

March 2010

## Canadian University Survey Consortium – Survey of Graduating Undergraduate Students 2009: Selected Results

The year 2009 marked the fifteenth student survey conducted by the Canadian University Survey Consortium (CUSC). Since 1996, surveys which collect information about the student experience and satisfaction with facilities, services, professors and academics, have run on a three-year cycle with different student populations targeted each year: first-year undergraduate students, all undergraduate students and graduating undergraduate students. The 2009 survey focused on graduating undergraduate students, that is, undergraduates who would be graduating in the spring of 2009.

Thirty-four universities took part in the 2009 survey. The overall response rate was 44.6% and produced a sample of approximately 12,160 students. At Lakehead University, 588 students out of the 1000 invited, completed the survey for a response rate of 58.8%. With this response rate the results can be generalized to the population of graduating undergraduate students at Lakehead University in 2008/2009 (approximately 1500 students) within +/- 4% 19 times out of 20.

In this report Lakehead University's results are presented and compared<sup>1</sup> to the results of its peer group, Group One Universities. Group One, which is made up of 18 universities including Lakehead, consists of institutions that offer primarily undergraduate studies and have smaller student populations<sup>2</sup>. Lakehead University's results are also compared to the results of Group Two universities; these universities offer both undergraduate and graduate studies, and have medium-sized student populations<sup>3</sup>. Where available, results are compared to the results of the last survey of graduating undergraduate students conducted at Lakehead University in 2003.

### Satisfaction with Student Services

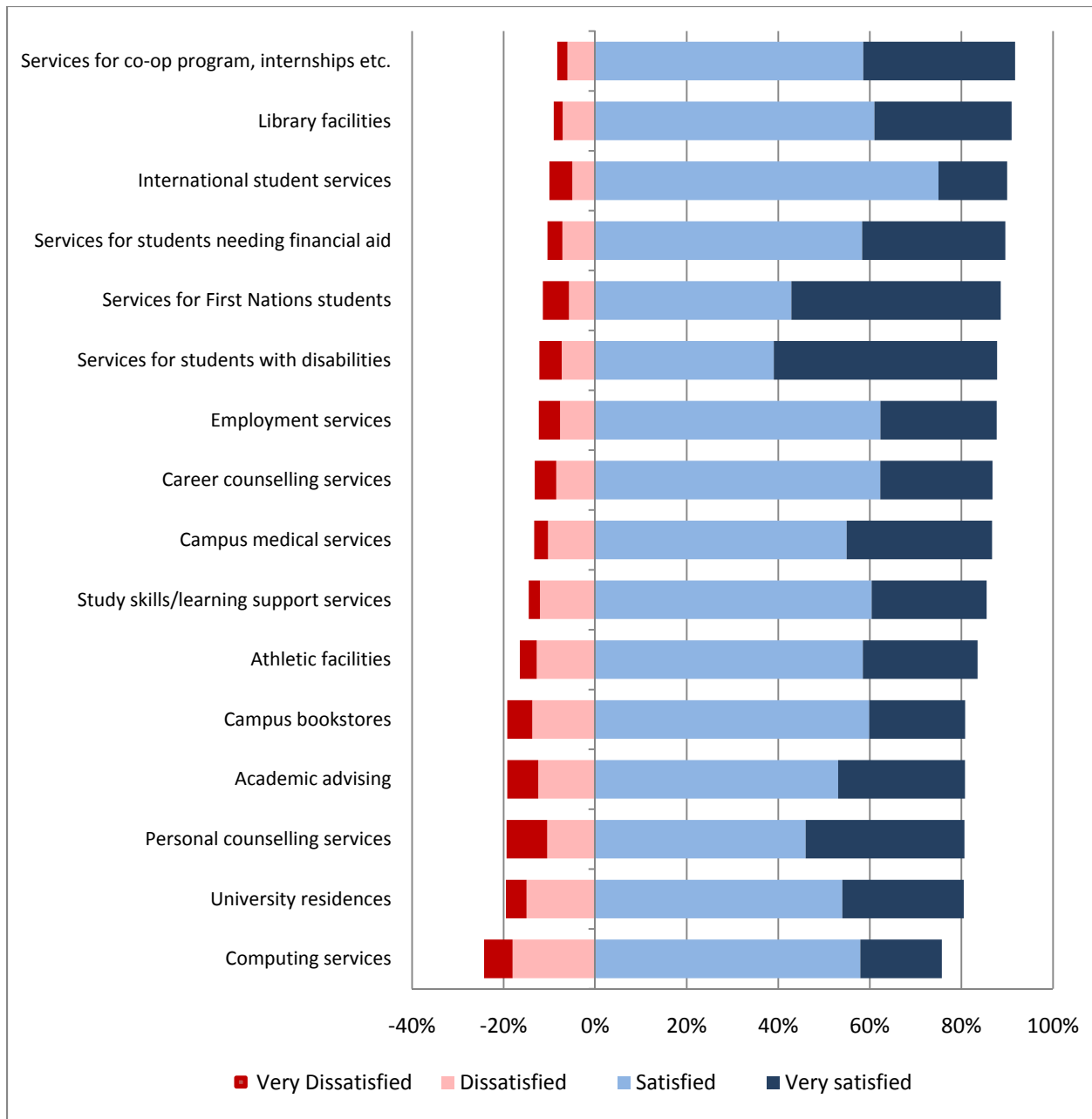
There is a high level of satisfaction with student services at Lakehead University. Between 80% - 90% of the graduating undergraduate students who used each of the services listed in Figure 1 were satisfied or very satisfied with the service, with the exception of computing services. To assess satisfaction with student services, graduating undergraduate students were asked if they had used a service and, if they responded in the affirmative, they were asked to rate their satisfaction with that service (See Figure 1).

