

**RYERSON
UNIVERSITY**

NATIONAL SURVEY OF STUDENT ENGAGEMENT 2006

HIGHLIGHTS OF RESULTS

PREPARED BY THE UNIVERSITY PLANNING OFFICE



Introduction

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 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 engaged actively in learning. 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.

NSSE has become an integral part of planning and improvement initiatives at Ryerson. The 2005 round of NSSE was an important part of the President's Commission on Student Engagement and Experience, and the results have informed academic planning and resource allocation. The Quality Agenda, Ryerson's 2006-07 budget, placed high priority on student engagement by including expenditures such as creating more campus study spaces, increasing library hours, and enabling students to access a wide range of student services in a single location. A Vice-Provost Students has been appointed to oversee and coordinate student support services with a goal of continuously improving the student experience at Ryerson. The importance of NSSE is confirmed by our current policy environment, where universities across Ontario are required to undertake the survey periodically.

In 2006, over five hundred American universities and four-year colleges participated in NSSE together with all Ontario universities as well as a number of Canadian institutions in other provinces. In Winter 2006, 5,413 first-year and 4,106 fourth-year Ryerson students were contacted by email and asked to complete the survey online. The total sample of 3,550 students yields a response rate of 37.3 percent. The response rate for students in first year (37.3 percent) is virtually identical to that for students in fourth year (37.2 percent). The sample size and response rate contribute to a relatively low estimate of statistical error.²

Results from the 2006 version of the survey are fairly consistent with those from the 2005 round. This is not surprising. (Ryerson conducted NSSE in 2005 in preparation for the 2006 round, where the provincial Government would require all institutions to participate. Moreover, the 2006 round of the survey was conducted before a number of developments on campus, including the new Ryerson Business Building and the addition of study spaces, had been completed.) The Indiana Center for Postsecondary Research, which developed the NSSE survey, suggests that a number of years is required to effect appreciable change in survey results. The Center recommends conducting NSSE every three to four years.³

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: 1.3 percentage points for first-year and fourth-year students combined, 1.7 percentage points for first-year students alone, and 2.0 percentage points for fourth-year students alone.

³ Indiana University Center for Postsecondary Research, "Using NSSE Data," Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Center for Postsecondary Research, 2006, p. 2.

This report provides an overview of Ryerson's NSSE results for 2006. 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 presents a preliminary set of core questions that consultations suggest are of particular relevance to Ryerson. Next, the report provides detailed results for the individual survey questions from which the benchmark summary scores were constructed, and discusses a number of additional questions that are not part of the benchmarks. The final section focuses on the relationship between level of student engagement and student demographics including gender, parental education and commuting time to campus.

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 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 or 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 Ryerson's benchmark scores compared with those of Ontario universities, and U.S. Peer institutions as defined using the Carnegie Classification.⁴ Differences that are greater than those attributable to chance alone are shown in **boldface**.

The American comparison group used in 2006 differs from that used in the 2005 round of the survey. In 2005, Ryerson's scores were presented alongside the average for all U.S. Master's

⁴ The Indiana Center excludes Ryerson when calculating benchmark scores for Ontario universities; this enables Ryerson to compare its scores against those of other Ontario universities. There are 19 institutions in the U.S. Peers group: Boise State University, California State University-Chico, California State University-Long Beach, California State University-Northridge, CUNY Bernard M Baruch College, Eastern Michigan University, Kennesaw State University, Middle Tennessee State University, National University, University of Texas-Pan American, University of Texas at San Antonio, University of Alaska Anchorage, University of Central Oklahoma, University of Nebraska at Omaha, University of North Carolina Wilmington, University of North Florida, University of South Alabama, Webster University Worldwide, Youngstown State University.

institutions. This broad group included large and small, residential and commuter-based, private and public institutions that had a wide range of baccalaureate programs and awarded Master's degrees. In 2006, Ryerson had the opportunity to construct a new U.S. comparison group based on the more specific criteria used in the recently revised Carnegie Classification system. The 2006 U.S. comparators are institutions that award at least 200 Master's degrees annually, have undergraduate enrolment of at least 10,000 full-time equivalent students, and are primarily non-residential (i.e., fewer than 25 percent of students live on campus).

Table 1: Comparison of benchmark summary scores*

	1 st Year			4 th Year		
	Ryerson	Ontario	U.S. Peers	Ryerson	Ontario	U.S. Peers
Level of Academic Challenge	52.1	50.4 ▼	49.3 ▼	56.5	55.0	54.4 ▼
Active & Collaborative Learning	40.0	34.1 ▼	39.7	51.2	42.2 ▼	49.5
Student-Faculty Interaction	25.1	21.8 ▼	29.2 ▲	33.3	31.1 ▼	37.3 ▲
Enriching Educational Experiences	25.3	24.3	24.9	35.6	33.5 ▼	35.0
Supportive Campus Environment	55.6	55.3	55.6	50.3	50.6	54.0 ▲

*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 Enriching Educational Experiences 4th Year: On a scale of 0 to 100, Ryerson scores 35.6, and the Ontario score of 33.5 is sufficiently lower than Ryerson's for the difference to be statistically significant. The U.S. Peers' score of 35.0 is so close to Ryerson's score that the difference may be the result of chance alone.

Broadly speaking, Ryerson scores as well or better than Ontario universities. Ryerson exceeds its American comparators in Level of Academic Challenge, but lags behind the scores achieved by U.S. Peer institutions for Student-Faculty Interaction in first and fourth year, and for Supportive Campus Environment in fourth year.⁵

CORE QUESTIONS

While the NSSE benchmarks provide a summary of Ryerson's performance, they do not provide direction in terms of specific items on which the University should concentrate efforts for improvement. In Fall 2006, the University Planning Office consulted with the NSSE Advisory Committee, Academic Planning Group of Deans and other senior academic administrators, and the Academic Leadership Team comprised of department Chairs/Directors and other academic leaders. Through these consultations, a preliminary set of core questions has been developed. This subset of survey items reflects Ryerson's mission and priorities, areas in which Ryerson wants to maintain high performance, and those in which improvement is needed. As further discussions occur, it is anticipated that the set of items on which we focus will evolve. These items will be incorporated into the University's academic planning process and scores on these items will be monitored over time.

Table 2 outlines the scores achieved on the core questions in the 2005 and 2006 rounds of NSSE respectively. (Where a score is not provided on a particular item for 2005, it is because the item was new to the questionnaire in 2006.)

⁵ 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.

