

NATIONAL SURVEY OF STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

2014

HIGHLIGHTS OF RESULTS



PREPARED BY THE UNIVERSITY PLANNING OFFICE

**RYERSON
UNIVERSITY**

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 fifth time at Ryerson in 2014 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 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 2014, 692 institutions across North America participated in NSSE, including 70 Canadian and 622 American institutions. All Ontario universities began administering NSSE in 2006. The survey is now conducted on a triennial basis across the province.

In 2014, 7,080 first-year and 7,874 fourth-year Ryerson students were contacted by email and asked to complete the survey online. The total sample of 3,635 students yields a response rate of 24.3 percent. The response rate was slightly higher for fourth-year students (25 percent) than for those in first year (23 percent). The sample size and response rate contribute to a reasonable estimate of statistical error.²

NSSE results inform decision-making geared to initiating improvement across the University. 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.

This report provides an overview of Ryerson's NSSE results for 2014. It is organized into four major sections: First, it examines performance on "engagement indicators" 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 results for the individual survey questions from which the engagement indicators were constructed, as well as for other related items. The final section focuses on student characteristics such as employment, parental education and commuting time to campus.

ENGAGEMENT INDICATORS

The Indiana Center attempts to summarize the large amount of information found within the survey's questions by creating ten engagement indicators to cover four major themes. 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 indicators can be thought of as subtypes or aspects of student engagement. They include:

¹ Kezar, A. J. (2006) The impact of institutional size on student engagement. *Journal of Student Affairs Research and Practice*, 43(1), 87-114.

² Nineteen times out of twenty, the percentages shown throughout this report are estimated to be accurate to within: 1.4 percentage points for first-year and fourth-year students combined, 2.1 percentage points for first-year students alone, and 1.9 percentage points for fourth-year students alone.

Academic Challenge	Higher Order Learning Reflective and Integrative Learning Learning Strategies Quantitative Reasoning
Learning with Peers	Collaborative Learning Discussions with Diverse Others
Experiences with Faculty	Student-Faculty Interaction Effective Teaching Practices
Campus Environment	Quality of Interactions Supportive Environment

The use of engagement indicators is a new feature of the 2014 results. A composite score for each indicator is calculated by averaging each student's answers to the relevant questions.³ The scores provide a method of summarizing the extent to which students at a particular institution are engaged compared with students elsewhere.

Previous rounds of NSSE summarized performance with the use of five benchmarks: *Level of Academic Challenge*, *Active and Collaborative Learning*, *Student-Faculty Interaction*, *Enriching Educational Experiences*, *Supportive Campus Environment*. While the method of constructing the new engagement indicators is very similar to that used in the creation of the former "benchmarks," they include somewhat different sets of questions, and thus, are not directly comparable. Table 1 provides Ryerson's indicator scores and those of other Ontario universities, and U.S. Peer institutions as selected using Carnegie Classification data.⁴

The 2014 U.S. Peers are those 11 American institutions participating in the survey 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).

Broadly speaking, Ryerson scores above other Ontario universities as well as its American comparators in the area of Learning with Peers. Ryerson tends to lag behind scores achieved by U.S. peer institutions for other engagement indicators, and is lower than the Ontario average on a number of indicators; these differences are identified by NSSE as statistically significant. For individual questionnaire items, differences of at least 10 points are identified in Figure 1a through Figure 6 in order to identify items where the Ryerson differs from its comparators in a particularly substantial way.

³ Responses for individual questions within the engagement indicators are reported by students using a Likert scale (e.g., strongly disagree, disagree, agree, agree strongly). NSSE converts these to numeric values on a 60-point scale (e.g., Never = 0; Sometimes = 20; Often = 40; Very often = 60), and the rescaled items are averaged. Thus a score of zero means a student responded at the bottom of the scale for every item in the indicator, while a score of 60 indicates responses at the top of the scale on every item.

⁴ The institutions in the 2014 U.S. Peers group for Ryerson University are: California State Polytechnic University-Pomona, California State University-Chico, Eastern Michigan University, Kennesaw State University, Middle Tennessee State University, San Jose State University, Southeastern Louisiana University, University of South Alabama, University of Nebraska at Omaha, University of Texas-Pan American, University of Texas at San Antonio.

Table 1: Comparison of Engagement Indicator scores*

Engagement Indicator	1 st Year			4 th Year		
	Ryerson	Ontario	U.S. Peers	Ryerson	Ontario	U.S. Peers
ACADEMIC CHALLENGE						
Higher Order Learning	36.1	37.1 ▲	38.7 ▲	37.8	38.0	40.7 ▲
Reflective and Integrative Learning	33.9	34.1	35.7 ▲	36.2	36.5	38.2 ▲
Learning Strategies	34.6	35.5 ▲	39.0 ▲	34.4	35.4 ▲	40.1 ▲
Quantitative Reasoning	22.4	25.0 ▲	27.7 ▲	27.2	26.7	30.5 ▲
LEARNING WITH PEERS						
Collaborative Learning	33.9	32.5 ▼	31.6 ▼	34.5	32.4 ▼	34.3
Discussions with Diverse Others	42.0	40.5 ▼	40.8 ▼	44.6	41.5 ▼	42.4 ▼
EXPERIENCES WITH FACULTY						
Student-Faculty Interaction	12.5	13.6 ▲	19.0 ▲	17.6	18.8 ▲	22.9 ▲
Effective Teaching Practices	34.0	35.0 ▲	39.9 ▲	34.1	35.9 ▲	40.4 ▲
CAMPUS ENVIRONMENT						
Quality of Interactions	37.3	38.2 ▲	39.7 ▲	37.7	39.4 ▲	41.8 ▲
Supportive Environment	31.4	32.4 ▲	36.1 ▲	28.3	28.5	32.3 ▲

*Statistically significant differences are shown with the use of an arrow designating whether the comparator group's score is higher ▲ or lower ▼ than Ryerson's score.

CORE QUESTIONS

The NSSE engagement indicators are one way of summarizing Ryerson's performance, however, as composite measures they do not provide direction about specific items or activities on which the University should focus its efforts.

To address this issue, the University Planning Office consulted in Fall 2006 with the NSSE Advisory Committee, the 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 for which the scores are being monitored over time.

Table 2 outlines the scores achieved on the core questions in the 2008, 2011 and 2014 rounds of NSSE, and how the most recent performance compares with other Ontario universities and U.S. Peers.⁵

⁵ The exact wording of several survey items was changed effective 2014. Table 2 indicates items where the change in wording may make comparisons to results from previous years difficult. These items include:

- Applying facts, theories or methods to practical problems or new situations (emphasis of coursework)
WAS: Applying theories or concepts to practical problems or in new situations
- Providing support to help students succeed academically WAS: Providing the support you need to help you succeed academically
- Quality of interactions with other administrative staff and offices (registrar, financial aid, etc.) excluding student services WAS: Quality of relationships with administrative personnel and offices
- Received prompt and detailed feedback on tests or completed assignments WAS: Received prompt written or oral feedback on your academic performance

Table 2: Core NSSE Questions, Responses in 2008, 2011 and 2014

			First-year			Fourth-year		
Question	Measure	Performance in 2014 ¹	2008	2011	2014	2008	2011	2014
Asked questions or contributed to class discussions in other ways	Often or very often	Ryerson similar to Ontario, but lower than U.S. peers in 1 st and 4 th year	37%	37%	38%	51%	50%	50%
Complete a culminating senior experience (capstone course, thesis, project, comprehensive exam, portfolio etc.)	Plan to do or done	Ryerson higher than Ontario and similar to U.S. peers in 4 th year; similar to Ontario and U.S. in 1 st year	31%	33%	45%	48%	48%	61%
Participating in co-curricular activities (organizations, campus publications, student government, sports, etc.)	% <u>not</u> participating at all in a typical week	Lower participation at Ryerson than Ont in 1 st and 4 th year; lower than U.S in 1 st year but similar to U.S. in 4 th	65%	59%	58%	61%	60%	52%
Participate in an internship, co-op, field experience, student teaching, or clinical placement	Plan to do or done	Ryerson similar to Ontario and U.S. peers, but higher than Ontario in 4 th year	82%	80%	84%	74%	70%	71%
Applying facts, theories or methods to practical problems or new situations (emphasis of coursework) ²	Quite a bit or very much	Ryerson similar to Ontario and U.S. peers	76%	79%	72%	82%	84%	74%
Providing support to help students succeed academically ²	Quite a bit or very much	Ryerson similar to Ontario, but lower than 4 th year U.S. peers	69%	72%	68%	58%	60%	54%
Quality of interactions with other administrative staff and offices (registrar, financial aid, etc.) excluding student services ²	Scale from 1 (poor) to 7 (excellent)	Ryerson lower than Ontario and U.S. peers	4.4	4.6	4.3	4.1	4.3	4.2
Discussed course topics, ideas, or concepts with a faculty member outside of class	Often or very often	Ryerson similar to Ontario and U.S. peers	19%	17%	18%	23%	23%	24%
Received prompt and detailed feedback on tests or completed assignments ²	Often or very often	Ryerson similar to Ontario and lower than U.S. peers	43%	45%	43%	51%	53%	47%
Item needing improvement in classroom: Quality of course instruction by professors ³	% indicating university needs to address	Ryerson similar to Ontario	30%	33%	31%	39%	35%	35%
Item needing improvement in classroom: Increasing the number or variety of course offerings in your major ³	% indicating university needs to address	Ryerson similar to Ontario	19%	22%	19%	30%	38%	29%
Item needing improvement outside classroom: Library collection ³	% indicating university needs to address	Ryerson similar to Ontario	13%	11%	5%	20%	14%	6%
Item needing improvement outside classroom: Quality or availability of study spaces ^{3,4}	% indicating university needs to address	Ryerson higher than Ontario	35%	44%	52%	38%	44%	57%
How would you evaluate your entire educational experience at this institution?	Good or excellent	Ryerson similar to Ontario and U.S. peers	78%	81%	76%	77%	77%	75%
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, but lower than U.S. peers in 1 st year	61%	62%	54%	72%	72%	68%

NOTES: 1. Remarks refer to differences of at least 10 percentage points. 2. Change in wording of question effective 2014 may compromise comparison to results from previous years. 3. Item included only in Ontario survey; U.S. comparison not applicable. 4. Survey conducted in 2014, one year before opening of Student Learning Centre

INSIDE THE ENGAGEMENT INDICATORS

NSSE's engagement indicators are developed by combining responses from a number of related survey questions. This section outlines the specific survey items that are used for each engagement indicator. Where Ryerson respondents differ from Ontario or U.S. comparators by at least 10 points on a given survey item, a notation is made in Figure 1 through Figure 6.

