None of these existed five years ago. The complexity that's required to develop and manufacture these is sufficient, I believe, to meet degree requirements. If students are not offered the opportunity to have a degree, this will basically shut them out of certain job opportunities (Standing Committee Transcripts, Nov.20, 2000).

There is no doubt that the overwhelming majority of the literature that is supportive of college degrees points to their introduction as responding to labour and community needs. In this context, other key labour-related issues were raised by respondents, including the poor credential recognition that accompanies the Ontario college diploma, particularly the 3 year advanced diploma, and the higher entry to practice requirements.

Moreover, in several other governmental and institutional documents these issues were often addressed from the “labour market response” perspective, at both the domestic and international levels, and with the view of growing competition amongst postsecondary jurisdictions and institutions. The representative from Cambrian College, Frank Marsh, presenting at the meetings suggested the following:
If we were to look at it from a global context, Ontario students who apply to work with multinational corporations are restricted from being able to do cross-border work in Europe and in the US and North America because of the certification that we give. In the international context, if you were to look at institutions like ours throughout the world, in Europe, in North America, in Asia and in the Middle East, the programs are reasonably similar for institutions of our size. They have degree-granting capability. In fact, many of the courses that they graduate from, with exactly the same standards that we have in place now, have a bachelor of applied science (Standing Committee Transcripts, Nov.20, 2000).

Canadore’s Timothy McTiernan provided three clear examples of negative results for Canadore college in North Bay because of the CAAT’s lack of degree granting privileges. Here is one:

In an international context we've had one instance in the past year of a situation where not being able to provide a degree or not being degree-granting has affected our ongoing work on an international project. We were the lead college for a consortium of Canadian colleges, Ontario, BC and Alberta colleges working on a project in Thailand throughout the second half of the 1990s. It was essentially taking curriculum in environmental and other resource areas and translating it and modifying it for use in a Thai institute of technology CIDA-funded project. At the end of that project, and a host of related projects last year, there was a conference in Thailand to look at follow-up opportunities. We were a key part of the conference. Our Thai partner was very polite and very firm in saying to us that they liked the job we'd done but they no longer considered us a vital or a significant partner and they were happier to deal with the BC member of the consortium that was a degree-granting institution because they had just attained degree-granting status and they saw their partnership base shifting (Standing Committee Transcripts, Nov.20, 2000).
The idea that the degree credential is the most sought after undergraduate credential on the international market is supported by available enrolment data for international students in Ontario colleges. For example, in the period between 2000-01 and 2011-12 there was an increase of more than 544% in the overall number of international students enrolled in Ontario colleges (OCAS). As Table 4 below demonstrates, in 2005-06 1,871 international students were enrolled in an advanced diploma program. By 2012, that number rose to 3,531, an 89% increase. Over the same period, international student enrolment in degree programs went from 189 to 763. This amounts to a 304% increase. Thus, enrolment by international students in degree programming compared to advanced diploma programming grew proportionately much higher between 2005-06 and 2012-13. According to available OCAS statistics, enrolment by international students in degree programming compared to advanced diploma programming at the five colleges from which the respondents for this study were drawn tracked at about the same rate as all 12 degree granting colleges, 26% higher than advanced diplomas.
Table 4: International Student Enrolment in Advanced Diploma and Degree Programs at 12 Degree Granting Colleges

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Algonquin</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centennial</td>
<td>261</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>253</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>313</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>366</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conestoga</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fanshawe</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George Brown</td>
<td>371</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>352</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>393</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georgian</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humber</td>
<td>173</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>198</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>263</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>La Cité</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Niagara</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seneca</td>
<td>620</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>585</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>554</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>548</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheridan</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Lawrence</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grand Total</td>
<td>1871</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>1857</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>1924</td>
<td>327</td>
<td>2232</td>
<td>337</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Ontario Colleges Application Services (OCAS)

Given the labour demands for degree graduates, the concentrating efforts of Ontario colleges to attract increasing numbers of international students, and the extent of mass global migration in the 21st century, it’s not surprising that the colleges would experience a significant enrolment increase in this demographic. The greater pace of international student enrolment at the degree level over the advanced diploma level would further support the idea that the degree credential is the more sought after credential in the international market.

As for those respondents who stated higher entry-to-practice requirements as a reason for introducing applied degrees, employers who had hired college degree graduates were asked about the minimum level of education for these positions (See Figure 2 below). Close to a third (30%) of the employers indicated that a college degree
was the minimum level of education required for the jobs in which they had hired. A total of 38% required a degree as a minimum, including university or college degrees; however, almost half of the employers would have accepted a minimum level of education that was below degree (Evaluation Report, p.18).

**Figure 2**: Minimum level of education required for a job (according to employers)

**** Composed of the following categories; “other,” “some high school,” “co-op placement,” “university below bachelors,” and “some university.”

Graduates were also asked about the minimum level of education required for their positions at the time when they were hired. As shown in Figure 3 below, 16% indicated that the minimum level of education required at the time they were hired was a college degree. This was a lower agreement rate than that of employers, 30%. It would seem that the responses from the students and employers confirm that employers are seeking and finding graduates. What is not as clear is whether or not the college degree
was a pivotal factor in deciding to hire college degree graduates given that about half of the employers who hired college degree graduates indicated they would have accepted a lower level of minimum education for the job.

**Figure 3:** Minimum level of education required for job (according to graduates)

![Minimum level of education required for job (according to graduates)](image)

*Evaluation Report: n=117. Student Survey: H9: When you were selected for this job, what was the minimum level of education needed to get this job?*

### 5.5.8 Emphasis on Teaching and Learning

In discussing what impact the introduction of college degrees has had on the teaching and learning function of the colleges, seven respondents felt that the teaching learning process was better understood as a result of introducing degrees. Seven also indicated that the colleges had maintained their focus on experiential and applied learning. Three pointed to a renewed focus on effective curriculum development. Three
responses highlighted the increased professional development opportunities that were 
harnessed with the new degrees. One discussed challenges with staffing and teaching 
breadth courses, and one felt there had been no distinctive change.

The idea that the colleges have maintained their focus on experiential and applied 
learning is one that also cuts across other themes. For example, the issue was raised under 
the theme of “mission and accepted ideas,” and received a high response rate again in the 
following theme, “institutional culture and identity.” Moreover, all five colleges make 
explicit mention of teaching and learning in their vision, mission and value statements. 
The emphasis appeared in these documents regardless of the overall ambitions outlined in 
the associated strategic plans. For example, while one subject college has publically 
stated its goal of becoming a university, its strategic plan also puts a greater emphasis on 
teaching and learning than the other colleges in this study. That said, another subject 
college has also increased its focus on teaching and learning, as indicated in its strategic 
plan, yet its Strategic Mandate Agreement (SMA) indicates a preference for a designation 
beyond CAAT or ITAL. The polytechnic designation has not been present in Ontario 
since Ryerson became a university, but is present in jurisdictions outside the province.

When asked to rate their satisfaction levels with aspects of their degree programs, 
which intersect with some of the statement results above, college degree graduates were 
satisfied with six of eight components of their programs: courses up to date; theoretical 
knowledge; applied skills development in courses; equipment up to date; and overall 
quality of instruction. The remaining two components – preparation for the job market 
and the usefulness of their programs in achieving their goals after graduation – indicated 
lower satisfaction levels (Evaluation Report, 2010).
Table 5: College degree graduate satisfaction levels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Satisfaction</th>
<th>Ontario KPI '06-'07 Graduate</th>
<th>Ontario KPI '07-'08 Graduates</th>
<th>Ontario KPI '08-'09 Graduates</th>
<th>Eval. Report Graduates 2010</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Usefulness of college education in achieving goals after graduation</td>
<td>n=307</td>
<td>n=415</td>
<td>n=602</td>
<td>n=230</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dissatisfied</td>
<td>10.1%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>9.5%</td>
<td>15.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied</td>
<td>14.0%</td>
<td>13.0%</td>
<td>14.8%</td>
<td>22.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfied</td>
<td>75.9%</td>
<td>790%</td>
<td>75.7%</td>
<td>62.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparation for the job market</td>
<td>n=278</td>
<td>n=375</td>
<td>n=514</td>
<td>n=232</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dissatisfied</td>
<td>15.5%</td>
<td>12.8%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>20.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied</td>
<td>11.9%</td>
<td>13.9%</td>
<td>12.8%</td>
<td>14.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfied</td>
<td>72.7%</td>
<td>73.4%</td>
<td>75.1%</td>
<td>65.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course content</td>
<td>n=278</td>
<td>n=382</td>
<td>n=511</td>
<td>n=233</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dissatisfied</td>
<td>64.5%</td>
<td>6.5%</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied</td>
<td>11.9%</td>
<td>8.9%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>13.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfied</td>
<td>72.7%</td>
<td>84.6%</td>
<td>84.1%</td>
<td>80.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Courses up to date</td>
<td>n=273</td>
<td>n=383</td>
<td>n=516</td>
<td>n=233</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dissatisfied</td>
<td>19.1%</td>
<td>5.2%</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
<td>6.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied</td>
<td>8.1%</td>
<td>6.5%</td>
<td>7.2%</td>
<td>8.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfied</td>
<td>72.9%</td>
<td>88.3%</td>
<td>87.8%</td>
<td>84.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall quality of instruction</td>
<td>n=278</td>
<td>n=381</td>
<td>n=515</td>
<td>n=233</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dissatisfied</td>
<td>6.8%</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied</td>
<td>11.5%</td>
<td>10.8%</td>
<td>10.7%</td>
<td>15.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfied</td>
<td>81.7%</td>
<td>83.5%</td>
<td>83.7%</td>
<td>72.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equipment was up to date</td>
<td>n=276</td>
<td>n=380</td>
<td>n=508</td>
<td>n=229</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dissatisfied</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>8.1%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied</td>
<td>6.2%</td>
<td>8.9%</td>
<td>9.8%</td>
<td>14.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfied</td>
<td>89.8%</td>
<td>86.1%</td>
<td>82.1%</td>
<td>78.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applied skills development in courses</td>
<td>n=274</td>
<td>n=382</td>
<td>n=507</td>
<td>n=233</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dissatisfied</td>
<td>18.9%</td>
<td>10.2%</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
<td>8.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied</td>
<td>8.4%</td>
<td>8.6%</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
<td>11.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfied</td>
<td>72.6%</td>
<td>81.1%</td>
<td>80.6%</td>
<td>80.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Student Survey: H18 How would you rate your satisfaction with each of the following aspects of your college degree? 22e: How satisfied are you with each of the following aspect of your program? The wording is slightly different in the KPI survey: “skills developed in courses.”
The KPI data for 2006-07 to 2009-10 seem to confirm the generally high satisfaction levels with this component of the program. The results of both the Evaluation Report and the KPI surveys of college degree graduates also registered high satisfaction levels (on average, 7 to 8 in 10) indicating that they were satisfied that their courses and equipment were up to date, with overall quality of instruction in their programs, and with their applied skills development in courses. Much of these align with respondent statements and the available literature (See Table 5 above).

