

# PUSH-PULL FACTORS RELATED TO STUDENT RETENTION AND INTEGRATION IN QUÉBEC

Paul Holley

The Association for Canadian Studies and the Canadian Institute for Identities and  
Migration

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY.....</b>	<b>Pg. 3</b>
<b>SOMMAIRE EXÉCUTIF.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>OVERVIEW OF STUDY.....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>SURVEY ACTIVITIES.....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>SURVEY SAMPLE.....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>SURVEY FINDINGS.....</b>	<b>9</b>
Academic Information.....	9
Family and Living Situation.....	11
Student Demographics.....	12
Arrival in Quebec.....	13
Country/Province of Birth.....	14
Employment or Internship Status.....	14
Language Knowledge and Proficiency.....	15
Social or Leisure Activities (and Language).....	16
Social Interactions (and Language).....	17
Student Satisfaction.....	17
Push and Pull Factors.....	17
Further Analysis: “Good Jobs”.....	21
Plans After Graduation.....	22
<b>FOCUS GROUP ACTIVITIES.....</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>FOCUS GROUP SAMPLE.....</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>FOCUS GROUP FINDINGS.....</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>METHODOLOGICAL BARRIERS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>SUMMARY AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS.....</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>REFERENCES.....</b>	<b>45</b>

## **Executive Summary**

This study aimed to identify the principal factors that drive English-speaking youth including English-speaking international students and immigrants to remain in or leave the province upon the completion of their university education. We were concerned with the socioeconomic and linguistic factors that attract students to the province and contribute to the retention of these youth in the English-speaking community (ESC) of Quebec. Specifically, we examined English-speaking students' initial motivations for studying and living in Quebec, what kind of support they obtained upon arrival and across their period of study, and the conditions that might motivate them to remain in the province upon the completion of their studies.

Push and pull factors were identified by surveying and interviewing English-speaking students, both Canadian and foreign-born, from Quebec's three English-language universities: McGill, Concordia and Bishop's University. We collected a total of 502 on-line survey responses (445 valid responses). We also collected in-depth qualitative information from 25 focus group members across the three universities.

Our sample was balanced between Quebec-born respondents (35% of total), students from the rest of Canada (27%) and international students (38%). Approximately three in five non-Quebec English-speaking students were recent immigrants to the province (arrived in the past 5 years). Most students were studying full-time (83%) at the time of the survey and there was a mix of undergraduates and graduates. The majority of the sample was female (73%), white (62%) and under the age of 30 (71%). Less than half of students surveyed learned English in childhood (44%) compared to only 9% who learned French; 18% came from bilingual homes (English/French) and 29% were Allophones.

Students generally reported being satisfied with their learning and living experiences to date and this finding was consistent among Quebec-born, other Canadian and international students. Students from the Rest of Canada (ROC) showed the highest satisfaction levels with their university learning experience. However, students were least satisfied with the availability and accessibility of support services in English in their city of residence (Montreal/Sherbrooke).

When asked about their arrival experience to the university, many focus group participants recalled a warm welcoming from their peers, professors and academic supervisors. Some students felt less welcomed by the school's administration, claiming that they had little or no guidance in navigating the university "system" when they first arrived. Students had generally positive survey ratings of their university learning experience to date, but several focus group participants felt strongly that the university and government could be doing more to support

students to learn and practice French. Students felt that there is no time to learn French while studying full-time for an academic major and/or working part-time to make ends meet.

When deciding where to live and study, the most important factors as rated by students on the survey were: program of study, quality of education, studying in English, and a low cost of tuition. International students also identified cost of living, a safe place to live, international recognition of qualifications, and post-study work opportunities as important pull factors. Other key factors included the culture and “vibe” of the city (Montreal/Sherbrooke), living close to a beautiful, natural environment with open green spaces, family, friends and social networks, and the ease of applying to the university or of getting a visa (immigration).

Several students in the focus groups identified the French language, and to a lesser extent, French culture as key factor that drew them to Quebec. However, despite their initial intentions to learn French, most of these students did not actually improve their language skills due to time constraints, a lack of motivation, or because they interact mostly with English-speaking students. Access to health and mental health services was also a hot topic of discussion among focus group participants, and there were some very mixed reviews across the three universities. While the schools do provide access to basic medical services, students claimed that the availability of daily appointment times is inadequate. Students were also concerned with the quotas placed on the number of mental health sessions one could attend while enrolled in school.

Slightly more than one in four students surveyed plan to seek employment in Quebec after graduation (35% of Quebec-born students) and over one-third (35%) intend to find employment elsewhere in Canada (50% of students from the ROC). If they were to leave their current place of residence in the next five years, around half of students surveyed would go to another province or territory in Canada (as would 71% of students from the ROC); 11% would move to another community in Quebec (18% of Quebec-born students) and 11% of international students intend to return to their country of origin. Almost half the students surveyed (46%) report intentions to stay in Quebec after graduation and another 18% were on the fence or undecided about the future. Retention rates are higher for Quebec-born students (70% are somewhat or very likely to stay) compared to international students (43%) and students from other provinces (35%).

The most important factors that influence students’ decision to stay in Quebec after graduation include: good job opportunities, a good network of friends, a safe place to live, and low cost of

living. Students born in Quebec were concerned most about cost of living and having a good network of friends whereas other Canadians were focused on job opportunities and the low cost of living in Montreal. International students were also looking for good job opportunities, a safe place to live and a strong network of friends. Focus group participants were split (50:50) in their decision to stay and integrate in Quebec after graduation or leave to pursue opportunities elsewhere. But the unanimous factor for students is *employment*. Graduates are willing to stay in Quebec if there are quality, competitive jobs available that provide incentives for language skills; but they are also ready and willing to pursue opportunities elsewhere, depending on the health of the local economy and job market.

### **Sommaire exécutif**

Cette étude vise à identifier les facteurs principaux qui poussent les jeunes d'expression anglaise à rester ou à quitter la province à la fin de leurs études universitaires. Nous nous intéressons aux facteurs socioéconomiques et linguistiques qui attirent les étudiants à la province et contribuent à la rétention de ces jeunes dans la communauté anglophone du Québec. Plus spécifiquement, nous avons examiné les motivations initiales des étudiants anglophones qui les ont poussés à étudier et vivre au Québec, le genre de soutien qu'ils ont reçu à leur arrivée et lors de la période de leurs études, et les conditions qui peuvent les motiver à rester dans la province à la fin de leurs études.

Des facteurs d'attraction et des causes de départ ont été identifiés à la suite de nos entretiens avec les étudiants anglophones canadiens et étrangers des trois universités anglophones du Québec : McGill, Concordia et l'Université Bishop. Nous avons recueilli un total de 502 réponses à l'aide d'un sondage en ligne (445 réponses valides). Nous avons également recueilli des informations qualitatives approfondies auprès de 25 individus provenant de ces trois universités qui ont participé à notre groupe de discussion.

Notre échantillon était composé d'un nombre équilibré de répondants nés au Québec (35 %), d'étudiants provenant du reste du Canada (27 %) et d'étudiants étrangers (38 %). Près de trois étudiants nés à l'extérieur du Québec sur cinq étaient des immigrants récents à la province (arrivés au cours des 5 dernières années). La majorité des étudiants étaient des étudiants à temps plein (83 %) au premier ou au deuxième cycle au moment du sondage. L'échantillon était majoritairement composé de femmes (73 %), de personnes de race blanche (62 %) et d'individus de moins de 30 ans (71 %). Moins de la moitié des étudiants avaient appris l'anglais dans leur enfance (44 %), comparativement à seulement 9 % ayant appris le français; 18 % provenaient de familles bilingues (anglais/français) et 29 % étaient des allophones.

En général, les étudiants ont signalé être satisfaits avec leurs expériences scolaires et de vie à ce moment et ce résultat concorde avec les impressions des étudiants nés au Québec, des autres canadiens et des étudiants étrangers. Les étudiants du reste du Canada (LRDC) ont signalé le plus haut degré de satisfaction envers leurs expériences universitaires. Cependant, les étudiants ont

été moins satisfaits avec la disponibilité et l'accessibilité des services de soutien en anglais dans leur ville de résidence (Montréal/Sherbrooke).

Lorsque questionnés à propos de leurs expériences lors de leur arrivée à l'université, plusieurs participants du groupe de discussion ont affirmé avoir été accueillis chaleureusement par leurs pairs, leurs professeurs et leurs superviseurs universitaires. Certains étudiants se sont sentis moins bien accueillis par le personnel administratif de l'école, affirmant qu'ils ont reçu peu ou pas d'aide lors de la navigation du «système» universitaire lorsqu'ils sont arrivés. En général, les étudiants ont attribué un score positif à leurs expériences scolaires à l'université, mais plusieurs étudiants du groupe de discussion ont souligné que l'université et le gouvernement pourraient diriger plus d'efforts pour soutenir les étudiants dans l'apprentissage et l'utilisation du français. Les étudiants ont senti qu'ils n'avaient pas le temps d'apprendre le français alors qu'ils étudiaient à temps plein et/ou travaillaient à temps partiel pour pourvoir à leurs besoins.

Lorsqu'ils décidaient où vivre et étudier, les facteurs les plus déterminants pour les étudiants étaient : le programme d'étude, la qualité de l'éducation, le fait de pouvoir étudier en anglais et les frais de scolarité abordables. Les étudiants étrangers ont également identifié le coût de la vie, la sécurité de l'endroit, la reconnaissance internationale des qualifications, les possibilités professionnelles après la fin de leurs études comme des facteurs importants les ayant attirés au Québec. Parmi les autres facteurs principaux, il y avait la culture et «l'ambiance» de leur ville (Montréal/Sherbrooke), le fait de vivre à proximité de la nature et d'espaces verts, la famille, les amis et les réseaux sociaux, et la facilité du processus d'inscription à l'université ou pour un visa (immigration).

Plusieurs étudiants du groupe de discussion ont identifié la langue française et, à un degré moindre, la culture francophone, en tant que facteurs principaux les ayant attirés au Québec. Toutefois, malgré leurs intentions initiales d'apprendre le français, la plupart des étudiants n'ont pas réellement amélioré leurs compétences linguistiques à cause de contraintes temporelles, d'un manque de motivation, ou parce qu'ils interagissent principalement avec des étudiants anglophones. L'accès aux services de santé et de santé mentale a été un sujet qui a fait réagir les participants, et nous avons reçu des commentaires très variés à ce sujet de la part des étudiants des trois universités. Alors que les universités offrent des services de santé de base, les étudiants ont affirmé que les disponibilités des rendez-vous étaient inadéquates. Les étudiants s'inquiétaient également des quotas qui sont mis sur le nombre de séances avec un professionnel de la santé mentale auxquelles ils ont droit lors de leurs séjours à l'université.

Un peu plus d'un étudiant interrogé sur quatre planifie de chercher un emploi au Québec après l'obtention de son diplôme (35 % des étudiants nés au Québec) et plus d'un tiers (35 %) compte trouver un emploi ailleurs au Canada (50 % des étudiants du LRDC). S'ils devaient quitter leur résidence actuelle dans les cinq prochaines années, environ la moitié des étudiants interrogés iraient s'installer dans une autre province ou un autre territoire du Canada (70 % des étudiants du LRDC en feraient aussi ainsi); 11 % s'installeraient dans une autre communauté du Québec (18 % des étudiants nés au Québec) et 11 % des étudiants étrangers retourneraient dans leur pays d'origine. Près de la moitié des étudiants interrogés (46 %) signalent vouloir rester au Québec

après l'obtention de leur diplôme et environ 18 % ne sont pas certain de ce qu'ils veulent faire. Les taux de rétention sont plus élevés parmi les étudiants nés au Québec (70 % sont presque ou très certain de rester au Québec) comparativement aux étudiants étrangers (43 %) et aux étudiants des autres provinces (35 %).

Les facteurs les plus importants qui influencent la décision des étudiants de rester au Québec après leurs études sont : de bonnes possibilités professionnelles, un réseau solide d'amis, un endroit sécuritaire où vivre et le coût abordable de la vie. Les Québécois accordaient le plus d'importance au coût de la vie et au fait d'avoir un bon réseau social alors que les autres Canadiens accordaient plus d'importance aux possibilités professionnelles et au faible coût de la vie à Montréal. Les étudiants étrangers cherchaient également à avoir de bonnes possibilités d'emploi, un endroit sécuritaire où vivre et un réseau solide d'amis. Les participants de notre groupe de discussion étaient divisés (50:50) au sujet de rester et de s'intégrer à la société québécoise après l'obtention de leur diplôme ou de quitter afin de rechercher un emploi ailleurs. Mais le facteur décisif choisi unanimement par les étudiants a été *l'emploi*. Les diplômés sont prêts à rester au Québec s'il y a des emplois concurrentiels de qualité qui offrent des mesures incitatives pour apprendre la langue; mais ils sont également prêts à tenter de se trouver un emploi ailleurs, compte tenu de la vitalité de l'économie locale et du marché de l'emploi.

