

# Graduating Student Survey 2015

For students  
graduating from  
undergraduate  
programs





## GRADUATING STUDENT SURVEY 2015

### *Highlights of Results for Ryerson University*

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#### ***Introduction***

In 2015, as part of its participation in the Canadian University 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 2015 is 34 percent: 1,647 respondents were enrolled in full-time programs, and 138 were enrolled in part-time programs.<sup>1</sup>

For the past 16 years, Ryerson has been a member of the Canadian University Survey Consortium, a group of approximately 25 universities across Canada that conducts student surveys across participating institutions. Since 2000, the Graduating Student Survey has been conducted on a triennial basis. A summary of results for these earlier surveys can be found on Ryerson's website at [www.ryerson.ca/upo](http://www.ryerson.ca/upo).

#### ***The development of skills and personal traits***

**Ryerson's contribution:** Graduating students were asked how well Ryerson helped them to build skills or develop personal traits in a variety of areas, such as communication related skills, analytical and learning skills, as well as work-related and life skills. Respondents indicate the extent to which Ryerson contributed to their skills development with the use of the following scale: very much, much, some, very little or none.

The vast majority of graduating students surveyed indicate that Ryerson made a substantial contribution to the following aspects of students' development:

- Thinking logically and analytically
- Ability to find and use information
- Working independently
- Cooperative interaction in groups
- Ability to interact with people from backgrounds different from my own
- Dealing successfully with obstacles to achieve an objective

More than 90 percent of respondents report that Ryerson made a contribution in the areas listed above. Ryerson's contribution to most other areas is also rated positively. Figure 1 illustrates for each aspect of personal development the ratings provided by students.

**Relative importance of skills and traits:** Students were asked to identify which three skills or traits are the most important ones to develop, regardless of how Ryerson may have contributed. Among twenty-nine skills listed, 29 percent of students identify the ability to think logically and

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1. Nineteen times out of twenty, the percentages shown throughout this report are estimated to be accurate to within: 1.9 percentage points for full-time and part-time programs combined, 2.0 percentage points for full-time programs alone, and 6.8 percentage points for part-time programs alone.

analytically as the most important, and this is in the “top three” for 47 percent. Other skills appearing most commonly in respondents’ “top three” are skills and knowledge for employment, time management skills, and dealing successfully with obstacles to achieve an objective. Table 1 indicates the proportion of respondents identifying these as among the three most important, along with the rating of Ryerson’s contribution to the development of these skills.

**Table 1: Development of selected skills\***

Skill	% of respondents indicating it is among the top three most important skills to develop	% of respondents indicating that Ryerson made a contribution to their development of skill
Thinking logically and analytically	47	94
Skills and knowledge for employment	25	80
Time management skills	24	89
Dealing with obstacles to achieve an objective	21	91

