

# GRADUATING STUDENT SURVEY 2012

FOR STUDENTS GRADUATING FROM UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMS



RYERSON  
UNIVERSITY

HIGHLIGHTS OF RESULTS PREPARED BY THE UNIVERSITY PLANNING OFFICE

Everyone Makes a Mark



# GRADUATING STUDENT SURVEY 2012

## *Highlights of Results for Ryerson University*

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### ***Introduction***

In 2012, under the auspices of the Canadian University 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 2012 is 33 percent: 1,424 respondents were enrolled in full-time programs, and 140 were enrolled in part-time programs.<sup>1</sup>

Ryerson has been a member of the Canadian University Survey Consortium, a group of approximately 30 universities across Canada that conducts student surveys across participating institutions, for the past 15 years. Since 2000, the Graduating Student Survey has been conducted on a triennial basis. A summary of results for these earlier surveys can be found on Ryerson's website at [www.ryerson.ca/upo](http://www.ryerson.ca/upo).

### ***Ryerson's impact on students' growth and development***

Graduating students were asked about their perception of the degree 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 using a four-point scale: very much, some, very little, and none. Alternatively, respondents could indicate that a given activity was "not applicable." Generally, results are consistent with the previous round of the survey conducted in 2009.

Figure 1 summarizes the ratings provided by students for academic activities. Generally, graduating students indicate that classroom activities and assignments made substantial contributions to their growth and development. These include classroom instruction (with 91 percent of students indicating this made a positive contribution) and written assignments (rated positively by 86 percent). Similarly, faculty feedback on assignments, classroom discussions and required reading were each rated as making a positive contribution by 84 percent.

The activities receiving the highest ratings are practica and internships (rated positively by 96 and 93 percent of respondents, respectively). Co-ops and other program-related work experience are rated positively by 90 percent. It should be noted that only about a fifth of respondents actually report experience in these areas (and fewer than 10 percent report experience with co-ops).

Relative to other activities, the reported contribution of interactions with teaching assistants, faculty research activity and recommended reading was fairly low. However, students who report that they have *been* a teaching assistant generally indicate that the experience contributed to their growth and development.

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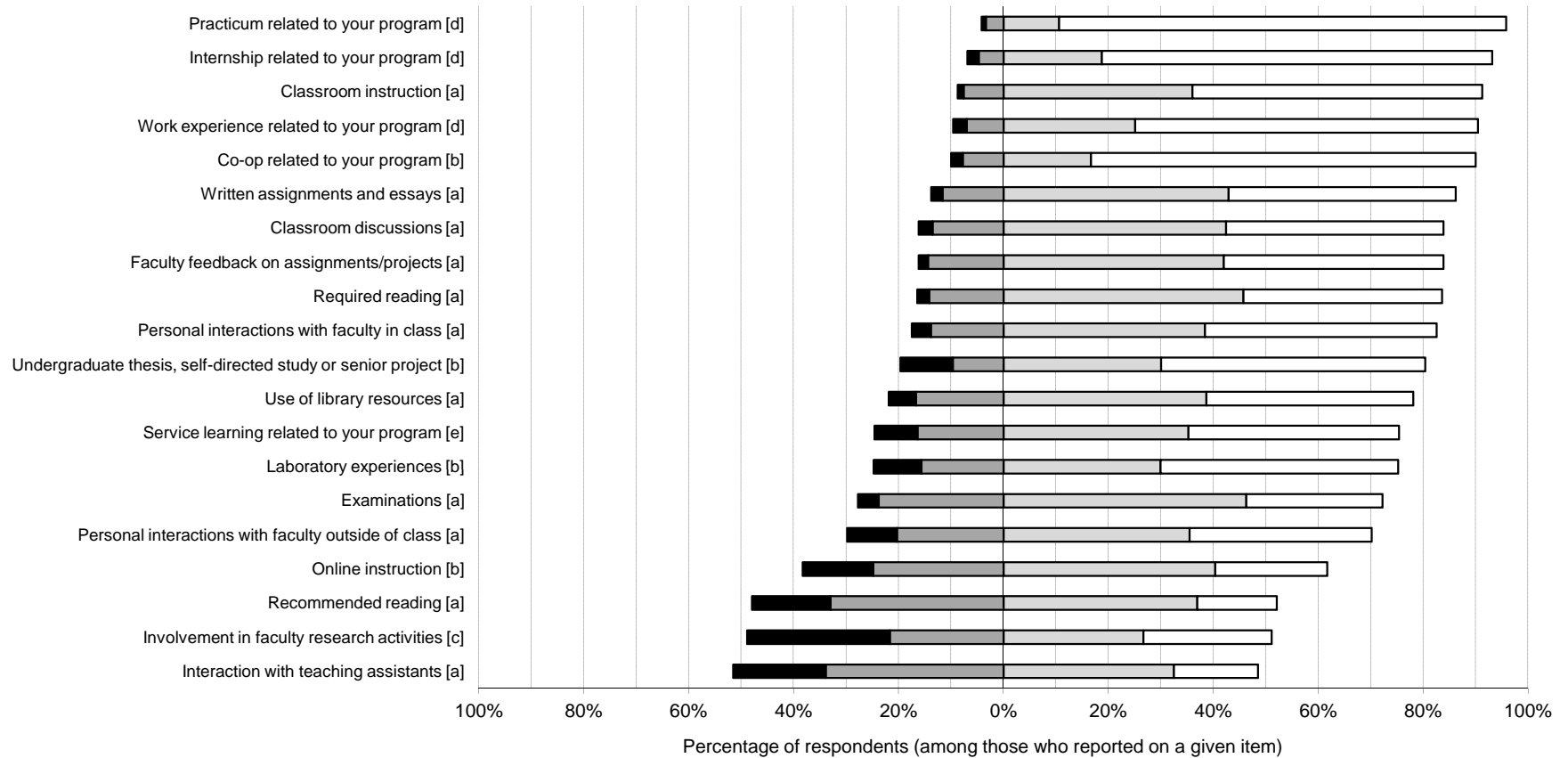
1. Nineteen times out of twenty, the percentages shown throughout this report are estimated to be accurate to within: 2.0 percentage points for full-time and part-time programs combined, 2.1 percentage points for full-time programs alone, and 6.7 percentage points for part-time programs alone.