The declining vitality and strength of the English-speaking community (ESC) in Quebec is well documented as a major socio-economic concern for the province (e.g., Canadian Heritage, 2011; Marmen & Corbeil, 2004; Landry, 2008; Lamarre 2007; Magnan, 2005). Quebec continues to lose more English-speaking residents than it gains each year. The province had net departures 5,700 English-speakers from 2006-2011 and a net loss of 8,000 English-speakers from 2001-06 (Bourhis, 2014). The retention rate among the English-speaking community of Quebec is 50.1% - down from 69% in 1971 – whereas the Francophone majority in Quebec has the highest retention in the country at 96% (Floch & Pocock, 2012). In other words, “Anglophones in Quebec are approximately half as likely as their respective majorities to remain in their province of birth.” More problematic is that bilingual English-speakers (Canadian Heritage, 2011) “at the peak of their working age” [25-44] are the ones “who are most likely to leave” (Floch & Pocock, 2012). “This exodus of Quebec Anglophones during their best working years constitutes a real loss of human capital for the English-speaking communities of Quebec, and also a loss of know-how for Quebec society as a whole” (*ibid*).

This phenomenon of the “best and brightest” departing to another province or country to pursue better economic opportunities is referred to as “brain drain” (e.g., Bourdarbat et al. 2013; Canadian Heritage, 2011; Zarifa et al., 2008). Several studies on Canada's brain drain point to “the importance of income gains as a critical factor that motivates individuals to move...” (Zarifa & Walters, 2008). Stevenson (2000) suggests the root cause of the problem to be “Quebec’s language laws, constitutional policies and relative economic decline.” He goes on to argue: “such a large loss of population is bound to have had harmful effects both on the province’s economy and on its viability as a distinct society” (Stevenson, 2000).

So what is driving young, bilingual English-speakers out of the province? The English-speaking community’s best and brightest want to stay in Quebec, but they feel their future is uncertain here because of limited job opportunities and economic prospects. While many youth show a desire to remain in the province, they also acknowledge the attraction of western Canada because “outside Quebec any ability to speak French is a competitive advantage” (QCGN, 2009). Vaillancourt et al. (2007) and others also find that “despite the expectation that greater French-language competency leads to greater success in the job market, ESC bilinguals (as well as those who are unilingual) have lower income levels than French-speaking bilinguals” (see also Floch & Pocock, 2012, 2008; Canadian Heritage 2011). As posited in *A Portrait of the English-Speaking Communities of Quebec* (2011), “In the absence of a clear frame of reference for the level of language acquisition necessary for the job market, the tendency for bilingual English speakers to seek work outside Quebec will continue.”



Quebec is also a difficult place for recent immigrants to find work. In 2015, the unemployment rate for Quebec's immigrants who landed in the past five years was 16.4% compared to 10.1% for Ontario, 9.3% for BC, 9.0% for the Atlantic provinces, 8.9% for Alberta, and 8.2% for Manitoba and Saskatchewan (StatsCan, 2011). Recent immigrants have even more difficulty trying to find work in Montreal, where newcomers are two to three times as likely to be unemployed than people born in Canada (e.g., 17.3% vs. 6.9% in Sept. 2016) (Labour Force Survey, 2016). Moreover, the employment gap between recent immigrants and Canadian-born workers is the largest for the most educated. University graduates who recently arrived in Canada are four times as likely to be unemployed than their Canadian-born university grads (Global News 2014).

## **Overview of Study**

This study aims to identify the principal factors that drive English-speaking youth to remain in or leave the province upon the completion of their university education. We are most concerned with the socioeconomic and linguistic factors that attract students to the province and contribute to the retention of these youth in the English-speaking community of Quebec.

Quebec's English-language universities have long been a destination of choice for international students and students residing elsewhere in Canada. The purpose of this study was to examine English-speaking students' initial motivation for studying and living in Quebec, what kind of support they obtained both upon arrival and across their period of study, and the conditions that might motivate them to remain in the province upon the completion of their studies. Given that English-speakers in Quebec age 25-44 experience disproportionate low rates of income on the one hand and high rates of upward mobility on the other (Floch & Pocock, 2012), this research identifies a short list of economic and non-economic indicators that foster retention and consequently determine the profile of those students who are most and least likely to stay in Quebec upon the completion of their studies. These indicators will offer guidance in determining the types of support needed to encourage English-speaking students, including international students and immigrants, to consider settlement in Quebec. Push and pull factors were identified by surveying and interviewing English-speaking students, both Canadian and foreign-born, from Quebec's three English-language universities: McGill, Concordia and Bishop's University.

Since March 2016, the Association for Canadian Studies team has worked diligently to accomplish all the major milestones for this project. We launched the on-line survey "Push and Pull Factors Related to Student Retention and Integration in Quebec" on March 1, 2016 and recruited students to participate from Concordia, McGill and Bishop's University through our networks, most notably Youth Employment Services in Montreal, the Student Recreation Center at Bishop's University, and professor's networks at the three universities. In total, we collected 502 survey responses (445 valid responses). We also collected in-depth qualitative information from 25 focus

## **Survey Activities**

- Sent an e-mail blast to out to 1,400+ English-speaking students and clients of Youth Employment Services (YES) in Montreal (across the street from McGill).
- Distributed over 700 survey flyers to students on campus, at YES' offices, in university departments, libraries, cafés and restaurants in surrounding areas (see sample flyer attached).
- Advertised the on-line survey through professors' and students' on-line social networks at all three universities.
- Placed an on-line social media ad in Townshippers Magazine (Sherbrooke) during the summer of 2016 to recruit additional survey respondents from Bishop's University.
- Posted a survey and focus group ad in the social media pages of the Student's Representatives Council (SRC) at Bishop's University in September 2016.

## **Survey Sample**

- Our total sample of n=502 responses to the on-line survey was reduced by 33 respondents who were not current students, 20 respondents who indicated no institutional affiliation and 4 students who did not provide survey consent. These respondents did not complete the survey and were not eligible for analysis.
- Of the remaining n=445 respondents, 48 were from Bishop's University (10.8% of sample), 221 were from McGill University (49.7%), 161 were from Concordia University (36.2%), and 15 were from some other university (3.4%).
  - A total of n=404 respondents also provided their country/province of birth, which was a primary variable of interest in the descriptive analysis. 143 of these students were from Quebec (35.4%), 109 were from some other province/territory in Canada (27.0%), and 152 respondents were international students (37.6%).

## **Survey Findings**

### *Academic Information*

Table I below presents the number of respondents by educational institution (McGill, Concordia, Bishop's) and province/country of birth, which represents the working survey sample for this study (n=404). The majority of respondents were studying full-time (82.8%) at the time of the survey, especially among international students (87.4%).

Table 1. Academic institution

What academic institution are you currently enrolled in?	All		Quebec		Rest of Canada		International	
	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#
<b>McGill University</b>	35.4%	143	39.2%	56	30.3%	33	35.5%	54
<b>Concordia University</b>	51.2%	207	46.9%	67	52.3%	57	54.6%	83
<b>Bishop's University</b>	10.4%	42	9.8%	14	15.6%	17	7.2%	11
<b>Other</b>	3.0%	12	4.2%	6	1.8%	2	2.6%	4
<b>Sample</b>		<b>404</b>		<b>143</b>		<b>109</b>		<b>152</b>

Table 2. Academic enrollment

Are you currently studying full-time or part-time?	All		Quebec		Rest of Canada		International	
	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#
<b>Studying full-time</b>	82.8%	333	78.3%	112	82.4%	89	87.4%	132
<b>Studying part-time</b>	13.9%	56	16.8%	24	14.8%	16	10.6%	16
<b>Studies are currently on hold</b>	3.2%	13	4.9%	7	2.8%	3	2.0%	3
<b>Sample</b>		<b>402</b>		<b>143</b>		<b>108</b>		<b>151</b>

Education was the most common field of study among students surveyed (28.4%) followed by business, management, and marketing fields (14.0%) and social sciences (11.9%). One in nine students surveyed were enrolled in a STEM (science, technology, engineering, mathematics) degree program. See table 3.1 for degree programs.

Table 3.1 Academic degree program of study



In what type of degree program are you officially registered?	All		Quebec		Rest of Canada		International	
	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#
<b>09 – Communication, journalism and related programs</b>	3.6%	14	2.1%	3	6.5%	7	2.7%	4
<b>11 – Computer and information sciences and support services</b>	.8%	3	.7%	1	.9%	1	.7%	1
<b>13 – Education</b>	28.4%	112	35.7%	50	27.1%	29	22.4%	33
<b>14 – Engineering</b>	2.3%	9	2.1%	3	0%	0	4.1%	6
<b>16 - ...Foreign languages, literatures, linguistics</b>	5.8%	23	5.7%	8	8.4%	9	4.1%	6
<b>19 – Family and consumer sciences/human sciences</b>	2.8%	11	1.4%	2	1.9%	2	4.8%	7
<b>22 – Legal professions and studies</b>	.5%	2	.7%	1	0%	0	.7%	1
<b>23 – English language and literature/letters</b>	1.0%	4	2.1%	3	.9%	1	0%	0
<b>24 – Liberal arts and sciences, general studies and humanities</b>	3.0%	12	.7%	1	5.6%	6	3.4%	5
<b>26 – Biological and biomedical sciences</b>	1.3%	5	.7%	1	2.8%	3	.7%	1
<b>27 – Mathematics and statistics</b>	1.0%	4	1.4%	2	0%	0	1.4%	2
<b>38 – Philosophy and religious studies</b>	2.0%	8	1.4%	2	1.9%	2	2.7%	4
<b>40 – Physical sciences</b>	6.3%	25	7.1%	10	4.7%	5	6.8%	10
<b>42 – Psychology</b>	3.6%	14	2.9%	4	2.8%	3	4.8%	7
<b>44 – Public administration and social service professions</b>	2.0%	8	3.6%	5	2.8%	3	.0%	0
<b>45 – Social sciences</b>	11.9%	47	12.9%	18	10.3%	11	12.2%	18
<b>50 – Visual and performing arts</b>	6.1%	24	6.4%	9	7.5%	8	4.8%	7

<b>51 – Health professions and related programs</b>	8.8%	3	7.7%	1	0%	0	4.4%	2
<b>52 – Business, management, marketing and related services</b>	14.0%	55	10.7%	15	8.4%	9	21.1%	31
<b>54 – History</b>	2.8%	11	7.7%	1	7.5%	8	1.4%	2
<b>Sample</b>		<b>394</b>		<b>140</b>		<b>107</b>		<b>147</b>

Approximately 2 in 5 students (41.3%) were in a bachelor's degree program and half (50.0%) were graduate students enrolled in a master's or doctoral degree program. The majority of respondents born in Quebec were registered in a bachelor's degree program (53.8%). Nearly 2 in 3 international students (65.5%) were registered in an advance degree program (masters/doctorate). See table 3.2 for academic degree programs.

Table 3.2 Academic degree programs

In what type of degree program are you officially registered?	All		Quebec		Rest of Canada		International	
	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#
<b>Bachelor's</b>	41.3%	166	53.8%	77	42.6%	46	28.5%	43
<b>Master's</b>	32.6%	131	26.6%	38	33.3%	36	37.7%	57
<b>Doctorate</b>	17.4%	70	5.6%	8	18.5%	20	27.8%	42
<b>Undergraduate Certificate</b>	0.5%	2	1.4%	2	0.0%	0	0.0%	0
<b>Graduate Certificate</b>	0.7%	3	1.4%	2	0.0%	0	0.7%	1
<b>Undergraduate Diploma</b>	1.7%	7	2.8%	4	0.9%	1	1.3%	2
<b>Graduate Diploma</b>	3.0%	12	4.9%	7	1.9%	2	2.0%	3
<b>Other (please specify)</b>	2.7%	11	3.5%	5	2.8%	3	2.0%	3
<b>Sample</b>		<b>402</b>		<b>143</b>		<b>108</b>		<b>151</b>

### Family and Living Situation

About 1 in 4 students live with their spouse or partner (25.4%) or with roommates (23.4%) and approximately 1 in 5 students live with their parents/family (21.7%) or alone by themselves (20.2%). Quebec-born students are the most likely to live with their parents/family (45.5% compared to 4.6% for the Rest of Canada (ROC) and 11.3% for international students).

