



SU 2020 ANNUAL SURVEY

Students' Union, University of Calgary

December 2020

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Executive Summary

The Students' Union (SU) Annual Survey assists the SU in identifying key areas of impact and contribution to student satisfaction and engagement at the University of Calgary. The survey helps to inform the SU's strategic planning, advocacy to university administration and all levels of government, and service provision. The 2020 Annual Survey asked students about their satisfaction and experience with the Students' Union; the same themes as that administered in 2018, making it possible to observe changes in student feelings over time. This year, the survey included a new section pertaining to the SU's advocacy efforts on tuition increases and post-secondary funding in Alberta.

2,437 undergraduate students at the University of Calgary responded to the survey, representing an 8.6% response rate. 86.1% of respondents completed the survey, down slightly from 2019's 88.0% response rate. This may be due to the added questions pertaining to SU advocacy on tuition and post-secondary budget changes, which involved several open-ended text response questions and added to the overall length of the survey by several questions. Student engagement was up both in terms of involvement with clubs and SU elections from 2019.

The sample size was proportionate to the demographic characteristics of the University of Calgary undergraduate student population. Variances in the representation of demographic characteristics are consistent with the profile of the typical undergraduate student who is hyper-engaged with the SU. Specifically, the typical survey respondents continue to be fulltime female undergraduates between the age of 18 and 22. Science students are overrepresented in these results, and Cumming School of Medicine and Engineering students are moderately underrepresented. This survey received the highest percentage of international student responses since 2010, a substantial increase to 10.62% of respondents from the previous record of 7.6% in last year's 2019 survey.

Overall satisfaction with the SU remains consistent with previous years' survey results, with SU Clubs being the most satisfactory aspect of the SU's offerings, while SU employment opportunities, the Health and Dental Plan and SU Advocacy and Representation were among the least satisfactory overall. However, a majority of respondents indicated they were satisfied with all aspects that were asked about in the survey, except employment opportunities, which saw an above-average amount of "unaware" and neutral responses.

Introduction

The annual SU survey was administered from Jan. 13 to Feb. 08, 2020. In the past, results of the survey have been used to guide and inform strategic planning, the Quality Money Committee, and tuition consultation. Key performance indicators have been identified to align with goals and outcomes of strategic planning which will continue to help benchmark the SU's progress. Results reported demonstrate longitudinal trends and findings that are significant for understanding student satisfaction and engagement with the University of Calgary. Data from multiple questions may be cross-tabulated to determine how different factors impact student satisfaction and help the SU to provide better programs and advocate effectively.

2,437 undergraduate students at the University of Calgary responded to the survey, representing an 8.6% response rate. 86.1% of respondents completed the survey. The survey response rate improved from the previous two years' surveys (5.2% and 6.0% in 2018 and 2019, respectively). However, completion rate fell slightly from 88.0% in 2019, though remains higher than 2018's response rate of 78.5%.

Methodology

Instrument

In 2015, the annual SU Survey was divided in two parts to be used separately in alternating years. The 2019 survey asked questions measuring students' satisfaction with aspects of academic programs and student services offered by the University of Calgary. The 2020 survey focused on students' satisfaction with SU programs, services, and businesses.

Administration of Survey

The survey was administered online and took approximately 10 minutes to complete. SU staff managed the survey and Qualtrics Survey Software was used to create the web-based questionnaire.

As an incentive, the SU offered prizes through random draws to survey participants. Participants provided their names and email addresses through a separate link upon completion of the survey. Respondents' personal information was in no way connected to their survey responses. Full contest rules were made available on the SU website (see Appendix II). Five \$100 prepaid Mastercards and one hundred \$5 Stör vouchers were available as prizes to students who completed the survey.

Budget

Expenses for the SU Annual Survey were budgeted for in the SU's Communications budget. For 2019-20, the budget for the SU Annual Survey was \$1,000. Actual expenses included five \$100 prepaid Mastercards and one hundred \$5 vouchers for the Stör. Not all \$5 vouchers were redeemed by prize winners. The survey was administered using the same platform as in 2019, Qualtrics.

Communications

The online survey was open from Jan. 13 to Feb. 08, 2020. The traditional communications tactics used for SU surveys were executed by SU staff, as detailed below. In addition, SU elected officials were encouraged to promote the survey within their faculty via D2L, mailing lists, and classroom visits.

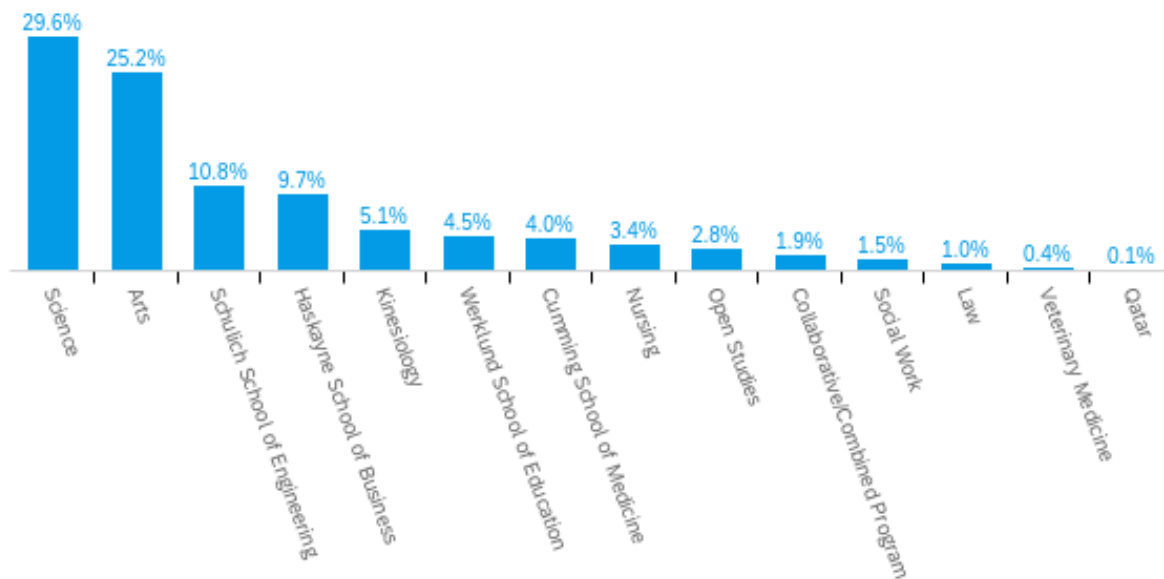
- **Email**
 - The email list was extracted from the SU internal list. The total number individuals on the SU contact list is unknown but this is known to be the most up-to-date student list.
 - Students received an initial email from the President's email account inviting them to participate in the survey and a subsequent reminder email.
 - SU registered clubs received notice of the survey in the club's newsletter and through direct email to primary contacts on file for clubs.
- **Social Media**
 - The survey link was shared from SU accounts on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram.
- **Print/Digital**
 - The SU Communications department produced posters and digital ads which were displayed in the MacEwan Building.
- **Website**
 - There was a prominent SU Survey link on the SU website (<http://www.su.ucalgary.ca/>) throughout the duration of the survey.

Ethical Considerations

All students were informed in a cover letter that participation in the survey was voluntary and confidential. Respondents were free to withdraw at any time with no penalty. For privacy reasons, personal information (student names and email addresses) will not be shared and the information will be disposed of except to contact winners of the prizes. Students were notified that the winners would be contacted by email. The survey data file will reside with Qualtrics Survey Software and the SU; the aggregate data, minus personal information, will be reserved for internal use by the SU. The SU did not go through the university ethics approval process as this survey was administered by the SU for internal use.

Student Demographics

Percentage of Responses by Faculty

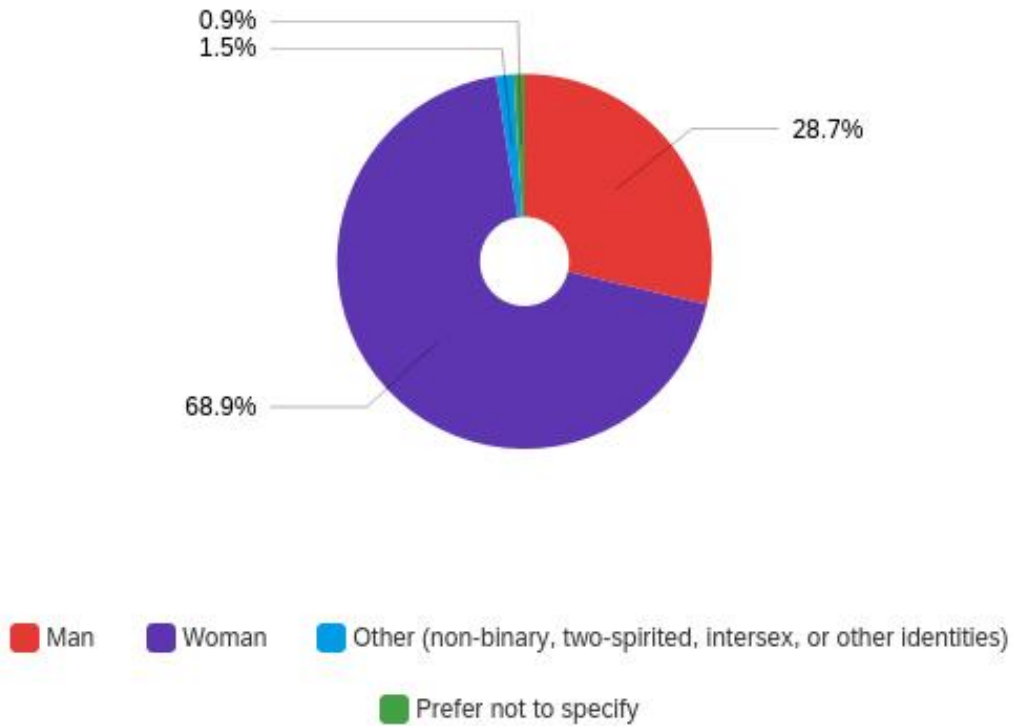


As shown in the graphic above, a majority of respondents to the 2020 Annual Survey are from either of the University's two largest faculties, Arts and Science. Generally, faculty-based representation is proportional to actual enrolment data with a few small exceptions noted below.

Compared with [actual Fall 2019 enrolment data](#) made available from the Office of Institutional Analysis, students in the Faculty of Science are the most over-represented in the 2020 SU Annual Survey results (29.6% of responses, versus 18.27% of enrolment), while students in the Cumming School of Medicine (4% of responses, 7.6% of enrolment) and Engineering (10.8% of responses, 13.7% of enrolment) are slightly under-represented. However, these variances are consistent with previous years' surveys, and

are statistically insignificant; survey responses are mostly proportional to enrolment data at the university.

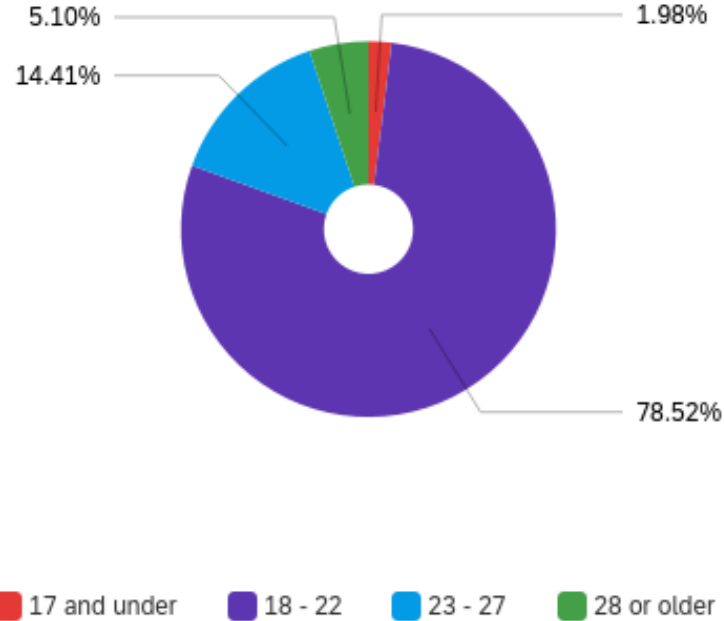
Percentage of Responses by Gender Identity



Female-identifying undergraduates are over-represented in the 2020 SU Annual Survey (68.9%): a recurring trend, suggesting a continued heightened level of engagement with the SU in general by female-identifying students. However, this over-representation is down slightly from last year's survey (71.4% in 2019).

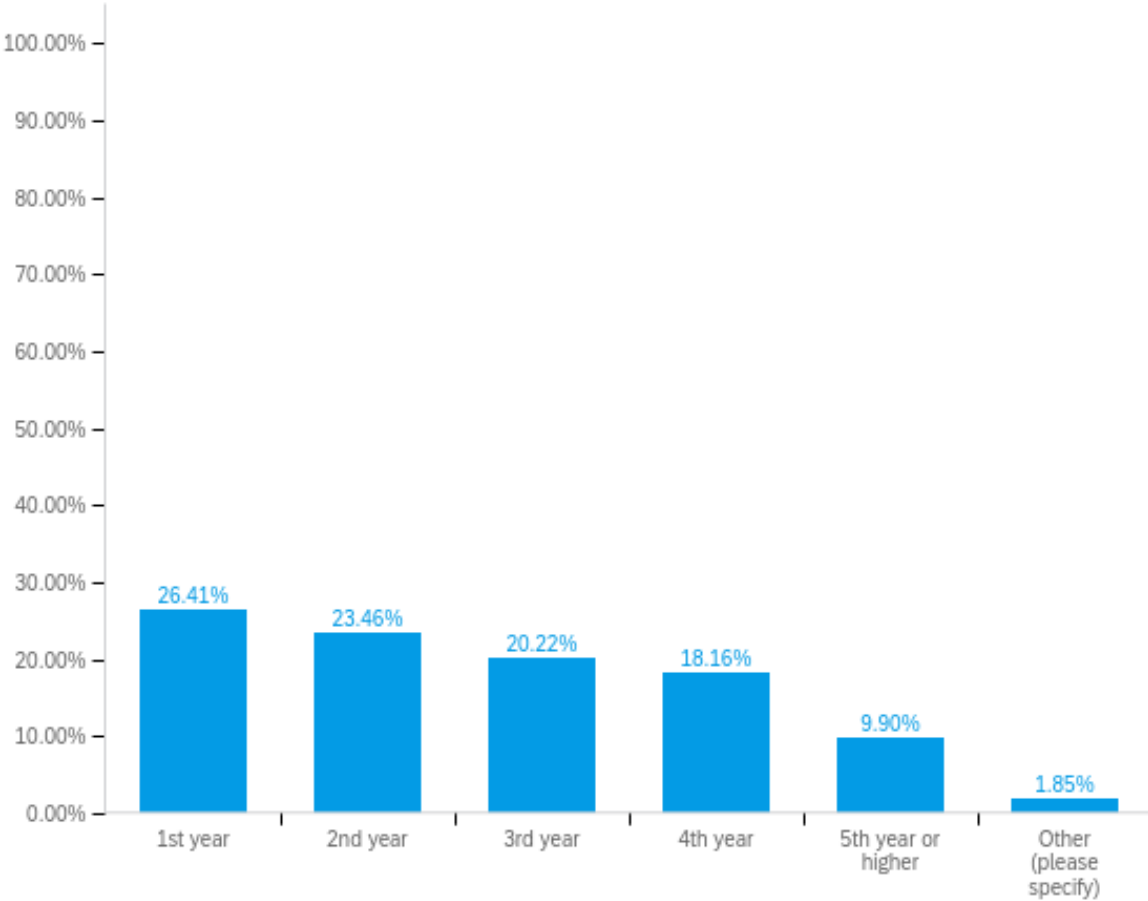
The 2020 Annual Survey also saw an increase in "Other (non-binary, two-spirited, intersex or other identities)" responses, up 0.5% from 2019's 1.0%. This may be due to the larger respondent pool in 2020 leading to a more representative survey result, or could indicate an increase in gender-diverse undergraduate admissions to the University of Calgary.

