

**“Lessons learned, wisdoms shared”
The experiences of international and domestic students as third year
students at the University of British Columbia.**

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Background to Project

This research report is part of a longitudinal national study of international and domestic student experiences during the first three years of university. This national project includes four universities, Dalhousie University, McGill University, University of British Columbia and York University. This particular report is focusing on the 3rd year focus groups at the University of British Columbia.

In January and February of 2006, participants from the first-year focus groups were re-invited by e-mail to participate in the third-year focus group. In addition to past participants, a general recruitment drive also occurred by postering residences, student union building, bus loop and a variety of academic buildings. A separate focus group was held for third year international students and domestic students.

The international focus group was held on the evening of March 1, 2006. We had six participants in total. Three of the six participants had been part of the first-year focus groups held in 2004. There were 2 females and 4 males in this focus group. Disciplines represented included: geography, food and nutritional science, mechanical engineering, accounting and commerce.

The domestic focus group was held on February 28, 2005. There were eight participants of which 3 had been participants in the first-year focus groups. There had been 4 students from the previous year confirmed to attend the third year focus group but they did not show. There was one male and seven females in this focus group. These students were represented the disciplines of geology, civil engineering, Japanese, arts, science and fine arts, psychology, English, chemistry and nursing.

The focus groups were held on-campus and lasted 2 to 2.5 hours. Participants were provided a pizza lunch and beverages during the focus groups. Each participant was also given 15 dollars for their time. Students were given the money prior to the focus group starting, recognizing that students may not be able to stay (or not wish to stay) for the entire focus group.

The focus group protocol was comprised of open-ended questions that were similar to the first-year protocol. Generally, the protocol was designed to get students to reflect upon their experiences as a third-year student in comparison to their first and second years.

International student population at the University of British Columbia

The University of British Columbia is a large research institution supporting undergraduate, professional, graduate and post-graduate programs. At the time of this study, in 2006, UBC had 35,860 enrolled undergraduate students, an increase from the 2005 student population of 35,403 (see Table 1 for breakdown by gender and study-status).

**Table 1:
University of British Columbia Undergraduate Student Enrollment for 2004-05**

	Female	Male	Total
Full-time	12,585	10,429	23,287
Part-time	6,922	5,194	12,116
Total	19,780	15,623	35,403

As Figure 1 shows, there has also been a steady increase in UBC's international student population over the last 4 years. In 2006, international students represented 10% of the undergraduate student population at UBC.



**Figure 1
International undergraduate student enrollment at UBC from 2003-04 to 2006-07.**

As for country of origin, Table 2 demonstrates enrolment trends over time by country of origin¹. China, United States, Korea (South) and Hong Kong are the five top countries of origin for undergraduate international students. Interestingly, there have been more international students from the US over the last two years compared to China. Indonesia, Austria and New Zealand are starting to show as areas of growth as the student population from these areas have increased over the last four years, where Australia up to 2005-06 were increasing student participation at UBC saw a marked drop in 2006-07.

It is also important to note that in 2005-06, the University of British Columbia opened up a second campus- UBC-Okanagan in Kelowna, which is located in the central region of the

¹The student demographic and country of origin profiles (table 1, table 2) have been modified from student demographic information presented on the UBC's Planning & Institutional Research website: <http://www.pair.ubc.ca/student/demographics.htm>. Please note that gender X international/domestic student was not available from the website.

province. Therefore Table 2 only reflects the international students at the UBC-Vancouver campus. Although the international student population in the Okanagan is small, the three main countries of origin parallel those of UBC-Vancouver- China, United States and Korea (South).

Table 2
International undergraduate student country of origin from 2003-04 to 2006-07 at UBC-Vancouver.

Country of origin	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07
China	368	572	703	682
United States	349	448	644	716
Korea (South)	242	266	341	376
Japan	227	266	255	258
Hong Kong	137	130	159	159
Indonesia	60	82	119	136
Mexico	90	134	139	124
United Kingdom	97	116	123	116
Taiwan	96	101	99	95
<i>Austria</i>	7	6	16	88
Singapore	50	70	75	73
Saudi Arabia	48	56	66	70
Germany	57	50	54	63
India	53	53	59	61
France	29	33	35	51
<i>New Zealand</i>	20	21	34	40
<i>Australia</i>	115	95	122	12

Results

This section of the report presents the analysis of the focus groups broken down in terms of the themes of the questions posed to both international and domestic students.

Enjoyable experiences as a third year student

Third year was seen by most participants to be their most enjoyable experience thus far; yet many of the challenges that were discussed in previous years' focus groups were still present as the remaining of this report will highlight. While some students reminisced of the social fun they had in first year, particularly those students who had lived in residence and now live off-campus, most students felt that third year was a better than first and second year. Domestic students enjoyed the third year for the small class experience, having more established friendships, and more focused-curriculum. Students also talked about having improved relationships with faculty as third years.

I find that in 3rd year classes, they're more focused, than 1st or 2nd year. Like for example, the names are more, the titles of your courses are more specific too. Female- Domestic

It seems like the quality of the instruction is getting better as well, because you've got profs who aren't just teaching a general first year

course because they have to now. They're teaching the kinds of things that they want to teach, and maybe the information that they know a lot about. Female - Domestic

The international students also indicated that they had better friendships, small class size and professors were enjoyable experiences as third year students. Another international student spoke about knowing the campus better; she found that by having more knowledge of what activities are available and what to get involved in made the campus smaller.

Knowing more people. Knowing more activities and what to get involved in. And that kind of makes the university very small too. Female- International

Sometimes it's like you know somebody new and that new friend turns out to be someone you already knew. Male- International

You get smaller classes and better profs. Like in 1st and 2nd year big class of like 200 people sitting in a theatre, but in 3rd year you generally get like 20 or 30 people in a class. Male - International

Smaller class size of course was dependent on the students' faculty. For some students in business or engineering, there were bigger classes but not as big as first year. As one international engineering student explained "Well, first year is definitely a lot bigger than second year [and third year]. It is not like a small classroom, but we still have a 120 people in the lecture, but still I'm not complaining."

Not-enjoyable experiences as third year student

Understandably, academic expectations of third-years were more demanding than first or second year. As a result, some of the students' not-enjoyable experiences were around academic issues such as longer lab hours, more group projects and harder grading. Although, as some domestic students discussed, experiences with "easy" or "hard" marking was dependent on what faculty they were in.

There's a lot more group projects, which can be good but can be bad. So it's just kind of different. . . For me I found marking a lot easier in 3rd year. All our class averages are like above 80. It's nice. Male - Domestic

I think the grading is getting more stricter. Because they're scaling in our department. Like even if you have a specific percentage and you think that's good you might get scaled down. Female - Domestic

I think marking wise, really depends, still depends on the prof. Like the prof I had last term for Japanese, she was quite sticky on say like translation where it could get pretty specific, pretty detailed. So really depends on the prof. Female - Domestic

Non-enjoyable third year experiences for international students were more around issues of international student tuition and support services. Students expressed concern over increasing

tuition costs for international students especially considering the rate of exchange for the Canadian dollar.

Been looking at our tuition increase. And the foreign exchange rate for Canadian dollar is so high, the Canadian dollar appreciated by like 50 percent, since I come to UBC! So my tuition doubled, and it's already very expensive, and the tuition is increasing every year. Male - International

And also for international students there aren't as many opportunities, as domestic students, in terms of working. Because we're restricted, 'cause we can only work on-campus, right? Like for other people, like domestic students they can go on summer interns, they can go to co-ops or find off campus jobs not related to field of study. But we're only restricted to here on campus. So I mean when we graduate I mean we're in competitive disadvantage compared to them. So that's a problem. I guess that is a problem in this country. Male - International

Other students also talked about the challenges of working off-campus and limited on-campus employment opportunities for international students. At the time of this focus group, UBC international students were still ineligible to work off-campus, although this was not the case in other provinces. There were also limitations on co-op placements for international students that proved to be challenging in finding appropriate co-op placements to meet their degree requirements.

Academic challenges & successes as third-years

UBC domestic students had a variety of academic challenges that were somewhat different from their first and second year experiences. Many of the students still had issues around time management and increased workload compared to first and second year. For one student, time management was about not having the time to get involved in all the activities they wanted to. For others academic challenges were around not becoming apathetic to the work, actually getting down to the work and passing it in on time.

My biggest non academic challenge is to do everything I want to do. There's so much things to do that I have to turn down, or quite certain groups, things like that. Time constraints and what not. Male - Domestic

Biggest challenge would be motivating myself to write my lab reports and handing them in on time. 'cause I really don't like writing them. Female - Domestic

For another domestic student she was having challenges in getting the required courses for her degree program. She talked about the frustration of bringing this issue to the department and having a confrontation with the department secretary. Her sense of having made a positive change in the department for students was negated by the confrontation.

I was trying to get in to this required course because I'm majoring in [DISCIPLINE] and had sort of a major shouting match with my secretary because she was just like insisting 'oh we can't open a new section for the course' yet there were about 20 or so students just like me who had to take that course for a requirement. So I just thought well, whatever I'll just take it the following year then. Well then they also after I had that shouting match the dept. head comes, emails the whole [department] and says 'oh, we open a new section.' Maybe what I did make a difference, but just caused a really bad impression for me. Female - Domestic

In the international student focus group, the discussion was more around finding a better balance in third year as compared to previous years.

Being able to balance, like, social life and academic. Then eating and sleeping at same time, doing necessary stuff. Male - International

One international student discussed in length the challenges she was having with one particular professor who did not see her competent enough in her written English. This particular student who has gotten good grades up to this point was frustrated that she was now getting a C+ from this particular professor. She explains her situation as follows:

My greatest challenge is one of my profs saying my English is not qualify as a [department] student, so he failed my term essay . . . and I go talk to him and he say 'well, as an [department]graduate, your English is not good enough.' So okay what can we do now? So he offered me to rewrite the essay. So that is the greatest challenge. Because I don't know. I never failed in anything. In my whole life. And I failed with him essay and that's pretty big challenge. And now he adjust the grade, and now I am getting C plus, and that is the worst course I have ever had in UBC. Female - International

Both international and domestic students did not highlight any academic successes as third year students when they were asked specifically to name an "academic success." One domestic student shared an academic success has having experienced the "big mind screw" when they spent hours doing some academic work and felt "alive" from the intensity of the work.

I don't really have much academic joy, to be honest with you. Except one night I was really happy, I spent like 8 hours doing something, it was like, whatever those things are those movies where people write and write and write . . . it was like that. But it's done now. So that was a big mind screw kind of thing, where like my head was alive. It's hard to explain. Male - Domestic

Academic experiences of international and domestic students are discussed further in this report.

