

GRADUATING STUDENT SURVEY 2006

HIGHLIGHTS OF RESULTS FOR RYERSON UNIVERSITY



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Introduction

In 2006, under the auspices of the Canadian Undergraduate Survey Consortium, Ryerson undertook a survey of students who were expected to graduate that year. Questions focused on students' satisfaction with their academic program and the University as a whole, as well as their plans for future education and employment.

The overall response rate for the Graduating Student Survey 2006 is 48.1 percent: 1,351 respondents were enrolled in full-time programs, and 245 were enrolled in part-time programs. The large sample size and response rate contribute to a relatively low estimate of statistical error.¹

Ryerson has been a member of the Canadian Undergraduate Survey Consortium, a group of approximately 20 universities across Canada that conducts student surveys across participating institutions, since 1997. The Graduating Student Survey was also conducted in 2000 and 2003. Generally, the 2006 results are consistent with those of the previous rounds. A summary of results for the earlier surveys can be found on Ryerson's website at www.ryerson.ca/upo.

Ryerson's impact on students' growth and development

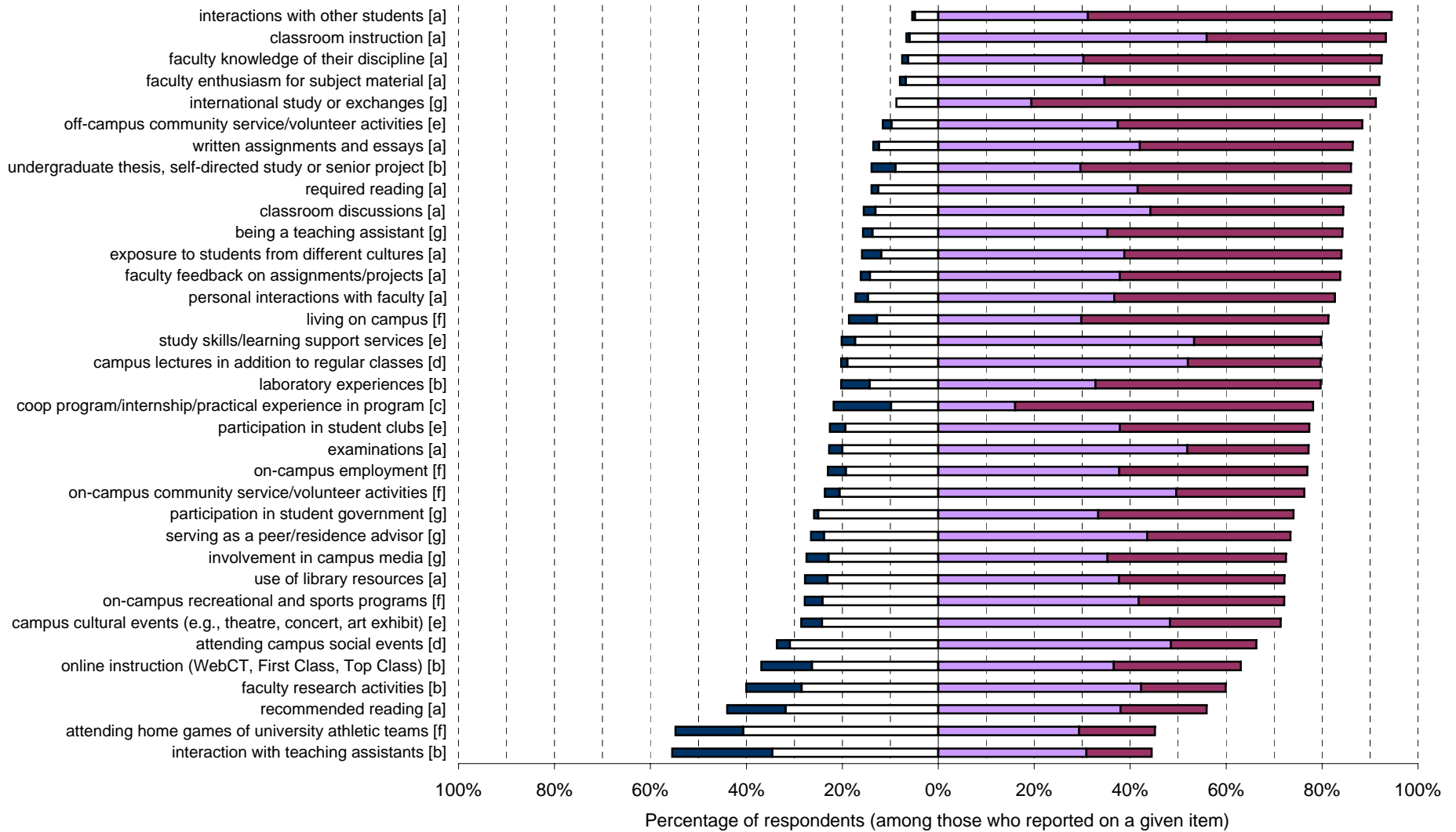
Graduating students were asked about their perception of the degree to which various activities and features of the University contributed to their growth and development. They were provided with a list of activities or features and asked to rate the contribution of each to their growth and development with the use of the following four-point scale: very much, some, very little, and none. Alternatively, respondents could indicate that a given activity was "not applicable."

