

**RYERSON
UNIVERSITY**

GRADUATING STUDENT SURVEY 2009

FOR STUDENTS GRADUATING FROM UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMS

**HIGHLIGHTS OF RESULTS
PREPARED BY THE UNIVERSITY PLANNING OFFICE**



GRADUATING STUDENT SURVEY 2009

Highlights of Results for Ryerson University

Introduction

In 2009, under the auspices of the Canadian Undergraduate Survey Consortium, Ryerson undertook a survey of students who were expected to graduate that year. Questions focused on students' satisfaction with their academic program and the University as a whole, as well as their plans for future education and employment.

The overall response rate for the Graduating Student Survey 2009 is 30 percent: 1,048 respondents were enrolled in full-time programs, and 142 were enrolled in part-time programs.¹

Ryerson has been a member of the Canadian Undergraduate Survey Consortium, a group of approximately 30 universities across Canada that conducts student surveys across participating institutions, since 1997. The Graduating Student Survey was also conducted in 2000, 2003 and 2006. A summary of results for these earlier surveys can be found on Ryerson's website at www.ryerson.ca/upo.

Ryerson's impact on students' growth and development

Graduating students were asked about their perception of the extent to which various activities and features of the University contributed to their growth and development. A list of these activities or features was provided to respondents, who were asked to rate the contribution of each to their growth and development with the use of a four-point scale: very much, some, very little, and none. Alternatively, respondents could indicate that a given activity was "not applicable."

Figure 1 summarizes the ratings provided by students for academic activities. Generally, graduating students indicate that classroom instruction, faculty knowledge of their discipline and faculty enthusiasm for subject material made substantial contributions to their growth and development.

Relative to other activities, the reported contribution of interactions with teaching assistants was fairly low. However, students who report that they have *been* a teaching assistant are very likely to indicate that the experience contributed to their growth and development.

Results are fairly consistent with those achieved in 2006, with statistically significant increases in two areas – the proportion of students indicating that use of library resources contributed "some" or "very much" to their growth and development has increased from 72 to 77 percent, and the proportion reporting this for co-op, internship or other practical experience has increased from 78 to 83 percent.

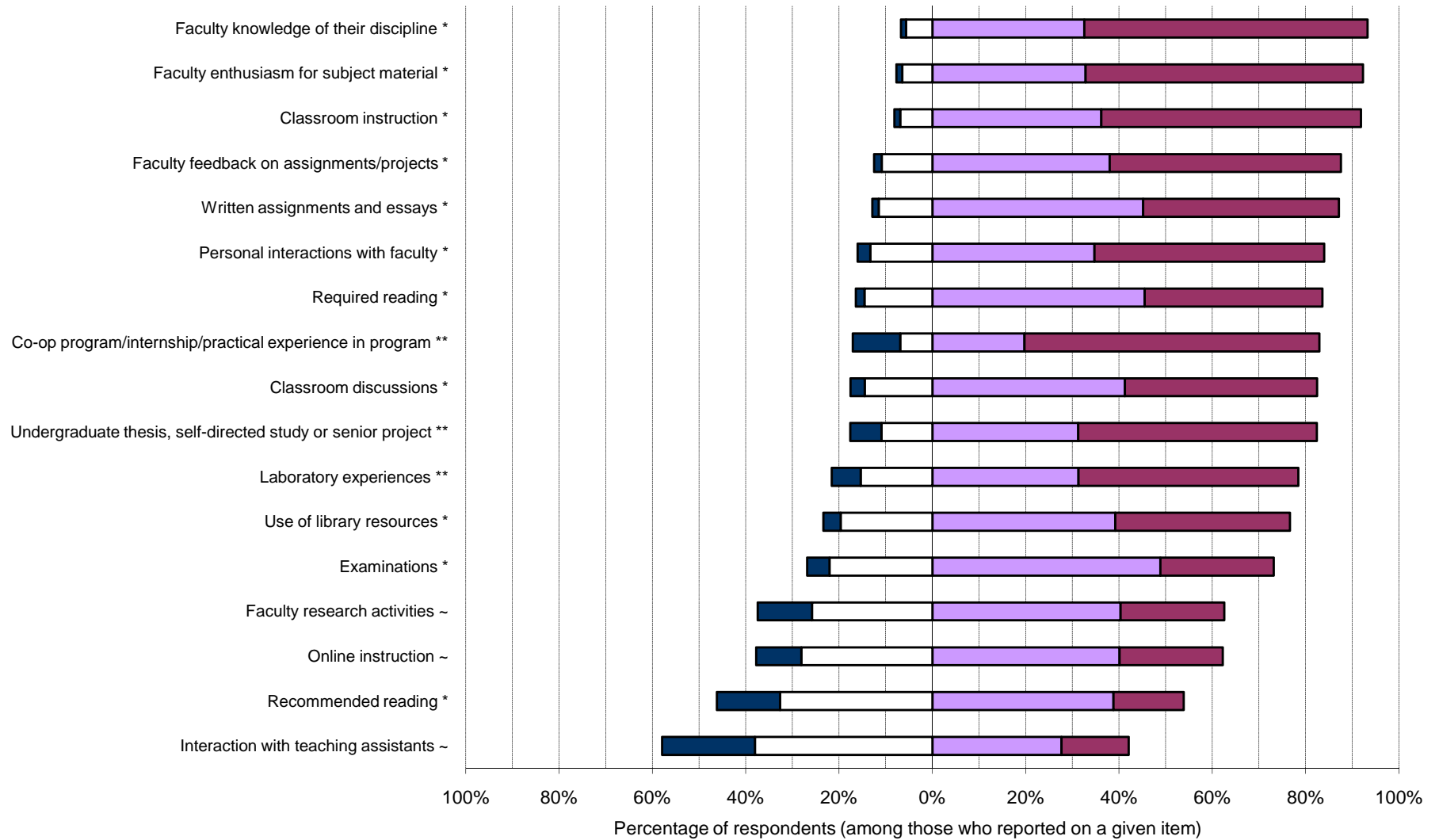
1. Nineteen times out of twenty, the percentages shown throughout this report are estimated to be accurate to within: 2.4 percentage points for full-time and part-time programs combined, 2.5 percentage points for full-time programs alone, and 6.9 percentage points for part-time programs alone.