Non-academic challenges & successes as third-years

Non-academic challenges for domestic students included editing papers (which can also be considered an academic challenge) and finding part-time work. Whereas, the biggest non-academic challenge as third years for international students was dealing with on-campus housing. International students explained that the housing lottery was a challenge because first-years are guaranteed spaces, which meant that returning students often find themselves without on-campus housing. There is no reserved on-campus housing for international students, which resulted in international and domestic students competing for the remaining housing placements through the lottery.

Ya, I have friends that they don't have any place to live 'cause they're from China or whatever . . . Male - International

And domestic students have an equal chance of getting in, so it doesn't really improve the situation much. Male - International

Non-academic successes for domestic students were actually taking a break from their studies and hanging out or engaging in extracurricular activities.

Biggest joy non academic is just getting away from the academic. Just hanging out at home, or whatever. Female - Domestic

International students discussed non-academic successes as having a better understanding of who their true friends were at home and at UBC. Social time was also an important part of the university experience that was non-academic.

I kind of know who your friends really are? The ones who stick to you all the way, kind of, by this stage. And not just the ones on campus but the ones at home too. Female - International

There are a lot of joys, It's hard to pick out one. Friday nights! Some of the intramurals. Male - International

Lessons learned from first year that helped in third year

When asked what lessons they learned from first and second year that helped them in third year, most of the domestic students felt they had learned how to study, either through cramming (enough to get a good mark) and/or group study sessions.

How to cram. Study up for exams, and not really know what you're doing but get a good mark. Male - Domestic

Study with friends. Female - Domestic

International students had different opinions on what lessons they had learned. For one international student, he learned that his stereotypes of Frats were wrong when he in fact did join a frat as a result of not getting into the regular on-campus housing.

I learnt that there's nothing wrong with joining the frat. So all this, mentality about frat guys being really perverted alcoholics? Totally

wrong. So that's what I learned. So don't base everything on what you see on movies. So, including like, well just not the fraternity. Male - International

Others shared they had gotten use to rejection when searching for on-campus employment.

I'm getting used to being turned down by other people. When I apply for jobs on campus. Male - International

Typical day as third year student

As with second year, students' typical day experience as third years really varied depending on students' academic department and course load (e.g., 5 to 3 courses). While all the students were attending full-time there was a range in course contact hours. There was quite a range of experiences for international and domestic students. For those in Arts, classes seemed more interspersed and their days less structured, unlike those in Sciences which had labs and classes during the day. For those in professional programs, like Business or Engineering, days full of classes and/or labs were common.

I don't have typical days, because I'm in arts and science, sort of, so it's kind of hard to coordinate the schedules. So one day I have 9 to 11, and one day I have 10 am to 10 pm, because I have evening classes. Female - Domestic

I have 8 am class every day, so typically I go and make it to the 8 am class, but then have about four hours, well not yesterday or the day before, but . . . And then just go to lab once or twice a week. Like it's pretty dull. But outside of school it's pretty good. Male - Domestic

My classes usually start from 11 to 5, and in between it's about 2 hours of studying at the library. Female - Domestic

I'm only taking 4 classes this terms, because I took like 6 last term because I wanted to [inaudible] But with my schedule I can relax, specially as I compare it to last term! But it's mainly focused in the late afternoon, ya, and late mornings. Female - Domestic

I'm in Engineering, so basically my day goes like 'go to class, do a mid term come out upset, go to a lab, come out upset, go home for dinner. Study, and then maybe do some drugs and go to bed. Male - International

[There is] always group projects. Like a group project everyday in commerce. Male - International

One female international student also explained that her day is also busy filled with extracurricular activities.

I've been involved in a lot of other things too, this year. Like I'm in the international peer program, I'm a peer leader so I do that sometimes. I volunteer at the XXX Café at my faculty. And I'm the Secretary of one of my clubs on campus. So it's not so much academic. And I find I

can't really focus at night, so I'll end up doing random things like email or talk to my friends back home on the internet, and then grocery shop, go on E-bay, procrastinate. And then finally at ten o'clock I start getting panicked, and doing productive things. And so then I go to sleep. Female - International

Health

Like previous years, students were asked to comment on their general health as a third year student. Some domestic students shared that they felt less healthy because of lack of sleep. There was a range of health experiences amongst domestic students, while some felt their health had deteriorated, others felt they were stronger in third year.

I sleep less now, so I get sick more often. Female - Domestic

I was sick a lot last term. But this term I've been pretty good. Exercising. Male - Domestic

My health is like deteriorating. No sleep. Female - Domestic

Mine's ok. Not too much to complain about. Female - Domestic

One domestic student pointed out that her physical health and mental health had improved since high school.

I think physically I'm doing ..like physiologically and such, or physically? I think after all these years my self esteem and confidence has risen since like high school and such. So I've found that that helps. As well my personal image has been better. Female - Domestic

International students felt that generally their health had improved since first year. Most felt they were eating healthier and doing better balancing their academics and social lives. A few commented that while they were better cooks, sometimes it was easier to skip cooking because of their busy academic schedules. Another student felt he had become lazier since coming to Canada and got more sleep because the demands of high school in China were tougher than the demands of university.

Not really, because of, in first year you have the cafe to go to, but right now you have to make food your own. So sometimes you want to skip a meal or two. Male - International

I think I'm less healthy than before. Ya, because I eating out more, because I'm too busy to cook, and I sleep less. Because I'm too busy to study. Female - International

Because I'm spacing out my credits more, rather than cramming it. At the beginning my mentality was 'let's cram it all in.' I be like 31, 32 credits a year. But now I'm like whatever, it's been easier, had more fun, so. That's my mentality now. Female - International

Ya. I think I'm more lazy, after I came to Canada. That's true. When I was in high school I was like getting up at six o'clock, getting some exercise, play tennis, you know, do some memorization of some English words something like that, but as I came here like sleep in everyday unless I have an early class. Male - International

Academic integration

Academic performance

Most domestic and international students felt that they were doing academically the same or better than second year. One student who did better in courses in which he had bought his professors a beer wondered if that was why he got better grades. This particular student talked later about the importance of professors knowing who you are and that this helps academically. The role of professors is further explored in a latter section of this report.

I did really, really well in two classes, and then just kind of sub par in the rest, so I don't know what that means. Actually I do, because just before exams I was, there's a little get together for all the profs and students, and for two of my professors I bought them a bunch of beer. And those are the two classes that I did really well in, so I don't know if that had anything to do with it, but I like to think that it did. Male - Domestic

When asked if they were happy with their performance, most students were okay with their grades and stated that their grades were okay based on their expended efforts.

I think it reflects the amount of effort I put in. That's all that matters. Female - Domestic

I should be doing better, but I don't put enough time and energy into it. Female - Domestic

For international students, some felt that they were doing better. However, one student shared that he was doing worse than first year but it did not bother him because everyone else was doing worse as well.

Relative to 1st year? Well, I'm doing a lot worse than my first year but it's not bothering me because everyone around me feels as well. So relative to my class I'm doing quite alright, but relative to 1st year, I'm not doing all that well. Male - International

Other international students discussed how their grades were depended on the class (e.g., their specialization). As the following conversation between two students highlights academic performance was also dependent on their professors.

3rd year we get into specialization. Like in first two years we all take common courses, then in 3rd year we get into some specializations like marketing, finance, stuff like that. Male - International

*And sometimes it really depends on the prof. Like which prof you take.
Male - International*

*Ya, 'cause we have different exams. Some profs are very hard, some
profs are very nice. Male - International*

*'cause sometimes you'll get 54, 55 averages, and sometimes you get
like 70-80 percent averages. Male - International*

One international student felt that her grades were improved because she was now familiar with the system and also felt more competent in English compared to first year.

*My grades get better. Because I get more used to the system. I write
better essays now than the first year. I think I said something about my
English writing in the first year, and about LPI, and now I survive in
these. So my grades improved. Female - International*

ESL experiences of international students are discussed further in the next section.

Experiences of ESL students

As the previous quote highlighted, for those international students whose first language was not English they did feel more competent with the English language. Students were adamant however that their proficiency in English was not measured by or assisted by the LPI (Language Proficiency Index) exam. When asked what did help improve their English students shared that writing essays, one-on-one interactions with professors and other students and living in residence assisted with their English. As the housing lottery was an issue discussed earlier, it is important to acknowledge how one international student raised the importance of living on campus for the exposure to English as part of the UBC experience.

*Oh, you have to write paper like every term, and the more you write
the better you will be. Male - International*

*And also from day to day interactions, with profs, with other students.
Male - International*

*Ya, I think living on campus can improve your English a lot, but UBC
doesn't guarantee international students housing. We still join lottery,
and our home is not here it's very difficult for us to find a place to live
compared with local students. Yeah- They should have priority for
international students to live on campus. Male - International*

In terms of seeking ESL support, students typically relied on friends for support or asked a domestic student who they knew well for help.

*Sometimes, if the writing is very important. Like I'm going to apply
some programs outside UBC, and when I have to write personal
statement I ask my friends to proof read for me. Otherwise, for normal
classes I will just do it myself and hand in whatever I have. Female -
International*

Or sometimes I just ask one of the domestic students whom I know reasonably well, I ask him to check out the mechanics. Male - International

For the international student who discussed having challenges with her professor who felt her English was not good enough- she did not go to the Writing Centre for help and also relied on her friends for support. As she explained *“I asked my friends for help. The writing centre is just not professional enough, in my opinion. My experience with them is they help you in a casual manner. They have said “I’m not really help to bring up your writing to that standard.”*

The LPI was still a very sore issue for students. Students reiterated issues from the first and second year focus groups that the LPI did not adequately predict how a student performed academically or conversationally in English. They felt that the TOFL test was a better indicator. The students gave the example of a friend of theirs who despite using the coaching services continues to fail the LPI and as a result, even though his academic grades are good might have to leave UBC. This is related to a policy at UBC where non-English speaking students were required to pass the LPI by their third year of study or withdraw.

Ya, we have a friend who has issues with LPI. I mean this is completely off topic, but . . . well, he is able to speak English and he knows how to write and stuff like that. And he’s been doing that for most of his life, but the thing about him and LPI is that he can’t pass his LPI for some reason, and he’s been sitting for it quite a few times now. And if he doesn’t pass his LPI this term, he has to leave UBC, which he doesn’t want to . . . Male - International

Which is fairly ridiculous, because in Indonesia he was in like an international college. And so I don’t know it’s kind of really sad for him. Female - International

I think he spent a lot of money on coaches and extra tutorials and stuff like that. Male - International

Another international student talked about the inconsistency between what was tested in the LPI and what was expected in the classroom. He remembered the first thing his professor from his first English class at UBC said was *“if you write essays like LPI, I’ll fail you.”* Another female student argued that the testing should be an English test that required rigour but fairness. This student also believed that as a UBC student and graduate, all students should be proficient in their English speaking and writing ability.

