



QUALITY

RESULTS FROM THE 2015 ONTARIO POST-SECONDARY
STUDENT SURVEY

OUSAA

Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance

ABOUT OUSA

OUSA represents the interests of over 140,000 professional and undergraduate, full-time and part-time university students at eight institutions across Ontario. Our vision is for an accessible, affordable, accountable, and high quality post-secondary education in Ontario. To achieve this vision we've come together to develop solutions to challenges facing higher education, build broad consensus for our policy options, and lobby government to implement them.

CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	4
INTRODUCTION	6
METHODOLOGY	8
RESULTS	9
DISCUSSION	18
CONCLUSION	22

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

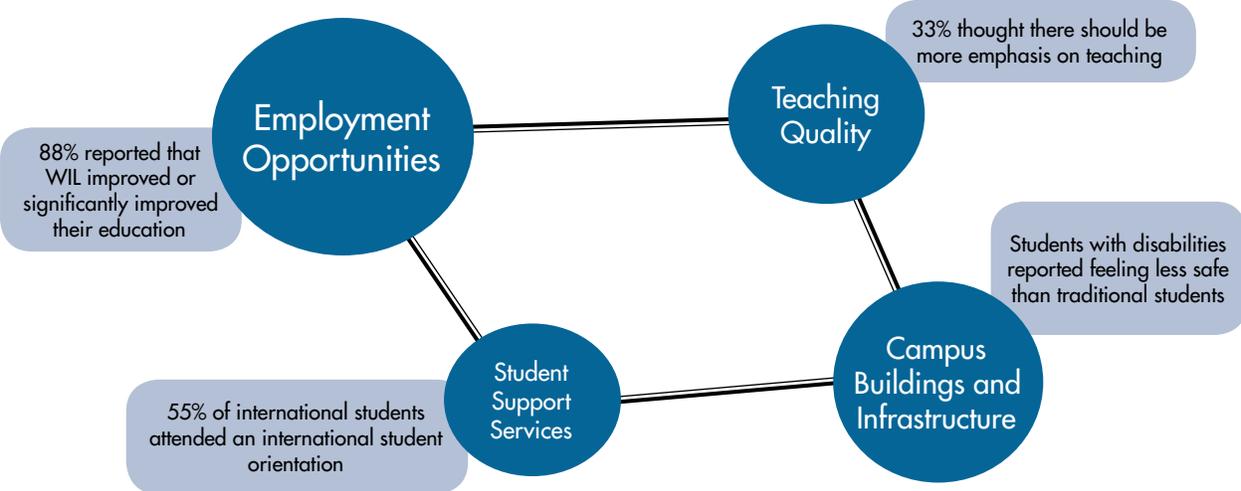
As an advocate for many of Ontario’s university students, OUSA prides itself on keeping their voices at the forefront of discussions about systemic change. To this end we survey our membership to ensure that we have the best possible information about their experiences, and can make recommendations for improvements. This report is one in a three part series that presents the results from the 2015 Ontario Post-secondary Student Survey. The discussion herein will assist our organization in determining the quality of teaching and learning, the impact that work integrated learning has on student learning, the quality of the student experience, and the capacity for civic engagement, among others.

4 /

In November 2015, over 10,000 individuals anonymously participated in the 2015 Ontario Post-Secondary Student Survey from six of OUSA’s eight member student associations. From these participants we gathered 9,197 complete responses from undergraduate students. The vast majority of respondents were domestic students: 91 percent identified themselves as Canadian citizens and another three percent identified as permanent residents. Five percent of the sample indicated they were international students in Canada on a visa.

Policy priorities related to quality were significant for our respondents. Employment opportunities for students were the third most common policy initiative (37 percent), which was followed by campus buildings and infrastructure (30 percent), teaching quality (28 percent) and student support services (23 percent).

Most students (60 percent) reported that they had participated in a class that was based primarily online during their studies. Slightly less than half of these respondents said that they would take an online course again, while one third were unsure. Mature students and Indigenous students were the most likely to have had experience in online courses. Two thirds of respondents reported that they had never participated in work-integrated learning (WIL) during their post-secondary education. Mature students were more likely to have had a WIL experience than traditionally-aged students. In terms of satisfaction, the vast majority of respondents were either satisfied (42 percent) or very satisfied (42 percent) with their WIL experience. In addition, most of these students also reported that their WIL experience improved (43 percent) or significantly improved (45 percent) their education overall.





Over one third (36 percent) of the respondents thought there was equal emphasis between teaching and research at their university, while 23 percent thought there was more emphasis on research, and 12 percent reported a larger teaching emphasis. Half of the respondents thought that their universities' current research and teaching emphasis was acceptable, but a third of the respondents thought there should be more emphasis on teaching. A small majority of respondents (54 percent) felt that their universities value the feedback students provide in course and teacher evaluations, while 46 percent did not. A breakdown by institution shows that McMaster's students felt most confident that their institution valued their course evaluation results. 41 percent of Indigenous students indicated having had the opportunity to take a course with significant Aboriginal, Native, or Indigenous content in university. However, a third of our Indigenous respondents indicated that they had not had this type of learning opportunity.

About one third of the international students surveyed decided to leave Canada based on career opportunities. Another significant motivation was the fact that many of these students missed their friends and families. 55 percent of international students indicated that they had attended an orientation program for international students at the beginning of their studies. Among these attendees, most thought that it was either somewhat useful (56 percent) or very useful (28 percent). Finally, 38 percent of international respondents who had used their University Health Insurance Plan (UHIP) said that they were satisfied with their coverage. Almost the same proportion (36 percent) reported never having used their UHIP coverage at the time they were surveyed.

The majority of respondents (57 percent) said that their part-time instructors' availability outside of class was the same as their full-time professors' availability, while 33 percent indicated their availability was less or much less. Meanwhile, 67 percent of respondents said their part-time instructors' course content was just as engaging as their full-time professors' content, and 71 percent said their part-time instructors' teaching abilities were the same as their full-time professors' abilities.