1. Academic Challenge

According to NSSE, challenging intellectual and creative work is central to student learning, and universities should challenge and support students to engage in various forms of deep learning. Four indicators are used to summarize the level of academic challenge that students experience. Results are summarized in Figures 1a through 1d.

- a) ***Higher-Order Learning*** challenges students to analyze, evaluate or apply the material they learn in class in a variety of ways. Seventy-four percent of respondents report that there is “quite a bit” or “very much” emphasis in their coursework on the application of facts, theories or methods to practical problems or new situations. 62 percent report a similar emphasis on evaluating a point of view, decision or information source. Ryerson is similar to other Ontario universities in fourth year but slightly below the Ontario average in first year on the Higher-Order Learning indicator.
- b) ***Reflective and Integrative Learning*** asks students to evaluate their own way of thinking, connect their learning to broader issues, or consolidate information from a variety of sources. Examples include connecting course materials to prior knowledge and experiences (78 percent report doing this often or very often) or combining ideas from different courses when completing assignments (65 percent). A higher proportion of students in fourth year than in first year indicate engaging in these activities. Ryerson is similar to the Ontario average on this indicator at both first and fourth year.
- c) ***Learning Strategies*** are practices that students may undertake to help them understand and retain course material. An example is reviewing notes after class, which is done often or very often by 44 percent of students. Ryerson is lower than the Ontario average on this indicator.
- d) ***Quantitative Reasoning*** challenges students to use numerical information. For example, 43 percent report that, often or very often, they reach conclusions based on their own analysis of numerical information (e.g., numbers, graphs, statistics). About one third report using numerical information often or very often to examine a real-world problem or issue (e.g., unemployment, climate change, public health). A higher proportion of fourth-year students than first-year students indicate that they use numerical information in their courses. Ryerson is below the Ontario average on the Quantitative Reasoning indicator at first-year and similar to the province at fourth year.

