

# NATIONAL SURVEY OF STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

# 2011

## HIGHLIGHTS OF RESULTS



**RYERSON  
UNIVERSITY**

PREPARED BY THE UNIVERSITY PLANNING OFFICE

Everyone Makes a Mark



## 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 fourth time at Ryerson in 2011 and is based on research indicating that active rather than passive learning is more likely to lead to excellent student learning outcomes.<sup>1</sup>

Ryerson follows an integrated approach to planning centred on a five-year academic plan, *Shaping Our Future: Academic Plan for 2008 to 2013*, that was 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.

Most of the NSSE questionnaire's items, numbering more than one hundred, examine a wide range of activities in which students are actually involved rather than 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 2011, 751 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 2008, and the survey will be repeated periodically in the future in order to track progress.

In Winter 2011, 5,682 first-year and 6,556 fourth-year Ryerson students were contacted by email and asked to complete the survey online. The total sample of 4,204 students yields a response rate of 34.4 percent. The sample size and response rate contribute to a reasonable estimate of statistical error.<sup>2</sup>

This report provides an overview of Ryerson's NSSE results for 2011. 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 set of core questions that 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 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 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

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<sup>1</sup> 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](http://publications.naspa.org/naspajournal/vol43/iss1/art6)).

<sup>2</sup> Nineteen times out of twenty, the percentages shown throughout this report are estimated to be accurate to within: 1.2 percentage points for first-year and fourth-year students combined, 1.9 percentage points for first-year students alone, and 1.6 percentage points for fourth-year students alone.

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.<sup>3</sup> All Ontario universities participated in NSSE in 2011. Differences that are greater than those attributable to chance alone are shown in **boldface**.

The 2011 U.S. Peers are those 11 American institutions that participated in NSSE 2011 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). Eight of the institutions are the same as those in the list of 15 comparators used in 2008. (7 of the 15 institutions did not participate in 2011 and 3 are new.)

**Table 1: Comparison of benchmark summary scores\***

	1 <sup>st</sup> Year			4 <sup>th</sup> Year		
	Ryerson	Ontario	U.S. Peers	Ryerson	Ontario	U.S. Peers
Level of Academic Challenge	52.8	<b>51.9 ▼</b>	52.4	57.3	<b>56.2 ▼</b>	56.9
Active & Collaborative Learning	39.5	<b>35.5 ▼</b>	<b>43.2 ▲</b>	48.8	<b>44.4 ▼</b>	<b>52.2 ▲</b>
Student-Faculty Interaction	25.4	<b>23.1 ▼</b>	<b>33.0 ▲</b>	33.9	<b>32.5 ▼</b>	<b>39.9 ▲</b>
Enriching Educational Experiences	25.1	24.7	<b>26.9 ▲</b>	34.8	34.4	<b>37.3 ▲</b>
Supportive Campus Environment	57.8	57.3	<b>61.7 ▲</b>	53.9	<b>52.4 ▼</b>	<b>57.6 ▲</b>

\*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.

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 Level of Academic

<sup>3</sup> 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 11 institutions in the 2011 U.S. Peers group for Ryerson University: California Polytechnic State University-San Luis Obispo, California State Polytechnic University-Pomona, California State University-Northridge, Eastern Michigan University, Kennesaw State University, Middle Tennessee State University, San Jose State University, University of North Carolina Wilmington, University of South Alabama, University of Texas-Pan American, University of Texas at San Antonio.

Challenge, but lags behind the scores achieved by U.S. Peer institutions for the other benchmarks.<sup>4</sup>

## **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 specific items within a benchmark the University should focus its efforts.

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 set of core questions reflecting Ryerson's mission and priorities, areas in which Ryerson wants to maintain high performance, and items for which a need for improvement was identified. 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 2008 and 2011 rounds of NSSE, and how the most recent performance compares with other Ontario universities and U.S. Peers.

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<sup>4</sup> 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 2008 and 2011**

Benchmark	Question	Measure	Performance in 2011 ~	First-year		Fourth-year	
				2008	2011	2008	2011
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 in 1 <sup>st</sup> and 4 <sup>th</sup> year	37%	37%	51%	50%
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 in 1 <sup>st</sup> and 4 <sup>th</sup> year	31%	33%	48%	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 in 1 <sup>st</sup> and 4 <sup>th</sup> year and U.S. peers in 1 <sup>st</sup> year	65%	59%	61%	60%
	Practicum, internship, field experience, co-op experience, or clinical assignment	Plan to do or done	Ryerson higher than Ontario in 1 <sup>st</sup> and 4 <sup>th</sup> year	82%	80%	74%	70%
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%	79%	82%	84%
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 <sup>th</sup> year U.S. peers	69%	72%	58%	60%
	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	4.6	4.1	4.3
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	19%	17%	23%	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 in 1 <sup>st</sup> year	43%	45%	51%	53%
Not in benchmarks	Item needing improvement in classroom: Quality of course instruction by professors*	% indicating university needs to address	Ryerson similar to Ontario*	30%	33%	39%	35%
	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*	19%	22%	30%	38%
	Item needing improvement outside classroom: Library collection*	% indicating university needs to address	Ryerson similar to Ontario*	13%	11%	20%	14%
	Item needing improvement outside classroom: Quality or availability of study spaces*	% indicating university needs to address	Higher % indicating needs improvement at Ryerson than Ontario in 1 <sup>st</sup> yr*	35%	44%	38%	44%
	How would you evaluate your entire educational experience at this institution?	Good or excellent	Ryerson similar to Ontario and U.S. peers	78%	81%	77%	77%
	University's contribution to development of skills in writing clearly and effectively	Quite a bit or very much	Ryerson similar to Ontario but lower than 1 <sup>st</sup> year U.S. peers	61%	62%	72%	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 thought they could, plus 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. Overall, Ryerson exceeds other Ontario institutions on this benchmark 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.

Over half (53 percent) 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 60 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. 80 percent 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, 65 percent of year one students and 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 2008 round of NSSE.