Table 4. Living situation during academic year

Which of the following best describes your living situation during the academic year?	All		Quebec		Rest of Canada		International	
	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#
<b>Answer Options</b>								
<b>University residence</b>	6.7%	27	2.1%	3	10.2%	11	8.7%	13
<b>With my parents / family</b>	21.7%	87	45.5%	65	4.6%	5	11.3%	17
<b>With my spouse or partner</b>	25.4%	102	18.9%	27	22.2%	24	34.0%	51
<b>With roommates</b>	23.4%	94	16.1%	23	34.3%	37	22.7%	34
<b>Alone (by myself)</b>	20.2%	81	14.0%	20	26.9%	29	21.3%	32
<b>Other (please specify)</b>	2.5%	10	3.5%	5	1.9%	2	2.0%	3
<b>Sample</b>		<b>401</b>		<b>143</b>		<b>108</b>		<b>150</b>

International students are more likely than other student groups to live with their spouse or partner (34.0%). Youth from the ROC are the most likely to live with roommates (34.3%) or alone by themselves (26.9%). And nearly 1 in 10 survey respondents reported having children, most of whom were international students (21 of 38 students). In 7 out of 8 cases (86.8%), the children were living with the respondent in Quebec.

Table 5.1 Respondent's children

Do you have any children?	All	Quebec	Rest of Canada	International

Answer Options	%	#	%	#	%	#	A C %	• A # C
Yes	9.5%	38	7.8%	11	5.6%	6	13.9%	21
No	90.5%	362	92.2%	130	94.4%	102	86.1%	130
<b>Sample</b>		<b>400</b>		<b>141</b>		<b>108</b>		<b>151</b>

Table 5.2 Children living with respondent

Do your children live with you in Québec?	All		Quebec		Rest of Canada		International	
Answer Options	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#
Yes	8.4%	33	8.7%	12	4.7%	5	10.7%	16
No	8.4%	33	4.3%	6	7.5%	8	12.7%	19
N/A	83.2%	328	87.0%	120	87.7%	93	76.7%	115
<b>Sample</b>		<b>394</b>		<b>138</b>		<b>106</b>		<b>150</b>

### Student Demographics

Approximately three females (73.2% of total sample) took the on-line survey for every one male (25.7%). The gender distribution was relatively constant across comparison groups (Quebec, ROC, International).

Table 6. Respondent's gender

What is your gender?	All		Quebec		Rest of Canada		International	
Answer Options	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#
Male	25.7%	103	25.4%	36	24.1%	26	27.2%	41
Female	72.6%	291	73.2%	104	72.2%	78	72.2%	109
Other	1.7%	7	1.4%	2	3.7%	4	0.7%	1

One in eight students were under the age of 21 (12.7%), nearly half of the sample was between the ages of 21 and 25 (45.8%), and 1 in 5 students were between the ages of 26 and 30 (24.6%). The Quebec-based sample was younger than the rest of the: 58.5% from Quebec were age 25 or under compared to 50.0% for the ROC and only 36.0% of international students.

Table 7. Respondent's age

What is your age group?	All		Quebec		Rest of Canada		International	
	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#
<b>Answer Options</b>								
<b>18 to 20</b>	14.8%	59	12.7%	18	22.2%	24	11.3%	17
<b>21 to 25</b>	33.0%	132	45.8%	65	27.8%	30	24.7%	37
<b>26 to 30</b>	23.3%	93	24.6%	35	23.1%	25	22.0%	33
<b>31 to 35</b>	15.3%	61	5.6%	8	13.9%	15	25.3%	38
<b>Over 35</b>	13.8%	55	11.3%	16	13.0%	14	16.7%	25
<b>Sample</b>		<b>400</b>		<b>142</b>		<b>108</b>		<b>150</b>



Three out of four students (75.4%) in the overall sample were white, but only 1 in 3 international students reported white ethnicity. There were also small samples of Chinese and South Asian students (e.g., East Indian, Pakistani, Sri Lankan, etc.), around 6 percent of the overall sample each, as well as Black and Latin American students (around 4 percent each).

Table 8. Respondent's ethnicity

Which of the following best describes your ethnicity? (Mark more than one or specify, if applicable)	All		Quebec		Rest of Canada		International	
	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#
<b>Answer Options</b>								
<b>White</b>	62.4%	251	75.4%	107	85.3%	93	33.8%	51
<b>South Asian (e.g., East Indian, Pakistani, Sri Lankan, etc.)</b>	6.0%	24	6.3%	9	2.8%	3	7.9%	12
<b>Chinese</b>	6.2%	25	2.1%	3	1.8%	2	13.2%	20
<b>Black</b>	4.0%	16	4.2%	6	0.9%	1	6.0%	9
<b>Filipino</b>	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0
<b>Latin American</b>	3.7%	15	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	9.9%	15
<b>Arab</b>	1.5%	6	1.4%	2	0.9%	1	2.0%	3
<b>Southeast Asian (e.g., Vietnamese, Cambodian, Malaysian, Laotian)</b>	1.0%	4	0.0%	0	0.9%	1	2.0%	3
<b>West Asian (e.g., Iranian, Afghan, etc.)</b>	3.0%	12	1.4%	2	0.0%	0	6.6%	10
<b>Japanese</b>	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0
<b>Other ethnicity</b>	2.5%	10	2.8%	4	0.9%	1	3.3%	5
<b>Multiple</b>	6.5%	26	4.9%	7	3.7%	4	9.9%	15
<b>No response</b>	3.2%	13	1.4%	2	2.8%	3	5.3%	8
<b>Sample</b>		<b>402</b>		<b>142</b>		<b>109</b>		<b>151</b>

Arrival in Quebec only pertains to students from the ROC and international students (n=255). 48 students (18.8%) arrived in Quebec in the past year and another 48 students (18.8%) have been in Quebec for more than a decade. A total of 157 students can be considered “recent immigrants” who arrived in the past five years (61.6% of non-Quebecers or 38.9% of total valid sample).

Table 10. Time of arrival in Quebec

When did you arrive in Quebec?	All		Quebec		Rest of Canada		International	
	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#
<b>Answer Options</b>								
< 6 months	5.5%	14	--	--	5.6%	6	5.4%	8
6 months to 1 year	13.3%	34	--	--	16.7%	18	10.9%	16
1 to 5 years	42.7%	109	--	--	38.0%	41	46.3%	68
5 to 10 years	19.6%	50	--	--	18.5%	20	20.4%	30
10 or more years	18.8%	48	--	--	21.3%	23	17.0%	25
<b>Sample</b>		<b>255</b>	--	--		<b>108</b>		<b>147</b>

The majority of survey respondents were born in Canada (62.4%), followed by the United States (8.4%), China (5.0%), Iran (2.2%) and India (1.7%). France and Columbia each had 5 respondents as well (1.2%). Over half the sample within Canada is from Quebec (56.7%) and one-fourth of the Canadian-born sample is from Ontario (25.0%).

Table 9a. Respondent's country of birth

What is your country of birth?	All	
	%	#
<b>Answer Options</b>		
Australia	0.2%	1
Brazil	1.0%	4
Canada	<b>62.4%</b>	<b>252</b>
China	5.0%	20
France	1.2%	5
Germany	0.2%	1
India	1.7%	7
Iran	2.2%	9
Italy	0.2%	1
Japan	0.0%	0
Mexico	0.7%	3
New Zealand	0.0%	0
Russia	0.2%	1
Spain	0.5%	2
United Kingdom	0.2%	1
United States	8.4%	34

Table 9b. Respondent's province of birth

In what province or territory were you born?	All	
	%	#
<b>Answer Options</b>		
Alberta	3.6%	9
British Columbia	5.2%	13
Manitoba	2.0%	5
New Brunswick	0.8%	2
Newfoundland and Labrador	0.8%	2
Northwest Territories	0.0%	0
Nova Scotia	3.2%	8
Nunavut	0.0%	0
Ontario	25.0%	63
Prince Edward Island	0.4%	1
Quebec	56.7%	143
Saskatchewan	1.2%	3
Yukon	1.2%	3
<b>Sample</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>252</b>

<b>Other country</b>	15.6%	63
<b>Sample</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>404</b>



### Employment or Internship Status

Over 60 percent of the sample reported being employed; approximately 1 in 10 students were employed full-time, more than half at part-time (53.2%) and 4.5% self-employed. Students from the ROC were the most likely to have full-time employment (17.6%) and international students had the highest rate of unemployment (44.4%).

Table 11. Current employment status

Are you currently employed?	All		Quebec		Rest of Canada		International	
	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#
<b>Answer Options</b>								
<b>Yes, I am employed full-time</b>	13.0%	52	10.6%	15	17.6%	19	11.9%	18
<b>Yes, I am employed part-time</b>	46.0%	184	53.2%	75	43.5%	47	41.1%	62
<b>Yes, I am self-employed</b>	4.5%	18	5.7%	8	5.6%	6	2.6%	4
<b>No, I am unemployed</b>	36.5%	146	30.5%	43	33.3%	36	44.4%	67
<b>Sample</b>		<b>400</b>		<b>141</b>		<b>108</b>		<b>151</b>

One in 4 students reported participation in an internship or work-study program (25.7%), but international students were much more likely to participate (45.2%) compared to students from Quebec (16.1%) or the ROC (5.3%).

Table 12. Internship or work-study participation

Are you part of an internship or work-study program?	All		Quebec		Rest of Canada		International	
	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#
<b>Answer Options</b>								

<b>Yes</b>	25.7%	75	16.1%	15	5.3%	4	45.2%	56
<b>No</b>	74.3%	217	83.9%	78	94.7%	71	54.8%	68
<b>Sample</b>		<b>292</b>		<b>93</b>		<b>75</b>		<b>124</b>

### Language Knowledge and Proficiency

English only was the primary language for one-third of Quebec-born and international students whereas 68.8% of students from the ROC learned English in childhood and still use it today. French was the mother tongue for 8.8% of students in the overall sample and for 1 in 5 students from Quebec. Approximately 1 in 4 Canadian students were from bilingual households (French and English).

Table 13. Language of respondent

What language(s) did you first learn at home or in childhood and still understand and use today?	All		Quebec		Rest of Canada		International	
	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#
<b>English</b>	43.7%	173	33.8%	47	68.8%	75	34.5%	51
<b>French</b>	8.8%	35	20.1%	28	0.9%	1	4.1%	6
<b>English and French</b>	18.2%	72	27.3%	38	24.8%	27	4.7%	7
<b>Other/Multiple Languages</b>	29.3%	116	18.7%	26	5.5%	6	56.8%	84
<b>Sample</b>		<b>396</b>		<b>139</b>		<b>109</b>		<b>148</b>

Our sample was most proficient in the English language. On a 1 to 5 scale, the average skill level is above 4.70 (on a five-point scale where 5 = “Native or Bilingual”). The highest English proficiency levels are found among students from the ROC (4.94 average score in all categories) whereas the students born in Quebec have the highest French proficiency (3.72 writing – 4.16 understanding French). International students had the highest proficiency in non-official languages (3.23 – 3.67). Please refer to Table 14 below for more information on language proficiency.

### *Social or Leisure Activities (and Language)*

The most common social or leisure activities that respondents took part in, regardless of language or geography, were *sports and physical activities* (e.g., the gym, basketball, soccer, swimming, tennis, volleyball, rock climbing, exercise, martial arts and yoga). Going out with friends to the cinema/movies, dinners and parties were also some favorite social and leisure activities among respondents. Several respondents also mentioned volunteering/community service, hanging out at coffee shops/cafés, book clubs, French classes/conversation groups, meet-ups, board games and video gaming. Please refer to Table 15 below for more information regarding social and leisure activities and language.

What is your level of proficiency in the (English/French/Other) language?	All			Quebec			Rest of Canada			International		
	Mean	SD	n	Mean	SD	n	Mean	SD	n	Mean	SD	n
<b>ENGLISH</b>												
Speaking	4.72	0.56	394	4.77	0.62	139	4.94	0.27	108	4.52	0.59	147
Understanding spoken English	4.76	0.58	385	4.77	0.73	137	4.94	0.27	105	4.60	0.56	143
Reading	4.77	0.53	386	4.80	0.61	136	4.94	0.27	105	4.61	0.54	145
Writing	4.70	0.60	388	4.69	0.74	137	4.94	0.27	106	4.54	0.58	145
<b>FRENCH</b>												
Speaking	3.13	1.57	395	3.96	1.19	139	2.98	1.42	108	2.46	1.64	148
Understanding spoken French	3.37	1.53	392	4.16	1.06	137	3.30	1.44	108	2.69	1.63	147
Reading	3.39	1.45	392	4.07	1.06	137	3.33	1.27	108	2.80	1.63	147
Writing	2.92	1.61	393	3.72	1.29	137	2.74	1.46	108	2.30	1.67	148
<b>OTHER</b>												
Speaking	2.27	2.05	328	1.73	1.83	117	0.92	1.36	85	3.67	1.77	126
Understanding spoken Other language	2.30	2.05	325	1.80	1.87	115	1.00	1.46	85	3.66	1.76	125
Reading	2.05	2.01	326	1.46	1.74	115	0.77	1.26	84	3.42	1.84	127
Writing	1.84	1.99	325	1.18	1.59	114	0.62	1.13	84	3.23	1.93	127

Likert-scale: 1 = None, 2 = Elementary, 3 = Limited Working, 4 = Professional Working, 5 = Native or Bilingual.