That said, when the data on college degree graduate satisfaction levels are compared to the satisfaction levels for the overall college graduate population, the degree graduate satisfaction rate falls below that of the overall graduate population (See Table 6 below). For example, the results registered in the Evaluation Report on college degree graduates in the area of applied skills development indicated that 80.7% were satisfied. This is comparable to KPI data measuring college degree graduate satisfaction in the same area for 2006 – 2009 shown in Table 5: 72.6%, 81.1%, and 80.6% respectively. However, in the KPI data measuring overall college graduate population satisfaction levels in the area of applied skills, the results for this same period were 87.2%, 87.5%, and 88.1%. The overall rate compared to the college degree graduate rate in 2006 was 15% higher. Over the next two years that gap narrowed to 8%.
Table 6: College Student Satisfaction (KPIs), % satisfied/ very satisfied, 05-06 to 12-13

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Student satisfaction (avg. of 4 capstone questions)</th>
<th>Knowledge and skills gained</th>
<th>Quality of learning experience</th>
<th>Quality of facilities/resources</th>
<th>Quality of college services</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2005-06</td>
<td>77.8</td>
<td>87.3</td>
<td>81.2</td>
<td>71.7</td>
<td>70.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006-07</td>
<td>77.4</td>
<td>87.2</td>
<td>81.1</td>
<td>71.0</td>
<td>70.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007-08</td>
<td>77.9</td>
<td>87.5</td>
<td>81.8</td>
<td>71.3</td>
<td>70.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008-09</td>
<td>78.4</td>
<td>88.1</td>
<td>82.4</td>
<td>71.8</td>
<td>71.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009-10</td>
<td>76.3</td>
<td>87.2</td>
<td>80.2</td>
<td>69.3</td>
<td>68.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-11</td>
<td>76.1</td>
<td>87.1</td>
<td>80.2</td>
<td>68.8</td>
<td>68.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities "College Student Satisfaction Surveys" Year reflect KPI reporting year.

5.5.9 Institutional Culture and Identity

There was a range of comments on this subject. Seven respondents spoke of the potential for drift toward a two-tiered faculty, and six of these respondents mentioned the increased focus on faculty credentials, (e.g., the requirement for PhDs) and the increased focus on research that has accompanied the degree granting growth in the colleges. Six also stated that the emphasis on an applied curriculum remained. Five expressed concern over the colleges giving less attention to diploma programming and three expressed concern over hiring practices. Both respondents who raised the issue of class size indicated that the colleges continued to keep relatively small class sizes. Two also felt that there had been little to no change to institutional culture and identity as a result of degree granting.

As suggested by more than half of the respondents, the issue of potential drift toward a two-tiered faculty within some college programs did also arise in the literature, but only in a couple of documents, and was directly tied to the increasing number of
PhDs on college faculty. As for the colleges’ increased focus on research, the available data and literature reviewed corroborates the rise in focus on applied research in the colleges, as perceived by almost half of the respondents.

As such, correlated with the growth of applied degrees in Ontario colleges is growth in applied research activity. For example, colleges and institutions across Canada are allocating part of their core budgets to support applied research. In 2012-13, 99 colleges and institutes across Canada (91% of respondents) reported a total of $49,157,481 in institutional budgets for applied research development offices and projects, up by 29% from the previous year (ACCC, Applied Research Report, 2012-13).

In terms of eligibility with federal granting councils, the Natural Sciences and engineering Research Council of Canada (NSeRC) is a primary source of funding for college and institute applied research, and an important indicator of applied research capacity is the number of institutions that have acquired NSeRC eligibility. As of 2012-13, the number of NSeRC eligible colleges and institutes across Canada had increased by 88% over a five year period, when 51 institutions had eligibility, and in 2005-06 only 13 had NSeRC eligibility. In 2012-13, there were also 59 colleges and institutes eligible for support from the Social Sciences and humanities Research Council (SShRC), up from 38 in 2010-11 (ACCC, Applied Research Report, 2012-13). Table 7 (adapted from ACCC Applied Research Report, 2012-13) provides an overview of total investment in applied research between 2008-09 and 2012-13 as reported by ACCC.
Table 7: Investments in Applied Research at Canadian Colleges and Institutes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Private sector</td>
<td>$45,00</td>
<td>$45,000,00</td>
<td>$50,300,00</td>
<td>$59,400,00</td>
<td>$72,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federal government</td>
<td>$27,00</td>
<td>$28,000,00</td>
<td>$33,700,00</td>
<td>$72,000,00</td>
<td>$71,400,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colleges and institutes</td>
<td>$35,00</td>
<td>$35,000,00</td>
<td>$38,000,00</td>
<td>$38,000,00</td>
<td>$49,200,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provincial/territorial</td>
<td>$25,00</td>
<td>$29,000,00</td>
<td>$29,700,00</td>
<td>$44,000,00</td>
<td>$36,900,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International partners</td>
<td>unknown</td>
<td>unknown</td>
<td>$295,000</td>
<td>$1,533,000</td>
<td>$3,500,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foundations</td>
<td>unknown</td>
<td>$840,000</td>
<td>$1,373,000</td>
<td>$730,000</td>
<td>$587,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community service</td>
<td>unknown</td>
<td>$168,000</td>
<td>$319,000</td>
<td>$831,100</td>
<td>$407,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Municipal governments</td>
<td>unknown</td>
<td>unknown</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>$533,000</td>
<td>$313,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The increases in budget allocations to applied research in Canadian colleges and institutes and their increasing eligibility for funding from federal granting councils does corroborate statements made by respondents regarding the increased emphasis placed on applied research functions. Moreover, 82% of institutions indicated they had provincial legislation recognizing applied research. 98 institutions (90% of respondents) reported having a dedicated research and development office. And, importantly, 91% reported that applied research was included in their institutional mission statements (ACCC Applied Research Report, 2012-13).

In 2012-13, applied research and development offices reported 1,336 full- and part-time staff, up by 15% from the last year. 2,298 faculty and staff (e.g. industrial experts and technicians) participated in applied research activities, a 30% increase from
2011-12. 72% of faculty and staff were involved part-time and had a range of credentials: 17% had a college/institute diploma; 36% a bachelor’s degree; 29% a master’s degree; and 18% a doctorate (ACCC Applied Research Report, 2012-13). Figure 4 shows the colleges’ approach to involving faculty and staff in applied research.

**Figure 4:** How Colleges and Institutes Facilitate Faculty Participation in Applied Research

Most reported that the applied research office assisted with proposal development, awareness building activities, and the identification of contacts and facilitating networking. Other ways colleges and institutes supported faculty and staff involvement were by identifying potential partners, providing policies and procedures to support applied research, and facilitating linkages with granting councils. Faculty release time was identified as a factor for college and institute applied research, and for 2012-13, 86% of colleges and institutes reported that they provided faculty release time; however, the extent and structure of this process is unclear given that college faculty is expected to
teach full time, with no allocation for research-related release time in provincial operating grants or collective agreements.

Ontario colleges reported having the highest levels of involvement in several key functions of applied research. For example, they had the highest number of areas of research specialization across 5 of 6 categories. Figure 5 below identifies areas of specialization for eleven provinces and territories across six categories: natural resources and energy; environmental science and technologies; health, medical and life sciences; information and communication technologies; manufacturing and building technology; and social innovation. This is the only area of specialization, social innovation, in which Ontario did not register the highest numbers.

**Figure 5**: National Distribution of Areas of Research Specialization: Total = 654

As of 2012, colleges and institutes across Canada identified 489 specialized research centres and laboratories, 102 more than the previous year (See Figure 6 below). Again, in this regard Ontario reported the highest number of research centres and labs for all categories, except Social Innovation. The following figure shows the distribution of research centres by province/territory for the same categories.

**Figure 6: National Distribution of Research Centres and Labs: Total = 489**


The increased level of research activity in Ontario colleges is further demonstrated by the number of research networks in Ontario relative to other provinces and territories (See Table 8 below). The purpose of provincial and regional research networks is to increase capacity and advocate for increased financial support for college
and institute applied research. As of 2012-13, Ontario colleges reported having 86 research networks, which is about 32% of all reported research networks across Canada (ACCC Applied Research Report, 2012-13).

