

JUNIOR AND SENIOR STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF BLENDED LEARNING

University of Maryland

2014 – Issue 3, June

This Campus Assessment Working Group (CAWG) Snapshot reports findings on junior and senior students' experiences with blended learning. The data included represent results from the University of Maryland Student Survey (UMSS), an annual survey administered by the CAWG Assessing Campus Experiences Subgroup (ACES). Respondents complete the survey approximately 8-10 weeks into the spring semester during Professional Writing courses. For the UMSS 2013, out of 2,679 juniors and seniors enrolled in Professional Writing, 1,600 (60%) completed the survey.

Of the respondents, 53% were White; 17% were Asian; 11% were Black or African American; 8% were Hispanic; 5% were Unknown; 3% were Foreign; 3% were Two or More Races; and <1% were classified as Other, including American Indian and Hawaiian. Additionally, 55% were male and 45% were female. The demographic breakdown of respondents is representative of the university as a whole. The data below represent only the responses of survey respondents, not all UMD students; therefore, use caution when generalizing. Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

Snapshot Highlights

Most respondents expressed interest in taking blended courses, particularly lower level, general education, and elective courses. However, students have a variety of concerns including instructor proficiency with technology and level of instructor interaction.

What faculty said

Institutional Research, Planning & Assessment invited all full-time faculty (n=1,736) to participate in a May 2013 survey on blended learning; 537 responded, resulting in a 31% response rate. Selected results from that survey are included throughout this Snapshot in the blue "What faculty said" boxes. To read the faculty report in its entirety, please visit the "What's New" tab at www.irpa.umd.edu.

Enrollment in Blended Courses

The table below compares respondents' enrollment rates in web-facilitated, blended, and fully online courses at UMD as well as at other colleges or universities.

Reported Course Format Experiences:	% who took courses for credit at:	
	UMD	Another college or university
Web-facilitated *	92%	Question not asked
Blended *	62%	16%
Fully online	25%	21%

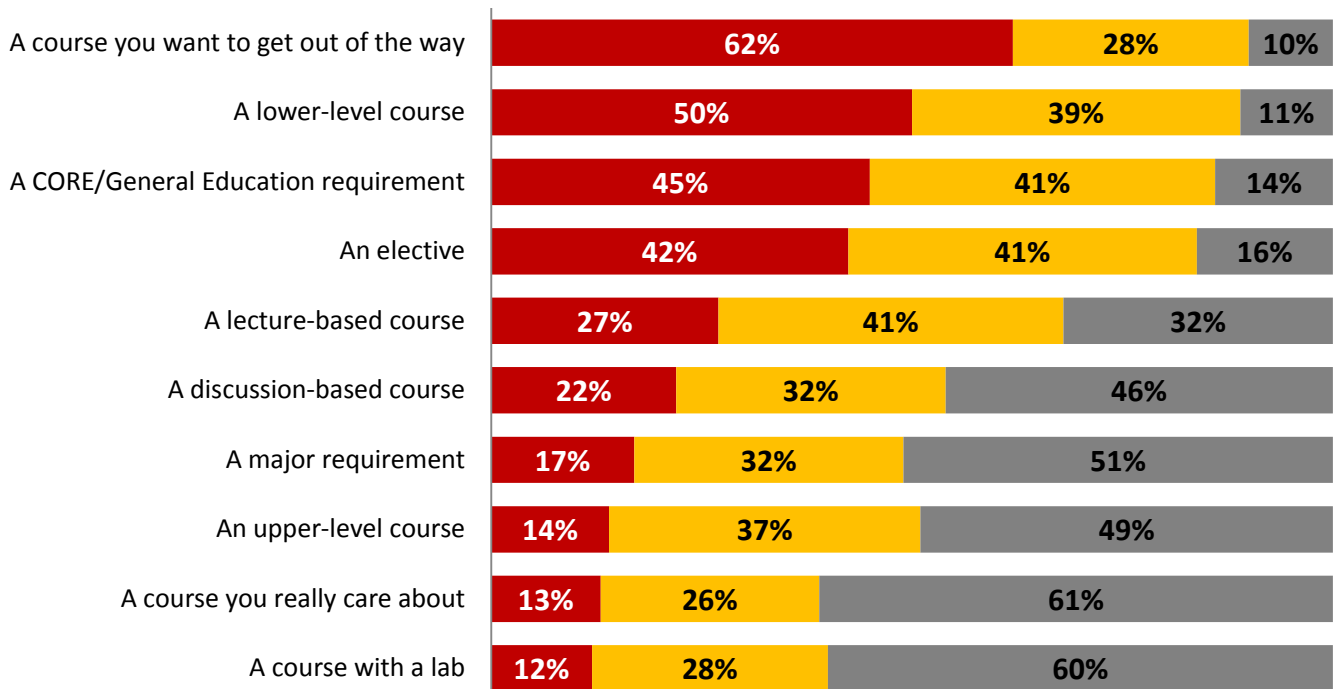
* See page 2 for course definitions.