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<sup>1</sup> While comparisons are presented for reference, no tests of significance were conducted.

<sup>2</sup> Group One universities: Univ. British Columbia (Okanagan), Univ. of the Fraser Valley, King's University College, Lakehead, Univ. of Lethbridge, Mount Allison, Univ. of New Brunswick (Saint John), Univ. of Northern British Columbia, Nipissing, Nova Scotia Agricultural College, Univ. of Ontario Institute of Technology, Redeemer Univ. College, St. Thomas, St. Francis Xavier, Saint Mary's, Trent, Trinity Western, Univ. of Winnipeg.

<sup>3</sup> Group Two universities: Brock, Carleton, Univ. Of Regina, Ryerson, Simon Fraser, Univ. Of Victoria, Wilfrid Laurier.



**Figure 1: Percent of graduating undergraduate students at Lakehead University who are satisfied, very satisfied, dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with selected student services.**

For most student services, the level of satisfaction at Lakehead is similar to that at Group One and / or at Group Two universities. See Table 1. Students at Lakehead University rated their satisfaction with financial aid services and career counselling services higher than students at Group One or at Group Two universities, however, students at Lakehead University were less satisfied with computing services than students at Group One or at Group Two universities.

**Table 1: Percentage of graduating undergraduate students at Lakehead University who report using each of 16 student services, along with the percentage who report being satisfied or very satisfied with each of these services at Lakehead, Group One and Group Two universities.**

Student Services	Percent of Lakehead Students Using Service	Satisfaction with Services at Lakehead (Percent very satisfied or satisfied)		
		Lakehead	Group 1	Group 2
Services for co-op, internships etc... (n=181)	33%	92%	89%	86%
Library facilities (n=564)	97%	91%	87%	92%
International student services (n=20)	4%	90%	92%	89%
Financial aid services (n=307)	53%	90%	85%	82%
Services for First Nations students (n=35)	7%	89%	91%	84%
Services for students with disabilities (n=41)	8%	88%	90%	89%
Employment services (n=130)	24%	88%	87%	88%
Career counselling services (n=106)	19%	87%	81%	81%
Campus medical services (n=233)	40%	87%	86%	92%
Study skills/learning support services (n=207)	37%	86%	91%	90%
Athletic facilities (n=431)	75%	84%	85%	91%
Campus bookstores (n=568)	98%	81%	77%	79%
Academic advising (n=458)	79%	81%	79%	79%
Personal counselling services (n=124)	23%	81%	84%	82%
University residences (n=200)	35%	81%	81%	83%
Computing services (n=449)	78%	76%	88%	93%

*Note: n represents the number of students at Lakehead University who responded to each of the satisfaction questions (don't know responses not included). The 'don't know', 'no response' and 'not applicable' response categories were omitted from the denominator of the satisfaction question results when calculating percentages.*