Figure 1 illustrates for each activity or feature the ratings provided by students. The information in Figure 1 indicates, for example, that generally, graduating students believe interactions with other students as well as classroom instruction, faculty knowledge of their discipline and faculty enthusiasm for subject material made substantial contributions to their growth and development.

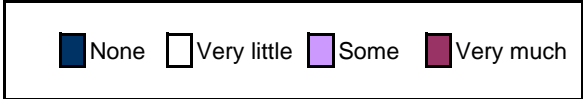
Relative to other activities, the reported contribution of interactions with teaching assistants was relatively low. However, students who report that they have been a teaching assistant are likely to indicate that the experience contributed to their growth and development.

1. Nineteen times out of twenty, the percentages shown throughout this report are estimated to be accurate to within: 1.77 percentage points for full-time and part-time programs combined, 1.95 percentage points for full-time programs alone, and 4.01 percentage points for part-time programs alone.

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



NOTES: [a] 85 - 100% of respondents reported on this item.
 [b] 70 - 84.9% of respondents reported on this item.
 [c] 55 - 69.9% of respondents reported on this item.
 [d] 40 - 54.9% of respondents reported on this item.
 [e] 25 - 39.9% of respondents reported on this item.
 [f] 10 - 24.9% of respondents reported on this item.
 [g] < 10% of respondents reported on this item.



Ryerson's contribution to the development of skills and personal traits

Graduating students were also asked about their perception of how well Ryerson helped them to build skills or develop personal traits in a variety of areas. They were directed to rate how well Ryerson contributed to their development of each skill/trait according to the following scale: excellent, good, fair, or poor/fail. Alternatively, respondents could indicate that a given skill or trait was “not applicable.”

Figure 2 illustrates for each skill or trait the ratings provided by students. Generally, graduating students believe Ryerson made a substantial contribution to the development of their ability to work independently and to interact cooperatively in groups, as well as the development of knowledge in their major field of study. Students appear to be less positive about Ryerson's contribution to their mathematical skills, second or third language skills or their spiritual development. Interestingly, respondents are more positive about Ryerson's contribution to their skills in “analyzing quantitative problems” than they are with respect to mathematical skills.

While results of the 2006 round of the survey are largely consistent with those obtained in 2003, there has been improvement in the proportion of students indicating that the University has made a good or excellent contribution to their ability to access information. In both 2000 and 2003, about two-thirds of respondents report this way, whereas in 2006, the figure is 78 percent.

A small number of new items were added to the survey in 2006. According to the results from two of the new questions, roughly two-thirds of students report that the University's contribution was good or excellent with respect to a) the development of personal self-confidence and b) persistence with difficult tasks.

