

GRADUATING STUDENTS SURVEY 2003

HIGHLIGHTS OF RESULTS FOR RYERSON UNIVERSITY



RYERSON UNIVERSITY

Introduction

In 2003, under the auspices of the Canadian Undergraduate Survey Consortium, Ryerson undertook a survey of students who had applied to graduate by the end of the academic 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 2003 is 51.3 percent. 1,437 respondents were enrolled in full-time programs, and 170 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. Generally, its results are consistent with those of the 2003 version. A summary of results for that survey 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. It would appear that, relative to other activities, attending home games of university athletic teams, and teaching and lab assistants did not contribute very much to most students' growth and development. Although a relatively low percentage of respondents indicate that attending home games of athletic teams made a contribution, a much higher percentage report that participation in intramural athletic programs sports made a substantial contribution to their growth and development.

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. The information in Figure 2 indicates, for

example, that generally, graduating students believe Ryerson made a substantial contribution to the development of their ability to interact cooperatively in groups and work independently 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 entrepreneurial skills, their ability to deal with personal crises, their appreciation of the Arts or their mathematical skills.

Students' Satisfaction

In the survey, graduating students provide information about their satisfaction with i) professors and ii) the University in general. Results among the 2003 graduates are generally consistent with those found in the 2000 version of the survey.

Satisfaction with professors: 92 percent agree that professors seemed knowledgeable in their field, and 88 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. 28 percent disagree with the statement that most of their professors provided useful feedback on their academic performance. Similarly, 27 percent disagree with the statement that most of their professors are knowledgeable of career opportunities in their field.

Figure 3 below illustrates students' ratings of their professors.

Satisfaction with the University: 89 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.

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. Almost 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. Over a third (38 percent) of students disagree with the statement that "I feel as if I am part of the university."

Figure 4 below illustrates students' ratings of the University.

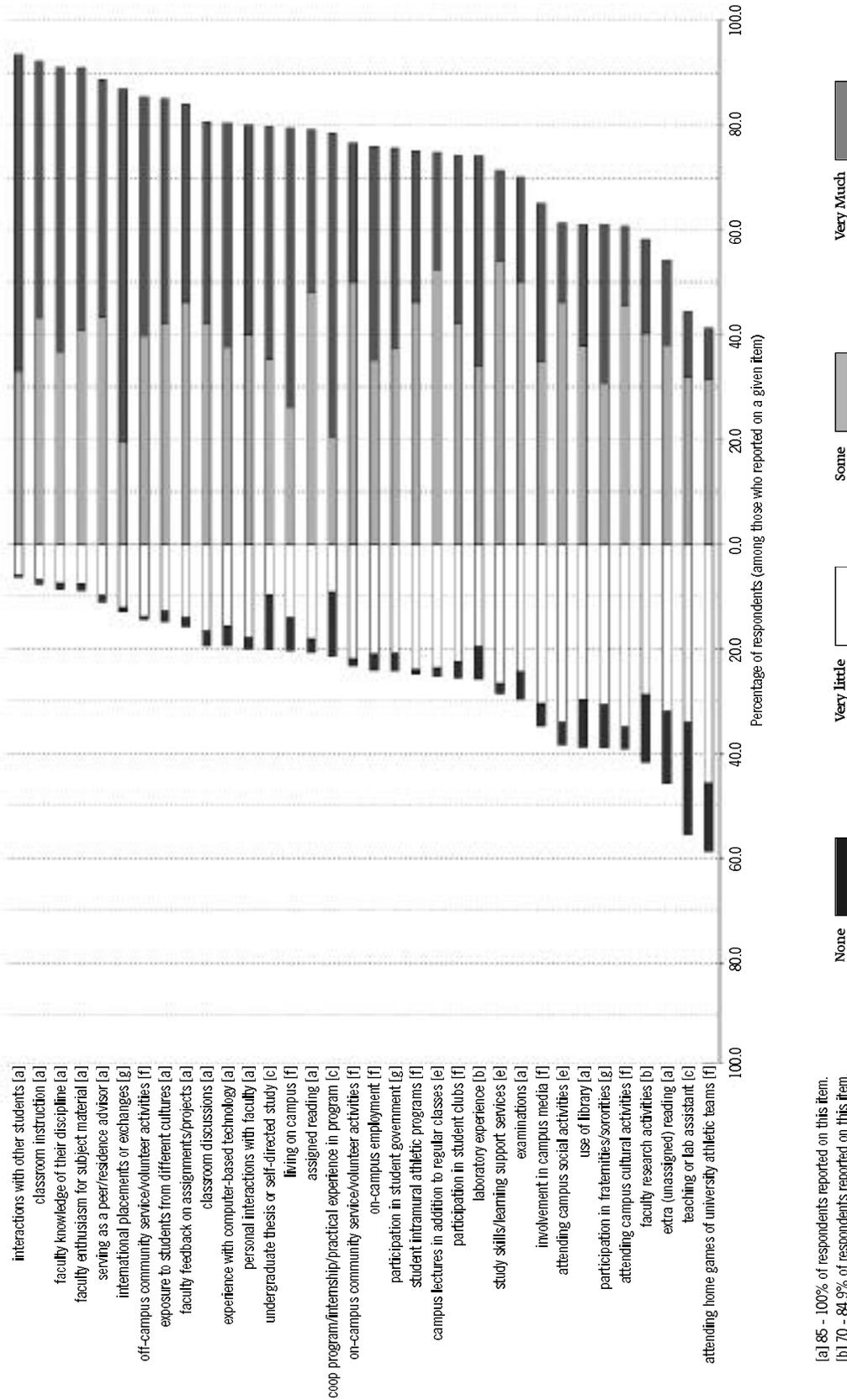
In an attempt to explain variation in students' overall satisfaction, several factors were assessed in terms of their relationship with students' ratings of "the overall quality of education received" at Ryerson.

