

**RYERSON
UNIVERSITY**

NATIONAL SURVEY OF STUDENT ENGAGEMENT 2005

HIGHLIGHTS OF RESULTS

PREPARED BY THE UNIVERSITY PLANNING OFFICE



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Introduction

How can a university determine and demonstrate that it is offering a high quality education to its students? This question has been studied extensively and much of the research indicates that a key to achieving excellent student learning outcomes is the extent to which students are active rather than passive participants in their education.¹ Universities that foster an active learning environment where students are highly engaged in educational activities both inside and outside the classroom are seen by the research as providing a higher quality postsecondary experience than those that do not.

During the late 1990's, the Indiana University Center for Postsecondary Research developed a questionnaire, known as the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), that measures the extent to which students are actively engaged in learning. In its six years, NSSE has become progressively more widely adopted as an important measurement and decision-making tool for assessing the student engagement dimension of education quality.

NSSE is more than a survey of student satisfaction. Because of its distinctive focus on what students actually *do*, NSSE is a powerful tool for assessing a university's contribution to students' learning — it gives faculty, staff and students a variety of ways to think about the student experience. At many universities, NSSE has served as a centerpiece in sustained efforts to improve the student experience. It enables progress to be measured by monitoring changes in survey results over time and providing comparative data across institutions. The importance of NSSE is confirmed by our current policy environment, where universities across Ontario are required to undertake the survey periodically beginning in 2006. NSSE is also an important part of the work of the President's Commission on Student Engagement and Experience.

In 2005, over five hundred American universities and four-year colleges participated in NSSE together with ten Canadian universities. This was the first year that Ryerson participated in the survey. In Winter 2005, 2,000 first-year and 2,000 fourth-year Ryerson students were contacted by email and asked to complete the survey online. The total sample of 1,614 students corresponds to an overall response rate of 40.9 percent. The response rate for students in first year (40.7 percent) is similar to that for students in fourth year (41.1 percent). The sample size and response rate contribute to a relatively low estimate of statistical error.²

This report provides an overview of Ryerson's NSSE results for 2005. It is organized into four major sections: First, it examines overall benchmark summary scores that have been created by the Indiana University Center for Postsecondary Research. It then looks at the more detailed results for the individual survey questions from which the benchmarks are constructed. Next, the report discusses a number of additional questions that are not part of the benchmarks but instead relate to: integrative learning, the learning environment, skills development, students' overall experience and demographic characteristics. The final section focuses on the relationship between the level of student engagement and student demographics including gender, level of parental education and commuting time to campus.

¹ Adrianna J. Kezar (2006) "The Impact of Institutional Size on Student Engagement", Vol. 43: No. 1, Article 6, pp. 87-91 provides a brief synopsis (publications.naspa.org/naspajournal/vol43/iss1/art6).

² Nineteen times out of twenty, the percentages shown throughout this report are estimated to be accurate to within: 2.2 percentage points for first-year and fourth-year students combined, 3.1 percentage points for first-year students alone, and 3.1 percentage points for fourth-year students alone.

BENCHMARK SUMMARY SCORES AND COMPARISONS

The Indiana Center attempts to summarize the large amount of information found within the survey's 120 questions by creating five benchmarks. These were developed by using a statistical technique known as principal components analysis to group the survey questions in a meaningful way. The benchmarks can be thought of as categories, subtypes or aspects of student engagement. The benchmarks include:

- **Level of Academic Challenge**, which measures the extent to which the University emphasizes academic performance and sets high expectations for students
- **Active and Collaborative Learning**, which measures the extent to which the University encourages students to be active participants in their learning and to work with others
- **Student-Faculty Interaction**, which measures the extent to which the University fosters opportunities for faculty to serve as mentors and guides both inside and outside of class
- **Enriching Educational Experiences**, which measures the extent to which the University offers a spectrum of opportunities to enhance student learning, ranging from internships to co-curricular activities
- **Supportive Campus Environment**, which measures the extent to which the University provides academic and social support through positive working and social relationships with other students, faculty and staff

A composite score for each benchmark is calculated that averages each student's answers to the questions related to that benchmark. The scores have become a popular method of presenting the extent to which students at a particular institution are engaged compared with students elsewhere. Table 1 provides a summary of Ryerson's benchmark scores compared with those of the Canadian Consortium, and U.S. Master's institutions as defined using the Carnegie Classification.³ (U.S. Master's institutions are used as a comparator for Ryerson because they have a wide range of baccalaureate programs and also award Master's degrees. There are 225 institutions in the U.S. Master's group.) Differences that are greater than those attributable to chance alone are shown in **boldface**.

Table 1: Comparison of benchmark summary scores*

	1 st Year			4 th Year		
	Ryerson	Canadian Consortium	U.S. Master's	Ryerson	Canadian Consortium	U.S. Master's
Level of Academic Challenge	51.3	48.7 ▼	51.6	54.2	53.8	52.6 ▼
Active & Collaborative Learning	40.9	34.5 ▼	42.5	50.0	44.8 ▼	52.2 ▲
Student-Faculty Interaction	24.8	23.3	33.9 ▲	31.4	32.0	43.6 ▲
Enriching Educational Experiences	26.3	23.4 ▼	26.7	35.4	32.7 ▼	40.4 ▲
Supportive Campus Environment	55.8	52.5 ▼	60.1 ▲	49.6	49.9	58.0 ▲

*Statistically significant differences are shown in **boldface**; the arrows designate whether the comparator group benchmark summary score is higher ▲ or lower ▼ than Ryerson's score. For example, in the case of Level of Academic Challenge 1st Year: On a scale of 0 to 100, Ryerson scores 51.3, and the Canadian Consortium's score of 48.7 is sufficiently lower than Ryerson's for the difference to be statistically significant. The U.S. Master's score of 51.6 is so close to Ryerson's score that the difference may be the result of chance alone.

³ The 2005 Canadian Consortium members are: Acadia, Carleton, New Brunswick - Fredericton, Ottawa, Regina, Ryerson, Windsor, York. The Indiana Center excludes Ryerson when calculating benchmark scores for the Consortium. Two additional universities in Canada undertook the survey but were not part of the Consortium.

Broadly speaking, Ryerson is similar to members of the Canadian Consortium but lags behind the scores achieved by U.S. Master's institutions, particularly in fourth year.⁴ Ryerson tends to exceed universities in the Canadian Consortium in terms of active and collaborative learning and enriching educational experiences. In 2005, only eight universities participated in the Canadian Consortium. Ryerson's relative standing in future years will be determined in part by the mix of institutions that participate. In 2006, Ryerson will participate in NSSE along with all Ontario universities and survey results will be provided at the provincial level as well as for Ryerson specifically.

BEHIND THE BENCHMARKS

Level of Academic Challenge

Universities can enhance students' academic achievement by emphasizing the importance of academic effort and setting high expectations for student performance. The Level of Academic Challenge benchmark is comprised of six questions that focus on the emphasis of students' coursework and the extent to which students believe they have worked harder than they once thought they could, as well as questions about the volume of academic work students complete. In 2005, Ryerson exceeds other Canadian participants in this area with respect to first-year students, and Ryerson exceeds the U.S. Master's group at the year-four level. Results are summarized in Figure 1.

Approximately half of first-year students report that they often or very often worked harder than they thought they could to meet an instructor's expectations, and 57 percent of fourth-year students reported similarly. Students in first year are more likely than those in fourth year to report doing large amounts of reading: 32 percent of first-year students say that during the current academic year, they have completed 11 or more assigned textbooks, books or book-length packs of course readings. The figure for fourth-year students is 20 percent.

Over half of respondents report that, often or very often, they have worked harder than they thought they could in order to meet an instructor's expectations.

Active and Collaborative Learning

Among the premises underlying NSSE is the argument 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."⁵ The Active and Collaborative Learning benchmark is comprised of seven survey questions that focus on the extent to which students' academic work involves others. First-year students at Ryerson provide higher scores on this benchmark than do their Canadian comparators. Among fourth-year students, Ryerson is also higher than the Canadian Consortium, but lower than the U.S. Master's group. Results are outlined in Figure 2.

⁴ The benchmarks are, however, problematic because even though the data for individual questions are reported by students using a Likert scale (e.g., strongly disagree, disagree, agree, agree strongly), NSSE converts these to numeric values (e.g., 0, 33, 66, 99) and calculates average scores. Statisticians typically would argue that this is inappropriate because these average scores fall in between the values from which a student can actually select.

