CAMPUS ASSESSMENT WORKING GROUP

Juniors and Seniors' Perspectives on their Participation in Campus Activities

September 2023

This report summarizes findings on juniors and seniors' sense of responsibility to their community and engagement with campus activities in Spring 2023. This report answers three questions:

1. How have respondents' perceptions about their commitments to their community changed over time?
2. How do respondents say they engage with campus activities?
3. For respondents who sign up for campus activities, how often do they attend them, and if they do not attend, why not?

Recent conversations with faculty and staff on other topics led to the formation of these research questions. We thank them, and the members of the Directors of Undergraduate Studies Forum in particular, for their suggestions.

Main findings

- Ninety-three percent of respondents strongly agreed or agreed that it is important for them to honor their commitments. When asked specifically about activities on campus, 30% of respondents said they did not attend an activity and/or appointment for which they had registered.
- Compared to 2016, a higher percentage of respondents in 2023 said they felt a commitment to help their community.
- There was a wide range in how often respondents said they attended events and appointments after signing up for them.
- The 30% of respondents who said they signed up for activities or appointments that they did not attend were asked why they did not attend these events. Many respondents cited reasons related to lack of interest in the activity.

About the University of Maryland Student Survey

This report was written by the Campus Assessment Working Group (CAWG) ACES subcommittee using data from the 2023 University of Maryland Student Survey (UMSS23). The 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]

This report includes data from the UMSS23 and the UMSS16, which asked about civic engagement and voter behavior. The questions from the UMSS16 came from a survey administered by the Leadership & Community Service Learning (LCSL) unit in the Adele H. Stamp Student Union Center for Campus Life.

[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 reflect current reporting guidelines for gender (male/female).

Ninety-three percent of respondents strongly agreed or agreed it is important for them to honor their commitments. When asked specifically about activities on campus, 30% said they did not attend an activity and/or appointment for which they had registered.

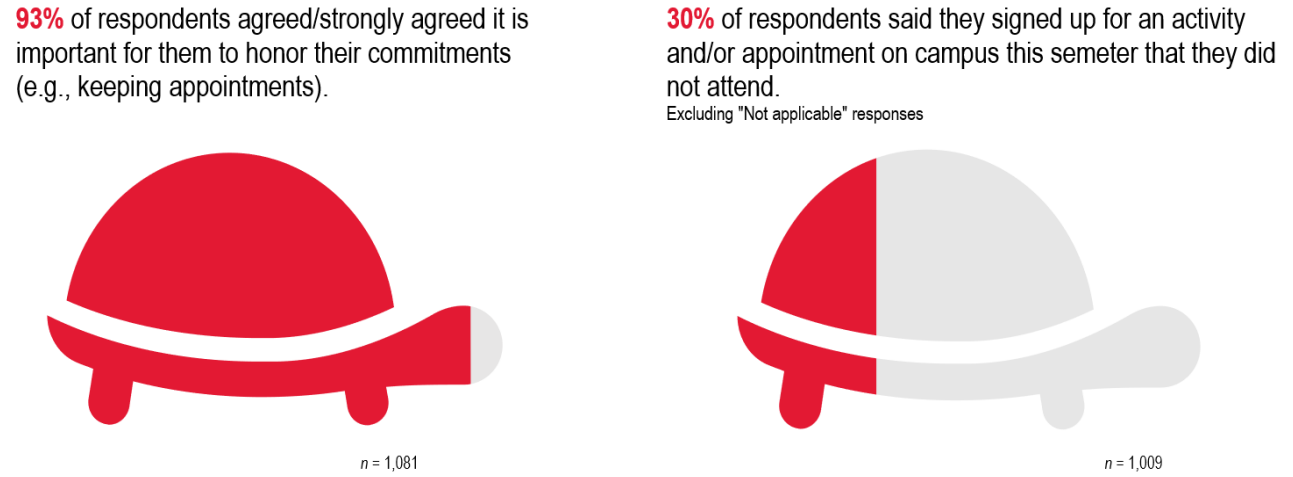

Figure 1. Percent of respondents who strongly agree or agreed with the item, “It is important for me to honor my commitments,” UMSS23 (left). Percent of respondents who said “yes” to the item, “This semester, did you sign up for any activities and/or appointments on campus that you did not attend?,” UMSS23 (right). The second item excludes respondents who selected “not applicable” (*n* = 72).

Compared to 2016, a higher percentage of respondents in 2023 said they felt a commitment to help their community.

Figure 2. Percentage of respondents who strongly agree or agreed with items on the UMSS16 and UMSS23.