Figure 2 outlines the ratings provided for a variety of co-curricular activities. Interactions with other students made the most substantial contribution to the greatest number of students. The vast majority of all respondents indicate that interactions with other students contributed to their growth and development, with 60 percent saying that this contributed “very much.” Exposure to students from different cultures is identified as contributing “some” or “very much” to the growth and development of 81 percent of respondents.

Other activities -- international study and exchanges, or being a teaching assistant -- are also rated highly by the respondents who report on them, but fewer than 10 percent of students indicate that they have participated in these activities. Relative to other activities, the reported contribution of campus social activities is somewhat low, and only about half of students report participating in these events.

Students’ ratings of the contribution of various co-curricular activities is fairly consistent with the results of the survey conducted in 2006. There has been a decline in the proportion of students indicating that campus cultural events (such as theatre performances, concerts and art exhibits) have made a contribution: 64 percent report that these events have contributed “some” or “very much” compared to 71 percent in 2006. Conversely, the proportion of students indicating that attendance at home games of Ryerson athletic teams has made a contribution has increased: 53 percent of students indicate that this activity contributed “some” or “very much” compared to 45 percent in 2006. (It should be noted that only students who indicate they have experienced these activities provide ratings for them. In the case of campus cultural events, this is 44 percent of all respondents; for attendance at athletic games, this is 13 percent.)

Figure 1: Contribution of academic activities to students' growth and development



NOTES: * At least 95% of respondents report on this item.
 ~ 80 to 89% of respondents report on this item.
 ** 70 to 79% of respondents report on this item.

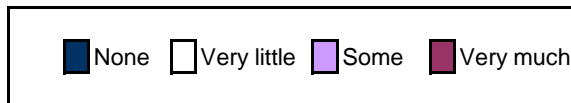
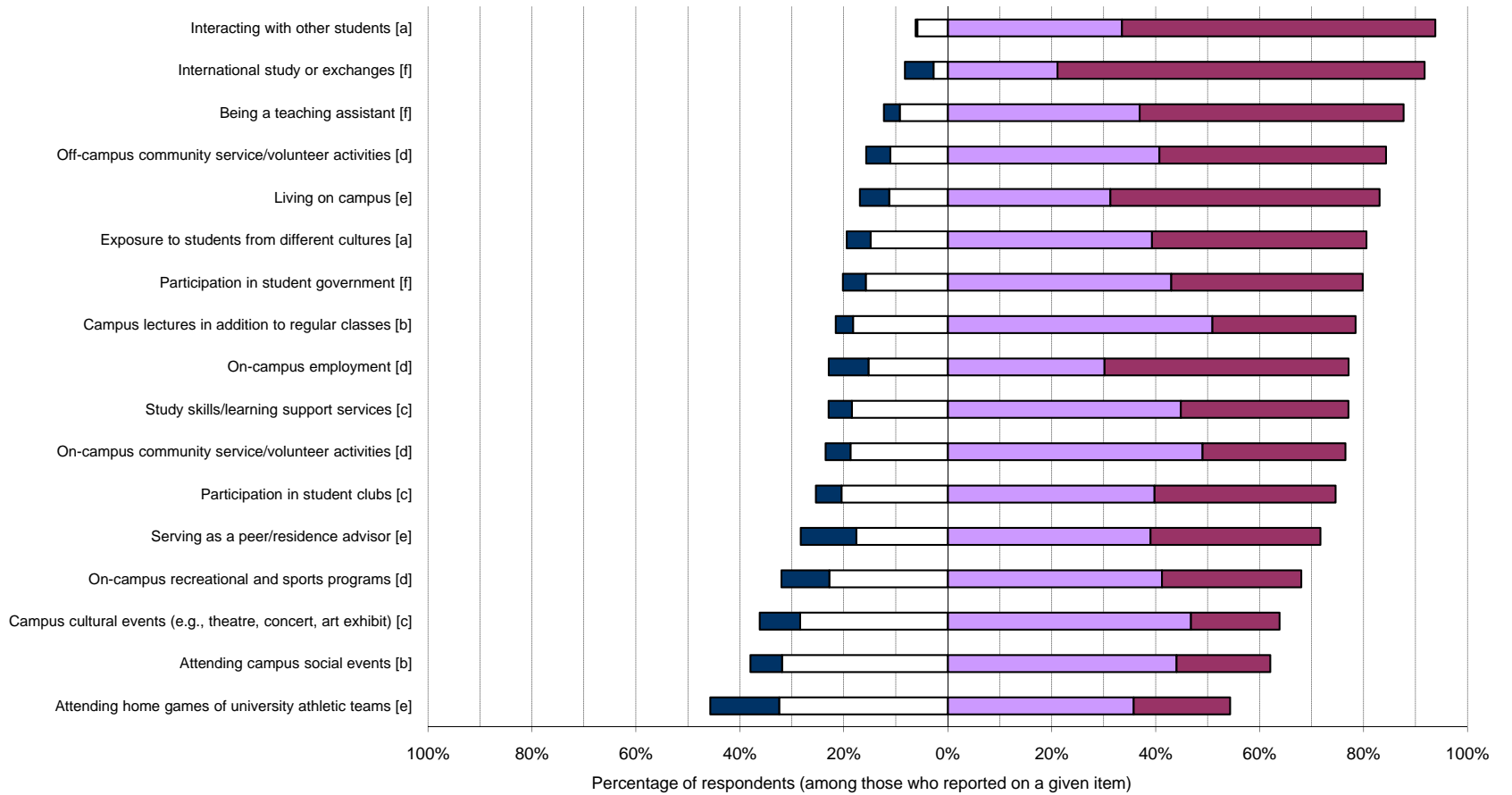
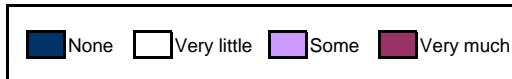


