



**NATIONAL SURVEY OF
STUDENT ENGAGEMENT
2008 RESULTS SUMMARY**

Office of Institutional Research & Analysis
October 2008

BACKGROUND

The notion of 'student engagement' has become an increasingly popular subject area for post-secondary institutions as they look to assess the overall quality of education that they deliver. Quite simply, a student's level of engagement can be measured through the amount of time spent on educational activities (academic work, extracurricular experiences, student/faculty relations etc.).

NSSE focuses on the nature of first-year and fourth-year students' undergraduate experience. The questions allow institutions to measure how successful they are at engaging students in activities and programs that they provide for students' academic and personal development.

NSSE provides data for specific comparison groups including the Ontario Consortium (combined results of all Ontario universities, excluding UOIT), a selected U.S. peer group (public institutions in selected U.S. states that compete with Ontario) and the entire NSSE population (consisting of 769 institutions in Canada and the U.S.).

This summary will look at the results for UOIT, including; the characteristics of respondents, NSSE benchmark performance and other notable findings.

RESPONDENTS

Response Rate

In the spring of 2008, students were e-mailed a survey invitation. All UOIT first-year students (1,944), and all UOIT fourth-year students (739), were e-mailed an invite. Of the survey population, 946 first-year students (49%) and 359 fourth-year students (49%) responded, resulting in an overall response rate of 49%.

Characteristics

For both first-year and fourth-year students, the typical UOIT respondent was male, 23 years of age or younger, residing off-campus and full-time. **Table 1** provides a comparison of UOIT's respondent characteristics to those of their Ontario peers. The amount of males responding at UOIT was distinctly different than that of other Ontario universities (55% of first-year students and 54% of fourth-year students).

It was also found that first-year UOIT students were far less likely to reside on-campus. Only 29% of respondents indicated that they lived on-campus, well below the 49% rate for the Ontario group. It should also be noted that 45% of first year students self-identified themselves as non-white. Compared to other Ontario universities (37%), the number is significant.

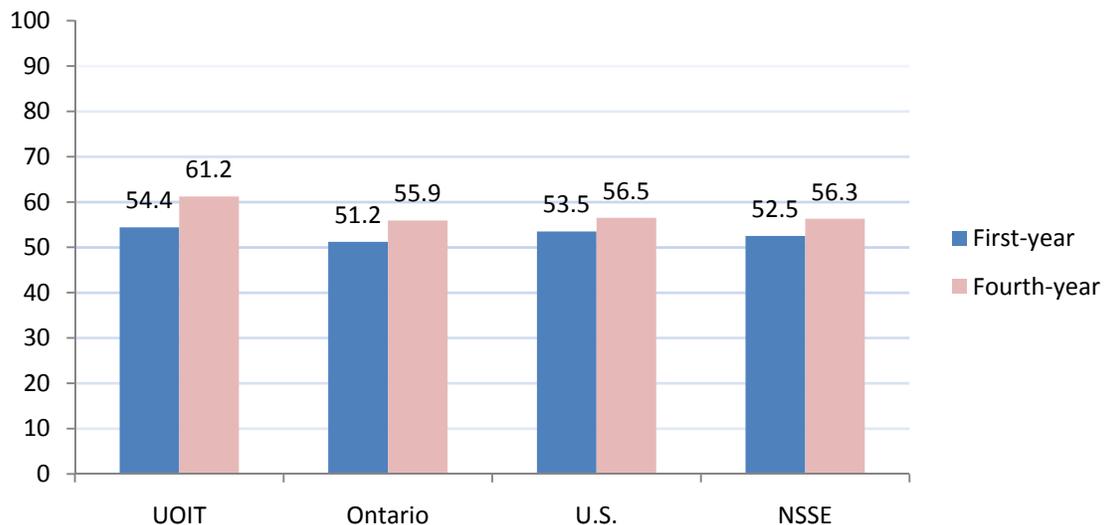
Table 1: Respondent Characteristics	UOIT		Ontario	
	First Year	Fourth Year	First Year	Fourth Year
Gender				
Female	45%	46%	63%	62%
Male	55%	54%	37%	38%
Enrolment Status				
Full-time	97%	94%	94%	83%
Less than full-time	3%	6%	6%	17%
Place of Residence				
On-campus	29%	6%	49%	6%
Off-campus	71%	94%	51%	94%
Age				
Non-traditional (24 or older)	18%	22%	7%	21%
Traditional (less than 24)	82%	78%	93%	79%

BENCHMARKS

NSSE groups a number of key questions into five broad categories called the Benchmarks of Effective Educational Practice.

