



CAMPUS
ASSESSMENT
WORKING GROUP

Juniors and Seniors' Experiences Learning about Diversity in the Classroom

August, 2024

This report explores items that asked juniors and seniors to think about how they have engaged with diversity in their classes under the current general education curriculum. These survey questions were inspired by UMD's General Education Diversity Initiative and were written to reflect specific behaviors that students might experience from learning about diversity in the classroom and show the educational benefits of learning about diversity and different cultures. As the University works to implement a new General Education Diversity requirement, these results can serve as a baseline for both understanding what students say they learn and for future assessment.

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).¹

Diversity Requirements at the University of Maryland

Students are currently required to take four to six credits in diversity courses as part of their general education requirements. In March 2022, The University Senate approved a new General Education Diversity Initiative (GEDI) that would replace the current curriculum.² These new courses will incorporate theory- and practice-oriented approaches towards diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives, such as discussions of systemic racism and teaching skills of civic engagement. The GEDI requirement will go into effect in fiscal year 2026.

The GEDI Task Force also recommended that every major degree program adds discipline-specific diversity learning outcomes to incorporate diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts that are directly related to students' future careers.

Understanding Identities in Class

Respondents said they learn about identities different from their own in general education courses more often than in courses for their major.

- Eighty-three percent of respondents agreed that their general education courses increased their understanding of racial/ethnic identities different from their own; fewer (66%) agreed that general education courses increased their understanding of racial/ethnic identities similar to their own .

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 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. The distribution of respondents by first generation status was similar to that of the UMD population of juniors and seniors.

² Source: UMD Office of Undergraduate Studies' Diversity Education Task Force website: <https://www.ugst.umd.edu/deef.html>

- A similar pattern emerged when respondents were asked about courses in their major: over two-thirds (69%) of respondents agreed that courses in their major increased their understanding of racial/ethnic identities different from their own, while 60% of respondents agreed that courses in their major increased their understanding of racial/ethnic identities similar to their own.
- More respondents agreed that they increased their understanding of different racial/ethnic identities in general education courses, compared to courses in their major.

Indicate how much you agree/disagree with the following:

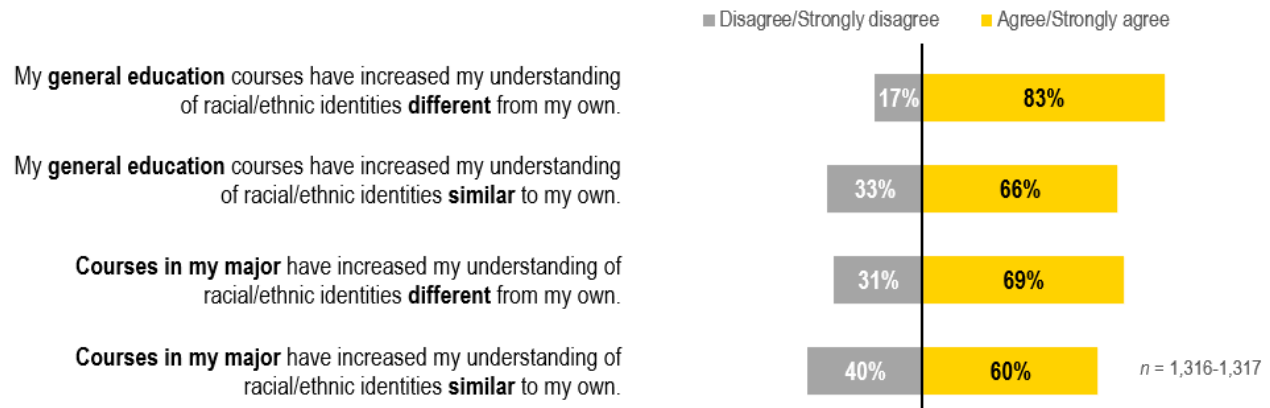


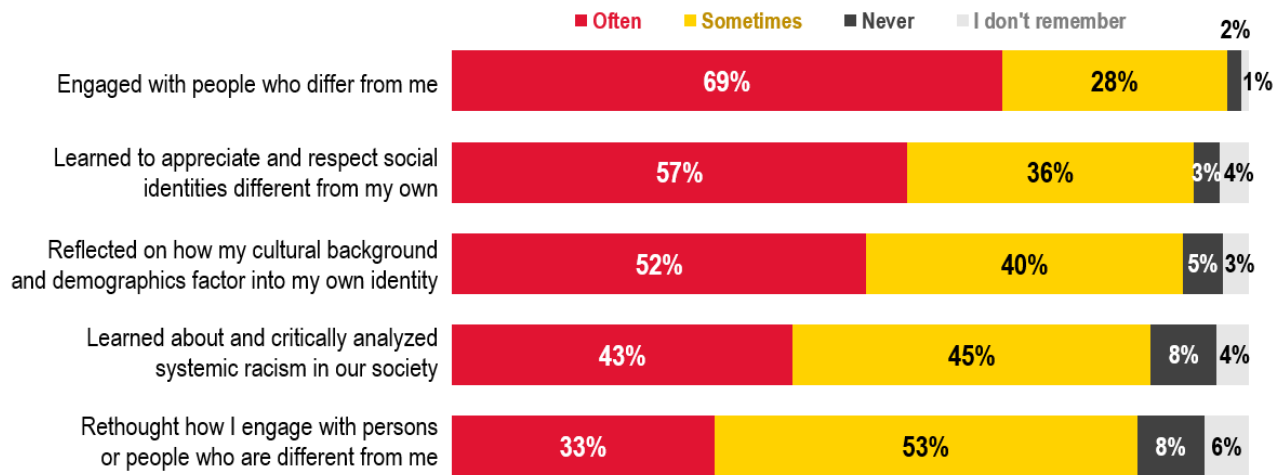
Figure 1. Distribution of respondents who agreed/strongly agreed and disagreed/strongly disagreed with items about courses at UMD, UMSS24.

Changing Behaviors

Most respondents said they often engage with diverse populations in class, but fewer said they changed their behaviors.

- Most respondents said they often engaged with people who differ from them (69%), learned to appreciate and respect social identities different from their own (57%), and reflected on how their cultural background and demographics factor into their own identity (52%) in classes at UMD.
- Less than half of respondents said they "often" (43%) or "sometimes" (45%) learned about and critically analyzed systemic racism in our society.
- About half of respondents (53%) said they "sometimes" rethought how they engage with persons or people who are different from them in their classes. Almost one in ten respondents (8%) said they have "never" done so in their classes at UMD.

When thinking about the classes you have taken at UMD, how often have you done the following?



n = 1,317-1,319

Figure 2. Distribution of responses for items about learning about diverse perspectives in classes at UMD, UMSS24.

Questions to Consider

- How are respondents defining “culturally diverse”? Does that differ from how they are interpreting “racial/ethnic identities”?
- Where might people be learning these skills outside of the classroom?
- How frequently should we expect students to be engaging in these behaviors?

Conclusion

These questions were designed to serve as a baseline for students’ engagement and knowledge of diversity and inclusion in the classroom, as the University implements a new diversity requirement in general education courses and eventually in every major’s curriculum. Currently, students agreed less with learning about any identities in courses in their major compared to general education courses. Fewer respondents said they learn about identities similar to their own compared to identities different from their own. Further, respondents said they are often learning about diversity in class, but change behaviors or rethink their perspectives less frequently.

Similar response patterns were found about respondents’ overall attitudes and beliefs about cultural diversity – read more about it on the [CAWG website](#).

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 Buenaflor, 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; Pearl Lo; Adele H. Stamp Student Union; Scott Moses, Department of English; Ronald Zeigler, Nyumburu Cultural Center; Sharon Ousman, Career Center; Alan Socha, IRPA; Minli Wang, A. James Clark School of Engineering. For more information, to view past reports, or to join a CAWG subgroup, visit <http://ter.ps/CAWG>.