The vast majority of respondents felt either very comfortable (64 percent) or somewhat comfortable (32 percent) on their university campus. When not on campus, 41 percent of respondents spend more than half their time in the city where their campus is located, while almost the same proportion (35 percent) spends less than half their time in the city where their campus is located. Students with disabilities reported feeling less safe in their neighbourhoods at all hours of the day and night than their peers. 39 percent of respondents felt that their institutions' municipalities actively engaged students, while 31 percent felt their institutions' municipalities did not actively engage students. Looking ahead to employment, 75 percent of respondents reported that they did not intend to work in the city where their university is located for at least one year after graduation. However, students who grew up in Northern Ontario were far more inclined to work in their institutions' respective municipalities.

Going forward, the government should focus its policy efforts on incentivizing experiential, service, and work integrated learning opportunities for students across all disciplines and institutions. Next, it is essential for the government to include special purpose grants to institutions that are attempting to provide effective teaching and learning for underrepresented groups such as first generation students, mature students, Indigenous students and students with disabilities, among others.

INTRODUCTION

6/ All willing and qualified students in Ontario should be able to access and excel within the post-secondary education system. To achieve this, decision makers and influencers need reliable evidence to describe the successes and failures of the system's current arrangement. As an advocate for many of Ontario's university students, OUSA prides itself on keeping their voices at the forefront of discussions about systemic change. To this end we survey our membership biennially to ensure the best possible information about student experiences and recommendations for change are readily available.

This survey comes out of an initial national collaboration in 2009 when a multi-institutional survey was conducted to engage the entire student body and share their opinions of post-secondary education. The end goal of this previous project was to provide data to national and provincial, student and government leaders to help inform their decisions on improving higher education in Canada.

OUSA's relationships and partnerships have changed over the years, but the value of the student voice remains central to our operations. This current project is unique in its focus on undergraduate students in Ontario and is representative of the voices that make up the OUSA membership.

Results from the 2015 Ontario Post-Secondary Student Survey (OPSSS) aid us in assessing the quality of teaching and learning taking place at select universities, the impact that contract faculty have on the quality of university education, the quality of the student experience, and the capacity for civic engagement, among others. This is a crucial component for OUSA's policy research in that it provides accurate, up-to-date information on our members' attitudes and behaviours with respect to the quality of higher education. Results will be used to inform advocacy efforts and policy development over the next two years, until the administration of the next survey.

Maintaining the quality of university education during times of declining government funding is a collective responsibility that secures the strength and reputation of the sector as well as the province's economy as a whole. The quality of the PSE system should be considered an essential part of Ontario's policies. OUSA measures quality based on the level of student satisfaction with their instructors, campus experience, and professional development. In this report, several different facets of quality will be explored: teaching quality, quality of online learning courses, quality of work-integrated learning opportunities, quality of student experiences on campus, and the quality of institutional-municipal relations for civic



engagement. This research looks at the ways that each of these components impact students' perceived value of the university sector.

Professional development opportunities for students are lacking. Not only are there not enough opportunities available to students, many do not know of existing programs and are therefore unable to even begin their professional development. Furthermore, when it comes to engaging in the broader community in which campuses are located, universities are behind the curve. Despite the multitude of opportunities for student learning and development in these communities, there remains a distinct lack of initiative on the part of university administrations in developing community engagement programs. Additionally, faculty and part-time instructors do not have adequate training or expertise in effective teaching practices. With these concerns in mind, this report will discuss the quality of OUSA's member institutions' employment opportunities for students, campus buildings and infrastructure, and teaching quality. In service of these queries, the report will describe the methodology and limitations of the Ontario Post-Secondary Student Survey before presenting the results.

/7



METHODOLOGY

Students belonging to six of OUSA's then-seven member student associations were surveyed in November 2015 (Brock, Laurier, McMaster, Trent Durham, Waterloo, and Queen's). Our application to the Non-medical Research Ethics Board at Western University was not approved due to institutional restrictions regarding the use of student email addresses. Laurentian University's Students' General Assembly was not a member at the time of administering the survey.

8/

The survey questionnaire was 118 questions long, although not all respondents were asked every question. The questionnaire was uploaded onto a secure online web platform hosted by CCI Research Inc. Once we received ethics approval, invitations to participate in the survey were sent to students' university emails. Each invitation contained a link to the survey and was mailed from our member student associations. If students decided to take part in the survey, they were directed to a detailed letter of information that explained the risks and benefits of participating as well as the steps taken to keep students' identities private and responses confidential.

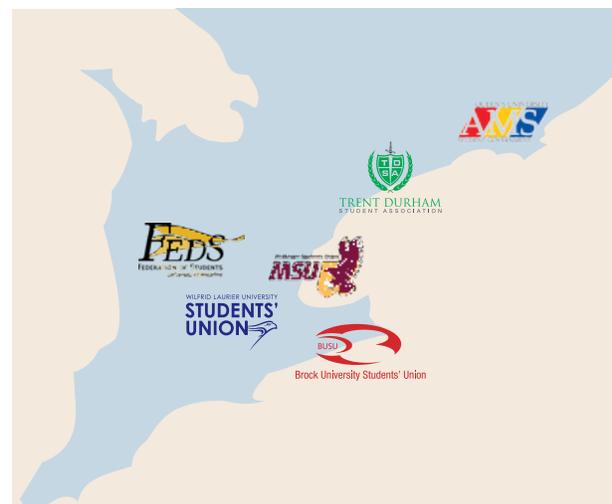
Responses were only recorded after students clicked "submit" at the end of the survey. Respondents could skip any question or invalidate their responses by exiting the browser at any time. All surveys were completed anonymously and participation was entirely voluntary.

To incentivize participation, respondents were invited to enter a draw for a chance to win one of two iPad Mini 3 tablets upon completing the survey. Respondents were asked to provide their email addresses if they were interested in entering the draw. All voluntarily submitted email addresses were stored separately from survey responses to maintain respondents' anonymity. OUSA never had access to students' email addresses.

Survey participants were recruited using a non-random sampling method. Prior to data analysis, all data were weighted by institutional enrolment to provide a more accurate representation of the OUSA membership at large. In addition to observing differences in descriptive statistics, statistical testing was used to compare means and certain variables' independence from one another. These data analysis techniques helped reveal meaningful patterns in the dataset. Only significant results are reported herein.

LIMITATIONS

As previously stated, the survey was administered to only six of OUSA's then-seven member schools. Unfortunately, the results cannot be generalized to the students attending schools who were unable to participate. Western is the largest OUSA member school so its exclusion from the dataset restricts the sampling frame. This opens results to selection bias. Another limitation, inherent to all survey research, lies in the nature of self-reported data: OUSA must rely on respondents to be honest, truthful, and forthcoming in their responses. Finally, not all students respond to every question, which means less insight is provided in certain areas.