Students' satisfaction

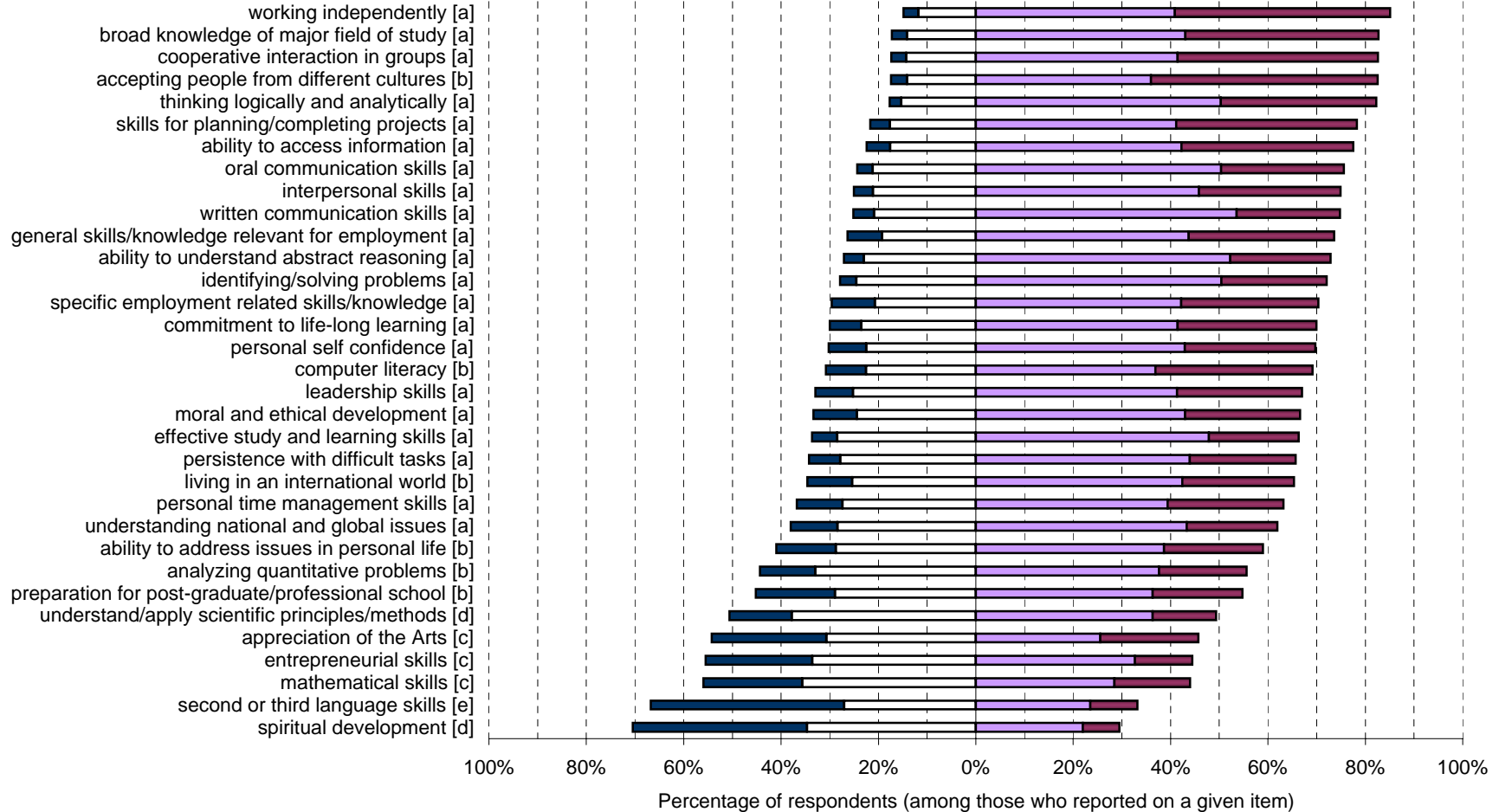
A number of questions in the survey ask students to provide information about their satisfaction with i) instructors and ii) the University in general.

Satisfaction with instructors: 94 percent agree that professors seemed knowledgeable in their field, and 87 percent report that professors were accessible outside of class to help students. The aspect of professors' teaching with which graduating students appear to be the least satisfied is that of feedback on their academic performance. Almost a third of respondents disagree with the statement that most of their professors provided useful feedback on their academic performance. Figure 3 below illustrates students' ratings of their instructors.

Satisfaction with the University: 90 percent report that they are satisfied or very satisfied with their decision to attend Ryerson, and 88 percent are satisfied or very satisfied with the overall quality of education that they received. Sixty-five percent of respondents indicate that they are satisfied with the availability of information about career options in their area of study.

The aspect of Ryerson with which graduating students appear to be the least satisfied is that of concern shown by the University for students as individuals; half indicate that they are dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with Ryerson in this regard. In addition, 67 percent of students *agree* with the statement that they sometimes feel they “get the run-around” at this university. While Ryerson is similar to other universities with respect to “concern shown by the University for students as individuals,” we are somewhat higher than other Canadian universities with regard to the proportion who believe they sometimes get the “run-around.” Figure 4 below illustrates students' ratings of the University.

Figure 2: Ryerson's contribution to the development of skills and personal traits



NOTES: [a] 95 - 100% of respondents reported on this item.
 [b] 85 - 94.9% of respondents reported on this item.
 [c] 75 - 84.9% of respondents reported on this item.
 [d] 65 - 74.9% of respondents reported on this item.
 [e] fewer than 50% of respondents reported on this item.