Well, make it a more fair English test, because I mean for sure English is definitely one thing that you should master by getting into University. I mean, I don’t know if you think my English is really good, but like, in my class, there’s a lot of people who don’t speak English, and communication is so hard. Like we write essays, and I’m the one who has to edit it. It’s really a pain, because every sentence says all these things, all these, like, things, and I’m like, ‘well, I have to rewrite all your essays ‘cause you’re cutting and pasting from the book, or using really bad English. And I’m not discriminating against them, but I think you definitely need a certain standard to get in. like half of them are exchange students, so it’s kind of okay, but if you’re a UBC

student, I think you definitely need to have a certain grasp of English to make it easier on your group and the school. Female - International

There was general agreement with the international students that all students who graduate from UBC have a certain proficiency in English- it was a reason many of them choose to study at a Canadian English-speaking institution.

Classroom experiences

Similar to the domestic students early sharing of their academic challenges, some international students found the workload heavier because they were doing more credits. International students also found that there were more expectations and an increased workload in third year.

Not really more course credits, but in terms of the course, in the first two years we have many labs and lectures, so when you get tot the 3rd and 4th year, you have many seminars, but you really have a small group but you have to talk. You have to be prepared. That's the thing- there is more. Female - International

One of the visions of TREK 2010 is that undergraduate students leave UBC with some research experience. Domestic UBC students had a variety of research experiences in their programs. For some they had an entire class devoted to research (e.g., in a lab) while others were doing group research projects. Others shared that the only research they were doing was the research for their course papers. One domestic student volunteered in the Psychology lab but did not return because she did not enjoy the experience.

I have a class right now that is just 100 percent research. The whole class is like one big project. Pretty non-interesting to me, but it's still going into like a lab and doing research. Male - Domestic

One of my classes we have the option of doing research paper instead of the final exam. Last term we had one group research project. That's about it. Female - Domestic

I'm in English. We don't do any cool research stuff but go to the library and dig throughout articles. So that's the extent of my research. Female - Domestic

Well, you have to do research for labs to be able to write them up, 'cause they ask you questions and you don't know what the answer is until you look it up. Female - Domestic

Last year I volunteer in the Psych lab and they kind of do research but it wasn't really that . . . it was really boring you just give out consent forms to people and tell them what to do and record whatever it is, their blood pressure. Well, I kind of did it for one semester, and because I didn't work for the summer, I didn't go back. They do it paid in the summer, and they do it regular credits regular times. That one was really bad 'cause you had to yell at people to get them aroused,

then measure their blood pressure. Then you had to apologize for all this yelling is fake, and that kind of stuff. So that's why I didn't really go back. Female - Domestic

For international students their research experiences were also within the classroom or part of their course work. One student discussed how her program included working in a science lab that was working with industry as a fourth-year student. As a third year student, she was experiencing research by conducting a research project that had implications for industry. Another student reiterated that research experience was really dependent on the program or department one was in.

I think next year we're going to do a Science lab where they hook us up with companies, and with industries, and we can design like, processes, and stuff like that for them. And for [course], as being a paper, where we had to present to the Fraser Valley Poultry industry regarding the Avian flu. And like all suggestions on how we can create a more sustainable poultry system in BC. And they were going to choose the best project and send it in to the Fraser Valley, so that was kind of a really, really neat paper to write. Female - International

I think it totally depends on your faculty. Like in the faculty of forestry, and I do a lot of research. I do research paper where you find some research paper that the people write, and you write a review on that. And you can freely choose what paper you want to review. And I also do many essays which require research. Like a 15 page essay requires having five references. So I think that's a good example. Female - International

The following conversation between the business students illustrates how some of their classes (despite the reputation of the professor) were positive experiences with learning and experiencing research.

*Well, I'm taking a research course, called marketing research.
[Laughs] It is the most horrible course I have ever taken- the course is okay but because of the prof. . . . Male - International*

. . . must because of you. Male - International

The course is OK. I mean they teach you different techniques in conducting surveys, conducting focus groups, survey areas. That's pretty interesting, but the prof is a well-known . . . [jerk]. Male - International

But for your other class, the other marketing class, where several groups form an industry and they become people in that industry. Male - International

Ya ya ya , simulation. Like you play. The whole course is a game that you play online. Like they divide you into groups, and you have a company, and then all other groups in your class they have a company, but your in the same industry. So you have to compete with other groups. You will be evaluated on your stock price. Just like real world. You market your product, you price your product, you find your

*customers, and then your grades will be based on your performance.
Very interesting. Male - International*

Other students felt that many research opportunities, particularly those that were paid positions, were reserved for graduate students.

Usually these opportunities are given to PhD students, graduate students, undergraduate students don't get any chances. Male - International

A research assistant is doing research with professors. And getting paid. Male - International

When asked if they had opportunities to be research assistants with professors, one male international student responded by stating that “*I think, right now, is too early, somewhat. We don't have enough knowledge to that kind of thing.*” Another female international student indicated that it was possible to get an RA during the summer, but more difficult during the winter. She said “*I actually know one student that's doing RA, but it's only in the summer. In the winter session even harder to get a RA.*”

Internationalization & Globalization

Internationalization and globalization was experienced by both international and domestic students in fairly similar ways. For example, both groups saw the international diversity of their professors as an important contribution to their global knowledge. Students' experiences with professors will be discussed in the next section.

Ya, I had a psych prof from America, and like everything is like America this or that. Female - Domestic

I just notice some profs who are going on exchange are interested in staying here permanently, one was from Germany and the other was from China. Female - Domestic

For some domestic students globalization was part of their course work although this again was dependent on their discipline and even major within a particular faculty. For other domestic students their experiences with internationalization came with their interactions with international students.

I'm friends with a lot of international students. But in classes they don't ever mention it except for once in a while they'll say, they're talking to someone and they'll say 'in Europe they do it slightly differently, they do this', but that's about it. That's in engineering. Male - Domestic

They don't talk about it. Female - Domestic

Not really so much on teaching, but most of the profs I have are Japanese natives, and well, depending on the age group, I've had a four language courses I had to take over the course of the year. There

were just two profs for the four courses, so kind of like, they were two pairs of courses continuing each other on to the 2nd term, and one of the profs is a pretty old Korean raised in Japan. And the other is a really young Japanese woman who has Korean parents. So that's the only kind of international kind of thing about my courses, I think. Female - Domestic

Well, my professor as well, when they were, you try to read like their course material cross culturally, they 'oh this is in this area, and here in comparison this area is..' That's pretty much the only internationalization thing that I have in my class. Female - Domestic

For psych classes, sometimes you will have, like, 'what will people do differently or behave differently if they're in different cultures.' And I also take a course on nutrition and world health, and they talk about what is nutrition and food like in different cultures, and how people adapt to their own cultures. Female - Domestic

International students also had similar experiences. Interestingly, one male international student asked the question “*Can you explain what these terms mean? Can you explain what that means to our life? do you mean how it relates to our world?*” The facilitators explained that the term was in relation to having a broader understanding of the world, particularly having an internationalized curriculum so that students learn about Canada and the globe within their programs. With the question clarified, students went on to explain how various courses (but not all) had aspects of international focus. Other students also mentioned that through their programs they had the opportunity to study-abroad. Such experiences were seen as broadening their international perspective.

In E-Commerce course we get examples from all over the world. Male - International

Ya, we have international business options, and we have a lot of studying abroad opportunities. Male - International

International students also experienced internationalization through the content and the ethnic diversity of their professors along with learning from their professors international experiences.

Well, like in classes mostly we do case studies. They order a case from Harvard, so we do those. And it's all about different countries, not only North America. Like there's Indian companies, there's Chinese companies in different situations, and you have to analyze it and give management consulting and like that, so it's pretty good. Male - International

And also in the E-Comm. class, we took together last summer, the prof gave us, was comparing monetary policies all over. Like between countries, Mexico, China, US, Canadian. And then there's also a Chinese scholar, who's from a Chinese university, who's also taking part in that course. Male - International

Ya, definitely, like in case studies and stuff like that, we had to do finding out some imports to Hong Kong having some bacteria in it and

we're supposed to liaise with the Hong Kong people to come out with some resolutions. Ya, they do stuff like that. And they also email out, 'cause I'm contact with advisor, the career advisor and sometimes she sends out emails regarding like, jobs overseas, or international opportunities. Ya. Female - International

Different places. In my first year we had a Turkish professor, and now I have a Poland this year, and a Chinese, and a Mexican. Male - International

Each [professor] brings their own perspectives in terms of teaching. Male - International

International students were also asked about their residence experiences with regards to interacting with domestic students as an exposure to internationalization and globalization. While some international students were living in residence and had Canadian roommates, one student did said “*we don't hang out*” he further said “*we talk, like how's it going. Play hockey, something like that. Like really . . .*” This “acquaintances, not friends” phenomenon has not changed since first year, although international and domestic students do not do fundamentally different things there is a culturally-comfort distance that students find difficult to bridge, as one male international student stated “*unless you've been here for like very long, I think it's a problem.*” The male international student who lived in residence with Canadian roommates further stated:

I guess there are always the cultural differences. Like you grow up ins someplace else, there's a barrier you can't cross, or it's really hard to cross. Male - International

This issue of international and domestic student relationships will be further discussed under the heading “Peer Group Interactions.”

Professors

Both international and domestic students were for the most part very positive about their experiences with their professors. As one male international student stated “*I think the professors abilities are getting better in 3rd year.*” These two focus groups also discussed how professors, either because of their own ethnicity or from their diverse educational and work experiences also added to the internationalization/globalization of students’ academic experiences. International students felt their professors were helpful and more available in third year. One international student spoke of how she comfortable she was to speak to professors who would come to the café where she volunteered.

Oh, they’re always nice. they are always nice. In the international context, talking about internationalization, the profs in the geography department come from various places, so they’re really nice, and they don’t have any racism. Even when I asked for help, when I was first year, when my English was really suck, they try their best to help me. So I really like their style, in geography department. Female - International

I could say the same for my faculty. I really really like them. They’re very helpful, and I also work in the student run café, so I tend to bump into them pretty often ‘cause they come down for lunch and stuff. Like “oh, I remember you, you applied for exchange and you talked to me about it, how did you do? Blah blah” So it’s really nice. The fact that it’s small so you get to know every single person. Female - International

Domestic students reiterated the international student experiences. In fact, both groups highlighted the importance of knowing professors- or having professors know you as a third year student, especially in terms of making a good impression and getting references for jobs or graduate school. The following conversation between the domestic students highlights their awareness of the importance of being recognized by their professors.