\* from a list of 29 skills included in the survey

### *Students’ satisfaction*

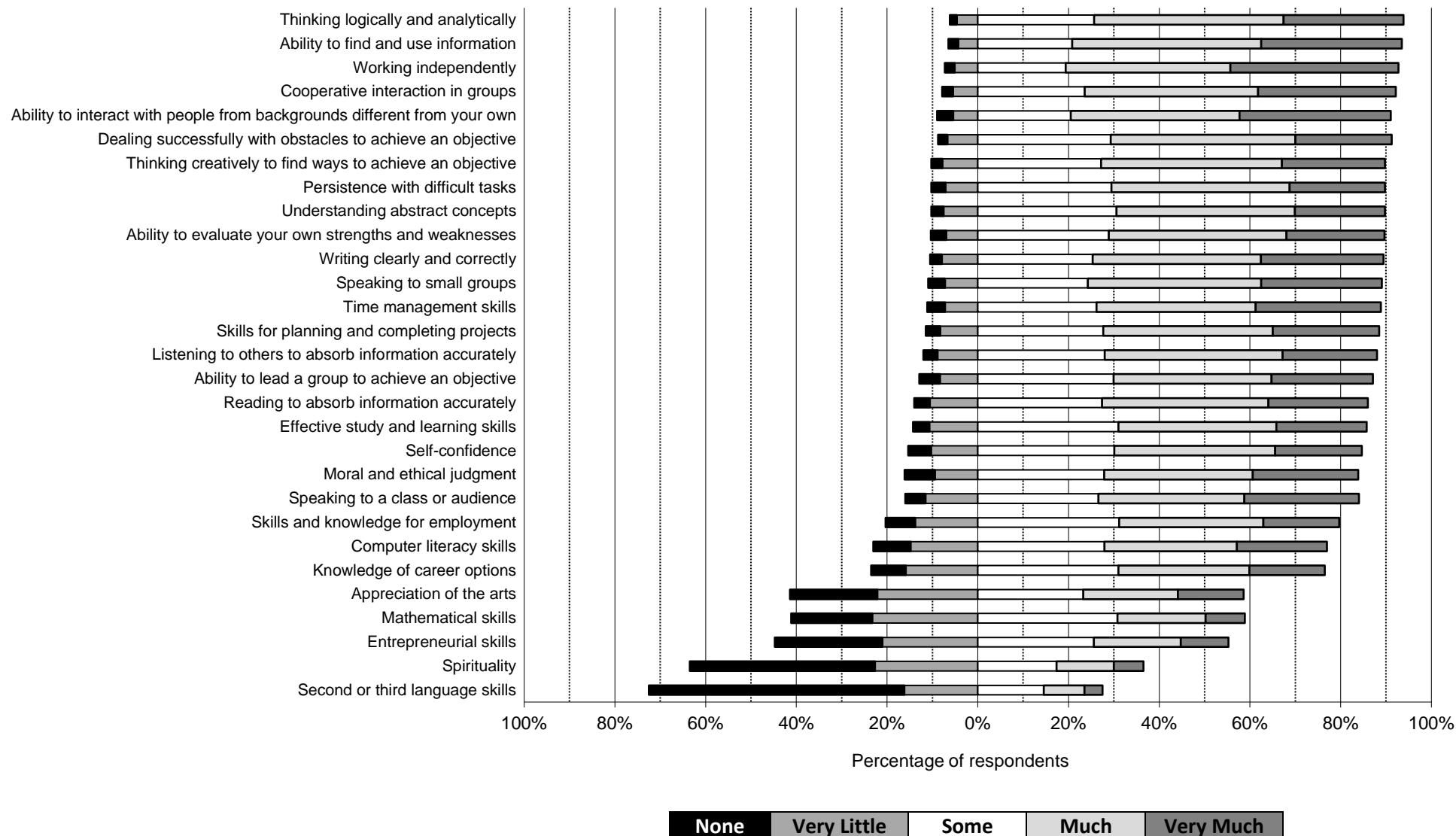
80 percent of respondents indicate that their experience at Ryerson has met or exceeded their expectations. 85 percent of students graduating from full-time programs indicate that they would recommend Ryerson to others, as do 88 percent of those in the part-time group. These proportions have remained relatively stable over the past few iterations of the survey.

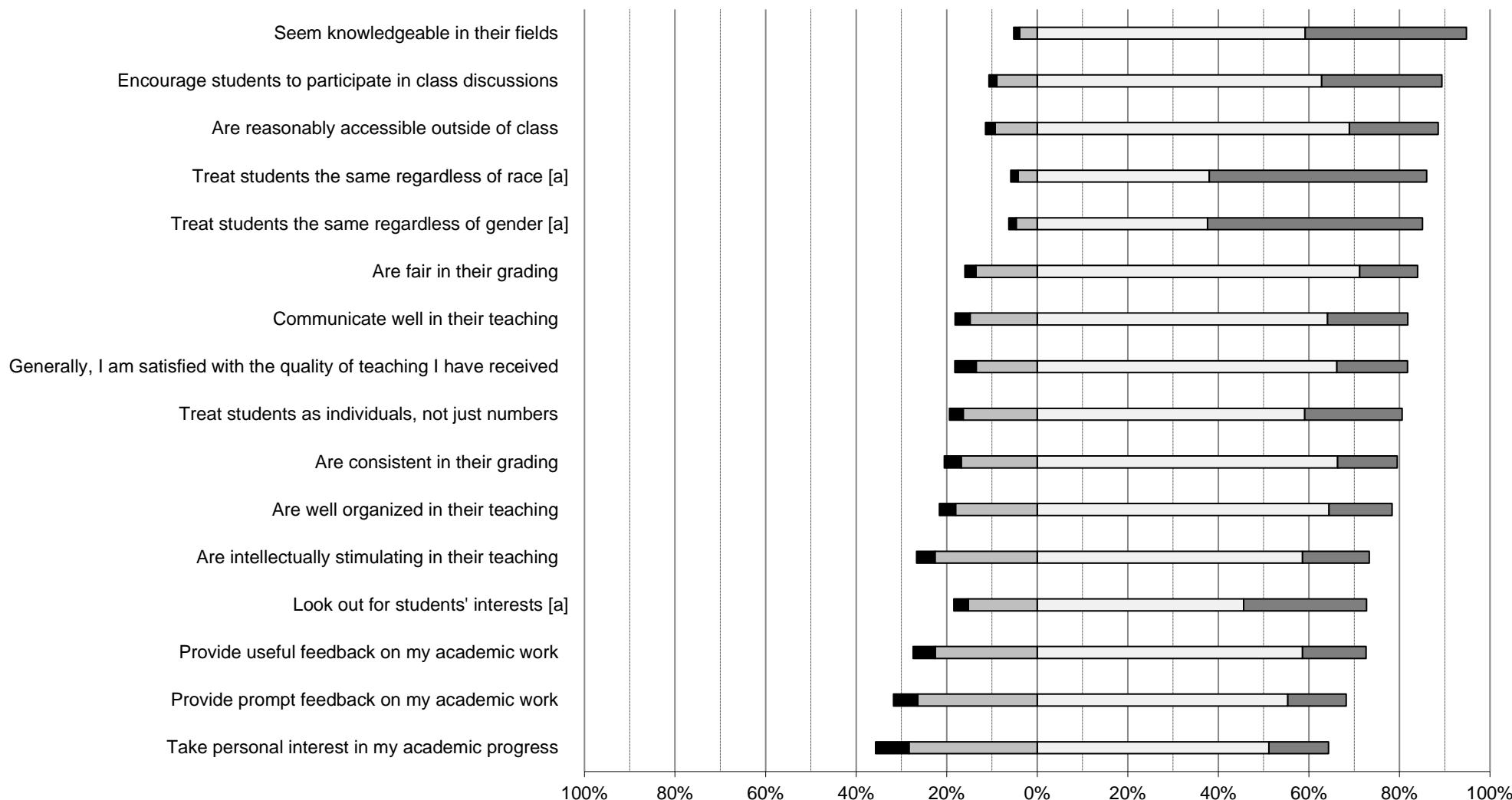
*Satisfaction with instructors:* 95 percent agree that professors seem knowledgeable in their field, and 89 percent report that professors are accessible outside of class to help students. The aspect of professors’ teaching with which respondents appear to be the least satisfied is feedback on academic performance: 28 percent disagree with the statement that most of their professors provided useful feedback on their academic performance, and 26 percent disagree that feedback is provided promptly, which is the same as the experience reported at other Canadian universities. Figure 2 summarizes students’ perception of their professors.

