



This Campus Assessment Working Group (CAWG) Snapshot reports findings on junior and senior students’ perceptions with regard to campus civility.<sup>1</sup> The data represent results from the University of Maryland Student Survey (UMSS), an annual survey administered by the CAWG Assessing Campus Experiences Subgroup (ACES). Respondents completed the survey during the 2018 spring semester in Professional Writing courses.

In 2017 CAWG met with UMD Undergraduate Studies and Faculty Affairs, with the goal of learning more about student perceptions related to academic integrity and course-related communication. A Beginnings/ACES survey arose from those conversations; the Beginnings data are reported here [https://irpa.umd.edu/CAWG/Reports/2018/snapshot\\_july18.pdf](https://irpa.umd.edu/CAWG/Reports/2018/snapshot_july18.pdf). ACES continued to study this theme in our 2018 survey, focusing on civility in course-related communication.

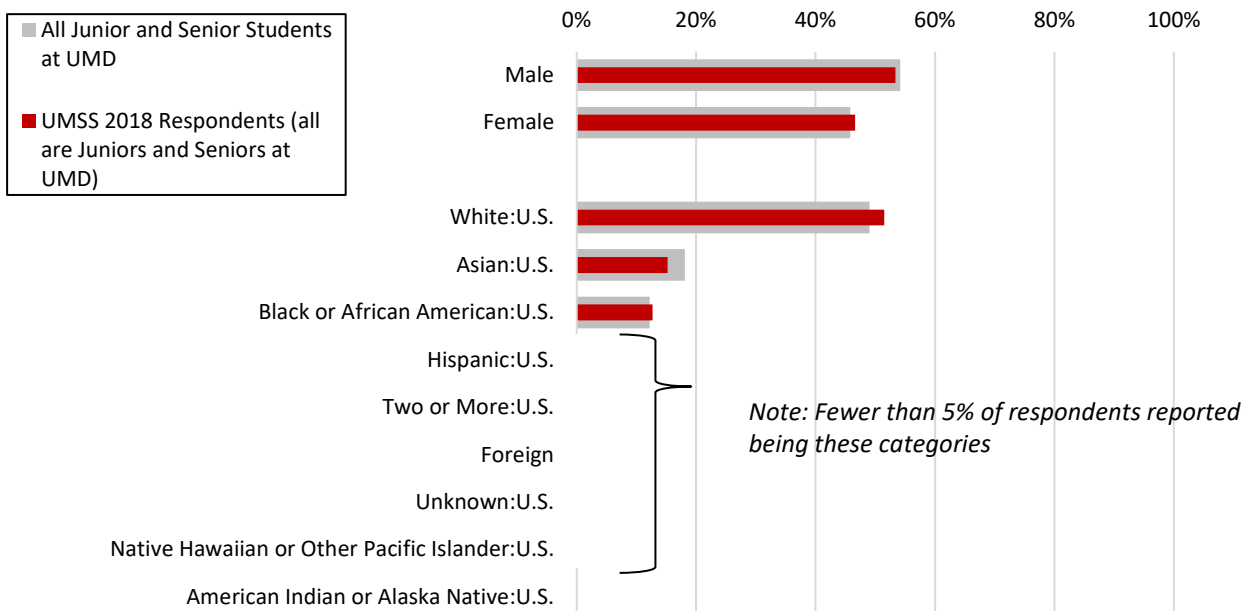
<sup>1</sup> This memo was edited in March 2024 to fix errors that were found in the chart about students’ comfort expressing honest opinions to other students and the chart positive or negative behaviors reported in class.

### Respondent Demographics

During the Spring semester of 2018, 1,533 (47%) of juniors and seniors who were enrolled in Professional Writing courses completed the survey. Demographics were available for 83% ( $n = 1,266$ ) of survey respondents. The demographic breakdown of those known respondents generally reflects that of all juniors and seniors.

