

# Voluntary Sector Studies Network



## Students' perceptions, knowledge and expectations of voluntary/nonprofit sector courses and careers

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## SUMMARY

### Introduction

The voluntary sector in Canada is massive, employing over two million Canadians (Faul, 2014, p. 11). According to Hall et al., Saskatchewan has the second highest number of voluntary organizations per capita in the country (2004). However, Saskatchewan does not offer any post-secondary education programs on the sector (Tremka & Karman, 2015). This student survey is part of a series of research projects focused on voluntary sector education in order to determine the need and demand for academic programming in Saskatchewan.

The purpose of this research is for the Voluntary Sector Studies Network (VSSN) to explore the perceptions, knowledge and expectations of university students about the voluntary/nonprofit sector. This will allow us to understand university students' needs and expectations in order to better develop university curriculum and courses which will allow us to build and shape a new certificate in Voluntary Sector Studies.

### Methods

A sample of 100 students was created based on a convenience sampling strategy. Surveys were circulated at a VSSN booth in the University of Regina Riddell Centre, through a 'VSSN open house' where students were invited to complete surveys in the commons area at Luther College at the University of Regina, and through distribution in various classes at Luther College. The sample size was purposefully selected. A random representative sample was not achieved because the classes that completed the surveys were all within Luther College. Questions were asked in a variety of forms including closed-ended questions, Likert scales, circle all that apply questions, open-ended questions, and partially closed-ended questions. Data was entered and analyzed in an Excel spreadsheet.

### Results

Highlights of our main results are now presented.

- We ensured all questions seeking demographic information were open-ended to allow respondents to self-identify. Demographic information included:
  - A diversity of students participated in the survey. Respondents were from **10** different faculties, majoring in **38** various areas.
  - Most student respondents (**72%**) were in their later years (*3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup>*) of study.
  - The majority (**77%**) of students were *female* while **20%** of students were *male* and **3%** did not answer the question.
  - Respondents were from **13** various ethnic/cultural groups.
  - Respondents named **59** various careers when asked about their career aspirations.



- Over half of the respondents (**57%**) were involved in the voluntary sector, either working or volunteering.
- We wanted to determine how much students thought they knew about the voluntary sector. We found that the majority of respondents (**50%**) said they had ‘*little*’ or ‘*no*’ knowledge of the sector, followed by those who said they were ‘*knowledgeable*’ (**31%**) and those who said they were ‘*very*’ or ‘*extremely*’ knowledgeable (**19%**).
- When asked how interested students were in learning about the voluntary/nonprofit sector, the highest number of respondents (**44%**) said they were ‘*interested*’ in learning about the sector. Forty-three percent (**43%**) of students said they were ‘*very*’ or ‘*extremely*’ interested in learning about the sector. On the other end of the spectrum, only **13%** of students said they had ‘*little interest*’ or were ‘*not at all interested*’.
- When asked how relevant the study of the voluntary/nonprofit sector was to the students’ university degree, we found that **35%** of respondents believed the study of the sector to be ‘*extremely*’ and ‘*very relevant*’, followed by **29%** that believed it to be ‘*relevant*’, and **36%** of respondents perceived it as ‘*somewhat*’ and ‘*not relevant*’ to their degree.
- When asked how relevant the study of the voluntary/nonprofit sector was to the students’ future career, we found that most respondents (**47%**) believed the sector to be ‘*extremely*’ or ‘*very*’ relevant to their future career. Twenty-four percent (**24%**) believed it was ‘*relevant*’, while **29%** believed it was only ‘*somewhat*’ or ‘*not relevant*’ to their future career.
- We asked if students would register for a course on the voluntary/nonprofit sector if their schedule and program requirements were NOT an issue. We found that the majority of students (**59%**) responded with ‘*definitely*’ or ‘*probably*’. Thirty percent (**30%**) of students responded with ‘*maybe*’, and only **11%** of students answered ‘*probably not*’. It is key to note that no respondents answered ‘*definitely not*’.
- We wanted to determine some of the reasons for registering for a voluntary/nonprofit sector course. Respondents were able to select as many options as they would like as well as fill in their own reasons in the ‘*other*’ category. It is important to note that over half of respondents (**56** students) selected “*I want to explore career opportunities in the voluntary/nonprofit sector*”.
- When we asked for reasons for NOT registering for a voluntary/nonprofit sector course, only **2** respondents said the sector was ‘*not important to learn about*’. The most



important take-away from this question was **50** respondents said their '*program has little room for these types of courses*'.

- We asked if students would be interested in enrolling in a certificate focusing on the sector. Forty-six percent (**46%**) of students responded 'yes', **40%** said they were '*not sure*', and only **14%** of students said they were '*not interested*' in the certificate.
- Finally, we wanted to know what course formats students would prefer if they were to take a certificate on the voluntary/nonprofit sector. We found that the majority of students' preferred *face-to-face* courses, followed by *online* and *blended* courses.

## Conclusion

After reviewing the research articles and data collected through the student surveys, we have concluded that it is important to have learning opportunities on the voluntary sector available for students within Saskatchewan. Furthermore, there is a student demand for these learning opportunities at the University of Regina. The majority of student respondents were very interested and excited in the idea of having a new certificate or courses offered on the nonprofit/voluntary sector; however, there are some institutional barriers to student access. These require attention as the VSSN moves academic programing forward.



# 1. INTRODUCTION

The voluntary sector<sup>1</sup> in Canada is massive, employing over two million Canadians (Faul, 2014, p. 11). There are approximately 170,000 voluntary organizations across Canada and an incredible \$176 billion in income (Faul, 2014, p. 11). Given the size, scope and importance of the voluntary sector in Canada, there is an increasing interest in labour force and human capital development by those working and volunteering in the voluntary sector as well as by the funders and governments that fund these organizations. *"The ability of this sector to attract and retain the right talent, develop effective leadership, provide relevant training and skills development, and offer competitive benefits and compensation will be critical in determining the future vibrancy and sustainability of the nonprofit sector"* (McIsaac et al., p. 2). This highlights the significance of the sector attracting university/college students who are knowledgeable and passionate about the voluntary sector.

According to Hall et al., Saskatchewan has the second highest number of voluntary organizations per capita in the country (2004). However, Saskatchewan does not offer any post-secondary education programs on the sector (Tremka & Karman, 2015). This has a significant influence on those who are involved with and affected by the voluntary sector, including all levels of governments, voluntary organizations, students, and citizens in our communities. This is currently changing. As of July 2015, the Voluntary Sector Studies Network at Luther College at the University of Regina is developing a certificate in *'Voluntary Sector Studies'*. This student survey is part of a series of research projects focused on voluntary sector education in order to determine the need and demand for academic programming in Saskatchewan.