*Satisfaction with the University experience:* 86 percent report that they are satisfied or very satisfied with their decision to attend Ryerson, and 81 percent are satisfied or very satisfied with the overall quality of education that they received.

72 percent of respondents indicate satisfaction with their opportunities to become involved in campus life, and 78 percent with opportunities to develop lasting friendships. Two-thirds are satisfied with opportunities to enhance their education through activities beyond the classroom (e.g., undergraduate research, service learning, student exchange). Satisfaction with concern shown by the University for students as individuals is relatively low at 55 percent, although this is similar to other universities. Responses related to the university experience are summarized in Figure 3.

*Satisfaction with University services:* Students were asked to indicate their level of satisfaction with a variety of University services with which they had experience. All services were rated positively by 75 to 90 percent of users. Results are summarized in Figure 4.

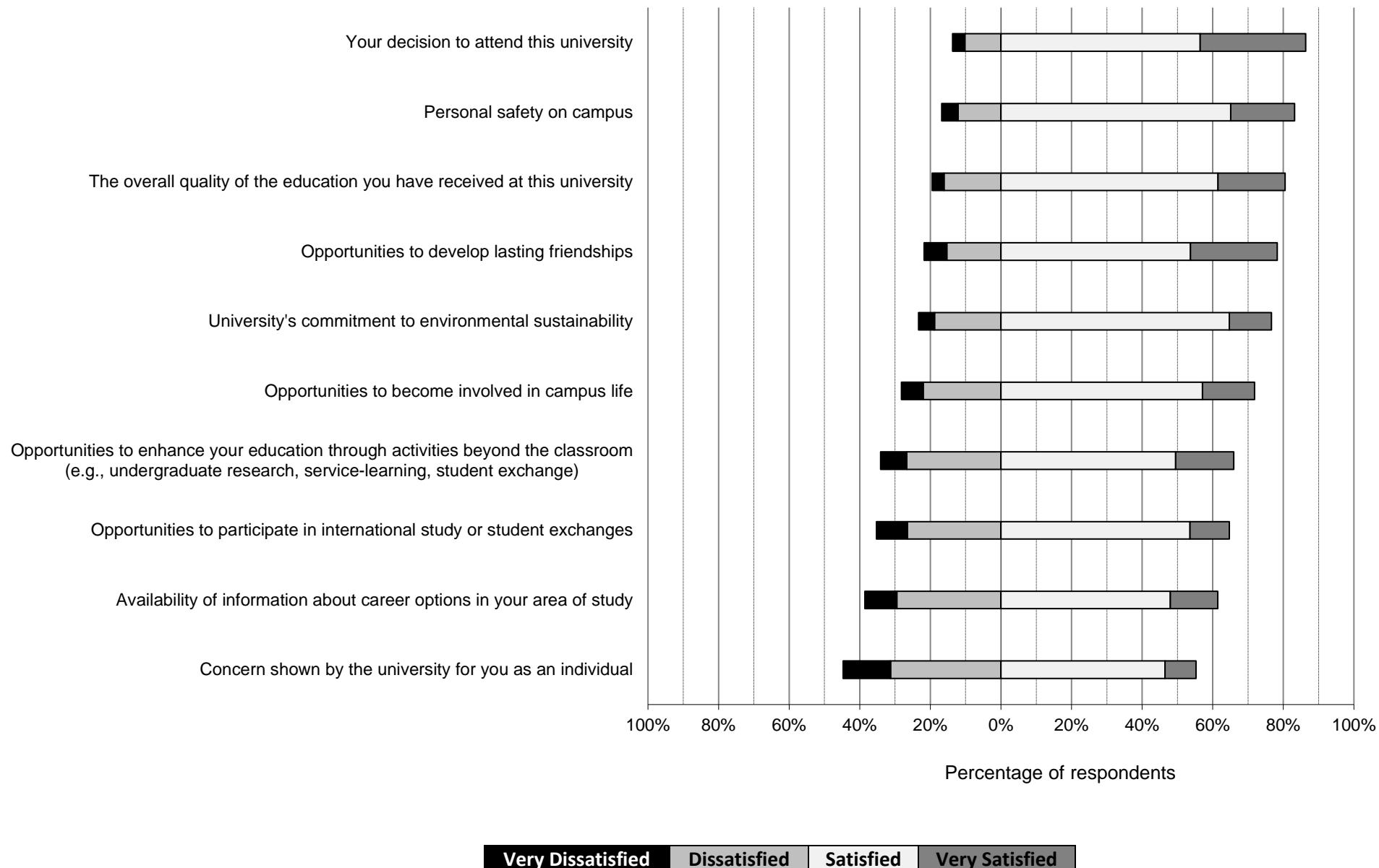
**Figure 1: Ryerson's contribution to the development of skills and personal traits**