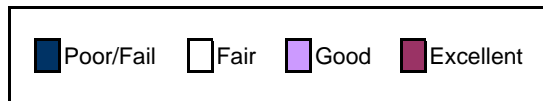
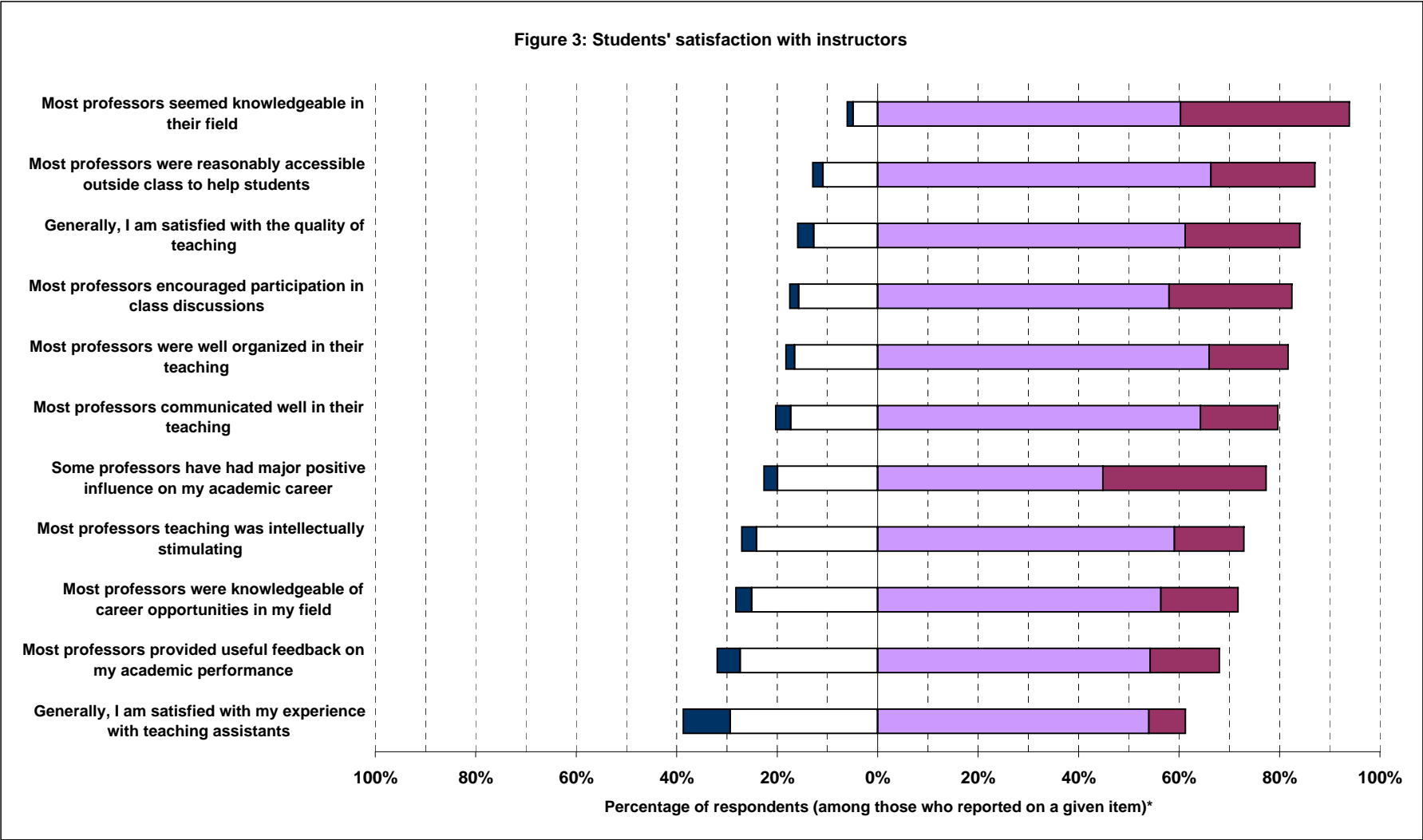