Table 15. Social and leisure activities and language

Do you participate in social or leisure activities in (English/French/Other Language)? How often?	All			Quebec			Rest of Canada			International		
	Mean	SD	n	Mean	SD	n	Mean	SD	n	Mean	SD	n
<b>ENGLISH</b>												
Activity 1	3.10	1.02	232	3.35	0.91	72	<b>3.21</b>	1.09	70	2.82	0.99	90
Activity 2	3.06	1.18	160	3.18	1.17	45	3.23	1.24	53	2.82	1.12	62
Activity 3	3.10	1.24	96	3.35	1.23	26	2.97	1.29	35	3.20	1.21	35
<b>FRENCH</b>												
Activity 1	2.87	1.20	26	3.00	1.19	48	<b>2.66</b>	1.10	32	2.89	1.29	46
Activity 2	2.52	1.25	65	2.40	1.16	30	2.60	1.24	15	2.65	1.42	20
Activity 3	2.28	1.09	40	2.14	1.13	22	2.00	0.82	7	2.73	1.10	11
<b>OTHER LANGUAGE</b>												
Activity 1	2.53	1.39	49	2.00	1.18	14	<b>2.29</b>	1.38	7	2.86	1.43	28
Activity 2	2.12	1.42	26	1.64	1.29	11	1.00	0.00	2	2.69	1.44	13
Activity 3	2.06	1.47	18	1.63	1.19	8	2.33	2.31	3	2.43	1.51	7

Likert-scale: 1 = Rarely, 2 = Once per month, 3 = Once per week, 4 = A few times a week, and 5 = Every day.



The majority of students surveyed use English in their social interactions with friends and/or family (76.4%), fellow students (82.9%), university groups (80.2%), non-university groups (72.8%) and to a lesser extent, community services (69.2%). Almost one-third speak French with their friends/family (30.3%) and 41.8% use French to access non-university services (e.g., health, employment) in the community. Nearly half of international students use a non-official language with their friends/families (48.7%).

When asked about their use of language in daily interactions, the most frequent used language was English, followed by French and other non-official languages. As anticipated, students born in Quebec were most likely to engage others using the French language whereas students from other provinces used English in their daily interactions and foreign students used non-official languages more often than French, but not more often than English.

Please refer to Table 16 below for information about language and social interactions. Also see Table 17 for information about language and students' daily interactions.

### *Student Satisfaction*

Students are generally satisfied with their university learning and community living experiences to date and this finding was consistent among Quebec-born, other Canadian and international students. Students from the Rest of Canada (ROC) showed the highest satisfaction levels with their university learning experience. Students were least satisfied (in general) with the availability and accessibility of support services in English in their city of residence (Montreal, Sherbrooke), however the average rating (2.99) was still at the level of “satisfied” (see Table 18 below).

### *Push and Pull Factors*

When deciding where to live and study, the most important factors for students were: program of study (3.64), quality of education (3.57), studying in English (3.43), and cost of tuition (3.32). These factors were important across geographic regions. International students also identified cost of living (3.32), safe place to live (3.30), international recognition of qualifications (3.37), and post-study work opportunities as important *pull* factors (see Table 19 below). The most



important factors that influence students' decision to stay in Quebec after graduation include: good job opportunity (3.49), a good network of friends (3.35), safe place to live (3.23), and low cost of living (3.21). Quebecers were concerned about cost of living (3.36) and a good network of friends (3.36) whereas other Canadians were focused on job opportunities (3.56) and a low cost of living (3.36). International students were also looking for good job opportunities (3.62), a safe place to live (3.45) and friends (3.42) (see Table 20 below).



Which language(s) do you use in your social interactions with...	All		Quebec		Rest of Canada		International	
	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#
<b>ENGLISH</b>								
Friends and/or family?	76.4%	340	82.5%	118	96.3%	105	77.0%	117
Fellow students?	82.9%	369	90.2%	129	96.3%	105	88.8%	135
Members of university groups to which you belong?	80.2%	357	85.3%	122	93.6%	102	87.5%	133
Members of non-university groups?	72.8%	324	75.5%	108	90.8%	99	77.0%	117
Non-university services (e.g., health, cultural, employment services)?	69.2%	308	67.1%	96	86.2%	94	77.6%	118
<b>FRENCH</b>								
Friends and/or family?	30.3%	135	48.3%	69	22.0%	24	27.6%	42
Fellow students?	18.0%	80	27.3%	39	13.8%	15	17.1%	26
Members of university groups to which you belong?	11.7%	52	15.4%	22	11.0%	12	11.8%	18
Members of non-university groups?	33.9%	151	51.0%	73	29.4%	32	30.3%	46
Non-university services (e.g., health, cultural, employment services)?	41.8%	186	60.8%	87	38.5%	42	37.5%	57
<b>OTHER LANGUAGE</b>								
Friends and/or family?	22.7%	101	16.8%	24	2.8%	3	48.7%	74

<b>Fellow students?</b>	4.7%	21	2.4%	3	0.9%	1	11.2%	17
<b>Members of university groups to which you belong?</b>	2.0%	9	1.4%	2	0.0%	0	4.6%	7
<b>Members of non-university groups?</b>	7.9%	35	3.5%	5	2.8%	3	17.8%	27
<b>Non-university services (e.g., health, cultural, employment services)?</b>	2.2%	10	2.8%	4	0.9%	1	3.3%	5

Table 17. Daily interactions and language

Do you use (English/French/Other language) in your daily interactions outside of the university setting?	All			Quebec			Rest of Canada			International		
	Mean	SD	n	Mean	SD	n	Mean	SD	n	Mean	SD	n
<b>English</b>	3.32	0.77	349	3.25	0.90	121	3.36	0.76	98	3.36	0.65	130
<b>French</b>	2.25	1.07	336	2.69	0.95	119	1.97	0.90	94	2.03	1.17	123
<b>Other language</b>	1.39	1.35	227	1.32	1.21	73	0.23	0.63	56	2.11	1.28	98

Likert-scale: 0 = Never, 1 = Almost never, 2 = Occasionally/Sometimes, 3 = Almost every time, and 4 = Every time.

Table 18. Student satisfaction levels

Overall, how satisfied are you with...	All	Quebec	Rest of Canada	International
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Answer Options	Mean	SD	n	Mean	SD	n	Mean	SD	n	Mean	SD	n
All aspects of your learning experience at the university?	3.27	0.61	386	3.23	0.63	136	3.35	0.53	107	3.26	0.65	143
Your living experience in your community or city of residence?	3.37	0.62	366	3.36	0.64	118	3.39	0.65	108	3.37	0.58	140
The availability and accessibility of support services in English at your university? (e.g., health, cultural, employment services)	3.41	0.66	363	3.42	0.64	121	3.42	0.68	102	3.40	0.66	140
The availability and accessibility of support services in English in your community or city of residence? (e.g., health, cultural, employment services)	2.99	0.82	350	3.03	0.79	114	2.96	0.89	100	2.98	0.79	136

Likert-scale: 1 = Very dissatisfied, 2 = Dissatisfied, 3 = Satisfied, and 4 = Very Satisfied.

Table 19. Pull factors

How important were each of the following factors when deciding where to live/study?	All			Quebec			Rest of Canada			International		
	Mean	SD	n	Mean	SD	n	Mean	SD	n	Mean	SD	n
Quality of education	3.57	0.61	382	3.52	0.55	132	3.52	0.68	106	3.65	0.61	144
Program of study	3.64	0.58	381	3.63	0.54	131	3.63	0.62	106	3.64	0.59	144
Cost of tuition	3.32	0.81	383	3.33	0.84	133	3.21	0.89	106	3.40	0.71	144
Cost of living	3.24	0.82	364	3.27	0.84	117	3.10	0.94	105	3.32	0.71	142

<b>Safe place to live</b>	3.21	0.87	359	3.22	0.90	124	3.08	0.91	104	<b>3.30</b>	0.82	141
<b>Work opportunities</b>	2.93	0.96	369	3.03	0.86	124	2.49	0.99	106	3.17	0.93	139
<b>Earning potential</b>	2.74	0.99	368	2.78	0.93	125	2.34	0.99	106	3.01	0.94	137
<b>Quebec culture</b>	2.10	1.01	363	2.07	1.12	121	2.06	0.95	104	2.16	0.95	138
<b>Study in English</b>	<b>3.43</b>	0.84	373	<b>3.33</b>	0.95	129	<b>3.51</b>	0.85	104	<b>3.46</b>	0.70	140
<b>Learn and/or improve French</b>	2.38	1.04	346	2.14	1.07	105	2.48	1.04	105	2.49	0.99	136
<b>International recognition of qualifications</b>	3.03	1.02	364	3.06	0.93	126	2.51	1.09	100	<b>3.37</b>	0.90	138
<b>Ease of getting a visa to study</b>	2.10	1.18	186	2.00	1.16	46	1.45	0.86	38	2.39	1.20	102
<b>Ability to work while studying</b>	2.68	1.11	353	2.88	1.09	121	2.53	1.08	100	2.61	1.15	132
<b>Post-study work opportunities</b>	3.10	1.00	359	3.26	0.86	126	2.68	1.08	99	<b>3.27</b>	0.98	134
<b>Ability to get PM in Canada after studies</b>	2.17	1.22	167	1.88	1.19	33	1.47	0.96	34	2.50	1.19	100
<b>Other (please specify)</b>	2.32	1.42	56	2.43	1.47	21	1.89	1.32	18	2.65	1.41	17

How important are each of the following with regard to your decision to stay in Quebec after graduation?	All			Quebec			Rest of Canada			International		
	Mean	SD	n	Mean	SD	n	Mean	SD	n	Mean	SD	n
<b>Answer Options</b>												
<b>Safe place to live</b>	<b>3.23</b>	0.90	168	3.12	0.98	74	3.11	0.92	36	<b>3.45</b>	0.73	58
<b>Low cost of living</b>	<b>3.21</b>	0.82	168	3.12	0.78	74	<b>3.36</b>	0.93	36	3.24	0.80	58
<b>Good job opportunity</b>	<b>3.49</b>	0.70	170	<b>3.36</b>	0.74	76	<b>3.56</b>	0.65	36	<b>3.62</b>	0.64	58

<b>The people are very welcoming</b>	2.99	0.88	164	2.91	0.83	70	2.64	0.90	36	3.29	0.84	58
<b>A good network of friends</b>	<b>3.35</b>	0.75	171	<b>3.36</b>	0.74	76	3.19	0.71	36	<b>3.42</b>	0.79	59
<b>Recreation / Nature (Green Spaces)</b>	3.06	0.82	165	3.01	0.86	72	2.94	0.73	35	3.19	0.81	58
<b>Great place to raise a family</b>	3.04	0.97	149	3.24	0.86	63	2.47	1.14	32	3.15	0.86	54
<b>Opportunities to live and work in English</b>	3.06	0.97	162	2.94	1.05	70	3.08	0.96	36	3.18	0.86	56
<b>Opportunities to use / practice French</b>	2.71	0.97	163	2.62	1.01	71	2.77	0.94	35	2.79	0.94	57
<b>Cultural diversity</b>	3.14	0.85	169	3.07	0.83	75	3.23	0.88	35	3.19	0.88	59

Likert-scale: 1 = Not important at all, 2 = Somewhat important, 3 = Important, 4 = Very Important.

Table 20. Student retention factors

Likert-scale: 1 = Not important at all, 2 = Somewhat important, 3 = Important, 4 = Very Important.

### *Further Analysis: “Good Jobs”*

“Good jobs” was the most important factor in the current study and is a long-standing issue for the retention and integration of English-speaking students in Quebec (Canada Senate, 2011; Canadian Heritage, 2011; Corbeil et al., 2010). Students in the focus groups seemed generally aware of current economic conditions and labour market realities in Quebec. They were knowledgeable of the high unemployment rates in Quebec, especially among recent immigrants to the province. Students were also aware of the cultural and linguistic barriers faced by English-speaking job seekers in Montreal, Sherbrooke and other communities of Quebec.

