

# The no job myth explodes

The word has been out for several years now: If you really want to get a job, forget about university and learn a trade, or go to community college, or start looking for work right after high school because a BA degree won't buy the groceries.

But the word hasn't been getting through to the people doing the hiring.

Despite the doom-and-gloom forecasts, a new survey shows that those university graduates nobody supposedly wanted any more have the lowest unemployment rate of any group in the economy and they're earning considerably bigger salaries than community college graduates.

A university degree may not be an automatic ticket to success but it certainly helps, says a study done by Statistics Canada. The more education you get, the more it helps. Graduates who went on to get master's degrees are earning 38 per cent more on average than those with BA's. And those with PhD's, at least in Ontario, are earning even more.

Even the general arts and science graduates who were supposed to be lost in an age of specialization are earning more money than most community college graduates after two years in the work force. It's taking that group longer to find a job. They often have to start at a lower level than the trained specialists but, in the end, they're going farther.

universities are making a comeback. For the first time since 1975, enrolment in the province's universities is expected to go up this year, although the Grade 13 graduating class is smaller.

"Employers in general seem to be putting a lot of value on the university degree," Harvey said. "University graduates have better prospects of getting into a job, they have less unemployment and they're more likely to earn higher wages than their counterparts who don't."

"It's hard to think of an occupational field where the educational requirements are not being upgraded."

Added Wayne Gartley, executive director of the University and College Placement Centre, which helps graduates of both streams find jobs. "All statistics still show a university education is the best way to get into the employment market and to have a good career."

The latest employment figures put it even more clearly. In July, university graduates had a 2.8 per cent unemployment rate, compared to 4.3 per cent for community college graduates, and 8.2 per cent for high school graduates. A survey of the 1976 university and college graduating classes in 1978 by Statistics Canada found that those with a BA had a median salary of \$14,813, while those with three or four year community college diplomas had a median salary of \$13,129.

"The myth about the unemployed

"The jobs are out there, and they'll eventually find them, but no one taught them how to go about it," said Gartley of the placement bureau, which has prepared a guide showing thousands of jobs a graduate can qualify for with a general BA.

"Most people still have a very limited idea of what occupations are available to them," he said.



While there are 20,000 careers in Canada, "they tend to say 'okay, I'll be a teacher or doctor or a lawyer' because those are the people they've been in contact with."

They don't even look at the options. "It takes a lot of hard work to plan a career but you owe it to yourself to do it because that's how you're going to be spending the next 40 years of your life."

At the moment, there is an over-supply of lawyers and teachers, but that hasn't stopped students from going into those fields. If they do, "I think they should be well aware of their other career

alternatives," he said.

"What are you going to do if you don't get that teaching job? Where could you use those skills instead?"

"That's where they're making the mistake," he said. "You can get all sorts of really beneficial skills in teachers' colleges but it's taking them up to a year to find where they can use those skills."

Experts say you shouldn't plan your career strictly on the basis of what jobs look good at the moment, since all that could change by the time you graduate.

On the other hand, there's no point in taking something you really like if there are no jobs in the field.

Arthur Kruger, dean of arts and science at U of T, worries that too many students are shifting out of the humanities into areas like computer science, economics and commerce — areas where the job market is brighter.

"I'm very worried we're turning out large numbers of people who are technically trained, and less and less people with a broad liberal training and exposure to the humanities."

"It's partly industry's fault," he said. "There's an assumption that a business major is better-suited for a business degree than a philosophy major, and it may not be true."

"The philosophy major has been taught how to think clearly, how to put his thoughts down on paper. You may have to invest a few bucks training him in marketing, but I think we would have a healthier society for it."

But the times may be changing.

"Education has been on a downhill slide for some time now and in my cautious view, it has hit the pits and is on an uphill climb again," Harvey said. "My bet is that by 1985, you'll be reading articles on the shortage of university specialists again."

## Graduates who went on to get master's degrees are earning 38 percent more on average than those with BA's.

The ones who had the foresight to move into such high-demand areas as accounting, engineering and computer science are being snapped up by employers before they even write their exams.