Despite these limitations, the data still hold validity and are useful for providing insight into the student experience. The sample is not made up of a homogenous group of respondents, as there are a significant number of students from varying backgrounds and demographics. The survey included several screening and demographic questions to allow for more targeted analyses based on institution, year of study, program of study, identification as having a disability, identification as an Indigenous student, mature student status, full-time status, part-time status, parental education, and parental income. Background information regarding the type of neighborhood respondents grew up in was also explored to see if differences were found among students who grew up in rural, Northern, urban communities, or First Nations Reserves. The responses to these questions suggest widespread coverage of the membership. Responses have also been weighted so as to prevent misinterpretations in the data analysis.

RESULTS

SURVEY PARTICIPATION

Over 10,000 students participated in the 2015 Ontario Post-Secondary Student Survey. From these participants, we gathered 9,197 complete responses from undergraduate students (surveys were considered complete if the respondent answered at least 30 percent of the questions they were asked). About 225 respondents were disqualified when they indicated they were working towards a Masters or Doctorate degree.

Results were weighted by institutional enrolment to ensure results would be representative of OUSA's membership. Weighted participation results are listed in the table below by institution. All further results are weighted.

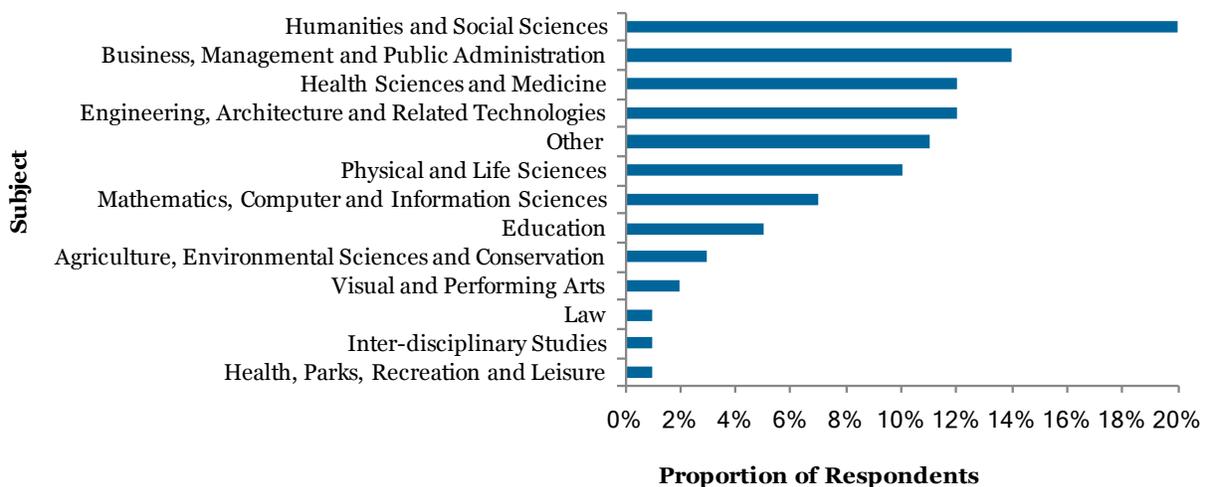
Table 1: Weighted survey participation by institution.

Institution	Weighted Count	Weighted Proportion
University of Waterloo	1778	29%
McMaster University	1405	23%
Queen's University	1192	19%
Brock University	858	14%
Wilfrid Laurier University	851	14%
Trent University Durham	51	1%
Total	6134	100%

Survey participation was relatively even across academic years of study: 23 percent of respondents were in their first year, 24 percent were in their second year, 25 percent were in their third, and 22 percent were in their fourth year. Very few students (6 percent) were in their fifth or higher year of study.

The majority of respondents were studying Humanities or the Social Sciences, however this only represents 20 percent of the sample. The next most common areas of study were Business, Management, and Public Administration (14 percent), Health Sciences and Medicine (12 percent) and Engineering, Architecture, and Related Technologies (12 percent). The vast majority of respondents were completing their Bachelor's degrees (92 percent), but very small minorities were working towards an undergraduate certificate or diploma (3 percent) or a professional degree in medicine, dentistry, veterinary medicine, law, or optometry (1 percent). Almost all of the respondents (96 percent) were enrolled full-time; only 4 percent were enrolled part-time.

Figure 1: Survey participation by field of study, n = 6132.



Citizenship

When asked about their immigration status, 91 percent of our respondents reported being Canadian citizens, 3 percent identified as permanent residents, and 5 percent identified as international students in Canada on a visa.

Students were asked to identify which country they were living in when they applied to university, and while the majority of international applicants that applied to Canadian universities indicated they applied from China (47 percent), the next most represented countries included Nigeria (5 percent) and India (3 percent).

