

TRENDS IN FIRST-YEAR STUDENT PERCEPTIONS BETWEEN 2008 AND 2015

University of Maryland

2016 – Issue 4, November

Survey history: This Campus Assessment Working Group (CAWG) Snapshot by the Beginnings subgroup reports findings on first-year students' responses to a variety of questions. The data included represent results from the Beginning Student Survey (BSS), an annual survey administered by the CAWG Beginnings subgroup. First-year students complete the paper survey approximately 8-10 weeks into fall semester during courses such as ENGL 101, UNIV 100, or HONR100. To allow for longitudinal comparisons, we administer these questions every other year to first-year students. The questions included in this Snapshot were asked in 2008, 2010, 2012, and 2015 unless otherwise indicated.

Report limitations: The data in this report represent only the responses of survey respondents, not all UMD first-year students; therefore, use caution when generalizing. Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding. Additionally, longitudinal differences were conducted using regression analyses to predict change over time (see page 3). While differences across the items appeared in large part to be linear in nature, regression analyses may not accurately predict nonlinear trends.

Other CAWG reports: To see other questions asked to first-year students as part of the annual Beginning Student Survey and reports created by CAWG, see <https://www.irpa.umd.edu/CAWG/CAWGReports.html>.

Themes included in this report

Incoming first-year students were asked 29 questions in 2008, 2010, 2012, and 2015 (unless otherwise indicated). After completing the data analysis (see page 2 for more details), CAWG organized the questions into six themes and a miscellaneous section. For more information on each theme, see pages 4-10.