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 most reporting that this contributed “very much.”

Community service or volunteer activities, both on- and off-campus, as well as on-campus employment, are each identified as making a positive contribution by about 85 percent of respondents. This proportion of students reporting positively on the impact of on-campus employment and on-campus volunteer work has increased 7 to 8 points over 2009 results. (About a quarter of students report on each of these items.)

Other activities – international study and exchanges, or being a teaching assistant – are also rated highly by the respondents who report on them, but few students (less than 20 percent) indicate that they have participated in these activities. Relative to other activities, the reported contribution of campus social activities and cultural events, as well as attendance at home games of university teams, is somewhat low. This is consistent with previous survey findings as well as the Canadian average.

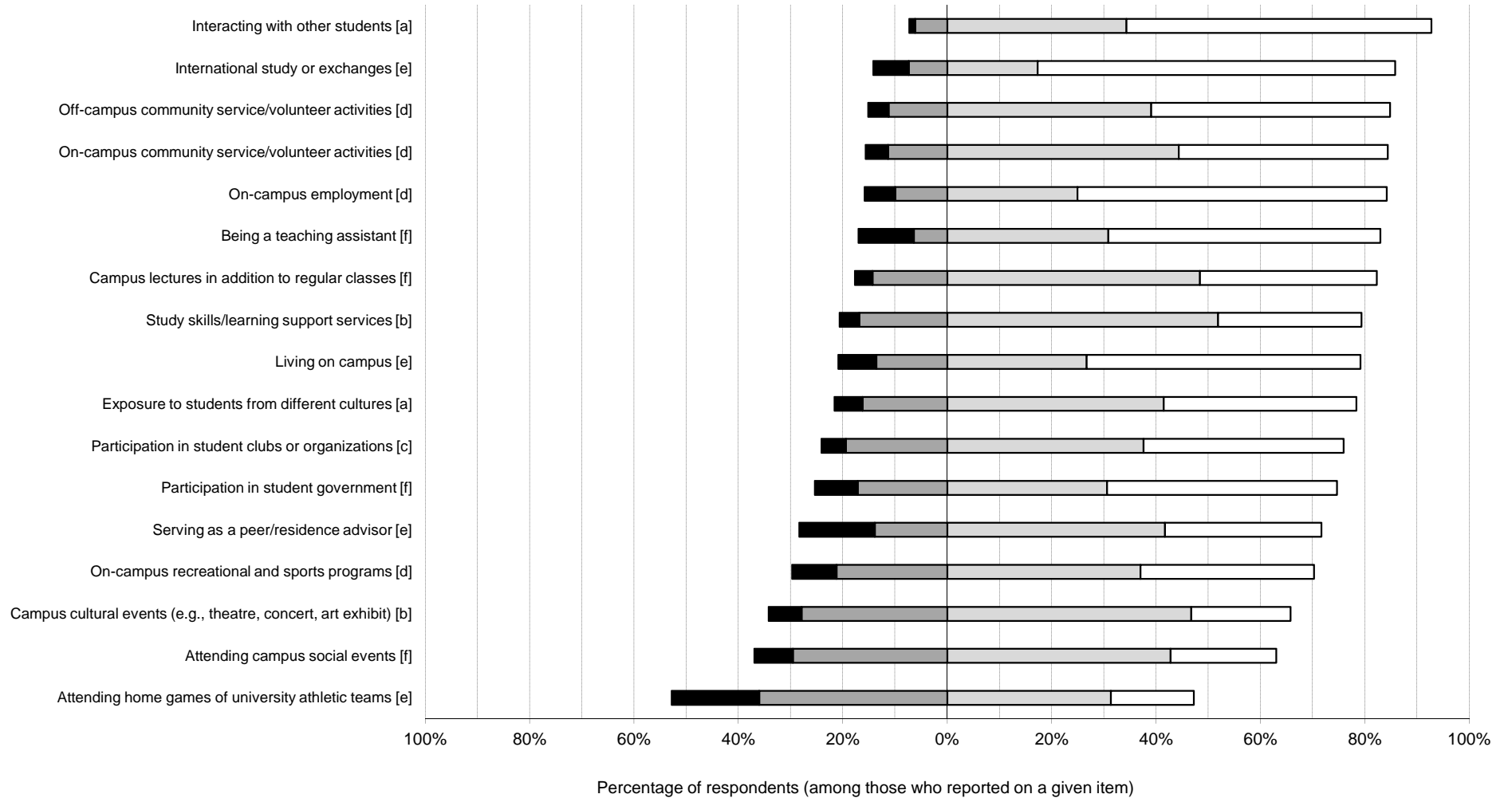
**Figure 1: Contribution of academic activities to students' growth and development**



