

# Canadian Evaluation Society Ontario Chapter

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## Results of the 2001 Student Survey

### Final Report

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&  
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# Introduction

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## Background

As of February 2001, the CES Ontario Chapter had an estimated 270 members representing about twenty percent (20%) of CES National's overall membership. Almost 80% (215) of members in the Ontario Chapter were professional members, 20% (53) were student members and one was an international member.

Student members of the Ontario Chapter have always been perceived as an important group representing the future of evaluation in Ontario. In 2001, a number of planning ideas specifically targeting student members were raised by the Student Representative and discussed by the Board of Directors. During these discussions, the lack of understanding of the needs and preferences of student members became apparent. Consequently, a survey of our student members was suggested.

In November 2001, the CES Ontario Chapter conducted a telephone survey with student members to determine how it could better meet the needs of this group.

Specifically, the survey investigated the development of a student newsletter to extend communication and interaction with student members, ideas for future student activities and suggestions for improving current student activities.



## Methods

The Student Representative (Candace Nykiforuk) and the Membership Chair (Adam Spencer) agreed to undertake the telephone survey of 12 student out of the 56 students members as of October 2001 (representing about 20% Chapter students).

The following is a detailed description of how the questionnaire was developed, the sample generated, the telephone interviews conducted, and the processing of the data.

### Questionnaire Development

The questionnaire was initially developed by the Student Representative (Candace Nykiforuk) and the Membership Chair (Adam Spencer). The questionnaire was provided to the CES Ontario Chapter Board Members for review and amendments. The final questionnaire used in telephone survey can be found in Appendix A.

### Generation of the Sample

In this survey, the population of interest was defined as student members of the CES Ontario Chapter. Students and their telephone numbers were identified using the October 2001 CES membership directory. Membership directory information originates from the "Form for Joining the CES" that all members must complete when joining or renewing their CES membership. Since students usually represent a transient population, and this information is not always updated to reflect their current coordinates, it was expected that the interviewers would have difficulties reaching some of the students from the directory. The resulting list of student member names and respective telephone numbers were used in attempting to reach students.

### Interviewing and analysis of data

The survey was conducted in November and December 2001 using telephone interviews. Students were randomly selected to complete a telephone interview. In the event of an answering machine, a message was left briefly describing the purpose of the call with a request for the person to call back if interested in participating. This way the interviewer could call the participant back to conduct the interview (to avoid placing the cost of a long distance call on the student member). If there was no answer and no answering machine, 5 call back attempts were made.

During the interview, student responses were entered electronically as part of word document.

### Study Limitations

A possible limitation in this survey was the non-participation of a large percentage of students. It is possible that those students who did not participate in the survey had different opinions than those students who did respond to the survey.



## Key Findings

### What led you to become a member of the CES?

- ◆ Beyond a general interest in evaluation, many of the student members' involvement with the Chapter stemmed from an evaluation course or a professor/mentor who highlighted CES.
- ◆ Many also noted that they saw membership as an opportunity to network and gain exposure to potential employers.

### What gained specifically gained your attention?

- ◆ Students felt that the Ontario Chapter and CES National had gained their attention through the professionalism of the CES materials (CJPE, mailings, Communiqué), access to CES conferences, and their personal interest in learning more about evaluation.

### How do you benefit from being a CES member?

- ◆ Student members' identified a number of ways they benefited from being a member (the journal, reduced student rates for events, networking and learning opportunities).
- ◆ Some students felt that they did not benefit from their membership because they did not have the funds to be more involved in the various Chapter and National activities. Others felt the CES was geared more towards consultants and active evaluation rather than students.

### What are your main evaluation interests?

- ◆ Students reported a variety of evaluation interests including health programs and human services, international evaluations, performance measurement, evaluation of federal programs and policies, and a variety of methodological interests.

### Are you interested in pursuing a career in evaluation?

- ◆ The majority of respondents were interested in pursuing a career in evaluation. A few respondents were still unsure about pursuing a career in evaluation, while others envisioned evaluation as a component of their job.

