

2007 Canadian Undergraduate Survey Consortium (CUSC): <u>First-Year</u> Undergraduate Students

Prepared by the Office of Institutional Research and Planning

September 2007

www.carleton.ca/oirp

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Introduction

Carleton University regularly participates in a number of surveys in order to better understand its students' characteristics, needs and perceptions. In January 2007, Carleton was one of 34 institutions that participated in an undergraduate survey co-ordinated by the Canadian Undergraduate Survey Consortium (CUSC)¹. This was Carleton's tenth 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: all undergraduates, graduating students or first-year students. In 2007, the sample consisted of first-year undergraduate students.

Methodology

For the third year, Carleton's CUSC survey was done online. An invitation to participate was emailed to a random sample of 2,000 Carleton students who were first time first-year students. 894 Carleton students responded to the survey, resulting in a 45 percent response rate.

This report is meant to highlight results related to student satisfaction with their university experience and success adjusting to university. Results for Carleton are 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. For the purpose of this report, **Group 2 will be used as a comparison** group². Any differences noted in the text of this report are deemed to be statistically significant, unless otherwise noted³.

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

² Carleton is excluded from the Group 2 proportions in this report.

³ Chi-square and Somers'd tests. $\alpha = 0.05$. Statistical tests exclude Carleton from Group 2.

The other Group 2 universities in the 2007 survey were:

- Brock University
- University of New Brunswick (Fredericton Campus)
- University of Regina
- Ryerson University
- Simon Fraser University
- University of Windsor
- University of Victoria

Part of participating in the Survey Consortium involves adhering to a protocol for data use. Amongst other things, this mutual agreement involves maintaining confidentiality of others' institutional results, as well as prohibits ranking or inter-university comparisons in a public report such as this. Analysis here will be kept to examining Carleton's results, with the exception of comparing Carleton to the group 2 institutions as an aggregate, which is permitted.

In order to get a sense of how Carleton is doing over time, the 2007 results have been compared to the results from the 2004 survey throughout this report (the last year that a first-year student survey was done). Again, only differences that are statistically significant will be discussed in the text.

Please note that totals may not add up to 100 since proportions are rounded. More detailed results for some of the information included in graphs and discussions can be found in **Appendix A**.

Profile of Carleton Respondents

A profile of Carleton students who responded to the 2007 CUSC survey is presented in **Table 1**. The profile of respondents at comparable institutions (Group 2) can also be found in this table. Overall, there were more similarities than differences between Carleton and the Group 2 institution average. To give a more representative idea of how the profile of students is fairly diverse amongst institutions, we've included the range (lowest and highest proportions) of results across the Group 2 universities.

Fifty-nine percent of the respondents from Carleton were female. This is a slightly higher proportion than at Carleton in general (48 %), but still represents a lower proportion of females when compared to the rest of Group 2.

Not surprisingly, a large proportion of first-year respondents were 18 years of age or younger. Nevertheless, Carleton respondents were slightly older in general in comparison to their Group 2 counterparts.

The first-year students who responded at Carleton and those at comparable institutions reported similar proportions, on average, of holding a student visa, being a visible minority, being aboriginal, and having a disability.

Table 1: Proportional Profile of Respondents				
	Carleton	Carleton Group 2 (n=320)	Group 2 (n=3205)	
	(n=894)	Average	Low	High
Female	59 %	63 %	54 %	74%
18 years of age or younger	82	85	77	93
Studying in Canada on a Student Visa	7	5	2	8
Visible minority	22	20	5	48
Aboriginal	3	3	1	4
Students with a disability	7	6	4	8
Living in rental accommodations	3	3	2	5
Living with parents	35	51	30	79
Living in on-campus housing	56	36	16	58
Came from a community of 300,000+	36	22	4	49
Students who work while studying	33	40	30	52
Average number of hours worked per week	15	15	13	17
(all respondents who worked)				
Median grade (self-reported) so far at university	B+	B+	В	B+
Median grade (self-reported) High School	A-	A-	A-	A or A+

At Carleton, more than half of first-year respondents were living in on-campus housing. Carleton respondents were more likely than respondents in Group 2 to be living in on-campus housing and less likely to be living with parents. First-year students from Carleton were more likely to have lived in an urban centre with a population of 300,000 or more before starting university.

