

*This Year's Study Involved 25 Canadian Universities*

# CANADIAN UNDERGRADUATE SURVEY CONSORTIUM

## 2006 Graduating Students Survey



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**The 2006 Graduating Students Survey is the twelfth** cooperative study undertaken by the Canadian Undergraduate Survey Consortium (CUSC). Since 1996, the survey has run in a three-year cycle, with different student populations targeted each year: first-year undergraduate students, all undergraduates, and graduating students. This year's study, involving 25 universities, presents the results for students graduating in 2006. Participating universities change from year to year. Traditionally, this has been a paper-based survey which universities have mailed to students. This was the first year that universities could choose to administer the survey using either a paper-based or an on-line version of the questionnaire. Overall, the response rate was 45% and produced a sample of approximately 10,500 students.



Categories of participating universities		
Group 1 (n=9)	Group 2 (n=7)	Group 3 (n=9)
King's University College Mount Saint Vincent University University of Lethbridge University of Northern British Columbia Nipissing University Saint Mary's University Trinity Western University Wilfrid Laurier University University of Winnipeg	Carleton University University of New Brunswick (Fredericton Campus) University of Regina Ryerson Polytechnic University Simon Fraser University University of Toronto at Scarborough University of Victoria <i>(In 2003, the University of Victoria was classified as a Group 1 university)</i>	University of British Columbia University of Calgary Concordia University Dalhousie University University of Manitoba Université de Montréal University of Ottawa University of Saskatchewan York University

*The response rates by university ranged from about 21% to 72% with an average of 45.4%. Response rates were very similar for the paper (42.1%) and on-line versions (48.9%) of the survey. Both represent a very good response rate for the type of survey.*



### **Personal profile**

- The typical graduating student is a single female, studying English, and almost 24 years old. In fact, about two-thirds of responding students are female; one-third are male.
- Three-quarters of students are 24 years of age or younger.
- Over 8 students in 10 are single, that is not married or living common-law.
- The vast majority of students report attending a university in their province of permanent residence.

### **Academic profile**

- Typically, students have majored in a Social Science, Arts and Humanities, or Business program, are studying full-time on a four-year degree, and have an average grade of about a B+.
- The average length of the degree program that students are enrolled in is 3.8 years while students report having spent an average of 4.5 years at the current university.

### **Academic activities**

The survey asked students to assess the contribution of 17 academic experiences to their personal growth and development. Of the academic experiences listed, five stand out as contributing very much to students' personal growth and development:

- faculty knowledge of discipline,
- faculty enthusiasm for subject material,
- classroom instruction,
- co-op or internship or practicum programs, and
- written assignments and essays.

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## Extra-curricular activities

Students were asked to rate the impact of 19 extra-curricular activities on their personal growth and development. In general, most students rate most extra-curricular activities as having little impact on their growth and development, with a few exceptions.

Overall the following activities had the greatest impact on the most students:

- interactions with other students,
- exposure to students from different cultures, and
- participating in on-campus recreational and sports programs.

## Use of and satisfaction with facilities and services

We asked students to rate their use of and satisfaction with 17 different facilities and services at their universities. Some services, by their very nature, are used by almost all students, while others are used by students who specifically require these services.

The services with the highest proportion of students who indicate that they are **very satisfied** are:

- services for students with disabilities,
- campus medical services,
- library facilities, and
- co-op programs.

## Skill growth and development

8 out of 10 students rate their university as doing a **good or excellent** job for contributing to their growth and development in these specific areas:

- working independently,
- broad knowledge of their major field of study, and
- thinking logically and analytically.

7 in 10 students rate their university as doing a **good or excellent** job for contributing to their growth and development in the following areas:

- ability to access information,
- written communication skills,
- accepting people from different cultures,
- skills for planning and completing projects,
- ability to understand abstract reasoning,
- commitment to lifelong learning, and
- cooperative interaction in groups.

Students rate their universities particularly **poorly** in terms of their institutions' contribution to growth and development in these areas:

- mathematical skills,
- appreciation of the arts,
- second or third language skills,
- entrepreneurial skills, and
- spiritual development.