NOTES: [a] At least 90% of respondents report on this item.  
 [b] 70 to 89% of respondents report on this item.  
 [c] 50 to 69% of respondents report on this item.  
 [d] Fewer than 25% of respondents report on this item.  
 [e] Fewer than 10% of respondents report on this item.

None Very little Some Very much

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



NOTES: [a] At least 80% of respondents report on this item.  
 [b] 50 - 53% of respondents report on this item.  
 [c] 40 - 46% 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] Fewer than 10% of respondents report on this item.

None Very little Some Very much

### ***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: very much, much, some, very little or none. Generally, results are consistent with those obtained in the previous round of the survey conducted in 2009.

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 broad knowledge in their major field of study, their ability to think logically and analytically, to work independently, to access information and to interact cooperatively in groups – at least 90 percent of respondents report that Ryerson made a contribution in these areas. Ryerson's contribution to most other areas is also rated positively. Students appear to be less positive about Ryerson's contribution to their mathematical skills, entrepreneurial skills or use of scientific principles. Interestingly, respondents are more positive about Ryerson's contribution to their skills in "analyzing quantitative problems" (69 percent) than they are with respect to mathematical skills (53 percent). Although both items are rated as relatively low compared to other skills, Ryerson is similar to other Canadian participants in this regard.

With respect to the development of entrepreneurial skills, feedback from Ryerson students is more positive than that from students at other universities: a quarter of Ryerson respondents indicate that the University contributed "much" or "very much" to the development of their entrepreneurial skills, compared to 19 percent at other universities.

*Relative importance of skills and traits:* Students were asked to identify which three 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 time management skills, cited by 37 percent of students, followed by self confidence and specific employment-related skills or knowledge, each identified by 30 percent.

### ***Students' satisfaction***

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

*Satisfaction with instructors:* 93 percent agree that professors seemed knowledgeable in their field, and 88 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: a quarter disagree with the statement that most of their professors provided useful feedback on their academic performance, which is very similar to the experience reported at other Canadian universities. Figure 4 summarizes students' ratings of their instructors. Results are very similar to those achieved in 2009.

*Satisfaction with the University experience:* 87 percent report that they are satisfied or very satisfied with their decision to attend Ryerson, and 83 percent are satisfied or very satisfied with the overall quality of education that they received.

About 70 percent of respondents indicate satisfaction with their opportunities to become involved in campus life, and with opportunities to enhance their education through activities beyond the classroom. While Ryerson is similar to other Canadian respondents with respect to the latter

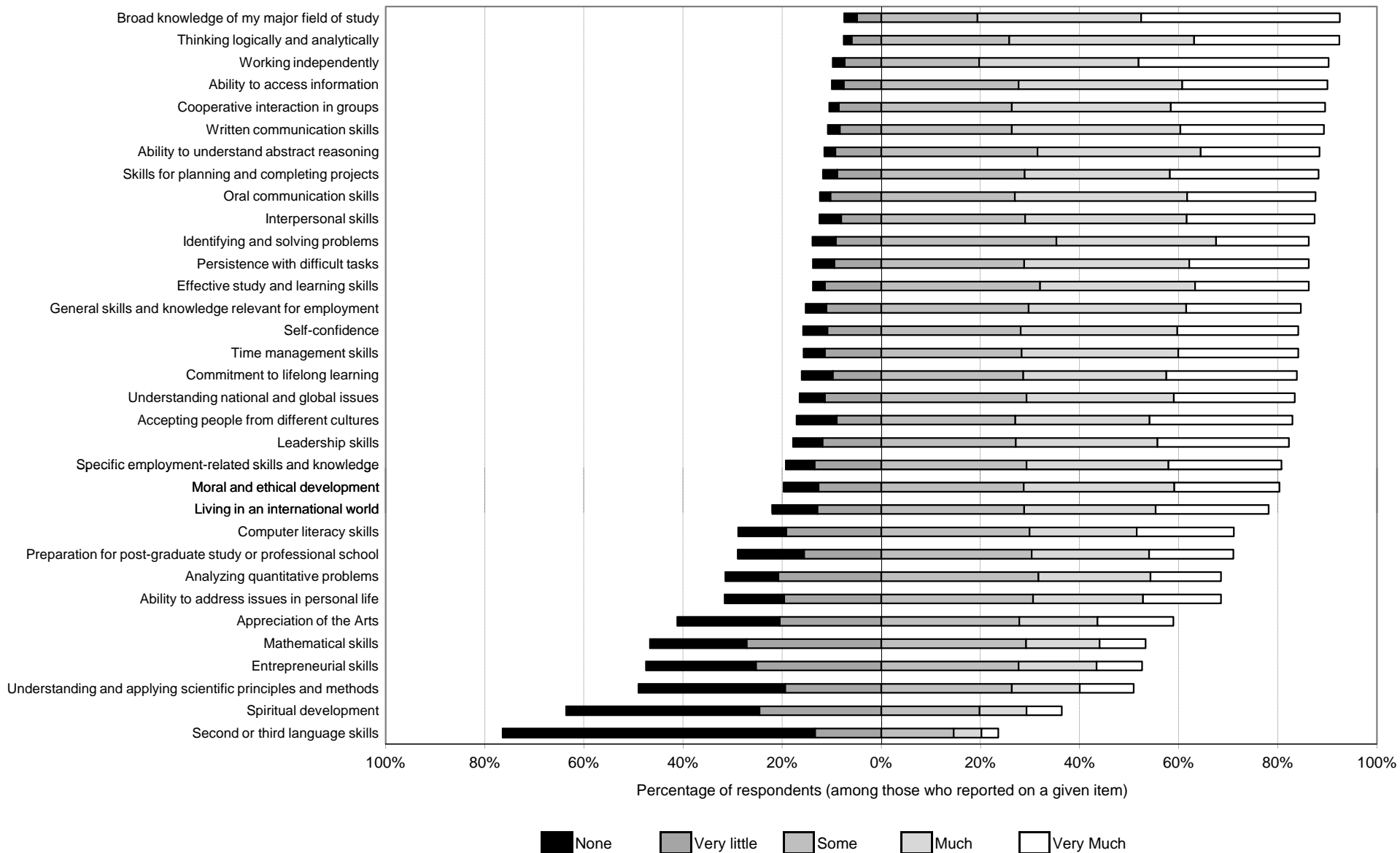
campus life (with 79 percent reporting that they are satisfied or very satisfied). 90 percent of respondents are satisfied with their personal safety on campus, which is the same as the average for other participating Canadian universities.