Carleton University first-year respondents were less likely to be working while studying, but those with employment worked the same number of hours, on average.

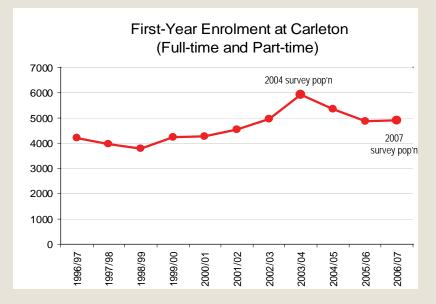
Self reported median grades, both from high school and their grades in university so far, were similar between the respondents at Carleton and those in Group 2 universities.

Notes on Comparing Carleton Results for 2004 and 2007 Surveys

In 2003, the Ontario high school system eliminated the OAC year (formerly grade 'thirteen') in favour of a four-year high school structure regardless of whether students were headed to university or college. Previously, OACs (Ontario Academic Credits) were typically taken in the fifth year of high-school by students planning to continue into university. This system change resulted in 2003 being a 'double cohort' year – students from grade 12 and the OAC year graduated together earlier that spring, and many were headed to further education.

Ontario universities experienced a temporary spike in enrolments in order to absorb the increased number of Ontario high school graduates. While the peak of enrolments occurred in the fall of 2003, the years 2002 and 2004 also saw increased new enrolments from those who 'fast-tracked' through the five year system (2002) and those who postponed enrolment or 'lagged' in order to avoid the double-cohort crunch in the system (2004).

The chart below shows the enrolment at Carleton from the late 1990s through to 2006/07. The 'double cohort' entering in the fall of 2003 would have represented the vast majority of the 2004 First-Year CUSC survey population (since the survey is done in the winter semester of the academic year).



While some additional funds were given to Ontario universities to help absorb the double cohort, it was unavoidable that the rapid increase in enrolment would exert pressure on program and service delivery on campus.

In addition to a sharp increase in the number of students enrolling in university, the double-cohort also meant that new first-year university students were younger on average than previous years, while future years would see that average age decrease further as most students came directly from grade 12. Specifically, the proportion of those 18 years-old or younger amongst first-year students increased at Carleton: from 24 % (2000/01), to 47 % (2003/04), to 56% (2006/07).

The reader of this report should keep these enrolment and demographic trends in mind when interpreting survey results.

Deciding to Attend University

Presumably, potential students have a myriad of reasons for considering university, as opposed to considering other options such as college, or postponing (or foregoing) post-secondary education and working instead. In an attempt to draw out themes amongst those who have chosen to attend university, the CUSC survey presents these first-year students with a list of often cited reasons. Respondents were first asked to rate how important each item was, and then pick the most important reason from a list (or specify other).

For 60 percent of Carleton respondents, the top reasons for deciding to attend university involved future employment **(Figure 1)**. This proportion was even higher for those in Group 2 (69 percent). Specifically, the most often cited reason was to prepare for a specific job or career, although Carleton respondents were less likely to choose this reason than those in Group 2. Carleton students were also slightly more likely to be motivated by broader undergraduate academic aspirations: 22 percent chose to get a good general education or to increase my knowledge in an academic field, compared to 15 percent in Group 2, on average. It should be noted that program mix across universities can vary considerably, and that presumably reasons for attending university may vary with the program mix. This analysis does not try to separate that influence on results.

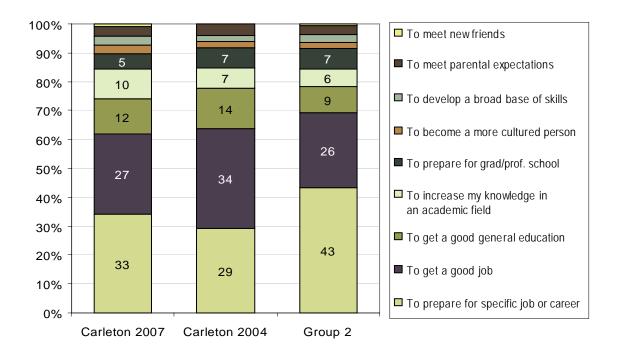


Figure 1: Most Important Reason in Your Decision to Attend University

There was a shift from 2004 to 2007 from being motivated by a general idea of good employment prospects in 2004 towards a specific career goal in mind in 2007. This was the case for both Carleton and Group 2 in general.

