



CAMPUS  
**ASSESSMENT**  
WORKING GROUP

## **Juniors and Seniors' Awareness of Campus Sustainability Resources**

November, 2024

This report summarizes findings on juniors' and seniors' attitudes and behaviors about sustainability. Specifically, this report addresses students' beliefs towards reducing environmental impacts and their awareness of sustainable resources on campus. The Assessing Campus Experiences (ACES) subcommittee collaborated with the Office of Sustainability to create these questions and get a better sense of what sustainability initiatives students participate in.

Sustainability continues to be an integral goal for UMD and is embedded through the [Strategic Plan](#) from taking on humanity's grand challenges to investing in people and communities. UMD has also committed to the [Climate Action Plan](#) to achieve net-zero carbon emissions by 2025.

### **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).<sup>1</sup>

## **Sustainable Beliefs and Behaviors**

### **Most respondents believe it is important to reduce their environmental impact, but slightly fewer practice sustainable behaviors.**

- Nine in ten respondents agree or strongly agree that it is important for both UMD to reduce its environmental impact and for all individuals to reduce their environmental impact.
- Eighty-eight percent of respondents try to sort their waste properly and 84% of respondents try to reduce their environmental impact when they can.



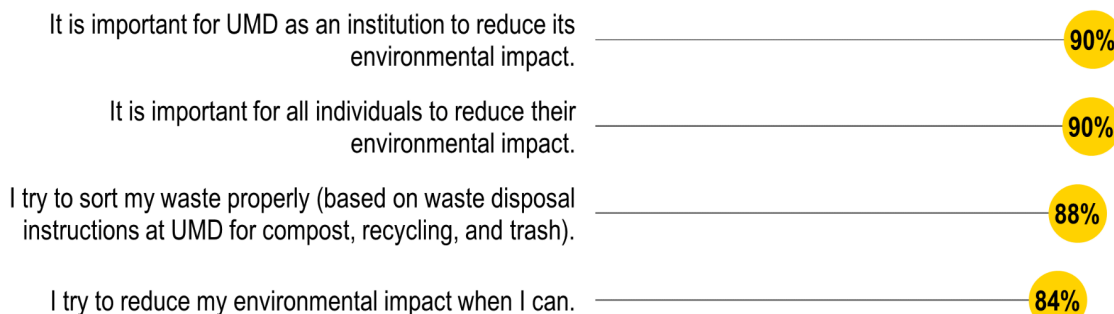
### **National Trends**

Nationally, 85% of undergraduates from 114 colleges and universities nationwide indicated that it is somewhat or very important for their campus to prioritize sustainability. These data come from a Student Voice survey administered by Inside Higher Ed and College Pulse in December 2022.

Although this statistic is not directly comparable to the questions on the UMSS24, it provides us with an idea of other college students' sustainable values. Read more about the findings from the Student Voice survey [here](#).

<sup>1</sup> 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. For more information on demographic data, visit the [IRPA website](#). 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)



n = 1,316 - 1,317

**Figure 1.** Distribution of respondents who agree or strongly agree with various sustainable beliefs and practices, UMSS24.



### Comparing UMD Cohorts

These four items were asked on both the 2023 Beginnings Student Survey administered to first-year students and the 2024 University of Maryland Student Survey administered to juniors and seniors: two separate groups of students in the same academic year. We can compare the responses to assess if there were differences between respondents who have spent more time on campus (i.e., upper-class students) and students in their first semester of college.

The percentage of students agreeing or strongly agreeing with these statements was similar for both cohorts regarding the importance of reducing environmental impact and trying to sort their waste properly. This suggests that there is consistency across cohorts in how respondents value sustainable practices.

Read more about [first-time students' culture of sustainability](#) including their environmental concerns, their environmental impact, and their engagement in sustainable practices.

### Question to Consider

- About 10-16% of respondents did not agree with the items regarding reducing environmental impact and about 12% did not agree that they try to sort their waste properly. Why might students feel this way despite UMD's continued efforts to prioritize the environment and sustainability?

