



CAMPUS ASSESSMENT WORKING GROUP

Balancing Act: How Juniors and Seniors Juggle Well-Being and Responsibilities January 2024

This report summarizes findings on juniors and seniors' well-being and how they balanced academic and non-academic responsibilities in Spring 2023. This report answers three questions:

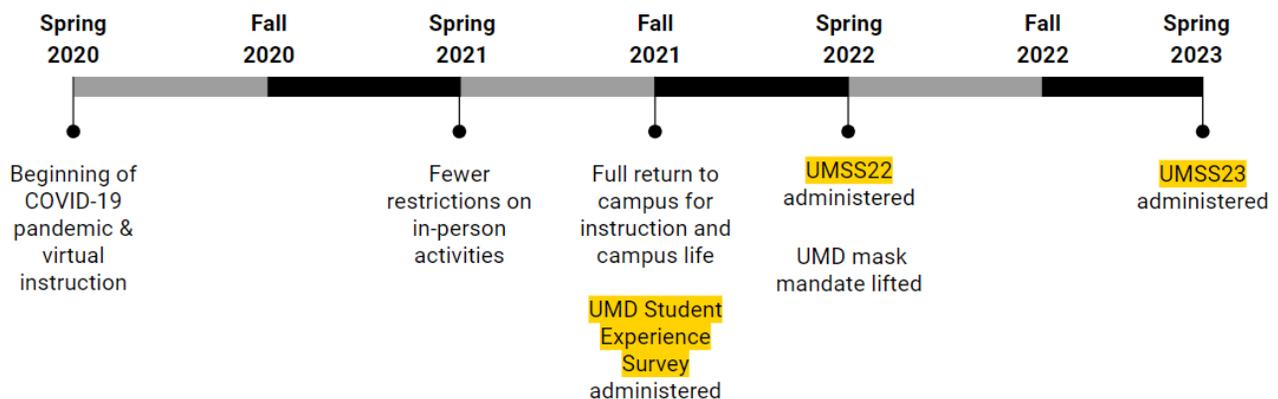
- 1. How do respondents feel about their academic progress/experience at UMD?
2. How do respondents manage their academic responsibilities and other aspects of their lives?
3. Have these perceptions changed over the last few years, and if so, how?

As the University continues to prioritize investing in people and communities as part of its strategic plan, these data can help us understand students' perceptions of their academic experience and well-being.

About the University of Maryland Student Survey

This report was written by the Campus Assessment Working Group (CAWG) ACES subcommittee. The 2023 University of Maryland Student Survey (UMSS23) was administered online from March 6 to March 24, 2023 to juniors and seniors enrolled in Professional Writing courses. In March 2023, 1,119 students completed the survey (30% of all students enrolled in Professional Writing courses).1

When appropriate, the report includes longitudinal data from previous University of Maryland Student Surveys and from junior and senior respondents to the Fall 2021 UMD Student Experience Survey. The Fall 2021 UMD Student Experience Survey was administered in Fall 2021, the first semester in which classes were mostly in-person again. While respondents to these two surveys differed -- the UMSS is administered in Professional Writing courses and the Fall 2021 survey was open to all students and administered outside of class -- comparing the results provides insights into students' experiences and perspectives over two academic years. The timeline below provides additional context regarding survey administration alongside COVID-19 pandemic protocols at UMD.



1 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. White respondents were slightly overrepresented (46% of respondents vs 42% of juniors and seniors). Fifty-two percent of respondents were female, compared to 48% of all juniors and seniors; 48% of respondents were male, compared to 52% of the population. University records in Spring 2023 did not include a non-binary option.

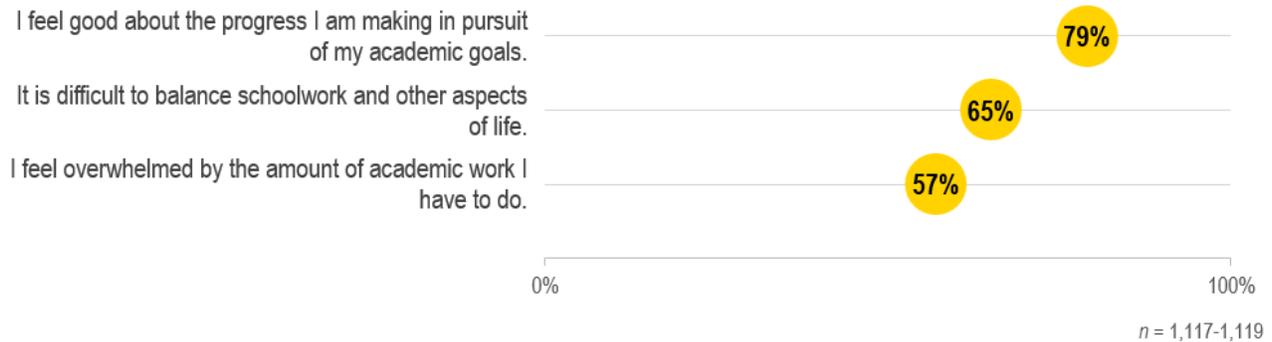
**Figure 1.** Timeline of COVID-19 pandemic and survey administration, 2020-2023. Visualization adapted from the Academic Technology Experience Team in the Division of IT.