Percentage of Responses by Age Group



As in previous years, most respondents to the 2020 Annual Survey fell into the age category of 18 to 22 years (78.5%).

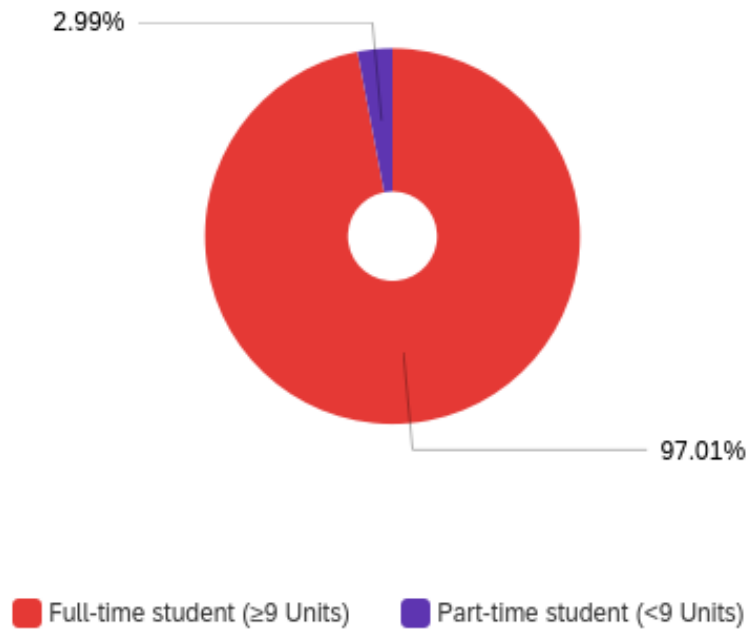
Percentage of Responses by Year of Program



This year’s survey saw a similar distribution of responses by year of program as in previous years. The distribution indicates a heightened level of engagement with the Students' Union in respondents' earlier years of their degree, with engagement tapering off as students progress through their degree.

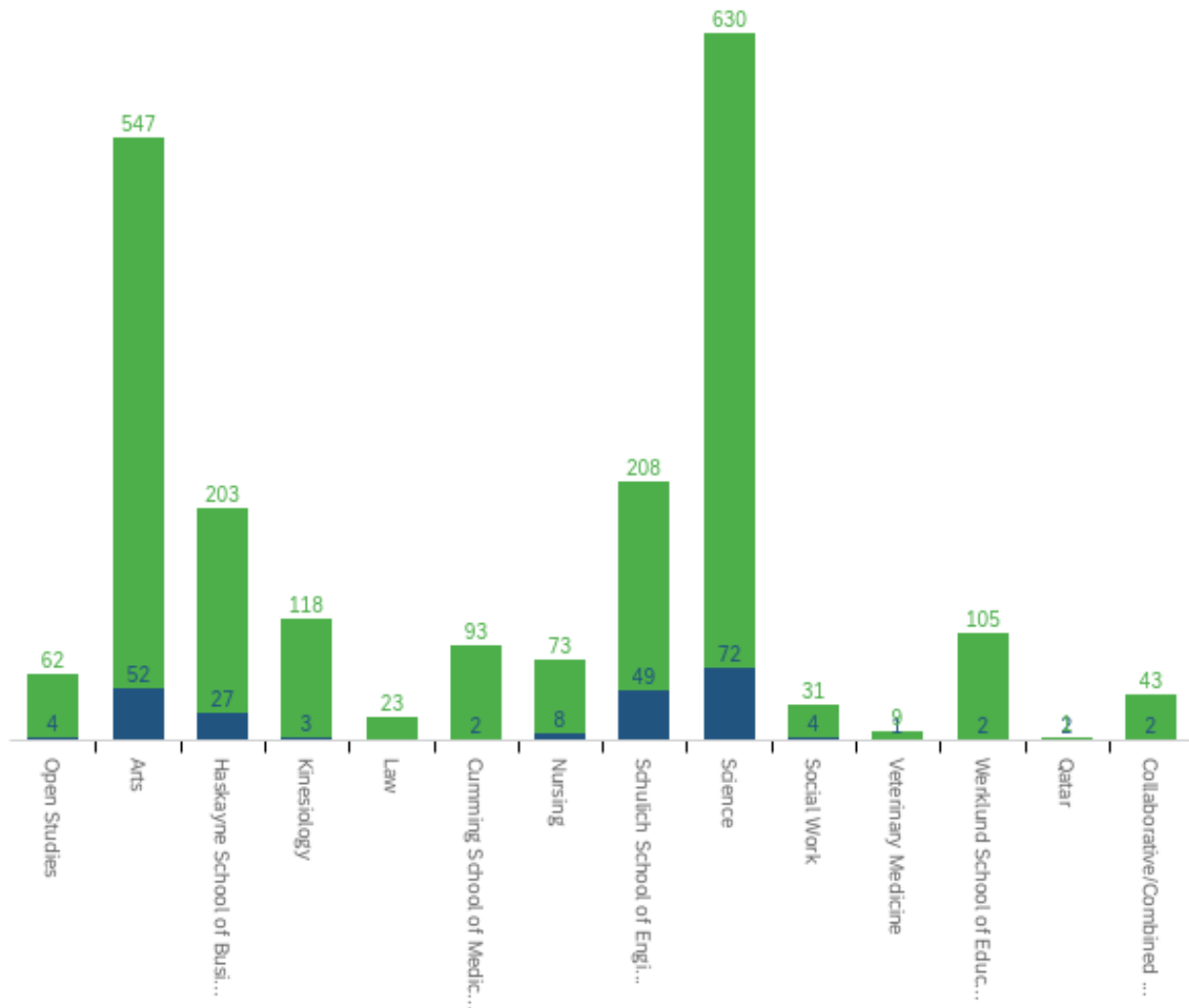
This may be due to an increasing course-load demand, or it could be indicative of first- and second-year students more actively seeking out ways to engage with their new campus as they settle in to the new circumstances of university.

Percentage of Responses by Course-load Status



The breakdown of full-time and part-time enrolment remains similar as in previous years' surveys. The results of the survey are also mostly representative of actual enrolment data provided by the [Office of Institutional Analysis](#) (which indicates a 94.3% to 5.7% split of full-time and part-time, respectively). The survey results indicate a slight under-representation of part-time students. This may be due to a sense of detachment from campus activity compared with full-time students, who generally spend more time on campus than part-time students, or it may be a result of sustained engagement with the Students' Union by full-time students compared with part-time students.

Number of International Student Respondents by Faculty



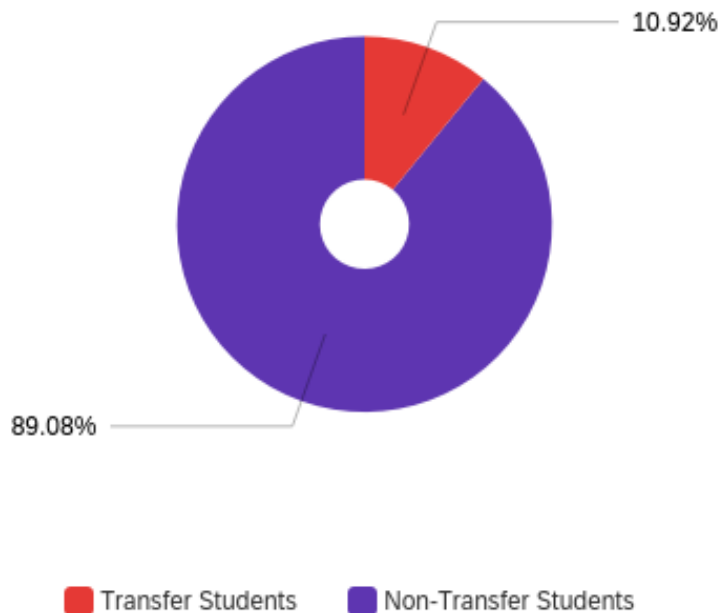
The Schulich School of Engineering saw the largest proportion of respondents identify as international students, while the Haskayne School of Business and the Faculties of Science, Social Work and Veterinary Medicine all also saw a large international student demographic represented in their survey respondents. The Faculties of Science, Arts, and the Schulich School of Engineering had the most individual respondents who were international students, which can be expected due to the large size of these faculties. The Faculties of Law and Kinesiology, as well as the Werklund School of Education all saw low overall response rates from international students.

Compared with actual enrolment data from the [Office of Institutional Analysis](#), international students from the Faculty of Law (Fall 2019 actual international student enrolment totalled 1.53%), open studies (17.94%) and the Cumming School of Medicine (6.58%) are all notably under-represented in the survey data. In contrast, the survey saw over-representation of international students from Engineering (Fall 2019 actual international student enrolment totalled 14.27%), Nursing (2.93%), Social Work (0.66%) and Veterinary Medicine (1.52%).

Across all faculties, actual international student enrolment was 10.23% in Fall 2019 according to the [Office of Institutional Analysis](#), while the SU Annual Survey saw a total of 10.62% international student responses.

For more specific data about international students, see the "International Students" section.

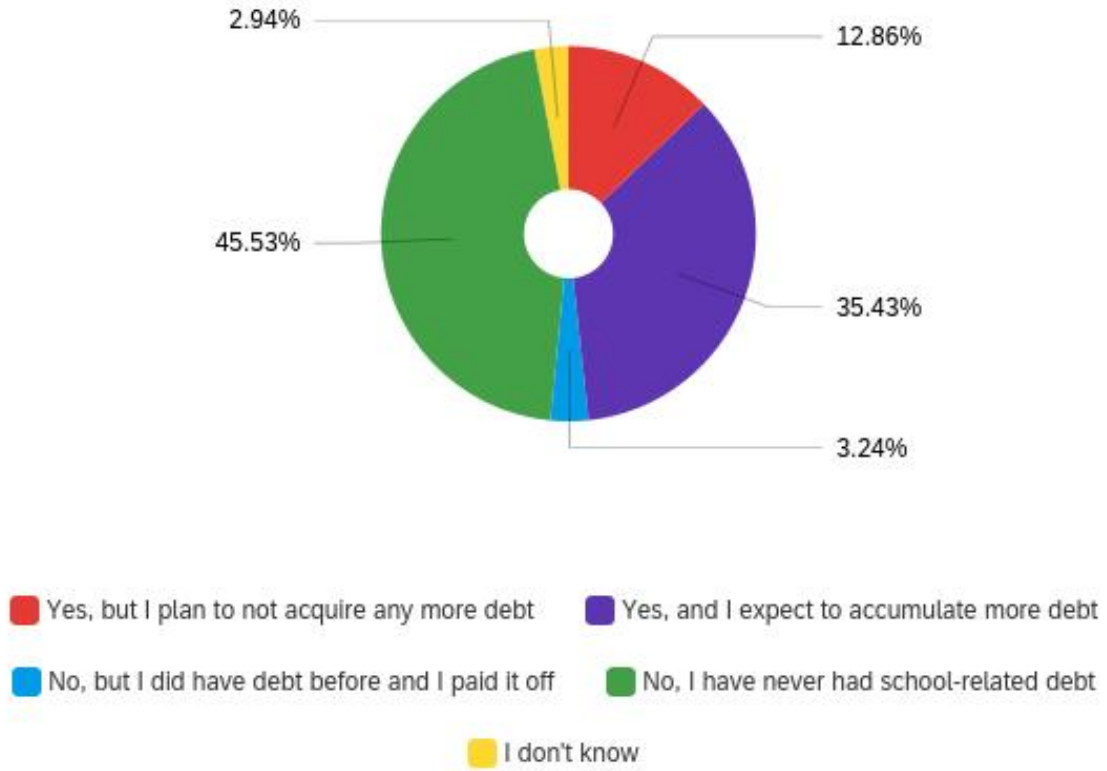
Percentage of Responses by Transfer Student Enrolment (Yes = Transfer Student)



The 2020 Annual Survey saw 10.92% of respondents identify as transfer students from other post-secondary institutions, before beginning their studies at the University of Calgary. 12.8% of transfer students previously studied at Mount Royal University, while 9.7% came from SAIT. Other notable institutions the U of C saw transfer students incoming from include Red Deer College (6.6%), the University of Alberta (7.0%) and the University of Lethbridge (6.6%).

