

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Footsteps beating to OC's door

We knew it would happen we just didn't know to what extent.

Historically when economies contract and unemployment rates increase colleges and universities will see an increase in demand for their programs and courses.

All of a sudden people are clamoring to get their application accepted and to start school sooner than later.

This past week the registrar's office at Okanagan College's Kelowna campus has had more foot traffic than ever before with students wanting to apply and register for classes all within the span of one week.

These last-minute students challenge the age-old myth that you have to apply months in advance to get accepted into college. The truth is that at most community colleges across Canada many students are still being accepted into programs where there is space.

This method of last-minute applications is very common for colleges



Jane Muskens

SCHOOL'S
IN

but not for universities.

Most Canadian universities have much stricter deadlines and usually will not accept applications past a certain date—usually late spring or early summer.

There are many reasons behind these strict deadlines with the most important being that universities admit based on grades.

Universities need to determine a student's grade average before they can be admitted, which takes time.

Colleges on the other hand tend to admit students on a first-come-first-served basis as long as they meet the general and program entrance requirements.

Although this too can be time consuming, it allows a student to walk

into a college's registrar's office with a sealed official transcript indicating that they meet a program's entrance requirement and if there is space in the program they can be admitted and registered fairly quickly—no grade average has to be calculated.

For students who decide in August to go back to school they need to be prepared to find that some programs and courses will be full.

If they do get into a program, especially an academic program where students pick their classes, they may find that they won't be able to get into the courses they need, such as first-year English, as these will be full.

They might also find the popular courses that all students want to take are full as well. So they have to be prepared to go on a waitlist or pick something else.

I know that many students apply and register late because they can't decide if they want to commit to school or not.

Many students who graduate from high school

find they want a break before they go to college or university.

This is understandable when you have spent 13 years in the public school system.

In reality what happens is that students leave high school, work at a summer job that pays very little and realize very quickly that they want more.

By August they can't see themselves in that job past Sept. 15 let alone an entire year. These are the students who end up in the registrar's office on Aug. 31.

If you have the desire to go back to school there is no sense waiting, so my advice to you is to start this September if there is space in the program you want to take.

What most students don't know is that if you're still undecided, Okanagan College and most other colleges will admit and register students in January.

Jane Muskens is the interim registrar at Okanagan College.

jmuskens@okanagan.bc.ca