

Columbia College Calgary Student-Centered Approach to Education

Introduction

Imagine you are a student pursuing further education for the purpose of moving towards a career goal. This journey involves a lot of steps, some small and some big. Your success can be measured through a number of different questions:

Did I graduate?

Am I employed in the field that I have been trained in?

Do I feel confident in my position, and excited about growing in my new career?

Do my future peers and future employer have confidence in me?

Did I reach my educational goals?

The answers to these questions are important indicators to help you evaluate your journey. These questions represent important outcomes that we, at Columbia College, measure every day.

What is an educational institution's role in helping you reach your goals?

A great deal of educational research, reports, and books have been published over the last sixty years to try and help evaluate how institutions can support you as you move forward on this path. Some of this research focused on understanding how individuals learn and what enhances their ability to learn, while other research describes effective methods of delivering educational programs while addressing the unique challenges, fears, barriers, strengths, and goals of each individual student.

Columbia College is dedicated to looking at the ever-evolving nature of research in education to help strengthen student-centered outcomes. This focus is incorporated in the design and delivery of our services (enrollments, accommodations, career advising, etc.), programs, and courses. As we continually review our outcomes, we invite you to review our outcomes as well. To review Columbia's outcomes, please read the following Columbia College document:

"What Outcomes Matter Most to Students"

<http://www.columbia.ab.ca/about-columbia/outcomes-matter-students/>

Who are our students?

A large portion of Columbia's students are between the ages of 25 and 45. In fact, a good number have children and all have bills to pay. Almost all have felt some degree of apprehension about attending any post-secondary educational institution. While it is common to have these feelings, making the decision

to go to school is taking a solid step towards reaching your dreams of a better life. So, how can we at Columbia College help your dream come true?

The following pages provide examples of Columbia's student-centered approach to higher education that sets us apart from other institutions. We are proud of the caring and supportive culture we have created since being established in 1986 and are proud to see the impact on the lives of our students. As our students succeed, we then feel we have succeeded.

1.0 Student-Centered Approach – Prior to Enrolment

1.1 Do you feel adequately informed to make the best decision on where to go to school? How confident are you that the program you are entering is the right program for you?

Columbia's website was designed to provide a lot more information to help you make a more informed decision.

Columbia College presents a lot of information so that you can make a more objective and informed decision regarding your future career, employment possibilities, and earning potential. We hope this information will help you move your life forward, and give you a clear picture of how the program you are researching fits into your goals. Our Admissions Advisors will provide you with a tool that will assist you in making an informed decision about which institution to attend. Take a look at the document called "*Which College is Right for You*" listed under the program you are considering or under the "*Columbia: The Right Choice?*" section on the website. It is all about helping *you*, the student, find the right program for you, and to help you succeed.

1.2 Do you worry about travelling through this decision alone?

Student Advisors at Columbia College are focused on helping you make an informed decision.

What are your questions? What are your concerns? The primary role of Columbia College's Student Admission Advisors is to take the time necessary to listen to you. Their role is to provide as much assistance as needed in answering your questions and to assist you in better understanding your program of interest and how to proceed through our enrollment process. It is not about how fast we can sign you up, but rather how we can help you make a more informed decision. Our advisors' wages are not commission based. We want the right students in the right programs. If our program is not right for you, we will try and help you see what other options might work for you.

1.3 How do I know if I'm ready academically to start my program?

We provide free assessments that help you identify your readiness for a program.

While most institutions require students to provide transcripts of their previous education, at Columbia we have learned that too often transcripts do not provide a clear understanding of the student's current academic skills in high school subjects such as math, English, and

science. We want every student to succeed at Columbia. Our assessments help both us and you better understand which of our resources would benefit you the most. For example, our assessments may reveal that you may need some extra help in one or more subjects to meet entry requirements before beginning a certain program. If you need help and have met other entry requirements, we offer help for tuition-free College Prep courses.

1.4 How can I prepare to return to school?

At Columbia we provide you with a welcome orientation to help prepare you for your program of study.