Among the variables examined, five have a statistically significant, positive relationship with overall satisfaction and one has a significant, negative relationship with satisfaction. They include the extent to which graduating students perceive that:

- professors' teaching was intellectually stimulating,
- professors were knowledgeable in their field,
- professors were well organized in their teaching,
- the University shows concern for students as individuals,
- they (the students) feel that they are part of the university, and
- they (the students) sometimes feel they get the run-around at the university (negative relationship with satisfaction).

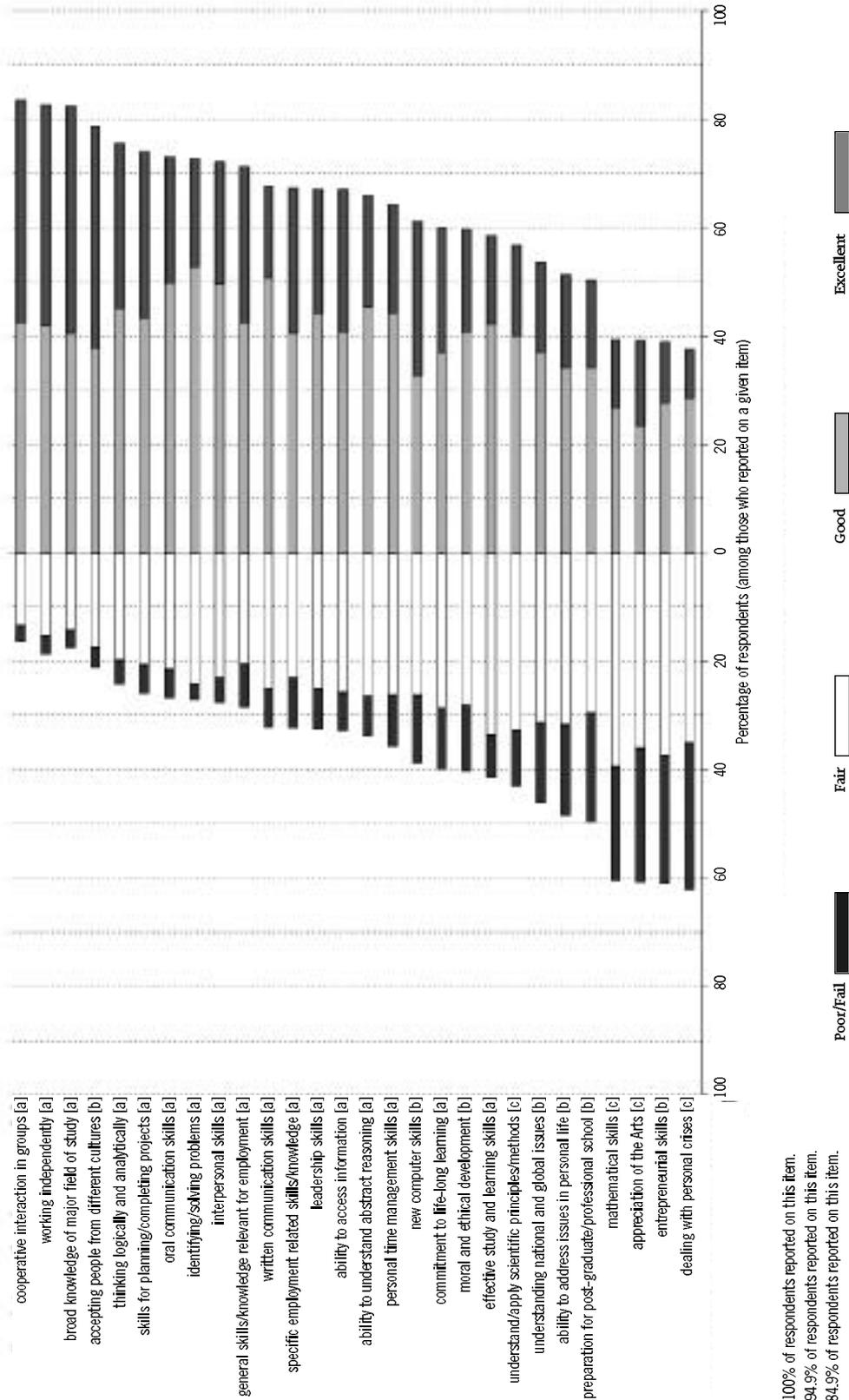
1. Nineteen times out of twenty, the percentages shown throughout this report are estimated to be accurate to within: 1.7 percentage points for full-time and part-time programs combined 1.8 percentage points for full-time programs alone and 4.6 percentage points for part-time programs alone