N = 1596 – 1598, depending on item

- Due to the small number of blended and online courses currently offered at UMD, readers should exercise caution when drawing conclusions from these data. For example, some respondents who indicated they took a blended or online course at UMD may have actually taken a web-facilitated course.

Likelihood of Enrolling in Blended Courses

■ Very Likely ■ Somewhat Likely ■ Not at all likely



N = 1591 – 1594 depending on item

- Respondents reported that they would be most likely to enroll in a blended version of a course that they want to get out of the way (62%), is a lower-level course (50%), is a CORE/General Education requirement (45%), or is an elective (42%).
- Respondents reported that they would be least likely to enroll in a blended version of a course that is a major requirement (51%), upper-level (49%), one they really care about (61%), one with a lab (60%).



Question to Consider

- Given this student feedback, to what degree should UMD focus on developing blended learning in lower-level courses rather than upper level courses?

DEFINITIONS

Blended Course: Lectures, discussions, and activities are a combination of online and face-to-face interactions; a portion of content is delivered online, with a corresponding reduction of face-to-face class time. Online components might include videos and podcasts of lectures, wikis, blogs, etc.

Web-facilitated / Traditional Course: Lectures, discussions, and activities are in face-to-face settings. Coursework may include web-facilitated work but online content does not take the place of face-to-face interaction. Includes classes with no web content, and classes that are web-facilitated.

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

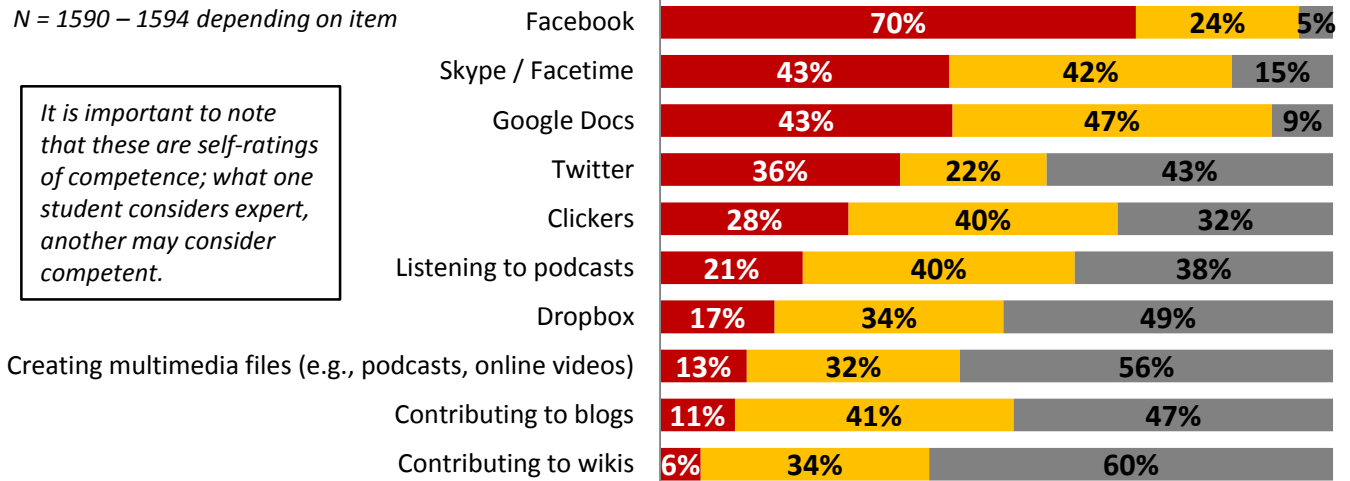
Proficiency and Interest with Technology

