

What Students Want

Results of the Ontario Student Survey

August 2010

OUSAA

Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance

This project was a collaboration between the Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance (OUSA) and its partners: the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations (CASA), the Council of Alberta University Students (CAUS) and the Alliance of Nova Scotia Student Associations (ANSSA).



The Canadian Alliance of Student Associations (CASA) is a non-partisan, not-for-profit national student organization composed of 25 student associations, representing over 300,000 students from coast to coast.



The Council of Alberta University Students (CAUS) represents the interests of over 70,000 Alberta university students from the University of Alberta, the University of Calgary and the University of Lethbridge to the public, government and other post-secondary education stakeholders. Based in Edmonton, CAUS is a non-partisan and active advocacy group looking to ensure a fully accessible and high quality system of education in Alberta.



OUSA represents the interests of over 140,000 professional and undergraduate, full- and part-time university students at seven institutions across Ontario, striving for an accessible, affordable, accountable and high quality education.



The Alliance of Nova Scotia Student Associations (ANSSA) is a non-partisan provincial lobby group representing over 35,000 students at five post-secondary institutions across the province of Nova Scotia. ANSSA's mandate focuses exclusively on post-secondary education and it is committed to a high quality system that is affordable and accessible to every qualified student.



The Canadian Student Survey was administered by the Canadian Education Project. The Canadian Education Project is part of the Higher Education Strategy Associates.

Recommended Citation:

Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance. *What Students Want: Results of the Ontario Student Survey*. Toronto: 2010.

Executive Summary

More than \$6 billion is spent annually on operating Ontario's universities, of which students contribute over \$2.7 billion. With such a substantial public and private investment in higher education, it is of paramount importance that this money be well spent. Asking students – the principal stakeholder of Ontario universities – what they want from their education should be a primary component of this exercise.

As part of the Canadian Student Survey, a bilingual survey conducted on 18 university campuses across Canada in the fall of 2009, over 10,000 full-time undergraduate students at seven Ontario universities provided their thoughts regarding priorities for and satisfaction with teaching quality, student financial assistance, institutional spending, student support services, and institutional governing bodies.

Affordability: Students remain principally concerned with the affordability and accessibility of university education. In one question, students were asked to prioritize how to direct \$1 million in institutional spending; financial aid was selected over all other possibilities by a large majority of students. When asked to choose between a \$250 tuition reduction for all students and a \$1,000 bursary for 25% of students with the greatest financial need, 60% of students selected the tuition reduction. Students who selected the targeted bursary option tended to be those with the greatest financial need.

Student Services: Student support services are also a priority for Ontario students. Students selected support services as the second highest spending priority for institutions, after financial aid and before academic staff, libraries and physical infrastructure. Satisfaction with most campus student services was high, with the exception of career counselling, financial aid services and services for students with disabilities. Satisfaction with several student services varied significantly by institution.

Teaching Quality: The survey also identified factors that contribute to what students view as quality teaching, and these were predominantly related to pedagogy. The availability and helpfulness of faculty, the quality of lectures, an engaging presence in the classroom, and the ability to deliver material in multiple ways were considered to be characteristics of quality teaching for most students. Prominent researchers and the integration of technology in the classroom were not considered important to most students' conception of teaching quality, particularly for those students who were less satisfied with the overall teaching quality at their institution. Slightly more students preferred hiring sessional teachers to reduce class sizes rather than hiring top research professors to increase research funding and attract graduate students. This view was more prevalent among those students who were less satisfied with their campus teaching quality.

Institutional Governance: Students overwhelmingly feel that they should have much greater representation on University Senates and Boards of Governors/Trustees. When asked what percentage of these governance bodies should be made up of students, the median response was 50% of Senates and 40% of Boards of Governors/Trustees. The current reality at the institutions surveyed is 16% of Senates and 9% of Boards.

Based on the survey results, the Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance suggests several important improvements:

- The federal and provincial governments should continue to invest in improvements and reforms to the student financial assistance system to ensure the affordability of higher education;
- Institutions and the provincial government should prioritize funding of student support services;
- Initiatives should be undertaken to improve the pedagogy utilized in university instruction, including instructional support programs, formal training of new PhD students in teaching methods, and weighting teaching quality equally with research performance for all decisions related to hiring, promotion, and tenure;
- The provincial government should set a policy direction and provide adequate funding to lower the Ontario student to faculty ratio to the national average;
- University charter legislation should be amended such that students hold a greater percentage of seats on the governing bodies of institutions.

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Survey Background and Methodology

Background

The Canadian Student Survey was a bilingual, multi-institutional survey conducted on university campuses across the country in the fall of 2009. The first project of its kind in Canada, the survey was designed and coordinated by students, and strived to engage the entire student body to share their opinions and experiences regarding post-secondary education. The end goal of the project was to provide data to national, provincial and institutional student leaders, stakeholders and policymakers to help inform decisions on how to improve higher education in Canada for current and future students.

This project was a collaboration between the Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance (OUSA) and its partners: the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations (CASA), the Council of Alberta University Students (CAUS) and the Alliance of Nova Scotia Student Associations (ANSSA). The survey was administered by the Canadian Education Project, part of the Higher Education Strategy Associates.

The Canadian survey results and findings have been released through a series of research reports:

1. **Summer Work and Paying for Post-Secondary Education** (March 2010)

This report focused on student work during the summer of 2009 and other ways that Canadian students pay for post-secondary education.

2. **Upper-Year Canadian PSE Students' Future Plans and Debt** (March 2010)

This report focused on the accumulated debt of Canadian post-secondary students and assessed student levels of confidence in their ability to repay their debt, the time it will take and the impact of their debt levels on potential choices they might make about their futures.

3. **The Illiteracy of the Literate: The Lack of Financial Aid Knowledge Among Canadian University Students** (June 2010)

This report focused on Canadian student knowledge about financial aid and the impact of different sources of information on financial aid literacy.

This report will focus on the results of questions posed to students from the seven surveyed Ontario universities relating to student priorities and satisfaction.

Survey Instrument

The survey was administered November 9-23, 2009, and students were invited to participate via an email that directed them to a secure website. To complete the survey, they had to log-in using either their institutional email address or a unique login that they were assigned for the purposes of the survey. The survey was open for a period of three weeks, and students were sent a follow-up email during the second week of the survey to remind them to complete the survey. The survey took approximately 15-20 minutes to complete.

