

# **BC UNIVERSITY BACCALAUREATE GRADUATE SURVEY**

## **REPORT OF FINDINGS**

### **THE CLASS OF 2002 TWO YEARS AFTER GRADUATION**

Prepared for  
The University Presidents' Council  
of British Columbia

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# Executive Summary

In 2004, The University of British Columbia (UBC), the University of Northern British Columbia (UNBC), Royal Road University (RRU), Simon Fraser University (SFU), and the University of Victoria (UVIC), together with the University Presidents' Council (TUPC) and the BC Ministry of Advanced Education, partnered to survey the year 2002 baccalaureate graduates. Over 6,500 responded to the telephone survey (response rate of 60.4%), answering a variety of questions on their university experience, the skills they acquired during their studies, how they funded their university education (including a special section exploring funding issues in greater depth), further education, and their experience in the labour market. In addition to an overall analysis, the data was examined by program area and university, with some comparison to previous two-year out survey results. To build upon the data and provide added detail, a number of open-ended comments from participants were included.

Consistent with university size and the results of previous outcomes surveys, the majority of respondents were UBC graduates (41.2%), followed by SFU (27.7%) and UVIC (24.8%). With relatively small student populations, UNBC and RRU graduates accounted for very small proportions of the survey group (4.5% and 1.9% respectively). There was a higher percentage of female respondents (57.2%), with extensive gender variation by program, and respondents' average age was 28.8 years. As expected, two-thirds were living in the Lower Mainland/Southwest part of the province at the time of the survey. Survey participants

were also questioned about equity group membership, with 3.2% self-identifying as disabled, 1.9% as Aboriginal, and 28.2% as being part of a visible minority group in Canada. These results varied somewhat by university, particularly with respect to ethnicity where there was a 31.0 percentage point difference between UBC (37.4% of respondents were members of a visible minority) and RRU (6.4%). Academically, the majority had completed bachelor's degrees in the Social Sciences (28.2%), followed next by Education (13.8%) and the Humanities (10.8%).

As part of the survey, participants were asked to reflect upon their university education. The results demonstrated very high levels of satisfaction, with 96.6% stating that they were "satisfied" or "very satisfied." While this result is relatively consistent across universities, there is some indication that satisfaction levels increase as university size decreases. There was also relative consistency across program areas, although some, such as the Health Professions and Law, had significantly higher percentages of graduates who were "very satisfied" (an approximate 21 percentage point spread between the margins). A comparison of these results with the two previous two-year out survey results showed a slight upward trend in overall satisfaction (an average 1.3 percentage point increase with each successive cohort).

Despite very high levels of satisfaction, the survey respondents were less positive when asked if they would take the same program again if given the opportunity (77.7%

responding affirmatively). These results varied a great deal by program area, with the most “satisfied” respondents from the Health Professions and Law also the most likely to say that they would take the same program again (87.8% and 87.6% respectively). In contrast, Life Sciences and Fine and Performing Arts graduates were the least likely to respond affirmatively (65.2% and 72.1% respectively). The results for this question were very similar among universities, the exception being RRU graduates who were more likely to state that they would take the same program again (86.4%). When asked why they would not take the same program again, lack of practicality, limited career opportunities, and changed interests were the reasons most commonly given by respondents. In fact, many of the open-ended comments suggested that a lack of practicality in their academic education has had a direct negative impact on some graduates' career success; this may explain why so many who were satisfied with their university experience would not choose the same program again. Furthermore, very few respondents (6.8%) identified poorly taught courses as a reason they would not take the same program again, a positive reflection further supported by the fact that 95.8% described their course instruction as “good” or “very good.”

Participants were also asked about the length of time it took them to complete their baccalaureate degrees, with 36.3% stating that it was longer than they had expected. The most common reason given was involvement in co-operative education (18.4% of respondents), followed by personal/family reasons (14.8%). In addition, 34.6% indicated that they had difficulty scheduling required courses, and 45.5% felt that there were areas

of study which would have been useful to them but were unavailable.

Since graduating in 2002, 53.5% of respondents had taken some type of formal post-secondary education or training; however, there was a substantial 48 percentage point spread in this result depending on the program from which individuals had graduated (i.e., 73.5% of Life Sciences graduates, compared to 25.5% of Education graduates). Just over one-half had taken or were currently enrolled in either an undergraduate (26.6%) or Masters (26.3%) degree program.

The cost of financing a university education, and the debt which graduates often incur as a result, continues to be closely monitored by university administrators and government. In addition to the financial questions regularly included in our outcomes studies, the 2004 survey also included a more comprehensive section on educational financing. Together, these questions elicited a fairly clear picture of some of the financial challenges facing university students. During their studies, the 2002 cohort relied most heavily upon students loans as their primary funding source (28.4% of respondents), followed by family and/or friends (26.7%) and employment (26.1%). For most, these primary funding sources covered at least one-half of their expenses. These results are consistent with previous outcomes studies, with a slight trend away from use of personal savings towards increased reliance upon student loans, employment, and family/friends. When asked about university-based financial assistance, one-half of respondents indicated that they had received none. Approximately one-quarter said that they had received bursary/grant support, and one-quarter scholarship support other than entrance scholarships.

With educational costs increasing, more university students are having to work in order to cover their expenses. In fact, 62.8% of the 2002 graduates stated that they had worked during their academic terms in order to finance their education. For this group of students, the average amount of time spent working weekly was 17.9 hours. A comparison of universities showed that the SFU graduates were the most likely to have been employed (70.3%), and those from RRU the least likely (44.1%). As expected, a higher percentage had worked during summers to pay for their university studies (81.8%), and 21.8% had spent time in co-operative education employment during university.

Participants were questioned about the effects of costs and debt load on their university persistence. Approximately 10% had either discontinued their studies or gone part-time for financial reasons, and the same percentage had taken more courses at some point in order to maintain full-time status (presumably to qualify for student loans or scholarship funding). A greater percentage (17.8%) commented that at some time in their bachelor's degree program they were unable to borrow as much as they needed from the Canada Student Loan program.

Students often borrow from a variety of sources when financing their university education. For the 2002 cohort, 46.0% had incurred debt, and 39.4% had acquired government-sponsored student loan debt. Furthermore, 17.8% indicated that they had graduated with private loan debt, and 11.6% credit card debt. The results showed some variation by university, with higher percentages of the UNBC and UVIC respondents having acquired debt. For those graduates who had incurred debt from each of

these sources, the mean amount of overall debt was \$19,040.26; \$18,325.38 for government-sponsored student loan debt; 7,494.54 for private loan debt; and \$4,275.56 for credit card debt. In the two years since graduation, the graduates had, on average, paid off approximately one-third of their government-sponsored student loan debt. Once again, there was some variation by university, with the UNBC and UVIC respondents carrying higher average amounts of financial debt upon graduation than their counterparts, although the sub-group from RRU was somewhat slower at repayment despite having the lowest amount of debt at graduation. On average, graduates with remaining debt were paying \$295.58 per month on this debt. Almost one-third indicated that they had accessed interest relief (30.1%), 17.7% had their repayment period extended, 7.4% had been in loan default, and 18.3% had at some point in time missed a payment. In terms of impact upon their lives, over one-half stated that they had postponed major purchases, such as a car or home, due to their educational debt (56.5%), and one-third had postponed further education (35.2%) or been less active in volunteer work (32.2%).

Essential to any examination of university education outcomes is the ability of graduates to find employment in their chosen field. In 2004, the 2002 graduates were experiencing a relatively low unemployment rate of 5.3%, 0.5 percentage points lower than the previous two-year out cohort. This rate differed noticeably by university, from a low of 1.7% for the RRU graduates to a high of 6.3% for those from UVIC. Likewise, there was a 7.0 percentage point spread between the unemployment rate for Health Professions



graduates (1.6%) and those from Computing Science (8.6%). In most cases, however, the unemployment rates were lower than the overall rates for BC (7.5%) and Canada (7.3%) in 2004 ([www.statscan.ca](http://www.statscan.ca)). When questioned about their unemployment, the majority of respondents who fell into this category indicated that they were going to school full-time (59.1%). For those unemployed persons who were actively looking for work at the time of the survey, the largest number stated that they were unable to find work (32.1%).

The data showed that 89.1% of working respondents held paid employment, compared to 6.7% who were self-employed and 4.2% who had some combination of paid and self-employment. Furthermore, 79.5% of this working sub-group was employed full-time and 21.7% at more-than-one job. On average, working respondents were spending 36.5 hours each week engaged in their jobs.

When asked about the connection between their prior academic studies and current jobs, over two-thirds of respondents said that their jobs were “somewhat related” (26.0%) or “very related” (43.7%) to their baccalaureate degree program. The extent of relatedness varied significantly depending on the program from which participants had graduated. As we might expect, graduates from quite specialized professional programs tended to see high degrees of relatedness (eg., Law: 83.0% “very related”; Education: 75.5%; Health Professions: 70.0%), while those from more “general” program areas saw somewhat less relatedness (eg., Social Sciences: 24.9% “very related”; Humanities: 26.7%; Life Sciences: 29.0%). Interestingly, a comparison with previous cohorts showed relative consistency with respect to relatedness, except for the Humanities, Social Sciences, and Life

Sciences where the 2002 graduates saw less relatedness—for these programs there appeared to be a trend of decreasing relatedness with successive cohorts.

Another important aspect of the relationship between an individual's university education and post-degree employment is the connection between those skills which were developed during that program and those which are most utilized in one's job. To this end, the skills most highly utilized in the 2002 graduates' work were the ability to “work effectively with others” (94.7% found “somewhat useful” or “very useful” in their jobs) and to “verbally express opinions/ideas clearly or concisely” (94.3%). As we might expect, these results varied significantly by program area; for example, Computing Science graduates found analytical and problem solving skills the most useful in their jobs, while verbal expression and reading comprehension were the most useful for Law graduates. When asked about the extent of skill development in their academic program, survey participants identified the ability to “analyze and think critically” (89.6% rated “high” or “very high”), to “learn on your own” (87.9%) and to “read and comprehend material” (84.6%) as the most developed overall. Once again, there were a variety of differences depending upon the program taken, especially (and expectedly) in the development of mathematical skills (81.1 percentage point spread between Engineering and Law graduates). Overall, 86.3% of respondents described the knowledge, skills and experience they acquired during their university education as being “somewhat useful” or “very useful” in their work, and 82.0% in their daily lives.

To further assess the 2002 graduates'

labour market experience, their jobs were categorized within a matrix of five skills levels. At the time of the survey, over half were in occupations described as “professional” (59.5%), followed by “technical, paraprofessional and skilled occupations” (19.0%). These results varied somewhat by university, clearly a reflection of the types of programs different institutions offer, and, in some cases, quite markedly by program area (eg., the greatest percentage of individuals whose jobs were in the “management” classification had graduated from Business). According to a more specific categorization of graduates' jobs, 38.6% were employed in the “social sciences, education, or government services,” followed by 18.8% in “business, finance and administrative” occupations.

One of the most highly scrutinized outcome indicators is employment income. Two years after graduating, members of the 2002 cohort who were working full-time earned an average of \$43,243.50 annually. In comparison, the average employment income of BC residents in November 2004 was \$35,620.00 ([www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca/data/](http://www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca/data/)). In general, salaries have remained stable when we compare the three most recent two-year out survey cohorts. However, there has been some positive and negative fluctuation by program area, particularly for graduates of Computing Science, Engineering and Physical Sciences programs whose annual salaries have fallen by approximately \$4,000 to \$9,500 for successive two-year out cohorts.



## I. Introduction

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The value of a university education is well-supported in public policy and higher education research, providing economic, social and intellectual benefits for the individual and society at large. Within British Columbia, efforts are continuing to expand the range of baccalaureate options, both geographically and with respect to the number and types of programs available to students. In times of such growth, it is critically important to monitor the outcomes of university education, ensuring that our post-secondary institutions are providing students with knowledge and skills relevant to their personal and work lives beyond university. Evaluative data provides us with fundamental information on problems, bottlenecks in the labour market, supply and demand issues, and educational practices as they relate to students' lives. As well, this type of information is very useful to prospective students in their post-secondary decision-making process, helping them match their academic interests with the types of jobs to which different university degrees may lead.

In 2004, The University of British Columbia (UBC), Simon Fraser University (SFU), the

University of Victoria (Uvic), the University of Northern British Columbia (UNBC), and Royal Roads University (RRU), together with the University Presidents' Council and the BC Ministry of Advanced Education, partnered to survey students who had graduated in 2002 with baccalaureate degrees. The goal of the survey was to examine how participants felt, on reflection, about their university experience, with questions exploring skills development, financing and debt load, and graduates' post-baccalaureate experience in the labour market and in furthering their education.

With 6,526 graduates responding to the survey, there was extensive data for analysis and discussion. Wherever possible, the results are compared to those of previous two-year out survey cohorts to see if there are any clear changes occurring in the outcome experiences of our university graduates. In addition, participants were invited to expand their feedback with open-ended comments, some of which have been included in this report (and all of which have been provided to the respective universities for further examination).

## II. Survey Population and Response Rates

This report is based upon the feedback of the 2002 BC baccalaureate graduates two years after degree completion. The survey sample consisted of 10,797 graduates from UBC, SFU, UVIC, UNBC, and RRU.

International students, Medical and Dental students, and those living outside North America were excluded. There was an overall valid response rate of 60.4%, with some variation by university: UBC (56.6%), SFU (61.9%), UVIC (64.4%), UNBC (65.4%), and RRU (69.8%).

## III. Demographics

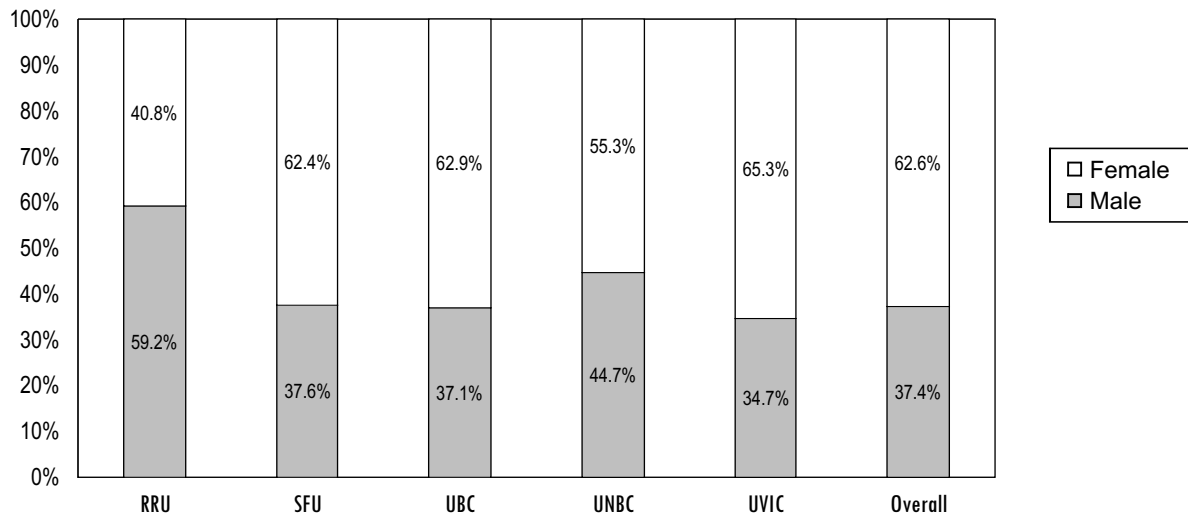
### A. Institution

Consistent with institutional size and the results of other outcomes surveys, the majority of respondents are UBC graduates (41.2%), followed by SFU (27.7%), UVIC (24.8%), UNBC (4.5%) and RRU (1.9%).

### B. Gender

As shown in Figure 1, the overall gender ratio for respondents is approximately 2:3 (male to female), similar among the three larger universities and relatively consistent with the 2004-05 demographic data for BC undergraduate students (42.8% male, 57.2% female) ([www.tupc.bc.ca](http://www.tupc.bc.ca)). The UNBC respondent pool is slightly more even, while the majority of RRU respondents, in contrast to the overall survey group, are male. The lack of gender equity by program area is striking, with only four of those included in this study approaching a 50:50 balance (Law, Business, Natural Resources, and Physical Sciences) (Table 1). The historical gender imbalance in certain programs is clearly reflected in these results. As we might expect, there are significantly more males in Computing Science and Engineering (approximately 80% male) and far more females in Education, Fine and Performing Arts, Health Professions (of which 66% graduated from Nursing, almost all of whom are female), Humanities and Social Sciences (the percentage of females in these

Figure 1: Gender (by Institution)



programs ranges from 69% to 88%). Furthermore, these results are essentially the same as those for the 2000 in 2002 cohort, the only obvious changes occurring in the Social Sciences (increase in females by 3.9 percentage points), Humanities (increase in males by 4.3 percentage points), and the Physical Sciences (increase in females by 7.0 percentage points).

Table 1: Gender Ratio (by Program)

	Male	Female	Total		Male	Female
Fine & Performing Arts	62	154	216		28.7%	71.3%
Computing Science	216	47	263		82.1%	17.9%
Engineering	229	58	287		79.8%	20.2%
Education	223	679	902		24.7%	75.3%
Law	57	66	123		46.3%	53.7%
Health Professions	47	340	387		12.1%	87.9%
Health, Fitness & Kinesiology	71	104	175		40.6%	59.4%
Business	350	305	655		53.4%	46.6%
Natural Resources	98	88	186		52.7%	47.3%
Social Sciences	580	1,262	1,842		31.5%	68.5%
Humanities	189	514	703		26.9%	73.1%
Life Sciences	223	378	601		37.1%	62.9%
Physical Sciences	97	89	186		52.2%	47.8%
Overall	2,442	4,084	6,526		37.4%	62.6%

### C. Age

Two years after completing their bachelor's degrees, the respondents were, on average, 28.8 years of age (median age of 26) (Table 2). As with past outcomes surveys, the UBC respondents tend to be somewhat younger than their counterparts from other universities, while the RRU respondents are older. When we examine mean and median ages by program area, we find variation based on whether the programs can be entered directly from secondary school (eg., Engineering, Social Sciences, and Life Sciences) or require prior academic studies as a basis for admission (eg., Education, Law, and Health Professions<sup>1</sup>).

Table 2: Mean and Median Age of Respondents (by University and Program)

	Mean	Median
RRU	32.8	30
SFU	29.1	27
UBC	27.7	26
UNBC	29.5	28
UVIC	29.6	27
Fine and Performing Arts	28.8	26
Computing Science	28.1	26
Engineering	26.7	26
Education	31.3	29
Law	31.2	30
Health Professions	33.3	29
Health, Fitness and Kinesiology	26.7	26
Business	27.4	26
Natural Resources	28.3	27
Social Sciences	28.5	26
Humanities	29.2	26
Life Sciences	26.2	26
Physical Sciences	26.2	26
Overall	28.8	26

<sup>1</sup> The Health Professions program area includes Pharmaceutical Sciences, which requires a minimum of one year of prior academic studies. It also includes Nursing, which includes a program whereby nurses with RN diplomas and prior work experience can complete their Nursing degrees. Medicine and Dentistry graduates are not included in the 2002 in 2004 USOP Survey.