Respondents were then asked about specific factors that led to the choice to pick the university they were attending at the time of the survey. Figure 2 shows the reasons for Carleton respondents, ranked by the proportion choosing 'very important'. Please note that some proportions are similar and the ranking in the chart below does not imply statistically significant differences between the ranked items.

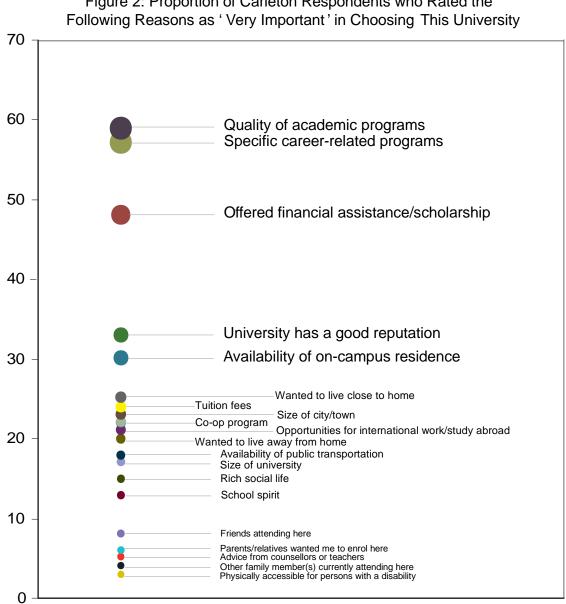


Figure 2: Proportion of Carleton Respondents who Rated the

When asked which was the single <u>most important</u> reason in their decision to attend their chosen university, the top five factors encompassed more than three-quarters of Carleton responses in 2007 (**Table 2**). As we've seen in past surveys, Carleton respondents were much more likely to cite scholarships as the most important factor in their decision – more than double the proportion at the rest of the Group 2 institutions. The most important reasons in 2007 are comparable to those in 2004.

Table 2: Most Important Reason in Your Decision to Attend This University% of Respondents							
Carleton 2007 Group 2 Carleton 2004							
Specific career-related programs	26	22	23				
Offered financial assistance/scholarships	17	7	17				
Quality of academic programs	15	14	16				
Wanted to live close to home	11	23	13				
Wanted to live away from home	7	4	4				

Factors Influencing Decision to Choose Carleton

A new item in the 2007 survey asked students if they recalled seeing, hearing or reading any advertisements about their university, and if so, they were asked to indicate which ones they recalled (**Table 3**). Less than four out of ten Carleton respondents recalled being aware of advertisements about Carleton – a similar proportion to the rest of Group 2, on average. Please note that the columns in table 3 may add up to more than 100 percent since students could indicate having seen multiple advertisement media.

Table 3: Institutional Advertising that Respondents Recalled (% of 2007 respondents)					
	Carleton Group 2				
None	62	59			
Yes, billboard	16	10			
Yes, newspaper ad	14	18			
Yes, radio ad	11	5			
Yes, TV ad	9	12			
Yes, other	11	15			

Respondents were asked to rate how important certain factors were in their decision to attend their university on a scale of not important, somewhat important, and very important, and then to pick the most important factor.

When rating the importance of these factors, responses from Carleton were statistically different from the rest of Group 2 in five areas. In all five cases, Carleton had a higher proportion of students choose 'very important':

- View books, brochures or pamphlets (35% at Carleton vs. 29% in Group 2)
- Campus visit/open house (46% vs. 36%)
- Calls from faculty/staff of the university (23% vs.16%)
- Calls from students of the university (21% vs. 13%)
- University web site (43% vs. 36%)

The most important factors are listed in **Table 4**, along with those of Group 2 and Carleton in 2004, where applicable (items with a dashed line in the 2004 column were not listed in that survey year). Overall, responses were similar at Carleton across time.