- Over 70% of respondents agreed with each question about individuals’ responsibility and engagement with their community. The highest percent of respondents (90%) agreed that they think about how others will be affected by their decisions.
- CAWG last asked these questions in 2016. For every question, a similar or higher percentage of respondents agreed with the items in 2023. For example, 82% of respondents agreed they value opportunities to contribute to their community, up from 69% in 2016. Similarly, 79% of respondents agreed they have responsibilities to their community, up from 69% in 2016.

Questions to Consider

- What do respondents consider to be a "commitment" and how do they define community?
- How might the different contexts in which these questions were asked in 2016 and 2023 have influenced respondents' answers?
- What might explain the differences between the percent of respondents who agreed it is important to honor their commitments (93%) and the percent who said they signed up for a campus activity that they did not attend (30%)?

There was a wide range in how often respondents said they attended events and appointments after signing up for them.

- Activities and appointments: Almost half of respondents said they rarely or never attended health and wellness appointments (45%) or appointments with student service offices (42%). On the other hand, fewer said they rarely or never attended academic appointments (24%) or office hours (28%).
- Events: About 30% or fewer of respondents said they never or rarely attended university-wide events, college-wide events, or student organization meetings and events. Fifty-nine percent of respondents said they always or often attended student organization events.
- Work: Sixty-five percent of respondents said they always or often attended shifts for their campus jobs, 9% said they sometimes attended, and 27% said they rarely or never attended.

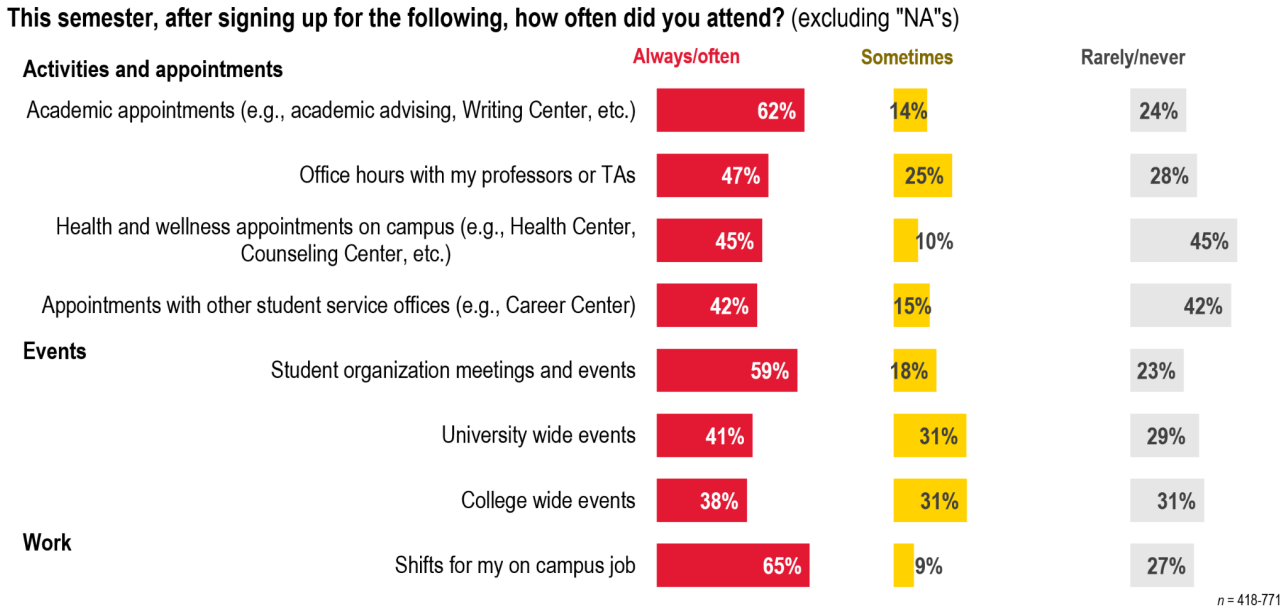

Figure 3. Distribution of responses to items about whether respondents attend events and appointments for which they sign up, UMSS23. Excludes respondents who selected "not applicable" (*n* = 320-661).

Behind the findings

According to Payroll and Human Resources data from Spring 2023, 6,051 undergraduate students had on-campus jobs that semester.

Questions to Consider

- These questions included a "not applicable" response option. Is it possible some respondents did not understand the "not applicable" option, adding to the percentage who selected "rarely" or "never" instead?

The 30% of respondents (*n* = 298) who said they signed up for activities or appointments that they did not attend were asked why they did not attend these events. Many respondents cited reasons related to lack of interest in the activity.

- Respondents who said they signed up for events and activities on campus and then did not attend them (see page 2) were asked a series of questions about why they did not attend these events.
- Among those respondents, 78% said when they did not attend something, it was because something else came up, and 65% of respondents said it was because they changed their mind.
- Around half cited reasons related to time management: fifty-six percent said they forgot and 47% said they double-booked themselves.