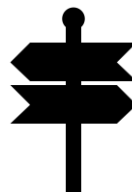
Theme 1:
Academic
Adjustment



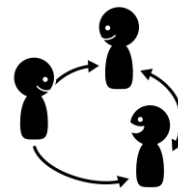
Theme 2:
Faculty &
Campus
Connection



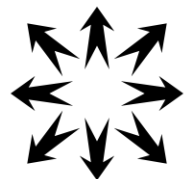
Theme 3:
Resource
Awareness



Theme 4:
Academic &
Career
Direction



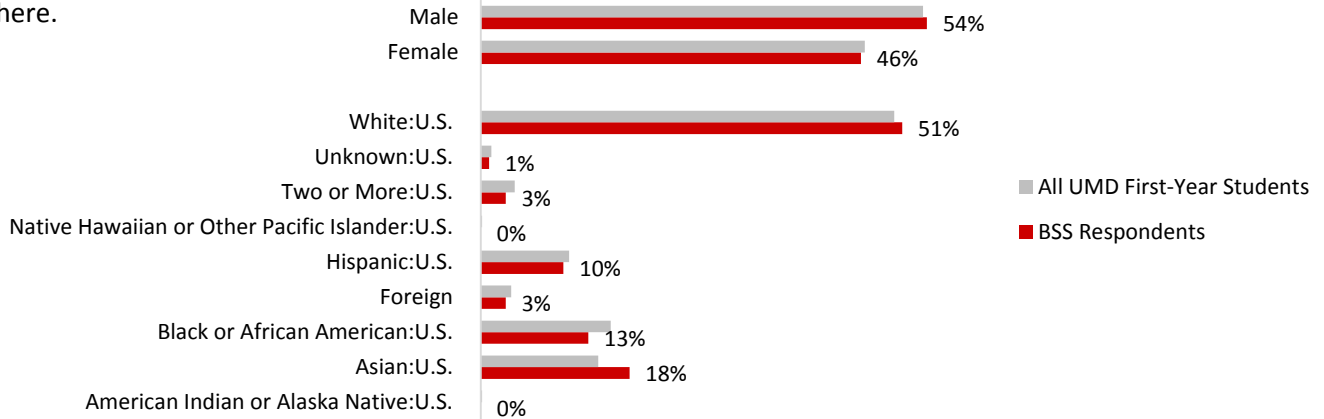
Theme 5:
Social
Engagement



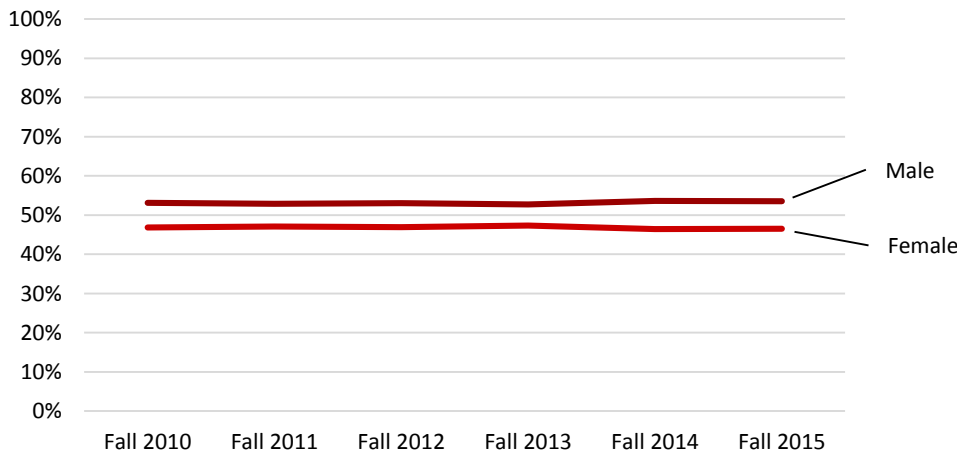
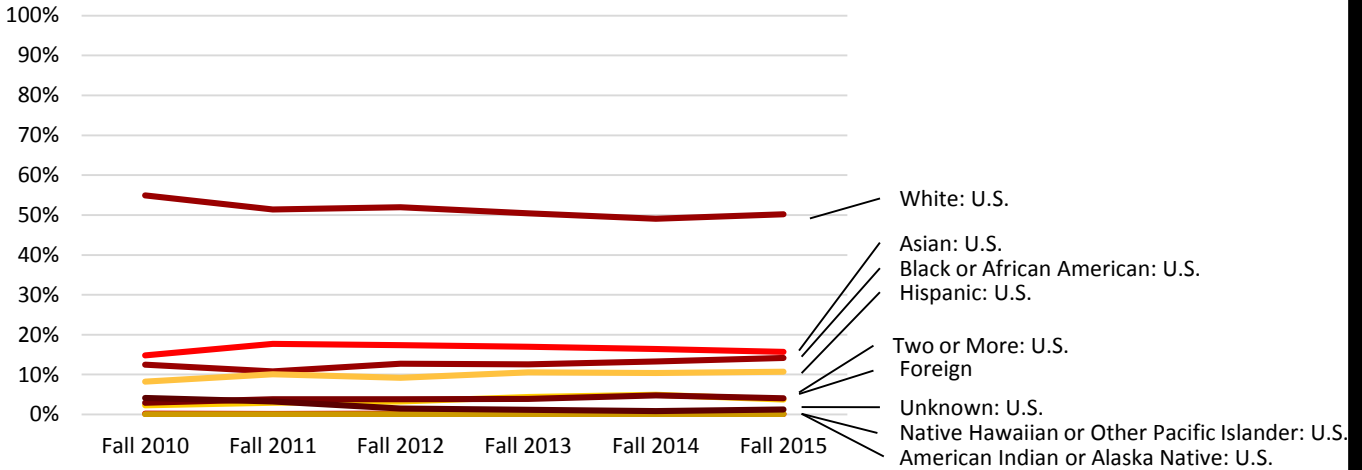
Theme 6:
Broadening
Academic
Perspectives

Demographics

Respondent demographics: For the BSS 2015, out of 3,936 first-time, full-time students, 1,449 (37%) completed the survey. Demographic percentages are displayed below in red alongside a comparison to the demographic breakdown of all UMD first-years. Students in all race/ethnicity categories except “foreign” are U.S. citizens. Demographic data were pulled from UMD databases, which align with mandated federal reporting guidelines. These guidelines set the race/ethnicity groups and binary sex classifications included here.

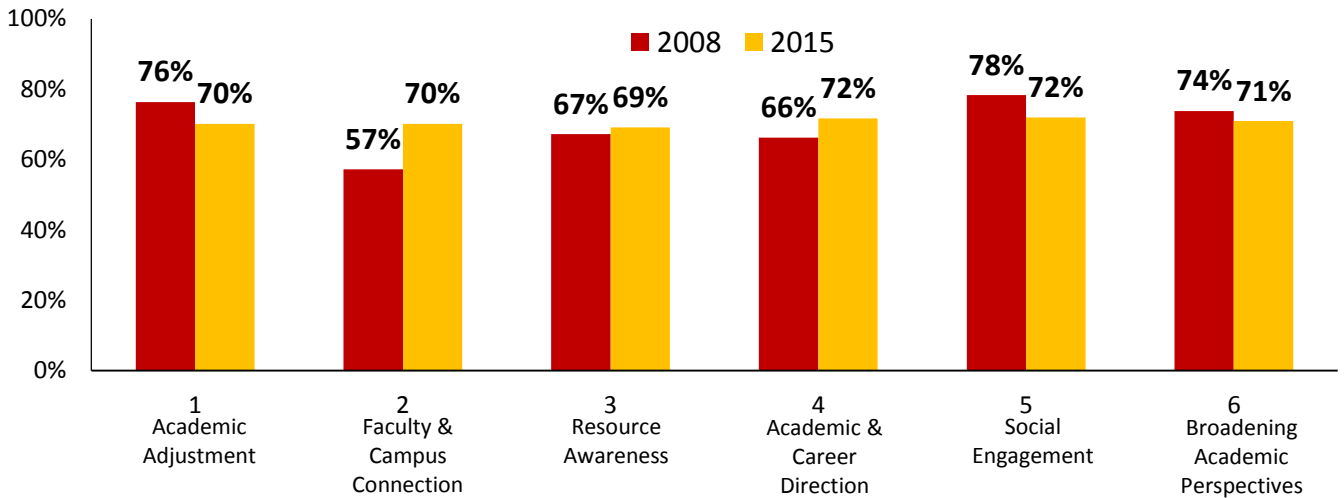


UMD demographics: The line graphs below depict changes in the demographic breakdowns of first-time, full-time students between Fall 2010 and Fall 2015.