The Canadian Student Survey instrument contained a mixture of multiple choice and user-inputted response questions and was composed of six different modules:

- i. Background information
- ii. Paying for Post-secondary Education
- iii. Expenditures
- iv. Financial Aid Literacy
- v. Policy Choices
- vi. Demographics

The Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance and the Council of Alberta University Students added province-specific modules, which were only visible to students who indicated that they were enrolled in post-secondary education in those provinces. The base survey was 52 questions in length; the Alberta version had a total of 56 questions and the Ontario version had a total of 57 questions.

The findings that follow are the survey results of eight questions. Four of these questions are from the Ontario-specific module and four are the results of Ontario students for four questions in the policy choices module posed to all Canadian students.

Survey Sample

A total of 21,634 individuals from 18 different universities responded to the Canadian Student Survey. Of this sample, this report contains the responses of the 10,334 respondents who were full-time undergraduate students¹ from the seven participating Ontario universities. This sample represents 9.2% of the total full-time undergraduate population at these institutions, providing a confidence interval of $\pm 0.9\%$ at the 95% confidence level.

The distribution of survey respondents by institution and by gender was not proportional to that in the university population as a whole. In order to improve the representativeness of the sample, survey results were weighted to reflect the population distribution of students by institution.² Furthermore, within each institution, results were weighted to reflect the actual gender breakdown at that institution. The breakdown of responses is included by institution in Table 1 and by gender in Figure 1.

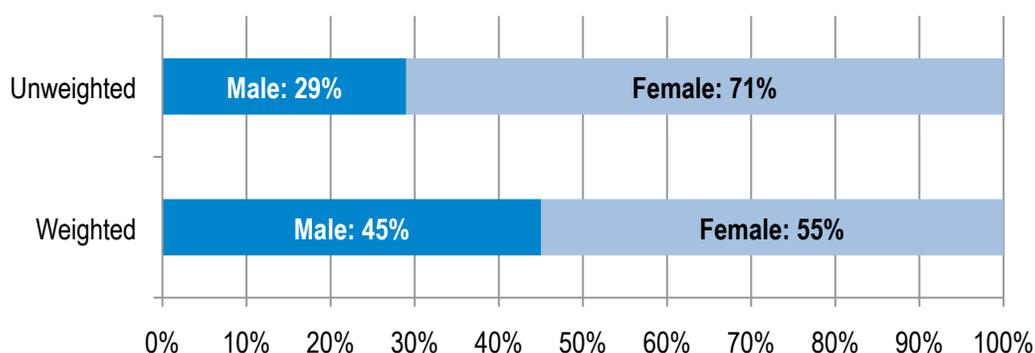
Table 1: Responses by Institution

Institution	Respondents	% of Possible Respondents	% of Sample	% of Weighted Sample
Brock University	2,155	16.8%	20.9%	11.2%
McMaster University	302	1.6%	2.9%	16.6%
Queen's University	1,721	12.4%	16.7%	11.7%
University of Waterloo	1,280	5.6%	12.4%	19.2%
University of Western Ontario	2,572	12.9%	24.9%	22.1%
University of Windsor	884	7.7%	8.6%	8.9%
Wilfrid Laurier University	1,420	11.7%	13.7%	10.2%
Total	10,334	9.2%	100.0%	100.0%

¹ A respondent was considered to be an undergraduate student if they indicated that they were studying for a "University Undergraduate Certificate or Diploma (below a Bachelor's Degree)" or a "University Bachelor's Degree (e.g. B.A., B.Sc., B.Ed.)."

² Data was weighted using the full survey sample of 2007 full-time undergraduate enrolment data from Statistics Canada's Postsecondary Student Information System (PSIS).

Figure 1: Responses by Gender



Sample Demographics

From this point on, responses are from the weighted sample of full-time undergraduates at Ontario universities.

- 93.0% of respondents reported studying towards a University Bachelor’s Degree, with the remaining 7.0% studying at the University Undergraduate Certificate or Diploma level.
- The median age of respondent was 20 years old.
- 98.8% of respondents reported having no children. The percentage of respondents that reported one, two, three, and more than three children was 0.5%, 0.4%, 0.2%, and 0.2%, respectively.
- 83.9% of respondents reported generally speaking English at home with their family, while 0.6% reported speaking French and 15.4% reported speaking another language.

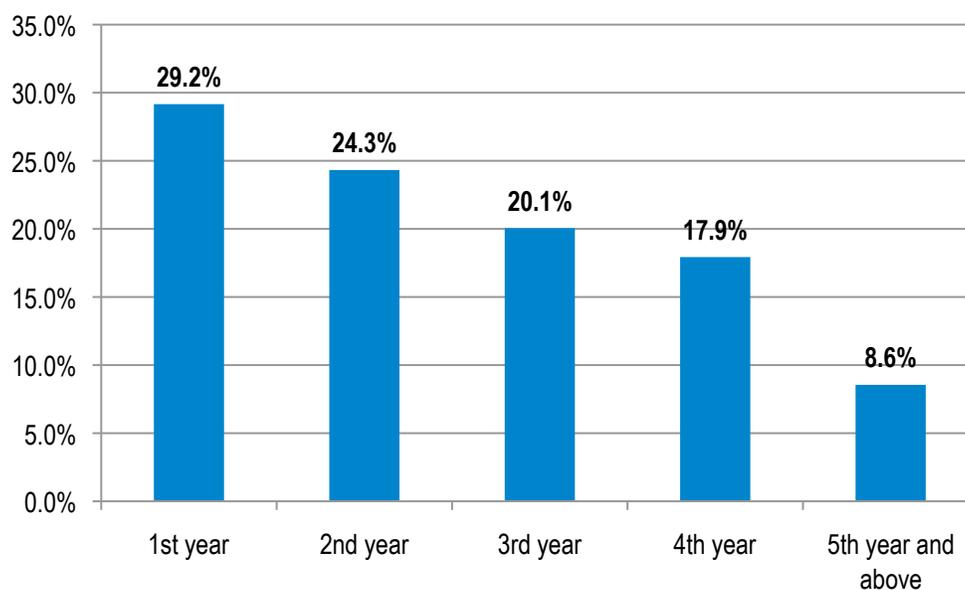
The breakdown of the sample by declared program of study is summarized in Table 2.