**Table 8:** Research Networks by Province and Territory

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province/Territory</th>
<th># of Research Networks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alberta</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>British Columbia</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manitoba</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saskatchewan</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yukon</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ontario</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quebec</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atlantic Provinces</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While the relationship between an increase in research activity and PhD hires is not clear from the available data, the respondents’ claims around an increased emphasis on research is supported by available data and does correlate with the rise of degree granting in Ontario colleges.

With regards to whether or not colleges are investing less time and resources in diploma level programming as a result of introducing degree level programming, particularly the three-year or advanced diploma, this was a concern raised by some of those interviewed for this study and in the literature reviewed. Generally speaking, the enrolment data indicate that colleges are enrolling proportionately fewer students in advanced diplomas than degree programming.
**Table 9:** Enrolment by credential at 24 Ontario colleges (Funded)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ADVANCED</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>DIPLOMA</td>
<td>40533</td>
<td>42103</td>
<td>45280</td>
<td>46519</td>
<td>49952</td>
<td>51030</td>
<td>50333</td>
<td>51109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CERTIFICATE</td>
<td>14530</td>
<td>15625</td>
<td>17634</td>
<td>19214</td>
<td>21361</td>
<td>22329</td>
<td>22172</td>
<td>23145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEGREE</td>
<td>3161</td>
<td>4019</td>
<td>4679</td>
<td>5241</td>
<td>5998</td>
<td>6779</td>
<td>8009</td>
<td>9236</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DIPLOMA</td>
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<td>73571</td>
<td>78355</td>
<td>81373</td>
<td>85411</td>
<td>90933</td>
<td>89799</td>
<td>91947</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GRADUATE</td>
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<tr>
<td>CERTIFICATE</td>
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<td>4094</td>
<td>4835</td>
<td>5269</td>
<td>5950</td>
<td>5976</td>
<td>6108</td>
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<tr>
<td>OTHER</td>
<td>398</td>
<td>337</td>
<td>670</td>
<td>647</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>102</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Grand Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>135584</strong></td>
<td><strong>139749</strong></td>
<td><strong>151453</strong></td>
<td><strong>158263</strong></td>
<td><strong>168680</strong></td>
<td><strong>177067</strong></td>
<td><strong>176456</strong></td>
<td><strong>182329</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Source: Ontario Colleges Application Services (OCAS)

According to Table 9 above, advanced diploma enrolment at the 24 colleges went from 40,533 in 2005-06 to 51,109 in 2012-13, an increase of 26%. Over this same period, advanced diploma enrolment at the 12 degree-granting colleges increased by about 29%; however, degree enrolment at the 12 degree-granting colleges rose from 3,161 to 9,236, an increase of 192%. When comparing the enrolment trend between the two credentials, then, degree enrolment grew 163% more than advanced diploma programming over the same 8-year period. Extracting enrolment numbers for the 5 colleges that are the focus of this study showed that enrolment levels at 19,911 students in advanced diploma programming in 2005-06 and 22,350 in 2012-13, an increase of just 12%. This figure is tracking 14% lower than all 24 colleges combined and 18% lower than the 12 degree granting colleges combined. Moreover, degree level enrolment at the 5 colleges on which this study focuses was at 2,459 in 2005-06 and 8,137 by 2012-13. This represents a 231% increase in degree level enrolment over the 8-year period – 39% higher than the total for the 12 degree-granting colleges. These 5 colleges have experienced a 14% lag behind the
The entire college sector in advanced diploma enrolment together with the fact that they are tracking ahead of the 12 degree granting colleges in degree level enrolment by 39%.

When looking at advanced diploma enrolment numbers at each of the 5 colleges from which the respondents were drawn, Colleges E, C and B actually experienced decreases in their advanced diploma level enrolment between 2005-06 and 2012-13, while College A tracked at about 47% growth, nearly double that of the college sector as a whole. College D saw a 59% increase, which is 12% higher than all 24 colleges and 20% more than the 12 degree granting colleges. As for degree programming, 4 out of 5 colleges experienced enrolment growth, with College E showing a slight decline in degree enrolment; however, the actual numbers in this particular case are quite small. In fact, College E represents less than 1% of the total degree enrolment at the 5 colleges and College D represents about 10% of the total degree enrolment at the 5 colleges.

5.6 Chapter Summary and Preview

This chapter focused on presenting the findings and analysing the results. It contained five sections: Introduction, Purpose of Study, Methods of Analysis, Selection Criteria, and Results and Analysis. This last section, Results and Analysis, was organized according to the nine themes that resulted from conducting a lexical word analysis of the interviewee transcripts. Key documents and statistics were considered and analysed to triangulate the information gathered. Chapter six provides a summary of the findings presented in this chapter, discussion of the findings and their implications, recommendations for further research, and conclusions are presented.
CHAPTER SIX: SUMMARY, DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

In an attempt to culminate this study with some final thoughts and inputs, this chapter provides a summary of the results of the previous chapter, followed by a discussion of the implications of the findings according to each of the research questions asked at the outset of this study. Finally, recommendations for further research and final conclusions are presented.

6.2 Summary of Results

Themes extracted from the interviews conducted are used in this section as a framework for providing a summary of the resulting interview and document analysis, and statistical examination. The themes are also used to frame comparisons between this study’s results and relevant literature in an effort to generate a tie-in with the body of knowledge heretofore established on the topic of degrees, their introduction in Ontario colleges, and their implications for the original mission of the colleges.

6.2.1 Mission and Accepted Ideas

All respondents stated that preparation for the labour market is core to the colleges’ basic mission, and, generally, there was consensus around various access and teaching and learning related functions being fundamental to the colleges’ purpose. These findings were consistent with the literature reviewed in Chapters 2 and 3 and key documents considered. Also consistent with the literature and key documents were
references to the adaptive and comprehensive nature of colleges, insofar as they have traditionally provided a range of programming and student services while responding to labour, social and economic shifts.

Davis and Cunningham also affirmed that the interviewee responses, key documents and literature reviewed on the topic are consistent with the basic perspectives at the time the colleges were established in the 1960s and when Bill 132 was passed into law in 2000, and with that the legal authority for colleges to grant degrees.

6.2.2 Introduction of College Degrees: Mission Change

The vast majority of the interviewees felt that no fundamental change to the colleges’ mission had resulted from the introduction of college degrees. The majority of reasons given fit three categories that are part of the framework for orienting the mission of the colleges in this study: labour market responsiveness, access to PSE, and an emphasis on teaching and learning. For example, comprehensive programming, labour market preparation, community responsiveness, student access, applied curriculum, and student centred teaching environment were mentioned by various respondents who felt that these and other basic functions of the college had remained unchanged. Indeed, both Davis and Cunningham felt that the introduction of college degrees was a valuable contribution to Ontario PSE, and Cunningham in particular stated that the CAAT’s mission had been enhanced without compromising core values through the legislative changes enacted in 2000 and 2002.

The notion that the mission at an institutional level, as perceived and lived by those who inhabited key senior roles in the colleges, potentially being out of sync or
worse, at odds, with the mission established by government was expressed by the respondents. This could be seen from the point of view of the inevitable and creative push-and-pull that is bound to affect change and growth in any large, complex system. Davis, commenting on the introduction of degrees stated that the theme now is “evolution of the institution.” The complexity of the Ontario PSE system and the expanse of the province in which the system is firmly established necessitate that colleges push on different pressure points articulated in the government prescribed mission for the colleges collectively, if each is to successfully serve its community.

6.2.3 Introduction of College Degrees: Reasons

In light of the fact that the overwhelming majority of respondents stated that being responsive to labour market was central to the basic mission of the colleges, it is perhaps not surprising that all but one of the respondents also stated that labour market responsiveness was a main driver toward college degrees in Ontario. As such, “labour market responsiveness” and a closely related topic, “capacity to prepare for the labour market,” were addressed as two distinct themes, but analysed jointly in the previous chapter. The same is true for “transfer options” and “access for underrepresented groups,” both of which were cited by respondents as a reason for college degrees. Other responses included in this theme, credential recognition and PSE competition, for instance, are addressed in the context of the above and other themes.

The direct influence of college presidents on government decision-making processes was often cited by respondents as a reason the colleges were eventually granted degree granting status. Cunningham and Davis confirmed that the presidents were
effective lobbyists. Moreover, the college degree has been a credential Ontario colleges have long sought. The coordinated lobbying efforts of the COP, particularly in the years leading up to the legislative changes providing colleges with degree-granting authority support the idea that the presidents were influencing the government’s decisions. What was present in key documents but did not arise in the respondents’ transcripts was the idea that the government ‘signalled’ the college presidents that it was “open to discussion” about introducing “advanced credentials” in the colleges.

Personal ambition by some presidents was raised by three respondents and, as such, was reported in the findings, even though this framing of motivations was somewhat discrepant with the majority of findings on the lobbying efforts of college presidents collectively.

6.2.4 Access for Underrepresented Groups

The majority of respondents indicated that access for these groups had been addressed in the planning stages, yet even in these cases the general experience was that access for underrepresented groups was not sufficiently integrated into the decision making process; however, when looking at this theme from the perspective of “access to an applied degree” regardless of demographics, then one could argue that 12 of 13 respondents, Davis and Cunningham, and a plethora of key documents did offer support for the college degree and part of that process included the logic of access to degree level education. A subsection of this perspective would include students transferring between institutions, and specifically, from college to university. As such, this perspective or context was often introduced when addressing the introduction of college degrees. The
themes of “reasons for degree” and “access for underrepresented groups” were elevated because of the volume of responses and literature on the subjects and because they emerged as central ideas in this study.