Figure 1a: Higher-Order Learning

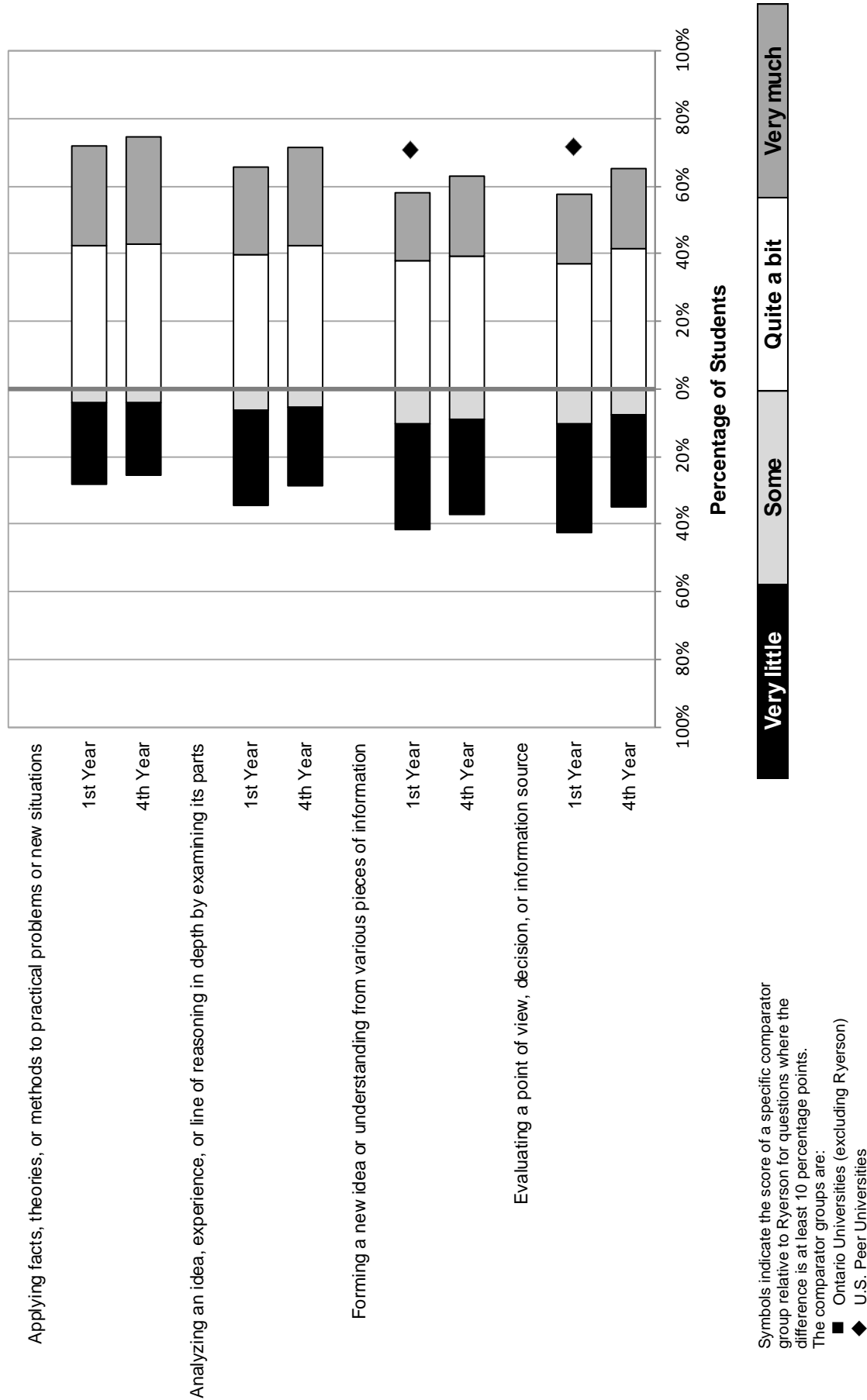


Figure 1b: Reflective and Integrative Learning

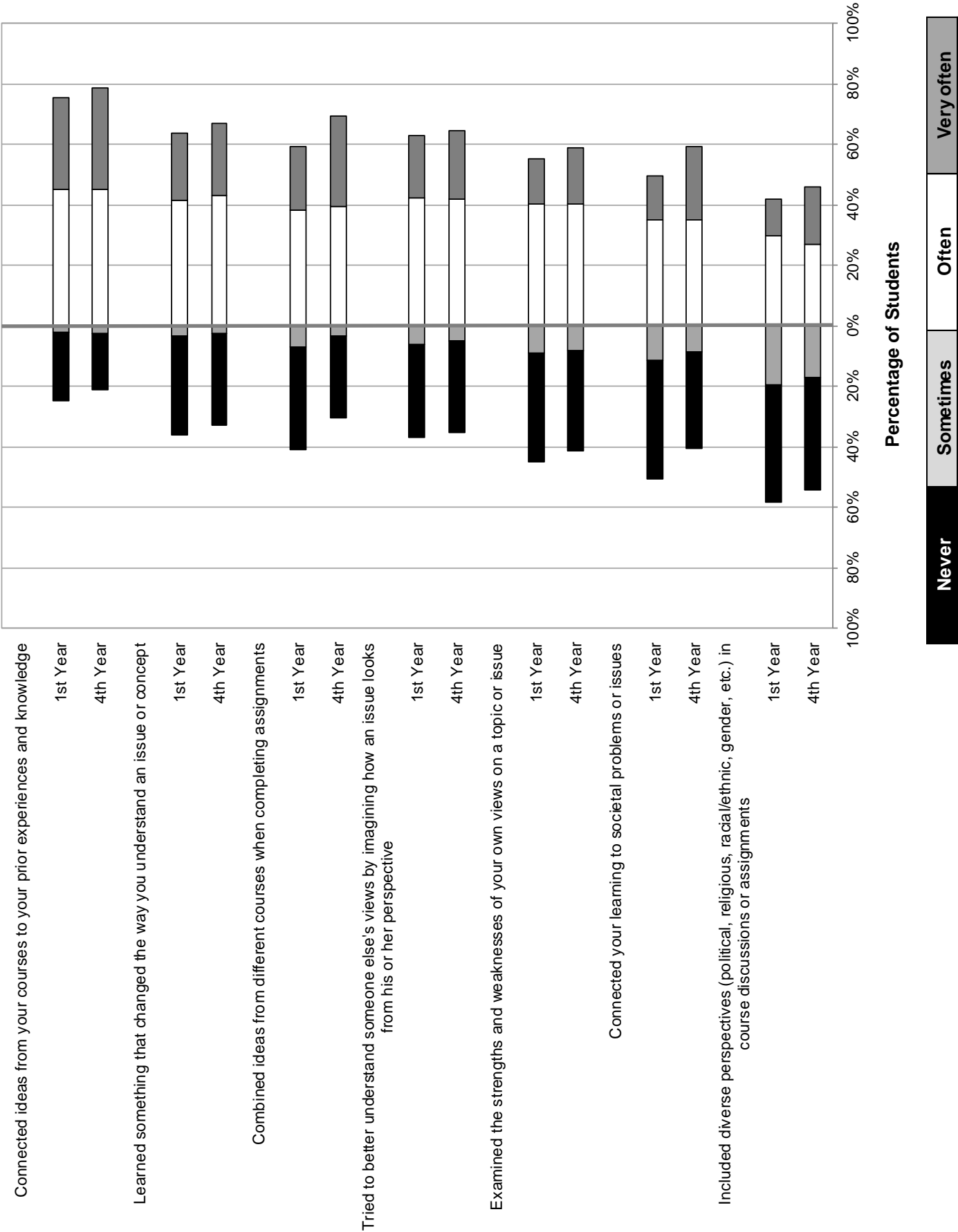


Figure 1c: Learning Strategies

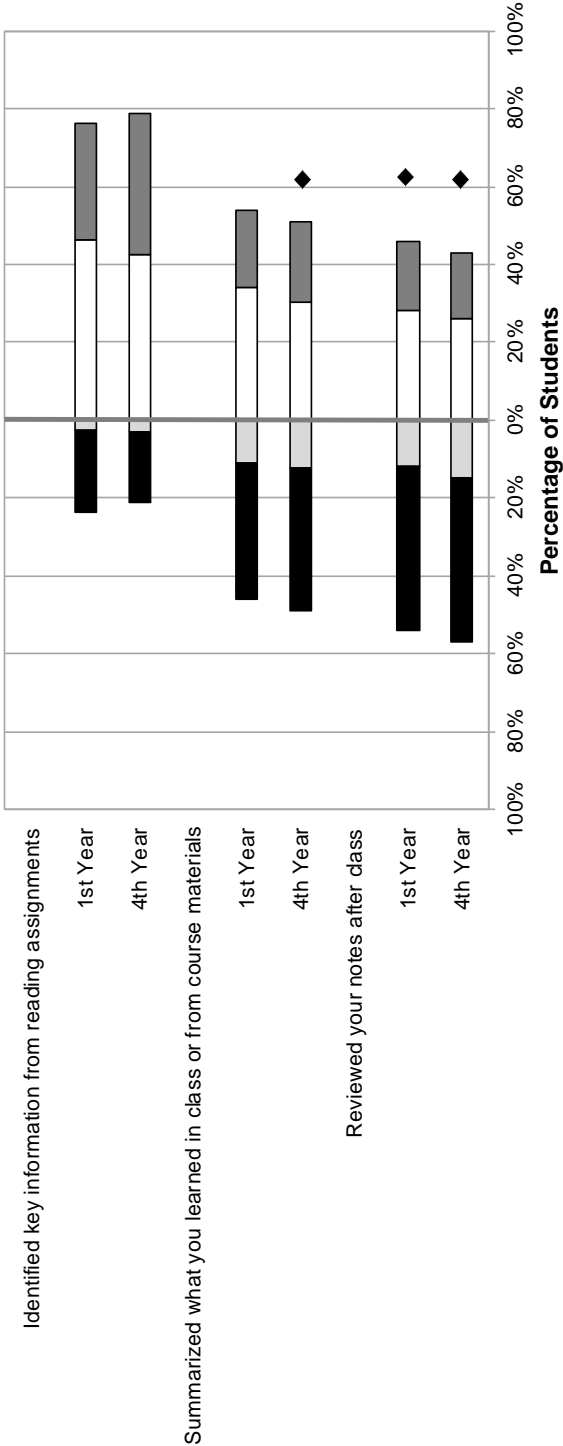
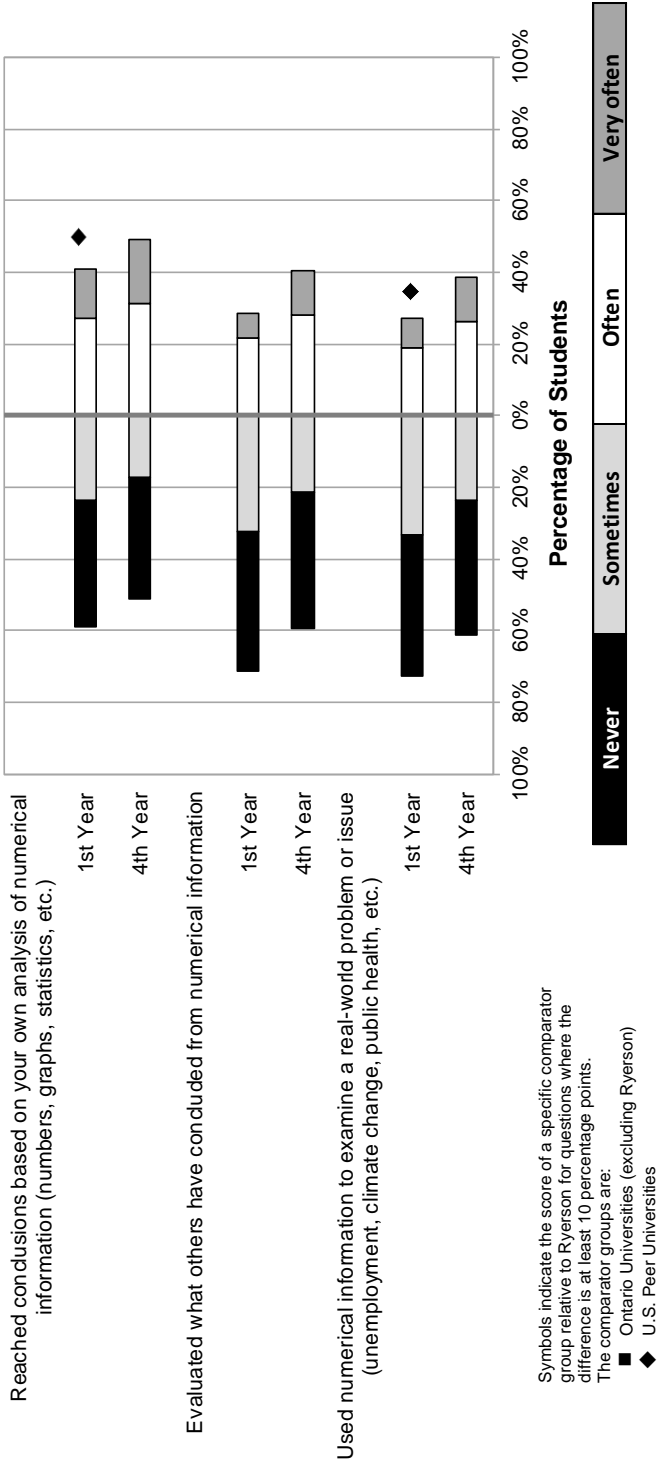


Figure 1d: Quantitative Reasoning



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

2. Learning with Peers

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 Figures 2a and 2b summarize two engagement indicators relating to respondents’ interactions with other students.

- a) ***Collaborative Learning*** occurs when students’ academic work involves others. The most common form of active and collaborative learning reported is working with other students on course projects or assignments. Sixty-one percent of first-year students and 74 percent of fourth-year students report doing this often or very often. Half of students at both years one and four report preparing for exams by going over course materials with other students. Ryerson scores higher than the Ontario average at both first- and fourth-year on the Collaborative Learning indicator.
- b) ***Discussions with Diverse Others*** occur more frequently among Ryerson respondents than the Ontario average. Students are asked about the frequency with which they have discussions with people who differ from themselves in terms of race or ethnicity, economic background, religious beliefs, or political views. Eighty-three percent of Ryerson respondents report engaging in discussions with people of a different race or ethnicity often or very often. Students appear to be least likely to have discussions with people who hold different political views from their own; 67 percent report engaging in discussions with such people often or very often.

3. Experiences with Faculty

Engagement indicators in this area are developed 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. Two indicators, student-faculty interaction and effective teaching practices, measure Ryerson’s success in this area and are summarized in Figures 3a and 3b.

- a) ***Student-Faculty Interaction*** includes four survey questions evaluating the frequency with which students engage directly with faculty. Not surprisingly, fourth-year students are more likely than first-year students to report engaging with faculty often or very often. About a quarter of fourth-year students report talking about career plans with a faculty member (compared to 16 percent of first-year students). A quarter of fourth-year students also report discussing course topics with a faculty member outside of class often or very often (compared to 18 percent at first year). Ryerson scores lower on this indicator than the Ontario average at both first and fourth year.
- b) ***Effective Teaching Practices*** is measured by asking students to report on the feedback they receive from faculty and selected aspects of teaching. Seventy-two percent of respondents, for example, report that instructors clearly explain course goals and requirements, and 69 percent believe instructors use examples or illustrations to explain difficult points “quite a bit” or “very much.” Forty-five percent indicate that, quite a bit or very much, instructors provide prompt and detailed feedback on tests or completed assignments. Ryerson scores lower on this indicator than the Ontario average at both first and fourth year.