### Active and Collaborative Learning

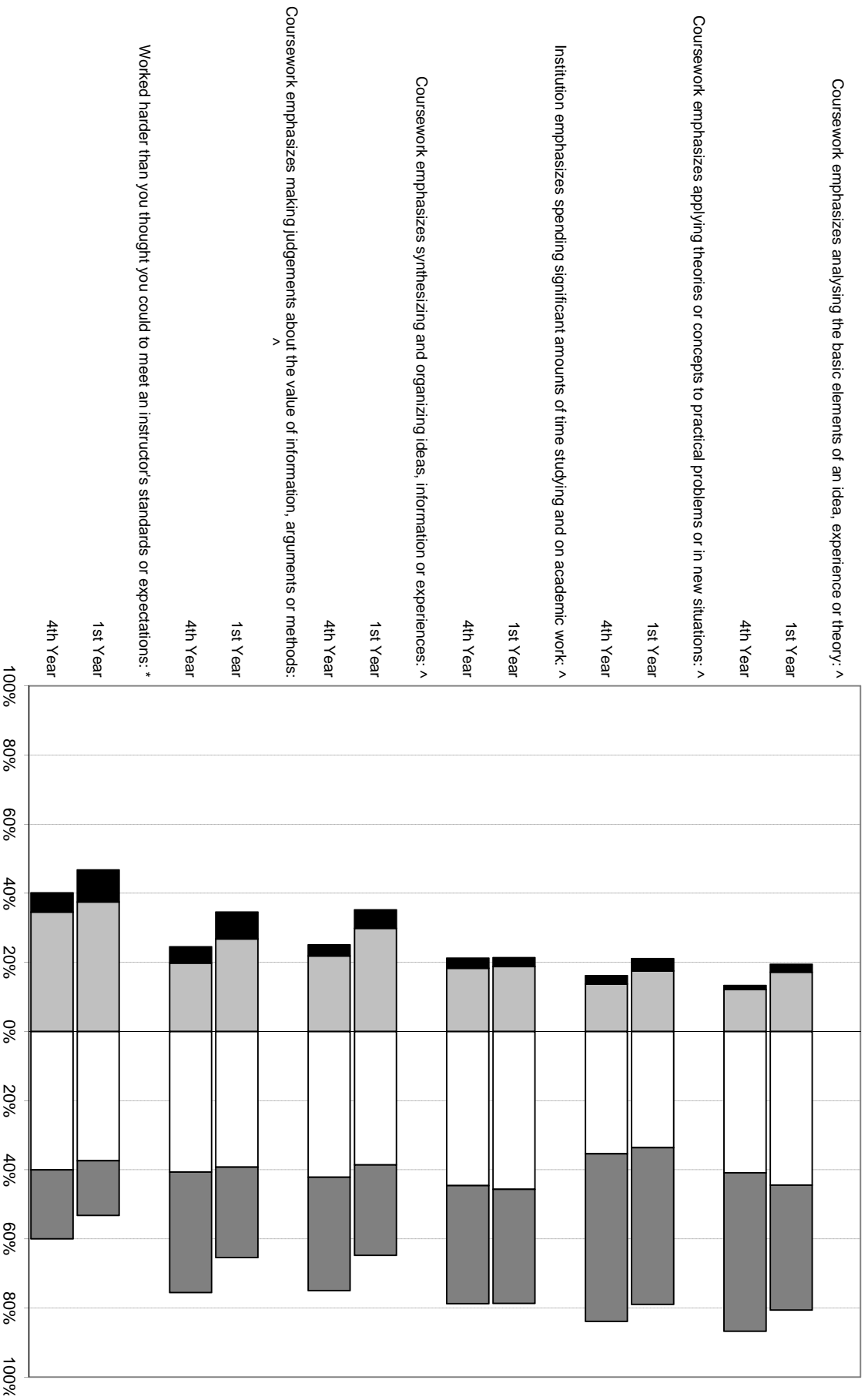
One of the premises on which NSSE is based is that "collaborating with others in solving problems or mastering difficult material prepares students for the messy, unscripted problems they will encounter daily during and after college."<sup>5</sup> Figure 2 outlines results for the Active and Collaborative 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 higher scores on this benchmark than do their Ontario counterparts. Ryerson is below the U.S. comparison group on this benchmark at both year levels.

The most common form of active and collaborative learning reported is working with classmates outside of class to prepare assignments. Sixty-two percent of first-year students and 76 percent

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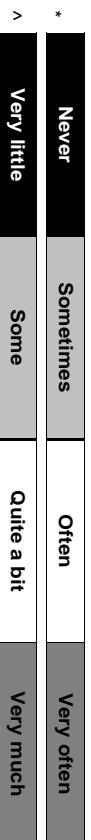
<sup>5</sup> Indiana University Center for Postsecondary Research, "Ryerson University Benchmark Comparisons", Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Center for Postsecondary Research, 2006, p. 4.

**Figure 1: Level of Academic Challenge**



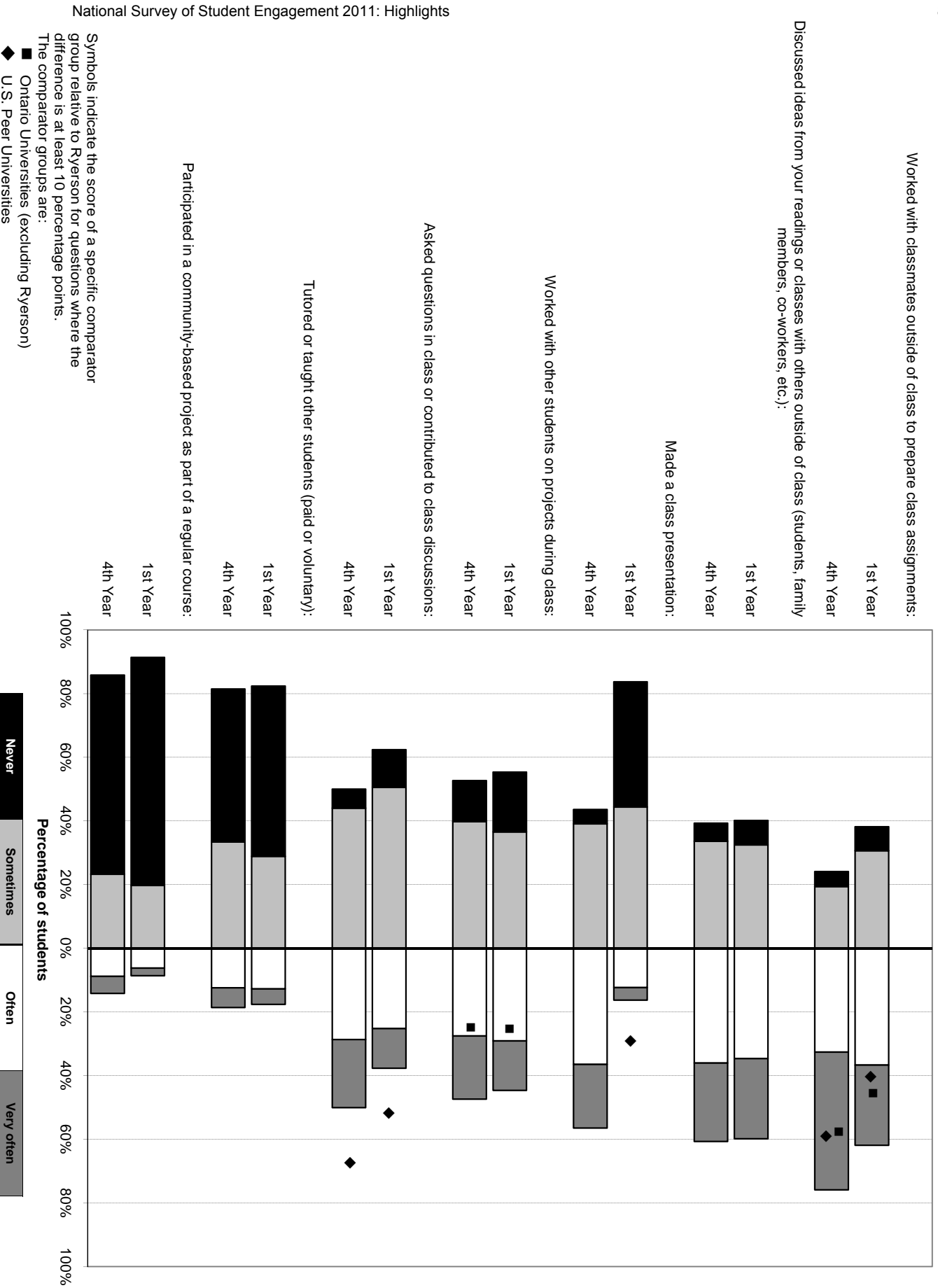
NOTE: For the questions shown in this chart, there are no instances where Ryerson's score differs from the corresponding score of Ontario Universities (excluding Ryerson) or U.S. Peer Universities by 10 percentage points or more.

Percentage of students





**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 16 percent of first-year students report doing this often or very often, 56 percent of students in fourth year report doing so. Interestingly, this represents a decline since previous rounds of the survey. In 2008, for example, 21 percent of first-year students and 65 percent of fourth-year students reported making class presentations often or very often.

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) – about 60 percent report doing this often or very often.