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



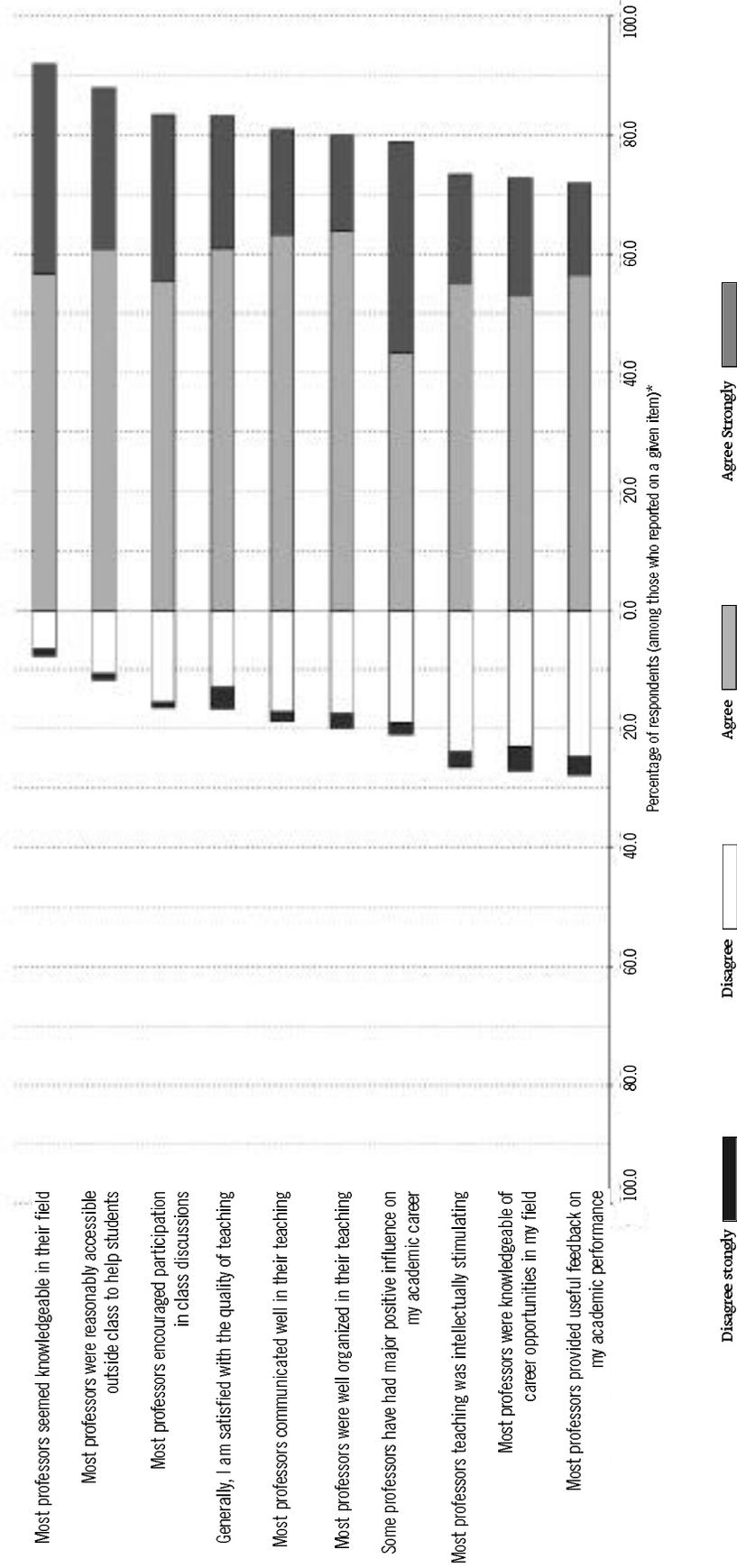
NOTES: [a] 85 - 100% of respondents reported on this item.
 [b] 70 - 84.9% of respondents reported on this item.
 [c] 55 - 69.9% of respondents reported on this item.
 [d] 40 - 54.9% of respondents reported on this item.
 [e] 25 - 39.9% of respondents reported on this item.
 [f] 10 - 24.9% of respondents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