6.2.5 Transfer Options

With the exception of internal pathways, almost all of the information provided on the subject of transfer by the respondents representing the five colleges from which they were drawn was focused on the associated challenges college graduates were having when applying for admission to Ontario universities, such as poor credential recognition for college diploma and degree graduates, poor government policy on transfer, or the labour intensive transfer and articulation development process. The respondents’ emphasis on this subject was consistent with the literature and various key documents examined, including Vision 2000, the Pitman Report, Port Hope Accord, legislative Standing Committee transcripts for Bill 132, and the Evaluation Report commissioned by the government in 2010, for instance. Frustration over various aspects of this issue had been growing and intensifying at least as far back as 1980s. What also emerged in the respondents’ statements was a growing sense that college degree graduates are facing some of the same challenges diploma graduates experience when applying for admission to an Ontario university, with the primary difference hinging on the level of the credential from the sending and receiving institutions. In the same way diploma graduates applying for admission to undergraduate program at an Ontario university were perceived to have been faced with poor transfer credit recognition, which was tied to a poor understanding of the outcomes associated with a diploma credential, college degree graduates are now
perceived to be facing similar challenges when applying for admission to master’s level programs at Ontario universities.

This frustration over the need for improved student mobility expressed by the respondents was also validated by Davis and Cunningham, with the caveat that both suggested that the universities did not present any public opposition. However, even if the universities were not publically opposed to the establishment of the CAATs and to the provision for degree-granting authority given to Ontario colleges, key documents such as COP meeting minutes, and respondent transcripts suggest that a majority of senior college administrators and policy agents perceived a resistance from the universities to the establishment of the Ontario college degree.

6.2.6 Response to Labour Market and Capacity to Prepare for the Labour Market

While these two themes emerged from the lexical coding analysis as distinct units, they are nonetheless closely reliant on one another. As such, the respondent results from each theme were reported independently, but they were examined and presented jointly. Of the respondents, ten stated that industry leaders and experts were consulted in the planning stages, which was corroborated by documents analysed, including the presentations made by labour market representatives and the COO of the Ontario Chamber of Commerce. Cunningham also clearly stated that industry leaders played a significant role in establishing college degrees. Higher entry-to-practice requirements were indicated as an important aspect of the changing labour market. Davis also commented on his own expectations that colleges would find ways to meet these higher labour demands. Meeting and being adaptive to various community and labour market
challenges were also common findings from the available data, respondent transcripts, and interviews with Davis and Cunningham.

Poor credential recognition with regards to the diploma was also often referenced by a range of respondents and documents examined. Moreover, the statistical analysis done on international student enrolment in colleges revealed that these students are proportionately one of the fastest growing demographics in the colleges and they are enrolling in degree programs at a proportionately faster rate than other college programs.

6.2.7 Emphasis on Teaching and Learning

When discussing the impact college degrees have had on the teaching and learning function of the colleges, a little more than half of the respondents felt that the colleges had maintained their focus on experiential and applied learning. This was not surprising, given the colleges’ well established pedigree in this regard. When comparing KPI data to other available statistics, the results for recent years have been consistent, but in 2006 there was a 15% gap in in the satisfaction rates for applied skill development between the overall college graduate population and college degree graduates. The difference dropped to 8% in 2008 and further declined thereafter. This is an important point when considering the high number of responses indicating that the colleges had maintained their focus on experiential and applied learning in other themes, including “mission and accepted ideas.”

In terms of the quality of instruction, which connects to seven respondents who felt that the teaching and learning function was better understood as a result of introducing degrees, again the difference between the data sets is negligible, and
importantly, there doesn’t seem to be any negative impact on the overall college population.

6.2.8 Institutional Culture and Identity

Just over half of the respondents spoke of the potential drift toward a two-tiered faculty because of degrees and the resulting increased focus on raising faculty credentials and hiring PhDs. About half also spoke to the perception that an increased emphasis on applied research coincided with the rise of degree granting in colleges and expressed concern over the potential for colleges to pay less attention to diploma programming than they have traditionally. While not a lot of literature and data are available on the perceived potential drift toward a two-tiered faculty with the increase in college degrees and greater number of PhD hires (Tesa, 2013), it seems reasonably clear that a rise in the focus on applied research is correlated with a rise in degree granting in Ontario colleges, but the focus on applied research is also a result of the colleges’ wider mandate under the 2002 Act. For example, the data confirmed that research budgets and allocations at colleges across the country grew at a faster rate between 2008 and 2013 than it had between 2002 and 2007. More and more colleges are becoming eligible for funding from federal councils. Colleges nationally are also reporting increasing numbers of faculty and staff involvement in applied research. Of particular note, however, is the fact that compared to other Canadian jurisdictions, Ontario colleges have the highest number of areas or research specialization supported by the highest number of research centres to facilitate their research. Add to these two points the fact that Ontario colleges have about a third (32%) of all reported research networks across the country.
The data on whether or not the colleges are paying less attention to diploma level programming, as perceived by some respondents, were inconclusive. The available enrolment data, however, indicate that the colleges are enrolling proportionately fewer students in advanced diplomas than degree programming. Moreover, when comparing the total enrolment in advanced diplomas at the five colleges on which this study focused against the total for all the colleges, it can be seen that the 5 colleges are lagging behind the system by 14% and behind the 12 degree-granting colleges combined by 18%. These figures taken with those representing huge increases in degree level enrolment at these five colleges combined suggest shifting priorities.

That said, whether or not this means less attention is being focused on advanced diploma programming at each of the five colleges is much less clear. Two of the five colleges, A and D respectively, each had 47% and 59% increases in advanced diploma enrolment – this figure represents nearly twice as much as the college sector as a whole. And, while four of five colleges experienced degree level enrolment growth, as of 2013 College A accounted for less than 1% of the total degree enrolment at these five colleges and college B just 10%.

6.3 Discussion and Implications

This study comprised one main research question, followed by two secondary questions, the last of which has three sub-questions. This section addresses each of the secondary and tertiary questions in the order in which they were asked at the outset of this study, ending with a discussion of the main research question.
6.3.1 What are the accepted ideas about the basic mission of Ontario colleges?

The findings showed that preparing students for the labour market was of the highest priority for the colleges. This was entirely consistent with available literature on accepted ideas about the mission of colleges in other jurisdictions in which college degrees have been introduced. This study also found that to varying degrees, applied skills development, responsiveness to community needs, access, comprehensive programming, and a commitment to teaching and learning were all considered key to Ontario colleges’ mission. This was consistent with what was found in the subject colleges’ vision, mission and value statements, along with what was contained in the colleges’ published strategic plans and other available key documents. As one respondent put it, “the mission of the colleges is really to take people from wherever they are and make them job ready.”

6.3.2 What are the reasons for the degree-granting status for Ontario’s colleges?

Several reasons for the introduction of degrees were found in this study, many of which are not surprising, and some align to a greater extent than others with the accepted ideas about the colleges’ basic mission. Labour market responsiveness was the most often cited reason and was addressed from a variety of perspectives, ranging from credential recognition on the domestic and international markets to higher entry-to-practice demands. Limited university transfer options were also found to be strong motivators for introducing college degrees.

Limited transfer options in particular were often framed in terms of the universities’
unwillingness to provide a sufficient amount of credit for the work completed by applicants from the sending college, so much so that it emerged as a stand-alone theme in this study. Interestingly, this study also found parallel challenges for college diploma and degree students when applying for undergraduate and graduate level study, respectively. In other words, there was a sense that introducing degrees was partly done in the service of those diploma graduates who wanted to further their education but lacked a viable option within the province; however, both the literature reviewed and available statistics suggest that some college degree graduates are facing similar obstacles when they attempt to continue their education. They, too, are finding limited admission options at Ontario universities.

The results also indicated that access for underrepresented groups to degree level education was a reason to offer degrees, but only in a few cases, and mainly by those colleges that have few to very few enrolled college degree students. Moreover, even though all the colleges in this study addressed this issue during their planning stages, the sense was that it was done so mostly based on the assumption that the colleges’ traditional focus on access would simply extend into degree level study. Other reasons found for the introduction of college degrees in Ontario were the global trend toward advanced credentials and PSE competition, along with the fact that there are more university graduates attending colleges.

For two colleges in this study, part of the initial impetus for offering degrees was local PSE competition and not only national or international competition. Both moved into degree granting territory partially because they discerned that they needed “to keep up with the Jones,” as one senior college administrator put it. In other words, for these
two colleges it’s not entirely clear that, or when, they would have begun offering degrees if other urban colleges had not done so when they did. Yet, even though as of 2012 one of these colleges had just 1% and the other just 10% of the total degree enrolment at the five urban colleges on which this study centred, senior administrators from both of these colleges suggested that introducing college degrees was generally an appropriate response to the needs of Ontarians.

Interestingly, this study also found that the college presidents’ lobbying efforts were a key reason for establishing the college degree. The coordinated efforts of the COP, together with individual petitioning efforts by some college presidents was found to be the second highest catalyst for college degree granting status in Ontario. And, while a couple of studies have been done on Ontario college policy change processes at both the governmental and institutional levels (Charles, 2011 and Cooke, 2007), little is available on the policy change processes that specifically brought about what is seen as one of the most significant changes in decades for Ontario colleges, the addition of the college degree.