⁵ Indiana University Center for Postsecondary Research, "2005 Institutional Benchmark Report," Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Center for Postsecondary Research, 2005, p. 3.

Figure 1: Level of Academic Challenge

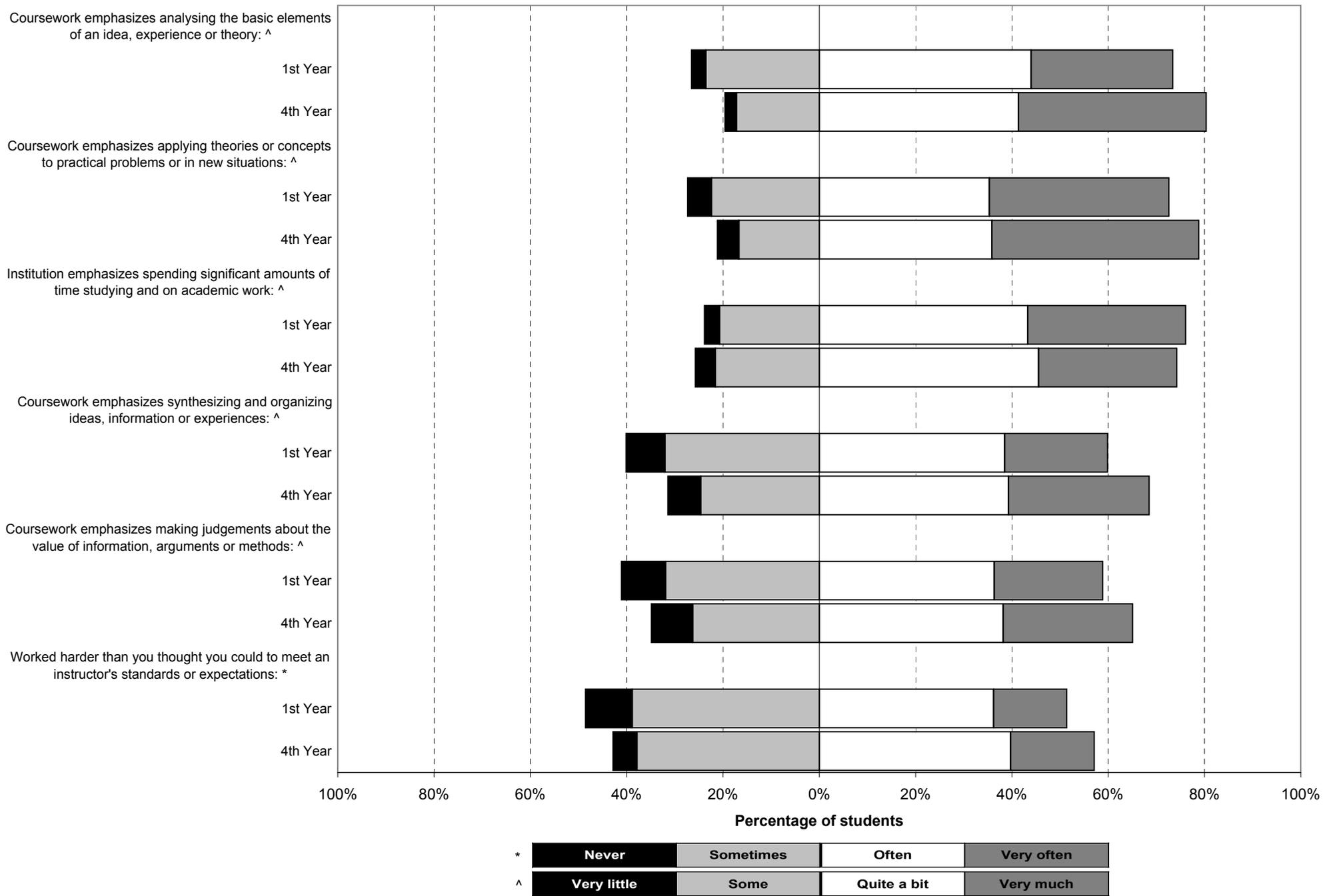
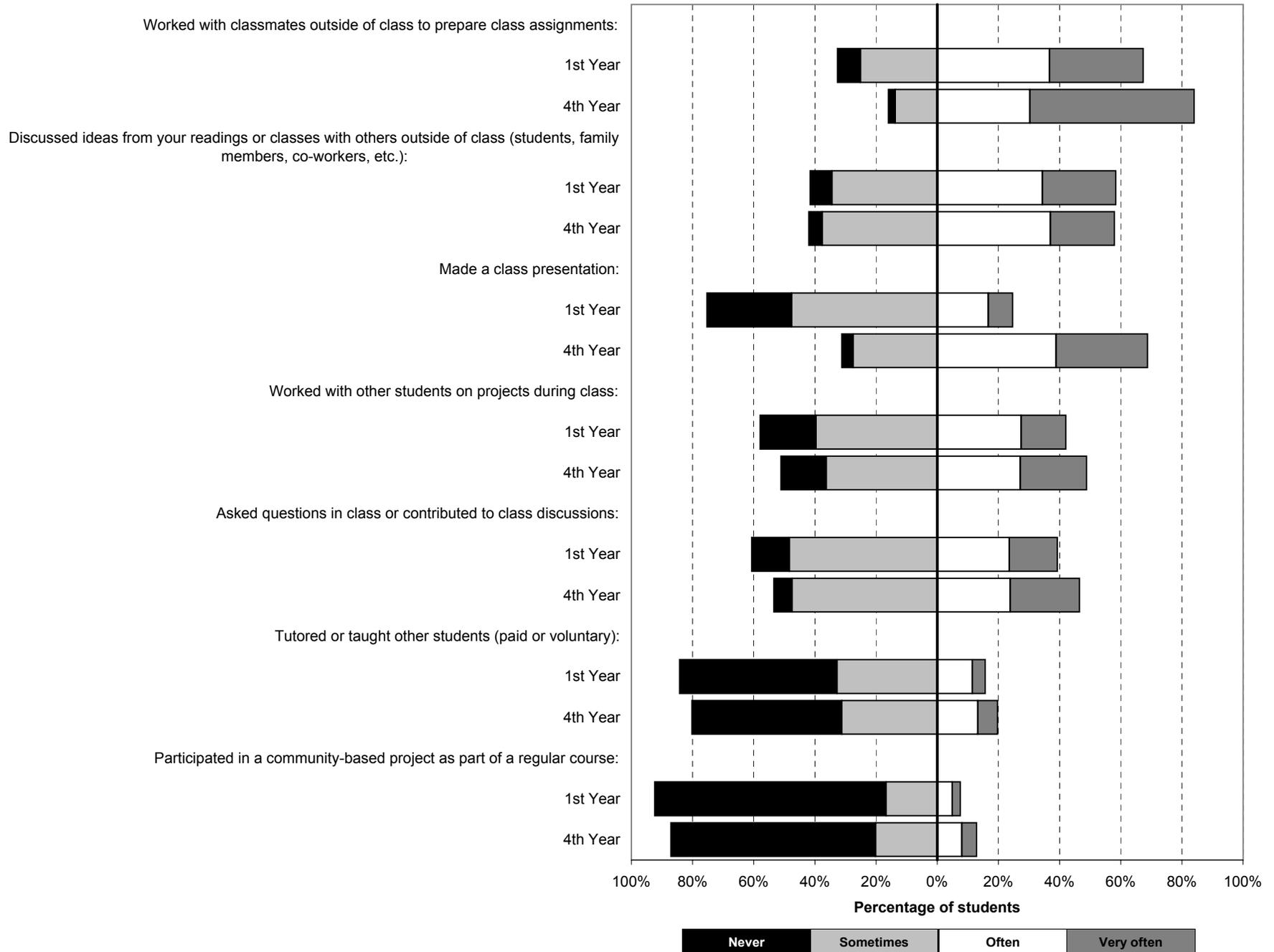


Figure 2: Active and Collaborative Learning



The most common form of active and collaborative learning reported is working with classmates outside of class to prepare assignments. Sixty-eight percent of first-year students and 84 percent of fourth-year students report doing this often or very often. With respect to active and collaborative learning, the greatest difference between first- and fourth-year students is the frequency with which they make class presentations. While a quarter of first-year students report doing this often or very often, 69 percent of students in fourth year report doing so.