Table 2: Preliminary Core NSSE Questions, Responses in 2005 and 2006

Benchmark	Question	Measure	Performance ~	First-year		Fourth-year	
				2005	2006	2005	2006
Active and Collaborative Learning (ACL)	Asked questions in class or contributed to class discussions	Often or very often	Ryerson lower than U.S. peers at 1 st and 4 th year	40%	40%	47%	52%
Enriching Educational Experiences (EEE)	Culminating senior experience (capstone course, thesis, project, comprehensive exam, etc.)	Plan to do or done	Ryerson lower than U.S. peers at 1 st and 4 th year	37%	31%	47%	43%
	Participating in co-curricular activities (organizations, campus publications, student government, sports, etc.)	% not participating at all in a typical week	Lower participation at Ryerson than Ontario universities at 1 st and 4 th year	64%	62%	64%	63%
	Practicum, internship, field experience, co-op experience, or clinical assignment	Plan to do or done	Ryerson higher than Ontario at 1 st and 4 th year	83%	79%	72%	73%
Level of Academic Challenge (LAC)	Applying theories or concepts to practical problems or in new situations	Quite a bit or very much	Ryerson higher than Ontario at 4 th year	72%	76%	79%	83%
Supportive Campus Environment (SCE)	Providing support you need to help you succeed academically	Quite a bit or very much	Ryerson lower than U.S. peers at 4 th year	66%	67%	51%	51%
	Relationships with administrative personnel and offices	On a scale from 1 (unsupportive/unhelpful) to 7 (supportive/helpful)	Ryerson similar to Ontario and U.S. peers	4.4	4.4	4.1	3.9
Student-Faculty Interaction (SFI)	Discussed ideas from your readings or classes with faculty members outside of class	Often or very often	Ryerson similar to Ontario and U.S. peers	15%	17%	18%	24%
	Received prompt feedback from faculty on your academic performance (written or oral)	Often or very often	Ryerson lower than U.S. peers at 4 th year	44%	39%	47%	46%
Not in benchmarks	Item needing improvement in classroom: Quality of course instruction by professors*	% indicating university needs to address	Ryerson similar to Ontario*	N/A	27%	N/A	36%
	Item needing improvement in classroom: Increasing the number or variety of course offerings in your major*	% indicating university needs to address	Ryerson similar to Ontario*	N/A	18%	N/A	28%
	Item needing improvement outside classroom: Library collection*	% indicating university needs to address	Cited by more Ryerson students than Ontario at 4 th year*	N/A	17%	N/A	30%
	Item needing improvement outside classroom: Quality or availability of study spaces*	% indicating university needs to address	Ryerson similar to Ontario*	N/A	31%	N/A	31%
	How would you evaluate your entire educational experience at this institution?	Good or excellent	Ryerson similar to Ontario and U.S. peers	78%	79%	74%	75%
	University's contribution to development of skills in writing clearly and effectively	Quite a bit or very much	Ryerson similar to Ontario and U.S. peers	59%	60%	65%	67%

~ Remarks refer to differences of at least 10 percentage points. *Item included only in Ontario survey; U.S. comparison not applicable.

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 2006, Ryerson exceeds other Ontario institutions in this area with respect to first-year students, and Ryerson exceeds its U.S. comparison group at both years one and four. Results for Ryerson are summarized in Figure 1. Where the difference between Ryerson and either its U.S. or Ontario comparators is statistically significant and substantial (at least 10 percentage points), the comparator score is also provided.

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 56 percent of fourth-year students reported similarly. In the area of Academic Challenge, first- and fourth-year students are most similar in terms of the extent to which they believe the institution emphasizes spending significant amounts of time studying and on academic work. Approximately three-quarters of students at each year level indicate that the University emphasizes this "quite a bit" or "very much." First- and fourth-year students differ in terms of the extent to which they report that their coursework emphasizes making judgments about the value of information, arguments or methods: 61 percent of year one students and 73 percent of year four students indicate that this is emphasized "quite a bit" or "very much."

These results are very similar to those found in the 2005 round of NSSE, with the exception of the emphasis of coursework on making judgments – in 2005, about two-thirds of fourth-year students report that is emphasized "quite a bit" or "very much."

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."⁶ 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- and fourth-year students at Ryerson provide higher scores on this benchmark than do their Ontario counterparts, and Ryerson is not significantly different from its U.S. comparators. Results are outlined in Figure 2.

The most common form of active and collaborative learning reported is working with classmates outside of class to prepare assignments. Sixty-one 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, 68 percent of students in fourth year report doing so. These results are, roughly, consistent with findings from the 2005 round of the survey.

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

Figure 1: Level of Academic Challenge

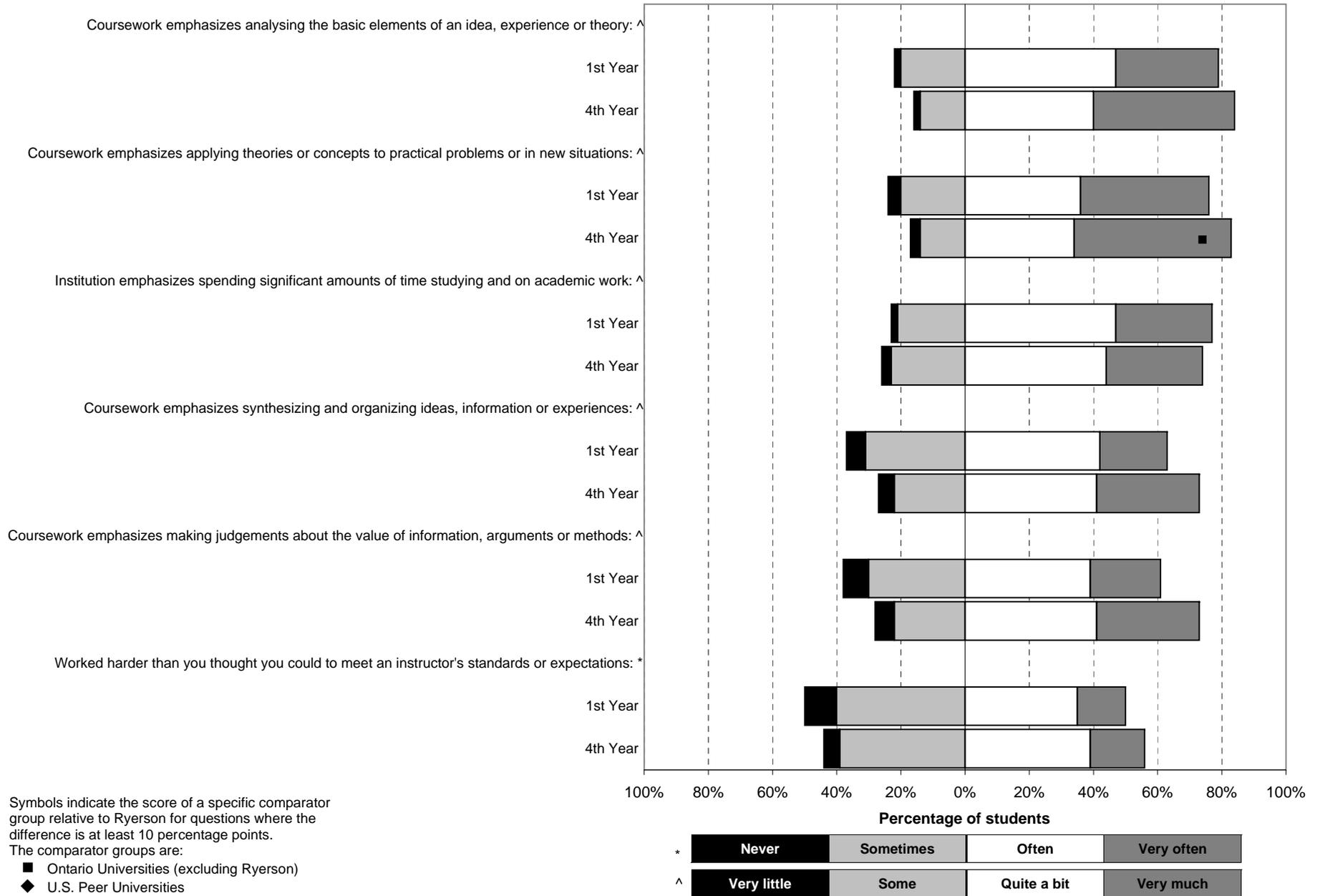
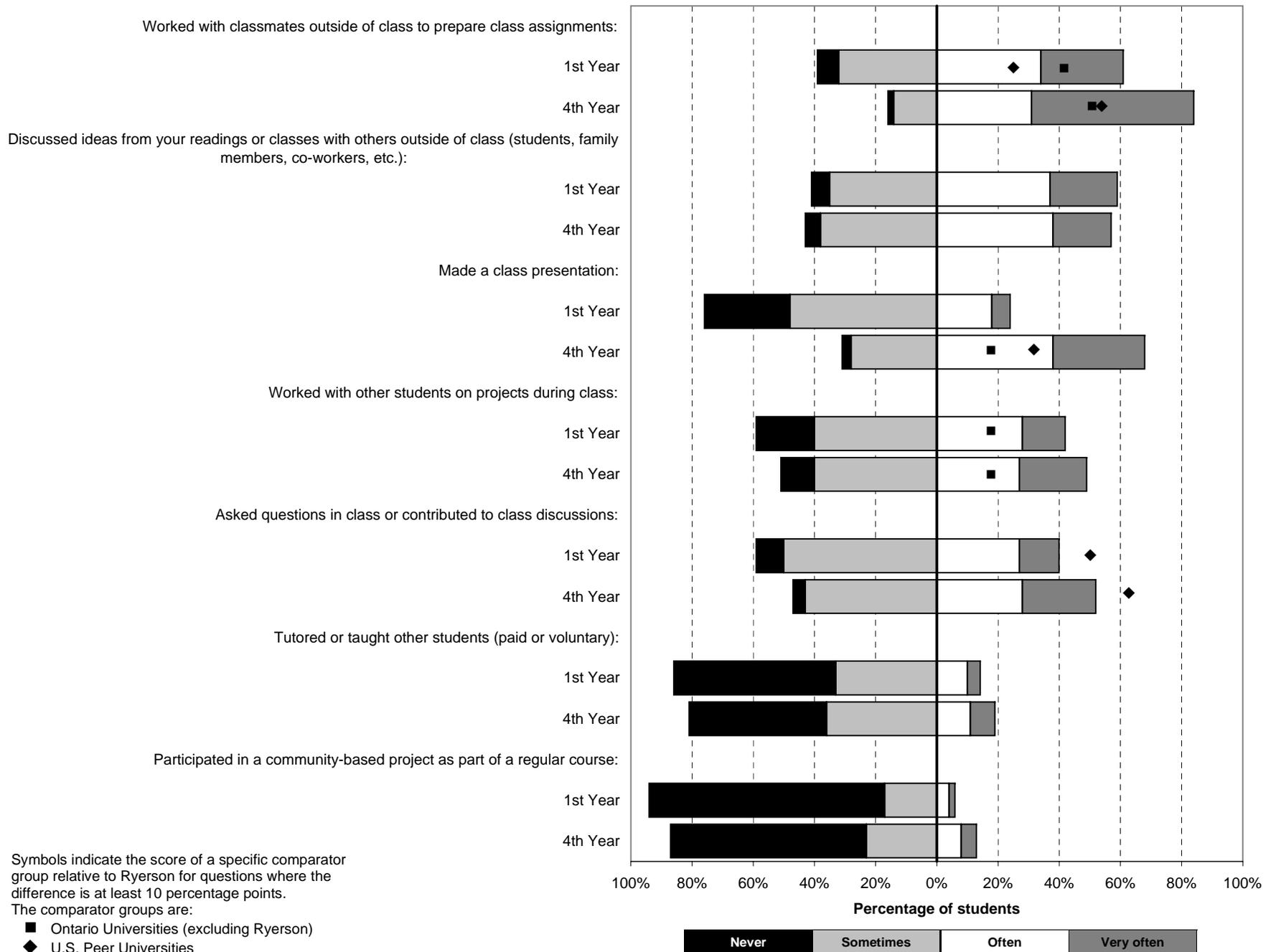