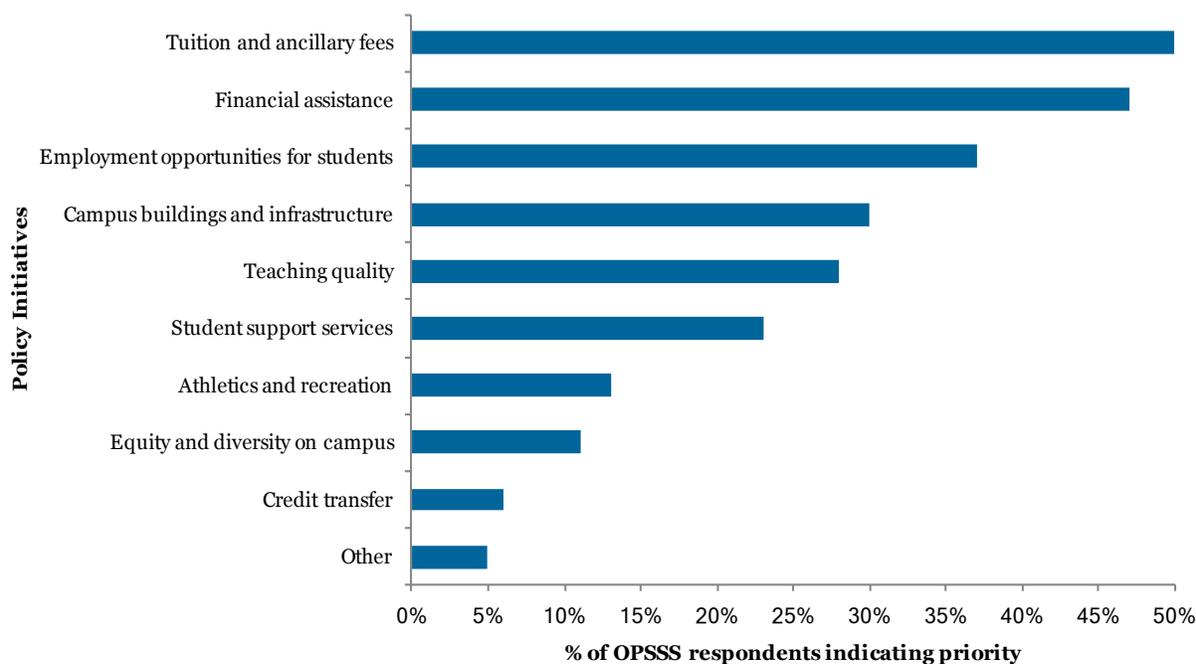
Provincial Background

A vast majority of students (92 percent) identified as graduates from Ontario when asked which province/territory they had graduated secondary school. The second highest proportion (3 percent) graduated from a high school in British Columbia.

QUALITY AS A POLICY PRIORITY

The quality of teaching and learning in Ontario universities proved to be an important topic for the survey respondents. While less critical than issues of affordability overall, there were still some indications that quality of the university experience is of general concern to many of our respondents. In-study employment opportunities for students was the third most frequent selection when respondents were asked to identify areas needing improvement (37 percent), which was followed by campus buildings and infrastructure (30 percent), teaching quality (28 percent) and student support services (23 percent). In summary, our respondents ranked the quality of universities as a policy priority, second only to affordability.

Figure 2: Respondents' indications of policy initiatives in need of the most improvement, n = 5262



TEACHING & LEARNING

Part of this survey was designed to explore the types of teaching and learning experiences students were having, as well as to gain insight into how they felt these areas could be improved in the future. As such, students were asked to reflect on their experiences with online courses, work-integrated learning opportunities and the level of emphasis placed on research and/or teaching. The results were varied and attempts were made throughout to examine student perspectives from various demographics such as: institution, year of study, program of study, students that identify as Indigenous, students that identify as having a disability, and mature students.

Online Courses

Many respondents (60 percent) reported that they had participated in a class that was based primarily online during their studies. Slightly less than half of these respondents, however, said that they would

take a primarily online course again, while one third were unsure if they would at all. Mature students and Indigenous students reported higher levels of participation in online courses than traditional students. This could be related to distance from campus or the fact that many mature students are working while attending university. However, it is worth noting that there is no statistically significant difference between Indigenous students and non-Indigenous students in online course participation based on a Pearson Chi-Square test ($\chi^2(2) = 1.56, p = 0.46, \Phi = 0.02$). On the other hand, there is a statistically significant difference between mature students and traditionally-aged students based on a Pearson Chi-Square test ($\chi^2(9) = 311.44, p = < 0.001, \Phi = 0.26$).

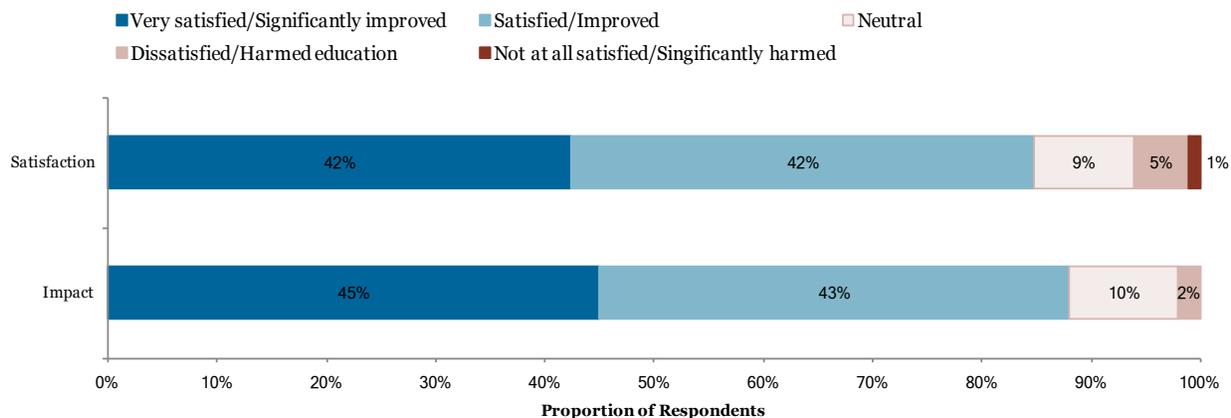
Work-Integrated Learning

Approximately half of our respondents indicated that they would like their courses to use more active learning techniques and another substantial proportion (42 percent) said they would like no change in the amount of active learning. This pattern was consistent when broken down by institution, as well as by targeted student groups (i.e. Indigenous students, mature students, students with disabilities).

Two thirds of respondents reported that they had never participated in work-integrated learning (WIL) during their post-secondary education (PSE) experience. Mature students were statistically significantly more likely to have had a WIL experience than traditionally-aged students ($\chi^2(9) = 477.47, p = < 0.001, \Phi = 0.32$). Mature students may be more concerned with acquiring job-specific skills and experience for professional development. Given Waterloo's reputation for co-op learning, the highest participation in WIL was among respondents from Waterloo University, while the lowest rate was from students at Queen's University.

When respondents that had participated in WIL were asked to rate their satisfaction with the experience, the vast majority were either satisfied (42 percent) or very satisfied (42 percent). In addition to this widespread satisfaction, most of these students also reported that their WIL experience improved (43 percent) or significantly improved (45 percent) their educational experience. These findings further the argument that experiential opportunities and work-integrated learning are satisfying and impactful elements of university programs.