**While nearly 80% of respondents said they felt good about their academic progress, over half felt overwhelmed by their academic work.**

- Almost 8 out of 10 (79%) respondents agreed they felt good about the progress they are making in pursuit of their academic goals, yet 65% agreed it is difficult to balance schoolwork with other aspects of life and 57% said they felt overwhelmed by the amount of academic work they have to do. Percentages were similar between juniors and seniors.
- Over half (57%) of respondents agreed they felt overwhelmed by the amount of academic work they have to do. Additionally, more juniors (60%) agreed they felt overwhelmed with the amount of academic work they have to do, compared to seniors (52%; data not visualized below).

**Indicate how much you agree/disagree with the following:**

% strongly agree/agree



**Figure 2.** Percent of respondents who strongly agreed/agreed to items about academics, UMSS23.

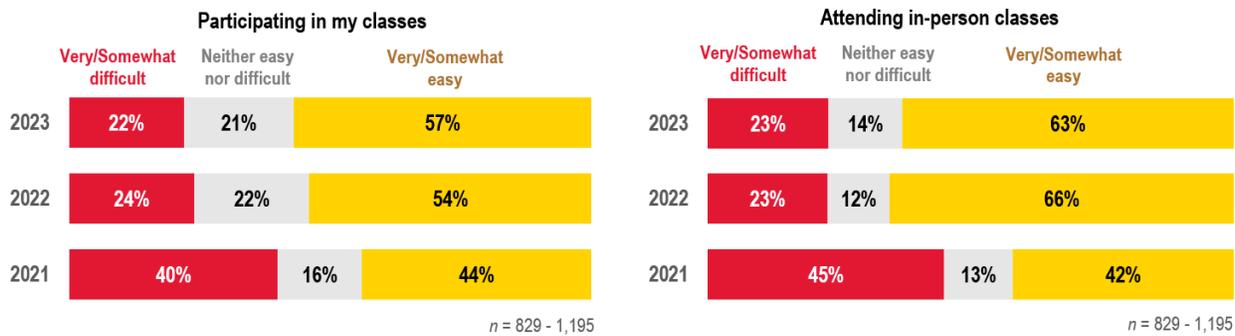
**Compared to 2021, fewer respondents in 2022 and 2023 said it was very or somewhat difficult to manage their responsibilities. However, many respondents continue to struggle to manage aspects of their academic experience.**

The following graphs show the distribution of responses per item since 2021. For each item, respondents could select “very difficult,” “somewhat difficult,” “neither difficult nor easy,” “somewhat easy,” “very easy,” or “not applicable.” Response options were collapsed into “very/somewhat difficult,” “neither easy nor difficult,” and “very/somewhat easy.” Unless noted otherwise, between 0% and 10% of respondents selected “not applicable” for these items. The “not applicable” responses were excluded from calculations.

In-person classes

- Less than one-fourth (22%) of respondents said it is difficult to participate in classes. Similarly, only 23% of respondents said it is difficult to attend in-person classes.