### Would you be interested in evaluation training?

- ◆ The majority of respondents noted that they would be interested in evaluation training, as long as it was affordable. Respondents suggested a variety of training opportunities, topics ranging from intermediate to more advanced and from methodological to more applied or "real-world" examples of evaluation.



## How can the Ontario Chapter enhance the quality of their membership?

- ◆ All of the respondents expressed the need for more networking opportunities and career-building activities. In addition, most respondents also suggested an employer and/or job bank in order to increase their access to potential employers and/or sources of employment.
- ◆ Respondents also identified the need for increased communication with students. This includes increased promotion of existing opportunities open for students, increased publicity about upcoming chapter and national conferences and activities, and Chapter Communiqué.
- ◆ Respondents felt workshops aimed directly at students would definitely enhance the perceived quality of membership.
- ◆ Respondents thought the Chapter should increase its visibility, especially among new members. Many felt that there is a very poor distinction between the Ontario Chapter and CES National (i.e., activities, separate entities, how one fits in the other).

## Is there anything that is currently offered that could be enhanced or improved?

- ◆ Some felt that the 'costs' of participating in CES conferences and workshops prohibits students from participating. Generally, respondents expressed the need for additional support for students in a number of areas including funding for research, travel to workshops and conferences, employment, reduced rates for attending workshops and conferences, and student specific workshops and events. A few students felt they could gain important skills from mentoring and presenting the Essential Skills Series.
- ◆ All respondents pointed to a general lack of awareness concerning Chapter and National activities.

## If you wanted to become more involved with CES, how would you go about it?

- ◆ Respondents suggested a number of different channels they could use in order to become more involved with the CES. Nevertheless, almost all respondents were unsure of the possibilities of getting involved and most indicated the need for increased advertising of opportunities for students to get involved.

## Do you have any suggestions for getting students more involved?

- ◆ Some suggested that new student members could be reached and recruited through their professors and/or mentors and through undergraduate and graduate evaluation courses.



## What do you think of the Ontario Chapter website?

- ◆ Most of the respondents visited the Ontario Chapter website and felt it was a well developed site. A number of improvements and/or additions were offered including the addition of a student's corner, a listserv link so students can talk to one another, job-related information, a resource list (& links) to evaluation journals, an area where student's can post there c.v.'s.
- ◆ Very few respondents were unaware of the Ontario Chapter website, or did not realize that it was distinct from the National website. One respondent felt no need to visit the site.

## What do you think of a regular student electronic newsletter?

- ◆ All of the respondents felt the electronic newsletter was a good idea. Most felt that an email newsletter would be preferable (2-6x per year), but that it should be complemented with an embedded hotlink (to reduce email size) or link on the website.
- ◆ Respondents offered a number of suggestions for the content of the student newsletter including student evaluations & accomplishments, job links or job-related tips, and connections to other students, among others.



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# Results

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## Call Results

Of the 56 students in the membership directory, all were called for an interview.

Forty of the 56 students were not reached due to one of the following reasons; incorrect (n=9) or absence (n=15), or not being able to reach the student (n=16).

Nine of the students were found to be ineligible to participate (i.e., no longer a student (n=7), student on the Board of Directors (n=2). Seven out of the 16 students that were reached completed an interview. None of the students reached refused to participate in the survey.

## Description of Respondents

Four of the seven respondents were female while three were male. Six of the seven were graduate students while one was a senior undergraduate student. Students were studying at Universities from across southern Ontario.

## Survey Results

### *What led you to become a member of the CES?*

Beyond a general interest in evaluation, many of the student members' involvement with the Chapter stemmed from an evaluation course or a professor/mentor who highlighted CES.

Many also noted that they saw membership as an opportunity to network and gain exposure to potential employers.

