

**RYERSON
UNIVERSITY**

NATIONAL SURVEY OF STUDENT ENGAGEMENT 2008

HIGHLIGHTS OF RESULTS

PREPARED BY THE UNIVERSITY PLANNING OFFICE



Introduction

The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) measures the extent to which students are actively engaged in learning. The survey was conducted for the third time at Ryerson in 2008 and is based on research indicating that active rather than passive learning is more likely to lead to excellent student learning outcomes.¹

Most of the questionnaire's more than one hundred questions examine a wide range of activities in which students are involved (student engagement) instead of emphasizing student satisfaction with services. Developed during the late 1990s at the Indiana University Center for Postsecondary Research, the survey has since been adapted for Canadian use. In 2008, 769 institutions across North America participated in NSSE including all Ontario universities as well as a number of Canadian institutions in other provinces. Ontario universities also administered NSSE in 2006, and the survey will be repeated periodically in the future in order to track progress. Broadly speaking, Ryerson's 2008 results are quite similar to those achieved in 2006.

Ryerson follows an integrated approach to planning centred on a five-year academic plan, *Shaping Our Future: Academic Plan for 2008 to 2013*, that has been developed within an overall direction established by the Board of Governors. NSSE results inform decision-making geared to initiating improvement at the University, Faculty and Academic Departmental levels. This includes use of the NSSE data as indicators to monitor progress in achieving academic objectives, and as a source of information while making resource allocation decisions.

In Winter 2008, 5,466 first-year and 5,024 fourth-year Ryerson students were contacted by email and asked to complete the survey online. The total sample of 4,684 students yields a response rate of 44.7 percent. The response rate for students in first year (40.6 percent) is lower than that for students in fourth year (49.1 percent). The sample size and response rate contribute to a relatively low estimate of statistical error.²

Results from the 2008 version of the survey are fairly consistent with those from the 2006 round, which is not surprising. The Indiana Center for Postsecondary Research, which developed the NSSE survey, suggests that a number of years is required to effect appreciable change in survey results. The Center recommends conducting NSSE every three to four years.³

This report provides an overview of Ryerson's NSSE results for 2008. It is organized into four major sections: First, it examines overall benchmark summary scores that have been created by the Indiana University Center for Postsecondary Research. It then presents a preliminary set of core questions that consultations suggest are of particular relevance to Ryerson. Next, the report provides detailed results for the individual survey questions from which the benchmark summary scores were constructed, and discusses a number of additional questions that are not part of the

¹ Adrianna J. Kezar (2006) "The Impact of Institutional Size on Student Engagement", Vol. 43: No. 1, Article 6, pp. 87-91 provides a brief synopsis (publications.naspa.org/naspajournal/vol43/iss1/art6).

² Nineteen times out of twenty, the percentages shown throughout this report are estimated to be accurate to within: 1.1 percentage points for first-year and fourth-year students combined, 1.6 percentage points for first-year students alone, and 1.4 percentage points for fourth-year students alone.

³ Indiana University Center for Postsecondary Research, "Using NSSE Data," Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Center for Postsecondary Research, 2006, p. 2.

benchmarks. The final section focuses on the relationship between level of student engagement and student demographics including gender, parental education and commuting time to campus.

BENCHMARK SUMMARY SCORES AND COMPARISONS

The Indiana Center attempts to summarize the large amount of information found within the survey's 120 questions by creating five benchmarks. These were developed with the use of a statistical technique known as principal components analysis to group the survey questions in a meaningful way. The benchmarks can be thought of as subtypes or aspects of student engagement. They include:

- **Level of Academic Challenge**, which measures the extent to which the University emphasizes academic performance and sets high expectations for students
- **Active and Collaborative Learning**, which measures the extent to which the University encourages students to be active participants in their learning and to work with others
- **Student-Faculty Interaction**, which measures the extent to which the University fosters opportunities for faculty to serve as mentors or guides both inside and outside of class
- **Enriching Educational Experiences**, which measures the extent to which the University offers a spectrum of opportunities to enhance student learning, ranging from internships to co-curricular activities
- **Supportive Campus Environment**, which measures the extent to which the University provides academic and social support through positive working and social relationships with other students, faculty and staff

A composite score for each benchmark is calculated that averages each student's answers to the questions related to that benchmark. The scores have become a popular method of presenting the extent to which students at a particular institution are engaged compared with students elsewhere. Table 1 provides Ryerson's benchmark scores compared with those of Ontario universities, and U.S. Peer institutions as defined using the Carnegie Classification.⁴ All Ontario universities participated in NSSE in both 2008 and 2006. Differences that are greater than those attributable to chance alone are shown in **boldface**.

The 2008 U.S. Peers are those 15 American institutions that participated in NSSE 2008 that award at least 200 Master's degrees annually, have undergraduate enrolment of at least 10,000 full-time equivalent students, and are primarily non-residential (i.e., fewer than 25 percent of students live on campus). Compared to the list of 19 U.S. comparators used in NSSE 2006, ten institutions are the same, five are new and four did not participate in 2008.

⁴ The Indiana Center excludes Ryerson when calculating benchmark scores for Ontario universities; this enables Ryerson to compare its scores against those of other Ontario universities. There are 15 institutions in the 2008 U.S. Peers group for Ryerson University: Boise State University, California Polytechnic State University-San Luis Obispo, California State Polytechnic University-Pomona, California State University-Chico, California State University-Long Beach, CUNY Bernard M Baruch College, Eastern Michigan University, Kennesaw State University, Middle Tennessee State University, Missouri State University, San Jose State University, Southeastern Louisiana University, University of Texas-Pan American, University of Texas at San Antonio, University of Nebraska at Omaha.

Table 1: Comparison of benchmark summary scores*

	1 st Year			4 th Year		
	Ryerson	Ontario	U.S. Peers	Ryerson	Ontario	U.S. Peers
Level of Academic Challenge	52.5	51.2 ▼	50.7 ▼	57.0	55.8 ▼	55.3 ▼
Active & Collaborative Learning	39.9	35.0 ▼	41.3 ▲	51.2	43.5 ▼	51.1
Student-Faculty Interaction	25.5	23.3 ▼	31.6 ▲	34.2	32.7 ▼	39.3 ▲
Enriching Educational Experiences	24.8	25.1	25.8 ▲	36.2	34.7 ▼	36.5
Supportive Campus Environment	56.0	55.9	58.5 ▲	52.0	51.5	55.6 ▲

*Statistically significant differences are shown in **boldface**; the arrows designate whether the comparator group benchmark summary score is higher ▲ or lower ▼ than Ryerson's score. For example, in the case of Enriching Educational Experiences 4th Year: On a scale of 0 to 100, Ryerson scores 36.2, and the Ontario score of 34.7 is sufficiently lower than Ryerson's for the difference to be statistically significant. The U.S. Peers' score of 36.5 is so close to Ryerson's score that the difference may be the result of chance alone.

Broadly speaking, Ryerson scores as well or better than Ontario universities. Ryerson exceeds its American comparators in Level of Academic Challenge, but lags behind the scores achieved by U.S. Peer institutions for the other benchmarks in first year, and for Student-Faculty Interaction and Supportive Campus Environment in fourth year.⁵

CORE QUESTIONS

The NSSE benchmarks are one way of summarizing Ryerson's performance regarding student engagement, however, as composite measures they do not provide direction about which of the specific items within a benchmark the University should focus its efforts at improvement.

To address this issue, the University Planning Office consulted in Fall 2006 with the NSSE Advisory Committee, Academic Planning Group of Deans and other senior academic administrators, and the Academic Leadership Team comprised of department Chairs/Directors and other academic leaders. These consultations yielded a preliminary set of core questions reflecting Ryerson's mission and priorities, areas in which Ryerson wants to maintain high performance, and those in which improvement is needed. While the list is expected to evolve over time as further discussions occur, this report focuses on the current core questions and how results for them have changed between 2006 and 2008. These items are part of the University's integrated planning process and the scores are being monitored over time.

Table 2 outlines the scores achieved on the core questions in the 2006 and 2008 rounds of NSSE respectively, and how the 2008 performance compares with other Ontario universities and U.S. Peers.

⁵ Responses for individual questions within the benchmarks are reported by students using a Likert scale (e.g., strongly disagree, disagree, agree, agree strongly). NSSE converts these to numeric values (e.g., 0, 33, 66, 99) and calculates average scores.

