

# Post-Degree decisions

## Waiting tables with a university degree?

### Maybe college is your next step

by Rathihha Egbert

**A**t a time when master's degree holders apply for low paying jobs, Dean Morin was determined to captivate recruiters by combining his undergraduate degrees with a diploma.

"It is the new edge," said Morin, Algonquin College public relations graduate, who also holds two BA degrees with concentrations in communication and geography.

Now, he is manager of marketing and communications at Traffic Injury Research Foundation.

Degree holders are increasingly being drawn to Ontario's community colleges to prepare themselves for the workforce.

"University trained my brain, but employers need hands-on skills. A master's degree will only give me more theory," said Morin. "Algonquin was highly recommended to me by a University of Ottawa prof as a good program to build onto a communications degree."

Sophie-Lise Mondou, human resources advisor and recruiter for Cactus Commerce, an e-business software and services provider, cautioned graduates to invest their time at a reputable institute.

"You are cutting your chances a lot if you have a diploma from a college that is not recognized by employers."

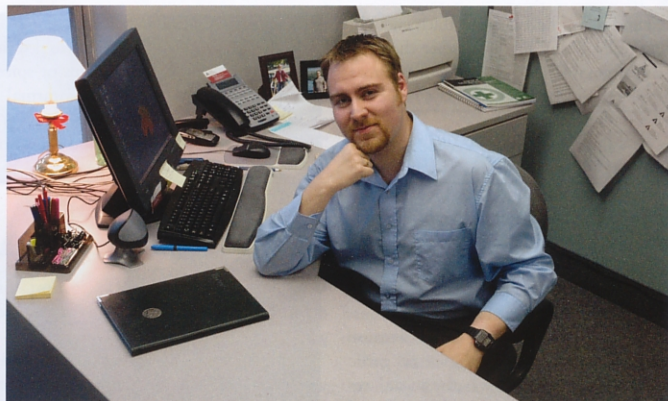
Jean Sauvé, Algonquin child and youth worker program coordinator questioned four university graduates about enrolling in a pilot project for an accelerated college program in Fall 2004.

"Their reason to come to college was they did not get enough practical training."

Although co-op placements are available both at universities and colleges, Sauvé said community colleges have more experience in the area since they have been doing it much longer.

Dave Chow, who has conducted departmental interviews for a leading hi-tech company in Ottawa, does not think that co-op terms are indicative of skill level.

"They have some familiarity with the work environment, but it doesn't necessarily mean



Dean Morin has been educated at both a college and a university and recommends the combination to any student.

that it's applicable to what an employer may be looking for."

Nevertheless, Mondou believes that co-op terms will better prepare a potential candidate for employment.

"They will have an idea of what you can and cannot do in the work environment," she said.

Overall, Chow and Mondou maintain that most employers prefer university degree-holders, but it is likely that a candidate with college credential will possess job skills.

Morin notices the irony of employers' prerequisites.

"The employment field is out of whack. Most employers want the degree but they also want the job skills," he said

Morin ignored negative comments from some family members and friends about "going down to college" after obtaining two university degrees.

According to Mondou, some employers find university degrees to be more involving than college because of the number of years that one must invest in learning theoretical approaches. "It's a mind-set," she said.

BA English graduate Adella Siemens, a second-year public relations student at Algonquin re-assessed her university educa-

tion as falling short of "what employers are looking for." She was motivated to return to college after customers interrogated her about working as a waitress.

"When I told them about my degree, they would give me the 'oh, you must have dropped out' look. I had a degree but I wasn't employable. I sure as hell didn't want to be a waitress for the rest of my life."

"It's really [about] how graduates can market themselves and that's what we help them with," said Jasmine Albagli, Carleton University career counsellor.

Rikke Wivel, director of communications for Monster.ca, said the higher you are on the rungs of the job ladder the more educated you have to be and the more you need to continue your education.

Morin advises individuals who are contemplating the college route to "go to college, without doubt, without hesitation."

"It can boost your chances of getting experience and what employers want," he said.

According to Albagli, a graduate's background and career goals will determine if college is an option.

"It is specific to each student and their circumstances," she said. "A lot of it depends."