**Figure 2: Students' satisfaction with instructors****Most of my professors:**

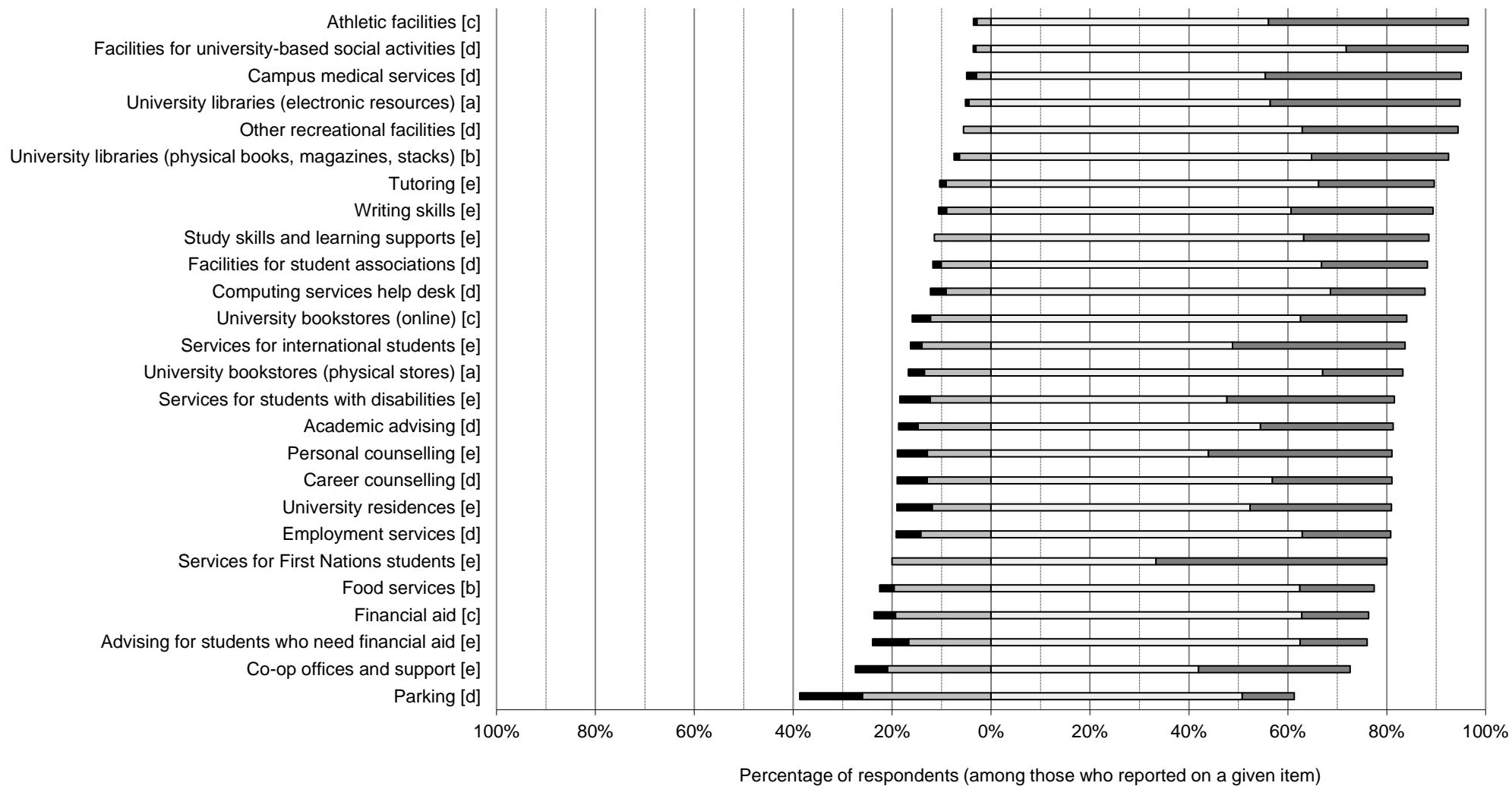
Notes: [a] Fewer than 10% of respondents report on this item.  
100% of respondents report on all other items.

