

**RYERSON
UNIVERSITY**

FIRST-YEAR STUDENT SURVEY 2007

FOR STUDENTS ADMITTED DIRECTLY FROM SECONDARY SCHOOL

HIGHLIGHTS OF RESULTS
PREPARED BY THE UNIVERSITY PLANNING OFFICE



Introduction

Since 1997, 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 universities. In 2007, Ryerson, under the auspices of the Consortium, undertook the First-Year Student Survey. Students were asked about their decision to attend university and about their experiences at Ryerson. The survey was made available online to a sample of 1,000 students who came to Ryerson directly from secondary school. Students coming directly from secondary school represented nearly 70 percent of first-year students. The overall response rate is 30.8 percent. The sample size and the response rate contribute to an acceptable estimate of statistical error.¹

Decision to attend university

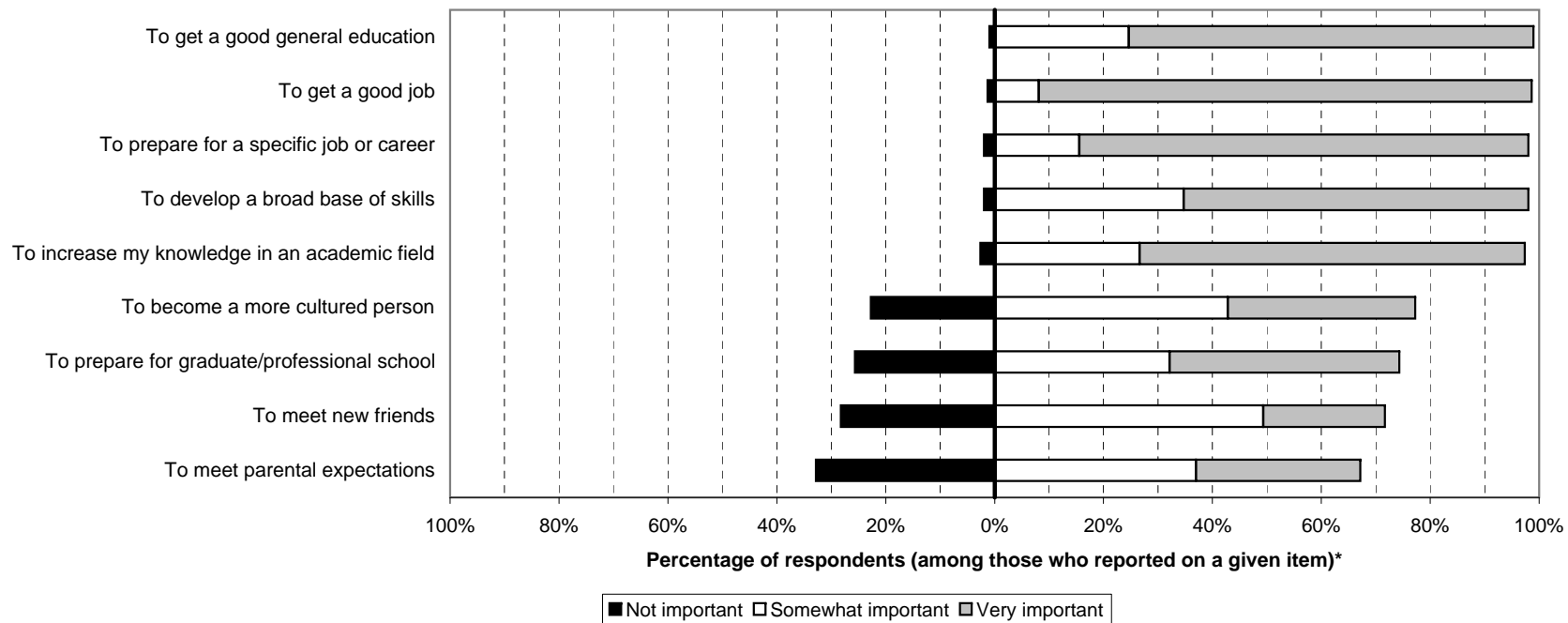
First-year students were asked about their reasons for attending university in general and their reasons for attending Ryerson in particular. The survey also examined the importance of various sources and formats of information in students' decisions to attend Ryerson. Respondents were provided a three-point scale to evaluate the various factors: not important, somewhat important and very important.

Figure 1 outlines respondents' evaluation of various reasons for attending university. More than 98 percent indicate "to get a good general education", "to get a good job" and "to prepare for a specific job or career" as very important reasons in their decision. Nearly all respondents also rate other academic and career-related reasons as somewhat or very important. Non-academic objectives, including "to meet parental expectations" and "to meet new friends," are of lesser importance, although both are rated as at least somewhat important by over two-thirds of respondents. These results are consistent with those reported in the previous 2004 and 2001 rounds of the First-Year Student Survey.

Figure 2 illustrates respondents' reasons for choosing Ryerson rather than another university. The top-rated reasons all relate to Ryerson's academic strengths: "specific career-related programs", "quality of academic programs", and the "University's good reputation". At least 92 percent of respondents identify each of these reasons as being somewhat or very important. At least 73 percent of respondents indicate factors relating to Ryerson's location as being important, specifically the "availability of public transportation" and "wanted to live close to home". Most students rate the attendance of family and friends at Ryerson as not important. A number of largely non-academic characteristics of the University, such as "recreational facilities", "rich social life" and "school spirit" fall in the middle of the range. The importance of "Size of city/town" has increased since the 2004 round of the survey. In 2004, 54 percent of respondents indicated that the "Size of city/town" was somewhat or very important; in 2007 this figure is 66 percent.