Table 2: Core NSSE Questions, Responses in 2006 and 2008

Benchmark	Question	Measure	Performance in 2008 ~	First-year		Fourth-year	
				2006	2008	2006	2008
Active and Collaborative Learning (ACL)	Asked questions in class or contributed to class discussions	Often or very often	Ryerson similar to Ontario, but lower than U.S. peers at 1 st and 4 th year	40%	37%	52%	51%
Enriching Educational Experiences (EEE)	Culminating senior experience (capstone course, thesis, project, comprehensive exam, etc.)	Plan to do or done	Ryerson similar to Ontario, but lower than U.S. peers at 1 st and 4 th year	31%	31%	43%	48%
	Participating in co-curricular activities (organizations, campus publications, student government, sports, etc.)	% not participating at all in a typical week	Lower participation at Ryerson than Ontario at 1 st and 4 th year and U.S. peers at 1 st year	62%	65%	63%	61%
	Practicum, internship, field experience, co-op experience, or clinical assignment	Plan to do or done	Ryerson higher than Ontario at 1 st and 4 th year	79%	82%	73%	74%
Level of Academic Challenge (LAC)	Applying theories or concepts to practical problems or in new situations	Quite a bit or very much	Ryerson similar to Ontario and U.S. peers	76%	76%	83%	82%
Supportive Campus Environment (SCE)	Providing support you need to help you succeed academically	Quite a bit or very much	Ryerson similar to Ont., but lower than 4 th year U.S. peers	67%	69%	51%	58%
	Relationships with administrative personnel and offices	On a scale from 1 (unsupportive) to 7 (supportive)	Ryerson similar to Ontario and U.S. peers	4.4	4.4	3.9	4.1
Student-Faculty Interaction (SFI)	Discussed ideas from your readings or classes with faculty members outside of class	Often or very often	Ryerson similar to Ontario and U.S. peers	17%	19%	24%	23%
	Received prompt feedback from faculty on your academic performance (written or oral)	Often or very often	Ryerson similar to Ontario, but lower than U.S. peers at 4 th year	39%	43%	46%	51%
Not in benchmarks	Item needing improvement in classroom: Quality of course instruction by professors*	% indicating university needs to address	Ryerson lower than Ontario at 4 th year*	27%	30%	36%	39%
	Item needing improvement in classroom: Increasing the number or variety of course offerings in your major*	% indicating university needs to address	Ryerson similar to Ontario*	18%	19%	28%	30%
	Item needing improvement outside classroom: Library collection*	% indicating university needs to address	Ryerson similar to Ontario*	17%	13%	30%	20%
	Item needing improvement outside classroom: Quality or availability of study spaces*	% indicating university needs to address	Ryerson similar to Ontario*	31%	35%	31%	38%
	How would you evaluate your entire educational experience at this institution?	Good or excellent	Ryerson similar to Ontario and U.S. peers	79%	78%	75%	77%
	University's contribution to development of skills in writing clearly and effectively	Quite a bit or very much	Ryerson similar to Ontario and U.S. peers	60%	61%	67%	72%

~ Remarks refer to differences of at least 10 percentage points. *Item included only in Ontario survey; U.S. comparison not applicable.

INSIDE THE BENCHMARKS

Level of Academic Challenge

The Level of Academic Challenge benchmark is comprised of six questions that focus on the emphasis of students' coursework and the extent to which students believe they have worked harder than they once thought they could, as well as questions about the volume of academic work. NSSE is premised on the belief that universities can enrich students' academic achievement by emphasizing the importance of academic effort and by setting high expectations for students' performance. Ryerson exceeds other Ontario institutions and its U.S. comparison group in this area at both years one and four. Results for Ryerson are summarized in Figure 1. Where the difference between Ryerson and either its U.S. or Ontario comparators on a particular item is statistically significant and substantial (at least 10 percentage points), the comparator score is also provided.

Half of first-year students report that they often or very often worked harder than they thought they could to meet an instructor's expectations, and 59 percent of fourth-year students report similarly.

In the area of Academic Challenge, first- and fourth-year students are most similar in terms of the extent to which they believe the institution emphasizes spending significant amounts of time studying and on academic work. Over three-quarters of students at each year level indicate that the University emphasizes this "quite a bit" or "very much."

First- and fourth-year students differ in terms of the extent to which they report that their coursework emphasizes making judgments about the value of information, arguments or methods and the extent to which coursework emphasizes synthesizing and organizing ideas, information or experiences. For both survey items, 63 percent of year one students and just under three-quarters of year four students indicate that this is emphasized "quite a bit" or "very much."

These results are very similar to those found in the 2006 round of NSSE.

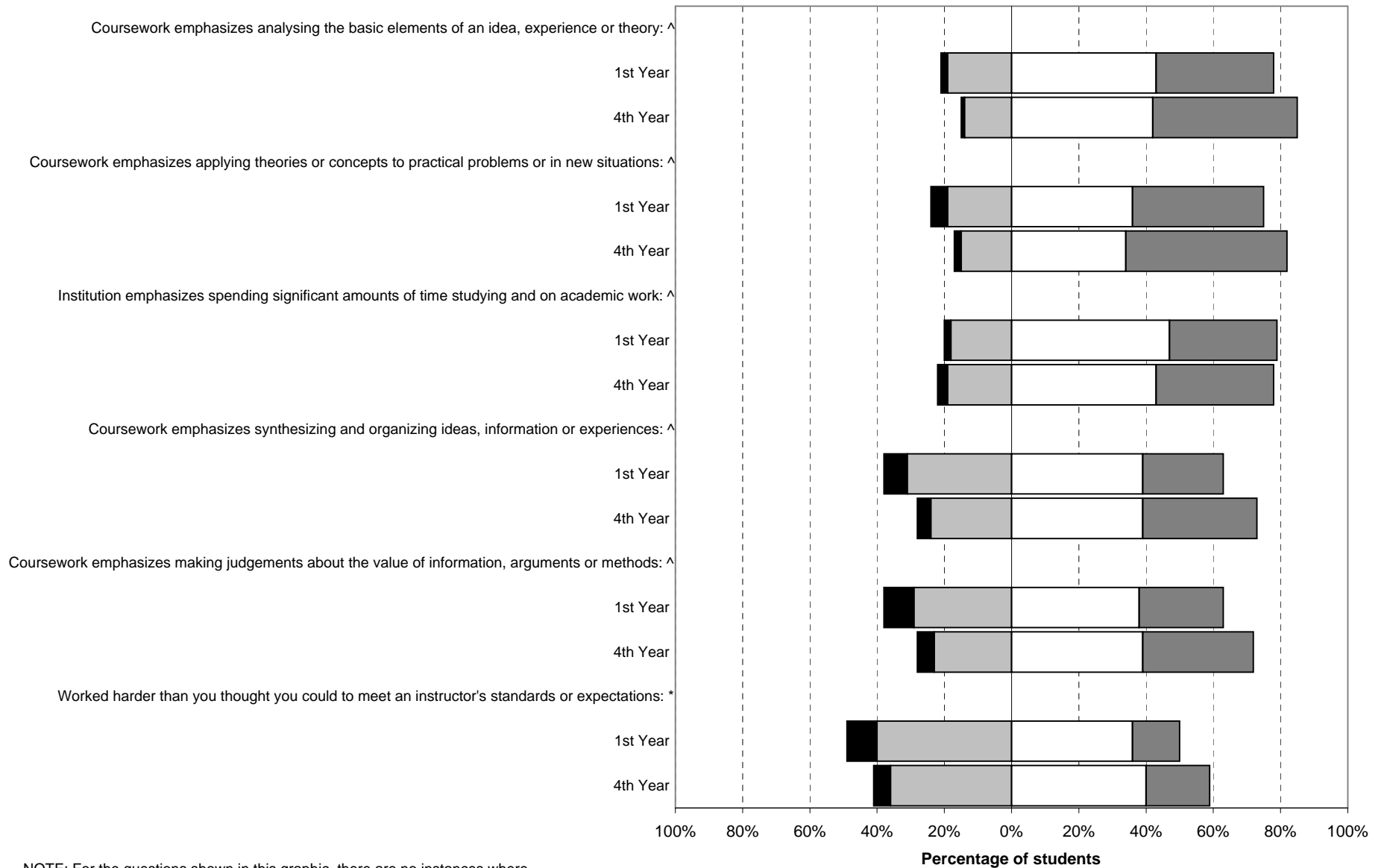
Active and Collaborative Learning

One of the premises on which NSSE is based is that "collaborating with others in solving problems or mastering difficult material prepares students for the messy, unscripted problems they will encounter daily during and after college."⁶ Figure 2 outlines results for the Active and Collaborative Learning benchmark that is comprised of seven survey questions focusing on the extent to which students' academic work involves others. First- and fourth-year students at Ryerson provide significantly higher scores on this benchmark than do their Ontario counterparts. Ryerson is below the U.S. comparison group on this benchmark at the first-year level, but scores very similarly to the U.S. comparators at fourth year.

The most common form of active and collaborative learning reported is working with classmates outside of class to prepare assignments. Sixty-five percent of first-year students and 80 percent

⁶ Indiana University Center for Postsecondary Research, "Ryerson University Benchmark Comparisons", Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Center for Postsecondary Research, 2006, p. 4.