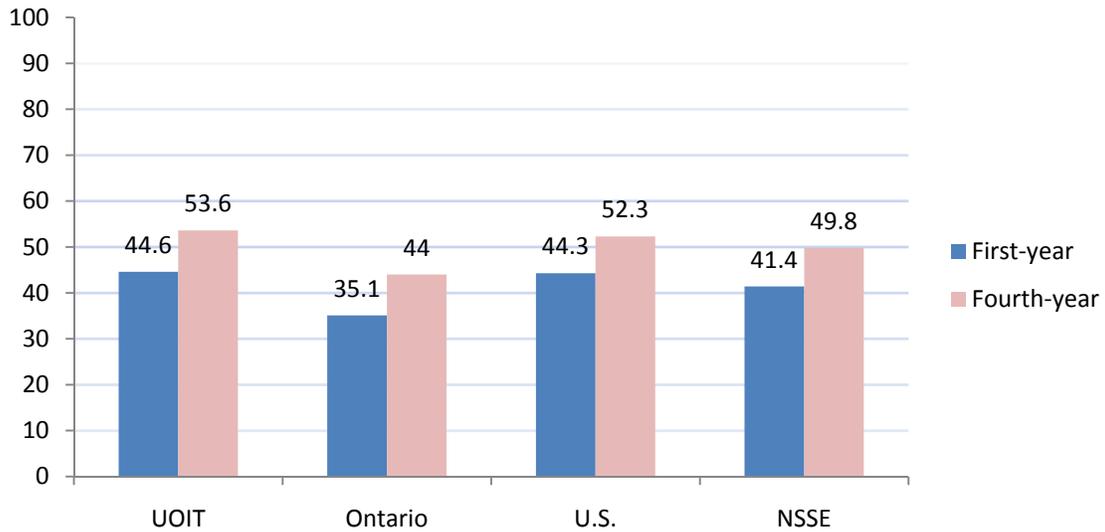
Level of Academic Challenge (LAC)

The nine questions included in the Level of Academic Challenge benchmark measure students' academic effort and institutional expectations of students. Both first-year and fourth-year students at UOIT scored higher than the Ontario Consortium, their U.S. Peer group and NSSE as a whole on this benchmark.



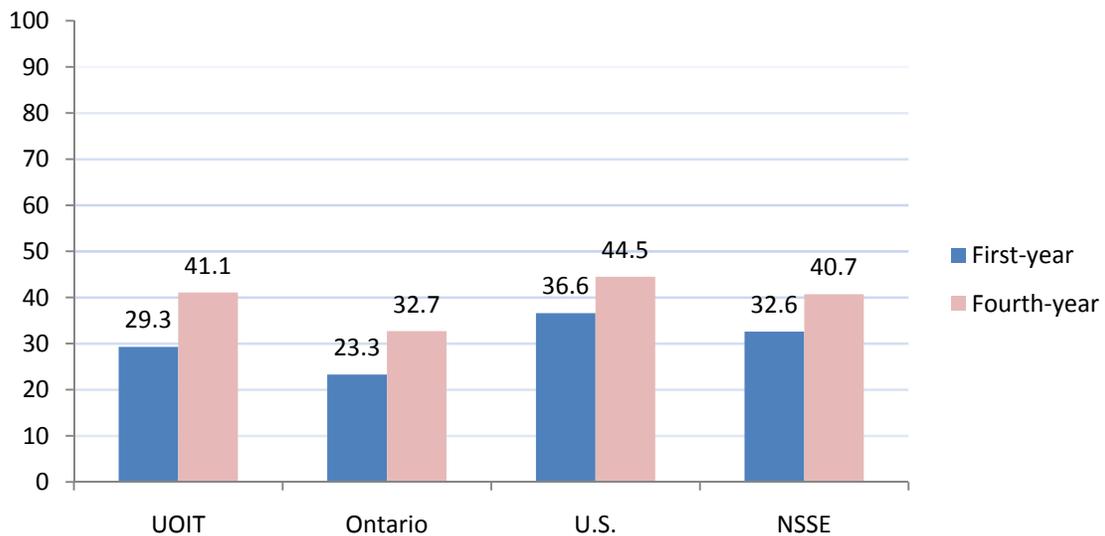
Active and Collaborative Learning (ACL)

This benchmark measures the extent to which students are participating in their education including the degree to which students are collaborating with others. Once again, both first-year and fourth-year respondents at UOIT had higher scores on this benchmark compared to Ontario, U.S. and NSSE peers.