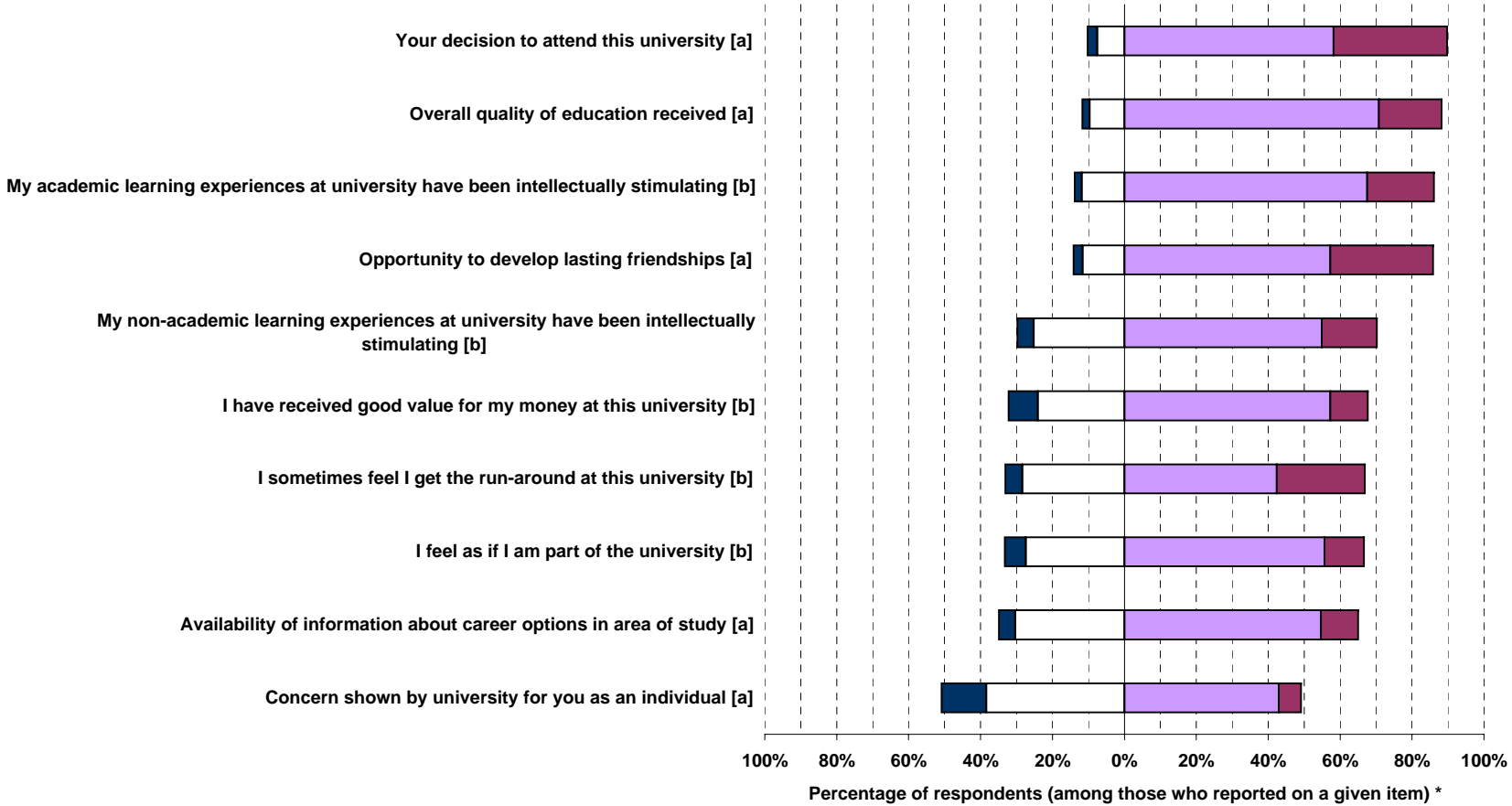
Figure 3: Students' satisfaction with instructors



* Over 90 percent of respondents reported on each item.



Figure 4: Students' satisfaction with various aspects of the University



* At least 97 percent of respondents reported on each item.

[a] Very dissatisfied Dissatisfied Satisfied Very satisfied

[b] Disagree strongly Disagree Agree Agree strongly

Recommending Ryerson to others

86 percent of students graduating from full-time programs indicate that they would recommend Ryerson to others, and 96 percent of those in the part-time group indicate that they would do so.

Among graduating students who would recommend Ryerson to others, over 80 percent indicate that “the program” is one of the reasons. 58 percent identify “the professors” as a reason, and 57 percent identify “relevance for job opportunities” as a reason. Students from full- and part-time programs are similar in terms of their reasons for recommending Ryerson with one exception: a greater proportion of those in full-time programs (23 percent) compared to part-time programs (4 percent) cite “quality of student/campus life” as a reason.

Some of the most common reasons for not recommending Ryerson are the same reasons cited by those who would recommend Ryerson. Among graduating students from both full-time and part-time programs who indicate that they would not recommend Ryerson to others, the two most common reasons are “the program” and “the professors.” It should be noted that only 14 percent of full-time program graduates and 4 percent of those in the part-time group indicate that they would not recommend Ryerson. The overall proportion of students citing a particular aspect of the University as a reason for not recommending is, therefore, relatively small.

Figure 5, below, outlines the proportion of respondents identifying various reasons for either recommending or not recommending Ryerson to others.