Percentage of respondents (among those who reported on a given item)

**Strongly Disagree      Disagree      Agree      Strongly Agree**

**Figure 3: Satisfaction with University Experience**

Very Dissatisfied      Dissatisfied      Satisfied      Very Satisfied

**Figure 4: Satisfaction with Services**

Notes:

- [a] 63-73% of respondents report on this item.
- [b] 40 - 46% of respondents report on this item.
- [c] 24 - 40% of respondents report on this item.
- [d] 10 - 20% of respondents report on this item.
- [e] Fewer than 10% of respondents report on this item.

Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
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### ***Co-Curricular Activities***

Respondents were asked how often they have attended or participated in various co-curricular activities during the current academic year. Most students report participating in at least one. About a quarter of respondents indicate that they did not undertake any of the activities listed. Findings are summarized in Figure 5.

Campus social events, and public lectures or guest speakers, are each attended at least occasionally by more than half of students. More than a quarter (27 percent) report attendance at home games of university athletic teams.

A greater proportion of students report doing volunteer work or community service off campus (34 percent) than on campus (28 percent). (There is considerable overlap between these groups, as 19 percent of respondents report doing volunteer work both on and off campus.) Students doing volunteer work report contributing an average of 5.8 hours in a typical week. The reported number of hours contributed among those doing on-campus community service/volunteer activities is 4.4 hours for a typical week. Students doing this off campus report contributing 5.3 hours in a typical week, while those volunteering both on and off campus provide an average of 6.8 hours.