Self-Reported Proficiency

■ Expert ■ Competent ■ Never used/Novice

N = 1590 – 1594 depending on item

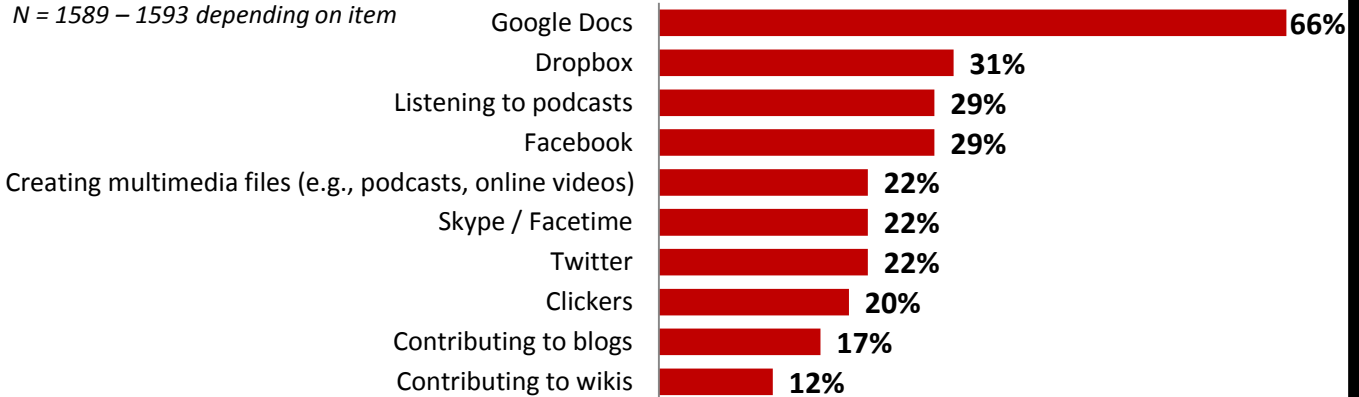
It is important to note that these are self-ratings of competence; what one student considers expert, another may consider competent.



Interest in Using Technology for Classes

■ % Interested

N = 1589 – 1593 depending on item



- Only Google Docs (66% interested, 90% expert or competent proficiency) was cited by more than half of respondents as an educational method they would be interested in using for their classes.
- Many students were proficient in Facebook and Skype / FaceTime, but few would be interested in using it in the classroom.
- Some technologies that are more likely to be used in blended courses (e.g., contributing to blogs or wikis) were least appealing to students.



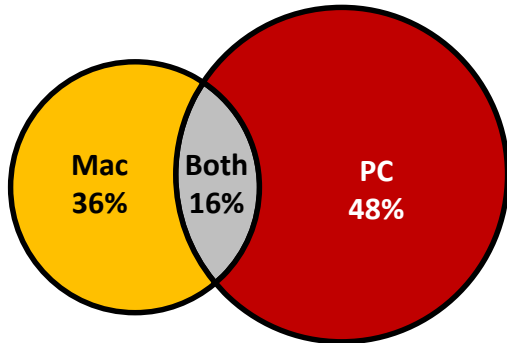
Questions to Consider

- Of these various technologies, which will stand the test of time?
- How can faculty make learning and using these technologies more appealing?

What faculty said

Of the technologies listed above, faculty respondents most often reported “expert” proficiency in Dropbox (26%) and were most interested in incorporating multimedia files into their courses (58%).

Platforms Students Use for Coursework



Students were fairly evenly split with the platforms they use for their coursework – 48% use a PC and 36% use a Mac while 16% use both.