Education financing and debt

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

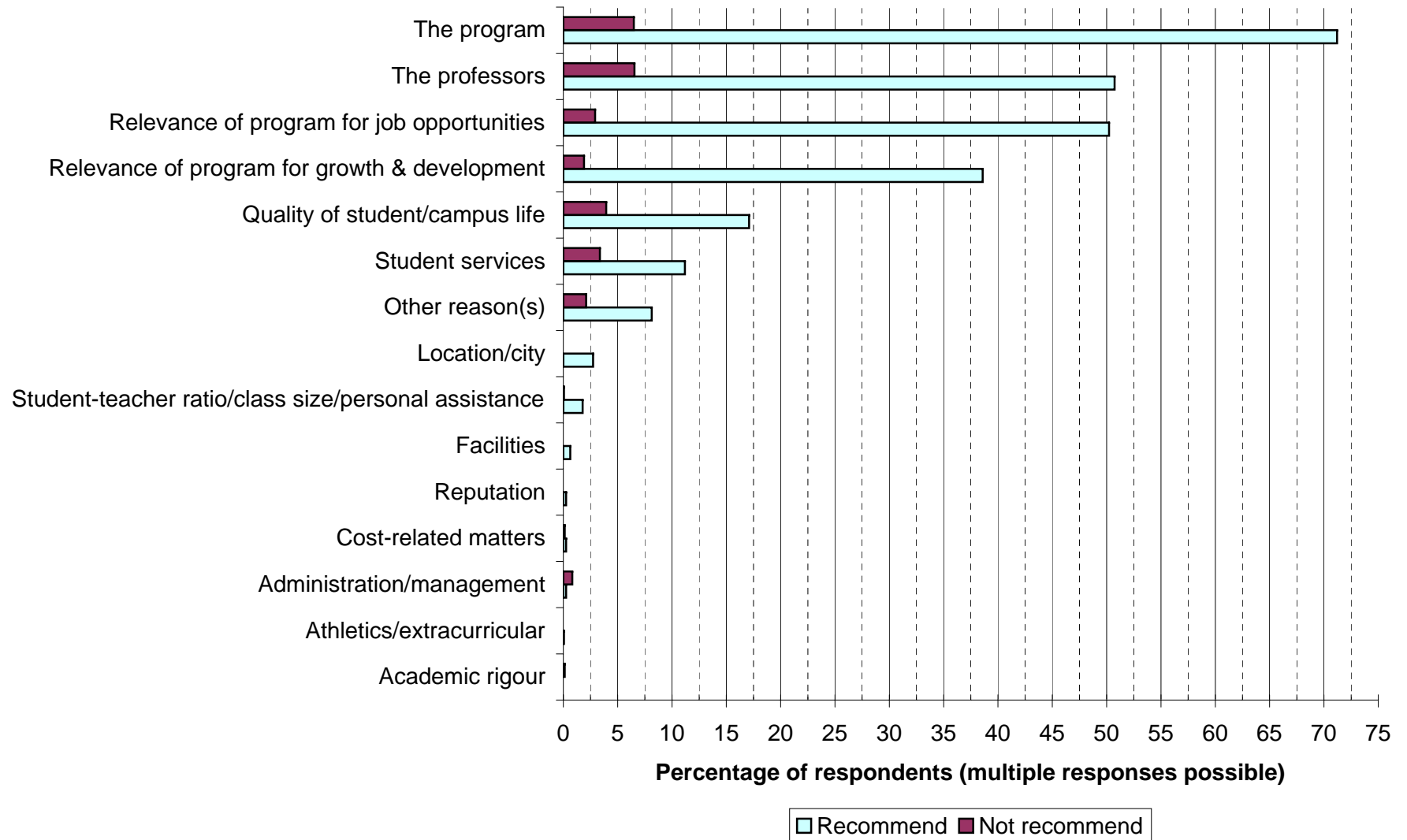
Sources of funds: Among students graduating from full-time programs, sources most commonly cited as supplying funds include parents, family or spouse (cited by 56 percent) and personal savings (cited by 40 percent). Government loans or bursaries, earnings from current employment and earnings from summer work each were cited by about a third of students from full-time programs.

Debt: Approximately 57 percent report graduating with debt that they incurred to help finance their university education. Among students reporting debt, the most commonly cited source of debt is government student loans. Sixty-nine percent of respondents with debt name this as a source. Debt from loans from financial institutions and loans from parents or family are each named by almost a third of students with debt.