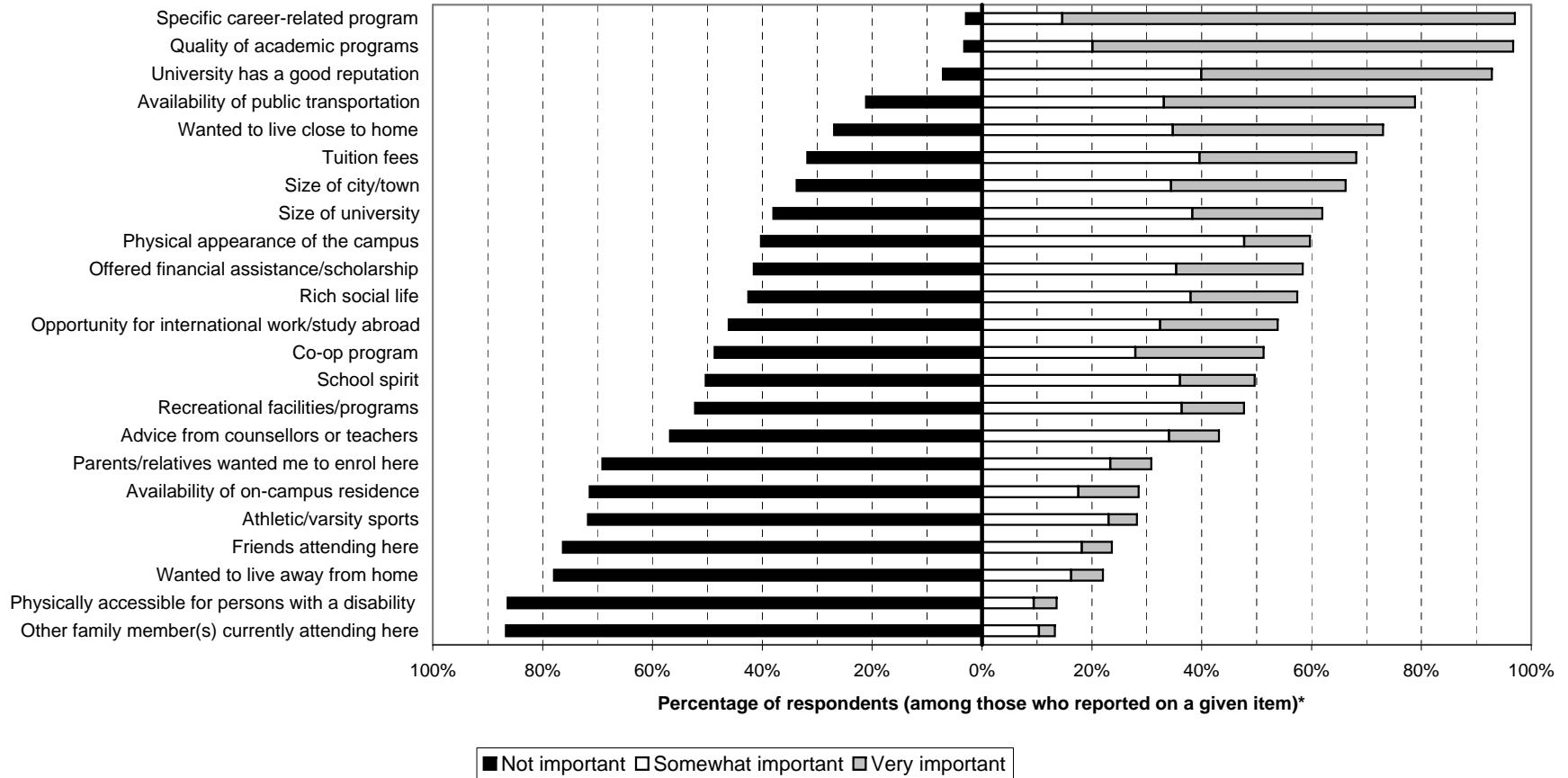
¹ Nineteen times out of twenty, the percentages shown throughout this report are estimated to be accurate within 5.3 percentage points. However, female students and those from the Faculty of Communication and Design are over-represented among respondents, and students from the Faculty of Business are under-represented.