The data in this snapshot represent only survey respondents, not all UMD students; therefore, use caution when generalizing. Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

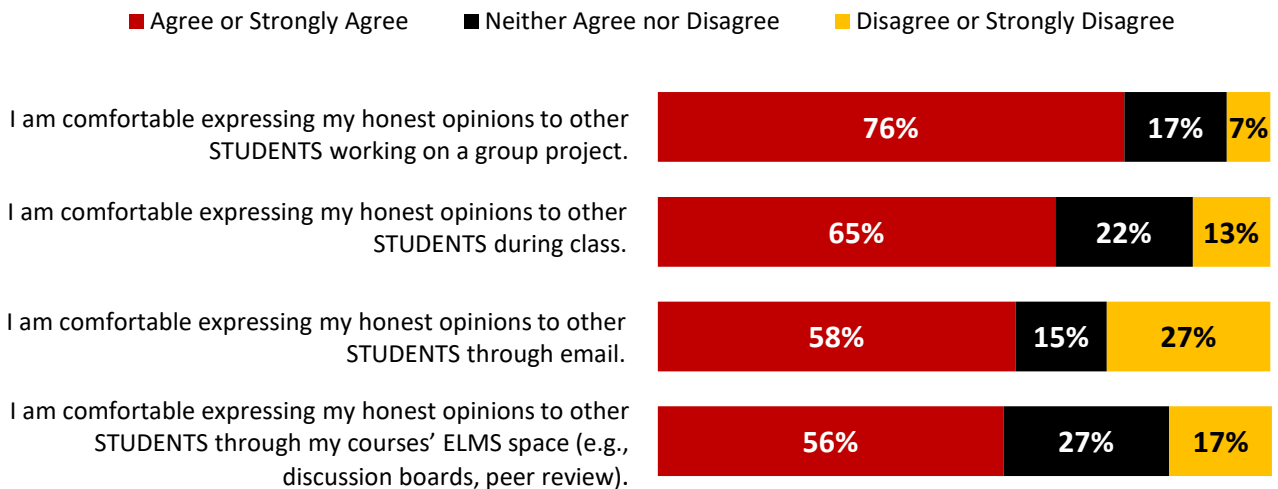
**Comparison of Respondents and General Population at UMD**



# Are students comfortable expressing honest opinions to others?

Students were asked how comfortable they were with expressing their honest opinions, through different mediums, to other students and instructors.

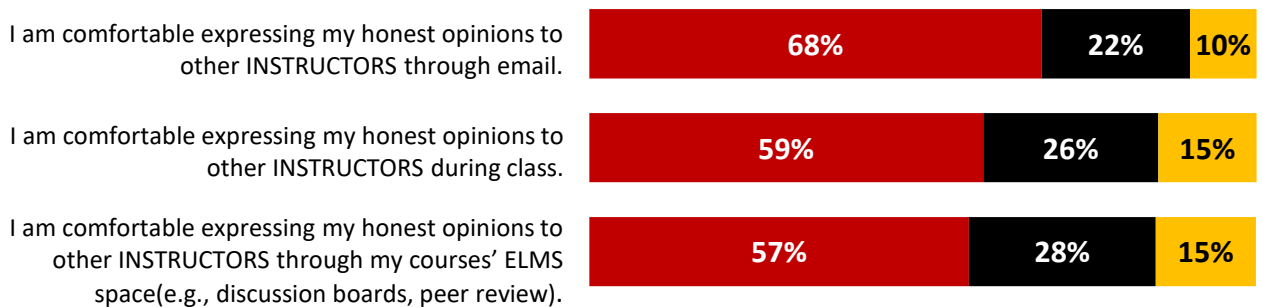
## Student comfort with expressing honest opinions to other students:



*n = 1476 – 1483, depending on item*

- More than three fourths of respondents (76%) reported comfort expressing their honest opinions to other students working on a group project. Level of agreement drops when expressing honest opinions to other students during class (65%), and even lower on email (58%) and ELMS (56%).