Data analysis

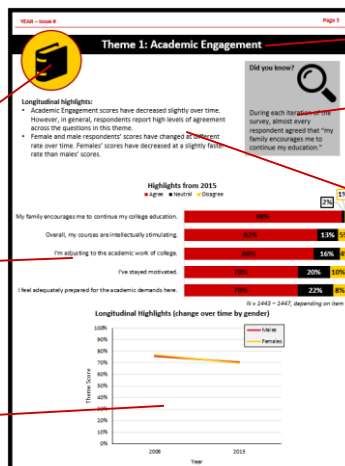
Principal components is an exploratory statistical method that helps translate patterns of responses among survey questions. The ultimate goal is to group several questions into themes. For the BSS longitudinal questions, six themes emerged as described on page 1. This helps us explore changes over time across subpopulations. CAWG explored differences over time, differences by gender, differences by race/ethnicity as well as interactions between time and gender. No statistically significant differences were found other than over time and by gender; these findings are represented in a line graph on each page.



How to read this graph: The bar graph above includes information on each of the 6 themes (on the x-axis) and the different rates at which respondents agreed (on the y-axis). The red bars represent responses in 2008 (with the exception of Component 6 where it represents 2010), the earliest iteration of the survey, and the yellow bars represent responses in 2015, the latest iteration of the survey.

How to read this report

We included data from the four years in a principal components analysis that resulted in six themes. For ease of review, each component is described separately on its own page. The stacked bar chart in the middle shows how students who took the survey in its most recent offering (2015) answered. The line graph shows the results of a regression analysis investigating how student responses have changed over time by gender. Due to changes in federal guidelines in 2009 for race reporting, how student responses have changed over time with regard to race/ethnicity could not be investigated. See the Appendix on page 10 for a comparison of student responses in 2008 and 2015.



Theme icon

Highlights from 2015 bar chart

Longitudinal highlights from multiple years line graph

Theme heading

“Did you know?” fact box

Description of data findings represented in visualizations below



Theme 1: Academic Adjustment

Longitudinal highlights:

- **Academic Adjustment** scores have decreased slightly over time. However, in general, respondents report high levels of agreement across the questions in this theme.
- Female and male respondents' scores have changed at different rates over time. Females' scores have decreased at a slightly faster rate than males' scores.

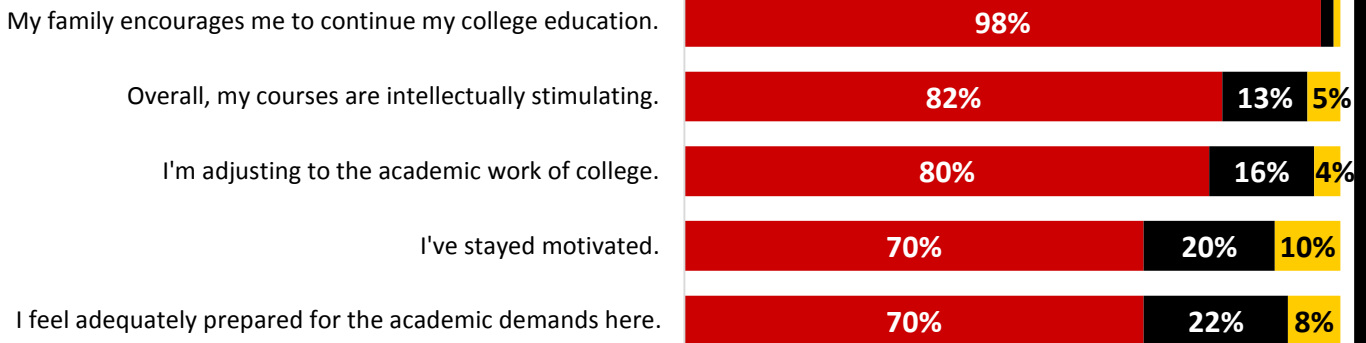
Did you know?



Consistently over time, almost every respondent agreed that “family encourages me to continue my education.”

