

SNAPSHOT

UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND
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CAWG

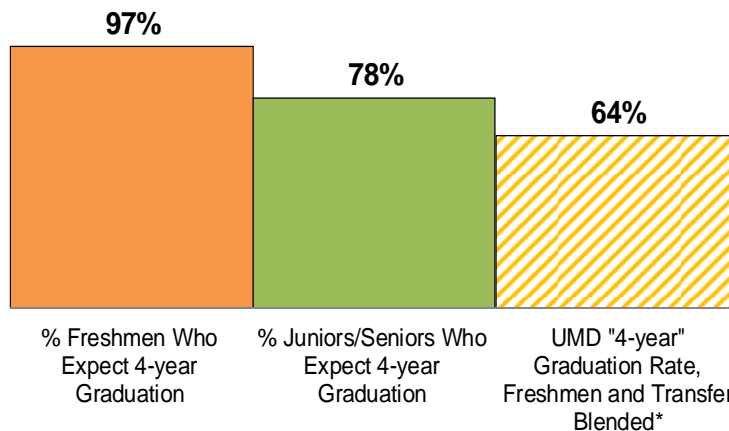
of
Student Experiences

Undergraduate Time to Degree

The University of Maryland is committed to graduating students within four years and has implemented several initiatives to help meet this goal. To inform decision-making related to these initiatives, the Campus Assessment Working Group (CAWG) surveyed both freshmen and juniors/seniors during the 2011-2012 academic year regarding their anticipated time to degree. We explored factors influencing their degree planning and completion expectations, whether they are on track to graduate on time, and reasons some students plan to remain at Maryland more than four years.

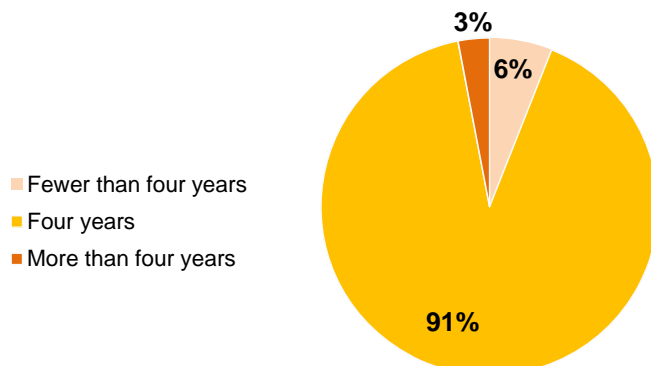
This Snapshot summarizes results from the Beginning Student Survey (BSS) 2011 and the University of Maryland Student Survey (UMSS) 2012 and contrasts freshman plans and junior/senior experiences. The BSS is administered in introductory courses such as ENGL101 and UNIV100 to freshmen eight to ten weeks into their first semester. Out of 3,994 first-time, full-time freshmen, 1,498 (38%) completed the BSS11. The UMSS is administered to juniors and seniors in Professional Writing courses during the spring semester. We distributed 2,471 UMSS12 surveys to Professional Writing courses and 1,844 (75%) respondents completed the survey. The data below represent responses of survey respondents, not all Maryland students; therefore, use caution when generalizing. Unless otherwise indicated, the number of responses to items is generally consistent with the sample size.

Expected and Actual 4-Year Graduation Rates



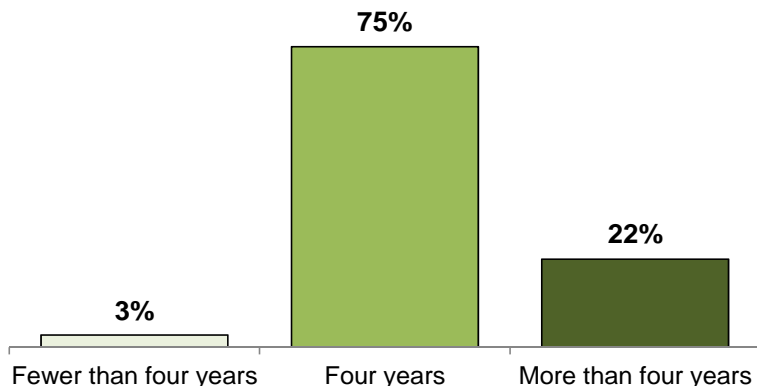
* This calculation is for the purposes of this Snapshot, and not officially reported elsewhere.