Percent of respondents who said the following were reasons why, when they signed up for something on campus, they did not attend:

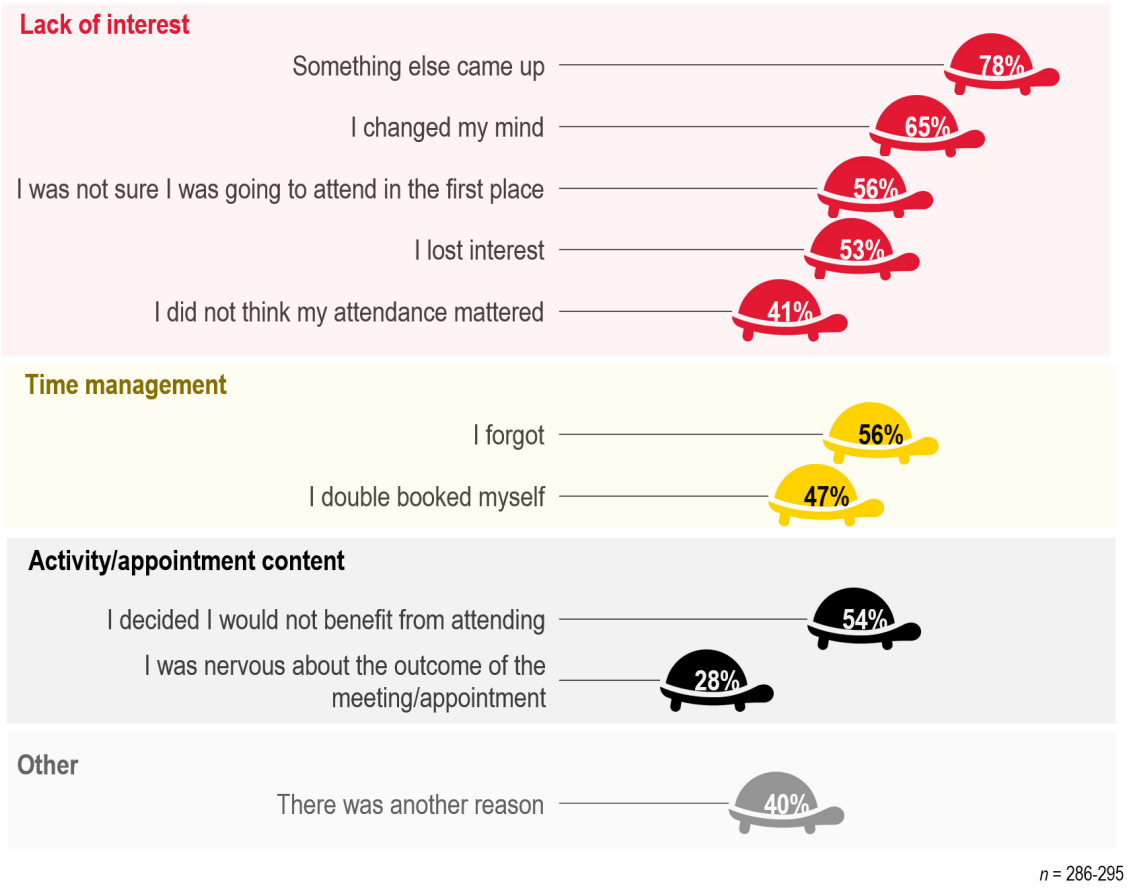

Figure 4. Percentage of respondents who said each factor was a reason they did not attend something on campus after signing up, UMSS23.

Questions to Consider

- What types of conflicts might have "come up" for the 78% of respondents who gave this response?
- Forty percent of respondents said they missed an activity or appointment for "another reason." What other reasons might have come up?
- Why might respondents have signed up for an activity or appointment when they were unsure they would attend?
- When asked about how frequently they attended activities and appointments, the plurality of responses were at the extremes (always/often or rarely/never). What does this say about students'

Conclusion

The data presented here represent juniors and seniors' self-reported behavior about their participation in campus activities. Large percentages of respondents reported feeling a sense of commitment to their community -- more than the last time these questions were asked, in 2016. However, almost 300 respondents said they did not attend an activity and/or appointment for which they had registered, and the frequency with which respondents said they attended certain events varied widely. When asked why they did not attend appointments and activities for which they had registered, many respondents cited reasons related to lack of interest in the activity and time management. These findings can help inform how University employees communicate about various activities and appointments and how to promote attendance.

What's next?

- Dive deeper: What additional information does your unit have to better understand why students do not attend appointments and activities after signing up for them?
- Take action: What can we do as University employees to address some of the reasons respondents gave for why they missed activities/appointments?

About ACES

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