

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

The 2017 *Middle-years Student Survey* marks the 23rd cooperative study undertaken by the Canadian University Survey Consortium/Consortium canadien de recherche sur les étudiants universitaires (CUSC-CCREU). The 2017 survey involved 24 universities and 15,248 middle-years university students from across Canada.

Profile of middle-years students

The demographic profile of middle-year students shows the following:

- ▶ Middle -year students tend to be Canadian citizens (85%), female (66%), and 22 years old. Many self-identify as a member of a visible minority (36%) or Aboriginal (5%).
- ▶ About 24% self-identify as having a disability; the most commonly selected disability was a mental health issue (15%).
- ▶ The majority of middle-years students live in off-campus housing (50%) in rented accommodations. Among those who do not live in on-campus housing, 23% would like to if given the opportunity.
- ▶ Just 13% of middle-years students are first-generation students — that is, neither parent has had any post-secondary education. Conversely, 19% have at least one parent/guardian who has completed a graduate degree.
- ▶ About 84% are studying full-time, and 31% report an average grade of A- or higher.

Activities

Student involvement in campus activities is inconsistent, with only *student club* (23%) activities being selected by more than 1 in 5 students as something they are involved in often or very often. About 24% of students volunteer on or off campus for an average of four hours per week.

On average, students spend about 32 hours per week on their academic work, almost evenly split between time spent in class and out of class.

Employment

About 54% of middle-years students are currently employed, working about 17 hours a week. Among those who are employed, 46% say their work has a negative impact on their academic performance.

Professors

Most students reported having had positive experiences with professors. In fact, among 15 aspects of interaction with professors, only two areas (*professors take a personal interest in their academic progress* and *professors provide prompt feedback on academic work*) received less than 70% agreement.

Overall, almost all students said they *were given the chance to evaluate the quality of teaching in their courses*, including 67% who said they were able to evaluate the teaching in all their courses.

Among middle-years students, almost 9 in 10 agreed that they are *generally satisfied with the quality of teaching they received*, including 18% who strongly agreed.

Staff

About 9 in 10 middle-years students agreed that *most university support staff are helpful* and 8 in 10 agreed that *most teaching assistants in their academic program are helpful*.

Growth and development

Students were asked to rate the extent which their university contributes to 29 skills. Students rated that their university contributed most to *working independently* (67% much or very much), the *ability to find and use information* (66%), *thinking logically and analytically* (65%), and the *ability to interact with people from backgrounds different than their own* (60%). On the other end, students rated their university's contribution lowest for *entrepreneurial skills* (20%), *second or third language skills* (19%), and *spirituality* (18%).

Commitment to completion

Several measures were used to gauge students' commitment to completing their programs at their universities.

- ▶ About 7 in 10 students agreed that a *university degree is worth the cost* (26% strongly agreed) or that *they have the financial resources to complete their program* (25% strongly agreed).
- ▶ Overall, 93% of students agreed that they are *willing to put a lot of effort into being successful at university*, which is reflected in the fact that 89% agreed that they *normally go to all of their classes*.
- ▶ Students are less positive that *they can deal with stress* (78%) or that they *have good study habits* (68%).
- ▶ At the time of the survey, 54% strongly agreed that they *plan to come back to this university next year*, while 63% strongly agreed that they *plan to complete their degree at this university*.

Expectations and experience

Overall, the majority (63%) of middle-years students said that their experiences *met their expectations*, while 22% said their university experiences *exceeded their expectations*. Few (16%) said their experiences *fell short*.

Overall evaluation of student experiences

When rating their experiences at university, students indicated the following:

- ▶ About 7 in 10 middle-years students said they are satisfied with the *concern shown by the university for them as an individual*, although just 8% are very satisfied.
- ▶ About 9 in 10 are satisfied with *their decision to attend their university*, including 24% who are very satisfied.
- ▶ About 8 in 10 agreed that they *feel as if they belong at this university*, including 17% who strongly agreed.
- ▶ Overall, 91% of middle-years students would *recommend their university to others*.

Goal development

The following bullets summarize information about students' goals, both for their current and future programs.

- ▶ About 92% of middle-years students said they had selected their major or discipline, although 38% have *changed their major or program of study*.
- ▶ Middle-years students seem to be somewhat more likely to want to apply to a *graduate school* (34%) than a *professional program* (24%).
- ▶ Overall, 26% of middle-years students have a specific career in mind. Despite many having a career (or two) in mind, just 20% said they know their career options very well.
- ▶ Even by middle-years, students have taken few concrete steps to prepare for employment, as most steps involve gathering information from talking with *parents/family* (76%), *friends* (76%), or *professors* (39%). Among more concrete behaviours, 57% *have a resumé or CV*, while about 31% have *volunteered or worked in their chosen field of employment*.

Satisfaction with facilities and services

Students indicated their use of and satisfaction with several different facilities and services, which are categorized below.

- ▶ **General facilities and services.** Among those who used each general service or facility, students are satisfied. Among 13 areas, two have satisfaction ratings below 80%: *parking facilities* (42%) and *food services* (74%).
- ▶ **Academic services.** Among those who have used each academic service, students reported very high levels of satisfaction, ranging from 84% to 91%.
- ▶ **Special services.** As the name implies, special services are used by a smaller group of students, with use ranging from 2% to 24% of students among the eight services. Satisfaction with special services is very high, with at least 80% of those who used them having said they are satisfied or very satisfied with it.

Finances

About 85% of middle-years students reported they have at least one credit card. Among those students who have credit cards, about 79% reported they pay off their balance each month and they carry an average balance of \$782.

About 41% of middle-years students reported owing money to at least one of the four sources tested, with *government student loans* (33%) being most common. Among all middle-years students, the average education-related debt at the time of the survey is about \$9,789. When only those who reported having any debt are considered, the average amount more than doubles to about \$24,007.

Overall, students required \$17,922 of financing for their current year of university education; the most common sources are *parents, family or spouse* (64%), and *summer* (49%) or *current* (44%) employment.