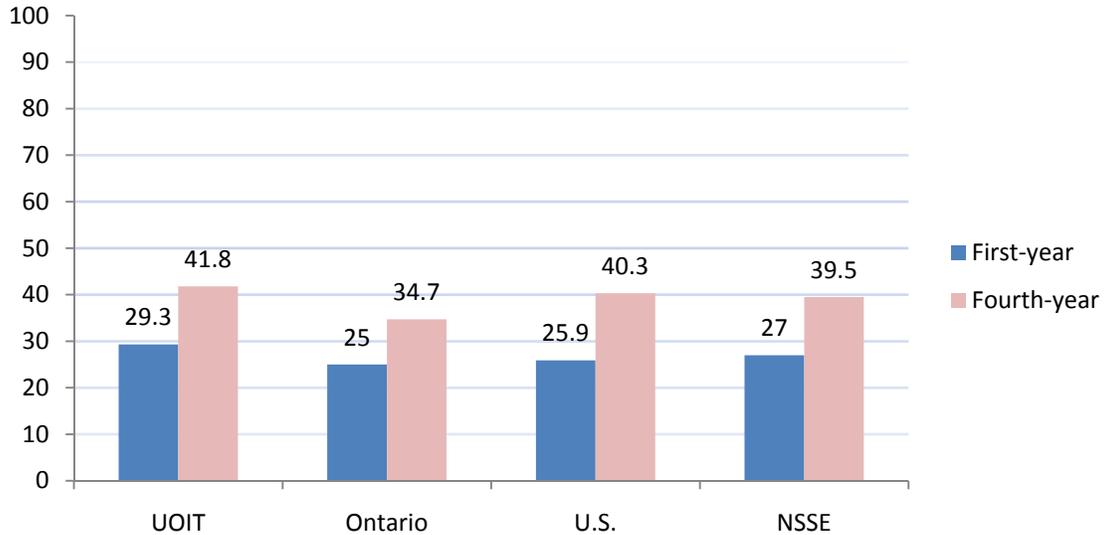
Student-Faculty Interaction (SFI)

The Student-Faculty Interaction benchmark measures the extent to which students engage in discussions with faculty members and work with faculty members on activities outside of their coursework. Both first-year and fourth-year students at UOIT reported significantly higher scores for Student-Faculty Interaction than the Ontario Consortium. However, in most cases, UOIT and other Ontario universities were below the average score for Student-Faculty Interaction in the U.S. and the NSSE group as a whole.



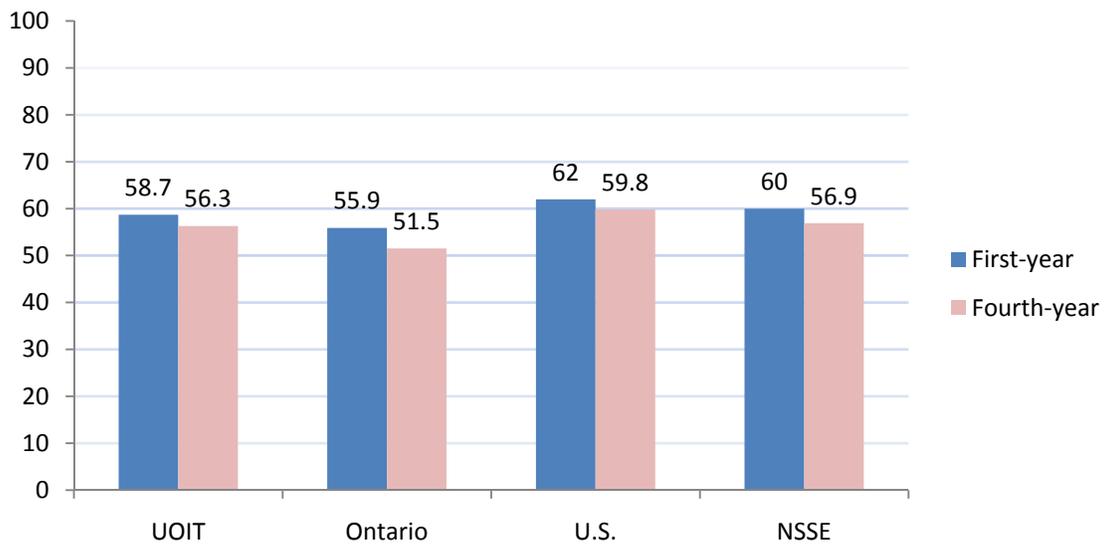
Enriching Educational Experiences (EEE)

The Enriching Educational Experiences benchmark looks at complementary learning activities. First-year and fourth-year students at UOIT again outperformed their Ontario, U.S. and NSSE peer groups.



Supportive Campus Environment (SCE)

The Supportive Campus Environment benchmark measures the quality of relationships that students have with those around them and whether the University supports them academically and socially. According to both first-year and fourth-year students, UOIT provides a more supportive campus environment compared to other Ontario universities. UOIT’s results compared to the U.S. and NSSE as a whole are slightly lower.