The purpose of this research is for the Voluntary Sector Studies Network (VSSN) to explore the perceptions, knowledge and expectations of University of Regina students about the voluntary/nonprofit sector. This will help us gain an understanding of university students' thoughts in order to better develop university curriculum and courses which will allow us to build and shape a new certificate in Voluntary Sector Studies.

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<sup>1</sup> The voluntary sector or community sector (also nonprofit sector or "not-for-profit" sector) is the duty of social activity undertaken by organizations that are not for-profit and non-governmental. This sector is also called the third sector, in contrast to the public sector and the private sector (Frumkin, 2005).



## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 The need for a voluntary sector program in Saskatchewan**

Many provinces have post-secondary education institutions that offer certificate programs, undergraduate degrees and graduate degrees that focus on the voluntary sector; Saskatchewan does not. Given the large number of 170,000 organizations in the sector (Hall et al., 2004), the high volunteer rate of over 13 million people in Canada devoting 2 billion hours of their time volunteering (Statistics Canada, 2010), the employment of over two million Canadians, and the financing of the sector (Faul, 2014), the time is right to advance this program of study on the voluntary sector in Saskatchewan.

The voluntary sector lacks a coordinated and comprehensive academic presence in Saskatchewan. While currently the University of Regina has strong linkages to the business community (through the Paul Hill School of Business), to government (through the Johnson-Shoyama School of Public Policy), and to some sub-sectors such as human services (through the Faculties of Social Work and Nursing) and sport/recreation (through the Faculty of Kinesiology and Health Studies), there is no focused program of study on the voluntary sector as a whole for students (VSSN, 2015).

Students should be given the opportunity to see and understand that the voluntary sector is a viable and meaningful career alternative in the same way that business students learn about working for the private sector and public policy/administration students learn about working in the government sector. In addition, the current cohort of students appears very interested in interdisciplinary approaches and programs that allow them to explore real-world problems from multiple perspectives (Lukanic, 2014). Currently, the VSSN is building a new certificate in Voluntary Sector Studies as well as other learning opportunities. This certificate will be the first of its kind in Saskatchewan.

### **2.2 The need for skill development in the voluntary sector**

Having learning opportunities specific to the voluntary sector is imperative for the success of the voluntary sector. Nonprofit organizations depend on highly qualified employees who are often called upon to be multi-skilled, creative, adaptable and entrepreneurial (Saunders, 2004, p. 69). Just like for-profit business, nonprofit organizations must ensure that employees have the necessary knowledge and skills required to complete their tasks effectively and efficiently, yet another reason why training and skill development is so important in the voluntary sector (HR Council, 2011, p. 19). It is critical that new and existing employees in the nonprofit sector are provided with the opportunity to gain the skills and competencies that are needed to navigate and cope with the complex, demanding, and rapidly changing environment through professional development and other educational opportunities (Daya, El-Hourani, & De Long,



2004, p. 119; HR Council, 2011, p. 2; McIsaac, Park, & Toupin, 2013, p. 35; Saunders, 2004, p. 8).

In order to keep employees in the sector, we need to find ways to support skill development through professional development (PD) workshops and other educational means (Toupin & Plewes, 2007, p. 131). Furthermore, the success of the voluntary and nonprofit sector depends on its ability to attract new employees and leaders to replace those who will be retiring (HR Council, 2011). As a result the sector must be sure to encourage greater portability of skills and experiences in order to keep young employees interested and engaged (Toupin & Plewes, 2007, p. 131).

### **2.3 Assessing MacEwan University students' knowledge and interest of nonprofits**

Research focusing on students has been undertaken at other post-secondary education institutions. For example, a survey administered in 2014 to 60 MacEwan University students assessing student knowledge and interest of nonprofits and sustainability concluded that although students claim that knowledge and skills of the nonprofit sector are important for future careers, students have a lack of knowledge and interest in taking courses. When presented with further information about nonprofits during the survey, most individuals cited an increased interest due to added knowledge. It was identified that there is demand for such programming; however, it needs to be open to all students, focus more on certificate and interest based electives, and must be integrated into numerous programs (McCoy, 2014).



### 3. METHODS

#### 3.1 Sample

A sample of 100 students was created based on a convenience sampling strategy. Surveys were circulated at a VSSN booth in the University of Regina Riddell Centre, through a 'VSSN open house' where students were invited to complete surveys in the commons area at Luther College at the University of Regina, and through distribution in various classes at Luther College.

#### 3.2 Participation and Ethics

This survey was completely voluntary for students. The incentives for completing this survey were intangible in that students were notified that the answers will help the VSSN design, build, and operationalize new learning opportunities for students on campus. Respondents were also made aware of the numerous careers that exist in the voluntary/nonprofit sector and were provided with a link to a website with multiple search engines to find careers in the voluntary/nonprofit sector.

The survey was approved by the Research Ethics Board at the University of Regina. Respondents were made aware of the anonymity and confidentiality of the information collected through the consent form that respondents signed and dated. **Please find this consent form in Appendix A.**

Complete anonymity of this survey was not possible because students completed the questionnaire in a public setting, thus others could potentially see who completed the survey. However, respondents' names were not required on the questionnaire, thus after completion of the survey, anonymity was guaranteed.

Confidentiality was guaranteed since only the principle investigator and research assistant had access to the completed questionnaires. Names were not included on the questionnaire; however quotes have been used throughout the results section to illustrate the responses from open-ended and partially open-ended questions. Any potential information that might have identified the student were altered. The consent forms were stored separately from the questionnaires so that it is not possible to associate the respondents name with any given set of responses.

#### 3.3 Data Collection and Analysis

This student survey is part of a series of research projects focused on voluntary sector education in Saskatchewan. Our questions were based on a survey completed by McCoy in 2014 on the *Future of Nonprofit and Sustainability Programs* which was administered to 60 MacEwan University students to assess student knowledge of nonprofits, interest in nonprofit



topics and potential future courses (McCoy, 2014, p. 20). Our survey questions were also based on VSSN's Backgrounder document and Action Plan (VSSN 2014; VSSN 2015). **Please find the questions to this student survey in Appendix B.**

The method for completing the surveys was a simple paper and pencil format distributed through face-to-face interactions. The physical layout of the questionnaire was adapted using the Canadian Public Health Association's *Guide to Questionnaire Construction and Question Writing* (Woodward & Chambers, 2012, p. 10). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* was used as a guide for completing this report (Creswell, 2014).

Questions were asked in a variety of forms including closed-ended questions, Likert scales, circle all that apply questions, open-ended questions, and partially closed-ended questions. All 'circle all that apply' questions were partially closed-ended providing respondents the opportunity to fill in their own responses in the 'other' category. Having partially closed-ended and open-ended questions ensures that options are not overlooked and allows us to explain quantitative results using qualitative explanations as well as incorporate the perspectives of individuals. These responses can be found in the results section of our study.