## D. Current Residence

As expected, the majority of respondents were living in the Lower Mainland/Southwest part of British Columbia in 2004 (66.1%), with the next largest grouping on Vancouver Island (14.0%) (Table 3). With geographical location a major factor in students' choice of university, it's not surprising that graduates also tend to live in regions close to the universities they attended. For example, over one-half the UNBC graduates live in Northern British Columbia (56.3%), while approximately 84% of the SFU and UBC graduates live in the Lower Mainland/Southwest part of the province, and close to one-half the UVIC and RRU respondents on Vancouver Island.

While students typically choose universities which are geographically accessible, some

may elect to move away to a more distant one in order to pursue a program not available close-to-home (eg., Pharmaceutical Sciences, which is only offered at UBC). In other cases, academic competitiveness may necessitate a move to attend university, as is seen with the higher percentage of Law graduates now residing outside BC (18.1%, compared to 10.0% overall); many of these students likely came to UBC or UVIC to complete their Law degrees, and have now returned to their home provinces to article and begin their careers. Furthermore, since one-third of the Natural Resources graduates come from UNBC and much of the primary sector professions in which these graduates are engaged are non-urban, it's not surprising that so many now live in Northern BC or the Southern Interior.

Table 3: Respondents' Current Residence (by University and Program)

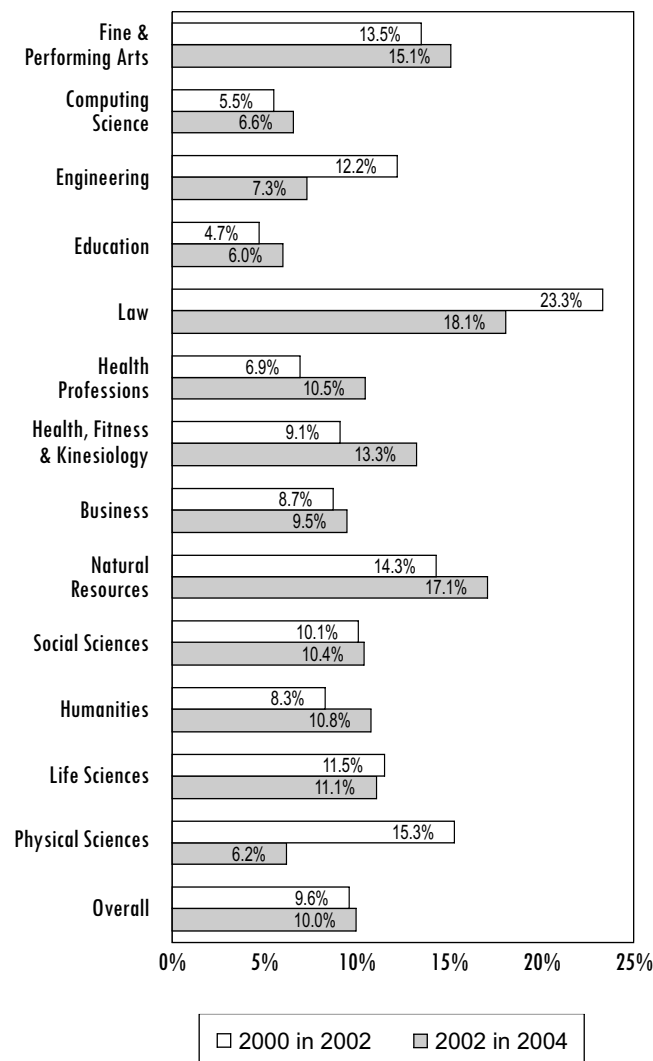
	Lower Mainland / Southwest	Southern Interior	Vancouver Island	Northern BC	Other Canadian Province	United States
RRU	24.6%	4.4%	51.8%	1.8%	17.5%	0.0%
SFU	84.8%	1.4%	2.0%	4.3%	6.5%	1.1%
UBC	83.3%	3.3%	2.7%	1.9%	8.4%	0.5%
UNBC	20.1%	4.9%	2.6%	56.3%	14.9%	1.1%
UVIC	27.8%	7.5%	45.4%	3.1%	15.0%	1.3%
Fine & Performing Arts	54.6%	2.9%	24.9%	1.0%	15.1%	1.5%
Computing Science	71.6%	1.6%	14.8%	2.9%	6.6%	2.5%
Engineering	72.4%	6.2%	10.2%	1.8%	7.3%	2.2%
Education	69.7%	5.4%	11.2%	7.8%	6.0%	0.0%
Law	61.0%	3.8%	16.2%	1.0%	18.1%	0.0%
Health Professions	61.7%	3.9%	16.5%	6.3%	10.5%	1.1%
Health, Fitness & Kinesiology	71.1%	1.8%	12.0%	0.6%	13.3%	1.2%
Business	68.1%	2.1%	14.3%	5.6%	9.5%	0.5%
Natural Resources	34.1%	13.5%	10.0%	23.5%	17.1%	1.8%
Social Sciences	66.2%	3.4%	14.9%	4.6%	10.4%	0.5%
Humanities	65.5%	3.6%	15.3%	4.1%	10.8%	0.6%
Life Sciences	68.1%	3.5%	11.6%	4.4%	11.1%	1.4%
Physical Sciences	72.5%	3.4%	10.7%	4.5%	6.2%	2.8%
Overall	66.1%	3.9%	14.0%	5.2%	10.0%	0.8%

When examining where our university graduates live, it's interesting to look at the percentages living in other Canadian provinces by cohort years. As shown in Figure 2, there is very little overall difference between the 2002 and 2000 survey groups; however, if we examine this trend by program, some differences are apparent. While the percentages of graduates living out-of-province have noticeably declined for Physical Sciences (9.1 percentage points lower), Law

(5.2 percentage points lower), and Engineering (4.9 percentage points lower) graduates, there has been a parallel increase for graduates from the Health Professions (3.6 percentage points higher), and Health, Fitness and Kinesiology (4.2 percentage points higher). Slightly lower increases can be seen with Natural Resources (2.8 percentage points higher) and Humanities (2.5 percentage points higher) graduates.

In addition, the percentage of graduates living in the United States has declined by approximately one percentage point when we compare these two cohorts. The most obvious differences are with the Physical Sciences, Law, and Computing Science graduates (2.7, 2.5, and 2.2 percentage points fewer 2002 graduates respectively living in the United States).

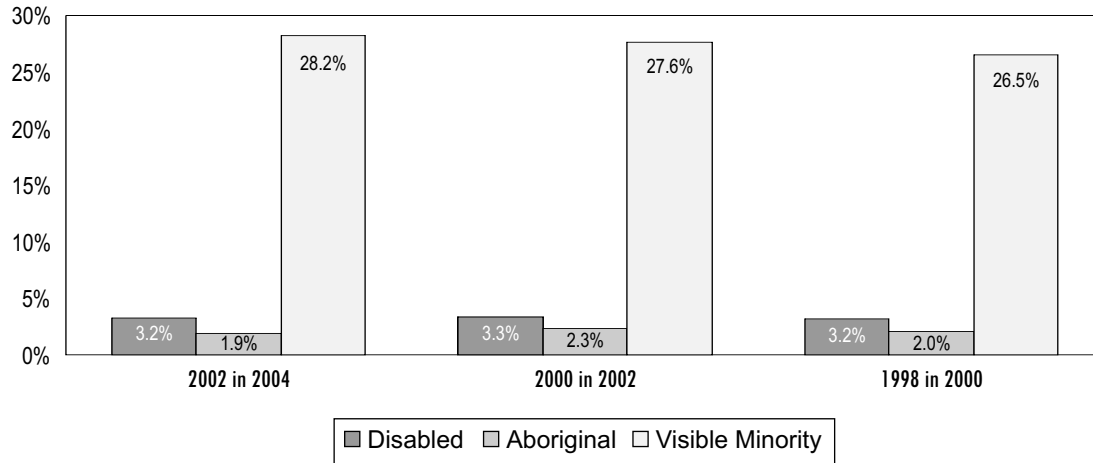
Figure 2: Percentage of Respondents Living in Other Canadian Provinces (Comparison of the 2002 and 2000 Graduate Cohorts)



## E. Equity Groupings

Equity group representation continues to be an important issue within BC's post-secondary system. Determining how many university students fall within various equity categories has long been a challenge, with some individuals unwilling to self-identify as belonging to a specific category (eg., Aboriginal, disabled), and others not feeling part of a certain group even though they are technically categorized in this manner (eg., visible minority). As part of this outcomes survey, participants were asked if they belong to three specific equity groups: persons with disabilities (ie., having a long-term physical and /or mental health condition which limits their daily activities), Aboriginal persons, or part of a visible minority group in Canada (with respect to ethnicity). As shown in Figure 2, 3.2% identify as disabled, 1.9% as Aboriginal, and 28.2% as members of a visible minority.

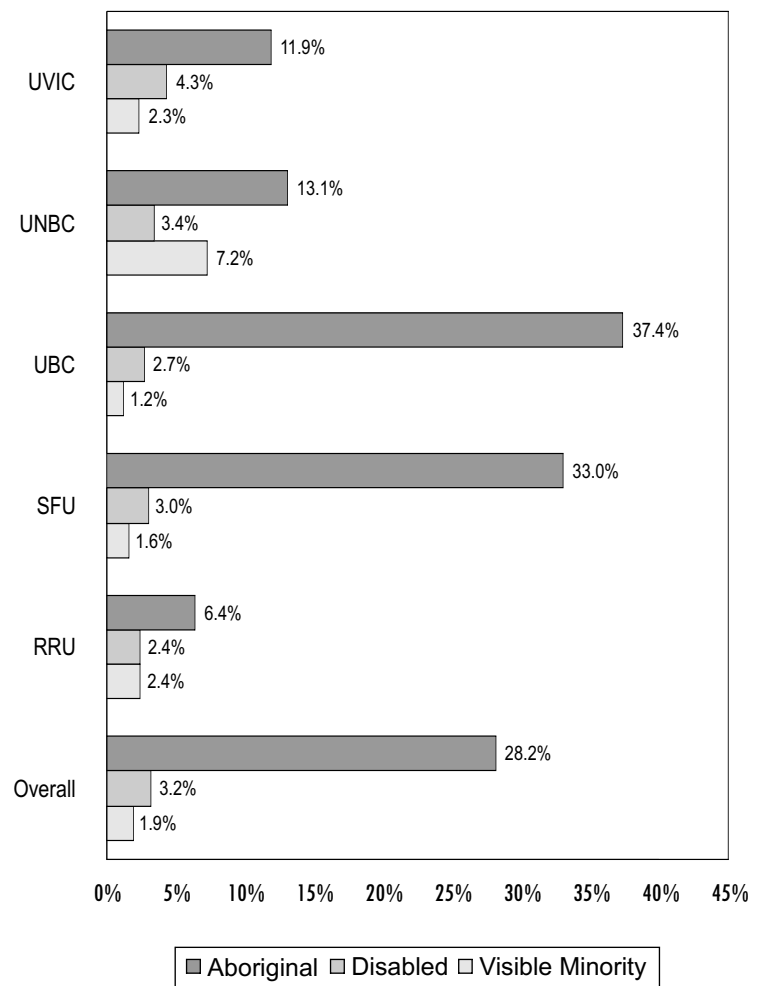
Figure 3: Equity Group Membership (Comparison of 2002, 2000, and 1998 Respondent Groups)



In addition, Figure 3 shows the percentage of respondents who self-identify with an equity group for each of the three most recent two-year out surveys (2002 graduates in 2004, 2000 graduates in 2002, and 1998 graduates in 2000). The only increase, albeit a small one, is in the visible minority category. Moreover, because the number of Aboriginal respondents is so small, we cannot draw anything from the slight decline in students in this category.

Figure 4 shows the proportional percentage of respondents from each university who identify as being disabled, Aboriginal, or a member of a visible minority. Clearly, a relatively greater percentage of the UNBC respondents are Aboriginal (7.2%, compared to 1.9% overall), while a slightly higher percentage of UVIC respondents are disabled (4.3%, compared to 3.2% overall). When we examine visible minority representation, the percentage of UBC (37.4%) and SFU (33.0%) respondents who identify within this category is approximately 20 percentage points higher than the next closest university.

Figure 4: Equity Group Membership (by University)





Furthermore, with limited overall representation from disabled and Aboriginal respondents, we cannot generalize about the experience of these students when examining individual program areas. However, the results do demonstrate that certain programs have higher representation from individuals who fall into these equity categories. As shown in Figure 5, over one-third of the Aboriginal respondents had completed a Social Sciences degree in 2002 (35.0%), followed by Humanities (17.9%) and Education (17.1%). What stands out in these results is the low number of Aboriginal graduates with baccalaureate degrees in the sciences—only 11.4%, or 15.5% if we include those graduates from the Health Professions.

In reflecting about their university experience, several of the Aboriginal participants spoke about the importance of

atmosphere and having Aboriginal teachers to their overall experience:

*I love the small class sizes and one-to-one instruction. It feels like a very safe learning environment. The building is beautiful and is an excellent learning environment. The First Nations centre is a wonderful place in terms of community feel. The instructors are always willing to help.*

(UNBC Humanities)

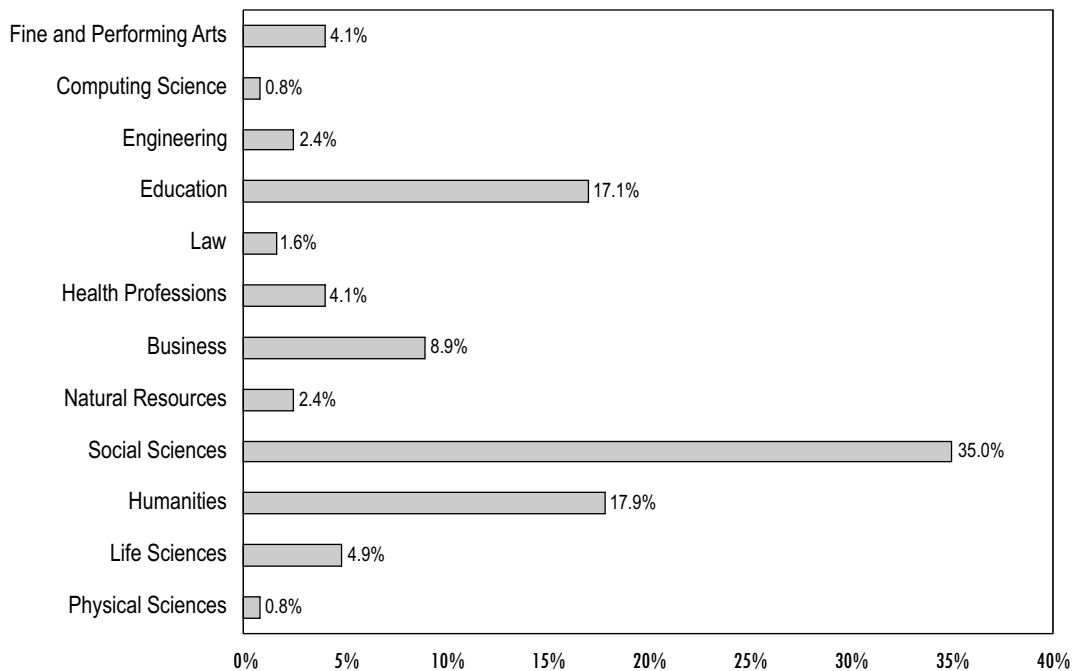
*The small class size was great and so was the location of campus. The First Nations centre was very important to my education.*

(UNBC Physical Sciences)

*I appreciate the Aboriginal instructors.*

(UVIC Social Sciences)

Figure 5: Representation of Total Aboriginal Respondent Pool (by Program)



As with the Aboriginal respondent pool, those graduates with a long-term physical or mental health condition were most likely to have graduated with a Social Sciences degree (30.1%), followed by Humanities (16.7%) and Education (13.4%) (Figure 6). As previous outcomes surveys have shown, disabled graduates face higher unemployment rates than the overall graduate cohort, although this difference has diminished with successive survey groups (eg., 1.5 percentage points higher for the 2002 graduates in 2004; 4.4 percentage points higher for the 2000 graduates in 2002; 5.3 percentage points higher for the 1998 graduates in 2003). As some of their comments reflect, support

networks are critically important for students with disabilities:

*Offer more employment opportunities for the disabled.*

(UNBC Natural Resources)

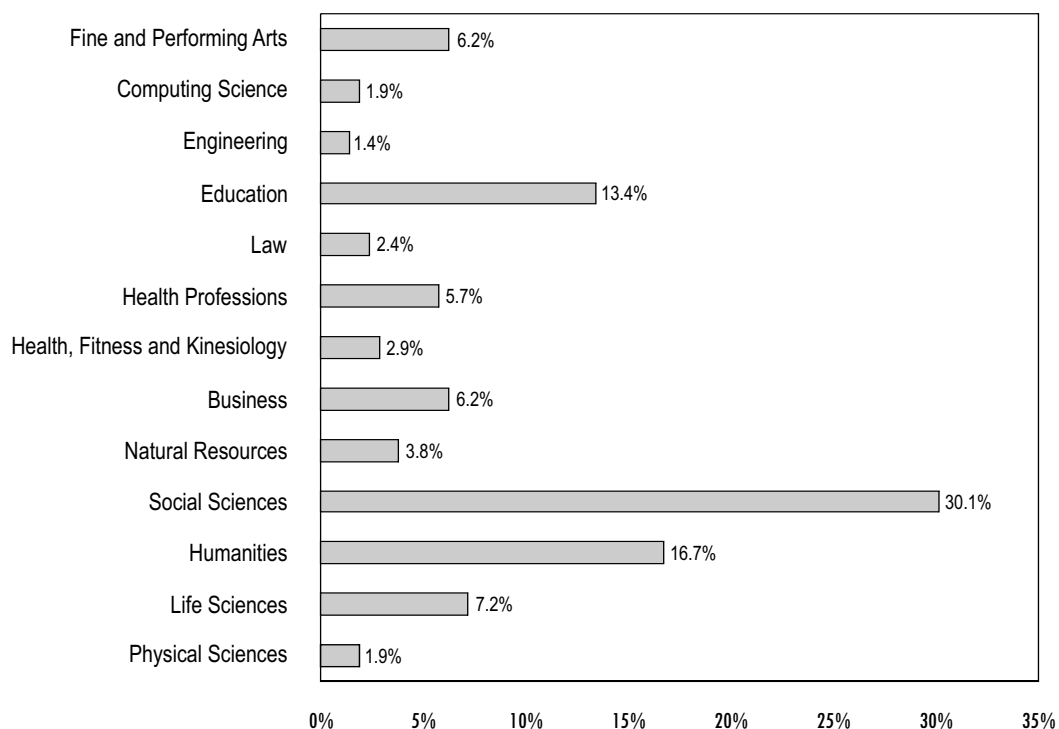
*I had great support from the resource department to provide me with skills development. I have a learning disability so they gave me great support.*

(UNBC Social Sciences)

*I was in the student society for disabled people and thought the university was fabulous.*

(UVIC Social Sciences)

Figure 6: Representation of Total Disabled Respondent Pool (by Program)



## IV. Academic Program

### A. Academic Program Taken

As shown in Table 4, the majority of respondents have completed bachelor's degrees in the Social Sciences (28.2%), followed distantly by Education (13.8%), the Humanities (10.8%), and Business (10.0%).