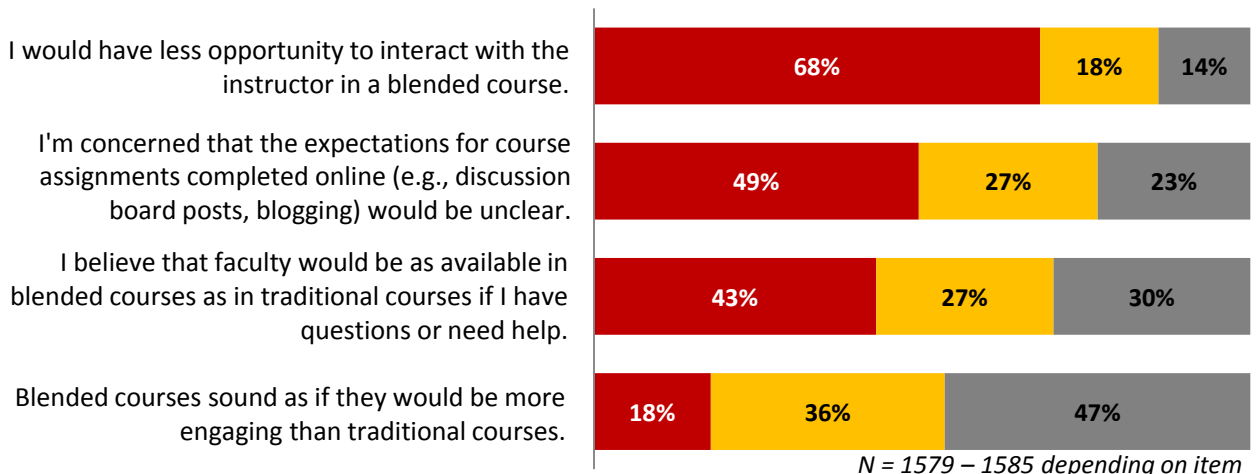
*Image not drawn to scale
N = 1545*

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

■ Agree or Strongly Agree ■ Neither Agree nor Disagree ■ Disagree or Strongly Disagree



- Generally, respondents anticipated that instructors in blended courses may be less available and engaged than in traditional courses.
- More than two-thirds (68%) of respondents felt that they would have less interaction with instructors and almost half (49%) were concerned about expectations for assignments. Furthermore, fewer than 1 in 5 believed that blended courses would be more engaging.



Question to Consider

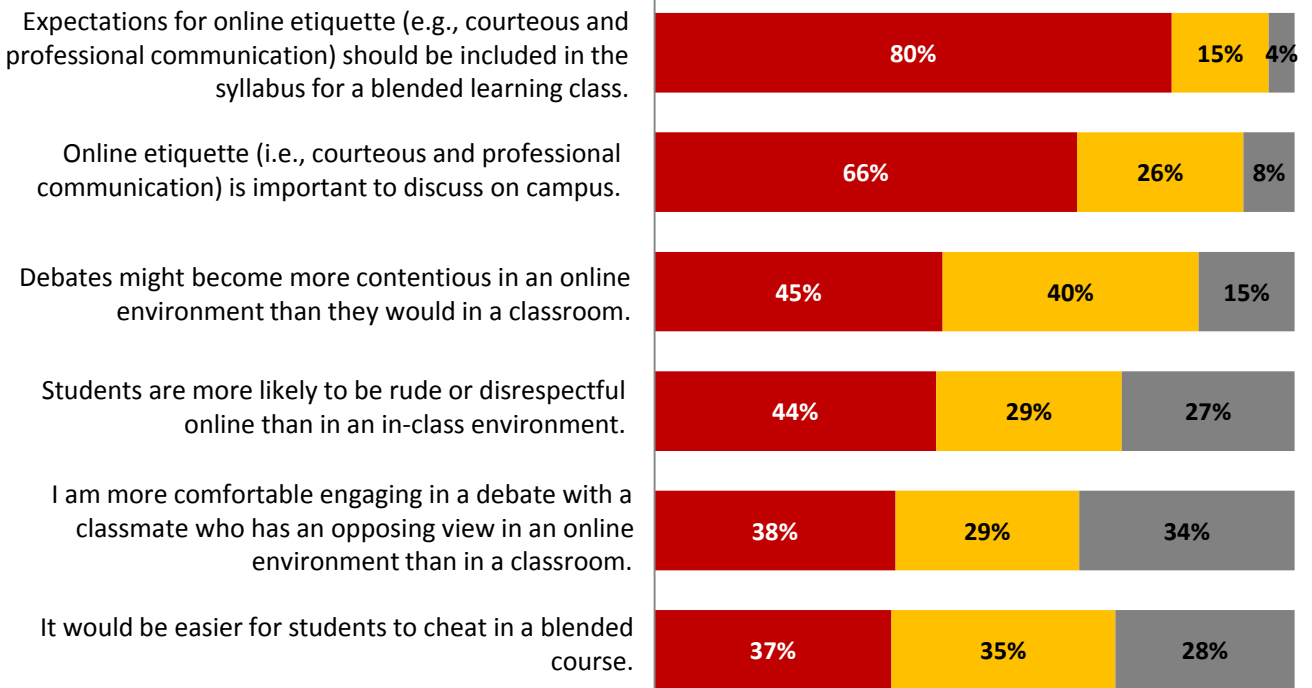
- How can we define engagement in a blended/online versus a traditional course?