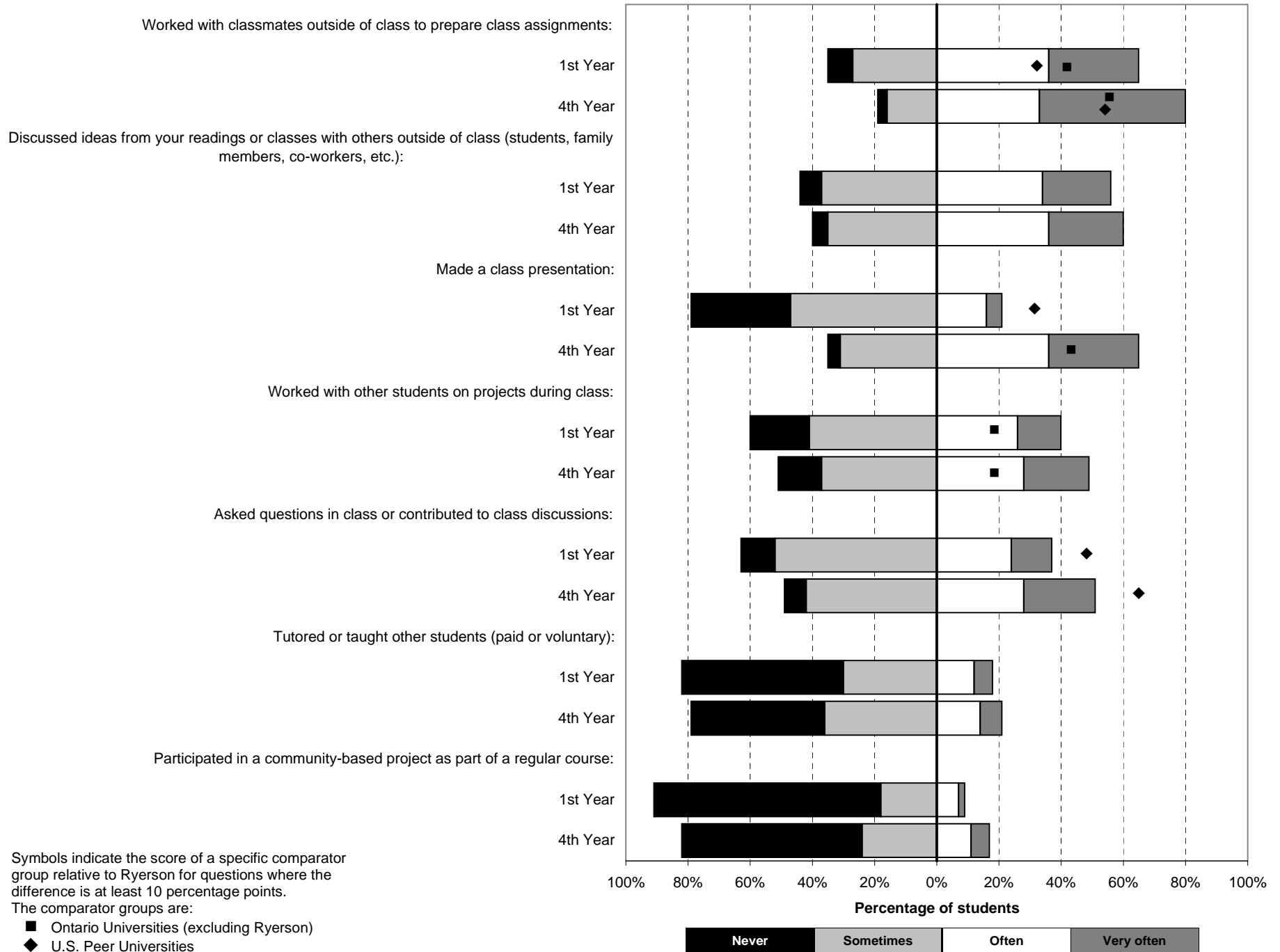
Figure 1: Level of Academic Challenge



NOTE: For the questions shown in this graphic, there are no instances where Ryerson's score differs from the corresponding score of Ontario Universities (excluding Ryerson) or U.S. Peer Universities by 10 percentage points or more.

Percentage of students				
*	Never	Sometimes	Often	Very often
^	Very little	Some	Quite a bit	Very much

Figure 2: Active and Collaborative Learning



of fourth-year students report doing this often or very often. With respect to active and collaborative learning, the greatest difference between first- and fourth-year students is the frequency with which they make class presentations. While 21 percent of first-year students report doing this often or very often, 65 percent of students in fourth year report doing so. First- and fourth-year students are roughly similar in the frequency with which they discuss ideas from their readings or classes with others outside of class (e.g., students, family members, coworkers). Fifty-six percent of first-year students and 60 percent of those in year four report doing this often or very often. These results are consistent with findings from the 2006 round of the survey.

Student-Faculty Interaction

The Student-Faculty Interaction benchmark is comprised of six survey questions that evaluate the frequency with which students engage in discussions with faculty, receive feedback from faculty on their academic performance, and work with faculty on projects. This benchmark is based on the premise that one of the best ways for students to learn firsthand how “experts” think about and solve problems is through interactions with faculty members. In first year as well as fourth year, Ryerson scores more highly than the Ontario average, but is below the U.S. comparison group for Student-Faculty Interaction. Results are summarized in Figure 3.

The most common form of student-faculty interaction reported is faculty feedback on students’ academic performance. Forty-three percent of first-year respondents and just over half of fourth-year students indicate that they receive prompt written or oral feedback often or very often. Less common are discussing ideas from readings or classes with faculty members outside of class (about one of five students report doing this often or very often) and working with faculty members on activities other than coursework such as committees, orientation or student life activities. (Fourteen percent of respondents report doing this often or very often.) Similar results were obtained in 2006.

Enriching Educational Experiences

The Enriching Education Experiences benchmark incorporates an assessment of experiences that are complementary to an academic program (e.g., internships, community service, capstone courses, participation in co-curricular activities, diversity, and technology).

In 2008, first-year students at Ryerson provide scores on this benchmark that are similar to their Ontario counterparts but below their U.S. peers. Among fourth-year students, Ryerson is higher than the Ontario group. Results are summarized in Figure 4.

A number of questions ask students whether they plan to participate in a given activity or whether they have already done so. Over three-quarters of respondents indicate that they have done or plan to engage in a practicum, internship, field experience, co-op experience or clinical assignment. Approximately two-thirds of students have done, or plan to do, community service or volunteer work. Not surprisingly, a higher proportion of fourth-year than first-year students report that they have actually *done* these various activities, whereas first-year students are more likely to indicate *plans* to do them.