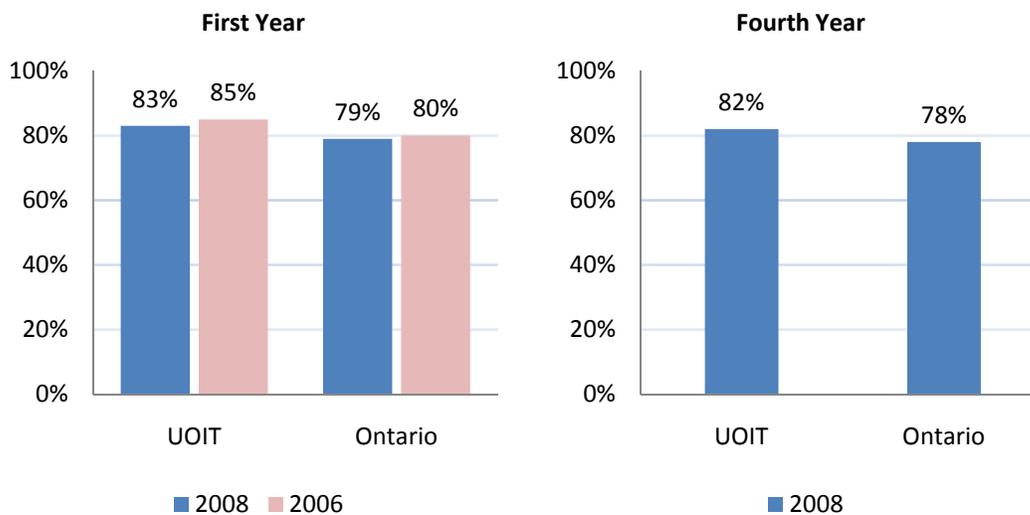
NOTABLES

In addition to the questions that comprised the five benchmarks, students were also asked a number of other questions dealing with various levels of engagement. Presented here are the findings for selected survey items, beginning with respondents' overall impressions of UOIT. Note that the 2006 NSSE results only include first year students since UOIT had no senior year at the time of the survey.

Overall Satisfaction Remains High

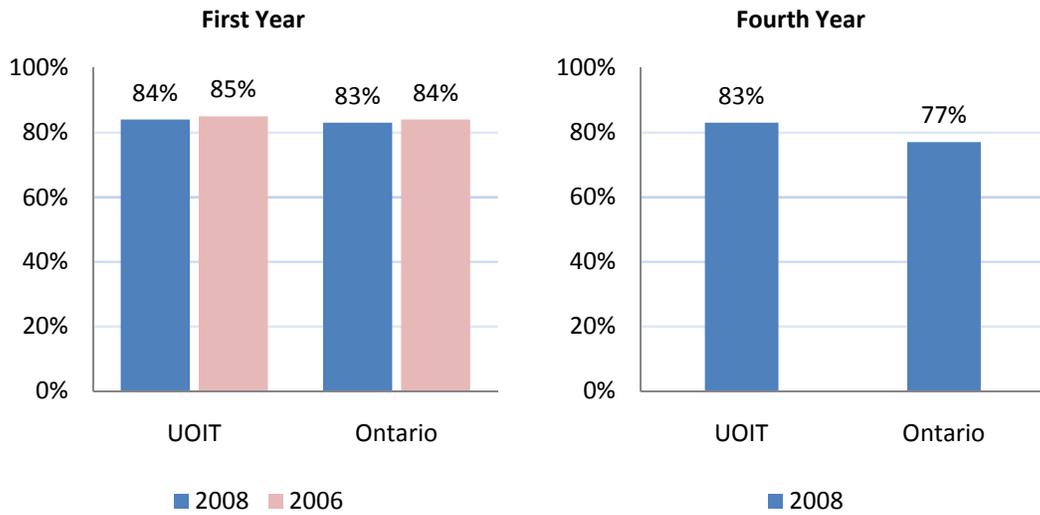
Students were asked two questions in relation to their overall satisfaction. The first asked them to evaluate their entire educational experience. As seen in **Figure 6**, 83% of first-year respondents and 82% of fourth-year respondents rated their entire educational experience at UOIT as either 'good' or 'excellent'. These numbers are slightly higher compared to other Ontario universities.

Figure 6 - Entire Educational Experience ('Excellent' or 'Good')



As a follow up question, students were then asked if they could start over again, would they attend the same institution they are currently attending. **Figure 7** shows that the results for first-year UOIT respondents that said 'Probably yes' or 'Definitely yes' (84%) was in line with the average for Ontario. Fourth-year respondents displayed a bit more confidence when asked the same question compared to respondents at other Ontario universities.