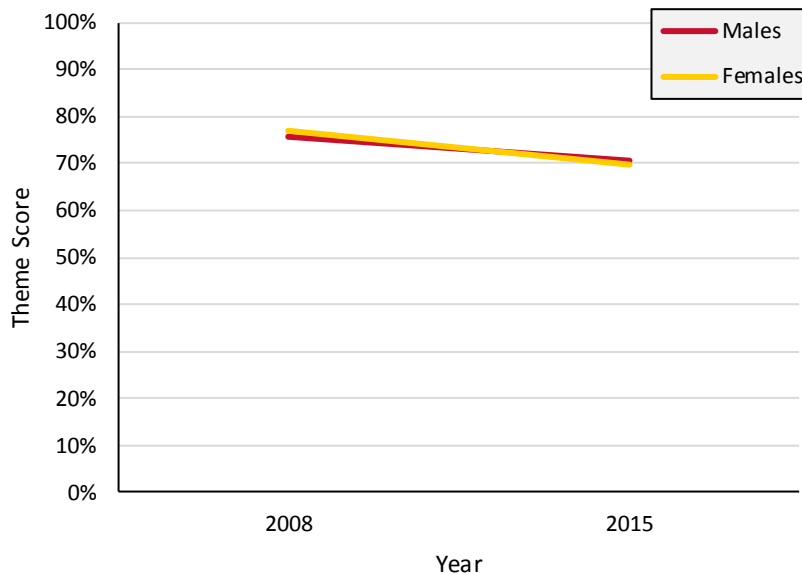
Highlights from 2015

■ Agree or Strongly Agree
 ■ Neither Agree Nor Disagree
 ■ Disagree or Strongly Disagree



N = 1443 – 1447, depending on question

Longitudinal Highlights (change over time by gender)





Theme 2: Faculty & Campus Connection

Longitudinal highlights:

- **Faculty & Campus Connection** scores have increased over time. While this theme saw the largest increase over time, the 2008 baseline was among the lowest of the six themes.
- Female and male respondents' scores have changed at similar rates over time. Males' scores are slightly higher than females'.

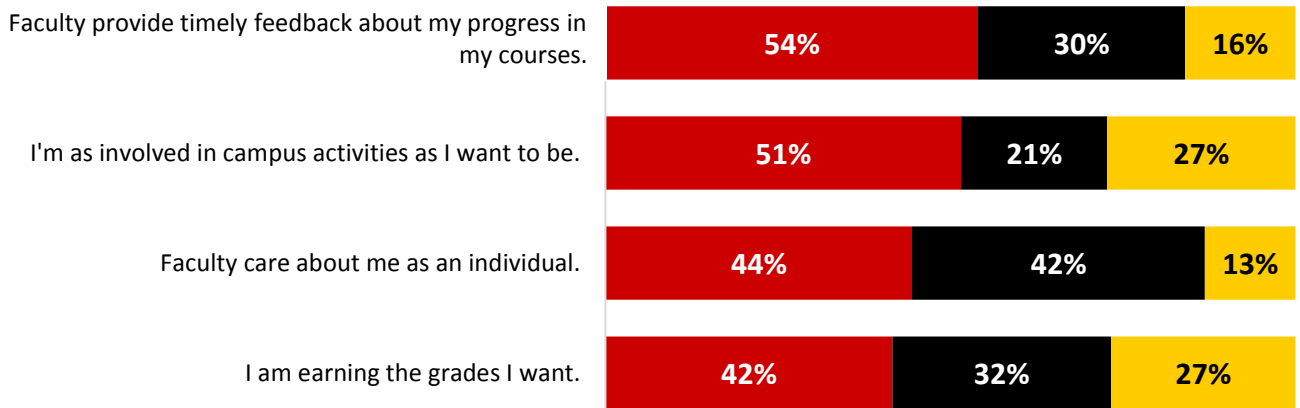
Did you know?



In 2015, just over one-quarter (27%) of respondents indicated that they are not as involved in campus activities as they'd like to be or that they're not earning the grades they want.

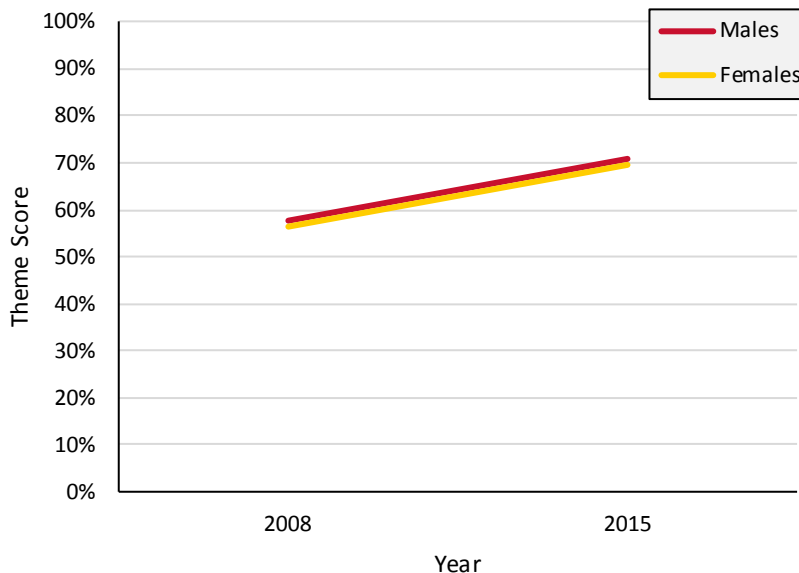
Highlights from 2015

■ Agree or Strongly Agree ■ Neither Agree Nor Disagree ■ Disagree or Strongly Disagree



N = 1442 – 1447, depending on question

Longitudinal Highlights (change over time by gender)





Theme 3: Resource Awareness

Longitudinal highlights:

- **Resource Awareness** scores have increased slightly over time. In general, more than two-thirds of respondents report high levels of agreement across the questions in this theme.
- Female and male respondents' scores have changed at similar rates over time. Females' scores are slightly higher than males'.