Figure 2: Active and Collaborative Learning



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, Ryerson scores more highly than the Ontario average, but is below the U.S. comparison group for Student-Faculty Interaction. Results are summarized in Figure 3.

The most common form of student-faculty interaction reported is faculty feedback on students’ academic performance. Forty-two percent of respondents indicate that they receive prompt written or oral feedback often or very often. Less common are discussing ideas from readings or classes with faculty members outside of class (about one of five students report doing this often or very often) and working with faculty members on activities other than coursework such as committees, orientation or student life activities. (Eleven percent of respondents report doing this often or very often.) Similar results were obtained in 2005.

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 2006, first-year students at Ryerson provide scores on this benchmark that are similar to both their Ontario and U.S. comparators. Among fourth-year students, Ryerson is higher than the Ontario 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. Over 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 whether they have serious conversations with students who are very different from themselves in terms of religious beliefs, political opinions or personal values, 54 percent of first-year and 62 percent of fourth-year students report doing this often or very often.

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, intercollegiate or intramural sports). First and fourth-year students are similar in this regard. Results are summarized in Figure 5. Similar results were obtained in 2005.

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

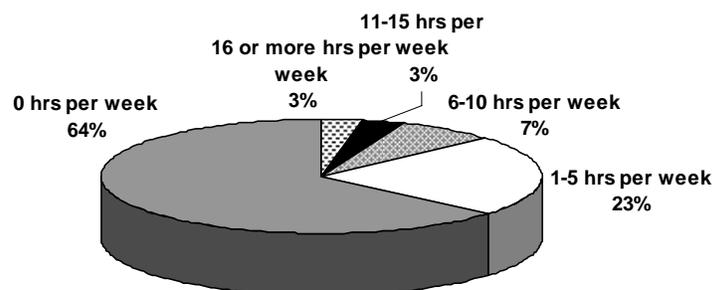


Figure 3: Student-Faculty Interaction

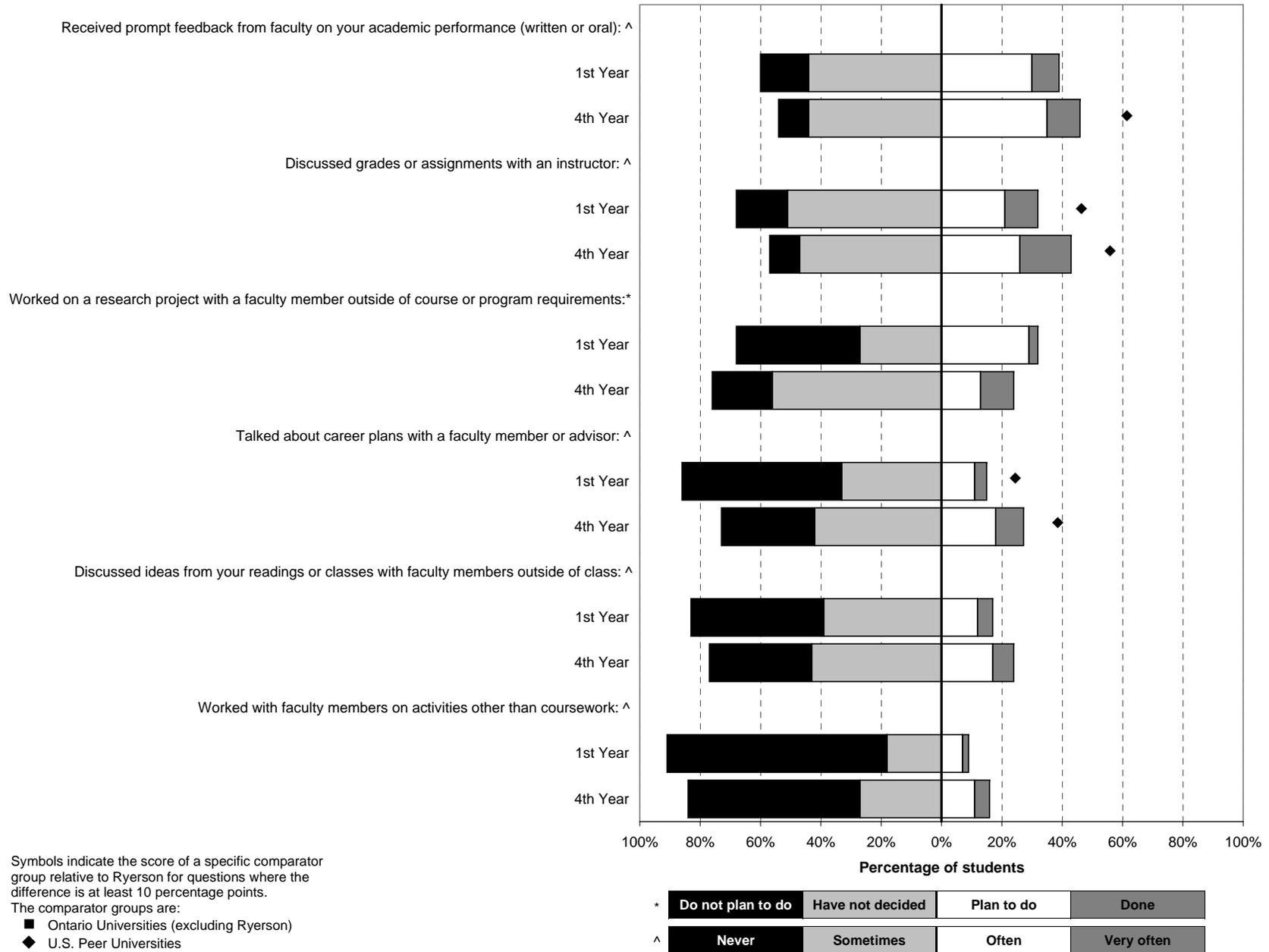
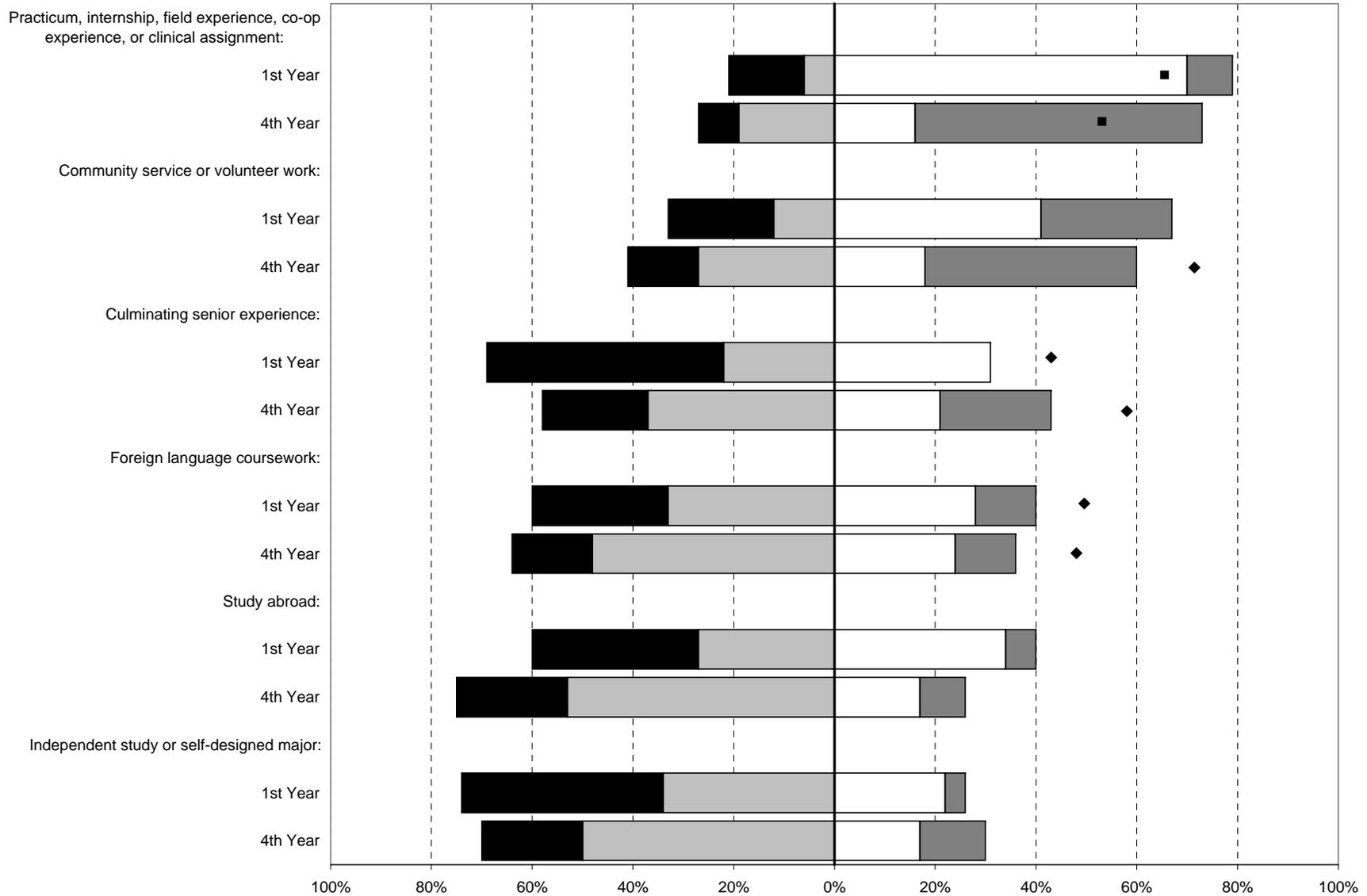


Figure 4: Enriching Educational Experiences



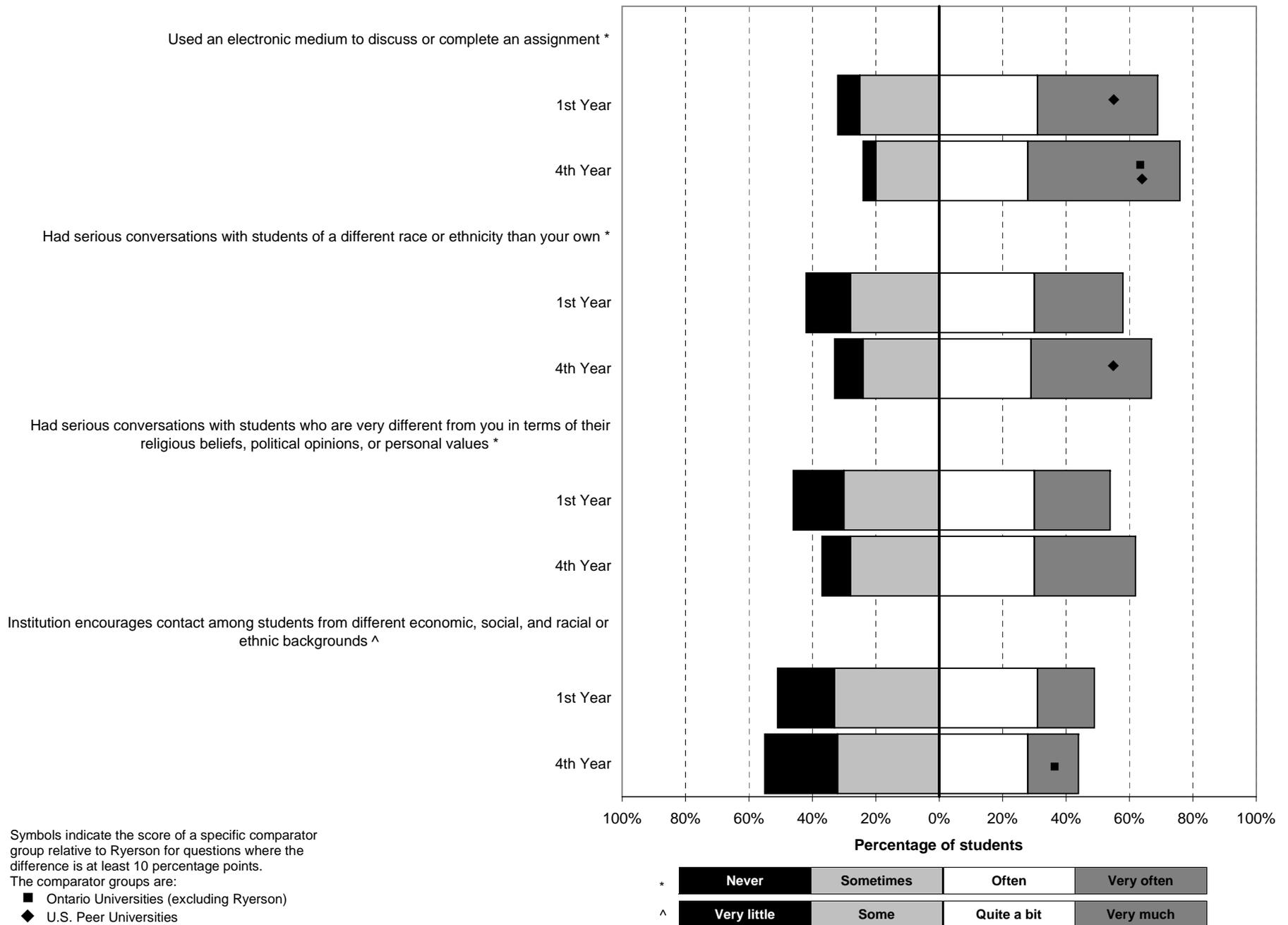
Symbols indicate the score of a specific comparator group relative to Ryerson for questions where the difference is at least 10 percentage points.

