

From the University/College Applicant Study™:

Attracting Students to Computer Science

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In spring 2009, we surveyed about 150,000 applicants to more than 40 colleges and universities across Canada, and asked them what drew them to specific institutions as their first choice for higher education. Respondents rated the impact of 50 different factors in 7 categories, on a seven-point scale from -3 to +3. In this *UCAS™ White Paper*, we look at the way applicants to university Computer Science programs weighed those considerations on average.



Overview: On average, Canadian university applicants report that the biggest factors in their choice of institution are their perceptions of reputation, quality faculty, student experience, employment outcomes, an attractive campus, published rankings, graduate school placements, and social activities. (*See the diamonds on the Push/Pull Graph, on page 2.*)

CompSci applicants are focused careerists, lured by co-op placements, the latest technology, relevant industry nearby, and strong career outcomes. They follow their friends. They give less thought to campus amenities or student life in general.

Reputation Factors: CompSci applicants place immense weight on the academic reputation of the institution and the program they choose – slightly more so than applicants to other programs – but put less stock in university rankings and the trappings of institutional history or tradition when assessing that reputation.

Academic Factors: CompSci applicants place significantly more weight than average on the value of the latest technology, to the point that it is almost as important to them as the quality of faculty. They also emphasize programs for academically-gifted students, high-profile research, and undergraduate research opportunities more than many of their peers in other programs.

Financial Factors: Monetary considerations are not the primary decision factors for most Canadian university applicants, and CompSci applicants are even less concerned about tuition, living expenses, or proximity to home than their

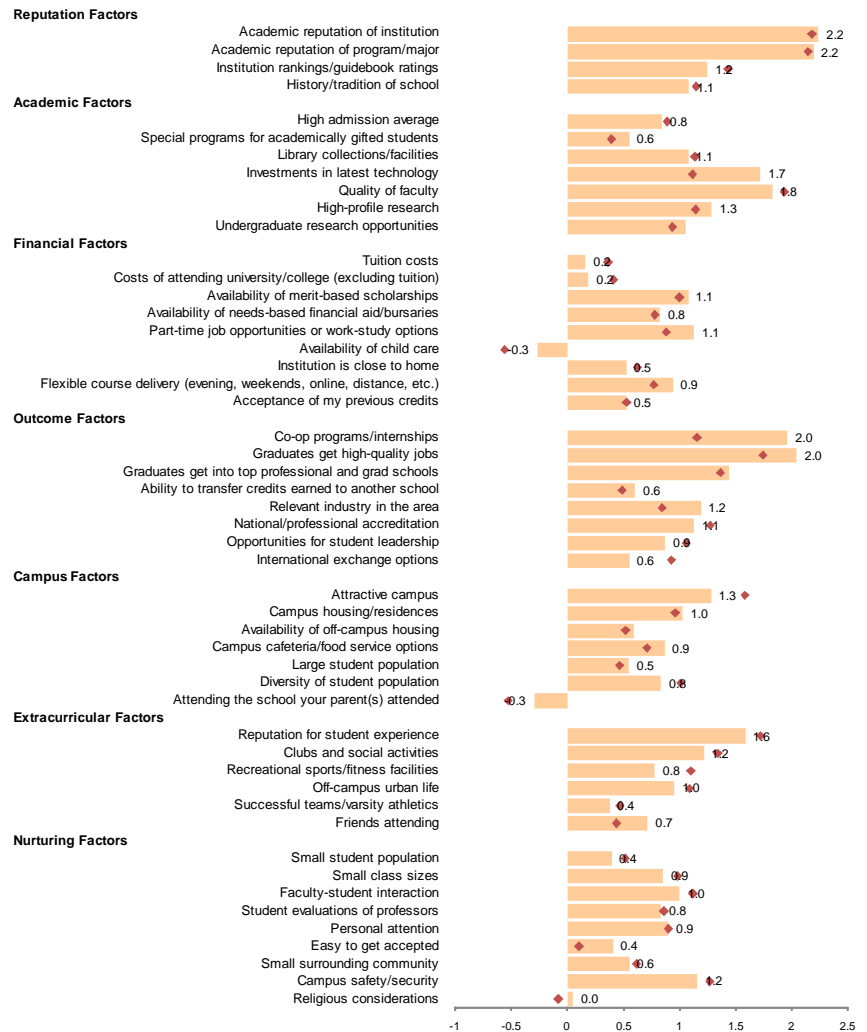
peers. They show markedly greater interest, however, in work-study programs, flexible course delivery, and merit-based scholarships.

Outcome Factors: CompSci applicants place significantly more weight on employment outcomes than their peers in other programs, and in particular report being more attracted by co-op programs, relevant industry in the area, and the perception that graduates get high-quality jobs. CompSci applicants are less attracted, however, by professional accreditations or opportunities for international exchanges or student leadership.

Campus Factors: CompSci applicants are less impressed by an attractive campus or student diversity than their peers in other programs, but do place slightly more emphasis on campus food services, residences, and off-campus housing when choosing their preferred university.

Extracurricular Factors: Extracurricular factors like fitness facilities, sports teams, social activities, off-campus urban life, and even the reputation for student experience are less significant to CompSci applicants than other students. They are noticeably more likely to report, however, that their choice of university was shaped by their friends' decisions to attend.

Nurturing Factors: CompSci applicants generally don't seem to be the touchy-feely type. Nurturing factors like campus safety, small class sizes, small student body, and faculty interaction matter less to these applicants than to their peers in other programs. They report, however, that their choice of university has somewhat *more* to do with ease of acceptance than average among Canadian university applicants. (Clearly they are calculating the odds.)



Push/Pull Graph: Impact of Key Decision Factors on selection of First-Choice University, all Canadian university Computer Science applicants, 2009 UCAS™ Applicant Study. (Overall average for university applicants to all programs is indicated by the diamond.)

FOR MORE INFO:

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