**How easy or difficult have you found each of the following to manage this semester? (N/A's removed)**

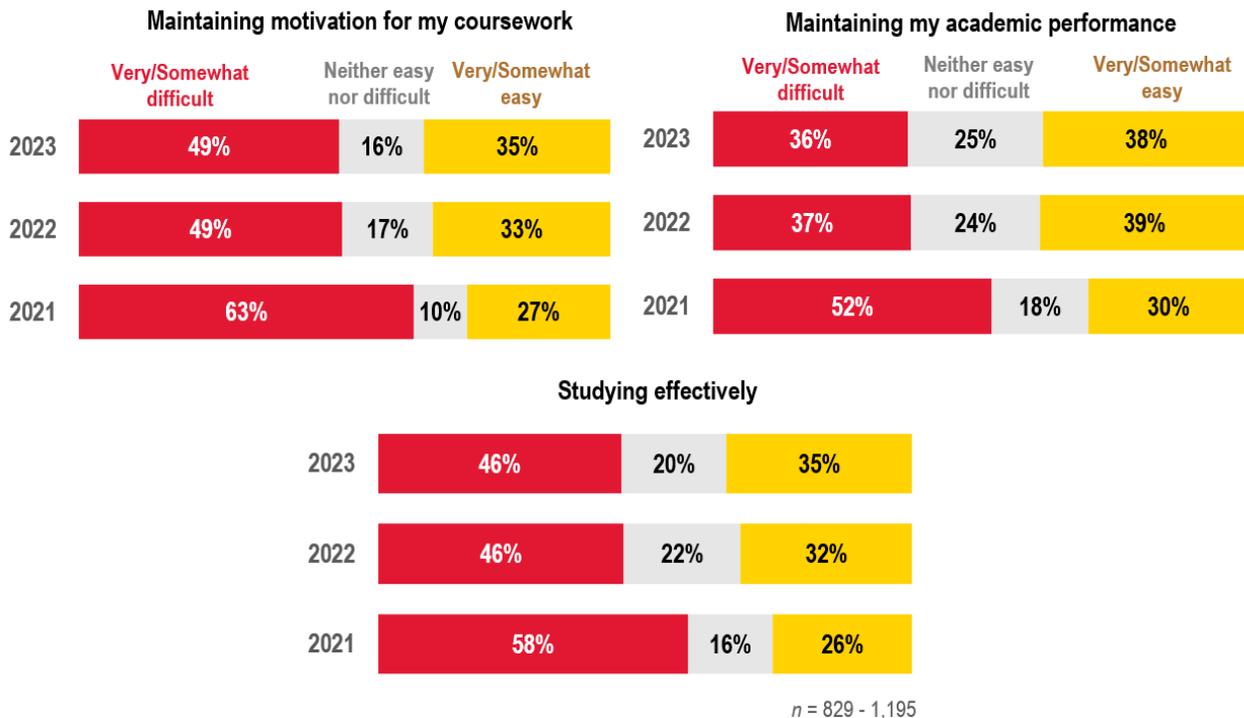


**Figure 3.** Distribution of responses to items about in-person classes, UMSS23, UMSS22, and the Fall 2021 Student Experience Survey.

Academic performance

- About half (49%) of respondents said it is difficult to maintain motivation for their coursework, a decrease from 63% in 2021. Over one-third (36%) of respondents said it is difficult to maintain their academic performance, a decrease from half (52%) in 2021.
- Almost half of respondents (46%) indicated that it is difficult to study effectively. This decreased from 58% in 2021.

**How easy or difficult have you found each of the following to manage this semester? (N/A's removed)**

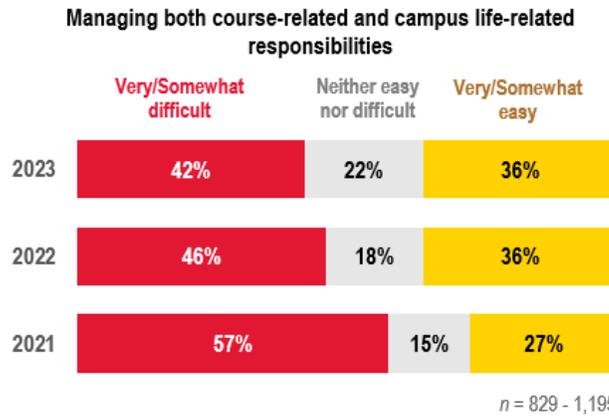


**Figure 4.** Distribution of responses to items about academic performance, UMSS23, UMSS22, and the Fall 2021 Student Experience Survey.

Balancing responsibilities

- In 2023, roughly 4 out of 10 (42%) respondents said it is difficult to manage both course-related and campus life-related responsibilities. This decreased from 2021 and 2022.

How easy or difficult have you found each of the following to manage this semester? (N/As removed)

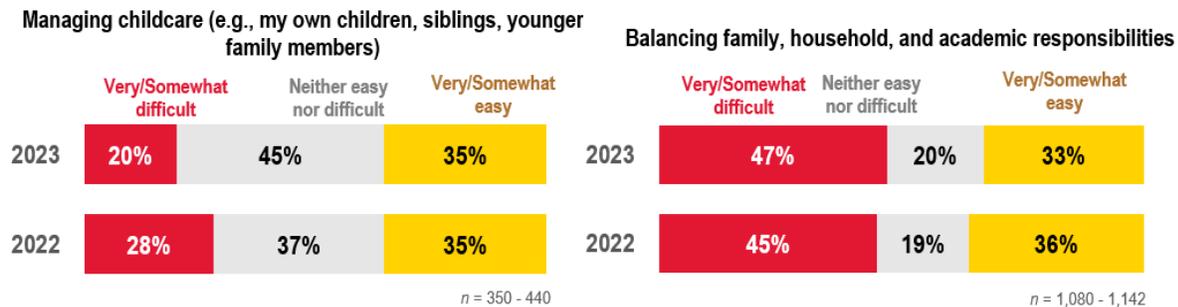


**Figure 5.** Distribution of responses to an item about balancing responsibilities, UMSS23, UMSS22, and the Fall 2021 Student Experience Survey.

