

# FIRST YEAR STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF BLENDED LEARNING

University of Maryland

2014 – Issue 4, July

This Campus Assessment Working Group (CAWG) Snapshot reports findings on freshman students' experiences with blended learning. The data included represent results from the Beginning Student Survey (BSS), an annual survey administered by the CAWG Beginnings subgroup. Freshmen complete the survey approximately 8-10 weeks into fall semester during courses such as ENGL 101 and UNIV 100, among others. For the BSS 2013, out of 4,012 first-time, full-time freshmen, 1,705 (42%) completed the survey.

Of the 1,705 respondents included in analysis, 53% were White; 15% were Asian; 14% were Black or African American; 11% were Hispanic; 4% were Two or More Races; 3% were Foreign; and 1% were classified as Other including American Indian and Hawaiian. Additionally, 49% were female and 51% were male. The demographic breakdown of respondents is comparable to the UMD student body as a whole. The data below represent only the responses of survey respondents, not all UMD freshmen; therefore, use caution when generalizing. Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

## Project History

This Snapshot is part of a comprehensive look at blended learning across UMD. In July of 2012, the Provost's Commission on Blended and Online Education formed to investigate issues surrounding technology in the classroom. To solicit campus responses on the topic, the Office of Institutional Research, Planning & Assessment surveyed faculty members on the topic in Spring 2013 then CAWG surveyed juniors and seniors in Spring 2013 and freshmen in Fall 2013. See page 6 for links to those reports. In Fall 2013, the Teaching and Learning Transformation Center was announced to act as the hub on campus that brings together support, incentives, infrastructure, assessment, and innovation, and provides leadership around teaching and learning including transformational technologies.

## Enrollment in Blended Courses

The table below compares respondents' enrollment rates in traditional, blended, and fully online courses during their last two years of high school and first semester at UMD.

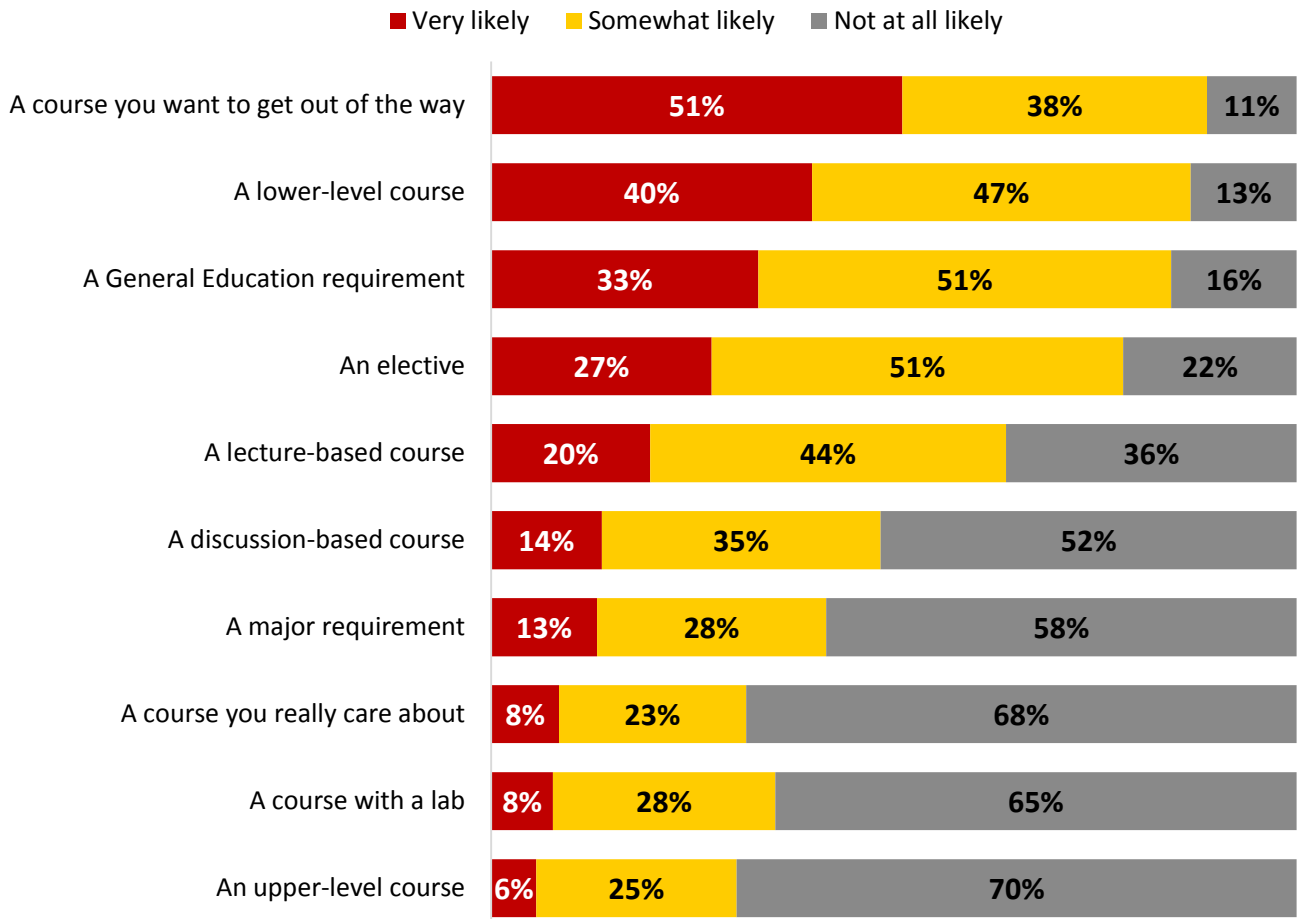
Reported Course Format Experiences:	% who took courses for credit:	
	During their last two years of high school	During the Fall 2013 semester at UMD
Traditional/Web-Facilitated *	89%	37%
Blended *	19%	40%
Fully online *	6%	Courses not available