Figure 1: Students' reasons for attending university



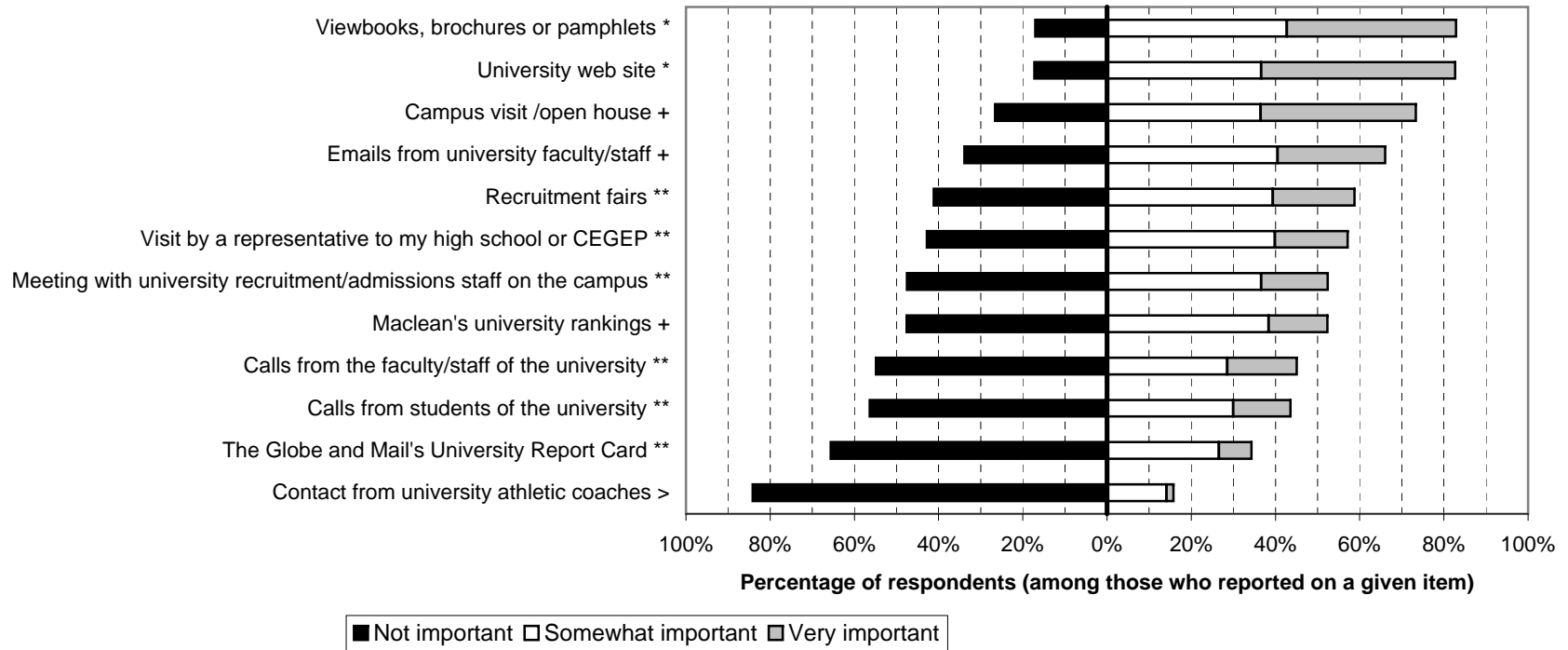
*NOTE: 100 percent of respondents reported on each item.

Figure 2: Students' reasons for attending Ryerson University



*NOTE: 100 percent of respondents reported on each item.

Figure 3: Factors that influence students to attend Ryerson University



NOTES: * 90.0 to 100.0% of respondents reported on this item.
 + 80.0 to 89.9% of respondents reported on this item.
 ** 70.0 to 79.9% of respondents reported on this item.
 ~ 60.0 to 69.9% of respondents reported on this item.
 > 55.0 to 59.9% of respondents reported on this item.

Figure 3 illustrates the extent to which various sources and types of information influenced students to attend Ryerson. Respondents report that “view books, brochures or pamphlets” and the “University website” were the most effective in determining Ryerson as their choice. (Approximately 82 percent report that these sources were at least somewhat important in their decision.) At least 73 percent of respondents indicate that campus visits were important. “Contact from university athletic coaches” is of less importance when choosing Ryerson, and the proportion of respondents, who rated this factor as at least somewhat important declined from 30 percent in 2004 to 14 percent in 2007.

Experience with application and registration processes

Respondents were asked to indicate their level of satisfaction with how “the University handled their application for admission”: 36 percent report being very satisfied with their experience and 46.8 percent are somewhat satisfied. First-year students were also asked about any “advice or help they may have received from the University regarding program or course selection”. Over one-third (39.4 percent) are very satisfied with the assistance they received, while 52 percent are somewhat satisfied.

