CAMPUS
ASSESSMENT
WORKING GROUP

The Value of Cultural Diversity: Insights from Juniors and Seniors

August, 2024

This report summarizes findings on juniors and seniors' beliefs, behaviors, and feelings on the value of cultural diversity at UMD in Spring 2024. Respondents were asked about their perceptions of learning about cultural diversity in the classroom.[1]

These data can help illustrate progress towards the University's goal of living a commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion as part of the university's Strategic Plan.

About the University of Maryland Student Survey

This report was written by the Campus Assessment Working Group (CAWG) ACES subcommittee. The 2024 University of Maryland Student Survey (UMSS24) was administered online from March 4, 2024 to March 15, 2024 to juniors and seniors enrolled in Professional Writing courses. In March 2024, 1,350 students completed the survey (36% of all students enrolled in Professional Writing courses).[2]

Almost all respondents said they value a culturally diverse environment, but less than three-fourths have challenged their own beliefs about race and ethnicity.
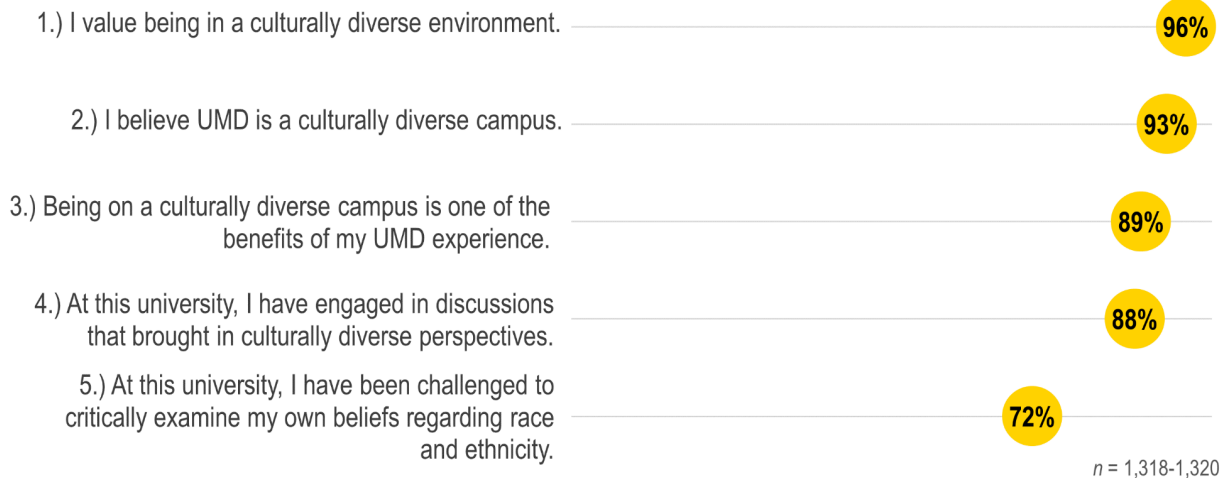
● Almost all respondents (96%) value being in a culturally diverse environment. A similar percentage of respondents (93%) believe that UMD is a culturally diverse campus.

● About 9 out of 10 respondents (89%) agreed or strongly agreed that being on a culturally diverse campus is one of the benefits of their UMD experience.

● Eighty-eight percent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that, at UMD, they have engaged in discussions that brought in culturally diverse perspectives.

● However, less than three-fourths (72%) of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they have been challenged at UMD to critically examine their beliefs regarding race and ethnicity.
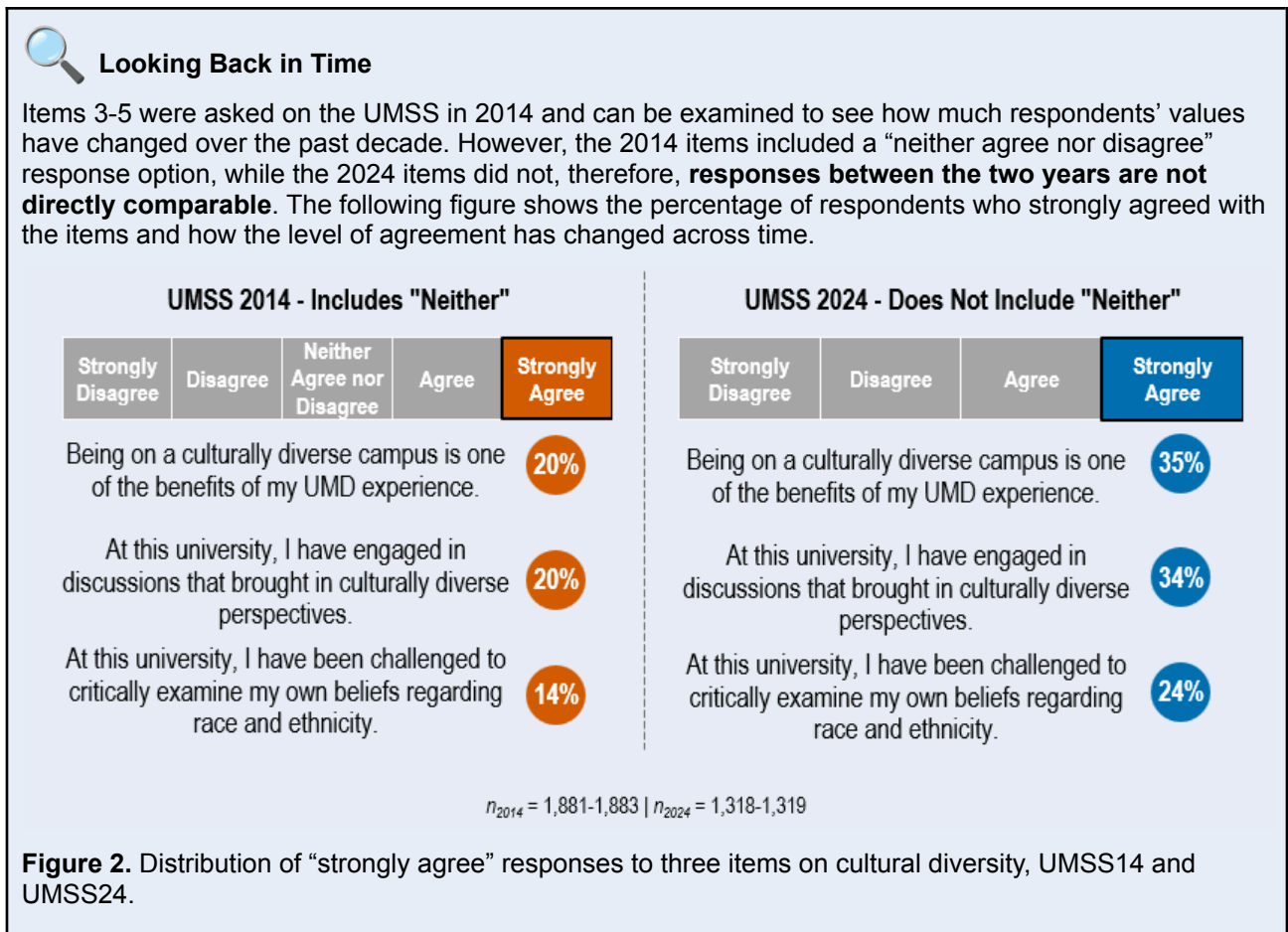
---