\* See page 2 for course definitions.

N = 1682 – 1701 depending on item

- In their junior and senior years of high school, respondents had the most experience with traditional/web facilitated courses for high school or college-earning credit. Eighty-nine percent reported taking traditional/web facilitated courses; 19% took blended learning courses; and 6% took fully online courses.
- In their first semester at UMD, 37% of respondents reported taking at least one web-facilitated course for credit and 40% reported taking at least one blended course for credit.

## Likelihood of Enrolling in Blended Courses



*N = 1691 - 1698 depending on item*

- Respondents reported that they would be much more likely to select a blended format for courses they want to “get out of the way” or lower-level courses.
- Respondents reported that they would be far less likely to take the blended version of a course they “really care about,” a course with a lab, or an upper-level course.

### DEFINITIONS

**Traditional/Web-Facilitated:** Lectures, discussions, and activities were face-to-face; some course materials (e.g., syllabus, readings, videos, supplemental discussions, assignments) were online.

**Blended:** Lectures, discussions, and activities were a combination of online and face-to-face interactions; a portion of content was delivered online, with a corresponding REDUCTION of face-to-face class time.

**Fully online:** Lectures, discussions, and activities were completely online; no face-to-face interaction other than the option of proctored tests.

*Note: These are complex concepts and there is a chance students may not have read or fully understood the definitions provided.*

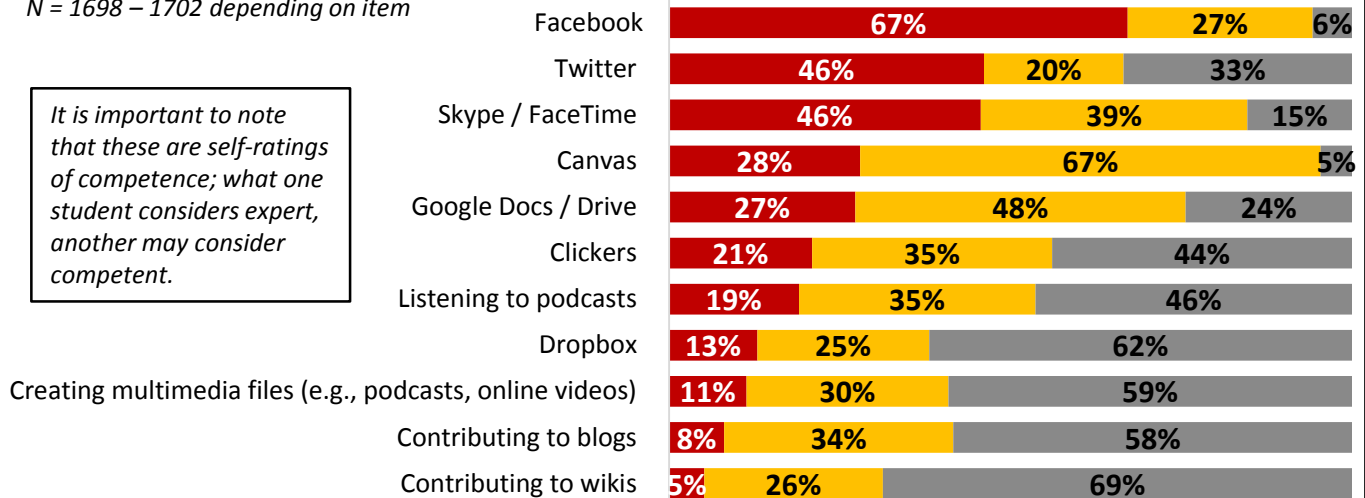
# Proficiency and Interest with Technology