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

Figure 2a: Collaborative Learning

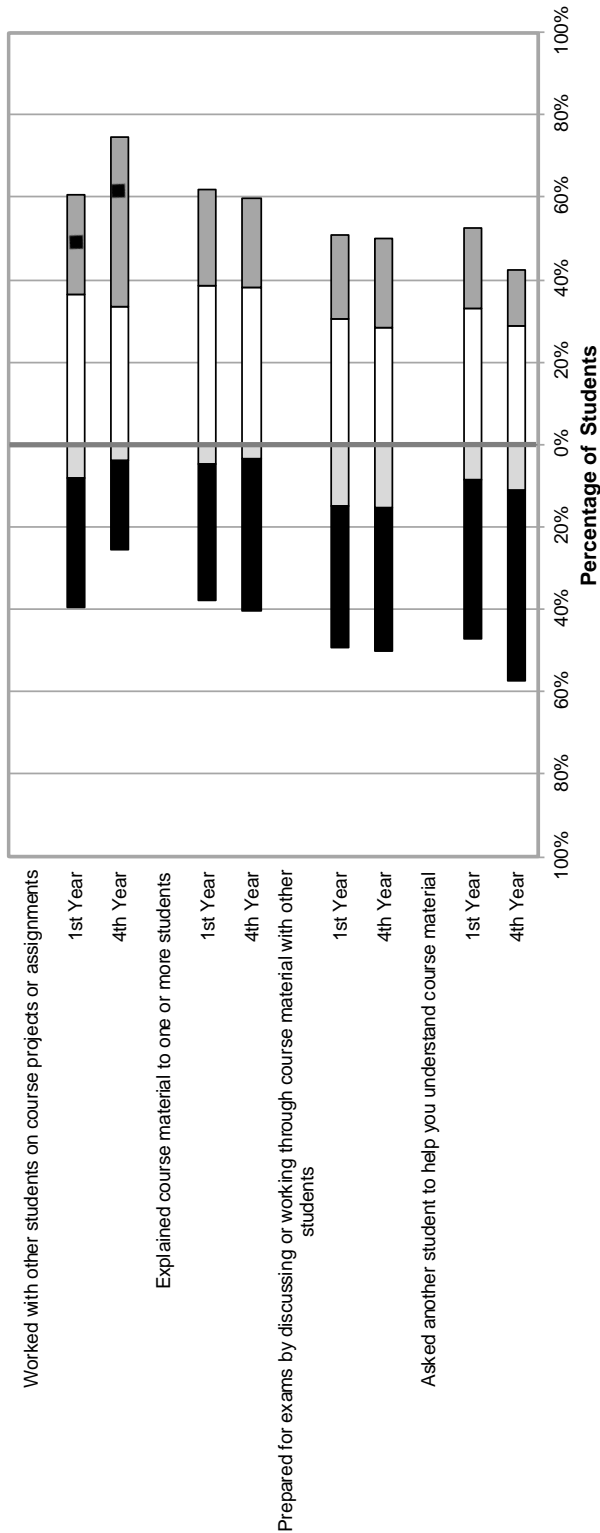
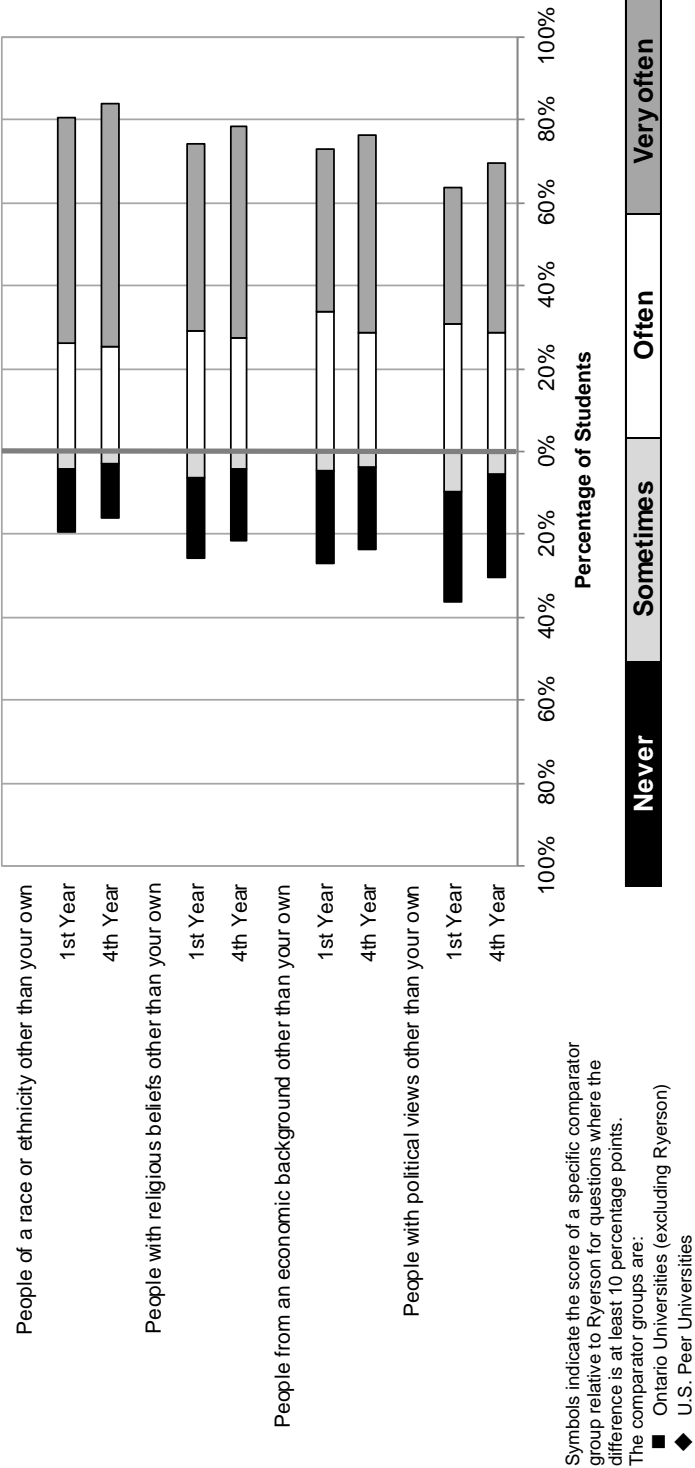
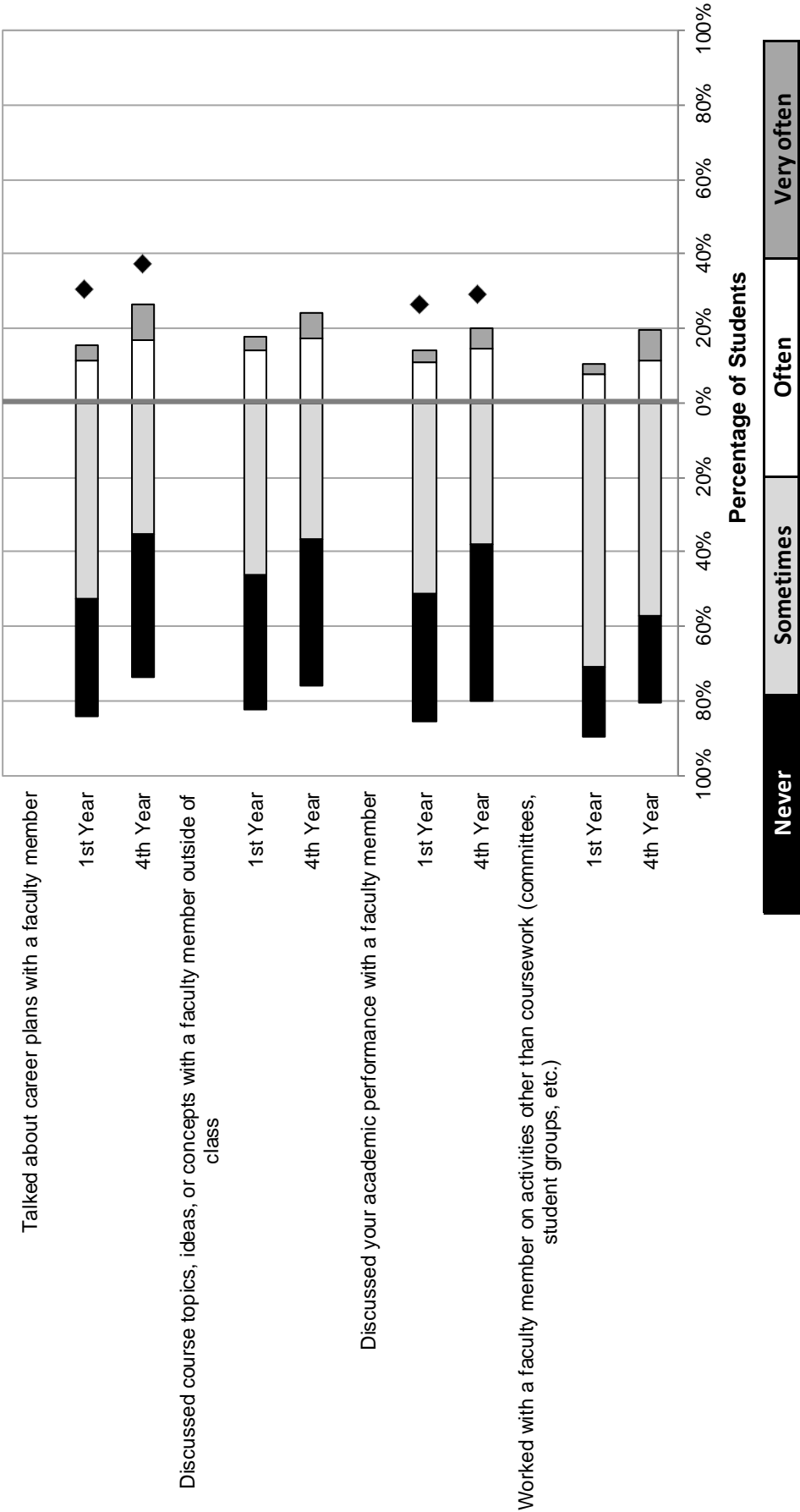