What faculty said

Sixty-eight percent of student respondents agreed that they would have less opportunity to interact with the instructor in a blended course; almost half (45%) of faculty respondents agreed that their overall engagement with students would be lower in a blended course.

Academic integrity and student civility

■ Agree or Strongly Agree ■ Neither Agree nor Disagree ■ Disagree or Strongly Disagree



N = 1578 – 1585 depending on item

- Overall, respondents indicated that online learning could have a negative effect on student civility and academic integrity.
- Close to half (44%) of respondents felt that students would be more likely to be rude or disrespectful online and 37% felt that it would be easier for students to cheat in a blended course.
- Eight out of ten respondents felt expectations for online etiquette should be included in the syllabus for a blended learning course.
- While 45% of respondents felt debates would be more contentious in an online environment than they would in a classroom, 40% neither agreed nor disagreed.



Question to Consider

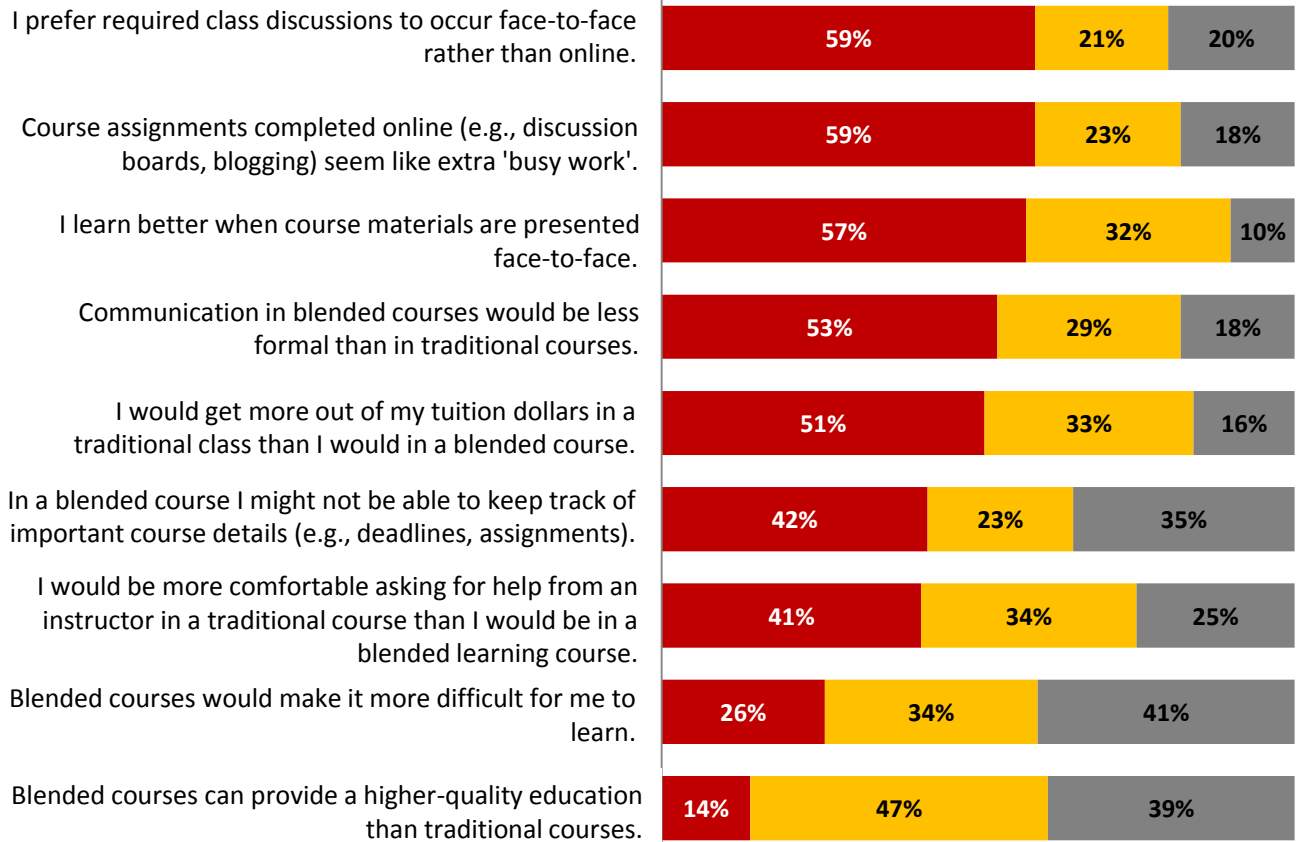
- Forty-five percent of respondents believed that debates would be more contentious online than they would be in a classroom. Why is this? What is behind the 40% of respondents who neither agreed nor disagreed?

What
faculty
said

- Thirty-seven percent of junior and senior respondents agreed that it would be easier for students to cheat in a blended course; similarly, 36% of faculty respondents also agreed.
- **Question to Consider:** Given these similar opinions, how can UMD promote academic integrity in online courses?

Student learning and engagement

■ Agree or Strongly Agree ■ Neither Agree nor Disagree ■ Disagree or Strongly Disagree



N = 1580 – 1590 depending on item

- Students reported they prefer face-to-face learning over blended or online learning. More than one-quarter (26%) of respondents agreed that blended courses would make it more difficult for them to learn and more than half (57%) agreed that they learn better when course material is presented face-to-face.
- Respondents were relatively evenly split in their preferences for blended/online environments versus traditional courses. Almost half of respondents (47%) were neutral about whether a blended course can provide a higher-quality education than traditional courses. Thirty-nine percent felt that blended learning cannot provide a higher-quality education than traditional courses.

What faculty said

- Only 14% of student respondents and 20% of faculty respondents agreed that blended courses can provide a higher-quality education than a traditional course and almost half (47%) of both groups were unsure.