Satisfaction with concern shown by the University for students as individuals is relatively low: 46 percent 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.

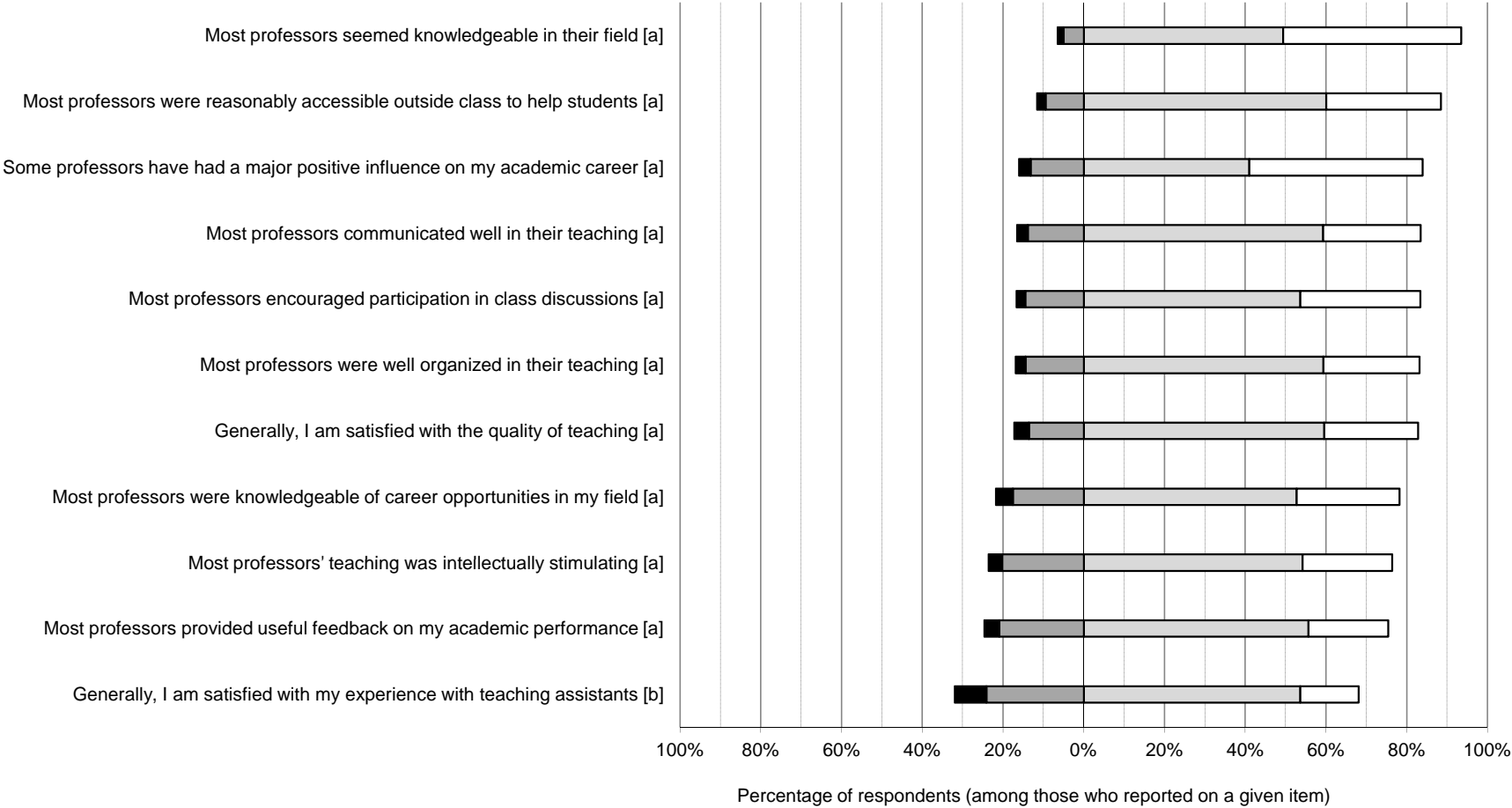
*Satisfaction with University services:* Students were asked to indicate their level of satisfaction with a variety of University services with which they had experience. All services were rated positively by 75 to 90 percent of users. Results are summarized in Figure 6. (As this topic was not included in prior rounds of the survey, comparisons to 2009 are not possible.)



