

# SNAPSHOT

CAWG

of  
Student Experiences

UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND  
2010 - ISSUE 1  
MARCH

This Campus Assessment Working Group (CAWG) Snapshot is based on two surveys that were administered during the 2008-2009 academic year: The Beginning Student Survey (BSS) and the University of Maryland Student Survey (UMSS). The BSS is administered to freshmen 8 weeks into their first semester in courses such as ENGL 101 and UNIV 100, among others. For the BSS 2008, out of 3902 first-time, full-time freshmen, 1551 (40%) completed the survey. The UMSS is administered in the spring semester to juniors and seniors in Professional Writing classes. For the UMSS 2009, of 2150 students enrolled in Professional Writing, 1407 (65%) completed the survey. Use caution when generalizing.

## Highlights:

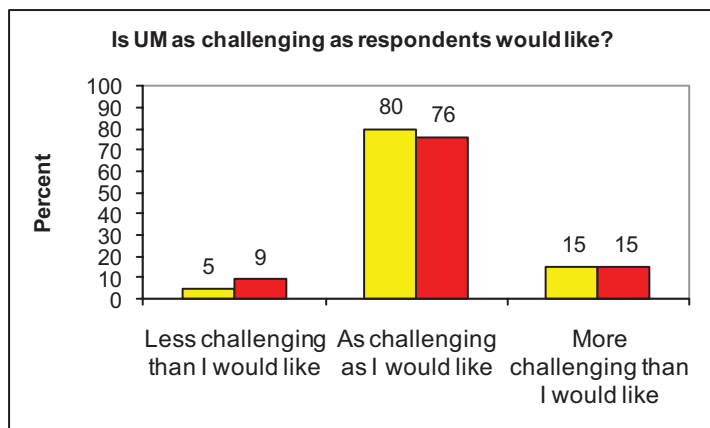
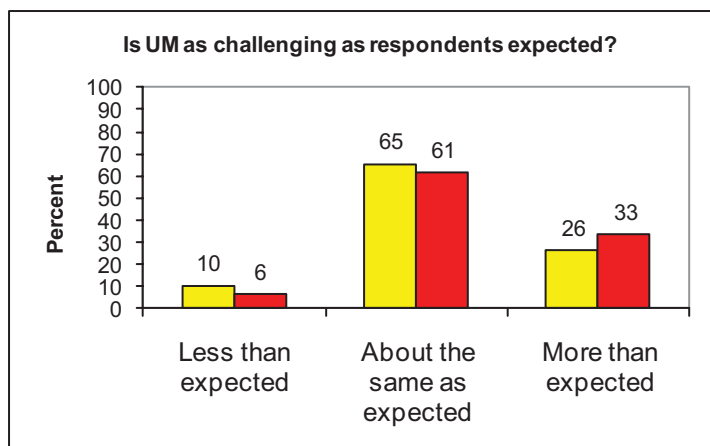
- ◆ Most respondents feel appropriately challenged in their academics at UM
- ◆ Freshmen respondents perceive high workload in reading and studying
- ◆ About 1/3 of freshmen respondents desire higher in-class engagement (ex. in-depth discussions)

## IS UM CHALLENGING ENOUGH?

For most freshmen and junior/senior respondents, UM is *at least as challenging as they expected (>90%)* and *at least as challenging as they would like (>90%)*.

The academic profile of UM's incoming class has risen over the past decade, with SATs increasing over 50 points and the average weighted GPA rising well above 3.9. The BSS 2008 and UMSS 2009 asked whether our academically talented students were challenged at UM. Interestingly, both freshmen and senior responses were quite similar. For most respondents, UM appears to be appropriately challenging.

- ◆ For most freshmen and junior/senior respondents, UM is as challenging as they expected (>60%) and as challenging as they would like (>75%).
- ◆ For some freshmen and junior/senior respondents, UM is more academically challenging than they expected (26% & 33% respectively), and more challenging than they would like (15% for both).
- ◆ For few freshmen and junior/senior respondents, UM is less challenging than they expected (<11%) and less challenging than they would like (<10%).



Sources: BSS 2008 & UMSS 2009

■ Freshmen

Note: Statistical tests on differences between groups not conducted

■ Juniors / Seniors

## HOW HARD ARE FRESHMEN WORKING?

More than 70% of respondents expect their workload in the following categories to be at least “some” or “a lot”: Reading (90%), completing problem sets (73%), writing papers (83%), and studying for tests (95%). In fact, more than 70% of respondents also indicated that they would like to be expected to do each type of work “about the same” or “less than” what is currently expected.