Family and childcare

- Two items asked respondents about their responsibilities outside of school, such as handling family and childcare. Over 60% of respondents indicated “not applicable” to the managing childcare item. In 2022, about 70% of respondents indicated “not applicable” to the same item.
- In 2023, 20% of respondents who answered the question as if it were applicable said it is difficult to manage childcare.
- When asked about the ease or difficulty of balancing family, household, and academic responsibilities, responses were similar in 2022 and 2023. In both years, over 40% of respondents said it is very or somewhat difficult (45% in 2022 and 47% in 2023).

How easy or difficult have you found each of the following to manage this semester? (N/A's removed)

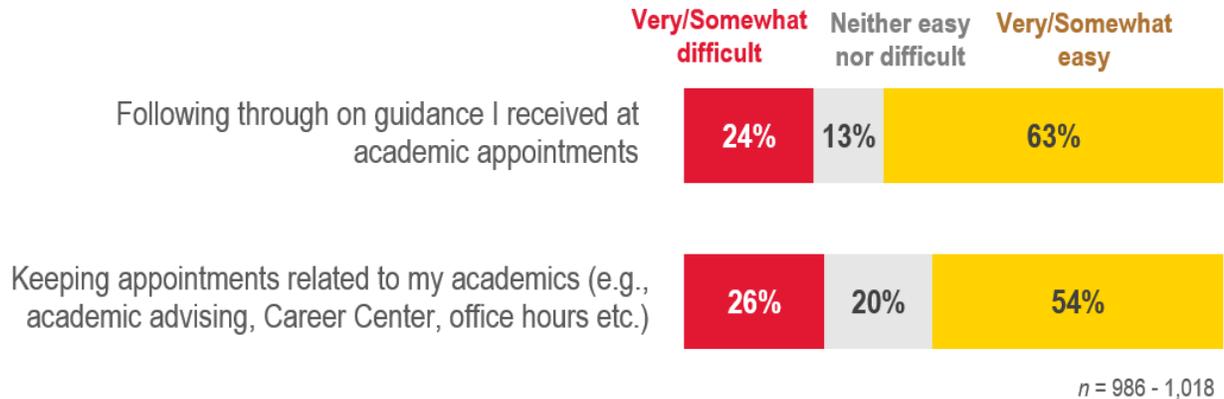


**Figure 6.** Distribution of responses to items about managing non-academic responsibilities, UMSS23 and UMSS22.

Academic appointments

- Two items about managing academic appointments were asked on the UMSS23 for the first time. For both items, about one-fourth of respondents said it is difficult to follow through on guidance at academic appointments (24%) or keep appointments (26%).

**How easy or difficult have you found each of the following to manage this semester? (N/A's removed)**



**Figure 7.** Distribution of responses to items about academic appointments, UMSS23.

**Questions to Consider**

- How can UMD help students learn about the academic support services offered on campus?
- How can we help students who want to be involved in campus life or student organizations but find it difficult to balance those responsibilities with academics (see Figure 5)?
- Sixty percent of respondents selected “not applicable” to managing childcare implying that the remaining 440 respondents do manage childcare, such as family members or their children. How does this align with your own experiences working with students? (Figure 6)
- How can UMD faculty and staff support student resilience? What coping strategies could we teach students to encourage them to work through adversity and thrive during stressful times?

**Conclusion**

The data in this report represent juniors’ and seniors’ perceptions of their academic experience in Spring 2023 and how it might impact their well-being. Although the University no longer operates under pandemic-era restrictions, many respondents struggle with balancing academic and non-academic responsibilities. In many cases, the percentage of students who reported certain activities as difficult remained the same from 2022. As the University implements its strategic plan, these findings can inform conversations about academic support and student well-being.

**About ACES**

This report was written by the Campus Assessment Working Group (CAWG) ACES subgroup: Robert E. Crane, College of Arts & Humanities; Jonathan Engelberg, Division of Information Technology; Danielle Glazer, Office of Institutional Research, Planning & Assessment (IRPA); Shannon Hayes Buenaflor, A. James Clark School of Engineering; Julie Kromkowski, Chair, Division of Administration Office of the VP; Scott Moses, Department of English; Sharon Ousman, Career Center; Chad Nazworth, Office of the Provost; Sharon Ousman, Career Center; Charlene Ploetz Savoy, College of Information Studies; Alan Socha, IRPA; Jess Wojton, IRPA; Ronald Zeigler, Nyumburu Cultural Center. For more information, to view past reports, or to join a CAWG subgroup, visit <http://ter.ps/CAWG>.