This Campus Assessment Working Group (CAWG) Snapshot reports findings on freshman students' interests in a variety of social causes. 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.

For the BSS 2013, out of 4,012 first-time, full-time freshmen, 1,705 (42%) completed the survey – 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 Other including American Indian and Hawaiian. Additionally, 49% were female while 51% were male; and 16% were first generation college students while 84% were not.

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.
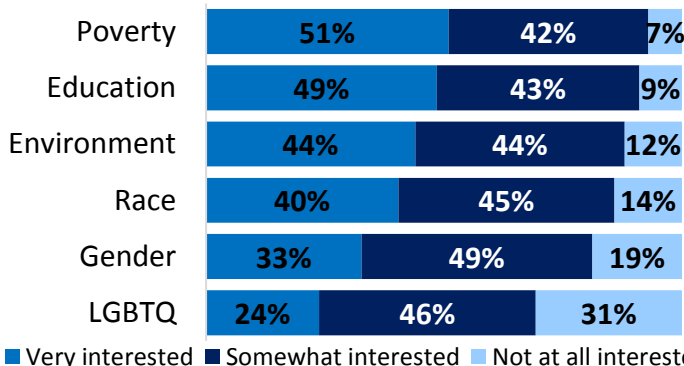
Key of chart labels

For ease of review throughout the snapshot, labels were shortened to one word such as "poverty" or "education." The survey included more descriptive text, outlined below.

- Poverty = Reducing poverty
- Education = Promoting equal access to quality education
- Environment = Protecting the environment and natural resources
- Race = Promoting racial understanding
- Gender = Promoting gender equality
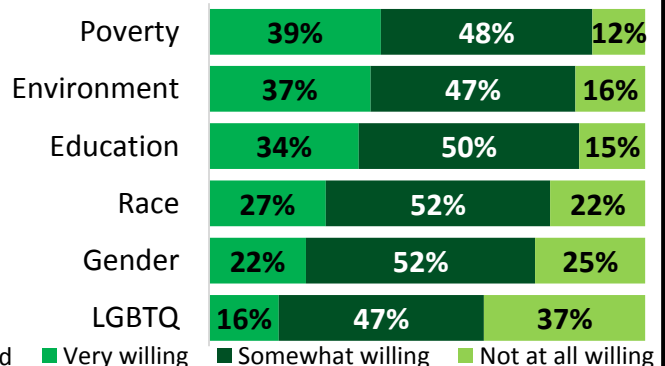- LGBTQ = Promoting LGBTQ equity

Student engagement in social issues

Students were asked two questions (cited below) about their <u>interest</u> in issues and their <u>willingness to work</u> on those issues. The top three most popular social causes were reducing poverty, promoting equal access to education and protecting the environment. Data from the two graphs below are discussed in more detail on page 2.
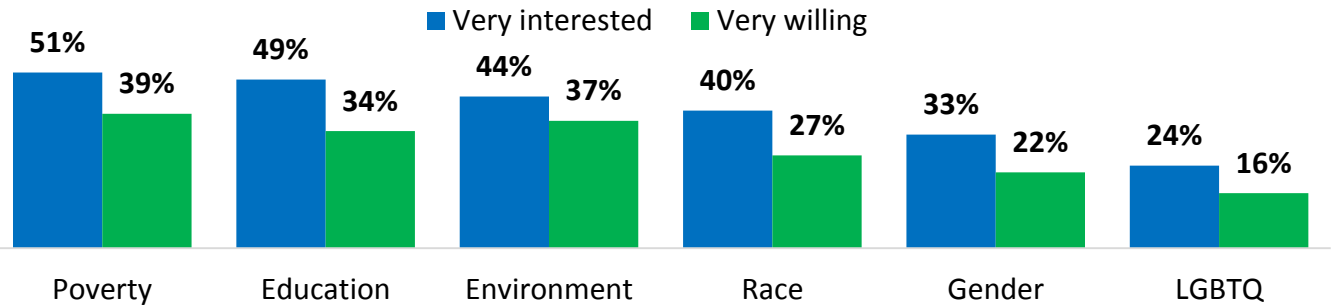
Student interest[+]

	Very interested	Somewhat interested	Not at all interested
Poverty	51%	42%	7%
Education	49%	43%	9%
Environment	44%	44%	12%
Race	40%	45%	14%
Gender	33%	49%	19%
LGBTQ	24%	46%	31%

Student willingness to work[^]

	Very willing	Somewhat willing	Not at all willing
Poverty	39%	48%	12%
Environment	37%	47%	16%
Education	34%	50%	15%
Race	27%	52%	22%
Gender	22%	52%	25%
LGBTQ	16%	47%	37%

[+]Full question: How interested are you in the following issues? (N=1698-1701 depending on item)
[^]Full question: If time allowed, how willing would you be to work on the following issues while you are a student at UMD? (N=1698-1702 depending on item)