Did you know?



A much higher percent of respondents have asked a faculty member for help (70%) than have asked a staff member or administrator (48%).

Highlights from 2015

■ Agree or Strongly Agree
 ■ Neither Agree Nor Disagree
 ■ Disagree or Strongly Disagree

Faculty are available outside class time if I have questions.



I know how to contact an advisor in my college/department.



I've asked a faculty member for help.



I know where to get help on campus with reading and study skills.

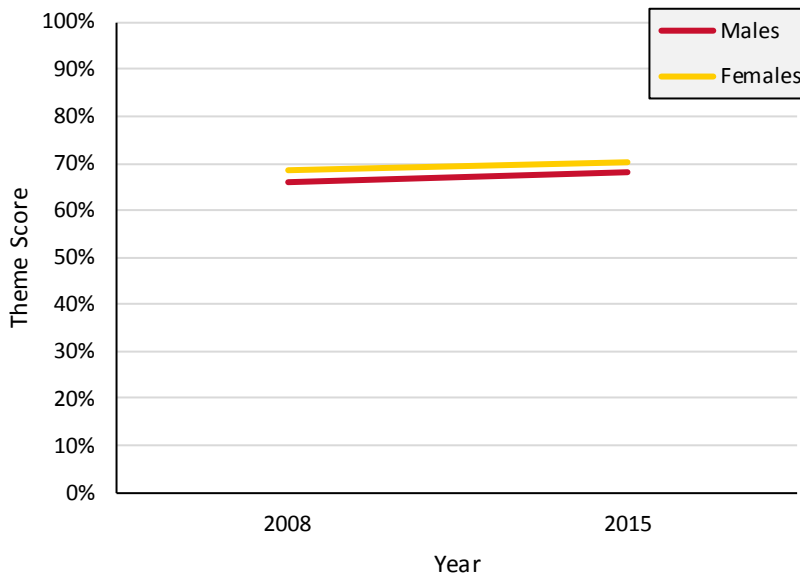


I've asked a staff member or administrator for help.



N = 1439 – 1447, depending on question

Longitudinal Highlights (change over time by gender)





Theme 4: Academic and Career Direction

Longitudinal highlights:

- **Academic and Career Direction** scores have increased over time. In general, more than half of respondents report high levels of agreement across the questions in this theme.
- Female and male respondents' scores have changed at slightly different rates over time. Males' scores have increased at a slightly faster rate than females' scores.

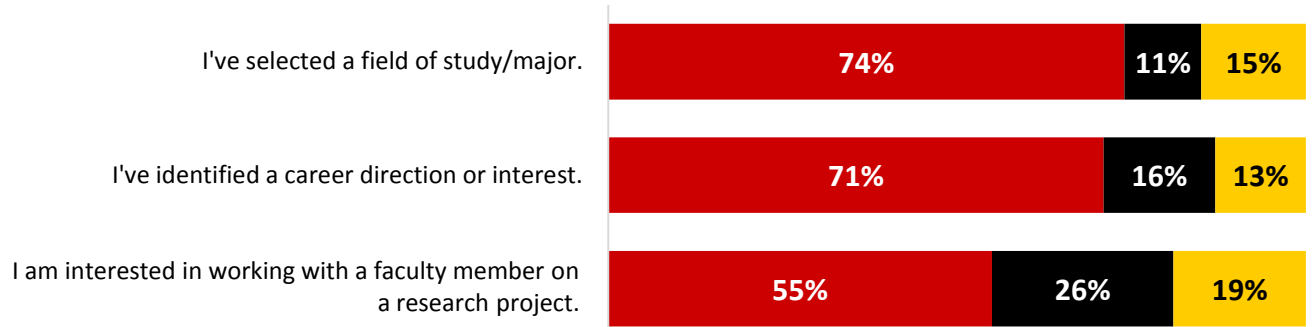
Did you know?

The percentage of respondents reporting interest in working with a faculty member on a research project increased from 41% in 2008 to 55% in 2015. This is one of the greatest increases between 2008 and 2015 for the entire survey.