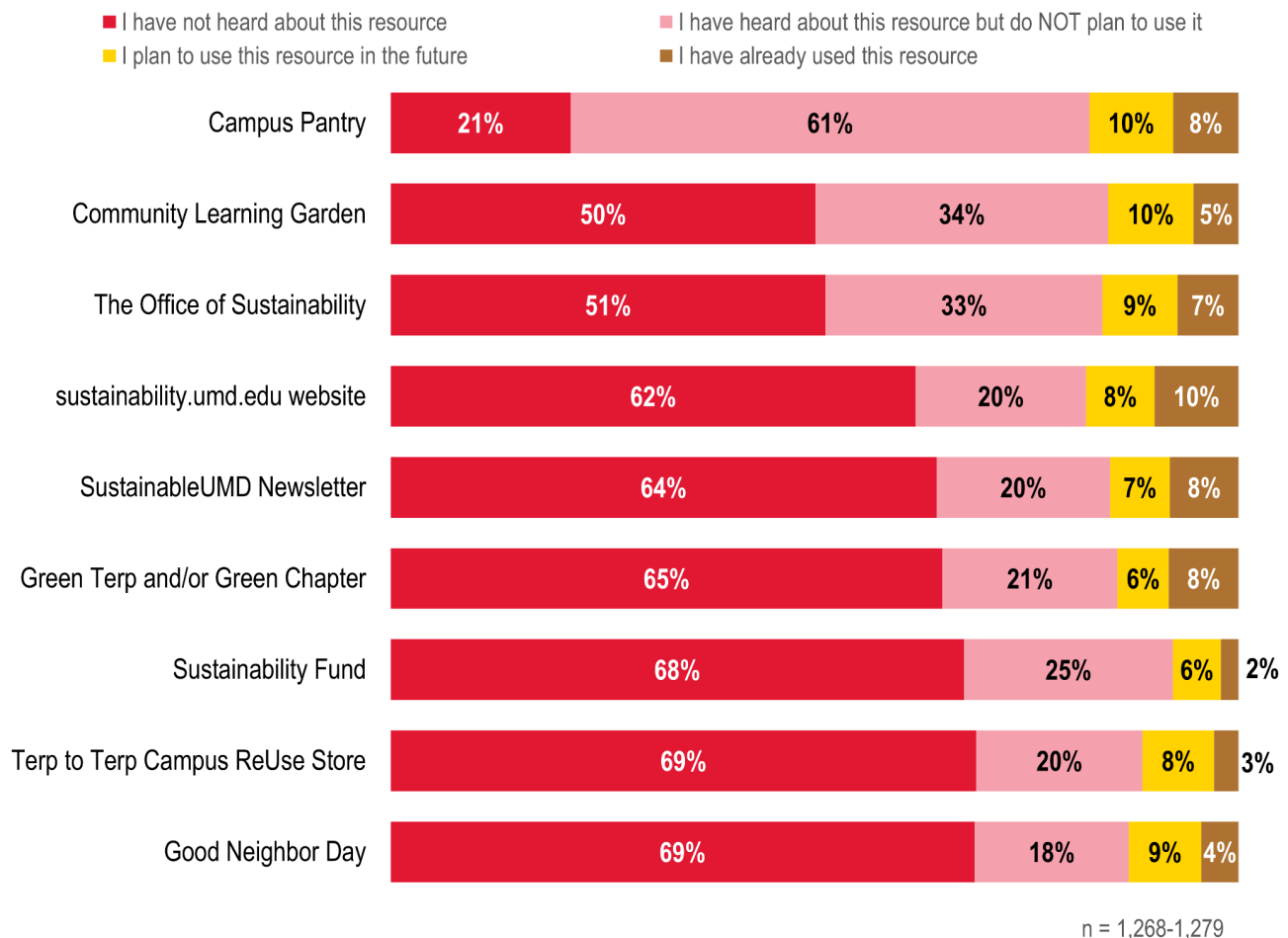


## Awareness of Resources

### Awareness of sustainability resources on campus varies, yet most respondents have not heard of many campus resources.