Comparing student <u>interest</u> in and <u>willingness to work</u> on issues

■ Very interested ■ Very willing

	Poverty	Education	Environment	Race	Gender	LGBTQ
Very interested	51%	49%	44%	40%	33%	24%
Very willing	39%	34%	37%	27%	22%	16%

N= 1698-1702 depending on item

All respondents:
- Approximately half of freshmen respondents indicated being *very* <u>interested</u> in the social causes of reducing poverty and promoting equal access to education, while one-third or fewer were *very* <u>interested</u> in gender equality and LGBTQ equity.
- There were 44 respondents (3%) who selected *not at all* <u>interested</u> for all six options, meaning 97% were *somewhat* or *very* <u>interested</u> in at least one topic. Alternately, 230 respondents (14%) selected *very* <u>interested</u> for all six options.

Demographic differences*:
- Racial group differences emerged for White and Black/African American respondents for all causes except LGBTQ.
   - Black/African American respondents reported higher than expected levels of <u>interest</u> and <u>willingness to work</u> on poverty, education, race, and gender; White respondents reported lower levels on those four topics.
   - The exception to this trend was for environment, where White respondents reported higher than expected levels of <u>interest</u> and <u>willingness to work,</u> and Black/African American respondents reported lower levels.
   - Further analyses by race revealed no statistically significant differences for Hispanic and Asian American respondents.
- First-generation respondents reported higher than expected levels of both <u>interest</u> in and <u>willingness to work</u> on education, race, and gender; non-first generation respondents reported lower levels for those three items. There was no statistically significant difference for poverty, environment, or LGBTQ.

> **Definition of first-generation:** Respondents who self-reported as 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.
> **Definition of LGBTQ**: Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer

***Demographic differences explained:**
   Differences (tested with chi square analyses) are reported where the responses across the demographic categories (e.g., male and female) are significantly different than expected relative to the overall response pattern. For example, if 70% of all respondents agreed with a statement, we would expect 70% of both males and females to agree, if sex were not a factor. However, if we found a significant difference with only 65% of males agreeing, then we would report that "fewer males than expected" agreed with the item.
   The American Indian/Native Hawaiian, Unknown, and Foreign racial/ethnic/citizenship group differences are not reported due to small sample sizes that make statistical analyses unreliable. For this report, analyses by Hispanic and Asian American respondents were reviewed and contained no overarching statistically significant differences.

Most important issues to students

After students rated their interest in and willingness to work on these six topics, students were asked, "If you had to CHOOSE ONE issue to work on, which is the topic you would be the most interested in?" The bar graph shows how all respondents answered, while the table shows statistically significant differences by demographic group.

Topic students would be MOST interested in

| Environment | Poverty | Education | Race | Gender | LGBTQ |
| 29% | 24% | 21% | 13% | 8% | 5% |

N=1688
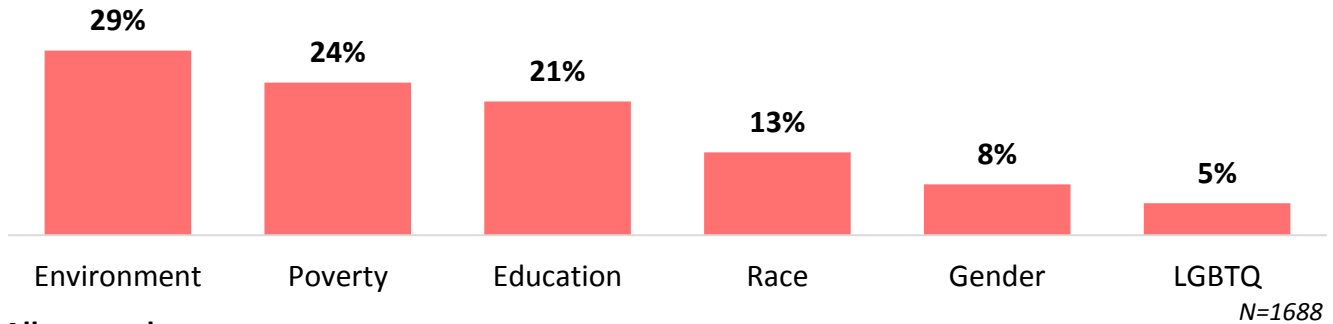
All respondents:
- Environment, poverty, and education emerged as the most popular social causes for students.
- When asked about their <u>interest</u> and <u>willingness to work</u>, poverty was the most selected issue. However, when students were forced to select one, environment was the most selected issue.

Table of demographic differences*:

Responses broken down by demographic group

	All respondents	Gender	Race	First-Generation (FG) Status
Environment	29%	33% of men & 25% of women chose *environment*	36% of White & 8% of Black/African American respondents chose *environment*	31% of non-FG & 19% of FG respondents chose *environment*
Poverty	24%	27% of men & 21% of women chose *poverty*	---	---
Education	21%	---	---	27% of FG & 20% of non-FG respondents chose *education*
Race	13%	---	33% of Black/African American & 6% of White respondents chose *race*	20% of FG & 12% of non-FG respondents chose *race*
Gender	8%	15% of women & 3% of men chose *gender*	---	---
LGBTQ	5%	---	---	---

Key: --- = no statistically significant differences to report

Question to consider: What do these data suggest about how students' own identities may influence their interest and commitment to working on social causes?