Orientation experience

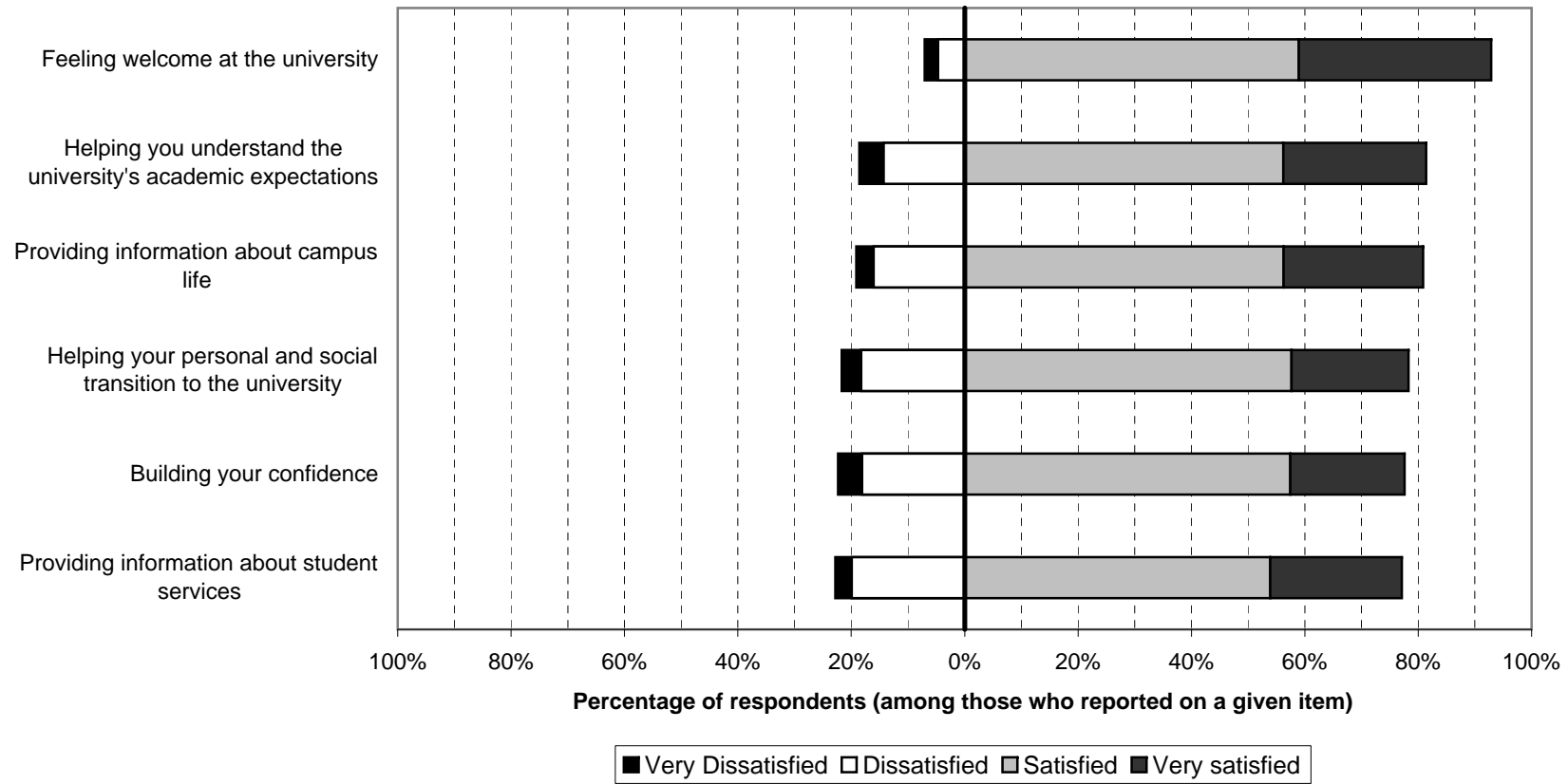
Respondents rated their level of satisfaction with various aspects of the orientation program. Satisfaction was expressed on the basis of a four-point scale: very satisfied, satisfied, dissatisfied, and very dissatisfied. (Students also had the option of selecting a response of “don’t know.”)

Generally, respondents are satisfied with all aspects of the orientation program evaluated. As Figure 4 illustrates, 93 percent report “feeling welcome at the university”. In addition, over 80 percent are satisfied or very satisfied with being helped to understand the university’s academic expectations and the provision of information about campus life. These results are consistent with those reported in previous round of the survey. However, fewer respondents were satisfied with the provision of information about student services. In 2004, 86 percent of respondents were satisfied or very satisfied while in 2007, this figure is 77 percent.

Adjusting to university

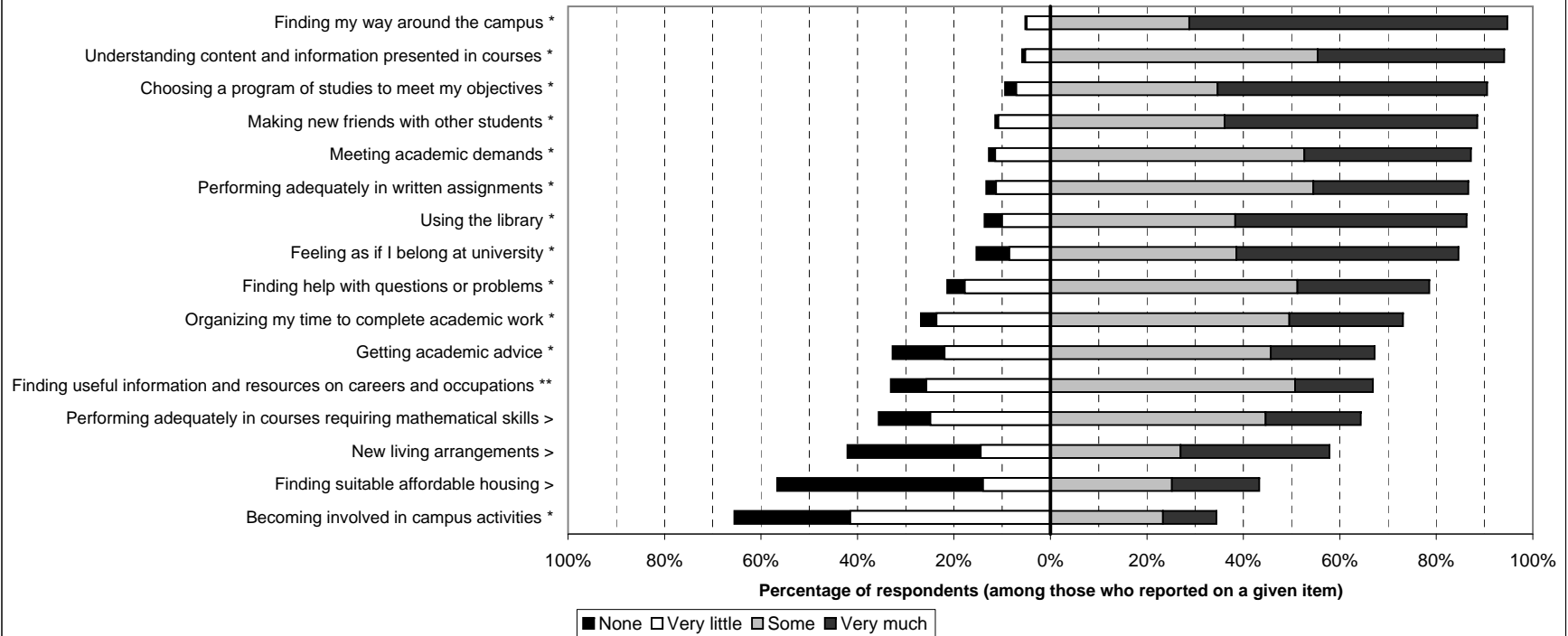
Respondents reported their level of success in adjusting to various aspects of university life with the use of the following scale: none, very little, some and very much. (Alternatively, students could indicate “not applicable.”) As Figure 5 illustrates, most respondents report being successful in their adjustment to university life by the end of first year. In particular, they are very comfortable with finding their way around campus, their understanding of the content and information presented in courses and choosing a program of studies to meet their objectives. However, students report less success with getting involved in campus activities; only one-third of respondents report some or very much success in this area. A lower percentage of respondents (64 percent in 2007 compared to 78 percent in 2004), reported success with “performing adequately in courses requiring mathematical skills”.