Table 5 demonstrates the variation among the universities with respect to degree programs taken. For example, RRU stands apart as a university with very specialized offerings at the bachelor's level—graduates from this institution have completed degrees in either Business (80.0%) or Natural Resources (20.0%). In comparison, the programs completed by SFU, UVIC, and UBC graduates are much more diverse.

### B. Program Assessment

As part of the survey, participants were asked to reflect upon their university education and their satisfaction with this experience. The results, highlighted in Figure 7, demonstrate very high levels of satisfaction, with 96.6% stating that they are “satisfied” or “very satisfied.” The results across universities are quite consistent, with only a 3.8 percentage point difference between the most satisfied RRU respondents (99.2% “satisfied” or “very satisfied”) and the least satisfied UBC respondents (95.4%).

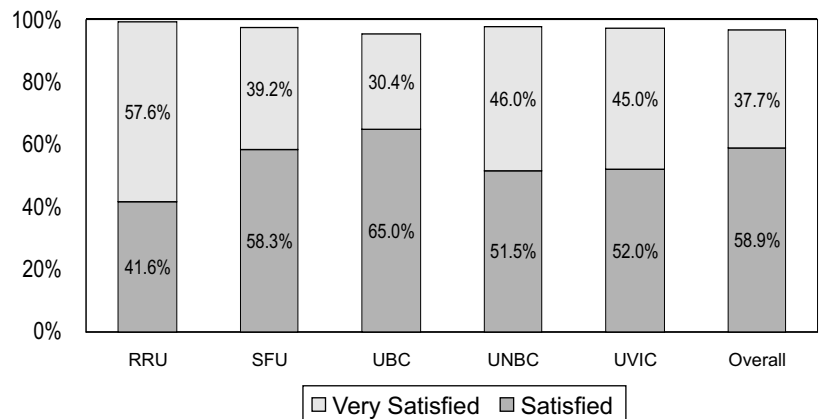
Table 4: Academic Program Completed (Overall)

Program	N	Percentage
Social Sciences	1,842	28.2%
Education	902	13.8%
Humanities	703	10.8%
Business	655	10.0%
Life Sciences	601	9.2%
Health Professions	387	5.9%
Engineering	287	4.4%
Computing Science	263	4.0%
Fine and Performing Arts	216	3.3%
Natural Resources	186	2.9%
Physical Sciences	186	2.9%
Health, Fitness and Kinesiology	175	2.7%
Law	123	1.9%
Total	6,526	100.0%

Table 5: Academic Program Completed (by University)

	RRU	SFU	UBC	UNBC	UVIC	Overall
Fine and Performing Arts	0.0%	2.0%	2.7%	0.0%	6.6%	3.3%
Computing Science	0.0%	5.0%	3.3%	5.8%	4.1%	4.0%
Engineering	0.0%	1.7%	7.3%	0.0%	3.8%	4.4%
Education	0.0%	15.9%	18.4%	0.0%	7.4%	13.8%
Law	0.0%	0.0%	2.8%	0.0%	3.0%	1.9%
Health Professions	0.0%	0.0%	7.5%	4.1%	10.7%	5.9%
Health, Fitness and Kinesiology	0.0%	3.6%	3.0%	0.0%	1.9%	2.7%
Business	80.0%	12.4%	6.8%	19.2%	5.8%	10.0%
Natural Resources	20.0%	1.3%	2.5%	24.4%	0.0%	2.9%
Social Sciences	0.0%	37.0%	20.3%	25.8%	34.2%	28.2%
Humanities	0.0%	13.0%	9.5%	7.6%	11.8%	10.8%
Life Sciences	0.0%	6.0%	12.1%	10.7%	8.5%	9.2%
Physical Sciences	0.0%	2.1%	3.8%	2.4%	2.4%	2.9%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Figure 7: Percentage of Respondents Who Are Satisfied/Very Satisfied with their University Education (by University)



It is interesting to note that levels of satisfaction seem to follow a pattern based upon university size—the smaller the university, the higher percentage of respondents who are “very satisfied”. Indeed, when we examine the open-ended comments participants provide, many from the larger universities focus on the difficulties of larger classes, their inability to connect with their professors, and the importance of smaller tutorials or seminars. On the other hand, respondents from the smaller universities tend to speak positively about that environment.

*I would have preferred smaller class sizes. I am glad that they introduced seminar classes, and I think they should require students to take more than one seminar class as a part of the program.*  
(UBC Humanities)

*The class size was too big and, as a result, didn't give students a chance to participate in learning at all.*  
(UBC Life Sciences)

*Smaller class sizes would have been nice. Large classes make it hard to get extra help.*  
(UVIC Social Sciences)

*UBC is a great university except that it is so big and, unless you live on campus, there is little opportunity to meet people. I didn't feel close to other people in my major and did not find close university friends or a useful network. There were not enough opportunities for students outside residence to spend time together.*  
(UBC Business)

*The first and second year science classes were too crowded, which made them very uninteresting and a poor*

*learning environment. I enjoyed the later stages when there were more opportunities to interact with students...*  
(UBC Life Sciences)

*I enjoyed the small class sizes because there was a lot of individual help from the professors. I wish UNBC had a sports facility.*  
(UNBC Business)

*I love the small class sizes and one-to-one instruction. It feels like a very safe learning environment. The building is beautiful and is an excellent learning environment. The First Nations centre is a wonderful place in terms of community feel. The instructors are always willing to help.*  
(UNBC Humanities)

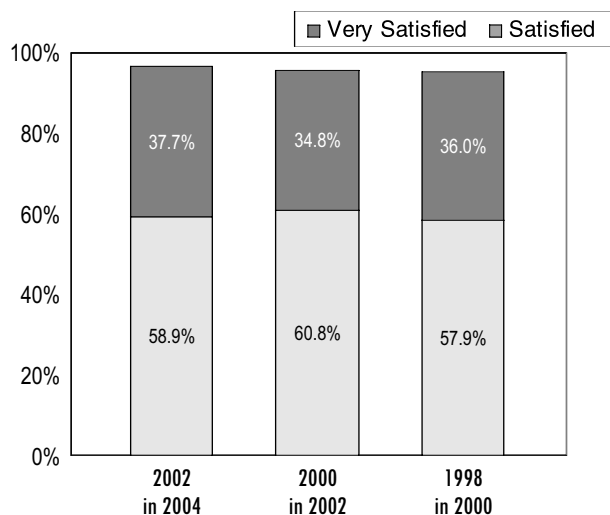
Another way to examine respondents' satisfaction levels is by the program area from which they graduated. The results, shown in Table 6, are most noteworthy by their overall consistency, with only a 5.0 percentage point spread between the margins for overall satisfaction. However, if we look at the percentage of respondents who describe themselves as “very satisfied,” some variation emerges. For example, significantly more respondents who completed Health Professions or Law degrees are “very satisfied,” while those with Life Sciences, Computing Science, Engineering or Education degrees are less likely to describe themselves as such (approximate 16-21 percentage point spread between the margins).

We can also compare the satisfaction levels for three different, two-year out graduate cohorts: 1998 graduates in 2000, 2000 graduates in 2002, and 2002 graduates in 2004. The results not only show the consistently high levels of satisfaction enjoyed

Table 6: Percentage of Respondents Who Are Satisfied/Very Satisfied with their University Education (by Program)

	Satisfied	Very Satisfied	Satisfied Plus Very Satisfied
Social Sciences	59.1%	38.8%	97.9%
Physical Sciences	64.0%	33.9%	97.8%
Computing Science	66.9%	30.8%	97.7%
Business	58.6%	39.1%	97.7%
Humanities	52.4%	44.7%	97.1%
Natural Resources	59.1%	37.6%	96.8%
Law	49.6%	47.2%	96.7%
Fine & Performing Arts	52.8%	43.9%	96.7%
Health Professions	46.5%	50.1%	96.6%
Engineering	64.6%	31.6%	96.1%
Health, Fitness & Kinesiology	59.5%	35.8%	95.4%
Life Sciences	65.9%	29.4%	95.3%
Education	61.6%	31.3%	92.9%
Overall	58.9%	37.7%	96.5%

Figure 8: Percentage of Respondents Who Are Satisfied/Very Satisfied with their University Education (Comparison of Three Graduate Cohorts Two Years After Graduation)



[Note: For the survey of 1998 graduates in 2000, this question was worded in the past tense (ie., How satisfied were you with the education you received?) while the subsequent surveys have worded this question in the present tense (ie., How satisfied are you with the education you received?). Perceptions may vary based upon how respondents felt about their education while experiencing it compared to their perception looking back; however, the positive upward trend is most pronounced between the 2000 and 2002 cohorts, where the question is worded identically.]

by BC's university graduates, but also an upward trend towards increased levels of overall satisfaction ("satisfied" or "very satisfied"), with an average 1.3 percentage point increase with each successive cohort (Figure 8).

Despite their high degree of satisfaction with their university education, the 2002 graduates are less unanimous when asked if they would select the same program again, with 77.7% responding affirmatively. Interestingly, responses vary considerably by program area: at the high end, 87.8% of Health Professions graduates and 87.6% from Law would take the same program again, whereas only 65.2% of Life Sciences graduates respond affirmatively (Figure 9).

Figure 9: Percentage of Respondents Who Would Select the Same Program Again (by Program)

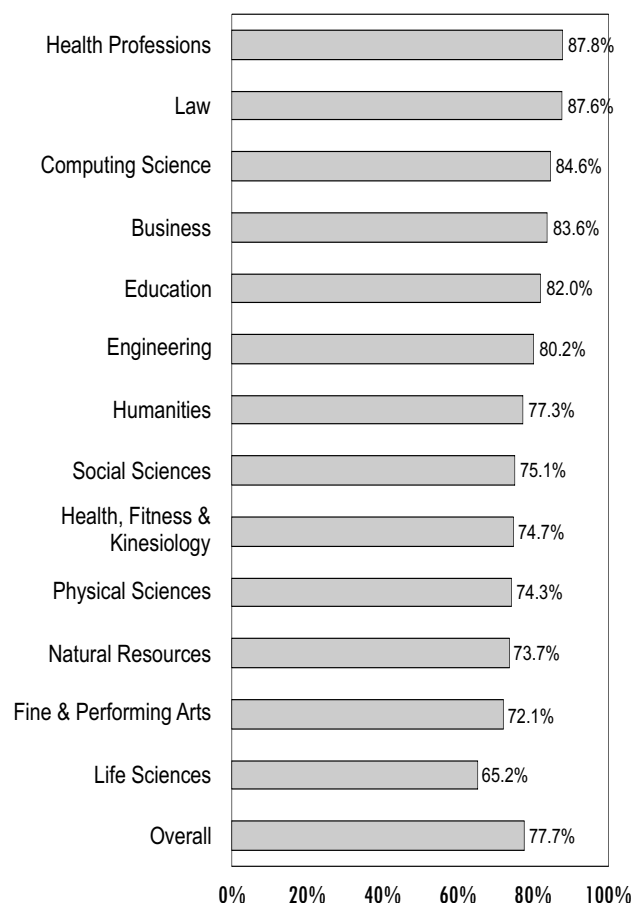
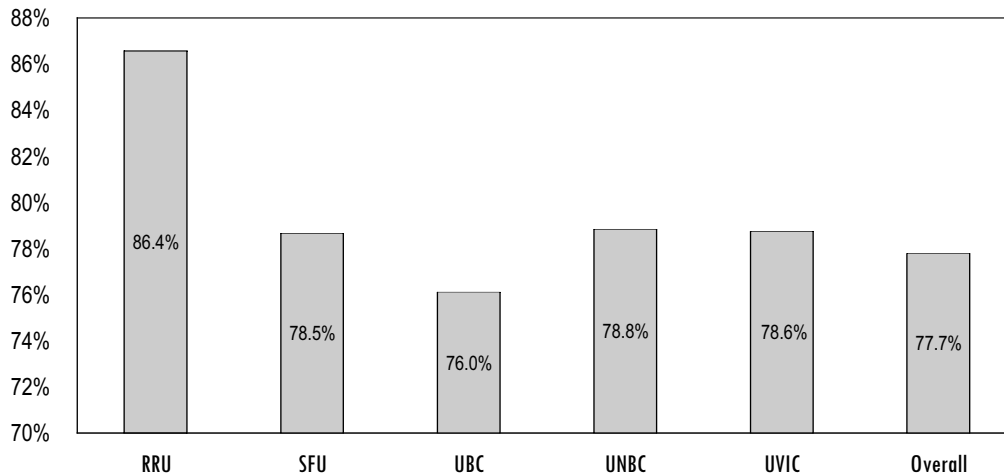


Figure 10: Percentage of Respondents Who Would Select the Same Program Again (by University)



As with the question about educational satisfaction, we observe an increasingly positive trend among graduates when we compare this graduate cohort with the previous two groups surveyed (74.7% affirmative with the 1998 in 2000 cohort; 76.3% affirmative with the 2000 in 2002 cohort).

The results for this question are relatively consistent among the various universities, the exception being RRU respondents who are more likely to want to take the same program again (by a margin of 8-10 percentage points) (Figure 10).

The reasons given by respondents for not choosing the same program again are consistent with previous cohort studies, with lack of practicality, limited career opportunities, and changed interests being the most commonly cited (Table 7). When we look at the open-ended comments survey participants provided, approximately 22% relate to the connection between their academic education and their work lives beyond university. Even when their university experience was a positive one, many still felt there was a lack of practicality in their studies which, in some

Table 7: Reason(s) Respondents Would Not Select the Same Academic Program Again (Overall)

	% of Responses	% of Respondents
Not enough course variety offered	3.3%	4.5%
Skills acquired were not very useful	6.9%	9.3%
Courses were poorly taught	5.0%	6.8%
Program was too general/not enough specialization	12.7%	17.2%
Courses were not practical	24.6%	33.4%
Interests have changed	19.7%	26.7%
Little or no career opportunities/hard to find a job	21.1%	28.5%
Do not agree with the grading system	0.6%	0.9%
Did not like institution	6.0%	8.2%
Total	100.0%	133.7%

[Note: Respondents were asked to select all the reasons that applied to them, therefore Table 7 shows both the overall percentage of total responses and the overall percentage of respondents.]

cases, has had a detrimental effect on their career success. Although some respondents clearly obtained this practical experience through co-operative education programs, others complained about the need for more co-op opportunities.

*SFU is a great school and I enjoyed myself, however, there needs to be more career preparation and aid in job finding. The program had lots of theory and lacked practical skills.*

(SFU Social Sciences)

*Counsellors are needed for the students before and after university and some kind of career day or counselling to see what is in the industry or what the industry wants.*

(UVIC Physical Sciences)

*The academic advisors were not very helpful. The prerequisites for courses should be more specified. The program needs more hands-on practical experience like a practicum, co-op, or volunteer work. Provide work placements upon graduation.*

(UBC Health, Fitness and Kinesiology)

*A lot of the courses emphasize things that aren't practical to the job field. People come out of their degrees without the skills to interact with people in work and everyday life. More communication skills, both verbal and written, would be beneficial. Team building activities need to be better structured. Only some students work when in a group setting and the rest coast by.*

(UVIC Computing Science)

*Field school was the best course available and where I learned the most.*

*However, I severely needed a co-op to gain experience and to help my job search.*

(UBC Life Sciences)

*The co-op program is terrific. I am working in this field because of the co-op program. It exposes the student to whole new fields of employment.*

(UVIC Humanities)

With so few respondents citing “poorly taught courses” as one of the reasons they would not select the same academic program again, it's not surprising that almost all describe the quality of their course instruction as either “good” or “very good” (95.8%). This positive result is fairly consistent across universities, with a 5.0 percentage point spread between the highest result from RRU graduates (99.2% rated “good” or “very good”) and the lowest from UBC graduates (94.2%). If we look specifically at the percentage of respondents who describe their course instruction as “very good,” we note more discrepancy in results by university, ranging from a high of 39.7% for UNBC graduates to a low of 25.6% for the UBC graduates.

*I had a lot of inspirational and dynamic professors.*

(UBC Education)

*The instructors were very flexible and open, extremely interested in each individual's learning experience, challenged students to look at issues in different ways, and were very accommodating.*

(UVIC Health Professions)

*The instructors were very good and up to date with technology and information.*

(UNBC Natural Resources)

Figure 11: Rating of Quality of Course Instruction (by University)

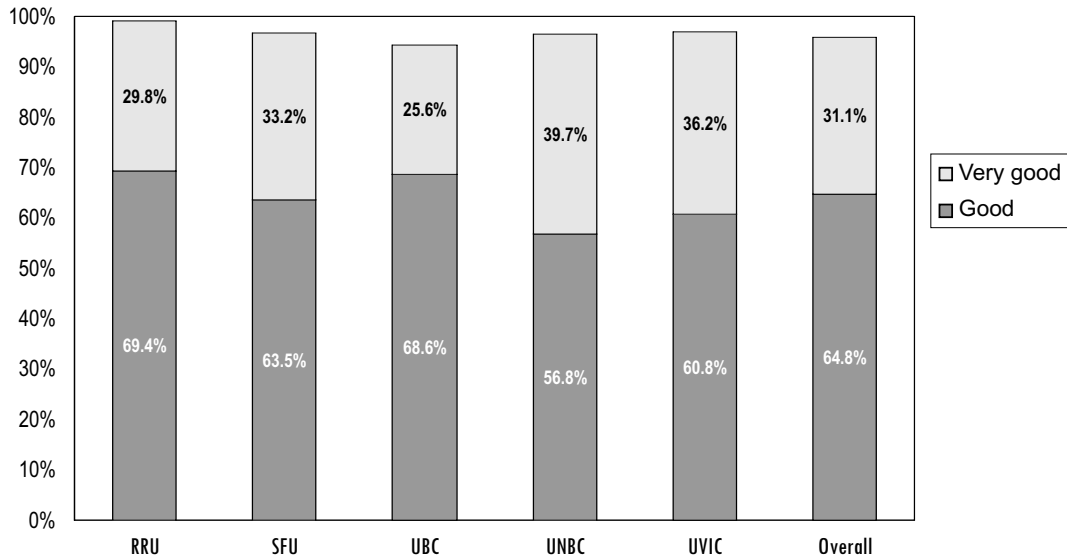
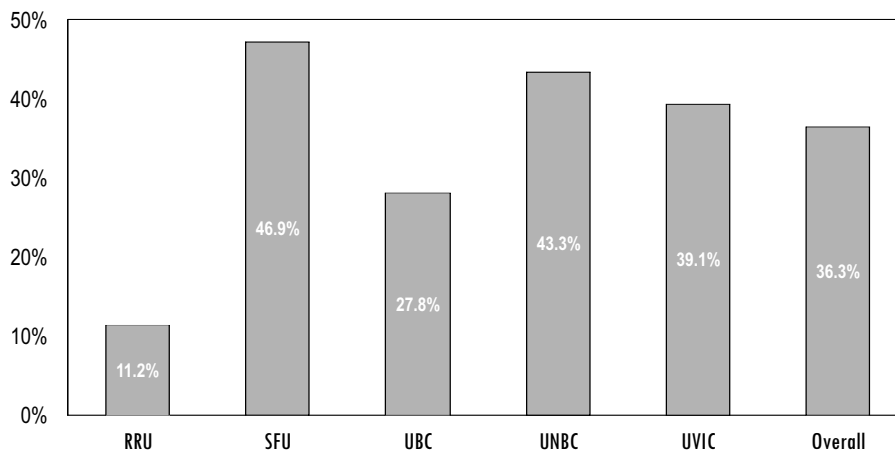


Figure 12: Percentage of Respondents For Whom Length of Time to Degree Completion was Longer Than Expected (by University)



Participants were also asked questions about the length of time it had taken them to complete their bachelor's degrees, with 36.3% indicating that it was longer than they had expected (Figure 12). This result was quite varied by university, with a 35.7 percentage point difference between the SFU respondents (46.9%) and those from RRU (11.2%). For those individuals who felt their degree completion time was longer than expected, the most commonly cited reason was

involvement in co-operative education (14.9% of responses), followed by personal/family reasons (11.9%) and financial reasons/having to work (10.6%) (Table 8). These reasons help to explain the higher percentage of SFU respondents who felt their degree took longer than expected, with its extensive co-operative education programs and higher numbers of mature/adult learners who, undoubtedly, have more familial responsibilities than most traditional 18-24 year old students.