Figure 2b: Discussions with Diverse Others



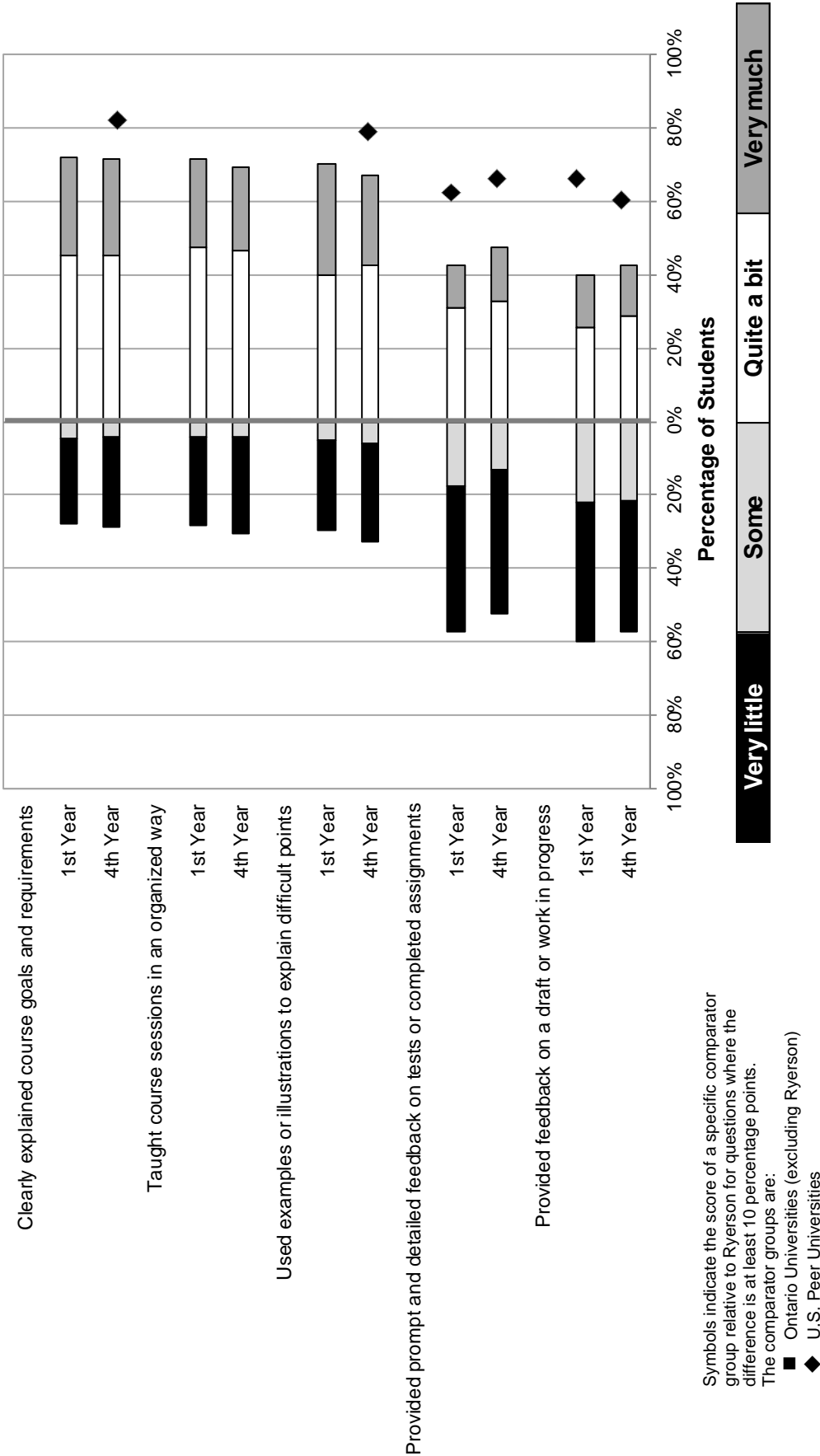
Symbols indicate the score of a specific comparator group relative to Ryerson for questions where the difference is at least 10 percentage points.
The comparator groups are:
■ Ontario Universities (excluding Ryerson)
◆ U.S. Peer Universities

Figure 3a: Student-Faculty Interaction



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

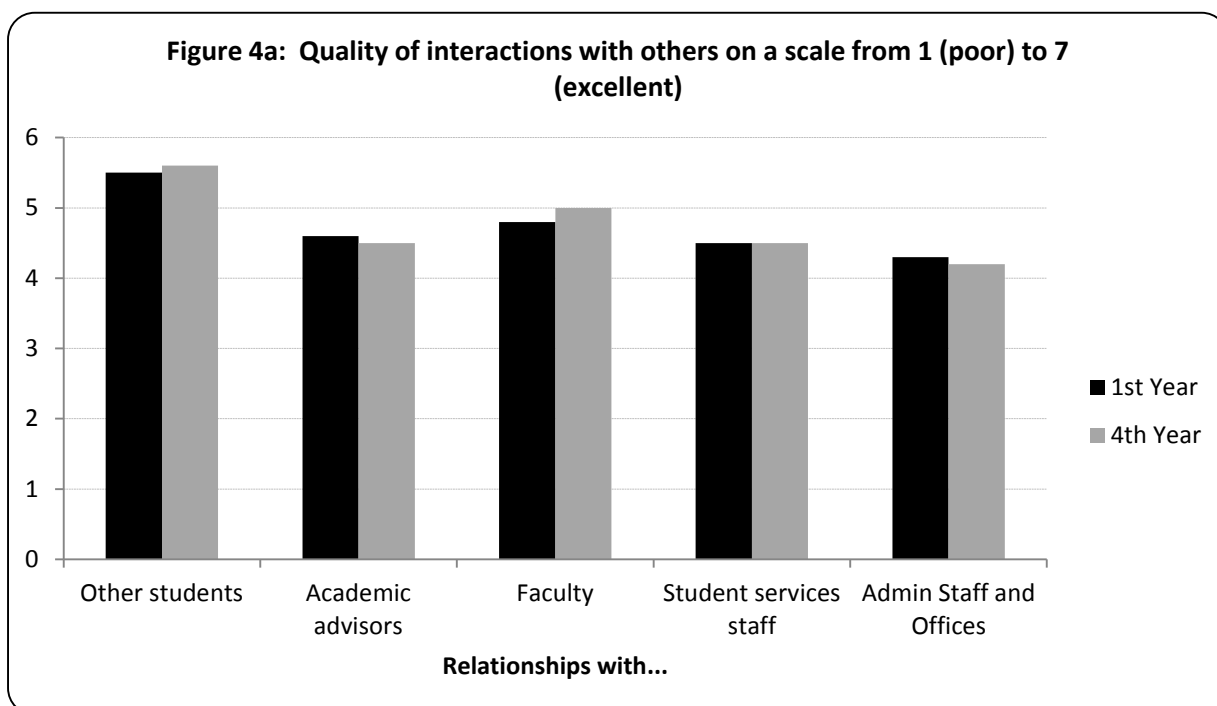
Figure 3b: Effective Teaching Practices



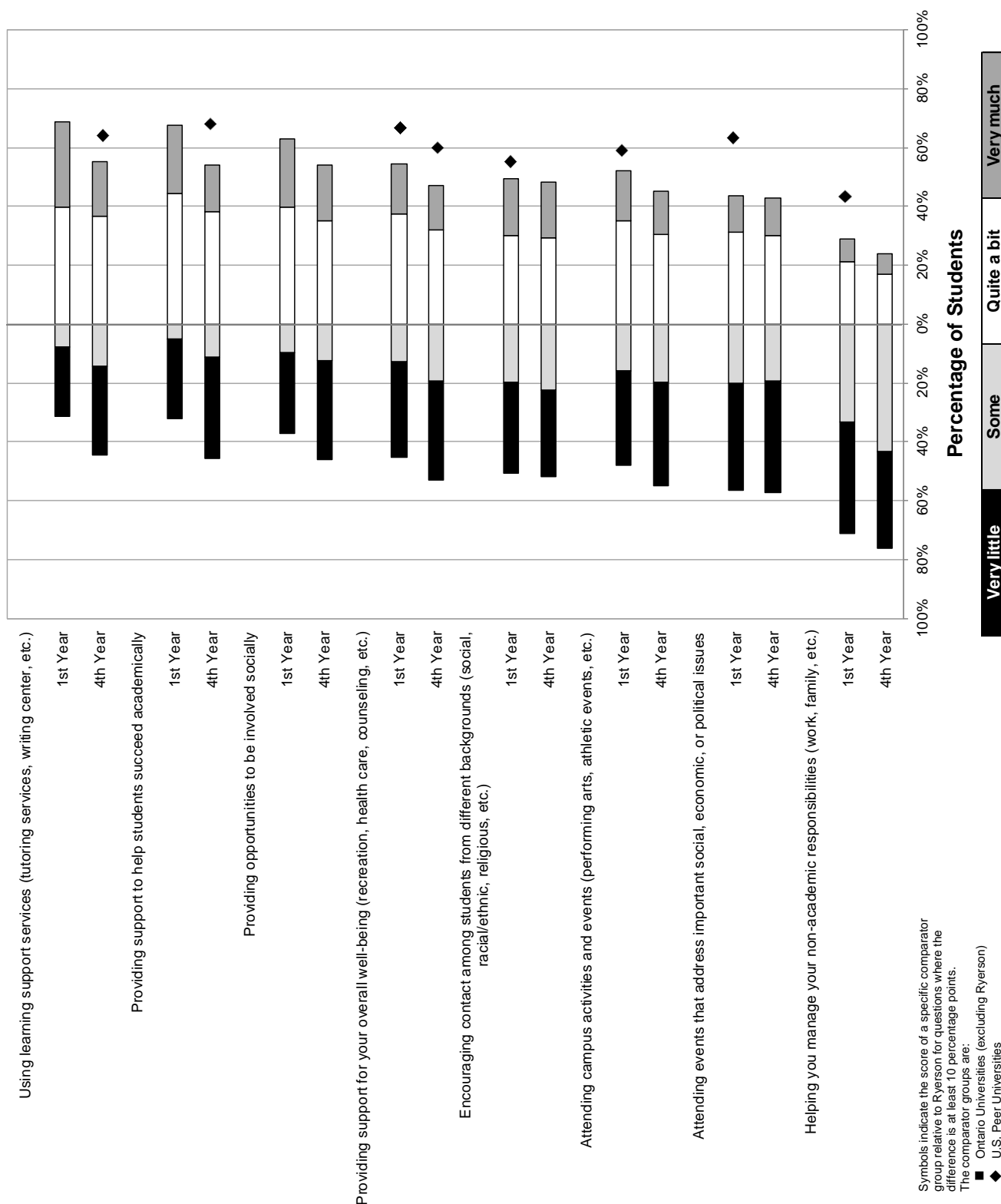
4. Campus Environment

Aspects of the campus environment assessed by NSSE include the quality of interactions among students, faculty and staff and the extent to which the university fosters a supportive campus climate. Responses are summarized in Figures 4a and 4b.