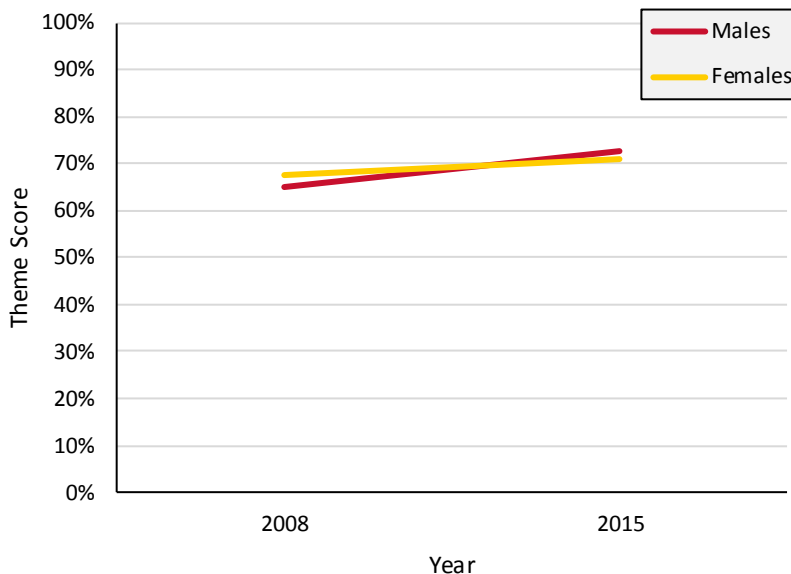
Highlights from 2015

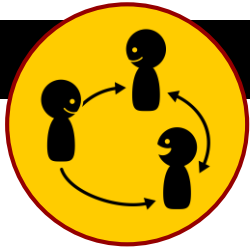
■ Agree or Strongly Agree
 ■ Neither Agree Nor Disagree
 ■ Disagree or Strongly Disagree



N = 1444 – 1446, depending on question

Longitudinal Highlights (change over time by gender)





Theme 5: Social Engagement

Longitudinal highlights:

- **Social Engagement** scores have decreased over time. However, in general respondents report high levels of agreement across the questions in this theme.
- Female and male respondents' scores have changed at similar rates over time. Females' and males' scores are similar.

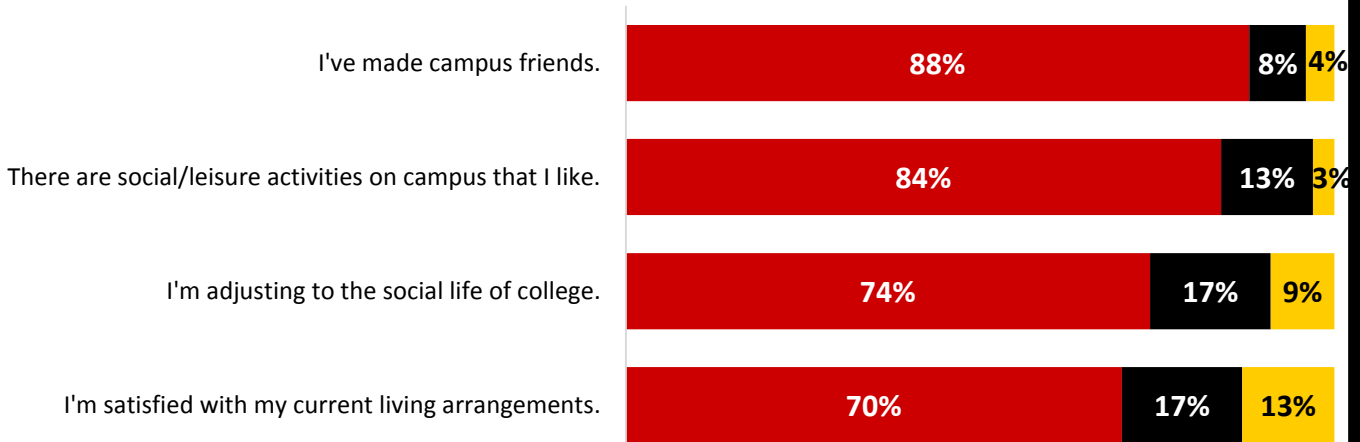
Did you know?



In general, students appear to be socially engaged. At least 70% agree with the questions included in this theme.

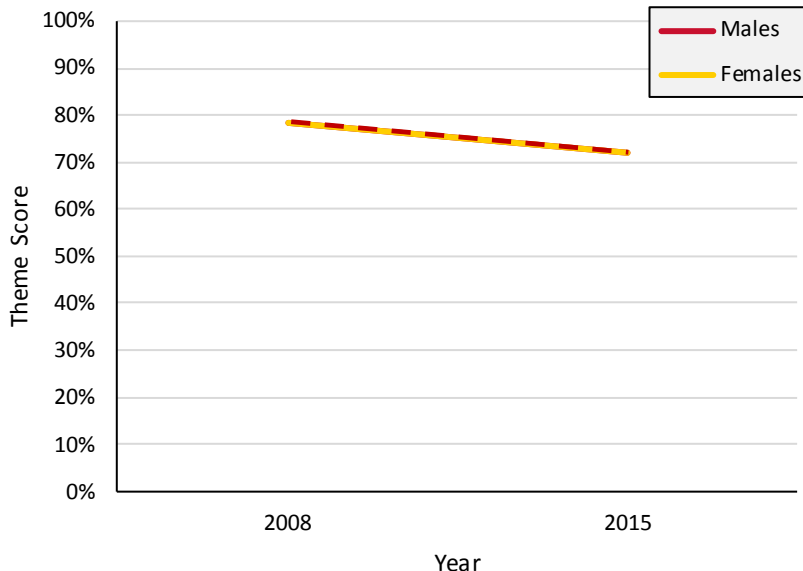
Highlights from 2015

■ Agree or Strongly Agree
 ■ Neither Agree Nor Disagree
 ■ Disagree or Strongly Disagree

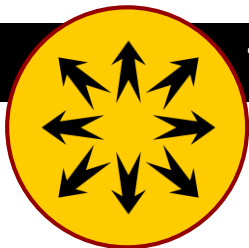


N = 1442 – 1447, depending on question

Longitudinal Highlights (change over time by gender)



Note: Only one line seems to appear in the bar chart above because female and male respondents' scores are so similar.