**Figure 3: Comparison of satisfaction and educational impact of work-integrated learning
n = 1804.**



Research versus Teaching

Over one third (36 percent) of the respondents thought there was equal emphasis between teaching and research at their university, while 23 percent thought there was more emphasis on research, and 12 percent reported a larger teaching emphasis. Breaking this down by institution shows that students from Laurier reported higher levels of teaching emphasis in their courses, while students from Waterloo reported the strongest research focus. Most of McMaster's students reported that their courses tended to balance both research and teaching.

Half of the respondents thought that their universities' current research and teaching emphasis was acceptable, but a third of the respondents thought there should be more emphasis on teaching in particular. These findings were also supported by the open-ended responses from the survey, which demonstrated a prominent concern about the level of emphasis, skill and overall quality associated with teaching. Overall, a balance of research and teaching was most supported. This was consistent across all institutions and demographics included in the survey. However, when we controlled for subject matter, a Pearson Chi-Square test shows that there are significant differences in what students feel deserves more emphasis. For example, students in education programs were typically less in favour of a research emphasis, and more inclined to favour a teaching emphasis. Fields such as health sciences and physical sciences, instead, had more respondents in favour of a research emphasis compared to the expected values ($\chi^2(36) = 64.57, p = < 0.001, \Phi = 0.13$).

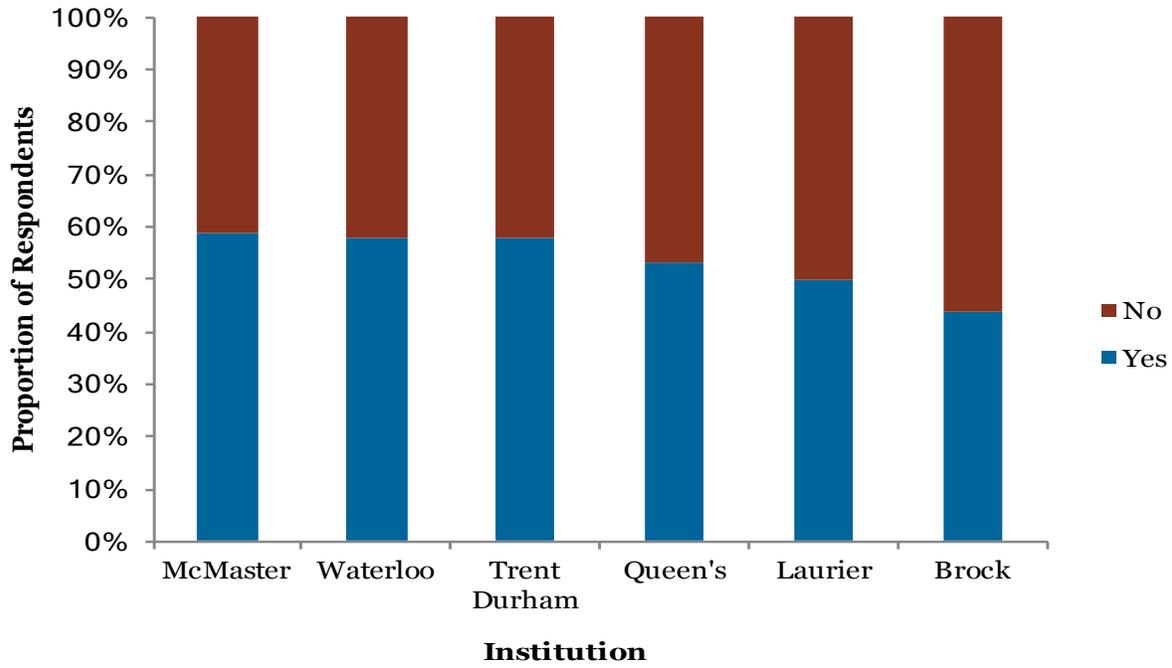
Course Evaluations

Most respondents (54 percent) felt that their universities value the feedback students provide in course and teacher evaluations, while 46 percent did not. A breakdown by institution shows that McMaster's students felt most confident that their institution valued their course evaluation results, while students from Brock were less confident of this fact. Overall, results indicate that students are very mixed as to whether they felt their evaluations of courses have much influence at their respective institutions.

RESULTS INDICATE THAT STUDENTS ARE VERY MIXED AS TO WHETHER THEY FEEL THEIR EVALUATIONS OF COURSES HAVE MUCH INFLUENCE AT THEIR RESPECTIVE INSTITUTIONS.



Figure 4: Perceived value of course/teacher evaluations by institution, n = 5221.



Interestingly, students with disabilities reported having less confidence in their universities' attention to student evaluations ($\chi^2(1) = 13.24, p = < 0.001, \Phi = 0.13$), while Indigenous students reported higher than average levels of confidence ($\chi^2(2) = 7.84, p = 0.02, \Phi = 0.04$).

Indigenous Content

For students who identified as an Indigenous person (or as having Indigenous ancestry), 41 percent indicated having had the opportunity to take a course with significant Aboriginal, Native, or Indigenous content in university. While this is promising, a third of our Indigenous respondents still indicated that they had not had this type of learning opportunity at any point during their time in school. As such, these mixed results suggest that more can be done to ensure Indigenous content is made available to undergraduate students in Ontario.

INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

International student respondents were given a unique set of questions in the survey, which were intended to explore issues and concerns more specific to this demographic. One of the themes the survey fleshed out was regarding international students' motivations for leaving Canada after their respective programs concluded. The figure below shows the diversity of motivational factors that international students reported.

ALMOST ONE THIRD OF THE INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS SURVEYED **DECIDED TO LEAVE CANADA** BASED ON CAREER OPPORTUNITIES BACK HOME OR A LACK THEREOF HERE.

Table 2: International students' reasons for leaving Canada upon graduation, n = 141.

Reason	Percentage
Career opportunities or lack thereof	30%
Family/Friends (Canada isn't home)	24%
Academic Reasons	12%
Financial Reasons	6%
Don't like Canada	6%
Want to travel	5%
Only here on exchange	4%
Visa/immigration policy	4%
Culture	2%
Other	8%

This data illustrates that almost one third of the international students surveyed decided to leave Canada based on career opportunities back home or a lack thereof here. Another significant motivation was the fact that many of these students missed their friends and families. Very few (12 percent) cited academic reasons for their planned departure, and even fewer (2 percent) felt that there were cultural factors at play in their decision-making. Overall, the fairly equal spread of selections suggests that there are few common reasons consistently cited by international students explaining their pending departure post-graduation.