### Satisfaction with Professors

Students were asked to evaluate a series of statements about their experiences with their professors using an “agree strongly” to “disagree strongly” scale. Results reveal a high level of satisfaction with professors among graduating undergraduate students at Lakehead University. Ninety-seven percent of students agreed or agreed strongly that most of their professors seemed knowledgeable in their field and 89% agreed or agreed strongly that most of their professors were reasonably accessible outside of class to help students (Figure 2). Over 80% of students agreed or agreed strongly that their professors were organized in their teaching, communicated well while teaching and encouraged students to participate in class discussions. Graduating undergraduate students at Lakehead University less frequently agreed or agreed strongly that their professors provided useful feedback on their academic performance (70%). On all of the above statements, graduating undergraduate students at Lakehead University in 2009 were more likely to agree or agree strongly than in 2003.

### Most of my professors...

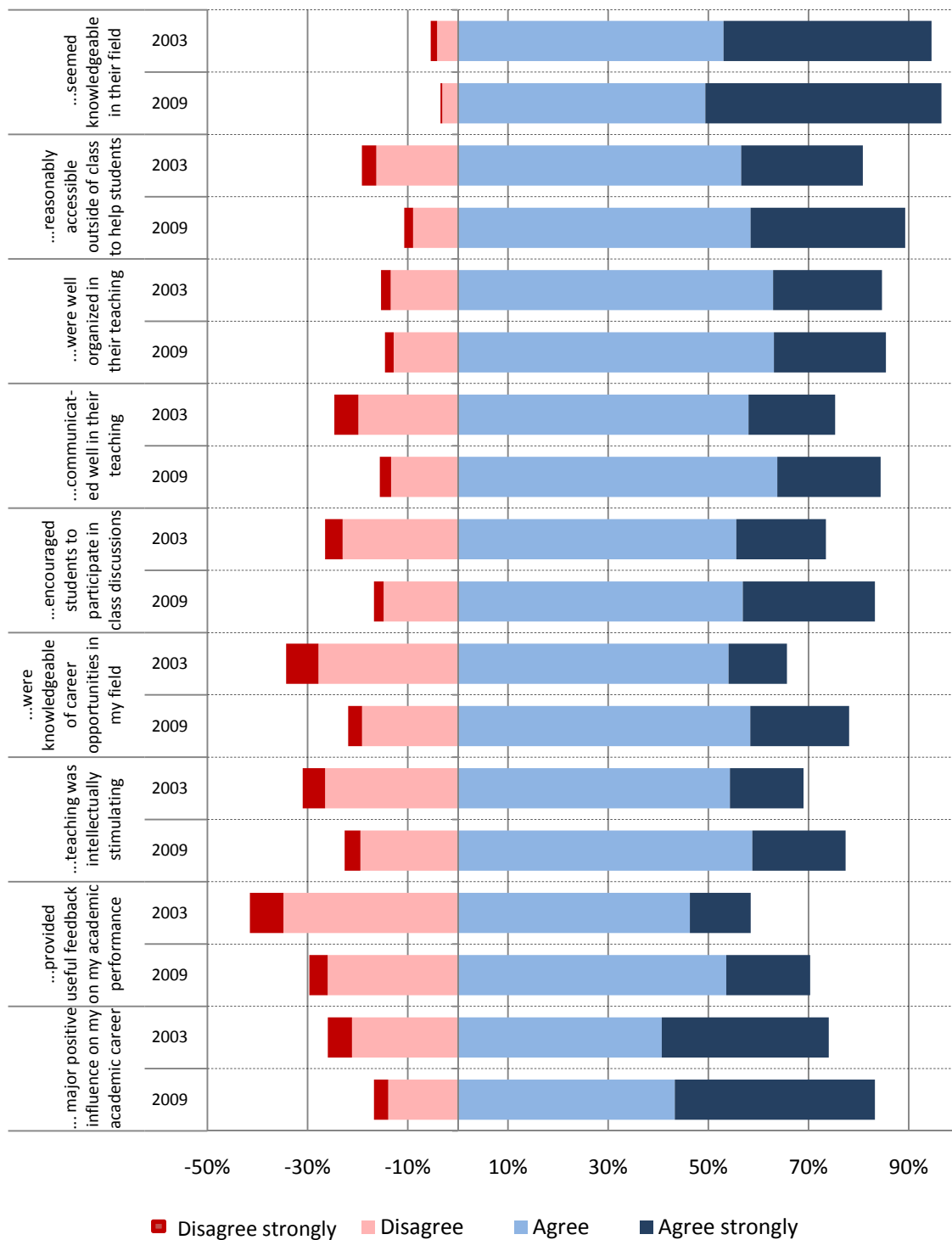
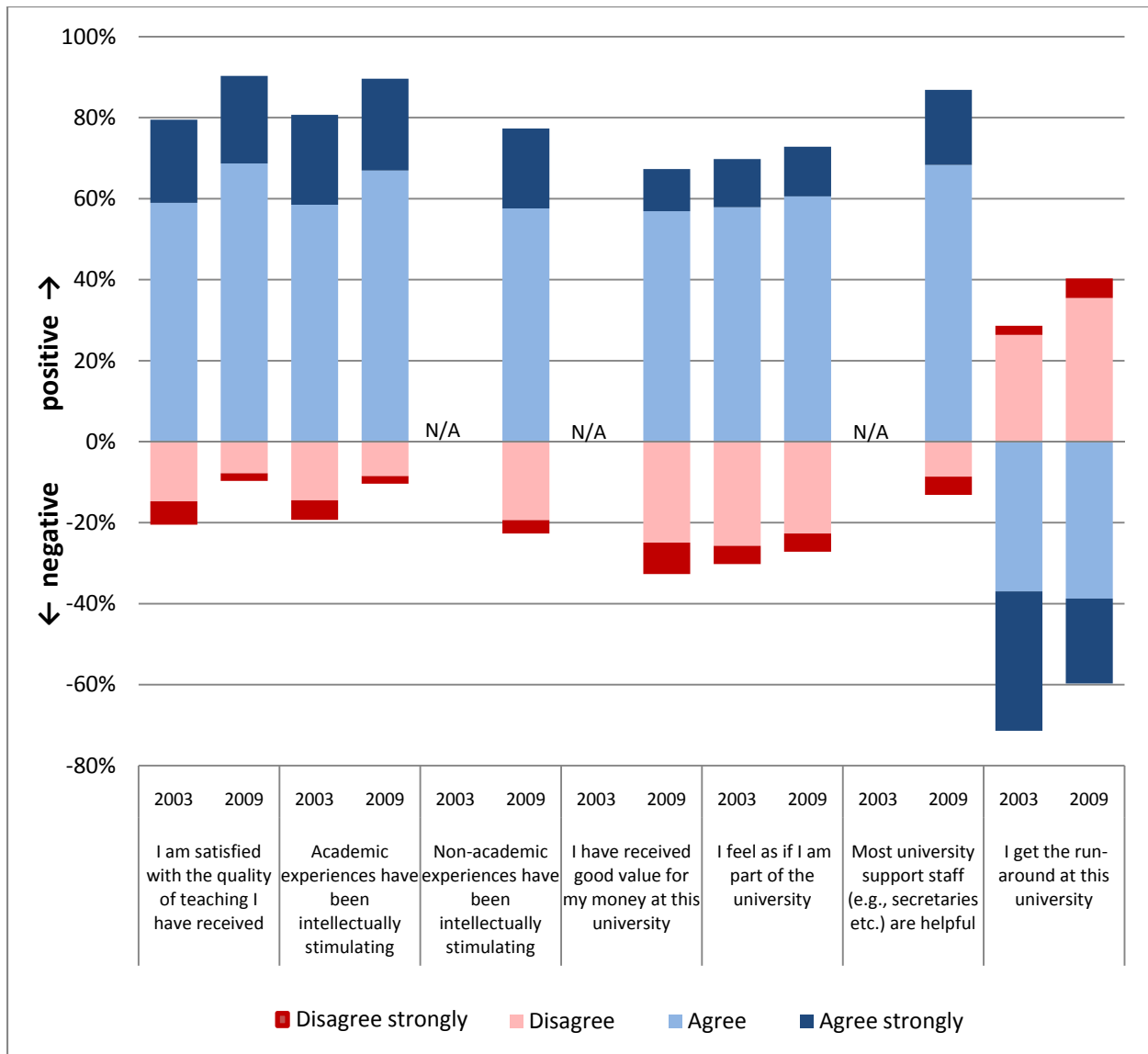


Figure 2: The level of agreement of graduating undergraduate students at Lakehead University in 2009 and 2003 with statements relating to their experiences with their professors

Compared to the average at Group One and at Group Two universities Lakehead University's 2009 graduating undergraduate students had similar agreement levels on whether 'professors seemed knowledgeable in their field' but had lower agreement ratings on other items.