Table 2: Sample by Program of Study

Program	% Sample
Social and Behavioural Sciences	18.3%
Physical and Life Sciences	14.5%
Humanities	12.3%
Business, Management and Public Administration	11.9%
Architecture, Engineering and Related Technologies	8.9%
Mathematics, Computer and Information Sciences	5.3%
Health, Parks, Recreation and Leisure	3.9%
Medicine, Pre-Medicine, Dentistry, Pre-Dentistry, Optometry	3.6%
Education	3.4%
Visual and Performing Arts, Communications Technologies	2.9%
Agriculture, Environmental Sciences and Conservation	2.0%
Law	0.4%
Other	12.4%

The composition of the sample by year of study is displayed in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Sample by Year of Study



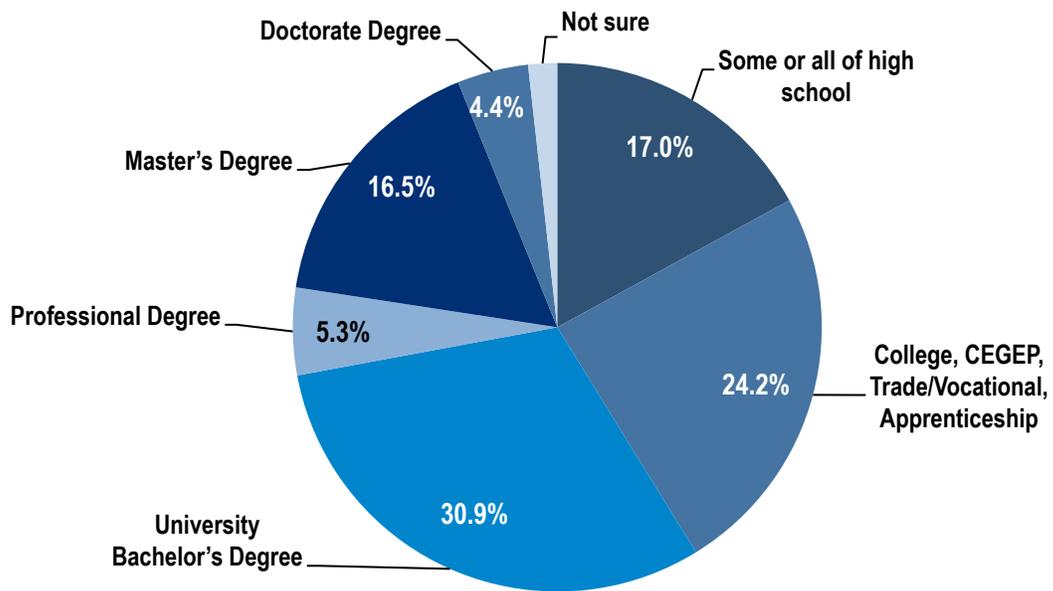
Participants were asked to indicate where they had completed high school; the results are displayed in Table 3.

Table 3: Sample by Location in which Participants Completed High School

Province or Territory	% Sample
Ontario	90.5%
Outside of Canada	4.7%
British Columbia	2.0%
Alberta	1.2%
Nova Scotia	0.4%
Manitoba	0.4%
Quebec	0.4%
New Brunswick	0.3%
Saskatchewan	0.1%
Newfoundland and Labrador	0.1%
Prince Edward Island	0.03%
Northwest Territories	0.03%
Yukon	0.01%

Participants were asked to indicate the highest level of education completed by either of their parents. The results are displayed in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Sample by Parental Education



The group of students using government loans as a funding source is used in the analysis of several survey questions. Government loan recipients represented 41.4% of the sample, while 58.6% of survey respondents were not government loan recipients.

Survey Results

The results that follow are based on eight questions relating to student priorities and satisfaction. In the survey, students were asked to prioritize how institutions should direct spending, whether provincial funds should be spent on tuition reductions or targeted bursaries, the ideal characteristics of a quality teacher, whether their institutions should hire research professors or sessional teachers, and finally the preferred student composition of their institutional governing bodies. Furthermore, students were asked to indicate their satisfaction with campus services and infrastructure, teaching quality, and the availability and helpfulness of academic and administrative staff.

Institutional Spending Priorities

Survey respondents were posed the following question: “If there were \$1 million to be spent at your institution and you had the power to direct this spending to one and only one area, which would you prefer it to be spent on?” Respondents were given a set of ten binary choice questions between five different priorities: academic staff, libraries and information technology, student services, physical infrastructure and laboratories, and financial aid.

Table 4 below is the priority matrix for respondents’ spending choices. The paired priority score is calculated by subtracting the percentage of students who identified one priority from another in the paired test. For example, financial aid (row 1) was a greater priority than academic staff (column 3) by 47 percentage points. In other words, students were more likely to identify financial aid as a priority than academic staff with a spread of 47 percentage points (73.7% of students selected financial aid and 26.3% of students selected academic staff).

Table 4: Institutional Spending Priority Matrix

	Financial Aid	Student Services	Academic Staff	Libraries and IT	Physical Infrastructure
Financial Aid	—	+33%	+47%	+40%	+37%
Student Services	-33%	—	+19%	+14%	+26%
Academic Staff	-47%	-19%	—	+17%	+2%
Libraries and IT	-40%	-14%	-17%	—	+11%
Physical Infrastructure	-37%	-26%	-2%	-11%	—

Respondents indicated that, without a doubt, their top spending priority is financial aid. Males and females, students at every level of parental education, loan recipients and non-loan recipients, students in all years of study, and every participating institution ranked financial aid above all other spending areas. Loan recipients were even more likely to rank financial aid as the top priority. Those students chose financial aid over all other priorities with increased spreads of between 20 and 30 percentage points.

The second highest spending priority for Ontario students was investment in student services, followed by academic staff. Student services were a higher priority than academic staff for first and second year students by 28 percentage points, while upper year students were split almost evenly between the two spending priorities.

Investment in libraries and information technology was ranked fourth overall, while physical infrastructure and laboratories ranked below all of the other choices. Males were more likely to select physical infrastructure over libraries by 9 percentage points, while females chose libraries over physical infrastructure by 26 percentage points.

Tuition Reduction or Targeted Bursaries

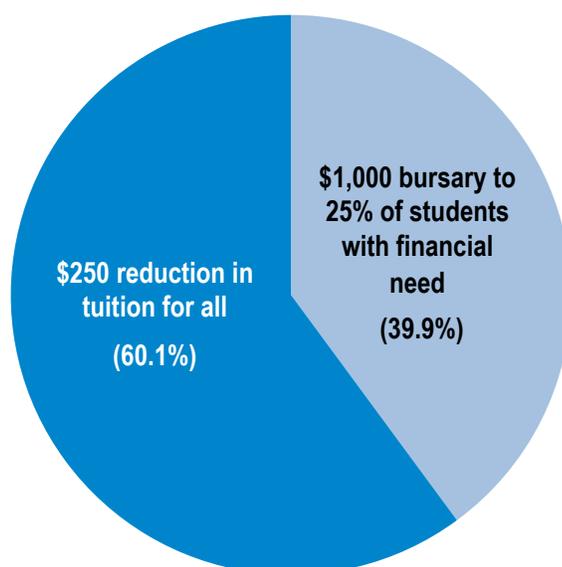
Survey participants were posed the following scenario:

“Your provincial government has a small windfall of cash to spend on students in next year’s budget. Which of the following two options comes closest to being your preferred option of how to distribute the money?:

- A) A \$250 reduction in tuition for all students
- B) A \$1,000 bursary to the 25% of students considered to have the greatest financial need”

The results are depicted in Figure 4. The \$250 tuition reduction was the choice of 60% of students, while the other 40% of participants selected the \$1,000 bursary option.

