



**Home Educated Students in Post-Secondary Institutions:
A Look at the Research
By Michael Wagner, PhD**

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An increasing number of home educated students are applying for admission to post-secondary institutions in Canada. Home schooling has become more common in many parts of the country since the 1980s. As more students follow this path, a growing number will be seeking higher education. Admissions personnel will benefit from being familiar with the research concerning home educated students pursuing entrance into post-secondary institutions.

Homeschooling first became popular in the United States. Current estimates of the number of homeschooled students in that country are around two million. Because the number is so high, it is not surprising that there are also a large number of home educated students seeking admission to colleges and universities. Admissions staff at many institutions are dealing with home educated students on a regular basis.

This situation has provided sufficient material for researchers in the United States to study how well home educated students have done in post-secondary settings. So far all of the research has basically pointed in the same direction: students who have been educated at home do just as well (or better) than their traditionally-educated peers. This finding is important because it demonstrates that homeschooling provides an adequate foundation to prepare students for success at college and university. Admissions personnel should be willing to admit these students into their institutions, and to develop the policies necessary to ease this process.

Over the last ten years or so, the *Journal of College Admission*, the official publication of the National Association for College Admission Counseling, has carried a number of articles about research on homeschooled students who have entered colleges and universities. In fact, the Fall 2004 edition focused specifically on this issue.

Paul Jones and Gene Gloeckner

Early in 2004, Drs. Paul Jones and Gene Gloeckner published a study comparing the first-year performance of homeschooled and traditionally schooled students in a variety of post-secondary institutions. The home educated students did very well. The authors summarized their results as follows: “Although not statistically significant, the average first-year GPAs, credits earned in the first year, ACT Composite test scores, and ACT English, Mathematics, Reading, and Science and Reasoning subtests for home school graduates were all higher than traditional high school graduates” (Jones and Gloeckner 2004a, 20).

As a result of their study, these scholars concluded that home educated students are sufficiently prepared for post-secondary learning: “The academic performance analyses indicate that home school graduates are as ready for college as traditional high school graduates and that they perform as well on national college assessment tests as traditional high school graduates” (Jones and Gloeckner 2004a, 20).

The same two authors published another study a short time later in the special issue of the *Journal of College Admission* on homeschooling. This one measured the attitudes and perceptions of admissions officers towards homeschooled students.

One of the most interesting findings was that an increasing number of colleges and universities in the United States were adopting official homeschool admission policies. The authors note that a 1986 study found that very few post-secondary institutions had such policies. Twelve years later another study found that 47 percent had homeschool admission policies. And their own study in 2004 revealed that nearly three-fourths had an official admission policy for homeschooled graduates (Jones and Gloeckner 2004b, 19). Clearly, in recent years, more and more colleges and universities have been adopting these kinds of policies. This undoubtedly reflects the increasing number of home educated students seeking admission and the institutions’ willingness to serve this segment of the population.

Jones and Gloeckner believe this to be a good trend, but also note that some admissions policies are rather difficult for the home schooled applicants. They recommend that colleges and universities “reevaluate their policies to ensure the removal of unnecessary barriers for these students” (2004b, 21).

They conclude by suggesting that colleges and universities would benefit by providing simple admissions procedures for home educated students: “Schools that are unwilling to make their policies more homeschool-friendly will see homeschool graduates gravitate elsewhere and miss admitting a large, and often highly successful, percentage of the student population” (Jones and Gloeckner 2004b, 21).

Dr. Brian Ray

Dr. Brian Ray, the most accomplished researcher on home education in the English-speaking world, also had an article published in the *Journal of College Admission’s* special edition on homeschooling. He argued that the available research clearly indicates “that the home-educated college applicant is very likely to succeed in college, both academically and socially” (Ray 2004, 10).

Standardized testing has provided clear evidence that home educated students are academically prepared for post-secondary work. Ray points out that “ACTs and SATs are the best-known test predictors of success in university or college in America. Both the SAT and ACT publishers have reported for several years that the scores of the homeschooled are higher, on average, than those from public schools” (2004, 8).

Ray reaches basically the same conclusion as Jones and Gloeckner regarding admission policies for home educated students. Writing to admissions officers he offers the following advice: “Make

sure your college has policies for receiving applications from and admitting the home-educated and make sure that your admission policies are reasonable, based on research and broad experience, and fair” (Ray 2004, 10).

Kellie Sorey and Molly H. Duggan

Four years after publishing the special issue on homeschooling, the *Journal of College Admission* published a study on the perceptions of admission officers about home educated students entering community colleges. This article, by Kellie Sorey and Molly H. Duggan, recommends that community colleges modify their admission policies to accommodate the expected increase in homeschooled applicants: “Overtime (sic), homeschoolers will gain greater ground in higher education institutions, and institutions that adapt their policies, programs and services to incorporate the needs of homeschoolers will be best prepared for their arrival” (2008, 24).

Sorey and Duggan briefly review the research on the performance of home educated students in college, and note that there are no concerns about their academic ability. Those students can be expected to perform just as well as traditionally-schooled students. Admissions officers have no reason to fear that admitting home educated students into their institutions would lead to problems.

Admitting homeschooled students requires the development of alternative methods from those usually followed to admit traditionally-schooled students. Sorey and Duggan explain that home educated students do not have the same sorts of records that admission directors normally rely upon:

Although it is simple to suggest homeschooled applicants should be required to complete the same admission procedures as their non-homeschooled counterparts, in reality this may not be a simple process. Homeschoolers are different in that they may have different documentation or possibly no documents to submit for evaluative purposes. While a lot can be said for the flexibility of the community college admission process, improvements can still be made to assist both the homeschooler and admission personnel (Sorey and Duggan 2008, 27).