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



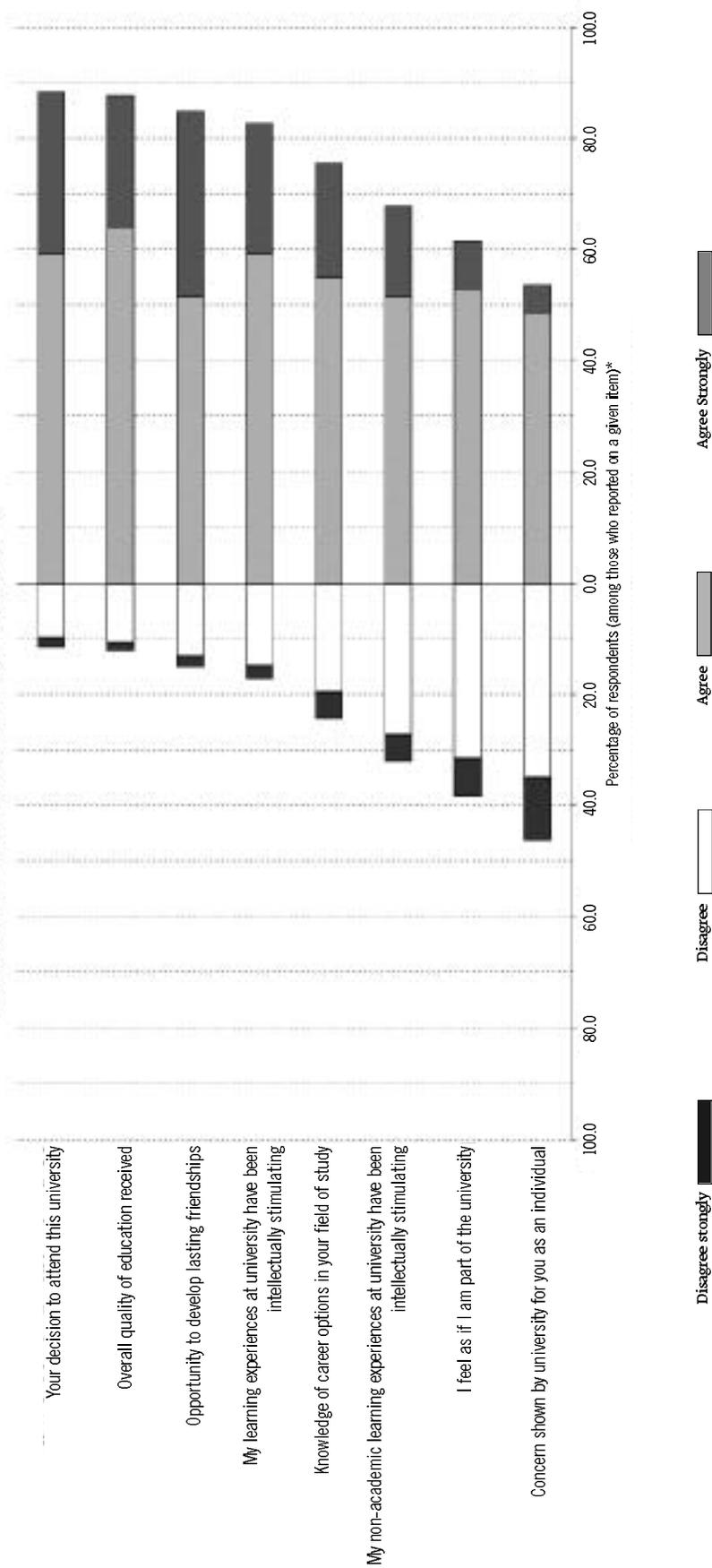
NOTES:
 (a) 95 - 100% of respondents reported on this item.
 (b) 85 - 94.9% of respondents reported on this item.
 (c) 75 - 84.9% of respondents reported on this item.

Figure 3: Students' satisfaction with professors



* Over 98 percent of respondents reported on each item.

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



* Over 98 percent of respondents reported on each item.

Interestingly, students' reported average grade does not have a significant relationship with reported satisfaction with overall quality of education. This is consistent with the finding of no significant relationship in the previous version of the Graduating Student Survey conducted in 2000.

Recommending Ryerson to Others

85.7 percent of students graduating from full-time programs indicate that they would recommend Ryerson to others, and 93.4 percent of those in the part-time group indicate that they would do so.

Among graduating students who would recommend Ryerson, 78 percent indicate that "the program" is one of the reasons; 61 percent identify "relevance for job opportunities" as a reason; and 53 percent identify "the professors" as a reason. Students graduating from part-time programs are similar to those in the full-time group in terms of their reasons for recommending Ryerson to others with one exception: 18.4 percent of those in the full-time group identify "quality of student/campus life" as a reason for recommending Ryerson, something that was identified by only 4.5 percent of students in part-time programs. (When the survey was conducted in 2000, among students who would recommend Ryerson, 15.8 percent of the full-time group and 4.3 percent of the part-time group cited quality of campus life as a reason for recommending Ryerson.)