Figure 4: Student Preference for Tuition Reduction or Targeted Bursaries



There was considerable variation in students’ answers to this question based on personal characteristics. However, it should be noted that not a single group of students had a majority select the \$1,000 bursary option. There was a 9% gap in preference for the tuition reduction by gender; 55% of males selected the option while 64% of females did the same. The student’s year of study also produced some notable differences in selection, as depicted in Table 5.

Table 5: Effect of Year of Study on Preference for Tuition Reduction

Year of Study	Preference for Tuition Reduction
First year	57.2%
Second year	63.7%
Third year	63.8%
Fourth year	58.4%
Fifth year and beyond	54.1%

Students without children were more likely to prefer the tuition reduction (61%), compared to students with children who were split evenly between the tuition reduction (50%) and the \$1,000 bursary (50%). Students who completed high school outside of Canada were also evenly split between the tuition reduction (50%) and the targeted bursaries (50%).

The data suggests that greater individual financial need was a key determinant in a student's preference for targeted bursaries over the tuition reduction. Government loan recipients were much more likely to prefer the targeted bursaries (47%) than those without government loans (33%). Moreover, non-government loan recipients who selected in a previous survey question that they "*did not need student financial aid in order to attend university, college or some other post-secondary program*" were significantly more likely to select the tuition reduction (72%), compared to those who needed financial aid (63%).

Table 6 compares the mean values of several variables related to student finances according to student preference for this spending. The average government loan and government loan debt load for students who preferred the targeted spending approach was significantly higher than for those who preferred a universal tuition fee reduction. Additionally, those who preferred the targeted spending approach had slightly smaller summer earnings and savings, higher bursary and grant allotments from both the government and university, and smaller loans and gifts from family members. The average loan and debt load from private sources was not significantly different between the two groups of students.

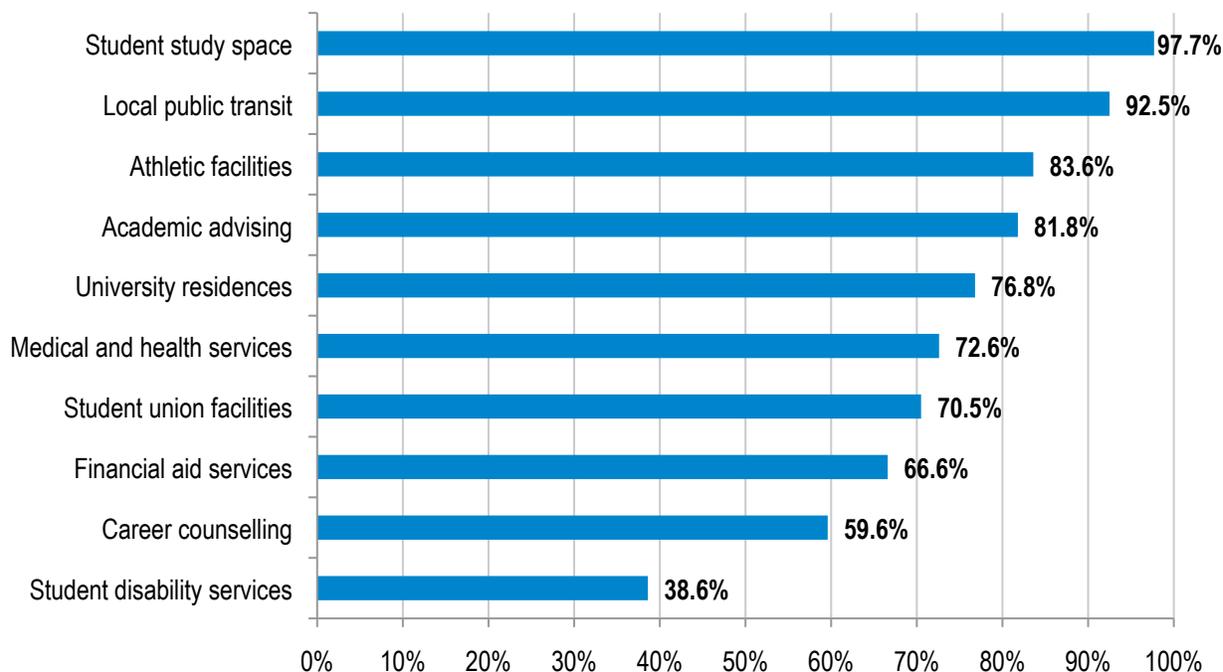
Table 6: Preference for Tuition Reduction or Targeted Bursaries by Student Finance Characteristics

	\$250 reduction for all	\$1000 bursary for 25% of students	All respondents
Government loans	\$1,846	\$3,143	\$2,349
Bursary or grant from government	\$366	\$746	\$513
University needs-based grant or scholarship	\$151	\$355	\$230
Private loan or line of credit	\$857	\$833	\$853
Summer paid employment (hours per week)	26.1	24.5	25.5
Summer earnings	\$3,834	\$3,594	\$3,741
Money saved over the summer	\$2,101	\$1,809	\$1,988
Income from work during the academic year	\$1,107	\$1,093	\$1,101
Loan from family member	\$1,170	\$803	\$1,028
Gift from family member	\$3,416	\$3,086	\$3,287
Personal savings	\$2,296	\$1,846	\$2,121
Total debt from government sources	\$3,830	\$6,998	\$5,057
Total debt from banks	\$1,565	\$1,565	\$1,565
Total debt from family	\$1,886	\$1,695	\$1,812

Satisfaction with Campus Services and Infrastructure

Participants were asked to indicate their use of and satisfaction with 10 campus services and categories of infrastructure. The response rate of those who had used the services and infrastructure are displayed in Figure 5. Over 80% of students reported use of study space, public transit, athletic facilities, and academic advising. Between 65% and 75% of students used financial aid services, student union facilities, health services, and university residences. Sixty percent of students had used career counselling, while 39% of students reported use of services for students with disabilities.