Theme 6: Broadening Academic Perspectives

Longitudinal highlights:

- **Broadening Academic Perspectives** scores have decreased slightly over time. However, in general, more than half of respondents report high levels of agreement across the questions in this theme.
- Female and male respondents' scores have changed at similar rates over time. Females' scores are higher on average than males' scores.

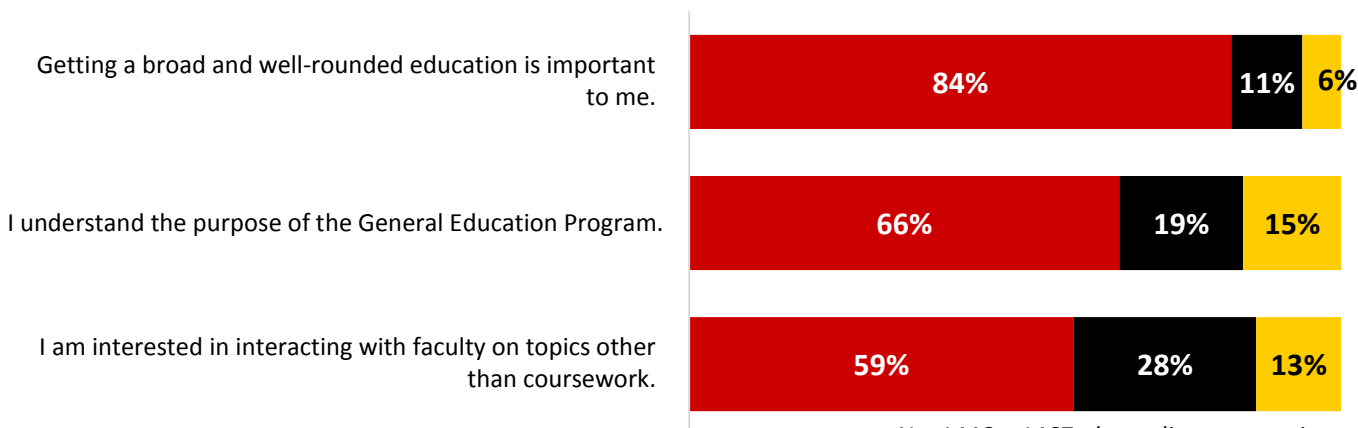
Did you know?



These questions were not asked in 2008, and the trend over time may not be as nuanced without the additional data.

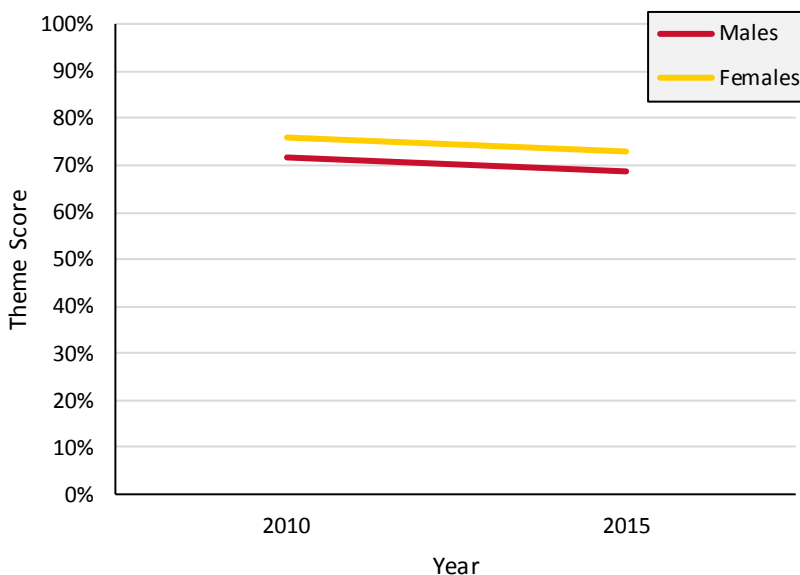
Highlights from 2015

■ Agree or Strongly Agree
 ■ Neither Agree Nor Disagree
 ■ Disagree or Strongly Disagree

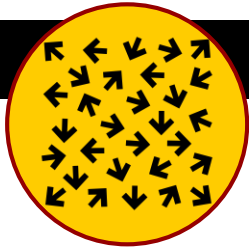


N = 1446 – 1467, depending on question

Longitudinal Highlights (change over time by gender)



Note: Questions in this component were not asked of students in 2008. Additionally, the wording of the second question changed from CORE (2010) to GenEd (2012, 2015) to reflect the change in programs at the University. For more information, see: <http://www.gened.umd.edu/about-gened/coreto gened.html>.