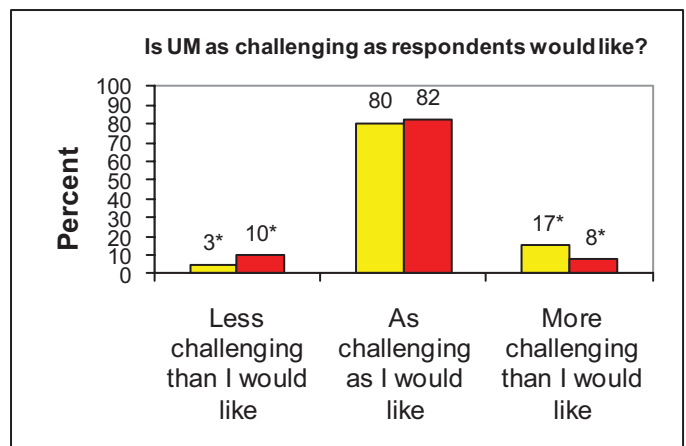
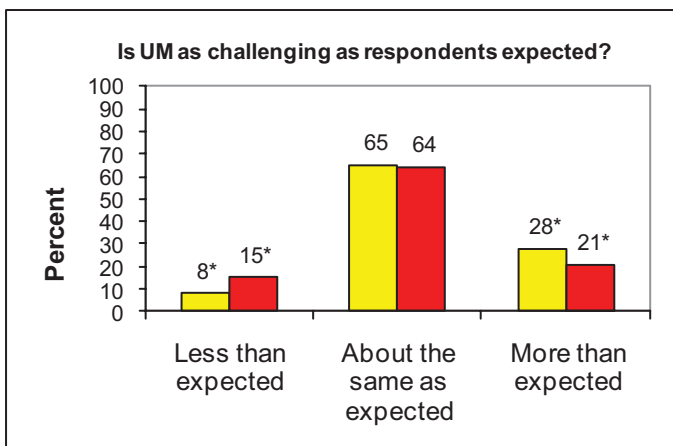
Gender differences: Women respondents were more likely to perceive that faculty expect “a lot” in terms of workload (reading: 73% vs. 54%; studying: 72% vs. 60%; writing papers: 47% vs. 37%).

The workload your course instructors expect [of the following] this semester is:			For Freshmen...	For your classes this semester, how much would you like to be expected to [do the following]:		
% “None/A Little”	% “Some”	% “A Lot”		% “Less than what is currently expected”	% “About the same”	% “More than what is currently expected”
5	29	66	<b>Studying for a test</b>	18	68	13
10	27	63	<b>Reading</b>	33	56	11
17	41	42	<b>Writing papers</b>	29	61	10
27	39	34	<b>Completing problem sets</b>	16	67	17

## IS UM MEETING THE EXPECTATIONS OF STUDENTS WITH HIGH SATs?

High SAT (>=75th percentile among UM freshmen) and non-high SAT respondents were remarkably similar in their perception of their expectations of challenge and their desire for challenge.

- ⇒ For both, a majority said that UM is about as challenging as they expected (about 65%), and an even greater majority (about 80%) said that UM is as challenging as they would like.
- ⇒ A slightly greater proportion of respondents with high SATs found UM less challenging than they expected, and a slightly greater proportion of respondents with high SATs perceive that UM is less challenging than they would like.



## DO FRESHMEN WANT MORE?

In contrast, when it comes to behaviors that reflect academic engagement, some freshmen respondents appear not to be engaged and report wanting more. Less than 30% of freshmen respondents report engaging “a lot” in challenging behaviors, such as participating in in-depth discussions, articulating and supporting their opinion, and working harder than they thought they could. In fact, about a third of respondents would like to be expected to do these behaviors more than what is currently expected in their classes.

For your classes this semester, how much do you [do the following]:			For Freshmen...	For your classes this semester, how much would you like to be expected to [do the following]:		
% “None/A Little”	% “Some”	% “A Lot”		% “Less than what is currently expected”	% “About the same”	% “More than what is currently expected”
19	53	28	<b>Articulate and support my own opinion</b>	6	60	34
34	47	20	<b>Participate in in-depth discussions</b>	13	48	39
34	52	14	<b>Rethink something I believed to be true based on new information</b>	8	64	28
38	40	21	<b>Work harder than I thought I could</b>			
50	38	12	<b>Seek additional information above and beyond what is expected for the course</b>			

Source: BSS 2008

Additionally, participants indicate that they are engaging in these behaviors more outside of the classroom versus their coursework: Participating in in-depth discussions (31% vs. 20%), rethinking something based on new information (22% vs. 14%), and articulating their own opinion (41% vs. 28%).

## QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

- ⇒ What is “academic challenge” for students: More work or different work?
- ⇒ What does it mean that students feel appropriately challenged?
- ⇒ Should UM want students to be more challenged than they would like?
- ⇒ Students feel challenged in the amount of work, but perhaps seek a different quality of academic engagement. How can UM accomplish this in the current resource environment?

### In Upcoming Issues:

Sustainability

Campus Assessment Working Group (CAWG)

Diversity

[www.umd.edu/cawg](http://www.umd.edu/cawg)