We conducted a special analysis concerning the issue of “good jobs” as a potential factor that could either pull English-speaking university students to stay in Quebec after graduation (or push them out of the province for a lack of good job opportunities). Our key independent variables of interest in this analysis were “birthplace of student” (Quebec, Rest of Canada, International), the student’s “first official language” (English, French, English and French, Other) and “program of study.”

First, we wanted to see if Quebec-born students were more or less likely to regard having a “good job opportunity” after graduation as an important retention factor compared to international students and/or students from the rest of Canada. We ran an ANOVA to test for differences and found that international students (3.62) were slightly more likely to view having a good job opportunity lined up after graduation as more important than Quebec-born students (3.36) ( $F_{2,167}=2.64$ ;  $p=.075$ ). Students from the rest of Canada (3.56) were also more likely to view jobs after graduation as important (not significant). Further analysis revealed that Quebec-born (3.24) and international students (3.15) were much more likely to view “family” as an important factor when deciding whether or not to stay in Quebec after graduation compared to students from the rest of Canada (2.47) ( $F_{2,146}=7.96$ ;  $p=.001$ ).

Second, we were interested in finding out differences in response patterns based on the student’s “first language learned at home and still understood and used today.” We ran another ANOVA and found virtually no differences between native English-speakers ( $M=3.42$ ,  $SD=.75$ ) and French-speakers ( $M=3.45$ ,  $SD=.76$ ) in rating “good jobs” as a retention factor; however, Allophones (non-English/French) were more likely to view having a good job in place after graduation as important ( $M=3.63$ ,  $SD=.67$ ). Further analysis of the “language” variable and retention factors revealed that “safe place to live” showed the largest variation between groups ( $F_{3,164}=3.31$ ;  $p=.022$ ), and in particular, Allophones ( $M=3.42$ ,  $SD=.75$ ) were much more likely to regard this as an important factor compared to English- and French-speaking students.



Third, we wanted to see if any differences existed between students from different programs of study. As there were many open-ended responses to the “program of study” survey question, we categorized student’s program of study into major field classification codes using the Canadian Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP 2016) standard (e.g., Education = 13; Foreign languages, literatures & linguistics = 16; Physical Sciences = 40; Social Sciences = 45) (See Table 3.1 above). We then tested for differences between students from different fields of study and the relative importance they place on having a “good job opportunity” in Quebec in order to stay after graduation. Although this analysis revealed subtle differences, the differences were not statistically significant. For instance, education (3.56) and social science majors (3.57) rated having a “good job opportunity” in place after graduation as more important than business (3.44), language/linguistics (3.39) and STEM majors (3.43), but again these differences were minimal and not significant.

We then turned to analyze “program of study” and pull factors that brought English-speaking students to Quebec to live and study. In particular, we were interested in how students from different degree programs rated “post-study work opportunities” as a determining factor. Again, there were slight differences between majors, but these differences were not statistically significant. Most notably, language/linguistic majors (3.25) and social science majors (3.27) tended to see post-study work opportunities as a more important “pull” factor than say visual and performing arts majors (2.81) or liberal arts and sciences majors (2.91).

### *Plans After Graduation*

Slightly more than one in four students surveyed (26.7%) plan to seek employment in Quebec after graduation (35.0% of Quebec-born students) and over one-third of students (34.7%) intend to find employment elsewhere in Canada (48.6% of students from the ROC); 5.9% will seek employment in the United States or some other country and 16.1% of students will pursue further education.

Table 21. Post-graduation intentions

What do you plan to do after completing your current program of study?	All		Quebec		Rest of Canada		International	
	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#
<b>Employment in Quebec</b>	26.7%	108	35.0%	50	19.3%	21	24.3%	37

<b>Employment in Canada</b>	34.7%	140	28.0%	40	48.6%	53	30.9%	47
<b>Employment in United States</b>	2.7%	11	0.7%	1	0.9%	1	5.9%	9
<b>Employment in home/other country</b>	3.2%	13	2.1%	3	1.8%	2	5.3%	8
<b>Migration</b>	1.5%	6	2.1%	3	0.0%	0	2.0%	3
<b>Further study</b>	16.1%	65	16.1%	23	19.3%	21	13.8%	21
<b>Other (please specify)</b>	5.9%	24	5.6%	8	3.7%	4	7.9%	12
<b>Unknown / No response</b>	9.2%	37	10.5%	15	6.4%	7	9.9%	15
<b>Sample</b>		<b>404</b>		<b>143</b>		<b>109</b>		<b>152</b>

If they were to leave their current place of residence in the next five years, around half of all students would go to another province or territory in Canada (51.5%), including 70.6% of students from the ROC. 11.1% of students will move to another community in Quebec (18.2% of Quebec-born students) and 11.2% of international students will return to their country of origin.

Table 22. Post-graduate intentions to leave

<b>If you were to leave your current place of residence in the next five years, where would you most likely go?</b>	<b>All</b>		<b>Quebec</b>		<b>Rest of Canada</b>		<b>International</b>	
	<b>%</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>#</b>
<b>Another community in Quebec</b>	11.1%	45	18.2%	26	10.1%	11	5.3%	8
<b>Another province or territory in Canada</b>	51.5%	208	39.9%	57	70.6%	77	48.7%	74
<b>United States</b>	9.7%	39	11.2%	16	2.8%	3	13.2%	20
<b>Country of origin / birth place</b>	5.0%	20	2.1%	3	0.0%	0	11.2%	17
<b>Other country (please specify)</b>	12.6%	51	16.1%	23	11.0%	12	10.5%	16
<b>Unknown / No response</b>	10.1%	41	12.6%	18	5.5%	6	11.2%	17
<b>Sample</b>		<b>404</b>		<b>143</b>		<b>109</b>		<b>152</b>

How likely are you to stay in Quebec after you graduate?	All		Quebec		Rest of Canada		International	
Answer Options	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#
Very unlikely	17.0%	63	11.6%	15	23.8%	25	16.8%	23
Somewhat unlikely	13.7%	51	10.1%	13	18.1%	19	13.9%	19
Neutral	13.2%	49	12.4%	16	9.5%	10	16.8%	23
Somewhat likely	18.6%	69	24.0%	31	16.2%	17	15.3%	21
Very likely	27.8%	103	34.9%	45	19.0%	20	27.7%	38
Don't know	5.9%	22	4.7%	6	6.7%	7	6.6%	9
Other (please specify)	3.8%	14	2.3%	3	6.7%	7	2.9%	4
<b>Sample</b>		<b>371</b>		<b>129</b>		<b>105</b>		<b>137</b>

Overall, 46.4% of students sampled are likely to stay in Quebec after they graduate and another 18.1% are on the fence (neutral or don't know). Retention rates are somewhat higher for Quebec-born students (68.9% are somewhat or very likely to stay) compared to international students (43.0%) and students from other provinces (35.2%).

Table 23. Post-graduation intentions to stay

### **Focus Group Activities**

- We included a question in the on-line survey to determine student's interest to participate in a focus group and collected contact information from those students who agreed to be contacted. In total, 351 survey respondents (75.2%) agreed to be contacted for a follow-up interview (focus group) and 291 respondents provided contact information (e-mail, phone number and/or mailing address).
- We initially contacted potential focus group members by the e-mail addresses they provided in the on-line survey. The researchers attempted to obtain a representative focus group sample, inviting a mix of Canadian and foreign students from different backgrounds to attend.
- Students who responded to the initial e-mail invitation were sent a follow up email with invitation to participate in an on-line 'Doodle' survey where they could select the best date(s) and time(s) to meet for a focus group.

- Reminder letters were sent to all focus group participants in the week leading up to the focus group. Incentive was also highlighted, which was a chance to win a \$200 Via Rail travel voucher (one winner per group).

## **Focus Group Sample**

- Twenty (20) students from Concordia responded to the Doodle survey and nine (9) students were able to meet for a focus group on the same date and time.
- We conducted the first focus group at Concordia University on Tuesday, May 3<sup>rd</sup> from 4:00-5:30 p.m. There were nine (9) student participants (6 F, 3 M) and two (2) facilitators in attendance. See summary details below.
- Eighteen (18) students from McGill responded to the Doodle survey and six (6) students were able to meet for a focus group on the same date and time.
- We conducted the second focus group at McGill University on Thursday, May 26<sup>th</sup> from 10:00-11:30 a.m. There were six (6) student participants (5 F, 1 M) and two (2) facilitators in attendance. See summary details below.
- Seven (7) students from Bishop's University responded to the Doodle survey, but only three (3) were able to meet for a focus group on the same date and time.
- The focus group at Bishop's University was initially scheduled for September 2016, but was postponed due to low recruitment numbers (only three students could attend). The group was rescheduled for early October, but was again postponed due to low recruitment numbers (only two students could attend).
- Since we had limited success scheduling the third focus group at Bishop's on-line, we tried alternative strategy by identifying a key informant who currently attends Bishop's University. We prepared the informant by discussing the content of the focus group questions and had him recruit fellow classmates to respond to the questions. This strategy proved to be successful because he was able to solicit responses from ten (10) classmates (4 F, 6M) on October 24, 2016.

## **Focus Group Findings**

### **I. What were the most important factors that influenced your decision to choose to live and study in Quebec?**

The two most common reasons why students came to Quebec to live and study were related to language (to learn French) and the school or academic program. Other important factors included the “vibe” of the city (Montreal), the low cost of living, living close to a beautiful, natural environment (e.g., green spaces), friends and family, and the ease of applying to the university or the ease of getting a visa (immigration).

Several students in the focus groups identified the French language, and to a lesser extent, French culture as a key “pull” factor:

“The French aspect of Montreal and Quebec was a big part of the draw.”

“I wanted to come to a city where I could learn a second language. My undergrad is in language so I’ve always been interested in learning languages. Living somewhere that was not predominately English was important to me.”

“I did French immersion from K-12. I wanted to improve French.”

However, despite their initial intentions to learn French, most of these students did not actually improve their language skills due to time constraints (e.g., too busy studying), a lack of motivation, because they interact mostly with English-speaking students or because French-speaking students will often switch to English if they sense that you are not Francophone.

“I thought I would get better at French, but it’s easy to get by in English. And Concordia is in English. Didn’t actually improve my French much.”

“Nice to have a choice – French and English – practice both of them at the same time – not that I’ve been doing that. I’ve been lazy...”

“I too thought I would learn French and I’ve learned what the word “sac” means from going the grocery store, but that’s about it.”

Although it was a less common, some students who came to Quebec to learn the French language actually did succeed: “For me it was also for French, but I actually did learn it.” These students were quick to point out that it is up to you to learn the language: “You have to be adamant to

get people to speak to you in French.” The students who were able to learn French forced themselves to speak French only when given the opportunity, even if others around them switched to English.

Perhaps the most common reason cited by students who participated in the focus groups as to why they came to Quebec was because of the high quality of education and/or the specific program of study at their university. This was especially the case for students from McGill University:

“I came to McGill specifically for the research topic I was interested in...the culture program.”

“[I] chose McGill to be close to music scene and great music program.”

One student came to Quebec for the program of study, despite being “terrified of the French issue” ... “I’m not fluent in it at all. My partner is more fluent than I am and he moved here a year after me... it was all about the program.”

In addition to the program of study, students mentioned other factors that brought them to Quebec to study, such familial connections or friends:

“I have two friends here [in Montreal], they always told me was a nice city, the university was good...”

“I too came for the program, but parents were born and raised in Montreal. They left [Montreal] in the 80s, [but there is still a] personal connection [to the city]. Even though I hadn’t been here often.”

One student said that she came to Quebec because her husband was from here and could easily get a job. And on several occasions female students had mentioned, somewhat embarrassingly, that they came out here “for a boy.”

A couple students chose to come to the university because of a specific professor’s reputation or field of expertise: “The supervisor for my program at Concordia. I already knew her and met with her a few times before coming here...” And others came here because they felt it was easier to get accepted into their program of study or there was less competition compared to other universities in Canada.

“I chose McGill because of the healthcare program – allows direct entry from high school whereas U of T [University of Toronto] and UBC [University of British Columbia] require two years of life sciences first.”

“[There is] less competition in the nursing program at McGill, students are more cooperative.”

On a similar note, students felt that the application process to the school and/or to Canada through immigration was relatively easy:

“I planned to study in Canada because the application process to the U.S. was much more complicated. I applied to three universities and got accepted at two. I chose McGill because it was bigger university.”

