

News Release

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June 30, 2008

College Education A Great Investment: Credentials Boost Lifetime Earnings \$880,000

By Steve Bareham, Instructor

"If you dream big enough, you can be just like Tiger Woods or Michelle Wie."

Most parents have relayed a version of this message to their children in the hope that it would serve to motivate. But dreams can hurt if they obscure achievable career options.

"Many young people dream of riches and fame in professional sports, but the odds of becoming a professional athlete of Tiger Woods' stature are on par with winning a lottery," says Kate Tognotti, instructional dean, School of Hospitality & Tourism, Selkirk College. "Contrast a few thousand pro athlete spots with hundreds of thousands of management careers in Canada's booming recreation, hospitality, and tourism industries. And, to continue with the lottery metaphor, education is a much better bet because a lottery-sized financial gain of \$880,000 awaits college diploma holders."

Tognotti says this impressive number was revealed in a recent study by the Association of Canadian Community Colleges (ACCC), titled: Economic Contribution of Canada's Colleges and Institutes. The research looked at income and economic impact from the nation's 150 colleges, institutes and polytechnics. A key finding is that Canadian college graduates with two or three-year diplomas earn an average \$41,937 per year, 29% more than people with only high school diplomas. "This means high school grads earn \$32,509, on average, per year, \$9,428 less than a college diploma holder. Projected over a working lifetime, the difference is dramatic—a college grad will earn \$880,000 more."*



Kate Tognotti

Tognotti says proof of the significant income boost brought about by a college education also addresses an issue that can deter college attendance. "Statistics Canada reports that the cost of going to college is a barrier for some, but consider that the annual income for college grads increases \$3,800 for every year of college attendance. The addition of nearly a million dollars to a lifetime of earnings makes education a very good investment and one that leads to a more comfortable lifestyle.

"Still, Selkirk College has to be sensitive to cost concerns," she notes, "so we're taking a 3rd Millennium approach to minimize costs by offering a new 100% online certificate in golf operations management. The golf industry faces a critical shortage of trained managers, so this 'earn as you learn,' 10-course Golf Club Operations Online (GCOOL) certificate lets existing golf club staff upgrade their skills without leaving the workplace. The high tech courses also give significant

advantages to people who want to break into the industry; it's impressive to be able to include accredited management courses on job applications because it shows initiative and dedication.

"Online courses are very appropriate for the Gen X and Gen Y generations that have grown up using computers and the Internet," says Tognotti. "Harvard University researchers report about a million computer-based learners in 2007, a 22-fold increase over 2000, but that's still only one per cent of education courses. Online, distance education, is the fastest growing segment of education, but we haven't seen anything yet. By 2019 researchers believe about 50% of courses will be delivered online."

Canada's tourism and recreation industries have never offered more or better opportunities, Tognotti adds. "Not only are new properties opening at a rapid rate, but there will be a huge sucking sound from the management vacuum created by Canada's retiring baby boomers. Millions of new, high paying jobs will be created in the coming decades," says Tognotti, "but the successful candidates will be those who planned and prepared by getting post secondary credentials to capitalize on these rewarding careers."

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For information about the online certificate: www.selkirk.ca/ht/golf/