- The Campus Pantry had the largest percentage of respondents (79%) who have heard of, plan to use, or have already used this resource.
- The rest of the resources or initiatives had 50% or less of respondents who agreed or strongly agreed that they have heard about, plan to use, or have already used these resources: 50% for the Community Learning Garden; 49% for the Office of Sustainability; 38% for the sustainability.umd.edu website; 36% for the SustainableUMD Newsletter; 35% for Green Terp and/or Green Chapter; 32% for the Sustainability Fund; 31% for the Terp to Terp Campus ReUse Store; and 31% for Good Neighbor Day.

#### Please describe your awareness of the following resources on campus:



**Figure 2.** Distribution of responses to how aware respondents are of sustainability resources on campus, UMSS24.



### Did You Know?

Despite a small number of respondents who said they have already used these resources or plan to use them in the future, these initiatives remain an important part of campus and have a strong impact on the people who do use them.

- [Campus Pantry](#): During 2023, the Campus Pantry helped 2,143 visitors accumulating more than 18,000 visits.<sup>2</sup> Note that the Campus Pantry sees a large number of graduate students as well as faculty and staff – none of whom are represented in the UMSS24 sample.
- [Terp to Terp ReUse Store](#): For the 2023-2024 academic year, the ReUse store provided 648 students with free essential living items. Additionally, the ReUse store has diverted over 38,000 pounds from landfills as of August 2024.
- [Dining Services](#): Since 2012, Dining Services has prioritized sustainable food efforts such as supporting local businesses and farms and reducing the amount of plastic in campus cafes.
- [Sustainability Fund](#): Each year, approximately \$800,000 is available for any UMD student, faculty, or staff member with a sustainability-focused initiative or project. Since 2011, over 185 projects have received over \$4 million in funding.
- [SustainableUMD Website](#) & Newsletter: Over 11,000 unique users visited the SustainableUMD website during the 2023-2024 academic year and the SustainableUMD newsletter sees an average monthly open rate of 3,463 people (including undergraduate students and others).

### Questions to Consider

- How might the University encourage the use of these resources and initiatives?
- How else might students be receiving information and resources on sustainability from sources other than the Office of Sustainability (e.g., social media, other university departments, and sources outside UMD)?
- What other metrics, beyond awareness, may be helpful in assessing the impact of UMD's sustainability resources?
- How has the way that people think about sustainability and engage in sustainable practices changed over time? What practices (e.g., using a reusable water bottle) are now parts of daily life that we don't think about as proactively sustainable?



## Conclusion

The data presented here provide a glimpse into juniors' and seniors' beliefs towards sustainability and how they interact with campus sustainability resources. While UMD has placed sustainability and the environment as a high priority per the Strategic Plan and the Climate Action Plan, these data show what the culture of sustainability is like on campus. Most respondents agreed that it is important for UMD to reduce its environmental impact and that they try to reduce their own environmental impact. However, the sustainable resources on campus are not as well known, with 50% or more of respondents reporting not being aware of most resources. This shows the areas of opportunity the University has in promoting those resources and initiatives.

### About ACES

This report was written by the Campus Assessment Working Group (CAWG) ACES subgroup: Julie Kromkowski, Chair, Division of Administration Office of the VP; Jess Wojton, Office of Institutional Research, Planning & Assessment (IRPA); Shannon Buenafior, A. James Clark School of Engineering; Stephanie Chang, Office of Diversity & Inclusion; Robert E. Crane, College of Arts & Humanities; Jonathan Engelberg, Division of Information Technology; Danielle Glazer, IRPA; Anton Lahaie, Adele H. Stamp Student Union; Pearl Lo; Adele H. Stamp Student Union; Scott Moses, Department of English; Sharon Ousman, Career Center; Tami Kopischke Smith, Teaching and Learning Transformation Center; Minli Wang, A. James Clark School of Engineering; Ronald Zeigler, Nyumburu Cultural Center. For more information, to view past reports, or to join a CAWG subgroup, visit <http://ter.ps/CAWG>.

<sup>2</sup> Tjaden, A., Tumlin, L., & Jordan, H. (2024). *Campus Pantry Utilization: 2014-2023*. University of Maryland Dining Services.