

Give me freedom, or give me – college?

DANIELLE WEBB
CUP ATLANTIC BUREAU CHIEF

ANTIGONISH (CUP) – While wandering around the Eaton Centre in Toronto this winter, I paid a visit to Santa Claus. When posed with the quintessential holiday question: "What do you want for Christmas?" I asked Santa to bring me a big-girl job – one that paid more than minimum wage and would last longer than a year.

Christmas morning came and went, and my dream job wasn't wrapped in a box with a pretty green bow under the tree. Now in the home stretch of my degree, I'm still facing graduation without secure employment waiting at the finish line.

With economic uncertainty and reports of companies going under or posting deficits – each translating into smaller hiring budgets – a lot of my fellow soon-to-be-university-graduates are facing similar situations.

Let's face it: Jobs are hard to come by,

and they'll be hard to come by for a while. Most economists are not predicting a positive spike to the economy until mid-2010.

While I try not to succumb to the go-back-to-school-while-waiting-for-a-job back-up plan, others are viewing further education as a viable way to weather the economic storm.

It's not traditional academic programs that are seeing the enrolment boost; it's college programs that promise students direct routes to the job market upon graduation.

Catchy slogans for technical programs adorn billboards across the country. For example, advertisements for George Brown College in Toronto include the slogan: "George Brown gets you the job," claiming that nine out of 10 graduates are employed within six months of graduation. The college offers programs like nursing, information technology, culinary arts, and graphic design – all fields that are currently in desperate need of employees.

Schools like Humber College and Conestoga College, both in Ontario,

are seeing applications for 2009-2010 increase by 15-17 per cent.

In Atlantic Canada, the drought in skilled trades like carpentry and electrical work are so dire that even some of the schools are having trouble filling teaching positions.

Economic downturn or not, some people are always guaranteed work.

But, as more of us fresh university grads consider college to actually gain some real-world work experience, one

result also seems inevitable.

The whole convoluted and tuition-filled process is breeding an over-qualified workforce that will be ready for the picking in two or three years. It will undoubtedly leave the job market more competitive than it is now, with more graduates with more skills looking for jobs.

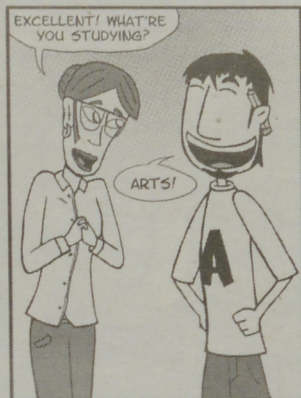
Maybe I should go back to school. Sooner or later, my humble history undergraduate degree will become as common as a high school diploma, and

I'll still be looking for a job with few skills backed up by an institution's certificate.

On the other hand, for the first time, I don't have my future planned out. I don't know what my next step will be, but one thing is certain: The possibilities are endless. So for the first time, I plan to leap head-first into the job market and prove myself based on my skills and the strength of my character.

I'm kind of excited to see what that will bring.

Art & Lit



By Chris Nyarady

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Jackie Dableh

A graduate from UNB, Jackie chose the CGA program because she knows that the CGA designation will give her that competitive edge in today's marketplace. As a staff accountant at EPR Daye Kelly & Associates, a CGA public practice accounting firm in Fredericton, Jackie is gaining valuable experience in accounting, tax and auditing while studying towards her CGA designation. Enrolling in the CGA Program of Professional Studies was an important part of Jackie's plan to reach her career goals.

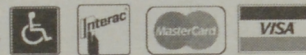
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