The comparator groups are:

- Ontario Universities (excluding Ryerson)
- ◆ U.S. Peer Universities



Figure 4: Enriching Educational Experiences Cont'd

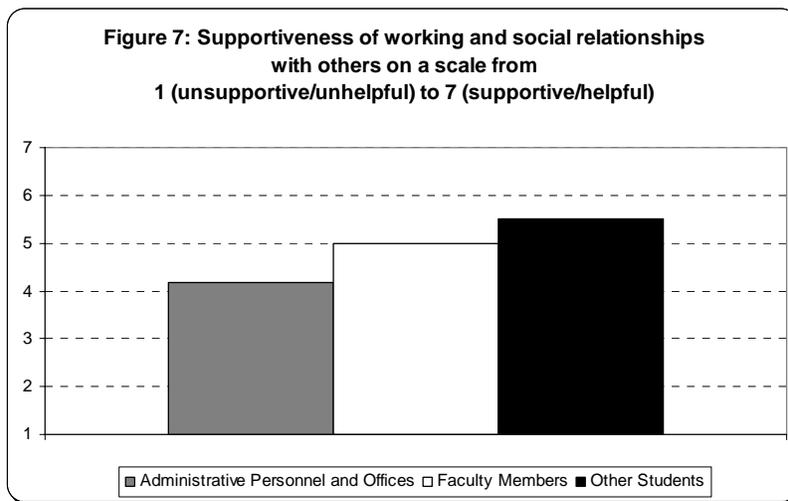


Supportive Campus Environment

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 2006, Ryerson's performance in this area at first year is similar to that of other Ontario institutions as well as the U.S. comparison group. However, Ryerson is below the U.S. group for this benchmark in year 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 similar in terms of their reported quality of relationships. Results are summarized in Figure 7. Similar results were obtained in 2005.

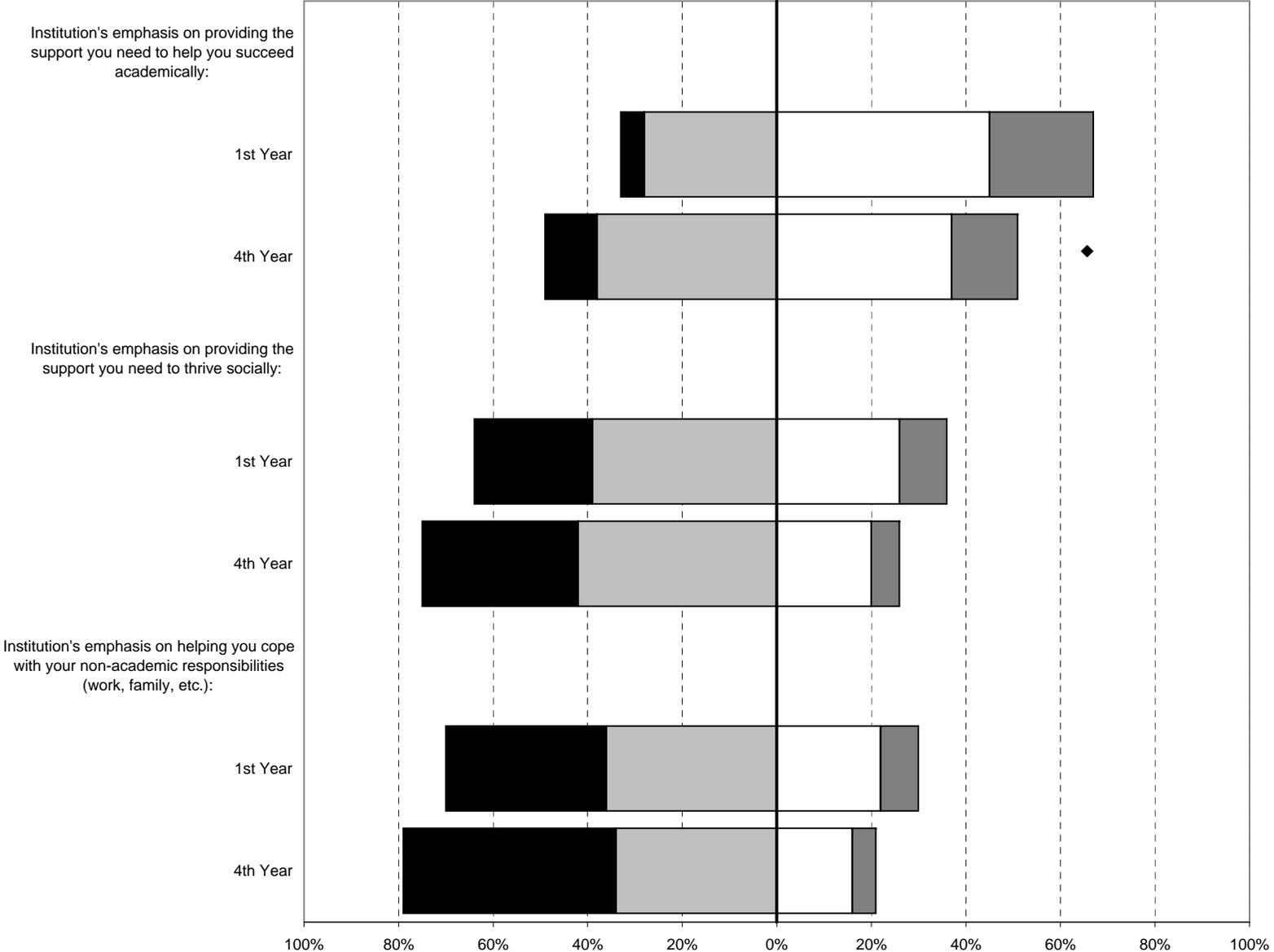
ADDITIONAL TOPICS INCLUDED IN NSSE

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, 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.