## Student comfort with expressing honest opinions to instructors:



*n = 1474 – 1482, depending on item*

- Compared to level of comfort in expressing honest opinions to other students, respondents were somewhat less comfortable expressing honest opinions to instructors in class (59%), even less on ELMS (57%). Level of comfort was higher on email (68%).

### Questions to consider:

- Might the audience — for example, in class vs. one-on-one email communication — impact students' comfort?
- Why might students feel more comfortable expressing opinions to instructors via email than they feel expressing opinions to other students via email?

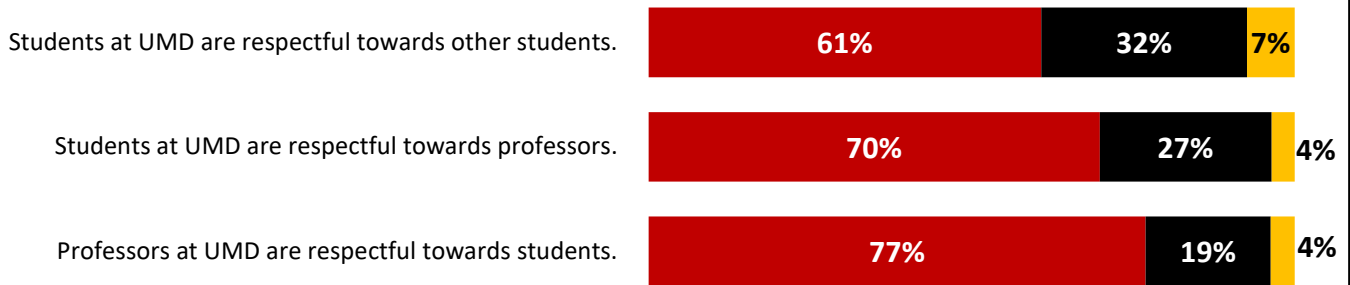


## Do students think students and professors are respectful?

Students were asked if other students and professors are respectful towards one another.

Please indicate how much you agree/disagree with the following:

■ Agree or Strongly Agree    ■ Neither Agree nor Disagree    ■ Disagree or Strongly Disagree



*n = 1487 – 1489, depending on item*

- More than half of respondents reported that students are respectful towards other students (61%) and professors (70%).
- More than three-fourths of respondents indicated that professors are respectful towards students (77%).

### Questions to consider:

- What resources are available to students who witness disrespectful behavior?
- What would a target level be for respect towards other students?

