

**The Gateway**  
**Indebted students less likely to stay in province of study**  
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Traditionally, the term "brain drain" referred to a loss of knowledgeable individuals to another country. But now, that term could be used to describe the movement of the best and brightest from one province to another.

According to a recent report, students that have high debt are less likely to remain in their province of study after they graduate from postsecondary.

Entitled "Next Steps: Upper-Year Canadian PSE Students' Future Plans and Debt," the report looks at the debt of senior students, their future plans, and the correlation between them, using data from 18 different postsecondary institutions.

The results seem to be a good thing for Alberta when compared against Atlantic Canada.

The study states that "students from the Maritime provinces had the highest levels of accumulated debt, [and] students in Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Prince Edward Island were less likely to remain in their province of study than their counterparts in Ontario and Alberta."

Even though the study showed that Alberta fared better, the provincial government was quick to point out that the study, using only the records of full-time undergraduate students, missed out on a large segment of postsecondary students in Alberta. According to Rachel Bouska, spokesperson for Alberta Advanced Education and Technology, "two thirds of Alberta's learners [...] are part-time or distance learners."

Furthermore, the government highlighted earnings in relation to debt.

"It is important to keep in mind that while student debt has increased, so did graduate earnings. The [survey] has found that earnings have increased at relatively the same pace as student loan debt," said Bouska.

In 2005-2006, the average total net debt (after any federal and provincial loan remission has been applied) was \$13,747, but in 2008-2009, it increased to \$17,120.

According to Aden Murphy, Vice President (External) for the U of A Students' Union, the issue is that graduation and higher earnings can seem like a long ways away for some students.

"[Students] work part-time during the year [which] causes a significant strain on their academics," he said.

The report was released by the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations, the Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance, the Council of Alberta University Students, and the Alliance of Nova Scotia Student Associations.