### **Student-Faculty Interaction**

The Student-Faculty Interaction benchmark is comprised of six items evaluating 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 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 in this area. Results are summarized in Figure 3.

The most common form of student-faculty interaction reported is faculty feedback on students’ academic performance. 45 percent of first-year respondents and 54 percent 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. (15 percent of respondents report doing this often or very often.) Similar results were obtained in 2008.

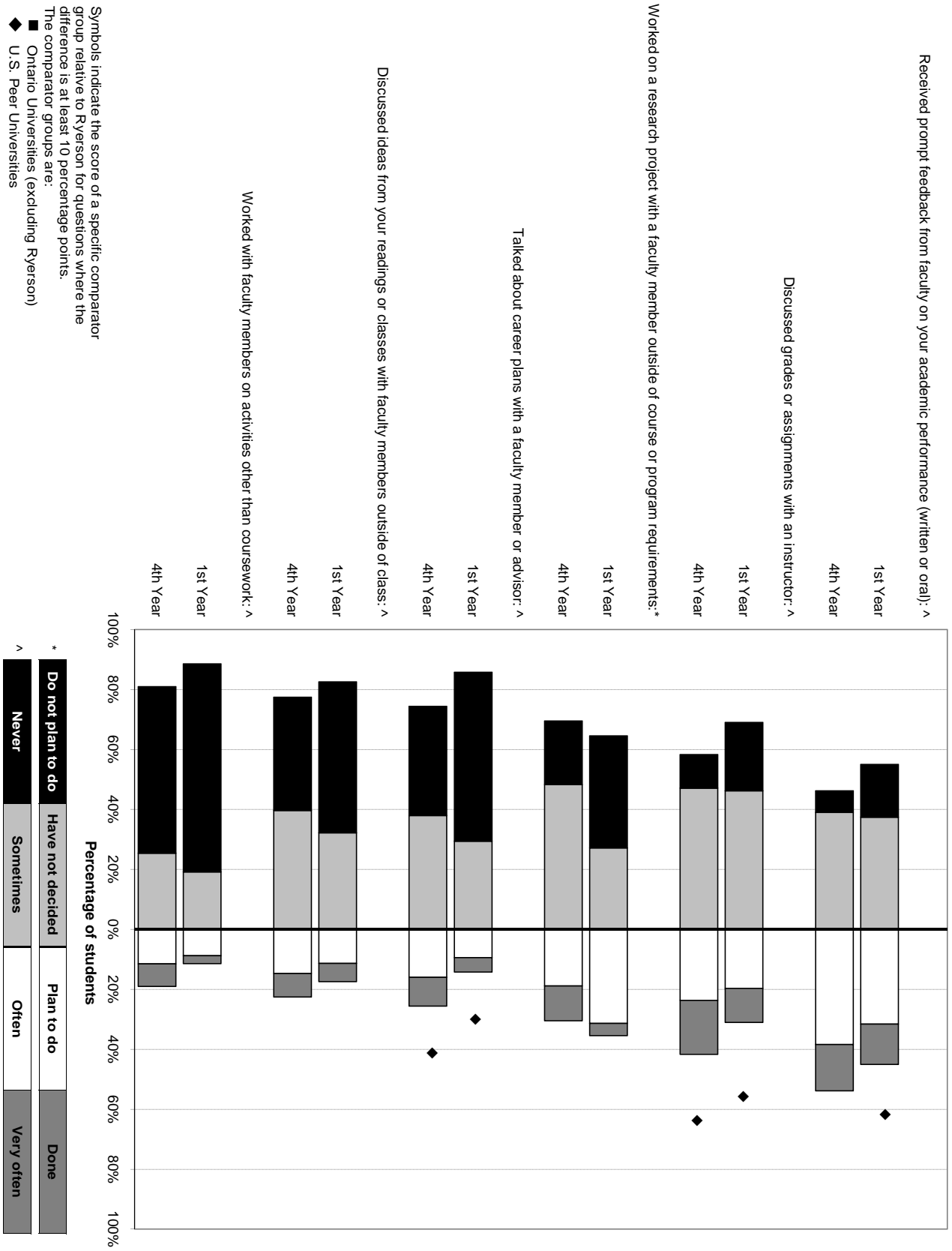
### **Enriching Educational Experiences**

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).

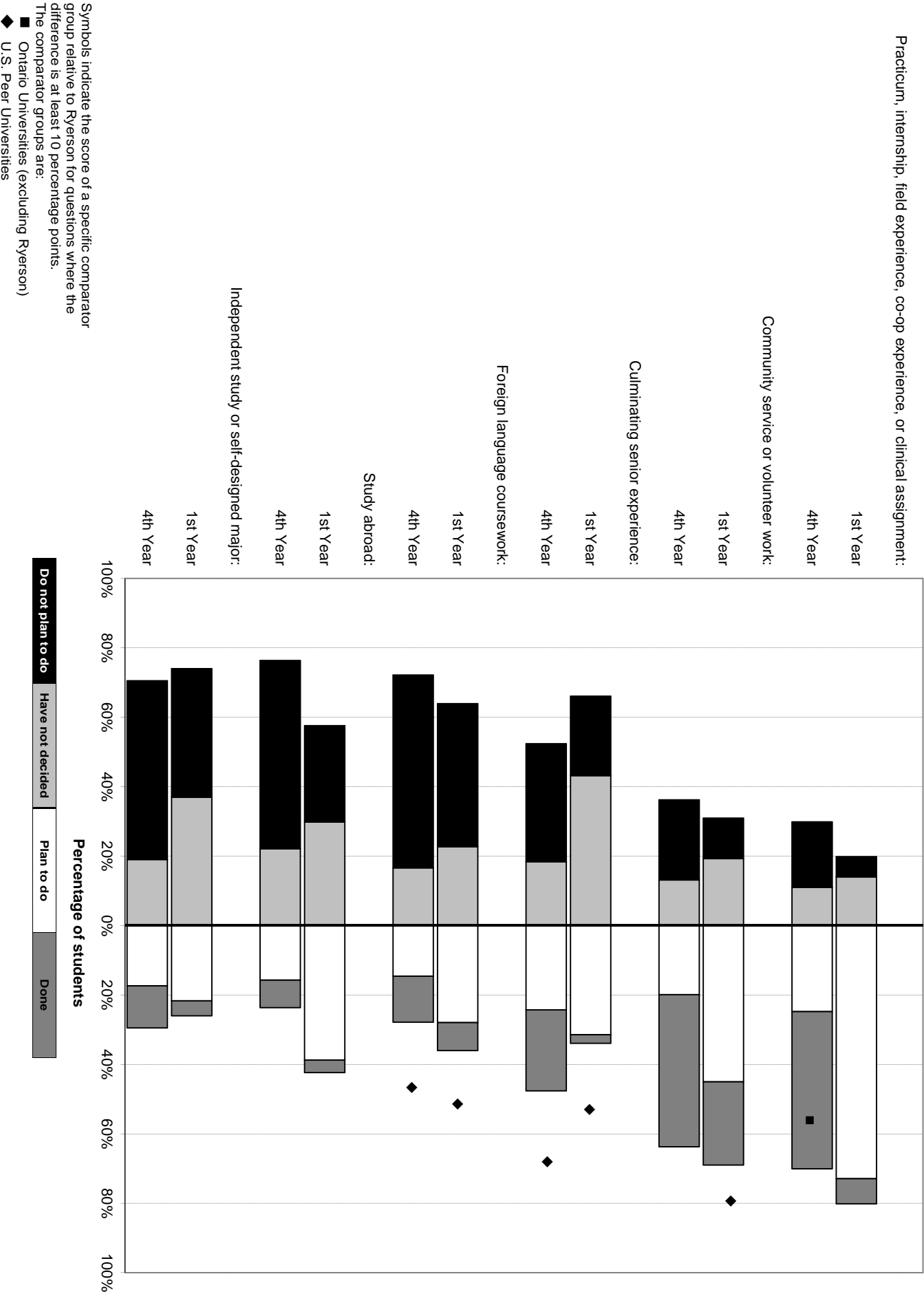
In 2011, students at Ryerson provide scores on this benchmark that are similar to their Ontario counterparts but below their U.S. peers. Results are summarized in Figure 4.