Figure 2: Contribution of co-curricular activities to students' growth and development



NOTES: [a] At least 89% of respondents report on this item.
 [b] 50 - 55% of respondents report on this item.
 [c] 40 - 45% of respondents report on this item.
 [d] 20 - 29% of respondents report on this item.
 [e] 10 - 19% of respondents report on this item.
 [f] < 10% of respondents report on this item.



The development of skills and personal traits

Ryerson's contribution: Graduating students were asked how well Ryerson helped them to build skills or develop personal traits in a variety of areas. For each skill or trait, the following scale was used: excellent, good, fair, or poor/fail. Alternatively, respondents could indicate that a given skill or trait was “not applicable.”

Figure 3 illustrates for each skill or trait the ratings provided by students. Generally, graduating students believe Ryerson made a substantial contribution to the development of their ability to work independently and to the development of broad knowledge in their major field of study. Students appear to be less positive about Ryerson's contribution to their mathematical skills or entrepreneurial skills. Interestingly, respondents are more positive about Ryerson's contribution to their skills in “analyzing quantitative problems” (61 percent) than they are with respect to mathematical skills (48 percent), although both items are rated as relatively low.

Compared to the 2006 round of the survey, there has been statistically significant, positive change on two-thirds of the skills or traits assessed. (The remaining third saw no significant change.) Areas with the greatest change include appreciation of the Arts, understanding and applying scientific principles and methods; understanding national and global issues, moral and ethical development, and preparation for graduate or professional school. The average increase in the percentage of students reporting that the University made a good or excellent contribution to these areas is 10 points. Increases have also been made in the University's contribution to entrepreneurial skills, interpersonal skills and effective learning and study skills.

Relative importance of skills and traits: Students were asked to identify which two skills or traits are the most important ones to develop, regardless of how Ryerson may have contributed. The skill or trait identified most commonly is self-confidence, which was cited by about a third of students, followed by personal time management skills, identified by one-fifth. (Three-quarters of respondents rate Ryerson's contribution to the development of their self-confidence as “good” or “excellent.” The University's contribution to personal time management skills is rated positively by 71 percent.)

Specific employment-related skills, leadership skills, and broad knowledge of one's field of study are named in the “top two” of 15 to 17 percent of respondents. Skills in identifying and solving problems, general skills relevant for employment, interpersonal skills and a commitment to life-long learning are named by 12 to 14 percent of respondents as being among the most important.

Students' satisfaction

Eighty percent of respondents indicate that their experience at Ryerson has met or exceeded their expectations.

Satisfaction with instructors: 92 percent agree that professors seemed knowledgeable in their field, and 89 percent report that professors were accessible outside of class to help students. The aspect of professors' teaching with which respondents appear to be the least satisfied is feedback on academic performance: 25 percent disagree with the statement that most of their professors provided useful feedback on their academic performance. (However, this represents improvement over results from 2006, when almost a third of respondents disagreed with this statement.) Figure 4 summarizes students' assessments of their instructors.

