

# **2006 Canadian Undergraduate Survey Consortium (CUSC): Graduating Undergraduate Students**

**Report #1: Satisfaction Levels and  
Perceptions of Their University**

Prepared by the Office of Institutional Research and Planning

January 2007

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Introduction</b> .....	3
<b>Methodology</b> .....	3
<b>Profile of Carleton Respondents</b> .....	4
<b>Results – Satisfaction Levels and Perceptions of the University</b> .....	5
<b>Conclusion</b> .....	13
<b>Appendix A (CUSC Protocol for Data Use)</b> .....	14
<b>List of Tables</b>	
Table 1: Proportional Profile of Respondents .....	4
Table 2: Why Would You Recommend or Not Recommend Your University to Others...	7
<b>List of Figures</b>	
Figure 1: Satisfied with Overall Quality of Education, 2003-2006.....	5
Figure 2: Satisfied with Overall Quality of Education, Carleton vs. Group 2 and 3.....	6
Figure 3: Has Your Experience at This University Exceeded, Met, or Fallen Short of Your Expectations...	7
Figure 4: Satisfied with Concern Shown for Students as Individuals, 2003-2006.....	8
Figure 5: Satisfied with Concern Shown for Students as Individuals, Carleton vs. Group 2 and 3..	9
Figure 6: Student Satisfaction Ratings of Services on Campus.....	10
Figure 7: Satisfied with Decision to Attend this University, 2003-2006.....	11
Figure 8: Satisfied with Decision to Attend this University, Carleton vs. Group 2 and 3....	11
Figure 9: Perceptions of the University.....	12

## **Introduction**

Carleton University regularly participates in a number of surveys in order to better understand its students' needs and perceptions. In February 2006, Carleton was one of 25 institutions that participated in an undergraduate survey co-ordinated by the Canadian Undergraduate Survey Consortium (CUSC)<sup>1</sup>. This was Carleton's ninth year participating in a CUSC survey.

CUSC operates on a three-year survey cycle. Each year in the cycle a random sample is selected from a different group of undergraduates: either all undergraduates, graduating students or first-year students. In 2006, the sample consisted of graduating students.

## **Methodology**

For the second year, Carleton's CUSC survey was done online. Overall, 12 universities chose to conduct the survey on-line, while 13 universities maintained the traditional paper-based survey method. An invitation to participate was e-mailed to a random sample of 1,000 Carleton students who were deemed eligible to graduate (given their credit profile and registration status at the time the sample was taken). 452 Carleton students responded to the survey, resulting in a 45 percent response rate.

This report is meant to highlight selected results from the 2006 CUSC survey related to student satisfaction with their university experience. Results for Carleton will be presented along with a comparison with similar universities. CUSC uses three institutional groupings that are based on the type of programs offered, as well as the size of the student population. Group 1 includes universities which have primarily undergraduate programs and they tend to be relatively small. Group 2 institutions are more comprehensive, offering undergraduate and graduate programs, and have a medium-sized student population. The largest institutions that participated in CUSC tend to be in Group 3: they also offer a wide range of programs, including professional programs. Carleton University is conceptually situated between groups 2 and 3, and so for the purpose of this report, 'comparable universities' will be an aggregation of both groups 2 and 3.

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<sup>1</sup> See Appendix A for CUSC's Protocol for Data Use and data use permissions.

In order to get a sense of how Carleton is doing over time, the 2006 results have been compared to the results from the 2003 survey throughout this report (the last year that a graduating student survey was done).

### **Profile of Carleton Respondents**

A profile of the Carleton students who responded to the 2006 CUSC graduating student survey is presented in **Table 1**. The profile of respondents at comparable institutions (groups 2 and 3) can also be found in this table, along with the range of proportions across these universities.

Fifty-eight percent of the respondents from Carleton were female. This is a slightly higher proportion than at Carleton in general (51 %), but resulted in the lowest proportion of female representation when compared to institutions in groups 2 and 3.