Figure 4: Satisfaction with orientation



*Note: At least 70 percent of respondents reported on each item.

Figure 5: Students' transition to university



NOTES: * 90.0 to 100.0% of respondents reported on this item.
 ** 80.0 to 89.9% of respondents reported on this item.
 ~ 70.0 to 79.9% of respondents reported on this item.
 > 35.0 to 60.0% of respondents reported on this item.

Perception of the University

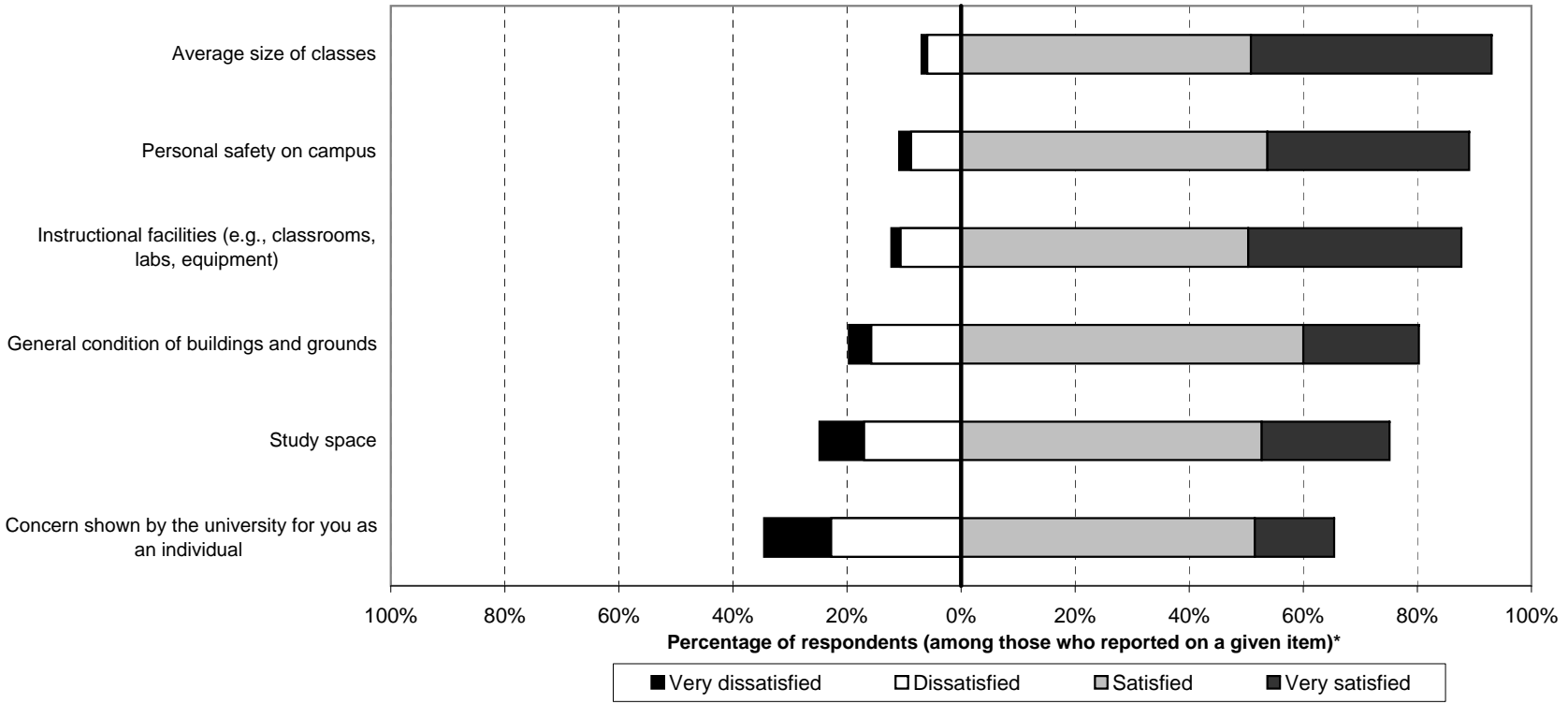
Overall, students' impressions of their first year at Ryerson were positive. Sixty two percent of respondents report that their experience at Ryerson met their expectations, while 18 percent indicate that it exceeded their expectations. These figures are virtually identical to those obtained when the question was asked in the 2004 round of the survey.