Freshman Expectations Upon Entering



An overwhelming majority of freshman respondents (91%) reported that they expect to receive their bachelor's degree in four years; 6% reported expecting to graduate in fewer than four years.

Junior/Senior Current Estimate of Time to Degree



Note: Respondents include only those who began their college career as freshmen at UMD (freshman admits); *n* = 1,316.

- More than three-quarters (78%) of junior and senior respondents reported expecting to complete their degrees in four or fewer years.
- Twenty-two percent of juniors/seniors estimated that it will take them *more* than four years to complete their degrees. A higher percentage of Black/African American respondents (30%) expected the same.
- Based on the overall distribution of respondents, more first-generation college students than expected (28%) estimated it will take *more* than four years to earn their bachelor's degree(s).

Definitions

First-generation college students are those who indicated on their admissions application that none of their parents had completed at least a bachelor's degree.

Freshman admits are students who were first admitted to UMD as full-time freshmen.

Demographics

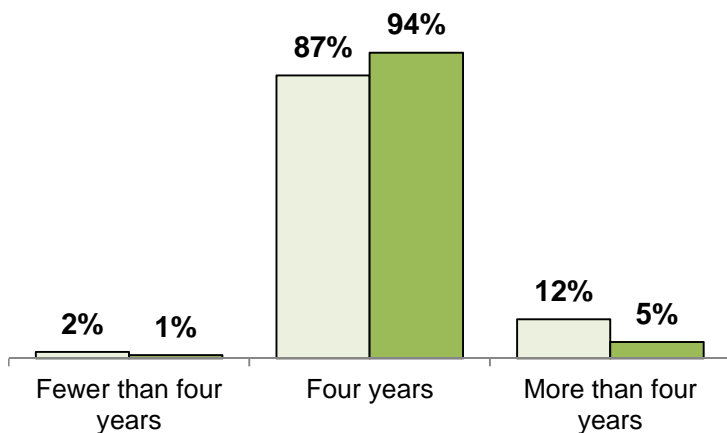
BSS11 (*n* = 1,498):

UMSS12 (*n* = 1,844):

- | | |
|---|---|
| • 51% White | • 58% White |
| • 18% Black or African American | • 10% Black or African American |
| • 12% Asian | • 16% Asian |
| • 10% Hispanic | • 7% Hispanic |
| • 4% Foreign | • 3% Foreign |
| • 3% Two or More | • 3% Two or More |
| • 3% Unknown | • 2% Unknown |
| • <1% American Indian or Alaska Native | • <1% American Indian or Alaska Native |
| • <1% Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander | • <1% Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander |
| • 16% first-generation | • 21% first-generation |
| • All freshman admits | • 72% freshman admits |

Juniors/Seniors Perceive...

- most STUDENTS expect to graduate in ...
- the UNIVERSITY expects students to graduate in ...



Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

Overall, 95% of junior/senior respondents believe the *university* expects them to graduate in four or fewer years. Based on the overall distribution of respondents, a lower percentage of Black/African American respondents (90%) than expected reported the same. Conversely, a higher percentage of Asian respondents (98%) than expected believe UMD expects them to graduate in four or fewer years.