"The message is clear — the more education you've got, the better your chance of success," said Edward Harvey, an education and job forecaster for the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education.

Because the job market has tightened, "it may be even more important to have a university education today than it was 10 years ago," he said. It's a far cry from the image that emerged in the mid-70's when, after 10 years of unprecedented growth, universities were accused of having turned into degree-granting factories, pouring out an endless supply of worthless sheepskin.

Ontario students heeded the message and hordes of them turned to community colleges with their job-oriented courses. In the three years that followed, enrolment at the colleges jumped 22 per cent while at the universities, it fell by 6 per cent.

The logic was simple. Why invest a minimum \$3,600 a year in tuition, room and board for a university education that could lead to the unemployment rolls. Community colleges were closer to home, tuition fees were lower and employers seemed to want the kind of specialized training they provided. But with new figures emerging on what's actually happening out there in the work world,

graduate has been exploded," said Will Sayer, information director for the Council of Ontario Universities. "It may take the general degree-holder longer to get there, but they are getting the jobs." Harvey said the myth began because in the exploding economy of the 60's everyone who emerged from a university had several job offers waiting. But that had more to do with the need for workers than the fact they held degrees, he said.

When the economy returned to normal in the early 70's unemployment began to hit the university level for the first time and the shocked graduates found they had to scramble for jobs. The word got around that a degree was no longer an automatic passport to employment.

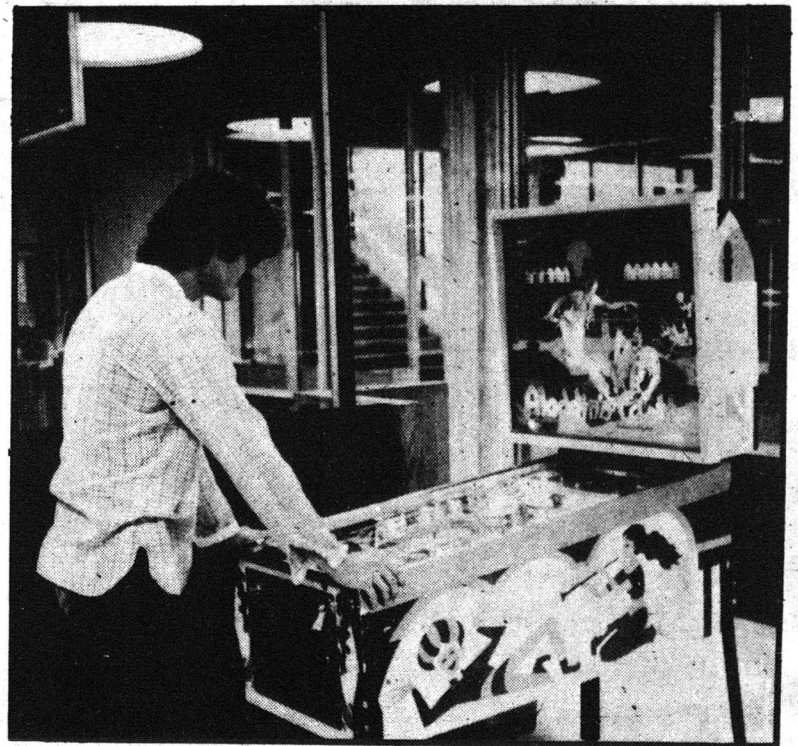
University officials say they've always known their graduates were getting jobs, but it took the latest surveys to prove it.

To bolster their claims even further, the universities have launched a \$200,000 tracking system with the Ontario Ministry of Colleges and Universities to find out how the 1979 class made out.

Although the low unemployment rate for graduates is encouraging to university officials, they warn that this year's arts and science graduates shouldn't expect to step into a job without a lot of searching. Many will have to settle for jobs they think are beneath them.

But statistics indicate that through promotions and job switches they'll eventually make their way up the career ladder.

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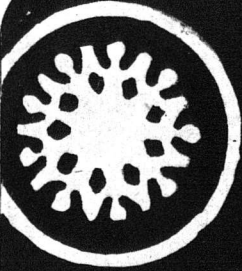
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