Student-Faculty Interaction

Interaction with faculty members allows students to learn firsthand how “experts” think about and solve problems. The Student-Faculty Interaction benchmark is comprised of six survey questions that assess the frequency with which students engage in discussions with faculty and work with faculty on projects. In first year as well as fourth year, both Ryerson and the Canadian Consortium are well below the U.S. Master’s average score for Student-Faculty Interaction. Results are summarized in Figure 3.

Students report that the most common form of student-faculty interaction is faculty feedback on academic performance. 46% of students say they receive prompt feedback often or very often.

The most common form of student-faculty interaction reported is faculty feedback on students’ academic performance. Forty-six percent of respondents indicate that they receive prompt feedback often or very often. Less common are discussing ideas from readings or classes with faculty members outside of class (17 percent of students indicate that they do this often or very often) and working with faculty members on activities other than coursework such as committees, orientation or student life activities. Ten percent of respondents report doing this often or very often.

Enriching Educational Experiences

The Enriching Educational Experiences benchmark incorporates a broad set of activities that can be characterized as complementary to the basic academic program. These include experiences relating to diversity, technology, internships, community service and capstone courses, as well as participation in co-curricular activities. In 2005, first-year students at Ryerson provide higher scores on this benchmark than do their Canadian comparators. Among fourth-year students, Ryerson is also higher than the Canadian Consortium, but lower than the U.S. Master’s group. Results are summarized in Figure 4.

A number of questions ask students whether they plan to participate in a given activity or whether they have already done so. Slightly more than three-quarters of respondents indicate that they have done or plan to engage in a practicum, internship, field experience, co-op experience or clinical assignment. Approximately two-thirds of students have done, or plan to do, community service or volunteer work. Not surprisingly, a higher proportion of fourth-year than first-year students report that they have actually *done* these various activities, whereas first-year students are more likely to indicate *plans* to do them.

The Enriching Educational Experiences benchmark also includes items relating to diversity among students. Over 60 percent of respondents indicate that they have serious conversations with students of a different race or ethnicity than their own often or very often. When asked

Figure 3: Student-Faculty Interaction

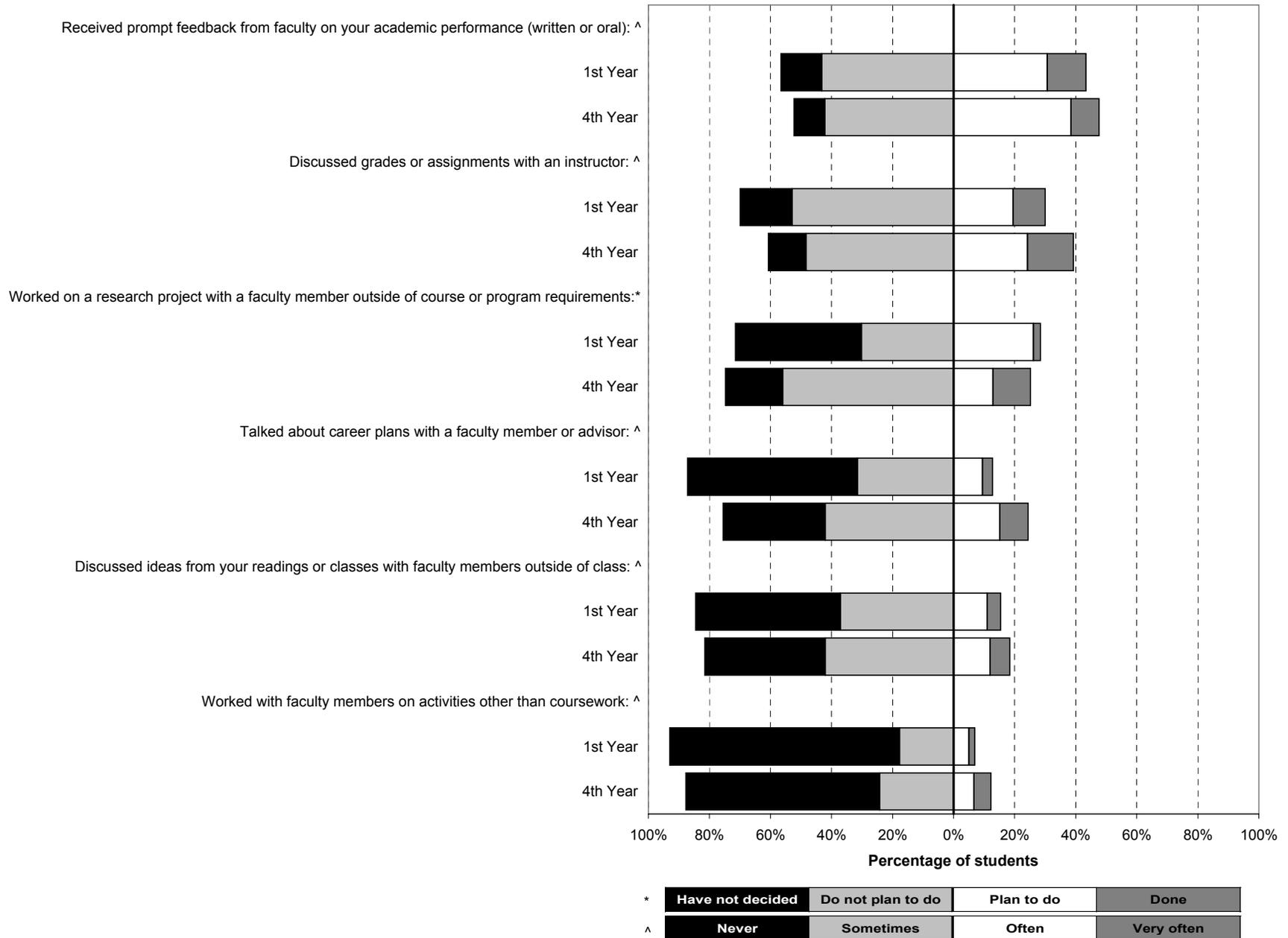


Figure 4: Enriching Educational Experiences

Practicum, internship, field experience, co-op experience, or clinical assignment:

1st Year

4th Year

Community service or volunteer work:

1st Year

4th Year

Culminating senior experience:

1st Year

4th Year

Foreign language coursework:

1st Year

4th Year

Study abroad:

1st Year

4th Year

Independent study or self-designed major:

1st Year

4th Year

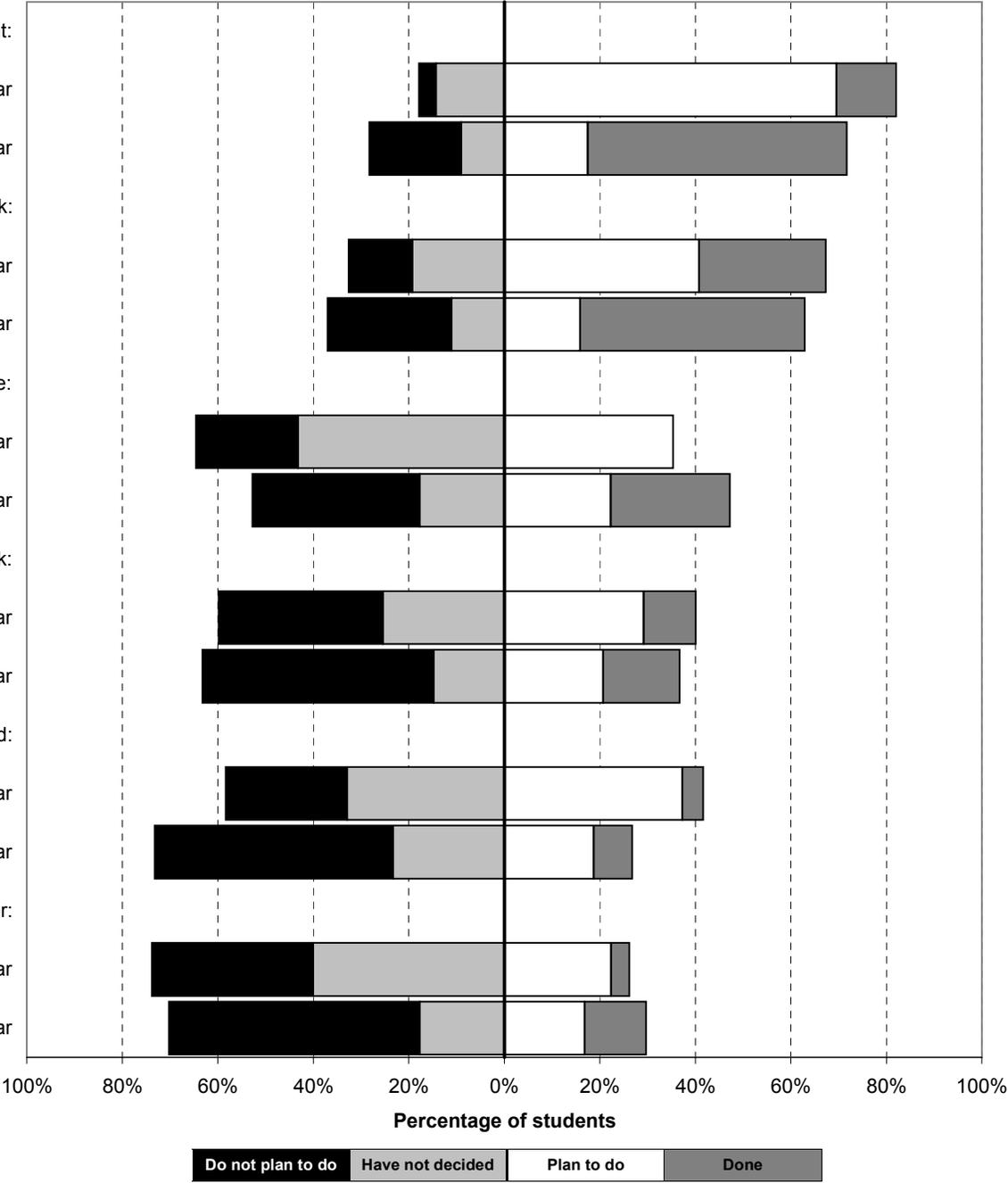
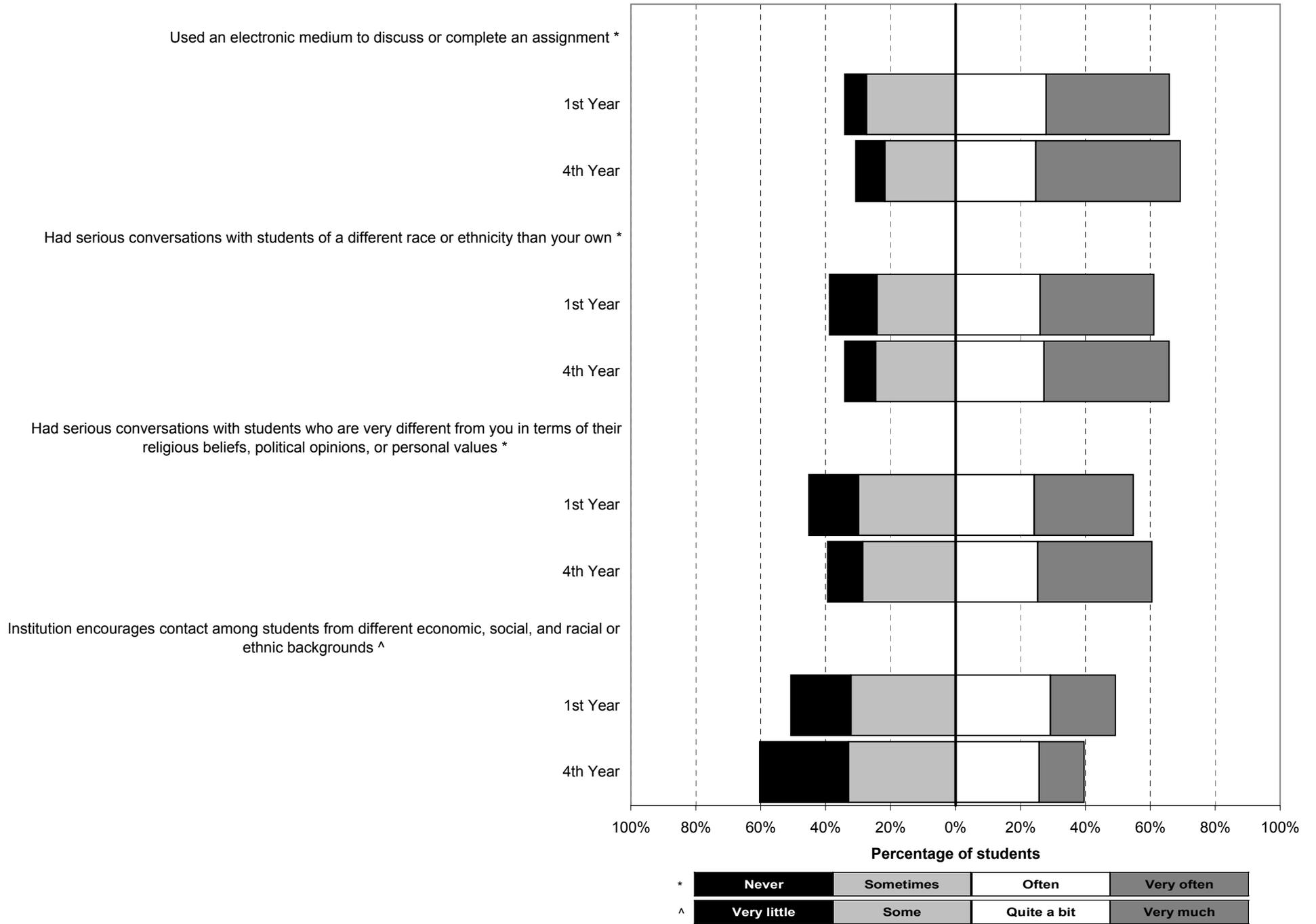
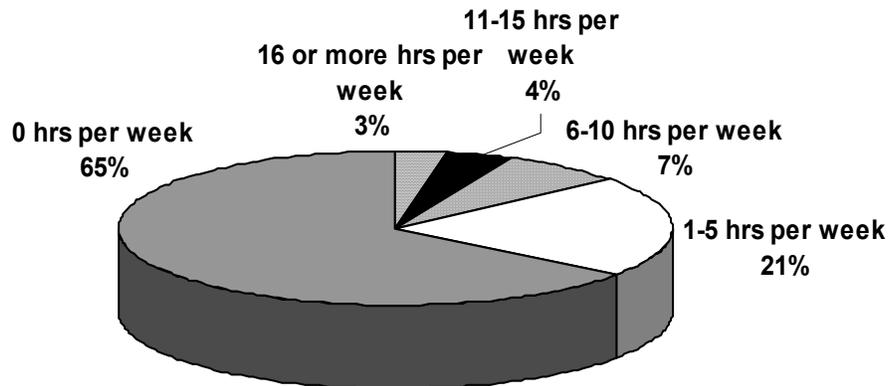


Figure 4: Enriching Educational Experiences Cont'd



whether they have serious conversations with students who are very different from themselves in terms of religious beliefs, political opinions or personal values, 55 percent of first-year and 60 percent of fourth-year students report doing this often or very often.

Figure 5: Hours per week spent participating in co-curricular activities



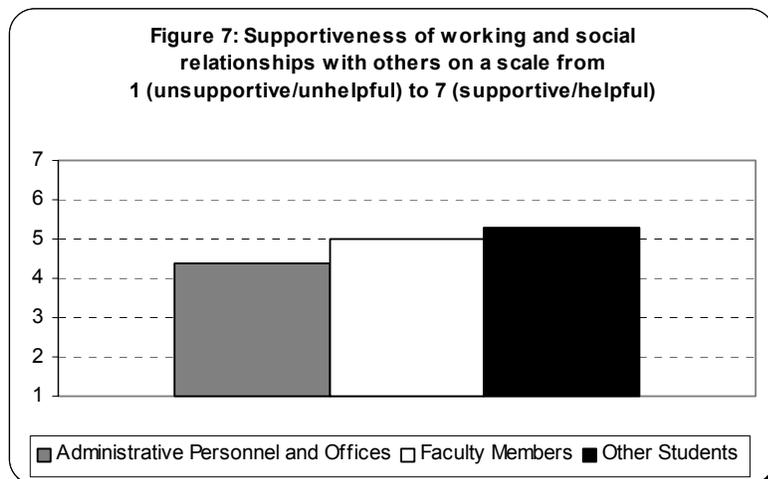
Almost two-thirds of respondents report that in a typical week, they spend no time at all in co-curricular activities (e.g., organizations, campus publications, student government, social fraternity or sorority, intercollegiate or intramural sports). First and fourth-year students are similar in this regard. Results are summarized in Figure 5.