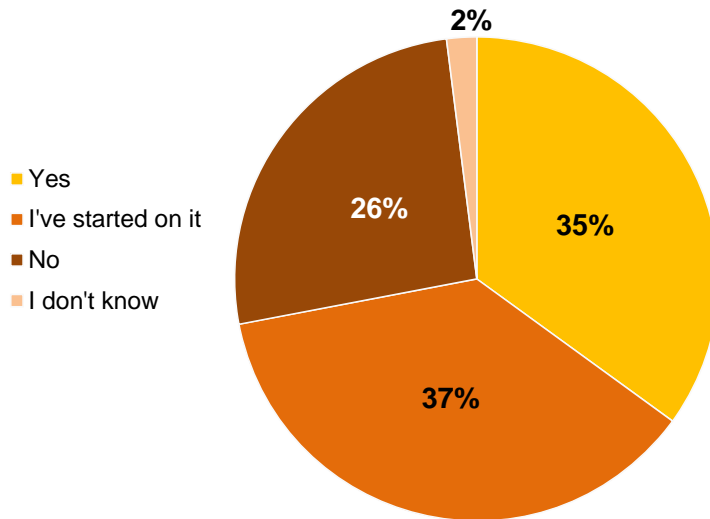
Questions to Consider:

- What factors may lead to varying perceptions among different groups regarding UMD's expectations for their time to degree?
- How can UMD better convey its expectation that students graduate within four years in ways that affect student behavior?

Freshman Degree Planning

To promote undergraduate student success, in Fall 2005 the University of Maryland implemented the Student Academic Success-Degree Completion policy for new freshmen. The policy establishes a structured framework and criteria to guide all students to completion of an undergraduate degree within a reasonable period of time. One expectation of the policy is that each undergraduate student will create an individualized plan for completing their degree in accordance with their academic unit's four-year graduation plan. Students and advisors on campus frequently call these plans "four-year plans" or "academic plans."

Have you developed your UMD "four-year plan?"



- Eight to ten weeks into their first semester, freshmen appear to be on their way to completing their four-year plans. Almost three-quarters reported either completing or starting their four-year plan.
- Academic plans for students entering UMD without precollege credit would include an average of 15 credits per fall and spring semester in order for the student to graduate in four years. The majority of freshman respondents (81%) reported planning to take 15-17 credits per semester while at UMD. Fourteen percent plan to take 12-14 credits per semester and just 5% plan to take 18 or more.



90% of freshman respondents reported taking AP/IB/college-level courses in high school.



3/4 of those who reported taking these courses also reported earning credit that counted toward their UMD degree.