### **Satisfaction with University Experience**

In 2009, graduating undergraduate students at Lakehead University were satisfied with academics, teaching and other non-academic experiences at the University. Students were most satisfied with their academic experiences but less satisfied with their non-academic experiences. Ninety-one percent agreed or agreed strongly that they were satisfied with the quality of teaching they had received (Figure 3). This is similar to 93% of students at Group One universities and 92% of students at Group Two universities. Ninety percent of graduating undergraduate students at Lakehead University, in 2009, agreed or agreed strongly that their academic learning experience at the University was intellectually stimulating. This percentage is similar to students at Group One universities (92%) and Group Two universities (91%). Seventy-seven percent of students agreed or agreed strongly that their non-academic experiences were intellectually stimulating, 87% agreed or strongly agreed that most university support staff are helpful, 73% agreed or agreed strongly that they feel as if they are part of the university and 67% agreed or agreed strongly that they received good value for money. However, 60% of graduating undergraduate students at Lakehead University feel that they sometimes get the run-around at Lakehead. For all items in Figure 3 that appear in both the 2009 and 2003 CUSC surveys, the percent of students who responded positively was greater in 2009 than in 2003.

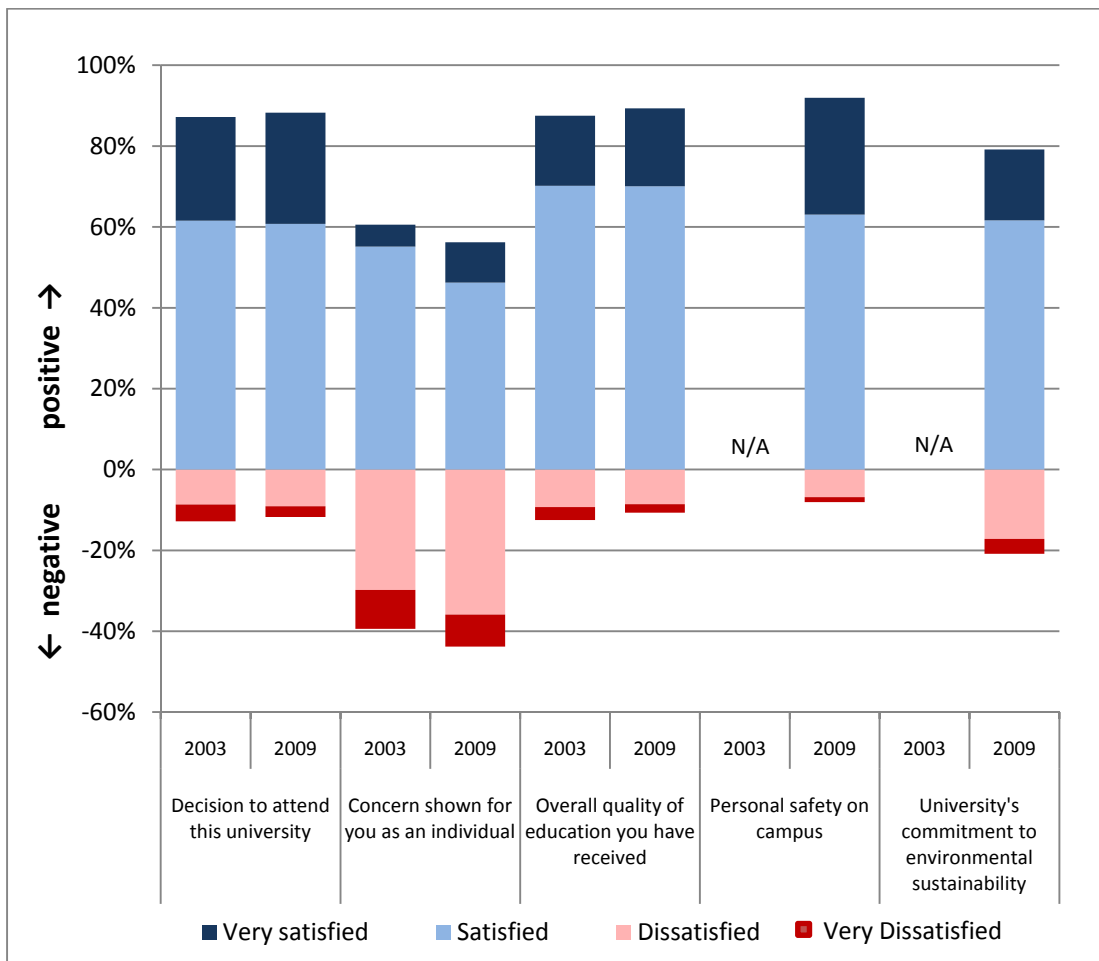


Note: N/A= not available. Question not asked in the 2003 CUSC survey.

**Figure 3: The level of agreement of graduating undergraduate students in 2003 and 2009 with various statements relating to academic, social, administrative and financial experiences at Lakehead University.**

When asked explicitly about their level of satisfaction, graduating undergraduate students at Lakehead University have high scores. Eighty-nine percent are satisfied or very satisfied with the overall quality of education that they have received (Figure 4). This is only slightly lower than at Group One universities (92%) and Group Two universities (91%). Eighty-eight percent of graduating undergraduate students at Lakehead University were satisfied or very satisfied with their decision to attend this university. This is compared to 91% of students at Group One universities and 91% of students at Group Two universities. While satisfaction with most items has grown between 2003 and 2009, Lakehead University’s graduating undergraduate students are less satisfied with the concern shown for them as individuals. In 2009, only 56% of graduating undergraduate students were satisfied or very satisfied with the concern shown by

the University for them as individuals. Of note is the high level of satisfaction with personal safety on campus.



Note: N/A= not available. Question not asked in the 2003 CUSC survey.

**Figure 4: The level of satisfaction of 2009 versus 2003 graduating undergraduate students with various elements of the Lakehead University experience.**

Many (63%) undergraduate students in their graduating year at Lakehead University reported that their experiences at Lakehead University had met their expectations. A further 19% stated that their experiences had exceeded their expectations for a total of 82% of students who stated that Lakehead University met or exceeded expectations. The most frequently stated reasons for why Lakehead University exceeded expectations include high quality, approachable and caring professors and a quality education. Eighty-six percent of graduating undergraduate students at Lakehead University stated that they would recommend the university to others.