Supportive Campus Environment

The Supportive Campus Environment benchmark examines students' perceptions of the extent to which the University supports students academically, socially and in terms of non-academic responsibilities. Students are also asked to describe the quality of their relationships with other groups on campus. In 2005, Ryerson's performance in this area is higher than that for the Canadian Consortium at the first-year level. However, Ryerson is below the U.S. Master's group for this benchmark in both years one and four.

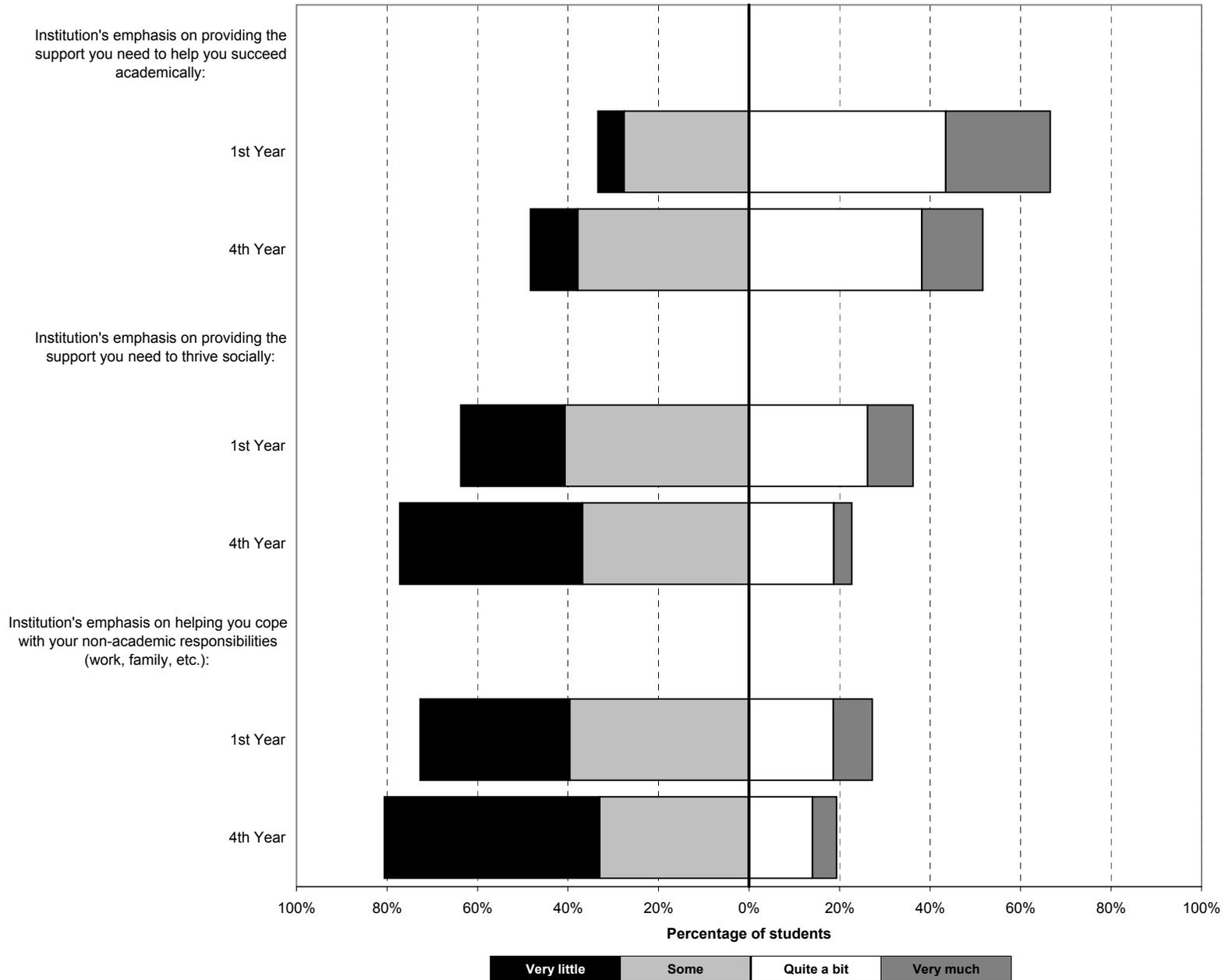
Students' perception of the extent to which the University provides support to students in various areas (academic and otherwise) is lower among fourth-year students than among first-year students. For example, two-thirds of students in first year and only half of those in fourth year indicate that the University emphasizes providing support for students to succeed academically "quite a bit" or "very much."

Results are summarized in Figure 6.



Students rate the quality of their relationships with fellow students more highly than their relationships with either faculty members or administrative personnel. Students in years one and four are very similar in terms of their reported quality of relationships. Results are summarized in Figure 7.

Figure 6: Supportive Campus Environment



ADDITIONAL TOPICS INCLUDED IN NSSE

The NSSE questionnaire includes a wide variety of items in addition to those that fall within the benchmarks reviewed earlier. Some of these additional items can be categorized based on similarity in terms of the topics they address: Integrative Learning, Learning Experience, Skills Development and Overall Experience.

Integrative Learning

Items relating to integrative learning are those that ask students to evaluate their own way of thinking or pull together information from a variety of sources. Results are summarized in Figure 8.

Most students indicate that, often or very often, they work on papers or projects that require integrating ideas or information from various sources. However, a significantly greater percentage of students in fourth year (91 percent) report doing this than do those in first year (79 percent). Similarly, over three-quarters of fourth-year students and 61 percent of first-year students indicate that, often or very often, they put together ideas from different courses when completing assignments or during class discussions.

Learning Experience

Questions relating to the learning experience deal with classroom issues such as quality of instruction and class size, as well as availability of courses and quality of academic advising.

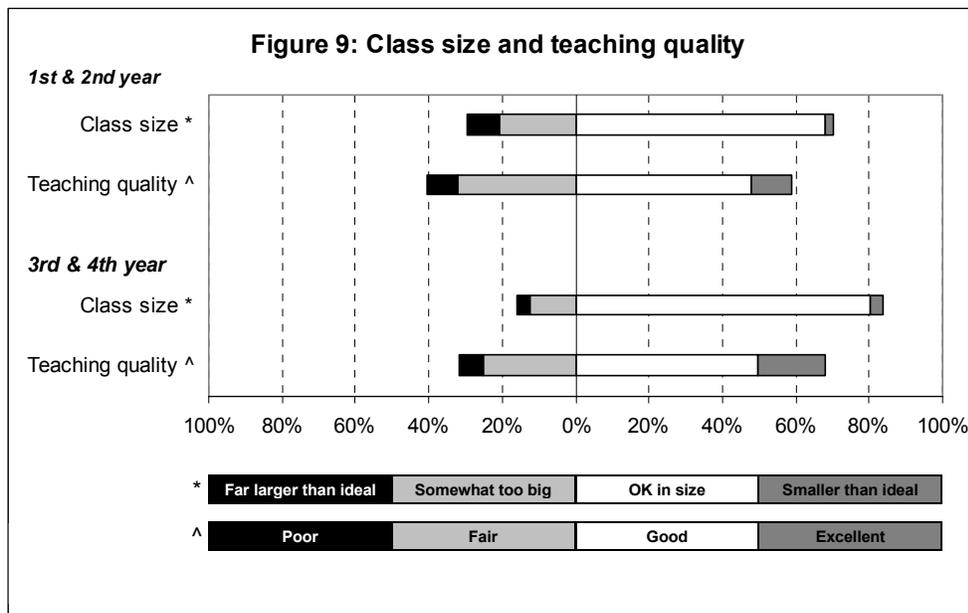
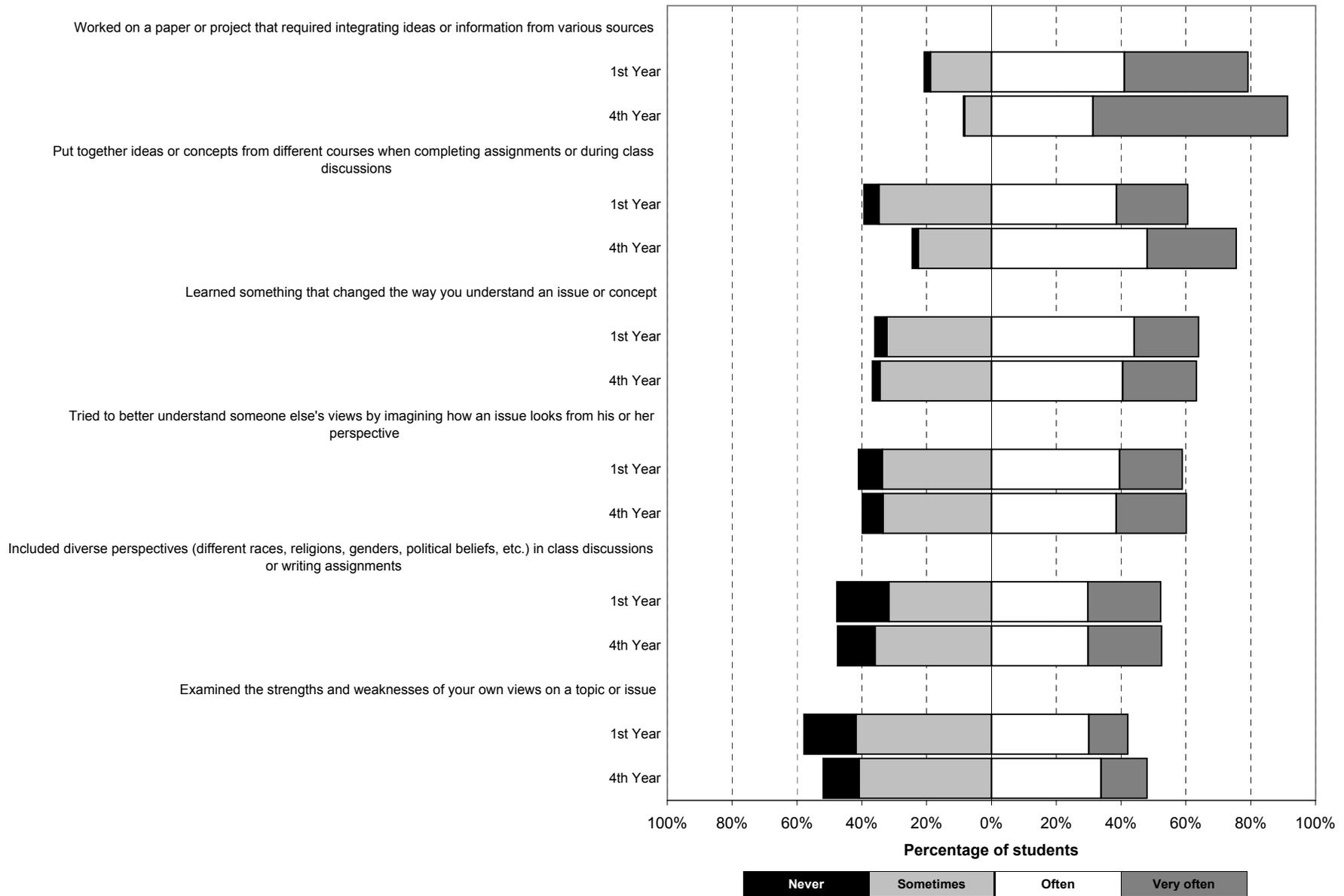