6.3.3 To what extent do the reasons for degree granting status intersect with the following tenets of the Ontario colleges’ basic mission: labour market responsiveness; access for students; teaching and learning emphasis?

This study found that the majority of reasons for degree granting status for the colleges had a high degree of intersection with one of the basic tenets of the colleges’ mission: labour market responsiveness. Access for students had a moderate rate of crossover. Teaching and learning, specifically, was not mentioned as a reason but
elements therein were provided as reasons. As such, teaching and learning had a lower rate of crossover than labour market responsiveness.

The first of these reasons, labour market responsiveness, has been a mainstay of Ontario colleges since their inception and has continued through the college degree approval processes of 2000 and 2002. As for access for students, it too has been a key priority for the colleges; however, it was found to be a partial basis for the introduction of college degrees in Ontario. In terms of the lobbying and subsequent planning for the Ontario college degree, while access issues did get some coverage during these early stages, it was largely general in nature and it was presupposed by senior college and governmental agents that this function would simply continue at the degree level. Interestingly, no explicit mention was made of teaching and learning by respondents when asked about the reason for college degrees; however, this study found that much like the access issue, teaching and learning was framed as vital to the success of the college degree, largely because of the applied nature of the degree. This study found that the colleges’ emphasis on applied skills development and learning is not only continually emphasized but is likely perceived as the single most important differentiator between the traditional Ontario university degree and the college degree.

6.3.4 To what extent is the introduction of degree-granting in Ontario colleges a response to labour market demands?

Of the data contained within the nine themes summarized in this chapter and analysed in the previous chapter, “Response to Labour Market” and “Capacity to Prepare for the Labour Market” were used to address the above research question.
Overwhelmingly, the data suggest that the introduction of college degrees was largely seen by key college and government agents as a way of meeting increasingly sophisticated labour market demands.

This study confirmed the importance of consultation with industry leaders when planning for the introduction of college degrees in Ontario even though the extent and structure of this process remained unclear. This consultative process, however, did stay true to one of the originally intended aims for establishing the CAATs, namely a response to the changing labour (and social) forces at the time. Davis referred to these as the “knowledge explosion,” “technological revolution,” and the “population explosion” in the Basic Documents. Moreover, the general approach aligns with the majority of findings from other jurisdictions in which college degrees were introduced. As evidenced in available PEQAB documents, many applications to offer college degrees were in areas the colleges had already developed much of the expertise necessary to offer a degree in the area related to the already operating diploma program. In 2002, when the first degree programs were in fact approved, nine colleges were authorized to offer 12 degree programs. These were focused on information technology, financial services, and e-business management. There were also programs in animation, paralegal studies, manufacturing technologies, automotive management, and environmental site remediation (MTCU, 2002). The sentiments expressed in the context of this study were that advanced diploma programs with a strong track record in an area of high demand, and increasing entry-to-practice requirements served efficiently as the foundation for the development of a related degree.

When employers and Ontario college degree graduates were asked about the
minimum level of education required for the positions the graduates currently held, about a third of the employers said that a college degree was the minimum level of education required for the position hired; however, almost half of these same employers said that they would have accepted a credential below the degree. This raises the question of whether or not any credential below a degree (e.g., advanced diploma) would have sufficed for entry-to-practice. One could reasonably assume that in addition to credentials, experience in the field would be a key decision factor in employers’ assessments of job applicants. Because most of these data are based on hires that took place in the midst of an economic downturn, a period when a large number of experienced workers were unemployed and seeking work alongside recently graduated candidates (on average, five years or less of on-the-job experience) who would likely not have had the same level of on-the-job experience, then it’s possible that in a period with robust employment rates college degree hire rates for these employers would rise relative to lower credential hire rates.

The data in this study also support the idea that the degree credential as such is the credential of choice internationally. The substantially greater pace of international student enrolment at the degree level versus the advanced diploma level supports this idea. Many of the respondents and literature reviewed highlighted the fact that communities are increasingly understood as being global in nature, and that labour market competition, or for that matter, PSE competition, does not stop at the Canadian border. Attracting international students to the colleges was seen as a necessary step in remaining relevant in both the domestic and international labour and PSE markets.
6.3.5 To what extent has the introduction of degree-granting in Ontario affected access to Ontario colleges?

Of the data contained within the nine themes summarized in this chapter and analysed in the previous chapter, “Access for Underrepresented Groups” and “Transfer Options” were used to address the above research question. Taking all the data into consideration, the colleges’ foray into degree level territory has had little effect one way or another on access to the colleges. There does, however, seem to be some merit to the idea that college degrees may enable access to degree level study for those who may not have considered it an option when universities were the sole purveyors of degree granting in the province.

Introducing college degrees in Ontario could be having a mitigating effect on the negative PSE participation rate for specific underrepresented groups, even though the vast majority of college degrees are offered by urban colleges where the cost of living tends to be higher but the population of underrepresented groups is greatest. For example, both Aboriginal students and those whose parents have no PSE are nearly twice as likely to attend a college over a university. As such, given that the colleges have historically been more effective than universities at meeting the needs of these two groups, college degrees may provide potentially sustainable approach to improved access to degree-level education for the two groups. Additionally, the gender gap in PSE also reflects females’ preference for university over college and could be partially addressed through college degrees. That is, the number of male degree graduates in Ontario can be increased by leveraging the fact that males are more likely to attend a college than a university. The same kind of argument may be extended to persons with disabilities.
These arguments are supported by the findings in this study. Despite the fact that Ontario’s PSE system was not originally designed for movement between colleges and universities, the total number of students continuing their education at either a college or university in Ontario increased by 2.4% from 2001-02 to 2008-09. Add to this fact that university applications suggest that students from underrepresented groups are more likely to be college diploma transfer students than direct entry students (Kerr, et al., 2010). These data together with the data that suggest students who enrol in a program and intend to pursue further education are more likely to remain, and would prefer to stay, in the same institution than move on to another institution, suggest that increasing the availability of the college degree may address some of the barriers to degree-level education faced by underrepresented groups.

On the other hand, increasing degree offerings in colleges could have the effect of decreasing access for the underrepresented groups that the colleges were intended to serve. For example, the proposal to introduce three-year degrees in the colleges is often connected to the proposal to convert advanced diplomas to degrees (Colleges Ontario, 2012; Hicks et al., 2013). If some advanced diplomas are replaced with three-year degrees, then the admission challenges that some students may have faced when diploma programs were scaled back or cancelled to make room for the four-year degree program would remain unchanged. In other words, some students who previously met the admission requirements for the diploma program would not meet the admission requirement of the degree, since the degree admission requirement for both Ontario colleges and universities is a minimum overall average of 70% in six Grade 12 U/M courses for Ontario Secondary School Diploma graduates. Thus, the question is not only
how many degree spaces would be made available, but what could be done to ensure that increasing degree offerings regardless of their length, does not have the effect of decreasing access to colleges, specifically, and PSE, generally, for underrepresented groups.

Moreover, at this juncture, the mobility value of a college degree in Ontario is at best, uncertain. In much the same way that college diploma graduates face perceived artificial challenges with regards to credit assessment when applying for undergraduate admission in an Ontario university, college degree graduates are also perceived to be facing unnecessary admission challenges when seeking to further their education at the graduate level. Somewhere between 12% and 20% of college degree graduates planned to enrol in a master’s program between 2005 and 2010. Roughly, about half of these students actually applied to a master’s program, and of those, more than a third indicated that their college degree credential had not been recognized by the admissions office at the university to which they applied.

Despite being addressed in the Basic Documents, Vision 2000, and the Pitman Report, for instance, and in the absence of an embedded transfer function in the establishment of the college sector, the originally stated intention of collaboration between universities and colleges on the issue of transfer remains a challenge from the perspective of senior college administrators and some former high level government officials interviewed for this study. Underpinning the issue of transfer from an applied Ontario college degree to Ontario graduate schools is also a larger societal issue around perceptions between applied and academic education. As Ignash suggested, “articulating applied associate degrees (or non-liberal arts degrees, or occupational/technical degrees,
or whatever “non-academic” appellation is used) tests our views of the curriculum” (Ignash, 2012). Ontario colleges that serve a greater proportion of underrepresented groups than universities, along with government and other stakeholders have a responsibility to ensure that students are able to access college degrees and are not being inadvertently disadvantaged by a lack of coordination and poor system or sector design with regards to degree-level study in the province.

6.3.6 To what extent has the introduction of degree-granting in Ontario colleges affected the teaching-learning function of these institutions?

Of the data contained within the nine themes summarized in this chapter and analysed in the previous chapter, “Emphasis on Teaching and Learning” and “Institutional Culture and Identity” were used to address the above research question. Taking all the relevant data into consideration, this study found that the subject colleges have maintained their focus on applied and experiential learning in the face of introducing degree level study, and continue to place a high priority on the teaching and learning functions within their institutions. This was present in the literature reviewed and was emphasized by respondents not only in both of the themes quoted above but in the context of other themes, and, importantly, in the context of “accepted ideas about the mission of the colleges.”

