

SNAPSHOT

CAWG

of
Student Experiences

Freshmen and
Sustainability

UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND
2010 - ISSUE 4
NOVEMBER

This Campus Assessment Working Group (CAWG) Snapshot is based on two surveys: the Beginning Student Survey (BSS) 2009 and the BSS 2008. 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 09, out of 4072 first-time, full-time freshmen, 2100 (52%) completed the survey. For the BSS 08, out of 3902 first-time, full-time freshmen 1551 (40%) completed the survey. Use caution when generalizing.

Highlights:

- ◆ 85% agreed that protecting the environment was the responsibility of every person.
- ◆ About half haven't changed their behavior despite their concern over global warming, diminishing natural resources, and renewable energy.

Freshmen participate in some green practices, but not others.

Highest Self-reported "Green" Practices

- ◆ Most report never or rarely sleeping with the TV/music on.
- ◆ Almost 2/3 report always turning off lights/appliances when leaving their room, and always turning off computers when not in use for more than 2 hours.

Lowest Self-reported "Green" Practices

- ◆ Fewer than one in four report never/rarely using styrofoam containers/cups when eating in the dining halls.
- ◆ One in five report always reading materials related to class assignments online rather than printing.
- ◆ About one in ten report always unplugging other electronics (e.g., TV, fan, stereo) when not in use for more than 2 hours.

Questions to consider:

- ⇒ Are these behaviors influenced by many freshmen living with roommates?
- ⇒ Are these behaviors based on convenience or conviction?

How often do you...?	Never/ Rarely %	Some- times %	Always %
Turn off lights and appliances when leaving room/apt for more than a few minutes	8	32	61
Turn off computer or activate the "sleep mode" when not in use for more than 2 hours	17	23	60
Take public transportation instead of driving*	17	27	56
Turn the water off while brushing teeth	19	28	53
Recycle used items such as paper, bottle, and cans	15	38	47
Read materials related to class assignments online rather than printing	23	57	20
Unplug other electronics (e.g., TV, fan, stereo) when not in use for more than 2 hours	69	19	12
Sleep with the TV or music on	81	14	5
Take a shower for longer than 15 minutes	48	37	15
Use styrofoam containers/cups when eating in the campus dining halls	22	42	36

Source: BSS 08

*In 2008, 92% of students lived on campus.

When respondents do not recycle, why not?

In 2008...

- ⇒ **15% of respondents reported never/rarely recycling**
- ⇒ **Another 38% reported recycling sometimes.**
- ⇒ **47% of respondents reported always recycling.**

When you choose not to recycle, these are the reasons why not: (Choose all that apply)	Percent
Recycling containers are not conveniently located.	51
Recycling containers are usually full.	7
Recycling takes too much time.	7
Recycling is not important to me.	5
Recycling does not make a difference.	2
Other	5
N/A: I almost always recycle.	40

Source: BSS 09

In 2009, respondents were asked what their reasons were when they chose not to recycle. The most common reason, selected by half the respondents, was that recycling containers were not conveniently located. A small number responded that containers were usually full, recycling took too much time, was not important to them, or indicated another reason.

Respondents are concerned about the environment, but most have not changed their behavior and many are not willing to pay a fee.

Respondents were asked about their level of concern for several environmental themes and its impact on their behavior.

- ◆ Most freshmen respondents (85%) agreed that protecting the environment was the responsibility of every person.
- ◆ Just over half reported that they were concerned enough about the amount of recycling materials that ended up in landfills, and about reducing their environmental impact, that they had changed their behavior.
- ◆ Yet, half to two-thirds reported they had not changed their behavior despite their concern over global warming, diminishing resources, and the development of renewable energy sources.
- ◆ In the BSS 08 respondents were asked how much more money they would be willing to pay in student fees per semester for renewable energy; the median amount for all respondents was \$10. Additionally, over one-third of respondents were not willing to pay any extra fee.

How concerned are you about the following issues?	Not concerned %	Concerned, but haven't changed behavior %	Concerned and have changed behavior %
Amount of recyclable materials that end up in landfills	13	34	53
Reducing my environmental impact	11	36	53
Diminishing natural resources	9	54	37
Global warming	21	47	32
Development of renewable energy sources	9	61	30

Source: BSS 09

How are environmental issues related to education at UM?

In 2009, respondents were asked how environmental issues should be covered in college.

- ◆ 43% agreed every UM graduate should be educated about environmental issues.
- ◆ About 1 in 5 supported the inclusion of environmental issues within all courses or major courses, and half of those students support the inclusion of both.
- ◆ Fewer indicated that environmental issues would influence their choice of major.

	Disagree %	Neutral %	Agree %
Environmental issues influenced/will influence my choice of major.	56	29	15
Faculty should include environmental examples in all courses.	42	40	18
Environmental themes should be examined in upper level courses for my major.	38	41	20
Every graduate from the University should be educated about environmental issues regardless of major.	22	34	43

Source: BSS 09

All in all, how green are UM freshmen?

- ◆ Many respondents reported sometimes or always engaging in green behaviors.
- ◆ 85% agreed that protecting the environment was the responsibility of every person.
- ◆ 43% of respondents believed every UM graduate should be educated about environmental issues.
- ◆ About 80% or more are concerned about environmental issues like global warming, diminishing natural resources, and renewable energy.
- ◆ About 40% weren't willing to pay a fee for renewable energy.
- ◆ About 1 in 10 agreed that the environment should be included in coursework (general *and* major).
- ◆ About half of respondents haven't changed their behavior despite their concern over global warming, diminishing natural resources, and renewable energy.

Questions to consider:

- ⇒ Many respondents reported engaging in green behaviors, but over a third weren't willing to pay a fee for renewable energy. Do you think this is a comment on their commitment to the environment or their financial situation?
- ⇒ Most agreed that protecting the environment was the responsibility of every person, but many respondents said they had not yet changed their behaviors. Why?
- ⇒ Nearly half of respondents think students should be educated on environmental issues, but few think this should be covered in coursework. If not in coursework, how should they be educated?

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Campus Assessment Working Group (CAWG)

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