Table 8: Reasons It Took Respondent Longer to Complete Degree than Expected (if applicable)

	N	% of Responses	% of Respondents
Poor academic advising	55	1.9%	2.4%
Course transfer problems	81	2.8%	3.5%
Difficulty choosing courses or major degree area	96	3.3%	4.1%
Change of major/program/area of specialization	274	9.5%	11.7%
Completed requirements for more than one degree program	82	2.8%	3.5%
Experienced difficulty getting into required courses	267	9.2%	11.4%
Courses wanted were not offered at convenient times, terms or semesters	170	5.9%	7.3%
Chose to take more courses than were required for degree program	151	5.2%	6.5%
Involvement in co-op program extended completion time	430	14.9%	18.4%
Financial reasons/had to work to pay for education	307	10.6%	13.1%
Studied part-time	134	4.6%	5.7%
Studied through distance education	8	0.3%	0.3%
Personal or family reasons	345	11.9%	14.8%
Chose to take time off/take a break	178	6.2%	7.6%
Took time off to travel	34	1.2%	1.5%
Did not take full course load (course load too heavy, chose to take a lighter course load)	148	5.1%	6.3%
Poor academic performance	69	2.4%	3.0%
Other	60	2.1%	2.6%
Total	2,889	100.0%	123.7%

When asked whether there had been required courses which they had difficulty scheduling due to lack of availability, restrictive enrollment policies, or the course(s) always being full, over one-third responded affirmatively (Figure 13). This challenge seems to have been most prevalent for the SFU (45.0%) and UNBC (46.7%) respondents, and not an issue for those from RRU (7.3%). In addition, participants were asked whether there had been areas of study unavailable to them which they thought would have been useful to their program. Close to one-half of the participants responded affirmatively to this question (45.5%), with relative consistency across institutions (9.0 percentage point spread).

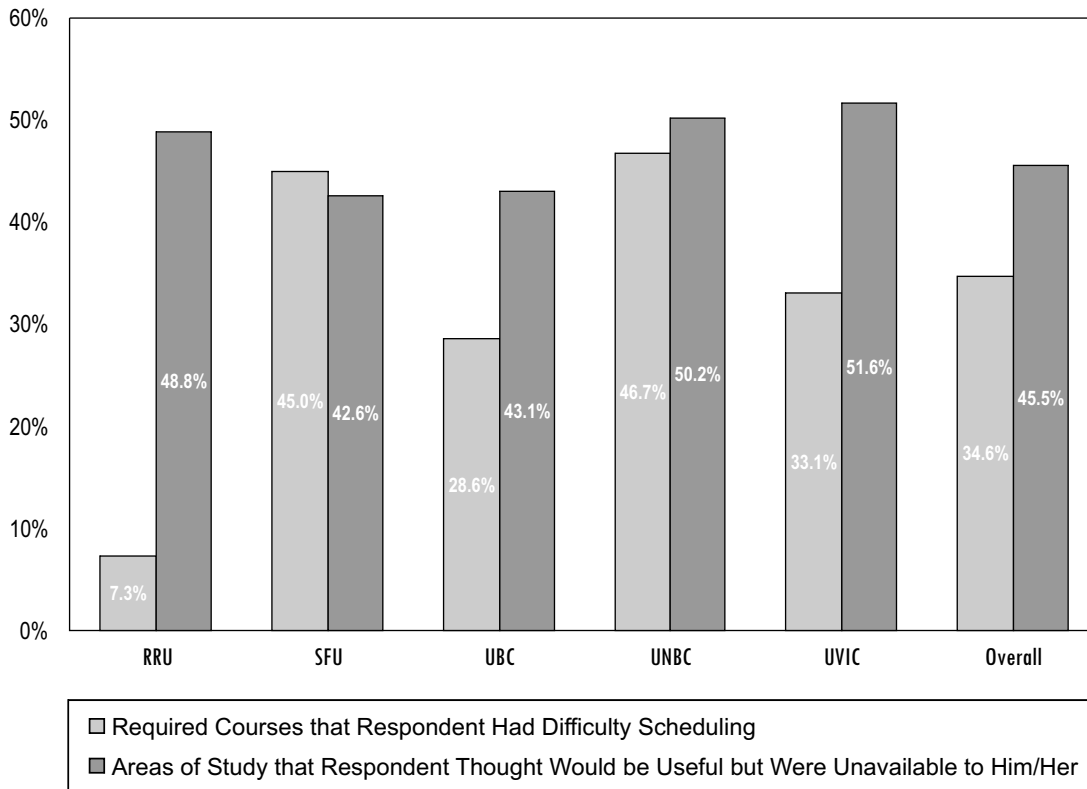
*Because some students have to work to fund their programs, the university needs to provide in the evenings for these students, library services for example. I was forced to attend some classes in the day because they were simply not available at night so I had to take unpaid time off work.*

(UBC Social Sciences)

*I took a distance program, which allowed me to continue working full-time and study full-time. I was able to finish more quickly than might be normally expected. The structure made it very positive for me. Otherwise, I might not have considered doing it.*

(Uvic Social Sciences)

Figure 13: Course Availability (By University)



## V. Formal Post-Secondary Education or Training Since Graduation

In the two years since they completed their bachelor's degrees, 53.5% of respondents have taken some type of formal post-secondary education or training (Figure 14). This result varies significantly by program area, with a 48 percentage point spread between the Life Sciences (73.5%) and Education (25.5%) graduates. Of this group, 59.2% were enrolled at the time of the survey and two-thirds of this subgroup were studying full-time (65.8%, or 20.8% of the entire sample) (Figure 15).

Respondents were asked to specify the type of formal post-secondary education/training they had taken since graduating. Just over one-half had been or were currently enrolled in an undergraduate (26.6%) or Masters (26.3%) degree program (Table 9). As we'd expect, a very high percentage of Law and Business graduates were engaged in professional association certification (59.5% and 48.1% respectively). It's interesting to see the high percentages of respondents pursuing Education/Teacher Training (43.7% of those respondents completing another undergraduate degree).

Figure 14: Percentage of Respondents who have Participated in Formal Post-Secondary Education or Training Since Graduation (by Program)

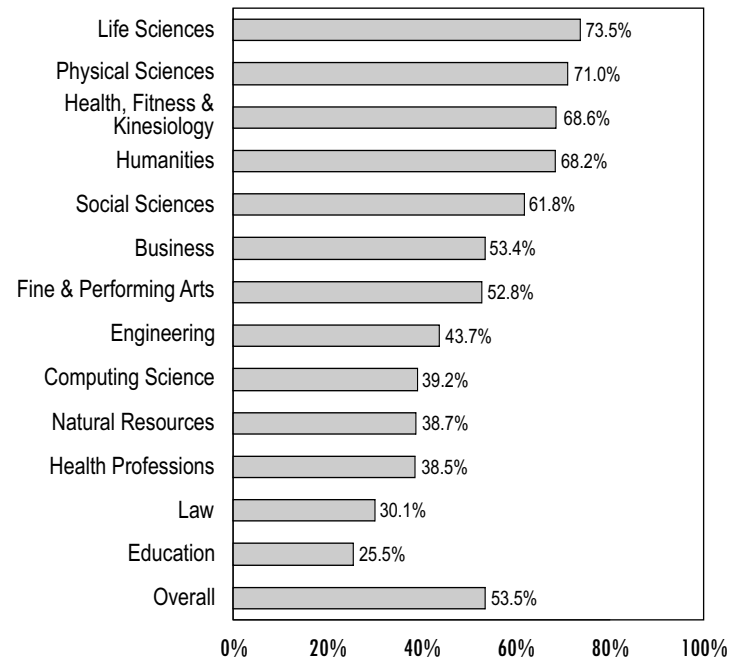


Figure 15: Percentage of Overall Respondent Pool Who Are Currently Enrolled in Full-Time Formal Post-Secondary Education or Training (by Program)

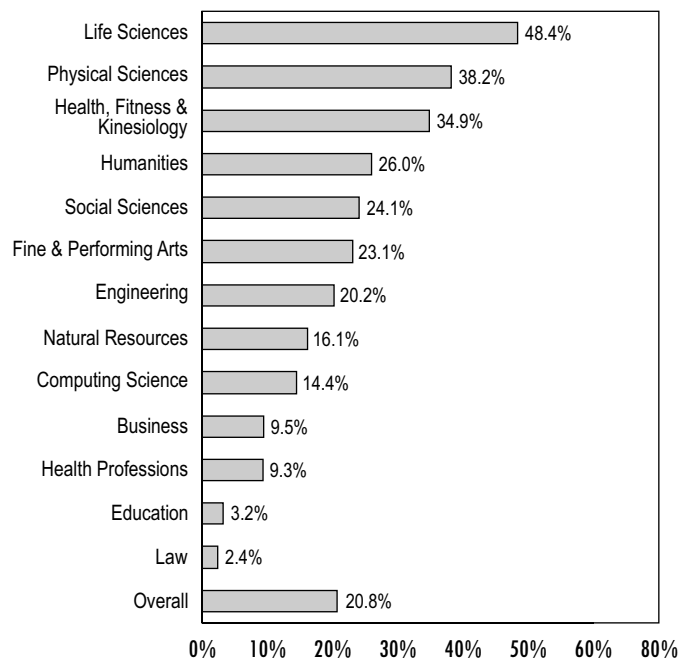


Table 9: Type of Formal Post-Secondary Education/Training Respondent Has Taken/Is Taking (by Program)

	Undergraduate Degree	Masters Degree	Doctoral Degree	Applied Program Certification	Professional Association Certification	Other (Specify)	Total
Fine & Performing Arts	27.9%	32.4%	2.7%	9.0%	11.7%	16.2%	100.0%
Computing Science	7.9%	35.6%	8.9%	19.8%	11.9%	15.8%	100.0%
Engineering	8.1%	60.5%	4.8%	13.7%	3.2%	9.7%	100.0%
Education	21.5%	29.6%	0.9%	17.0%	9.4%	21.5%	100.0%
Law	0.0%	18.9%	0.0%	10.8%	59.5%	10.8%	100.0%
Health Professions	9.5%	32.7%	2.0%	23.8%	20.4%	11.6%	100.0%
Health, Fitness & Kinesiology	35.3%	26.9%	9.2%	6.7%	15.1%	6.7%	100.0%
Business	11.2%	11.5%	0.0%	14.0%	48.1%	15.2%	100.0%
Natural Resources	18.3%	33.8%	5.6%	15.5%	14.1%	12.7%	100.0%
Social Sciences	30.8%	23.5%	1.8%	15.7%	15.5%	12.7%	100.0%
Humanities	36.2%	26.4%	2.5%	11.1%	11.1%	12.8%	100.0%
Life Sciences	37.0%	24.2%	12.1%	9.6%	7.5%	9.6%	100.0%
Physical Sciences	25.0%	36.4%	9.8%	10.6%	10.6%	7.6%	100.0%
Overall	26.6%	26.3%	3.9%	13.8%	16.6%	12.8%	100.0%

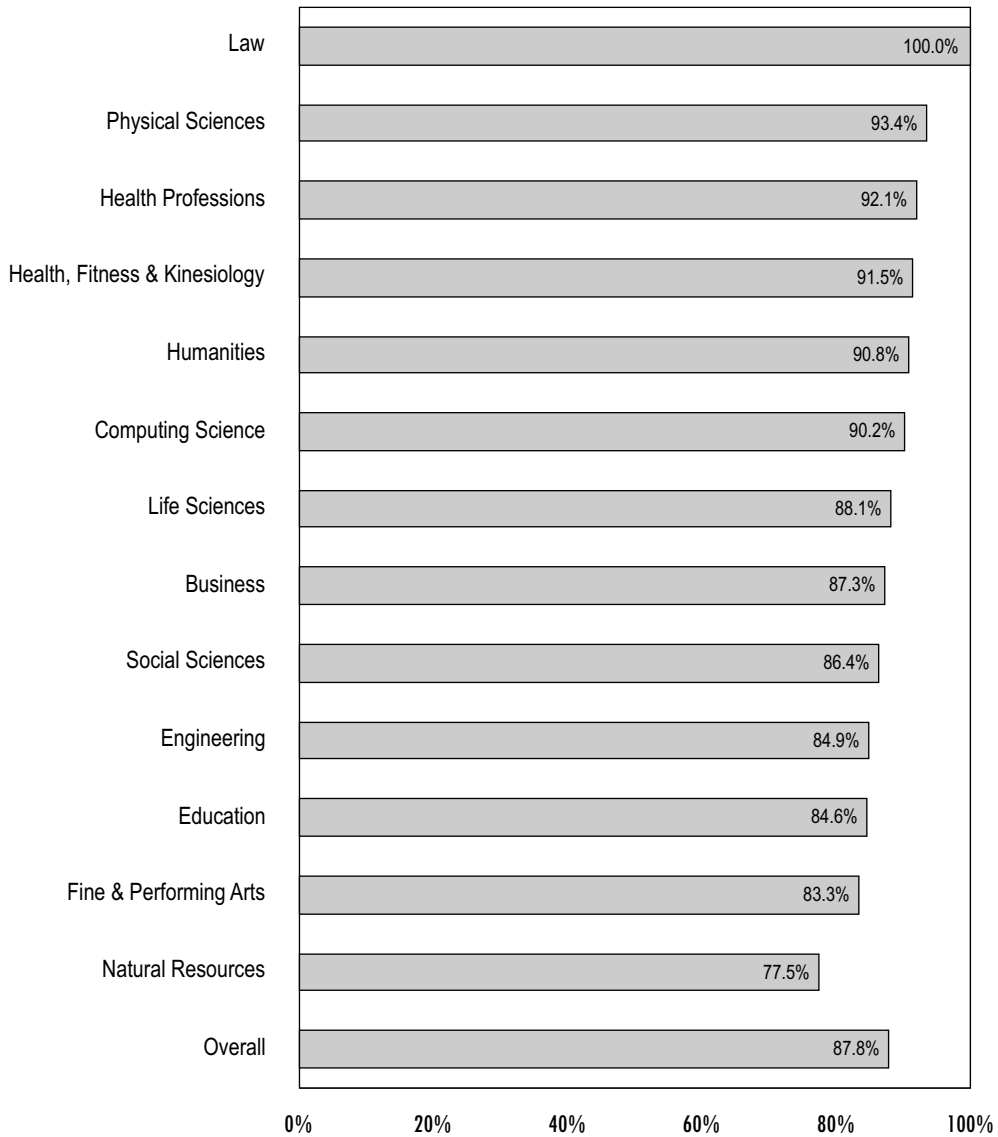
Table 10: Type of Undergraduate Degree Program Being Taken (by Program)

	MD	DMD	Education/Teacher Training	Law	Other	Total
Fine and Performing Arts	0.0%	0.0%	71.0%	3.2%	25.8%	100.0%
Computing Science	0.0%	0.0%	25.0%	0.0%	75.0%	100.0%
Engineering	10.0%	0.0%	10.0%	30.0%	50.0%	100.0%
Education	2.1%	0.0%	41.7%	4.2%	52.1%	100.0%
Health Professions	21.4%	7.1%	14.3%	0.0%	57.1%	100.0%
Health, Fitness and Kinesiology	14.3%	0.0%	45.2%	7.1%	33.3%	100.0%
Business	0.0%	0.0%	12.8%	56.4%	30.8%	100.0%
Natural Resources	0.0%	0.0%	53.8%	15.4%	30.8%	100.0%
Social Sciences	0.9%	0.3%	46.4%	23.8%	28.7%	100.0%
Humanities	0.6%	0.0%	60.5%	15.7%	23.3%	100.0%
Life Sciences	22.2%	6.2%	25.9%	6.8%	38.9%	100.0%
Physical Sciences	3.0%	0.0%	51.5%	6.1%	39.4%	100.0%
Overall	5.7%	1.3%	43.7%	16.9%	32.4%	100.0%

As highlighted in Figure 16, 87.8% of those respondents who had taken some formal post-secondary education or training

since graduation felt that their baccalaureate degree had prepared them “well” (43.8%) or “very well” (44.0%).

Figure 16: Percentage of Respondents Whose Baccalaureate Degree Program Prepared Them Well/Very Well for the Degree Program Being Taken in 2004 (by Program)



## VI. Education Financing and Debt

For many, attending a post-secondary institution is their first major financial expenditure. During the time period during which the 2002 graduates were completing their degrees, tuition fees were frozen by the BC Provincial Government at approximately \$2,200 per 30 credits (1996 to 2002). Coupled with expenditures such as books, transportation, and in many cases housing and food, students found themselves with overall bills of approximately \$12,000 per academic year. Since this time, the tuition freeze has been lifted and overall costs have risen, facts which must be considered when we use this data to inform our current discussions about the effects of costs and consequent debt on university students.