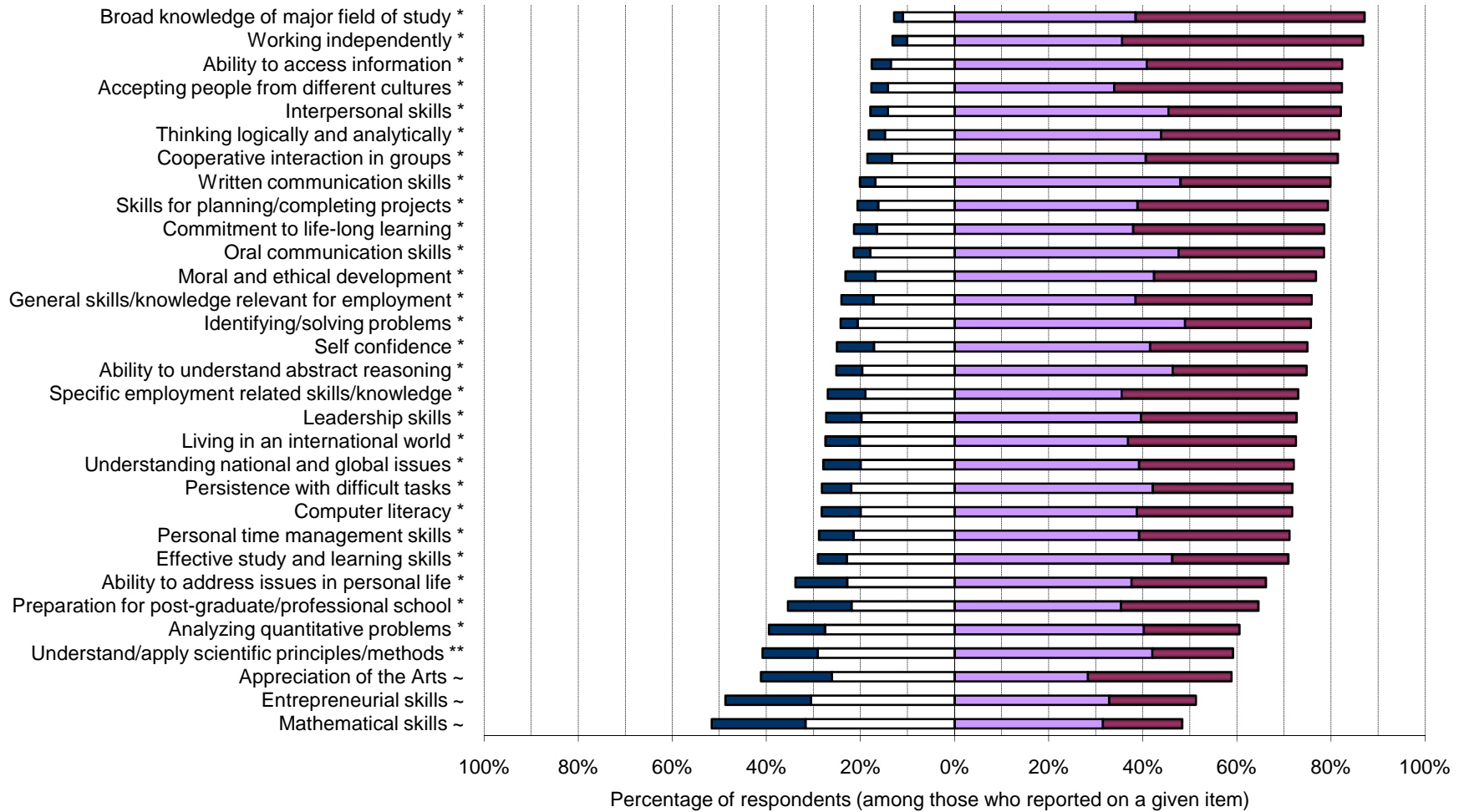
Compared to the 2006 round of the survey, reported satisfaction with instructors has increased in a number of areas. As mentioned above, a greater proportion of students report that most professors have provided useful feedback on their academic performance. In addition, a greater proportion of students indicate that most professors were knowledgeable of career opportunities in their field, and that some professors have had a major positive influence on their academic career.

The largest change from the 2006 round of the survey is the increase in the proportion of students reporting that they are satisfied with their experience with teaching assistants. This has increased from 61 percent to 71 percent of respondents.

Satisfaction with the University: 87 percent report that they are satisfied or very satisfied with their decision to attend Ryerson, and 85 percent are satisfied or very satisfied with the overall quality of education that they received. Two-thirds of respondents indicate that they are satisfied with the availability of information about career options in their area of study.

The aspect of Ryerson with which graduating students appear to be the least satisfied is that of concern shown by the University for students as individuals; almost half indicate that they are dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with Ryerson in this regard. (However, this has improved somewhat since the 2006 round of the survey.) In addition, 65 percent of students *agree* with the statement that they sometimes feel they “get the run-around” at this university. Ryerson is similar to other universities with respect to “concern shown by the University for students as individuals,” although it is somewhat higher than other Canadian institutions in terms of the proportion who believe they sometimes get the “run-around.” Figure 5 illustrates students’ ratings of the University.

Figure 3: Ryerson's contribution to the development of skills and personal traits



NOTES: * Over 90% of respondents report on this item.
 ~ 80 to 85% of respondents report on this item.
 ** 70% of respondents report on this item.