An important component of our orientation for professional students is our 'Welcome Orientation'. In this 'Welcoming Orientation' you will be introduced to a number of Microsoft 365 applications that you may be using as part of your Columbia College Student 365 account. You will be introduced to Columbia College's 'Learning Management System' and shown how to access your courses online. You will then be introduced to a number of different support resources that you have access to in your program including:

- Learning Strategist
- Career Services Advisor
- Student Services support
- Transcripts and transfers support
- Student LifeWorks Resource center

1.5 Will I be treated respectfully as an individual? And not a number being pushed through a program factory?

We proudly approach every day by finding ways to help you within our personal, respectful, and learner-centered culture.

We believe our primary role is to help you succeed; all people are equal – regardless of their backgrounds. With this in mind we have created a learner-focused culture that does all it can to treat each learner in a respectful manner. We operate on a first-name basis. We interact with you in a caring and personal manner and go out of our way both inside and outside of our classrooms to create a supportive, stimulating, experiential (hands-on), and high quality educational experience.

2.0 Student-Centered Approach – Program of Study

2.1 How do I know if what I'm learning will be relevant in my job?

Our Professional Program facilitators have both academic qualifications as well as years of experience in industry to share with you to help you prepare for the 'real world'.

To ensure that you are learning from the most qualified faculty members, Columbia only hires Professional Program professionals who are well educated and experienced in the area

they will be facilitating at the College. Some eighty percent of our faculty are also currently working in industry and bring direct industry knowledge, dynamism, and experience to the classroom. This allows you to learn relevant theories, as well as learn how these are applied in the real work world.

2.2 How do I know that my learning needs are a priority?

At Columbia our faculty effectiveness is measured by your success.

Our classroom is the heart of the College. Columbia evaluates its faculty on the basis of their effectiveness in helping you acquire the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and professional behaviours outlined in your course syllabus. Our faculty understand that what they are helping you learn is a critical building block that contributes to your future success. Faculty effectiveness is therefore measured through your ability to apply your newly acquired classroom knowledge and skills in your labs as well as your cooperative education/practicum workplace. Finally, faculty effectiveness is measured through Student Satisfaction surveys, classroom observations of their work, successful completion of courses and programs, and the overall results of students on National exams.

2.3 Will my facilitators be approachable? Or, will I be on my own?

Our faculty provide additional support inside and outside the classroom.

Smaller class sizes allow faculty to get to know you on a first-name basis. This also allows faculty to better understand your needs, motivations, and learning challenges. Faculty will interact with you and provide guidance, coaching, and support in a respectful and caring manner. This interaction takes place before, during, and after classes.

2.4 How do I know that my future employer will value what I'm learning?

At Columbia we put great value on the opinion of employers and the needs of industry.

Columbia has established Employer Advisory Boards in each of our Professional Programs in order to take advantage of industry advice on the changing needs in the marketplace and how these changing needs can be addressed in your program.

The College further asks cooperative education/practicum employers to complete performance evaluations on students working in their organization. Their feedback helps us identify the aspects of your program that are well-supported in industry and should continue, as well as program areas that may need further emphasis or strengthening for future graduates entering the industry.

2.5 Will I get an opportunity to learn onsite of a workplace and network with industry?

At Columbia College you complete a cooperative education/practicum course/s with each Professional Program or Employment Training Program.

A cooperative education/practicum course is a key component in each government-licensed program at Columbia College. This field-based work experience will give you opportunities to see how theory courses can be applied directly to a workplace environment. This provides you with the opportunity to observe workplace culture and workplace practices. You will be able to interact with individuals performing the duties you may be expected to perform in the future. You will also be engaged in networking with a number of different individuals within your career area.

This exposure will allow you to develop a relationship with the organization that may lead to future employment opportunities within that organization, an employment referral to another organization, and/or a valuable employer reference. You will also be able to list this practical experience on your resume as an example of previous work experience. Previous experience is something most employers are seriously looking for when hiring new employees.

Some of our cooperative education/practicum employers are so impressed with our students during their work experience that they offer either part-time employment while these students are still enrolled in our program, and/or employment immediately following graduation.

2.6 Will I get lost in large classes?

We intentionally created an institution with smaller class sizes than most institutions in North America.

A class size of 75 to 175 students is not unusual in many educational institutions in North America. At Columbia College we believe that it is critically important to keep class sizes smaller so you have more time to interact with other students as well as your facilitator. Smaller class sizes will increase your ability to learn and succeed academically. Our classes tend to range between 16 and 40 students. In fact, the ratio of students to faculty in our labs is about 1 facilitator to 8 students, depending on the program and activity. This ensures that the facilitator is able to observe each student and provide individual guidance and correction where needed as you learn new skills and techniques. Our average class size, by design, is among the lowest in North America.