<b>Table 1: Proportional Profile of Respondents</b>				
	<b>Carleton (n=452)</b>	<b>Group 2 and 3 (n=7433)</b>		
		<b>Average</b>	<b>Low</b>	<b>High</b>
Female	58 %	65 %	58 %	73 %
22 years of age or younger	57	55	34	71
Studying in Canada on a Student Visa	7	5	2	9
Visible minority	20	22	6	59
Aboriginal	3	3	1	8
Students with a disability	6	6	4	8
Living in rental accommodations	59	42	15	64
Living with parents	34	44	22	76
Living in on-campus housing	1	3	0	8
Came from a community of 300,000+	47	38	5	65
Students who work while studying	60	62	50	70
Average number of hours worked per week (all respondents who worked)	18	19	17	23
Median grade (self-reported) so far at university	B+	B+	B	B+

Apart from gender, Carleton respondents' demographic profile tended to be very similar to the average of comparable institutions. The graduating students who responded at Carleton and those at comparable institutions are similar, on average, in the proportion of respondents who were 22 years of age or younger, reported holding a student visa, being a visible minority, being aboriginal, and having a disability.

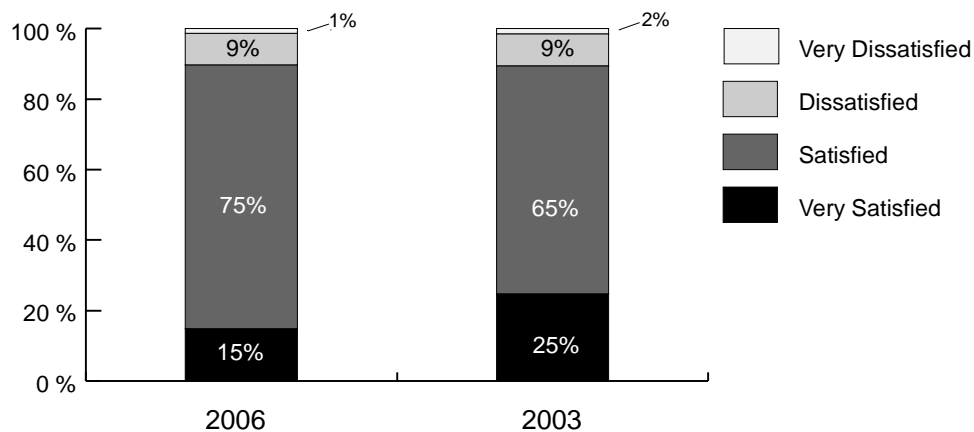
Carleton respondents were more likely to be living in rental accommodation and less likely to be living with parents. As might be expected, few graduating students lived in on-campus housing. Graduating students from Carleton were more likely to have lived in an urban centre with a population of 300,000 or more before starting university.

The proportion of those working, the average number of hours worked per week and the self-reported median grade so far, were also similar between the respondents at Carleton and those in group 2 and 3 universities.

### **Satisfaction Levels and Perceptions of the University**

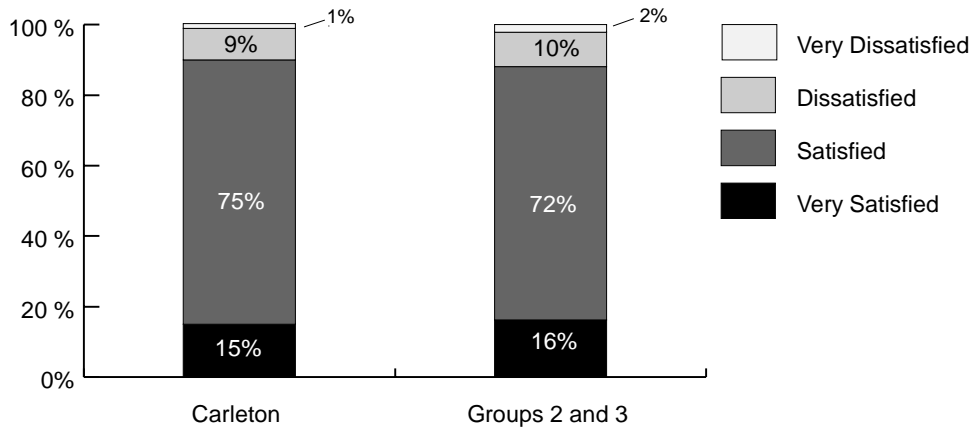
The undergraduates were asked how satisfied they were with the overall quality of education they received, ranging from ‘very dissatisfied’ to ‘very satisfied’. Fifteen percent of respondents at Carleton indicated that they were ‘very satisfied’ and 75 percent reported that they were satisfied with their overall education. **Figure 1** shows the results for 2006, along with those for 2003, the last year a similar group of students were surveyed. While the proportion of students who were dissatisfied with the quality of their overall education remained constant, there was a significant decrease in the proportion of Carleton respondents who reported being ‘very satisfied’ with their overall education, from 25 percent to 15 percent. Please note that this chart, and similar ones throughout this report, was produced excluding the ‘don’t know’ and ‘no response’ categories, and that the four rated categories may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