First-year students were asked about their perception of various features of the University: average class size; personal safety on campus; instructional facilities; concern shown by the University; general condition of buildings and grounds; and study space. A four-point scale ranging from very dissatisfied to very satisfied was used. The vast majority (93 percent) of respondents report being satisfied or very satisfied with the average size of classes. 89 percent report similarly on personal safety on campus. 88 percent are satisfied with instructional facilities (e.g., classrooms, labs, equipment). 65 percent are satisfied with "concern shown by the university for you as an individual." Three quarters of the students are satisfied with "study space" and 80 percent reported as being satisfied or very satisfied with the "general condition of buildings and grounds". These results are summarized in Figure 6. More respondents in the 2007 round of the survey report being very satisfied with instructional facilities than did those in the 2004 round. In 2007, 87 percent indicated that they were satisfied or very satisfied with instructional facilities, while 78 percent of respondents in 2004 reported feeling this way. This marks a return to the level achieved in the 2001 round of the survey. Results pertaining to average class size, personal safety on campus and concern shown by the University were fairly consistent between 2004 and 2007.

Figure 7 summarizes student satisfaction with an array of university services. The proportion of students reporting experience with each of these services is also indicated. Over 90 percent of first-year students are satisfied with access to computers; career counseling services, library facilities, facilities for student associations and clubs, and personal counseling services for students. Most campus services received positive ratings by the majority of respondents, including key academic services such as library facilities and study skills/learning support services. At the bottom of the ranking, 46 percent of students are dissatisfied with parking facilities, although only 8 percent reported on this item. (It is possible that some respondents who reported on a given service and indicated that they were dissatisfied or satisfied did not have any experience with it and thus should have indicated "no experience.")

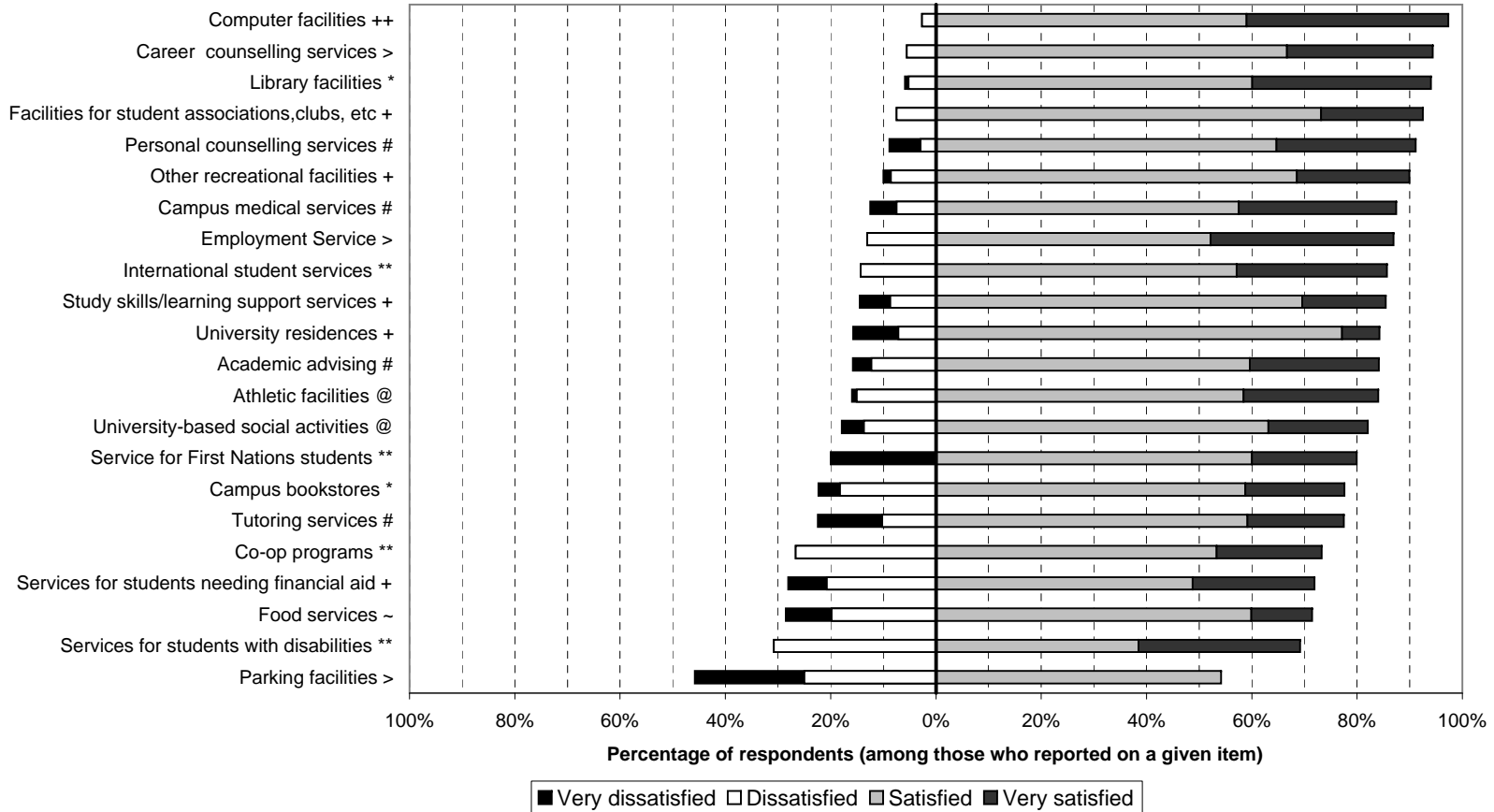
Respondents also indicated their level of agreement with various statements about the teaching they received during their first year at Ryerson. Over 92 percent of students agree that they are satisfied with their decision to attend this university and that their professors are reasonably accessible outside of class to help students. In addition, 88 percent express satisfaction with the quality of teaching that they have received. Respondents were somewhat less likely to agree with statements about professors encouraging participation in class discussions, professors treating students as individuals, and the general quality of teaching, although the majority of respondents still respond positively in these areas. Results are summarized in Figure 8.