A number of questions ask students whether they plan to participate in a given activity or whether they have already done so. 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. Slightly more than 40 percent of students have done or plan to undertake a culminating senior experience. 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.

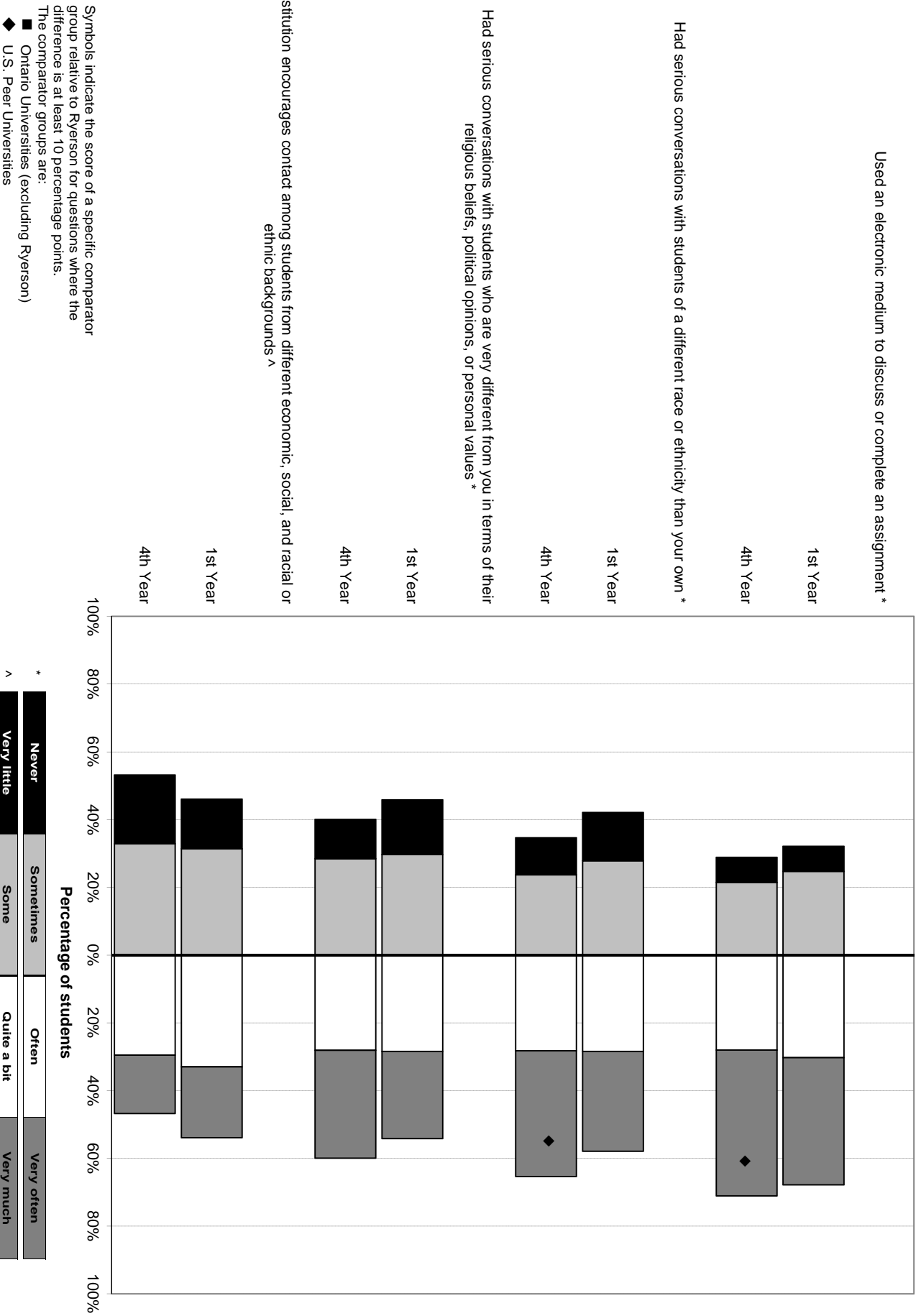
**Figure 3: Student-Faculty Interaction**



**Figure 4: Enriching Educational Experiences**



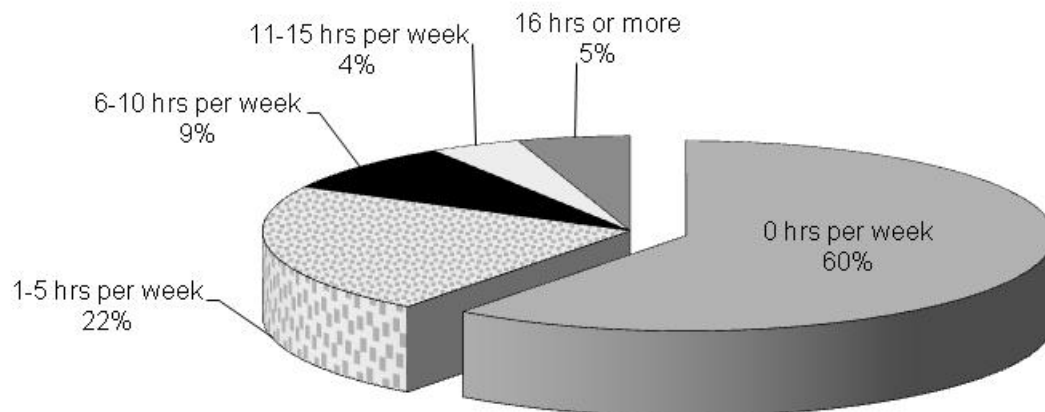
**Figure 4: Enriching Educational Experiences Cont'd**



The Enriching Educational Experiences benchmark also includes items relating to diversity among students. Over 60 percent of respondents indicate that, often or very often, they have serious conversations with students of a different race or ethnicity than their own. Similarly, 58 percent report having serious conversations with students who are very different from themselves in terms of religious beliefs, political opinions or personal values often or very often.

Sixty 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. This finding is consistent with results from previous rounds of the survey. Low levels of participation are found even among those who live close to campus. Among students whose travel time to campus is 20 minutes or less, over half (55 percent) report that they do not participate in co-curricular activities.