Other reasons why students became members included:

- ◆ wanting to receive the Canadian Journal of Program Evaluation (CJPE)
- ◆ becoming a member as result of attending a workshop
- ◆ a link from the Registered Nurses Association website to the National CES website



### *What gained specifically gained your attention?*

Students felt that the Ontario Chapter and CES National had gained their attention through the professionalism of the CES materials (CJPE, mailings, Communiqué), access to CES conferences, and their personal interest in learning more about evaluation.

More specifically, a few students mentioned that the **Ontario Chapter** had gained their attention through their annual conference and the Essential Skill Series (ESS). A few students mentioned that **CES National** had gained their attention through the annual student case competition and annual conference.

### *How do you benefit from being a CES member?*

Ways student members' felt they benefited from their membership included:

- ◆ the quarterly journal (CJPE)
- ◆ reduced student rates when attending workshops and conferences
- ◆ possibility of receiving sponsorship to attend the annual National or Chapter conferences
- ◆ opportunities to network with people involved in the field
- ◆ opportunities to learn about the application of evaluation

Some students felt that they did not benefit from their membership because they did not have the funds to be more involved in the various Chapter and National activities. Others felt the CES was geared more towards consultants and active evaluation rather than students.

### *What are your main evaluation interests?*

Students reported a variety of evaluation interests including:

- ◆ health programs and human services (including tobacco, physical activity, privatization, e-health, minorities, aboriginal, and underserved populations)
- ◆ international evaluations
- ◆ performance measurement
- ◆ evaluation of federal programs and policies
- ◆ methodological interests such as evaluation frameworks, mixed-methodology, program logic models, and the use of the internet as an evaluation tool



### *Are you interested in pursuing a career in evaluation?*

The majority of respondents were interested in pursuing a career in evaluation. Reasons for their interest in evaluation included:

- ◆ evaluation as an interesting, challenging, and flexible (applied or theoretical) field
- ◆ the opportunity to pursue academic research in the area
- ◆ evaluation involves the development of transferable skills
- ◆ the foreseeable need for evaluation in both the private and public sector

A few respondents were still unsure about pursuing a career in evaluation, while others envisioned evaluation as a component of their job.

### *Would you be interested in evaluation training?*

The majority of respondents noted that they would be interested in evaluation training, as long as it was affordable.

Respondents suggested a variety of training opportunities, topics ranging from intermediate to more advanced and from methodological to more applied or “real-world” examples of evaluation.

The most frequently mentioned types of training were employment-related training. For example, how to start/run a consulting business, contract negotiation, client relationships, and skills employers are looking for in new evaluators. Other suggested topics included performance measurement, cost-benefit analyses, and health programs/services evaluation.

### *How can the Ontario Chapter enhance the quality of student membership?*

All of the respondents expressed the need for more networking opportunities and career-building activities. In addition, most respondents also suggested an employer and/or job bank in order to increase their access to potential employers and/or sources of employment. The following is a list of suggested ideas mentioned by respondents:

- ◆ job bank or job listserv
- ◆ career opportunity sessions at conferences or career fairs
- ◆ formalized mentorship program to match students with experienced evaluators
- ◆ mentorship program to match students with interest in evaluation with those who have opportunities for students.

Respondents also identified the need for increased communication with students. This includes increased promotion of existing opportunities open for students, increased publicity about upcoming chapter and national conferences and activities, and Chapter Communiqué.



A few respondents felt that it would be beneficial for them to get an update of professional standards and/or certification and recent publications (books and journals).

Respondents felt workshops aimed directly at students would definitely enhance the perceived quality of membership. Although students saw the benefit and learning opportunities in the Essential Skills Series, most felt the cost prohibited them to participate, and that the workshops seemed to be geared for professionals in the field rather than students.

Respondents thought the Chapter should increase its visibility, especially among new members. Many felt that there is a very poor distinction between the Ontario Chapter and CES National (i.e., activities, separate entities, how one fits in the other). They expressed the need to educate members in distinguishing between the Ontario Chapter and CES National.