Figure 3: Student-Faculty Interaction

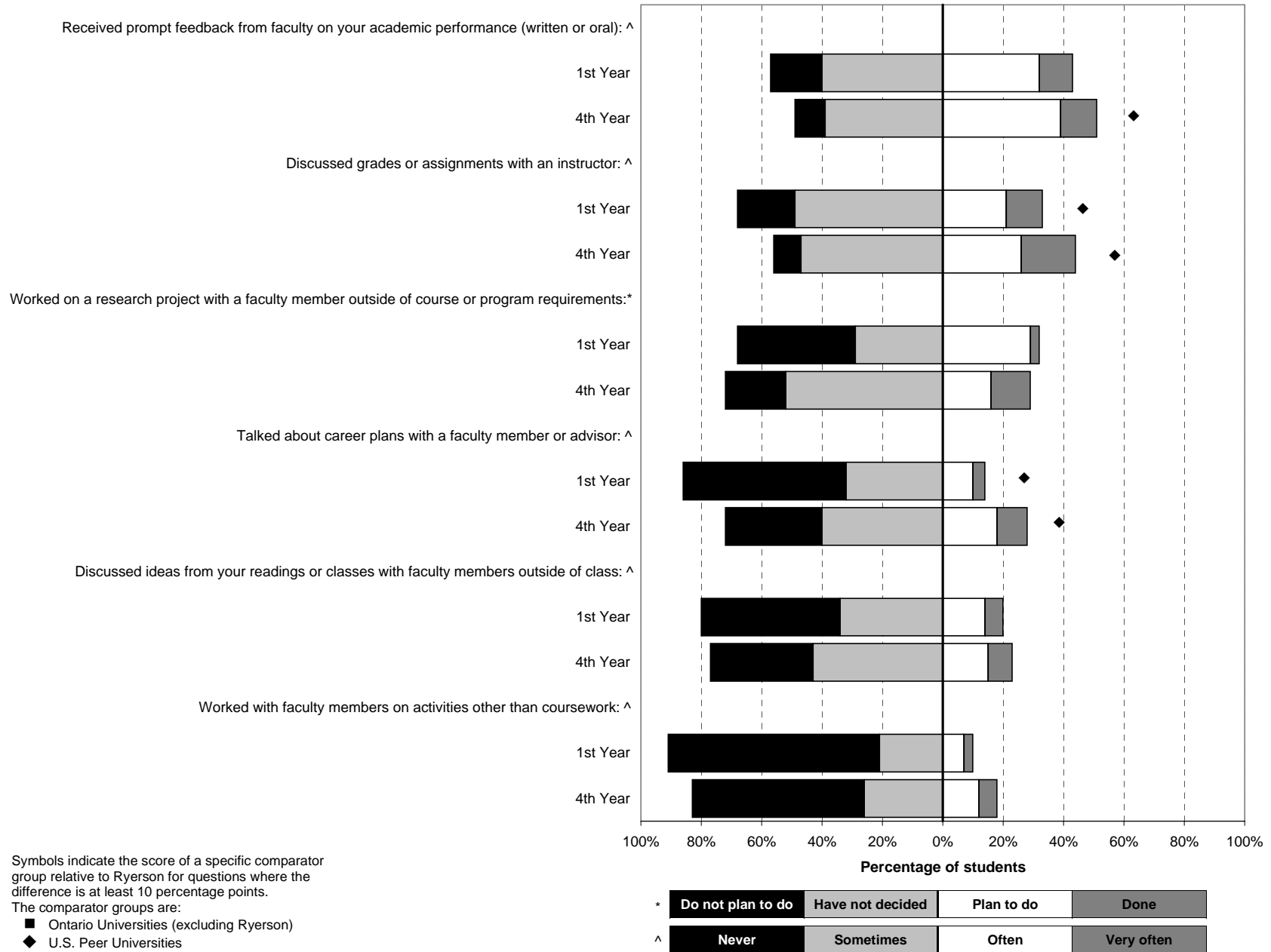
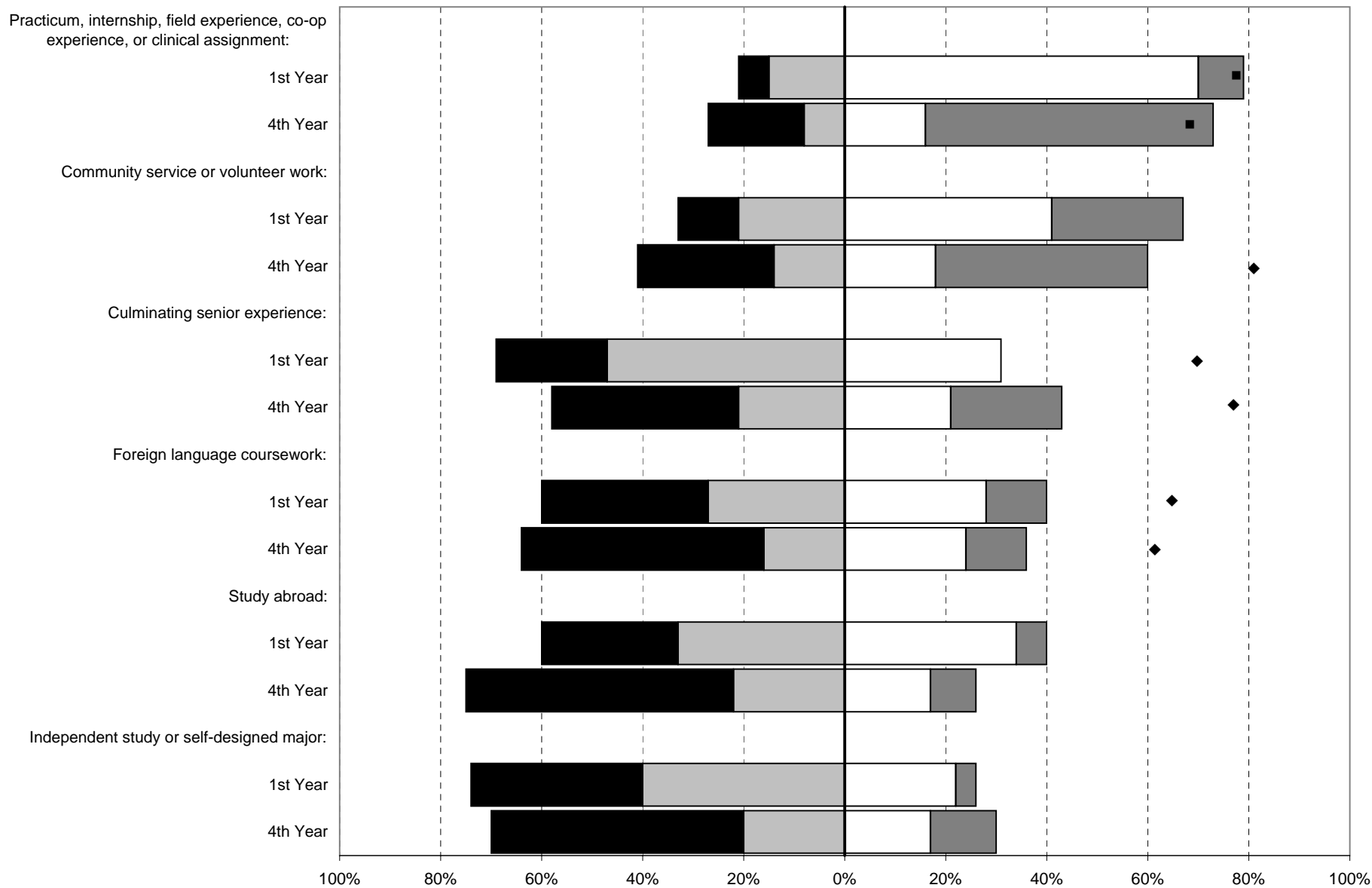


Figure 4: Enriching Educational Experiences



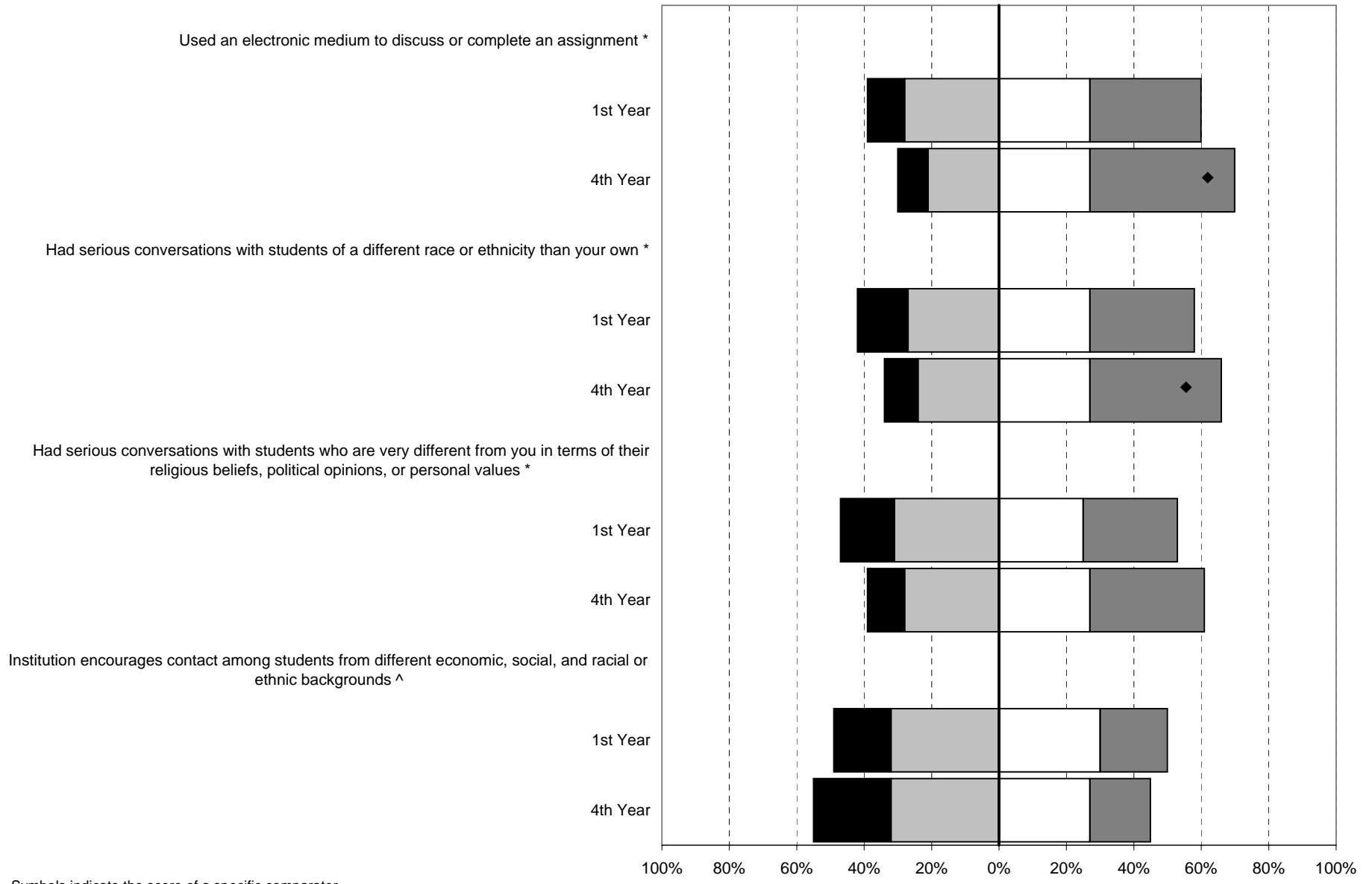
Symbols indicate the score of a specific comparator group relative to Ryerson for questions where the difference is at least 10 percentage points.

The comparator groups are:

- Ontario Universities (excluding Ryerson)
- ◆ U.S. Peer Universities

Do not plan to do Have not decided Plan to do Done

Figure 4: Enriching Educational Experiences Cont'd



Symbols indicate the score of a specific comparator group relative to Ryerson for questions where the difference is at least 10 percentage points.