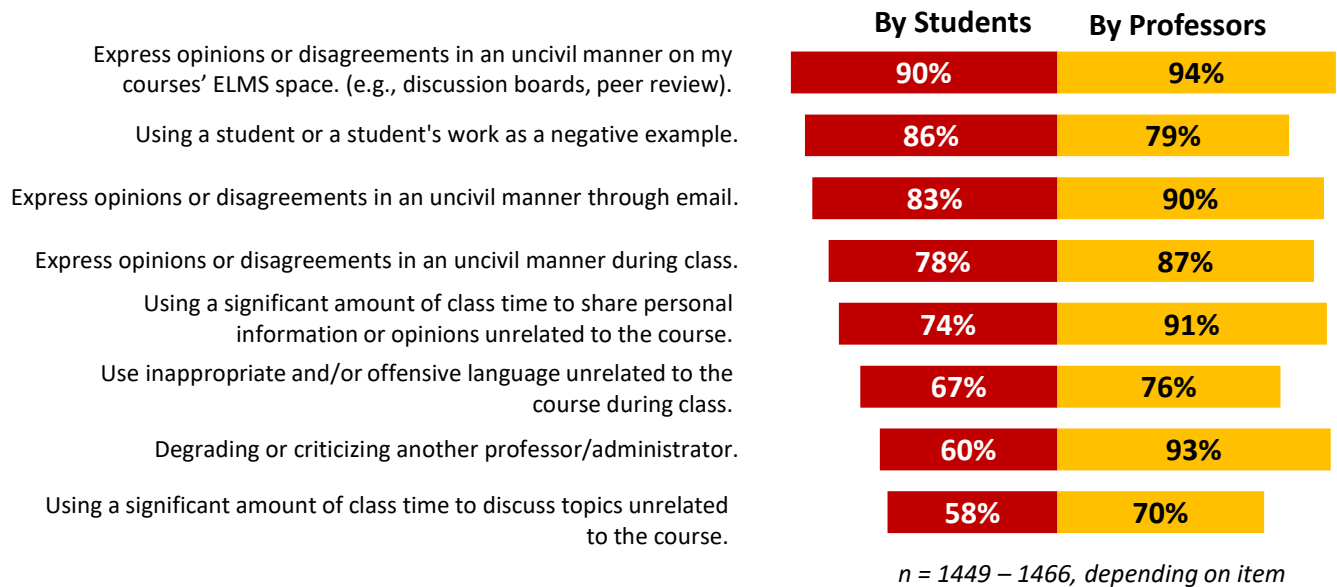


The Campus Assessment Working Group (CAWG) regularly gathers and exchanges information about UMD student and alumni experiences. The group is charged with developing a campus "Culture of Evidence" in which data and assessment can inform campus decision making. Its three subgroups focus on first-year 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](http://www.umd.edu/cawg).

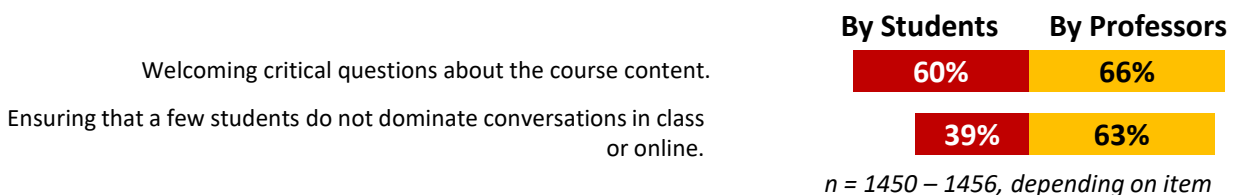
# What positive and negative behaviors do students report seeing in class?

Students were asked if other students and professors were exhibiting certain types of negative and positive behaviors.

## Student respondents who reported NEVER or RARELY seeing the following negative behaviors:



## Student respondents who reported SOMETIMES or OFTEN seeing the following positive behaviors:



- One in four respondents (26%) reported seeing other students using inappropriate and/or offensive language during class, sometimes or often.
- More than a fourth of respondents observed professors (30%) and students (42%) using a significant amount of class time to discuss topics unrelated to the course.
- There were statistical differences for all of the questions between respondents' perceptions of professors' civility and perceptions of other students' civility. In each case, more respondents had seen students exhibiting negative behaviors than professors, and more had seen professors exhibiting positive behaviors than students.

### Questions to consider:

- How could the university convey a common expectation for students' and professors' behavior in the classroom?
- Who should be responsible for steering course discussion?



## Do differences exist based on race/ethnicity and sex?

To answer the question of whether differences among groups exist, we conducted several multivariate analyses of variance (MANOVA). MANOVA is a procedure that combines responses to survey items into a single score and then tests statistically whether group differences exist on that score.

The first MANOVAs we conducted were on the survey items asking whether students were comfortable expressing their honest opinions (see page 2 for specific items). Under-represented minority students (i.e., Black or African American, Hispanic, American Indian or Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander) reported significantly higher comfort expressing their honest opinions to other students and instructors compared to White, Asian American, and Foreign students. Female students were significantly less comfortable expressing their honest opinions compared to male students.

We ran the same MANOVAs on the negative behavior items (see top of page 4). Females reported seeing statistically less frequent negative classroom behaviors compared to males, but no statistical differences existed between racial/ethnic groups.

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