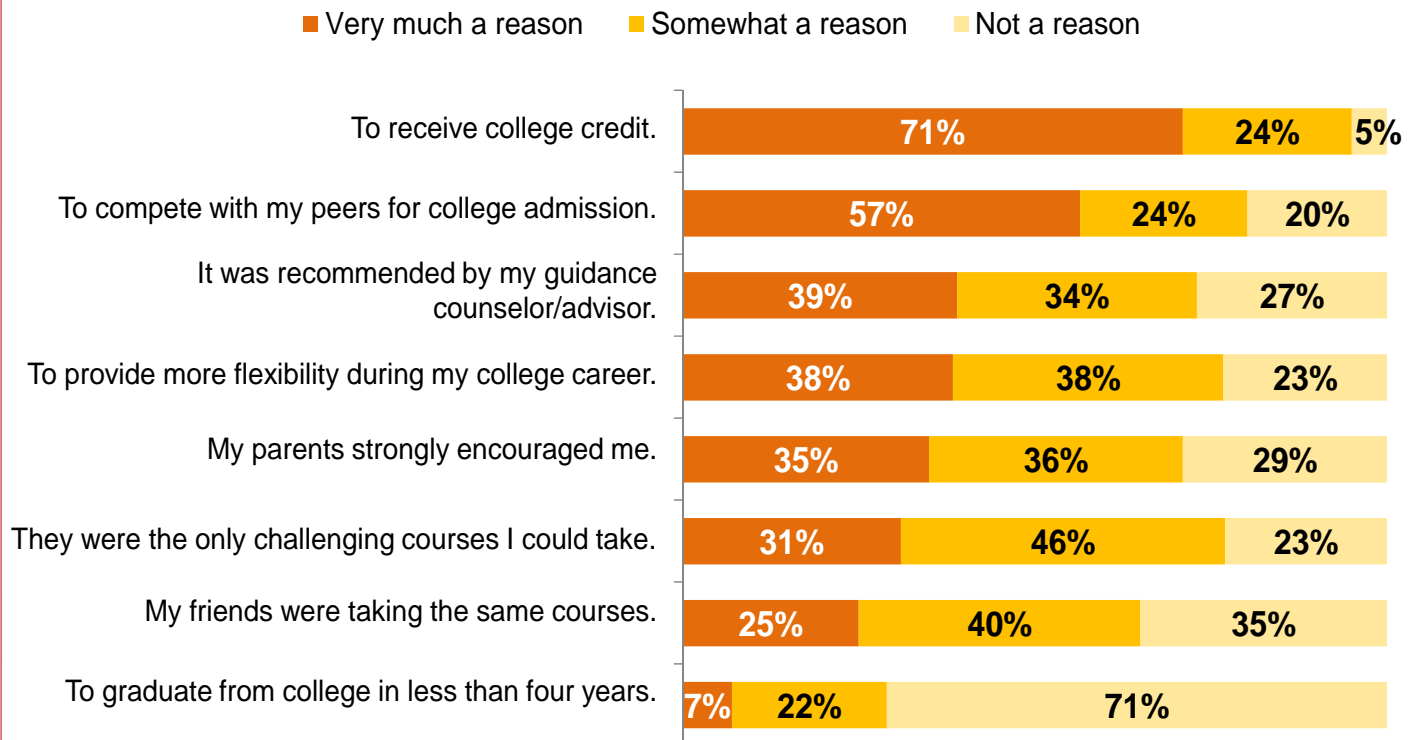


Freshmen were asked how their AP/IB/college-level credit would affect their ability to graduate. Of those who reported taking and earning AP/IB/college-level credit:

- 40% expected the credit would allow them to take fewer credits per semester to graduate in four years.
- 29% reported that the credit would not affect their ability to graduate in four years.
- 17% were not sure how the credit would affect their ability to graduate in four years.
- 13% expected the credit would allow them to graduate in fewer than four years.
- 1% did not believe they would graduate in four years.

Freshman Degree Planning (continued)

Reasons Freshmen Reported Taking AP/IB/College-level Courses in High School



- Freshmen appear to be more interested in taking AP/IB/college-level courses while in high school to be competitive for college admission than to graduate from college in less than four years. Whereas over half (57%) reported that competing with their peers for college admission was *very much a reason* for taking these courses, just 7% indicated that graduating from college in less than four years was *very much a reason*. In fact, although 71% said receiving college credit was *very much a reason* for enrolling in these courses, the same percentage reported that graduating early from college was *not a reason*.
- Thirty-eight percent indicated that providing more flexibility during their college career was *very much a reason* for enrolling in college-level courses.
- Over a third of freshman respondents reported that recommendations from guidance counselors/advisors (39%) and/or strong encouragement from parents (35%) were *very much a reason* for taking college-level courses.



