

**SNAPSHOT****CAWG**of  
Student Experiences**Alumni Reflections on  
the UMD Undergraduate  
Experience**

This Campus Assessment Working Group (CAWG) Snapshot contains reflections from recent alumni on their undergraduate experiences as reported in the 2011 University of Maryland Alumni Survey of 2010 graduates. Eight hundred thirty-seven recent alumni completed this online survey, with an overall sample mostly comparable to the UMD student population (slightly over-representing female and white students, and slightly under-representing male and Asian students). Seventy-three percent of respondents began as freshmen at UMD, while 27% transferred from another institution. Given that our sample represents 14% of the graduating class of 2010, caution should be used when generalizing results beyond this group of respondents.

In selected analyses, two groups were created to identify respondents by their post-graduation status. The first group reported being in graduate school, while the second identified as being employed. While the two groups responded similarly to the survey items, the few instances where their response patterns differed are presented throughout the snapshot. Please note that while an additional 20% of total respondents indicated that they were not employed, their data will not be presented here.

**Where Are They Now? Responding Alumni in Graduate School**

The graduate student group included 175 respondents (21% of the overall sample) who reported being enrolled full-time in either master's, doctoral, first professional, or graduate certificate programs. The majority pursued master's degrees (45%), while smaller percentages were enrolled in doctoral programs (19%), studying law (14%) or medicine (12%).

**Majors of respondents in  
full-time graduate programs as defined by the  
Maryland Higher Education Commission****Percentage of respondents in  
graduate school studying the  
following majors**

Master's Degree-M.A., M.S., M.E., etc.	45%
Ph.D.	19%
Law	14%
Medicine	12%
Master's of Business Administration	2%
Dentistry	1%
Master's of Fine Arts	<1%
Graduate Certificate	<1%
Veterinary Medicine	<1%
Other First Professional Degree	6%

## Where Are They Now? Responding Alumni Employed

The employed group was comprised of 576 respondents (69% of the entire sample), and included those who reported working full-time regardless of their status as a student. Those who held part-time jobs and did not report being in school were also included in this group.

Those who were employed held a variety of positions including engineer or architect (12%), financial (11%), information systems (10%), and sales or marketing (10%). It should be noted that 22% of respondents selected "other professional" as an alternative to the other employment options provided.

Over three-quarters of employed responding alumni indicated that a bachelor's degree was required to obtain their current position, whereas less than 20% indicated that it was not.

<b>Fields of employment as defined by the Maryland Higher Education Commission</b>	<b>Percentage of Employed Respondents</b>
Engineer or architect	12%
Financial	11%
Information systems	10%
Sales or marketing	10%
Scientist	9%
Skilled trades, secretary, clerical, laborer, service occupations	8%
Teacher	8%
Health professional	3%
Legal professional or law enforcement	3%
Social worker	3%
Manager, executive or proprietor	2%
Other professional	22%

## Reflections on the Undergraduate Experience

Respondents were asked to rate the degree to which their undergraduate career at UMD was valuable in terms of experiences with mentoring, diversity, real-world skill-building, and future preparation. They were also asked to indicate whether they wished they had more opportunity in these areas. For those areas in which they wished they had more experience, participating alumni elaborated upon what they could have done differently to improve their UMD undergraduate experience.

The remainder of this snapshot is organized into sections based upon the four themes listed in the left column of the table below. Each section includes questions for the reader to consider in addition to suggestions responding alumni provided regarding how the university could have improved their undergraduate experience at UMD.

Looking back at their UMD experience engaging in the opportunities listed below, the following percentages of responding alumni...		Found their experience valuable	Wished they had more opportunity
<b>Mentoring</b>	Establish a mentoring relationship with a UMD faculty/staff member	49%	64%
<b>Broad Experiences</b>	Work with others who are different from you	83%	28%
	Understand diverse perspectives	82%	31%
	Increase academic knowledge outside your major	70%	54%
	Gain an understanding of global issues	63%	46%
<b>Real-World Skills</b>	Apply what you have learned to other situations	79%	40%
	Revise your thinking based on new information	78%	34%
	Develop your leadership skills	73%	46%
	Develop your ability to write effectively	71%	41%
	Present a persuasive argument	68%	40%
	Develop your ability to speak effectively	67%	48%
<b>Preparation for the Future</b>	Prepare for your current educational or professional position	76%	59%
	Develop a sense of professional ethics	73%	34%

## Mentoring

While almost half of the respondents (49%) reported that their experience at UMD in terms of mentoring relationships was valuable or extremely valuable, a larger percentage (64%) indicated that they wanted more or a lot more opportunity to establish a mentoring relationship with faculty and staff.

Fifty-nine percent of respondents who reported being in graduate school found their UMD experience valuable in terms of mentoring, while those who were employed placed less value on their undergraduate mentoring experience (47%).

### Question to Consider

How does the university provide valuable mentorship opportunities to undergraduate students, and more specifically to those who do not intend to pursue graduate study?

### Alumni Suggestions

“The university could establish a mentoring program, where professors from within each college volunteer their time to provide guidance to students on an as needed basis. I understand that professors are very busy with class and research; however, I think it would be a great resource for students.”