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



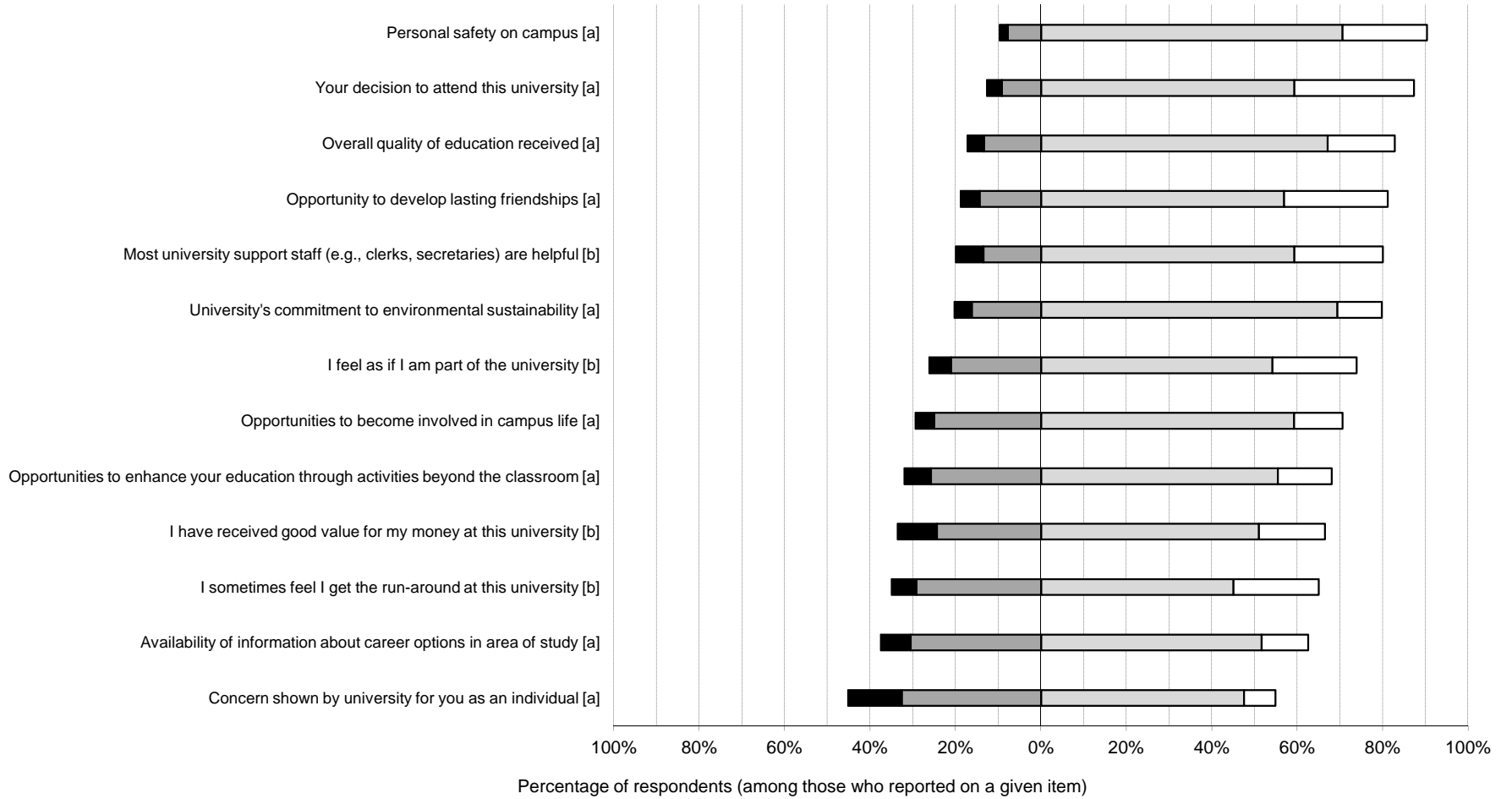
**Figure 4: Students' satisfaction with instructors**



NOTES: [a] At least 89% of respondents report on this item.  
 [b] 80% of respondents report on this item.