“[Because of] the ease of immigration [to Canada]. I was born in Canada, but I grew up [abroad]. When I was in my early 20s I decided to take a year off from school and learn another language and live in a bilingual environment. Because I had a Canadian Passport, it was the easiest choice. I didn’t have to worry about a visa, healthcare...”

Beyond these examples, there were a significant number of students who discussed the “vibe” of the City of Montreal. One student summarized this feeling succinctly:

“I was only supposed to be here for six months, but I fell in love with the city! Watermelon picnics, bike rides... it’s magical and romantic!”

Others compared the City of Montreal to their hometown:

“I wanted to live in a bigger city. Ottawa was too boring. Toronto is too businessy.”

“I wanted to get out of Toronto. I wanted something different. The reputation of Montreal (from what I saw as an outsider) was a very lively city... always something to do, people are very friendly, [and] a lot of fun!”

The City of Toronto was discussed a lot in this context, as too business-like, corporate or money-driven relative to Montreal. Students also preferred studying and living in Montreal over Toronto because of the cost of living comparison:

“I couldn’t afford to do a Ph.D. at the University of Ottawa because it was more expensive. And I did my master’s online... I wanted to have a social experience in school.”

“The tuition and standard of living was a big incentive, easy incentive compared to other schools/cities.

“...tuition is really cheap here [in Montreal] compared to the rest of Canada.”

And lastly, a number of students mentioned geographic factors as their reasons for studying in Quebec (e.g., wanted to live in the region, remain in city of residence) or the desire to live close to a beautiful, natural environment with green spaces.

**2. Please think back to your arrival experience at McGill/Concordia/Bishop’s University. Did you feel welcome? If applicable, how could your arrival experience have been improved?**



When students were asked about their arrival experience to the university, many recalled a warm welcoming from their peers, professors and academic supervisors. On the other hand, some students felt less welcomed by the school's administration, claiming that they had little or no guidance in navigating the university "system" when the first arrived.

One student mentioned a new friend from Montreal who helped to show her the ropes on campus and around the city: "I arrived in Montreal the day after I got married. Had my first class the night that I arrived. I met [name omitted] and we quickly became friends." Another student felt very welcomed by peers and the LGBTQ community:

"I already knew my roommate when I arrived, but no one else. The GSA (Physics) was very welcoming, had a BBQ. I met a lot of people through the LGBTQ community too. There is a huge queer community here, which is awesome... So there's a lot of events... there's the Center for Gender Advocacy right across the street and stuff like that. And then there's Queer Concordia and Queer McGill."

Students from Bishop's were especially likely to feel welcomed by the school community, making statements like "Bishop's has felt like home since my first week here" and "I have grown to love Bishops over the last four years. It has become my home." Moreover, another student stated: "My Bishop's arrival was amazing. I was welcomed by my RA and was introduced to my peers who I would be friends with in the long run."

Several students recalled being welcomed by their professors/supervisors:

"When I came [to McGill] for my PhD, it was very inviting... the professors and advisors make you feel like you're their only student."

"I felt really welcomed by my supervisor in particular. She is really, really sweet for the record. She gave me a tour of campus and everything... She even met me at the metro station and took me there [to campus] and gave me a grand tour."

Academic supervisors were also credited with helping students to build their social networks on campus and in the community. Some students mentioned being connected to other classmates through their supervisors, e.g., “My supervisor introduced me to my lab mates. Sent out an email and told them to welcome me.”

“My arrival experience was great! ... I had a supervisor and I was immediately placed into a lab. So I was given a family, I guess. Whether I wanted them or not. My lab mates really helped me know the different Burroughs in Montreal. So it was them who were really a good resource as opposed to the administration.”

Both of the following quotes summarize one of the main themes in the focus groups concerning students' arrival experiences – a generally positive experience with peers and supervisors, but an unsatisfactory experience with the school's administration. A few students felt very welcomed and supported by the administration in the beginning, but this was not the case for the majority of students over the long-term. Many felt that the information they received was inadequate and they were left to their own devices to figure it out for themselves:

“When I arrived from [country omitted], I didn't know how to navigate the university system. It is different from at home. They just assumed if you are a PhD student that you will know *their* system.”

“The administration was fine, but they didn't really give us a whole lot of information... it would have been nice if they trained us. As a grad student we have to do TA work for funding. They just kind of fling you into the situation and give you your schedule and your assigned job literally (in my experience) two days before I started... ‘You start in two days, you should probably read the lab book and then you'll be teaching it.’ They didn't give any instruction or preparation. That was kind of, not the greatest welcoming. But my supervisor and the grad committee were very welcoming. They had a BBQ to help get acquainted with everybody.”

Another student commented on the lack of support for students who arrive midway through the school year, at least according to one student:

“I was a transfer [student] and I started in the Winter session. So there was no orientation and I was super overwhelmed because at that point I didn't speak French and... couldn't

find the location of classes at first... so I gave up and went home. [I was] very disorientated at the beginning.”

In general, these students were looking for more guidance and support from the university administration in terms of an orientation to the school and its academic programs and services, counselling and other school and community resources, especially for international students.

“A little more guidance and structure about what you need to do and when would have been helpful. PhD program is known as ad hoc program. When do I submit my thesis/defense, etc.? It’s not really laid out. More guidance is needed.”

“[After I arrived] I had to start doing these orientations, but instead of feeling welcoming, it feels more like you are going into the machine and you getting sorted and processed. I guess they assumed that since I was from outside of Montreal that I wouldn’t be showing up until the first day of class. Because I didn’t hear anything from them and then I got to orientation the first day and all the local student’s had registered for classes, met their advisor, done all this stuff, and all of us from outside of Quebec hadn’t done anything. They sort of lined us up and fed us through like rapid fire with the advisor and then sent us out on our way. So it was not super pleasant.”

Economic integration was another key concern among international students, who often have limited employment opportunities due to their visa status or other barriers:

“I’m only able to work 20 hours a week as an international student. I’m very fortunate that my partner is from here and has been working in a proper job all this time, because it would have been a lot more of a struggle if I was on my own.”

“One thing McGill and the city [Montreal] can support more is the international student group. A lot of people have come to Montreal thinking that it will be easier to move here even if they speak French...they are fluent in the language, they have wonderful experiences in whatever industry they are from, they think they can come here easily and integrate into the economy... but for many systemic issues they are not able to, and they are not able to find a job, they struggle paying tuition... It’s not really the McGill experience, but it’s the societal issues that block them from having a welcoming experience.” I know people in our

cohort who are really smart and wonderful people, but their spouses have had to leave the province... Some people are working under the table to make ends meet, because they're international. What kind of job can they find? How else are they going to make ends meet? It's really difficult when I hear those stories compared to my experience as a Canadian.”

One of the hottest topics of discussion among focus group participants throughout was related to *language*. Students spoke of the “tensions between the English and French [language] in Quebec society. And how to negotiate those [tensions].” For many students, learning the French language is key to integrating into Quebec society and the economy, but many feel that they do not have the time, resources or support to learn and/or practice the language.

“[I've had a] hard time finding opportunities to speak French. The main hallmark of what makes you belong in this society is learning French. [And there are] all these barriers against speaking French. Makes you feel not welcome. Telling everyone that they should speak French, but not letting us. People [locals] immediately switch to English if you are not a confident French speaker.”

Language is evidently a deciding factor when it comes to staying or leaving the province after graduation, yet some students feel there is inadequate support from the “Quebec system” for students to learn French:

“I work in the hospital as a nursing student doing my clinicals. Some of patients only speak French, so I can either use google translator or ask my advisor to switch around my patients so I can get the English speakers. I can't speak French. In the end, I know I won't be working here. The Nurse's Order of Quebec wants all the nurses to pass a French proficiency test. I can work hard to pass that test or adopt the attitude “I'm not going to stay here so I'm not going to try [to learn French] anymore.” I'm going to go back to [home province] or another province. The Quebec system is not assisting my in any way.”

“Even if you do speak French, there is no assurance that you will get a job,” further claims another student. Others argued that identify and language politics causes a clear divide between the English-speaking and French-speaking communities of Quebec:

“I speak French very well, but there is still this barrier – the two solitudes... People here are so focused on language politics that they lose sight of the richness they could get from having a much more inclusive society. I can understand why international students have a trouble getting a job.”

“Identity politics is huge. I didn’t understand when I moved here. The Charter of Values came out as soon as I moved here. Quebec is like a completely different nation. The institutional level differs from the individual relationships we have in the city. For the most part, people here are welcoming.”

**3. Please describe your learning experience to date at McGill/Concordia/ Bishop’s University. Has it been generally positive or negative?**

When asked about their learning experience to date at their university, focus group participants reported positive experiences. The general consensus was that students were satisfied with their university learning experiences, especially their professors and academic supervisors, their friends and peers, and the city in which they live in. Multiple students commented that they have had an “amazing experience.” For example:

“I have had the most amazing learning experience at Bishop's. My classes and teachers are wonderful human beings who have encouraged my learning experience. It has been positive.

“My learning experience [at Concordia] has been very positive throughout the last four and a half years. The education program is challenging and has provided me with a lot of work related experience.”

“I have had a very positive experience with interpersonal relationships [at McGill]. My supervisors, resources and cohort is great!”

Despite the overall positive learning experiences among students, several focus group participants felt strongly that the university and government could be doing much more to support students

to learn and practice French. Students felt that there is no time to learn French while studying full-time for an academic major and/or working part-time to make ends meet.

“McGill could be doing more in terms of French-language training for students. I paid a lot of money to take intensive French classes (6 hours a day, 5 days a week). You can't do that while you are studying full-time. When I started my PhD I wanted to take some more French classes and it was this whole rigmarole to be allowed into [the classes]... I had to get special approval. Especially for grad students, it's not set up for us to be able to take French classes as an elective. And when I did get into the undergrad French classes, they were overfilled. Only 35 students in a class. The teacher was just dictating, overworked. Not quality education. I only took one class and then I dropped out. I think the university could be investing more. Even for the undergrads who can access [the French classes] more easily, you have to line up all morning to take a French proficiency test... they don't make it easy. On top of that, as a grad student, the language training is just not there for us.”

So although French classes are available to students, they are not always *accessible*. There is limited space in the classrooms, it can be quite an obstacle to simply register for the courses (special permission is often required), and students are very concerned that their GPA will be negatively affected if they try to learn French.

“I had to get special permission from my supervisor, which was fine, but it was still a whole other step with all these forms, etc. In order to get the reduced rate as a graduate student it [the French classes] would be counted as a credit course. So I was incredibly stressed that entire semester that it was going to affect my GPA if I didn't do well. I was just doing this for my personal development, because I want to stay here, because I want to become Canadian... And I was incredibly stressed that it would affect my GPA if I didn't do well. I worked so hard in my French classes and luckily I did well, but then I looked at my unofficial transcripts it says that it's excluded. They told us it would count towards our GPA.”

So what it comes down to for several students is concentrate on academic performance (GPA) or learn the French language. Many students come to Quebec with the intentions to learn French, study and practice it, but as the focus group findings reveal, the reality is that there is not enough time or resources to sufficiently learn and practice the language at university or in the surrounding community.

“The accessibility to French since I’ve been here has been very frustrating, because I want so badly to learn, and I’m so motivated and I try to practice. I’ve been here for four years and I’ve done it mostly on my own. I took one class through PGSS and it was ... just a waste of time. Then I did the cont. ed. ones [at McGill] and they were great, but I had to pay a decent amount of money and it was stressful. When I first arrived I came on a visa and had no access to French courses. Now I have a full-time job and I can’t take French courses because they are not offered at night (government ones). Access to government French course is set up for people who come here and don’t work for the first six months.”

There was also criticism that French language instruction at the universities is too focused on learning the language, but not the sociolinguistic dynamics attached to it:

“Even the French classes themselves, even the ones that were really good and I learned a lot, there is still this really backwards focus on French only... they focus really strongly on the language and they don’t talk about the sociolinguistic dynamic – the reality that you experience in the real world... We don’t talk about language politics. There’s this big disconnect between the classroom and reality.”

This part of the discussion also allowed for several points of comparison between McGill and Concordia Universities in Montreal. Students made several contrasts, such as McGill University’s class sizes of 300+ students compared to Concordia’s classes with 40 or so students. Concordia was seen as a “left-leaning” and “fun” liberal arts school by students and McGill has a reputation of being a more “serious” academic institution – “the school on the hill” - separate from the rest of Montreal:

“I did the bachelor’s degree at McGill. As a Montrealer, it was almost frustrating how oriented it was to outside students. It seemed very strange coming in as a Montrealer. I went to high school across the street from McGill. So I knew the campus very well. And I’ve been...downtown all my life. And it was just so strange to enter this portal where people were transposed from suburbs all over America... and I found it very removed from... my experience in Montreal. So it was almost like too much of an orientation... And I actually like the seamless relationship Concordia has with the city. So coming here as a

graduate student, it was good that I just started classes, started doing my thing. And I could kind of mediate the campus life and the city life pretty well, seamlessly.”