The data collected from the surveys were entered and analyzed in an Excel spreadsheet. The survey responses were categorized and coded as follows:

- **Ethnic/cultural group:** responses were coded by inductive coding using answers provided by the respondents.
- **Career aspirations:** responses were coded using answers provided by the respondents.
- **Faculty/Major:** responses were coded by responses provided by the respondent as they related to the University of Regina's Course Catalogue.
- **Current work/volunteer experiences in the nonprofit sector:** responses were coded based on organizations fitting within the International Classification of Nonprofit Organizations (Hall et al., 2004).

### 3.4 Validity and Reliability

In order to ensure this survey was measuring what we intend it to measure, one validity strategy that we used included triangulation. This is where we examined evidence from other sources to rationalize our themes. For instance, we completed a literature review to gather information on voluntary sector labour force themes, educational opportunities for those working in the sector, and on other research that has been done on students' perception and interest in voluntary sector studies.

The survey was pretested using VSSN's 12 member Steering Group in order to evaluate the specific questions, format, sequence, informational introduction, and instructions before using



this questionnaire for the main study. We ensured the survey took no longer than the 10 minutes which we suggested, that respondents understood all questions, that all questions were free of bias, and that our measurement scales were appropriate. We also pilot tested the questionnaire on students who were not affiliated with VSSN to determine ease of use and make refinements based on their feedback before administering the survey (Creswell, 2014).

As for the reliability of our study, we determined and chose concrete definitions for codes (Creswell, 2014). Two researchers worked on the coding to ensure consistency.

### **3.5 Data Limitations**

A random representative sample was not achieved because the classes that completed the surveys were all within Luther College. This sample bias is due to the fact that we ran out of time at the end of the winter semester to ask other professors around the University of Regina campus if their students could complete the surveys. In the future, we will consider the time of the semester that the survey is distributed to students to ensure it does not conflict with final exams.

Furthermore, in order to increase the number of survey respondents, we will consider using incentives such as a gift certificate to the University of Regina bookstore. Lastly, large amounts of data-cleaning was done while coding various sections including: faculty/major, current work/volunteer experiences in the voluntary/nonprofit sector, ethnic/cultural group, and career aspirations. In the future, we will endeavor to create an online survey using Qualtrics since online surveys are easier for respondents to fill out and for the researchers to analysis.



## 4. RESULTS

### 4.1 Demographic Information

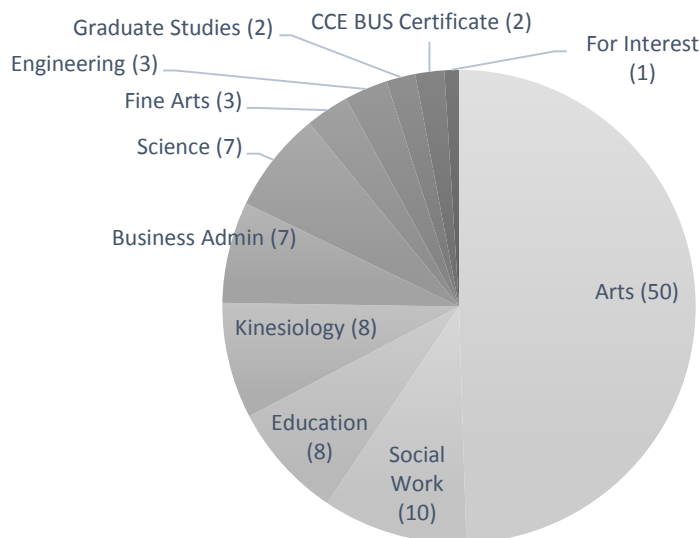
We ensured that all demographic questions were open-ended to allow respondents to self-identify. Within this section, we acquired the following information from respondents:

- Faculty
- Major
- Year of university
- Age
- Sex
- Ethnic/cultural group(s)
- Career aspirations

#### Faculty/Major:

We were interested in knowing the faculty that students belonged to as well as the major(s) that they were studying in order to understand our respondents' backgrounds. We found that the diversity of students was largely encompassing. In fact, within the **10** different *faculties* that the respondents belonged to, they *majored* in **38** areas. This is a positive finding, as some faculties and majors have more involvement in the voluntary sector than others. Therefore, we wanted to ensure we surveyed students in a wide range of faculties and majors to decrease any systematic bias. **Please see Appendix C for the list of majors.** See *Figure 1* below for details.

**Figure 1: Respondents' faculty**



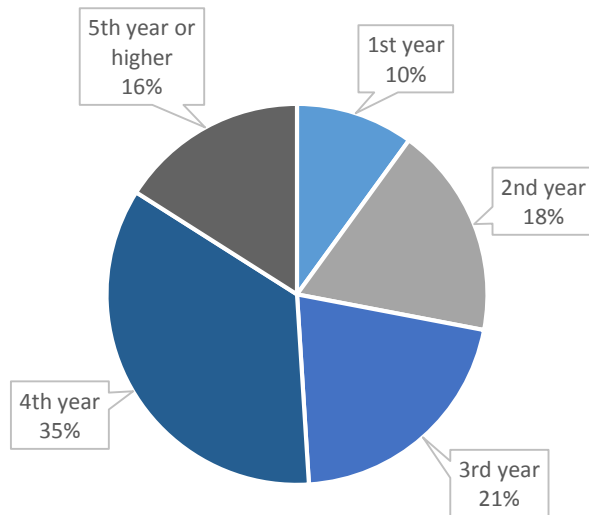
**Note:** Results add up to more than 100 since some students indicated more than 1 faculty.



### Year of study:

We asked the respondents to provide their year of study. This was important for us to know because the year of study could determine students' interest and experience in the voluntary sector. We found that most student respondents (**72%**) who completed the survey were in their later years (*3<sup>rd</sup>*, *4<sup>th</sup>* or *5<sup>th</sup>*) of study. Please see *Figure 2* for details.

**Figure 2: Respondents' year of study**



### Age

We asked the respondents to provide their age. Similarly to knowing the respondents' year of study, it was important for us to know their age since this factor could also play a role in students' interest and experience in the voluntary sector. We found that the ages of students were split quite evenly between <21 and >22 years of age. Please see *Table 1* for details.

**Table 1 – Respondents' age**

Age	
19 or <	13%
20	12%
21	23%
22	10%
23	13%
24 or >	27%

**Note:** Results do not add up to 100% due to rounding.



## Sex

We asked the respondents to list their sex. We ensured that this question was open ended in order to allow respondents to self-identify. We found:

- **77%** (the majority) of respondents were *female*;
- **20%** were *male*; and
- **3%** of respondents did not answer.

## Ethnic/Cultural Groups

We asked respondents which ethnic/cultural group(s) they most identified with. This question was given in an open-ended format, thus respondents were able to self-identify. We attempted to code these responses using Statistics Canada census categories but this was not possible. Instead, we used inductive coding using answers provided by the respondents. Please see *Table 2* for details.