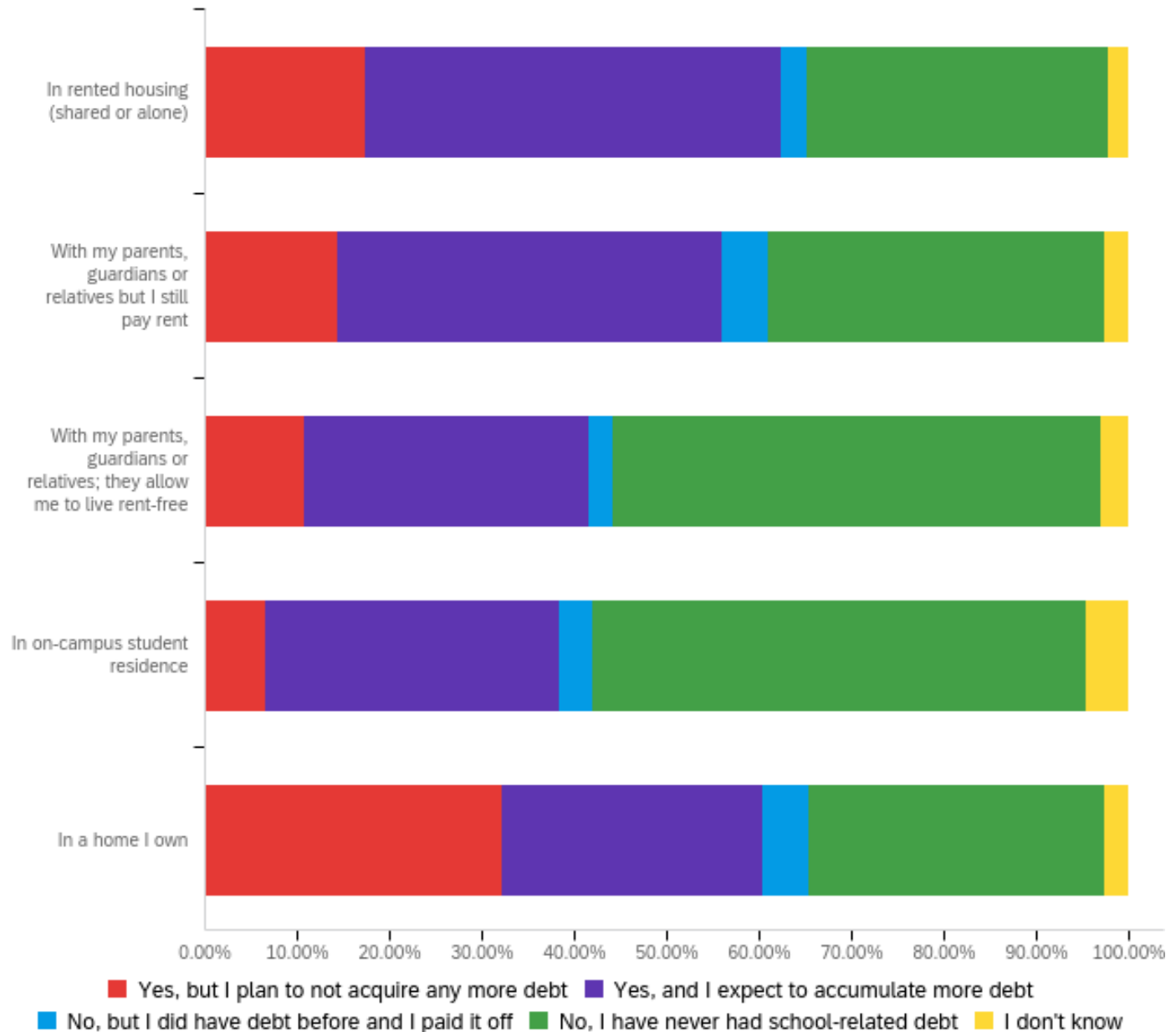
The Faculty of Social Work saw the single largest portion of respondents identify as transfer students at 54.3%. The Faculty of Veterinary Medicine also has a notable transfer student population at 30%, while the Faculty of Arts and open studies are both also above-average, at 16.2% and 16.7% respectively.

Percentage of Responses by School-Related Debt



Including both students who have never had school-related debt and those who responded "I don't know," only 48.5% of respondents have no direct relationship with student debt, while 48.3% currently have school-related debt (including both those who do not plan to acquire any more and those who do). Given that the remaining 3.2% of respondents previously had debt but were able to pay it off, the survey's results indicate that in general, students are more likely than not to incur some level of debt to afford their education.

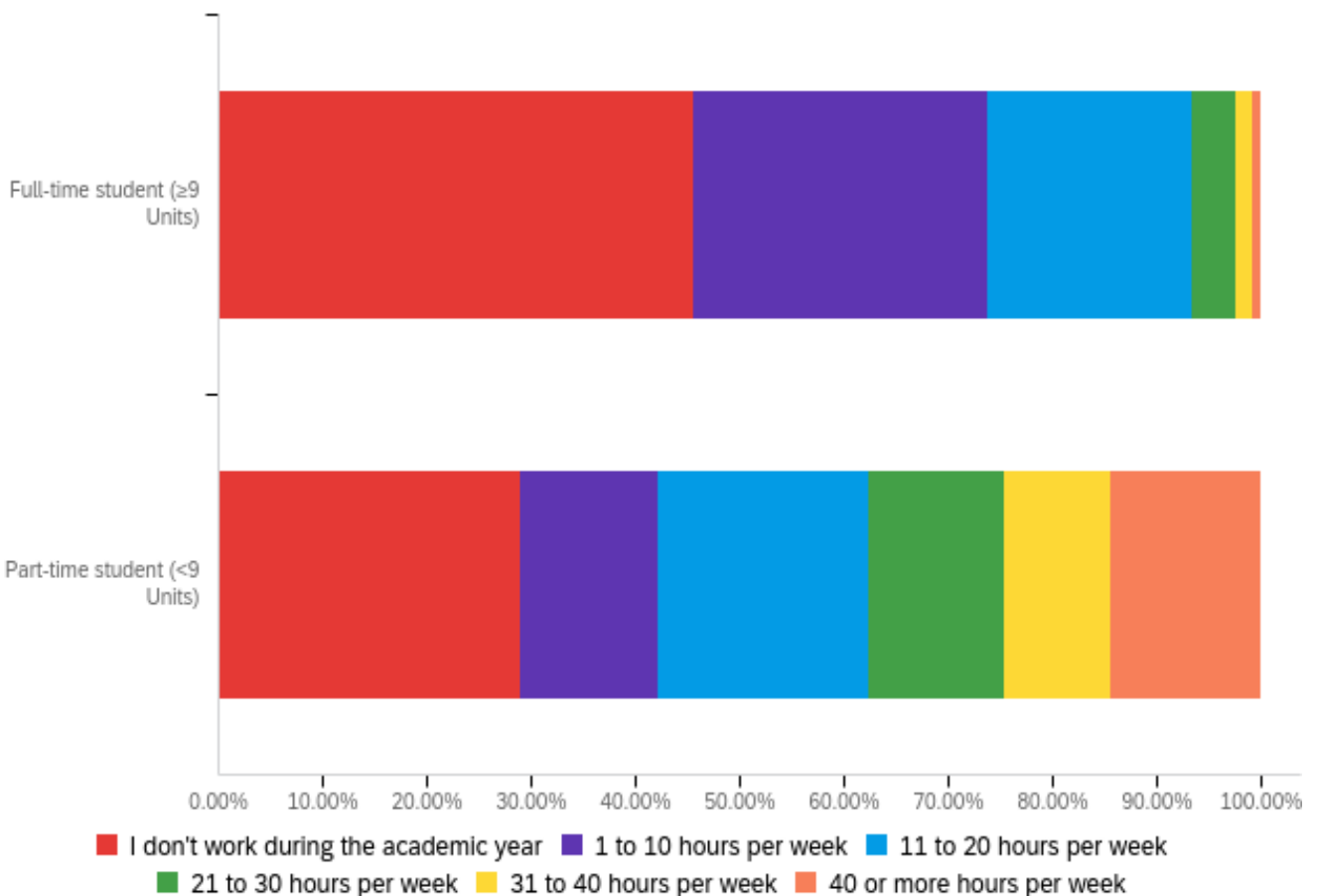
Level of School-Related Debt by Living Arrangement



Overall, 49.9% of respondents indicated they live rent-free with parents, guardians or relatives, while an additional 13.5% pay rent to their parents, guardians or relatives. With 63.4% of respondents living with parents, guardians or relatives off-campus and a total of 88.7% of respondents living off-campus, the 2020 Survey shows data consistent with the portrayal of the University of Calgary as a "commuter campus." Only 11.3% of respondents live in on-campus student residence. 21.5% of respondents rent off-campus housing (either shared or alone), while 3.4% own their own home. The remaining 0.4% have other living arrangements.

In the above graphic, respondents' relationship with student debt based on their current living arrangements is explored. Students who own their own home are second-most likely to have school-related debt (60.3% have debt, 28.2% of whom expect to acquire more), but are also the most likely to have had debt and paid it off (5.1%). Students living in on-campus student residence are the least likely to have school-related debt (53.6% have never had school-related debt), while students who live either in rented off-campus housing (62.4% have debt, with 45% expecting more) or pay rent to relatives (56.0% have debt; 41.5% expect more) are among the most likely to experience student debt.

Employment Status in Academic Year by Academic Load

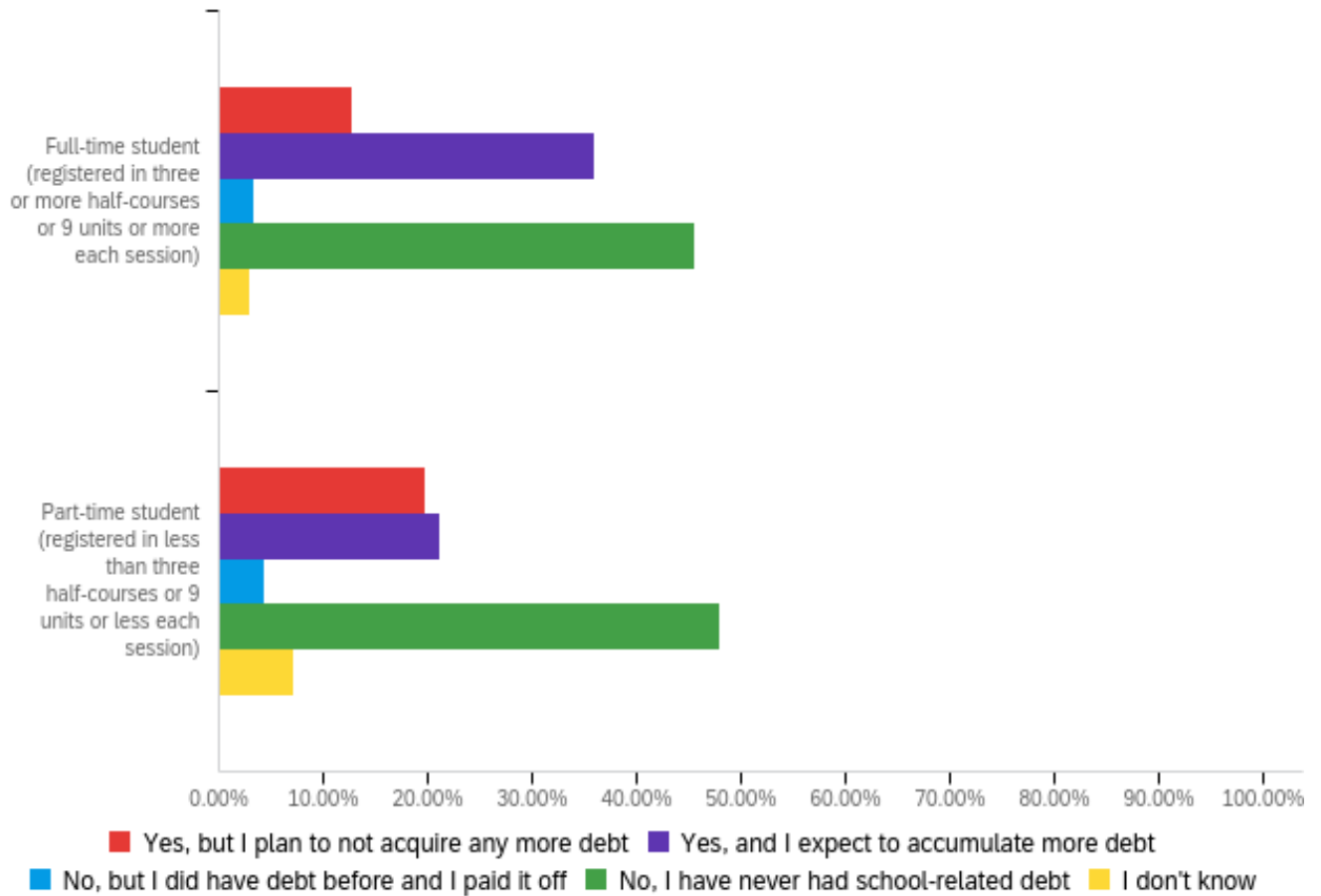


Overall, 45.0% of students do not work during the academic year. 27.7% work 1-10 hours per week, while 19.8% work 11-20 hours. 4.5% work 21-30 hours, 1.8% work 31-40, and 1.2% of respondents work 40+ hours per week during the academic year.

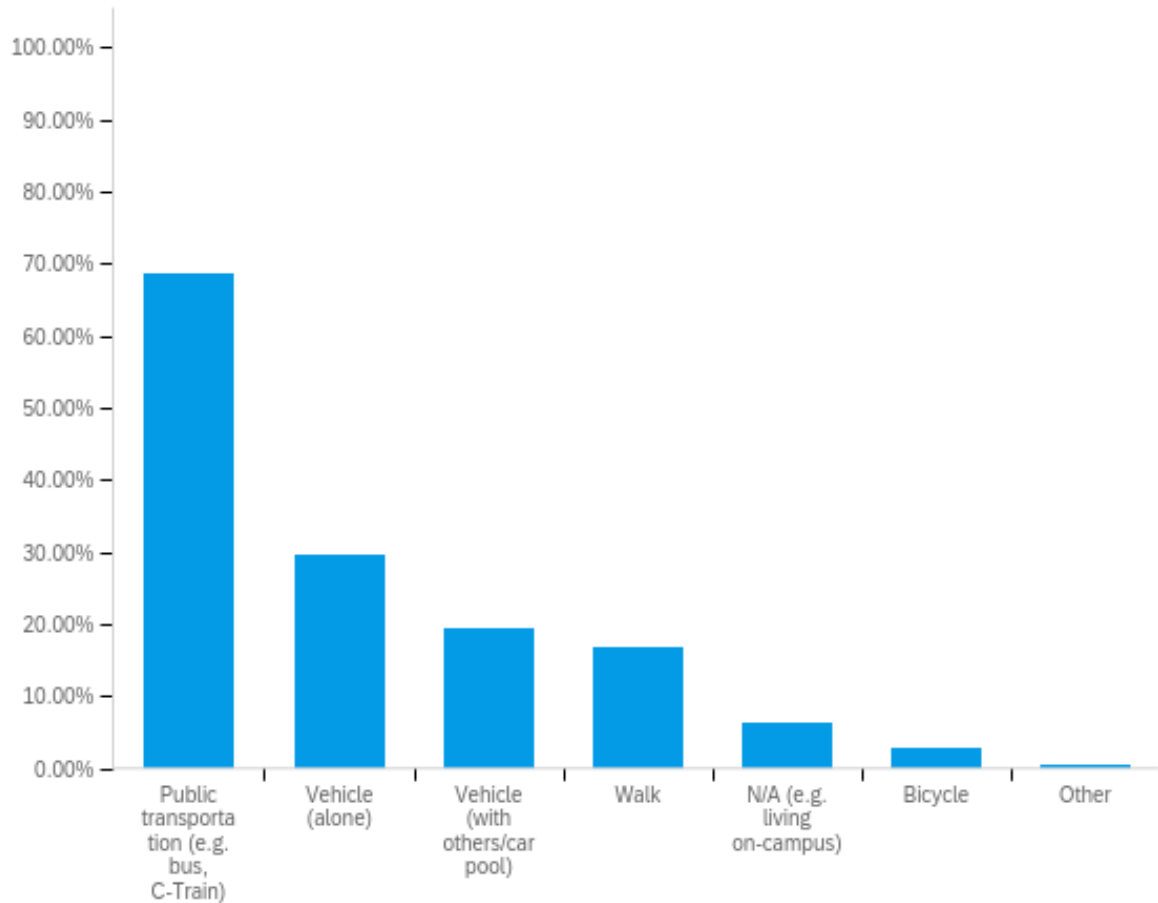
In the above graphic, we can see that full-time students are less likely to work during the academic year in general by 16.5%. Part-time students are also much more likely to work 21+ hours per week compared to full-time students, who tend to either work 1-10 hours per week or 11-20, if they work at all during the academic year.