Figure 1: Satisfied with Overall Quality of Education?



Carleton respondents had similar rates of satisfaction with the overall quality of their education compared to respondents from similar institutions, on average (**Figure 2**).

Figure 2: Satisfied with Overall Quality of Education?



When asked if they would recommend their university to others, 86 % of Carleton students answered ‘yes’. This is the same proportion as the average for groups 2 and 3. Carleton respondents answered similarly in 2003.

Respondents were then asked to select from a list why they responded that they would or would not recommend their university. **Table 2** shows the distribution of these responses for Carleton (both 2006 and 2003), as well as the average for groups 2 and 3. Please note that the responses could add up to more than 100 percent since respondents could mark all that applied.

There is some variation in how students responded to this question from 2003 to 2006, notably with the reported role that professors played in Carleton students recommending Carleton (or not). More specifically, professors were more likely to be cited as a reason why they chose that they would recommend Carleton, and less likely to be a reason why they would not recommend their university. In both cases, the shift is positive and fairly substantial.

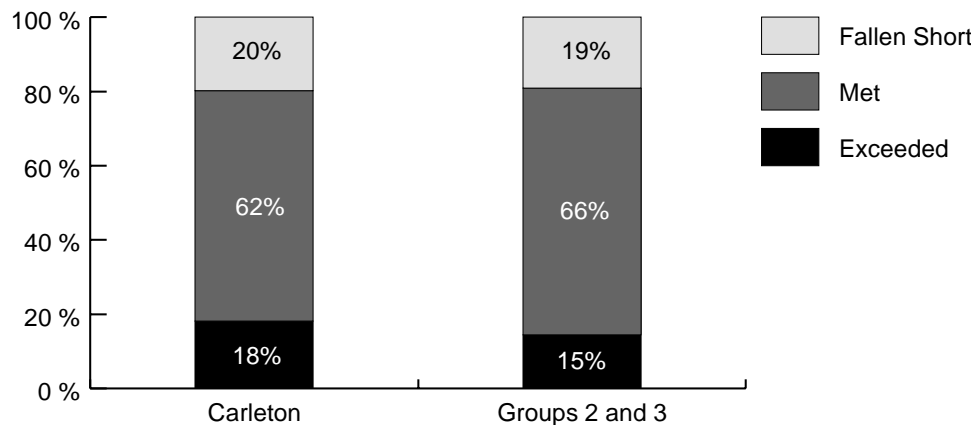
In comparison to group 2 and 3 results, Carleton students were more likely to recommend their university based on the program and the quality of student/campus life. Of those who chose not to recommend, Carleton students were more likely to cite student services as a

reason, and less likely to have chosen the program or the professors. It should be noted that since only 14 percent of Carleton respondents said that they wouldn't recommend their university, the proportions presented in the columns to the right in Table 2 are based on a relatively small number of respondents (for example, 62 respondents in 2006 at Carleton).