**Table 2 – Respondents’ Ethnic/Cultural Groups self-identified**

Ethnic/Cultural Groups self-identified	Frequency
Caucasian/white	41
Canadian	11
Multiple ethnicities stated	10
Aboriginal	3
First Nations/First Peoples	3
Métis	3
Middle East and Pakistan	3
Latin American/Hispanic	2
Mennonite	1
Filipino	1
Chinese	1
African	1
No response/prefer not to disclose/response not clear	20

## Career Aspirations

Determining students’ career aspirations is important, as this helps us understand where students’ interests lie regarding their post-university career. It is important to note that respondents listed both for-profit and nonprofit options; thus, it is difficult to determine the specific sector that students are seeking. Career aspirations varied widely among respondents, with approximately **59** various responses. Some nonprofit career aspirations that respondents listed include: *counsellor; gallery director; social worker; therapist; as well as working in*



*museums and other nonprofit organizations. Please see Appendix D for a complete list of career aspirations.*

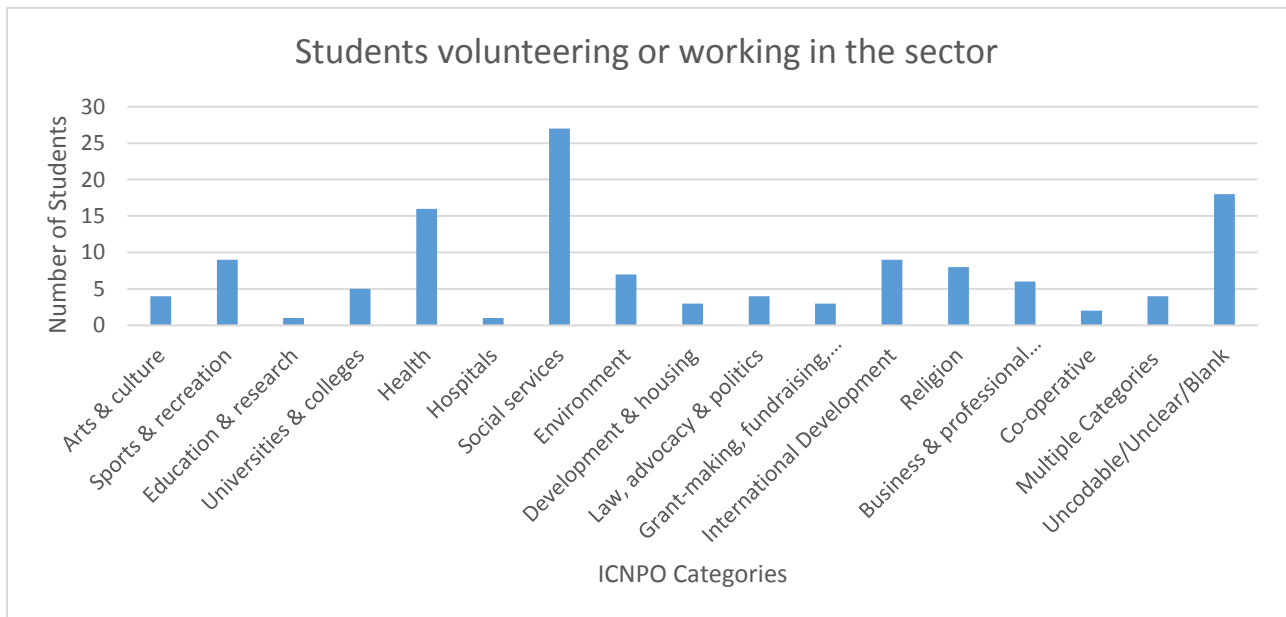
#### 4.2 Students' perceptions, knowledge, and expectations

The survey contained 10 questions regarding students' perceptions, knowledge, and expectations of the voluntary sector and regarding courses or a certificate offered on the voluntary sector. Responses from the sample of students for each of these questions are presented next.

##### a) Are you currently involved, either working or volunteering, in the voluntary/nonprofit sector? If yes, please list some of them.

We asked if students were currently involved, either working or volunteering, in the voluntary/nonprofit sector. If they responded 'yes', we asked if they would list some of the organizations that they volunteered/worked for in the provided space. We found that **57%** of respondents selected 'yes' they were involved in the sector, while **43%** of respondents selected 'no' they were not involved. Out of the respondents that said 'yes', we found that they were involved in many ways, either working or volunteering for numerous organizations or programs. In order to not identify respondents and for the ease of the reader, we organized the responses by the International Classification of Nonprofit Organizations (ICNPO) which classifies nonprofit organizations into 14 separate categories as outlined in *Graph 1* below (Hall et al., 2004). **Please see Appendix E for the complete list of ICNPO categories.**

**Graph 1 – Respondents' volunteering or working in the sector based on the ICNPO categories**



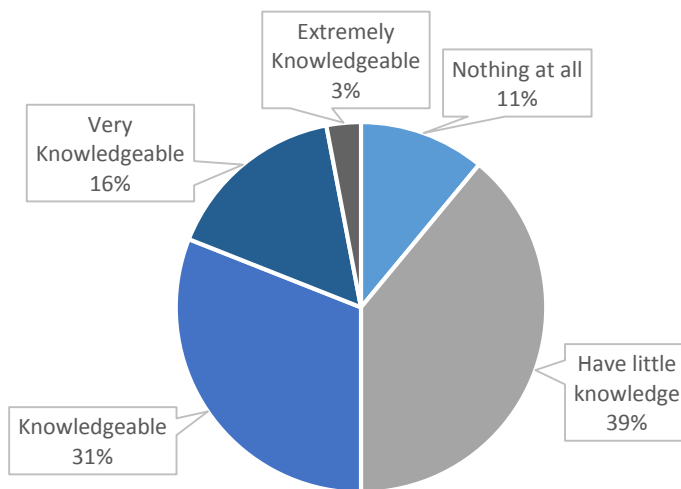
**Note:** Results will add up to more than 100 as students could provide multiple answers.



### b) How much do you think you know about the voluntary/nonprofit sector?

We wanted to determine how much students thought they knew about the voluntary/nonprofit sector. This is because through McCoy's research from 2014, he found that students who had an increased knowledge of the voluntary sector were more interested in taking a certificate on the sector. From our survey, we found that half of the respondents (**50%**) said they had 'little' or 'no' knowledge of the sector, followed by those who said they were 'knowledgeable' (**31%**) and those who said they were 'very' or 'extremely' knowledgeable (**19%**). Please see *Figure 4* for details.

