
Hopes and Hurdles: Ontario College Degree Graduates in Graduate School

Presented to
ONCAT Annual Student Pathways Conference
April 16, 2018
Toronto, Ontario

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Background

- ▶ Over the past 10 years Ontario Colleges have conferred over 10,000 bachelor and honours bachelor degrees in over 100 programs
- ▶ The Ontario government recognizes graduates of the programs as having the skills, knowledge and capacities of an honours degree credential
- ▶ This credential is recognized by the Ontario Qualifications Framework (OQF), and is the exact same as the Ontario University Undergraduate Degree Level Expectations (UDLEs)

Problem

- ▶ The academic trajectory of College Degree Graduates is largely unknown
- ▶ Common stories suggest College Degree Graduates have difficulty in gaining acceptance to graduate school despite having a recognized degree
- ▶ Anecdotal information suggests there are systematic barriers in both policy and practice
 - ▶ i.e. Some institutions may have admission policies that require a 'university degree' rather than a 'recognized degree'
 - ▶ i.e. CDGs may be unjustly devalued due to reputational bias

Goals and Purpose

- ▶ To identify trends in College Degree Graduates applications to graduate studies
- ▶ To identify ways in which colleges can support their students in preparing for graduate studies
- ▶ To support the development of policy and practice across Ontario that enhances access to graduate programming for all degree graduates

Primary Questions

1. Who goes where?

- Which programs are students coming from?
- Which programs are they applying to?
- Are there pathways /relationships between the sending and receiving programs and institutions?

2. How do they fare?

- What was the application process like for students?
- Were there conditions of acceptance?
- Were they awarded scholarships?
- Do they graduate?

3. Who doesn't go?

- Where are they applying?
- What are the reasons for the rejection?

4. How can colleges/programs support CDG's in accessing and succeeding in grad school?

Research Design and Data Collection

- ▶ **Semi-structured phone interviews with college degree graduates**
 - 2013 and 2014 cohort alumni that have requested transcripts
 - Inquire about applications made, experiences in application process, and their preparation and support at the college

- ▶ **Semi-structured interviews with College Registrars**
 - All participating college registrars
 - Inquire about experiences and patterns in supporting student applications

- ▶ **Focus groups**
 - College administrators/faculty/staff
 - To be determined

Alumni interview methodology

- ▶ **Data provided by colleges included:**
 - ▶ 2013 and 2014 alumni contact information, program, GPA and whether or not they requested a transcript
- ▶ **Alumni contact by registrar's office to alert them to the study and provide opt-out**
- ▶ **Telephone interviews taking place between March 19 and April 19, 2018**
- ▶ **Semi-structured interviews taking approximately 30 minutes**