### *Is there anything that is currently offered that could be enhanced or improved?*

Some felt that the 'costs' of participating in CES conferences and workshops prohibits students from participating. For instance, many felt that even with a sponsorship from SSHRC, costs to attend the annual CES conference was too much of a barrier for some students to participate. Respondents suggested the need for more volunteer opportunities at the Ontario Chapter and National conferences in exchange for reduced rates. Generally, respondents expressed the need for additional support for students in a number of areas including funding for research, travel to workshops and conferences, employment, reduced rates for attending workshops and conferences, and student specific workshops and events. A few students felt they could gain important skills from mentoring and presenting the Essential Skills Series.

All respondents pointed to a general lack of awareness concerning Chapter and National activities. Some mentioned a need to involve students from remote areas, but most noted a need for a better support system to promote communication and activities (i.e., increase awareness) among students. Suggestions include student-specific bulletins, messages on graduate student boards, and paper postings of events. They felt that it was important to be seen as 'legitimate' members in their own right, and that student-oriented activities be offered.

### *If you wanted to become more involved with CES, how would you go about it?*

Respondents suggested a number of different channels they could use in order to become more involved with the CES. A few would get in touch with the student representative, others would get in touch with someone at the Chapter, and there are some who would contact a known active member in their area. Nevertheless, almost all respondents were unsure of the possibilities of getting involved and most indicated the need for increased advertising of opportunities for students to get involved.

### *Do you have any suggestions for getting students more involved?*

Some suggested that new student members could be reached and recruited through their professors and/or mentors and through undergraduate and graduate evaluation courses. This includes increased communication with evaluation students and an outreach to students in other disciplines that may be evaluation-related. Respondents also suggested that advertisement and recruiting should be done in multiple geographic locations.

Awareness was a prominent discussion point among all respondents. This includes cultivating interest, commitment, and involvement among potential employers and potential mentors (faculty, researchers). Members need to be sold on the 'value' of membership. Surveys, bulletins, personal contact with student members (e.g., an invitation by telephone call to a student event) are ways to increase student involvement.

### *Do you have any suggestions as to how we could interest additional students in becoming members of the CES?*

- ◆ respondents suggested a variety of ideas:
- ◆ up-front membership incentives
- ◆ offer job opportunities, opportunities to develop marketable skills,
- ◆ increase awareness, promotion, and advocacy among senior undergraduates, graduate students, faculty, departments & universities, and other organizations
- ◆ send notices of all CES events to faculty, departments and universities;
- ◆ create inventory/directory of program evaluation courses taught in Ontario
- ◆ develop more localized groups (i.e., 'mini' chapters).

### *What do you think of the Ontario Chapter website?*

Most of the respondents had visited the Ontario Chapter website and felt it was a well-developed site. A number of improvements and/or additions were offered:

- ◆ add a student's corner, make student area easier to find on homepage
- ◆ add a listserv link so students can talk to one another
- ◆ add job-related information for students (i.e., notification of relevant jobs, job bank for Ontario and Canada, create a matching service with potential employers, contracts and internship opportunities)
- ◆ create a resource list (& links) to evaluation journals and Sage publications;
- ◆ create a area where student's can post there c.v.'s
- ◆ ensure the website is updated monthly

Very few respondents were unaware of the Ontario Chapter website, or did not realize that it was distinct from the National website. One respondent felt no need to visit the site.



### *What do you think of a regular student electronic newsletter?*

All of the respondents felt the electronic newsletter was a good idea. Most felt that an email newsletter would be preferable (2-6x per year), but that it should be complemented with an embedded hotlink (to reduce email size) or link on the website. One respondent felt that in addition, it could be beneficial to receive a paper-mailed supplement especially to highlight upcoming events and activities. The respondent felt this increase awareness in those students that ignore email announcements or bulk mail.