Table 4: Most Important Factor in Your Decision to Attend University% of Respondents				
	Carleton 2007	Group 2	Carleton 2004	
Campus visit / open house	30	25	31	
View books, brochures or pamphlets	20	21	16	
University web site	17	15	-	
Visit by a university representative to my high school or CEGEP	12	16	11	
Calls from students of the university	5	1	9	
Recruitment fairs	4	4	-	
Calls from faculty/staff of the university	4	3	5	
Meeting with university recruitment/admissions staff on the campus	3	5	-	
Maclean's university rankings	3	5	7	
Emails from university faculty/staff	3	3	-	
Contact from university athletic coaches	1	3	-	
The Globe and Mail's University Report Card	<1	<1	-	

Orientation

Two thirds of Carleton respondents participated in orientation (67%), which is a similar proportion to the rest of Group 2, as well as to Carleton's respondents in 2004. Respondents were asked to rate their satisfaction with various aspects of orientation (**Figure 3**). Overall, satisfaction levels are high for those who participated in orientation.

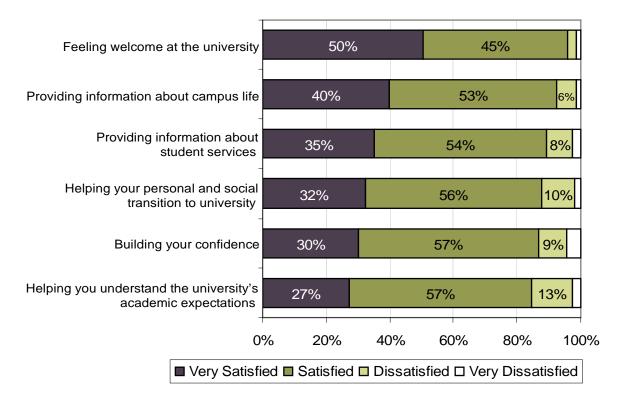


Figure 3: Satisfaction with Orientation % of Carleton Respondents

Satisfaction levels at Carleton are similar to those of Group 2. Carleton respondents in 2007 were more likely than those in 2004 to be satisfied or very satisfied with two aspects of orientation, providing information about student services (89% in 2007 vs. 81% in 2004) and building confidence (87% vs. 79%).

Adjusting to university

Respondents were asked how much success they had in adjusting to university in a number of areas. Carleton's 2007 survey results are shown in **Table 5**. Areas in which Carleton students were more likely than Group 2 to have success adjusting to university are marked with a plus (+) and areas where Carleton students were less likely to report success are marked with a minus (–).

Table 5: Success in Adjusting to University% of 2007 Carleton Respondents					
	None	Very little	Some	Very much	N/A
Finding my way around the campus	1	2	21	76	1
Choosing a program of studies to meet my objectives	2	7	37	54	0
Feeling as if I belong at university (+)	3	9	34	54	0
Understanding content and information presented in courses (+)	1	3	44	52	0
Making new friends with other students	2	12	36	50	0
New living arrangements (+)	8	6	36	50	25
Meeting academic demands (+)	1	7	49	43	0
Performing adequately in courses requiring mathematical skills (+)	11	14	33	42	48
Performing adequately in written assignments (+)	1	9	49	41	3
Using the library	6	15	43	37	6
Finding help with questions or problems	3	15	51	30	3
Finding suitable and affordable housing	13	15	43	29	37
Organizing my time to complete academic work (-)	3	20	52	25	1
Getting academic advice	9	24	45	22	10
Finding useful information and resources on careers and occupations (–)	9	30	45	16	11
Becoming involved in campus activities	14	40	35	12	4

In total, there are six areas in which Carleton respondents were more likely to report having success than their G2 counterparts (on average):

- Feeling as if I belong at univ. (54% at Carleton saying 'very much' vs. 47% in Group 2)
- Understanding content and information presented in courses (52% vs. 41 %)
- New living arrangements (50% vs. 47%)
- Meeting academic demands (43% vs. 36%)
- Performing adequately in courses requiring mathematical skills (42% vs. 32%)
- Performing adequately in written assignments (41% vs. 34%)

Carleton respondents were less likely than Group 2 to have success with organizing their time to complete academic work. At Carleton, 25 percent answered 'very much' while in Group 2 this proportion was 28 percent. Also, 61 percent of Carleton respondents reported having at least some success at finding useful information and resources on careers, lower than the 67 percent within Group 2.

When comparing results to those of 2004, respondents had more success meeting academic demands with 43 percent in 2007 reporting very much success compared to 33 percent in 2004. Respondents also had more success getting academic advice (22% in 2007 reporting very much success vs. 16% in 2004). Students reported having less success using the library (34% indicating very much success) than three years prior (45%).