Table 2: Why Would You Recommend or Not Recommend Your University to Others?						
Reasons:	Would recommend their university to others			Would <u>not</u> recommend their university to others		
	Carleton 2006	Carleton 2003	Groups 2 and 3	Carleton 2006	Carleton 2003	Groups 2 and 3
The program	83%	76%	74%	36%	42%	43%
The professors	69	56	64	34	63	44
Student services	24	20	21	47	42	34
Relevance of my program for job opportunities	33	33	33	36	29	34
Relevance of my program for growth and development	30	31	32	23	15	22
Quality of student/campus life	41	37	35	36	45	38

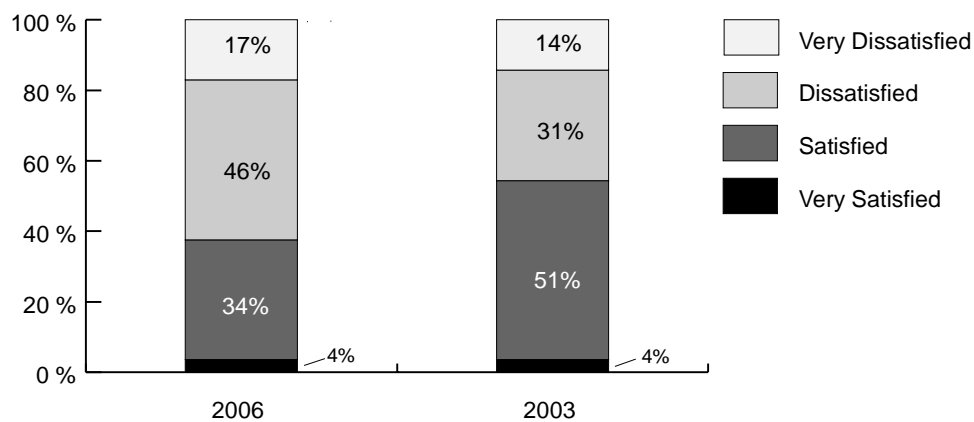
A new question was included in the 2006 graduating student survey: Has your experience at this university exceeded, met or fallen short of your expectations? Four in ten respondents at Carleton reported that their experience had met or exceeded their expectations (**Figure 3**). While a slightly higher proportion of Carleton respondents reported that their experience had exceeded their expectations, the differences between Carleton and the average for groups 2 and 3 are not statistically significant.

Figure 3: Has Your Experience at this University Exceeded, Met, or Fallen Short of your Expectations?



Respondents were also asked to rate their satisfaction levels with the ‘concern shown for you as an individual’. This distribution of responses for this question can be seen in **Figure 4**. Only 38 percent of respondents at Carleton gave this item either a ‘satisfied’ or ‘very satisfied’ rating. The proportion of respondents giving a positive rating of this item has decreased since the 2003 survey (55%). This can likely be partly explained by the increase in enrolment at Carleton in such a relatively short period of time. Specifically, in the fall of 2005, there were 25 percent more final-year students in comparison to the fall of 2002.

**Figure 4: Satisfied with Concern Shown for Students as Individuals?**



Comparing the results for ‘concern shown for you as an individual’ with other institutions shows that Carleton respondents were less likely to be ‘satisfied’ with the concern shown for them than the average of groups 2 and 3 (**Figure 5**).

This same result was seen in 2005’s CUSC survey of all-year undergraduates. One explanation for this decrease was that Carleton students were feeling the effect of the double cohort that arrived in the academic year 2003/2004. It was shown with the 2005 data that when Ontario schools’ results for this item were aggregated, a statistically significant decrease was observed. On the other hand, when non-Ontario institutions were aggregated, there was a statistically significant increase in satisfaction levels for this item. Also, no province, other than Ontario, saw a significant decrease.

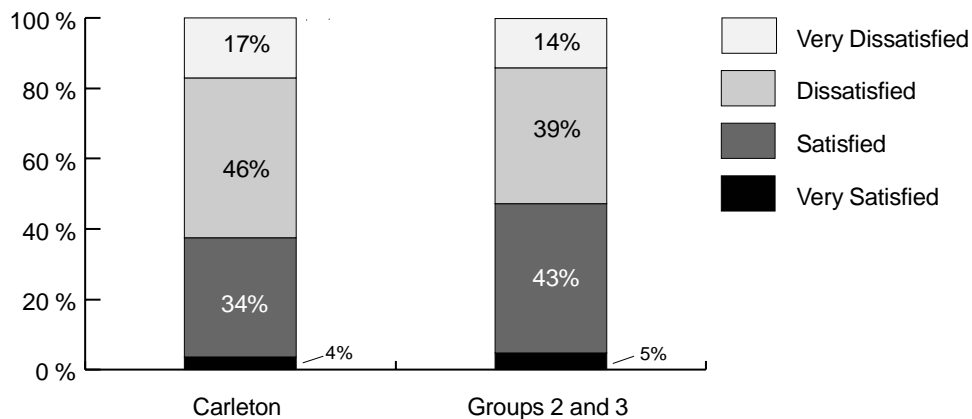
This is not entirely the case with the 2006 CUSC results for graduating students. Similar to the previous year, the satisfaction levels for the 2006 respondents had statistically significantly dropped between 2003 and 2006 for the aggregation of Ontario institutions.