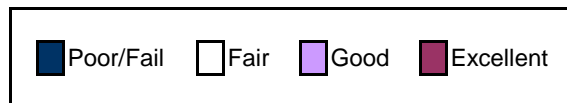
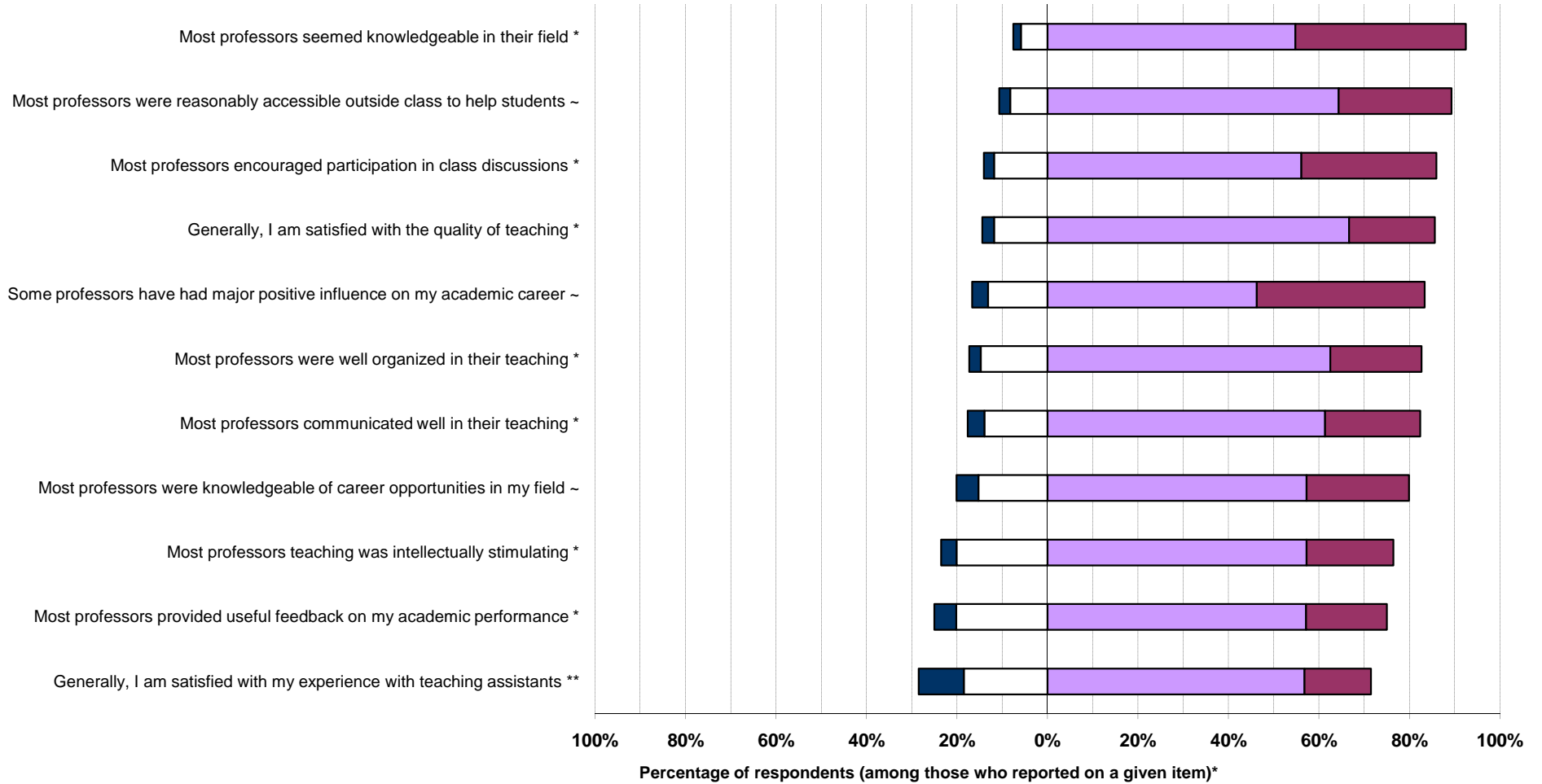


Figure 4: Students' satisfaction with instructors



NOTES:

* Over 90% of respondents report on this item.

~ 80 to 89% of respondents report on this item.