Some of the most common reasons for not recommending Ryerson to others 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."

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 the largest amount of funds include parents, family or spouse (cited by 31.8 percent) and government loans or bursaries (cited by 22.5 percent). Among students graduating from part-time programs, personal savings as well as earnings from current employment are most commonly cited as the largest source (cited by 25.5 percent each), followed by parents, family or spouse (cited by 19.1 percent).

Debt: Approximately 56 percent report graduating with debt that they incurred to help finance their university education. Among those reporting debt, the average amount owed upon graduation is \$18,905 (median = \$17,000; standard deviation = \$13,385). Among all graduating students, the average debt is \$10,552 (median = \$4,275; standard deviation = \$13,717).

The level of debt reported by students in this survey is somewhat lower than that reported by students graduating in 2000; however, the difference is not statistically significant. In 2000, the average amount among those reporting debt was \$19,546 and the average debt across all students was \$11,550.

Students graduating from full-time programs are more likely than those from part-time programs to report that they have debt. The proportions reporting that they have debt are 58.6 percent and 32.1 percent respectively. Among those who report debt, the average level of debt is \$19,211 among full-time program graduates and \$14,129 among the part-time group. Figure 6, below outlines the distribution of debt among respondents.

Employment During the Academic Year

Approximately two-thirds of full-time program graduates and 85 percent of part-time program graduates report that they are employed during the current academic term (excluding co-op related work). Most (86.2 percent) of those in the part-time group indicate that on average, they work 30 hours or more each week. Those in the full-time group are more varied in terms of the number of hours they work on a weekly basis: 3.5 percent work fewer than 5 hours; about a third work between 5 and 14.9 hours; 39 percent work between 15 and 24.9 hours; and a quarter work 30 hours or more.

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. 38 percent 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.

Among the full-time program group, there is a statistically significant, moderate relationship between the number of hours worked per week and students' perception of the extent to which employment has a negative impact on their academic performance. This relationship was not found in the part-time group.

Plans for Further Education

Approximately 30 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. Those graduating from part-time programs appear more likely to undertake additional studies following graduation than are students from the full-time group. Approximately 48 percent of students graduating from part-time programs report that they plan to undertake some sort of educational activity in the first year following graduation.

Employment After Graduation

At the time of the survey (late winter and early spring), 65 percent of respondents from the full-time group and 81 percent from the part-time group have decided on a career field or specific occupation. 22 percent of students graduating from full-time programs report that they have a full-time job arranged for after graduation. About 7 percent

Figure 5: Percentage of respondents identifying reasons for recommending or not recommending Ryerson to others (n=1,571)