[1] Students were informed at the start of the survey that their responses would remain confidential, but social desirability, the tendency to respond so that others view them favorably, may have led respondents to answer items the way they thought they "should" be answered. See King, M. & Bruner, G. (2000). Social desirability bias: A neglected aspect of validity testing. Psychology & Marketing 17*(2)*, pgs. 79-103.

[2] Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding. The distribution of respondents by race/ethnicity and gender was similar to that of the UMD population of juniors and seniors. Females were slightly overrepresented in the survey sample (54%) compared to 48% of all juniors and seniors, and 46% of respondents were male, compared to 52% of the population. The distribution of respondents by first generation status was similar to that of the UMD population of juniors and seniors.

Indicate how much you agree/disagree with the following:
(% Agree/Strongly agree)

1.) I value being in a culturally diverse environment. — **96%**

2.) I believe UMD is a culturally diverse campus. — **93%**

3.) Being on a culturally diverse campus is one of the benefits of my UMD experience. — **89%**

4.) At this university, I have engaged in discussions that brought in culturally diverse perspectives. — **88%**

5.) At this university, I have been challenged to critically examine my own beliefs regarding race and ethnicity. — **72%**

n = 1,318-1,320

Figure 1. Distribution of respondents who agreed or strongly agreed with questions related to cultural diversity, UMSS24.

🔍 **Looking Back in Time**

Items 3-5 were asked on the UMSS in 2014 and can be examined to see how much respondents' values have changed over the past decade. However, the 2014 items included a "neither agree nor disagree" response option, while the 2024 items did not, therefore, **responses between the two years are not directly comparable**. The following figure shows the percentage of respondents who strongly agreed with the items and how the level of agreement has changed across time.

UMSS 2014 - Includes "Neither"

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree

Being on a culturally diverse campus is one of the benefits of my UMD experience. — **20%**

At this university, I have engaged in discussions that brought in culturally diverse perspectives. — **20%**

At this university, I have been challenged to critically examine my own beliefs regarding race and ethnicity. — **14%**

UMSS 2024 - Does Not Include "Neither"

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree

Being on a culturally diverse campus is one of the benefits of my UMD experience. — **35%**

At this university, I have engaged in discussions that brought in culturally diverse perspectives. — **34%**

At this university, I have been challenged to critically examine my own beliefs regarding race and ethnicity. — **24%**

n_{2014} = 1,881-1,883 | n_{2024} = 1,318-1,319

Figure 2. Distribution of "strongly agree" responses to three items on cultural diversity, UMSS14 and UMSS24.

> **Questions to Consider**
> - How do students define "cultural diversity" and how might that have affected their responses? How might we ask questions about culture and identity in the future?
> - Why might fewer respondents believe they have been challenged to critically examine their beliefs about race and ethnicity at UMD?
> - What has changed in the world and at UMD over the past decade that could have changed how respondents view cultural diversity? How might initiatives at UMD impact the results?

Conclusion

These data offer preliminary insights into juniors and seniors' attitudes towards cultural diversity on UMD's campus and their engagement in certain behaviors related to this topic. Overall, respondents highly value cultural diversity, especially as part of their college experience. Further, more respondents strongly agree with these items than they did in 2014. Much has changed -- both at UMD and in the world -- over the past decade that could have influenced this change in values.

A majority of respondents agreed or strongly agreed they valued diversity and had engaged in certain behaviors related to cultural diversity. However, while almost all respondents agreed or strongly agreed they value diversity and engaged in diverse thought at UMD, a smaller majority said they had been challenged to examine their own beliefs surrounding race and ethnicity. There is room for improvement in actions that students can take to increase equity and inclusion on campus.

Respondents also tended to agree more with beliefs and less likely with actions about diversity education in the classroom – read more about it on the CAWG website.