Below, the relationship of school-related debt with academic load displays that in general, full-time students are more likely to already have and expect more, school-related debt than part-time students. Part-time students are also more likely to have some student debt without expecting to acquire more, and are slightly more likely to never have had school-related debt at all.

School-Related Debt by Academic Load



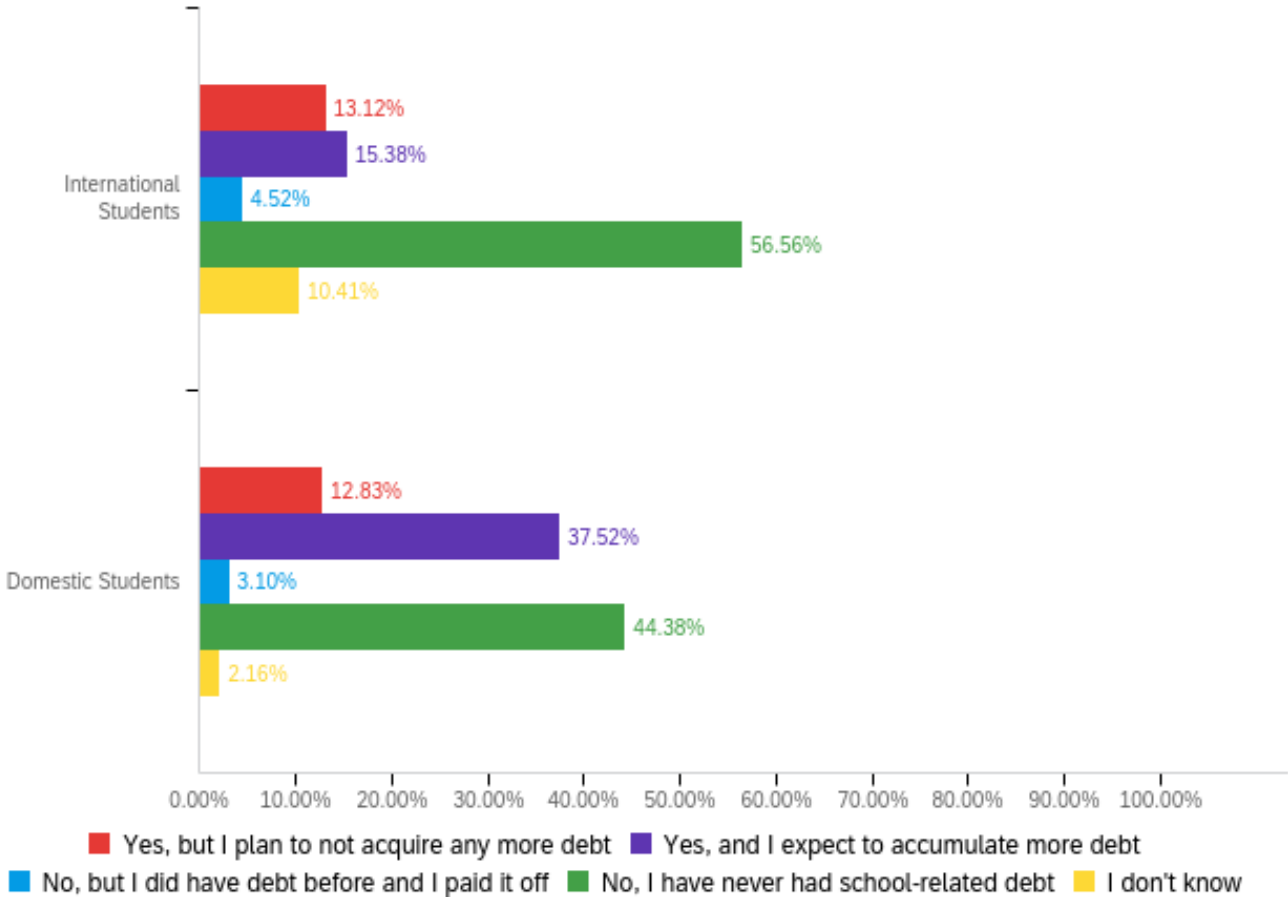
Percentage of Responses by Primary Method(s) of Transportation to Campus



The above graphic displays the percentage of respondents by their primary method of transportation to campus. Respondents were able to select more than one option (such as if their commute consisted of a walk and public transportation). 68.7% of respondents identified regular use of public transportation in their commute to campus. 29.7% drove to campus alone, while an additional 19.5% drove to campus as part of a carpool. 16.9% walked as part of their commute and 2.7% biked. 6.4% did not identify a commute (such as for students living on campus), and the remaining 0.7% identified other means of transportation.

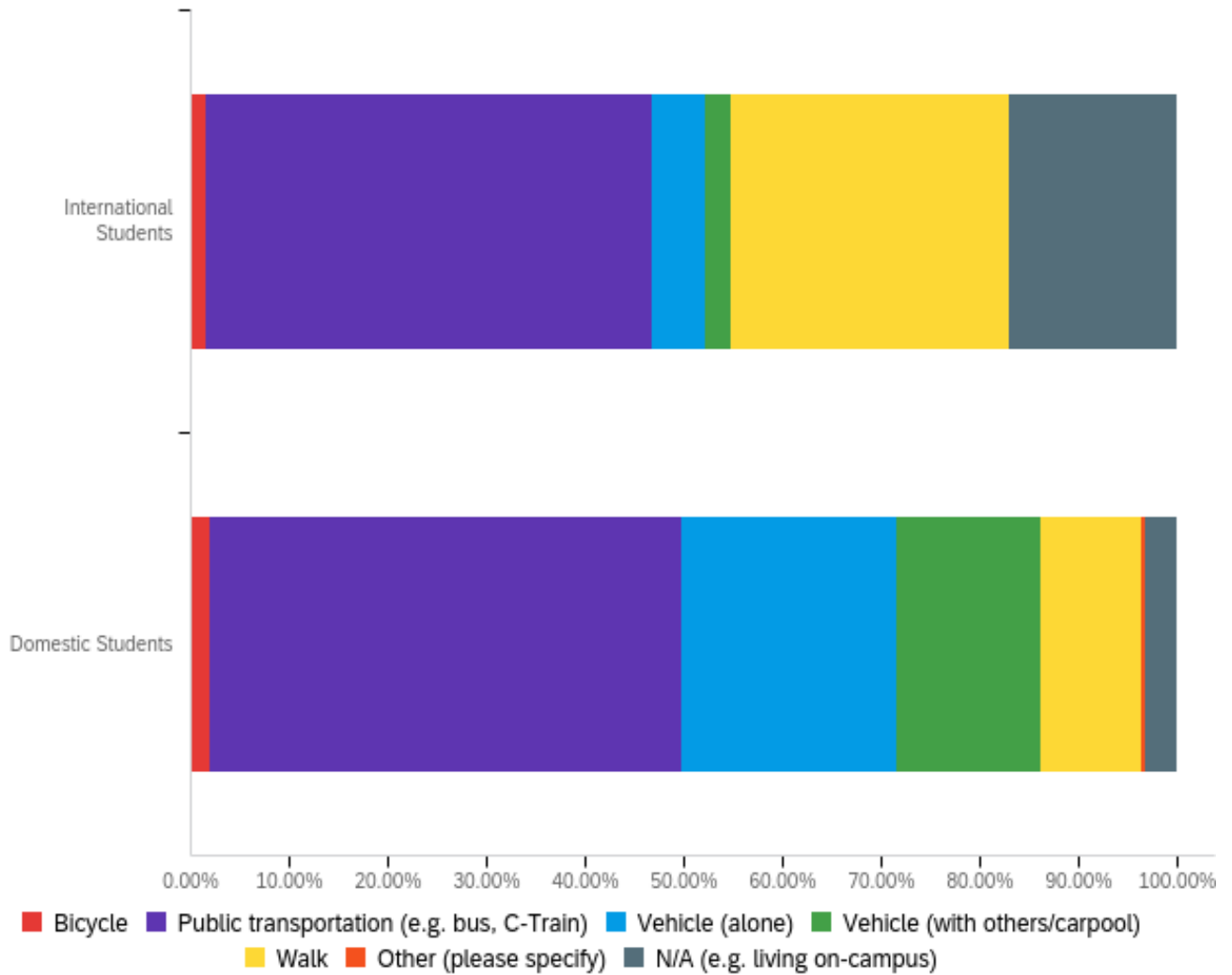
International Students

School-Related Debt of International Student Respondents



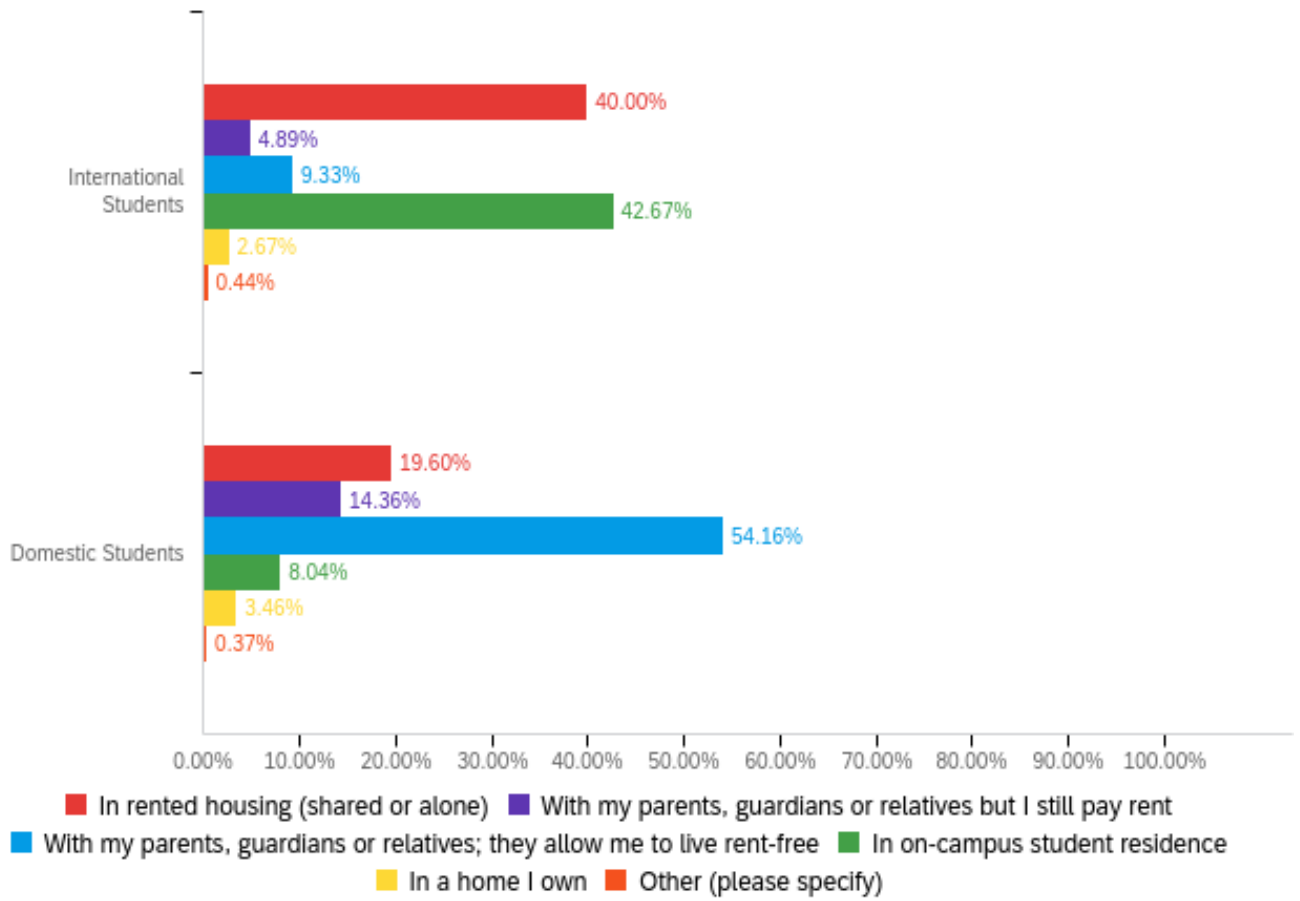
Despite higher tuition costs for international students, of whom 28.5% currently have school-related debt, an overall higher percentage of domestic student respondents (50.4%) indicated that they currently have school-related debt. This may be due to easier access to financial aid for domestic students when compared to student aid programs in international students' origin countries. However, international students are also much more likely to be unsure of whether they currently have school-related debt at 10.4% of respondents, compared with 2.16% of domestic students. This may be a result of the complexities associated with moving internationally for school, or a greater level of personal involvement in their financing of their education by domestic students.