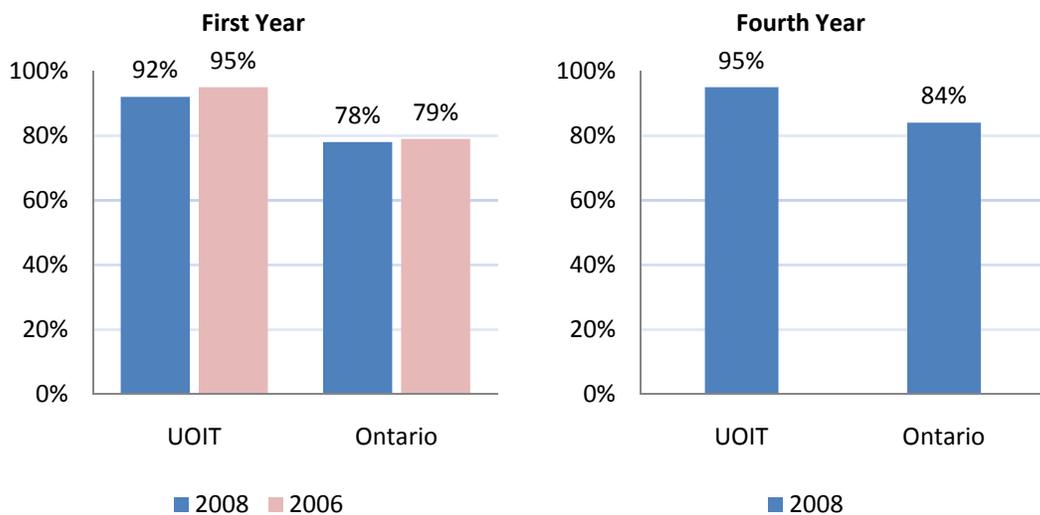
Figure 7 – Same Institution Again (‘Definitely Yes’ or ‘Probably Yes’)



Prominent Use of Technology at UOIT

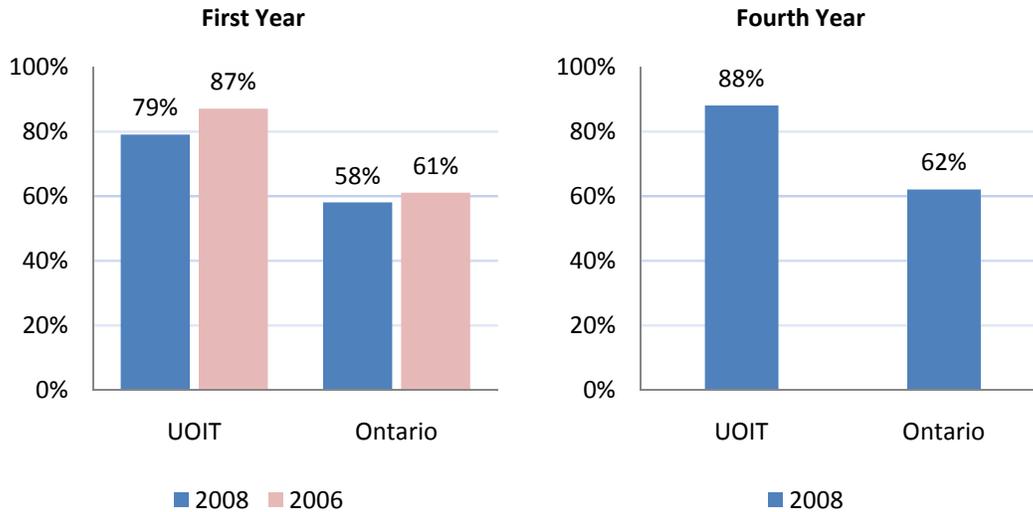
Students were asked several questions that revolved around the use and influence of computers and information technology. When asked to what extent their institution had emphasized the use of computers in academic work, 92% of first-year students indicated that UOIT did ‘very much’ or ‘quite a bit’, while 95% of fourth-year respondents said the same (**Figure 8**). These numbers exceeded the measures for Ontario (78% for first-year, 84% fourth-year).

Figure 8 – Use of Computers in Academic Work (‘Very much’ or ‘Quite a bit’)



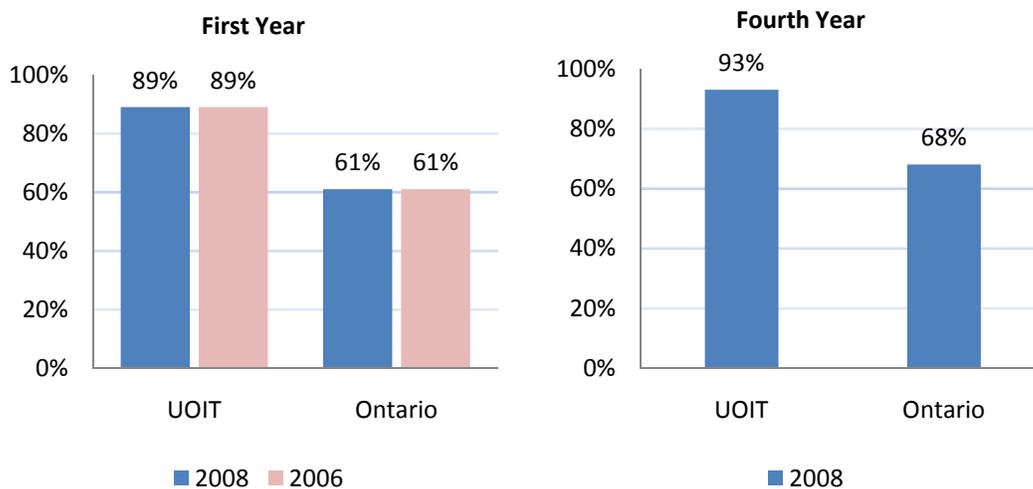
In terms of the actual use of computers and IT, students were asked if they had used an electronic medium (chat group, internet etc.) to discuss or complete an assignment. **Figure 9** reveals that 81% of first-year and 88% of fourth-year students indicated that they ‘very often’ or ‘often’ used an electronic medium to discuss or complete an assignment. Again, these numbers significantly outperformed the rates for other Ontario universities.