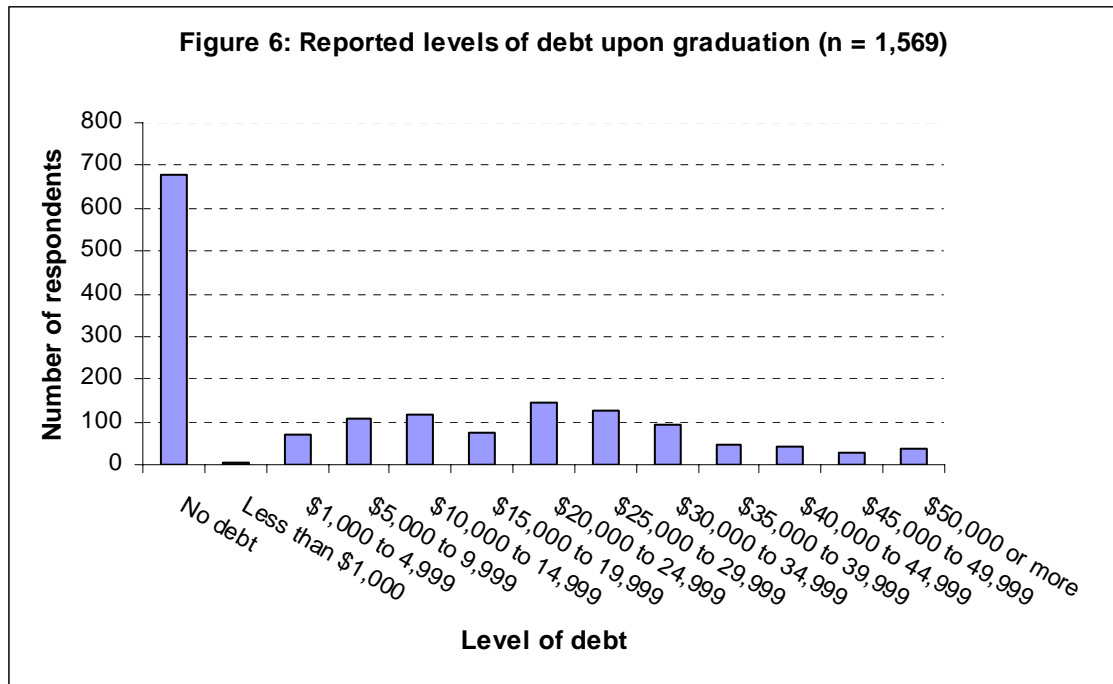
Among those reporting debt, the median amount owed upon graduation is \$20,000 (mean = \$21,957; standard deviation = \$14,311). Among all graduating students, the median debt is \$5,800 (mean = \$12,441; standard deviation = \$15,312). Figure 6 illustrates the distribution of debt levels among respondents. The level of debt reported by students in this survey is higher than that reported by students graduating in 2003. In 2003, the median amount among those reporting debt was \$17,000 and the median debt across all students was \$4,275.

Students graduating from full-time programs are more likely to report having debt than are respondents from part-time programs. Sixty-one percent of the full-time group and one third of the part-time group report incurring debt. Among the full-time program students, the median debt

Figure 5: Percentage of respondents identifying reasons for recommending or not recommending Ryerson to others (n = 1,573)



is \$21,000 (mean = \$22,433; standard deviation = \$14,134) and among the part-time program graduates, it is \$12,250 (mean = \$17,004; standard deviation = \$15,280).



Employment during the academic year

Over 60 percent of full-time program graduates and 86 percent of part-time program graduates report that they are employed during the current academic term (excluding co-op related work). Among those who are employed, most (82 percent) in the part-time group indicate that typically, they work 30 hours or more each week. Those in the full-time group are more varied in terms of the number of weekly hours they work: 29 percent work 10 hours or less; 46 percent work between 11 and 20 hours; 17 percent work between 21 and 30 hours; and a 7 percent indicate that they work over 30 hours.

Those in the full-time group are similar to part-time program graduates in terms of the extent to which they believe their employment has a negative impact on their academic performance. A third of respondents who are currently employed indicate that their job has no impact on their academic performance, while 10 percent report that the negative impact is significant or substantial.

Plans for further education

Those graduating from part-time programs appear more likely to undertake additional studies following graduation than are students from the full-time group. Twenty-nine percent of students graduating from full-time programs indicate that they plan to undertake some sort of educational

activity during their first year after graduation, while the figure for those graduating from part-time programs is 46 percent.