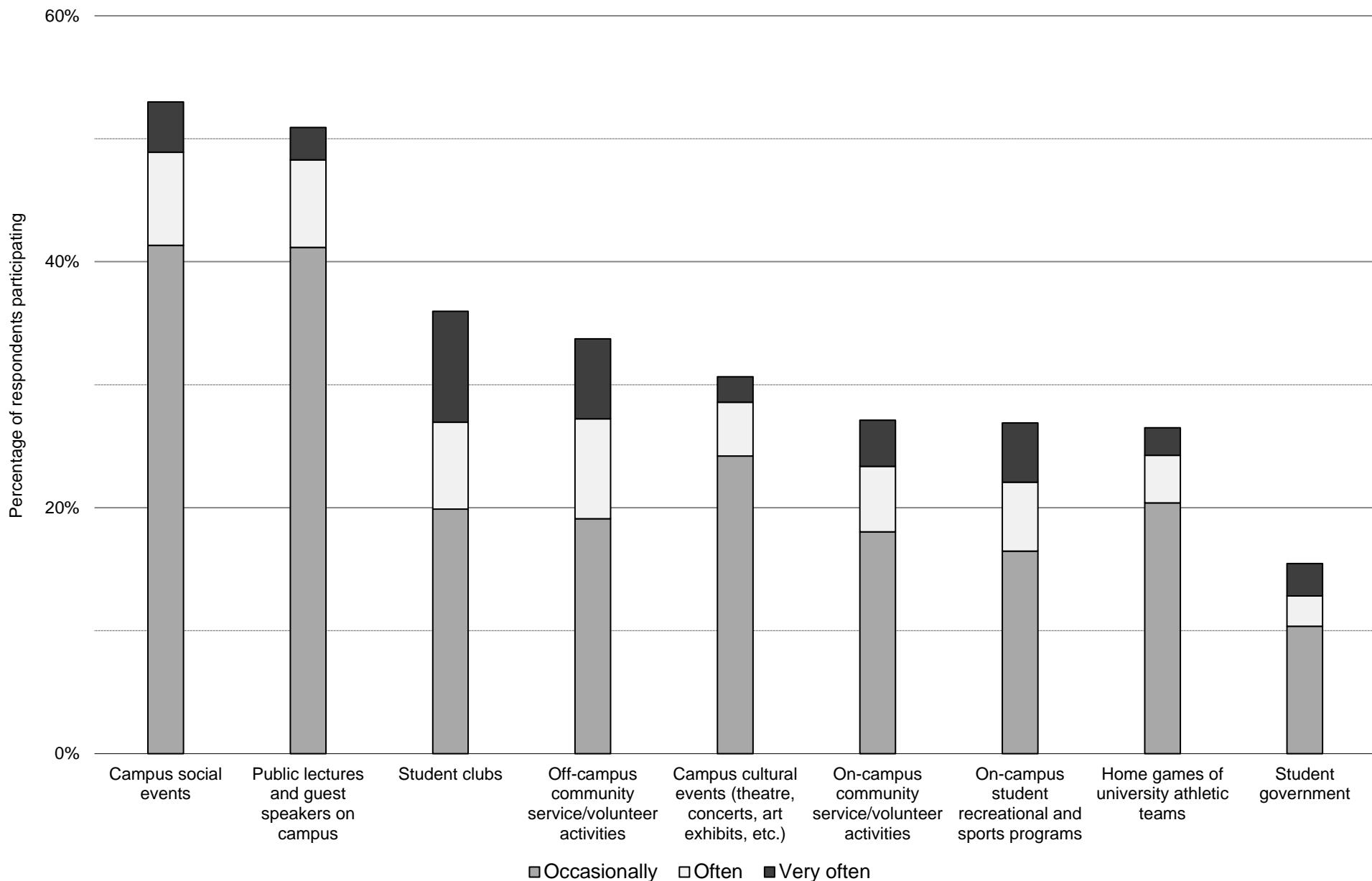
### ***Experiential Learning***

Sixty percent of respondents indicate participating in experiential learning activities as part of their program. A practicum and an unpaid internship are the most common forms of experiential learning reported, with about one in five students reporting that they participated. Table 2 outlines the proportion of respondents who report participation in each form of experiential learning included in the survey.

**Table 2: Participation in experiential learning**

Experiential learning activity	Respondents reporting participation (%)
Practicum	19.8
Unpaid internship	19.4
Work experience	17.8
Paid internship	11.7
Service learning	10.6
Co-op	5.3
<b>Any of the above*</b>	<b>59.8</b>

*\*Respondents could have selected more than one form of experiential learning.*

**Figure 5: Co-Curricular Activities in Current Year**

### ***Employment during the academic year***

66 percent of full-time program graduates and 89 percent of part-time program graduates report that they are employed during the current academic term (excluding program-related work such as a co-op or practicum). Among part-time program students who are employed, most (87 percent) indicate that they typically work 30 hours or more each week. Those in the full-time group are more varied in terms of the number of worked: 26 percent work 10 hours or less; 43 percent work between 11 and 20 hours; 18 percent work between 21 and 30 hours; and 12 percent indicate that they work over 30 hours in a typical week. This is similar to 2012 levels.

24 percent of employed students in the full-time group believe their employment has had a positive impact on their academic performance. 32 percent believe their employment has had no impact, and 44 percent report that their employment has had a negative impact on their academic performance. Among the full-time group, students with employment on campus are much more likely than those with only off-campus employment to report a positive impact on their academic performance.

Among employed students in part-time programs, 31 percent believe that their employment has a positive impact on their academic performance, while 24 percent report no impact and 45 percent report a negative impact.