Respondents offered a number of suggestions for the content of the student newsletter:

- ◆ student evaluations & accomplishments
- ◆ job links or job-related tips
- ◆ connections to other students
- ◆ promotion/information about the Chapter and CES
- ◆ upcoming activities and events
- ◆ what's new in evaluation including resources & book reviews
- ◆ feature stories on evaluation topics
- ◆ links to other evaluation pages and resources
- ◆ new evaluation courses and programs offered by different universities
- ◆ E-bulletin service with discussion of various evaluation topics (i.e., students could be invited to help write features and find resources)

### Other comments

Respondents were appreciative of the contact, and felt this was the first time anyone from the organization 'involved' them.

There is a need to keep in mind that student members may be 'mature' (older) students with different interests and needs than young university students.

Some mentioned that they would like it to be easier to become a joint member with AEA.

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## Appendix A: Questionnaire

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## CES Student Member Survey



Hello (name of graduate student). This is (Adam S. or Candace N.) calling on behalf of the Canadian Evaluation Society's Ontario Chapter. We're conducting a phone survey of our student members to determine how we can better meet their needs. Your name was randomly selected from our membership lists to take part in the survey. The information you will provide is completely confidential. Your participation is completely voluntary. The interview will only take about 5 to 10 minutes. May I interview you now?

> IF NO, Would there be a better time for me to call back?

[ARRANGE TIME IF POSSIBLE & RECORD DATE AND TIME]

> If NO, thank and ask if they have any comments before hanging up?

> IF YES [PROCEED]

1. a) First of all, what led you to become a member of the Canadian Evaluation Society?  
 b) Was there something about the ON Chapter or CES National that specifically gained your attention?  
 c) How do you benefit from being a CES member?
  
2. a) What are your MAIN evaluation interests (up to 3 mentions).  
 b) Are you interested in pursuing a career in evaluation? Why/why not?  
 c) Would you be interested in evaluation training? Yes  No   
 IF YES, what type of training would you be interested in?
  
3. In your opinion, is there anything that the Ontario Chapter could offer students that would enhance the quality of their membership? If so, what are your suggestions?  
*Prompts: (if suggestion/idea is offered, ask to specify at the local or national level if needed)*
  - Can you suggest any type of student activities, services and/or assistance that may benefit students?
  - Could we offer any training opportunities that may benefit students?
  - Do you think students would be interested in mentoring or presenting at the Essential Skills Series?
  
4. Is there anything that is currently offered that could be enhanced or improved to better meet student needs?  
*Prompts:*
  - If yes, do you have any specific suggestions how those things could be enhanced or improved?
  - If no, do you think the Chapter is currently doing a good job meeting student needs?

5. Hypothetically, if you wanted to become more involved with the CES, how would you go about it?

*Prompts:*

- Would you know how to get more information?
- Would you know who to contact?

6. Do you have any suggestions for getting students more involved with the Ontario Chapter? If so, what are they?

*Prompts:*

- In your opinion, why do some students choose not to be actively involved in the Chapter? (e.g., lack of time, lack of interest, unsure of opportunity, etc.)

7. Do you have any suggestions as to how we could interest additional students in becoming members of the Canadian Evaluation Society?

8. Have you visited the Ontario Chapter Website? Yes  No

If YES:

What did you think of the site? (Prompts: content, overall look, ease of use)

Do you feel there is anything we could add that would be of benefit to student members? (Prompts: posting student c.v.'s on the site?, job opportunity corner for students?)

If NO:

Any specific reasons for not visiting the site?

9. We are currently attempting to find the most effective way to communicate with Ontario's CES student members...our first thought was to develop a regular student electronic newsletter? What do you think of this idea?

If the newsletter IS a good idea:

Prompts:

- what should it include?
  - would you prefer an email newsletter emailed to you or a hotlink that you would visit on the "evaluationontario" website?
- how often should it be updated / sent out?

If the newsletter is NOT a good idea:

Prompts:

- would there be another way that we could better keep in touch with our student members?

That concludes our interview, we would like to thank-you on behalf of the Ontario Chapter. Your comments and suggestions will assist the Ontario Chapter in improving our services to our student members.