2.7 How long will it take for me to go from starting my program, to actually working in the industry?

Columbia College's students are able to complete their program in a shorter period of time and still achieve great results.

It is quite common for students to enroll in institutions across North America that deliver 26 weeks of classes over a 52-week period. This is achieved by providing students with many

breaks, including no summer classes. This method of delivery can seriously slow down how long it will take to complete your education.

At Columbia College we have removed most of the breaks in the delivery of our programs so that you can complete, for example, a two-year diploma in 52 weeks rather than 104 weeks. This allows you to graduate sooner and enter the workforce sooner. This is referred to as an accelerated delivery model. In our model we cover the same amount of educational material and graduate students who are equally qualified as students attending longer programs. In fact, students from Columbia College, who write national exams, score as well or higher than students attending programs that take longer to cover the same material.

2.8 If required, is there support for students who need to write a national exam?

Some programs at Columbia provide review classes in preparation for the student's National exams.

If you are in one of our accredited programs and are required to write a provincial or national exam, Columbia College offers review classes where you receive additional support and guidance as you prepare to write your exams. As long as you are committed and working hard, we will continue to work with you until you are successful. Students who attend these classes significantly increase their likelihood of passing the National exams. This is another example of how this College goes out of its way to help you succeed.

3.0 Graduation and Employment

3.1 After I graduate, how do I find a job?

We help you to transition from school to work.

It is probably fair to say the primary motivations for virtually every Columbia College student is to enroll in a program that will lead them to a better life, new employment opportunities, higher income, a more rewarding career, and an opportunity to play a more meaningful role in society. We understand these motivations. That is why we are constantly designing, developing, delivering, evaluating, and re-designing every aspect of our educational programs. We understand the needs of individuals and employers are constantly changing and to remain effective, we must be prepared to constantly change. Your future employment success is always paramount in our minds.

We also know that our work is not complete until we have provided assistance to help you – as a graduate – find employment in your field of training. Your success is our success.

Many students enrolling in Columbia's professional programs have a clear understanding of their career choice and the steps they will follow in achieving their education. Those who are uncertain can meet with a career advisor to further explore different choices. Upon entering our professional programs, you will be assisted to create an effective and contemporary, employment-ready resume. This is very valuable when seeking a practicum placement or employment. Prior to graduation, you will receive assistance in identifying and contacting prospective employers, preparing for and managing an effective interview, and

completing follow-up activities after a job interview. Before graduating, we will help you to take the necessary steps that will lead to employment in your field of training. This is why, to our knowledge, the employment rate of Columbia's students is one of the highest in North America. We continue to offer this support to graduates for up to one year after they graduate.

3.2 I'm worried the program may be too difficult, and I won't graduate. What are the graduation rates like?

We are very proud to say that our student graduation rate is one of the highest in North America.

For every 100 students who enroll in a one-year or two-year program in a public or private institution in North America, only about 60 of them actually complete their program and graduate. This low rate of success is shocking.

We are very proud to say the average graduation rate of our combined one-year and two-year programs at Columbia College is consistently over 80 percent. This means that individuals who enroll in our programs have a higher likelihood of completing their program at Columbia College and graduating. Columbia College's student success rate in program completion and graduation is well above the North American average.

3.3 At the end of the day, will I be employed in my field of training?

The employment rate of Columbia's graduates, in their field of training, is among the highest in North America.

To be employed in a field of training means that the student who graduated from a Practical Nurse Program would be employed as a Licensed Practical Nurse or a clearly related position. It does not mean the individual would be employed in an unrelated position such as a cashier, bartender, or sales clerk. Unfortunately, a large number of university and college graduates across North America find themselves employed in a position that is clearly unrelated to the program they completed. This should not be the case.

There are many factors and variables that can impact your employment after you graduate. Columbia College cannot – and should not – say to you that we can guarantee you employment. That being said, at Columbia College we are very proud to say that based on the average employment rate of all our licensed programs, we regularly see over 80 of every 100 of our graduates employed in their field of training. It is also not unusual for many of Columbia's students to be offered employment prior to graduation.