Primary Methods of Transportation to Campus by International Student Respondents

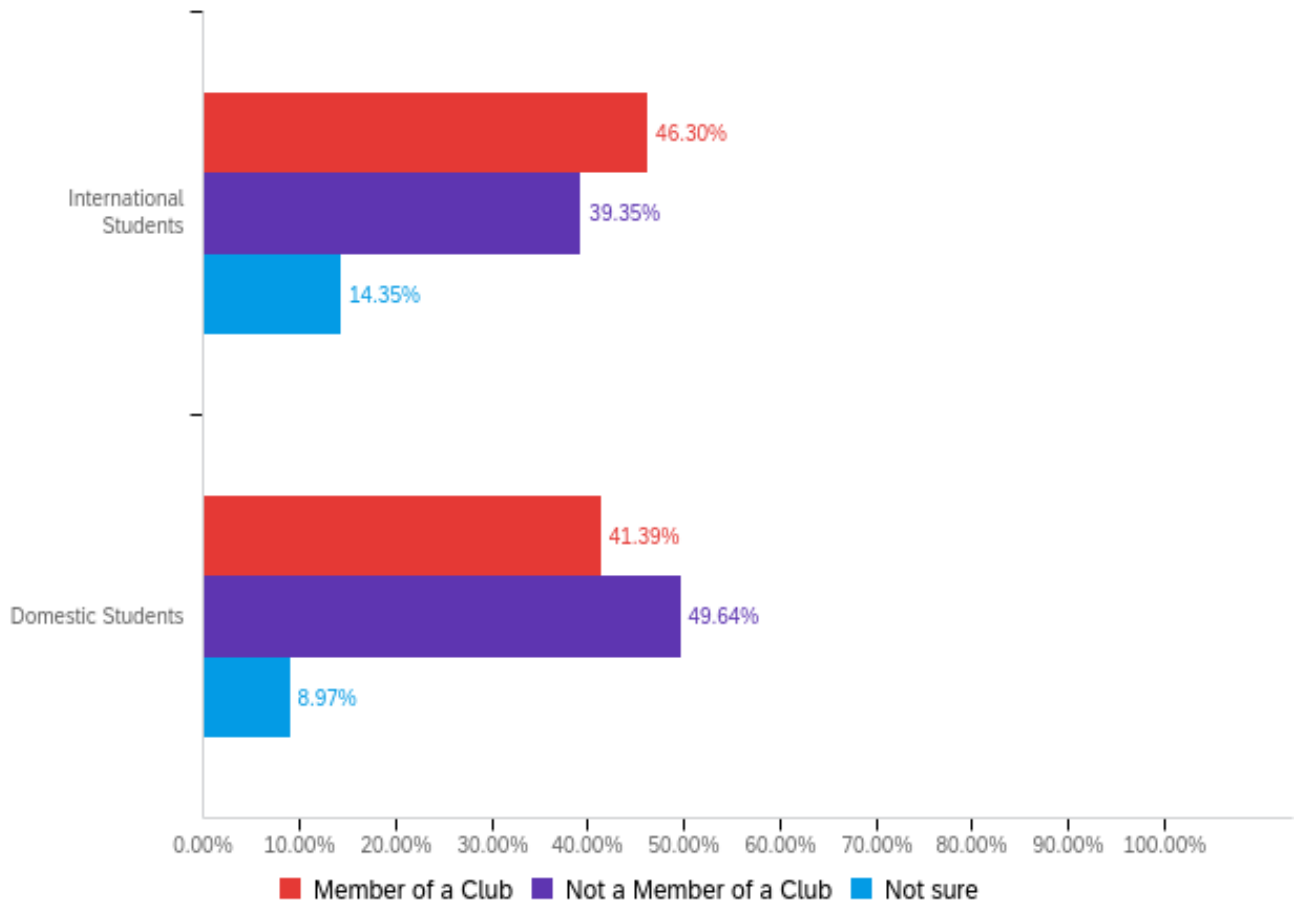


At 45.4%, international student respondents, like domestic students (at 47.8%), most commonly identified public transportation as one of their primary methods of transportation to campus. However, international students were significantly more likely to walk (28.2%) than domestic students (only 10.2%), who instead were more likely to travel by vehicle at a combined 36.4% (including both carpooling and driving alone). This is most likely due to the increased likelihood that international students live on campus (42.7% of international student respondents indicated they live on-campus, versus 8.04% of domestic students; see below). However, it may also indicate that when international students rent an off-campus home, they are more likely to choose a rental location specifically for its proximity to the university, compared with domestic students who may be more likely to choose a home for its proximity to other factors, such as pre-existing employment or proximity to family members.

Living Arrangements of International Student Respondents



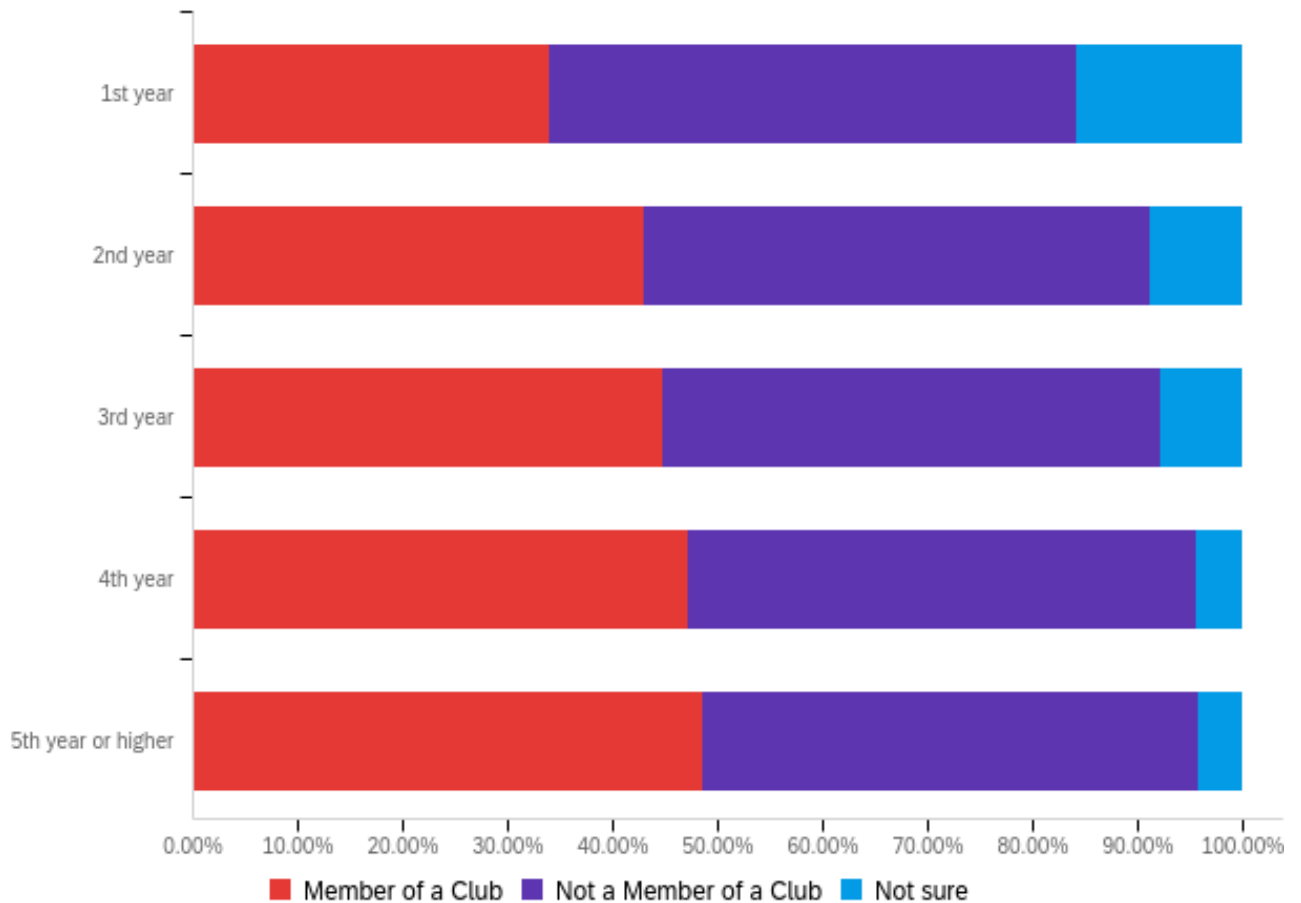
Engagement with Student Clubs by International Student Respondents



Compared with domestic students, international student respondents are more likely to be involved in a student club on campus by 4.9%. However, international students are also more likely to be unsure if they are a member of a student club. The resources available to international students, such as those available through the University's International Student Services office including the International Student Mentorship Program may result in this increase of confusion (i.e., differentiating between University programs led by peers vs. student-run clubs).

Student Engagement

Membership in SU Registered Club by Year of Program

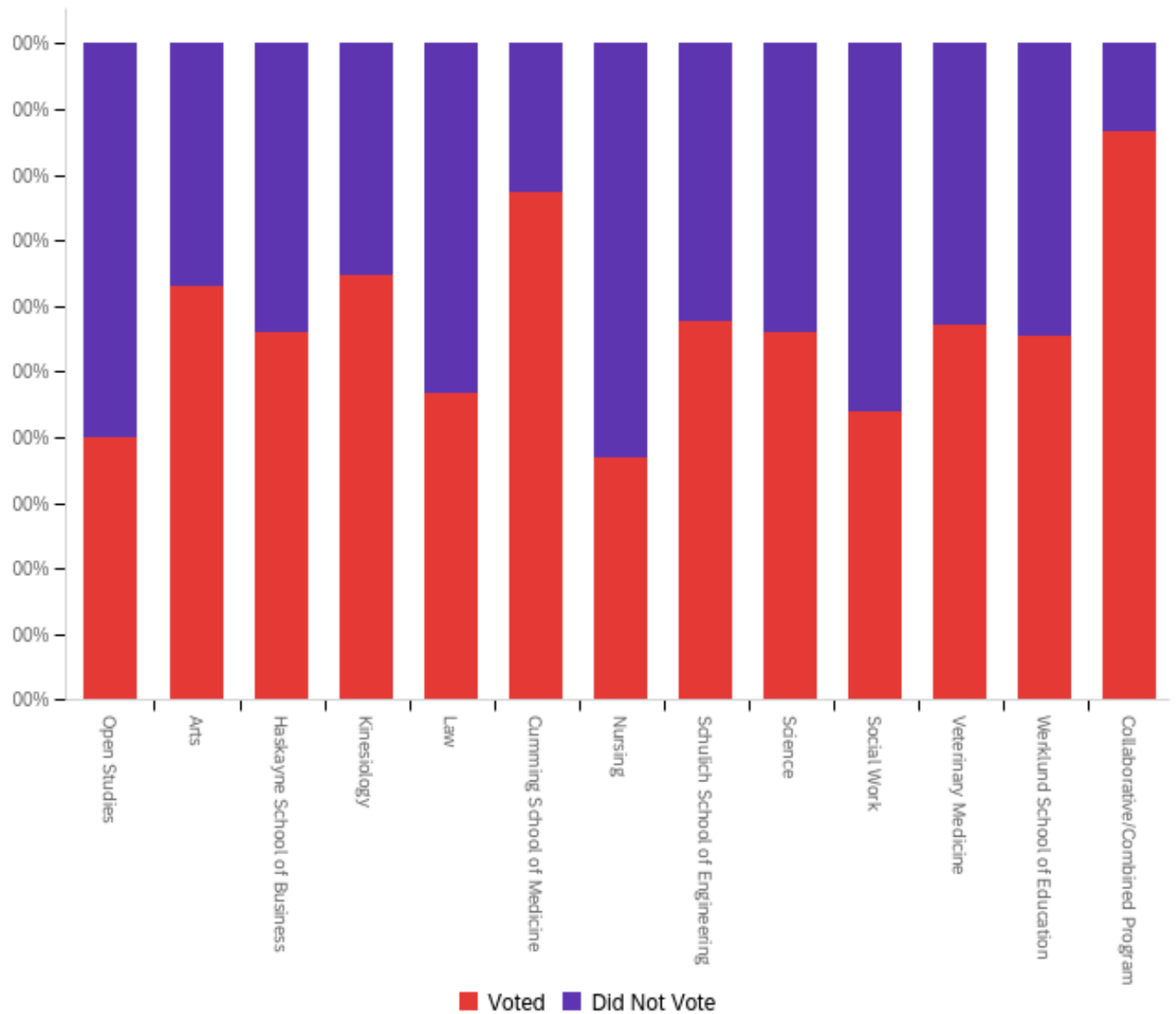


Overall, the 2020 Survey saw a 5.3% increase in respondents who were a member of an SU Registered Club from 2019. 42% of respondents to the 2020 Survey were members of an SU Registered Club, while 9% overall were "not sure."

The "not sure" responses may be explained by the large number of engagement opportunities on campus outside of SU Registered Clubs (such as non-registered student organizations and University programs), with participants in those programs and/or programs run by SU Registered Clubs being unsure of the differentiation between the two. However, the percentage of respondents indicating they were "not sure" consistently decreased with each higher year of program, indicating that students learn how the system works and its connection to the SU over the course of their degree.

Additionally, students became increasingly more likely to be a member of a club as they advance to upper-years of their degree (consistent with previous SU surveys), showing that students tend to become more involved and engaged as they spend more time on campus throughout their degree.