Junor and Usher (2004) identify three financial barriers to access and participation in university, two of which may have affected the 2002 graduate cohort: (1) “cash constraint”—when students who wish to attend

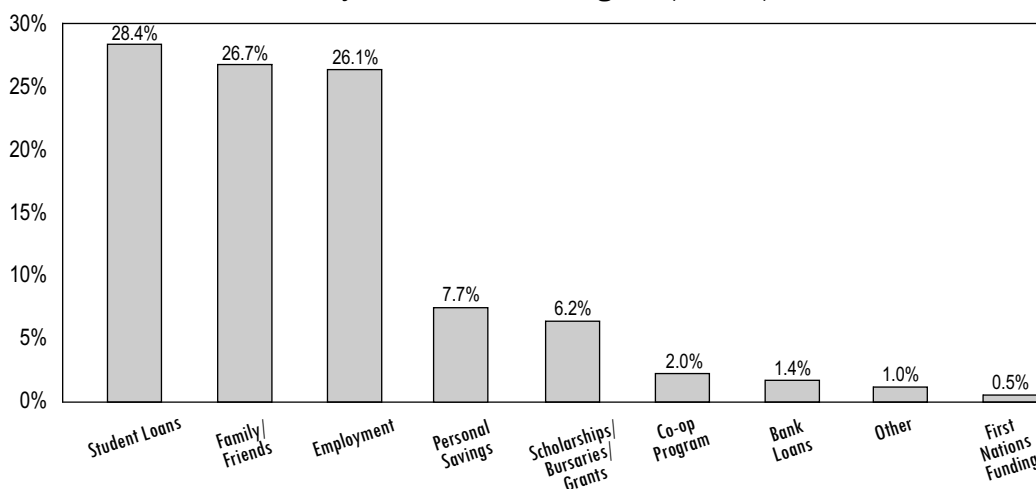
university simply do not have sufficient financial resources to cover their costs; this problem is typically handled by borrowing, in many cases through student loan programs; and (2) “debt aversion”—when students who face “cash constraint” cannot obtain additional funds by working more, they may be forced to take on more debt; not all students are comfortable with debt, and some may choose to defer or leave their studies as a result (p. 103).

In our consideration of the 2002 cohort's financial experience during their university studies, it is equally important to consider both their ability to finance their studies (particularly the cash constraints that may have affected some) and the consequent debt accumulated, including the effects of this debt in the two years following graduation.

### A. Financial Support During University Education

As shown in Figure 17, student loans were the funding source most utilized by the 2002 graduates (28.4% of respondents), followed

Figure 17: The Primary Source of Funding Respondent Relied Upon to Pay for Educational Program (Overall)



closely by family/friends (26.7%) and employment (26.1%). When questioned about the extent to which this primary funding source helped cover their educational costs, 85.2% indicate that it covered 50% or more, and almost one-third state that the funding covered 91% or more of their expenses. This result virtually mirrors that of the year 2000 graduates surveyed in 2002, although there is slight trend away from utilization of personal savings (1.4 percentage points lower for 2002 cohort) towards increased reliance on student loans, employment and family/friends.

The 2004 survey of 2002 graduates included a special section on educational financing, with more in-depth questions on graduates' financial experience during and after their baccalaureate program. Included were some detailed questions on the types of financial support students received from their families. As presented in Table 11, the three ways in which respondents were most

supported were with food (53.8% of respondents received this type of support), living at home (rent free or reduced cost) (48.2%), and through direct financial support (47.3%).

Survey participants were also asked to specify the areas in which they had received university-based financial assistance. By a wide margin, the most commonly cited response was "none" (50.4% of respondents chose), followed by bursary/grant (23.7%) and scholarship other than entrance scholarship (23.3%) (Table 12).

As one of the primary funding sources for university students, employment takes up a significant amount of time in their lives. While some consider this commitment valuable experience as they prepare for their future careers, others have commented that it detracts from valuable study time. For the 2002 graduates, the time spent working was significant, with 62.8% having worked during

Table 11: Types of Financial Support from Family/Guardians/Relatives (if received) (Overall)

	N	% of Responses	% of Respondents
Food	3,494	22.6%	53.8%
Living at home (rent free or reduced)	3,133	20.3%	48.2%
Direct financial support (i.e. cash)	3,076	19.9%	47.3%
Transportation	1,968	12.7%	30.3%
None of the above	1,525	9.9%	23.5%
Gifts, inheritance, trusts	932	6.0%	14.3%
Parental loan	700	4.5%	10.8%
RESP	623	4.0%	9.6%
Total	15,451	100.0%	237.8%

[Note: Respondents were asked to select all the responses that applied to them, and Table 11 shows both the percentage of all "responses" and the percentage of all survey "respondents" who selected each response. The ordering of responses does not change between the two.]

Table 12: Areas in Which Respondents Received University-Based Financial Assistance (Overall)

	N	% of Responses	% of Respondents
None	3,276	41.2%	50.4%
Bursary/grant	1,543	19.4%	23.7%
Other Scholarship	1,514	19.1%	23.3%
Entrance Scholarship	1,168	14.7%	18.0%
Work Study	366	4.6%	5.6%
Other	75	0.9%	1.2%
Overall	3,276	41.2%	50.4%

[Note: Respondents were asked to select all the responses that applied to them, and Table 12 shows both the percentage of all "responses" and the percentage of all survey "respondents" who selected each response. The ordering of responses does not change between the two.]

their academic terms (Figure 18). On average, this sub-group spent 17.9 hours/week working (Table 13). These results vary somewhat by university, with the highest percentage of working respondents being from SFU (70.3%) and the lowest from RRU (44.1%).

Furthermore, the average weekly hours of work are fairly consistent across all universities except RRU, where those respondents who worked were essentially employed full-time (31.9 hours/week).

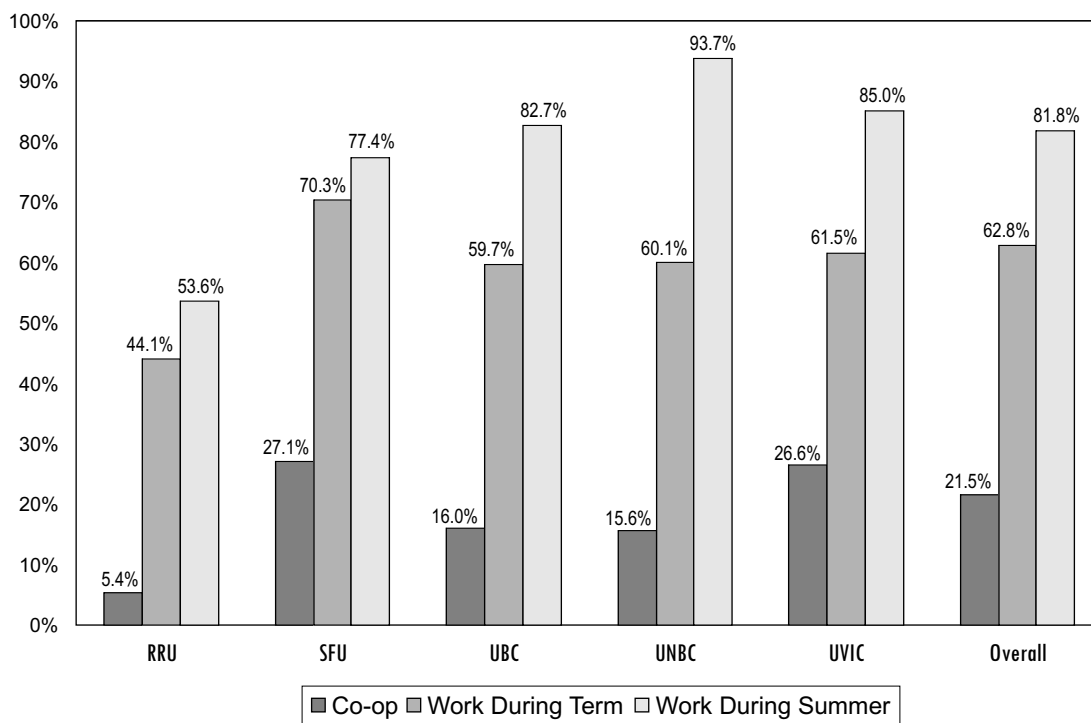
As we might expect, a significant percentage of respondents had worked during the summer to pay for their academic studies (81.8%), particularly those from UNBC where the percentage was 11.9 percentage points higher than the overall result. Those graduates who had worked during the summer were, on average, working full-time (mean of 36.8 hours/week). As well, almost one-

Table 13: Average Hours Per Week Spent Working (>0) (by University)

		Co-op	Work During Term	Work During Summer
RRU	Mean	22.3	31.9	39.2
	Median	23.5	37.5	40
SFU	Mean	35.9	19.2	34.0
	Median	40	20	40
UBC	Mean	31.7	15.6	36.6
	Median	40	15	40
UNBC	Mean	35.3	18.3	42.4
	Median	40	20	40
UVIC	Mean	36.6	19.1	38.8
	Median	40	17.5	40
Overall	Mean	34.7	17.9	36.8
	Median	40	16	40

quarter of the respondents had spent time in co-operative education employment (21.8%), the highest percentage from SFU (27.1%). As we would expect, those respondents engaged in co-op employment during university worked

Figure 18: Percentage of Respondents Who Worked in Order to Afford Their Education (by University)





full-time (mean of 34.7 hours/week).

Survey participants were also asked several questions pertaining to their Canada Student Loan borrowing and course-load/persistence as affected by educational costs. As shown in Figure 19, relatively few had been forced to delay/stop-out of their studies, or take more courses than desired, for financial reasons (approximately 10%). Somewhat more, however, indicated that at some point they were unable to borrow as much as they needed from the Canada Student Loan program (17.8% overall). These results vary by university. In particular, very low percentages of the RRU respondents had delayed/stopped their studies or taken more courses than desired for financial reasons (approximately eight percentage points lower than the overall result for each), whereas higher percentages of the SFU respondents had these experiences (5.4 and 3.4

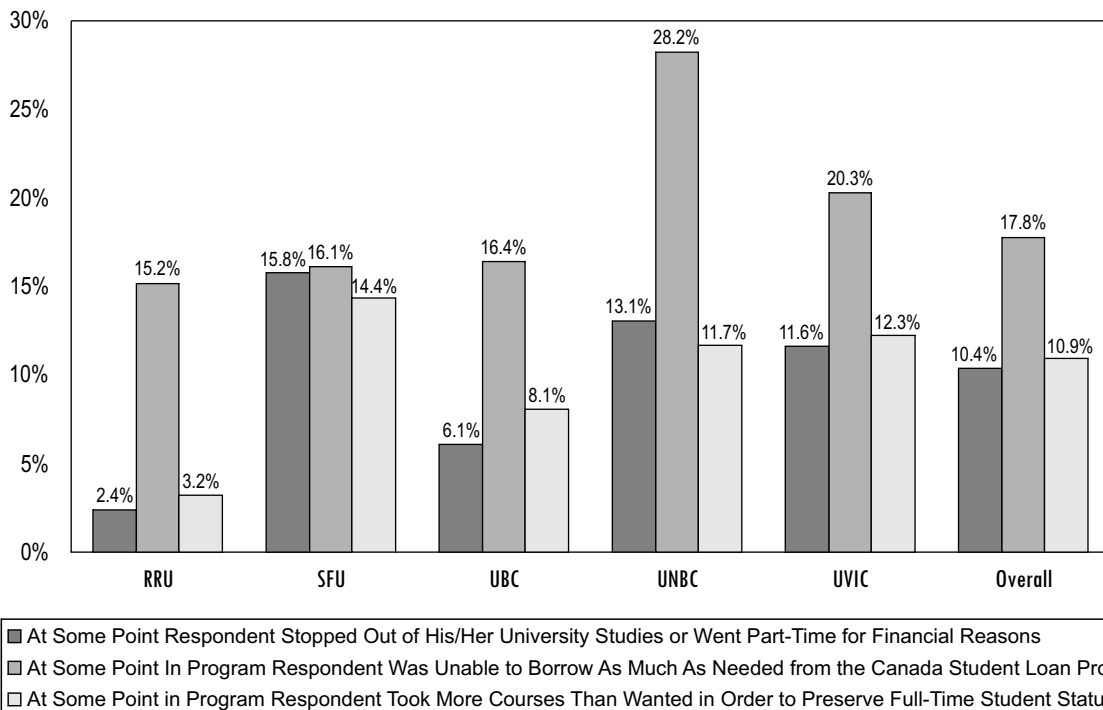
percentage points higher than the overall results respectively). In the case of SFU, this result is likely connected to the flexible nature of the university's tri-semester system and its support of (and therefore attractiveness to) part-time students. It's also noteworthy that more of the UNBC respondents had not been able to borrow as much from the Canada Student Loan program as they needed (10.4 percentage points higher than the overall result).

Although relatively few respondents commented on the effects of cost on their university experience, it's clear that some students did face immense challenges in financing their education.

*The financial costs made it difficult to complete my course in a timely fashion. I had difficulties completing class work because of my job.*

(UBC Fine and Performing Arts)

Figure 19: Some Financial Experiences During University Education (by University)



*The student financial aid policies should be less restrictive. I couldn't get student loans because my father wouldn't sign off on his income amounts and therefore I couldn't apply for bursary, grants, or work-study.*

(SFU Social Sciences)

*...It would be nice to receive some kind of financial reward for the practicum because the students do 80% of the teacher's job in the classroom while they sit back in the lunchroom. It would be nice to assist with the cost of tuition.*

(UBC Education)

*Tuition Fees are unreasonable for students who grew up outside of the Lower Mainland to survive in the Lower Mainland.*

(UBC Social Sciences)

*I had a great experience, however, the tuition was very high and finding work is difficult...*

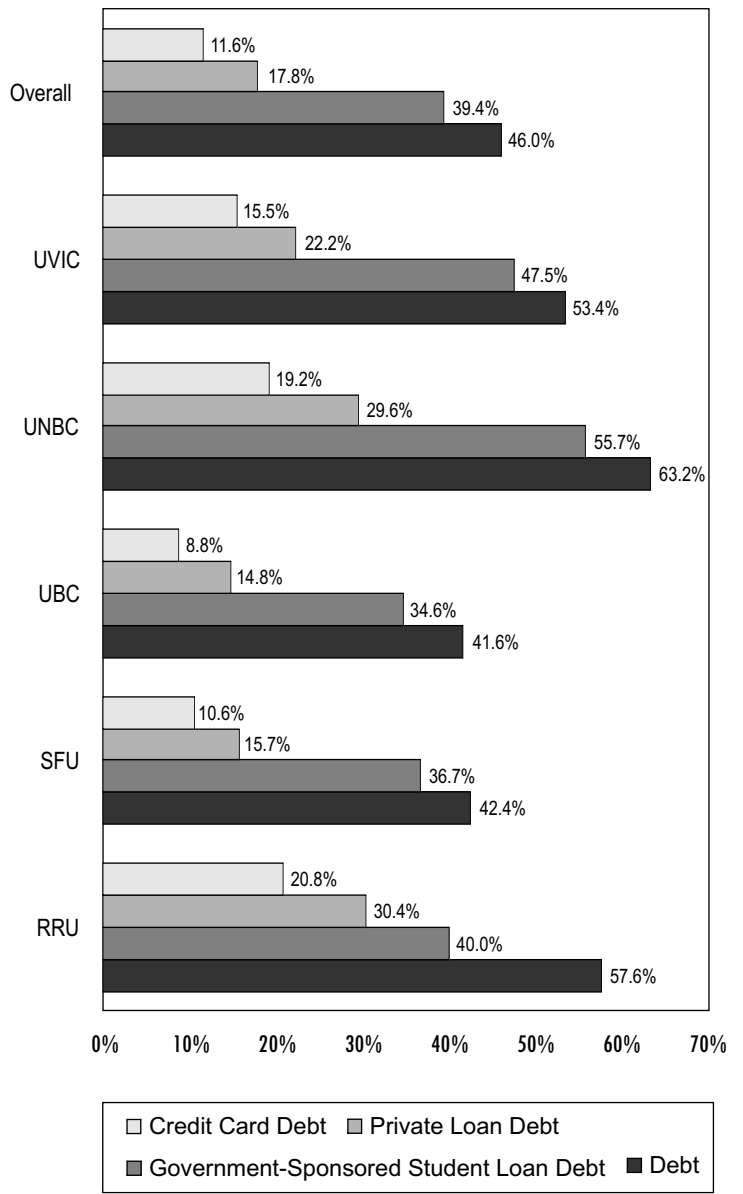
(UVIC Social Sciences)

## B. Financial Debt Resulting From University Education and Its Effects

As shown in Figure 20, 46.0% of the entire respondent pool had incurred debt to pay for their educational program, 39.4% government-sponsored student loan debt, 17.8% private loan debt, and 11.6% credit card debt. If we compare these results by university, we find that higher percentages of the UVIC and UNBC respondents had incurred debt from the three sources examined. Interestingly, while the percentage of RRU graduates with overall debt is 11.6 percentage points higher than the overall average, the actual amount of debt for those incurring it

was less than for graduates of other universities (approximately \$6,000 lower than the overall mean). There is also higher percentages of RRU and UNBC graduates with private debt and credit card debt.

Figure 20: Percentage of All Respondents Who Incurred Overall Debt, Government-Sponsored Student Loan Debt, Private Loans Debt, and Credit Card Debt to Pay for Their Educational Program (by University)



For those individuals who had acquired debt to cover their educational costs, the mean amount of overall debt was \$19,040.26. Likewise, the mean amount of government-sponsored student loan debt for those who had used this funding source was \$18,325.38. In the two years since graduating, respondents had paid off just over one-third of their government-sponsored student loan (37.7%) (Table 14). These results vary by university, in some cases quite substantially. Notably, there's an approximate \$10,000 difference in the mean amount of overall debt between the UNBC (\$23,214.13) and RRU (\$13,333.33) graduates. For most respondents, the mean amount of government-sponsored student loan debt is very close to the amount of overall debt they incurred; once again, the UNBC respondents have approximately \$8,500 more of this type

of debt that the RRU respondents. When we examine repayment of government-sponsored student loan debt, the trend changes somewhat, with the RRU respondents having the highest percentage left to repay (69.8%) and UBC the lowest (57.9%).