Figure 6: Perception of the University



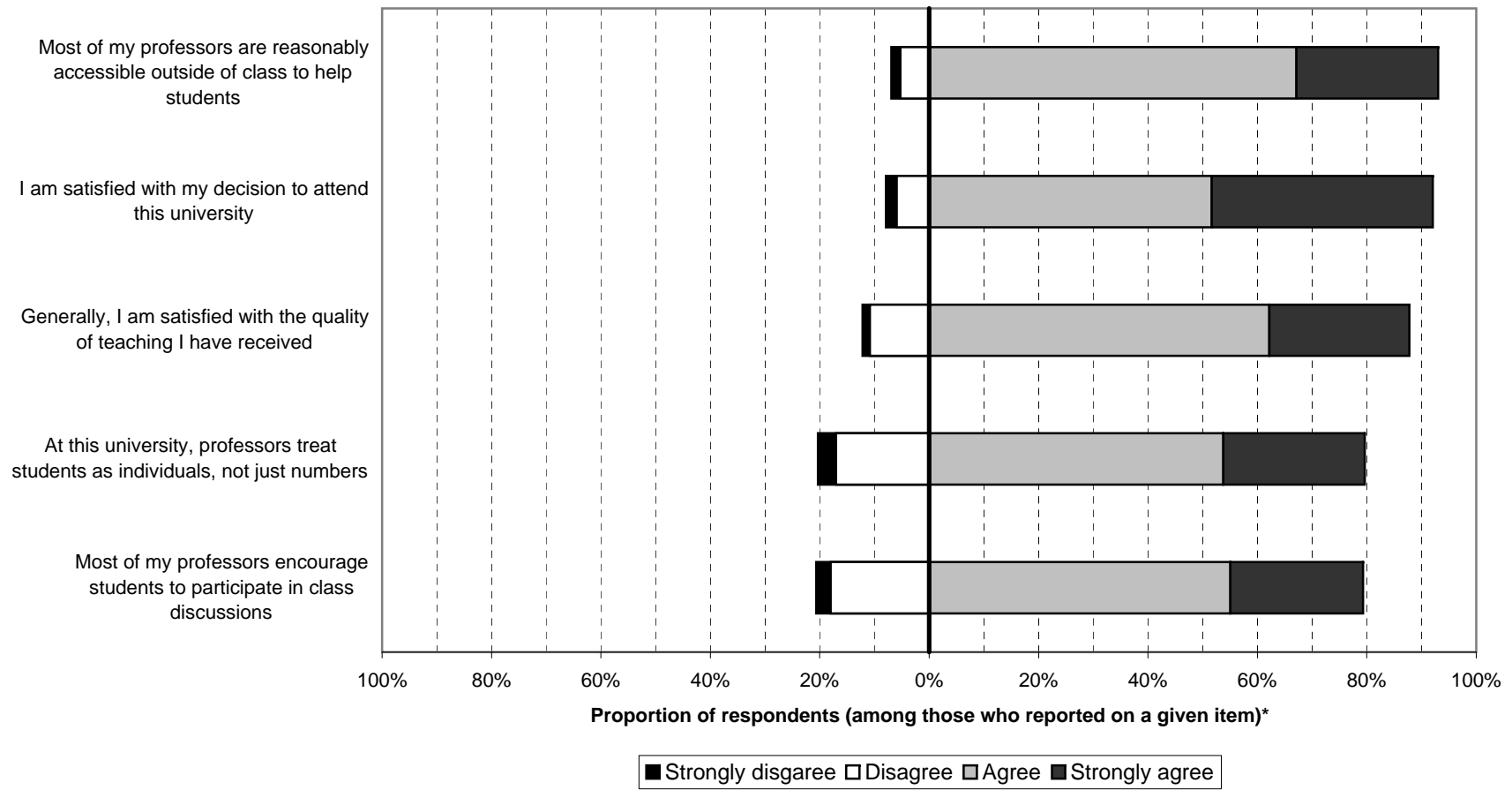
*NOTE: At least 88 percent of respondents reported on each item.