Figure 9 – Used an Electronic Medium (‘Very often’ or ‘Often’)



The lasting influence of computers and IT at UOIT was evident in the response to a question on the role institutions played in skills and development. As shown in **Figure 10**, 88% of first-year and 93% of fourth-year students indicated that their experience at UOIT had ‘very much’ or ‘quite a bit’ contributed to their knowledge, skills, and personal development in computing and IT. These results significantly outperformed the mark for Ontario (61% for first-year, 68% for fourth-year).

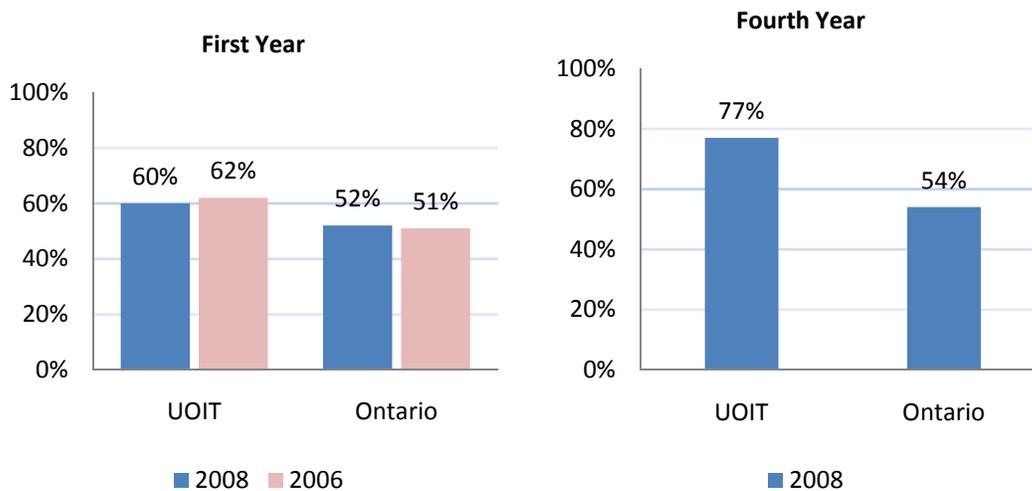
Figure 10 – Lasting Effect of Computing and IT (‘Very much’ or ‘Quite a bit’)



UOIT's Programs Prepare for the Real World

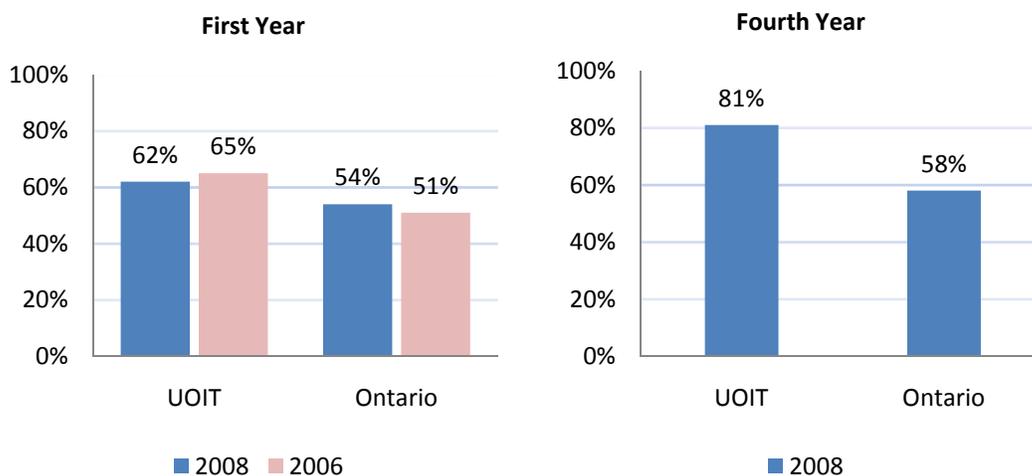
A number of questions dealt with student impressions of not only the practical application of their work at university, but their institution's ability to prepare them for relevant careers or 'real-world' work. **Figure 11** shows that 60% of first-year and 77% of fourth-year respondents felt that UOIT 'very much' or 'quite a bit' contributed to their knowledge, skills, and development in solving real-world problems. The gap between the rate for UOIT and Ontario was significant.

