

## Examining the University of Regina Student Experience

# Universities' Contribution to Students' Knowledge and Skills Development

Completed in April 2012, the 2012 CUSC Survey of Graduating Students focused on undergraduate university students deemed eligible to graduate in 2012. The survey was distributed to more than 41,000 students at 36 universities across Canada. In total, 15,062 undergraduate students from across Canada completed the survey, including 430 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, each of the six summary reports also compare results with the 2009, 2006, and 2003 CUSC surveys of graduating students. However, only the 2012 results are provided in this report because the particular questions explored were asked in a substantially different way, making it impossible to compare with results obtained in earlier graduate student surveys. Unless stated otherwise, all differences reported are not statistically significant.

This fourth report examines graduating students' assessment of the impact their university had in developing their knowledge base and skills in the context of three thematic areas including (1) academic skills, (2) communication skills, and (3) working and knowledge skills.

### Universities' contribution to students' growth and development in *academic skills*

Table 1 presents students' ratings of their university's contribution to their academic growth and development.

- ▶ For academic skills, University of Regina students provide ratings similar to students at other universities. University of Regina respondents say the university contributed most to their *broad knowledge of their major field of study* and least to their *mathematical skills*, which is the same as students nationally and at comparable universities.
- ▶ Nationally (including students from the University of Regina), male students are more likely than female students to say that their university contributed much or very much to their ability to *analyze quantitative problems* (49% versus 31%) and *mathematical skills* (39% versus 22%).
- ▶ Among students nationally (including the University of Regina), students in Engineering and Physical Science disciplines are generally most likely to say their university contributed much or very much to their development in four academic skills (*analyzing quantitative problems, computer literacy skills, understanding and applying scientific principles and methods, and mathematical skills*). Conversely, Arts and Humanities students are least likely.

	National (n=14,632)	Comparable universities (n=5,932)	University of Regina
			2012 (n=430)
Broad knowledge of major field of study	76%	76%	80%
Preparation for postgraduate study	45%	46%	41%
Analyzing quantitative problems	37%	41%	37%
Computer literacy skills	35%	39%	37%
Understanding and applying scientific methods	34%	33%	29%
Mathematical skills	28%	31%	27%

**Universities' contribution to students' growth and development in *communication skills***

Table 2 shows students' ratings of their university's contribution to their growth and development in communication skills. Overall, results indicate that University of Regina respondents rate their university's contribution similarly to students nationally and at comparable universities.

Nationally (which includes students from the University of Regina), there are significant differences among disciplines for most of the communication skills.

- ▶ Arts and Humanities students are most likely to say their university contributed much or very much to their *written communication skills* and *second or third language skills*.
- ▶ Students in Business programs are most likely to say their university contributed to their developing skills associated with *cooperative interaction in groups*.

	National (n=14,632)	Comparable universities (n=5,932)	University of Regina
			2012 (n=430)
Written communication skills	66%	67%	72%
Oral communication skills	61%	63%	66%
Cooperative interaction in groups	57%	59%	56%
Second or third language skills	17%	14%	19%

**Universities' contribution to students' growth and development in *analytical and learning skills***

For most analytical and learning skills, University of Regina respondents rated their university on par with students from other universities in Canada. Table 3 shows that University of Regina students, like students elsewhere, are most likely to report that their university contributed most to their ability to *think logically and analytically* and least to *identifying and solving problems*.

There are a couple of notable differences between University of Regina respondents and those from comparable universities, University of Regina graduating students (66%) are more likely than their counterparts from comparable universities (58%) to rate their university as having contributed much or very much to developing a *commitment to lifelong learning*. In contrast, University of Regina respondents (58%) are less likely than students from comparable universities (66%) to report that their institution contributed to their *ability to access information* (66%).

Again, some differences among disciplines are evident among students nationally (including University of Regina students). Students in Engineering and Physical Science programs are most likely to say their university contributed much or very much to their ability to *identify and solve problems*, while students in Education and Arts and Humanities programs were least likely.

<b>Table 3: Students reporting their university contributed much or very much to their analytical and learning skills</b>			
	<b>National (n=14,632)</b>	<b>Comparable universities (n=5,932)</b>	<b>University of Regina 2012 (n=430)</b>
Thinking logically and analytically	71%	73%	68%
Commitment to lifelong learning	57%	58%	66%
Ability to understand abstract reasoning	62%	63%	63%
Skills for planning and completing projects	61%	63%	61%
Ability to access information	63%	66%	58%
Effective study and learning skills	60%	62%	57%
Identifying and solving problems	52%	55%	52%

### **Universities' contribution to students' growth and development in working and knowledge skills**

Table 4 presents students' ratings for their university's contribution to their *working and knowledge skills*. University of Regina students are less likely to say the university contributed much or very much to their ability to *work independently* than students nationally and at comparable universities. However, they are more likely to say their university contributed to employment-related aspects, such as *general skills and knowledge relevant for employment* and *specific employment-related skills and knowledge*.

Nationally (which includes students from the University of Regina), six of these seven working and knowledge skills have significantly different ratings depending on the students' disciplines.

- ▶ Students in Education and Professional programs are most likely to say their university contributed much or very much toward *general skills and knowledge relevant for employment* and *specific employment-related skills and knowledge*. Students in Social Science programs are least likely to say their university contributed toward both skills.
- ▶ Students in Social Science and Business programs are most likely to say their university contributed to their ability to *understand national and global issues*. Students in Physical Science and Engineering are least likely.