/ 15

Another area of interest was orientation programs; 55 percent of self-identified international student respondents indicated that they had attended an orientation program for international students at the beginning of their studies. So while the majority of international students are experiencing some form of orientation to their Ontario university, it is clear there are still large numbers remaining disconnected. However, 28 percent said that while they did not attend orientation, a program was offered to them upon arrival. Among the international student respondents who had attended orientation programming, most thought that it was either somewhat useful (56 percent) or very useful (28 percent). These findings suggest that orientation programs are well-received by the international students who participate in them.

A final area of interest was the health insurance policies that are automatically applied to international students. While a plurality of international student respondents (38%) said they were satisfied with their coverage under the University Health Insurance Plan (UHIP), an equally large segment (36%), reported having never used it. The respondents who indicated that they were dissatisfied with their UHIP coverage often cited the amounts covered to be lacking, the wait times to be too lengthy after claim submissions, and the fact that its annual fees were too expensive.

CONTRACT FACULTY

This survey also explored students' perceived differences between full-time and part-time faculty. Students seemed to be aware of their instructors' employment statuses as indicated by the substantial amount of respondents (68 percent) who provided an answer when prompted. Only 33 percent said they did not know. This trend of not knowing significantly decreased as year of study increased. Among those who were aware, 41 percent said they had both full-time and part-time instructors, 25 percent said they had only full-time instructors, and just 2 percent said they had only part-time instructors.

Students who had experienced instruction by both were asked to compare their part-time instructors to their full-time professors in terms of overall availability, teaching quality, and engagement. Over half of these students (57 percent) said that their part-time instructors' availability outside of class was the same as their full-time professors' availability. At the same time, 33 percent of the respondents indicated that part-time instructors' availability was less or much less than their full-time professors' availability.

16/

33% OF THE RESPONDENTS INDICATED THAT PART-TIME INSTRUCTORS' AVAILABILITY WAS LESS OR MUCH LESS THAN THEIR FULL-TIME PROFESSORS' AVAILABILITY.

Any semblance of difference decreased when comparing engagement of course content and teaching ability; 67 percent of respondents said their part-time instructors' course content was just as engaging as their full-time professors' content, and 71 percent said their part-time instructors' teaching abilities were the same as their full-time professors' abilities. Although one might expect there to be a distinction between these two types of faculty, it may be possible that part-time faculty have more of a teaching emphasis, and therefore appeal more to students in coursework. This would be consistent with earlier findings from the survey that indicated more emphasis on teaching was desirable amongst a significant portion of students. In short, respondents often indicated in their open-ended comments that teaching quality was a prominent concern for them, with many stating that their professors lacked teaching skills and/or were better as only researchers.

STUDENT LIFE

The survey included questions exploring the level of comfort students had on campus, the amount of time they spent in the cities where their respective campuses were located, as well as their long-term intentions for where they planned to find work upon graduation.

The majority of respondents felt comfortable on their university campus—64 percent were very comfortable and 32 percent were somewhat comfortable. On the other hand, Indigenous students and students with disabilities reported statistically significant differences from their counterparts. Pearson Chi-Square tests show that students who are Indigenous ($\chi^2(6) = 29.69, p = < 0.001, \Phi = 0.07$) or have some type of disability ($\chi^2(3) = 21.36, p = < 0.001, \Phi = 0.16$) are more likely to report feeling some level of discomfort on campus. These findings may validate assumptions that campuses can be hostile places for certain marginalized/under represented students.





STUDENTS WHO ARE INDIGENOUS AND THOSE WHO HAVE SOME TYPE OF DISABILITY ARE MORE LIKELY TO REPORT FEELING DISCOMFORT ON CAMPUS.

When not on campus, 41 percent of respondents spend more than half their time in the city where their campus is located, while almost the same proportion (35 percent) spend less than half their time in the city where their campus is located. Looking at specific institutions, the results indicate that students at Waterloo and Laurier are more inclined to spend significant time in the cities where their campuses are located, while students at Trent University Durham are less likely to do so. However, this institutional breakdown does not yield a statistically significant relationship however ($\chi^2(12) = 14.13, p = 0.29, \Phi = 0.13$). There were also no significant differences within various demographic groups regarding this question.

The survey also probed feelings of security within their institutions' municipalities. Students with disabilities reported feeling less safe in their neighbourhoods at all hours of the day and night than traditional students, as verified by a Pearson Chi-Square test ($\chi^2(2) = 12.53, p = 0.002, \Phi = 0.12$). This could be related to the general tendency of students with disabilities to report higher feelings of discomfort on campus as well. Other demographic groups did not indicate significantly different feelings of security from the overall average, which was generally high.

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

The survey also asks students to reflect on their institutions' level of engagement with its respective municipality. Only 39 percent of respondents felt that their institutions' municipalities actively engaged its students, while 31 percent felt their institutions' municipalities did not actively engage their students. The specific institution does not have a statistically significant relationship with this variable ($\chi^2(8) = 7.87, p = 0.446, \Phi = 0.10$). However, McMaster's students reported lower feelings of municipal engagement than most and higher feelings of disengagement as a result.

Looking at Indigenous students specifically, the results indicate that this student population has an equal feeling of engagement/disengagement between their institutions and their municipalities, though this relationship is not statistically significant ($\chi^2(4) = 6.59, p = 0.159, \Phi = 0.09$). Overall, there appear to be very mixed feelings as to the level of civic engagement amongst students in their local municipalities.

Looking ahead to employment, 75 percent of respondents reported that they did not intend to work in the city where their university is located for at least one year after graduation. However, when we look at students who grew up in Northern Ontario, the results indicate that these students are far more inclined to work in their institutions' respective municipalities ($\chi^2(1) = 7.72, p = 0.005, \Phi = 0.09$). Other demographic backgrounds such as students from urban areas, rural communities, or First Nations reserves did not follow this trend.