Figure 11 – Solving Complex Real-World Problems ('Very much' or 'Quite a bit')



Students were asked to what extent their experience at their institution contributed to their knowledge, skills, and personal development at acquiring a job or work-related knowledge and skills. **Figure 12** reveals that 66% of first-year respondents and 81% of fourth-year respondents felt that their experience at UOIT had 'very much' or 'quite a bit' contributed. These measures significantly outperformed the indicators for Ontario.

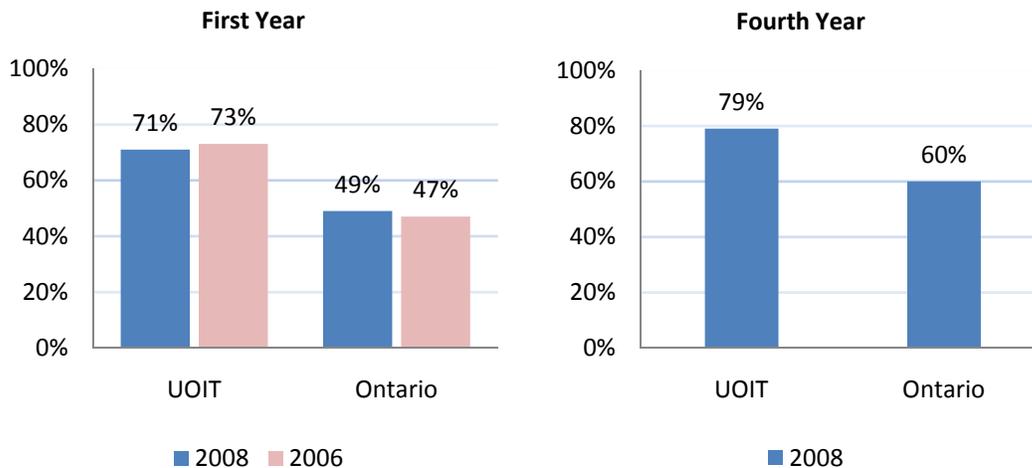
Figure 12 – Acquiring a Job and Work-Related Skills ('Very much' or 'Quite a bit')



UOIT Students Continue to Work Together

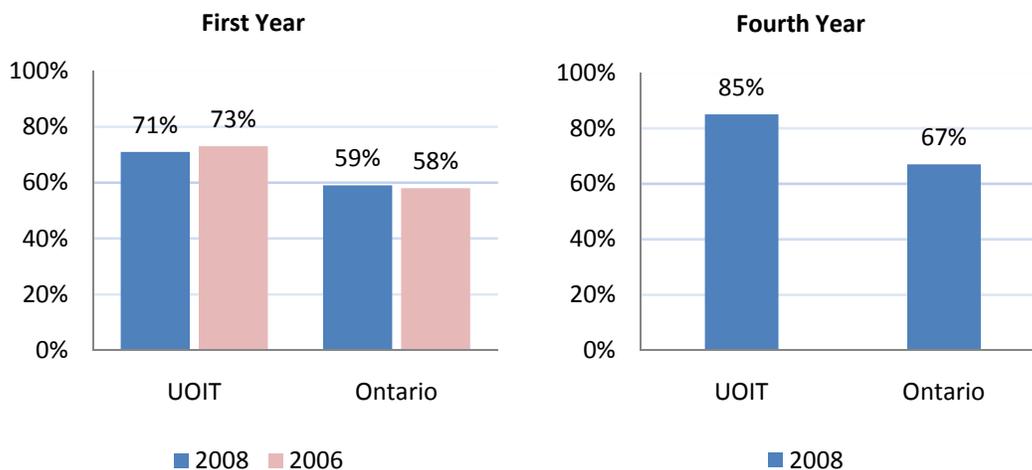
Students were asked a series of questions about their work with others. Questions ranged from work inside and outside of the classroom to effectiveness working with others. In **Figure 13**, it can be seen that 73% of first-year respondents and 79% of fourth year respondents indicated that they had worked ‘very often’ or ‘often’ with classmates outside of class to prepare class assignments. Both results outperformed the measures for other Ontario universities.

Figure 13 – Worked Together Outside of Class (‘Very often’ or ‘Often’)



Similarly, the question was posed to students about the contribution their institution had made to their knowledge, skills, and personal development in working with others. **Figure 14** illustrates that 73% of first-year respondents and 85% of fourth-year respondents felt that their experience at UOIT had ‘very much’ or ‘quite a bit’ contributed to their abilities with respect to working with others. Those rates outperformed the indicators for Ontario (59% first-year and 67% fourth-year).

Figure 14 – University Contribution to Collaborative Abilities (‘Very much’ or ‘Quite a bit’)



SIGNIFICANT CHANGES FROM 2006

In 2006, UOIT participated in NSSE for the first time. Since UOIT had no fourth-year students at the time, only first-year students were surveyed. Even with previous data for only one year level, it is possible to track the changing engagement levels of incoming first-year students. The following takes a brief look at some of the significant changes in first-year responses from 2006 to 2008.