They won’t even know you by the end of the term, if you have other class. But just talk to them after class, or in their office hours, send them emails. Actually helps. Even if your question is completely irrelevant to what they expect. I just don’t know why. Female-Domestic

I think it’s because when they mark you you’re the person who paid attention, as well as participation marks. Female - Domestic

If they recognize your name as someone who’s been trying to get a good mark.. Female - Domestic

They might actually take another look at what you’re doing. Male - Domestic

Or if what you’re saying isn’t totally clearly explained, then they will give it to you anyway. Female - Domestic

Or sometimes when I talk to the prof it just makes me feel more comfortable with the course, knowing that 'hey this person knows me they're a pretty nice person. They're not gonna, y'know'" Male - Domestic

Some domestic students felt that the small class size allowed professors to get to know students more personally (e.g., knowing their name). However, domestic students also cautioned that having this familiarity with professors can also be a hindrance.

I think that can be detrimental if you keep skipping, 'cause then they recognize you as a skipper and slacker and that will affect your mark. Female - Domestic

If you have a small class, like one of my Chinese class, like the prof basically knows me by name, and I only skipped like one class through the 2 semesters, and he actually talked to me like 'hey, why did you skip that?' Like, seriously. I was only absent for one class for the whole year, right? Female - Domestic

I think it's a good thing, because if you're planning to go into graduate school you have to get references, so getting to know your professors is more, is definitely beneficial. Female - Domestic

There was also discussion in the two focus groups around different strategies used by professors and students to get to know each other. For example, a domestic student shared that one professor gave students a harder assignment so that they would have to come speak to him. Another professor, even in a large classroom, had learned all the students' names. Again, having a professor knowing their names helped some students pay more attention in class (i.e., with a fear of being called upon). International students mentioned that some professors ask students to fill out name cards, which the professors then memorized.

One of my profs last terms, he purposefully assigned a really hard assignment that he knew none of us would be able to do by ourselves, just so that we would all go and meet him. Which was actually really nice, 'cause otherwise I would never have gone and talked to him. Female - Domestic

One professor I have now, it's a class of like 130, 140 people so it's pretty big. And she will learn someone's name and then use it all the time. So once I asked her to speak a little quieter, it was really hurting my ears, and since then she's knows my name and always asks me questions about what is going on. It's interesting. Male - Domestic

It makes me. it's the first time I was ever, it was one lecture, it was the first time I was ever actually listening to everything that was being said and I understood everything. So it was like if I did that in every class it would be really good, but . . . well the idea that she was calling on me, every sentence. Male - Domestic

For Halloween, the profs had a trick or treat thing, were you could go into their offices and get a treat, and the point was to get to know them. Female - Domestic

Some profs in commerce they take an active role in remembering you. Some profs before they start a section or start a term they look at each of students pictures and remember their name, and so when you start a class the teacher knows you. Male - International

The profs, like most of my profs, try to remember all the students' name, in the first few classes. So I have no problem with making the prof recognize me. Female - International

When asked if they were more comfortable approaching a professor now than in first-year on a scale of 1-10 (10 being most comfortable), most domestic and international students rated their comfort level as an 8. However, they emphasized that this was dependent on the professor. Most of the international students felt that if the professor was nice- they felt very comfortable approaching them.

Email would be more convenient, but I kind like talking to them. It's kind of fun. Female - International

If the prof is not nice, then we're not going to talk to him or her anyway. Male - International

Some profs just really don't care about you or anything. Especially like the really veteran ones who are about to retire, they're like 'ya, I don't care anymore.' Female - Domestic

Domestic students also shared that in first-year they did not know their professors names, while another student joked that she still doesn't know her professors names.

Ya, especially 1st year, I didn't even know my profs names. Female - Domestic

I don't know their names now! Laughs. Female - Domestic

When asked about their comfort level in contacting their professor by e-mail, ratings went up to a 10-comfort level. Some domestic students discussed it was more difficult to reach some professors by e-mail so they have learned to ask questions after class, while other students had experienced (and appreciated) very quick response time from professors.

Some profs it's hard to get them by email. They might get flooded with tons of emails, so it's better to just ask after class, to get a clear response, or a fast response at least. Female - Domestic

The majority of international students also expressed that they felt more comfortable contacting their professors by e-mail. As one female international student explained “because in email I can edit and rewrite again whatever I want to say. And I can say it in a more polite way and get a most desirable answer.”

Funny, once I e-mailed a prof at like, 1:30 in the morning on like a Sat. night, she e-mailed me back like 5 minutes later. I was impressed. Male - Domestic

Many of the themes discussed by domestic students were also mentioned by international students. International students also found their professors to be more accessible in third-year. As one student explained, she found that professors were more flexible. She attributed this to the fact that they had lighter teaching loads and there was more of a connection between their teaching and research. Another male student commented that because of smaller class size, professors also had more time to associate with students.

So flexible now, like I have a problem. And they'll be like 'oh, come by anytime.' So it's, they're really like, 'cause they only teach upper level courses, and most of them only teach one or two classes, and the rest of the time is devoted to research. Female - International

In 3rd year, each prof are teaching less students, so on average everyone has more time to associate with the professor. Male - International

International students were also cognizant of the importance of having a professor know who you are in terms of making connections, for reference letters and getting participation marks in class.

Ya, the good thing about talking to prof is that he knows how you look like, and then he actually remembers you from then on, and then he be able to, I don't know, do some nice things to you, to you grades, to your job. Male - International

Ya, especially when you want a recommendation letter. Reference letter. Male - International

Well, part of our grades is based on participation, so if a prof knows you, you get a better grade. Male - International

The question was posed to the group “is that something you knew coming in as a first year, or have you learned over time?” The majority of international students said that they had learned this over time, while another stated “*It just struck me.*” Students described different strategies to make sure their professor got to know them. Some answered questions during class or asked questions. Others said that attending office hours was best, especially if you were in a large class.

Answer one or two questions each class . . . Male - International

Well, like, answer some questions and ask some each class. Male - International

And go to office hours from time to time. Male - International

Ya, 'cause we don't have a large number of students in class, so, easier for the profs to remember you. Male - International

In defining a “good professor” domestic and international students had several different ideas. Some judged a good professor by how open they were to being asked questions in class. Others felt a good professor would be accepting of his/her mistakes.

How open they are in class to questions. I dunno. After hearing them talk for like ten hours you get an idea of what kind of person they are. Male - Domestic

A good prof would be very accepting of his or her mistakes? Because I notice with some profs, like I notice with some profs for example I took some Language courses, and some of the language instructors their English is not that fluent, and when you try to point out their mistakes they're like 'oh, well, but in my language it's like this and that,' so you should do it like this, but then it doesn't make sense in English. And my other profs, some of them are just like, 'yes, oh yes I notice that mistake now, thank you for pointing that out, I'll make a note of it.' Female - Domestic

I think the profs that shows a lot of enthusiasm in class, is more exciting. Female - Domestic

Although international students didn't really mention teaching assistants (TAs) during the focus group, Domestic students did have some discussion around their experiences with TAs. As the following conversation highlights, some TAs were seen a good because they spent the time with students answering their questions in a patient and kind manner. However, there was some frustration over not knowing what their TAs looked like and inconsistent grading between TAs teaching the same class.

Some TA's can be good, and some are just completely annoying, they're so ignorant. Like there's this one class I was actually sick for my midterm, so I kind of sent emails to the prof and the TA, so I asked, like there's no makeup exam, you just don't take the marks or anything, they pile up for the final. So I kinda thought 'is that true?' 'cause that's what it said in the syllabus, but I wanted to make sure, and then the prof never answered until the next day, but one TA was like 'oh ya, you're really sick, I'm really sorry for you, and yes, whatever the prof says for you I think it's true, right? The other TA says 'Oh, I just don't know, I will just go ask the prof, send an email to the prof.' that's already what she said, and I never saw her for the term at all. Like she never showed up, like one TA actually teaches, and guest lectures, and the other one never did anything, like I didn't even know what she looked like until the final. She just show up for the final. Female - Domestic

I know for a fact that some TA's don't come to class, they just mark. Female - Domestic

Yeah that's true. But I just don't like the fact that she just didn't now anything at all. Like some TA's just don't know anything. And they can mark your paper. Like in another language course, the prof marked the exams, but the TA marked the assignments, and usually we got the assignments basically from the prof, or you already got the answers from the prof, it's just like copy. But it can be so completely different, like the TA will have a completely different answer sheet, and so the answers will be completely different, and we got points off, marks off, and everyone got so frustrated. And we don't even know what he looks like? Female - Domestic

*Like I've had TA's who've spent so many hours just helping us do tough assignments and we ask the same questions over and over again and they keep answering them without getting frustrated with us.
Female - Domestic*

Other staff

Domestic students for the most part had positive experiences interacting with their departmental staff and academic advisors. However, as mentioned previously the negative confrontation with a staff person left one student feeling negative about her advocating for students.

Everyone in my department's been really helpful. Whenever I've had to talk to a secretary she's always been able to help me like with keys to the building. And talk to the course advisors has also been really helpful. Female - Domestic

*We have a good secretary. She's nice. She prints off the weekly newsletter. Staples them together too. Or the machine might do that!
Male - Domestic*

International students were also happy with their experiences with their departmental staff. However, some international students also had challenges in getting assistance from their department secretaries.

Oh, they're always nice. they are always nice. Female - International

The staff is really, how can I say? Not helpful. They won't come up to counter even if you wait there say five minutes. If you don't say hi there, if you don't call for service, they won't come here to help you. And when you ask for direction for the room of the profs, or where the assignment are, they never tell you directly. You just look around yourself. And when I ask for appointment with [Department] academic advisors, they try to turn me away, to the faculty of arts. They keep saying this should be the problem of the faculty of arts, blah blah blah. And when I go to the faculty of arts, they say oh this should be the problem of economics dept. and they keep me going between dept. and faculty, and I cannot get help anywhere. Female - International

International students using their faculty academic advisors had positive experiences.

Sometimes they can help us register for courses. Male - International

For my exchange program, to make sure that it's going to be approved. And they're really nice about it, like Dr. [name] is like 'oh, it's not really the same, but sure we'll give it to you.' And I can see it happening." Female - International

Support services

Unlike the international students who used their department academic advising, domestic students voiced concerns over academic advising that they had experienced thus far at UBC. Their issues were around accessibility, particularly long line-ups and not being able to “talk” to someone about their questions as the following excerpt demonstrates:

I always hated these sorts of services, 'cause there's always this huge line up. Like specially Advising, I know it's probably part of the faculty and everything, like there's always this huge line up, and you have to need it in person, or you have to phone in, and you're trying to get through and no one answers the phone. And so it's so frustrating. (General agreement.) Female - Domestic

And when you need it, like the beginning of the school year, they are never open, never available, and by the end of the year you don't need it they are always available but you don't need it any more, right? And then it's the same cycle, and that's why I never got to advising. I always say that actually one day I'm going to check out advising, but I don't know when. Female - Domestic

Students while critical were also able to provide recommendations on how these services could be improved for third year students. Students recommended that they have more people on during peak periods of need and having volunteers trained on basic questions. Another student reminded the group that there were peer advisors available, however, even the peer advisors had line-ups.