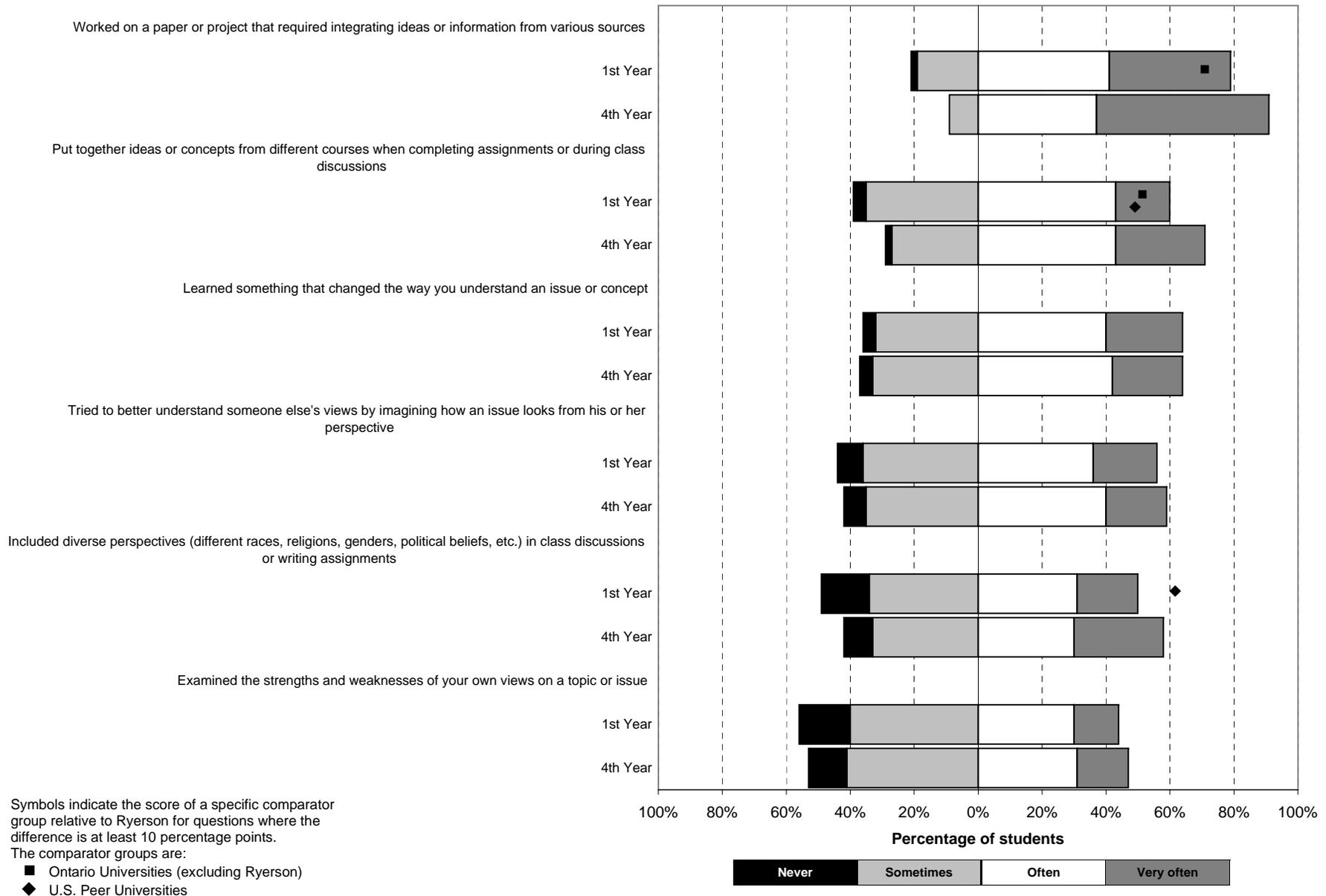
Figure 6: Supportive Campus Environment



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

Very little Some Quite a bit Very much

Figure 8: Integrative Learning



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, 71 percent of fourth-year students and 60 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.

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 ability to think critically and analytically. Seventy-nine percent of students report that the University contributed to the development of their skills in this area "quite a bit" or "very much." Similarly, about three-quarters of respondents report that the University contributed "quite a bit" or "very much" 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.

Slightly fewer than two-thirds of respondents indicate that the University has contributed "quite a bit" or "very much" to their ability to write clearly and effectively, and to skills in analyzing quantitative problems.

According to 58 percent of respondents, the University contributes "quite a bit" or "very much" to skills in solving complex, real-world problems. Fifty-three percent report similarly with regard to the development of a personal code of values and ethics.

Overall Experience

A number of questions ask students about their overall experience or general impressions of Ryerson. The majority of students are satisfied with their experience at the University. Over three-quarters of respondents indicate that their "entire educational experience" is good or excellent. And, 82 percent of respondents across first- and fourth-year combined report that if they could start over, they would probably or definitely attend Ryerson again.

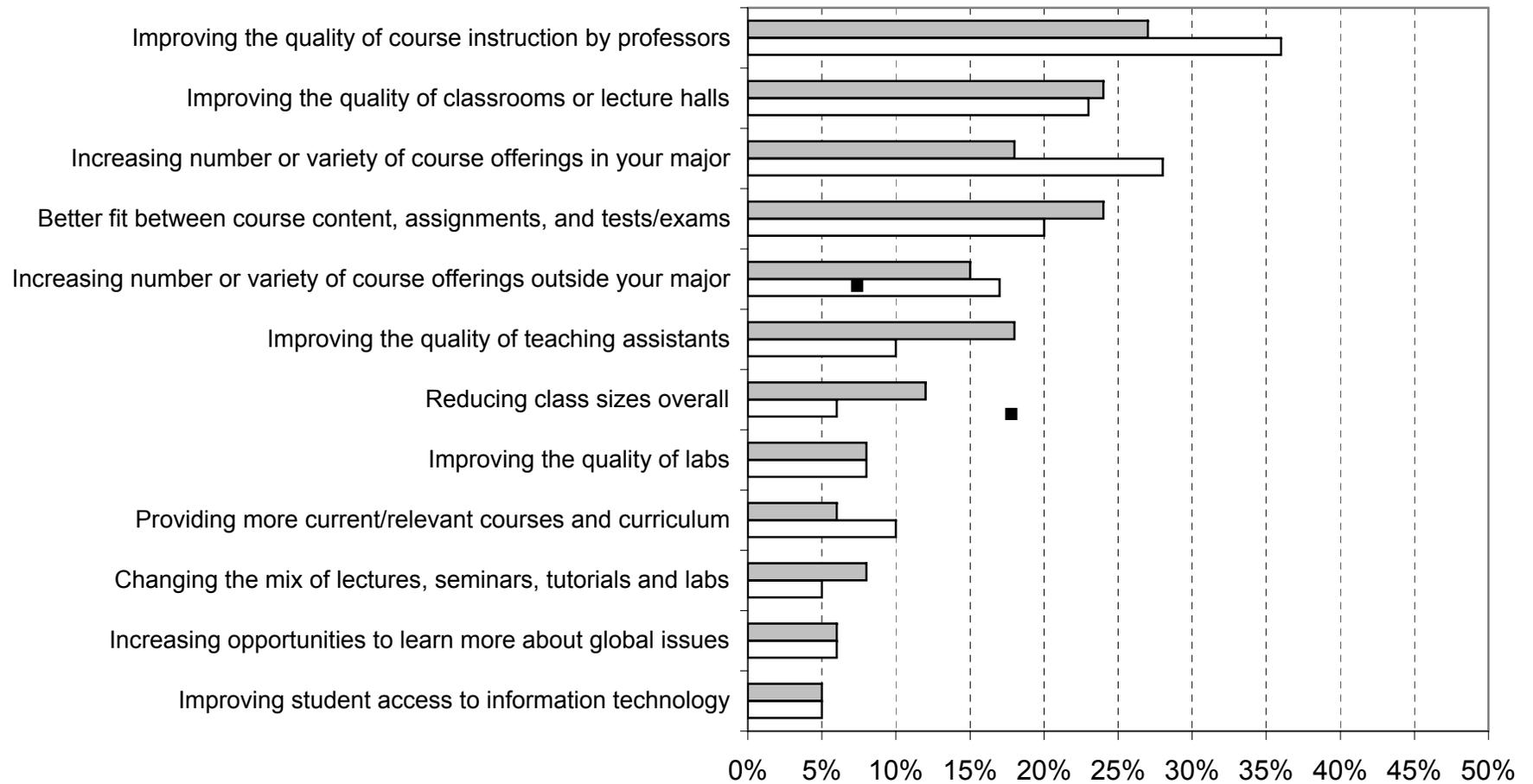
From a list of aspects relating to the student learning experience, respondents were asked to select two items that most need improvement *in the classroom*, as well as two items that most need improvement *outside the classroom*. Results are summarized in Figures 9 and 10.

First- and fourth-year students differ somewhat in their responses. Among first-year students, the items cited most frequently as requiring improvement *in the classroom* are the quality of classrooms or lecture halls, quality of course instruction by professors, and ensuring a better fit among course content, assignments and tests/exams. Each of these is cited by about a quarter of first-year students.