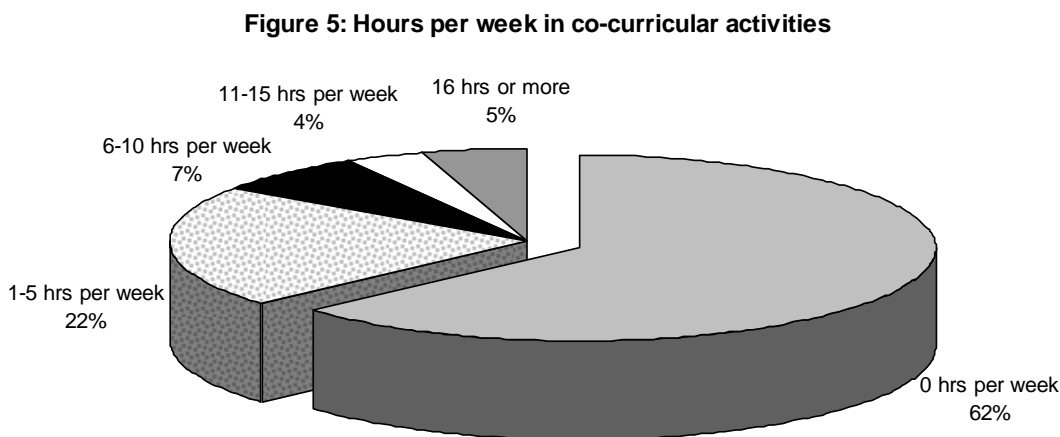
The comparator groups are:

- Ontario Universities (excluding Ryerson)
- ◆ U.S. Peer Universities

+	Never	Sometimes	Often	Very often
^	Very little	Some	Quite a bit	Very much

The Enriching Educational Experiences benchmark also includes items relating to diversity among students. Over 60 percent of respondents indicate that they have serious conversations with students of a different race or ethnicity than their own often or very often. When asked whether they have serious conversations with students who are very different from themselves in terms of religious beliefs, political opinions or personal values, 57 percent of students report doing this often or very often.

Over 60 percent of respondents report that in a typical week, they spend no time at all in co-curricular activities (e.g., organizations, campus publications, student government, intercollegiate or intramural sports). First and fourth-year students are similar in this regard. Results are summarized in Figure 5. Similar results were obtained in 2006.

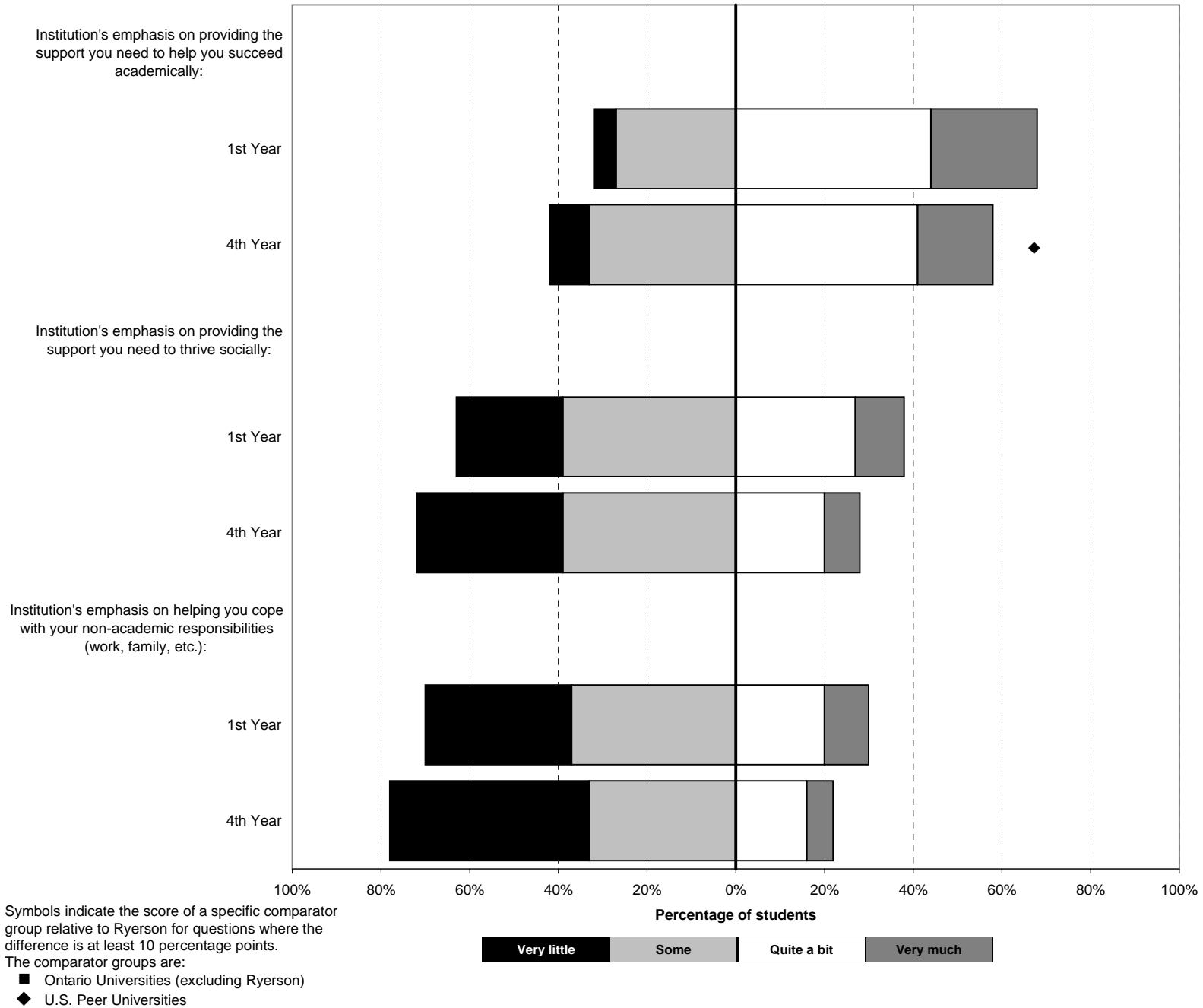


Supportive Campus Environment

The Supportive Campus Environment benchmark incorporates students' assessments of the extent to which Ryerson supports them academically, socially and in relation to non-academic responsibilities. It also includes an evaluation of the supportiveness of students' relationships with other students, faculty members and administrative staff. In 2008, Ryerson's performance in this area is similar to that of other Ontario institutions, but below the U.S. group.

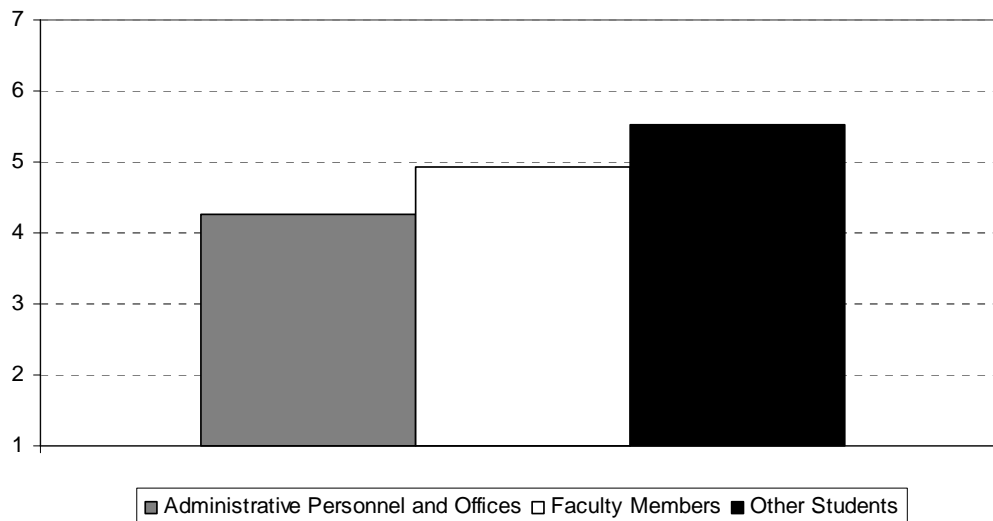
Students' perception of the extent to which the University provides support to students in various areas (academic and otherwise) is higher among first-year students than among fourth-year students. For example, 68 percent of students in first year and 58 percent of those in fourth year indicate that the University emphasizes providing support for students to succeed academically "quite a bit" or "very much." Results are summarized in Figure 6.

Figure 6: Supportive Campus Environment



Students rate the quality of their relationships with fellow students more highly than their relationships with either faculty members or administrative personnel. Students in years one and four are similar in terms of their reported quality of relationships. Results are summarized in Figure 7. Similar results were obtained in 2006.

Figure 7: Supportiveness of working and social relationships with others on a scale from 1 (unsupportive/unhelpful) to 7 (supportive/helpful)



ADDITIONAL TOPICS INCLUDED IN NSSE

A wide variety of items in the NSSE questionnaire are not included within the five benchmarks reviewed earlier. Many of these items can be grouped into three categories: Integrative Learning, Skills Development and Overall Experience.