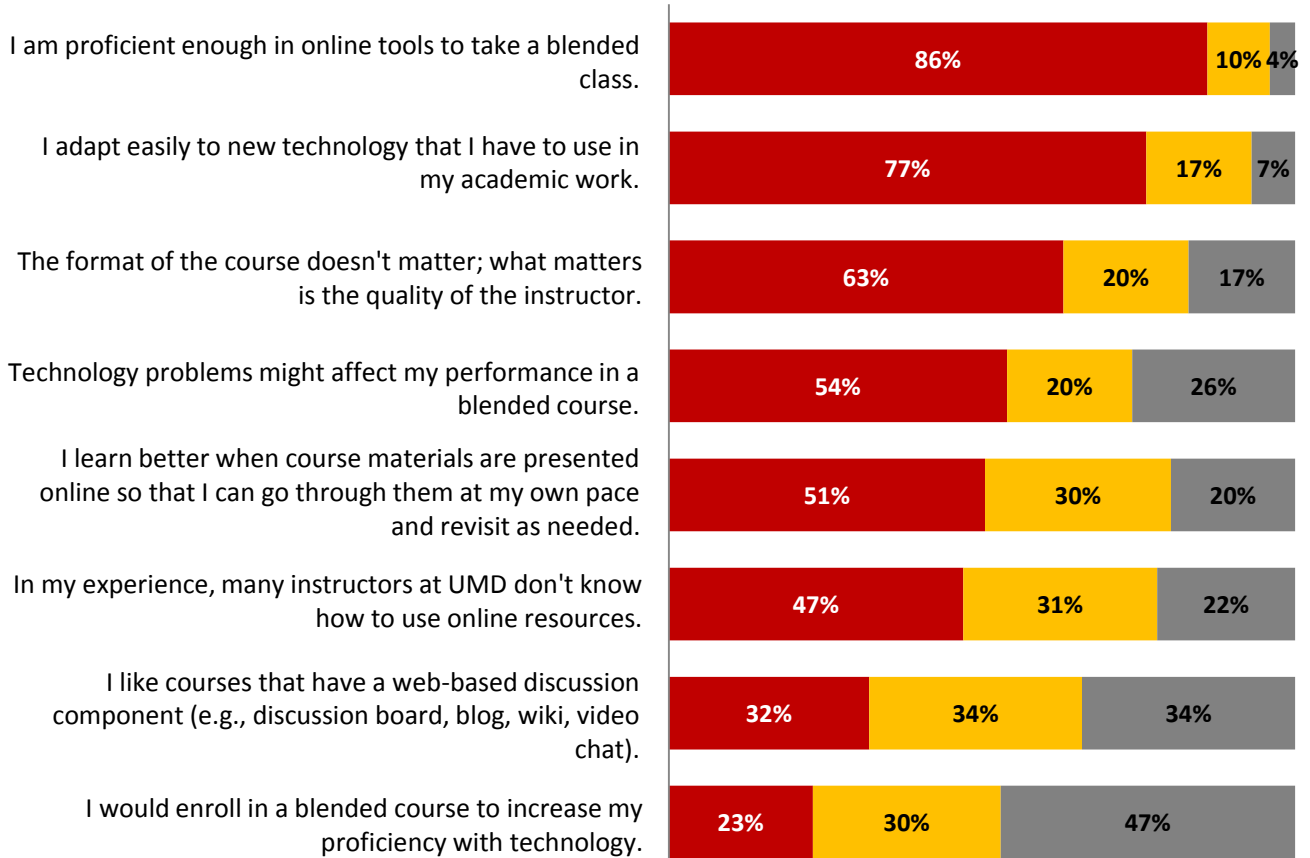


Question to Consider

- If both faculty and students were unsure that blended learning is of higher quality than traditional courses, how can UMD improve academic excellence in the realm of technology?

Technology and logistics

■ Agree or Strongly Agree ■ Neither Agree nor Disagree ■ Disagree or Strongly Disagree



N = 1580 – 1590 depending on item

- Students were conflicted about technology in their courses; 86% agreed they are proficient enough in online tools to take a blended course and 77% reported they easily adapt to new technology. However, 54% agreed that technology problems might affect their performance in a blended course.
- Despite being conflicted about technology in their courses, generally, there is a positive response about students’ abilities to engage in online learning. Sixty-three percent of respondents agreed that the format of the course doesn’t matter; what matters is the quality of the instructor.