Disagree strongly Disagree Agree Agree strongly

**Figure 5: Students' satisfaction with the University experience**



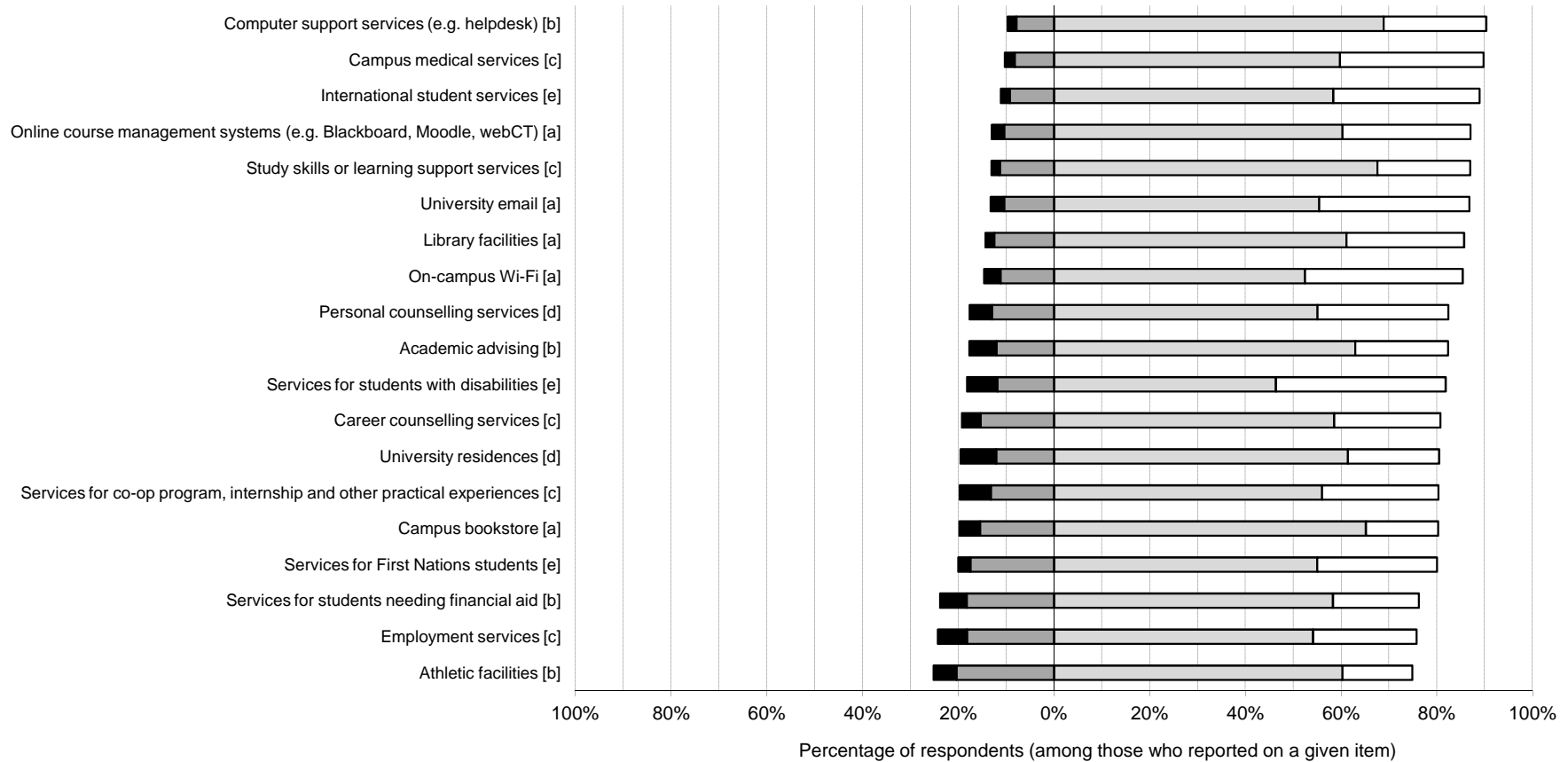
NOTE:

At least 84% of respondents report on these items

[a]  Very dissatisfied  Dissatisfied  Satisfied  Very satisfied

[b]  Disagree strongly  Disagree  Agree  Agree strongly

**Figure 6: Satisfaction with University services**



NOTES: [a] At least 90% of respondents report on this item.  
 [b] 40 - 53% of respondents report on this item.  
 [c] 25 - 33% of respondents report on this item.  
 [d] 10 - 20% of respondents report on this item.  
 [e] Fewer than 10% of respondents report on this item.