This time though, the aggregation of non-Ontario institutions also showed a statistically significant decrease in satisfaction, and provinces (as represented by participating institutions in CUSC), other than Ontario, also showed statistically decreasing satisfaction levels from 2003 to 2006 (namely BC, Manitoba and Saskatchewan).

This would suggest that satisfaction levels of ‘concern shown for you as an individual’ is decreasing overall. Carleton results were close to the national average in 2003, but have decreased more than the general trend downwards.

Figure 5: Satisfied with Concern Shown for Students as Individuals?



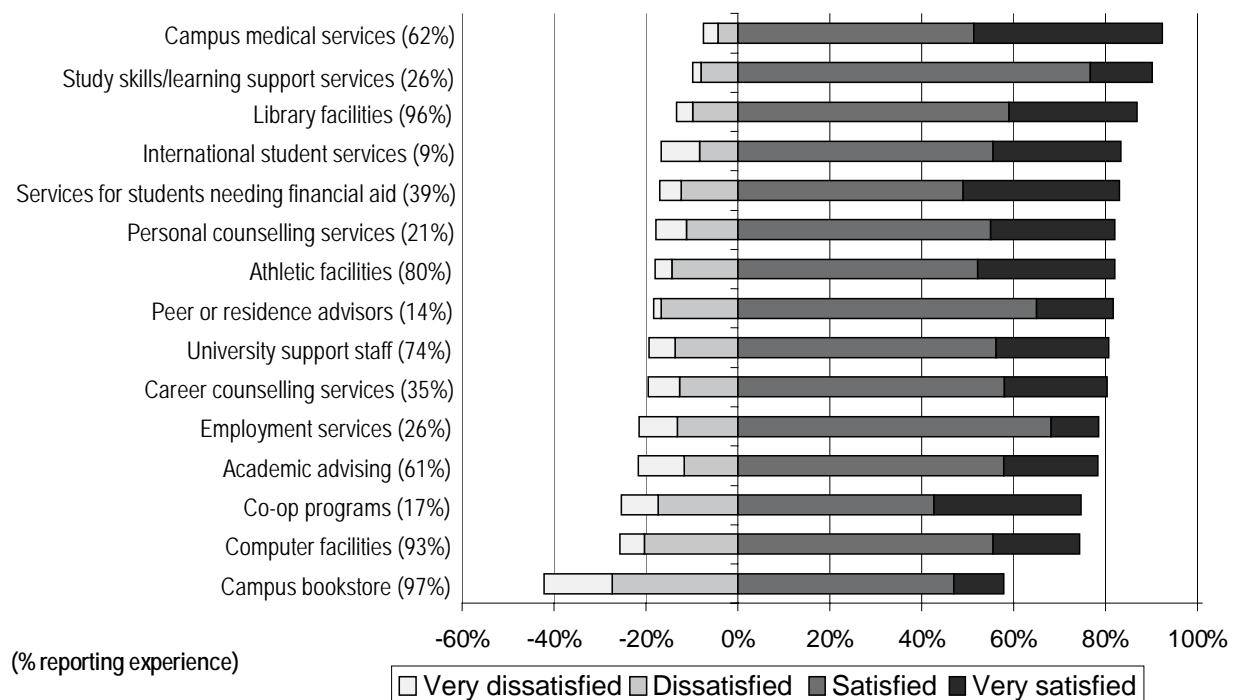
There was an opportunity on the CUSC survey for respondents to rate a number of services and facilities at the university (**Figure 6**). They were first asked if they personally used each service or facility, the proportion of users being shown in the chart in parentheses beside each item. For example 61 percent of respondents had used academic advising. The most widely used services and facilities on campus were (not surprisingly) the bookstore, the library, and computer facilities. The least used services were services for international students, peer or residence advisors, and co-op programs. Keep in mind that the smaller the proportion of students who reported using a service or facility, the less reliable the results may be for the satisfaction rating portion of the question.