I think they should have more people doing that in flux that's needed. Female - Domestic

They should have volunteers. Like just train the volunteers, they would know. Like people just need the basic questions. Female - Domestic

They do have peer advisors, though, that you can just go and see. Female - Domestic

There's still a line up for them too! Female - Domestic

[Go] Early in the morning. Female - Domestic

Students also discussed the note-taking services. While one student had worked as a note-taker for several terms, two others were not successful in their applications. One male domestic student was confused on why he wasn't selected even though he had good grades and submitted all the necessary documents.

One service, I've applied a bunch of times to be one of those note takers, and they never hire me. Never. Male - Domestic

It depends, like this year I actually sign up for a note taking, actually I have two previous experience, and my marks are pretty good, and I actually take that course with the same prof, like a lower level course, and I actually did that already, like I had experience in all aspects, and they didn't hire me. I don't know why. Maybe my mark is still not high enough? They get someone with a higher mark than me? I don't know. Female - Domestic

Part of the difficulty in this process was that students did not have a contact number or e-mail to inquire into why they were not selected. This discussion relates to the difficulties that some students, both domestic and international, had in finding suitable on-campus employment.

As second year students, international students had not really used the resources such as tutoring or the Writing Centre. Their use of support services did not seem to change that much as third year students. Some international students still hadn't used the Writing Centre, as one male student stated "what is writing centre for? I never used it." Another felt that the service there was not good quality because the tutors could not answer his questions. When asked how do they get help with their writing, students said they relied on each other or read other essays or books on writing.

I just go once, for LPI. But the tutors there are students. And sometimes I ask them questions and they're like 'oh, I don't really know.' Like they're English major students, I only used once and I've never come back. Male - International

International students use of international house had also not changed much from second and third year. Although they might not use the services offered there often, one student felt that it was important and she went there sometimes because they always knew where to refer her. Another student shared that she was using the service more than first-year because she was volunteering as an international peer advisor.

I don't really have anything to add. I do go to international house sometimes, but they're really, really nice. So if I ever need help. They always know who to refer me to. Female - International

On the exchange. now that I'm an international peer advisor sometimes I need a book room or stuff like that. General thing, like for references for my exchange program stuff like that. But not for writing. Female - International

In terms of career services, international students indicated that some of their departments provided career support. However, they also mentioned that the jobs posted were often for domestic or permanent residents. They saw the Career services offered on-campus at Brock Hall as resume support rather than a place to network or to get referrals for jobs.

They provide some industry connection between the international student and local employers. Male - International

Oh, well, we have a career centre at the business school but it's more for domestic students. Male - International

I think they mostly help you to prepare a resume. Female - International

I think normally the referral jobs would be within your faculty. Like I have a lot of people coming up to me and like 'come for this seminar, go to this workshop' that kind of thing. that happens in my faculty. Female - International

One international student felt that more services need to be focused on international student career needs. He suggested that knowing about other opportunities to participate in research, like this particular study would be beneficial for international students.

I think that's the thing that many people may not have thought of. Maybe we should have some sort of service that give us information about surveys like this where we can earn money, right? Because, well, international students, it's bad enough that we have to pay such high fees, so we need some sort of an income, and we seem to have difficulties getting jobs on campus. So if there's a service that could gather information about surveys like this, especially in the psychology dept., and let us know about what's going on, then that would be appreciated. Male - International

When asked who they saw as best facilitating that kind of service, International house and the AMS (UBC Student union) were suggested. However, a female international student reminded the group that Career services does in fact does provide those services. Another male student mentioned that a lot of these services were available through the UBC website (e.g., student service centre).

Career services? Like a lot of campus jobs are at career services. That's how I got my job, and they'll be like 'this is on campus' and as long as it's on campus you can go work there as international students. And they have jobs like 'so and so is doing a study, do you want to do this?' and it's all in career services, if you're interested. Female - International

It's already available. You just go to UBC and you can search what you want. Male - International

This highlights the fact that while services may in fact existed on campus more communication was needed to bring students' awareness about what was available on campus. As one female international student stated "Yep. I think UBC actually has a lot other services that we don't know where to go to. So it's just a matter of asking around, finding out where you can get this information. I think." Another female student recommended that "maybe UBC needs some kind of umbrella organization, so that people know where they should look when they need information." So while some of the students in this group were not aware of the services

available, other students in the group proved to be useful in informing students where in fact they could access various services.

It's all on the website. Male - International

In fact you don't even have to go to the website. I think in the 2nd level, in the SUB, they have those offices for like, if you're looking for volunteer experiences, I think you just go to the SUB, it's one of those tiny offices with just one guy sitting in it. Male - International

Online resources

The domestic and international students when asked about the quality of online resources first discussed WebCT- a common theme from previous year's focus groups. Similarly, domestic students had mixed-reactions about the usefulness of having WebCT as a course supplement. Some domestic students they felt it was a waste of time and resources. Others felt that the quizzes available through WebCT were not helpful in learning course content. However, others felt that WebCT served as a useful tool for organizing their courses, getting lecture notes and other resources.

The WebCT seems like kind of a waste of money, to me. A lot of the time, it seems like it gets used to give not-very-useful assignments. Female - Domestic

Ya, 'cause, they have quizzes on there, and some profs are like, 'okay, there's quizzes, and now we should give quizzes to the students.' But I don't find that really helps me with the courses. Female - Domestic

I have WebCT in like every class, and I think it's really good, and I don't know how different it would be. I guess it's a lot just easier, 'cause otherwise I would have six different websites to go to, this way it's all there. So it works really well. They can post all their old stuff, old files. Don't do any actual quiz work or anything, but I dunno, I think it's good. Male - Domestic

I find it useful in language because they have all those exercises, like comprehension exercises and everything. So I found it helpful when I took languages. Female - Domestic

For international students some of the technical issues still existed with WebCT, there was general group agreement that WebCT was the best option available.

I can't think of a better alternative. (To WebCT). Male - International

Ya, I think it's the best. Female - International

International students, similarly to domestic students used WebCT for homework, getting assignments and class notes, videos. Some also used the online quizzes and using the online forum.

Homework. Getting assignments. Notes. Videos And they also have the forums for questions you can post up there. Male - International

Yeah, the discussion board is especially useful. Male - International

Another international student gave an example of how through WebCT she was able to take a course offered by another university. This is also another example of the internationalization of curriculum at UBC.

Oh, I really want to tell about WebCT, One class I take last term is about international migration, and it's a course organized from University of Singapore, and University of New South Wales, and UBC. So students from the three universities talk in WebCT Forum. And I really gained a lot of knowledge from this kind of learning. Female - International

Another technological issue that was an issue for some domestic students was the unreliability of the on-campus wireless services at UBC, as one student stated:

Can I complain about something? I really hate the wireless network here, it keeps cutting me off, so ya. I hate it with a passion. And like when you go home and you have to log on to the server, to access any of the services you have to log on, and changing everything, changing your proxy server.

Domestic students were happy with the Student Service Centre. The ease of accessing all their student records, financial information and exam timetables along with registration was valued by students. In learning that SFU's online services were not liked by their friends, several domestic students were impressed that UBC was seen as a leader in service provision. Another female domestic student shared how while she was away, she found it easy to pre-list all her courses and then her mom could log into the system and register for her.

I had to be away this summer, so I just work-listed all the courses that I wanted and then when the day came my mom could just go online and click 'register for courses.' Female - Domestic

The ease of navigation and use was important to the students.

I found Student Services pretty good. It's nice to, like all the courses and exam timetables and everything. Female - Domestic

I had someone tell me at SFU, 'oh yeah, the UBC one is way better.' If you tried SFU you would cry. They said they have to call instead of doing it online, and then they always mixed it up, and the marks were always mixed up and stuff. So I guess UBC is better. Female - Domestic

I also though kind of in terms of registration. You kind of see like there, what, how many seats are still left in your course. Female - Domestic

The work with thing when you're registering for courses. Female - Domestic

Ya, they keep adding things. Female - Domestic

There was discussion on how UBC continues to improve the services. They noted that some services were not available to them in first-year, but UBC keeps adding things, particularly the registration system- adding/dropping courses.

International students also discussed the usefulness of having most of the services online at the Library, particularly articles. However, some students were having technical difficulty because of their slow internet connection or their personal computers.

I like it way better than going to the library itself. Like everything's online, which is perfect! Female - International

A lot of e-journals are online, and I normally use like journals. So it's nice. Female - International

They have real time librarian chat, so if you're having trouble finding reference, you can type in your questions and the librarian will be right with you, during the library hours. Female - International

The new learning center opened up as the Irving K. Barber Library at UBC was seen as a nice space for students, although some felt “*it was always crowded*” (Male - International). The virtual library was seen as a useful way of reserving and retrieving library books but the majority of the group had not used this service at the time of the focus group.

I tried. It's good. Well, but if you want to get a book, you have to put a reserve. You have to put an order to let the librarian get it for you. Female - International

Social Integration

Social life

Similar to second-year, many domestic students felt that their academic schedules impeded their social lives compared to their first year experiences. Most felt okay with their social lives, they were balancing studying, working (if they were working), and extracurricular activities. Some domestic students felt that because of their involvement in various activities that they were having more of a social life in third year than in previous years.

More- 'cause I've been doing all these jobs around here, I don't have time to see anybody. Female - Domestic

Mine was bad for like 2 weeks before reading week this year. It was a rough two weeks, I feel, socially. Just a lot. I don't know what it was, exactly. I had no spare time. There was always stuff in there. Male - Domestic

One student commented that having a social life requires work and is almost like a job.

I find I'm putting more effort into making myself have social time. Because before it was much easier because I didn't have much to do. But now I have to put more of an effort into creating the social time, socializing. You have to make more of an effort, otherwise you might not have, y'know. You get bogged down with homework and all that stuff. So you have to, like. It is sort of becoming work to socialize. Female - Domestic

International students when asked about their social activities talked about gathering together for study groups as a form of socializing with their friends because they are too busy otherwise. Other activities international students have tried to engage in were watching hockey and skiing.

We all try to study together. Female - International

A hobby!! Because like many of my friends are getting into 3rd or 4th year, and everyone gets so busy, and we don't even have time to hang out, and so 'let's study together'. Female - International

We watch more hockey. And we go skiing more often. Male - International

I couldn't imagine skiing, go down the mountains on a board? After I go a couple of times, it's pretty fun. Male - International

When asked what proportion of their week do they study or socialize, most international students indicated that they studied during the week and kept their weekends for socializing.