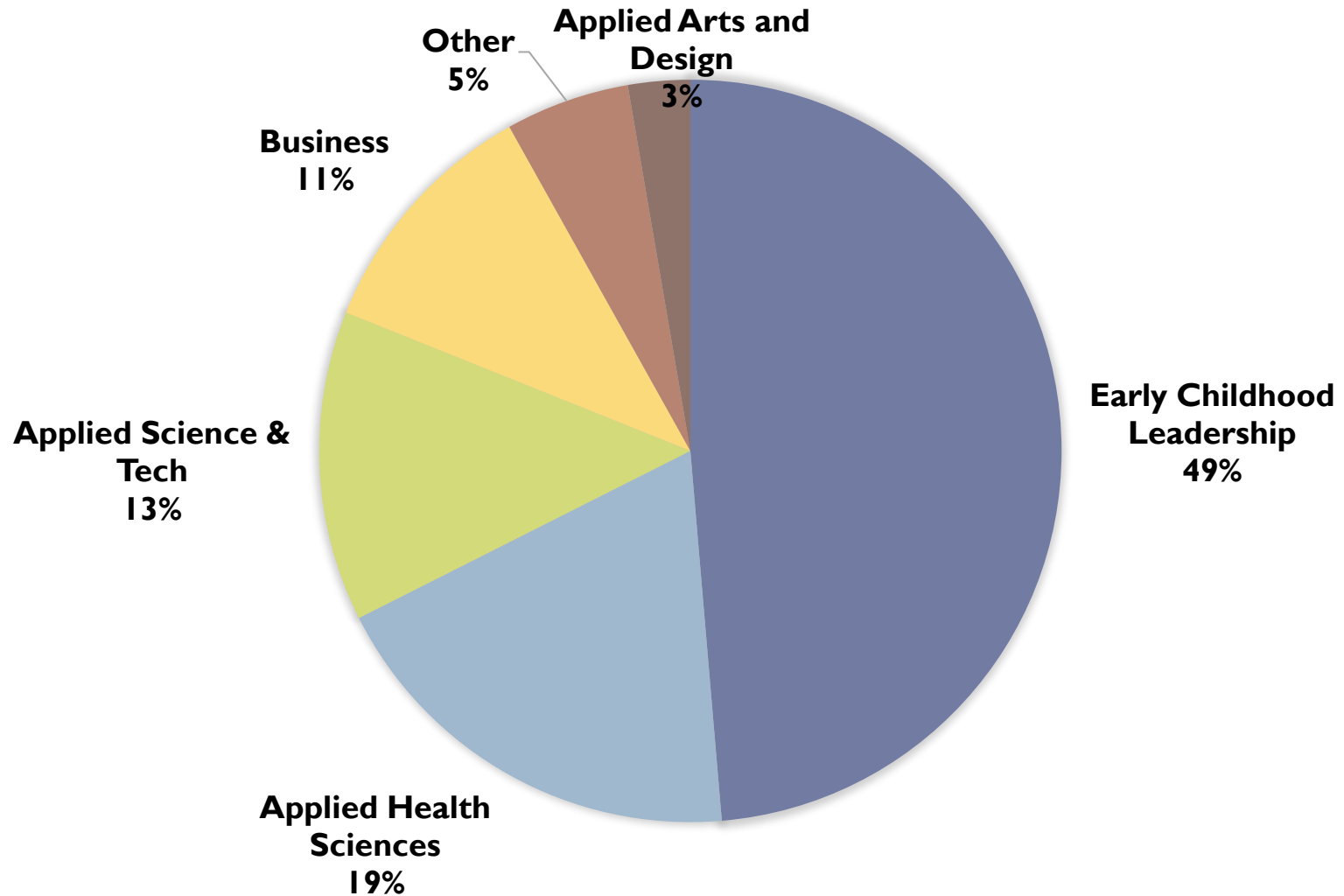
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- ▶ Preliminary findings from alumni interviews from 6 of 9 colleges

Sample population for presentation analysis

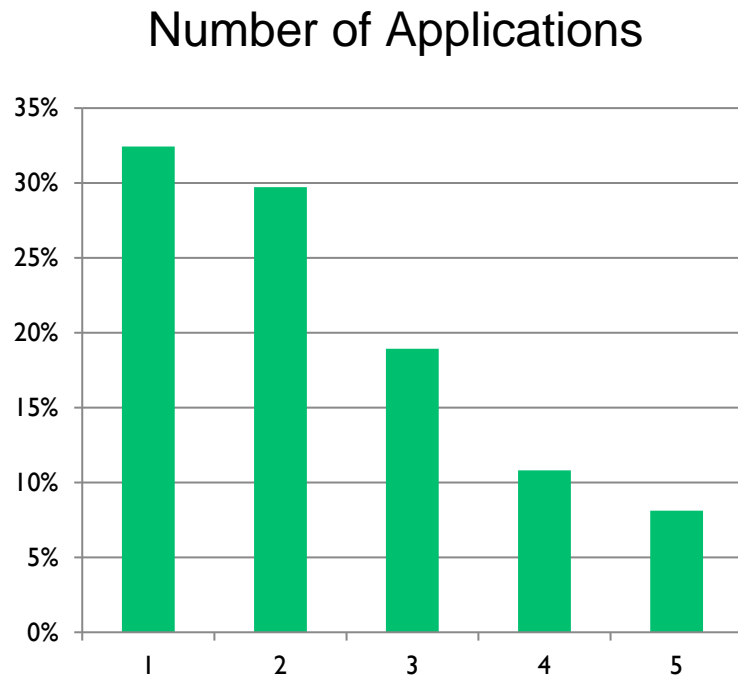
- ▶ 2259 degree graduates from 6 colleges
- ▶ 14% requested their transcripts
- ▶ 304 individuals are currently in the survey sample
- ▶ 224 individuals (75%) had current contact information
- ▶ 31 individuals (13%) had not yet been contacted at time of analysis