- a) **Quality of Interactions** is an engagement indicator created by asking students to rate, on a scale from 1 (poor) to 7 (excellent), the quality of their interactions with other students, academic advisors, faculty, student services staff, and administrative staff. Respondents rate the quality of interactions with fellow students highest, particularly at fourth year. Fourth-year students also provide higher ratings of their interactions with faculty than do students in first year. Ryerson performs lower than the Ontario average on this indicator.



- b) **A Supportive Environment** is one where the university fosters student success and encourages students to become involved in campus life. For example, 68 percent of first-year students and 54 percent at fourth year indicate that Ryerson emphasizes the provision of support to help students succeed academically “quite a bit” or “very much.” Sixty-three percent at first year and 54 percent of fourth-year students believe the university emphasizes the provision of opportunities to become involved socially. Fifty-two percent of first year students and 45 percent of fourth-year students report that the university emphasizes attending campus activities and events. Within Ryerson, students in first year tend to provide responses that are more positive than do fourth-year students. However, Ryerson is similar to the Ontario average at fourth year, but below at first year on this indicator.

Figure 4b: Supportive Environment

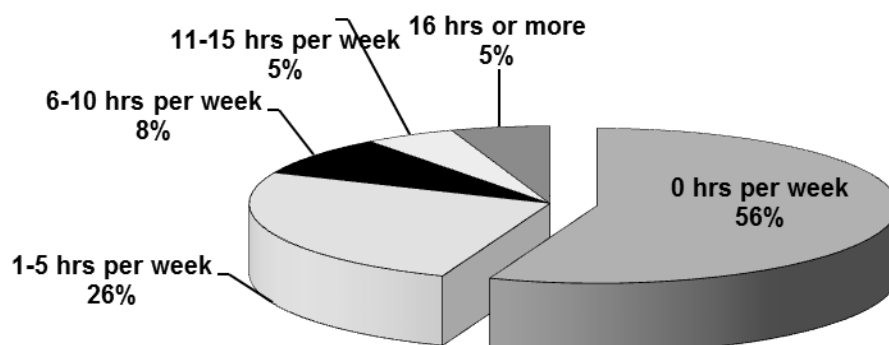
ADDITIONAL TOPICS

Co-Curricular Participation

Although it is not included in the Campus Environment indicators, a related feature of the university experience is the amount of time students spend in co-curricular activities (e.g., organizations, campus publications, student government, intercollegiate or intramural sports). In 2014, more than half (56 percent) of all students report that they do not participate in co-curricular activities during a typical week. Relatively low levels of participation are found even among those who live close to campus: half of students whose travel time to campus is 20 minutes or less report that they do not participate in co-curricular activities.

The reported level of participation in co-curricular activities at Ryerson has improved over each of the past rounds of NSSE, with the percentage of students reporting non-involvement going from 65 percent in 2005, and 60 percent in 2011, to 56 percent in 2014. Results for 2014 are summarized in Figure 5.

Figure 5: Hours per week in co-curricular activities



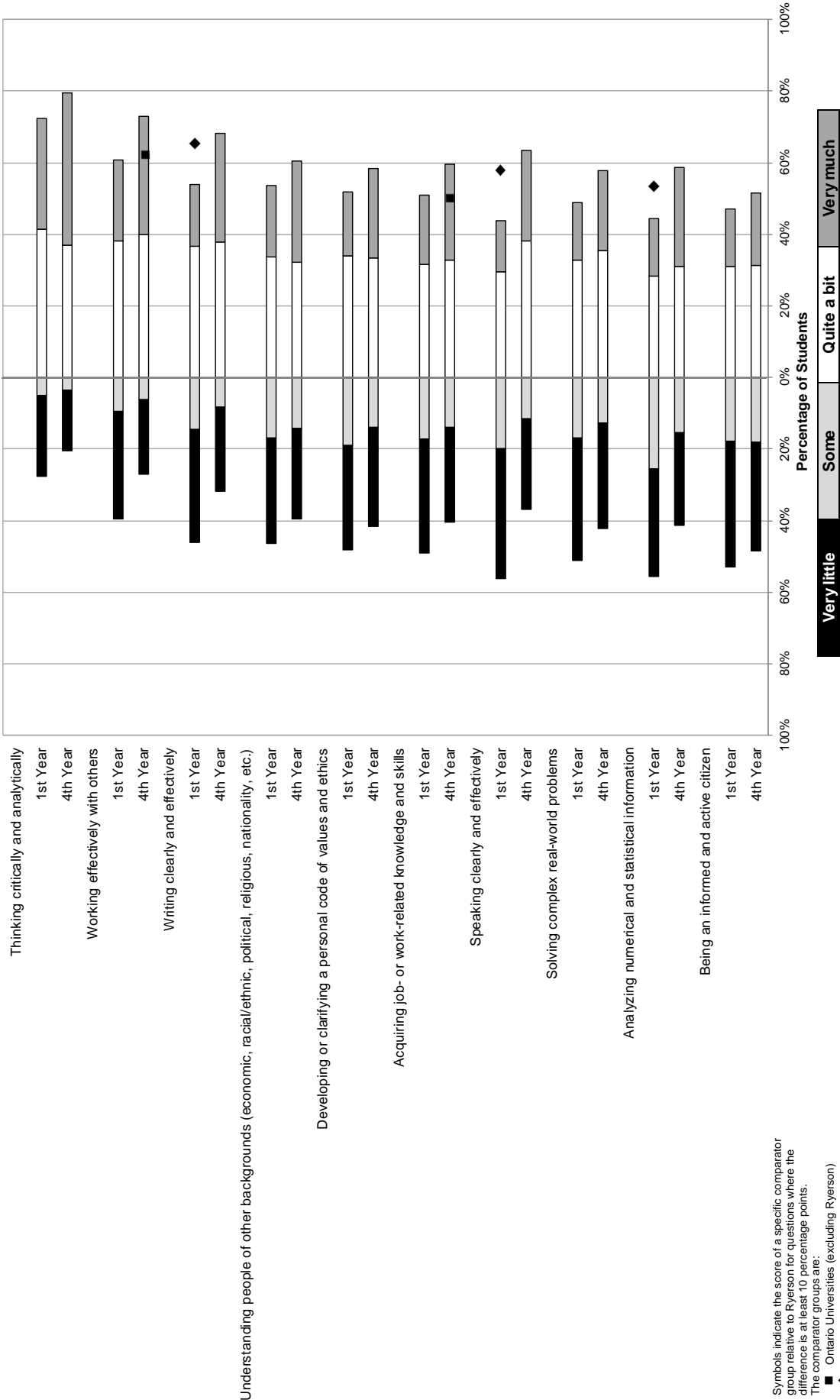
Skills Development

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. Seventy-six percent of students report that the University contributed to the development of critical and analytical thinking skills "quite a bit" or "very much." Two-thirds report that the University contributed in this way to their ability to work effectively with others, and 61 percent report similarly with regard to their ability to write clearly and effectively. 51 percent report that the University has contributed to their ability to analyze numerical and statistical information.

Fifty-five percent of students report that the University contributed "quite a bit" or "very much" to the acquisition of job- or work-related knowledge and skills. Fifty-three percent report that that University made this contribution to their skills in solving complex, real-world problems.

Fourth-year students tend to provide more positive responses on skills development than do first-year students. Ratings are outlined in Figure 6.

Figure 6: Skills Development



High Impact Practices

NSSE has identified “High Impact Practices,” six activities that have significant associations with student learning and engagement. High Impact Practices share a number of common elements: they demand considerable time and effort, facilitate learning outside of the classroom, require meaningful interactions with faculty and students, encourage collaboration with diverse others, and provide frequent and substantive feedback. NSSE recommends that institutions should aspire for all students to participate in at least two High Impact Practices over the course of their undergraduate experience.

The proportion of students participating in each of three of these activities is measured in first year, and the proportion participating in each of the six activities is measured in fourth-year. Respondents are asked whether they have *ever* participated in these activities at any point during their time at Ryerson.

At first year, a somewhat higher percentage of students Ontario-wide than at Ryerson have participated in at least two High Impact Practices. However, by fourth-year, Ryerson students are more likely than those across Ontario to have participated in High Impact Practices, particularly in service learning and in culminating senior experiences. Students at the Ontario-level are more likely than those at Ryerson to have participated in research with faculty. Each of the High Impact Practices is listed in Table 3. (Note that NSSE considers only three activities as being applicable in first year, while all six are measured in fourth year.)