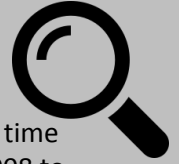


Miscellaneous

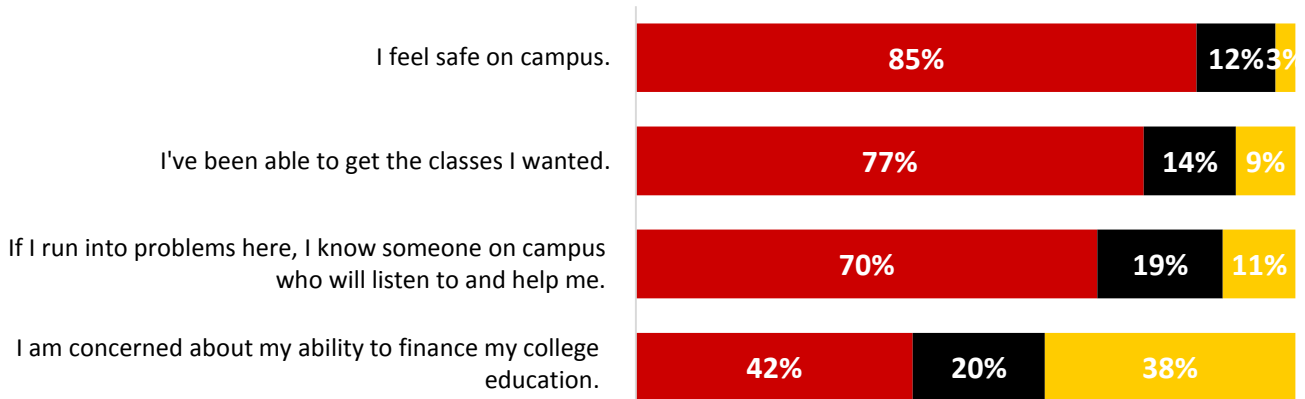
Note: Some survey questions did not align with one of the six themes. Those questions are included here.

Did you know?

“I feel safe on campus” has increased over time from 63% in 2008 to 85% in 2015 – the largest change over time in the survey.



■ Agree or Strongly Agree
 ■ Neither Agree Nor Disagree
 ■ Disagree or Strongly Disagree



N = 1446 – 1447, depending on question

Questions to consider

- What policy changes may have taken place on campus between 2008 and 2015 and how might they have contributed to changes in student agreement with the survey questions?
- Students took these surveys 8-10 weeks into their freshman year. Which responses illustrate room for growth? Which responses show positive, early engagement with campus?



Appendix

This table compares the percentage of students who reported they agree or strongly agree with the statements below in 2008 as compared to 2015. These responses are discussed on pages 4-10 of this report but are repeated here for ease of comparison.

Please indicate how much you agree/disagree with the following: (% of respondents who agreed or strongly agreed)	2008	2015
Theme 1: Academic Adjustment		
My family encourages me to continue my college education.	97%	98%
Overall, my courses are intellectually stimulating.	78%	82%
I'm adjusting to the academic work of college.	82%	80%
I feel adequately prepared for the academic demands here.	74%	70%
I've stayed motivated.	67%	70%
Theme 2: Faculty & Campus Connection		
Faculty provide timely feedback about my progress in my courses.	48%	54%
I'm as involved in campus activities as I want to be.	44%	51%
Faculty care about me as an individual.	33%	44%
I am earning the grades I want.	42%	42%
Theme 3: Resource Awareness		
Faculty are available outside class time if I have questions.	82%	87%
I know how to contact an advisor in my college/department.	76%	75%
I've asked a faculty member for help.	64%	70%
I know where to get help on campus with reading and study skills.	61%	66%
I've asked a staff member or administrator for help.	48%	48%
Theme 4: Academic & Career Direction		
I've selected a field of study/major.	69%	74%
I've identified a career direction or interest.	67%	71%
I am interested in working with a faculty member on a research project.	41%	55%
Theme 5: Social Engagement		
I've made campus friends.	89%	88%
There are social/leisure activities on campus that I like.	85%	84%
I'm adjusting to the social life of college.	78%	74%
I'm satisfied with my current living arrangements.	70%	70%
Theme 6: Broadening Academic Perspectives		
Getting a broad and well-rounded education is important to me.	83%	84%
I understand the purpose of the General Education Program.	---	66%
I am interested in interacting with faculty on topics other than coursework.	---	59%
Miscellaneous		
I feel safe on campus.	63%	85%
I've been able to get the classes I wanted.	68%	77%
If I run into problems here, I know someone on campus who will listen to and help me.	69%	70%
I am concerned about my ability to finance my college education.	42%	42%

--- indicates the question wasn't asked in 2008



The Campus Assessment Working Group (CAWG) regularly gathers and exchanges information about UMD student and alumni experiences. The group is charged with developing a campus "Culture of Evidence" in which data and assessment can inform campus decision making. Its three subgroups focus on freshman experiences, junior/senior student experiences, and retention and completion efforts. For more information, to view past reports, or to join a CAWG subgroup, please visit www.umd.edu/cawg.