The saliency of this college attribute is of particular relevance when one considers that the Drummond Report, for example, cited a deficiency in the resources devoted to experiential learning in postsecondary institutions in Ontario. As Dennison and Gallagher (1986) outlined, experiential and applied learning is more prominent in the colleges than
universities. Indeed, experiential and applied learning is part of the Ontario colleges’ 
\textit{raison d’etre}. The original mandate of all Ontario colleges (22 established between 1965 
and 1967, and two others, La Cite and College Boreal, established in 1990 and 1995, 
respectively) made explicit that they were intended to provide vocationally-oriented, non-
degree programs, and their establishment often involved the integration of independent 
specialized vocational institutes (Jones and Skolnik, 2009). Perhaps, one way to ensure 
more degree students get the benefit of experiential and applied learning is to increase the 
number of college applied degree programs in the province instead of curbing their 
development, assuming the colleges can continue to improve their college degree student 
satisfaction rates for skill development in degree courses while adhering to the original 
tenets of the CAAT’s mission. An increase in college degrees does not actually conflict 
with the idea of using differentiation to improve postsecondary quality. If, as Skolnik 
(2012) argued, differentiation is not tied to only academic credentials but also to other 
criteria such as occupation focus, different clientele, teaching oriented, and an emphasis 
on applied and experiential learning, then it would seem that allowing colleges to award 
degrees is one way the province might more effectively use its resources in the service of 
experiential and applied learning, while simultaneously achieving sustainability and 
employable graduates.

That said, Trow (1973) warned that any planned significant increases to student 
population should be managed carefully, if the culture and identity are not to be 
undermined. If a large proportion of college degree entrants enter the system too quickly, 
they could threaten to overwhelm the established processes within an institution. Whereas 
increasing college degree numbers at a slower rate allows for induction into the sector’s
value systems. In this case, part of that value system of the colleges encompasses their teaching and learning function, which is largely experiential and applied in nature. Interestingly, Colleges A and C both seemed to have vastly increased their focus on the teaching and learning functions within the institutions, and each has higher degree enrolment numbers than the other colleges in this study combined. However, Colleges A and C are also both seeking a designation other than CAAT or ITAL. Whether or not this means that these colleges are focusing less of their attention and resources on advanced diploma level study is not clear, but it is clear that these colleges are focusing more and more attention and resources on degree level study and associated functions.

One of the associated institutional functions that supports college degree study is applied research. Several respondents indicated an increased emphasis on research, however, there is little evidence in this study of these colleges becoming research intensive institutions, like many Ontario universities. While it is true that there have been significant increases in college budget allocation to research, and that the number of colleges eligible for research funding has significantly increased over the last decade, compared to universities the actual figures are small. Moreover, even though Ontario colleges reported having the highest number of research centres and networks in Canada, there is also much evidence to suggest that teachers who are not active researchers are just as effective in the classroom, and, interestingly, some 80% of college faculty responses across the country indicated that they were interested in research related specifically to teaching and learning.
6.3.7 To what extent does the introduction of degree-granting constitute a change in the mission of the Ontario colleges, as outlined in the Basic Documents and according to key college and governmental agents?

This study found that while the introduction of degrees contributed to a shift in priorities for two of the five subject colleges, generally speaking, no fundamental change to the colleges’ mission had resulted from introducing degree level study in 2000. Taking all the data together, this study found that when college degrees were introduced, they were largely considered to be a vertical extension of the CAAT’s original mission. As articulated in the Basic Documents and according to key college and governmental agents, the colleges’ traditional focus on labour market responsiveness, access for students not bound to university, and a focus on teaching and learning, particularly as it involves applied skills development, continued to be high priorities for the colleges. Their community responsiveness and comprehensive nature were also upheld through the introduction of degrees. Moreover, the college degree in Ontario is not being offered to a great number of students relative to other college credentials and is concentrated in a handful of mostly urban colleges; and yet, being an urban college does not necessitate the offering of a high number of degrees, as was the case with one urban college in this study.

Competition amongst PSE institutions and across jurisdictions did seem to drive some colleges toward overlapping or at the least, similar, missions. This is perhaps not surprising when considering that the PSE market is increasingly becoming global in nature and institutions are vying for the same international students. It is also worth noting that Ontario’s move to college degrees happened later than several other
jurisdictions of comparable size and complexity and was partially framed by respondents and in key documents as a response to PSE competition, in terms of attracting both students and employers who will hire the students upon graduation.

In 2012/13 approximately 74 degree programs were offered by 12 Ontario colleges (PEQAB, 2013, p5). In the same year, 21 colleges submitted 48 degree applications, 22 of which were for new degrees (PEQAB, 2013, p.6). Currently, the Ontario government limits the number of degrees that a college may offer. The legislated percentage of approved programs that ITALs may offer at the degree level is 15%. All other colleges are limited to 5%. System-wide growth in college degree enrolment and graduation has been relatively minimal. In 2010/11, of the 72,066 college graduates, only 921 students graduated with a college degree. Thus, approximately 1.2% of all college graduates earned a degree. In terms of enrolment in 2010/11, 6,213 of the 187,430 full-time college students were enrolled in degree program. Thus, approximately 3.3% were enrolled in a degree program (HECQO, College Graduates by Credential, Retrieved January, 2015). Like college degree graduates, college degree enrolment has remained relatively small.

At the institutional level, the distribution and growth of college degrees varies considerably among the 12 degree granting colleges. In 2011, the percentage of college students enrolled in a degree program at one of these colleges ranged from 12% to 1% (Hicks et al, 2013, p.9). Yet, despite these seemingly low system-wide and institutional percentages, there is evidence of shifting priorities at two colleges in this study, both of which made formal submissions to the government for a designation other than CAAT or ITAL. That said, in light of the non-mention of teaching and learning as such when respondents were asked specifically about the reasons for college degrees, this study
found evidence of an increased focus on teaching and learning with the introduction of
degrees at these same two colleges seeking a new designation.

In different ways, each of these two colleges showed signs of being on a similar
trajectory as some of the colleges in BC and Alberta in the 1990s that moved away from
their traditional client base once they were provided with degree granting authority. One
might take another view on this issue and suggest that these two colleges are moving the
government’s stated intentions of greater differentiation in the PSE system forward. It’s
unclear how close this would move Ontario to a kind of multi-mission approach for its
PSE system, similar to Alberta.

The literature reviewed confirmed that the overall trend in the production of non-
university, and in particular, college, degrees in Canada has been on the rise. In each of
the rationales provided by the provinces for initially offering college degrees there are
references to some or all of the forces and assumptions that Marshall (2005) suggests
have motivated this change in Canadian degree-granting policies. Of relevance for this
study is that all college degree-granting provinces referenced labour market demand and
preparation, along with access challenges, in their arguments for the policy changes. And,
in some cases, institutional differentiation was seen as a way of meeting these and other
related challenges around the need for greater instructional focus and efficiency.
Moreover, because all of these college degrees are to be “applied” degrees, Canadian
colleges’ pedigree of vocational and technical education and their traditional access
mandate, as outlined by Dennison and Gallagher (1986), provided a solid foundation on
which to design, develop and deliver these “special meaning” degree programs.

Since college degrees must be in applied areas of study, colleges were initially
required to include the word “applied” in the degree’s title; however, this requirement changed in 2009. Although it is no longer required, of the 69 approved college degrees listed on the MTCU website, 48 still include “applied” in the title (MTCU, 2013). Yet, while applied degrees are supposed to be different from degrees offered by Ontario universities, theoretical knowledge and analytical skills are also taught in the programs. College degrees are required to prepare students with the theoretical and analytical skills required of practitioners. PEQAB states that “a degree in an applied area of study is normally designed to require a level of conceptual sophistication, specialized knowledge, and intellectual autonomy similar to that in an honours or specialist degree program but with the disciplinary content oriented to an occupational field of practice” (PEQAB, 2010, p.17). Moreover, an applied degree is not to interfere with the college’s mandate of providing diploma and certificate programs that are one to three years in duration.

For this study, a key distinction within the history of the college degree movement in Canada, however, is between colleges that offer a degree as a function of their traditional mandate versus colleges being authorized to award bachelor’s degrees by and/or subsequently becoming a university, polytechnic or degree-granting institution other than a college. For example, in at least four states in the U.S., associate-degree granting institutions were authorized to offer the baccalaureate degree and the institutions subsequently became baccalaureate-granting institutions (Townsend, 2009). Wagoner and Ayon point out that in the United States “baccalaureate programs bring changing student demographics, increased institutional autonomy, and university-style governance among other factors that, at the very least, indicate a new community college identity and perhaps even a new variant of a four-year college” (Wagoner and Ayon, 2012). Some
colleges in BC and Alberta were given degree-granting privileges, but did not retain their college designation. With the change in designation, these institutions were permitted to grant academic degrees in addition to the already approved applied degrees, if they were not already doing so. In Alberta, for example, this change resulted in the establishment of two polytechnic institutions, Northern Alberta Institute of Technology (NAIT) and Southern Alberta Institute of Technology (SAIT), ceasing to submit proposals for new “applied” degrees. The same happened with Mount Royal College and Grant MacEwan College in Alberta as of 2007, when they were turned into degree-granting institutions able to offer “academic” degrees. These two institutions later became universities in 2009 (Skolnik, 2012). Thus, while the college degree movement in Canada may have begun some twenty years ago in BC, colleges that offer degrees and have retained their core mandate and designation as a college is in many cases a more recent, and in other examples, still less prevalent phenomenon in Canadian PSE as a whole. For two of the five colleges in this study, it is the case that they too could transform into a degree-granting institution other than a college.

