

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

Completed in April 2013, the *2013 CUSC Survey of First-year Students* focused on undergraduate university students who started at the University of Regina during the 2012–2013 academic year. The survey was distributed to more than 41,000 students at 35 universities across Canada. In total, 15,218 undergraduate students from across Canada completed the survey, including 668 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. Where possible, this report also compares results with the 2010, 2007, and 2004 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 the main reasons for selecting their particular university.

### Most important reasons for attending university

First-year students were asked to rate the most important reason for attending university among eight offered. Table 1 shows the top five most important reasons, as rated by University of Regina students.

- ▶ Half of University of Regina (50%) students rate *preparing for a specific career or job* as being the most important reason for attending university, which is higher than the proportion nationally (42%) and at comparable universities (38%). The next highest proportion is *to get a good job* at 23%, which is less than half of those who choose *preparing for a specific career or job*. These results indicate that employment-related reasons tend to be the most important factors for students pursuing a university education, and this is fairly common across institutions.
- ▶ Secondary reasons appear to be education-related, such as *increasing knowledge in academic field* (7% among University of Regina students) and *getting a good general education* (7%).

	National (n = 14,550)	Comparable universities (n = 6,205)	University of Regina			
			2013 (n = 668)	2010 (n = 612)	2007 (n = 460)	2004 (n = 265)
Prepare for a specific career or job	42%	38%	50%	53%	50%	43%
To get a good job	26%	29%	23%	25%	28%	34%
Increase knowledge in academic field	8%	8%	7%	4%	3%	4%
Get a good general education	8%	8%	7%	8%	7%	5%
Prepare for graduate school	8%	8%	6%	3%	6%	6%

When rating the importance each of these factors played in their decision to pursue a university education, results at a national level (which include University of Regina students) show that students in professional programs tend to put more weight on aspects such as *getting a good job* and *preparing for a specific job or career* than students in other programs. Biological Science students tend to put more weight on *preparing for graduate school* than students in other programs.

## Application behaviors

Table 2 shows students' behaviors when applying for university.

- ▶ Compared to students nationally (71%) and at similar universities (86%), University of Regina (32%) students are much less likely to have applied to other universities. With that being said, the proportion of University of Regina students who applied to other universities has steadily increased over time from 19% in 2004 to 32% in 2013.
- ▶ Although University of Regina students are less likely to have applied to other universities than other students, they tend to be more likely to have applied to universities out of province (48% compared to 31% nationally and 23% at comparable institutions). This trend has declined since 2004 when 55% of University of Regina students, among those who applied to more than one university, applied to a university outside of Saskatchewan.

Even though almost one third of University of Regina students applied to other universities, 82% of University of Regina students say the university was their first choice. This compares to 78% nationally and 73% at comparable universities. Over time, the proportion of students at the University of Regina who report that the university was their first choice has decreased slightly from a high of 90% in 2007 to 82% in 2013. This is likely related to the increase in the proportion applying to other universities.

- ▶ Nationally (including University of Regina students), the older a student is, the less likely they are to have applied to more than one university. Also, Engineering (80%) and Social Science (79%) students are most likely to have applied to other universities, while Education (52%) students are least likely.

	National (n = 14,550)	Comparable universities (n = 6,205)	University of Regina			
			2013 (n = 668)	2010 (n = 612)	2007 (n = 460)	2004 (n = 265)
Applied to more than one university	71%	86%	32%	24%	28%	19%
Applied to university outside of home province*	31%	23%	48%	50%	50%	55%
Attending first choice of university	78%	73%	82%	88%	90%	87%

\* This proportion is only out of those students who indicated they applied to more than one university.

## Most important reason for choosing this university

Students were asked to choose the single most important reason for choosing their current university among 17 aspects. Table 3 shows some of the most common aspects.

- ▶ 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 (13%).
- ▶ Students nationally (23%) and at comparable universities (22%) most commonly selected *specific career-related programs* as the most important reason for choosing their university. This reason ranks second among University of Regina students (27%), although more selected it than students at other universities, and its importance has been increasing steadily since 2004.
- ▶ Students at other universities are more likely to say they selected their university because of the *quality of academic programs* (19% nationally, 18% at comparable universities, and 9% among University of Regina students) and the *university having a good reputation* (9% nationally, 7% at comparable universities, and 2% at the University of Regina).