**Figure 5: Hours per week in co-curricular activities**

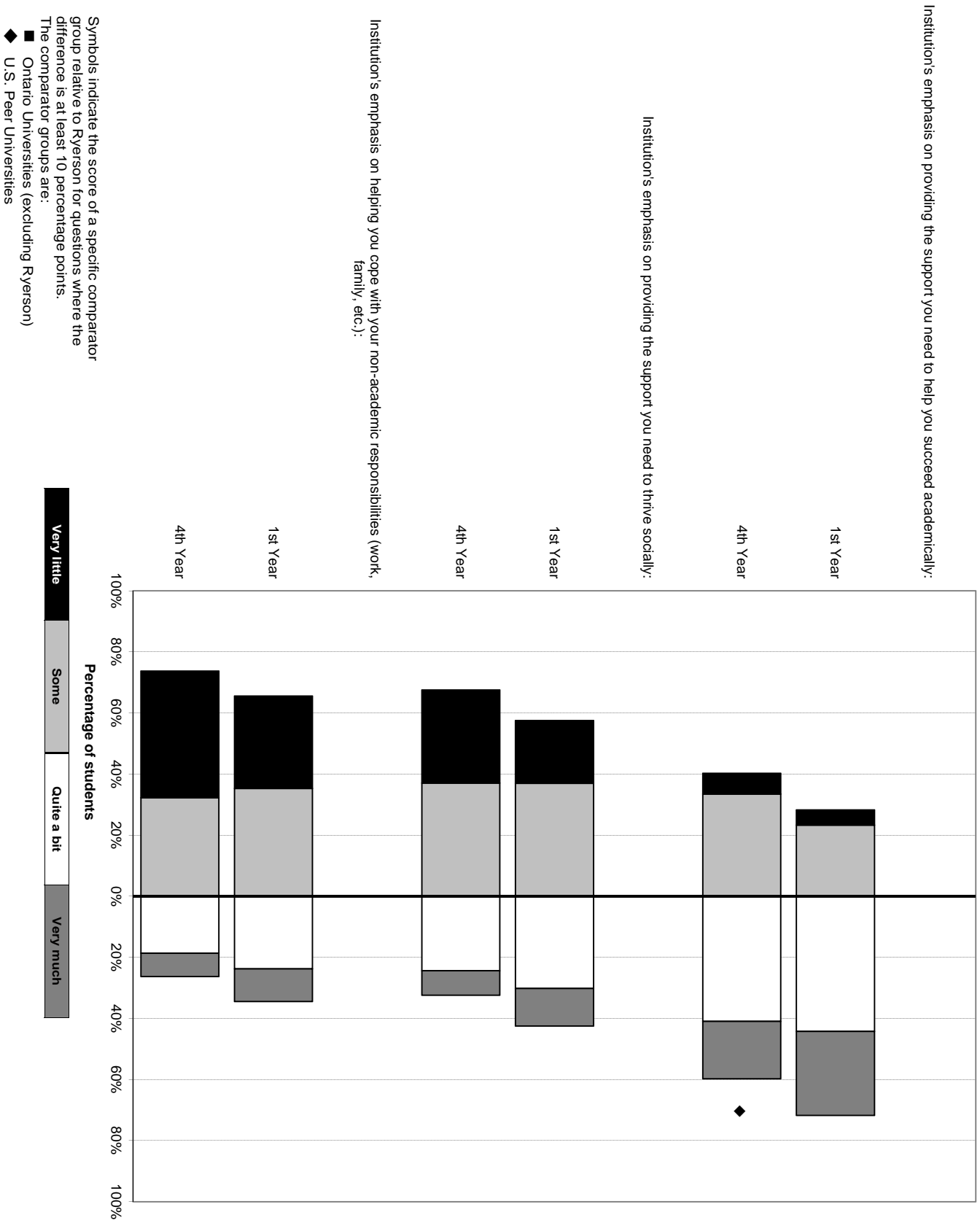


### **Supportive Campus Environment**

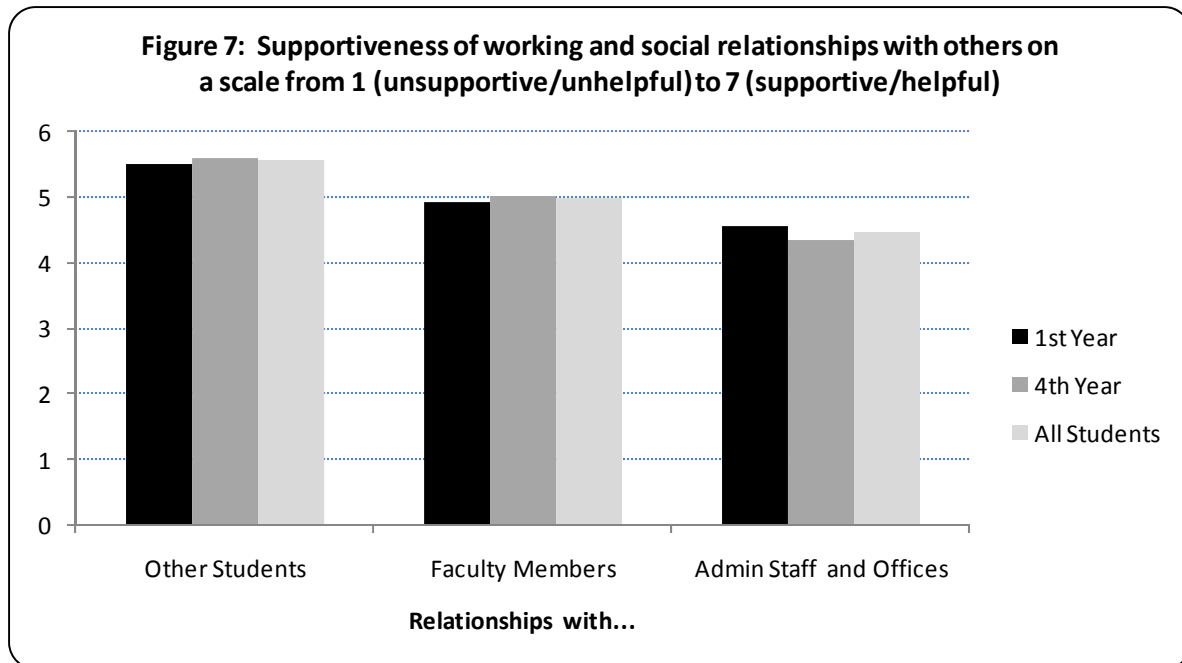
The Supportive Campus Environment benchmark incorporates students' assessments of the extent to which Ryerson supports them academically, socially and in relation to non-academic responsibilities. It also includes an evaluation of the supportiveness of students' relationships with other students, faculty members and administrative staff. In 2011, Ryerson's performance in this area exceeds the Ontario average at fourth-year, but is below the U.S. group for both years one and four.

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, 72 percent of students in first year and 60 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.