In addition to government student loans, increasing numbers of students obtain lines of credit through banks, while others rely upon credit cards to manage their expenses. Referencing the Canadian Undergraduate Survey Consortium's 2002 Survey of Undergraduate Students, Junor and Usher (2004) comment that 10-20% of all Canadian college and university students finance their education with private loans, with one-third of this group also using government-sponsored student loans. The amounts borrowed each year by students who use both loan sources are approximately equal; however, over the

course of a baccalaureate program, more students utilize government-sponsored student loans than private loans (p.237). While information on student credit card debt is difficult to track, the EKOS Research Survey found that approximately two-thirds of Canadian post-secondary students in the 2001-2002 academic year had at least one credit card, and approximately 40% carried debt on that card (Junor and Usher, 2004). Because we do not break down their borrowing on a year-by-year basis, we cannot compare the results of this survey group with those described by Junor and Usher. However, as already mentioned, we do know that

Table 14: Mean and Median Amounts of Financial Debt for Those Respondents With Overall Debt and Government-Sponsored Student Loan Debt (by University) (excluding \$0, except for last column showing debt repaid \$

		Amount of Financial Debt	Amount of Government-Sponsored Student Loan Debt (for those with loan left to repay)	Amount of Government-Sponsored Student Loan Left to Repay	Percentage of Government-Sponsored Student Loan Still Outstanding
RRU	<i>Mean</i>	13,333.33	13,400.00	9,487.76	69.8%
	<i>Median</i>	12,000.00	12,000.00	8,400.00	80.0%
SFU	<i>Mean</i>	18,367.47	17,736.95	12,753.19	62.9%
	<i>Median</i>	15,000.00	15,000.00	9,000.00	80.0%
UBC	<i>Mean</i>	17,118.76	16,530.93	10,666.82	57.9%
	<i>Median</i>	14,600.00	13,000.00	8,000.00	73.3%
UNBC	<i>Mean</i>	23,214.13	21,824.07	17,136.62	68.7%
	<i>Median</i>	20,000.00	20,000.00	15,000.00	80.0%
UVIC	<i>Mean</i>	21,711.48	20,594.28	15,269.49	65.3%
	<i>Median</i>	20,000.00	20,000.00	12,500.00	80.0%
Overall	<i>Mean</i>	19,040.26	18,325.38	12,972.58	62.3%
	<i>Median</i>	15,000.00	15,000.00	10,000.00	77.2%

significant percentages had accrued private loan (29.9%) and credit card (6.1%) debt to finance their studies (Figure 23). The mean amount of private loan debt for those 2002 graduates with such debt was \$7,494.54, while the mean amount of credit card debt was \$4,275.56 (Table 15). These amounts are fairly consistent by university, but vary somewhat based on the program from which survey participants graduated (Table 16). In particular, Law and Health Professions (eg., Pharmaceutical Sciences) graduates seem to have relied more heavily upon private loan sources, not surprising when we consider the length of their overall baccalaureate education with the inclusion of pre-admission requirements. Although we did ask survey respondents to focus on the debt they incurred from the program completed in 2002, it's possible that some may have included debt from their prior academic studies, explaining some of the variation by program area.

Two years after graduating, those individuals with remaining debt are paying, on average, \$295.58 per month on this debt. Amounts do vary somewhat by university, with the UNBC graduates at the high end—consistent with their higher overall debt load—and RRU at the lower end (Table 17).

In addition to determining the actual amounts of debt our graduates have incurred, it's important to find out the impact of this debt on their lives. To this end, survey participants were asked some very specific questions about how they have managed their

Table 15: Mean and Median Amounts of Private Loan and Credit Card Debt for Those Respondents With Such Debt (by University) (excluding \$0) \$

	Private Loan Debt		Credit Card Debt	
	Mean	Median	Mean	Median
RRU	6,592.11	5,000.00	3,692.31	3,000.00
SFU	7,329.40	5,000.00	4,142.45	2,500.00
UBC	7,937.66	5,000.00	4,204.04	3,000.00
UNBC	7,841.86	5,000.00	4,380.36	3,000.00
UVIC	7,147.49	5,000.00	4,482.20	3,000.00
Overall	7,494.54	5,000.00	4,275.56	3,000.00

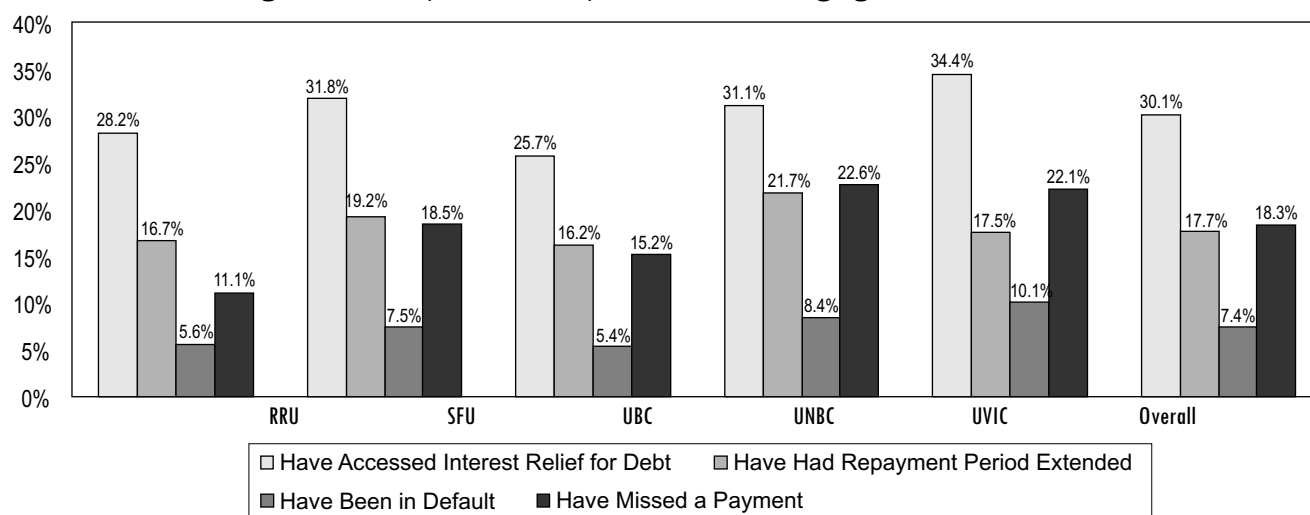
Table 16: Mean and Median Amounts of Private Loan and Credit Card Debt for Those Respondents With Such Debt (by Program) (excluding \$0, except for last column showing debt repaid) \$

	Private Loan Debt		Credit Card Debt	
	Mean	Median	Mean	Median
Fine and Performing Arts	6,522.86	5,000.00	4,625.00	3,000.00
Computing Science	7,458.33	5,500.00	5,357.14	4,000.00
Engineering	8,652.17	6,500.00	5,826.09	5,000.00
Education	7,449.74	5,000.00	3,690.60	3,000.00
Law	12,038.46	10,000.00	5,689.66	5,000.00
Health Professions	9,725.81	5,500.00	6,634.15	5,000.00
Health, Fitness and Kinesiology	9,071.43	5,000.00	5,125.00	2,500.00
Business	7,336.56	5,000.00	4,145.16	3,000.00
Natural Resources	8,111.11	6,500.00	4,216.67	3,250.00
Social Sciences	6,529.00	5,000.00	3,976.81	3,000.00
Humanities	7,344.37	5,000.00	3,963.27	2,250.00
Life Sciences	7,519.28	5,000.00	4,244.90	2,000.00
Physical Sciences	3,825.00	3,000.00	2,392.86	2,500.00
Overall	7,494.54	5,000.00	4,275.56	3,000.00

Table 17: Current Monthly Payment on Debt Incurred to Finance Education (>\$0) \$

	Mean	Median
RRU	234.75	200.00
SFU	287.57	250.00
UBC	285.36	250.00
UNBC	328.34	300.00
UVIC	311.32	300.00
Overall	295.58	250.00

Figure 21: Respondents' Experiences in Managing their Educational Debt



debt (Figure 21). Almost one-third of respondents indicate that they have accessed interest relief (30.1%), and 17.7% have had their repayment period extended. In addition, 7.4% state that they have been in loan default and 18.3% have, at some time, missed a payment.

For some individuals, the consequences of their student debt have extended into their decisions about major purchases, pursuing further education or volunteering, and whether or not to start a family (Table 18). Although very few respondents spoke about their

educational debt, the effects of such debt are clearly pervasive for some:

*I enjoyed my university experience but now I'm feeling overwhelmed with the student loan debt. In hindsight, I should have been efficient with my course selection and probably looked for a co-op program.*

(UVIC Life Sciences)

*When it takes so long to make up the required degree, the student is crippled by long-term debt.*

(SFU Social Sciences)

Table 18: Life Decisions and Experiences as a Result of Educational Debt (Overall)

	N	% of Responses	% of Respondents
None	821	9.3%	25.5%
postponed other debt	874	9.9%	27.2%
postponed major purchases (car, house)	1,819	20.6%	56.5%
postponed major decisions (marriage, children)	1,010	11.4%	31.4%
postponed further education	1,134	12.8%	35.2%
took a job which you otherwise would not have accepted	990	11.2%	30.8%
refused a job that didn't pay enough	599	6.8%	18.6%
been less active than you wanted in volunteer work	1,036	11.7%	32.2%
been denied credit or other services due to education debt	560	6.3%	17.4%
Overall	8,843	100.0%	274.8%

## VII. Labour Market Outcomes

### A. Unemployment

A central component in assessing the success of a university education is the ability of graduates to find employment. Overall, the unemployment rate for the 2002 graduates two years after degree completion was 5.3%, a slight decrease from the 5.8% rate for the year 2000 graduates in 2002 (Table 19). A comparison of rates by university reveals some differentiation, with a 4.6 percentage point spread between RRU (1.7%) and UVIC (6.3%) (Table 20). Nevertheless, respondents from all universities were experiencing unemployment rates lower than both the 2004 BC (7.5%) and Canadian (7.3%) unemployment rates ([www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca/](http://www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca/)).

Examining unemployment rates by program, we see a significant 7.0 percentage point spread. Enjoying very low unemployment rates in 2004 were those respondents who had graduated from Health Professions programs (1.6%) and Education (2.4%); conversely, graduates of Computing Science (8.6%), Fine and Performing Arts (7.3%) and Natural Resources (7.3%) programs were more likely to be unemployed (Table 21).

As shown in Table 22, the primary reason respondents gave for being unemployed was that they were going to school full time (59.1%), followed very distantly by their inability to find work (7.8%). If we look specifically at those individuals actively looking for work, we then find the primary reason to be that they cannot find work (32.1%), or they have been temporarily/seasonally laid off (10.5%).

Table 19: Comparison of Unemployment Rates for Three Successive, Two-Year Out Survey Cohorts

	02 in 04	00 in 02	98 in 00
Employed (a)	5,201	6,018	5,376
Not employed but looking (b)	290	373	202
Not employed and not looking (c)	1,029	989	772
Unemployment Rate = $b/(a+b)$	5.3%	5.8%	3.6%

Table 20: Unemployment Rates (by University)

	RRU	SFU	UBC	UNBC	UVIC	Overall
Employed (a)	117	1,483	2,095	236	1,270	5,201
Not employed but looking (b)	2	84	107	11	86	290
Not employed and not looking (c)	6	238	482	44	259	1,029
Unemployment Rate = $b/(a+b)$	1.7%	5.4%	4.9%	4.5%	6.3%	5.3%

Table 21: Unemployment Rates (by Program)

	Employed (a)	Not employed but looking (b)	Not employed and not looking (c)	Unemployment Rate = b/(a+b)
Fine & Performing Arts	166	13	37	7.3%
Computing Science	212	20	31	8.6%
Engineering	222	12	53	5.2%
Education	841	21	39	2.4%
Law	112	6	5	5.2%
Health Professions	366	6	15	1.6%
Health, Fitness & Kinesiology	130	6	39	4.4%
Business	581	27	47	4.4%
Natural Resources	153	12	21	7.3%
Social Sciences	1,417	99	325	6.5%
Humanities	530	37	133	6.5%
Life Sciences	342	22	237	6.0%
Physical Sciences	129	9	47	6.5%
Overall	5,201	290	1,029	5.3%

Table 22: Main Reason Respondent Not Employed

	All Not Working Respondents	Not Working But Actively Looking Respondents
Going to school full-time	59.1%	0.0%
Business conditions (cannot find work/lack of suitable opportunities)	7.8%	32.1%
Other personal or family responsibilities	5.7%	8.0%
Personal preference	3.4%	6.6%
Awaiting work visa	3.3%	8.4%
Lost or quit job	3.1%	9.1%
Temporary or seasonal layoff	3.1%	10.5%
On a leave of absence from job	2.8%	1.4%
Just finished school	2.8%	7.7%
Caring for children full-time	2.2%	0.7%
Recently returned to Canada	2.2%	8.7%
Going to school part-time	2.1%	3.8%
Permanently unable to work (illness or disability)	1.1%	0.0%
Lack of skills for job wanted	0.6%	2.4%
Retired	0.4%	0.0%
Casual part-time worker	0.1%	0.7%
Currently a full-time volunteer worker	0.1%	0.0%
Total	100.0%	100.0%
N	1,342	290

## B. Employment Characteristics

There are many aspects of a graduate's employment experience which are important to examine. For example, while some individuals end up working in full-time jobs which bear a close connection to the university program they completed, others find themselves holding more than one job and experience great disconnect between their academic studies and the career they are beginning.

Overall, 79.4% of respondents indicate that they are working at a paid job or business. Of this working group, 89.1% are paid employees, 6.7% are self-employed, and 4.2% have some combination of both types of employment (Figure 22). There is relative consistency across program areas, the obvious exception being respondents with Fine and Performing Arts degrees of whom 36.0% are either self-employed or have some combination of paid employment and self-employment.

In addition, 79.5% of working respondents are employed full-time (20.5% part-time) (Figure 23). This characteristic varies significantly by program area, with a 36.5 percentage point spread between Law graduates (99.1% working full-time) and those from Fine and Performing Arts programs (62.6%).

Figure 22: Paid worker or Self-Employed (by Program)

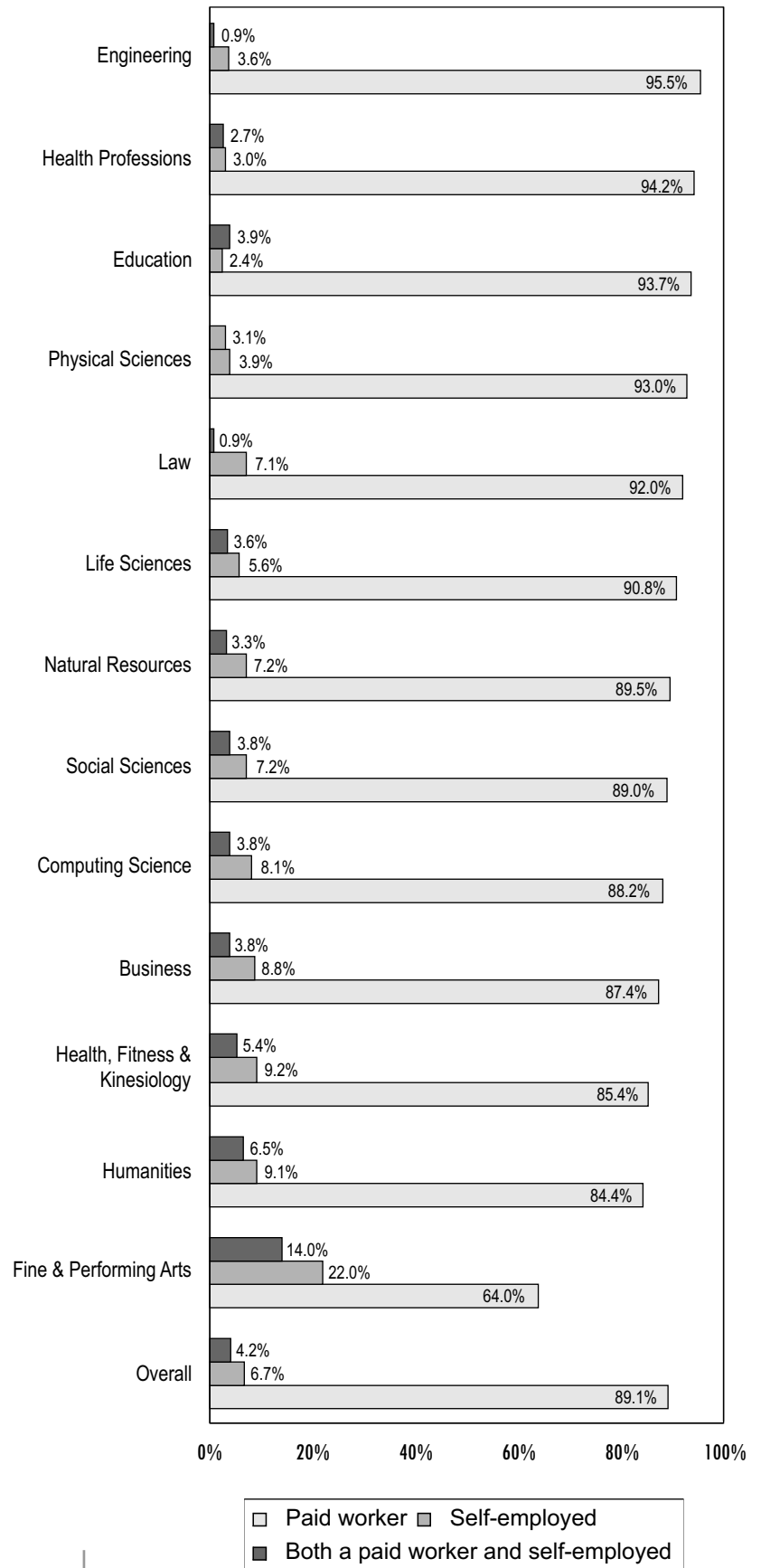
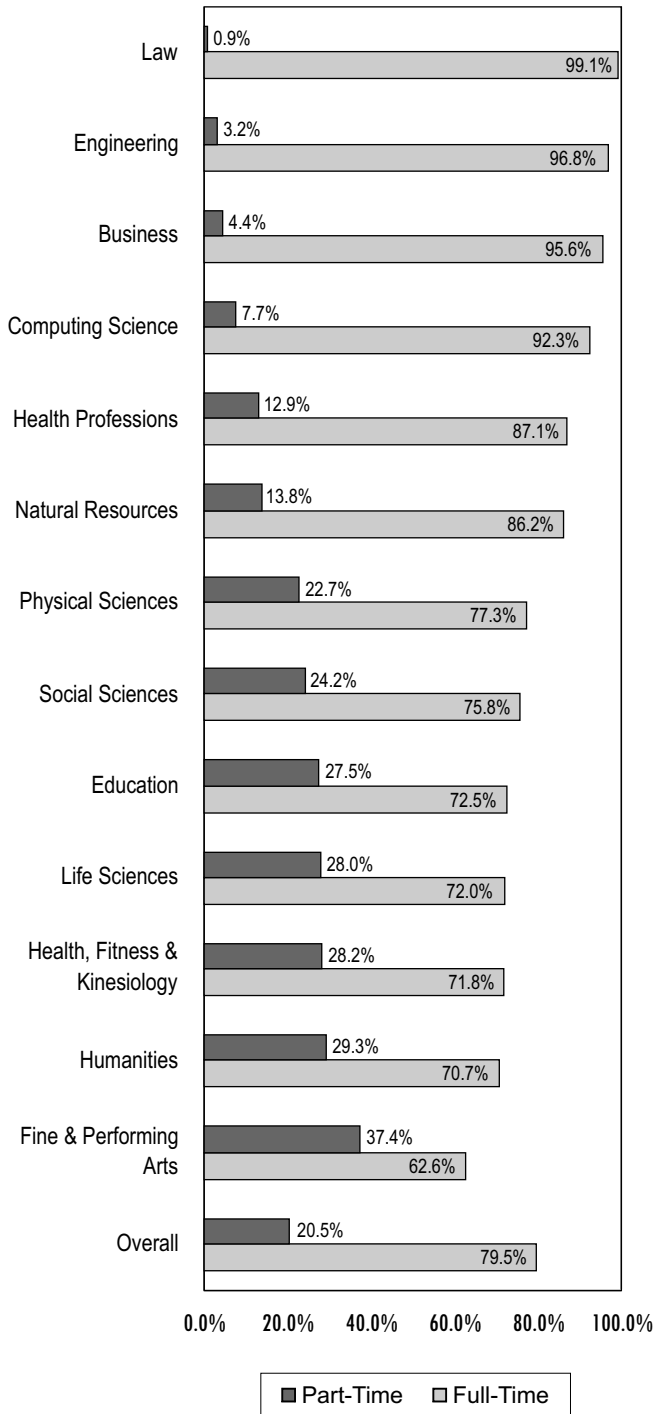