## Self-Reported Proficiency

■ Expert ■ Competent ■ Never used / Novice

N = 1698 – 1702 depending on item

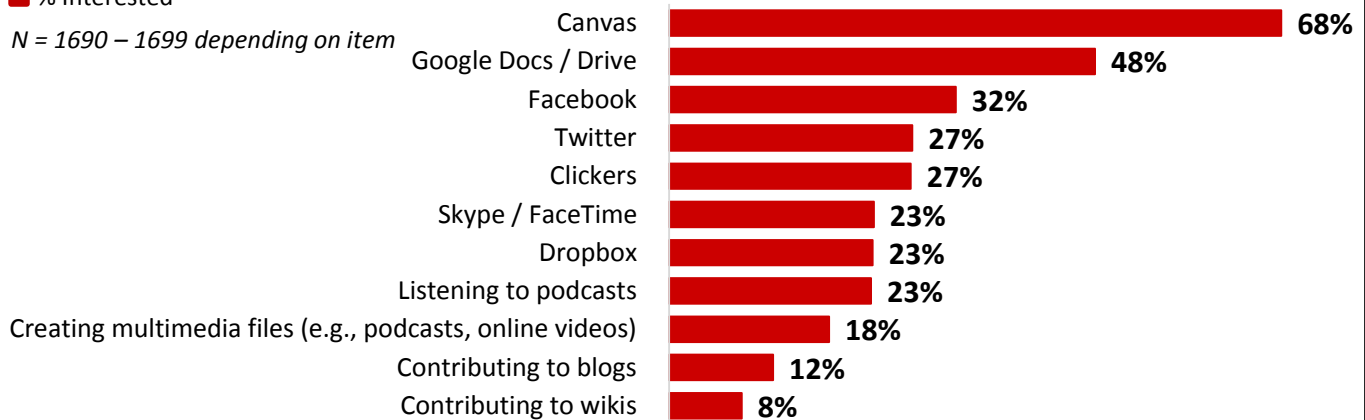
*It is important to note that these are self-ratings of competence; what one student considers expert, another may consider competent.*



## Interest In Using Technology for Classes

■ % Interested

N = 1690 – 1699 depending on item



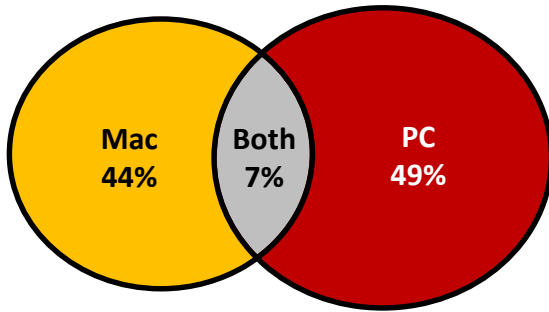
- Regarding proficiency, highest expert ratings included technologies primarily used for interpersonal communication such as Facebook (67%), Twitter (46%), and Skype (46%).
- Over two-thirds (67%) of respondents rated themselves as having “expert” proficiency with Facebook, but fewer than one-third (32%) were interested in using it for class.
- More than half of respondents reported low levels of proficiency as they had never used or were novices when it came to contributing to wikis (69%), using Dropbox (62%), creating multimedia files (59%), and contributing to blogs (58%). Additionally, fewer than one quarter of students indicated that they were interested in using these technologies for class.
- Although more than two-thirds (68%) of respondents reported being interested in using Canvas for their classes, only 28% rated their proficiency as “expert” 8 – 10 weeks into their first semester.