Integrative Learning

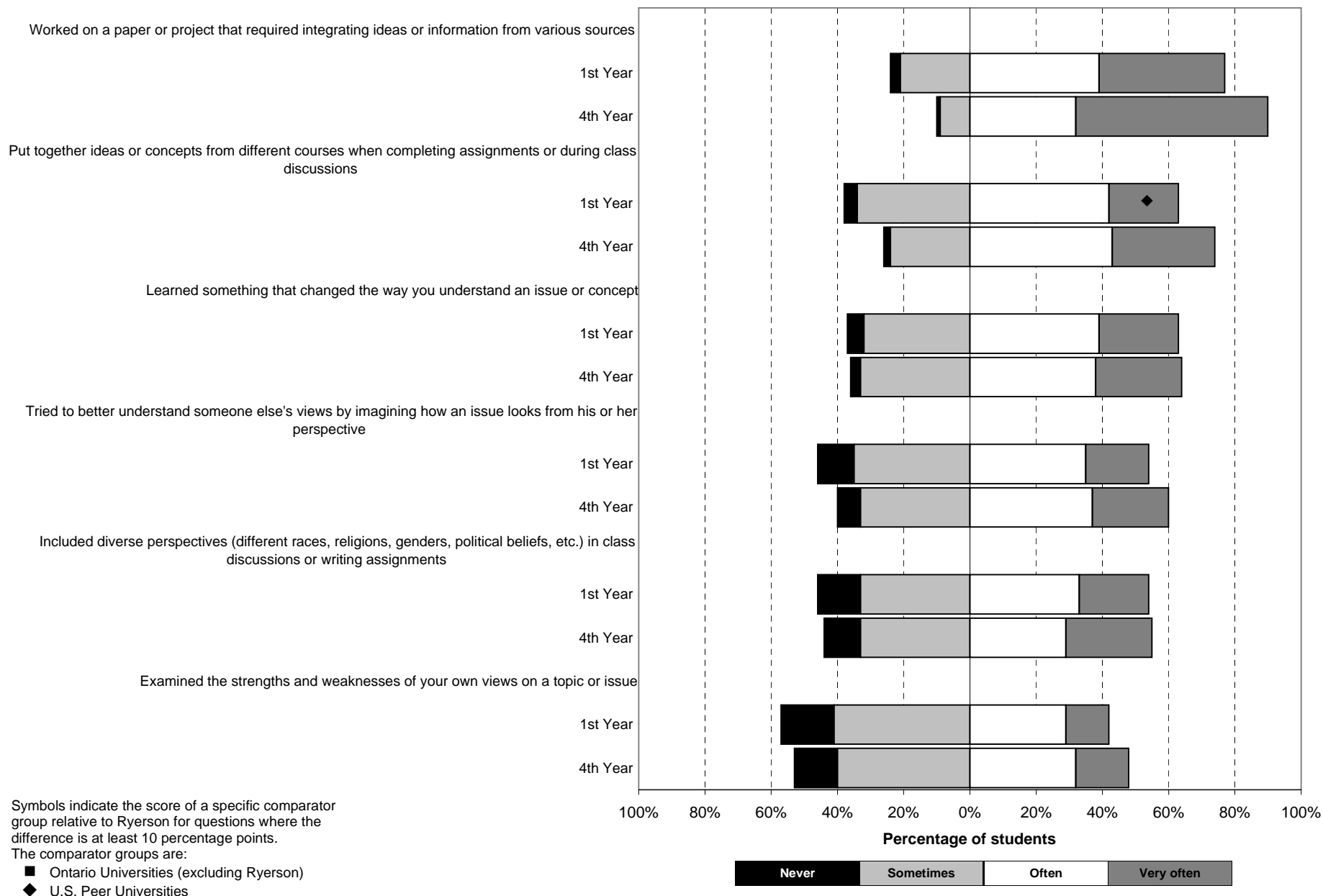
Items relating to integrative learning are those that ask students to evaluate their own way of thinking or pull together information from a variety of sources. Results are summarized in Figure 8.

Most students indicate that, often or very often, they work on papers or projects that require integrating ideas or information from various sources. However, a significantly greater percentage of students in fourth year (90 percent) report doing this than do those in first year (77 percent). Similarly, 74 percent of fourth-year students and 63 percent of first-year students indicate that, often or very often, they put together ideas from different courses when completing assignments or during class discussions.

Skills Development

Respondents were asked to rate the institution's contribution to their development of skills in a variety of areas. Overall, the most highly rated area is the ability to think critically and

Figure 8: Integrative Learning



analytically. Over 80 percent of students report that the University contributed to the development of their skills in this area “quite a bit” or “very much.” Similarly, over three-quarters of respondents report that the University contributed “quite a bit” or “very much” to their ability to work effectively with others.

Slightly more than two-thirds of respondents indicate that the University has contributed “quite a bit” or “very much” to their ability to write clearly and effectively, and to skills in analyzing quantitative problems.

According to 61 percent of respondents, the University contributes “quite a bit” or “very much” to skills in solving complex, real-world problems. Fifty-six percent report similarly with regard to the development of a personal code of values and ethics.

Fourth-year students tend to provide more positive responses on items relating to skills development than do first-year students.

Overall Experience

The majority of respondents are satisfied with their experience at Ryerson. Over three-quarters of students indicate that their “entire educational experience” is good or excellent. And 83 percent report that if they could start over, they would probably or definitely attend Ryerson again.

Students were asked to identify the factor which has posed the biggest obstacle to their academic progress. One in ten students indicate that they have faced no obstacles. Among first-year students, one quarter indicate that their academic performance at university has been the biggest obstacle, while almost third cite financial pressures or work obligations. This differs from fourth-year students – about one in ten report that academic performance has been the biggest obstacle to their progress. Thirty-eight percent of fourth-year students point to financial pressures or work obligations.

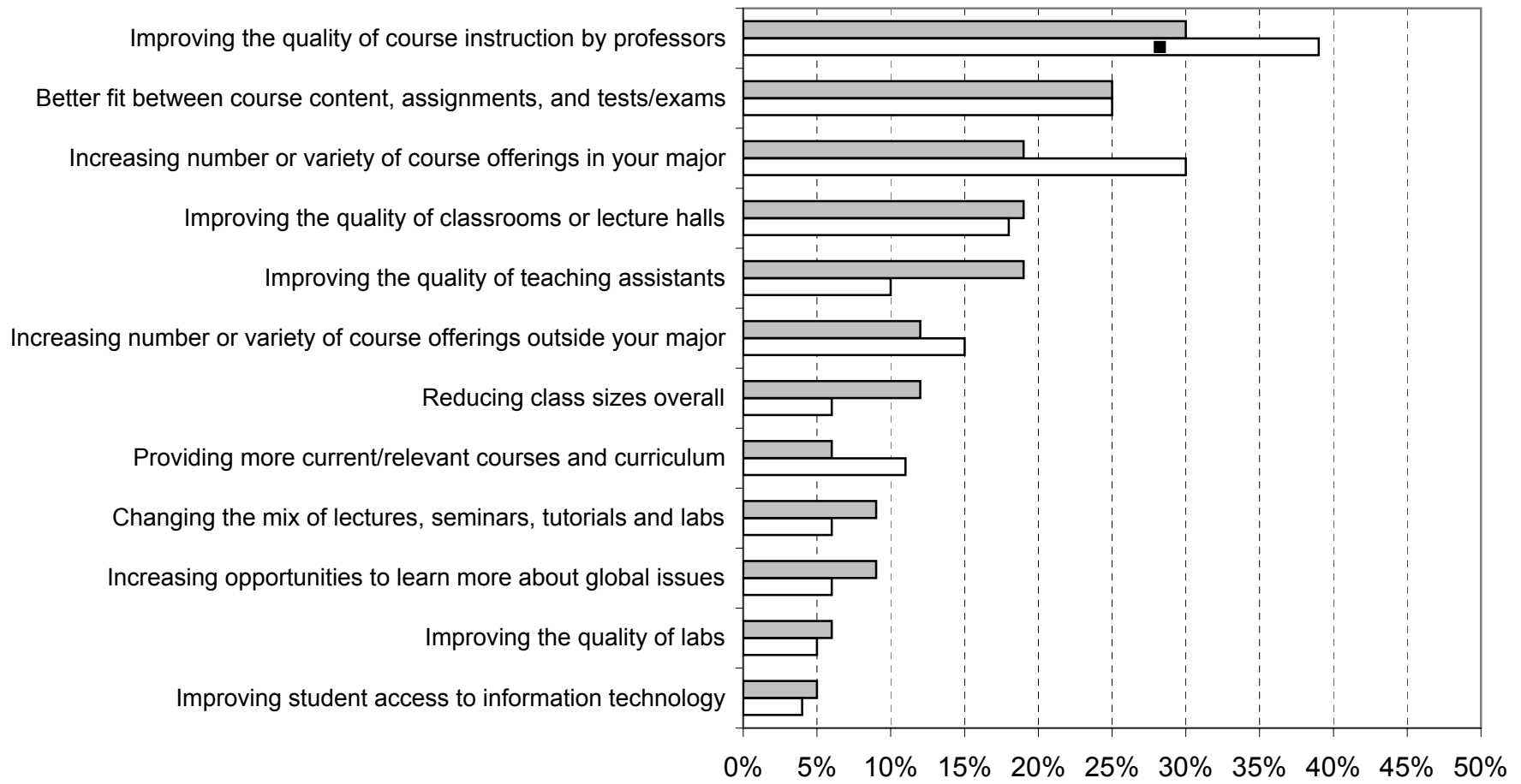
Seventy-one percent of first-year students and two-thirds of those in fourth year report that the quality of academic advising they have received at Ryerson is good or excellent.

Fewer than a third of first-year and fourth-year students indicate that, in their current academic year, they have felt a strong sense of community at Ryerson (i.e., felt that they are part of a group that shares common interests, goals, values and experiences).

Priorities for improvement: Respondents were provided with a list of items related to the student learning experience and were asked to choose two items that most need improvement *in the classroom*, and two items that most need improvement *outside the classroom*. Responses are summarized in Figures 9 and 10.