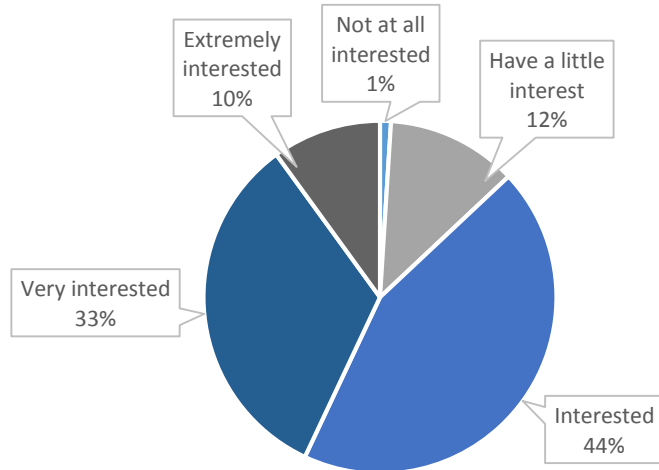
**Figure 4 – Respondents' knowledge of the sector**



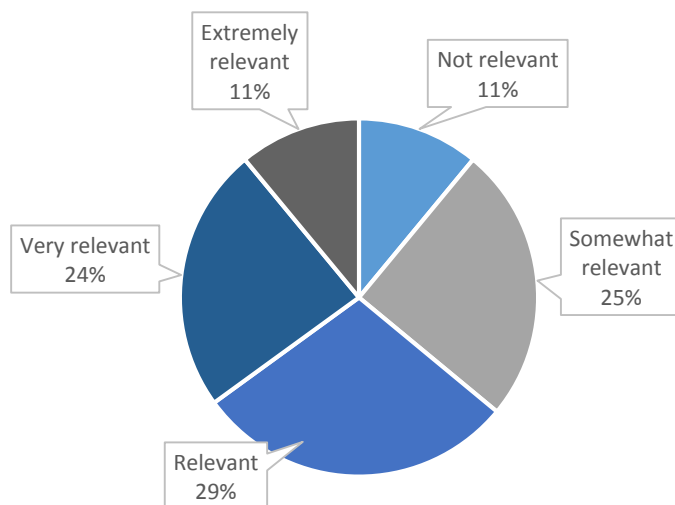
### c) How interested are you in learning about the voluntary/nonprofit sector?

It was also important to determine how interested students were in learning about the voluntary/nonprofit sector. This question gives us insight into students' interest levels of the sector which helps us determine the potential interest levels in the Voluntary Sector Studies certificate. We found that the highest number of respondents (**44%**) said they were 'interested' in learning about the sector. Forty-three percent (**43%**) of students said they were 'very' or 'extremely' interested in learning about the sector. On the other end of the spectrum, only **13%** of students said they had only a 'little interest' or were 'not at all interested'. Please see *Figure 5* for details.



**Figure 5 – Respondents' interest in the sector****d) How relevant is the study of the voluntary/nonprofit sector to your university degree?**

We were interested in determining students' perceptions on the relevancy of the study of the voluntary/nonprofit sector to their university degree. We found that **35%** of respondents believed the study of the sector to be '*extremely*' and '*very relevant*', followed by **29%** that believed it to be '*relevant*', and **36%** of respondents perceived it as '*somewhat*' and '*not relevant*' to their degree.

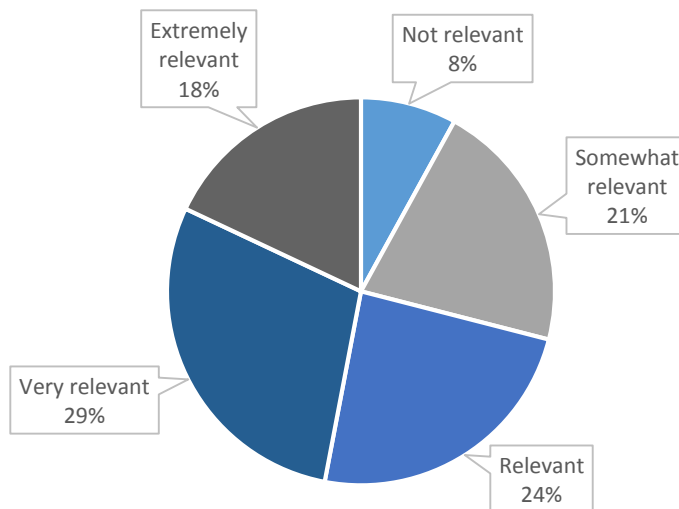
**Figure 6 – Respondents' perception of how relevant the study of the sector is to their degree**



**e) How relevant is the study of the voluntary/nonprofit sector to your future career?**

We were also interested in determining students' perceptions on the relevancy of the study of the voluntary/nonprofit sector to their future career. We found that most respondents (**47%**) believe the sector to be 'extremely' or 'very' relevant to their future career. Twenty-four percent (**24%**) believe it is '*relevant*', while **29%** believe it is only '*somewhat*' or '*not relevant*' to their future career. We noted that more students perceived the study of the voluntary/nonprofit sector to be either '*extremely*' or '*very*' relevant to their *future career* (**47%**) compared to their *degree* (**35%**). Please see *Figure 7* for details.

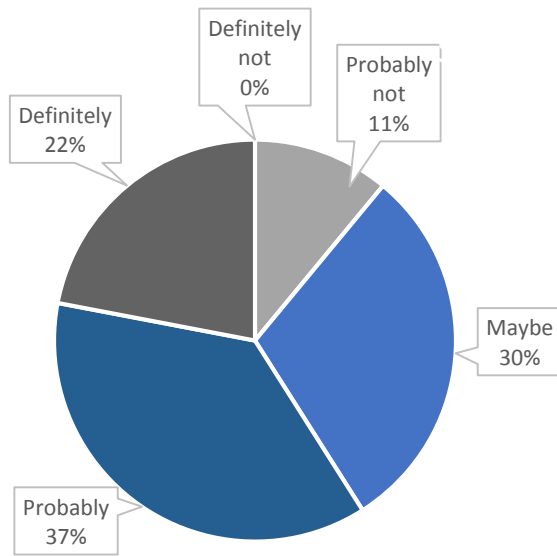
**Figure 7 – Respondents' perception of how relevant the study of the sector is to their future careers**



**f) If your schedule and program requirements were NOT an issue, would you register for a course on the voluntary/nonprofit sector?**

Students' schedules and program requirements are imperative for determining whether they could take courses on the voluntary/nonprofit sector. Therefore, we wanted to know if students would register for a course on the voluntary/nonprofit sector if their schedule and program requirements were NOT an issue. We shared some examples of courses that could be offered which included: *governance & leadership*, *how to run a voluntary sector organization*, *program evaluation*, *volunteer management*, *marketing for nonprofits*, etc. What we found was the majority of students (**59%**) responded with '*definitely*' or '*probably*', followed by **30%** of students who responded with '*maybe*', and only **11%** of students who answered '*probably not*'. It is key to note that no respondents answered '*definitely not*'. Please see *Figure 8* for details.



