

The Changing Goals of Undergraduate Students During their First Year of Postsecondary Education



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Traditional Territories Acknowledgement

The University of Manitoba campuses are located on original lands of Anishinaabeg, Ininewuk, Anisininewuk, Dakota Oyate and Denesuline, and on the National Homeland of the Red River Métis.

We respect the Treaties that were made on these territories, we acknowledge the harms and mistakes of the past, and we dedicate ourselves to move forward in partnership with Indigenous communities in a spirit of Reconciliation and collaboration.



First-Year Students' Goals

The underlying assumptions of our study:

1. Transitioning to postsecondary study can be difficult for students, therefore, it is vital to design programs that effectively support first-year students.
2. Students have various goals in mind throughout their first-year experience.
3. Students' goals may change over time because of their experiences.
4. Understanding students' changing goals over time can enable service providers to:
 - Design better programs
 - Outreach communications

This research was conducted in partnership with Student Affairs at the University of Manitoba



Purpose of The Study:

Examine student goals across the first year of their postsecondary education, at four different time points to explore the changes over time.





Methods – Qualitative

Surveys completed by **1,567** students who self-identified as being in their first year.

Participants were asked the following question:

- What are your goals for your post-secondary studies this year?



Methods – Qualitative

Word Cloud Generation

- Using wordcloud.com
- Emphasized the most frequently used words
- Enabled thematic analysis

No character limit was imposed on responses.



Most Frequent Words

Time 1	Time 2	Time 3	Time 4
good	pass	GPA	GPA
classes	classes	grades	good
want	good	pass	grades
grades	grades	good	pass
well	want	classes	classes
new	GPA	want	courses
make	courses	courses	want
pass	year	make	year
year	well	friends	well
courses	make	year	faculty
friends	high	best	make
GPA	goals	well	can

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In Summary

1. Grades, either in terms of passing or good grades are consistently at the forefront of student's minds.
2. Students develop quickly a link between their goals and GPA.
3. Students only identify "friends" at the beginning of the term. Perhaps highlighting the important of social connection, but also challenge with maintaining that goal over time.



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 Social Sciences and Humanities
Research Council of Canada

Conseil de recherches en
sciences humaines du Canada

Canada



Thank you!