### ***Education financing and debt***

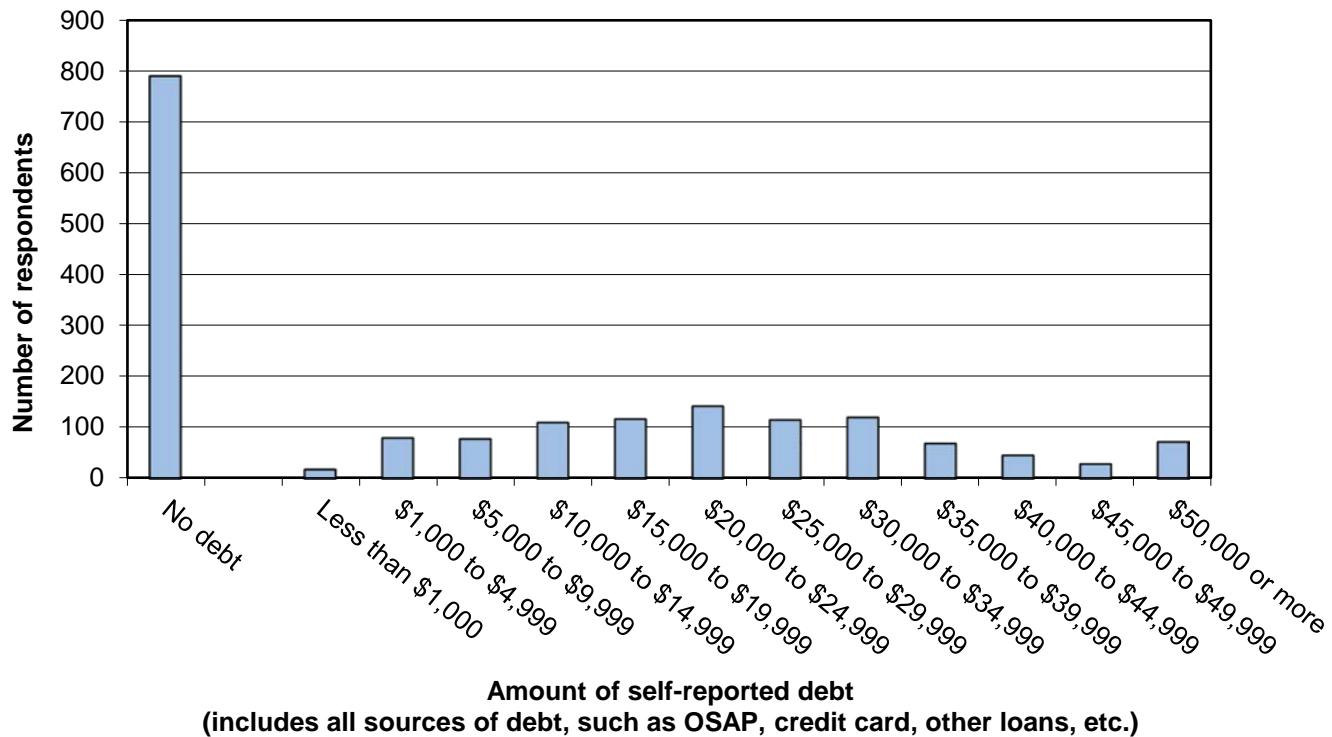
Graduating students were asked for information about the means by which they financed their university education as well as the level of debt that they incurred.

*Sources of funds:* Among students graduating from full-time programs, sources most commonly cited as supplying funds include parents, family or spouse (cited by 59 percent), earnings from current employment (52 percent), earnings from summer work (42 percent) and government loans or grants (51 percent). Earnings from current employment tend to be the predominant source of funds for students from part-time programs.

*Debt:* Fifty-six percent report graduating with debt that they incurred to help finance their university education. The most commonly cited source of debt is government student loans; 87 percent of respondents with debt name this as a source. Loans from parents or family are named by 28 percent of students with debt, and 23 percent report that they have loans from financial institutions.

Average debt levels are relatively stable in comparison to previous years, and Ryerson results are lower than or comparable to the Canadian average. Among those reporting debt at Ryerson, the mean amount owed upon graduation in 2015 is \$24,408, lower than the Canadian average of \$26,819.

Among all graduating students, including those without debt, the mean amount owed in 2015 is \$13,619 at Ryerson, compared to a Canadian average of \$13,331. The distribution of Ryerson graduates by level of debt is provided in Figure 6.

**Figure 6: Reported levels of debt upon graduation**

### *Plans for after graduation*

63 percent of students in full-time programs and 73 percent of those in part-time programs indicate that they plan to undertake some sort of educational activity during their first five years after graduation.

Most respondents have possible careers in mind, and a similar number report knowing well what career options their program could open for them. Not surprisingly, students from part-time programs appear to have a clearer sense of their career path than do students from full-time programs:

- 35 percent of students in *full-time* programs have a specific career in mind, and 39 percent have several possible careers in mind. Almost a quarter indicate that they have some general ideas but need to clarify them.
- 72 percent of students in *full-time* programs know the career options that their program could open for them “very well” or “fairly well.”
- 60 percent of students in *part-time* programs have a specific career in mind, and 28 percent have several possible careers in mind. Only 10 percent indicate that they have some general ideas but need to clarify them.

- 83 percent of students in *part-time* programs know the career options that their program could open for them “very well” or “fairly well.”