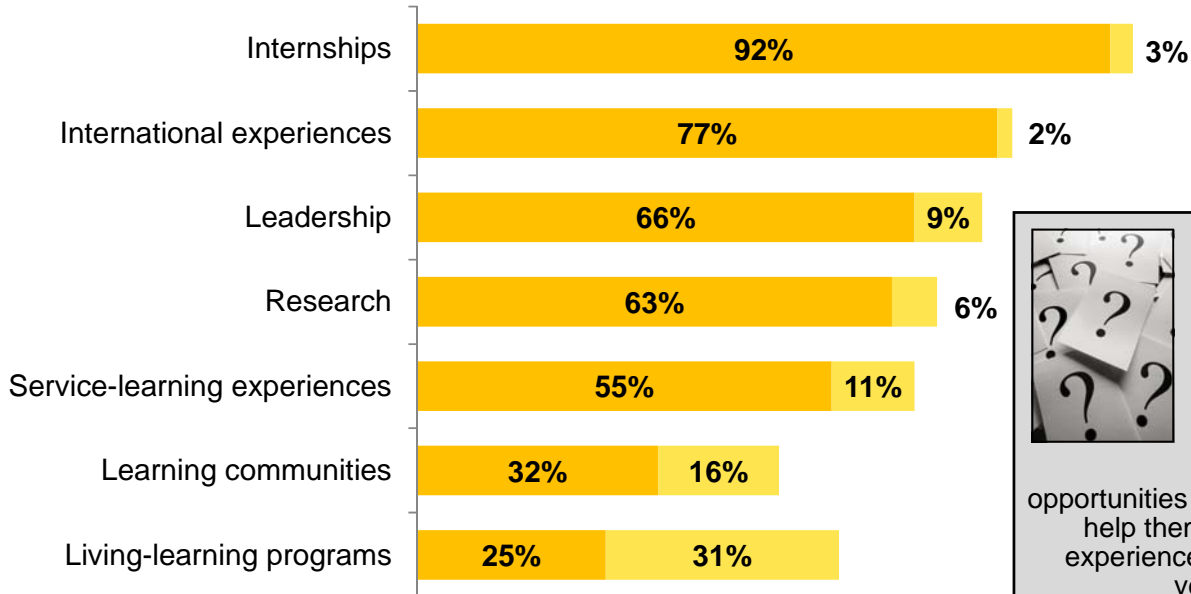

Question to Consider:

How can we encourage these students to make the best use of the flexibility provided by their pre-college credits and still graduate within four years?

What Else Would They Like to Fit In?

Percentage of Freshmen Who Reported They ...

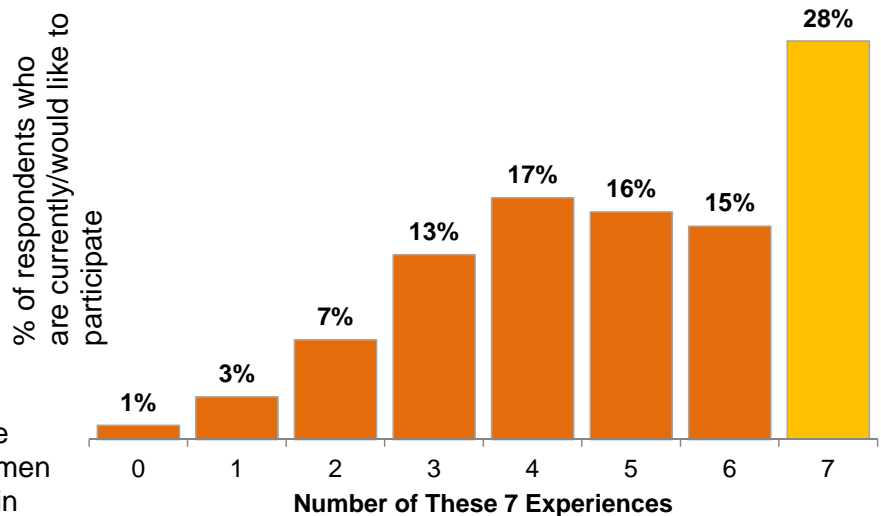
■ Would like to participate in ■ Are currently participating in

Question to Consider:
How do we connect students with the information they need to pursue these opportunities and how do we help them plan for these experiences within a four-year time frame?

The graphic to the right examines the total number of experiences that respondents reported they either *currently participate in* or *would like to participate in*.

Interest in the Above Experiences



- Over a quarter of all freshman respondents expressed interest in participating in all seven experiences above.
- Despite indicating interest in these experiences, the majority of freshmen (60%) did not report participating in any of these experiences 8-10 weeks into their first semester.
- When asked how participating in one or more of these experiences would affect their ability to graduate in four years, freshmen responded in the following ways:
 - 54% believed it would not affect their ability to graduate in four years.
 - 35% were not sure how it would affect their ability to graduate in four years.
 - 6% believed it would delay graduation; however, they believed the experience is worth the delay.
 - 5% believed it would delay graduation and, therefore, might not do it.

Reasons for Staying at Maryland Longer than Four Years

Twenty-two percent of all junior and senior respondents reported not planning to graduate with their bachelor's degree within four years. The next two tables indicate reasons why. The first table includes responses from juniors and seniors who reported not being on track to complete their degree within four years and the second reports responses from juniors and seniors who indicated they are on track to graduate in four years, but are choosing not to.