Importantly, a handful of respondents in this study raised the issue of some Ontario colleges becoming something other than a CAAT, and suggested that the introduction of college degrees should not be used as a means for turning colleges into universities. These responses taken together with the examples from other jurisdictions suggest that perhaps Ontario college degrees ought to continue to be only applied degrees, if the demonstrated strengths and well-established pedigree of these institutions are to be properly and efficiently leveraged – and if the whole idea of an Ontario college degree is not to be undermined.
Another result of the forces and assumptions that have motivated an increase in the development of non-university degrees in Canada is the proliferation over the past two decades of new degree experiences, and an array of degree labels from associate degrees, applied degrees, professional degrees, graduate degrees, to executive degrees that are differentiated from the labels and experience of the mainstream Canadian university (Marshall, 2008). In an effort to provide clarity to the purpose and features of each credential offered in Ontario, the government developed the Ontario Qualifications Framework (OQF). Each qualification can be seen as a reference point along a continuum that includes 13 different levels that are differentiated by the knowledge and skills expected of holders of each type of qualification; and it shows the relationship and differences between qualifications based on program design and outcomes; preparation for employment and further study; duration; admission requirements; and institution (MTCU 2014).

The OQF is the first complete framework in Canada that includes all postsecondary credentials and apprenticeship certificates. According to the MTCU, “if a program from a particular institution meets all legislative and regulatory requirements, that institution may offer the credential” (MTCU, 2014). In other words, the levels of qualifications are not tied to type of institution. Publicly-assisted universities may offer any degree program, including a degree in an applied area of study. Colleges apply for ministerial consent to offer degrees in applied areas of study; however, both applied and non-applied degrees fall into the same category of Baccalaureate: Honours.

Yet, despite the fact that Ontario college degrees are held to equal qualification standards as degrees offered by Ontario universities, the “special meaning” and mobility
value of an applied degree offered by a college has been a concern in the Canadian context, and is of concern in Ontario, specifically. The issue is not only problematic from a student and labour market perception of an “applied” degree, but in many ways the concern is analogous to the debates around credential recognition vis-à-vis credit transfer from college diploma to university degree, except that the transfer blockage for college degree graduates is at the master’s level. This study found that the majority of participants believed that the universities have long been resistant to equitable credit transfer for diploma graduates and, more recently, college degree graduates; this despite the fact that student mobility was supposed to be acted on according to the Basic Documents, and despite the fact that Ontario has responded by developing a credit transfer agency, OnCAT, albeit only recently (2011). One of the current challenges is that the debate over the acceptance of full degrees is relatively new since it is only relatively recently that college degree graduates have entered the employment or further study market in Ontario.

For several respondents and in the literature reviewed, the meaning, and therefore, value, of a college degree is partially at issue, here. Ontario’s PEQAB did develop outcomes for the college degree, including the requisite breadth outcomes. However, these and other degree outcome exercises, like those taken on by the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC) and the development of the Ontario Qualifications Framework (OQF) were not seen by most respondents as adequately addressing the confusion around the meaning and value of the Ontario college degree. Other jurisdictions, Alberta, for instance, have had a reasonably high level of political will and coordination to enable and affect meaningful change regarding college
institutional mandates, degree production, and transfer. In this regard, the same level of political will and coordination has not been as obvious in Ontario.

6.4 Recommendations for Further Research

The area of college degrees in Ontario is ripe for further research. The college degree is a recent development in Ontario and there is still much that is unknown. Pioneering efforts are different than those that have evolved into accepted, standardized, mature degree programs. As such, it will be interesting to see what impact these programs have on the mission of the colleges over the long term.

As a result of this study and a review of the literature, it is suggested that the following research efforts would be useful in order to expand the body of knowledge in this area:

1. To date, half of Ontario colleges have chosen not to pursue a college degree. A study comparing those who chose to pursue this advanced credential with those who did not would be worth tackling. Why does one college choose to initiate what is potentially a transformational change and another chooses not to?

2. It would be interesting to see a comparison of attitudes and beliefs about the college degree between college personnel (leaders, faculty, staff) and others outside the institution such as students, employers and community leaders. Are the attitudes about college degrees and their value the same or are they different?
How might college degrees be improved upon receiving the results of such a pervasive evaluation?

3. Related to the previous idea, how much employer demand is there for college degree graduates? It’s not clear whether there is really strong demand by employers for graduates of an applied degree program in a field that also accepts diploma graduates. What effect will overlapping credentials have on the value of the diploma credential in Ontario? Will it spur, for example, decreased entry-to-practice salaries for diploma graduates? What effect will overlapping credentials have on the value of the college degree credential in Ontario?

4. This study focused exclusively on five urban colleges in Ontario. Comparative studies of other jurisdictions and Ontario in terms of the impact college degrees have had on the mission of these institutions and systems would be useful. What remained the same, what changed, and why? Have the traditional college values been maintained or changed in other jurisdictions and how does this compare to the findings of this study? Did the transformation into a degree-granting institution pose challenges as yet not faced in Ontario?

5. Financial barriers and access to college degrees would be a useful study. Given that colleges attract more students from low-income environments together with the fact that college degrees are as costly as comparable university degrees, how the financial burden or the “sticker price” of PSE is mitigated for college degree
seekers is unclear. As the data indicate, the colleges have fared much better than universities in attracting students from all income and education ranges; however, without addressing the systemic underrepresentation of these groups, the college degree programs may simply pose the same kinds of challenges as their university counterparts; especially, when one considers that the bulk of college degrees are being offered by colleges that are mainly situated in urban centres where the cost of living tends to be higher than in rural areas.

6. There are several examples of colleges delivering entirely vocational content in courses coded as General Education at the diploma level. Is this practice extending into the degree programs? Does an Ontario college degree, particularly at a smaller college, have the resources to develop curriculum that allows for breadth of study? This is a key issue for students intending to transfer to a university undergraduate program, and will likely pose similar challenges for college degree graduates applying for graduate level study.

7. Differentiation in Ontario’s PSE system has been a growing topic of interest in recent years. There has been an increase in the number of public “discussions” facilitated by both government and interested academics, and there have been a number of newspaper and journal articles written on the topic of college degrees, including their occupational value and differentiated status in Ontario. As such, a study that focused on the potential impact of college degrees on differentiation in Ontario would add to the scholarship in the field.
8. The colleges’ practice of enlisting Program Advisory Boards (PACs) in the design, development and delivery of college degree programs has been an important portal for communication between the colleges and the labour market, and is an additional differentiating aspect of college degrees. A study looking at the impact PACs have had on shaping the college degree would be a useful addition to scholarship in the field and might yield some utility in terms of praxis. What role does PAC play in the design, development, and delivery of college degrees? To what extent have PACs influenced labour market perception of college degrees?

9. With the establishment of college degrees in Ontario, PEQAB was also established. PEQAB’s role in the assessment, consent and renewal process is a needed addition to the field. How effective has PEQAB been in carrying out its mandate? What are the attitudes and beliefs about PEQAB by college personnel and governmental agents? Are there differences in the way PEQAB assesses application from publically funded colleges versus private degree granting institutions?

10. Related to the previous recommendation, colleges are already offering a number of degrees in areas that overlap with university degrees (e.g., Business and Commerce). Should colleges also be allowed to offer programs in other professional and applied areas, such as Education or Engineering? Should they
also be allowed to venture into the more traditional university areas such as liberal arts degree? Where does the opportunity to provide any number of college degree programs start and stop?

11. Given that the colleges infrastructure and student support services were designed with non-degree credentials in mind, it would be helpful to know what impact the inclusion of college degrees has had on these and other non-academic components of the college.

12. True funding impact of established college degrees needs to be explored. How has funding changed and on what basis? Has funding of the college sector on the whole been impacted on by introduction of the advanced credential? Are non-degree granting colleges being impacted at all? What additional funding resources have been utilized by colleges in order to provide degree programs? Which programs were jeopardized due to funding issues? How were funding problems resolved?

13. Now that college degree graduates are in the field and working, what are their attitudes about the programs they experienced? Did they value them and find them useful? Did they learn what they needed to learn and develop the skills they needed in order to become productive employees? What attitudes did their employers have about their degrees and their readiness to work? Were they well
prepared for the “real world” scenario? Longitudinal studies on the impact of these programs on graduates and their careers would be useful.

6.5 Conclusions

As this study has indicated, some observers have argued that giving degree-granting privileges to colleges is simply a natural extension of the colleges’ original mission. They suggested that colleges are responding to changing labour market expectations, the need for degree-level education that puts a greater emphasis on teaching and applied skills, and narrow access to traditional degree-level education. Others proposed that college degrees suggest an unfortunate expansion of the colleges’ original mandate, and, as such, weaken the basic tenets on which the colleges were established. This study focused on the introduction of college degrees in Ontario and whether or not they can be accurately characterized as part of the CAAT’s original mission.

Overall, the vast majority of college and governmental leaders in this study believed that the introduction of degrees was a logical extension of the mission and that the progression of the mission itself was essential if colleges were to be responsive to changing labour and community needs. The study also pointed out that three basic “founding” tenets of the colleges – labour market responsiveness, access for students, and an emphasis on the functions of teaching and learning – were generally being adhered to between 2002 and 2012. On the other hand, the leadership of two of the five colleges studied did demonstrate a desire to move beyond the mission and become a different kind of institution—a university and a polytechnic in the name of creating a more
differentiated PSE system in Ontario. The need for much further research, notwithstanding, it is clear that the accessibility and learning orientation of the original mission created on May 21, 1965 must continue to receive attention.
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Appendix A

OISE
ONTARIO INSTITUTE FOR STUDIES IN EDUCATION
UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

Request to Participate

Date
Addressee’s name and title
Addressee’s address

Dear ____________ :

I am a graduate student in the Department of Leadership, Higher and Adult Education at Ontario Institute for the Studies in Education of the University of Toronto (OISE/UT) and am currently planning a research project entitled: “Ontario Colleges and the Introduction of Degrees: Mission Drift or Sustaining the Mission?” The study is being undertaken under the supervision of Dr. Pascal in the Department of Applied Psychology and Human Behaviour, at OISE/UT and is part of the requirements for a doctoral degree.