Very dissatisfied   Dissatisfied   Satisfied   Very satisfied

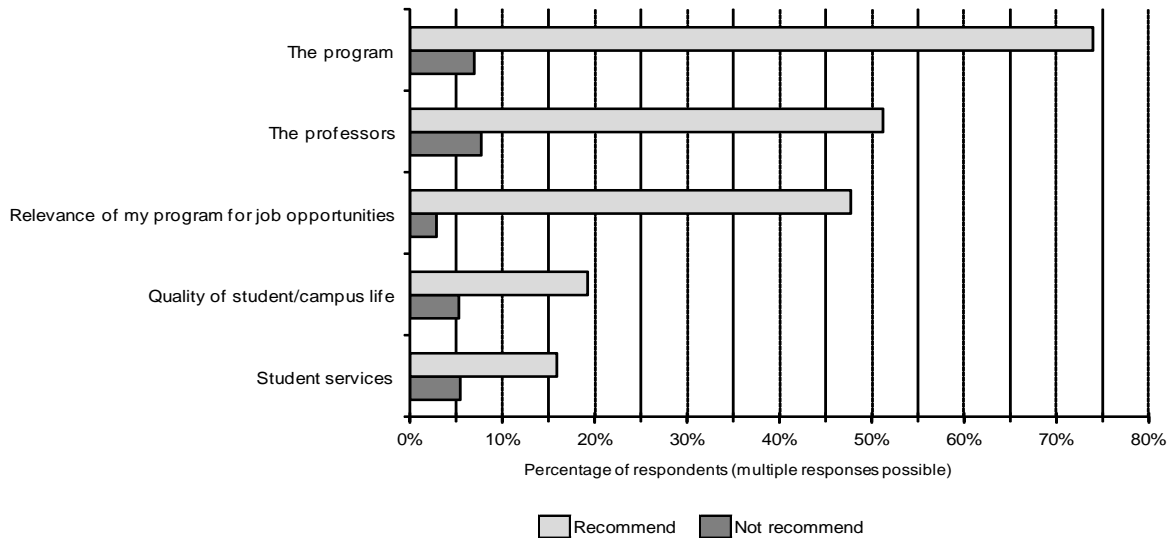
86 percent of students graduating from full-time programs indicate that they would recommend Ryerson to others, as do 90 percent of those in the part-time group. This proportion has remained stable over the past few iterations of the survey.

Among graduating students who would recommend Ryerson, 89 percent indicate that “the program” is one of the reasons. 65 percent identify “the professors” as a reason, and 49 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 7 summarizes the overall proportion of respondents identifying various reasons for either recommending or not recommending Ryerson to others.

**Figure 7: Percentage of respondents identifying reasons for recommending or not recommending Ryerson (n = 1,523)**



**Education financing and debt**

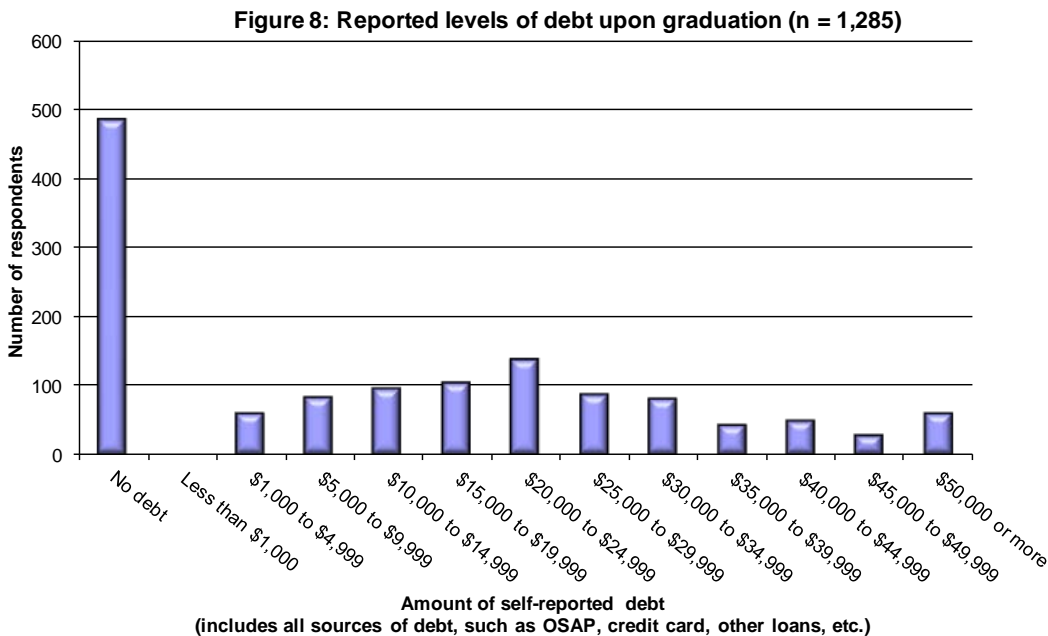
Graduating students were asked for information about the means by which they financed their university education as well as the level of debt that they incurred.

*Sources of funds:* Among students graduating from full-time programs, sources most commonly cited as supplying funds include parents, family or spouse (cited by 61 percent), personal savings (52 percent), earnings from summer work (37 percent), earnings from current employment (37 percent) and government loans or grants (46 percent). Earnings from current employment and personal savings are the sources cited most commonly among students from part-time programs.

*Debt:* Approximately 63 percent report graduating with debt that they incurred to help finance their university education, compared to a Canadian average of 59 percent. This is similar to the 2009 round of the survey, where 61 percent at Ryerson reported graduating with debt. The most commonly cited source of debt is government student loans. Eighty percent of respondents with debt name this as a source. Loans from parents or family are named by a third of students with debt, and 21 percent report that they have loans from financial institutions.