**Figure 8 – Student responses on if they would register for a course on the voluntary sector****g) What are some reasons you would register for a voluntary/nonprofit sector course?**

We wanted to determine some of the reasons for registering for a voluntary/nonprofit sector course. Respondents were able to select as many options as they would like as well as fill in their own reasons in the 'other' category. These 'other' results are listed below. Please see *Table 3* for details.

**Table 3 – Respondents' reasons for registering for a voluntary/nonprofit sector course**

Reasons for registering for a voluntary/nonprofit sector course	Frequencies
a) I have experience with the voluntary/ nonprofit sector and want to learn more.	50
b) I'm personally interested in the voluntary/nonprofit sector.	63
c) I want to explore career opportunities in the voluntary/nonprofit sector.	56
d) I think it's important to know about and understand the voluntary/nonprofit sector.	62
e) Other reasons (listed below).	12

**Note:** Results will add up to more than 100 because respondents could list more than one reason.

**Other reasons for registering for a voluntary/nonprofit sector course:**

- "Interested in artist run/volunteer galleries."
- "My career choice was made so that I would be able to work extensively in the voluntary/nonprofit sector."
- "To build stronger communities and personal relationships."
- "I enjoy helping others."



- “All of the above, also I'd like to start up my own social enterprise and integrate effective nonprofit models.”
- “To understand the role they play in our society and economy.”
- “To contribute to the community and help others.”
- “I would be interested as to what I could volunteer for and what options there are.”
- “I could use professional development.”
- “I took part in ARTS CARES program and it completely dismantled my ignorant bias against homelessness.”
- “Options available for volunteer work.”
- “Leadership training – how to run volunteer clubs, working with groups, research volunteering.”

#### **h) What are some reasons you would NOT register for a voluntary/nonprofit sector course?**

We wanted to determine what some of the reasons might be for not registering for a voluntary/nonprofit sector course. Students were able to select as many options as they would like, as well as fill in their own reasons in the ‘other’ category. These ‘other’ results can be found in a list below. Only 2 respondents said the sector was ‘*not important to learn about*’ and what seems to be the most important take away from this question was 51 respondents said their ‘*program has little room for these types of courses*’. It is key to note that when student were asked if their schedule and program requirements were NOT an issue, 59% responded that they would ‘*definitely*’ or ‘*probably*’ register for a course on the voluntary/nonprofit sector. However, unfortunately over half of respondents’ programs have little room for these courses according to our survey. This is something the VSSN will have to focus on in the future because we must tackle obstacles such as this that lie in the way of students taking a voluntary/nonprofit course. Please see *Table 4* for details.

**Table 4 – Respondents’ reasons for NOT registering for a voluntary/nonprofit sector course**

Reasons for NOT registering for a voluntary/nonprofit sector course	Frequencies
a) It doesn’t apply to the career I’m pursuing.	20
b) I’m not personally interested in the voluntary/nonprofit sector.	10
c) My program of study has very little room for these types of courses	51
d) I don’t think it is important to learn about the voluntary/nonprofit sector.	2
e) Other reasons (listed below).	19

**Note:** 18 students did not answer this question.

#### **Other reasons for NOT registering for a voluntary/nonprofit sector course:**

- “Time” (7 respondents suggested this response).
- “Schedule conflict” (2 respondents suggested this response).



- “Resources.”
- “Busy schedule” (2 respondents suggested this response).
- “I may be too busy to make time. If I find something that is really interesting, I would do it.”
- “I am in my final semester and at this time I do not have any reason to take another course, however, I tried to take 200IDS this semester but it did not meet my 300 level degree requirement.”
- “I’m unsure of my future career; it would be nice to learn about it but not so nice to spend +\$500 for it.”
- “An extra class might not fit into my schedule.”
- “Not pursuing employment.”
- “Graduating.”
- “I am interested, but worried class would be dull.”
- “Already Retired.”
- “Degree requirement constraints.”
- “I may not be a part of the sector if I find out that I am not learning from it.”

**I) Would you be interested in enrolling in a new university Certificate focusing on the voluntary/nonprofit sector that would augment your current program of study and earn you extra job-related credentials?**

We asked if students would be interested in enrolling in a certificate focusing on the sector. We provided students with information that the certificate would likely include 5 to 8 courses to be completed while they are a university student. We also provided the students with a few examples of courses that might be offered which includes: *leadership & governance, human resources management, nonprofit finances and fundraising, communications, monitoring/evaluation, advocacy, collaboration and partnership building, etc.* We also noted that courses are intended to help develop their knowledge and skill base so that when they graduate they would be capable of managing an organization. We found that:

- **46%** of students responded ‘yes’;
- **40%** said they were ‘not sure’; and only
- **14%** of students said they were ‘not interested’ in the certificate.



**J) What course format would you prefer if you were to take this new certificate?**

We wanted to know what course formats students would prefer if they were to take a certificate on the voluntary/nonprofit sector. We found that the majority of students prefer face-to-face courses, followed by online courses. Please see *Table 5* for details.

***Table 5 – Preferred course formats for certificate***

Delivery Methods	Frequencies
a) online	39
b) face-to-face	65
c) blended	28
d) block courses	5
e) Saturday	5
f) May & June	24
g) other	6

**Note:** Results will add up to more than 100 because respondents could choose more than one response.

**Other preferred course formats for certificate:**

- “Evening classes” (2 respondents suggested this response).
- “Summer courses.”
- “Summer/Spring are great times to offer electives for students in any faculty.”
- “Not sure what block courses are but if they refer to MWF or TR style, then yes.”
- “All year round.”



## 5. CONCLUSION

After reviewing the research articles and data collected through the student surveys, we have concluded that it is important to have learning opportunities on the voluntary sector available for students within Saskatchewan. Furthermore, there is student demand for these learning opportunities at the University of Regina. The majority of student respondents were very interested and excited about the idea of having a new certificate or courses offered on the nonprofit/voluntary sector.

By surveying university students, we were able to answer more in-depth questions on the demand for voluntary/nonprofit courses. This helped us understand how many students have knowledge about the sector, how many students have experience volunteering or working in the sector, and how many students are interested in taking courses or a certificate on the sector – along with the reasons why or why not.

There is a future for a certificate in voluntary/nonprofit studies at Luther College at the University of Regina. To make this project a reality, we must tackle the obstacles that lie in the way of students taking a voluntary/nonprofit course. These obstacles were highlighted by students' responses in the survey. For instance, although 59% of respondents would 'definitely' or 'probably' register for a course on the voluntary/nonprofit sector, respondents also demonstrated that one of the main hurdles in the way of taking courses on the voluntary sector was that their program of study has very little room for these types of courses. This is an institutional barrier but can be relieved through various ways including student advisors bringing certificates to the attention of students to take as electives.