** 70 percent of respondents report on this item.

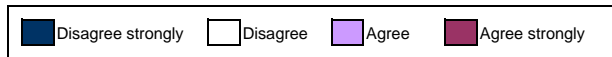
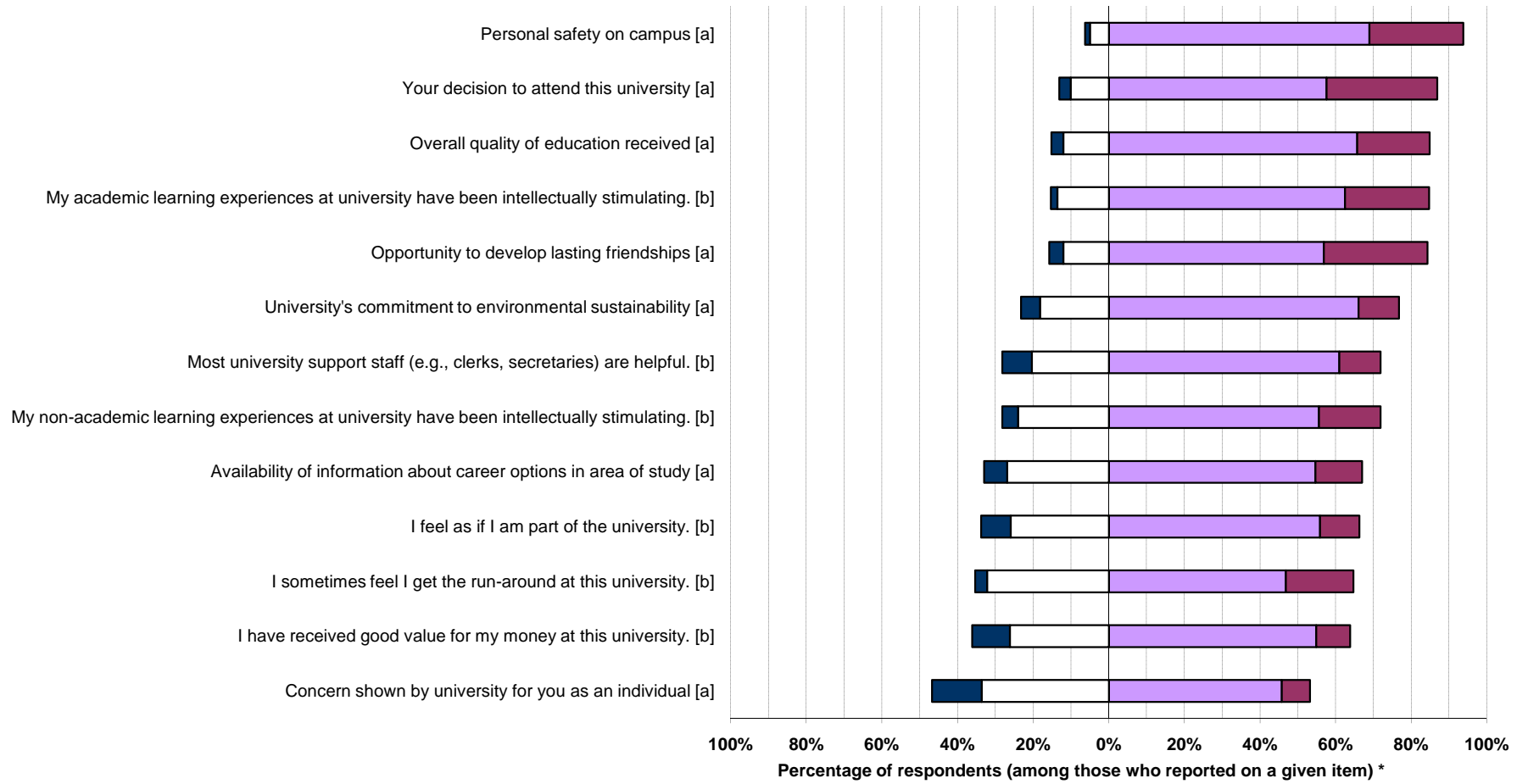


Figure 5: Students' satisfaction with various aspects of the University



* At least 90 percent of respondents report on each item.



Recommending Ryerson to others

85 percent of students graduating from full-time programs indicate that they would recommend Ryerson to others, as do 91 percent of those in the part-time group.

Among graduating students who would recommend Ryerson, 86 percent indicate that “the program” is one of the reasons. 60 percent identify “the professors” as a reason, and 55 percent identify “relevance for job opportunities.”

Some of the most common reasons for *not* recommending Ryerson are the same as those cited by students who *would* recommend Ryerson. Among graduating students who indicate that they would not recommend Ryerson to others, the two most common reasons are “the program” and “the professors.” (Because few students indicate they would not recommend Ryerson, the overall proportion of students citing a particular aspect of the University as a reason for not recommending is very small.)

Figure 6 summarizes the overall proportion of respondents identifying various reasons for either recommending or not recommending Ryerson to others.

Education financing and debt

Graduating students were asked for information about the means by which they financed their university education as well as the level of debt that they incurred.

Sources of funds: Among students graduating from full-time programs, sources most commonly cited as supplying funds include parents, family or spouse (cited by 51 percent) and government loans or grants (cited by 42 percent). Personal savings, earnings from current employment and earnings from summer work each were cited by about a third of students from full-time programs.

Debt: Approximately 61 percent report graduating with debt that they incurred to help finance their university education. Among these students, the most commonly cited source of debt is government student loans. Seventy-three percent of respondents with debt name this as a source. Loans from financial institutions and loans from parents or family are each named by over a quarter of students with debt.

Among those reporting debt, the median amount owed upon graduation is \$22,000 (mean = \$24,156). Among all graduating students, the median debt is \$9,250 (mean = \$14,828). The level of debt reported by students in this survey is higher than that reported by students graduating in 2006 – that year, the median amount among those reporting debt was \$20,000 and the median debt across all students was \$5,800. The distribution of students by level of debt is provided in Figure 7.