### Questions to Consider



- How might the University take advantage of student proficiency and interest in online technologies when designing and structuring blended learning courses?
- How might increasing their proficiency in some of these technologies help students in blended courses as well as in other ways outside of the classroom?

## Platforms Students Use for Coursework

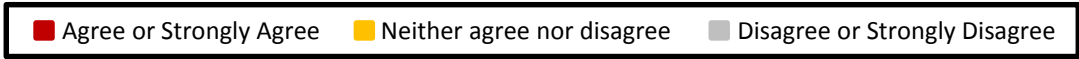


Students were fairly evenly split with the platforms they use for their coursework – 49% use a PC and 44% use a Mac while 7% use both.

*Image not drawn to scale  
N = 1655*

## Opinions on Blended Learning

Students were asked their level of agreement with the following statements. Their responses are coded according to the key below. Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding.



### Instructor Engagement

I would have less opportunity to interact with the instructor in a blended course.



Blended courses sound as if they would be more engaging than traditional courses.

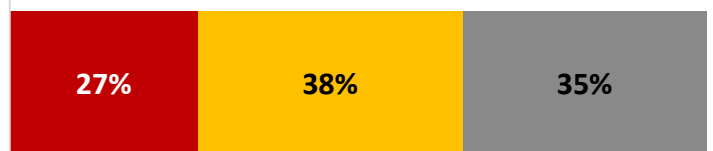


*N = 1702*

- Most respondents (78%) believed that they would have less opportunity to interact with their instructors in a blended course, and more than half (54%) appeared to believe these courses would be less engaging.

### Academic Integrity and Student Civility

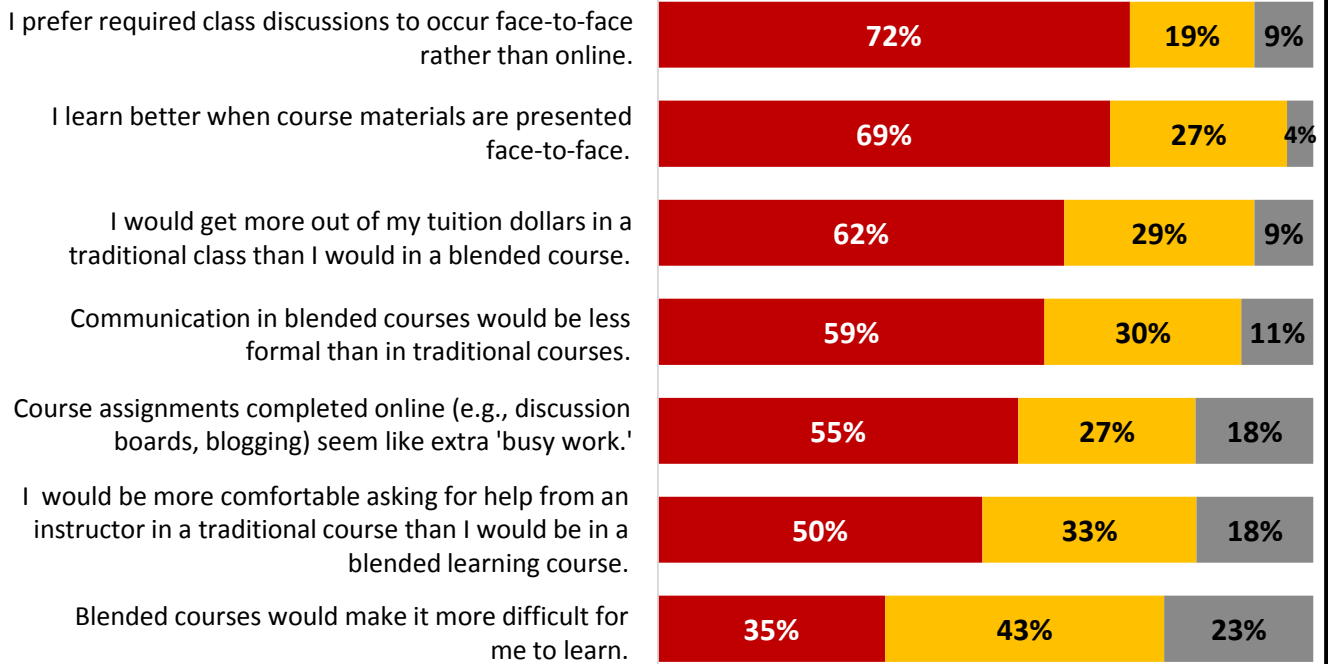
Students are more likely to be rude or disrespectful online than in an in-class environment.