Percent of Responses Voted in SU General Election or By-Election by Faculty

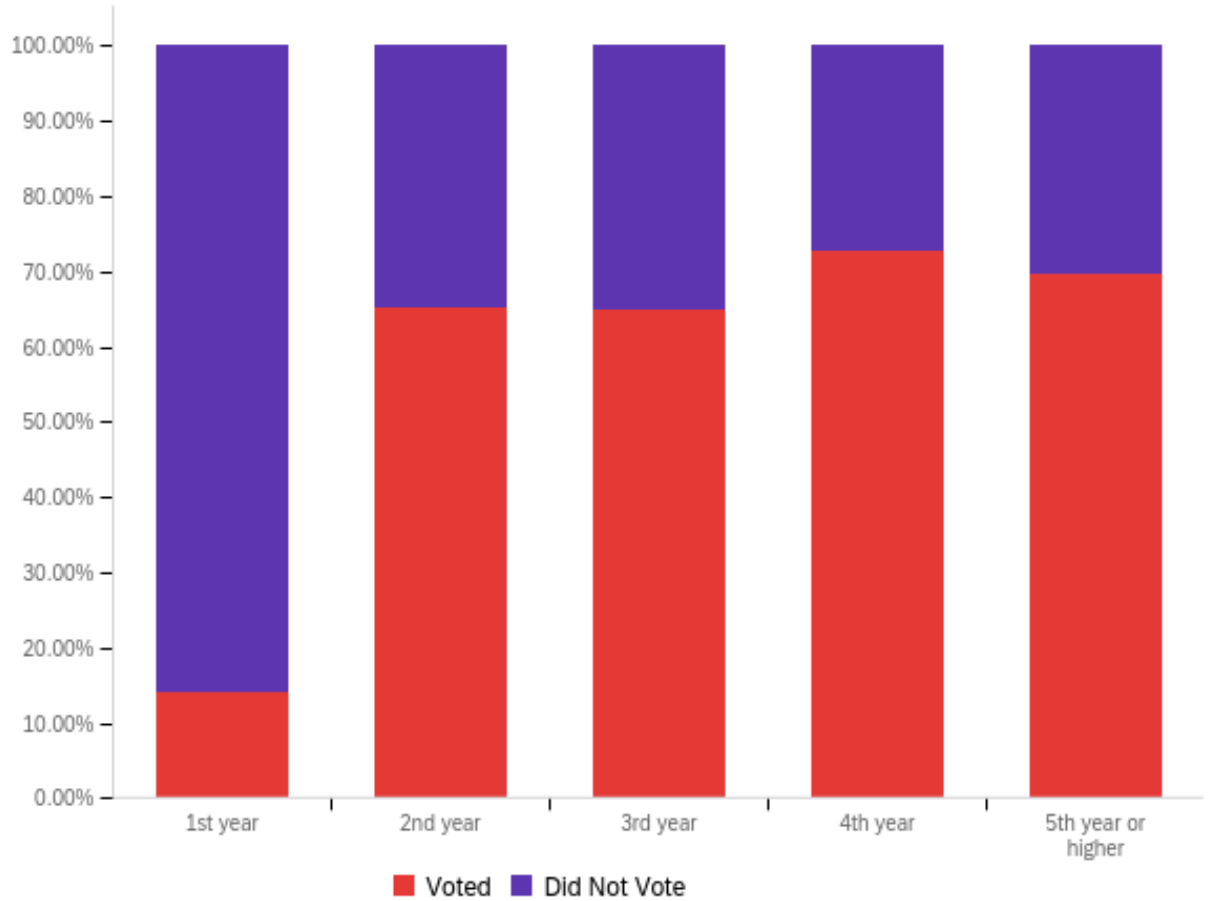


In the 2020 SU General Election, 22% of eligible undergraduates voted, up from 21.1% in 2019. In the 2020 Survey, however, 59% of respondents indicated they had voted in either (or both) of the General Election or By-Election, suggesting an over-representation in the Survey of students who are hyper-engaged with the SU. This is consistent with previous surveys, such as 2019 where 55.6% responded that they had voted in a General or By-Election.

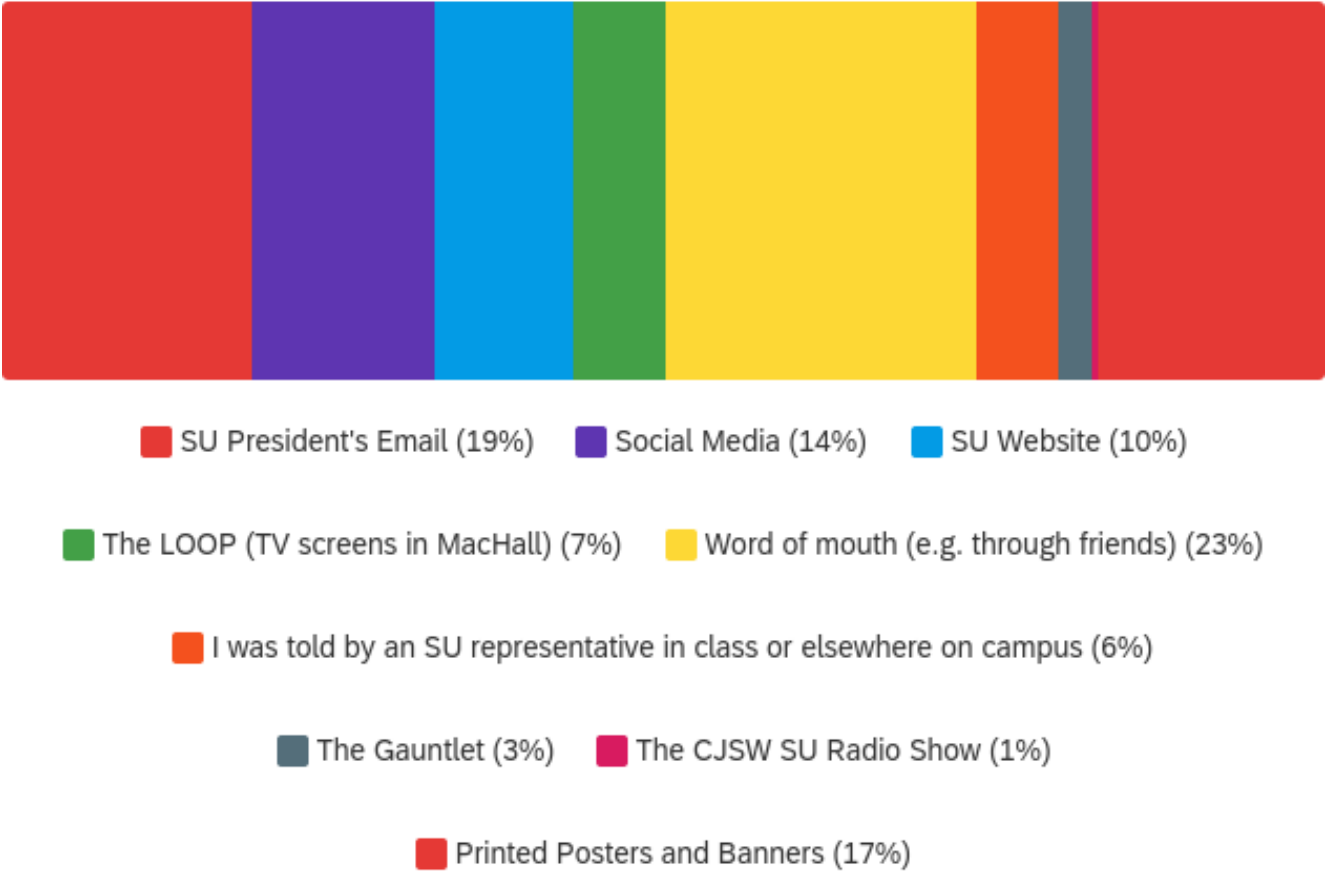
The above graphic shows the percentage of each faculty's engagement with the SU elections. Students in Law, Nursing and Social Work, as well as open studies, were the least likely to have voted in an SU election, while Medicine, Kinesiology and Collaborative/Combined Degree students were among the most likely. In the below graphic, which shows voting engagement by year of program, the 2020 Survey sees a clear

pattern of first-years being least likely to vote or participate in SU elections, while 2nd and above year students remained fairly consistently engaged with SU voting, a pattern consistent with previous SU surveys.

Percent of Responses Voted in SU General Election or By-Election by Year of Program



Percentage of Responses by Recalled Method of Communication of SU Businesses, Services & Programs



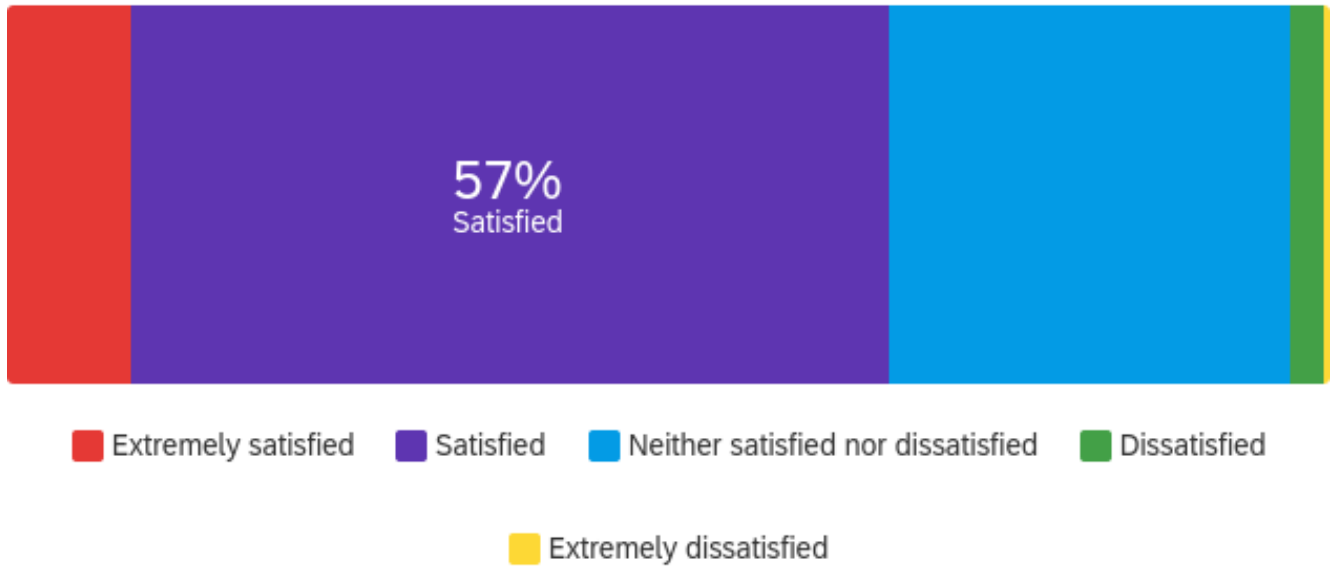
The above graphic displays the method(s) of communication respondents remembered hearing about SU businesses, services and programs through. Respondents were able to select more than one option. This data shows that word of mouth communication amongst students remains the most effective method by which SU businesses, services and programs are promoted at 23%, followed by the SU President's newsletter-style emails at 19%.

Satisfaction with the Students' Union

The following graphics display the distribution of responses from "extremely satisfied" to "extremely dissatisfied" with a number of aspects about the Students' Union.

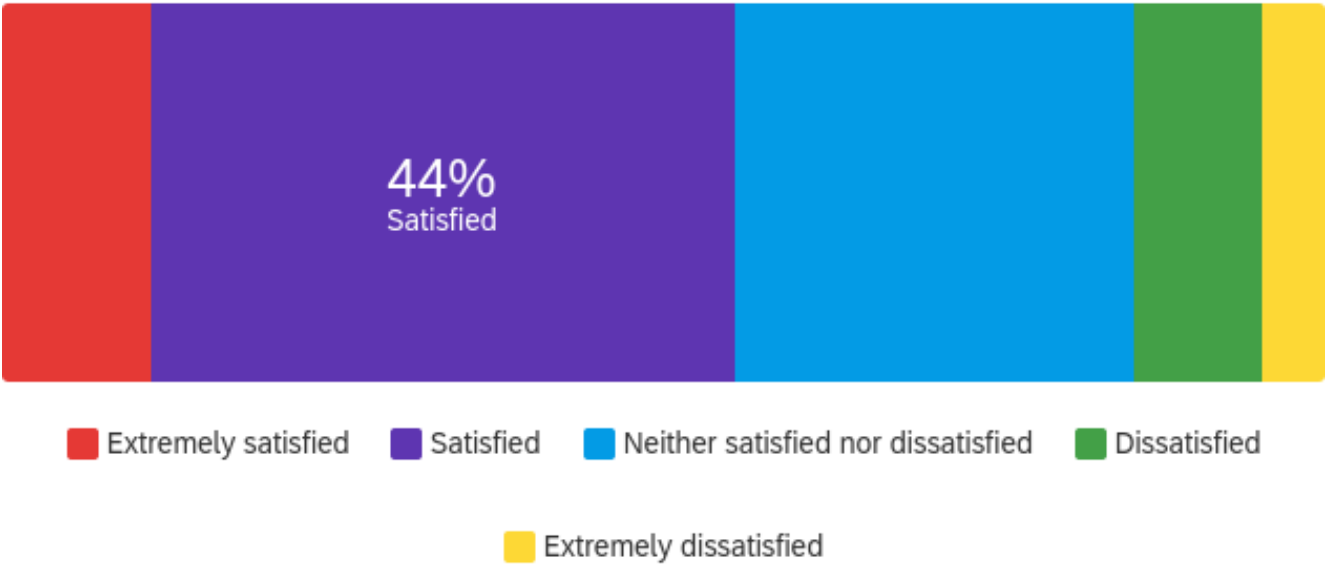
Responses of "I have not used or interacted with this aspect" and "I was unaware of this aspect" have been excluded from the graphics to focus attention on the satisfaction of respondents who have engaged with each aspect, however, the percentage of responses for both excluded categories is included in the notes below each graphic for perspective.

Satisfaction with Students' Union Programs and Services



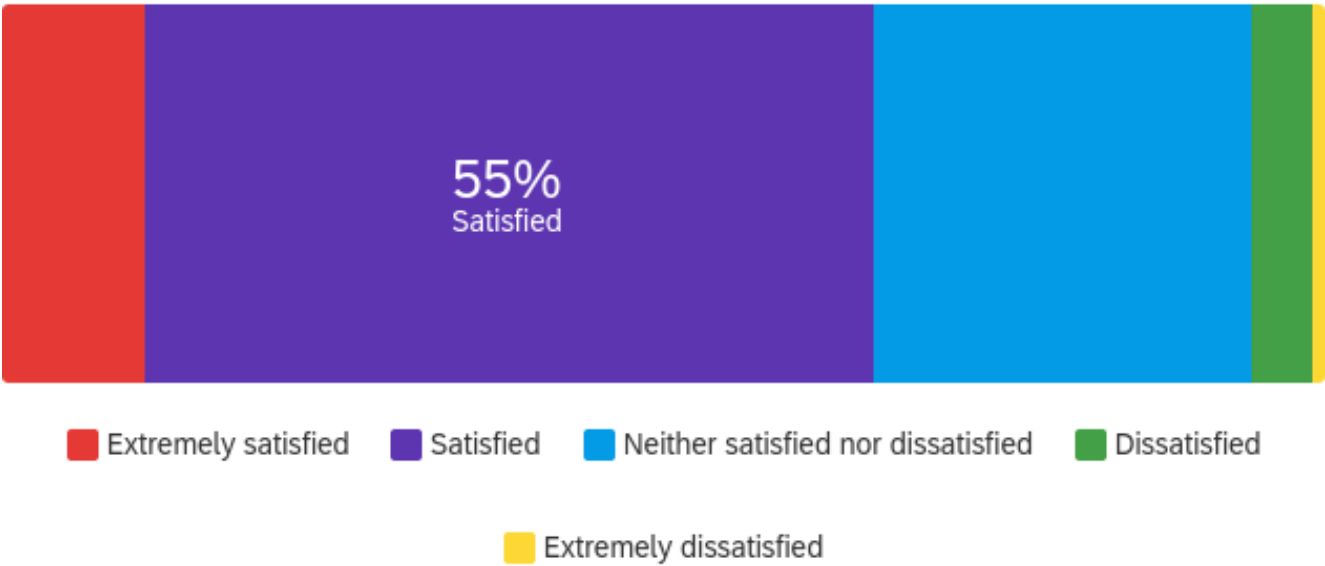
12% of all respondents to this question indicated they have not used or interacted with Students' Union programs and services. 5% of respondents were unaware of them.