Employment after graduation

At the time of the survey (February/March 2006), 62 percent of respondents from the full-time group and 84 percent from the part-time group have decided on a career field or specific occupation. 17 percent of students graduating from full-time programs report that they have a full-time job arranged for after graduation. About 9 percent indicate that while they do not have a job arranged, they are not seeking work. 68 percent of students graduating from part-time programs report that they have a full-time job arranged, and 7 percent are not seeking work.

30 percent of respondents in the full-time group and 47 percent of those in part-time programs believe that there are many jobs available in their major area of study.

Personal profile of graduating students

Graduating students were asked to report on a variety of personal characteristics, including their gender, age, disability status, visible minority status, marital status, number of children, and their home province.

- The majority of respondents (89.4 percent) report that their permanent home before coming to Ryerson was in Ontario.
- Females comprise a larger proportion of respondents among the part-time program group than among the full-time program group. Respondents from the part-time group are, on average, older than those in the full-time group. (See Table 1, below.)
- 38 percent of graduating students indicate that they are a member of a visible minority.
- 5.7 percent of respondents report having at least one type of disability. Among those who report having a disability, the most commonly cited type is a learning disability, followed by a mental health problem.
- One in ten respondents (4 percent of the full-time group and 46 percent of the part-time group) has at least one child.
- 3.1 percent of respondents indicate that they are studying in Canada on a student authorization, study permit or visa.

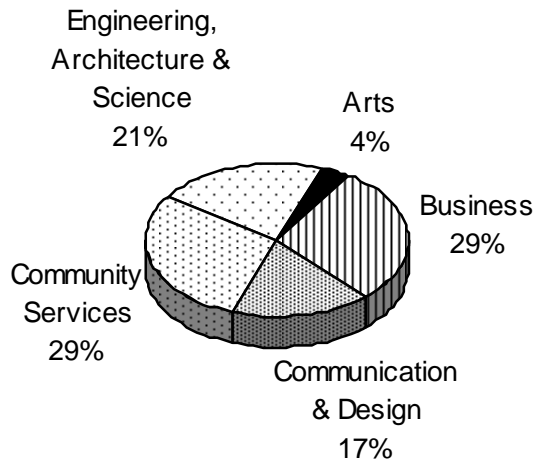
Table 1: Gender and age of respondents

	Full-Time Programs	Part-Time Programs	Total Respondents
GENDER			
Male	39.1%	22.8%	36.6%
Female	60.9%	77.2%	63.4%
AGE			
Median	22.0 years	33.0 years	23.0 years
Mean	23.5 years	35.1 years	25.3 years
Standard deviation	3.7 years	9.2 years	6.4 years

Academic profile of graduating students

Graduating students were asked a variety of questions relating to their studies, including their program of study, whether they had transferred credits from another post-secondary institution, and whether they had ever interrupted their studies.

Figure 7: distribution of respondents by Faculty (full- and part-time programs)



The distribution of respondents by Faculty, summarized in Figure 7, roughly approximates the distribution of the full population of graduates. Graduates from the Faculty of Community Services and Faculty of Arts are somewhat overrepresented in the sample, as the response rate among this group is higher than the average response rate for the survey. Conversely, graduates from the Faculty of Communication and Design and Faculty of Business are somewhat underrepresented, as the response rates for these groups are lower than the

average rate. The proportion of respondents from the Faculty of Engineering, Architecture and Science is equal to their proportion in the actual population of graduates.

While not typical, some students report that they had interrupted their studies for at least one term (not including intersessions, summer sessions or a co-op/work term). Among students graduating from full-time programs, 14 percent report interruption of their studies. The most commonly cited reasons for the interruption are employment, family or personal reasons, financial reasons, and being required to withdraw by the University. Among students graduating from part-time programs, 43 percent report an interruption in studies. The most commonly cited reasons for interruption among the part-time group are employment, and childcare responsibilities and other family reasons.

Method

Over a six-week period beginning in February 2006, questionnaires were mailed to 2,903 students in fourth year, and 415 students who applied for June 2006 graduation.

Strengths of the survey include the response rate of 48.1 percent, which is relatively high for a mail-out format. Moreover, because the survey was sent to the full population of potential graduates rather than a smaller sample, there is a sufficient number of respondents to generate useful results at the level of individual Faculties, and in many cases, specific programs. As previously mentioned, the large sample size and the high response rate contribute to a relatively low estimate of statistical error.

The summary of highlights outlined above is one part of the available information relating to the Graduating Student Survey 2006. Frequency tables outlining responses to each item in the questionnaire separately for full-time and part-time programs are also available in the Library. For further information about the Graduating Student Survey 2006, please contact the University Planning Office at (416) 979-5033.



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RYERSON UNIVERSITY, 350 VICTORIA STREET, TORONTO, ON M5B 2K3

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