*N = 1700*

- Respondents appeared split regarding levels of respect in an online classroom environment.

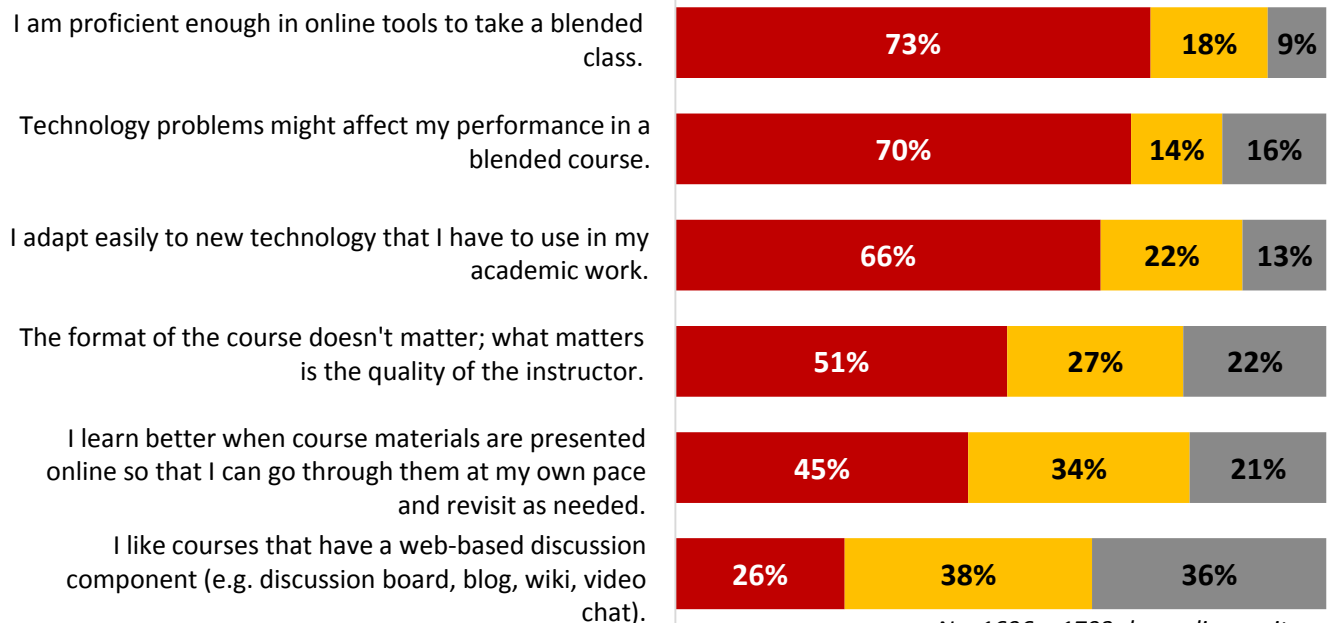
## Student Learning and Engagement



*N = 1698 – 1702 depending on item*

- Respondents preferred face-to-face interaction for class discussion and course material, and tended to agree that traditional courses provide a better financial value than blended courses.