All responding students were encouraged to comment on what they thought Lakehead University did well. Excellence of professors, small class sizes, opportunities for student / professor interaction, and

social atmosphere / sense of community were areas of excellence frequently mentioned by students. Table 2 presents examples of comments grouped by area of excellence.

**Table 2: Areas of excellence identified by graduating undergraduate students at Lakehead University in response to the question ‘what do you think the university did particularly well?’.**

<b>What do you think the university did particularly well? (Thunder Bay campus only)</b>		
<b>Category</b>	<b># of comments</b>	<b>Example comments</b>
Good professors	62	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>professors were excellent and were very helpful</li> <li>dedicated professors</li> <li>the help from my profs was amazing</li> <li>I want to salute all my professors for doing a good job</li> <li>professors are knowledgeable and enthusiastic about the subject matter</li> </ul>
Small class sizes	50	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>small personable classrooms</li> <li>small class sizes</li> </ul>
Student / professor interaction	42	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>professors... .. very approachable and willing to help students</li> <li>I thoroughly enjoy the professor-student interaction</li> <li>professors were easy to get in touch with after class time</li> <li>professors get to know the students on a first-name basis</li> <li>opportunities to interact and discuss with professors on a daily basis</li> </ul>
Good social atmosphere / sense of community	32	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>university engaged me as a person and not a customer</li> <li>they made the university not just a place but a community</li> <li>nice welcoming atmosphere</li> <li>communicated with its students as PEOPLE not just numbers</li> <li>good feeling of community on campus</li> </ul>
Academic advising	16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>academic advising office was a big help</li> <li>academic advising works hard to get you what you need</li> </ul>
Scheduling (classes and exams)	8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>always had our course and exam schedules organized and easy to access</li> </ul>
Aboriginal services etc...	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Aboriginal co-ordinator... .. was very helpful with any questions I had and was very knowledgeable about the programs and courses I needed to register for</li> </ul>
Good financial aid	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the school provided many opportunities for me to receive bursaries and financial support</li> <li>financial assistance was very good at this university. Without it I would have to drop out</li> </ul>

### **About Lakehead University Students**

The demographic component of the CUSC survey allows universities to understand who their students are in comparison to similar universities across Canada. While some demographic data are more readily and accurately available from other sources (such as official reporting files) some of the data presented here are unique.