Satisfaction ratings were provided by those who had used the service or facility. More than nine in ten respondents rated the campus medical services and study skills/learning support services as ‘satisfied’ or ‘very satisfied’. Many other services and facilities were also very

positively rated, with more than eight out ten students rating them satisfied or very satisfied. The least positively rated service was the campus bookstore.

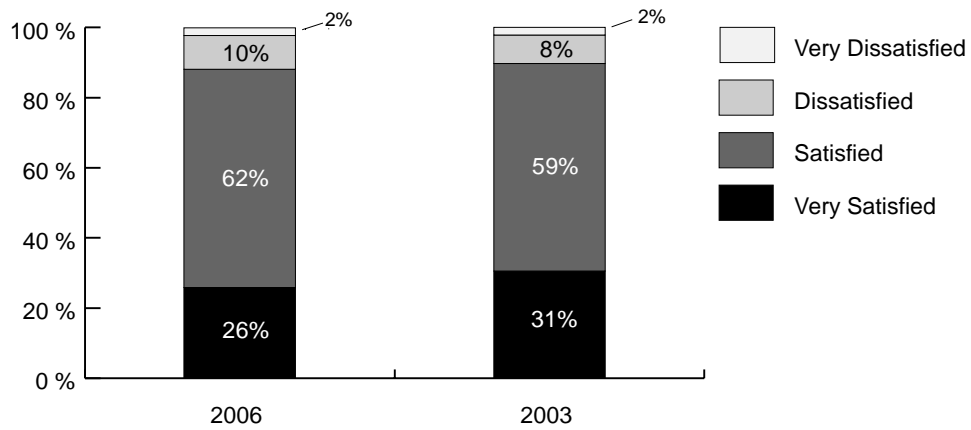
In comparison to the average satisfaction levels at comparable institutions, Carleton's results were lower for library facilities, university support staff, employment services, computer facilities, and the campus bookstore. The only item which saw a statistically significantly higher level of satisfaction was services for students needing financial aid. This series of satisfaction questions was not asked on 2003's CUSC graduating student surveys.

Figure 6: Student Satisfaction Ratings of Services on Campus



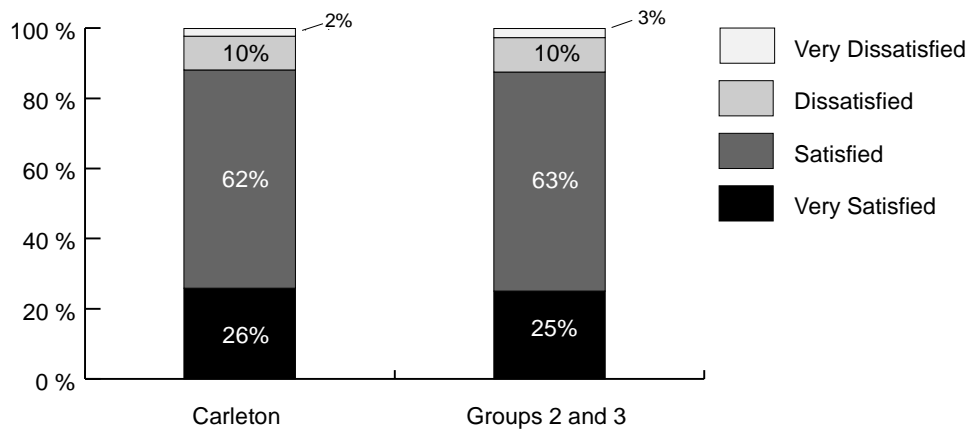
The graduating students in this survey were asked about their satisfaction with their decision to attend Carleton. The proportion of those who reported being 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' has not changed significantly between 2003 and 2006 (90 to 88%). The distribution within the satisfaction categories has tended more towards 'satisfied' instead of 'very satisfied' between the two survey years.