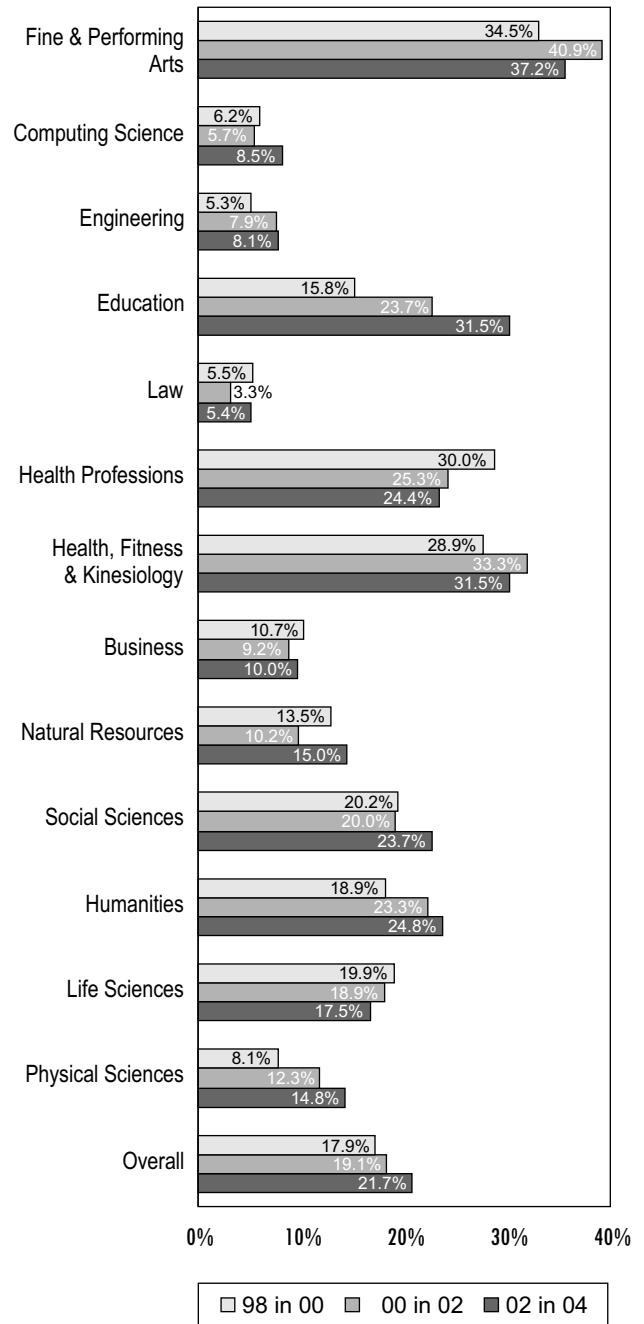


Figure 23: Part-Time or Full-Time Employment (by Program)



Survey participants were also asked if they are employed at more-than-one job or business, with 21.7% responding affirmatively. Figure 24 presents this data by program area,

Figure 24: Percentage of Respondents Employed at More than One Job or Business (Comparison of Three Successive Two-Year Out Cohorts)



comparing three successive cohorts of graduates who were surveyed two years after degree completion. While there has been a slight increase in the percentage of graduates

holding more than one job (3.8 percentage point increase between the 1998 and 2002 graduates), this comparison is most interesting in specific program areas. For example, the most striking shift has occurred with Education graduates for whom the percentage holding more than one job has increased by approximately eight percentage points with each successive cohort (15.7 percentage point increase overall). Albeit to a smaller extent, consistent increases can also be found with graduates from the Humanities and Physical Sciences, while a consistent decline has occurred for Health Professions graduates.

Table 23 highlights the number of hours respondents spend working in their jobs each week, with an overall mean amount of 36.5 hours. As we have seen in previous cohort surveys, respondents who have graduated with Law degrees spend significantly more hours at work than all other groups (mean of 51.5 hours, compared to 42.9 hours for the next closest group of Business graduates). The Fine and Performing Arts graduates spend the least amount of time working each week (31.2 hours); nevertheless, respondents from all program areas exceed a 30-hour work week.

### C. Impact of Academic Education on Employment

Along with their attainment of a baccalaureate degree, most people consider their post-secondary education a mechanism for developing important skills for their careers and lives beyond university. However, anecdotal evidence suggests that many university graduates are employed in jobs very different from those they had envisioned when completing their academic studies. For the

Table 23: Average Hours/Week Worked at Main Job (by Program)

	Mean	Median
Fine and Performing Arts	31.2	35
Computing Science	41.4	40
Engineering	42.0	40
Education	35.0	36
Law	51.5	50
Health Professions	36.6	37.5
Health, Fitness and Kinesiology	34.4	36
Business	42.9	40
Natural Resources	38.8	40
Social Sciences	34.4	37.5
Humanities	33.0	37
Life Sciences	33.6	37.5
Physical Sciences	35.1	40
Overall	36.5	40

2002 graduates, approximately two-thirds found themselves in jobs that were “somewhat related” (26.0%) or “very related” (43.7%) to the programs from which they had graduated two years previous. This result varies considerably by program area, with very high indications of relatedness for graduates of Law (83.0% “very related”), Education (75.5% “very related”), and the Health Professions (70.0% “very related”)—what we might expect for graduates of these very specific “professional” programs who, in many cases, have prior degrees and experience. At the other end of the spectrum are graduates of the Social Sciences (24.9% “very related”), Humanities (26.7% “very related”), Life Sciences (29.0% “very related”) and Physical Sciences (33.1% “very related”). The fact that respondents with degrees from these four programs have higher unemployment rates than the overall group (6.0% for the Life Sciences; 6.5% for the other three programs; 5.3% overall) supports the fact that these types of degree programs may not be as “job-specific” as some others, and that the transferable skills obtained may lead

Figure 25: Percentage of Respondents Who Describe their Main Job as being “Somewhat Related” or “Very Related” to the Baccalaureate Program from which They Graduated (by Program)

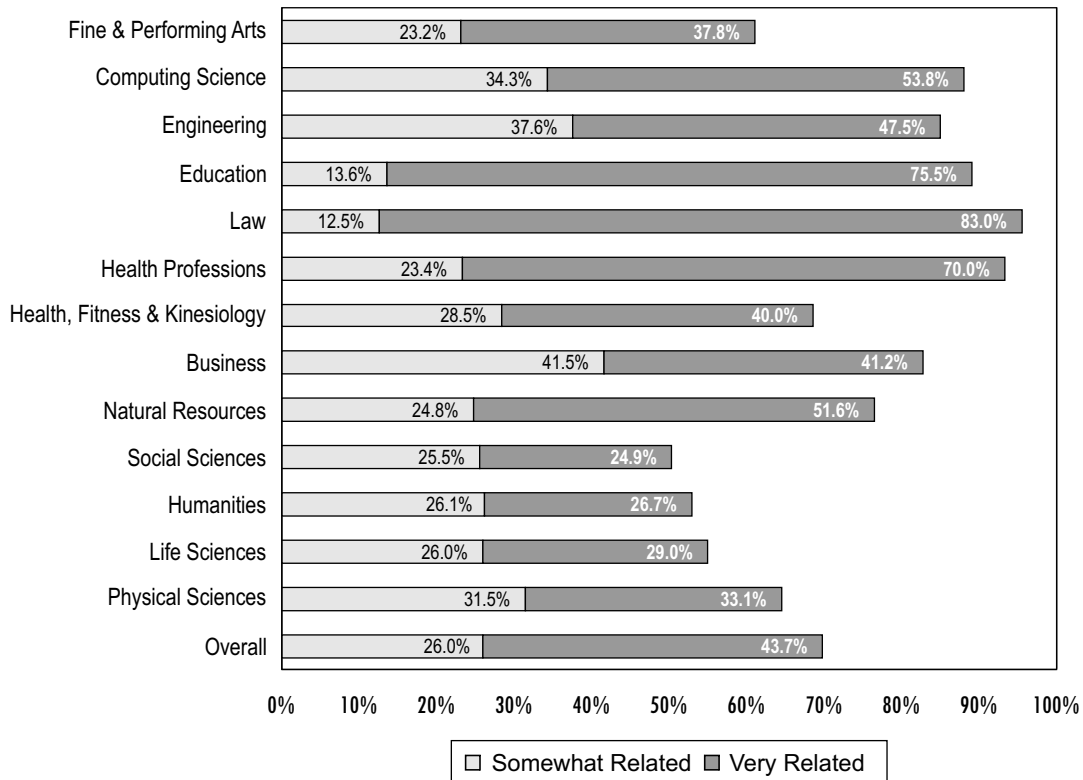


Table 24: Relatedness of Main Job to the Program from which Respondents Graduated for the Four “Least Related” Programs (Comparison of Three Successive, Two-Year Out Cohorts)

	<i>"Very Related"</i>			<b>Overall Change</b>
	<b>2002 in 2004</b>	<b>2000 in 2002</b>	<b>1998 in 2000</b>	
Social Sciences	24.9%	25.0%	25.1%	-0.2%
Humanities	26.7%	33.8%	34.4%	-7.7%
Life Sciences	29.0%	28.8%	26.6%	+2.4%
Physical Sciences	33.1%	43.0%	38.5%	-5.4%

	<i>"Somewhat Related" + "Very Related"</i>			<b>Overall Change</b>
	<b>2002 in 2004</b>	<b>2000 in 2002</b>	<b>1998 in 2000</b>	
Social Sciences	50.4%	54.6%	59.5%	-9.1%
Humanities	52.8%	61.5%	62.6%	-9.8%
Life Sciences	55.0%	56.9%	53.2%	+1.8%
Physical Sciences	64.6%	74.3%	67.4%	-2.8%

to employment in areas “less related” to the actual degree program taken.

Furthermore, respondents' views on relatedness, both overall and for those graduates of the “very related” programs of Law, Education and the Health Professions, are consistent with the previous two-year out studies. However, when we examine those programs where graduates see less relatedness between their degrees and jobs, there's a clear decline with successive cohorts from the Social Sciences, Humanities and Physical Sciences (Table 24).

Another way to assess degree utility in the job market is to look at the types of skills being used and the extent to which they were developed in university. As shown in Table 25, the skills most utilized overall are the ability to “work effectively with others” (94.7% “somewhat useful” or “very useful”

and to “verbally express opinions/ideas clearly or concisely” (94.3%). The only skill which is not very useful overall is the ability to “use mathematics appropriate to the field of work” (57.8%).

Looking at skill utilization by program area, it's clear that certain types of degree programs lead to jobs with very different skill requirements. For example, Computing Science and Engineering graduates rely more heavily upon analytical and problem-solving skills, whereas verbal expression and reading comprehension are important to lawyers, and educators must be able to work well with others.

In examining skill utilization in the workplace, it's beneficial to consider how effectively graduates feel these skills were developed in their university program. Overall, the 2002 cohort was quite positive in its

Table 25: Percentage of Respondents Who Feel the Following Skills/Abilities are “Somewhat Useful/Very Useful” in Doing their Main Job (by Program)

	Write Clearly and Concisely	Verbally Express Opinions/Ideas Clearly or Concisely	Read and Comprehend Material	Work Effectively with Others	Analyze and Think Critically	Resolve Issues or Problems	Use Mathematics Appropriate to Field of Work	Use Computers Appropriate to Field of Work	Learn on Own
Fine & Performing Arts	75.6%	93.3%	87.8%	95.7%	93.3%	92.1%	48.1%	67.5%	92.0%
Computing Science	82.9%	91.9%	91.4%	93.8%	97.6%	97.6%	57.6%	93.3%	93.3%
Engineering	92.3%	95.0%	94.1%	96.8%	96.8%	97.7%	64.4%	91.0%	94.6%
Education	91.6%	97.1%	94.6%	97.6%	94.7%	96.5%	71.4%	80.2%	94.0%
Law	96.4%	100.0%	100.0%	91.1%	99.1%	95.5%	23.1%	84.7%	95.5%
Health Professions	94.2%	98.9%	96.4%	99.2%	99.2%	96.7%	68.1%	83.9%	95.6%
Health, Fitness & Kinesiology	80.0%	95.4%	85.4%	97.7%	92.3%	92.3%	49.6%	82.2%	88.5%
Business	88.9%	96.0%	92.9%	94.1%	96.5%	94.5%	74.4%	91.7%	93.3%
Natural Resources	89.5%	94.7%	92.1%	96.1%	93.4%	92.1%	60.5%	87.5%	91.4%
Social Sciences	81.4%	92.0%	85.5%	92.5%	88.4%	91.8%	47.5%	73.5%	88.4%
Humanities	84.6%	92.0%	87.4%	93.7%	91.6%	89.9%	44.5%	76.8%	89.1%
Life Sciences	80.2%	90.8%	85.8%	93.5%	87.9%	93.5%	58.5%	78.4%	89.1%
Physical Sciences	86.7%	96.9%	93.8%	93.0%	95.3%	95.3%	66.1%	84.4%	90.6%
Overall	86.0%	94.3%	90.2%	94.7%	92.9%	93.8%	57.8%	80.5%	91.4%

Table 26: Percentage of Respondents Who Feel that their University Program had a “High/Very High” Effect on the Development of the Following Skills (by Program)

	Write Clearly and Concisely	Verbally Express Opinions/ Ideas Clearly or Concisely	Read and Comprehend Material	Work Effectively with Others	Analyze and Think Critically	Resolve Issues or Problems	Use Mathematics Appropriate to Field of Study	Use Computers Appropriate to Field of Study	Learn on Own
Fine & Performing Arts	80.9%	83.3%	84.3%	75.5%	94.0%	70.7%	18.6%	44.2%	89.8%
Computing Science	62.6%	57.3%	82.4%	81.4%	91.6%	82.8%	84.3%	93.9%	89.0%
Engineering	71.4%	68.2%	82.1%	88.2%	93.0%	80.8%	89.2%	84.0%	86.4%
Education	66.5%	78.9%	66.3%	82.4%	81.8%	69.2%	41.8%	41.0%	79.7%
Law	84.6%	84.6%	87.0%	50.4%	91.9%	78.0%	8.1%	52.8%	84.6%
Health Professions	85.2%	84.2%	87.6%	82.4%	90.7%	80.6%	41.7%	55.3%	89.9%
Health, Fitness & Kinesiology	77.1%	82.3%	86.3%	84.0%	84.0%	73.7%	55.4%	57.1%	89.6%
Business	84.4%	84.4%	82.0%	89.6%	90.5%	80.3%	69.8%	78.6%	89.0%
Natural Resources	85.5%	84.9%	90.3%	87.1%	88.1%	77.3%	58.1%	73.1%	88.7%
Social Sciences	88.6%	82.6%	90.2%	68.1%	92.4%	72.0%	38.3%	49.5%	90.2%
Humanities	91.6%	84.6%	89.4%	65.5%	89.9%	66.1%	17.6%	40.4%	87.2%
Life Sciences	82.0%	69.4%	89.9%	73.0%	87.8%	68.8%	63.4%	55.9%	89.5%
Physical Sciences	65.6%	67.2%	84.9%	65.1%	91.9%	75.0%	84.9%	69.4%	91.4%
Overall	81.5%	79.4%	84.6%	75.5%	89.6%	73.2%	47.5%	55.8%	87.9%

assessment. As highlighted in Table 26, those skills that respondents felt were most developed were the abilities to “analyze and think critically” (89.6% rated “high” or “very high”), to “learn on your own” (87.9%), and to “read and comprehend material” (84.6%). As we’ve seen with previous outcomes surveys, the development of mathematics (47.5%) and computer (55.8%) skills are the least highly rated. For most skills sets, results vary significantly by program area. Those skills with the least variation in response by program are the ability to “learn on your own” (11.7 percentage point difference between the highest and lowest results), to “analyze and think critically” (12.2 percentage point difference), to “resolve issues or problems” (16.7 percentage point difference), and to “verbally express opinions or ideas clearly or concisely” (17.7 percentage point difference). As we would expect, the skill with the greatest variation in development by program area is

the “use of mathematics” (81.1 percentage point difference).

Interestingly, if we compare the results for this question with those from the 2002 survey of 2000 graduates, we see almost identical results for each skill area. The one exception, however, is in the area of mathematics, where the percentage of 2002 graduates who rate this skill development as “high” or “very high” is 9.8 percentage points lower than with the 2000 graduates. Unfortunately, the skill development question given to the 1998 graduates is sufficiently different from the more recent surveys that we cannot also include these results in our comparison.