Figure 6: Percentage of respondents identifying reasons for recommending or not recommending Ryerson (n = 1,039)

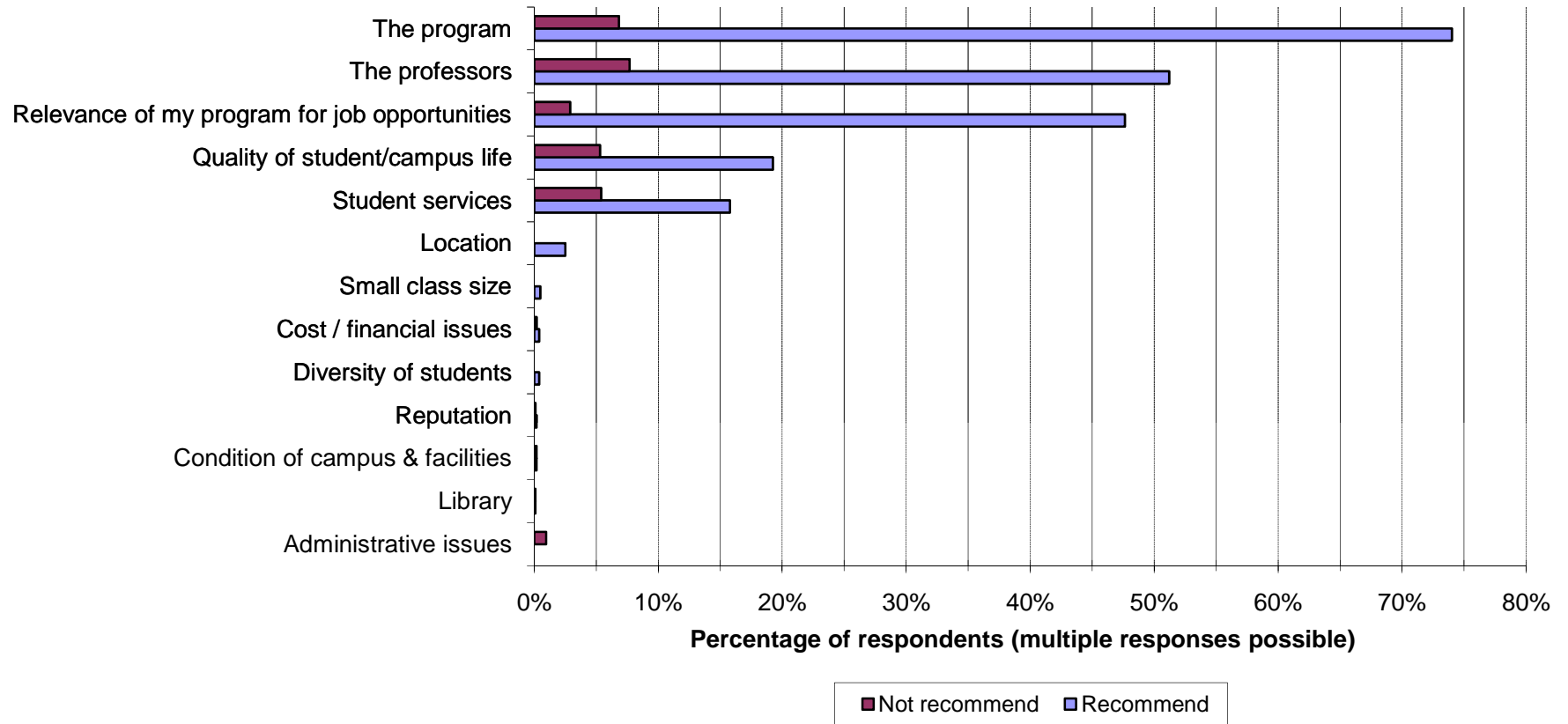
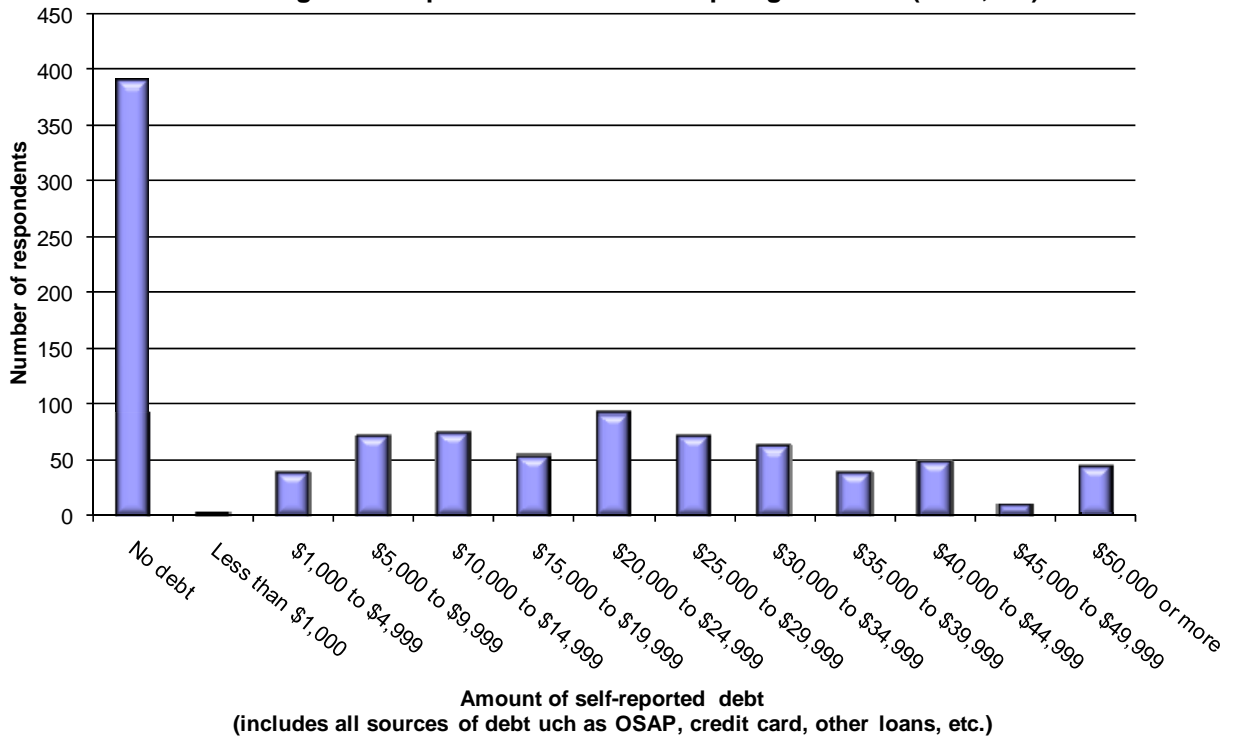