Figure 7: Satisfied with Decision to Attend This University?



The level of students' satisfaction with their decision to attend Carleton is on par with students at comparable institutions.

Figure 8: Satisfied with Decision to Attend This University?

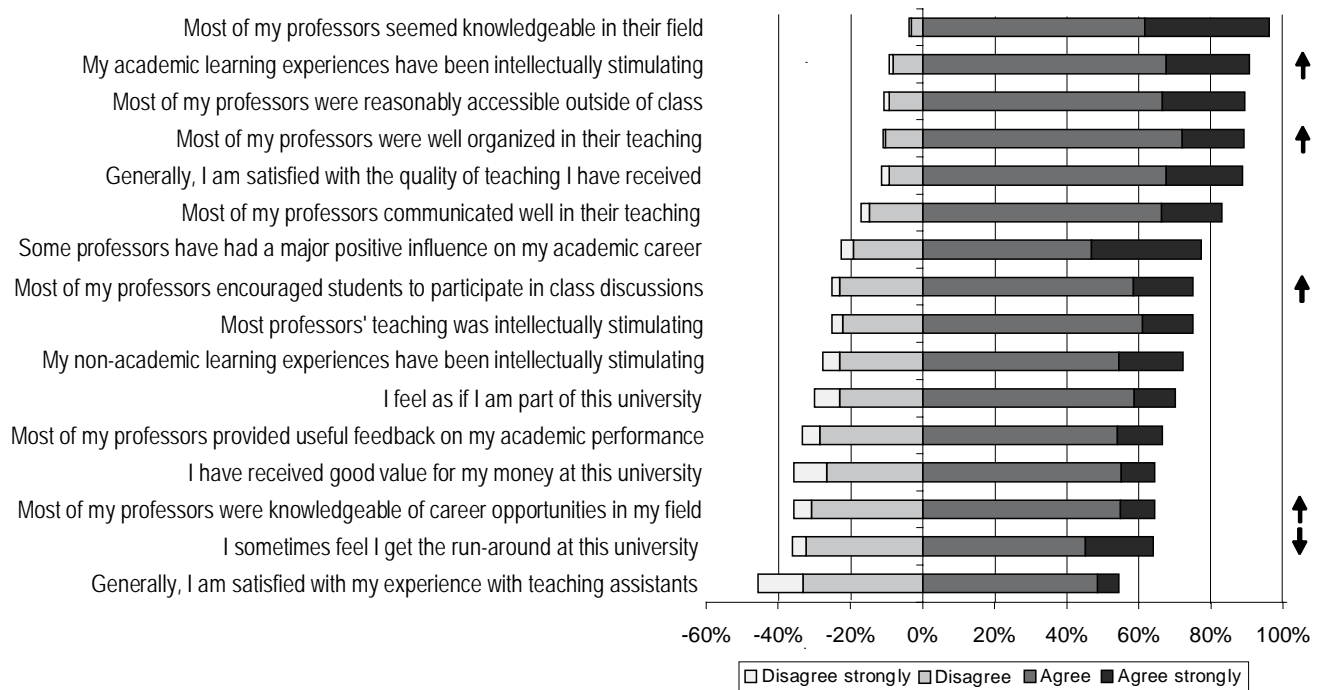


In the graduating student survey, there are a number of questions about student perceptions of teaching and other academic experiences at their university. On average, results for the institutions in Group 1 tend to have more positive results, which one might expect from the smaller, more undergraduate-teaching focused universities in that group. Groups 2 and 3

had comparable results, on average, with each other. Carleton's results were very similar, for the most part, to those from Group 2 and 3.

The distribution of the Carleton responses to all of the perception questions are shown in **Figure 9**, illustrating that respondents perceive, amongst other items, that most of their professors are knowledgeable, accessible, organized and communicate well. One item that Carleton fared worse on than comparable institutions was the satisfaction level with teaching assistants. Not only was this item the lowest ranked amongst Carleton respondents, the proportion who 'agreed' or 'agreed strongly' was considerably lower than groups 2 and 3, on average: 55 percent vs. 70 percent. This item was not in the 2003 survey, and so there is no way of knowing whether this has worsened for this population of graduating students, or whether it has always been this way.