Figure 5: Student Usage of Campus Services and Infrastructure

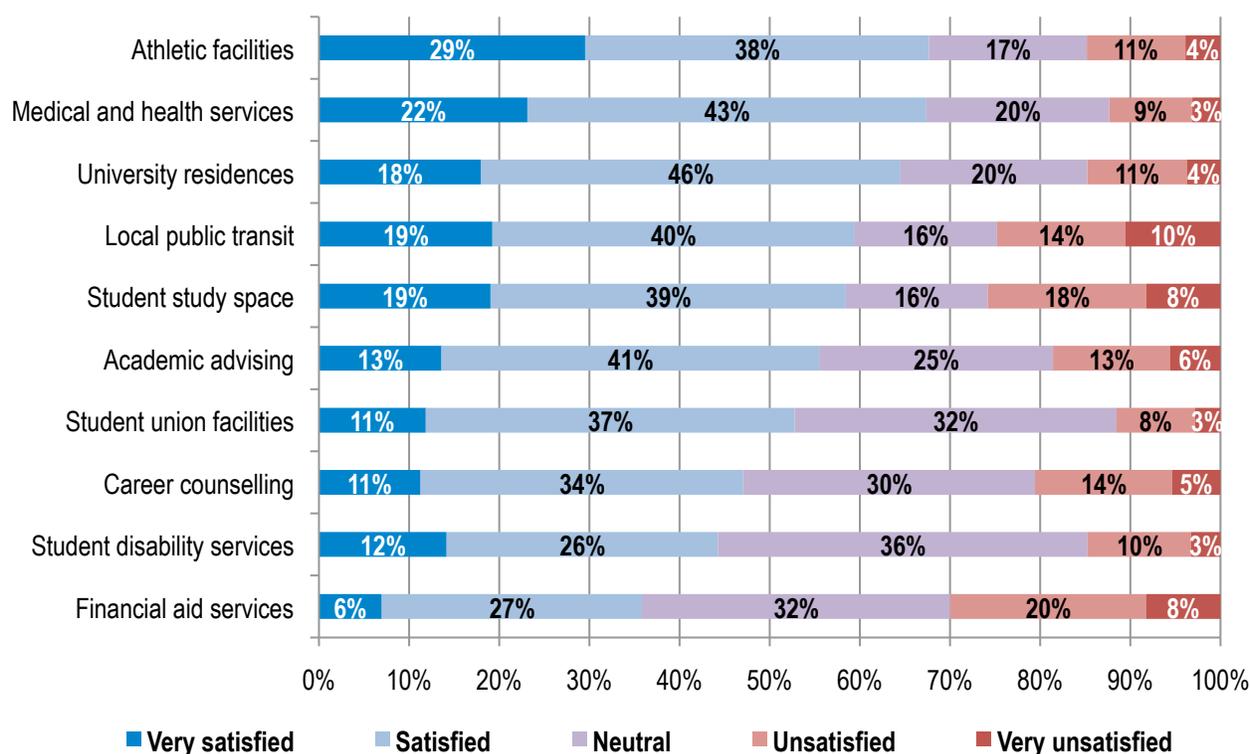


The usage of many campus services and categories of infrastructure was fairly consistent across years of study. However, unsurprisingly, the use of academic advising and career counselling services rose significantly as students progressed through their course of study. Use of academic advising rose from 74% to 88% from first- to fourth-year, and similarly the use of career counselling services rose from 49% to 67% from first- to fourth-year.

The use of financial aid services differed between government loan recipients and non-loan recipients. While use of these services was 89% for loan recipients, usage was under 46% for those without a government loan. Use of this service also differed based upon students' parental education. Only 45% of students whose parents have a professional degree (i.e., medicine, dentistry, law, veterinary or optometry) and 63% of students whose parents have a Master's or doctorate degree reported use of financial aid services, while 78% of students whose parents have a high school diploma or less used these services.

The satisfaction and dissatisfaction with campus services and infrastructure from students who reported using them are displayed in Figure 6. The majority of students reported satisfaction ("satisfied" or "very satisfied") with most student services, though fewer than 50% of students reported satisfaction with career counselling, disability services, and financial aid services.

Figure 6: Student Satisfaction with Campus Services and Infrastructure



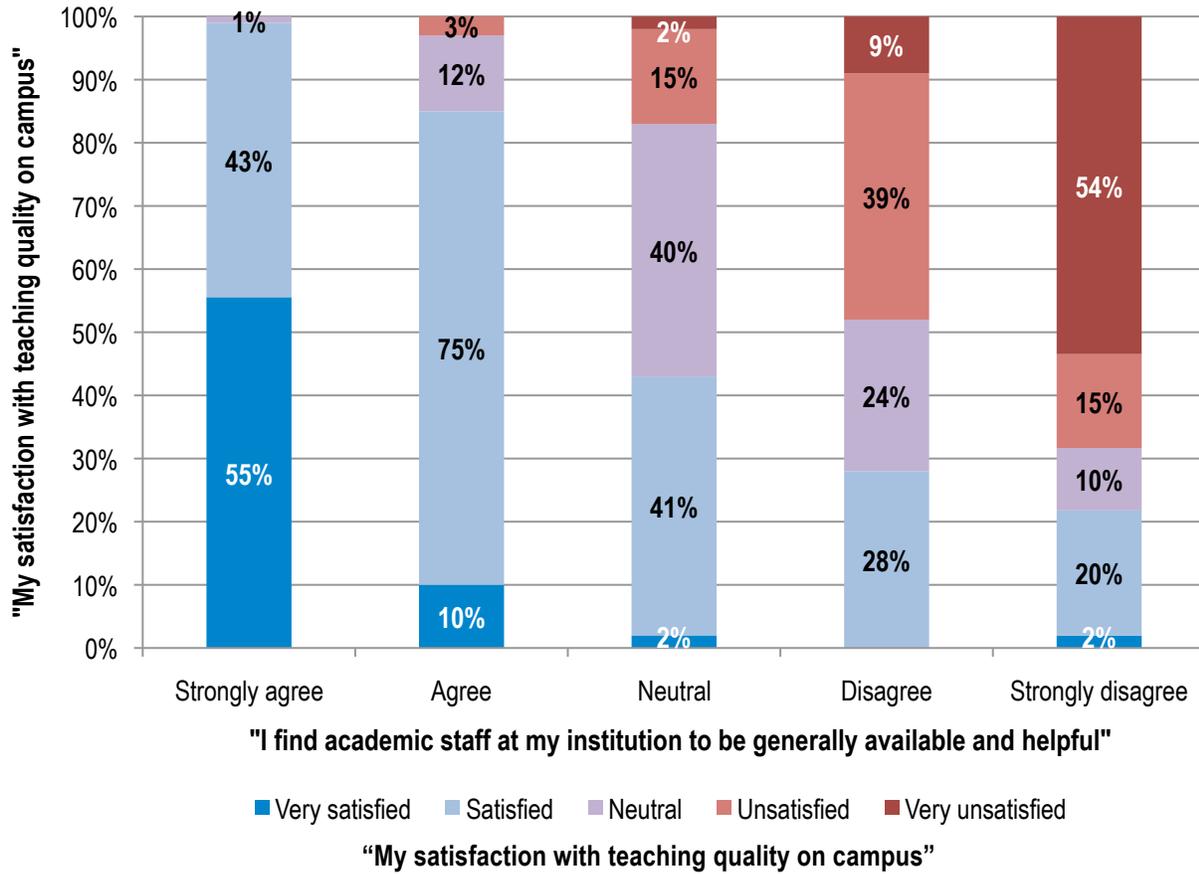
Satisfaction with some services varied considerably between universities. For example, 92% of students at one institution reported being “satisfied” or “very satisfied” with their athletic facilities, while 40% of students reported the same level of satisfaction at another institution. University residence satisfaction at one institution was low at 33% and high at 79% at another institution. Significant variation between institutions was also evident in satisfaction with local public transit, health services, and study space.