**4. Please describe one or two support services (e.g., health, cultural, spiritual/religious, employment) you have accessed, either through the university or your community or city of residence, during your studies at McGill/Concordia /Bishop’s University. Were you satisfied or dissatisfied with the level of service you received? How could your experience have been improved?**

Health services were most frequently discussed among focus group participants across all three universities and there were some very mixed reviews. Students from Bishop’s University were more positive overall. One student from Bishop’s commented that they were satisfied “with how quick they are and how clear they are in referencing you to other doctors and explaining the process” and another stated in regard to mental health support services on campus: “they were great and accommodating to student’s needs. I felt very welcomed.” Another student stated emphasized: “Health is huge. There is an on campus clinic, which is very helpful. Also there are many other facilities available around the school.” On the other hand, one dissatisfied student from Bishop’s said there was limited availability of doctors and appointment times at mental health services.

Students from Concordia and McGill University were overall dissatisfied with *access* to health care and mental health services on campus and in the surrounding community (in Montreal). While the universities provide access to basic medical services, the number of available appointment “spots” that are offered per day are inadequate, according to students. And those who do secure appointments must be diligent in their efforts, such as waiting in cues (on the telephone) for hours on end to schedule them. One student from McGill explained their frustrations:

“The McGill Health Clinic has so many issues. They only allow you to book appointments on the 15<sup>th</sup> [of the month] and you have to call at exactly 8:30 a.m. If you call at 8:37 you are in the cue for hours... Once it fills up, it fills up and then you have to keep calling back to see if there has been any cancellations... There is no way you are going to get a spot unless you call at right at 8:30 a.m.”



Another student from Concordia University echoed the same concerns about access and availability in regards to mental health care:

“Triage at Loyola to see psychologist. Can only take three people a day. If you get there too late you have to wait till next day or next week. Limited availability of time slots. Not just Concordia (in general), there are specified times to see someone. Otherwise you just have to wait. I went to triage. Just given a reference. In the end I could have just looked it up on-line. They need to have more people (only 3/day). People get refused service.”

A few students who did access medical services were also concerned with the limits on the number of counseling sessions available to students who seek mental health care. One student spoke in reference to visiting the counseling department on campus:

“I used quite a few sessions, eight or nine in my bachelors program. There was a death in the family right before my master’s degree. I wasn’t dealing with it well. So I went to see someone. The woman who met me was not a psychologist. She just evaluated me and asked me “what’s wrong.” I was told that it was a “pre-session” because I had used up all my free sessions in my bachelor’s degree program. I was being evaluated to see if I really needed counseling services. And I was asked why I didn’t seek outside counseling services. I said because outside services are very expensive and I can’t afford that. You don’t get renewed sessions as a grad student. I felt it was really awful. So I never went back there.”

A similar situation was brought up by a student who visited McGill Health Services in the beginning of her second year, at the same time her husband was getting deported and her mother was diagnosed with cancer:

“I started having memory lapses, which is a sign of stress. So I went to the McGill Medical Center to access the [mental health] services regularly. They triage you. Try to get you back on your feet and out the door. They said “I don’t think things are too bad so you don’t need regular counseling.” It felt quite dismissive. It would be nice to get access to mental health services on a preventative rather than just an emergency basis.”

While some students were not satisfied with the level of access to health care in terms of available appointments and doctors, most students did seem aware of the health services that exist on campus and where to go to access them. One student even commented that mental health services are “over-advertised” at Concordia. A graduating student from McGill stated “medical services at McGill are way better advertised” than at other schools. “Coming from here [in Montreal] it’s difficult to get a family doctor. While I was at McGill, I took advantage of that access.”

Other students found better luck with accessing health services in the city of Montreal, despite being a little dismayed by the length of time it takes to see a doctor:

“I had a chronic pain issue a few years and couldn’t figure out how to make the McGill health services work, so I went to the CLSC (public health services). No one has a GP [General Practitioner] in Montreal. If you have a GP, you’re like a wizard. Accessing the CLSC means taking an entire day out of your life. And when you are working, you may as well just take the money and pay a private clinic. So I was paying \$200 to see a private doctor, who was great.”

An international student who accessed public health services in Montreal for a broken wrist complained about the long wait times and bureaucratic process one must endure when visiting the hospital for treatment:

“I broke my wrist a couple years ago... I had to go to the [Montreal] General Ortho Clinic for follow-ups. There you could get appointments more often, but the clinic was only open on Fridays, and I worked on Fridays, so I just had to cancel my classes every Fridays and not work. I’d have an appointment for 8:30 and I’d get there at 8:15, but I wouldn’t see anyone till about 1 p.m. I’d have an appointment and still have to spend the entire day there. And the worst part... I wasn’t even a student at this point so I was just on a working holiday visa and I had private health insurance from Australia that covered things, but I had to pay everything in advance. And you go to the hospital, turn up for the first appointment, you go to the clinic and they say you need to go get a hospital card. So I go downstairs, get a hospital card, go back... then they tell me I have to go get any X-ray and I have to pay for it first, so then I have to go to the billing place and pay for that, and I have to go back and get my X-ray, back to the clinic, and go see the doctor. Pay for the doctor, but they don’t

take cards. So I go back downstairs to the ATM...It was the most frustrating thing I've ever done in my life.”

In terms of health care coverage, there was some confusion about the process of how to obtain a health card and the conditions under which one must apply. One student stated, “I never tried to get a health card because I heard you had to cancel your [current] health card and then not be covered, whereas in other provinces you just apply...” Another student discussed the process as long and arduous, but finally obtained a health card after a prolonged period:

“It took 9 months to get a health card. I cancelled my [home province] health card, because you have to have proof that you cancelled your health card in order to get the Quebec one. I was not covered for 9 months and I ended up having to pay \$100 to see a doctor, which wasn't reimbursed... I was told “you need more proof that you are going to stay.” I was only a part-time student, but they were like “you are probably just here for your studies.” It was almost like they didn't believe that I wanted to live here. So I had to write this whole story about how I love Quebec so much, how it's the best place ever and they have all these great services and I'm going to stay here and this is the program I'm going to do in grad studies and then they gave me a health card. I ended up writing the letter in French. I was very stubborn at first and I was going to write it in English, because they have to serve me in English! And then in the end I wrote the letter in French to prove my commitment. They kept shuffling me around with different staff members who were in charge of my file. So that was hard. And to be considered a Quebec resident by the university is a different thing. It's not the same, so you can't just show your Quebec health card to prove your residency. And I had a lease. Concordia wouldn't accept it.”

Two other students were more general in their complaints of Montreal and the university system as too “bureaucratic”:

“Montreal's bureaucracy is like no other, not like anywhere else in Canada. It's not just the university. The whole city has this very drawn out bureaucratic system where you have to go to this desk and if you don't have these papers you have to go this desk... I'm thinking about when I had to get my health card. Three visits later and I'll still different have the right stuff. My passport as well. I had to renew it while I was here. Same story. Always five extra steps in getting anything accomplished. Depends on whether you are considered a

Quebec vs. Canadian citizen. There are different definitions for the university and the healthcare system. So many extra steps that seems unnecessary!”

“I came to Montreal and fell in love with the city and everything was amazing at the beginning, but the moment you need to be an adult, you have an adult issue like getting a job or driving your car or accessing a doctor, it’s like living in a developing country. And going back to retention, that is one of the main reasons why I am leaving. I’m really lucky that I am healthy and educated, and able-bodied... but I’m afraid of what might happen if I get sick or I’m in some kind of situation where I have to interact with the government and bureaucracy, and all the red tape...”

There were those who have had more pleasant experiences when accessing public health and other community services. One student from Concordia who didn’t have a health card mentioned discovering *Head in Hands* for youth ages 12 to 25. “They don’t care if you have health coverage or not. Ideally, they’ll get paid, but if not, fine, they won’t turn you away. They also have a pro-bono lawyer for legal services.” Another student from McGill said: “I had to renew my passport and it was like the easiest process ever. At least two or three other students agreed and chimed in with “yeah me too.” “And I got it two weeks later, which was great because I was going to Cuba.”

Several students from Concordia mentioned the Housing and Jobs Office (HOJO) in the Student Union as an excellent resource. One student remarked: “I went to HOJO quite a few times because we had a lot of problems with our landlord and they were very helpful there. I really like that service.” Another student was just as pleased: “I also love HOJO. And have used their services a few time for dealing with not super great landlords who seem to be everywhere. I found jobs through their job bank, apartments.”

One student also discussed their biggest support in the faith-based community outside of McGill: “I go to church regularly and my husband and I found a church in our neighbourhood. We’ve been there for almost three years now and they are absolutely fantastic! It’s kind of like a family, a ton of people there, and they are much older than all of us, mostly retirees, but they are all very supportive.”

- 5. If you are considering living in Quebec upon completion of your studies please tell us in one or two sentences what the principal factors for doing so. &**
- 6. If you plan on leaving Quebec, please tell us in one or two sentences, which factors or conditions could convince you to remain in Quebec after the completion of your studies.**

Focus group members were asked if they planned to stay in Quebec after graduation and what factors would most likely influence their decision to stay or leave. There was a pretty even 50:50 divide among students who indicated they would stay and integrate into the Quebec economy or leave to find opportunities in other provinces or countries. But the unanimous factor for students across all three focus groups was *employment*. Several students commented on chasing the job opportunities, be they in Quebec or elsewhere: “I’m very open to wherever the opportunities take me” and “it all depends on job openings to be honest. Gotta go where the money is.”

There were also several students who clearly wanted to stay in Quebec after they completed studies, but they were uncertain if they would be able to because of difficulties finding employment in the current job market. A student from Bishop’s stated: “I plan on working in the educational system and it is hard to find a job here.” Several English-speakers were also very concerned about their French-language abilities and competitiveness relative to native French speakers. One student explained:

“It is really hard to find a job if you are not completely fluent in French. And it’s like a Catch 22 situation: If you have a job in Quebec, the government will pay you to take French classes, but you can’t get a job unless you are fluent in French.”

An international student from Concordia described their predicament in learning French:

“I’m from [home country]. I’m not going back [there]. Learning French is a problem though. I really like Montreal. When I visited Toronto, all the people were in a rush. I didn’t like the atmosphere. In Montreal, people are calm, relaxed. Not in a rush. But I’m afraid that the French will make me have to leave.”

Another student described the difficulties in finding work in the City of Montreal, explaining how they will probably have to work virtually from home to pay the bills:

“Employment. My partner has already integrated, so there’s a lot of pressure to find work here. I work in a field that is very language-dependent. It’s been a little bit tricky trying to find work. I will probably end up working on-line just so I can stay in the province. Working nationally and internationally instead of locally. Which is sort of unfortunate because I’d much rather be working locally with different organizations. I will probably end up having to travel a lot more because of that.”

One student from Concordia mentioned that there are some jobs where French isn’t mandatory, but opportunities are limited. For example,

“As a business analyst in a local company. Working at Concordia, French not necessary. Bombardier is all in English. If one person speaks in English, the rest switch over. Calling centers are Canada-wide so 95 percent is in English. UN jobs in Montreal are another option. International corporations don’t require French.”

While some students say learning French as an obstacle, other were drawn to the challenge and saw it as an opportunity. One student said: “I plan to stay in Quebec based on the fact that I love the bilingual culture.” And another student commented:

“Bilingualism is really important for me. I’m pretty well established here. I’ve decided I’m staying. But when I think back to when I first got here, I felt if I had to move to anywhere else in Canada, I wouldn’t, I’d just move back to the States. From my impression, Montreal is so unique. Where I wanted to stay. It drove me to want to learn French.”

An international student described the process of how she become integrated into the community and now considers herself very fortunate to call Montreal her new home:

“I’ve just chosen to settle here. My partner is from Montreal. His family is from here. We bought a condo together and we’re getting married next year. We have two dogs. I have friends here now. I just feel very comfortable. I like winter, I like snow, I like speaking French. I’ve been very lucky to find a really fantastic job that looks like it’s going to one day be permanent, which is like the ‘holy grail’ if you are a CEGEP teacher. I really love the CEGEP system. It’s the perfect balance between being a high school teacher and university teacher. Teaching ESL is fun. It’s been four years since I arrived. This is my home now.”

