

# Fact Sheet

## Quality

### Chapter 3: Third Annual Review and Research Plan

This chapter deals with how Ontario's postsecondary education system can define and measure a quality education.

#### Key Challenges

It is difficult to find an appropriate measure of educational quality and targets or benchmarks against which to compare actual performance. HEQCO believes that a quality education system is one where there is effective teaching and learning (which we characterize as programs that achieve clearly-defined learning outcomes), and one where the great majority of students will graduate, and will do so in a reasonable period of time.

#### Options for Measuring Quality

##### Colleges

Three surveys are conducted annually in Ontario's college sector as part of the KPI requirement. Colleges use the KPI data for internal program review, as a measure of intervention success, and for student recruitment. The Ministry also ties a small amount of funding to the results. We believe that these surveys, with results properly interpreted, are useful indicators of the overall quality of education offered in Ontario's colleges.

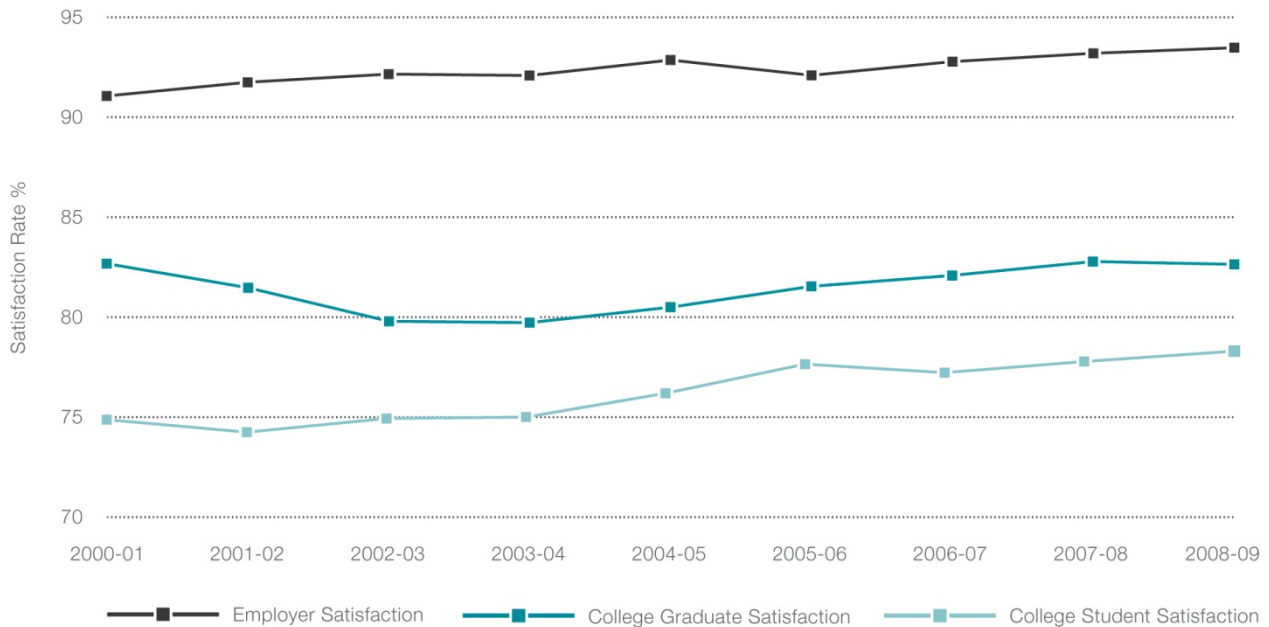
The *Student Satisfaction Survey* is administered to all enrolled students beyond their first semester. A summary question (# 47) asks students to "Rate the importance of, and your satisfaction with, your overall college experience." In the *Graduate Satisfaction Survey*, the summary question (# 34) asks "How would you rate your satisfaction with the usefulness of your college education in achieving your goals after graduation?" In the *Employer Satisfaction Survey*, the summary question is "In general, how would you rate your satisfaction with this employee's overall college preparation for the type of work he/she was doing?"

Figure 3.1 shows provincial average results for the three summary questions for the period 2000-01 to 2008-09. The results are remarkably consistent among the surveys and over time. Interestingly, employer ratings are always highest, with over 90 per cent consistently reporting that they were

“satisfied” or “very satisfied” with their employees’ preparation.<sup>1</sup> Graduates reported somewhat lower satisfaction rates, although these scores still range between 80 per cent and 85 per cent. Satisfaction rates on the student survey are the lowest of the three groups, although, even here, scores range between 75 per cent and 80 per cent, with a slight upward trend.