“[UMD should] have a sort of first look fair, but with available mentors instead of student groups.”

## Broad Experiences

UMD’s focus on diversity as a core value is reflected in responses to related survey items. For example, 83% of responding alumni reported their UMD experience was valuable in terms of working with others who are different from them, while 82% reported that their UMD experience was valuable in helping them understand diverse perspectives. In addition, less than a third of respondents (28% and 31% respectively) indicated that they wanted more opportunity in these areas.

While a moderate percentage of respondents wanted more opportunity to increase academic knowledge outside their major (54%) and to better understand global issues (46%), significantly more rated their experience at UMD as valuable in these areas (70% and 63% of responding alumni respectively).

### Questions to Consider

How does the university provide opportunities for students to learn in fields outside of their majors and enrich their understanding of global issues?

How might the university’s new General Education program create ways to meet the expressed interest in broader undergraduate experiences?

### Alumni Suggestions

“There weren’t many opportunities to interact with people outside of my major. Providing those opportunities would have enabled me to know more about how to use my major with other issues in and outside of my major.”

“I always liked going to see the speakers that came to UMD, but a lot of students didn’t take advantage [...] maybe [UMD] could encourage students to take advantage of those opportunities more when they’re freshmen and sophomores.”

## Real-World Skills

A majority of respondents endorsed their UMD experience as having been valuable in achieving several learning outcomes. For example, over two-thirds of alumni respondents indicated that their UMD experience was valuable or extremely valuable with regard to facilitating development of leadership skills and professional ethics, their ability to write and speak effectively, and to present a persuasive argument.

Almost half of the respondents who reported being employed full-time (49%) wished they had more opportunity to develop their leadership experiences, which was a higher percentage than for those who were in graduate school (34%).

Regarding speaking skills, 71% of employed responding alumni found their undergraduate experience at UMD valuable in honing this skill, whereas those in graduate school reported this aspect of their undergraduate experience as less valuable (59%).

Employed responding alumni indicated that their UMD experience was especially valuable in helping them develop their leadership skills (49%) in comparison to responding alumni who reported being in graduate school (34%).

Over three-quarters of all respondents found their UMD experience valuable in providing opportunities to apply what they learned to other situations (79%), and revising their thinking based on new information (78%).

### Questions to Consider

Since respondents reported wishing they had more opportunity to gain an understanding of global issues, speak effectively, and present a persuasive argument, what initiatives can be taken to make sure these types of opportunities are available for students?

What does it mean that responding alumni who were employed found their UMD experience more valuable in terms of real-world skills (e.g. speaking and leadership) than those who reported attending graduate school?

### Alumni Suggestions

"[UMD could have] prepared me for something other than graduate work. Every one of my classes was about theory and writing a long paper, not about real work experiences."

"[I would have liked] more critical feedback from professors as to speaking and leadership skills."

## Preparation for the Future

Seventy-three percent of respondents reported that their UMD experience was valuable in helping them develop a sense of professional ethics, while a similar percentage indicated that their UMD experience was valuable or extremely valuable in preparing them for their current educational or professional position (76%). However, fewer respondents wished that they had more opportunity in these areas (34% and 59% respectively).

Ninety percent of respondents who reported being in graduate school indicated that their UMD experience provided them with excellent or good preparation for their graduate/professional study, in comparison to the 75% of employed respondents who reported that their experience at UMD provided them with excellent or good preparation for their current job.

## Preparation for the Future (continued)

### Questions to Consider

Why did respondents overall report wishing they had more opportunity to prepare for their current educational/professional position, and those in graduate school specifically rate their UMD experience as more valuable in this area?

What can be done to prepare students for the future if they intend to pursue full-time employment after graduation?

### Alumni Suggestions

“The university could have internships available in the lower-level classes so students could get the real-world situations and form a connection with professionals in their major of interest very early in their college experience. “

“[There should be] much more encouragement to have students prepare for current professional development. I would have liked to have more assistance in the preparation of interviews, resume building, etc.”

## Alumni Impressions of UMD

Responding alumni were asked whether or not they would attend UMD and major in the same field if they had the opportunity to pursue their undergraduate degree over again. The majority reported that they would choose UMD for their undergraduate degree (87%) and major in the same field (72%). This indicates that responding alumni were pleased overall with their experience at UMD as well as their specific area of study.

After graduation, responding alumni entered fields that were similar to their undergraduate majors at UMD. For example, 85% percent of respondents pursuing graduate degrees chose either the same or a similar major to that which they previously studied at UMD. Likewise, 76% percent of employed respondents were employed in fields that were similar to their UMD undergraduate majors.

### Question to consider

How can we explain the remaining percentages of responding alumni who indicated that they would not attend UMD (13%) or major in the same field again (28%) if they could repeat their undergraduate careers?

### Concurrent Issue:

Advice to Undergraduates from the  
Graduating Class of 2010

Campus Assessment Working Group  
(CAWG)

[www.umd.edu/cawg](http://www.umd.edu/cawg)