## 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.

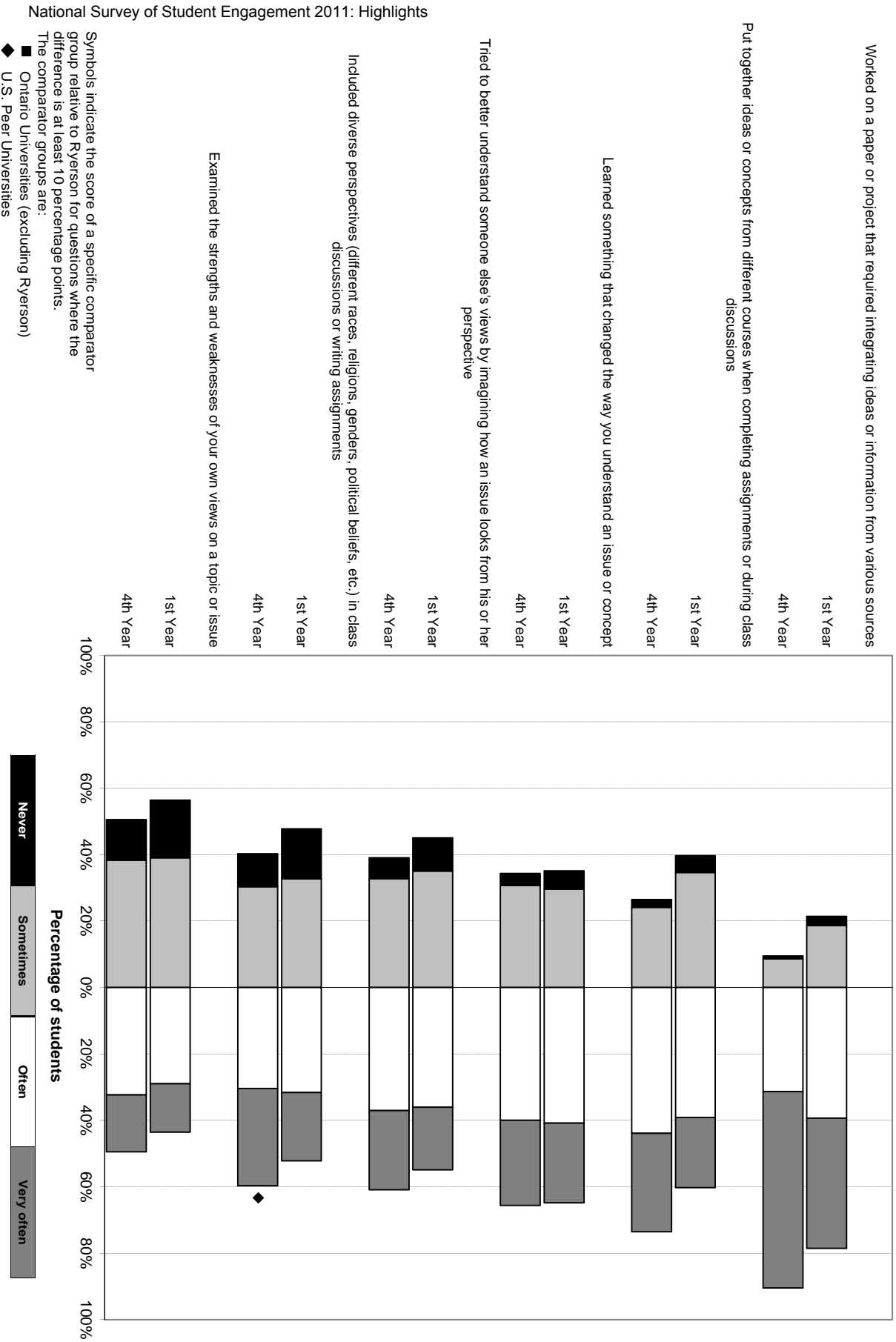
### Integrative Learning

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 (79 percent). Similarly, 74 percent of fourth-year students and 60 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. An activity that appears to be less common is examining the strengths and weaknesses of one's own views on a particular issue. Fewer than half of students (49 percent in fourth year and 44 percent in first year) report doing this often or very often.



**Figure 8: Integrative Learning**



Never  
 Sometimes  
 Often  
 Very often

Percentage of students

100% 80% 60% 40% 20% 0% 20% 40% 60% 80% 100%

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

### **Skills Development**

Respondents were asked to rate the institution's contribution to their development of skills in a variety of areas. The most highly rated area is the ability to think critically and analytically. Over 80 percent of students report that the University contributed to the development of critical and analytical thinking skills "quite a bit" or "very much." Over three-quarters of respondents report that the University contributed in this way to their ability to work effectively with others, and 74 percent reported similarly in terms of "learning effectively on your own."

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 has contributed "quite a bit" or "very much" to skills in solving complex, real-world problems. Fifty-nine 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 skills development than do first-year students.

### **Overall Experience**

The majority of respondents are satisfied with their experience at Ryerson. Almost 80 percent indicate that their "entire educational experience" is good or excellent. And 81 percent report that if they could start over, they would probably or definitely attend Ryerson again.

Students were asked to identify the extent to which various factors may have posed obstacles to their academic progress. Few students (less than 5 percent) indicate that none of the items listed posed an obstacle. Half of fourth-year students and 43 percent of first-year students report that financial pressures or work obligations have posed a major obstacle. Twenty-nine percent of respondents in first-year indicate that their academic performance has been a major obstacle. While about a quarter of fourth-year students also describe their academic performance in this way, over a third of them identify course availability or scheduling issues as a major obstacle.

Roughly three-quarters 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.

Students were provided with a list of venues or contexts and asked to indicate whether they have felt a sense of community in each. The most common venues for experiencing a sense of community are "in a class" (cited by 56 percent) and "in my academic program" (cited by 46 percent). Study groups, student activity space, and student organizations were selected by 20 to 30 percent of respondents. Slightly more than one in ten respondents indicates that they have not experienced a sense of community.

*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:* Among first-year students, the items cited most frequently as requiring improvement *in the classroom* are the quality of course instruction by professors (cited by 33 percent) and ensuring a better fit among course content, assignments and tests/exams (cited by 27 percent).

35 percent of fourth-year students name the quality of course instruction in their top two items, and an increase in the number or variety of course offerings in one's major is identified by 38 percent of respondents in fourth-year. 23 percent of fourth-year students identify the fit among course content, assignments and tests/exams in their top two priorities.

*Priorities outside the classroom:* Outside of the classroom, 44 percent of students across 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 30 percent). 23 percent identify expansion or improvement of academic support in their top two items.

