

## Examining the University of Regina Student Experience Factors influencing university decisions

Completed in Spring 2016, the *2016 CUSC First-Year Student Survey* focused on undergraduate university students who started during the 2015 – 2016 academic year. The survey was distributed to almost 58,000 students at 34 universities across Canada. In total, 14,886 first-year students from across Canada completed the survey, including 657 from the University of Regina.

This report focuses on the University of Regina's students, comparing them to students nationally and to students attending institutions comparable to the University of Regina (see final page for a listing). Where possible, this report also compares results with the 2013, 2010, and 2007 CUSC surveys of first-year students. Unless stated otherwise, all differences reported are not statistically significant.

This second report in a series of six examines students' motivations and factors influencing their decision to attend university, their application behaviour and their main reasons for selecting their particular university.

### Most important reasons for attending university

First-year students were asked to rate the importance of fifteen different reasons to attend university. Results show that the top three aspects are all career-oriented motivators, and include *more likely to get a job with a degree*, *get a more fulfilling job*, and *to prepare for a specific job*. Results also show that the least important reasons for attending university are *most of my friends are going*, *the chance to participate in varsity athletics*, and *to explore whether university is right for me*. All results are shown in the following table:

| Motivation for attending university<br>(% important or very important)              | National<br>(n=14,886) | Comparable<br>universities<br>(n=6,176) | University of<br>Regina<br>(n=657) |
|---|------------------------|---|------------------------------------|
| I am more likely to get a job with a degree   | 91%                    | 92%                                     | 93%                                |
| To prepare for a specific job or career   | 90%                    | 90%                                     | 92%                                |
| To get a more fulfilling job than I probably would if I didn't go                   | 90%                    | 91%                                     | 91%                                |
| To apply what I will learn to make a positive difference in society or my community | 78%                    | 76%                                     | 78%                                |
| Learning new things is exciting   | 80%                    | 79%                                     | 74%                                |
| To satisfy my intellectual curiosity  | 80%                    | 79%                                     | 72%                                |
| To get a broad education  | 78%                    | 77%                                     | 72%                                |
| To earn more money than if I didn't go  | 73%                    | 76%                                     | 72%                                |
| To meet my family's expectations  | 58%                    | 62%                                     | 56%                                |
| The satisfaction of doing challenging academic work                                 | 57%                    | 56%                                     | 46%                                |
| To meet new people  | 53%                    | 58%                                     | 45%                                |
| To explore whether university is right for me                                       | 41%                    | 45%                                     | 43%                                |
| Most of my friends are going  | 24%                    | 28%                                     | 19%                                |
| The chance to participate in varsity athletics                                      | 12%                    | 13%                                     | 13%                                |
| I didn't have anything better to do   | 12%                    | 13%                                     | 9%                                 |

After ranking each motivator individually, students were asked to select the most important reason for why they decided to attend university. Not surprising, given the information in the previous table, *preparing for a specific job or career* was the most important reason for students nationally (44%), at comparable universities (43%), and also at the University of Regina (54%). Over the years, *preparing for a specific job or career* has been the most important reason for University of Regina students to attend university, as shown in the table below:

| Most important reason for attending university | National (n=14,886) | Comparable universities (n=6,176) | University of Regina |              |              |              |
|--|---------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
|  |                     |                                   | 2016 (n=657)         | 2013 (n=668) | 2010 (n=612) | 2007 (n=460) |
| To prepare for a specific job or career        | 44%                 | 43%                               | 54%                  | 50%          | 53%          | 50%          |

## Application behaviour

Nationally, 76% of students applied to a university other than the one they are currently attending. On average, they applied to about two other universities. Although only 45% of first-year students at the University of Regina said they applied to more than one university, the proportion has been increasing over the years, from 19% in 2004 to 28% in 2007 and 32% in 2013.