Satisfaction with University Experience

Respondents were asked to rate how satisfied they were with a number of aspects of their university. **Figure 4** shows that overall, respondents are generally satisfied. The levels of satisfaction for these items are comparable to Group 2 institutions, as well as with Carleton's 2004 results⁴

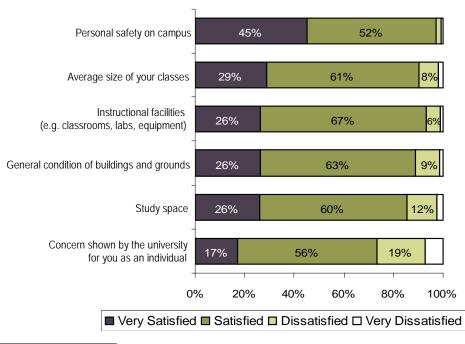


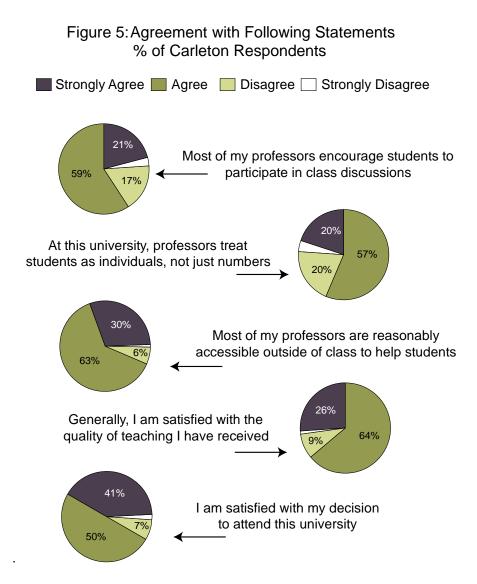
Figure 4: Satisfaction with University Experiences % of Carleton Respondents

⁴ The items 'general condition of buildings and grounds' and 'study space' were not on the 2004 survey.

CUSC respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with each of the statements in **Figure 5**. Carleton students were more likely to strongly agree (sa) than Group 2 respondents on all items except 'most of my professors encourage students to participate in class discussions'.

- Professors treat students as individuals (20% strongly agree vs. 15% in Group 2)
- Professors are reasonably accessible outside of class (30% sa vs. 23%)
- Generally satisfied with quality of teaching (26% sa vs. 19%)
- Satisfied with decision to attend this university (41% sa vs. 36%)

2007 respondents at Carleton were more likely to strongly agree with 'professors treat students as individuals, not just numbers' than 2004 respondents (20% vs. 15% in 2004). This is a particular result where the caution of comparing the 2004 and 2007 cohorts should be kept in mind – the smaller number of first-year students in 2007 would logically lead to an improvement in this item.



Satisfaction with Student Services

Overall, Carleton has many high satisfaction ratings in their various services. The categories are divided into two charts (**Figures 6 and 7**) and are organized from those with the highest satisfaction ratings to those with the lowest. The proportion of respondents rating the services can be found in parentheses in the charts. This is a factor that should be kept in mind when looking at these results, especially for the services with very high or very low usage rates amongst respondents.

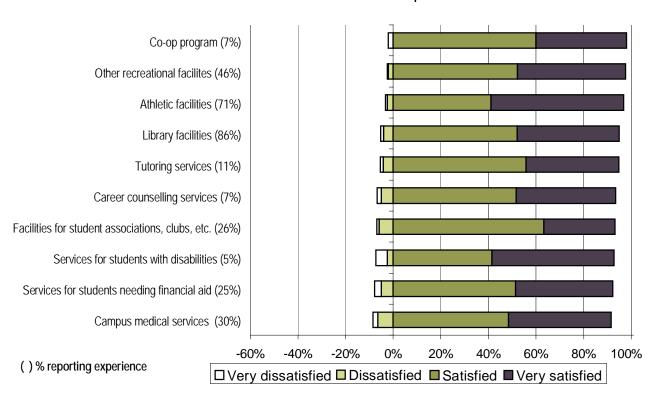
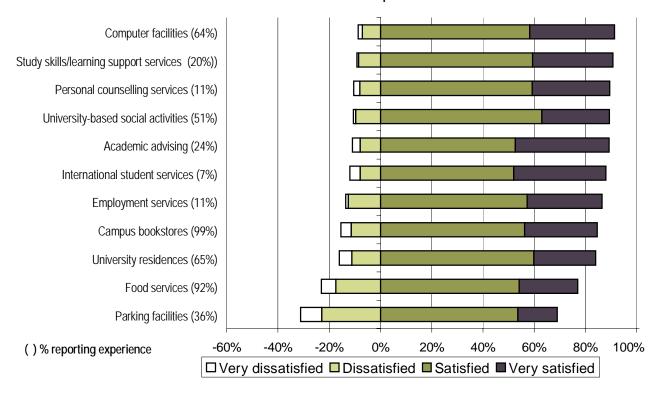