I spend during the day on my own studying or going online talking to people back home. But then on weekends it's more social. I go out a lot more. Female - International

Weekends are usually more social stuff. Normally I just blow my whole Saturday away doing nothing. It doesn't have to be social stuff, because . . . the thing about engineering is you see your friends, you have lots of classes, right. You see your friends every day. You have to study day and night, so you study your friends, so the weekend is pretty much the only time you get to spend alone. Male - International

On-campus activities

Domestic students typically still spent most of their time engaged with on-campus commitments rather than off-campus. For example, they volunteered, worked part-time on campus. A few participants had taken part in UBC's Learning Exchange Program during their reading week.

Kind of on but off, like I volunteer with the Learning Exchange, which is on-campus, but it's going off-campus, to like work at schools. Male - Domestic

Ya, I did that over this reading week as well. Female - Domestic

Also I have done a lot of things at International House as well. Female - Domestic

Other students talked about participating in on-campus sports, being part of their residence association or being involved within their department. One of the students talked about the negative impact the Olympics will have on student recreation as the loss of two arenas will mean less ice-time for recreational hockey.

I do intramural ultimate Frisbee. Female - Domestic

I play hockey in a league and in the drop in. They're ripping down the arenas, or two of them, for the new Olympic things. And that makes me sad and angry. This may not be the right place to complain. They're taking the two rinks where 90 percent of what I play is, just 'cause it's all drop in non-serious stuff. So the odds are good there'll be very, very limited ice time next year, which is a shame. Male - Domestic

Ya, definitely. I am the treasurer for my Rez Association, and I edit the Science paper. Female - Domestic

International students were also involved in their student associations and clubs, along with on-campus intramurals.

External commitments (off-campus; activities outside of academics)

External commitments or off-campus activities for domestic students primarily revolved around volunteering. For example, one student volunteered at the hockey games but this was limited because of his schedule. He explained "*I volunteer at Canucks games, but I haven't done that in a while, 'cause I haven't really had time.*"

A couple of the students indicated that they worked part-time. One student had worked during the Federal election. Another female domestic student shared that she had tried working part-time but because of academic demands couldn't work or volunteer. Only one domestic student in the group currently worked part-time while attending school. Most felt it was too hard to balance working with studying.

This January I worked for the Federal Election. The pay's pretty good, and it gets me to know a lot of things about the election. But I had to

skip school, that's the bad thing, for a couple of days. Female - Domestic

I don't work and I don't volunteer. At least not right now, anyways. [laughs]. Oh, and actually, I've been participating . . . this focus group is kind of involvement, isn't it? Female - Domestic

I tried part time last year near my April exams, and I just had to fire my boss. I got too many exams crammed up and I just said 'hey, I can't work. Sorry.' Or I would just get D on everything. Female - Domestic

International students also volunteered during reading week on the Learning Exchange program. In fact, one student commented on how many Canadian students participated in the program, she “*thought a lot of international students would be interested in that.*” They saw this as an off-campus activity because they volunteered in the downtown eastside. One student felt that such a program was valuable and believed that was important that UBC had it as a goal for students to have such experiences.

I'm doing a reading week project, I'm very excited about that. It was, basically we worked with the downtown eastside schools? And we worked with the kids for a couple of days, and that was really fun, you got to meet many, many people from other faculties, other years, and work with the kids. So it was just a really good way of getting out. And I liked the fact that UBC is trying to make that a goal, by 2010, I think, that all 50% or something percent of UBC students do that. And that's really nice, that they're branching out into the community. Female - International

Other off-campus activities for international students included going grocery shopping, eating at restaurants, clubbing, going to karaoke and movies.

Residence/Commuting

Students were asked whether they were living on-campus or had moved off-campus. For the domestic students, most of those who had lived in residence in second year were still in residence in third year. One student had moved from Thunderbird (a residence typically for first-year students) to another residence on-campus. This same student talked about how the social life of first-year was better for meeting people but he preferred his new residence. Another student agreed with the social experiences of first-year residence, she stated “*I wouldn't have traded my first year residence for anything. But it's nice not to be in that scene anymore.*”

First year was a lot of fun. I think first year is the most fun, meeting so many new people. 2nd year was kind of a drag, “cause of where I was living in Totem. Third year's been really good. Like, I don't meet as many people thru residence, as much as I had in the past. It is fine though. Male - Domestic

There was some discussion with those living in residence, both international and domestic students, about the physical conditions of the residence being older and dirty. As one male

international student stated “Fairview is so old, the sealing on the bathtub, when someone took shower, it will dripping water.”

International students’ discussion about residence life was dominated by their dissatisfaction with the UBC Housing lottery policy. Some students had lost their room in residence and had to find other accommodations either on-campus (not through campus housing) or off-campus.

Well, I was kicked out. I live on campus, but it’s not part of UBC housing. You know there is a couple of parts out there that is not part of UBC housing. Male - International

International students also spoke about how their diet had improved because they were now able to cook for themselves- it is convenient and they didn’t have to eat residence food. While they said that the food was good (e.g., sandwiches, breakfasts), they did not want to eat the same thing every day.

Ya, it’s very convenient. Male - International

We’re cooking ourselves. Male - International

For once or twice it’s ok, but then you eat, if you have the same thing every day. Male - International

They also noted that food on-campus was more expensive than purchasing food off-campus.

Domestic students who were commuting to UBC (i.e., living off-campus) discussed how their commuting influenced how much time they could volunteer or engage in other extracurricular activities as third year students. Consequently, domestic students living on-campus also found that engaging in activities off-campus was often a challenge because of the distance and commuting on local transportation.

I find that you might be more into like, school, and the varsity and the sports and area if you actually lived on or near campus? ‘cause I have a friend who lives by Stanley Park, and he participates in sports, but not school sports, because he’s so far away from everything. But I’m sure he would be in school sports. It’s the distance that keeps us from actually participating. Female - Domestic

So I don’t have a lot of extra time or anything. I would love to volunteer, but if I volunteer I would probably get home everyday like by 6 or 7 or even 8 right, and I can’t get up that early in the morning. I tried a 9:30 and I was like late the whole year. Female - Domestic

My hockey games sometimes go til two in the morning, a lot of them do. So for someone who live in Burnaby it really wouldn’t work out. Or if I wasn’t living on campus. Male - Domestic

Those few domestic students who were living off-campus they were living with their parents (i.e., no one was renting off-campus). They found the commute reasonable ranging from 20 to 60 minutes each way. Although one student said that her commute takes time away from studying,

while other students seem to study on the bus, she found that too difficult. One student found the local transit to her home had improved and her commute was only 45 minutes.

It just takes so much time just to get. Like I live in Burnaby too, so it takes a long time. And I would rather use the 3 hours to study. You can't really study on the bus, 'cause it's so bulky. Maybe some people can, but for me I can't it's so jumpy. Female - Domestic

I find that I just don't do anything. I bring my I-pod and I just listen. And sleep, and maybe eat. Usually I don't study unless I have an exam right after. But I don't find it that bad, just a bit time consuming. But I kind of get used to it, I guess. Female - Domestic

I don't feel I have a right to complain about my commute, like considering before. It used to be really bad before you had all these . . . like translink have made it much better. The buses that come here. So compared to that it's much better. And also I'm only like 45 minutes or an hour away. Female - Domestic

Only one student who lived off campus worked part-time. The other two students felt their schedules were too hectic to try to work part time on top of their studies.

Peer group interactions

When asked about their friendships over the last three years, students had a variety of experiences to share. For those students who had smaller class size, they had established friendships with their classmates and simply knew more people in their classes. These friendships helped one male domestic student get notes or assignments when he missed classes.

That's the difference between 3rd year and 2nd, is that I have a good set of people, friends, in all my classes that I know really well, so whenever I'm not there they always give me their notes or their assignments. Male - Domestic

Now my classes are sometimes 30 people, so it's more possible to know them. Female - Domestic

Other students shared that their friendships were more transitory depending on how the friendship was established (e.g., class or residence). As one female domestic student explained

I found friendships to be more transitory. Like after the term, it takes more of an effort to keep in touch and everything. Especially if perhaps they're non-residents, and your other friends are in residence, 'cause I found that residence bonds with residence, like as opposed if you have to commute to Burnaby or White Rock or anything. Like you won't bother to meet up or anything? So I found that term to term friendships are much more transitory."

Most domestic students agreed with this one female domestic student's opinion that friendships depended on where you were living and what classes you were taking. If you did not see those

people on a regular basis then long-term friendships might not happen. The fluid or transitory nature of friendships is also highlighted in this domestic female description of how her friendships have changed over the last couple of years.

My friends have changed over the past couple of years, from like in 1st year it was the kids I was living with in residence, and now it's a lot more people I'm in class with now, or have been in class with. Female - Domestic

Another female domestic student said that although her best friend also goes to UBC they rarely saw each other on-campus; instead they tended to socialize off-campus in the area of the city where both of them were living.

Ya. My best friend is still my friend back in High School, but she also comes to UBC. But she's in a completely different faculty, and she does completely different stuff. But we'll try to meet up maybe at her house or outside campus. So we actually don't really meet up in the campus, because it's just too big. And then we both live in Burnaby, so there's no point meeting up here. Female - Domestic

When asked whether their friends were on- or off-campus, those domestic students who lived on-campus tended to have more friends on-campus than off. One student said her friendships are half on-campus and half-off, because she lives off-campus. For another student her friends were made up of those in her program and half were from where she lived. Students who lived in residence over the last three years indicated they were still close with the friends that they had made in the first two years, but the nature of the friendships changed over time and there are a lot of people that just “come and go.”

I think so. A couple of them. The friends that were like, good friends, in 1st year, I've stayed friends with but there's a lot that y'know. Male - Domestic

Domestic students also talked about how that people in university were more accepting based on their experiences in high school. Not being “rejected” during first year seemed to have important meaning for students feeling comfortable during their first year.

When I first came to UBC I found people WAY nicer than in high school. Female - Domestic

I found that too. People are more accepting here. Like everyone does have, like groups here, but everyone just intermingles. 'cause there's like SO many. People want to make friends here. Male - Domestic

Especially in my first year, like you could basically ask them any question and they would not laugh at you or reject you or say things behind you. Female - Domestic

These students also discussed how that openness does change as they progressed to third year. The following discussion between the domestic students demonstrates that as domestic students became more familiar with the university and established social networks there was an eagerness to finish their program and be less social.