Building Community... A common sense of community is growing on campus. 40% of first year students 'strongly' or 'very strongly' felt that they experienced a sense of community at UOIT. These numbers are up from the same time in 2006 when only 34% of respondents felt the same way.

Starting Elsewhere... More students are arriving in their first year having initiated their university career at UOIT. In 2006, 87% of first-year respondents indicated that they began their university career at UOIT. In 2008, the measure was 89%.

Dependents... A sizeable amount of time for first-year UOIT students is spent providing care for dependents. In 2006, 41% of respondents spent between 1-20 hours per week caring for dependents. In 2008, the rate jumped to 47% for those spending 1-20 hours of care.

Study Space... The lack of sufficient study space continues to be an issue at UOIT. In 2006, 29% of first-year students selected it as one of the two top items that UOIT needs to address. In 2008, 43% of respondents flagged it as an urgent issue.

Extracurricular Experience... In 2006, one of the areas that UOIT students lacked engagement in was participation in extracurricular activities. At that time, only 8% of first-year respondents indicated that they 'very often' or 'often' attended an art exhibit, gallery, play, dance, or other theatre performance. The 2008 result showed a significant increase in participation with 16% noting they attended 'very often' or 'often'.

Preparing for Class... First-year students reported spending less time preparing for class. In 2006, 12% of respondents indicated that they spent 30 hours or more per week preparing for class. In 2008, the percentage dipped to 7%.

Working Off-Campus... The number of UOIT students that worked for pay off-campus is increasing. In 2006, 38% of first-year respondents noted that they worked some degree of time off-campus for pay. In 2008, the rate increased to 45%.

CONCLUSION

In many areas, UOIT first-year and fourth-year students reported substantive levels of engagement. When compared to the Ontario Consortium, UOIT respondents were significantly more engaged in a number of ways. This outperformance was especially noticeable in the benchmarks, where the UOIT results were higher in every case. When compared to the U.S. peer group and the NSSE population as a whole, UOIT is on par with their results. In fact, in some cases, such as selected benchmark results, UOIT comes out on top.

Generally, first-year respondents had lower engagement scores than fourth-year respondents. This tendency was especially evident in the benchmark results. The fact that upper year students were more engaged is not too surprising given the amount of time spent on campus, and level of comfort, that fourth-year students would have compared to their newly arrived first-year peers.

Compared to 2006, first-year UOIT students are becoming increasingly more engaged. From more quality relationships to more time spent in extracurricular activities, the improvement is apparent. Likely the most telling result is the significant rise in the amount of students that felt there was a real sense of community at UOIT. A number of efforts have revolved around building this spirit on campus over the past few years and this result offers evidence of success.

Ontario universities are now on a 3-year cycle to administer NSSE. The survey will be run again in the winter of 2011. Moving forward, UOIT will now be able to compare and monitor engagement for fourth-year students, as well as first-year students, over time.

For more information on NSSE or the survey itself, please visit nsse.iub.edu.

For more information on UOIT and other survey results, please visit www.uoit.ca/oira.

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The 2008 Ontario Consortium

Brock University (St. Catharines)
Carleton University (Ottawa)
King's University College (London)
Lakehead University (Thunder Bay)
Laurentian University (Sudbury)
McMaster University (Hamilton)
Nipissing University (North Bay)
Ontario College of Art & Design (Toronto)
Queen's University (Kingston)
Ryerson University (Toronto)
Trent University (Peterborough)
University of Ontario Institute of Technology (Oshawa)
University of Ottawa (Ottawa)
University of Guelph (Guelph)
University of Toronto (Toronto)
University of Waterloo (Waterloo)
University of Western Ontario (London)
University of Windsor (Windsor)
Wilfrid Laurier University (Waterloo)
York University (Toronto)

U.S. Peer Group (Carnegie Classification)

The following is a list of the participating U.S. institutions that made up the 'U.S. peer' comparison group:

Belmont Abbey College
Black Hills State University
Bloomfield College
Brigham Young University-Hawaii
Centenary College
Central Methodist University
Clarke College
Colby-Sawyer College
Concordia University-Saint Paul
CUNY Medgar Evers College
Daemen College
Dakota State University
Dakota Wesleyan University
Defiance College
Dickinson State University
Elmira College
Flagler College
Florida Southern College
Grove City College
Illinois College
Indiana University East
Keuka College
LaGrange College
Lenoir-Rhyne College
Lyndon State College
Martin Methodist College
McMurry University
Metropolitan State College of Denver
Millikin University
Missouri Western State University
New England College
Ohio Northern University
Ramapo College of New Jersey
Roger Williams University
Russell Sage College
Saint Josephs College
Saint Mary's College
Southern Adventist University

Southwestern College
Thiel College
Unity College
University of Charleston
University of Maine at Farmington
University of Science and Arts of
Oklahoma
University of South Carolina Aiken
University of the Ozarks
Villa Julie College
Voorhees College
Wilson College
Wingate University