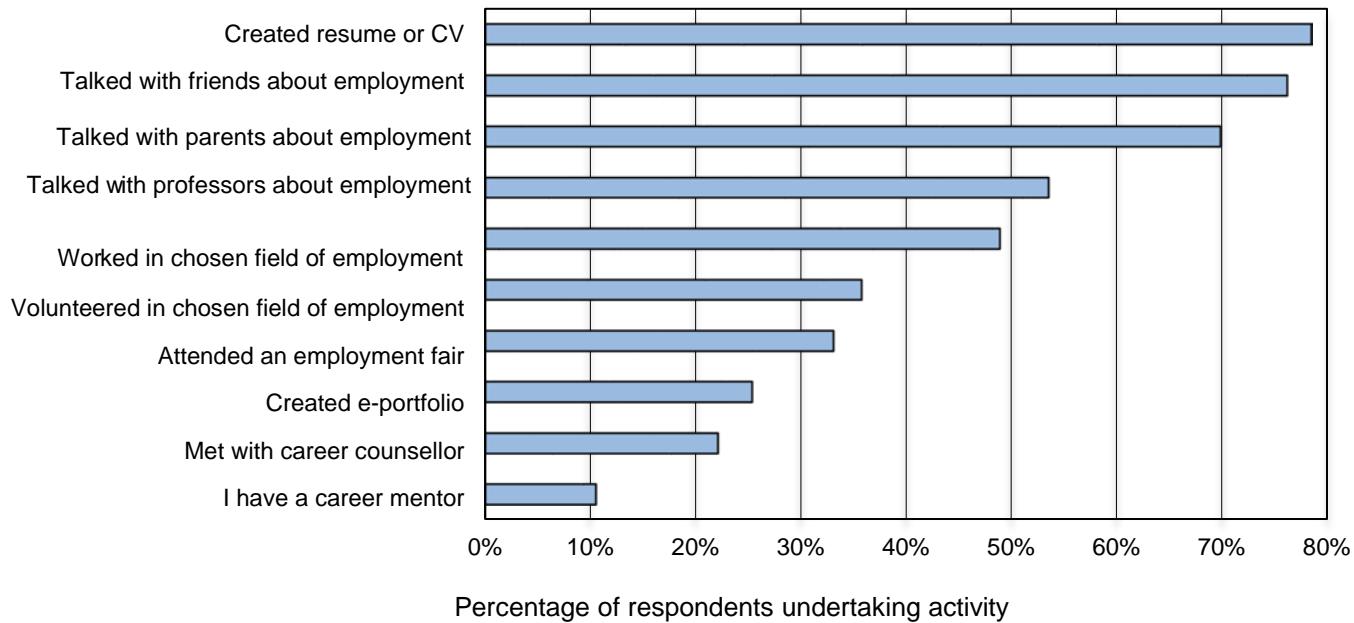
Figure 7 outlines the proportion of respondents who have undertaken various activities to prepare for a career, such as attendance at career fairs or meetings with career counsellors. 79 percent of students indicate that they have developed a resume, and 25 percent have created an e-portfolio. About 1 in 10 have a career mentor, and 54 percent have discussed career plans with professors. Fewer than a quarter of students report meeting with a career counsellor.

At the time of the survey (February/March 2015), 29 percent of students graduating from full-time programs report that they have a job arranged for after graduation. 6 percent indicate that while they do not have a job arranged, they are not seeking work. 70 percent of students graduating from part-time programs report that they have a job arranged, and 3 percent are not seeking work.

Students in full-time programs who have secured a job are less likely to report that those jobs are full-time (63 percent) than are students in part-time programs (87 percent).

Among respondents who have arranged a job, 72 percent from full-time programs and 93 percent from part-time programs report that their job is significantly or moderately related to the knowledge and skills acquired from their studies.

**Figure 7: Career preparation activities**



### ***Personal profile of graduating students***

Graduating students were asked to report on a variety of personal characteristics:

- 61 percent of respondents live with parents, guardians or relatives.
- 71 percent of respondents use public transportation to travel to campus.
- 63 percent of respondents identify as female. (Females account for roughly 60 percent of the actual graduating class of June 2015.)
- The mean age of respondents is 23.8 years. (It is 22.8 years among students from full-time programs and 35.9 years among those from part-time programs.)
- 1 percent of respondents reports being Aboriginal.
- It is estimated that 55 percent of students are members of a visible minority.
- 6 percent of respondents (2 percent of the full-time group and 50 percent of the part-time group) have at least one child.
- 2 percent of respondents indicate that they are international students, and 9 percent report that they are permanent residents of Canada but not citizens.

### ***Academic profile of graduating students***

The distribution of respondents by Faculty, summarized in Table 3, is almost identical to the distribution of the full population of graduates.

While not typical, some students report interrupting 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, 18 percent report interruption of their studies. The most commonly cited reason for the interruption is employment. Among students graduating from part-time programs, 53 percent report an interruption in studies. The most commonly cited reasons among the part-time group are childcare responsibilities and other family issues, and for employment.

Students were also asked to identify issues that may have delayed the completion of their programs. 31 percent of students in full-time programs report experiencing a delay, which is lower than the Canadian average of 36 percent. The reasons for delay that were identified most commonly include availability of required courses and students' grades.

**Table 3: Distribution of respondents by Faculty**

Faculty	Percentage of respondents (%)
Arts	11.3
Communication & Design	13.3
Community Services	29.3
Engineering & Architectural Science	10.2
Science	4.0
Ted Rogers School of Management	31.8
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100.0</b>

***Method***

Over a six-week period beginning in February 2015, an invitation to participate in an online survey and two reminders were emailed to 5,259 graduating students.

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.

# **Graduating Student Survey 2015**

For students graduating from  
undergraduate programs

Highlights of results prepared by the  
University Planning Office