Figure 9 summarizes students' opinions about class size and quality of teaching. Over two-thirds of students are satisfied with the size of their first- and, in the case of senior students, second-year classes. With respect to the upper years

of study, 80 percent of fourth-year students report being satisfied with the size of their third- and fourth-year classes.

Two-thirds of first-year students report that the quality of instruction in their classes is good or excellent. Among fourth-year students, half say that the quality of instruction is good or excellent in first- and second-year classes. For their third- and fourth-year classes, 68 percent of fourth-year students indicate that the quality of instruction is good or excellent.

Figure 8: Integrative Learning



Respondents cite a variety of sources for their academic advising. The source cited most commonly is friends or family. Over a third of first-year students and over a quarter of fourth-year students indicate that, in the past year, they have received most of their academic advising from friends or family. Over one in five students indicate that most of their academic advising came from advisors within their Faculty or department, whereas only 2 percent report receiving central advising. Fifteen percent of students indicate that most of their advising was provided by instructors or staff members who are not formally assigned as advisors.

The most commonly cited source for academic advising is friends or family. Over a third of first-year students and over a quarter of fourth-year students report receiving most of their academic advising in the past year from friends or family.

With respect to availability of courses for first-year students, 37 percent say they have *always* been able to take the courses they need *when they want*, while 39 percent indicate that they have been able to do so *most* of the time. About a quarter (27.7 percent) of fourth-year students report *always* being able to take courses they need *when they want*, and 38 percent indicate that they have been able to take these courses most of the time.

Skills Development

Respondents were asked to rate the institution's contribution to their development in a variety of areas. Overall, the most highly rated area is the use of computers in academic work. The vast majority, 84 percent, of students report that the University contributed to the development of their skills in this area "quite a bit" or "very much."

Over three-quarters of respondents report that the University contributed "quite a bit" or "very much" to their ability to think critically and analytically and to their ability to work effectively with others. Fourth-year students provide more positive responses with regard to working effectively with others than do first-year students.

84% of students indicate that the University contributed to the development of their academically-related computer skills "quite a bit" or "very much".

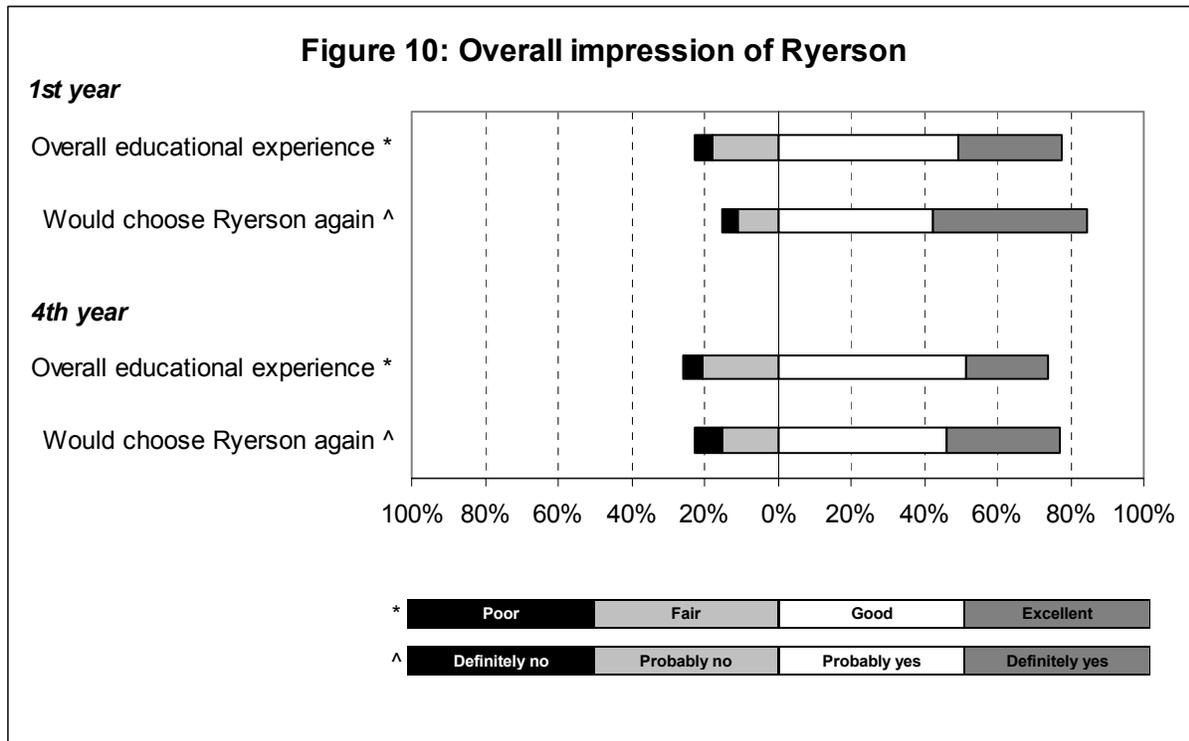
About 70 percent of students indicate that the University contributed "quite a bit" or "very much" to the development of their ability to learn effectively on their own.

Fewer than half of respondents report that they often or very often prepare at least two drafts of a paper or assignment before turning it in. First- and fourth-year students are similar in this regard.

Often or very often, fewer than half of students prepare at least two drafts of an assignment or paper before handing it in.

Overall Experience

A number of questions asked students about their overall experience or general impressions of Ryerson. As outlined in Figure 10, the majority of students are satisfied with their experience at the University. Three-quarters of respondents indicate that their “entire educational experience” is good or excellent. And, over 80 percent of respondents across first- and fourth-year combined report that if they could start over, they would probably or definitely attend Ryerson again.



PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

Profile of respondents

Table 2 compares characteristics of the survey sample to the student population where comparable population data exist, including gender, Faculty, age and course load. Female students are over-represented in the sample and were more likely to complete the online questionnaire irrespective of their Faculty or year level. Students from the Faculty of Community Services tend to be over-represented while those in the Faculty of Engineering, Architecture and Science are under-represented. First-year students in the Faculty of Business are under-represented, but this gap is not present in fourth year. The sample is representative of the population in terms of age and course load.

Table 2: Comparison of survey sample and population characteristics

	1 st year				4 th year			
	Sample		Population		Sample		Population	
Gender								
Female	481	59.3%	2,396	50.0%	517	64.4%	2,085	54.2%
Male	330	40.7%	2,399	50.0%	286	35.6%	1,762	45.8%
<i>Total</i>	<i>811</i>	<i>100.0%</i>	<i>4,795</i>	<i>100.0%</i>	<i>803</i>	<i>100.0%</i>	<i>3,847</i>	<i>100.0%</i>
Faculty								
Arts	60	7.4%	339	7.1%	20	2.5%	90	2.3%
Business	195	24.0%	1,403	29.3%	304	37.9%	1,420	36.9%
Communication & Design	210	25.9%	1,078	22.5%	149	18.6%	709	18.4%
Community Services	161	19.9%	799	16.7%	188	23.4%	736	19.1%
Engineering, Arch & Sci	185	22.8%	1,176	24.5%	142	17.7%	892	23.2%
<i>Total</i>	<i>811</i>	<i>100.0%</i>	<i>4,795</i>	<i>100.0%</i>	<i>803</i>	<i>100.0%</i>	<i>3,847</i>	<i>100.0%</i>
Age*								
Mean (years)	20.1		20.1		24.0		24.0	
Course Load								
Full-time	664	81.9%	3,949	82.4%	655	81.6%	2,897	75.3%
Part-time	147	18.1%	846	17.6%	148	18.4%	950	24.7%
<i>Total</i>	<i>811</i>	<i>100.0%</i>	<i>4,795</i>	<i>100.0%</i>	<i>803</i>	<i>100.0%</i>	<i>3,847</i>	<i>100.0%</i>

* Age as of the end of the 2004 calendar year, based on reported year of birth.

Grades

Among respondents in first year, the percentage of those with a reported overall grade range is as follows: A (17 percent), B (57 percent), C (20 percent) and C- or lower (5 percent). The distribution of respondents in fourth year by reported overall grade range is: A (23 percent), B (68 percent), C (8 percent) and C- or lower (1 percent).

FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH ENGAGEMENT

An attempt has been made to examine the extent to which the average composite scores for each benchmark differ in terms of the demographic characteristics of respondents. The variables assessed include sex, visible minority status, level of parental education, place of residence, length of commute to campus, employment and whether students began their studies at another institution.

When considering the extent to which any statistically significant differences are meaningful, a factor that should be taken into account is program of study. For example, it is not certain that differences by gender are not, in fact, differences due to program of study. Results are summarized in Table 4.

Gender

Six of ten respondents are female. Males and females do not differ significantly in terms of average composite scores in the areas of Active and Collaborative Learning, Student-Faculty Interaction or Supportive Campus Environment. On average, females report a higher Level of

Academic Challenge than do males. Similarly, females provide a higher average score on the Enriching Educational Experiences benchmark than do males.⁶

As mentioned above, it is not clear whether the differences observed between males and females are related to program of study. Some of the items within the Level of Academic Challenge benchmark, for example, include measures of the volume of reading that students complete and the number of papers that students write – it is possible that these could vary by program, and females do tend to score more highly than males on these items. With regard to Enriching Educational Experiences, females are more likely than males to report doing (or planning to do) a practicum, internship, co-op placement, clinical assignment or field experience as well as community service or volunteer work. Males, however, are more likely than females to indicate that they have undertaken (or plan to undertake) an independent study. Males are also more likely than females to report being (or planning to be) involved in a culminating senior experience such as a thesis or major project.

Visible minority status and citizenship

Approximately 42 percent of respondents report being part of a visible minority group in Canada. Eighty-five percent of those in first year and 93 percent of those in fourth year indicate that they are Canadian citizens. Benchmark scores do not differ significantly by visible minority status. However, students who report that they are Canadian citizens have, on average, higher scores on the Enriching Educational Experiences benchmark than do students who are not Canadian citizens.⁷ Again, it is not clear whether differences between these groups are a function of program of study.

Beginning at another institution

Most respondents (83 percent of those in first year and 75 percent of those in fourth year) indicate that they began their post-secondary education at Ryerson. (It should be noted that second-entry programs intended for transfer students were excluded from the survey.)

There is a significant difference between students who began their studies at Ryerson and those who began elsewhere in terms of average composite score on the Active and Collaborative Learning benchmark. Students who report beginning university at another institution, on average, score more highly than do students who report beginning their studies at Ryerson.⁸

It is possible that the difference between those who began at another institution and those who began at Ryerson is simply a function of experience with university in general. When the comparison is made *within* each year level, it is found that the difference between those who began at another institution and those who began at Ryerson is significant *only* among first-year students and *not* among fourth-year students.

⁶ A statistically significant difference between males and females is observed on: Level of Academic Challenge ($t=3.24$, $p<.001$) and Enriching Educational Experiences ($t=2.63$, $p<.01$).

⁷ $t=3.36$, $p<.001$

⁸ $t=2.64$, $p<.01$

Parental education

With respect to parents' highest level of education, approximately half of respondents indicate that at least one of their parents attended (but not necessarily completed) university. Eighteen percent report that at least one parent attended (but not necessarily completed) college, while 13 percent indicate that at least one parent finished high school. Seven percent of respondents report that neither of their parents completed high school.

About half of respondents report that at least one of their parents attended university. Students who have a parent who attended university provide higher scores on the Student-Faculty Interaction and Enriching Educational Experiences benchmarks than do students who do not have a parent who attended university.

Students who report that at least one of their parents attended university provide significantly higher composite scores on the Student-Faculty Interaction and Enriching Educational Experiences benchmarks than do students who do not have a parent who attended university.⁹

In the area of Student-Faculty Interaction, respondents who report that at least one of their parents attended university report discussing grades or assignments with an instructor, as well as working with faculty members on activities other than coursework (e.g., committees, orientation, student life activities) with greater frequency than do students whose parents did not attend university.

Within the Enriching Educational Experiences benchmark, students who report that at least one parent attended university indicate having serious conversations with students of a different race or ethnicity (than their own) with greater frequency than do students who do not have a parent who attended university. Similarly, these students perceive that the University encourages contact among students from different economic, social, racial or ethnic backgrounds to a greater degree than do students whose parents did not attend university.

Employment

Almost two-thirds (65.4 percent) of students report working for pay in a typical week. Half (51.6 percent) report that they work off campus only, 5.8 percent work on campus only and 8 percent work both on and off campus. One of every five students works off campus for up to ten hours per week; one of four works between eleven and twenty hours. About 13 percent of students report working off campus for over twenty hours in a typical week.

Generally, students who are employed report higher levels of engagement than do non-employed students on the composite scores for each benchmark except Supportive Campus Environment, where no significant difference is

Almost two-thirds of students are employed. Generally, students who are employed report higher levels of engagement than do non-employed students on each benchmark (except Supportive Campus Environment, where no significant difference is found).

⁹ Difference between students who have at least one parent who attended university and those where neither parent attended: Student-Faculty Interaction ($t=3.16, p<.01$) and Enriching Educational Experiences ($t=2.79, p<.01$)

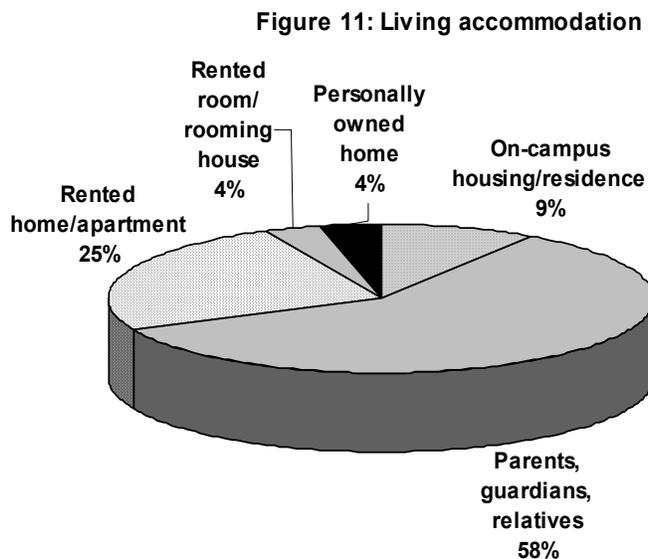
found.¹⁰ In the areas of Active and Collaborative Learning, Student-Faculty Interaction and Enriching Educational Experiences, further differences are found when a distinction is made among three groups of students: those who work off campus, those who work on campus, and those who work *both* on and off campus. Students who work only off campus score significantly lower than do both those who work on campus as well as those who work both on and off campus.¹¹

When full-time students working off campus for at least 16 hours per week are compared to those who report working fewer hours, it is found that those working the higher number of hours have, on average, a lower composite score in the area of Supportive Campus Environment.¹²

Commuting and place of residence

As reported in Figure 11, almost 60 percent of both first- and fourth-year students live with parents, guardians or relatives. Slightly fewer than one in five first-year students reports living in residence. About one in five first-year students and a third of fourth-year students live in rented accommodations.