Satisfaction with Students' Union Advocacy and Representation



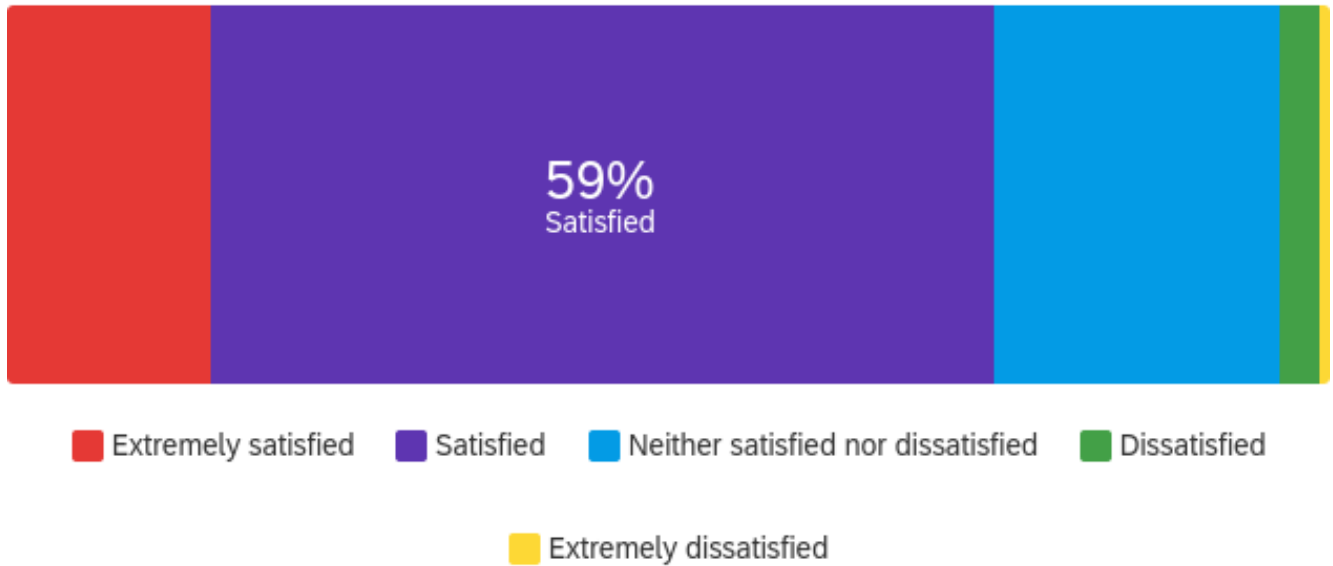
15% of all respondents to this question indicated they have not used or interacted with Students' Union advocacy and representation. 11% of respondents were unaware of them.

Satisfaction with Students' Union Events and Activities



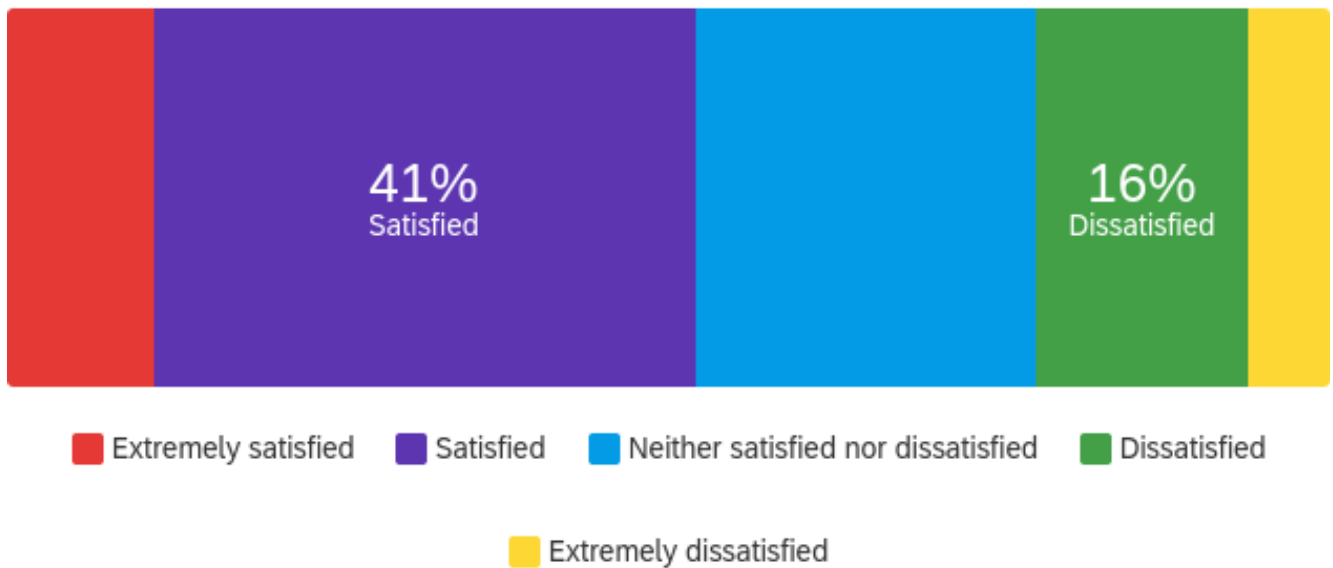
12% of all respondents to this question indicated they have not used or interacted with Students' Union events and activities. 4% of respondents were unaware of them.

Satisfaction with Students' Union Clubs



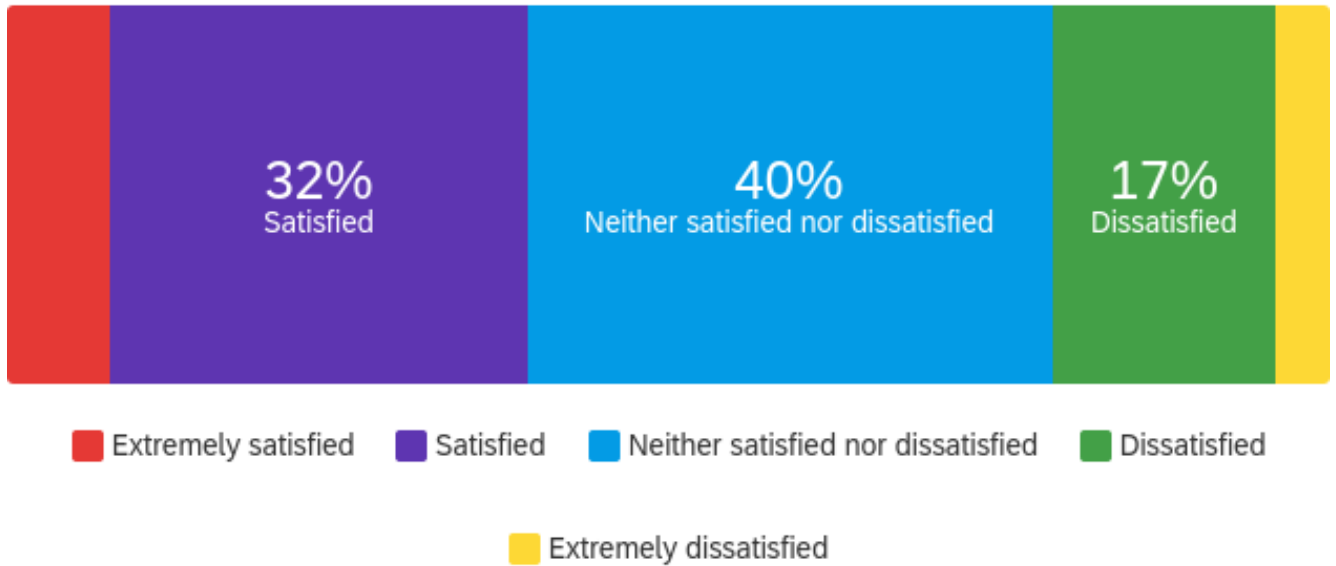
13% of all respondents to this question indicated they have not used or interacted with Students' Union clubs. 2% of respondents were unaware of them.

Satisfaction with the Students' Union Health & Dental Plan



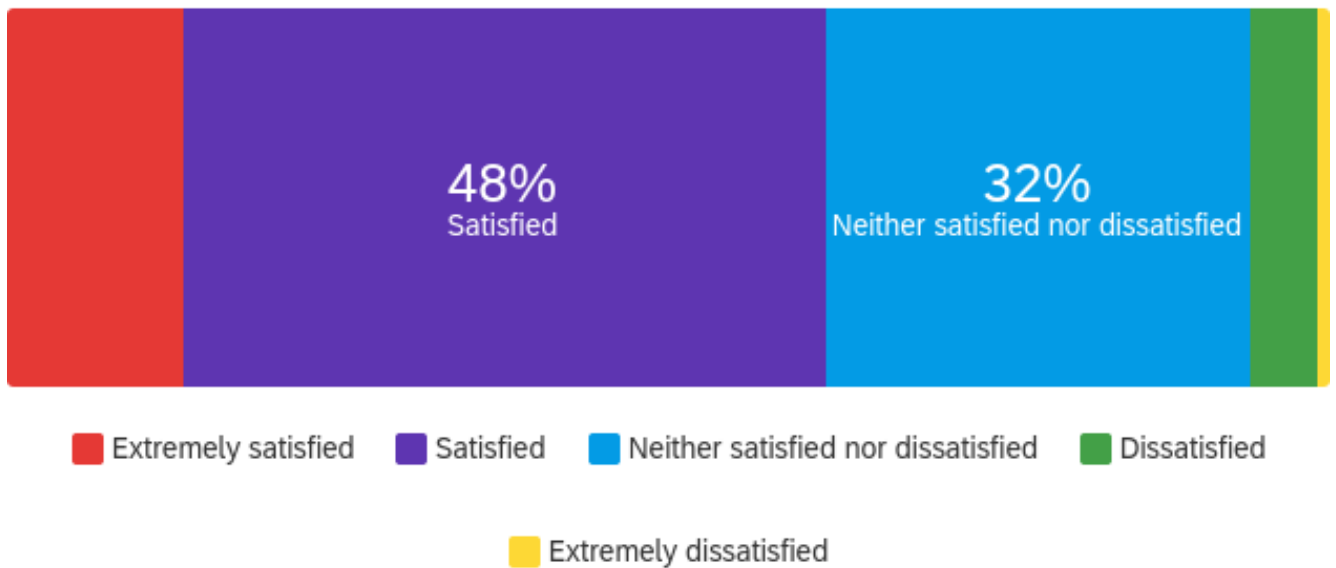
33% of all respondents to this question indicated they have not used or interacted with the Students' Union Health and Dental Plan. 3% of respondents were unaware of it.

Satisfaction with Students' Union Employment Opportunities



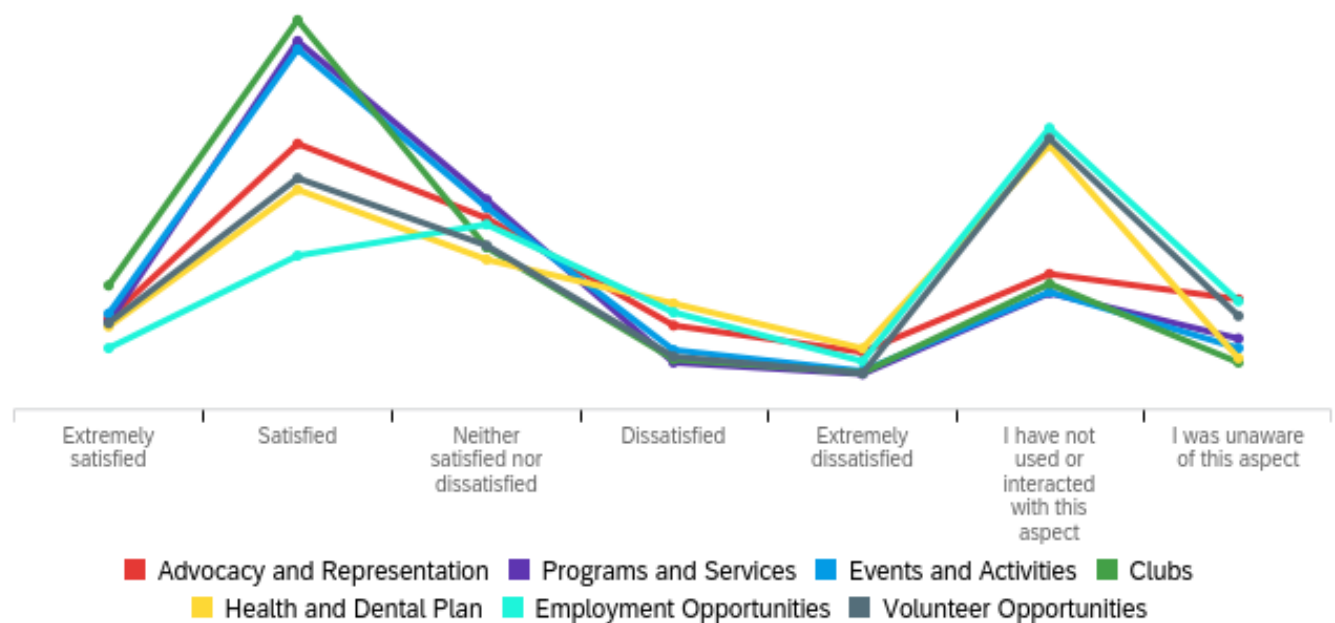
35% of all respondents to this question indicated they have not used or interacted with Students' Union employment opportunities. 11% of respondents were unaware of them.

Satisfaction with Students' Union Volunteer Opportunities



34% of all respondents to this question indicated they have not used or interacted with Students' Union programs and services. 9% of respondents were unaware of them.