**FIGURE 3.1**  
Employer, College Graduate and College Student Satisfaction Rates, 2000-01 to 2008-09 (Percentage “Satisfied” or “Very Satisfied”)

Source: MTCU “College Student Satisfaction Surveys”



## Universities

Ontario universities have two main surveys that, interpreted properly, provide useful information on teaching and learning quality.

### ***National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE)***

NSSE is the leading tool for measuring student engagement in universities. In 2004, 11 Canadian universities participated, seven of them in Ontario. In 2006, 31 participated, including all 19 in Ontario. In 2008, 38 Canadian institutions participated, again including 19 universities and one affiliate in Ontario. Participation in NSSE is now to the point where it is possible to compare results among provinces and to look at changes over time for individual universities.

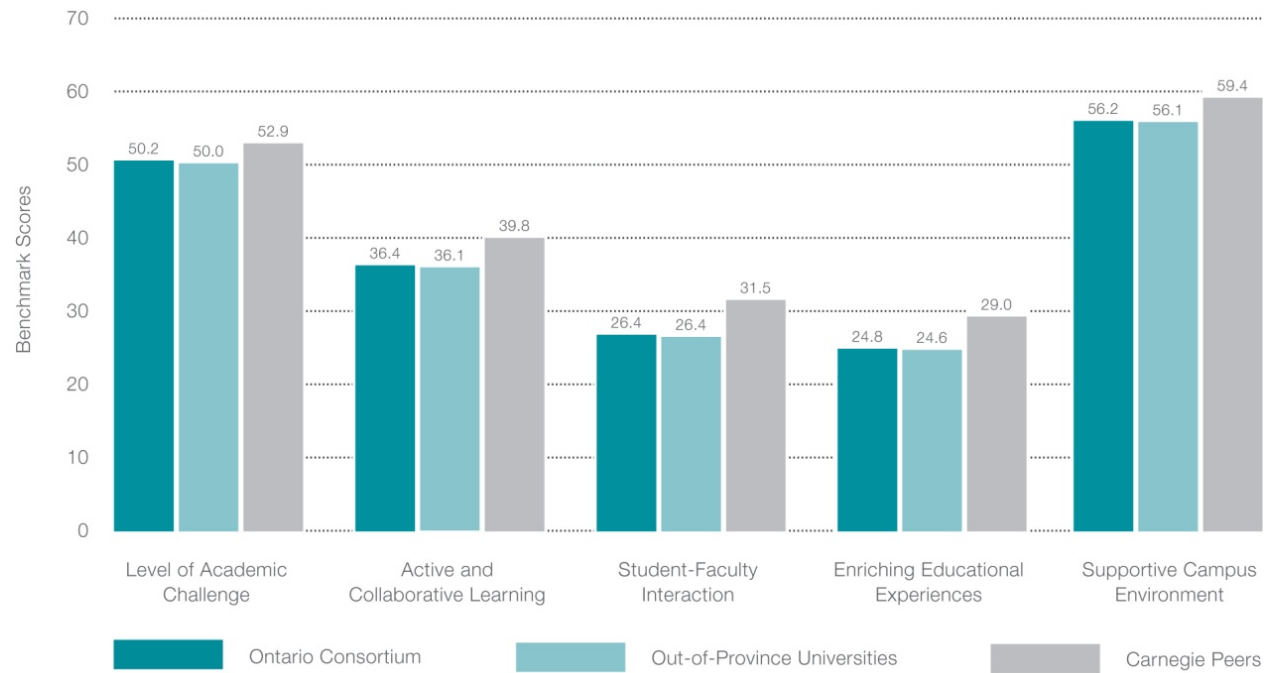
<sup>1</sup> We noted earlier that employee permission is required for employers to be contacted, so there may be an upward bias in these responses.

The results for the 2008 NSSE survey are now available. Figures 3.6 and 3.7 show the average scores for the five benchmarks for Ontario, for other provinces and for Carnegie peers for first-year and fourth-year students respectively. The 2008 results are similar to those for previous years. There are no significant differences between the Ontario average and that for out-of-province universities for any of the five benchmarks for first-year students. Canadian institutions lag their Carnegie peers in all cases.

The results for fourth-year students again are broadly similar. Ontario and Canadian universities match their Carnegie peers in three categories, but lag behind them notably in two others – student-faculty interaction, and enriching educational experiences.

**FIGURE 3.6**  
**Comparison of Average Benchmark Scores of Ontario Universities with Out-of-Province Universities and Carnegie Peers, 2008 NSSE for First-Year Students**

Source: CUDO, NSSE 2008 Institutional Benchmark Report



**FIGURE 3.7**  
**Comparison of Average Benchmark Scores of Ontario Universities with of Out-of-Province Universities and Carnegie Peers, 2008 NSSE For Fourth-Year Students**

Source: CUJO, NSSE 2008 Institutional Benchmark Report