Furthermore, we must also keep in mind course delivery methods that were most preferred as indicated by the survey. In sum, the VSSN can learn from the results of this research and factor them into the development of its own post-secondary program, which is designed to fill the voluntary sector academic program gap that exists within Saskatchewan, and provide another avenue for students to access lifelong, rewarding careers.



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## APPENDICES

### Appendix A - Student Consent Form

# Voluntary Sector Studies Network



March/April 2015

Dear student participant,



**Research project title:** Students' perceptions, knowledge and expectations of voluntary/nonprofit sector courses and careers.

**Principal Researcher**

Gloria DeSantis, Ph.D, Facilitator/Developer  
Voluntary Sector Studies Network (VSSN)  
Instructor, Interdisciplinary Studies, Luther College at University of Regina  
Regina, SK, Canada, S4S 0A2  
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**Research Assistant:**

Angela Tremka (Undergraduate practicum student at the University of Regina, [jagtremka@gmail.com](mailto:jagtremka@gmail.com))

**Purpose of the study:** This questionnaire focuses on exploring the perceptions, knowledge and expectations of university students like you about the voluntary/nonprofit sector. The purpose of our research is to gain a understanding of university students' thoughts in order to better develop university curriculum and courses. This understanding will allow us to build and shape a new *Certificate in Voluntary Sector Studies* as well as other learning opportunities at the Voluntary Sector Studies Network (VSSN). The VSSN is an innovative, interdisciplinary, community-university collaborative comprising students, the voluntary sector and faculty/staff administered out of the VSSN office at Luther College at the University of Regina. It opened in September 2014 and appears to be the first of its kind in Saskatchewan.

**Procedures:** This questionnaire is available to any university student. We ask you to please read and ask any questions about this consent form and the questionnaire at any time. The questionnaire will take approximately 10 minutes to complete and we ask that you complete it here at this table; this table is set aside for students to use. If you wish to choose another table to complete it, that is just fine. Further, if you decide that you no longer wish to participate in this study, even after you signed this consent form, you simply need to tell us and we will shred your questionnaire. Otherwise your answers will be put together with answers from other students and only used in summary form during the analysis. Your questionnaire will be kept secure in a locked filing cabinet at the VSSN office at Luther College, although we will separate your consent form from your questionnaire. All materials will be destroyed no later than five years after the end of this project.

**Potential risks:** There are no known or anticipated risks to you by participating in this research.

**Potential benefits:** Your answers to our questions, taken together with other students' answers, will help us design, build and operationalize new learning opportunities (e.g., courses, special seminars, etc.) for students on campus. It was also help to expand students' awareness of jobs and careers in the voluntary/nonprofit sector.

**Anonymity:** Complete anonymity is not possible because you will be completing the questionnaire in a public place, thus others will see you completing it. However, your name is not required on the questionnaire, thus after you complete it, no one will know you completed it.



**Confidentiality:** We guarantee confidentiality of your responses because only the principle investigator and her research assistant will have access to your completed questionnaire. As well, we will not ask you to include your name on the questionnaire. However, some of your quotes might be very useful to illustrate a point and in this case, you will simply be labeled "a student" and any potential information that might identify you will be altered in the quotes. Moreover, the consent forms will be stored separately from the questionnaires, so that it will not be possible to associate your name with any given set of responses. Please do not put your name or other identifying information on the questionnaire.

**Right to Withdraw:** Your participation is voluntary and you can answer only those questions that you are comfortable with. You may withdraw from the research project for any reason, at any time without explanation or penalty of any sort – you simply have to tell us that you no longer want to fill out the questionnaire and we will shred your document. However, once your questionnaire is submitted, we cannot withdraw your data as the questionnaire is anonymous.

**Research results, further questions and follow up:** A copy of the final report, based your and other students' data, will be available on the VSSN website by Sept. 30, 2015 [www.luthercollege.edu/vssn](http://www.luthercollege.edu/vssn). This final report may be modified for scholarly peer reviewed publication as well. If you have any questions about this research at any time, please do not hesitate to contact Gloria DeSantis via her information above.

**Ethics Approval:** This project has been approved on ethical grounds by the U of R Research Ethics Board. Any questions regarding your rights as a participant may be addressed to the committee at 585-4775 or [research.ethics@uregina.ca](mailto:research.ethics@uregina.ca). Out of town participants may call collect.

**If you have any concerns or questions about the procedures outlined above, please contact Gloria DeSantis at the phone number listed above.**

**Consent:**

I have read and understand the contents of this consent form and I agree to participate in this questionnaire and this study. (Please circle one answer.)

Yes  
No

Your signature below indicates that you have read and understand the description provided and that you have had an opportunity to ask questions and receive answers.

**I consent to participate in the research project.**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant name (please print)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student email addresses (e.g., uregina.ca ...)


\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant signature


\_\_\_\_\_  
Researcher signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date




## Appendix B – Student Survey





**Voluntary Sector Studies Network**



**LUTHER  
COLLEGE**  
UNIVERSITY OF REGINA

**Voluntary/Nonprofit Sector Questionnaire for Students**

Only takes 10 minutes and then we'll show you jobs!

*Voluntary = nonprofit = third sector = community-based = nongovernmental = civil society*

We are gathering information about students' perceptions, knowledge and expectations about the voluntary/nonprofit sector as well as student interest in learning about the Voluntary Sector in a university setting. Please ensure you have read and signed the attached consent form before completing this questionnaire.

**Defined as:** they do not distribute profits to their members, are different from government and the private sector, are self governing and rely on volunteers in their organizations, however, many also have paid staff.



**Many types of organizations:**

Arts/culture .....  
Sports/recreation .....  
Health .....  
Social .....  
Religion .....  
Environmental .....  
Research .....  
Housing and development .....  
Fundraising .....

**Examples:**

Museums, art galleries  
Soccer associations  
Diabetes, Lung, Cancer organizations  
Counselling agencies  
Temples, mosques, churches  
Nature conservancy, pollution control, parks  
Canadian Securities Research Institute  
Neighbourhood centres  
Foundations, united ways

**1. Are you currently involved, either working or volunteering, in the voluntary/nonprofit sector?**

- a) Yes
- b) No

If yes, please list some of them here.