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## Student satisfaction

- The vast majority of students agree that their professors seem knowledgeable in their fields, communicate well in their teaching, and are reasonably accessible outside of class. Many students also report that some professors have had a major positive influence on their academic career.
- The vast majority of students are satisfied with the quality of the education they received from their university (89%) and agree that their learning experience at university was intellectually stimulating (90%).
- According to students, the weakness of some of their professors is their lack of knowledge of career opportunities in their field. While a majority agree that their professors are knowledgeable of career opportunities, about 1 student in 3 disagrees.
- Notably most graduates (83%) report that they are satisfied with the opportunity to develop lasting friendships.
- Many students (47%) are very dissatisfied with the concern shown by their university for them as individuals, and most (59%) report that they sometimes feel they get the run-around from their university. While most (71%) feel that they are part of their university, a considerable number (28%) disagree with this statement.
- In spite of this, the vast majority of students generally report being satisfied (89%) with the overall quality of education they received at their university, and almost as many (82%) say their university has met or exceeded their expectations. Indeed, most say they are satisfied (89%) with their decision to attend their university. These positive impressions are further reflected in the fact that 86% of students would recommend their university to others.



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## Education financing and debt

Among those students reporting debt, the average amount per student is just over \$24,000.

The most common source of debt is student loans, as almost 4 students in 10 report such debt. As well, student loans also account for 58% of the total reported amount of student debt, while loans from financial institutions (21% of all debt) and loans from parents or family (18% of all debt) account for most of the rest of the remainder of their debt.

The most commonly used sources of funding are parents or other family members (56%), although at least one-third of students report relying on personal savings, earnings from summer or current employment, or government loans or bursaries. On average, students' reported sources contribute just over \$12,100.

8 students in 10 report having at least one credit card. Almost 3 in 4 of those who have credit cards report regularly paying off their balance each month. Among all students with at least one credit card, their current balance owing is an average of \$670. Among those with a credit card balance, the average balance owing is over 4 times higher at approximately \$2,800.

About 6 students in 10 are currently employed. Students who are employed spend an average of 19 hours a week working. Most of those who work (65%) report at least some negative impact from their employment on their academic performance.

## Future education and employment

Most students are prepared for employment, as demonstrated by the fact that some 8 students in 10 have a current curriculum vitae.

Almost half of students intend to continue their education in the first year after graduating. 9 students in 10 report that they will or may take additional university studies in the future.

Many also intend to simply take time off (20%) or travel for an extended period (38%). About 1 student in 4 will be involved in unpaid volunteer work in that first year.

About 1 graduating student in 3 has arranged for full or part-time employment other than a summer job, including about 1 in 5 who has arranged a full-time job.

Those with full-time jobs, about 2 in 3 report that these jobs are permanent.

6 students in 10 report that their degree helped them get their job and that their job was related to the knowledge and skills acquired from study at university.

On average, students with arranged jobs anticipate earning almost \$33,000 annually, although the amount is considerably lower for those with part-time (\$20,400) than full-time employment (\$37,700).

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## Conclusion

Generally, graduating Canadian students are satisfied with their university and they have had generally positive experiences while attending. As noted, the vast majority would recommend their university to others, suggesting that students typically believe that the years they spent working toward their degree were worthwhile.

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This year's study presents the results for undergraduate students who were graduating in 2006.

Table 1 shows the types of students that CUSC has surveyed each year.

Year	Sample	Number of participating universities
1994	All undergraduates	8
1996	All undergraduates	10
1997	Graduating students	9
1998	First-year students	19
1999	All undergraduates	23
2000	Graduating students	22
2001	First-year students	26
2002	All undergraduates	30
2003	Graduating students	26
2004	First-year students	27
2005	All undergraduates	28
2006	Graduating students	25

This year's study is coordinated through the University of Manitoba Student Affairs division and is a cooperative effort by all universities involved. If your university is interested in participating in future CUSC surveys, please contact any of the CUSC steering committee members listed below:

**Lynn Smith**, University of Manitoba  
(204) 480-1498  
Lynn\_Smith@UManitoba.ca

**Dan Pletzer**, Nipissing University  
(705) 474-3450  
danp@nipissingu.ca

**Michael O'Sullivan**, Dalhousie University  
(902) 494-6776  
Michael.OSullivan@Dal.CA

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**Canadian Undergraduate Survey Consortium**  
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