List of service learning resources at UMD

The list below includes information on ways to get involved with a variety of social causes through UMD-organized activities. This list may serve as a resource for students hoping to become more involved with service-learning and volunteering. It represents a starting point, and not an exhaustive list.

Leadership and Community Service Learning (LCSL) at Stamp:
- Specific programs
    - Terp service days: http://thestamp.umd.edu/leadership_community_service-learning/programs/terpservice/terpservice_days
    - Alternative breaks: http://thestamp.umd.edu/leadership_community_service-learning/programs/alternative_breaks
    - America Reads*America Counts: http://thestamp.umd.edu/leadership_community_service-learning/programs/america_reads_america_counts
- General service opportunities:
    - General student engagement resources: http://thestamp.umd.edu/leadership_community_service-learning/resources/general_student_community_engagement_resources
    - UM serves, community service listserv (page to sign up): https://app.e2ma.net/app2/audience/signup/1706142/1700447/?v=a
    - Community service opportunities database: http://orgsync.umd.edu/

Examples of major/career-related volunteer opportunities
- BSOS service learning website: http://www.bsos.umd.edu/students/service-learning
- Engineers Without Borders (UMD chapter): http://www.ewb.umd.edu/
- Healthy Futures: http://sph.umd.edu/community-partnerships/healthy-futures-program
- Maryland Council on Family Relations (MCFR): http://sph.umd.edu/department/fmsc/student-organizationmcfr
- MEDLIFE: http://www.medlifeweb.org/
- Pre-health volunteer opportunities: http://www.prehealth.umd.edu/extracurricular/volunteeropportunities
- Public Health Without Borders (UMD chapter): http://phwb-umd.org/
- Student Council for Exceptional Children (SCEC): https://www.facebook.com/pages/SCEC-Student-Council-for-Exceptional-Children-UMD/128216760522921

Other opportunities
- Green initiatives: http://www.sustainability.umd.edu/content/community/index.php
- Students Helping Honduras (UMD chapter): http://umdshh.webs.com/

Faculty resources:
- LCSL faculty resources website: http://thestamp.umd.edu/leadership_community_service-learning/academic_opportunities/faculty_service-learning
- The Stamp Service-Learning Faculty Fellows program (provides $1500 grants for 5 faculty members each year to develop new service-learning courses or to integrate service-learning into an existing course): http://tltc.umd.edu/programs/stamp_service_rfp_2015.html

Background & context

Provided by Dr. Sheri Parks, College of Arts and Humanities

What does the literature say about service learning?

There is a great deal of evidence of student altruism and a willingness to be involved in social activism (Levine & Dean, 2012). Behavioral measures of charitable involvement have been linked to better college grades, leadership development, intellectual self-confidence, psychological well-being, commitment to promoting racial understanding, growth in appreciation of other races and cultures, and satisfaction with college. Membership in student organizations, leadership training, and living on campus has been found to enhance charitable involvement.

College experiences can substantially impact students' "ethic of caring," or their attitudinal measure of caring and concern for the welfare of others and the world around them. They often express this by helping those who are troubled, alleviating suffering, and committing to social justice and activism. Ethic of caring can be accelerated by participating in study abroad programs, taking interdisciplinary courses, and engaging in community service as part of a class (i.e., service learning) (Higher Education Research Institute, 2010).

What issues are students most interested in?

In research conducted with first-year college students, respondents reported being most interested in gender and sexual equality, racial understanding, educational inequities, poverty, and protecting the environment and natural resources (Higher Education Research Institute, 2012). The Service-Learning Office of the Maryland State Department of Education reported that the top categories for high school students were aging, animal welfare, prejudice, the environment, education, health and poverty. To better understand UMD students, CAWG surveyed first semester freshmen on their social interests using the following list of six social justice causes: poverty, education, environment, race, gender, LGBTQ.

References

- Higher Education Research Institute (2010). Spirituality in Higher Education: A National Study of Students' Search for meaning and purpose, Higher Education Research Institute, UCLA http://spirituality.ucla.edu/findings/spiritual-measures/charitable-involvement.php
- Levine, A. & and Dean,D. (2012). *Generation on a Tightrope: A Portrait of Today's College Student.* Hoboken, NJ: Jossey-Bass.
- Office of Service Leaning, Maryland State Department of Education http://www.marylandpublicschools.org/MSDE/programs/servicelearning/project_ideas.htm
- Higher Education Research Institute (2012) http://heri.ucla.edu/monographs/TheAmericanFreshman2012.pdf

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.