- ▶ **37 individuals (16%) participated in the interview at the time of analysis**

College programs respondents graduated from



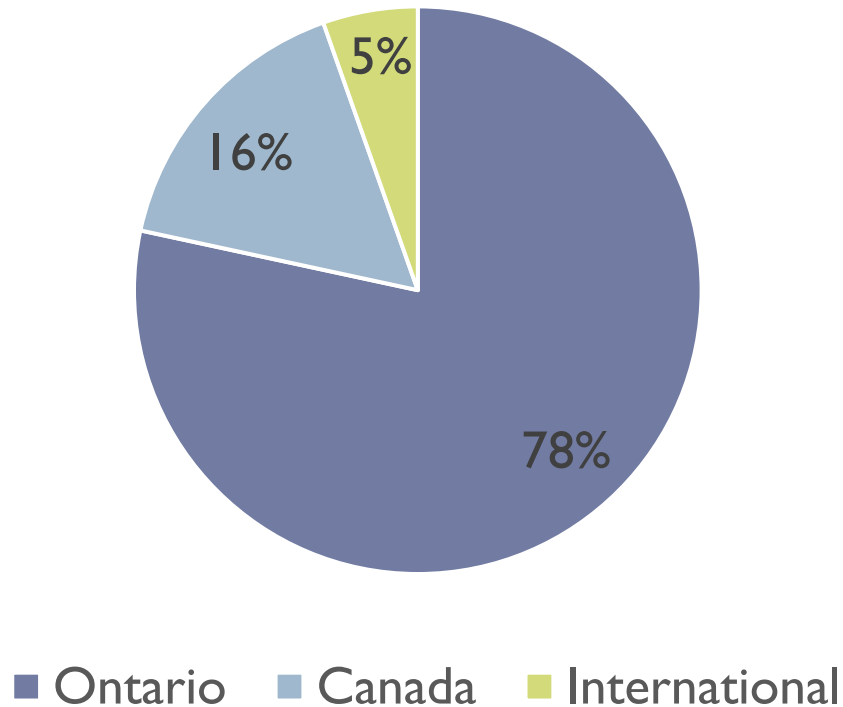
Number of Applications



- ▶ Average number of applications made: 2.3
- ▶ Multiple applications were more likely to come from respondents applying to teachers' colleges

Application Destinations

Grad School Destinations



Top Ontario destinations

- ▶ Western (19%)
- ▶ University of Toronto (13%)
- ▶ York University (13%)

▶ **95% of alumni were accepted into at least one program**

▶ Acceptance rate of applications: 65%

Conditions of acceptance and additional challenges

- ▶ 88% (49 out of 56) acceptances had no conditions attached
- ▶ Cases where conditions were attached:
 - ▶ Maintain a 75% GPA
 - ▶ Take additional courses
- ▶ One case of conditions concerning the substance of the applied degree.

Rejection Rate & Reasons

- ▶ Rejected Applications: 35% (n=30)
- ▶ No clear pattern of reasons for rejected applications, given small number and range of reasons:
 - ▶ Not meeting GPA cut-offs
 - ▶ Other components of application (written exams, interviews, wait-listed)
- ▶ Three cases where reason offered was that the degree was not from a recognized university

Stories of applicants

- ▶ “Robert” - Applied Science and Technology program graduate
- ▶ “Beth” – Applied Science and Technology program graduate
- ▶ “Michelle” – Early Education and Leadership program

Preliminary findings

- ▶ College degree alumni ARE gaining entry to graduate programming
- ▶ College applications are subject to some inaccurate policies at some universities
 - ▶ I.e. Not degree recognised

Next Steps

- ▶ Continue conducting interviews with remaining college degree graduates
- ▶ Further analysis of college supports for transitions to graduate school
 - ▶ I.e. Perceptions of college preparation, support and advice for graduate school applications
- ▶ Interview with College Registrars
- ▶ Conduct focus groups with college faculty and staff

Expected Outcomes

- ▶ Study will address both structural and reputational barriers in CDG's accessing different programs/institutions
- ▶ Findings and patterns in CDG rejections will present options for improving policies and relationships between sending and receiving programs/institutions
- ▶ Results will provide evidence of the success of individual students and demonstrate the quality of college degree programs



For more information

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