<b>Table 4: Students reporting their university contributed much or very much to their working and knowledge skills</b>			
	<b>National (n=14,632)</b>	<b>Comparable universities (n=5,932)</b>	<b>University of Regina 2012 (n=430)</b>
Working independently	74%	75%	65%
General skills and knowledge relevant for employment	50%	52%	58%
Specific employment-related skills and knowledge	44%	45%	53%
Understanding national and global issues	47%	49%	48%
Living in an international world	44%	45%	42%
Appreciation of the arts	29%	30%	33%
Entrepreneurial skills	18%	19%	17%

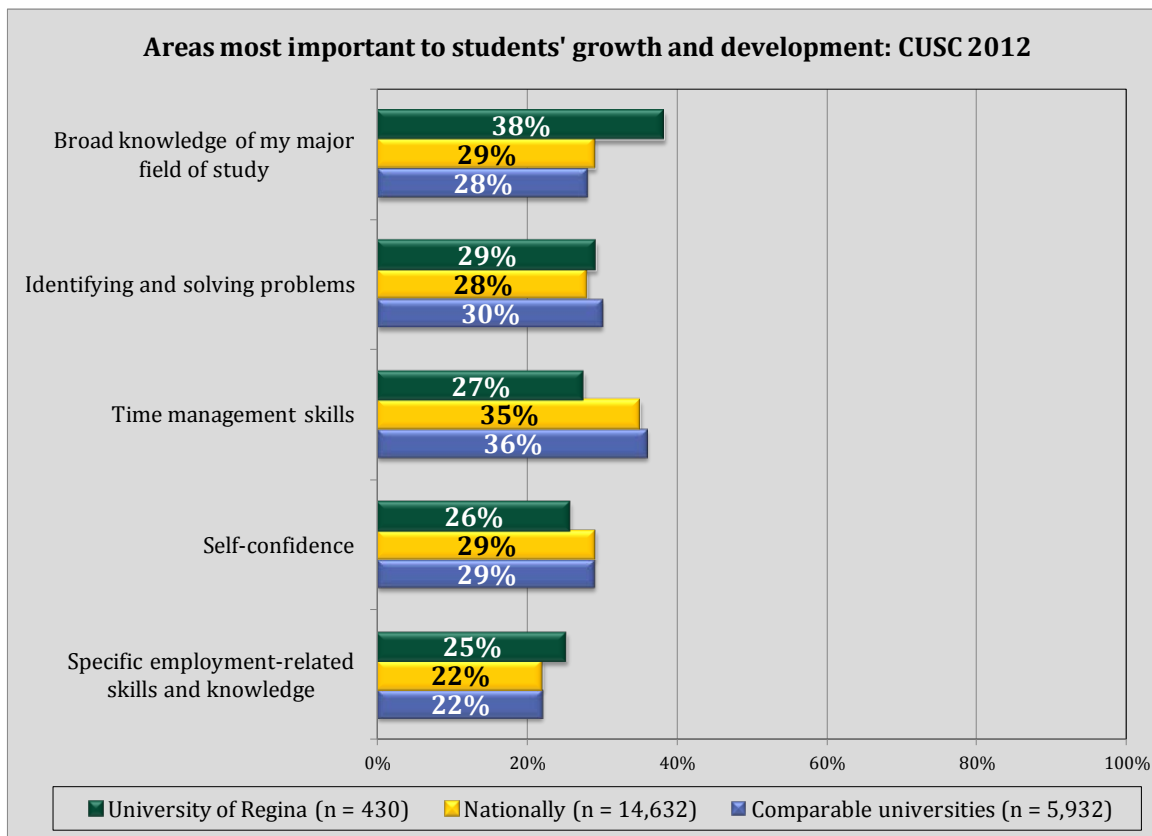
- ▶ Students in Arts and Humanities programs are much more likely than students in other disciplines to say their university contributed much or very much to their *appreciation of the arts*. Engineering students are least likely.
- ▶ As might be expected, students in Business programs are most likely to say their university contributed much or very much to their *entrepreneurial skills* and *living in an international world*.

**Areas students perceive as being most important for universities' contribution to student development**

From 20 of the 33 items to which students rated their university's contribution, students were asked to identify the most important areas for a student's growth and development. Students' choices are diverse, and no single factor is seen as most important to more than 4 in 10 students at the University of Regina.

Figure 1 shows the top five areas University of Regina students rate as being most important for their university to contribute towards.

- ▶ University of Regina students tend to put more emphasis on having their university contribute to *their broad knowledge in their major field of study* than students nationally and at comparable universities.
- ▶ Conversely, University of Regina students put less emphasis on their university needing to contribute to their *time management skills* than students at other universities.



**Figure 1**

## About CUSC

The 2012 CUSC survey is the 18<sup>th</sup> cooperative study undertaken by the *Canadian University Survey Consortium / Consortium canadien de recherche sur les étudiants universitaires* (CUSC/CCREU) and the 13<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 students who will be graduating from their program of study in 2012 and compares results to previous surveys conducted in 2009, 2006, and 2003. The survey involved 37 participating universities and over 15,000 students from across Canada, yielding an overall response rate of 36.5%. Participating students from the University of Regina numbered 430, which represents a 31.5% 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 2012, eleven 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), Waterloo and Wilfred Laurier. This reflects a higher number of participating Group 2 institutions as compared to earlier surveys of graduating students, with seven in each of the 2006 and 2003 studies.

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.

**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).**