In the end, these two scholars arrive at much the same conclusion as the previously mentioned researchers: “Since the number of homeschool applicants is increasing, community colleges need to develop and publicize formal admission guidelines for this population. These guidelines should be flexible, fair, reasonable and based on research and address the needs of local homeschoolers” (Sorey and Duggan 2008, 27).

Michael F. Cogan

In 2010 another article about homeschooled students entering post-secondary institutions appeared in the *Journal of College Admission*. The purpose of this study, by Michael F. Cogan, was to examine the academic outcomes of homeschooled students who had been admitted into a particular medium-sized university in the Midwest of the United States. Cogan found that the homeschooled students did very well compared to their traditionally-schooled peers. He writes:

Descriptive analysis reveals homeschool students possess higher ACT scores, GPAs and graduation rates when compared to traditionally-educated students. In addition, multiple regression analysis results reveal that students, at this particular institution, who are homeschooled, earn higher first-year and fourth-year GPAs when controlling for demographic, pre-college, engagement, and first-term academic factors. Further, binary logistic regression results indicate there is no significant difference between homeschooled student's fall-to-fall retention and four-year graduation rates when compared to traditionally-educated students while controlling for these same factors (Cogan 2010, 24).

He cautions against drawing too strong of a conclusion from his study because the sample size for his data was not large. However, his findings reflect that of previous researchers who had considered the same question. That is, home educated students seem to perform at least as well as traditionally-schooled students in higher education.

It should be clear, then, that admissions personnel should be interested in recruiting these students into their own institutions. As Cogan puts it, "Although the population observed in this study should not be considered generalizable to all undergraduates at all schools, the results do provide college admission counselors with further evidence that homeschooled students are prepared for college and may even be considered as high achievers when compared to non-homeschooled students" (Cogan 2010, 24).

Marc Snyder

Like Michael Cogan, Marc Snyder studied the comparative success rates of home educated and traditionally-educated students at one particular institution. His data was gathered from a Catholic university in South Florida.

Snyder notes that previous studies have shown that homeschooled students do just as well at post-secondary institutions as traditionally-schooled students. His own study added further evidence for that conclusion.

Snyder compared the test results and GPAs of homeschooled and traditionally-schooled students at his focus institution. The homeschooled students did very well in this comparison. He came to the following conclusion: "given the fact that homeschooled students scored significantly higher than traditionally schooled students in standardized achievement tests (the ACT and SAT) and in overall college GPA, it seems reasonable to say that the homeschooling movement is preparing students for academic success in college, specifically a Catholic college" (Snyder 2013, 305).

As a result of his study, Snyder recommends that Catholic universities increase their efforts to recruit homeschooled students, writing, "More explicit recruitment efforts should be made at targeting this group of students, with the intention of maintaining or even increasing its current population percentage" (Snyder 2013, 306).

Robert Kunzman and Milton Gaither

In 2013, two of the best-known researchers on home education, Robert Kunzman and Milton Gaither, published a comprehensive survey of the research that has been conducted on

homeschooling thus far. Their study summarizes what others have found on various aspects of homeschooling.

In a section entitled “Transition to College/Adulthood,” they discuss the studies on homeschooled students attending post-secondary institutions. The majority of these studies use quantitative methods. They summarize the results of studies that compared the academic performance of students as follows: “Most studies of this sort have found little to no difference on a wide range of variables between previously homeschooled and previously institutionally schooled students, though on a few measures homeschoolers consistently come out on top, if only by small margins” (Kunzman and Gaither 2013, 29).

Besides the specifically academic aspects of life at institutions of higher learning, home educated students also compare well on other measures. Kunzman and Gaither write, “Studies of other variables have found little to no difference between college students who were homeschooled and those who attended traditional schools. Studies of student retention and graduation rates have found no difference” (Kunzman and Gaither 2013, 29).

A few studies using qualitative methods have also been conducted. These studies’ findings are consistent with the findings of the quantitative ones: “The qualitative studies have largely found the same—that previously homeschooled college students transition well to college and do well in college” (Kunzman and Gaither 2013, 29).

Jones and Gloeckner, one more time

Jones and Gloeckner, whose articles from 2004 were discussed above, wrote a follow-up article in 2013 for a special issue of the *Peabody Journal of Education* on homeschooling. For the most part, it is a restatement of their previous material and conclusions. After almost ten years of following the situation, they still believe that home educated students do well at post-secondary institutions.

Considering the studies that have been conducted since they published their research, they make an important point: “It may be of interest to note that none of the studies reported higher standardized test scores for traditional education samples over homeschooled samples” (Jones and Gloeckner 2013, 311). In other words, for those who are skeptical about the academic success of homeschooled students at post-secondary institutions, thus far there is no research to support their skepticism.

Conclusion

It appears that all of the professional and academic research conducted so far on home educated students' performance in post-secondary settings arrives at the same conclusion: those students do at least as well as their traditionally-educated peers. This finding is important because it should provide impetus for admissions officers to adopt admission policies for home educated students, and to ensure that those policies do not impose an undue burden on the applicants.

In a society that values equality and diversity, no one who is qualified for and seeking post-secondary training should be denied that opportunity. Colleges and universities should welcome home educated students. Doing so will expand their pool of potential recruits and increase the diversity of their student population.

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