Question to Consider

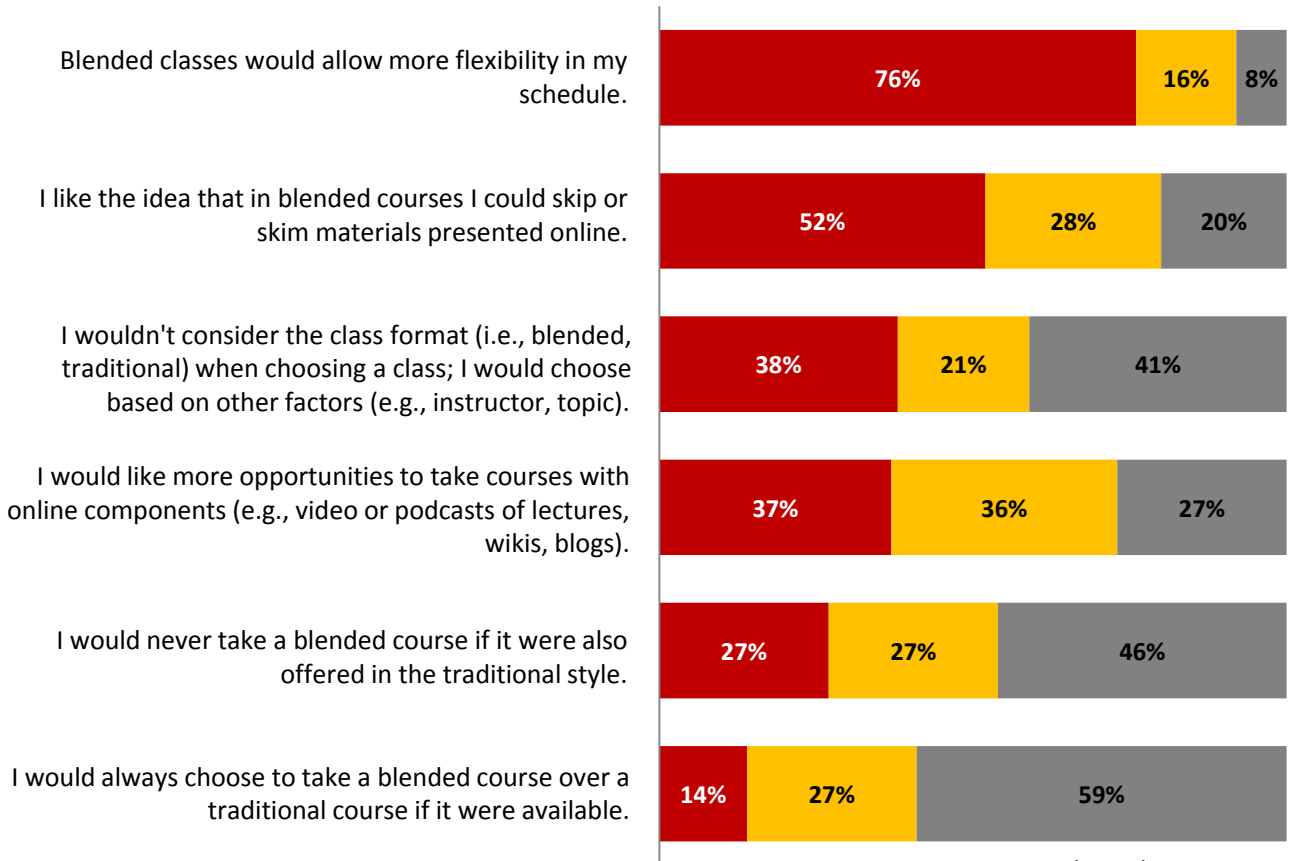
- How could UMD facilitate learning new technologies outside of coursework?



Forty-seven percent of student respondents agreed that many instructors at UMD do not know how to use online resources, while 50% of faculty respondents agreed that they are proficient enough with online tools to teach a blended course.

Interest in blended courses

■ Agree or Strongly Agree ■ Neither Agree nor Disagree ■ Disagree or Strongly Disagree



N = 1584 – 1591 depending on item

- Three-quarters (76%) of respondents agreed that blended classes could allow more flexibility in their schedule but only 52% reported liking the idea that they could skip or skim materials presented online.
- Only 14% would always choose to take a blended course over a traditional course.

What faculty said

Students indicated interest in taking blended courses and faculty appeared to be willing to meet this need. A majority of faculty respondents reported a willingness to teach a new (51%) or existing (57%) course in a blended format.



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.