Don't you find people getting colder by third year? I have this feeling like people are really excited going to 1st year. Then they get colder every year, and by the fourth year they're like 'I don't want to be here anymore.' Female - Domestic

I feel a lot more bitter now than I did in 1st year. Kinda true. Male - Domestic

I think when you're starting 1st year it's a new experience, and everyone is trying to branch out and find someone. It's more accepting that way. But perhaps after when you become more veteran you're back to you're old picky ways, you have you're group of friends. Female - Domestic

Like in high school first year everyone is more open, but then by 2nd year everyone becomes cliques. And it's the same here. Female - Domestic

International students also talked about friendships as situational, which was a common theme during the second year focus groups as well. For example, one female international student described the nature of friendships with her classmates as “*Sometimes you can get really close, because you've got to share the same class and you do projects together, and then you kind of get off to another class, and you meet that person and chat through MSN, and your friendship kind of just kind of changes or just not as deep.*”

International students spoke of having friendships with people who were from the same ethnic group, these students could be either domestic or international as long as they were from the same group. As one male international student explained that he had trouble understanding those who were not Chinese. Other students also talked about this barrier as not being language necessarily, although sometimes speed of speech and slang were still issues for these third year students.

I know more Chinese. International, domestic, as long as they speak Mandarin. [Big laughs]. Ya, somehow, I just can't find some commonality with local Canadians. Maybe it's because of cultural . . . Male - International

There's a thing, I don't know. I think it's just, it's like there's a thing. Like psychological. Like different perceptions. Male - International

When they talk to you they speak very fast. Sometimes I can't understand. Male - International

It's not the language. It's like psychological stuff. Like we all do the same things, playing games, eat, whatever. Male - International

Yes, language plays an important role. 'cause when they talk they speak slang. Slang. Slang is not in a text book 'cause we don't understand. Male - International

When asked to explain the psychological issues with making friends from other ethnicities, one male student simply explained it as being more comfortable with people from the same group. It was about a shared language for some. Others felt that being so far from home it was natural to gravitate to those who had similar cultural backgrounds and understandings- a way of developing support networks away from home. Another student felt that the longer one lived in Canada the easier it would be to have cross-cultural friendships.

Probably one would feel more comfortable being, with the same group of people. Male - International

Probably live here for a long time. I think if I live here for like ten years I won't have a problem. Any problem. Male - International

I mean...I can say that in terms of closeness, like who I would call if I was in trouble, like not anyone from my faculty, but from, like, other Singaporeans or who are Southeast Asian, who are living, who I got to know. We have a bunch of friends all from Southeast Asia kind of, and that makes us more able to connect than with even other Asians. Female - International

I mean if you're this far from home, you automatically feel close to people from the same region, doesn't have to be from the same country. Male international

Similar to domestic students, most international students said that they had maintained contact with some of the friends from first year. Others said that people come and go as friends. The dialogue with these groups of students showed that sometimes there was a reconnection to people they might meet in first-year but hadn't talked to in a while.

Not really. People come and go. People graduate, go co-op. Female - International

. . . but then you still have the contact. Male - International

So, I was in contact with him and this other guy. And actually there's two other girls from Totem who I met and barely talked to in first year, but kind of started talking to after a while. Female - International

The male international student who lived in a frat house in his third year shared that he had good friendships with his frat guys despite early fears. He explains “*I used to be quite scared of them, because I used to think of frat guys as rednecks, and actually that's not true at all. They just accept me.*”

Family Relationships

Domestic students' relationships with their family seemed to remain unchanged from second year. For those domestic students from outside of the lower mainland, many of them had established a regular communication with their parents but had less contact than first year. Domestic students felt that their parents saw them as more grown-up in third year than first year.

*Less contact. I used to get an email every 2 or 3 days, now I don't.
Female - Domestic*

Ya, my mom has kind of stopped trying as well. I talk to them at least once a week or so, but I don't go home very often. They're getting used to it. I think now they're just getting used to the fact that I don't live at home. Male - Domestic

I think with the parent issue, they accept that you've grown up and might have lost contact. Because back when you were in high school, you're like under their roof and they perhaps fret about you more, because they think you're just naive, innocent little, y'know, teenagers or something. And now they accept that you've grown up, and have you're own life and so maybe they don't need to pry as much into your personal life. They know that you have more responsibilities. Female - Domestic

There was also a range of independence felt from families. While one female student said “*I've been left alone since I was 15, so I don't really care anymore;*” another student felt that her parents didn't see her as responsible or independent. She explains

*My parents still think I'm five, so that doesn't . . . I don't agree with that. They talk to me like I don't know anything. Because I'm Asian, they always treat you like you're this naive little thing who doesn't know anything about the world, when you know virtually everything.
Female - Domestic*

Others talked about family support primarily as financial support. Parents were helping them pay for tuition or other costs related to their education. For one student she saw her parent's saving through an RESP as supporting her education, she said “*my parents actually saved up my RESP. They aren't actually paying right now, they are just like, [helping] off that.*”

International students described their relationships with their parents as closer. One female international student explained that “*the longer you left home, the more your parents miss you.*” Others in the group agreed with her comment. However, one female student said that although things were good with her parents, things were not on the same level because she thought “*they're more used to [her] being away right now.*” This closeness however did not translate into more frequent contact with their parents. As one female international student said “*when they call*” while another male student in the group said that “*my mom just called last night. She told me about how so many chickens in Malaysia died because of the bird flu.*”

Similarly, international students also felt that their parents saw them as more independent. Although, for one student whose parents were paying for his tuition said “*I don't know. My mom still thinks that I'm very dependent. I don't know how she gets that idea.*”

Diversity on Campus

Both groups were asked how they were experiencing diversity on campus. The themes raised to this question were similar to those raised under internationalization and globalization.

International and domestic students spoke of the racial diversity of the campus. The diversity with professors was also reiterated by students.

Well, you've obviously already got a lot of different cultures. Like I've got a prof from the U.K., Prof from America and everything and I have a prof who is in a wheel chair. Female - Domestic

An issue of concern raised in the domestic student focus group was racism on campus. She herself was Chinese-Canadian, she explains the situation below:

Actually, I was walking in the SUB, and I heard this really rude, racist comment. There was this Caucasian girl and she was walking with her friend, and she's like 'oh my gosh there's so many Chinese people here!', in that really rude kind of voice. And I was just so shocked. You're in Vancouver, you're in Canada, of course there's lots of Chinese, like multicultural - there's lots of other races as well. But I didn't say that, I was just thinking that. And she said it so loud so that everyone in the SUB could hear practically. I was just so shocked by that. Female - Domestic

Another student commented that in terms of racist comments, he felt that those he has heard comes from people who do not have exposure with other races.

Well, I hear it but not in a kind of racist way, just as more like commentary. Someone who's coming from another parts of Canada, like Halifax or whatever. Y'know, they're used to growing up where everyone in their school is all Caucasian and all of a sudden they're at UBC. Male - Domestic

There was also discussion of the inter-racism that has been observed within Asian groups. While some students joked around about the differences between groups, it was not meant in a racist way, unlike the above situation.

I don't know, I've found the different races, I always joke around with them. Joke about like my Asian is a Chinese and stuff with friends but then the way that girl said it I know she wasn't joking. Female - Domestic

Ya. I have a lot of Asian friends who joke about that kind of stuff too. Male - Domestic

There's a difference for like people from Hong Kong or people from Taiwan. Like 'oh you're from China, you must be lower than people from Hong Kong. Like people from Hong Kong think that way. I don't agree, but they do think that way. Female - Domestic

International students said that they were experiencing more diversity in third year than in their first year experiences. One student said “like in first year I only remember knowing Chinese guys, and now I know a lot of Canadians. As well as people from other countries.” Another female international student talked how she was friends with domestic and international students but these two groups did not socialize well because of personality differences.

In class I normally hang out with Canadians. But my class are really weird. It's like the white group then the Chinese group. I think it's just by accident that it happened, but I happened to be close to one of the white girls, so I happened to be part of the white group. But the funny thing is that I actually am getting closer to the Asian group at the same time, so I can actually hang out with both, which is kind of nice. It's kind of sad that they're not together, which I can understand, but it's kind of hard when some of the people from one group would kind of bad mouth someone from the other group. Female - International

When asked about being friends with them, students explained that they were good friends with some and not others. They sometimes went to their domestic friends homes. Another female international student said that another way to experience diversity was making friends with exchange students.

'cause a lot of people come from like exchange during our level, and started coming to our classes and we work with them, so in a way that works out to have more international friends as well. Female - International

Residence, particularly the Frat house experience was also seen as a diverse experience because of the different countries that students were from.

I think you can put it that way, because it's multicultural in the sense that lots of the guys in the house have friends from all over the world pretty much, because they are the kind of guys that go outside and do stuff and make new friends and bring them back to the house. So we have a good time because we get to know people from not just all over Canada, but pretty much all over the world, except for Australia. Male - International

International students added to the discussion that there were not many international students compared to domestic student population, but UBC had a diverse campus.

Finances

As discussed under parental support, some international and domestic students were getting financial support from their parents. Most of the discussions for both international and domestic students were around the rising tuition costs.

Within the domestic focus group, students discussed the need for more scholarships to off-set the costs of tuition. Others talked about how much harder it is to get scholarships than in previous years and the contradiction of “*need[ing] higher marks to get less money.*” Most students felt they were happy to have experienced the scholarships they received as first-years rather than having to be competing as a first-year now with the changes. A few of the domestic students saw their scholarships as motivation to study and do well.

*I do wish they would give more scholarships. ‘cause I heard that they give more scholarships to first year’s now, it’s so unfair. ‘cause in like first year the most you can get, if you don’t apply to anything, like automatically, you only get like \$2,500. And now they give up to like 4 thousand dollars, and that’s like practically free tuition, but then in the other years the most you can get is like \$1,500, if you don’t apply.
Female - Domestic*

People that came in a year after us, though, they changed it. And they made it only like the top 5 percent, which is a lot harder ‘cause I know friends who got above 85 average, and they didn’t get it. So they just made it harder on them. Male - Domestic

I’m so happy I’m in this year. Female - Domestic

Ya, so am I. it gives motivation. If we could go back that’s the only thing . . . money. Gives motivation to study. Male - Domestic

Domestic students were also financing their education through student loans and working in the summer, along with parental support (e.g., RESPs, savings).

International students also discussed the increases in tuition and scholarships. Tuition for international students had almost doubled in their three years at UBC.

*But when I came here, we have a budget, right. Now it’s like doubled.
Male - International*

When I come to UBC I planned to spend like 60 thousand Chinese Yuen, and actually now it’s much more than that, 80 thousand. Male - International

When asked why they stayed, most felt that it was an investment and not worth the challenges of relocating and starting all over somewhere else.