While slightly less than a quarter of fourth-year also cite the quality of classrooms or lecture halls as one of their "top two" issues, over a third report that the quality of course instruction requires improvement. Over a quarter of fourth-year students indicate that increasing the number or variety of course offerings within their major is among their top two priorities.

Outside of the classroom, almost a third of students in both first- and fourth-year indicate that improvem in the quality, availability or quantity of study spaces is a priority. Twenty-three

Figure 9: Top two priorities for improvement *in* the classroom

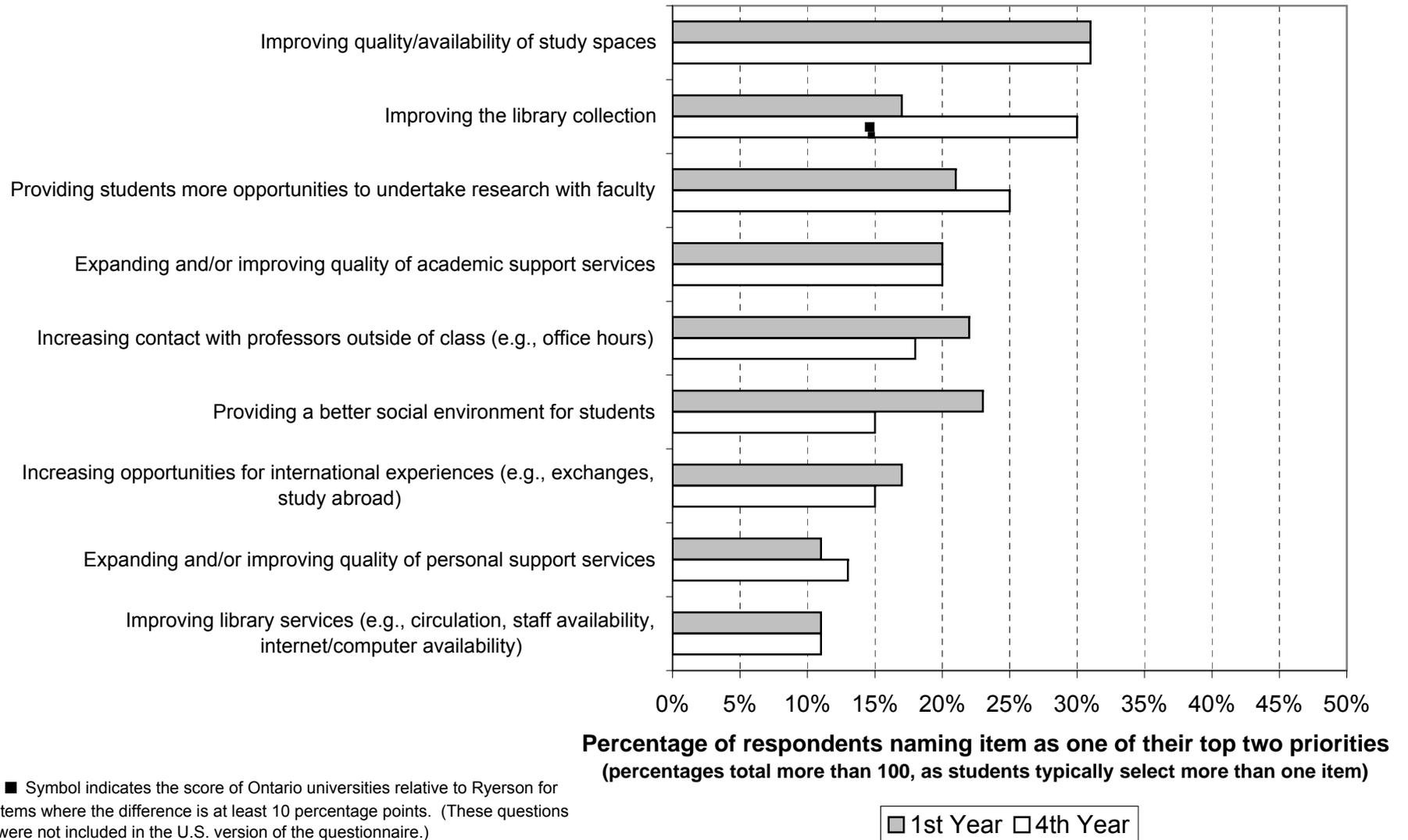


Percentage of students naming items as one of their top two priorities
 (percentages total more than 100, as students typically select more than one item)

■ Symbol indicates the score of Ontario universities relative to Ryerson for items where the difference is at least 10 percentage points. (These questions were not included in the U.S. version of the questionnaire.)

■ 1st Year □ 4th Year

Figure 10: Top two priorities for improvement outside the classroom



percent of first-year students report that a better social environment is required. About a fifth of first-year students name expanded academic support services, increased contact with professors outside of class, and more opportunities to undertake research with faculty in their “top two” items for improvement outside the classroom. The priorities among fourth-year students, in addition to study spaces, include improving the library collection (identified by 30 percent) and providing students with more opportunities to undertake research with faculty (identified by 25 percent).

Students were asked to identify the factor which has posed the biggest obstacle to their academic progress. Almost 10 percent indicate that they have faced no obstacles. Among first-year students, one quarter indicate that their academic performance at university has been the biggest obstacle, while a third cite financial pressures or work obligations. This differs from fourth-year students, only one in ten of whom report that academic performance has been the biggest obstacle to their progress. Thirty-eight percent of fourth-year students point to financial pressures or work obligations.

Three-quarters of first-year students and two-thirds of those in fourth year report that the quality of academic advising they have received at university is good or excellent.

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.

Fewer than a third of first-year students and about one quarter of fourth-year students indicate that, in the current academic year, they have felt a strong sense of community at Ryerson (i.e., felt that they are part of a group that shares common interests, goals, values and experiences).

PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

Profile of respondents

Table 3 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 Business are under-represented. The sample is representative of the population in terms of age, but students taking a part-time course load in fourth year were somewhat less likely to complete the survey than those on a full-time course load.

Table 3: Comparison of survey sample and population characteristics

	1 st year				4 th year			
	Sample		Population		Sample		Population	
Gender								
Female	1,199	59.3%	2,738	50.6%	899	58.8%	2,148	52.3%
Male	819	40.5%	2,666	49.3%	630	41.2%	1,958	47.7%
Not Stated	3	0.1%	9	0.2%				
Total	2,021	100.0%	5,413	100.0%	1,529	100.0%	4,106	100.0%
Faculty								
Arts	293	14.5%	688	12.7%	31	2.0%	78	1.9%
Business	439	21.7%	1,544	28.5%	411	26.9%	1,234	30.1%
Communication & Design	443	21.9%	1,090	20.1%	316	20.7%	789	19.2%
Community Services	407	20.1%	850	15.7%	386	25.2%	869	21.2%
Engineering, Arch & Sci	439	21.7%	1,241	22.9%	385	25.2%	1,136	27.7%
Total	2,021	100.0%	5,413	100.0%	1,529	100.0%	4,106	100.0%
Mean Age*	20.4		20.2		24.0		24.1	
Course Load								
Full-time	1,731	85.7%	4,608	85.1%	1,191	77.9%	2,976	72.5%
Part-time	290	14.3%	805	14.9%	338	22.1%	1,130	27.5%
Total	2,021	100.0%	5,413	100.0%	1,529	100.0%	4,106	100.0%

* Age (in years) as of the end of the 2005 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 (21 percent), B (55 percent), C (19 percent) and C- or lower (5 percent). The distribution of respondents in fourth year by reported overall grade range is: A (20 percent), B (67 percent), C (12 percent) and C- or lower (0 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, level of parental education, place of residence, length of commute to campus, and employment.