Another foreign-born student commented they would stay if they could get permanent residency: “I’m considering a master’s degree at McGill. If I’m a permanent resident then I can pay the Quebec tuition fees. Half of what I’d pay otherwise. That’s motivation!” A Concordia student expressed their passion for the city of Montreal and described the reasons that made them want to stay here for the long-term:

“I will stay because I’ve just fallen in love with this city! I really, really love Montreal. There is always something going, on and all different kinds of things happening. I love that people are really into terraces and hanging out in the park and sitting around. I love how you can here completely bilingual conversations where the same person will switch half way through [from French to English and vice versa]. Social justice expectations and the social democratic, political side to Quebec and Montreal. I like that people are involved. Challenging government action is part of the culture. It’s just accepted. It’s the norm. It’s an important part of democracy.”

Family was also a deciding factor for many. Foreign-born students also made comments that Quebec and Montreal is a “great place to have a family.” Some students were native to Quebec and therefore already well integrated into society and family life. Their intentions were to in Montreal or the Sherbrooke areas because their families lived here. Quebec-born students also mentioned having jobs in place for them upon graduation.

For the same reasons that Quebec-born students planned to stay in their hometown, students from other provinces and countries intended to return home upon graduation. One student said: “I’m not going to stay because of my family and personal life [back home].” Another focus group member commented:

“I’m pretty sure I won’t be staying in Montreal, I’ll be going back home. Because that’s where all my friends and family and partner is. It’s a quieter way of life too. I know most people say oh you’re young, you’re going to love this city [Montreal], everybody loves it! But I’m more of a lean-back country kind of person.”

Some students offered recommendations for improving conditions that might convince them to remain in Quebec after completion of their studies. These recommendations were focused mainly on “the availability of quality job opportunities” and “salaries that are comparable to other provinces, or in more specific instances, “Better job availability and better pay for teaching,” as stated by a Bishop’s student. One focus group participant made a more formal recommendation about how to encourage students to stay in the province after they graduate:

“Offer jobs. Or just money! [laughter]. Make it a priority in the university setting to get the French you need to integrate into society. They don’t care if you stay or not. They just want to get you in and out of the program. If you finish your program early, they pay you an incentive. But you are not required to take French. In fact, you are discouraged. There is not enough time to learn the language. Course loads are already full. It’s too difficult to take French language courses.”

**7. Please describe your living experience in Montreal/Sherbrooke (thus far). What do you enjoy most about the city? How could your living experience in Montreal/Sherbrooke be improved?**

When asked to describe their living experience in Montreal or the Sherbrooke area so far, students made general comments about appreciating “the city itself and the people,” all the “green spaces,” “summertime” and “picnics,” “community gardens” and the “local farmers markets” such as Atwater and Jean Talon. One focus group participant described their love for the outdoors, which they could experience in the heart of the city of Montreal: “I enjoy all of the natural beauty around where we live and the abundance of trails and paths that allow us to explore them as well as living within walking distance of my friends.” Another student described how we have “more freedom to use spaces” in Montreal. Pop-up things. Spontaneity. There’s a certain *joie du vivre!* And many really enjoyed “all the festivals downtown,” such as Jazz Fest and Just for Laughs.



It was agreed upon by students that for a bigger city, “Montreal is safe.” One female student described her comfort level: “As a women, I don’t feel like I’m in danger in a lot of areas. I feel super safe in fact. No stress walking alone after dark.” A number of students also referred to the great “neighbourhood vibes” and “cultural diversity” that exists throughout the Burroughs of Montreal. One student appreciated the bilingual aspect of the Quebec culture: “It’s amazing to live somewhere where everyone is obsessed with language!” And another student was attracted to the “European aspect of the city”:

“I love the fact that Montreal is an old city. Old cities are smaller. They have more history in terms of community and we can just walk everywhere. I can walk from one end of the city to the other and there is always something to see. Everybody is enjoying life in the moment. It’s the European aspect to city.”

Several students commented on the low cost of living and cheap housing in Quebec relative to their home provinces/countries. One student was particularly impressed the “award-winning” metro-system with new trains that look like “spaceships.” Others like the travel aspect of the city and its geographic proximity to other cities like Ottawa, Toronto, New York, and Boston. “You can pick a city and visit it over a weekend.” A student from Bishop’s University described how they enjoyed living in Lennoxville, a town neighboring Sherbrooke: “I have had many opportunities to venture into Sherbrooke. It offers lots of activities... I enjoy the restaurants, shopping and museums in this city.” Another student remarked how they appreciated being close to “nature, camping, and hiking” in or around Sherbrooke. Although they felt “far from home” as a non-Quebec student, the nature and beauty made them feel a lot closer to home.

There were also a number of focus group members who described forming a strong sense of community belonging since arriving in Quebec. One student commented that Sherbrooke “has a small town feel and great sense of community.” A number of students also discussed how they have met a lot of great new friends since being here and now feel a part of a “very close-knit community” at their university and in their local communities. One student described her unique experience:

“I know my neighbours here [in Montreal], which is weird. My whole life growing up, I never spoke much to others. But here, I recognize people I know in the streets all the time. It rarely happens back home. All the little neighbourhoods [in Montreal] feel like nice and inviting little communities.”

A student from McGill also described forming a strong sense of belonging: “I really enjoy university life because of the community and friendships I’ve built here. I’m blessed in the sense that I have a community and support system that I can always go back to.”

### **Methodological Barriers and Recommendations**

Recruiting students to participate in the survey and focus groups had its challenges at first, but we were ultimately successful in our recruitment efforts thanks to our network of professors and university staff across all three English-university campuses. Sending e-mail blasts to students and distributing hundreds of flyers on campus and in the surrounding community seem to have little impact on boosting survey numbers or garnering interest to participate in a focus group. Ultimately, the best way to get student’s attention was to have professors and staff members from the student recreation center post a link to the survey on-line through their social media pages.

The focus groups were an even greater challenge. Gathering six to twelve students together for 90 minutes all on the same day and same time proved to be quite a task at all three universities. Students had busy school schedules and workloads, so meeting in the middle of a weekday was difficult to accommodate. As an incentive for participation we offered travel vouchers, but the incentive may not have been appealing enough since students who participated in the focus groups only had a 8:1 chance (on average) to win the prize. Students from Bishop’s University may have been even less excited about the incentive since there is not a VIA Rail train station located in Sherbrooke.

Our first recommendation in regards to conducting focus groups in future studies is to offer each participant an individual incentive rather than to take part in a drawing. This incentive should be relative to what a student might be paid at an hourly rate for a job. For instance, if the focus group will last 60 minutes, students should be remunerated at a reasonable rate. But it may not be just the incentive that dissuaded students from participating in the focus groups, it may have been other factors such as the length of time the group was anticipated to take (90 minutes), their level of interest in the content, or the fact that students had to physically be somewhere. Our second recommendation would therefore be to embrace technological options to conduct focus groups. Focus group participants could possibly engage in the conversation over the Internet or via their cell phones/tablets. This would likely increase availability and participation rates. The Internet could also be used as a means of soliciting interest in the focus groups by

creating an on-line forum and discussion of the content beforehand, and have focus group members provide input as to the topics of discussion.

### **Summary and Policy Recommendations**

Our study on “Push and Pull Factors Related to Student Retention and Integration in Quebec” reveals similar findings to previous studies on the subject. A recent October 2016 report issued by Ipsos Public Affairs and Global Affairs Canada identified the following “pull” factors that promote student interest in studying abroad:

- The quality of education offered, including the ranking and renown of a particular institution and its program of study;
- The day-to-day environment of living abroad, including opportunities for socialization, but also safety, security, familiarity, and tolerance;
- The anticipated experiences offered by living abroad, such as opportunities for travel and leisure activities;
- The anticipated opportunities for post-study career opportunities, both domestically and abroad, as well as the possibility of immigration.

When deciding where to live and study, the two most important factors for students who responded to our on-line survey were “quality of education” and “program of study,” which mirrors the above study. McGill is ranked #1 in Canada among medical-doctoral universities, according to Maclean’s 2016 rankings, Concordia is ranked 10<sup>th</sup> overall in the comprehensive category, and Bishop’s is ranked 12<sup>th</sup> in the nation in among primarily undergraduate schools. Students were drawn to Quebec, at least in part, because of the recognition of the three English-speaking universities in the province. “Opportunities to study in English” and a low “cost of tuition/cost of living” in Quebec were also important pull factors for students. For international students, “living in a safe place,” where “international qualifications” are recognized and “post-study work opportunities” are available were also identified as key factors in our study. Similarly, the Ipsos/Global Affairs study found the reasons why international students view Canada as a favorable destination to study and live are for its overall affordability, safety, quality of life, post-study job opportunities, and favorable policies and practices in terms of immigrating and obtaining a visa.

Several students in the focus group discussions mentioned *travel and leisure activities* as important features of their host community that determines where they choose to attend university.

Students commented on how Montreal is central to other cities (e.g., Ottawa, Toronto, Boston, NY), which allows for quick vacation getaways. Students also appreciate how Montreal/Sherbrooke is so close to nature, camping, hiking, etc. and has a lot of green spaces to enjoy. The social environment was also important for students. Students wanted to live in a fun environment that offers recreational activities, and Montreal/Sherbrooke was viewed as having an abundance of these opportunities. Students mentioned the festivals and concerts in summertime, picnics in the park, local farmer's markets, French cuisine and the "great neighbourhood vibes" found throughout the 19 Burroughs of Montreal as great draws. Many students also appreciate the cultural diversity and bilingual aspect of Quebec.

"Good job opportunities" was rated by students in our study as the #1 factor that would influence their decision to stay in Quebec or leave upon graduation. Employment was clearly the most important issue for students, both according to the survey and focus group discussions. In short, students indicated that they would stay in Quebec if they had real career opportunities lined up after completing their studies. In lieu of that, they will leave the province and go to where the opportunities exist. In addition, establishing a good network of friends and living in a safe, affordable place were important factors to students when deciding whether or not to stay in the province post-graduation.

Based on the survey and focus group findings from this study, we present the following recommendations for Quebec's English-speaking universities and Quebec government:

- **Improve access to French-language instruction for English-speaking students.** French-language courses should be offered in the university context and setting, to reflect the needs of English-speaking students, including those of international and immigrant students. English-speaking universities in Quebec should consider a new, more accessible format for offering French language courses to students and/or adapting existing service delivery approaches. English-speaking students expressed a strong desire to learn a second language (French); for many, it was a motivating "pull" factor to live and study in Quebec. However, several English-speaking students said they had very little time or resources to learn French and maintain their grade point average. Without opportunities to learn French and integrate into Quebec culture, we will lose many of these graduating students to other provinces and countries.
- **Create social networking opportunities for English-speaking students.** Provide these students with opportunities to interact with and learn from friendly, established French-speaking students or native English speakers who are already well integrated in Quebec. These

“Cultural Ambassadors” may offer (in)formal French-language instruction or tutoring to English-speakers and introduce them to Francophone and Quebec culture, including discussion of “identity politics,” as alluded to by several students in the focus groups. Incentives (e.g., course credit) could be offered to French-speaking students to help integrate English-speakers in the university setting and surrounding community.

- **Improve student’s welcoming experience with the university’s administration.** Several students complained about a lack of guidance and instruction when first arriving to their university. While most students felt very welcomed by their professors, supervisors and cohort, many felt not as welcome by the university’s administration. Several students were disoriented and overwhelmed. One suggestion would be to implement a “buddy” or mentorship program where new students are paired with a senior student to learn all the “ins” and “outs” of the university system, help them decide on a major, choose courses for the semester, refer them to community resources, etc.
- **Develop/improve foreign credential recognition program for newcomers.** This recommendation pertains primarily to the “pull” factors that will draw international students to the province. “International recognition of qualifications” was identified as an important pull factor in the survey analysis among foreign-born students. We recommend working with these prospective students *before* they arrive to Quebec to ensure that they have all the information needed to decide where to live and study.
- **Make getting permanent residency after studies easier for international students.** The ability to work and live in Quebec after graduation ultimately depends on the international student’s PR status. Students who want to stay in Quebec after graduation may be dissuaded by a difficult application process to obtain permanent residency. The university system and Quebec government should coordinate resources to develop a program to help international students obtain student/work VISAs while studying in Quebec and facilitate the process of obtaining permanent residency during or immediately after the completion of studies. If the application process is started early and if all the paperwork is completed prior to graduation (i.e., begin paperwork to Citizenship and Immigration Canada upon arrival to university), this will likely lead to more international students staying in the province after their studies as they will have already completed a necessary hurdle in order to become permanent residents of Canada living and prospering in Quebec.

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