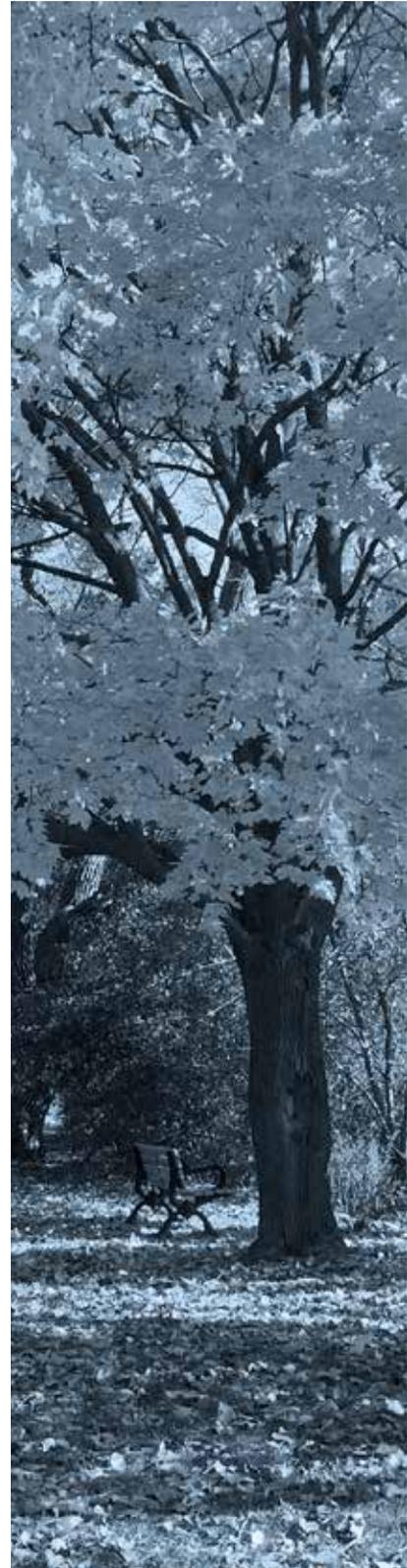
DISCUSSION

Part of this survey was designed to explore the types of teaching and learning experiences undergraduate students encountered, as well as to gain insight into how they felt these areas could be improved in the future. Results indicate that students consider the quality of their education to be a significant contributor to their overall satisfaction, engagement, and outcomes. Furthermore, the findings prove that students recognize areas where quality can be improved across the university sector.

18 /

Online learning should be a viable alternative for students completing their undergraduate programs. It is imperative that the same standards of quality and purpose that apply to traditional education be applied to online learning. The survey findings show that 60 percent of our members have participated in a class that was based primarily online. However, less than half of these respondents said that they would take a primarily online course again, while one third were unsure if they would at all. This suggests that the overall quality of online courses may not be as developed as students wish. Some comments from the open-ended questions revealed that a lack of collegiality was a common issue students had with online courses. The data also illustrated that mature students and Indigenous students enrolled in online courses more than traditional students. This data might suggest that a key benefit of online learning is that it promotes broader accessibility for non-traditional student populations.

All willing and qualified students should be able to benefit from experiential learning opportunities while they attend university. Work integrated learning was only experienced by about a third of the survey respondents. It is noteworthy that about 30 percent of the survey respondents are from fields relating to the Humanities and Social Sciences, which often do not offer their students such learning opportunities. This could also relate to broader misconceptions of WIL being strictly a co-op or internship-based program/course, rather than be inclusive of broader experiential/service learning. The lack of consistent terminology may have skewed the responses of our students. Nevertheless, we found that those that had experienced WIL programming were either satisfied (42 percent) or very satisfied (42 percent) with the experience. In addition to this widespread satisfaction, most of these students also reported that their WIL experience improved (43 percent) or significantly improved (45 percent) their educational experience. These findings further the argument that experiential opportunities and work-integrated learning are satisfying and impactful elements of university programs.



Over one third (36 percent) of the respondents perceive an equal emphasis between teaching and research at their universities, while almost a quarter (23 percent) perceive more emphasis on research. Half of the respondents feel that their universities' current research/teaching emphasis is acceptable, but a third of the respondents think there should be more emphasis on teaching in particular. There was also a prominent concern about the level of emphasis, skill and overall quality associated with teaching. Overall, though, a balance of research and teaching is most supported. This was consistent across all institutions and demographics included in the survey. Program choice also has a significant influence on this aspect, wherein students from humanities and social sciences were more supportive of teaching or balanced emphases, while students in the health and life sciences were more inclined towards research emphases.

Most respondents (54 percent) feel that their universities value the feedback they provide in course and teacher evaluations. However, the results also showed that this tended to be influenced by the specific institution of the respondent. The slim majority suggests students are very mixed as to whether they feel their evaluations of courses have much influence at their respective institutions. Students with disabilities reported having less confidence in their university's attention to student evaluations than students without disabilities across all campuses. This could be related to broader issues of accessibility and accommodations for this demographic, which frequently encounter ill-prepared or untrained faculty that are unable to implement inclusive teaching and learning practices.

For students who identified as Indigenous persons (or as having Indigenous ancestry), 41 percent indicated having the opportunity to take a course with significant Aboriginal, Native, or Indigenous content in university. This is an encouraging finding that aligns with provincial and institutional goals of enhancing the student experience of Indigenous students. However, while this is promising, a third of our Indigenous respondents still indicated that they had not had this type of learning opportunity at any point during their time in school. As such, these mixed results suggest that more can be done to ensure Indigenous content is made available to undergraduate students in Ontario. Looking at institutions in Northern Ontario, such as Laurentian, could be a way to find relatable and practical models to bolster these learning opportunities for Indigenous students in Southern Ontario.



Regarding international students' motivations for leaving Canada after their respective programs conclude, only a few (12 percent) cited academic reasons as contributing to their decision to leave, while fewer still (2 percent) cited some type of cultural reason. The most consistently cited reasons for international students intending to leave Canada upon graduation pertained to work opportunities and wanting to be with family. It was also found that 55 percent of international student respondents indicated that they had attended an orientation program at the beginning of their studies. This means that the majority of international students are experiencing some form of orientation to their Ontario university, yet it is clear there are still large numbers remaining disconnected. However, 28 percent said that while they did not attend orientation, a program was offered to them upon arrival. Among the international student respondents who had attended orientation programming, most thought that it was either somewhat useful (56 percent) or very useful (28 percent). These findings suggest that the overall impacts of orientation programs are well-received by international students.