Priorities in the classroom: First- and fourth-year students differ somewhat in their responses. Among first-year students, the items cited most frequently as requiring improvement *in the classroom* are quality of course instruction by professors (cited by 30 percent) and ensuring a

Figure 9: Top two priorities for improvement *in* the classroom

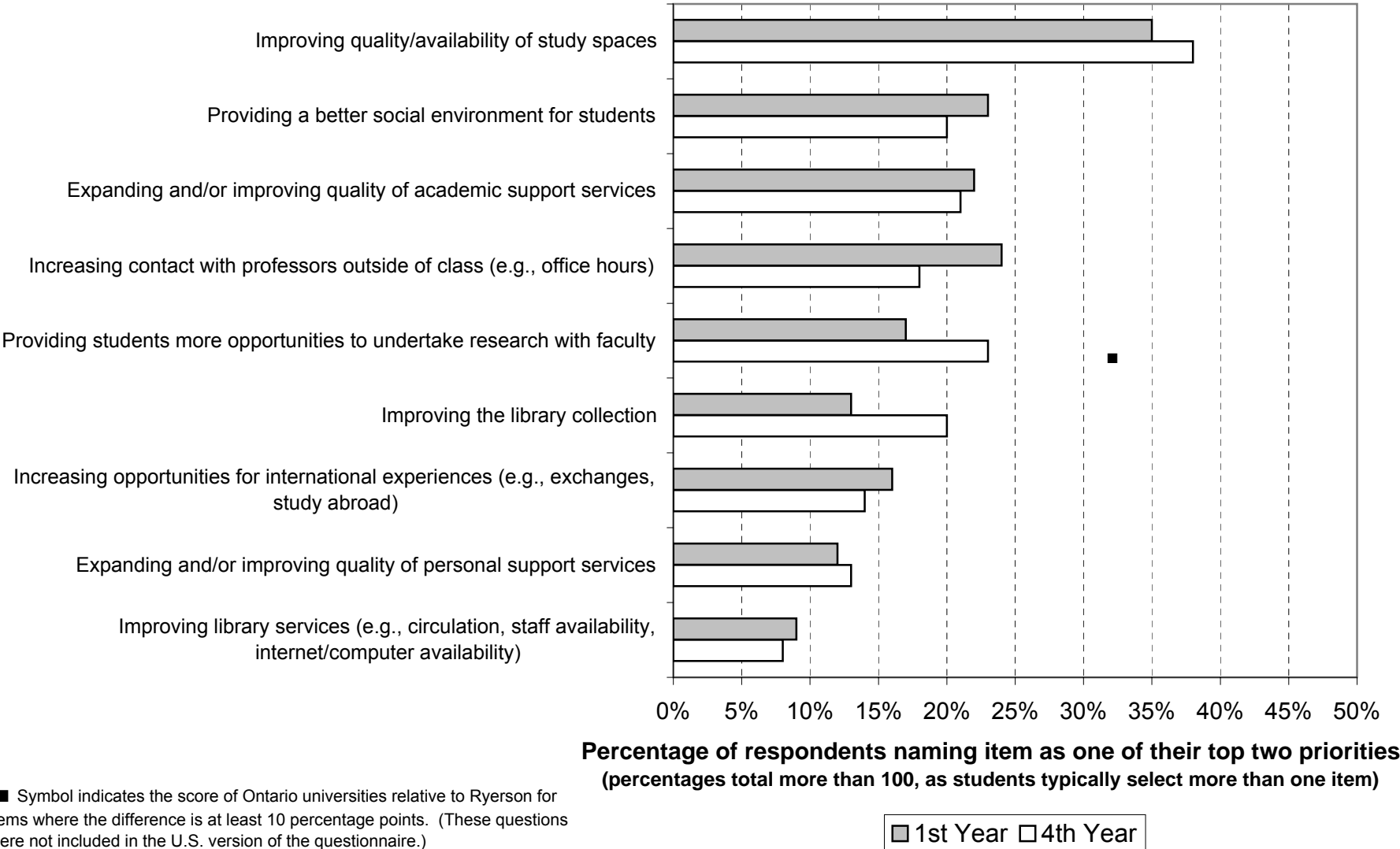


Percentage of students naming items as one of their top two priorities
 (percentages total more than 100, as students typically select more than one item)

■ Symbol indicates the score of Ontario universities relative to Ryerson for items where the difference is at least 10 percentage points. (These questions were not included in the U.S. version of the questionnaire.)

■ 1st Year □ 4th Year

Figure 10: Top two priorities for improvement outside the classroom



better fit among course content, assignments and tests/exams (cited by 25 percent). The need to increase the number or variety of course offerings in one's major, improving the quality of teaching assistants, and improving the quality of classrooms or lecture halls is each identified by 19 percent of first-year respondents.

While a quarter of fourth-year students also cite the fit between course content, assignment and tests/exams as one of their "top two" issues, almost 40 percent report that the quality of course instruction requires improvement. Almost a third of fourth-year students indicate that increasing the number or variety of course offerings within their major is among their top two priorities.

Priorities outside the classroom: Outside of the classroom, over a third of students in both first- and fourth-year indicate that improvement in the quality, availability or quantity of study spaces is a priority. Almost a quarter of first-year students report that increased contact with professors outside of class (e.g., office hours) is required. About the same proportion call for a better social environment and expansion or improvement in academic support services.

The priorities among fourth-year students, in addition to study spaces, include providing students with more opportunities to undertake research with faculty (identified by 23 percent). Approximately one-fifth of year four students identify social environment, expansion or improvement of academic support, and the library collection in their top two items.

PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

Profile of respondents

The characteristics of the survey sample and survey population in terms of gender, Faculty, age and course load are compared in Table 3. These are all items where comparable population data exist in Ryerson's student information system.

Female students are over-represented in the sample and were more likely to complete the online questionnaire irrespective of their Faculty or year level.

Students from the Faculty of Community Services tend to be somewhat over-represented while those in the Faculty of Business are somewhat under-represented. The sample is representative of the population in terms of age, but students taking a part-time course load in fourth year were less likely to complete the survey than those on a full-time course load.

Table 3: Comparison of survey sample and population characteristics

	1 st year				4 th year			
	Sample		Population		Sample		Population	
Gender								
Female	1,304	58.8%	2,833	51.8%	1,395	56.6%	2,607	51.9%
Male	915	41.2%	2,633	48.2%	1,070	43.4%	2,417	48.1%
<i>Total</i>	<i>2,219</i>	<i>100.0%</i>	<i>5,466</i>	<i>100.0%</i>	<i>2,465</i>	<i>100.0%</i>	<i>5,024</i>	<i>100.0%</i>
Faculty								
Arts	287	12.9%	725	13.3%	119	4.8%	206	4.1%
Ted Rogers School of Mgt & Design	593	26.7%	1,526	27.9%	714	29.0%	1,611	32.1%
Community Services	433	19.5%	1,021	18.7%	461	18.7%	908	18.1%
Engineering, Arch & Sci	402	18.1%	832	15.2%	631	25.6%	1,148	22.9%
504	22.7%	1,362	24.9%	540	21.9%	1,151	22.9%	
<i>Total</i>	<i>2,219</i>	<i>100.0%</i>	<i>5,466</i>	<i>100.0%</i>	<i>2,465</i>	<i>100.0%</i>	<i>5,024</i>	<i>100.0%</i>
Mean Age*	19.8		20.1		23.5		24.0	
Course Load								
Full-time	1,904	85.8%	4,605	84.2%	1,865	75.7%	3,641	72.5%
Part-time	315	14.2%	861	15.8%	600	24.3%	1,383	27.5%
<i>Total</i>	<i>2,219</i>	<i>100.0%</i>	<i>5,466</i>	<i>100.0%</i>	<i>1,529</i>	<i>100.0%</i>	<i>5,024</i>	<i>100.0%</i>

* Age (in years) as of the end of the 2007 calendar year, based on reported year of birth.

Grades

Among respondents in first year, the percentage of those with a reported overall grade range is as follows: A (20 percent), B (58 percent), C (18 percent) and C- or lower (4 percent). The distribution of respondents in fourth year by reported overall grade range is: A (21 percent), B (68 percent), C (11 percent) and C- or lower (0 percent).

FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH ENGAGEMENT

An attempt has been made to examine the extent to which the average composite scores for each benchmark differ according to the demographic characteristics of respondents. The variables assessed include sex, level of parental education, place of residence, length of commute to campus, and employment. It is not certain whether differences by particular demographic characteristics (e.g., gender) may be a function of program of study. Results are summarized in Table 4.

Gender

Almost six of ten respondents are female. Males and females do not differ significantly in terms of average composite scores in the areas of Active and Collaborative Learning, Student-Faculty Interaction or Supportive Campus Environment. Females provide a higher average score on the Enriching Educational Experiences benchmark and the Academic Challenge benchmark than do males.⁷ This differs from the 2006 round of NSSE, where males and females provided different scores for Enriching Educational Experiences but were similar in terms of Academic Challenge.

Parental education

With respect to parents' highest level of education, 54 percent of respondents indicate that at least one of their parents completed a university degree (bachelor's, master's or doctoral). A further 6 percent attended university without earning a degree. Twenty percent report that at least one parent attended (but not necessarily completed) college, while 14 percent indicate that at least one parent finished high school. Six percent of respondents report that neither of their parents completed high school.

Students who report that at least one of their parents completed a bachelor's degree (or higher) provide significantly higher composite scores on the Active and Collaborative Learning, Student-Faculty Interaction and Enriching Educational Experiences benchmarks than do students who do not have a parent who completed university.⁸ These findings are consistent with the results of the previous (2006) administration of NSSE.