Over two-thirds of respondents use public transit to travel to campus while 15 percent walk, cycle or blade. Fewer than one in ten use cars to get to campus, either alone or sharing a drive with others. More than half (56 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 12.



Place of residence and travel time to campus are not associated with differences in scores on Level of Academic Challenge or Supportive Campus Environment.

Students who live in rental accommodation provide significantly higher scores in the area of Active and Collaborative Learning than do students who live with parents, relatives or guardians.¹³ However, length of commute does not have a statistically significant relationship with composite scores on the Active and Collaborative Learning benchmark.

¹⁰ Differences between students who are employed and those who are not: Level of Academic Challenge ($t=2.44$, $p<.01$); Active and Collaborative Learning ($t=6.58$, $p<.001$); Student-Faculty Interaction ($t=4.42$, $p<.001$); Enriching Educational Experiences ($t=5.58$, $p<.001$)

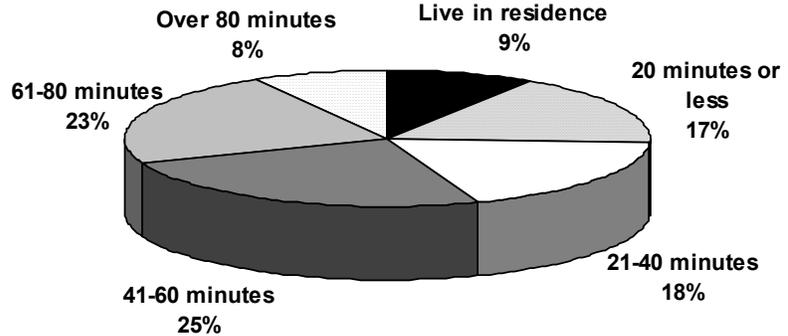
¹¹ Differences among students working on campus, off campus, and those working *both* on and off campus: Active and Collaborative Learning ($F=30.18$, $p<.001$); Student-Faculty Interaction ($F=48.47$, $p<.001$); Enriching Educational Experiences ($F=20.20$, $p<.001$)

¹² $t=2.71$, $p<.01$

¹³ $t=4.61$, $p<.001$

In the area of Student-Faculty Interaction, students who report that they live in rental accommodation provide significantly higher scores than do students living with parents, relatives or guardians.¹⁴ With regard to travel time to campus, two groups of students are compared: those with a long commute and those with a short commute. Students who report taking 20 or fewer minutes to commute to campus provide significantly higher scores in the area of Student-Faculty interaction than do those who take over 20 minutes.¹⁵ Similar results are found when students who take 40 or fewer minutes are compared to those who take over 40 minutes.¹⁶ Within the Student-Faculty Interaction benchmark, students who have a commute of 40 minutes or less report receiving prompt feedback from faculty on academic performance more frequently than do students with a longer commute. Similarly, students with a relatively short commute report working with faculty members on activities other than coursework more frequently than do students who travel over 40 minutes.

Figure 12: Travel time from place of residence to campus



Students living in rental accommodations differ in terms of their involvement in Enriching Educational Experiences from those who live with parents, relatives and guardians – the former group reports a statistically significantly higher level of involvement.¹⁷ When students with a reported commute of 40 minutes or less are compared to those with a longer commute, it is found that the group with a shorter commute provides higher scores in the area of enriching educational experiences.¹⁸ This is not found when comparing students with a commute of 20 minutes or less to those with a commute over 20 minutes.

Even among those who live close to campus, over half of respondents report spending no time at all participating in co-curricular activities in a typical week.

There is only a weak negative relationship between length of commute and the number of hours that students spend participating in co-curricular activities.¹⁹ Even, among students who live very close to campus (i.e., those who travel 20 minutes or less), over half of respondents report spending no time at all participating in co-curricular activities in a typical week.

¹⁴ $t=3.75, p<.001$

¹⁵ $t=2.59, p<.01$

¹⁶ $t=3.08, p<.01$

¹⁷ $t=5.28, p<.001$

¹⁸ $t=2.47, p<.01$

¹⁹ $r_s = -.113, p<.001$

Table 4: Factors associated with composite benchmark scores

	Academic Challenge	Active & Collaborative Learning	Student-Faculty Interaction	Enriching Educational Experiences	Supportive Campus Environment
Gender	Females higher than males	ns	ns	Females higher than males	ns
Visible minority status	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns
Experience at other institution	ns	Beginning at other institution higher than beginning at Ryerson among 1 st yr but not 4 th yr students	ns	ns	ns
Parental education	ns	ns	At least 1 parent attending university higher than if neither parent attended	At least 1 parent attending university higher than if neither parent attended	ns
Employment	Employed students higher than non-employed	Employed higher than non-employed; Employed off campus lower than those employed on campus <u>and</u> those working <i>both</i> off and on campus	Employed higher than non-employed; Employed off campus lower than those employed on campus <u>and</u> those working <i>both</i> off and on campus	Employed higher than non-employed; Employed off campus lower than those employed on campus <u>and</u> those working <i>both</i> off and on campus	Students working 16 or more hours per week score lower than those working less than 16 hours per week
Length of commute	ns	ns	Students traveling 20 or fewer minutes higher than those traveling over 20 minutes; traveling 40 or fewer minutes higher than those traveling over 40 minutes	Students traveling 40 or fewer minutes score more highly than those traveling over 40 minutes	ns
Place of residence	ns	Students who rent score more highly than those living with parents or relatives.	Students who rent score more highly than those living with parents or relatives.	Students who rent score more highly than those living with parents or relatives.	ns

ns = no statistically significant difference found

IMPLICATIONS OF NSSE

The results of the 2005 round of NSSE yield valuable information about characteristics of Ryerson's student population, the ways in which students spend their time and the types of educational experiences they have had. Beginning in 2006, all Ontario universities are required by the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities to participate in NSSE.

Ryerson is a commuter institution: 56 percent of students report traveling over 40 minutes to get from home to campus. While a long commute is associated with lower levels of co-curricular involvement, the proportion of students participating in co-curricular activities is fairly low even among those living close to campus.

Employment is associated with increased levels of engagement in several areas. The impact of employment is even more positive when students are working in positions on campus as opposed to off campus.

The survey results point to areas for further investigation and possible improvement at Ryerson. These include:

- aspects of student-faculty interaction, including discussions of career plans as well as discussing ideas from classes with faculty members outside of class
- participation in co-curricular activities
- students' experiences regarding administrative matters
- the University's emphasis on helping students to succeed academically, socially, and in terms of coping with non-academic responsibilities

Results in the areas of Active and Collaborative Learning and Enriching Educational Experiences are relatively positive. Over three-quarters of Ryerson respondents indicate that they have done or plan to undertake a practicum, internship, field experience, co-op or clinical placement. Over 60 percent have serious conversations with students of a different race or ethnicity than their own often or very often. The majority of students work on assignments with their classmates outside of class often or very often.

Overall satisfaction with the educational experience offered at Ryerson appears high. Three-quarters of respondents indicate that their "entire educational experience" has been good or excellent. And, over 80 percent of respondents report that if they could start over, they would probably or definitely attend Ryerson again.

Broadly speaking, Ryerson is similar to members of the Canadian Consortium but lags behind the scores achieved by U.S. Master's institutions, particularly in fourth year. Ryerson tends to exceed universities in the Canadian Consortium in terms of Active and Collaborative Learning and Enriching Educational Experiences.