Conversely, satisfaction with academic advising, student union facilities, financial aid services and career counselling was more or less consistent across years of study and institution. Government loan recipients had 10% higher satisfaction with financial aid services (37%) than non-loan recipients (27%), though dissatisfaction remained higher than with any other service in both groups.

Teaching Quality and the Availability and Helpfulness of Academic Staff

Survey participants were asked in separate questions to rate their agreement with the statement “I find academic staff at my institution to be generally available and helpful” and their satisfaction with the teaching quality on campus. There was a very strong relationship ($p < 0.05$, $\gamma = 0.81$) between respondents’ answers to the two questions. Ninety-eight percent of students who strongly agreed that academic staff were generally available and helpful said they were either very satisfied (55%) or satisfied (43%) with the quality of teaching at their institution. In contrast, only 22% of students who strongly disagreed that academic staff were generally available were satisfied with the quality of teaching. This relationship is displayed in Figure 7.

Figure 7: Relationship between Teaching Quality and Academic Staff Availability and Helpfulness



The strength of this relationship clearly indicates the importance of faculty being available and helpful to students for one-on-one help and guidance in their academic studies. Students viewed the characteristics of availability and helpfulness to largely be synonymous with quality.

Characteristics of a Quality Teacher

Respondents were asked to select up to three factors that they thought were “most important in determining whether a professor is a quality teacher” from a list of eight options. The percentages of students that selected each factor are summarized in Table 7. The three factors that were most selected related to pedagogy in the classroom. The vast majority of students believed that interesting, well prepared and organized lectures and an enthusiastic, entertaining or motivating presence in the classroom were the two most important characteristics of a quality teacher. Additionally, 52% of students reported that the ability to communicate in multiple ways was important for quality teaching.

The ability to meet with students regularly, the outlining of expectations, and students doing well in the course were factors selected by 26%, 22%, and 17% of students, respectively. Interestingly, only 13% of students selected a professor being a prominent researcher as important and less than 7% selected the integration of technology as important.

Table 7: Factors That Are Most Important to Being a “Quality Teacher”

Factor	% Selected
Delivers interesting, well prepared and organized lectures	83.7%
Enthusiastic, entertaining or motivating in the classroom	74.6%
Able to communicate the subject in multiple ways	52.4%
Able to meet regularly with students	25.8%
Clearly outlines expectations at the beginning of the semester	22.4%
Students often do well in his/her course	17.2%
A prominent researcher at the cutting edge of his/her field	13.2%
Integrates technology well into the learning environment	6.9%

The proportion that selected each factor was very consistent across years of study and institution. The only notable variation was in the selection of two variables at institutions categorized as primarily undergraduate. In these institutions, the proportion of students that selected outlining expectations at the beginning of the semester as important was higher than the comprehensive and medical doctoral counterparts by 7%, while interesting, well prepared and organized lectures was selected 6% less often.

All but two of these factors had no statistically significant relationship with the student’s satisfaction level with teaching quality. However, those who selected “students often do well in his/her course” as an important factor in teaching quality were 16% less likely to be satisfied with the teaching quality at their institution. Additionally, students who selected research prominence as an important factor in teaching quality were 6% more likely to be satisfied with their university’s teaching quality.

Research Professors or Sessional Teachers

Students were posed the following scenario and asked to select either option A or B:

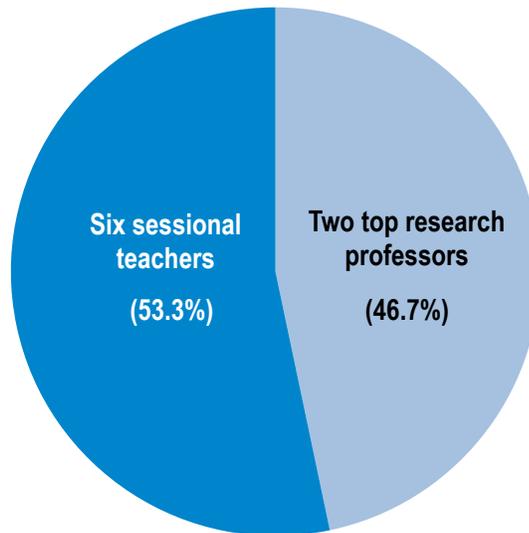
“Assume that your institution receives a \$400,000 donation for hiring new professors and that you are asked to make a decision about the type of professors to hire. Would you:

- A) *Hire two professors who are at the top of their fields and who could attract lots of research funding and top graduate students and, in turn, increase the school’s prestige. These professors, however, would only teach two undergraduate courses each year.*
- B) *Hire six sessional teachers who would, together, teach 20 undergraduate courses, reducing overall class sizes. These hires likely would not generate new research dollars, attract top graduate students or increase the prestige of the university.”*

The results are depicted in Figure 8, with 53% of students selecting the six sessional teachers compared with 47% of students selecting the two top research professors. The option selected differed by gender. Males were more likely to select the two top research professors (58%), while females selected the six sessional teachers more often (62%). A similar difference in opinion was evident based upon students’ parental education. Those whose parents had a high school diploma or less, trade/vocational training, or a Bachelor’s degree as their highest level of educational attainment were more likely to select six sessional teachers (61%, 59% and 50.2%, respectively), while those whose parents had a professional, Master’s or doctorate degree were more likely to select two top research professors (56%, 50.8%, and 59%, respectively). Students who finished high school outside of Canada were more likely to prefer the two top professors (54%).