As part of the research I will be conducting 15 interviews. I am looking for a sample of individuals drawn from across government and institutions that were involved in the decision to develop degree programming at the college. I obtained your contact information from your institution’s directory. As you held the position of ___________ at ______________ , I would very much like to interview you to gain your perspective. I would like to provide you with some information about the study and what your involvement would entail if you decide to take part.

The main purpose of the study is to determine whether or not the introduction of degree-level education in Ontario colleges constitutes mission drift. The study will look at the rationale and conceptual construction of the CAATs in their original development and whether the rationale for introducing degree-level programming in the CAAT sector is consistent with the original criteria. By focusing on the period between 2002 and 2012, the study will also look at whether the intended purpose for the introduction of degree-level education in Ontario colleges is being fulfilled.
I will be conducting interviews over the next few months. The interview would last for about an hour, and would be arranged for a mutually convenient time and location. (The interview could be conducted via telephone if that is preferred). During the interview you will be asked questions about your professional role, your institution, and involvement in the decision to offer and/or develop degree programming. You may decline to answer any question(s) that you are not comfortable with, and you may terminate the interview at any time. At no time will participants be judged or evaluated and at no time will participants be at risk.

It is intended that each interview will be voice recorded and later transcribed. A transcript of the interview would be forwarded to you for review and authorization within two weeks of the interview, at which point you are free to make any deletions or corrections to your responses. Authorized transcripts should be returned to the investigator within 14 days of receipt. You may decline to answer any question and are free to withdraw from the study at any time without consequence simply by notifying the investigator.

The information gathered from the interviews will be kept in strict confidence and stored at the investigator’s home office in a locked file cabinet, and only the investigator and supervisor will have access to the data collected. All information will be reported in such a way that individual persons and their affiliation with institutions cannot be identified. All data collected will be used for the purposes of a Ph.D. thesis and perhaps for subsequent research articles. All raw data (i.e. transcripts, field notes) will be destroyed five years after completion of the study. At all times, your privacy and confidentiality will be protected and respected. No personal information will be used or disclosed in the study, in publications or public presentations associated with the research. Codes and/or pseudonyms will be used where necessary to protect your identity.

Although there are no direct benefits to you as a result of participation, a summary of the results may be provided to you upon completion of the study. There are no known or anticipated risks to you as a participant in this study.

I would like to assure you that participation in the study is entirely voluntary, and the final decision to participate is yours alone. The University of Toronto is committed to the highest standards of integrity for research, and this study has passed and received approval from the University of Toronto Ethics Review Board.

I am happy to answer any questions you may have regarding the study, and will provide any additional information that you require. You may also contact my supervisor Dr. Pascal, OISE/UT on 416 716 7245, or by email at Charles.pascal@utoronto.ca should you have any comments or concerns prior to or resulting from your participation in this study. You may also contact the UofT Office of Research Ethics for questions about your rights as a research participant at ethics.review@utoronto.ca or 416-946-3273.

I will call or email you to ask if you are interested in participating and to set up an appointment for the interview. If you have any questions or concerns in the meantime,
please contact me at home at 416 788 2241 or during office hours at 416 675 6622 ext. 4852 or via email at jason.galea@utoronto.ca.

Sincerely,
Jason Galea
Ph.D. Candidate, Leadership, Higher and Adult Education
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto
Associate Dean, Humber College ITAL
**INFORMED CONSENT LETTER**

Date

Addressee’s name and title
Addressee’s address

Dear ____________:

The purpose of the study entitled, *Ontario Colleges and the Introduction of Degrees: Mission Drift or Sustaining the Mission?* is to determine whether or not the introduction of degree-level education in Ontario colleges constitutes mission drift. The study will look at the rationale and conceptual construction of the CAATs in their original development and whether the rationale for introducing degree-level programming in the CAAT sector is consistent with the original criteria. By focusing on the period between 2002 and 2012, the study will also look at whether or not the intended purpose for the introduction of degree-level education in Ontario colleges is being fulfilled.

The study is being undertaken under the supervision of Dr. Pascal, OISE/UT and is part of the requirements for a doctoral degree. The data is being collected for the purposes of a Ph.D. thesis and perhaps for subsequent research articles.

As part of the research, 15 interviews will be conducted with a sample of individuals drawn from across government and various institutions that were (are) involved in the decision to develop or not develop degree programming. The interviews will last for about one hour, and will be arranged for a mutually convenient time and location. (The interview can be conducted via the telephone if that is preferred.) During the interview, participants will be asked questions about their professional role, their affiliated institution, and/or involvement in the decision process. Participants may decline to answer any question(s) that they are not comfortable with, and may terminate the
interview at any time. At no time will participants be judged or evaluated and at no time will participants be at risk.

It is intended that each interview will be voice recorded and later transcribed. A transcript of the interview will be forwarded to you for review and authorization within two weeks of the interview, at which point you are free to make any deletions or corrections to your responses. Authorized transcripts should be returned to the investigator within 14 days of receipt. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time simply by notifying the investigator.

The information gathered from the interviews will be kept in strict confidence and will be kept in a locked box, which will be stored in a locked file cabinet situated in the investigator’s home office, and only the investigator and supervisor will have access to the data collected. All information will be reported in such a way that individual persons and their affiliation with institutions cannot be identified. Each interview participant will be assigned a numerical reference (e.g. participant # 1, participant # 2), and the term ‘institution’ with an addendum (e.g. institution “A”, institution “B”) will be assigned to the organization affiliated with interview participants. The use of organizational pseudonyms will ensure that the identity of participants cannot be linked to a specific organization thereby safeguarding and protecting anonymity. All raw data (i.e. transcripts, field notes) will be destroyed five years after completion of the study. At all times, your privacy and confidentiality will be protected and respected. No personal information will be used or disclosed in the study, in publications or public presentations associated with the research. Codes and pseudonyms will be used where necessary to protect your identity.

Although there are no direct benefits to you as a result of participation, a summary of the results may be provided to you upon completion of the study. There are no known or anticipated risks to you as a participant in this study.

If you have any questions regarding the study, or require additional information please contact me on 416 788 2241 or during office hours at 416 675 6622 ext. 4852 or by email jason.galea@utoronto.ca. You may contact my supervisor Dr. Pascal on 416 716 7245, or by email at Charles.pascal@utoronto.ca should you have any comments or concerns prior to or resulting from your participation in this study. You may also contact the UofT Office of Research Ethics for questions about your rights as a research participant at ethics.review@utoronto.ca or 416-946-3273.

Thank you in advance for your participation.
By signing below, you are indicating that you are willing to participate in the study, you have received a copy of this letter, and you are fully aware of the conditions above.

Name (print): _________________________

Institution (or affiliation): _________________________

Signed: _________________________

Dated: _________________________
APPENDIX C

OISE
ONTARIO INSTITUTE FOR STUDIES IN EDUCATION
UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

TRANSCRIPT AUTHORIZATION

TRANSCRIBED INTERVIEW HERE

I ________________________ have reviewed the transcript of my interview conducted by Jason Galea on (DATE) associated with the study entitled, *Degree Granting and Mission Drift: An Exploratory Investigation of Ontario’s Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology.*

I agree that this transcript with any amendments, or deletions as noted on the document, is an accurate representation of my contribution to the study. I authorize the investigator Jason Galea to include this information in the data, with the understanding that my privacy and confidentiality will be respected at all times, as set out in my Consent to Participate. I am aware that I may withdraw this consent at any time by advising the researcher.

I understand that the investigator will keep the authorized transcript secure, and it will be destroyed five years from completion of the study.

NAME OF PARTICIPANT: ____________________________________

SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT: ____________________________________

DATE: ____________________________________

INVESTIGATOR: ____________________________________

SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR: ____________________________________

DATE: ____________________________________
APPENDIX D

List of Interview Questions

Questions were tailored to participants and had increasing detail. The following are samples of the types of questions that were asked during the interviews.

What research was undertaken to determine whether the college should offer degrees?

What new policies have been established as a result of degree-granting in the institution?

What was the public mood at the time of the introduction of college degrees and how did it influence the decision to offer or not offer degrees?

What were the reasons for degree granting status for Ontario colleges?

What critical needs of students were identified that led to the decision to offer or not offer degrees? How did you identify those critical needs?

How has the introduction of degree granting in Ontario colleges affected student transfer options?

Did the introduction of college degrees address the well-documented challenges that underrepresented groups face in PSE?

What impact issues have you experienced with other academic institutions?

Is there a distinct identity to the CAATs that has remained constant since their inception?

Is the college mission compromised or changed by offering the college degrees? Could this change in any way compromise the focus/values of the colleges?

How is the college degree viewed as compared to the traditional degree from universities?

Does the college degree fit within the accepted ideas about the mission of the colleges?

What impact, if any, are college degrees having on diploma-level programming?

What was the make-up of the initial planning group?

What difficulties or conflicts did you encounter in initiating this change in your college? (Faculty/resource/facility problems?)
What recommendations do you have for college leaders seeking to establish the college degrees in their institutions?

In addition to meeting PEQAB standards, how do you ensure program quality? (Internal/external?)

Are the costs of providing programs different between the college degree and traditional diplomas?

How is competition for enrollments and allocation of provincial funds being addressed?

What lessons have been learned?

Is there anything else you would like to add with regard to any aspect of the college degree?