Although many students applied elsewhere, 85% of University of Regina first-year students said they are attending their first choice, compared to 81% nationally and 76% at comparable universities. The table below shows the results:

| Application Behaviour            | National (n=14,886) | Comparable universities (n=6,176) | University of Regina |              |              |              |
|----------------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
|                                  |                     |                                   | 2016 (n=657)         | 2013 (n=668) | 2010 (n=612) | 2007 (n=460) |
| Applied to other universities    | 76%                 | 87%                               | 45%                  | 32%          | 24%          | 28%          |
| Currently attending first choice | 81%                 | 76%                               | 85%                  | 82%          | 88%          | 90%          |

## Choosing a university

First-year students rated 18 aspects concerning the importance of selecting their university. When the aspects were ranked by the proportion of who answered important or very important, students across Canada were most likely to say that their university *has the program they wanted to take* (87%) followed by their *university's academic reputation* (72%) and *the city/town it's in* (65%). University of Regina students were more likely to say that their university *has the program they wanted to take* (79%) followed by *I wanted to live close to home* (67%) and *the city/town it's in* (62%). All results are shown in the following table:

| Importance for selecting their university<br>(% important or very important) | National<br>(n=14,886) | Comparable<br>universities<br>(n=6,176) | University of<br>Regina<br>(n=657) |
|--|------------------------|---|------------------------------------|
| It has the program I want to take  | 87%                    | 87%                                     | 79%                                |
| I wanted to live close to home   | 45%                    | 43%                                     | 67%                                |
| The city/town it's in  | 65%                    | 61%                                     | 62%                                |
| It offered a scholarship   | 51%                    | 58%                                     | 55%                                |
| The size of the university suits me  | 58%                    | 61%                                     | 53%                                |
| The academic reputation of the university                                    | 72%                    | 71%                                     | 52%                                |
| The program I want has a co-op, practicum, or other work experience          | 52%                    | 62%                                     | 52%                                |
| Cost of tuition and fees   | 46%                    | 44%                                     | 42%                                |
| It has a good reputation for campus life                                     | 53%                    | 53%                                     | 37%                                |
| It offered other financial assistance  | 39%                    | 44%                                     | 37%                                |
| The program I want offers study/work experience abroad                       | 38%                    | 41%                                     | 32%                                |
| Availability of public transportation  | 59%                    | 59%                                     | 27%                                |
| It's where my family wanted me to go   | 18%                    | 19%                                     | 26%                                |
| It's where my friends are going  | 14%                    | 14%                                     | 22%                                |
| It offered a place in residence  | 29%                    | 36%                                     | 19%                                |
| Cost of university residence   | 21%                    | 24%                                     | 17%                                |
| I wanted to live away from home  | 25%                    | 29%                                     | 14%                                |
| The chance to participate in varsity athletics                               | 9%                     | 10%                                     | 10%                                |

Students were presented with the same list of 18 aspects and asked to select the reason that was most important for selecting their university. On the national level, students said that *their university has the program they wanted to take* (33%), but also *wanting to live close to home* (16%) and *their program had a work experience program* (12%) were important. For University of Regina students the most important reason in choosing the university was because they *wanted to live close to home* (36%). This proportion is more than double that reported by students nationally (16%) and at comparable universities (15%). The second most important reason for University of Regina students was because *it has the program I want to take* (26%), compared to nationally (33%) and at comparable universities (32%). The following table shows the results:

| Most important reason for selecting university                      | National<br>(n=14,886) | Comparable<br>universities<br>(n=6,176) | University of Regina |                 |                 |                 |
|---|------------------------|---|----------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
|   |                        |   | 2016<br>(n=657)      | 2013<br>(n=668) | 2010<br>(n=612) | 2007<br>(n=460) |
| I wanted to live close to home                                      | 16%                    | 15%                                     | 36%                  | 36%             | 36%             | 38%             |
| It has the program I want to take*                                  | 33%                    | 32%                                     | 26%                  | 27%             | 26%             | 23%             |
| The program I want has a co-op, practicum, or other work experience | 12%                    | 17%                                     | 7%                   | 3%              | 4%              | 4%              |