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 whether differences by gender may be a function of 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 Academic Challenge, Active and Collaborative Learning, Student-Faculty Interaction or Supportive Campus Environment. Females provide a higher average score on the Enriching Educational Experiences benchmark than do males.⁷

⁷ $t=5.22, p<.001$

Within the Enriching Educational Experiences benchmark, females are more likely than males to report doing 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. As mentioned above, it is not clear whether the differences observed between males and females are related to program of study.

Parental education

With respect to parents' highest level of education, over half (54 percent) of respondents indicate that at least one of their parents completed a bachelor's degree. (A further 6 percent attended university without earning a degree.) Nineteen percent report that at least one parent attended (but not necessarily completed) college, while 14 percent indicate that at least one parent finished high school. Six percent of respondents report that neither of their parents completed high school.

Students who report that at least one of their parents completed a bachelor's degree (or higher) provide significantly higher composite scores on the Active and Collaborative Learning, Student-Faculty Interaction and Enriching Educational Experiences benchmarks than do students who do not have a parent who completed university.⁸

In the area of Active and Collaborative Learning, students who have at least one parent with a bachelor's degree report asking questions in class or contributing to class discussions with greater frequency than do students whose parents did not complete university.

With regard to Student-Faculty Interaction, respondents who indicate that at least one of their parents completed university report discussing grades or assignments with an instructor with greater frequency than do students whose parents do not have a bachelor's degree.

Within the Enriching Educational Experiences benchmark, students who report that at least one parent completed university are more likely than are those whose parents did not to report that they have done (or plan to do) additional language coursework. Similarly, a greater proportion of these students report that they have engaged in (or plan to do) a culminating senior experience such as a capstone course, thesis or major project.

Employment

Sixty percent of students report working for pay in a typical week. Among those who are employed, 81 percent report that they work off campus only, 8 percent work on campus only and 11 percent work both on and off campus.

Almost one in five students works off campus for up to ten hours per week; one in four works between eleven and twenty hours. About 13 percent of students report working off campus for over twenty hours in a typical week.

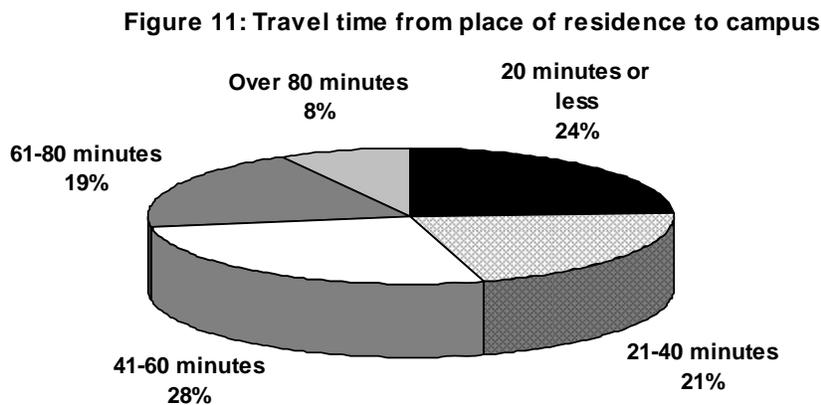
⁸ Difference between students who have at least one parent who completed a bachelor's degree and those whose parents did not: Active and Collaborative Learning ($t=2.88, p<.01$), Student-Faculty Interaction ($t=2.86, p.01<$) and Enriching Educational Experiences ($t=3.38, p<.001$)

Generally, students who are employed report higher levels of engagement than do non-employed students on the composite scores for the Active and Collaborative Learning, Student-Faculty Interaction, and Enriching Educational Experiences benchmarks.⁹ Further differences are found when a distinction is made among three groups of students: those who work only off campus, those who work only on campus, and those who work *both* on and off campus. Students who work only off campus score more highly than students who are not employed; however, they score lower than do those who work on campus (including those who work both on and off campus).¹⁰

Commuting and place of residence

Almost 60 percent of first- and fourth-year students live with parents, guardians or relatives. Fourteen percent of first-year students report living in residence. Almost a quarter of first-year students and over 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 (55 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 11.



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 Enriching Educational Experiences

than do those who take over 20 minutes.¹¹ Similar results are found when students who take 40 or fewer minutes are compared to those who take over 40 minutes.¹² Within the Enriching Educational Experiences benchmark, more of the fourth-year students who report traveling 40 minutes or less indicate that they have participated in a culminating senior experience (e.g., capstone course, senior project or thesis) than do students with a longer commute. Fourth-year students traveling 40 or fewer minutes are also more likely to report that they have studied abroad than are students traveling longer.

⁹ Differences between students who are employed and those who are not: Active and Collaborative Learning ($t=8.04$, $p<.001$); Student-Faculty Interaction ($t=8.29$, $p<.001$); Enriching Educational Experiences ($t=7.09$, $p<.001$)

¹⁰ Differences among students working on campus, off campus, and those working *both* on and off campus: Active and Collaborative Learning ($F=18.87$, $p<.001$); Student-Faculty Interaction ($F=69.78$, $p<.001$); Enriching Educational Experiences ($F=24.69$, $p<.001$)

¹¹ $t=4.35$, $p<.001$

¹² $t=3.35$, $p<.001$

In first year, students living on campus or 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 At the fourth-year level, students living in rental accommodations differ in 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.¹⁴

There is only a very weak, negative relationship between length of commute and the number of hours that students spend participating in co-curricular activities.¹⁵ Even among students who live very close to campus (i.e., those who travel 20 minutes or less), over half (56 percent) of respondents report spending no time at all participating in co-curricular activities in a typical week.

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	--
Parental education	--	Parent with degree higher than those where neither parent has degree	Parent with degree higher than those where neither parent has degree	Parent with degree higher than those where neither parent has degree	--
Employment	--	Employed higher than non-employed; Employed on campus higher than those employed off campus	Employed higher than non-employed; Employed on campus higher than those employed off campus	Employed higher than non-employed; Employed on campus higher than those employed off campus	--
Length of commute	--	--	--	Traveling 20 min or fewer minutes higher than those over 20 minutes; traveling 40 or fewer minutes higher than over 40 minutes	--
Place of residence	--	1 st year students renting or living on campus higher than living with parents or relatives.	--	Students who rent higher than those living with parents or relatives.	--

IMPLICATIONS OF NSSE

2006 marks the first year that all Ontario universities are required to participate in NSSE. The results 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.

Ryerson is a commuter institution: 55 percent of students report traveling over 40 minutes to get from home to campus. However, a long commute is associated only very weakly with lower

¹³ F=6.86, p<.001

¹⁴ F=7.19, p<.001

¹⁵ r_s= -.05, p<.01

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 might 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
- the University's emphasis on helping students to succeed academically, socially, and in terms of coping with non-academic responsibilities
- areas for improvement identified by students as priorities, including study spaces and the library collection

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. Over 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 scores at least as well as other Ontario universities, and exceeds them in a number of areas. Ryerson is similar to its American comparators in a number of areas, exceeds them in Level of Academic Challenge, but lags behind them in terms of Student-Faculty Interaction at both the first- and fourth-year levels.

At Ryerson, NSSE underpins student experience and engagement initiatives by providing a robust, long-term measurement regime. NSSE has become an integral part of the University's academic planning and budgeting processes. The Quality Agenda, Ryerson's 2006-07 budget, channeled resources to improve the student experience with initiatives such as creating more campus study spaces, increasing library hours, and enabling students to access a wide range of student services in a single location. In addition, a preliminary set of core NSSE questions has been developed locally to focus our improvement efforts on specific areas of importance to Ryerson. In 2006, Ryerson increased its sample size beyond standard NSSE levels to allow for disaggregation of responses to the level of individual programs. Consequently, survey results have begun to inform planning at the level of academic departments and Faculties in addition to the University-wide efforts already underway.

**RYERSON
UNIVERSITY**

NATIONAL SURVEY OF STUDENT ENGAGEMENT 2006

HIGHLIGHTS OF RESULTS

PREPARED BY THE UNIVERSITY PLANNING OFFICE