There was no significant difference in response across years of study or between those with and without a government loan. However, there was variation across types of institution. The preference for the six sessional teachers in institutions categorized as comprehensive, medical doctoral, and primarily undergraduate was 48%, 53%, and 61%, respectively.

Figure 8: Student Preference for Faculty Hiring Priorities



Students who indicated being “very satisfied” with the teaching quality at their institution were slightly more likely to prefer hiring two top professors (51%) than six sessional teachers (49%). In contrast, students at all other levels of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with teaching quality were more likely to prefer hiring sessional instructors, and the likelihood increased as satisfaction with teaching quality decreased. This statistically significant relationship is displayed in Figure 9. Similar to teaching quality, students’ preference for hiring two research professors declined as students’ agreement with the availability and helpfulness of their instructors declined. Overall, the data suggest that those students who are satisfied with faculty teaching and availability are more likely to prefer hiring top researchers while students who are less satisfied prefer hiring sessional instructors as a means of reducing class sizes.

Figure 9: Student Preference for Faculty Hiring and Teaching Quality Satisfaction

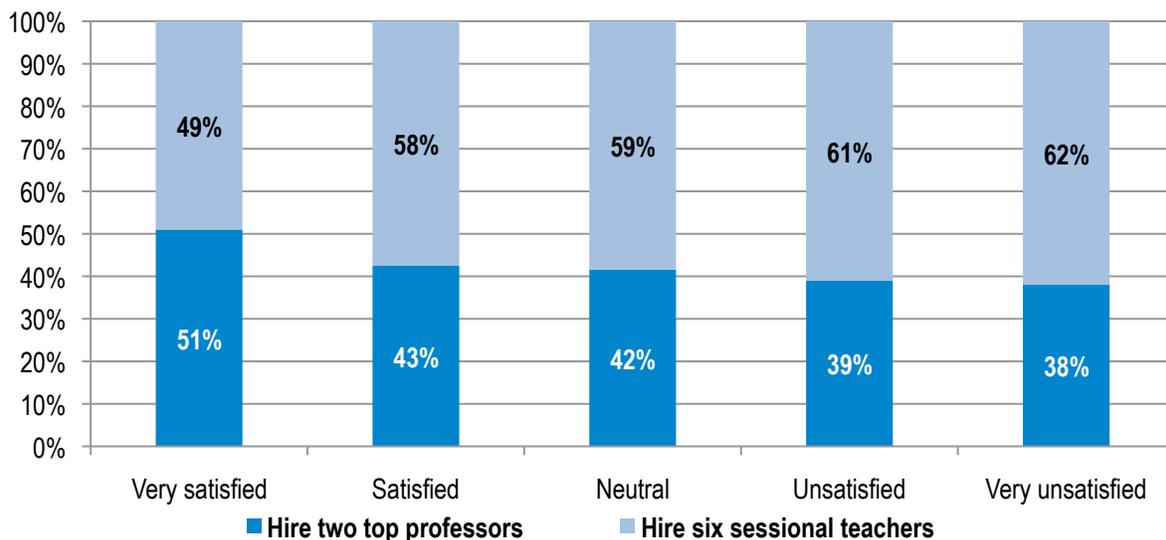
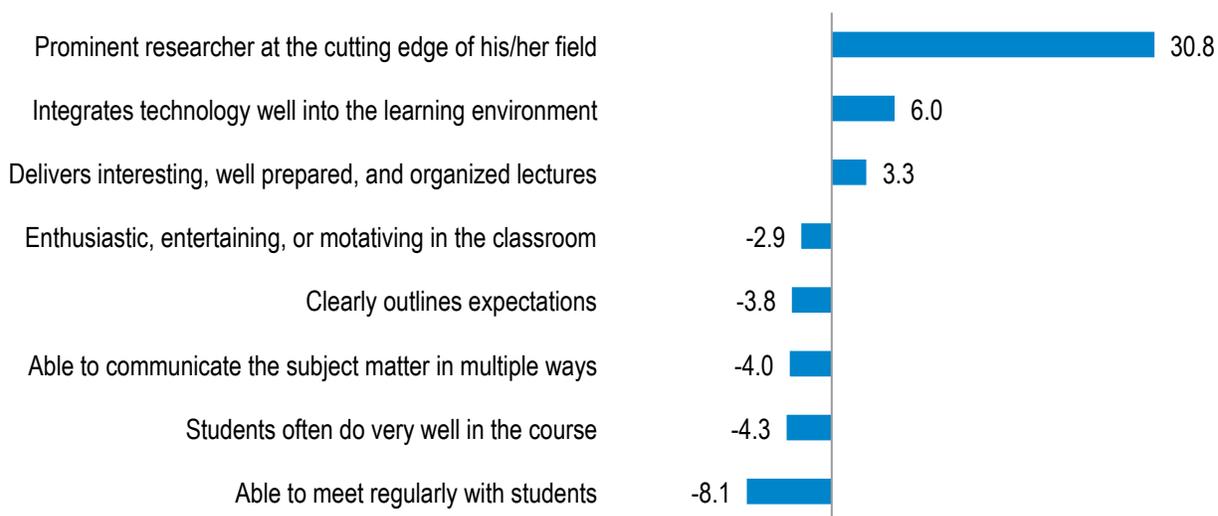


Figure 10 outlines the relationship between the characteristics of a “quality teacher” and students’ preference for faculty hiring. The minority of students who selected research prominence as important in determining if a professor is a “quality teacher” were much more likely to prefer hiring two prominent researchers than six sessional instructors. The relationships between other faculty characteristics and preferences for faculty hiring were weaker. Students who valued technology integration and interesting, well prepared, and organized lectures were marginally more likely to prefer hiring two prominent professors than students who did not identify these as key characteristics of a quality teacher. Students who valued professors who meet with students regularly, communicate the subject matter in multiple ways, and clearly outline expectations, as well as courses where students often do well, were more likely to prefer hiring six sessional instructors than students who did not select those traits.

Therefore, there does appear to be a distinction between what students value in a good professor and their preferred faculty hiring option. However, readers should be reminded that preferred professor characteristics were not evenly distributed, as outlined in Table 7. In fact, the considerable gap between those that selected a preeminent researcher as an important factor in teaching quality (13%) and those that selected the two top research professors (47%) indicates that students’ motivation in selecting the top professors may have extended beyond teaching quality.