Because we already committed. We can’t leave. If we go back to China we have to join the National Exam again and then go to another. It’s too complicated. Male - International

Ya, like if you want to transfer to some Eastern university , you have to go to a new environment, make new friends, and you have the transfer of credits. Province different, it's just too annoying. Even it's very simple, a lot of people would not. Male - International

Some of the international students did recognize UBC's efforts to offset the cost of tuition through work study programs for international students and scholarships.

We're not saying that it's all negative, though. Because, like in terms of other things, like financial stuff like they're doing the work/learn thing now. or the work study, I don't know what it's called, but they give you extra money as an international student, if you work in UBC, say, I dunno, some jobs, they top up how much that employer give you and you can make like 17 dollars an hour. So I mean it doesn't counteract the tuition situation of course, but it's y'know, they are doing things to help. And, in terms of scholarships, I find that I think they do recognize us as well, and y'know. Female - International

Scholarship I don't think so. They recognize us for the most of the scholarship in Commerce, you have to be a Canadian citizen or immigrant. Male - International

Our faculty, they don't really . . . as long as you get good grades, they will give it to you and they will give it any time as long as you meet their requirements. Female - International

Intentions for next year (plans for next year; career goals)

Most of the domestic students indicated that they were planning on finishing their degree at UBC during their fourth year. One student said that she may finish her degree elsewhere. When asked what their career goals were, some students had thought of where they wanted to work (e.g., water quality in a developing country or work in a lab).

I want to work with water quality, somewhere, doing something. I'd really like to go somewhere to a developing country. Female - Domestic

If after I graduate, I get a job in a lab, I'll be content for a while, but I don't want to do that forever. I've heard that people say that labs don't pay that well. Female - Domestic

Domestic students were also asked why they stayed at UBC for their education. One female domestic student responded “*why go anywhere else?*” Another female domestic student stated “*it's close.*”

International students were also asked why they stayed at UBC. Many felt it was too late to transfer to another institution, as one male student claimed “*oh, it's too late for that now.*” Another male international student said “*it's too annoying to transfer. If I had a chance I would go to another, I would have gone to Western Ontario or something like that, for business.*” When

asked why he would of chosen that particular university, he explained that it had a better business school and the tuition was cheaper.

Well, because they're better business schools. And their tuition is WAY lower than it is here. And even this year they have a proposal to continue to raise international student's tuition by 30 or 40 percent. It doesn't happen at any other faculty. It's just for business students. That is brutal. Male - International

As for international students plans for fourth year, most said that they would be graduating from UBC and looking for a job. One female international student said she was going to participate in an exchange program. Some students because of scholarship requirements were returning to their home countries to find work.

I think I graduate after summer, and I go back to Hong Kong and find a job. Because I'm on a scholarship thing, and they pay my tuition but require me to go back to Hong Kong after I graduate. Female - International

Institutional commitments

Domestic students felt more connected to UBC as third years which can partially be related to being more familiar with the campus and the services offered. As the male domestic student stated "It's gotten smaller. Just 'cause like after 3 years you really get to know the whole, like the way the AMS works, and the way different things work, and you kinda. Just be hanging out on campus I think you learn a lot more." This group also appreciated the green space on campus and raised concerns over the development happening on campus. Another student was cognizant of the existing land claims issue with the Musqueam nation and did not appreciate the developments.

I have a love/hate relationship with UBC. I love being here, but I don't like a lot of the things that are going on around here, like all the development. I don't think we should have condos being built on university lands, especially controversial university lands like ours. Like the land claims hasn't been settled with the Musqueam band, yet they're auctioning off the land. Well, not auctioning off, but giving it away on 99 year leases. Female - Domestic

I don't actually know this for sure, but I think that the way UBC is kinda seen is as a really green university, lots of plant life, lots of that, and because we have that, even though we're putting up lots of buildings 'oh, we're still green.' And all that stuff, and so we're just kind of like slowly, slowly becoming just like every other university. Male - Domestic

Well, if you look at Vancouver on a map, though, you'll see that there's Vancouver and then there's a big, green swath at UBC. I mean they can do a lot of building before we stop seeing green. Female - Domestic

Another student felt that UBC was too bureaucratic, but she admitted “*but then I’ve never been at another university, so I can’t say how it compares. So I guess it’s okay, but then perhaps other university are much better?*”

International students also felt more committed to UBC. Some students attributed to their faculty while others felt more comfortable and as a result felt more connected to the institution.

I like UBC WAY better than before, too. And I really attribute it to my faculty. Female - International

Owning UBC merchandise was one question asked of students. While in previous years, international students said they had bought some things as gifts but generally felt it was too costly. One male international student said “*I’m actually going to get a UBC T shirt now- just because I got a five dollar coupon.*”

University development was also mentioned by international students. They had seen a lot of changes during their three years on campus. Some felt that the developments were not a bad thing, while others felt it was disruptive or wondered why they didn’t have a new building as well.

I mean they have the new library, and they’re building stuff everywhere. And there’s a new res. And I see how commerce has changed over time. Male - International

A lot of construction site! That’s the difference from when I first come here. Sometimes it’s very annoying ‘cause I live in Fairview, and the trucks is just beside my window. So noisy. Male - International

I look at it in a positive way also, of growing the university. Male - International

But I’m wondering why, why don’t we have a new building? Like other kind of people, like dentistry, computer science. Male - International

Recommendations on how UBC can support third years. . .

When asked what UBC could be doing to better support third year students both focus groups were more than willing to provide recommendations. Domestic students felt that more support at the academic advising level was needed for third years. A female domestic student indicated that the needs of third years are different from first and second years and that needs to be considered in academic advising. Another student indicated that they hadn’t known that it was a professors’ job in his department to do academic advising. He thought knowing that ahead of time would have been helpful.

They should expand it and let as many people pop in as possible. Like not line up, not . . . you just don't want to go. I always want to talk with them in the beginning of the semester, and you just don't want to after you see the lineup. And then the lineup and they always say there's no more appointments for today and tomorrow. And after two weeks I just say OK, ya fine. Female - Domestic

I know some issues can be addressed by your major advisor. But then some issues can't, so I don't know. Maybe you should have some people who cater to the different years, 'cause maybe 4th year is more pressing 'cause they're going to graduate, and maybe some people could cater to them. And 3rd years are about to graduate, they aren't on the same par as 1st or 2nd years, although I admit they're important as well. Female - Domestic

Something that I didn't know I just learnt this in passing a little while ago, at least where I am in Civil Engineering, there's actually a professor who as part of their job is being the 2nd year advisor, or the 3rd or the 4th year. So I don't if that goes on anywhere else, but even though it goes on, I didn't actually know about it. And I don't think most other people know about it either. Male - Domestic

Scholarships were another recommendation raised by domestic and international students.

I just think of all else, I think they should have, they should try to give 3rd years, and more senior students, more opportunities for scholarships. I mean for 1st year you have your scholarship voucher, you have your passport to education, it's just. It's a little bit less stressful to pay for your tuition than senior years, but I mean, recently, it's supposed to be as you get older, the different courses and the scholarships cater to you. But It's not, it's mostly catered to 1st years, and it's not fair. Female - Domestic

Another recommendation put forth by a couple of domestic students was having courses that were more experiential or hands on, or at least a little more variety in options.

I'd like more courses that are more diverse in Chemistry. Because I have a lot of like the standard organic, inorganic, the sort of standard courses, but I want to know how the field works with interdisciplinary stuff, but I don't get that here. Female - Domestic

On a similar note, like for 3rd year, there really aren't that much variety in the kinds of courses you can take. It's just focuses don reading, comprehension, and speaking, and writing. That's it. Female - Domestic

International students were also keen to see more links between industry and their programs for obtaining relevant job experience as part of their studies.

I think that's the thing that many people may not have thought of. Maybe we should have some sort of service that give us information

about surveys like this where we can earn money, right? Because, well, international students, it's bad enough that we have to pay such high fees, so we need some sort of an income, and we seem to have difficulties getting jobs on campus. So if there's a service that could gather information about surveys like this, especially in the psychology dept., and let us know about what's going on, then that would be appreciated. Male - International

Another female international student recommended that “*UBC needs some kind of umbrella organization, so that people know where they should look when they need information.*”

Lowering tuition for international students was also an important recommendation put forward by students.

Just if they could reduce the tuition a little bit, and make more connections with industry, that would be great. Other things are really good. Male - International

Another concern that was evident from their discussions is the issue of on-campus housing. The stress of finding accommodations after first year was seen as unproductive and negative impacting their studies.

I think the most urgent changes are to do something with the housing. Because I didn't get in two years in a row. And I had to go to a different house, so at the end of last summer I had to go to the hall and talk to the housing staff, and say 'I'm really having difficulty, I have no place to sleep. Can you please help me and I like almost cry in front of them. And finally I get housing like two weeks later. So if they can guarantee international students housing it would let them concentrate on their studies. Female - International

One male international student indicated that UBC should help international students find more balance between academics and social because he thought that “*the whole point of coming to Canada is not to study, but to experience Canada. So I'd say spend less time studying, and do well.*”

Discussion and Conclusion

Third year for most students in the domestic and international student focus groups was the best year yet- primarily because of established friendships, more focused course work and better relationships with their professors. However, as stated in the introduction, the issues that were prevalent in first year and second year were still part of the students' discourses. For example, the rising cost of tuition and need for more financial aid. The most worrisome in terms of developing a diverse campus with an international and global citizenship focus is the lack of cross-cultural friendships between international and domestic students. There was evidence within the discussions that some international students were bridging relationships through their classes and group work with domestic students. Residence although it was cited as an important experience for enhancing international students' English; it seemed to fail short of building meaningful

friendships for international students with domestic students. Domestic students however did feel that their friendships did include international students.

The issue of the housing lottery was also an important part of the discussion. While domestic students did not seem to focus on this issue, it was a stressor for international students, who felt that it was harder for them to find housing off-campus. Another issue related to services on campus for international students was the need for more awareness of the types of services available on-campus outside of International house. International students seemed to be aware of the services offered within their respective departments (e.g. Commerce has it's own career office); but many students had little to no knowledge of other supports available on campus (e.g. the Writing Centre; Career Services). The change from second to third year that was a theme throughout the discussions of both groups was the need for jobs and job-searching skills. As more senior students both international and domestic students were logically thinking of the next step of their lives- graduating and finding employment. Therefore, the relationship between academic advising and career planning for third years seemed to be an important difference than the academic advising (e.g., course selection) for first and second years.

The top recommendations then arising from the third year experience are:

- ❖ Housing policies that allocate housing for international students beyond first-year
- ❖ Support services awareness campaign
- ❖ More scholarships for international and domestic students
- ❖ Improved academic advising for third years that links academic planning to career planning
- ❖ Focus on career services supports