Satisfaction with Students' Union (Comparative)



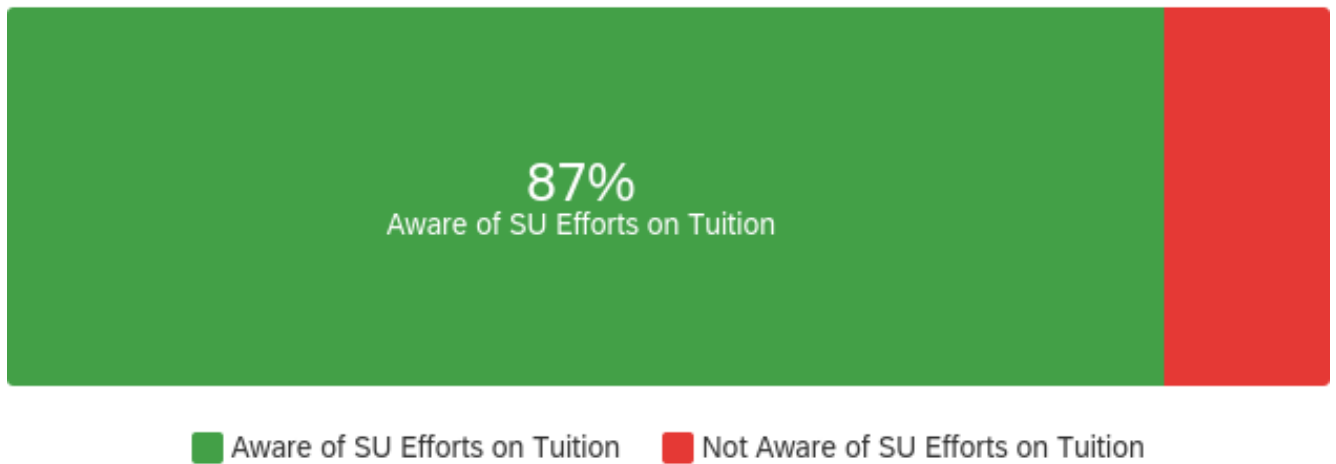
In this view, the satisfaction levels with different aspects of the Students' Union (including responses of those who have not used/interacted with or were unaware of them) can be easily compared.

The most highly satisfied responses overall were for Students' Union Clubs, which was also the most engaged with and most recognizable aspect of the Students' Union amongst respondents. While employment opportunities with the Students' Union were the least satisfactory aspect amongst respondents, it was also the least engaged with and least recognizable. However, the Health and Dental Plan, Employment Opportunities, and Advocacy and Representation were the three aspects with the highest portion of "Dissatisfied" or "Extremely Dissatisfied" responses. It is encouraging to see that students who were dissatisfied or extremely dissatisfied represent a small minority of respondents overall: students were more than twice as likely to have not used their Health and Dental Plan than to be dissatisfied or extremely dissatisfied with it, and only 12% of respondents reported being dissatisfied or extremely dissatisfied with the SU's advocacy and representation efforts, compared to 36% of respondents who reported being satisfied or extremely satisfied.

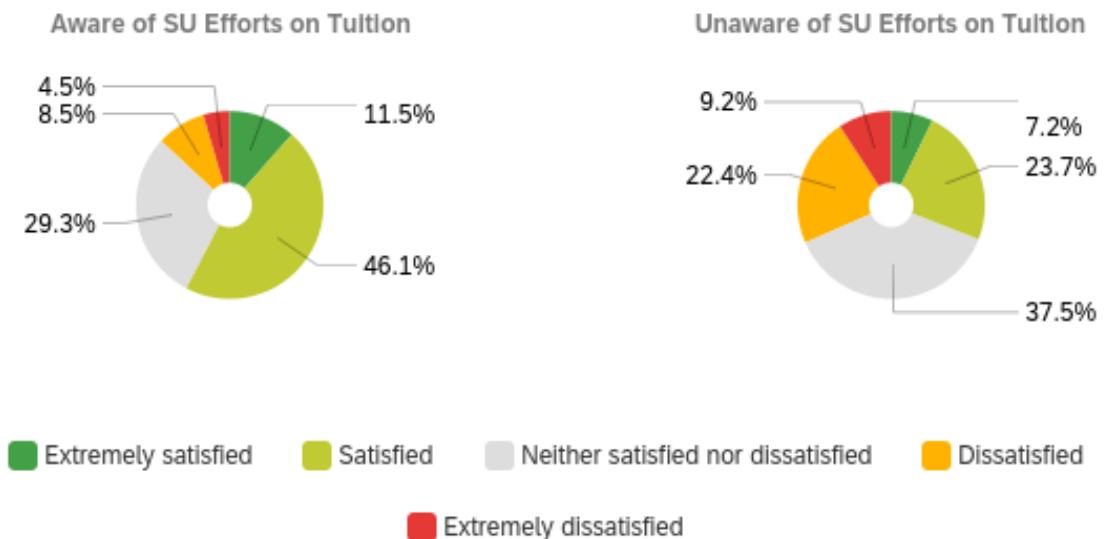
In general, most aspects of the Students' Union were met with "Satisfied" or "Extremely Satisfied" responses. After these responses, students were more likely to have not used an aspect or be unaware of an aspect than to be dissatisfied with their experience. These results indicate that the SU needs to continue to work to spread awareness regarding the wide variety of programs, services, and opportunities it provides to undergraduate students.

SU Advocacy and Representation & Tuition Advocacy Data

Percentage of Respondents by Awareness of SU Advocacy on Tuition to the University



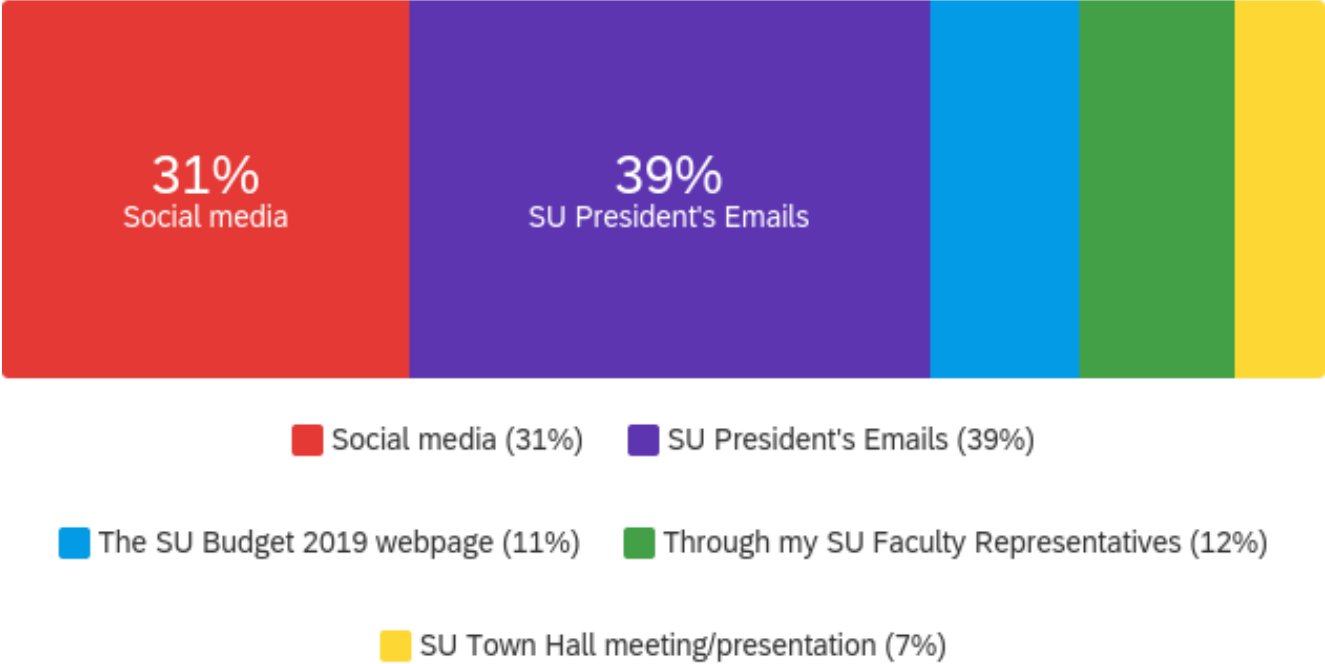
The above graphic displays the percentage of respondents who were actively aware of the Students' Union's advocacy efforts on the issue of tuition increases and changes to post-secondary budgets in Alberta at the time of the survey. 87% responded they were aware of the SU's efforts; however, given other indicators from the survey of an over-representation of highly engaged students in the survey, such as SU election participation rates, this number may also be an over-representation and the actual student population may be less aware of the SU's efforts.



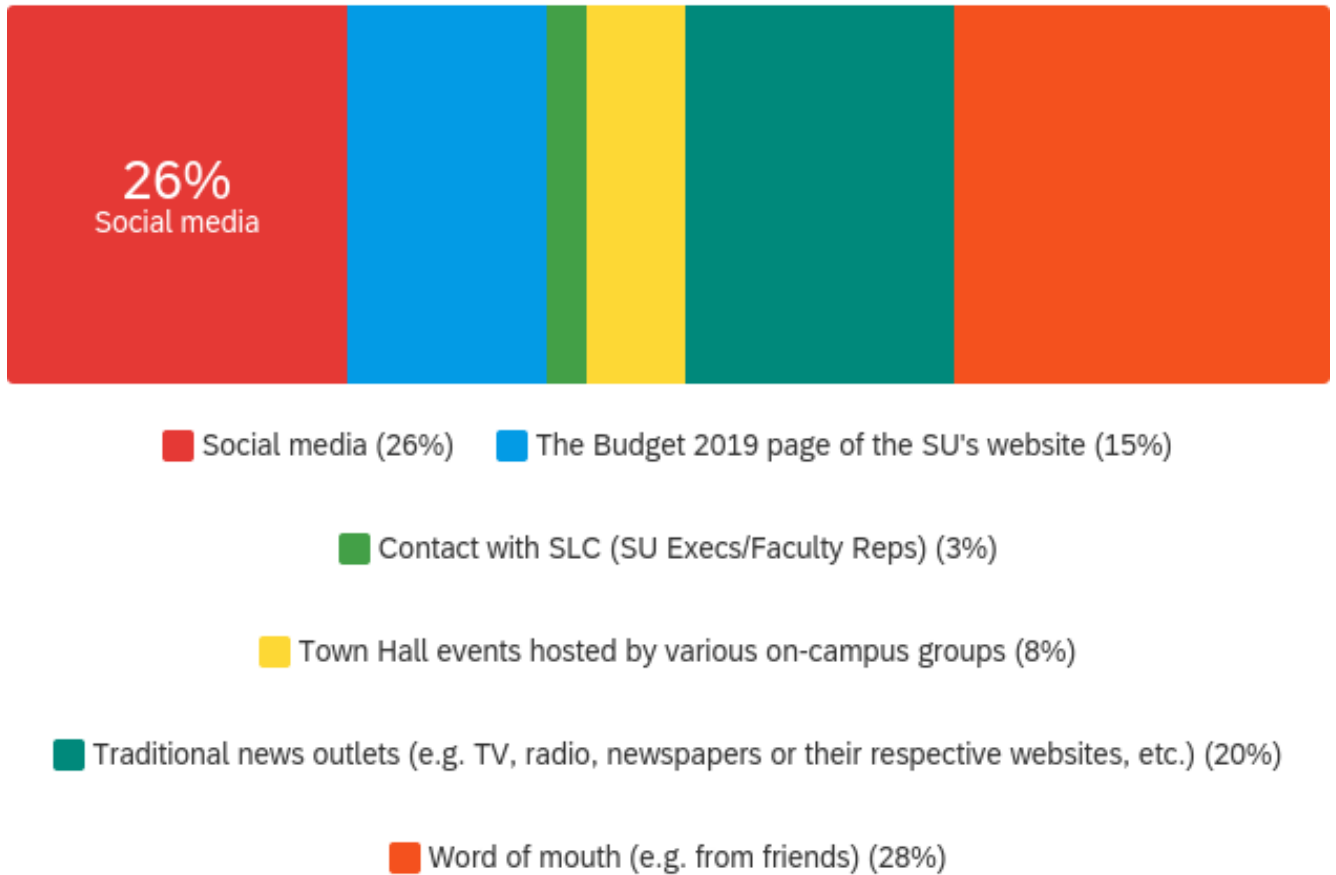
In the above graphic, a comparison of respondents' opinions towards SU advocacy and representation from Extremely Satisfied to Extremely Dissatisfied is broken down based on whether the respondent indicated they were aware of the SU's advocacy efforts on tuition increases at the University of Calgary in 2019/early 2020. Generally, the data shows that students who were unaware of the SU's efforts were

more likely to respond "dissatisfied" or "extremely dissatisfied." This indicates that some students may feel frustrated that information about what the SU does to advocate for students is not readily available or accessible to them, perhaps leading them to believe that the SU is not advocating on their behalf.

Preferred Method of Communication about SU Advocacy Work



How Respondents Learned About Changes to U of C Budget



The above two graphics display a contrast of how respondents indicated they would prefer to learn about SU advocacy efforts and how they had learned about changes to the University of Calgary budget and tuition (a major advocacy point for the Students' Union in 2019/2020).

Generally, most respondents learned about changes to the U of C's budget through word of mouth and through social media, while they indicated that they would mostly prefer to learn about advocacy efforts through social media and the SU President's emails, which were not used in communicating SU efforts on tuition/the University budget changes. As well, 12% of respondents said they would like to learn about these issues through their faculty representatives, while only 3% indicated they had heard from their representatives about the budget changes and tuition advocacy.

Respondents' Concerns About Changes to University Budget (2019)



■ Lack of consultation with students prior to cuts made by the Provincial Government (14%)

■ Increased cost of tuition for my program (20%)

■ Increased interest rates for provincial student loans (12%)

■ Cuts to University of Calgary academic programs and/or course offerings (16%)

■ Cuts to University of Calgary services (excl. programs and course offerings) (13%)

■ Uncertainty and/or lack of information about how the budget will impact students (13%)

■ Deferred maintenance program (i.e. overdue renovations and facility updates) (10%)

■ I do not have concerns about the proposed changes to the University of Calgary budget (1%)

The above graphic displays a breakdown of respondents' concerns regarding the changes to the 2019 University of Calgary budget. Respondents were able to choose more than one option. The most prominent concern amongst respondents was the increased cost of tuition for their program (20%), followed by the possibility of cuts to course offerings and programs from the University (16%).

1% of respondents indicated they were not concerned about changes to the University of Calgary budget in 2019.