**Figure 9: Perceptions of the University**



The arrows in **Figure 9** show the items which have seen a significant change in the distribution of those who agree or disagree with the statements (of the items that were asked in both surveys). There has been a statistically significant improvement in a number of the teaching-related items. The only significant decrease is also good news: the level of those

who agreed or strongly agreed with the statement 'I sometimes feel I get the run-around at this university'. In 2003, 69 percent 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' with this statement, where only 64 percent had in 2006. There is still obviously room for improvement, but it's encouraging nonetheless that satisfaction levels are moving in the right direction according to these results.

## **Conclusion**

Carleton University is pleased that its students participated in this latest CUSC survey, providing very useful feedback. While overall results are mixed in terms of satisfaction and perceptions, it is encouraging to see that some results are improving in relation to earlier surveys and in relation to group 2 and 3 institutions. Graduating students at Carleton were satisfied with the overall quality of their education, would recommend their university, and were satisfied with their decision to attend Carleton.

Some differences were seen between 2006 and 2003 satisfaction levels, notably a shift from 'very satisfied' to 'satisfied' on many of these big picture questions such as satisfaction with overall quality of education, with concern shown for students as individuals, and with their decision to attend this university.

When compared to the aggregated results from similar universities Carleton results were comparable on most items, with the exceptions of students' satisfaction with concern shown for them as individuals, and the level of satisfaction with teaching assistants.

Forthcoming reports will focus on other topics covered by CUSC, such as the University's contribution to growth and development, students' financing their education, and plans after graduation.

Results from this survey, along with others, will help Carleton provide an outstanding learning experience for its current and future students. The next CUSC survey is scheduled for February 2007, focusing on first-year undergraduate students.

For further information on Carleton University, and the results of the surveys in which it participates, go to [www.carleton.ca/oirp](http://www.carleton.ca/oirp).

## APPENDIX A

Please note that this report contains material copyrighted by the Canadian Undergraduate Survey Consortium. In order to use the data from this report, permission is required from the Office of Institutional Research and Planning, Carleton University. Also note that according to the protocol below, no ranking or inter-university comparisons are permitted.

### PROTOCOL FOR DATA USE

#### CANADIAN UNDERGRADUATE SURVEY CONSORTIUM (“CUSC”)

Members of the consortium are bound by the following protocol for the control of survey data.

It was agreed by the participants that data are owned collectively and will be distributed only by collective agreement.

1. The purpose of the survey is to produce data that will allow participating institutions to assess their programs and services. Comparisons with other institutions are made to assist in these assessments. Ranking of institutions is not, in itself, a purpose of the survey.
2. The survey data are owned collectively by the participating institutions.
3. The report that has been prepared may be reproduced and distributed freely on the campuses of participating institutions. However, use of the institutional code key is restricted to members of the steering committee and senior administration at the various campuses on a confidential basis.
4. Institutions will receive a data package that includes data for all participating institutions along with the institutional identifiers so that appropriate institutional comparisons can be made by each institution. This must be done in a way that protects the confidentiality of the institutional identities and respects the absolute right of each institution to decide what portions of its data should be disclosed.
5. For institutional promotion, recruiting or other public dissemination, rankings may not be used. However, an institution’s mean results, the aggregate mean results, and mean results for the comparable group of institutions in the survey report may be used, although the names of other institutions may not be used.
6. Access to the aggregate data for research purposes may be granted to interested persons provided that the intended use is a legitimate, non-commercial one, the researcher is qualified and agrees to acknowledge the ownership of the data by participating universities and to provide the consortium with a copy of any report or publication that is produced. Decisions on such requests will be made by a sub-committee consisting of Ken Kush, Michael O’Sullivan, Dan Pletzer, and Lynn Smith with consultation with members of the full CUSC committee (all participating institutions) in the case of requests that seem problematic.

Revised January, 2007