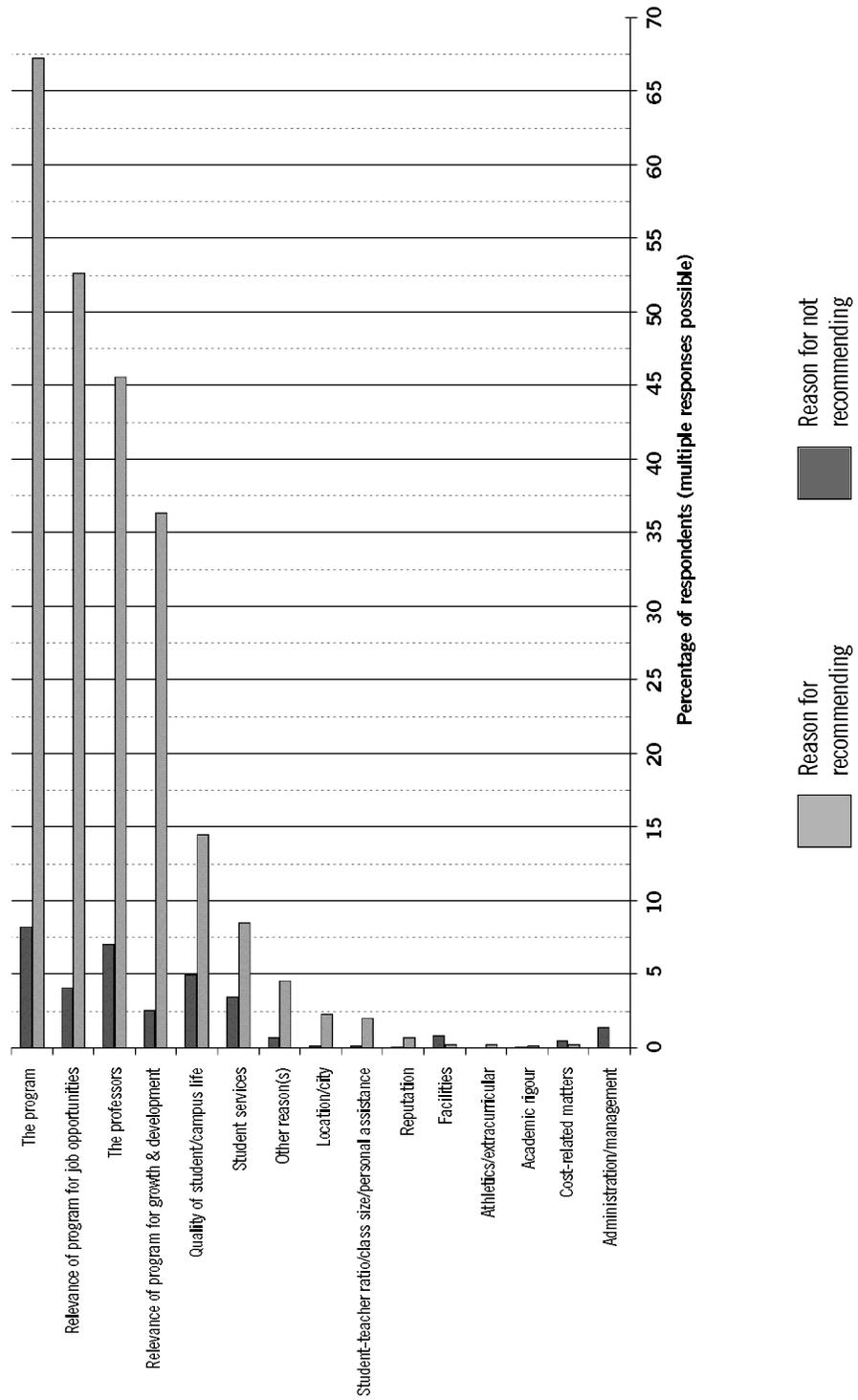
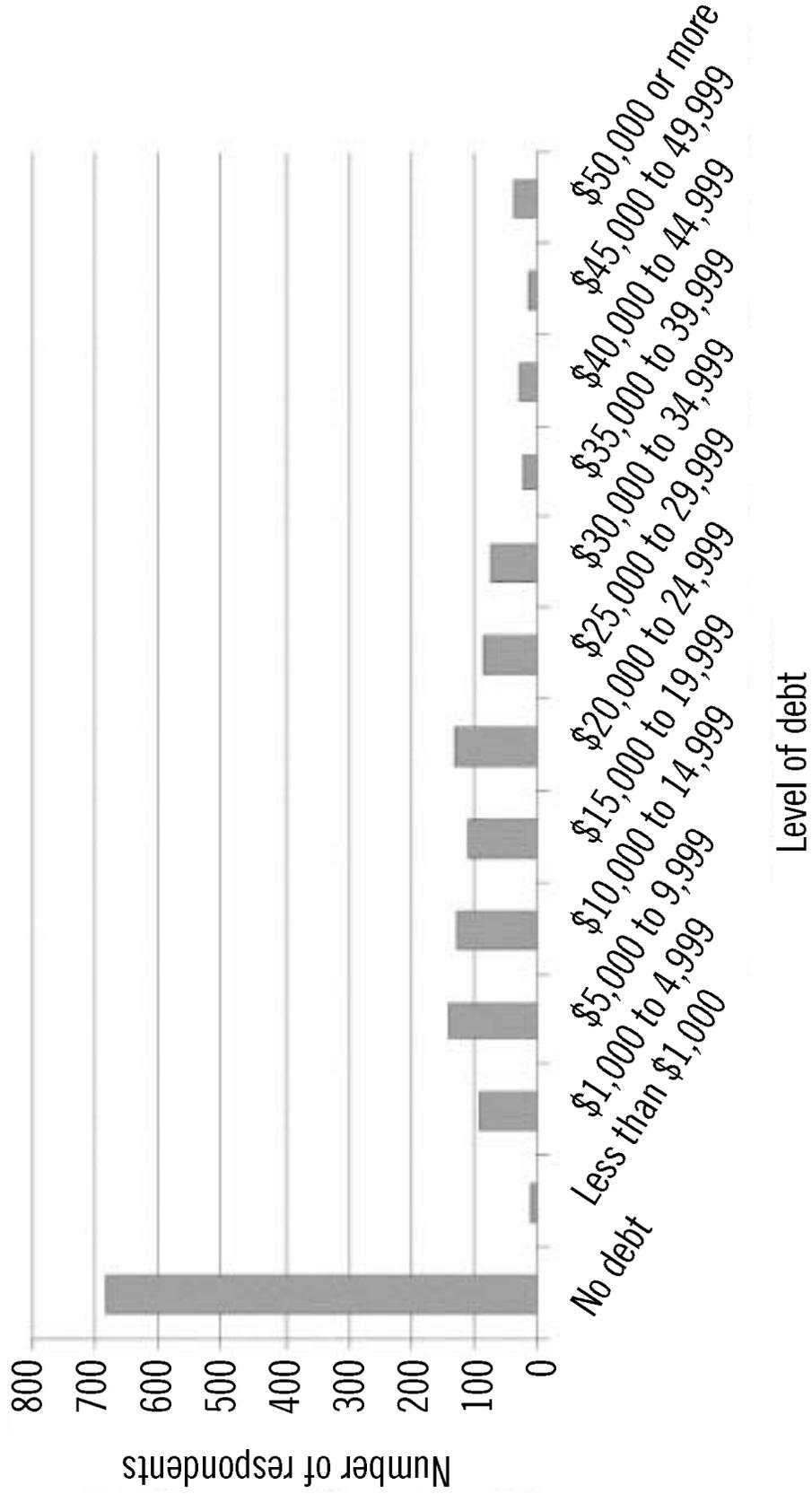


