

Examining the University of Regina First-Year Student Experience Expectations, Educational Experience and Goal Development

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.

The reports focus on responses from 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).

This fourth report in a series of six explores the expectations and experiences as well as the educational experiences and goal development of first-year students who completed the survey.

Expectations and Experience

First-year students rated 17 experiences as to whether they exceeded, met, or fell below their expectations. The average was calculated based on ratings of *much less than expected* (1), *less than expected* (2), *about what expected* (3), *more than expected* (4), and *much more than expected* (5). Results are shown in the following table:

Mean ratings of experience compared to expectations	National (n=14,886)	Comparable universities (n=6,176)	University of Regina (n=657)
The time you have to put into your coursework	3.6	3.6	3.6
Cost of going to university	3.5	3.5	3.6
How academically demanding your courses are	3.5	3.5	3.5
Debt you might have to take on to complete your program	3.3	3.4	3.5
Writing in your academic work	3.2	3.2	3.3
Intellectual stimulation	3.2	3.2	3.2
Doing coursework on your own	3.2	3.2	3.2
Doing coursework in groups	3.1	3.1	3.2
The university has help and advising available when I need it	3.0	3.0	3.1
Class participation	3.0	3.0	2.9
Contact with your professors in the classroom	3.0	2.9	2.9
Using math in your academic work	3.0	3.0	2.8
Contact with your professors outside of the classroom	2.9	2.9	2.8
Your course grades	2.8	2.7	2.8
Making friends	2.9	2.9	2.7
Getting involved in campus social activities	2.6	2.6	2.5
I get lost in the crowd	2.6	2.6	2.4

At the University of Regina, as at other universities, students are more likely to say that academic challenges such as *time to put into their coursework* and *how academically demanding their courses are*, along with cost-related aspects such as *cost of going to university* are more or much more than expected.

Making friends and getting involved in campus social activities were more difficult than our students expected. The table below presents all results:

Ratings of experiences compared to expectations	University of Regina (n=657)		
	Less/much less than I expected	About what I expected	More/much more than I expected
The time you have to put into your coursework	8%	40%	53%
How academically demanding your courses are	12%	40%	49%
Cost of going to university	4%	48%	49%
Debt you might have to take on to complete your program	12%	43%	45%
Doing coursework in groups	26%	37%	38%
Writing in your academic work	8%	59%	32%
Intellectual stimulation	10%	64%	26%
The university has help and advising available when I need it	17%	58%	26%
Class participation	25%	53%	23%
Contact with your professors in the classroom	27%	50%	23%
Your course grades*	41%	37%	22%
Making friends	42%	36%	22%
Doing coursework on your own	5%	75%	20%
Contact with your professors outside of the classroom	32%	49%	19%
Using math in your academic work	31%	54%	15%
I get lost in the crowd	52%	37%	11%
Getting involved in campus social activities	52%	38%	10%

*This question was asked using a scale from 'much lower than expected' to 'much higher than expected'.

Educational Experiences

Students rated their levels of agreement with a series of statements about their professors. Most students reported having had positive experiences with university faculty.

Most students agreed with the following statements:

- ▶ *Most of my professors treat students the same regardless of race*
- ▶ *Most of my professors treat students the same regardless of gender*
- ▶ *Most of my professors seem knowledgeable in their fields*
- ▶ *Most of my professors are reasonably accessible outside of class*

Students are less likely to agree with the following statements:

- ▶ *Most of my professors provide useful feedback on my academic work*
- ▶ *Most of my professors provide prompt feedback on my academic work*
- ▶ *Most of my professors take a personal interest in my academic progress*

See table on the following page for all results:

Perception of professors (% agree or strongly agree)	National (n=14,886)	Comparable universities (n=6,176)	University of Regina (n=657)
Treat students the same regardless of gender*	97%	96%	98%
Seem knowledgeable in their fields	97%	96%	98%
Treat students the same regardless of race*	97%	97%	96%
Are reasonably accessible outside of class	90%	90%	92%
Encourage students to participate in class discussions	87%	87%	89%
Are well-organized in their teaching	84%	84%	88%
Are fair in their grading	85%	83%	85%
Communicate well in their teaching	85%	84%	85%
Are consistent in their grading	86%	84%	84%
Look out for students' interests*	85%	84%	82%
Are intellectually stimulating in their teaching	81%	79%	82%
Treat students as individuals, not just numbers	79%	78%	78%
Provide useful feedback on academic work	68%	67%	75%
Provide prompt feedback on academic work	65%	66%	72%
Take a personal interest in academic progress	64%	65%	66%

*These questions included an option for students to say 'No basis for opinion' and those responses have been removed from the calculations.

Goal Development

The table below presents several career-related actions that first-year students have taken. Results show:

- ▶ Almost 7 in 10 first-years know their career options very well or fairly well.
- ▶ About 7 in 10 first-year students at the national level said they had selected their major or discipline, compared to almost 8 at the University of Regina and at comparable universities.
- ▶ University of Regina first-year students are more likely to have a specific career in mind (47%), compared to their peers at the national level (31%) and at comparable universities (28%).
- ▶ At this early point in their university studies, students at the national level seem to be equally likely to want to apply to a *professional program* (29%) as *graduate school* (34%). University of Regina students are less interested in graduate studies.
- ▶ About 8 in 10 University of Regina first-year students have talked with parents/family about employment/career after graduation.

Goal development	National (n=14,886)	Comparable universities (n=6,176)	University of Regina (n=657)
Has chosen a major or discipline	73%	77%	77%
Has a specific career in mind	31%	28%	47%
Has several possible careers in mind	32%	32%	28%
Plans to apply to professional program	29%	27%	34%
Plans to apply to graduate school	34%	31%	24%
Knows career options very well or fairly well	67%	67%	68%
Talked with parents/family about employment/career after graduation	75%	74%	78%

About CUSC

The 2016 CUSC survey is the 22nd cooperative study undertaken by the *Canadian University Survey Consortium / Consortium canadien de recherche sur les étudiants universitaires* (CUSC/CCREU) and the 17th 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.

For more information about CUSC/CCREU, visit the website at www.cusc-ccreu.ca.