Respondents were also asked to consider the usefulness of the knowledge, skills and abilities acquired during their university education in both their work and their daily lives. As shown in Figures 26 and 27, 86.3%

Figure 26: Usefulness of the Knowledge, Skills and Abilities Acquired During University Education in Respondent's Work (Overall)

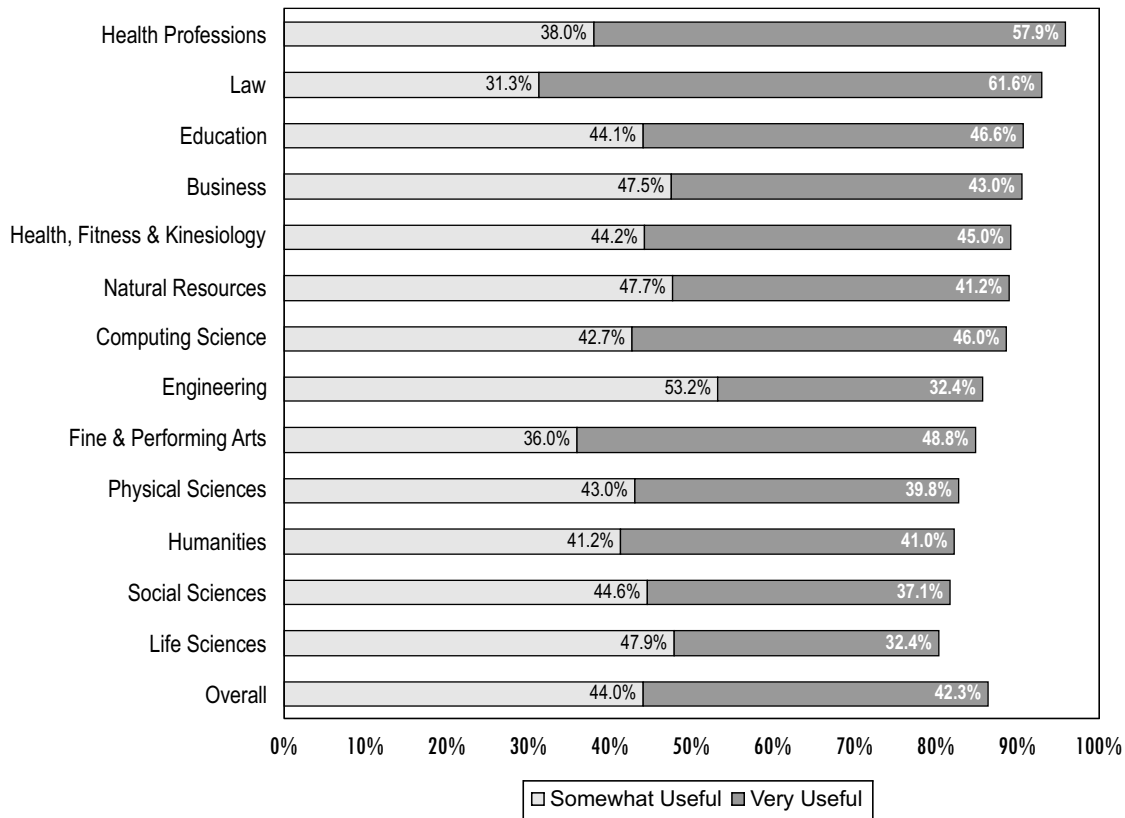
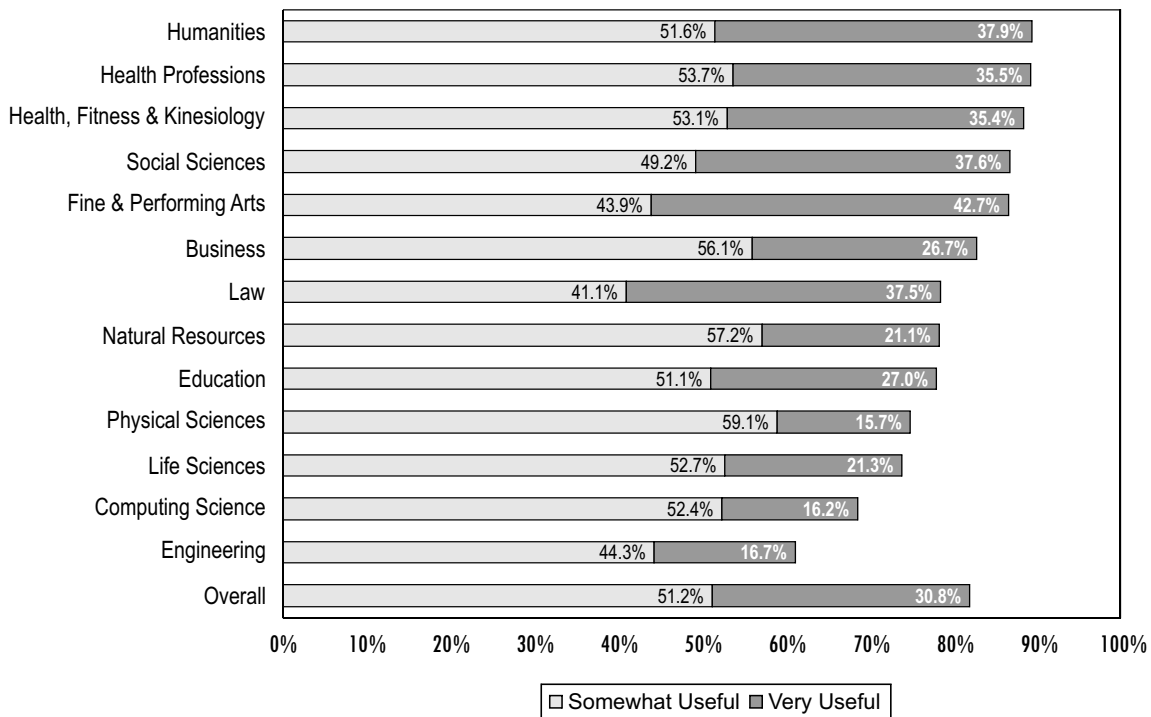


Figure 27: Usefulness of the Knowledge, Skills and Abilities Acquired During University Education in Respondent's Day-to-Day Life (Overall)



of respondents described the knowledge, skills and abilities acquired as “somewhat useful” or “very useful” in their work, and 82.0% in their daily lives. Consistent with the specific skills questions, there is much variation by program area. Furthermore, these two questions highlight the fact that some programs may have particular relevance in respondents' work lives, while others have more of an overall impact. As an example, 85.6% of Engineering graduates describe the knowledge, skills and abilities acquired as “somewhat useful” or “very useful” in their work, compared to 61.0% in their daily lives. In comparison, the Humanities graduates see more usefulness in their daily lives (89.5% “somewhat useful” or “very useful”) than in their work (82.2%). While differences such as these may not be surprising, they do confirm the fact that the impact of a university

education, particularly in some program areas, is not limited solely to labour market outcomes.

## D. Occupational Types and Skill Levels

One aspect of the survey analysis involved categorizing respondents' jobs into two matrices—one which looks at the skill level of the job, and the other at the type of job held. As shown in Table 27, the majority of graduates were in occupations which fall within the “professional” category (59.5%), followed by “technical, paraprofessional and skilled occupations” (19.0%). These results vary somewhat by university, undoubtedly a reflection of the types of programs offered respectively. The results also vary, in some cases substantially, by program area. For example, while we might expect more Business graduates to be in “management”

Table 27: Skill Level of Respondent’s Job (by University and Program)

	Management (no skill level)	Skill Level A (Professional Occupations)	Skill Level B (Technical, Paraprofessional and Skilled Occupations)	Skill Level C (Intermediate Occupations)	Skill Level D (Labouring and Elemental Occupations)
RRU	23.3%	35.3%	27.6%	13.8%	0.0%
SFU	6.1%	54.9%	22.1%	15.5%	1.4%
UBC	4.3%	65.1%	16.0%	12.9%	1.6%
UNBC	3.8%	54.7%	26.1%	12.8%	2.6%
UVIC	6.3%	58.9%	18.4%	14.3%	2.2%
Fine & Performing Arts	8.5%	48.2%	20.7%	18.9%	3.7%
Computing Science	2.9%	75.2%	16.2%	3.3%	2.4%
Engineering	4.1%	82.9%	9.0%	4.1%	0.0%
Education	1.6%	89.1%	5.8%	2.4%	1.2%
Law	0.0%	95.5%	3.6%	0.9%	0.0%
Health Professions	2.7%	95.6%	1.4%	0.3%	0.0%
Health, Fitness & Kinesiology	7.0%	57.4%	20.2%	10.9%	4.7%
Business	13.6%	48.1%	21.2%	17.0%	0.2%
Natural Resources	3.3%	48.0%	40.8%	5.9%	2.0%
Social Sciences	6.7%	40.5%	26.0%	24.2%	2.6%
Humanities	7.8%	44.8%	23.1%	21.6%	2.7%
Life Sciences	2.7%	42.1%	34.1%	19.3%	1.8%
Physical Sciences	4.8%	62.7%	20.6%	11.9%	0.0%
Overall	5.7%	59.5%	19.0%	14.0%	1.7%

positions (13.6%), it's interesting that Fine and Performing Arts graduates have the second highest percentage of respondents whose jobs fall into the “management” category (8.5%).

If we compare the three most recent two-year out survey groups, we see a slight change between the 2002 and 2000 graduates. In particular, the number of respondents in “management” positions is approximately three percentage points higher for the more recent cohort, with most of that shift coming out of the “professional occupations” category (4.2 percentage points lower).

The matrix shown in Table 29 provides a more specific categorization of respondents' jobs. By a significant margin, the highest percentage of respondents held jobs in the “social sciences, education, or government

services” (38.6%), with the next highest grouping being “business, finance and administrative” occupations (18.8%). The immense variation by university is undoubtedly a reflection of the types and size of programs offered, while the differences by program area an outcome of the program itself.

Table 28: Comparison of Skill Level of Respondent’s Jobs (Comparison of Three Successive Graduate Cohorts)

	02 in 04	00 in 02	98 in 00
Management (no skill level)	5.71%	2.8%	3.6%
Skill Level A (Professional Occupations)	59.5%	63.7%	62.7%
Skill Level B (Technical, Paraprofessional and Skilled Occupations)	19.1%	18.8%	18.8%
Skill Level C (Intermediate Occupations)	14.0%	13.6%	14.1%
Skill Level D (Labouring and Elemental Occupations)	1.7%	1.2%	0.8%
Overall	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Table 29: Skill Type of Respondents’ Jobs (by University and Program)

	Management	Business, Finance & Administrative	Natural & Applied Sciences and Related	Health	Social Science, Education, Government Services	Art, Culture, Recreation and Sport	Sales and Service	Trades, Transport and Equipment Operators	Primary Industry	Processing, Manufacturing and Utilities
RRU	3.4%	43.1%	9.5%	3.4%	12.1%	2.6%	19.8%	5.2%	0.0%	0.9%
SFU	0.1%	23.2%	11.1%	2.0%	41.1%	6.2%	13.4%	2.2%	0.4%	0.3%
UBC	0.2%	17.0%	15.0%	10.5%	40.0%	4.7%	10.8%	1.0%	0.3%	0.5%
UNBC	0.0%	17.5%	28.6%	5.1%	29.5%	2.6%	11.5%	1.3%	2.6%	1.3%
UVIC	0.5%	14.5%	12.8%	12.9%	37.6%	5.0%	13.2%	2.0%	0.6%	0.9%
Fine & Performing Arts	0.0%	11.0%	4.3%	0.6%	26.8%	31.7%	20.7%	3.0%	0.0%	1.8%
Computing Science	0.0%	6.2%	81.9%	0.5%	5.2%	0.5%	3.8%	1.0%	0.0%	1.0%
Engineering	0.0%	3.6%	86.0%	0.5%	3.6%	2.3%	3.2%	0.5%	0.0%	0.5%
Education	0.1%	2.3%	0.7%	0.5%	90.4%	0.8%	3.5%	1.4%	0.2%	0.0%
Law	0.0%	3.6%	0.0%	0.0%	95.5%	0.0%	0.9%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Health Professions	0.3%	0.3%	3.0%	88.5%	7.1%	0.0%	0.8%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Health, Fitness & Kinesiology	0.0%	10.9%	1.6%	6.2%	56.6%	7.8%	12.4%	3.9%	0.8%	0.0%
Business	1.0%	61.2%	5.4%	0.3%	8.6%	3.7%	16.8%	2.1%	0.2%	0.7%
Natural Resources	0.0%	2.6%	51.3%	3.3%	23.7%	2.6%	8.6%	0.7%	5.3%	2.0%
Social Sciences	0.4%	24.3%	5.3%	1.6%	37.9%	6.8%	19.9%	2.2%	0.7%	0.9%
Humanities	0.6%	25.4%	2.5%	1.9%	40.6%	9.4%	17.6%	1.3%	0.4%	0.4%
Life Sciences	0.0%	12.5%	25.2%	13.9%	25.8%	3.9%	14.8%	3.0%	0.3%	0.6%
Physical Sciences	0.0%	15.9%	33.3%	1.6%	39.7%	2.4%	6.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.8%
Overall	0.3%	18.8%	13.8%	8.3%	38.6%	5.1%	12.3%	1.7%	0.5%	0.6%



## E. Employment Earnings

Two years after completing their bachelor's degrees, the 2002 graduates who were working full-time earned a mean annual income of \$43,243.50 (Table 30). As other studies of university graduates have shown, a university degree has a positive influence on employment earnings, particularly when compared to average earnings in BC for all groups. For example, the average employment income of BC residents in November 2004 was \$35,620<sup>2</sup> ([www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca/data/](http://www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca/data/)).

When we compare the average incomes for successive, two-year out survey groups, we see

a very slight, overall decrease in average annual salaries between the 2000 graduates in 2002 and the current survey group. In general, salaries have remained consistent in the various program areas, with the most striking changes being observed with graduates from Computing Science (-\$9,530 between 1998 and 2002 cohorts), Engineering (-\$7,530 between 1998 and 2002 cohorts) and Physical Sciences (-\$4,075 between 1998 and 2002 cohorts). In contrast, the average salary for Life Sciences graduates has increased between the 1998 and 2002 cohorts (+\$2,233).

<sup>2</sup> Note: This BC salary statistic is for all employment groups, not just "younger" British Columbians. The mean age of respondents to this survey was 28.8 years.

Table 30: Comparison of Mean and Median Annual Salaries (includes those respondents employed full-time who earn >\$0 and <\$200,001) (by Program, University, Gender, and Overall) \$

	2002 in 2004		2000 in 2002		1998 in 2000	
	Mean	Median	Mean	Median	Mean	Median
Fine & Performing Arts	32,348.20	29,120.00	30,086.03	28,976.00	32,972.44	30,600.00
Computing Science	49,810.32	46,800.00	59,436.21	55,000.00	59,339.90	55,000.00
Engineering	49,958.37	48,000.00	58,597.84	55,000.00	57,488.38	50,000.00
Education	39,781.38	40,000.00	39,190.04	40,000.00	38,157.74	38,000.00
Law	68,449.00	67,500.00	71,568.21	74,500.00	67,000.00	67,500.00
Health Professions	59,487.22	57,720.00	59,581.73	55,224.00	53,034.23	50,000.00
Health, Fitness & Kinesiology	39,032.76	39,000.00	39,933.18	37,000.00	37,888.04	36,000.00
Business	46,914.86	43,000.00	46,780.10	43,000.00	46,132.12	42,000.00
Natural Resources	43,327.53	42,450.00	42,725.80	41,750.00	41,557.38	40,000.00
Social Sciences	37,865.87	36,000.00	39,399.81	37,000.00	37,660.41	35,400.00
Humanities	38,535.05	36,000.00	40,670.23	38,100.00	39,076.59	36,400.00
Life Sciences	37,503.74	36,000.00	36,825.72	35,100.00	35,270.48	34,320.00
Physical Sciences	39,136.38	38,000.00	45,127.63	41,500.00	43,211.37	39,250.00
RRU	54,846.27	45,750.00	48,577.89	45,000.00	46,814.77	40,000.00
SFU	40,823.69	39,000.00	43,439.67	40,000.00	41,632.01	38,000.00
UBC	43,912.61	41,000.00	44,941.58	41,000.00	43,802.60	40,000.00
UNBC	44,312.08	42,650.00	44,999.40	42,900.00	41,802.22	40,000.00
UVIC	43,424.96	41,600.00	44,827.98	41,000.00	42,351.54	40,000.00
Male	46,879.07	44,200.00	49,021.64	45,000.00	47,577.81	42,500.00
Female	40,853.57	39,000.00	41,315.59	39,000.00	39,531.68	38,000.00
Overall	43,243.50	40,000.00	44,554.10	40,500.00	42,779.56	39,000.00

## VIII. Conclusion

The results of this survey once again confirm the positive effects of an undergraduate education for BC's university graduates. Two years after graduating, most of the 2002 graduates were experiencing high levels of employment (unemployment rate of 5.3%), and the majority not working were carrying on with further full-time academic studies. Although a significant number (30.3%) felt there was little or no relationship between their jobs and the program they had taken at university, most had jobs which we'd categorize as either "professional" (59.5%) or "technical, paraprofessional and skilled occupations" (19.0%). The results also provide further evidence of the superior earnings of university graduates, with those working full-time earning an average annual salary of \$43,243.50, over \$7,000 higher than the BC average for November 2004. While this study presents only a small period post-graduation, other data shows that university graduates' income will increase by 90% between the beginning and end of their working life compared to 40% for those with lower levels of education (2001 Census of Population, Statistics Canada).

Reflecting upon their university education after two years away, 96.6% indicate that they are satisfied with this experience. Furthermore, when we consider the two previous two-year out surveys, we see slight increases in satisfaction of approximately 1.3 percentage points for each successive cohort. As with previous outcomes studies, the 2002 graduates provide very positive feedback on the skills they developed as part of their university program, including analytical and critical thinking skills, and most feel that the knowledge, skills and abilities acquired are

useful in their work (86.3%) and daily lives (82.0%).

While these results attest to the excellent education BC's university students are receiving, there are some areas which require further consideration. For the 22.3% who would not take the same program again, most cite a lack of practicality in their program, limited career opportunities, or changed interests as the main reason. While it's encouraging that almost all graduates described their course instruction as "very good" (95.8%), the results clearly convey the need to further examine the issue of utility in our university programs. Moreover, 36.3% of respondents felt that their degree program took longer than they had expected, 34.6% had difficulty scheduling required courses, and 45.5% felt that there were areas of study which would have been useful to them but were unavailable. The fact that these issues have arisen in previous outcomes surveys suggests that they are in need of further investigation. In particular, the fact that so many are taking longer than expected to complete their degrees is of concern, not only for the personal effect on an individual's ability to enter the workforce or continue on with further academic studies, but also for the institutional impact of students not completing their studies on a timely basis.

Another area requiring our ongoing consideration is student financing and debt. As we already know from previous studies, high percentages of BC's university students are incurring debt and having to work outside of their studies in order to cover their educational costs. In fact, when we compare these results with previous outcomes surveys, we see a slight trend away from the use of personal savings towards increased utilization

of student loans, employment, and family/friends. Almost one-half of the 2002 graduate cohort (46.0%) had debt upon graduation, 39.4% had government-sponsored student loan debt, and 17.8% held private loan debt. For those with debt, the average amount of overall debt was just over \$19,000, and the average amount of government-sponsored student loan debt was \$18,325. Interestingly, 17.8% stated that at some point in their program they were unable to borrow as much as they need from the Canada Student Loan program. Furthermore, of the 62.8% of graduates who had been employed during their academic terms, the average amount of time spent working was 17.9 hours per week. This high time commitment is somewhat disconcerting, particularly in view of other studies which have shown that most BC university students view work as having a negative effect on their academic studies, causing their grades to suffer and slowing their progress towards degree completion (Dumaresq, 2005).

Despite fairly high debt loads, the majority of graduates are having good success paying off their debt, with average repayment on student loans of approximately 20% per year. However, we cannot ignore the difficulties some graduates are having with their educational debt; according to these results, 17.7% have had their repayment period extended, and 18.3% have missed a payment at some point in time. Furthermore, 56.5% of survey participants have had to postpone major purchases, such as cars or homes, due to their educational debt, and 35.2% indicate that they have postponed further education as a result.

Clearly, the results of surveys such as this assist in our ongoing efforts to provide a high-quality, worthwhile educational experience for BC's university students. While there will continue to be challenges which require further examination, we are seeing clear evidence that the attainment of a baccalaureate degree provides individuals with the necessary skills and experience to obtain meaningful employment, become contributing citizens, and succeed in today's rapidly changing society.

## Works Cited

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