Table 3: Percentage of Students Who Have Participated in High Impact Practices

High Impact Practice	First Year		Fourth Year	
	Ryerson	Ontario	Ryerson	Ontario
Learning Community (or some other formal program where groups of students take two or more classes together)	7%	10%	17%	19%
Service Learning (community-based project)	45%	43%	56%	45%
Research with Faculty	2%	3%	16%	24%
Internship or Field Experience (including co-op, student teaching, clinical placement)			51%	46%
Study Abroad			8%	10%
Culminating Senior Experience (e.g., capstone course, senior project or thesis, comprehensive exam, portfolio)			42%	32%
<i>Participated in at least two activities</i>	4%	7%	57%	52%

Overall Experience

The majority of respondents are satisfied with their experience at Ryerson. Seventy-six percent indicate that their “entire educational experience” is good or excellent; 79 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 five percent) indicate that none of the items listed have posed an obstacle. Fifty-three percent of fourth-year students and 39 percent of first-

year students report that financial pressures or work obligations have posed a major obstacle. Academic performance is identified as a major obstacle among 25 percent of fourth-year students and 31 percent of first-year students. Among fourth-year students, about 30 percent report that course availability/scheduling issues or personal/family problems each pose a major obstacle. (Comparable figures among the first-year group are 18 percent and 21 percent respectively.) For the most part, the proportion of students facing each of the potential obstacles is similar to the previous round of NSSE, except for a decline in the proportion of fourth-year students reporting issues with course availability or scheduling.

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.

Sixty percent report that information on the content and focus of their academic program was good or very good, and about half report similarly with respect to information on how they would be evaluated in their courses.

Forty percent of students appear to be satisfied with information about how to access learning and support services, as are 34 percent with regard to information about financial aid. Only 24 percent of respondents rate the quality of information about common academic problems as good or very good.

First-year students tend to provide somewhat more positive answers than do fourth-year students. However, fourth-year students appear more satisfied than first-year students with respect to information about how they will be evaluated in their courses (55 percent at fourth year compared to 46 percent at first year) as well as the level of difficulty to expect in courses (43 percent at fourth year compared to 37 percent at first year).

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 7 and 8.

Priorities in the classroom: The items cited most frequently as requiring improvement *in the classroom* by first-year students is the quality of course instruction by professors (selected by 31 percent) and ensuring a better fit among course content, assignments, and tests/exams (selected by 27 percent). These results are very similar to those obtained in 2011.

Thirty-five percent of fourth-year students name the quality of course instruction in their top two items, which is identical to 2011 results. Increasing in the number or variety of course offerings within one's major is identified as a priority by 29 percent of respondents in fourth-year, down from 38 percent in the previous round of NSSE.

In 2014, more students selected "an increase in the number of variety of course offerings *outside your major*" as a priority (18 percent at first year and 21 percent at fourth year) than in 2011 (12 percent at first year and 13 percent at fourth year).

Priorities outside the classroom: Outside of the classroom, 57 percent of students in fourth year and 52 percent in first year indicate that improvement in the quality or availability of study spaces is a priority. Thirty percent of fourth-year students and 20 percent of first-year students name opportunities to undertake research with faculty within their top two items for improvement. Relatively few students at first or fourth year report that improvement in library services or collections is a priority.

The overall rank order of priorities remains unchanged from the previous round of NSSE conducted in 2011. That said, there has been an increase in the proportion of students naming study space in their top two items.⁷ Fewer students name library services and the library collection among their priorities for improvement in 2014 than in the previous survey.

⁷ In 2011, 44 percent of first-year students and 45 percent of fourth-year students named study spaces within their top two priorities for improvement. In 2014, comparable figures are 52 percent for first year and 57 percent for fourth year. It is notable that this survey was conducted one year before the opening of Ryerson's Student Learning Centre, which features student study and meeting space as a major component of the building.

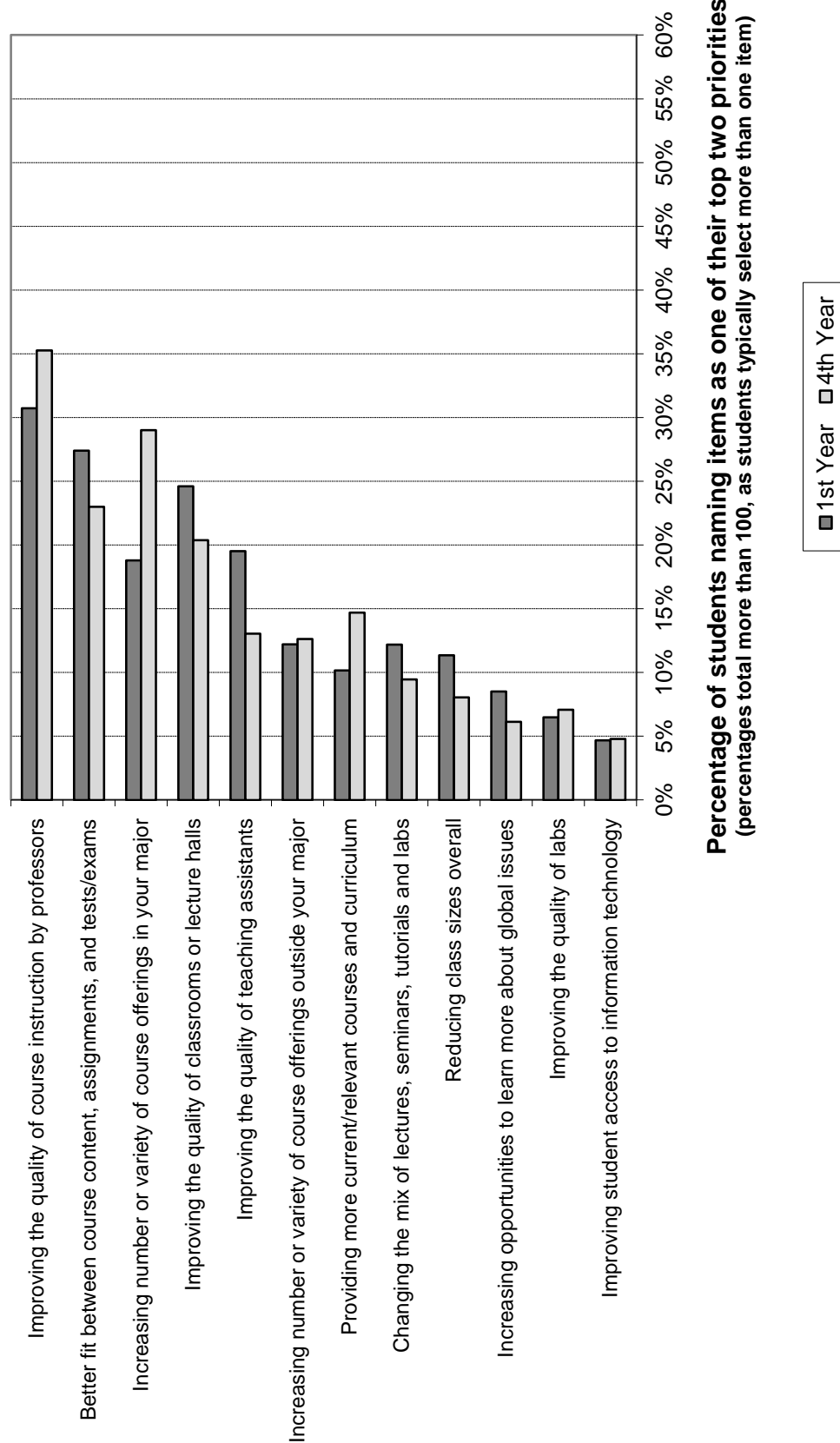
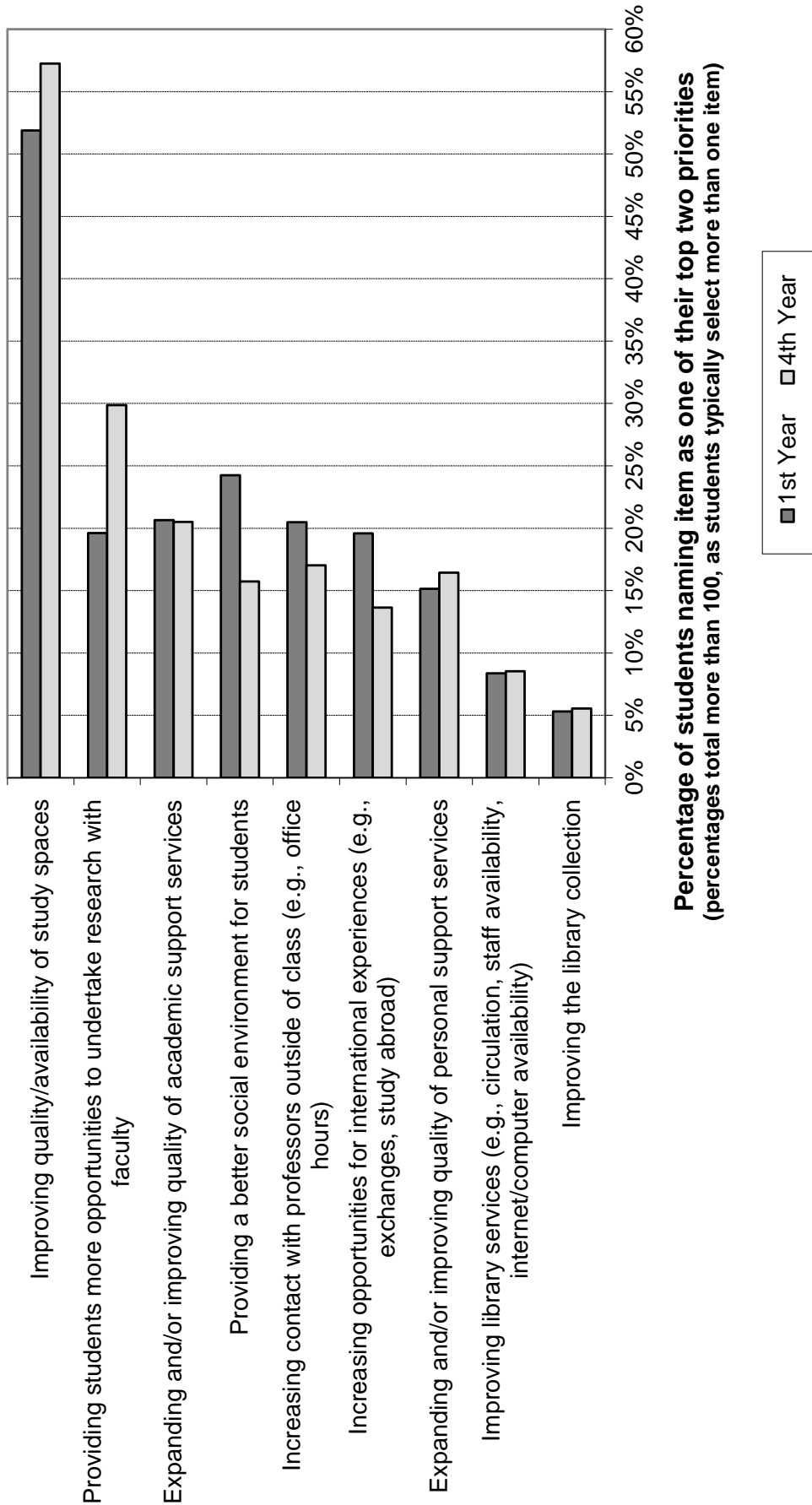
Figure 7: Top two priorities for improvement in the classroom