Figure 6: Reported levels of debt upon graduation (n=1,548)



indicate that while they do not have a job arranged, they are not seeking work. Over 65 percent of students graduating from part-time programs report that they have a full-time job arranged, and 4 percent are not seeking work.

A quarter of respondents in the full-time group and 54 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. With this information, a personal profile of respondents can be constructed.

- The majority of respondents (91.6 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.)
- Slightly more than a third of graduating students indicate that they are a member of a visible minority.
- 3.9 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 (5 percent of the full-time group and 52 percent of the part-time group) has at least one child.
- 1.8 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	Ryerson Total
GENDER			
Male	40.0%	18.8%	37.8%
Female	60.0%	81.2%	62.2%
AGE			
Median	23.0 years	37.0 years	23.0 years
Mean	24.5 years	37.2 years	25.8 years
Standard deviation	4.1 years	8.3 years	6.1 years

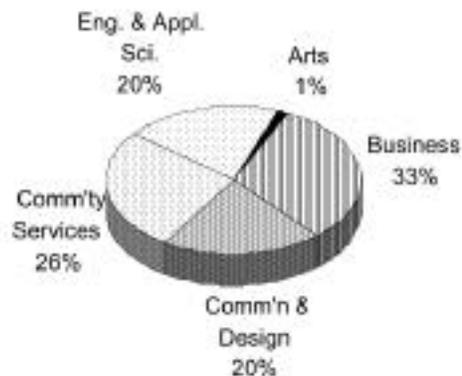
Academic Profile of Graduating Students

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.

1,437 respondents (89.4 percent) were enrolled in full-time programs, and 170 (10.6 percent) were enrolled in part-time programs. The distribution of respondents by Faculty, summarized in Figure 7 above, roughly approximates the distribution of the full population of

graduates. Graduates from the Faculty of Community Services are somewhat overrepresented in the sample, as the response rate among this group (58.1 percent) is higher than the average response rate for the survey (51.3 percent). Conversely, graduates from the Faculty of Communication and Design and Faculty of Engineering and Applied Science are somewhat underrepresented, as the response rates for these groups (47.2 percent and 46.1 percent respectively) are lower than the average rate.

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



Not surprisingly, students graduating from part-time programs are significantly more likely than those in full-time programs to have transferred degree credits from another institution. 53 percent of those in part-time programs indicate that they transferred credits from another university or college, while 31 percent of those in full-time programs report doing so.

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, 13.2 percent report interruption of their studies. The most commonly cited reasons for the interruption are employment, being required to withdraw by the University, and "other" unspecified reasons. Among students graduating from part-time programs, 52.4 percent report an interruption in studies. The most commonly cited reasons for interruption among the part-time group are different from those for the full-time graduates: they most commonly include child-care responsibilities and other family reasons, employment, and "other" unspecified reasons.



Method

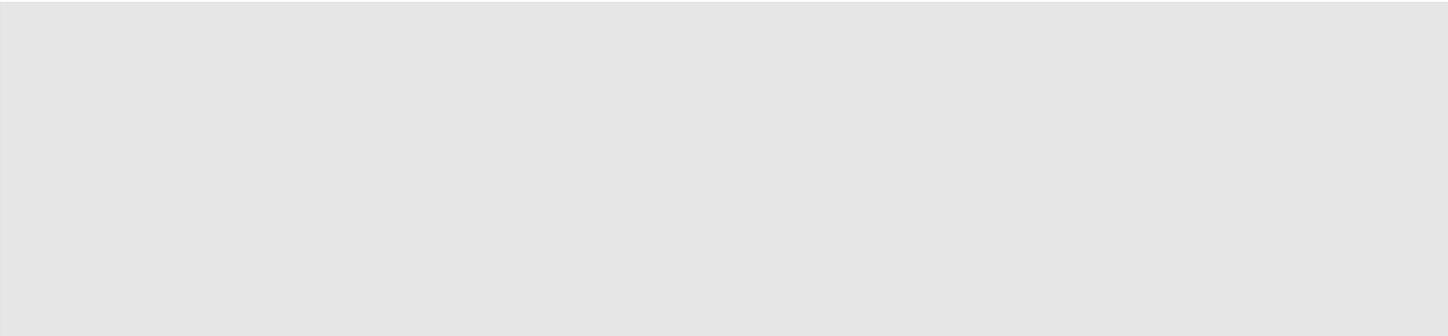
Over a six-week period beginning in February 2003, questionnaires were mailed to the 3,135 students who applied for June 2003 graduation. Strengths of the survey include the response rate of 51.3 percent, which is relatively high for a mail-out format. Moreover, because the survey was sent to the full 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.