Figure 7: Reported levels of debt upon graduation (n = 1,011)



Employment during the academic year

Fifty-nine percent of full-time program graduates and 87 percent of part-time program graduates report that they are employed during the current academic term (excluding co-op related work). Among part-time program students who are employed, most (86 percent) indicate that typically, they work 30 hours or more each week. Those in the full-time group are more varied in terms of the number of worked: 34 percent work 10 hours or less; 42 percent work between 11 and 20 hours; 10 percent work between 21 and 30 hours; and 14 percent indicate that they work over 30 hours in a typical week.

A third of employed students in the full-time group believe their employment has had a positive impact on their academic performance. Forty percent believe their employment has had no impact, and 27 percent report that their employment has had a negative impact on their academic performance. Among the full-time group, students with employment on campus are more likely than those with only off-campus employment to report a positive impact on their academic performance.

Among employed students in part-time programs, almost half (48 percent) believe that their employment has a positive impact on their academic performance, while 32 percent report no impact and 20 percent report a negative impact.

Plans for further education

Those graduating from part-time programs appear to be somewhat more likely to undertake additional studies during the first year following graduation than are students from the full-time group. Forty-two percent of students graduating from full-time programs indicate that they plan to undertake some sort of educational activity during their first year after graduation, while the figure for those graduating from part-time programs is 52 percent.

Employment after graduation

At the time of the survey (February/March 2009), 24 percent of students graduating from full-time programs report that they have a full-time job arranged for after graduation. About 11 percent indicate that while they do not have a job arranged, they are not seeking work. 70 percent of students graduating from part-time programs report that they have a full-time job arranged, and 8 percent are not seeking work.

20 percent of respondents in the full-time group and 36 percent of those in part-time programs believe that there are many jobs available in their major area of study. Compared to the results of the 2006 round of this survey, the perception that there are many jobs available in one's field has decreased by about 10 percentage points among students in both full- and part-time programs. Interestingly, the proportion of students reporting that they have full-time jobs arranged has not changed since 2006.

Personal profile of graduating students

Graduating students were asked to report on a variety of personal characteristics, including their gender, age, disability status, visible minority status, number of children, and their home province.

- 90 percent of respondents report that their permanent home before coming to Ryerson was in Ontario.
- While they account for the majority of both the part-time and full-time group, females comprise a larger proportion of respondents among the part-time program group than among the full-time program group. Respondents from the part-time group are, on average, older than those in the full-time group. (See Table 1, below.)
- 53 percent of graduating students indicate that they are members of a visible minority. In the 2006 round of the survey, 38 percent reported being a member of a visible minority.
- 8 percent of respondents report having at least one type of disability. Among those who report having a disability, the most commonly cited type is a learning disability, followed by a mental health problem.
- 8 percent of respondents (5 percent of the full-time group and 33 percent of the part-time group) have at least one child.
- 3 percent of respondents indicate that they are studying in Canada on a student authorization, study permit or visa.

Table 1: Gender and age of respondents

	Full-Time Programs	Part-Time Programs	Total Respondents
GENDER			
Male	34.5%	23.4%	33.0%
Female	65.5%	76.6%	67.0%
AGE			
Median	22.0 years	34.0 years	22.5 years
Mean	23.7 years	35.4 years	25.2 years

Academic profile of graduating students

The distribution of respondents by Faculty, summarized in Table 2, is similar to the distribution of the full population of graduates.

While not typical, some students report that they had interrupted their studies for at least one term (not including intersessions, summer sessions or a co-op/work term). Among students graduating from full-time programs, 16 percent report interruption of their studies. The most commonly cited reasons for the interruption are employment, family or personal reasons, financial reasons, and being required to withdraw by the University. Among students graduating from part-time programs, 42 percent report an interruption in studies. The most commonly cited reasons for interruption among the part-time group are employment, and childcare responsibilities and other family reasons.

Table 2: Distribution of respondents by Faculty

Faculty	Percentage of respondents
Arts	6%
Communication & Design	19%
Community Services	36%
Engineering, Architecture & Science	14%
Ted Rogers School of Management	25%
TOTAL	100%

Method

Over a six-week period beginning in February 2009, an invitation to participate in an online survey and two reminders were emailed to 3,960 graduating students.

Because the survey was sent to the full population of potential graduates rather than a smaller sample, there is a sufficient number of respondents to generate useful results at the level of individual Faculties, and in many cases, specific programs.