\*In previous years the option was: *Specific career related program*

## Important of sources of information

First-year students rated the importance of 19 sources of information they may have used when making a decision about whether or not to attend their university. The top three sources of information include *visits to campus for an open house* (52%), *their university's website* (50%), and *parents* (46%). For University of Regina students the most important source of information was their *parents* (53%), compared to nationally (46%) and at comparable universities (47%). The table below shows the top five sources of information for University of Regina students compared to students across Canada and at comparable universities:

| Importance of sources of information<br>(% important or very important) | National<br>(n=14,886) | Comparable<br>universities<br>(n=6,176) | University of<br>Regina<br>(n=657) |
|---|------------------------|---|------------------------------------|
| Parents   | 46%                    | 47%                                     | 53%                                |
| Visit to campus for an open house                                       | 52%                    | 55%                                     | 47%                                |
| High school/CEGEP counsellors or teachers                               | 36%                    | 37%                                     | 43%                                |
| Students attending the university                                       | 44%                    | 45%                                     | 41%                                |
| The university's website  | 50%                    | 50%                                     | 40%                                |
| Contact with admissions staff on campus                                 | 37%                    | 38%                                     | 40%                                |
| Friends   | 32%                    | 32%                                     | 35%                                |
| Other visit to campus   | 40%                    | 44%                                     | 33%                                |
| Printed university brochure, pamphlet, or view book                     | 44%                    | 47%                                     | 29%                                |
| Visit by a university representative to your high school or CEGEP       | 29%                    | 32%                                     | 27%                                |
| Contact with professors   | 26%                    | 27%                                     | 25%                                |
| Contact with university athletic coaches                                | 8%                     | 9%                                      | 11%                                |
| Maclean's university rankings   | 29%                    | 30%                                     | 10%                                |
| The university's other social media sites                               | 12%                    | 15%                                     | 9%                                 |
| The Times Higher Education World University Rankings                    | 20%                    | 20%                                     | 8%                                 |
| Globe and Mail Canadian University Report                               | 20%                    | 22%                                     | 8%                                 |
| The university's Facebook site  | 14%                    | 16%                                     | 8%                                 |
| QS World University Rankings  | 20%                    | 20%                                     | 7%                                 |
| Academic Ranking of World Universities                                  | 17%                    | 18%                                     | 7%                                 |

### About CUSC

The 2016 CUSC survey is the 22<sup>nd</sup> cooperative study undertaken by the *Canadian University Survey Consortium / Consortium canadien de recherche sur les étudiants universitaires* (CUSC/CCREU) and the 17<sup>th</sup> study in which the University of Regina has participated. Prior to 2014, the surveys ran in a three-year cycle, targeting first year, graduating, and all students in separate years. In 2014, the All Students survey was changed to a survey of middle-year students (i.e., students in the second or third year of a four-year program, second year of a three-year program, or second to fourth year of a five-year program).

This study focuses on first-year students and compares results to previous surveys conducted in 2013, 2010, and 2007. The survey involved 34 participating universities and almost 15,000 students from across Canada, yielding an overall response rate of 25.7%. Participating students from the University of Regina numbered 657, which represents a 43.8% rate of response.

### University comparisons

For comparison purposes, CUSC categorizes the participating universities into three groups:

- ▶ Group 1 consists of universities that offer primarily undergraduate studies and have smaller student populations.
- ▶ Group 2 consists of universities that offer both undergraduate and graduate studies and tend to be of medium size in terms of student population.
- ▶ Group 3 consists of universities that offer both undergraduate and graduate degrees, with most having professional schools as well. These tend to be the largest institutions in terms of student population.

The University of Regina is included in Group 2. In 2016, twelve Group 2 universities participated in the survey. Along with the University of Regina, they included Brock, Carleton, Lakehead, Ryerson, Simon Fraser, Thompson Rivers, Moncton, New Brunswick (Fredericton), Victoria, Waterloo and Wilfred Laurier. Because different universities participate each year, differences in results among similar surveys from earlier years may result from the inclusion of different universities rather than changes over time.

### Statistically significant differences

In order to term an association as statistically significant, the Pearson's chi-square must have probability of a type 1 error of less than .001 and either the Phi coefficient or Cramer's V must have a value of .150 or greater.

### Non-response

Non-responses have not been included in the analysis. Therefore, throughout this report, unless explicitly stated as a subpopulation, overall results do not include those who did not respond to a particular question. However, for questions where "don't know" is a valid response, overall results include those who selected "don't know" to a particular question.

**Note:** Tables in this report might not add up to one hundred percent due to rounding errors and/or because some categories (such as "Other") are not reflected in the table.