Employment

Sixty-four percent of students report working for pay in a typical week. Among those who are employed, 78 work off campus only, 9 percent work on campus only and 13 percent work both on and off campus.

Seventeen percent of students work off campus for up to ten hours per week; one in four works between eleven and twenty hours. About 15 percent of all respondents report working off campus for over twenty hours in a typical week.

Generally, students who are employed report higher levels of engagement than do non-employed students on the composite scores for the Active and Collaborative Learning, Student-Faculty Interaction, and Enriching Educational Experiences benchmarks.⁹ Further, students with on-campus employment (including those doing a combination of on- and off-campus work) score more highly on these benchmarks than do students who report working only off campus.¹⁰ This is consistent with findings from the previous round of NSSE conducted in 2006.

⁷ Differences between males and females: Enriching Educational Experiences ($t=4.13$, $p<.001$), Academic Challenge ($t=3.39$, $p<.001$)

⁸ Differences between students who have at least one parent who completed a bachelor's degree and those whose parents did not: Active and Collaborative Learning ($t=3.98$, $p<.001$), Student-Faculty Interaction ($t=3.49$, $p<.001$) and Enriching Educational Experiences ($t=2.71$, $p<.01$)

⁹ Differences between students who are employed and those who are not: Active and Collaborative Learning ($t=9.77$, $p<.001$); Student-Faculty Interaction ($t=8.18$, $p<.001$); Enriching Educational Experiences ($t=11.33$, $p<.001$)

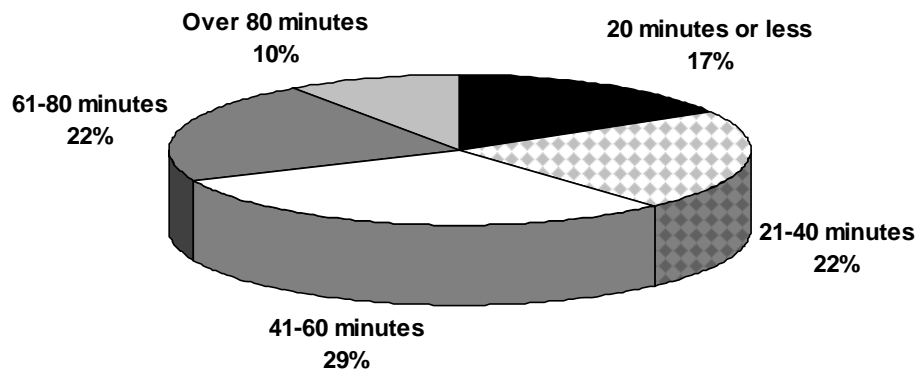
¹⁰ Differences among students working on campus (including combination of on and off campus) and off campus: Active and Collaborative Learning ($t=9.00$, $p<.001$); Student-Faculty Interaction ($t=13.16$, $p<.001$); Enriching Educational Experiences ($t=9.30$, $p<.001$)

Commuting and place of residence

About three quarters of first-year students and 60 percent of fourth-year students live with parents, guardians or relatives. Almost a quarter of first-year students and over a third of fourth-year students live in rented accommodations.

Over three-quarters of respondents use public transit to travel to campus while 15 percent walk, cycle or blade. Fewer than one in ten use cars to get to campus, either alone or sharing a drive with others. Sixty-two percent of respondents travel over 40 minutes to get to campus from their place of residence. The distribution of students by reported length of commute is summarized in Figure 11.

Figure 11: Travel time to campus from place of residence



With regard to travel time to campus, two groups of students are compared: those with a long commute and those with a short commute. Students commuting for 20 or fewer minutes to campus provide significantly higher scores in the areas of Active and Collaborative Learning, Student-Faculty Interaction, and Enriching Educational Experiences than do those who take over 20 minutes.¹¹ Similar results are found when students who take 40 or fewer minutes are compared to those who take longer.¹² This is a change from the 2006 round of NSSE, where the only difference found between the longer and shorter commute was in the area of Enriching Educational Experiences.

There is a very weak, negative relationship between length of commute and the number of hours that students spend participating in co-curricular activities.¹³ Even among students who live very close to campus (those who travel 20 minutes or less), over half (57 percent) of respondents

¹¹ Differences between students commuting 20 or fewer minutes and those with longer commute: Active and Collaborative Learning ($t=3.96, p<.001$), Student-Faculty Interaction ($t=4.52, p>.001$), and Enriching Educational Experiences ($t=6.06, p<.001$).

¹² Differences between students commuting 40 or fewer minutes and those with longer commute: Active and Collaborative Learning ($t=4.83, p<.001$), Student-Faculty Interaction ($t=5.55, p>.001$), and Enriching Educational Experiences ($t=7.86, p<.001$).

¹³ $r_s = -.05, p<.01$

report spending no time at all participating in co-curricular activities in a typical week. This finding is consistent with the results of the previous administration of NSSE conducted in 2006.

Students living on campus or in rental accommodation provide significantly higher scores in the areas of Active and Collaborative Learning, Student-Faculty Interaction and Enriching Educational Experiences than do students who live with parents, relatives or guardians.¹⁴ In the 2006 round of NSSE, these differences were found for Active and Collaborative Learning as well as Enriching Educational Experiences, but not for Student-Faculty Interaction.

Table 4: Factors associated with composite benchmark scores

	Academic Challenge	Active & Collaborative Learning	Student-Faculty Interaction	Enriching Educational Experiences	Supportive Campus Environment
Gender	Females higher than males	--	--	Females higher than males	--
Parental education	--	Parent with degree higher than where neither parent has degree	Parent with degree higher than where neither parent has degree	Parent with degree higher than where neither parent has degree	--
Employment	--	Employed higher than non-employed; On-campus employment higher than off-campus	Employed higher than non-employed; On-campus employment higher than off-campus	Employed higher than non-employed; On-campus employment higher than off-campus	--
Length of commute	--	Traveling 20 min or fewer higher than those over 20 min; traveling 40 min or fewer higher than over 40 minutes	Traveling 20 min or fewer higher than those over 20 min; traveling 40 min or fewer higher than over 40 minutes	Traveling 20 min or fewer higher than those over 20 min; traveling 40 min or fewer higher than over 40 minutes	--
Place of residence	--	Students who live with parents or relatives lower than others	Students who live with parents or relatives lower than others	Students who live with parents or relatives lower than others	--

IMPLICATIONS OF NSSE

Ryerson has now conducted three rounds of NSSE. Each year, the results yield valuable information about characteristics of Ryerson's student population, the ways in which students spend their time and the types of educational experiences they have had. Consequently, NSSE has generated a great deal of interest among students, faculty and staff across the University.

Broadly speaking, Ryerson scores at least as well as other Ontario universities, and exceeds them in a number of areas. Ryerson is similar to its American comparators in a number of areas,

¹⁴ Difference between students living with parents and those who live on campus or in rental accommodations: Active and Collaborative Learning ($t=5.20$, $p<.001$), Student-Faculty Interaction ($t=6.14$, $p<.001$), Enriching Educational Experiences ($t=6.15$, $p<.001$)

exceeds them in Level of Academic Challenge, but falls behind them in terms of Student-Faculty Interaction and Supportive Campus Environment at both the first- and fourth-year levels.

Overall satisfaction with the educational experience offered at Ryerson appears high. Over three-quarters of respondents indicate that their “entire educational experience” has been good or excellent. And 83 percent of respondents report that if they could start over, they would probably or definitely attend Ryerson again.

Results in the areas of Active and Collaborative Learning and Enriching Educational Experiences are relatively positive. Over three-quarters of Ryerson respondents indicate that they have done or plan to undertake a practicum, internship, field experience, co-op or clinical placement. Over 60 percent have serious conversations with students of a different race or ethnicity than their own often or very often.

Employment among students is associated with increased levels of engagement in several areas. The relationship between employment and engagement is even more positive when students are working in positions on campus compared to off campus.

The survey results suggest possible areas for further investigation and enhancement at Ryerson. These might include aspects of student-faculty interaction, participation in co-curricular activities, the University’s emphasis on helping students to succeed, and areas for improvement identified by students as priorities within and outside of the classroom.

At Ryerson, NSSE underpins student experience and engagement initiatives by providing a robust, long-term measurement regime. In 2008, Ryerson participated in the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario’s (HEQCO’s) NSSE Intervention Project. This multi-institution project was funded jointly by HEQCO and the participating universities. Coordinated by Queen’s University and endorsed by NSSE, the project is intended to assess the impacts of institutionally-developed initiatives to improve student engagement. The Ryerson initiative, *Writing for Success*, was developed for first-year students in the Faculty of Community Services to enhance the University’s role in the development of skills in writing clearly and effectively. Surveys administered to students before and after they complete the intervention, including a number of relevant NSSE questions, as well as student focus groups, will be used to assess the impact of the initiative.

NSSE has become an integral part of the University’s academic planning and budgeting processes. Ryerson has increased its sample size beyond standard NSSE levels to allow for disaggregation of responses to the level of individual programs. Consequently, survey results have begun to inform planning at the level of academic departments and Faculties in addition to University-wide efforts.

**RYERSON
UNIVERSITY**

NATIONAL SURVEY OF STUDENT ENGAGEMENT 2008

HIGHLIGHTS OF RESULTS

PREPARED BY THE UNIVERSITY PLANNING OFFICE