Figure 6: Student Satisfaction Ratings of Services (1) % of Carleton Respondents

In this first grouping of services, both athletic facilities and services for students needing financial aid were given satisfaction ratings that were statistically significantly higher than those given by Group 2. None of the services had significantly lower satisfaction than given by Group 2.

Comparing the results to those of 2004, both co-op programs and 'athletic facilities and other recreational facilities' were given higher satisfaction ratings by Carleton's 2007 respondents⁵. No service in the 2007 results had lower satisfaction than in 2004, however some categories were new in 2007, those being tutoring services, career counselling services, facilities for student associations and services for students needing financial aid.





Among the second grouping of satisfaction ratings, Carleton's results were above Group 2 in food services and parking services and below Group 2 in the satisfaction with computer facilities, campus bookstore and university residence.

Carleton's ratings have improved significantly since 2004 in employment services, campus bookstores, parking facilities and food services⁶. Academic advising is a new item in 2007's survey and therefore can not be compared to 2004 results.

⁵ In 2004, Athletics and Recreation were one item. It is inferred that both items are statistically significantly higher in 2007, since both 2007 items separately have significantly higher satisfaction levels than the 2004 combined item.

Positive and Negative Aspects (Open-Ended Questions)

The final two questions of the survey asked students what the most positive and the most negative aspects were at university. Positive aspects were coded into seventeen categories and negative aspects into twenty-one, making it easier to interpret student responses by observing the frequencies within each grouping.

Respondents were asked to give up to five aspects of their experience at university that they felt were the most positive. **Table 6** shows the rankings of the response categories, number one being the most frequently stated positive aspect.

Table 6: Most Positive Aspects of University Experience			
Rank	Category		
1	Social	57%	
2	Courses/Program	32%	
3	Personal growth	23%	
4	Academic (General)	21%	
5	Residence	19%	
6	Instructors	17%	
7	Campus environment	15%	
8	Recreation (Sports, Gym)	11%	
9	Location/Ottawa	- 8%	
2	Other	070	
11	Orientation	- 7%	
11	Student's success	/ /0	
13	Clubs	4%	
15	Student services	4/0	
15	Food Services	3%	
16	Library	1%	
10	Parental Support	1 /0	

Over half of the respondents (57%) wrote in a social aspect as one of their most positive at university, making it the most popular response. This category included responses such as friends, classmates, students and peers. The second most common aspect was a specific course or program, with 32 percent.

⁶ Food services significant with Somer's d but not with Chi Square

Responses having to do with academics were divided into three categories in order to give a better understanding of what specifically a student felt was a positive aspect. These categories were courses or programs, instructors, and academic (general). When we group these responses into one category and recalculate, 69 percent of the respondents gave an academic aspect as one of the most positive, making it the most frequent category.

Respondents were also asked to give up to five aspects of their university experience that they felt were the most negative. Results were grouped into categories which are ranked in **Table 7**, along with the percentage of students giving a response in this category.

Table 7: Most Negative Aspects of University Experience		
Rank	Category	
1	Academic	33%
2	Food Services	20%
3	Residence	19%
4	Social	14%
5	Instructors	14%
6	Financial	13%
7	Campus	9%
8	Location	8%
9	Time Management	6%
10	Student Services	6%
11	Grades	5%
12	Registration	5%
	Computers	
	Employment	
13	Exams	3%
	Library	
	Other	
	Parking	
19	10 Health Reasons	
17	Scholarships (Losing, Stress to Keep)	2%
21	Bookstore	1%

Responses given to this question were more diverse than the positive aspects given. The most frequent response category was academic (not including instructors, grades or exams) with 33 percent. Notice that many categories rank highly as a positive *and* a negative aspect, including social, academic, residence, instructors and campus.