In terms of their health coverage, most international students (38 percent) who had used their University Health Insurance Plan (UHIP) said that they were satisfied with their coverage. Interestingly, almost the same proportion of international student respondents (36 percent) had reported never having used their UHIP coverage at the time they were surveyed. The respondents who indicated that they were dissatisfied with their UHIP coverage often cited the amounts covered to be lacking, the wait times to be too lengthy after claim submissions, and the fact that its annual fees were too costly/expensive. If UHIP remains a system-wide fee for international students, then it either has to be more reliable to warrant its cost or be at a lower rate to enhance its accessibility and usage.

IF UHIP REMAINS A SYSTEM-WIDE FEE FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS, THEN IT EITHER HAS TO BE MORE RELIABLE TO WARRANT ITS COST OR BE AT A LOWER RATE TO ENHANCE ITS ACCESSIBILITY AND USAGE.

This survey also explored some of the perceived differences that students noted between the employment statuses of faculty they had in their university programs. Students, overall, seem to be aware of their instructors' employment statuses—two thirds of respondents provided an answer when asked about it and only a third said they did not know. The number of students who not knowing significantly decreased as year of study increased. This follows a logical trend, as students become more aware of instructor status as they experience them beyond the lecture halls of the first two years.

When students were asked to compare their part-time and full-time instructors, over half of these students (57 percent) said that their part-time instructors' availability outside of class was the same as their full-time professors' availability, which is a somewhat surprising result. However, a third of the respondents indicated that part-time instructors' availability was less or much less than their full-time professors' availability. These findings suggest that most part-time faculty are able to make themselves available to their students, yet there are still a significant proportion that are unable to meet those demands.

Any semblance of difference decreased, though, when it came to course engagement and teaching ability; two thirds (67 percent) of respondents said their part-time instructors' course content was just as engaging as their full-time professors' content, and 71 percent said their part-time instructors' teaching abilities were



the same as their full-time professors' abilities. These results are somewhat surprising, however, it may be possible that part-time faculty are typically hired to handle more of the teaching load. This is consistent with earlier findings that indicated more emphasis on teaching was desirable amongst a significant portion of students. Many of the respondents indicated that professors lacked teaching skills and/or were better as only researchers. Since the majority of respondents felt that the quality of teaching and engagement of students was equivalent regardless of an instructor's status, this suggests that students perceive a general lack of full-time instructors with teaching skills.

Exploring the level of comfort students had on campus, almost two thirds of our respondents (64 percent) reported feeling very comfortable or somewhat comfortable (32 percent). While this is certainly a positive result, Indigenous students and students with disabilities reported noticeably lower ratings compared to other students. This verifies concerns that a lot of student life initiatives remain tailored to the broader student body, and that it is pertinent to try to enhance the experiences of students with disabilities and Indigenous students in order to improve university quality.

When not on campus, 41 percent of respondents reported spending more than half their time in the city where their campus is located, while almost the same proportion (35 percent) reported spending less than half their time in the city where their campus is located. As a result, there is an opportunity for universities to build better or new partnerships with their municipalities and promote mutual growth. This could generate more feelings of security for students, as the survey illustrated that students with disabilities reported feeling less safe in their neighbourhoods at all hours of the day and night than students without disabilities. Each of these elements has an impact on the quality of the student experience, as well as students' long-term intentions for employment.

STUDENTS WHO GREW UP IN NORTHERN ONTARIO ARE FAR MORE INCLINED TO WORK IN THEIR INSTITUTIONS' RESPECTIVE MUNICIPALITIES.

When students rated their engagement within a university's municipality, only 39 percent of respondents felt that their institutions' cities actively engaged its students in municipal issues, while 31 percent felt their institutions' cities did not actively engage their students in municipal issues. Overall, there appear to be very mixed feelings as to the level of civic engagement students feel in their university's municipality. Municipal engagement can have broader influences on experiential learning opportunities, WIL, community partnerships, and civic mindedness amongst undergraduates. It can also share a relationship to long-term employment plans amongst students as they consider where to find work after graduation.

Looking ahead to employment, 75 percent of respondents reported that they did not intend to work in the city where their university is located for at least one year after they graduate. This might relate to the relatively low/mixed perceptions of civic engagement students reported in their municipalities. However, in juxtaposition to this overall finding, when we look at students who grew up in Northern Ontario/Canada, the results indicate that these students are far more inclined to work in their institutions' respective municipalities. This furthers the concern amongst Northern Ontario communities that are noticing their youth relocating to the south for PSE and employment and, often, not returning. Other demographic backgrounds, though, such as students from urban areas, rural communities, or First Nations reserves did not follow this trend.

CONCLUSION

Quality is a significant area of concern for OUSA members. Employment opportunities in particular are of high priority to students; low WIL participation and its significant satisfaction rates suggest a need for such opportunities to permeate to a larger proportion of students. Similarly, many cited a prominence of part-time teaching faculty with less availability outside of class to engage with students. Ensuring university students receive high quality teaching and experience active forms of learning is essential to their employment outcomes and civic engagement.

Going forward, the government should focus its policy efforts towards incentivizing experiential, service, and work integrated learning opportunities for students across all disciplines and institutions. The Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development has recognized the importance of such forms of learning, and we hope this is implemented through the upcoming revisions to the performance-based funding framework in the university sector. Next, it is essential for the government to include special purpose grants to institutions that are attempting to provide effective teaching and learning for underrepresented groups such as first generation students, mature students, Indigenous students and students with disabilities, among others.

This research on the quality of higher education—university education in particular—is an important component of OUSA's advocacy process. The OPSSS allows the organization to confirm anecdotal concerns of student members and make evidence-based recommendations to sector partners. It is our hope that our partners will also use this information to inform their advocacy and policy development efforts. Maintaining the quality of post-secondary education is a collective responsibility; a goal that can only be achieved by sharing research, data, and maintaining a focus on students.

This report has focused on the quality of education aspects of members' responses and reported the results from the teaching and learning, and municipal issues sections of the questionnaire. Our biennial student survey was designed, however, to gain insight into a multitude of aspects of the student experience. The OPSSS also provides comprehensive data on students' behaviours and attitudes, concerns and preferences related to student financial assistance, university affordability, credit transfer and mobility, institutional access, and students' identities. We invite you to read the other two reports based on this survey, which highlight the themes of accessibility and affordability in Ontario's universities.

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