**2. How much do you think you know about the voluntary/nonprofit sector? Please circle one answer.**

1	2	3	4	5
Nothing at all	Have a little knowledge	Knowledgeable	Very knowledgeable	Extremely knowledgeable

**3. How interested are you in learning about the voluntary/nonprofit sector? Please circle one answer.**

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all interested	Have a little interest in the sector	Interested	Very interested	Extremely interested



4. How relevant is the study of the voluntary/nonprofit sector to your university degree? *Please circle one.*

1	2	3	4	5
Not relevant	Somewhat relevant	Relevant	Very relevant	Extremely relevant

5. How relevant is the study of the voluntary/nonprofit sector to your future career? *Please circle one answer.*

1	2	3	4	5
Not relevant	Somewhat relevant	Relevant	Very relevant	Extremely relevant

6. If your schedule and program requirements were NOT an issue, would you register for a course on the voluntary/nonprofit sector? Some examples of courses that could be offered are: governance & leadership, how to run a voluntary sector organization, program evaluation, volunteer management, marketing for nonprofits, etc. *Please circle one answer.*

1	2	3	4	5
Definitely not	Probably not	Maybe	Probably	Definitely

7. What are some reasons you would register for a voluntary/nonprofit sector course? (*Circle all those that apply*).

- a) I have experience with the voluntary/nonprofit sector and want to learn more.
- b) I'm personally interested in the voluntary/nonprofit sector.
- c) I want to explore career opportunities in the voluntary/nonprofit sector.
- d) I think it's important to know about and understand the voluntary/nonprofit sector.
- e) Other reasons (*please specify*):

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8. What are some reasons you would NOT register for a voluntary/nonprofit sector course? (*Circle all those that apply*)

- a) It doesn't apply to the career I'm pursuing.
- b) I'm not personally interested in the voluntary/nonprofit sector.
- c) My program of study has very little room for these types of courses.
- d) I don't think it is important to learn about the voluntary/nonprofit sector.
- e) Other Reasons (*please specify*):

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9. Would you be interested in enrolling in a new university Certificate focusing on the voluntary/nonprofit sector that would augment your current program of study and earn you extra job-related credentials? The Certificate would likely include 5 to 8 courses to be completed while you're a university student. A few examples of courses that might be offered are: leadership & governance, human resources management, nonprofit finances and fundraising, communications, monitoring/evaluation, advocacy, collaboration and partnership building, etc. These courses are intended to help develop your knowledge and skill base so that when you graduate you would be capable of managing an organization.

*Please circle one answer.*

- a) Yes
- b) No
- c) Not sure

10. What course format would you prefer if you were to take this new certificate? *(Circle all those that apply)*

- a) online
- b) face-to-face classroom
- c) blended
- d) block courses
- e) Saturdays only
- f) May and June only
- g) other formats *(please specify):* \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

11. Last one... please tell us a bit about yourself:

Faculty \_\_\_\_\_

Major \_\_\_\_\_

What year of university are you in? \_\_\_\_\_

Sex \_\_\_\_\_

Age \_\_\_\_\_

To which ethnic/cultural group(s) do you most identify? \_\_\_\_\_

What are your career aspirations? \_\_\_\_\_

**Thank you very much for  
sharing your insights and time  
with us!**



March/April 2015



## Appendix C – List of Majors<sup>2</sup>

Accounting: 1 <sup>3</sup>	Sociology: 2
Biology: 2	Spanish: 2
Broadcast Journalism: 1	Visual Arts: 1
Business Certificate: 2	Women's and Gender Studies: 11
Chemistry: 1	Uncodable: 1
Economics: 1	Undeclared: 3
Elementary Education Program: 3	
English: 1	
Environmental Systems: 1	
Film: 2	
French: 1	
Geology: 1	
Health Promotion: 2	
History: 3	
Human Justice: 5	
Human Kinetics: 6	
Indigenous Studies: 1	
Industrial Systems: 1	
International Studies: 1	
Japanese: 1	
Journalism: 2 (Pre-Journalism: 1)	
Linguistics: 1	
Management: 1	
Marketing: 4	
Math: 2	
Petroleum: 1	
Police Studies: 3	
Political Science: 1	
Pre-Dentistry: 2	
Psychology: 14	
Religious Studies: 7	
Social Studies: 2	
Social Work: 8 (Pre-Social Work: 2)	

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<sup>2</sup> Results will add up to more than 100 due to students having more than one major.

<sup>3</sup> These numbers refer to the number of students who were majoring in the same area.



**Appendix D – List of Career Aspirations<sup>4</sup>**

Accountant: 1 <sup>5</sup>	Marketing Coordinator: 1
Advocate: 1	Math related: 1
Artist: 1	Money and adventure: 1
Community development: 3	Motivator: 1
Conservation: 1	Museum: 1
Co-operatives and credit unions: 1	News Anchor: 1
Corporation / Business: 3	Nonprofit organizations: 6
Counsellor: 8 (within school system, police, with abused children, at a woman's shelter, and addictions)	Occupational Therapy: 1
Cultural liaison for employers: 1	Open a youth LGBTQ shelter: 1
Customer service: 1	Orthodontist: 1
Dentist: 1	Personal trainer/Coach: 2
Enjoy my job and make money: 1	Police Officer: 3
Environmental Engineer: 1	Policy: 3
Exercise therapy: 1	Priest for Catholic Faith: 1
Film/expanded cinema production: 2 (indigenous films)	Professor: 2
Gallery director: 1	Psychologist/mental health: 6
Government: 4	Public Health: 1
Happiness: 1	Public Relations: 1
Health Promotion Specialist: 1	Recreation Therapist: 1
Health related: 2	Researcher: 2
Helping vulnerable populations find meaningful employment: 1	Retired: 2 (volunteer)
Human Resources: 2	School board: 1
International sector: 1	Medical doctor: 3
Journalist: 3 (print)	Shelters/homelessness organizations: 1
Lawyer: 7	Social worker: 7
Librarian: 1	Special Olympics: 1
Managerial: 2	Teacher: 12
Market Garden: 1	Therapist: 1
	Veterinarian: 1 (wildlife specialist)
	Writer: 2
	Unidentified: 1
	Unsure/Blank: 12

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<sup>4</sup> Results will add to more than 100 due to students providing more than one response.

<sup>5</sup> These numbers refer to the number of students who chose similar careers.



## **Appendix E - International Classification of Nonprofit Organizations (ICNPO)<sup>6</sup>**

- 1.** Arts and culture: 4<sup>7</sup>
- 2.** Sports and recreation: 9
- 3.** Education and research: 1
- 4.** Universities and colleges: 5
- 5.** Health: 16
- 6.** Hospitals: 1
- 7.** Social services: 27
- 8.** Environment: 7
- 9.** Development and housing: 3
- 10.** Law, advocacy and politics: 4
- 11.** Grant-making, fundraising, voluntarism: 3
- 12.** International development: 9
- 13.** Religion: 8
- 14.** Business and professional associations/unions: 6

### **Other:**

Co-operative: 2

Multiple categories: 4

Uncoadable/unclear/blank responses: 18

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<sup>6</sup> Results will add up to more than 100 as students could provide multiple answers.

<sup>7</sup> These numbers refer to the number of students who have worked or volunteered in a specific ICNPO category.