Figure 7: Satisfaction with university services



Note: *90.0 to 100.0% of respondents reported on this item.
 ++80.0 to 89.9% of respondents reported on this item.
 ~60.0 to 69.9% of respondents reported on this item.
 ^40.0 to 49.9% of respondents reported on this item.
 @30.0 to 39.9% of respondents reported on this item.
 +20.0 to 29.9% of respondents reported on this item.
 #10.0 to 19.9% of respondents reported on this item.
 >5.0 to 9.9% of respondents reported on this item.
 **1.0 to 4.9% of respondents reported on this item.

Figure 8: Satisfaction with teaching



*Note Over 98% of respondents reported on each item.

Academic profile of first-year students

First-year students provided information about their academic background including their entering average grade from high school, expected average grade at the end of first year, and whether they were taking a full course load. The most commonly reported average high school grade is A- and, respondents are most likely to expect an average grade of a B at the end of their first year of university. Most respondents (85.9 percent) are taking a full course load.

Financing of university education

Students were asked a series of questions relating to the manner in which they are funding their education and whether they believe they will have sufficient resources.

Approximately 43 percent of respondents indicate that they received government student assistance in their first year at university and 35 percent received a scholarship or other financial award from the university. These figures have increased from those reported in 2004 round of survey, which were 37 percent and 26 percent respectively.

Approximately 50 percent of respondents report that they are employed, while 28 percent state that they are looking for work. The average number of work hours for respondents who are currently employed is 14.3 hours per week. In 2004, 46 percent reported being employed, although the average number of hours worked per week was about the same across the latest two rounds of the survey. 33 percent of employed respondents indicate that their employment does not have a negative impact on their academic performance. 37 percent report that their employment has “some” negative impact on their academic performance and 25 percent indicate that it has at least a moderate negative impact. These figures are consistent with those reported in the 2004 round of survey.

Respondents indicated whether they believed they would have sufficient funding to complete their university education. 26 percent report being very concerned that they may not have enough funds, 51 percent report some concern but felt they would probably have enough funds, and 26 percent are not concerned because they should have sufficient funds. This is consistent with results obtained in 2004.

Profile of first-year students

Nearly all respondents (95.3 percent) report that their permanent home before attending Ryerson was located in Ontario. 79 percent live with their parents or guardians or relatives while 16 percent live in on-campus housing. 5 percent of respondents live in rented accommodations.

Females are over-represented among respondents. 74 percent of completed questionnaires were from females, but females comprise 46 percent of first year students entering Ryerson directly from secondary school in Fall 2006.

The average age of respondents at the time of the survey is 18.9 years. Population data consisting of first-year Ryerson students admitted from secondary school are consistent with survey data with respect to age.

Respondents from the Faculty of Communication and Design are over-represented, while those from the Faculty of Business are under-represented. About 43 percent of respondents identify themselves as members of a visible minority, up noticeably from the 28 percent indicated in the 2004 round of the survey. 1.4 percent of respondents consider themselves to be aboriginal.

About eight percent of respondents identify themselves as persons with a disability.

Table 1 provides a comparison of the survey group and with the actual population of first-year students (admitted from secondary schools) with regard to age, gender, and Faculty of registration:

Table 1: Comparison of survey sample and actual population

	Sample	Population*
GENDER		
Females	209 (67.9%)	1,737 (54.0%)
Males	75 (24.4%)	1,481 (46.0%)
No Response	24 (7.8%)	0 (0.0%)
Total	308 (100.0%)	3,218 (100.0%)
AGE (years)		
Mean	18.9	19.0
FACULTY		
Arts	43 (14.0%)	431 (13.4%)
Business	60 (19.5%)	975 (30.3%)
Communication & Design	93 (30.2%)	634 (19.7%)
Community Services	62 (20.1%)	509 (15.8%)
Engineering & Applied Science	50 (16.2%)	669 (20.8%)
Total	308 (100.0%)	3,218 (100.0%)

*Based on the November 1, 2006 cohort from which survey participants were selected. Age corrected to reflect approximate date of survey.

Summary

Generally, students are satisfied with their experience during their first year at Ryerson, and most report that their expectations were met or exceeded. Results are largely consistent with those found in 2004 and 2001, the previous times that this survey of first-year students was conducted.

Method

Over a six-week period beginning in February 2007, 1,000 students in their first year at Ryerson University who had been admitted directly from secondary school in Fall 2006, were invited to participate in an on line survey. After two email reminders, a hardcopy questionnaire was also mailed to non-respondents. The 30.8 percent response rate is considered reasonable for a mail-out format. The sample size was 308. Female students and those from the Faculty of Communication and Design are over-represented among respondents, while those from the Faculty of Business are under-represented.

Given that the questionnaire was developed for use across a number of universities, limitations of the survey relate mainly to ambiguity surrounding respondents' interpretation of certain questions. As previously mentioned in the case of student recruitment strategies not used by Ryerson and evaluation of various campus services, it is possible that some respondents who rated a given activity or feature of the University did not in fact have any direct experience with it and thus should have indicated "don't know" or "not applicable".

For further information about the First-Year Student Survey 2007, including frequency tables outlining responses to each item in the questionnaire, please contact the University Planning Office at 416-979-5033.

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