Average debt levels are relatively stable in comparison to 2009, and Ryerson results are comparable to the Canadian average. Among those reporting debt at Ryerson, the mean amount owed upon graduation in 2012 is \$23,983, slightly less than the amount reported in 2009 (\$24,156) and lower than the current Canadian average of \$24,579. (The Ryerson median in 2012 is \$21,000 and the Canadian median is \$20,000. In 2009, the Ryerson median was \$22,000.)

Among all graduating students, including those without debt, the mean amount owed in 2012 is \$15,024 at Ryerson, compared to a Canadian average of \$14,453. In 2009, the Ryerson mean was \$14,828. (The Ryerson median in 2012 is \$10,000 compared to a Canadian median of \$7,000. In 2009, the Ryerson median was \$9,250.) The distribution of Ryerson graduates by level of debt is provided in Figure 8.



### ***Employment during the academic year***

61 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 program-related work such as a co-op, internship or practicum). Among part-time program students who are employed, most (72 percent) indicate that they typically work 30 hours or more each week. Those in the full-time group are more varied in terms of the number of worked: 30 percent work 10 hours or less; 43 percent work between 11 and 20 hours; 15 percent work between 21 and 30 hours; and 13 percent indicate that they work over 30 hours in a typical week. This is similar to 2009 levels.

40 percent of employed students in the full-time group believe their employment has had a positive impact on their academic performance. 27 percent believe their employment has had no impact, and 32 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 much 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, half (53 percent) believe that their employment has a positive impact on their academic performance, while 18 percent report no impact and 28 percent report a negative impact.

### ***Plans for further education after graduation***

39 percent of students in full time programs and 45 percent of those in part time programs indicate that they plan to undertake some sort of educational activity during their first year after graduation. When asked about plans for 2 to 5 years after graduation, 71 percent of full time program graduates and 78 percent of the part time group intend to undertake further studies.

### ***Employment after graduation***

At the time of the survey (February/March 2012), 22 percent of students graduating from full-time programs report that they have a full-time job arranged for after graduation. About 8 percent indicate that while they do not have a job arranged, they are not seeking work. 73 percent of students graduating from part-time programs report that they have a full-time job arranged, and 6 percent are not seeking work.

14 percent of respondents in the full-time group and 23 percent of those in part-time programs believe that there are many jobs available in their major area of study. The perception that there are many jobs available decreased significantly between 2006 and 2009, and has decreased further in 2012 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. It is not clear whether there is something distinctive about those who secure employment at this relatively early stage (i.e., February/March of the graduating year).

About two thirds of students in the full-time group who had secured jobs indicate that their degree helped them to obtain their position, and 71 percent report that their job is significantly or moderately related to the knowledge and skills acquired from their studies.

**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, and number of children.

- 92 percent of respondents report that their permanent home before coming to Ryerson was in Ontario.
- 60 percent of respondents are from communities with a population over 300,000. Across Canada, 41 percent report being from communities of this size.
- 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.) On average, Ryerson respondents are 1.2 years older than the age of respondents across Canada.
- 55 percent of graduating students indicate that they are members of a visible minority compared to 32 percent across all Canadian respondents.
- 1 percent of respondents report being Aboriginal, compared to a figure of 3 percent across all Canadian participants.
- 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 mental health problem, followed by a learning disability. This is similar to other Canadian universities.
- 9 percent of respondents (4 percent of the full-time group and 59 percent of the part-time group) have at least one child, while the Canada-wide figure is 6 percent.
- 2 percent of respondents indicate that they are international students, and 4 percent report that they are permanent residents of Canada but not citizens. Across all Canadian participants, 5 percent are international students and 3 percent are permanent residents.

**Table 1: Gender and age of respondents**

	<b>Full-Time Programs</b>	<b>Part-Time Programs</b>	<b>Total Respondents</b>
<b>GENDER</b>			
Male	34.6%	20.7%	33.4%
Female	64.9%	78.5%	66.2%
Other	0.4%	0.7%	0.5%
<b>AGE</b>			
Median	22.0 years	37.0 years	22.0 years
Mean	23.3 years	37.5 years	24.6 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, 17 percent report interruption of their studies. The most commonly cited reason for the interruption is employment. Among students graduating from part-time programs, 48 percent report an interruption in studies. These proportions are similar to those reported in 2009 and are comparable to the Canadian average. The most commonly cited reasons for interruption among the part-time group are childcare responsibilities and other family issues, and financial reasons.

Students were also asked to identify issues that may have delayed the completion of their programs. 30 percent of students in full-time programs report experiencing a delay, which is lower than the Canadian average of 36 percent. The reasons for delay that were identified most commonly include availability of required courses and students' grades. (As this is a new item in the survey, comparisons to previous years are not possible.)

**Table 2: Distribution of respondents by Faculty**

<b>Faculty</b>	<b>Percentage of respondents</b>
Arts	9.5%
Communication & Design	15.5%
Community Services	31.1%
Engineering, Architecture & Science*	13.2%
Ted Rogers School of Management	30.7%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

\*Reflects the name and composition of the Faculty at the time the survey was conducted.

### *Method*

Over a six-week period beginning in February 2012, an invitation to participate in an online survey and two reminders were emailed to 4,758 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.

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