Of Lakehead University's graduating undergraduate students:

- ▶ 8% self-identify as Aboriginal, over twice as many as at Group One universities (4%) or at Group Two universities (3%).
- ▶ 12% self-identify as a visible minority, fewer than at Group One universities (17%) or at Group Two universities (30%).
- ▶ 10% self-identify as having a disability, more than at Group One universities (8%) or at Group Two universities (8%). The two most common types are learning (3.4%) and mental health (2.7%) disabilities.
- ▶ 11% have children, more than at Group One universities (7%) or at Group Two universities (7%).
- ▶ 44% received an academic scholarship, fewer than at Group One universities (50%) but higher than at Group Two universities (42%).
- ▶ 30% experienced delays in the completion of their program. The top three reasons for delays were inadequate grades (13%), required courses were not available (9%), and financial issues (8%). Delays in completion because required courses were not available are lower at Lakehead (9%) than at Group One universities (13%) and at Group Two universities (21%).
- ▶ 20% interrupted their studies for one or more terms (not including inter-sessions, summer sessions or work terms). The top four reasons for interrupting studies include employment (8%), financial (5%), family (5%), and illness (5%). The percentage of graduating undergraduate students at Lakehead University who interrupted their studies is similar to the 20% at Group One universities and lower than the 27% at Group Two universities.
- ▶ 57% were employed during the current academic term (excludes work that is part of a co-op program), fewer than at Group One universities (60%) or at Group Two universities (63%). Eleven percent of graduating undergraduate students at Lakehead University report working on campus, which is lower than at Group One universities (21%) or at Group Two universities (16%). Of those employed during the current academic term, the average self-reported time spent at place(s) of employment was 19.4 hours / week and 34% reported that their employment had a somewhat negative or very negative impact on their academic performance.

### **Financing Education**

Graduating undergraduate students at Lakehead University used several sources of funding to finance their undergraduate education. The most frequently accessed sources of funding were: summer employment (45%), parents, family, spouse (44%), government loan or bursary (44%) and university scholarship, award or bursary (42%). Sixty-nine percent of graduating undergraduate students at Lakehead University reported that they acquired repayable debt to finance their university education, more than at Group One universities (64%) or at Group Two universities (55%). The average debt of

those with debt is \$27,020 (median = \$25,000) at Lakehead University, \$28,141 (median = \$26,000) at Group One universities and \$26,183 (median = \$21,000) at Group Two universities.

### **Plans after Graduation**

The final section of the CUSC survey asked students to reflect on their plans for after graduation. Fifty-three percent of graduating undergraduate students at Lakehead University planned to continue their education in their first year after graduation. While about one half of graduating undergraduate students at Lakehead University were planning to pursue further education, only 25% planned to attend graduate or professional school, 16% planned to complete further undergraduate education and 4% planned to attend a college, technical or vocational school.

Debt had an impact on planned pursuits for after graduation. Of those with debt who were not planning on pursuing further education in the first year after graduation, 48% said that their accumulated debt had a great impact on their decision not to pursue further education and 32% said it had some impact.

At the time the CUSC survey was conducted (late January / early February 2009) 30% of graduating undergraduate students indicated that they had some type of employment arranged for after graduation (21% had arranged full-time employment). A further 56% of students were seeking work while 14% did not have employment and were not seeking employment. The percent of graduating undergraduate students at Lakehead University who indicated that they had employment arranged for after graduation is comparable to that at Group One universities (30%) and Group Two universities (33%). Almost all (95%) graduating undergraduate students at Lakehead University had taken one or more steps to prepare for employment / career after graduation. The most common steps taken were creating a resume or curriculum vitae (73%), talking with professors about employment / career (59%), and attending an employment fair (59%).