Figure 10: Relationship between Selected Factors of a Quality Teacher and Preference for Hiring Research Professors



*A positive score indicates that the factors increases the likelihood of selecting “two top professors” while a negative score indicates that the factor increases the likelihood of selecting “six sessional teachers.”
A larger score indicates a larger relationship between the two variables.*

Governing Body Membership

Survey participants were asked to “indicate the percentage of institutional governing bodies that should be made up of students” in relation to both the University Senate and the Board of Governors/Trustees. The median response for the percentage of the Senate that should be students was 50 percent. The median response for the percentage of the Board of Governors/Trustees that should be students was 40 percent.

This stands in stark contrast to the reality at the surveyed institutions. At the surveyed institutions, the average percentage of student representation on Senates is 16.4% and only 9.3% on Boards of Governors/Trustees. The student compositions of these bodies are summarized in Tables 8 and 9.

Table 8: Student Representation on University Senates

Institution	Senate Undergraduate Student Seats	Senate Graduate Student Seats	Total Senate Voting Seats	% of Senate that is Students
Brock University	7	2	64	14.1%
McMaster University	6	6	66	18.2%
Queen’s University	11	5	71	22.5%
University of Waterloo	9	5	84	16.7%
University of Western Ontario	14	4	102	17.6%
University of Windsor	10	3	84	15.5%
Wilfrid Laurier University	7	1	78	10.3%
Average	—	—	—	16.4%

Table 9: Student Representation on University Boards of Governors/Trustees

Institution	Board Undergraduate Student Seats	Board Graduate Student Seats	Total Board Voting Seats	% of Board that is Students
Brock University	2	1	32	9.4%
McMaster University	1	1	36	5.6%
Queen’s University	1	2*	44	6.8%
University of Waterloo	3	2	36	13.9%
University of Western Ontario	2	1	28	10.7%
University of Windsor	2	1	30	10.0%
Wilfrid Laurier University	2	1	34	8.8%
Average	—	—	—	9.3%

* The Rector position is an elected student representative for all students and is currently a graduate student.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The goal of the Ontario Student Survey was to better understand the needs and priorities of full-time undergraduate students on Ontario campuses. The Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance believes that these results reveal several important priorities for improving the university experience in Ontario. The four primary conclusions and corresponding recommendations for improvement are outlined below.

Students' Concerns with Affordability and Accessibility

Students at Ontario universities remain principally concerned with the affordability and accessibility of their university education. Financial aid was selected as the top priority by all groups of students, well ahead of student services, academic staff, libraries and physical infrastructure. A majority of students desired a \$250 tuition reduction to improve affordability over a \$1,000 bursary for the 25% of students with the greatest financial need, and those students who selected the \$1,000 bursary appear to be those with the greatest financial need. However, a significant proportion of students who would not be in the 25% of students with the greatest financial need still chose the targeted bursary over a tuition reduction, highlighting many students' concerns with financial barriers to accessibility.

Recommendation: The provincial and federal governments should continue to invest in the highest priority of Ontario students: improvements and reforms to the student financial assistance system and the affordability of higher education. The Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance believes there are several important changes that should be made, including:

- Regulation of tuition such that fees make up no more than one-third of university operating budgets;
- A reduction in the expected parental contribution in the government loan needs assessment;
- An improved needs assessment formula that ensures that the amount of financial assistance allocated to students is large enough to completely cover tuition and provide reasonable cost of living expenses;
- A reduction of the interest rate on government loans to below prime;
- A reduction in student debt by lowering the Ontario Student Opportunity Grant cap.

Student Desire for Improved Student Services

Improvement in student services remains a primary concern of Ontario students. Based on the survey, investment in student services was the second highest institutional spending priority after financial aid. Usage of campus services that are available to all students was generally high, though fewer than 60% of students used career counselling services. Satisfaction with athletic facilities, university residences, local public transit, health services and student study space varied considerably by institution. Some institutions had strong satisfaction levels with these services, while some had lower satisfaction results. Across all survey participants, fewer than 50% of students were satisfied with career counselling, financial aid services and student disability services.

Recommendation: Institutions must recognize that support services are important to students and prioritize funding of these services, even in times of fiscal restraint. To ensure student services are adequately supported to meet current and future demand and to ensure that their funding is secure, the provincial government should create envelopes within the funding formula that designate specific amounts per student for student support services.

Student Priorities for Improving Teaching Quality

Ontario students have indicated a number of important factors that contribute to a high-quality teaching and learning environment. The availability and helpfulness of faculty was highly correlated with students' conceptions of teaching quality. Interesting and well-planned lectures, an engaging presence in the classroom, and the ability to deliver material in multiple ways were characteristics of quality teaching to most students. Students have clearly expressed that pedagogy is the most important determinant for teaching quality.

More costly factors, such as having preeminent researchers and technology in the classroom, were deemed to be significantly less important to students, particularly those students who were less satisfied with the teaching quality at their institution. A small majority of students desired a greater investment in sessional teachers to reduce class size over top research professors, and this desire increased as students' satisfaction with teaching quality declined. This indicates that many students remain concerned with their ability to interact with their teachers.

Recommendation: For innovative and engaging pedagogy to be present at institutions, instructors must first learn the skills to deliver it. The Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance recommends the following initiatives:

- Institutions should establish and adequately maintain instructional support programs, in order to encourage innovation in teaching and provide professional development for Ontario's university instructors;
- All new PhD students should be given formal instruction in teaching methods;
- Universities should appoint a teaching and learning leader in each department to work with their colleagues in improving the department's teaching, learning and assessment strategies and to assist in reviewing and designing curriculum;
- Quality teaching should be weighed equally with research performance for all decisions relating to hiring, promotion, and tenure.

To address students' concerns with class sizes, the provincial government should set a policy direction and provide adequate funding to lower the Ontario student to faculty ratio to the national average.

Student Interest in Greater Involvement with Institutional Governance

Students believe that they should be more involved in the governance of their universities. When asked what percentage of institutional governing bodies should be made up of students, the median response was 50% of Senate and 40% of the Boards of Governors/Trustees. The current reality is 16% and 9%, respectively. As students now contribute upwards of 45% of university operating budgets, students perceive a lack of influence over their institutions that must be corrected.

Recommendation: The federal and provincial governments should work with universities to amend charter legislation such that students hold a greater percentage of seats on the governing bodies of each institution.

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August 2010