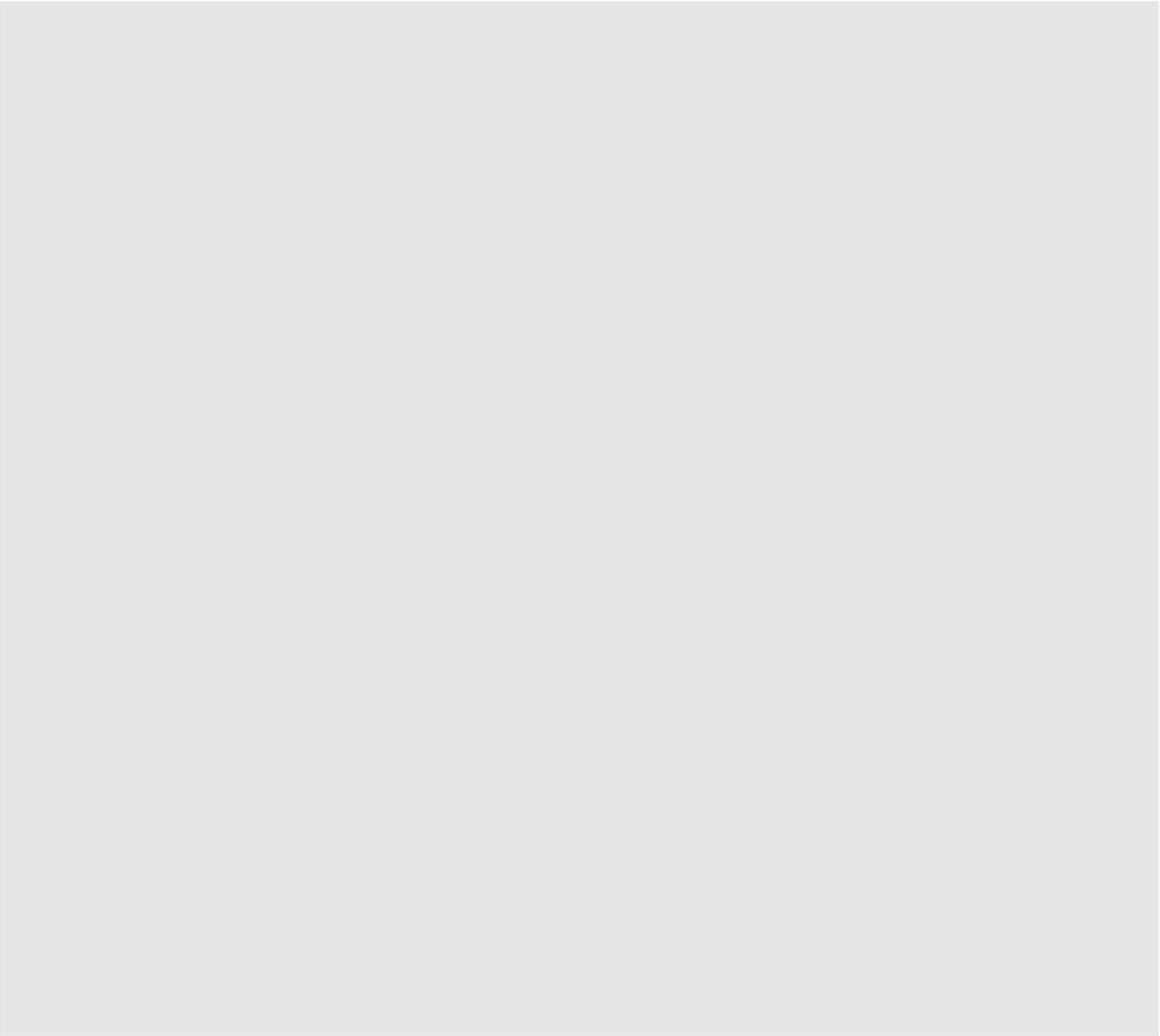
Limitations of the survey relate mainly to ambiguity surrounding respondents' interpretation of certain questions. Given that the questionnaire was developed for use across a number of universities, there may have been variation in respondents' understanding of questions where broad concepts such as "student services" or "academic advisors" are used.

The summary of highlights outlined above is one part of the available information relating to the Graduating Student Survey 2003. Frequency tables outlining responses to each item in the questionnaire separately for full-time and part-time programs are also available.



**For further information about the
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