

ENROLMENT UP

OTTAWA (CUP)—Just as campus administrators began to worry about declining enrolment, along came the tail end of the baby boom and the Summer of Unemployment.

Recoiling from the worst job market in 45 years, Canadian students have enrolled in courses this fall in record numbers.

Stats. Canada predicts that full-time university and college enrolment will reach 693,000, up 19,000 from 1981-82. Including part-time students, more than one million Canadians now attend post-secondary institutions.

The startling story coming out of this fall's registration is the reversal of the usual enrolment pattern: for the first time in years, university enrolment has increased faster than college enrolment.

Full-time university enrolment will be 414,000, up 3.2 per cent from 1981-82, according to Stats. Canada. Full-time college enrolment is expected to reach 279,000, up almost two per cent.

Zoltan Zsigmond, a Stats. Canada researcher, said university enrolment is increasing faster because people with university degrees are weathering the recession much better than people with college diplomas. And both groups are more likely to find a job than less educated people.

Overall unemployment for 15 to 24 year-olds jumped from 11.8 per cent in July 1981 to 19.6 per cent a year later. But among people in the same age group with a university degree it only rose from 6.8 to 10 per cent. For 15 to 24 year-olds with a college diploma, unemployment rose much more rapidly in the same period, from 5.7 to 13.6 per cent.

"With more education it is easier to find a job," said Zsigmond. "But this does not mean that all those with a diploma or degree will find an appropriate job according to their education."

Zsigmond said the better educated are pushing the less educated out of work in the scramble for a diminishing number of jobs. Youth unemployment rates are dramatically higher among less educated groups. In July, a staggering 34 per cent of 15 to 24 year olds with a grade eight or less education were unemployed.

He said that during a recession more people upgrade their education to increase their job prospects.

He said the proportion of people attending Alberta universities declined during the economic boom there because well-paying jobs were available to people holding only bachelor's degrees.

With the collapse of the boom, more Albertans are staying on at university to get a master's degree, even

in programs like commerce and engineering.

A smaller factor in this year's enrolment increase was the movement of the tail end of the baby boom through post-secondary institutions, said Zsigmond.

Many people have the mistaken impression that the baby boom has already passed through the 18 to 24 age bracket, but the largest number of births in Canadian history was in 1959.

The birth rate went into a steep decline in the early 1960's, so enrolment should presumably start to fall after 1982-83. But Zsigmond said the state of the economy and the availability of

student aid will be major determinants of next year's enrolment.

He said that post-secondary education is much more affordable now than it was in the last period of very high unemployment, the 1930's. Because of this, today's students are more likely to remain in school longer, he said.

So the long-awaited enrolment decline remains. But the unemployment crisis will only postpone the decline for a year or two, said Zsigmond.

"By 1985 for sure."

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