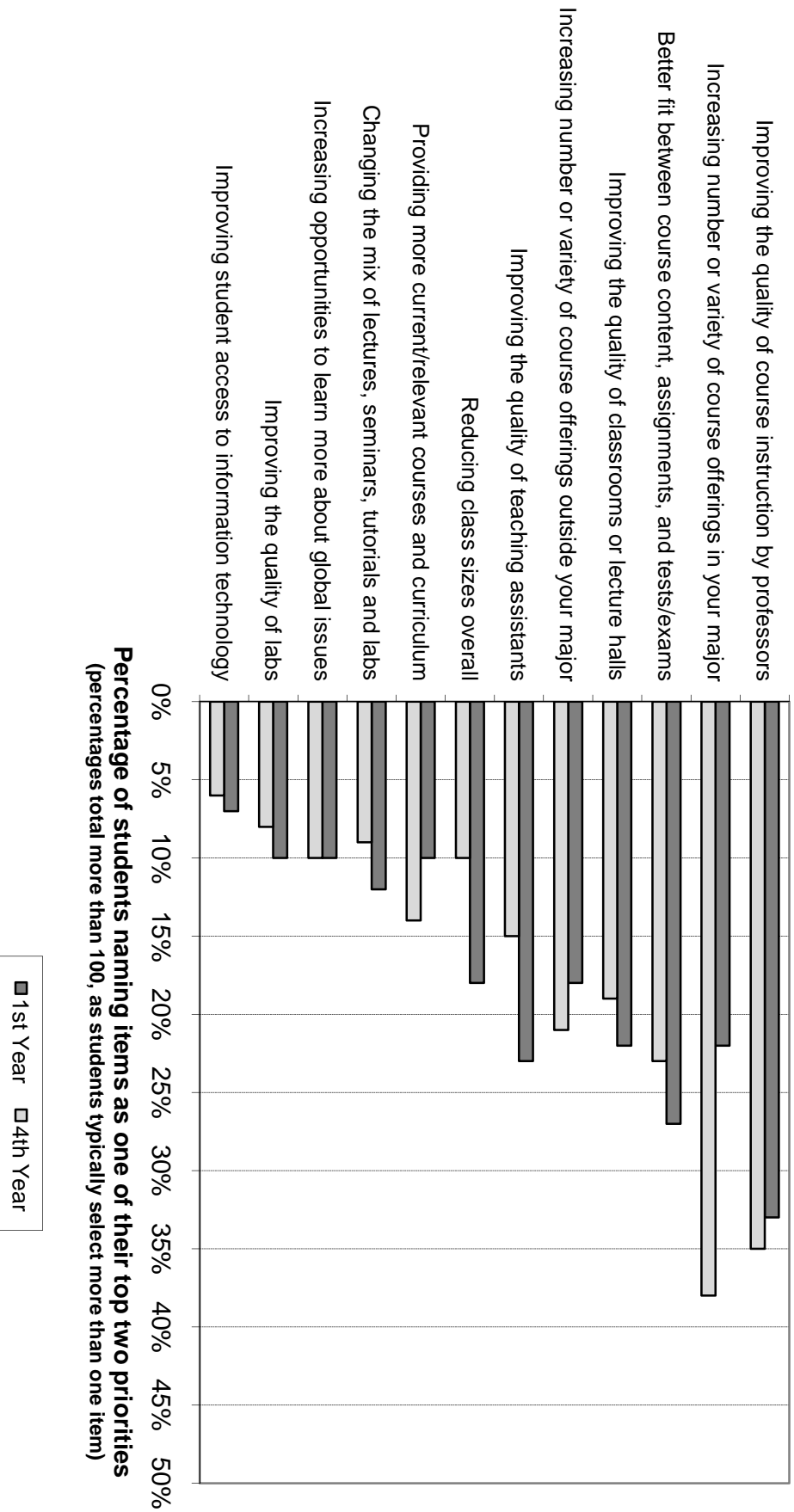
#### *Information provided to students*

Respondents were asked to rate the quality of information they received from the University at the beginning of the school year. Over 60 percent report that information on the content and focus of their academic program was good or very good, and slightly more than half report similarly with respect to information on how they would be evaluated in their courses.

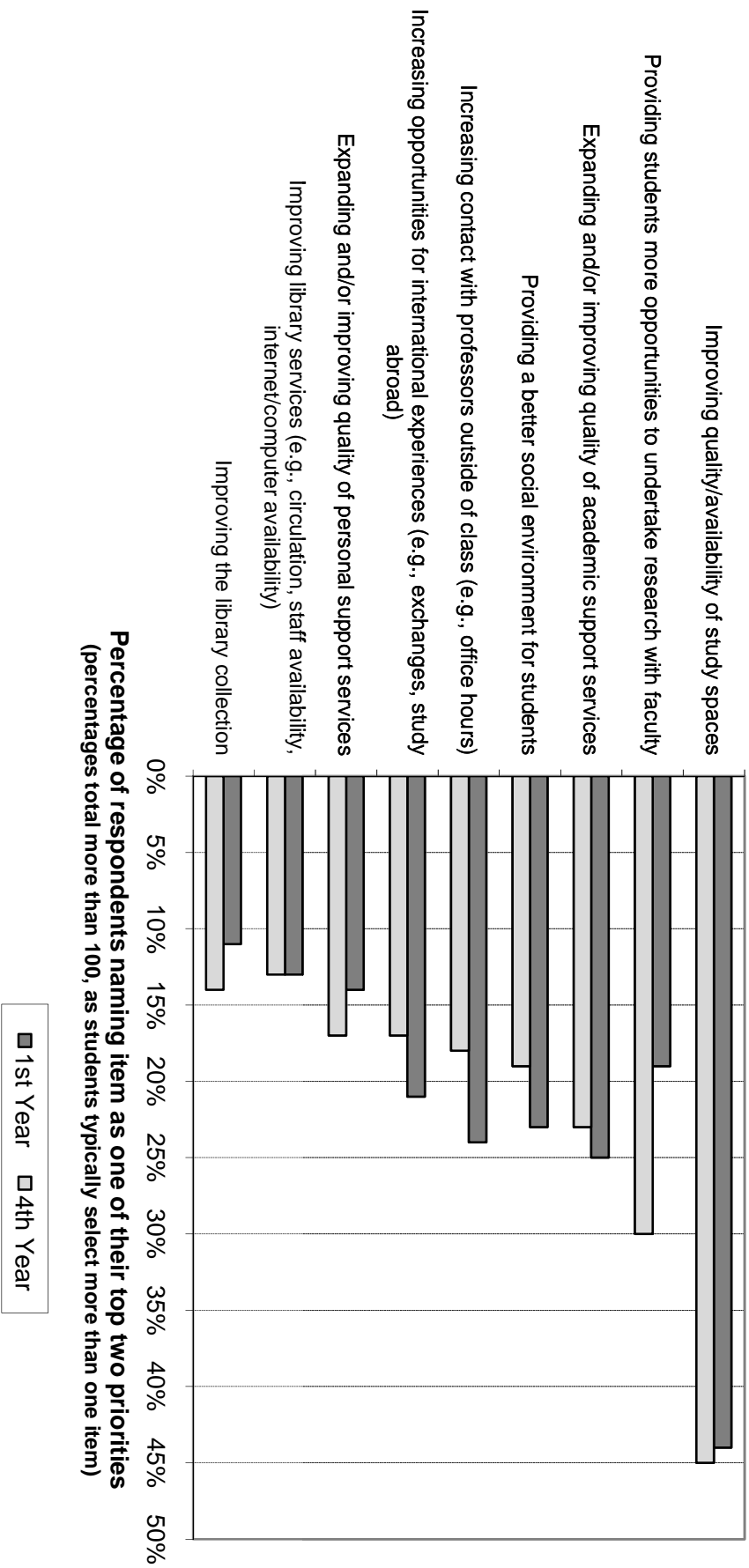
Fewer than half of students rate information about how to access learning and support services as good or very good, and 36 percent indicate this about the availability of information about financial aid.

Overall, less than one-third of students report that information about career opportunities after graduation (provided at the beginning of the school year) was good or very good. Fourth-year students report less satisfaction with this item (27 percent) than do first-year students (38 percent).

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



**Figure 10: Top two priorities for improvement outside the classroom**



## PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

### Profile of respondents

The characteristics of the survey sample are compared to the population in terms of gender, Faculty, age and course load in Table 3. These are items for which 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 year level.

In first year, students from the Faculties of Communication and Design and Community Services tend to be somewhat over-represented while those in Ted Rogers School of Management and Faculty of Engineering, Architecture and Science are slightly under-represented. In fourth year, there is slight overrepresentation among Community Services students, with the Faculty of Engineering, Architecture and Science being somewhat underrepresented.

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 <sup>st</sup> year				4 <sup>th</sup> year			
	Sample		Population		Sample		Population	
<b>Gender</b>								
Female	1,057	57.1%	2,914	51.3%	1,368	58.1%	3,404	51.9%
Male	793	42.9%	2,768	48.7%	986	41.9%	3,152	48.1%
<i>Total</i>	<i>1,850</i>	<i>100.0%</i>	<i>5,682</i>	<i>100.0%</i>	<i>2,354</i>	<i>100.0%</i>	<i>6,556</i>	<i>100.0%</i>
<b>Faculty</b>								
Arts	240	13.0%	774	13.6%	231	9.8%	628	9.6%
Ted Rogers School of Mgt Communication & Design	491	26.5%	1,625	28.6%	831	35.3%	2,372	36.2%
Community Services	366	19.8%	989	17.4%	324	13.8%	906	13.8%
Engineering, Arch & Sci	313	16.9%	858	15.1%	551	23.4%	1,345	20.5%
	440	23.8%	1,436	25.3%	417	17.7%	1,305	19.9%
<i>Total</i>	<i>1,850</i>	<i>100.0%</i>	<i>5,682</i>	<i>100.0%</i>	<i>2,354</i>	<i>100.0%</i>	<i>6,556</i>	<i>100.0%</i>
<b>Mean Age*</b>	19.3		19.6		23.5		24.0	
<b>Course Load</b>								
Full-time	1,706	92.2%	5,140	90.5%	1,614	68.6%	4,108	62.7%
Part-time	144	7.8%	542	9.5%	740	31.4%	2,448	37.3%
<i>Total</i>	<i>1,850</i>	<i>100.0%</i>	<i>5,682</i>	<i>100.0%</i>	<i>2,354</i>	<i>100.0%</i>	<i>6,556</i>	<i>100.0%</i>

\* Age (in years) as of the end of the 2010 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 (23 percent), B (52 percent), C (18 percent) and C- or lower (7 percent). The distribution of respondents in fourth year by reported overall grade range is: A (20 percent), B (71 percent), C (9 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, 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.<sup>6</sup> This is consistent with the difference between males and females that was observed in the 2008 round of NSSE.