Not Being on Track to Graduate in Four Years

If you are not on track to complete your bachelor's degree(s) in four years, please indicate the degree to which each of the following are reasons why.	Major or Minor Reason%	Not a Reason%
I decided to change my major and have to stay longer.	59	41
I revised my academic plan in order to pursue additional opportunities (e.g., internship, additional degree/major).	55	45
I dropped/failed classes.	52	48
I experienced non-academic issues (e.g., personal, financial).	43	57
The classes I needed were not available.	40	60
Not all of my credits from my previous institution(s) transferred to UMD.	39	61
I was required to change my academic plan (e.g., dismissed from major, could not get into my desired major).	28	72
My selected major(s) requires more than four years or 120 credits to complete.	21	79
I am not sure why I will not complete my degree in four years.	5	95
I am not planning to graduate.	1	99

n = 338–347, depending on item

- The academic path to timely graduation is not smooth for some junior/senior respondents. Of those who reported not being on track to complete their bachelor's degree(s) in four years: 59% indicated they decided to change their major, and 55% reported revising their academic plan to accommodate additional opportunities.
- Of the respondents who are not on track to graduate in four years:
 - 43% indicated non-academic issues (e.g., personal, financial) have been a reason for not being on track.
 - 52% reported that dropped or failed courses delayed their graduation beyond four years.
- These juniors and seniors indicated that UMD policies also play a role in extending their graduation timeline. Thirty-nine percent of respondents who reported not being on track to complete their degree in four years reported that UMD did not accept all of their transfer credits. More than a quarter (28%) reported that they were required to change their academic plan (e.g., dismissed from major, could not get into their desired major).
- Following their academic plan appears to go more smoothly for transfer students. Freshman admits were more likely than transfer students to report that revising their academic plan and dropping/failing classes were major or minor reasons for delaying their graduation.



Questions to Consider:

What can UMD do to make the transition between majors smoother for students? Is there a way to support students in selecting a major earlier and staying with that major?

How can we help these students improve their academic planning and performance to stay on track for graduation in four years?

Reasons for Staying at Maryland Longer than Four Years (continued)

Choosing to Stay Longer than Four Years

If you are on track to complete your bachelor's degree in four years but do not plan to graduate in four years, please indicate the degree to which each of the following are reasons why.	Major or Minor Reason%	Not a Reason%
I am staying to pursue an additional curricular opportunity (e.g., another major, minor, certificate, degree).	62	38
There are additional courses I would like to take.	53	47
I am staying to pursue an additional extracurricular opportunity (e.g., internship, research).	53	47
My parent(s)/guardian(s) is/are willing to pay for additional semesters.	29	71
I have other funding for additional semesters.	24	76
I like it here and I will not be ready to leave.	24	76
I have no post-graduation plans.	16	84

n = 115–123, depending on item

Eight percent of all junior/senior respondents reported that they are on track to complete all requirements for their bachelor's degree in four years, but are choosing not to for the following reasons:

- Sixty-two percent indicated that they are staying at UMD longer to pursue an additional curricular opportunity (e.g., another major, minor, certificate, degree). Similarly, 53% reported staying longer to take additional courses of interest.
- Just over half (53%) said they are staying longer to pursue an additional extracurricular opportunity (e.g., internship, research).
- Although the majority reported that funding was not a factor in extending their graduation timeframe, about one in four indicated that funding for additional semesters (24%) or having parent(s)/guardian(s) willing to pay for additional semesters (29%) were reasons for staying. Similarly, almost a quarter (24%) indicated that they like it here and are not ready to leave.



Questions to Consider:

How can we encourage students to plan for all of their curricular and extra-curricular pursuits early enough to avoid delaying graduation?

Do these additional pursuits help students with their post-graduation plans?

Recent Snapshot Issues:

Mentorship Programs

Alumni Reflections on the UMD Undergraduate Experience

Campus Assessment Working Group
(CAWG)

www.umd.edu/cawg