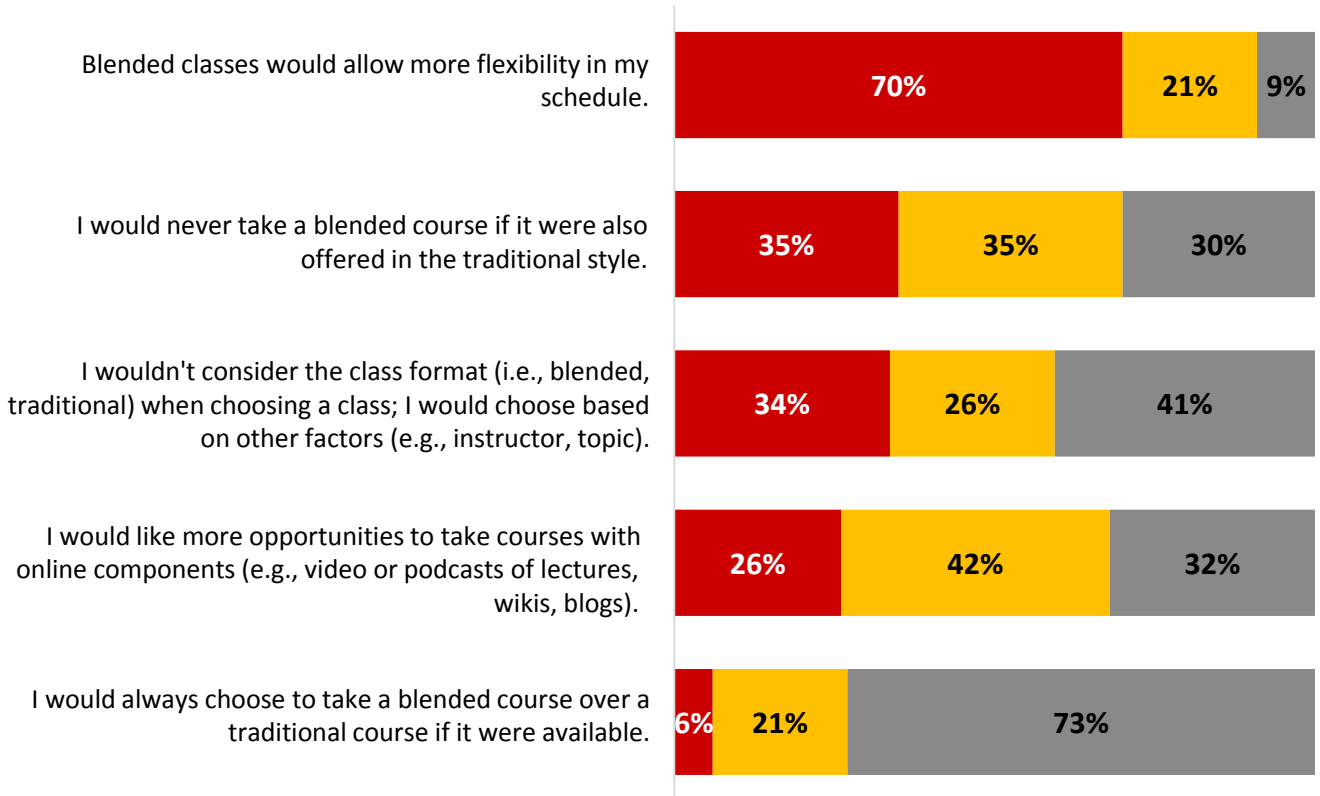
## Technology and Logistics



*N = 1696 – 1703 depending on item*

- Respondents appeared confident in their own abilities to take blended courses. Seventy-three percent agreed that they are proficient enough in online tools to take a blended class, and 66% reported adapting easily to new technology that they have to use in their coursework.
- However, 70% believed that technology problems might affect their performance in a blended course.

## Interest in Blended Courses



*N = 1699 – 1701 depending on item*

- While 70% of respondents agreed that blended learning classes allowed more flexibility in their schedules, only 6% said that they would always choose to take a blended course over a traditional course.
- If provided with a choice, approximately one-third (35%) of respondents would never take a blended course, while over one-third (34%) report that they would choose a course based upon factors other than class format.

### How do UMD faculty members and juniors/seniors feel about blended learning?

In a 2013 survey, faculty members were asked similar questions to those reported. To see the related report in its entirety, please visit the “What’s New” tab at [www.irpa.umd.edu](http://www.irpa.umd.edu).

That same year, juniors and seniors were also asked similar questions. To see the related report in its entirety, please visit: [www.umd.edu/cawg](http://www.umd.edu/cawg).



*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 freshman 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).*