Figure 8: 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 and course load in Table 4.

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

Female students are over-represented in the sample.

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. In first year, the proportion of survey respondents on a part-time load matches that among the population.

Table 4: Comparison of survey sample and population characteristics

	1 st year				4 th year			
	Sample		Population		Sample		Population	
Gender								
Female	1,065	65.1%	3,766	53.2%	1,190	59.6%	3,954	50.2%
Male	572	34.9%	3,314	46.8%	808	40.4%	3,920	49.8%
<i>Total</i>	<i>1,637</i>	<i>100.0%</i>	<i>7,080</i>	<i>100.0%</i>	<i>1,998</i>	<i>100.0%</i>	<i>7,874</i>	<i>100.0%</i>
Faculty								
Arts	255	15.6%	1,017	14.4%	227	11.4%	781	9.9%
Communication & Design	350	21.4%	1,323	18.7%	244	12.2%	1,023	13.0%
Community Services	281	17.2%	962	13.6%	473	23.7%	1,479	18.8%
Engineering & Architectural Sci	205	12.5%	1,082	15.3%	324	16.2%	1,320	16.8%
Science	163	10.0%	691	9.8%	117	5.9%	463	5.9%
Ted Rogers School of Mgt	383	23.4%	2,005	28.3%	613	30.7%	2,808	35.7%
<i>Total</i>	<i>1,637</i>	<i>100.0%</i>	<i>7,080</i>	<i>100.0%</i>	<i>1,998</i>	<i>100.0%</i>	<i>7,874</i>	<i>100.0%</i>
Course Load								
Full-time	1,412	86.3%	6,112	86.3%	1,260	63.1%	4,652	59.1%
Part-time	225	13.7%	968	13.7%	738	36.9%	3,222	40.9%
<i>Total</i>	<i>1,637</i>	<i>100.0%</i>	<i>7,080</i>	<i>100.0%</i>	<i>1,998</i>	<i>100.0%</i>	<i>7,874</i>	<i>100.0%</i>

Grades

Among respondents in first year, the percentage of those with a self-reported average grade is as follows: A (25 percent), B (56 percent), C (14 percent) and C- or lower (four percent). The distribution of respondents in fourth year by self-reported average grade is: A (26 percent), B (63 percent), C (10 percent) and C- or lower (one percent).

Parental Education

Fifty-one percent of respondents indicate that at least one of their parents completed a university degree (bachelor's, master's or doctoral). A further four percent attended university without earning a degree. Twenty percent report that at least one parent attended (but not necessarily completed) college, while 16 percent indicate that the highest level of education completed by their parents is high school. Nine percent report that neither of their parents completed high school. Using the definition of parents never attending any post-secondary education, the proportion of respondents who are First Generation students is 25 percent. This is somewhat higher than the estimate (20 percent) derived from the previous round of NSSE conducted in 2011.

Members of a Visible Minority

Respondents are asked to provide information about their ethno-cultural background, which may be used to estimate whether a given student is likely to identify as a member of a visible minority. It is estimated that 55 percent of respondents are members of a visible minority. This is similar to the estimate derived from the previous round of NSSE.

Students with Disabilities

Eight percent of respondents indicate that they have a disability. The most commonly reported type of disability is a mental health disorder, followed by a learning disability. In previous rounds of NSSE, Ryerson students were not asked to identify whether they had a disability.

Employment

Fifty-eight percent of students report working for pay in a typical week. Among those who are employed, 77 percent work off campus only, nine percent work on campus only and 14 percent work both on and off campus. These proportions are the same as those reported in the previous round of NSSE, conducted in 2011.

Students who are employed report higher average levels of engagement than non-employed students on a number of indicators, including Student-Faculty Interaction, Reflective and Integrative Learning, and to a somewhat lesser extent, Quantitative Reasoning and Discussions with Diverse Others.⁸

Students with *on-campus* employment (including those doing a combination of on- and off-campus work) score more highly on five engagement indicators than do students who report working only off campus⁹:

- Student-Faculty Interaction
- Quantitative Reasoning
- Supportive Environment
- Quality of Interactions
- Collaborative Learning

⁸ Differences between employed and non-employed students: Student-Faculty Interaction ($t=8.35$, $p<.001$); Reflective and Integrative Learning ($t=5.51$, $p<.001$); Quantitative Reasoning ($t=2.50$; $p<.01$); Discussions with Diverse Others ($t=2.48$, $p<.01$).

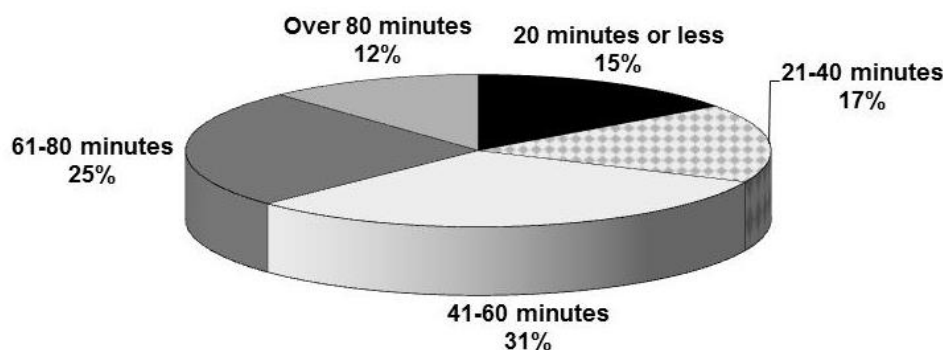
⁹ Differences between students working on campus (including a combination of on- and off-campus work) and those working only off campus: Student-Faculty Interaction ($t=12.06$, $p<.001$); Quantitative Reasoning ($t=6.89$, $p<.001$); Supportive Environment ($t=4.40$, $p<.001$); Quality of Interactions ($t=2.90$, $p<.01$); Collaborative Learning ($t=2.56$, $p<.01$).

Differences between those with on-campus employment and those with only off-campus employment are particularly marked in the areas of Student-Faculty Interaction and Quantitative Reasoning.

Commuting to Campus

Eighty percent of respondents use public transit to travel to campus while 15 percent walk or cycle. The remainder, roughly one in twenty students, uses a car to get to campus, either alone or sharing a drive with others. Sixty-eight 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 9.

Figure 9: Travel time to campus from place of residence



SUMMARY

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 planning processes. Ryerson has increased its sample size beyond standard NSSE levels to allow for disaggregation of responses to the level of individual programs. This has allowed survey results to inform planning within academic departments and Faculties in addition to University-wide efforts.

Overall satisfaction with the educational experience offered at Ryerson is high: 79 percent of respondents report that if they could start over, they would attend Ryerson again.

The reported level of participation in co-curricular activities has improved over the past few rounds of NSSE.

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 a review of these items is underway. These might include aspects of student-faculty interaction as well as interaction with other university offices, continued involvement in co-curricular activities, and student participation in faculty research.

A variety of initiatives at Ryerson have been informed by NSSE results. For example, the past few rounds of NSSE have underscored the importance of study space, and planning for increased student space was made an integral part of new building plans. The most recent survey (2014) was conducted exactly one year prior to the opening of Ryerson's new Student Learning Centre, which features study space as a principal component of the building. Similarly, survey responses have been considered in curriculum reviews, and subsequent pilot initiatives have been undertaken in an effort to provide students with more choice in their selection of courses.

NSSE and other student surveys will continue to provide an important source of information about Ryerson's progress in enabling engagement and success for all students.

NATIONAL SURVEY OF STUDENT ENGAGEMENT 2014

HIGHLIGHTS OF RESULTS

PREPARED BY THE UNIVERSITY PLANNING OFFICE