	National (n = 14,550)	Comparable universities (n = 6,205)	University of Regina			
			2013 (n = 668)	2010 (n = 612)	2007 (n = 460)	2004 (n = 265)
Specific career-related program	23%	22%	27%	26%	23%	22%
Quality of academic programs	19%	18%	9%	8%	9%	8%
Wanted to live close to home	16%	13%	36%	36%	38%	33%
University has good reputation	9%	7%	2%	2%	2%	3%
Co-op program, internships, or other practical experiences	8%	15%	3%	4%	4%	3%
Parents wanted me to enroll here	3%	2%	6%	6%	3%	3%

When rating the importance of these aspects<sup>1</sup>, there are a few differences that are found nationally (including University of Regina students) among disciplines.

- ▶ *Specific career-related programs* was more frequently identified as a *very important* reason in choosing their current university by students in Professional (83%) and Education (84%) programs than by students in other disciplines.
- ▶ Students in Engineering (58%) and Business (49%) programs are much more likely than other students to say that *co-op programs, internships, and other practical experiences* were *very important*.

<sup>1</sup> Ratings were done on a three point scale (Not important, Somewhat important, Very important).

## Most important contact in decision when choosing university

Before deciding to attend their university, students report having received various types of contact. We asked students to consider 14 different types of contacts and identify which one was the most important in their decision to attend their current university. Table 4 shows the top five forms of contact that first-year students say had the most impact on their decision to attend their university.

- ▶ Of these pre-decision contacts, two types stand out for University of Regina student respondents. University of Regina students rate *advice from high school counsellors or teachers* (21%) and *campus visits and open houses* (19%) as being the most important forms of contact. Although students nationally (22%) and at comparable universities (24%) also rate *campus visits and open houses* as one of the most important forms of contact, about half as many rate *advice from high school counsellors or teachers* as important (11% nationally and at comparable universities).
- ▶ Results nationally (including University of Regina students) show that the younger students are, the more likely they are to indicate that *campus visits or open houses* were the most important influence on their decision about which university to attend (decreasing from 23% of those 18 and younger to 11% of those 21 and older). This type of contact was chosen most often by those 18 and younger. Also, the older students are, the more likely they are to rely on the *university website* (increasing from 10% of those 18 and younger to 23% of those 21 and older). This form of contact was chosen most often by those 21 and older.

	National (n = 14,550)	Comparable universities (n = 6,205)	University of Regina			
			2013 (n = 668)	2010 (n = 612)	2007 (n = 460)	2004 (n = 265)
Campus visits/open houses	22%	24%	19%	16%	26%	32%
Word of mouth	15%	13%	13%	17%	-	-
University website	12%	10%	11%	8%	20%	14%
Advice from high school counsellors or teachers	11%	11%	21%	25%	-	-
Visit by university representative to high school	8%	8%	10%	8%	13%	16%

## **About CUSC**

The 2013 CUSC survey is the 19<sup>th</sup> cooperative study undertaken by the *Canadian University Survey Consortium / Consortium canadien de recherche sur les étudiants universitaires* (CUSC/CCREU) and the 14<sup>th</sup> study in which the University of Regina has participated. Since 1996, the survey has run in a three-year cycle, with different student populations targeted each year: all undergraduates, first-year undergraduates, or graduating students.

This study focuses on undergraduate university students who started in the Fall 2012 term and compares results to previous first-year surveys conducted in 2010, 2007, and 2004. The survey was distributed to more than 41,000 students at 35 universities across Canada. In total, 15,218 undergraduate students from across Canada completed the survey, yielding an overall response rate of 37.0%. Participating students from the University of Regina numbered 668, which represents a 49.2% 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 2013, 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. This reflects a higher number of participating Group 2 institutions as compared to earlier surveys of graduating students.

In this report, the University of Regina is not included in either the *National* category (all three Groups) or the *Comparable Universities* category (Group 2 institutions).

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.

## **Weighting**

In order to compensate for the discrepancies between the population of first-year students among participating institutions and the sample population, the combined (national and comparator) data in this report have been weighted.

**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](http://www.cusc-ccreu.ca).**