Conclusion and Summary of Results

Carleton University is pleased that a large number of students responded to this latest CUSC survey. In addition to providing Carleton with very useful feedback and a greater understanding of its students, this kind of survey helps to understand what Carleton students perceive as the University's strengths and to identify where progress can be made.

Results in this report include:

- The main reason that Carleton respondents chose to attend university was future employment some having a specific career in mind and some in order to get good job in general.
- Carleton respondents were more likely to cite scholarships as the most important factor in having chosen to attend Carleton. A similar result has been noted in the past.
- Satisfaction levels are high for the two-thirds of respondents who reported participating in Orientation. Improvements since 2004 were seen in the satisfaction levels with the information provided and the aspects of orientation leading to increased confidence.
- In general, Carleton respondents reported high levels of success in adjusting to university, with comparatively higher levels in many areas.
- While Carleton results were similar to comparable institutions in terms of general university experiences, a number of items related to teaching were rated higher in comparison to the rest of Group 2 institutions.
- Satisfaction ratings across many university services have increased since 2004
- Carleton's only lower results in comparison to Group 2 institutions were for computer facilities, campus bookstore, and university residences.

As noted, caution should be taken when interpreting changes between 2004 and 2007, given that the former was a year that saw in sharp increase in first-year students due to the double cohort. In addition to the difference in the number of students on campus between the two years, there was also the change in age profile, with a higher proportion of first-year students aged 18 or younger in 2007. These factors may be explored further in a future report, but were not controlled for here.

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 will be for all-year undergraduate students and is scheduled for February 2008.

For further information on Carleton University, and the results of the surveys in which it participates, go to <u>www.carleton.ca/oirp</u>.

APPENDIX A

Table A1: How Important Were the Following Factors in Deciding to Attend University? (Carleton 2007)					
Not ImportantSomewhatVerImportantImportantImportant					
To prepare for a specific job or career	6	27	67		
To get a good job	3	16	81		
To get a good general education	1	21	78		
To increase my knowledge in an academic field	2	27	71		
To prepare for graduate/professional school	20	42	38		
To become a more cultured person	20	43	38		
To develop a broad base of skills	5	40	56		
To meet parental expectations	36	40	23		
To meet new friends	25	47	28		

Table A2: How important were the following reasons in your choosing this university? (Carleton 2007)			
	Not Important	Somewhat Important	Very Important
Quality of academic programs	6	36	59
Specific career-related program	11	32	57
Offered financial assistance / scholarships	18	34	48
University has a good reputation	14	53	33
Availability of on-campus residence	41	29	30
Wanted to live close to home	55	20	25
Tuition fees	27	49	24
Size of city / town	32	45	23
Co-op program	53	26	22
Opportunities for international work/study	45	35	21
abroad			
Wanted to live away from home	54	27	20
Availability of public transportation	48	34	18
Size of university	38	44	17
Rich social life	41	44	15
School spirit	45	43	13
Friends attending here	67	45	8
Parents/relatives wanted me to enrol here	71	32	6
Advice from counsellors or teachers	64	30	5
Other family member(s) currently attending	86	10	4
here			
Physically accessible for persons with a disability	87	10	3

Table A3: How satisfied are you with each of the following services at this university? (Carleton 2007)				
	Very dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
Co-op program	2	0	60	38
Other recreational facilities	.3	2	52	45
Athletic facilities	1	2	41	56
Library facilities	1	4	52	43
Tutoring services	1	4	56	39
Career counselling services	2	5	52	42
Facilities for students associations,	1	6	63	30
clubs, etc				
Services for students with disabilities	5	2	42	51
Services for students needing	3	5	51	41
financial aid				
Campus medical services	2	7	49	43
Computer facilities	2	7	58	33
Study skills/learning support services	1	9	59	31
Personal counselling services	2	8	59	30
University-based social activities	1	10	63	26
Academic advising	3	8	53	37
International students services	4	8	52	36
Employment services	1	13	57	29
Campus bookstores	4	12	56	28
University residence	5	11	60	24
Food services	6	18	54	23
Parking facilities	8	23	54	15