### 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 7 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 Student-Faculty Interaction and Enriching Educational Experiences benchmarks than do students who do not have a parent who completed university.<sup>7</sup>

### Employment

Sixty percent of students report working for pay in a typical week. Among those who are employed, 77 percent work off campus only, 9 percent work on campus only and 14 percent work both on and off campus. While the overall proportion of students who work remains similar to the proportion in 2006, there has been an increase in those reporting *on-campus* employment.

Seventeen percent of students work off campus for up to ten hours per week; one in four works between eleven and twenty hours. About 14 percent of all respondents report working off campus for over twenty hours in a typical week. This distribution is similar to that found in previous rounds of the survey.

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

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<sup>6</sup> Differences between males and females: Enriching Educational Experiences ( $t=4.61$ ,  $p<.001$ ), Academic Challenge ( $t=4.18$ ,  $p<.001$ )

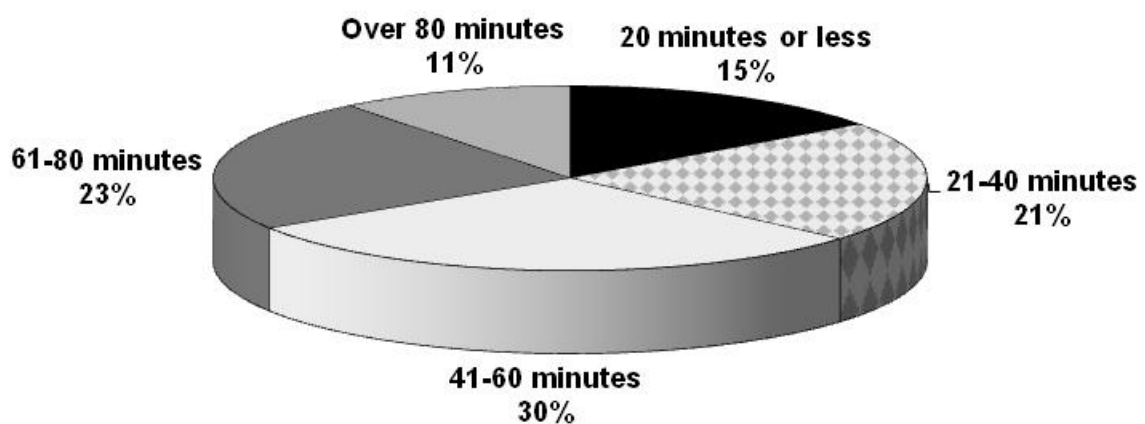
<sup>7</sup> Differences between students who have at least one parent who completed a bachelor's degree and those whose parents did not: Student-Faculty Interaction ( $t=3.30$ ,  $p<.001$ ) and Enriching Educational Experiences ( $t=2.80$ ,  $p<.01$ )

Interaction, and Enriching Educational Experiences benchmarks.<sup>8</sup> Further, students with on-campus employment (including those doing a combination of on- and off-campus work) score more highly on all benchmarks than do students who report working only off campus.<sup>9</sup>

### Commuting to campus

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-four 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.<sup>10</sup> Similar results are found when students who take 40 or fewer minutes are compared to those who take longer.<sup>11</sup> This pattern is consistent with previous rounds of NSSE.

<sup>8</sup> Differences between students who are employed and those who are not: Active and Collaborative Learning ( $t=9.43$ ,  $p<.001$ ); Student-Faculty Interaction ( $t=8.62$ ,  $p<.001$ ); Enriching Educational Experiences ( $t=11.05$ ,  $p<.001$ )

<sup>9</sup> Differences between students working on campus (including combination of on and off campus) and off campus: Level of Academic Challenge ( $t=3.40$ ,  $p<.01$ ); Active and Collaborative Learning ( $t=10.42$ ,  $p<.001$ ); Student-Faculty Interaction ( $t=13.79$ ,  $p<.001$ ); Supportive Campus Environment ( $t=4.79$ ,  $p<.001$ ); Enriching Educational Experiences ( $t=10.86$ ,  $p<.001$ )

<sup>10</sup> Differences between students commuting 20 or fewer minutes and those with longer commute: Active and Collaborative Learning ( $t=4.34$ ,  $p<.001$ ); Student-Faculty Interaction ( $t=4.72$ ,  $p>.001$ ); and Enriching Educational Experiences ( $t=7.25$ ,  $p<.001$ ).

<sup>11</sup> Differences between students commuting 40 or fewer minutes and those with longer commute: Active and Collaborative Learning ( $t=3.51$ ,  $p<.001$ ); Student-Faculty Interaction ( $t=4.48$ ,  $p>.001$ ); and Enriching Educational Experiences ( $t=6.08$ ,  $p<.001$ ).



**Table 4: Factors associated with composite benchmark scores**

	<b>Academic Challenge</b>	<b>Active &amp; Collaborative Learning</b>	<b>Student-Faculty Interaction</b>	<b>Enriching Educational Experiences</b>	<b>Supportive Campus Environment</b>
Gender	<b>Females higher than males</b>	--	--	<b>Females higher than males</b>	--
Parental education	--	--	<b>Parent with degree higher than where neither parent has degree</b>	<b>Parent with degree higher than where neither parent has degree</b>	--
Employment	<b>On-campus employment higher than off-campus</b>	<b>Employed higher than non-employed; On-campus employment higher than off-campus</b>	<b>Employed higher than non-employed; On-campus employment higher than off-campus</b>	<b>Employed higher than non-employed; On-campus employment higher than off-campus</b>	<b>On-campus employment higher than off-campus</b>
Length of commute	--	<b>Traveling 20 min or fewer higher than those over 20 min; traveling 40 min or fewer higher than over 40 minutes</b>	<b>Traveling 20 min or fewer higher than those over 20 min; traveling 40 min or fewer higher than over 40 minutes</b>	<b>Traveling 20 min or fewer higher than those over 20 min; traveling 40 min or fewer higher than over 40 minutes</b>	--

## IMPLICATIONS OF NSSE

At Ryerson, NSSE underpins student experience and engagement initiatives by providing a robust, long-term measurement regime. The survey 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.

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 Level of Academic Challenge, but lags behind the scores achieved by U.S. peer institutions for the other benchmarks. Overall satisfaction with the educational experience offered at Ryerson appears high. Almost 80 percent of respondents indicate that their "entire educational experience" has been good or excellent; and 81 percent report that if they could start over, they would probably or definitely attend Ryerson again.

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 enhancement at Ryerson, and review of these items is underway. These might include aspects of student-faculty interaction, participation in co-curricular activities, and areas for improvement identified by students as priorities within and outside of the classroom. A number of recent initiatives have been informed by students' responses to NSSE. For example, experiential learning activities have been undertaken in academic departments and schools. And, study spaces are part of the plans for Ryerson's new Student Learning Centre and Applied Health Sciences Building. The importance of each of these initiatives is supported by NSSE results.

# **NATIONAL SURVEY OF STUDENT ENGAGEMENT 2011**

## **HIGHLIGHTS OF RESULTS**

PREPARED BY THE UNIVERSITY PLANNING OFFICE

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