

First-year Student Survey Results

February 2021

The Office of Institutional Research, Assessment, and Planning (OIRAP) is the primary source for official campus statistics, complying with federal, state, and university reporting standards and requirements. OIRAP conducts student surveys and special research studies in support of university policy formation, assessment, and accountability. Every year since 2013, OIRAP administers the First-year Student Survey previously known as the Freshman Survey. The survey is designed to learn more about our first-time incoming class, and to understand their expectations for the coming year.

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More information: umb.edu/oirap.



First-year Student Survey 2021

Office of Institutional Research, Assessment, and Planning (OIRAP) has been conducting the First-year Student Survey, previously known as the Freshman Survey, since 2013. The survey is designed to learn about the first-time first-year students' high school engagement, their expectations from UMass Boston for the coming year, potential difficulties during the first year, their academic preparedness, and financial concerns. This year, we introduced two new sets of questions to (1) understand why students initially select undecided majors, and (2) to understand their sense of belonging at this institution. The Survey was created in Qualtrics, an online survey platform. The first-time first-year students captured on our first day of classes census were asked to take the survey during the second week of classes. The survey was closed in mid-October. The responses were weighted by respondents' gender and race.

Response Rate

2021 First-year Student Survey yielded a response rate of 31 percent.

Table 1: Response Rate by College

College	Survey Respondents		First-time First year Fall 2021		Response rate (unweighted)
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	
Education and Human Dev.	18	3	55	2	33%
Liberal Arts	244	35	764	34	32%
Management	74	11	294	13	25%
Nursing and Health Sciences	90	13	229	10	39%
School for the Environment	6	1	35	2	17%
Science and Mathematics	259	38	869	39	30%
Total	691	100	2246	100	31%

Respondents

Figure 1 presents respondents' gender and racial background.

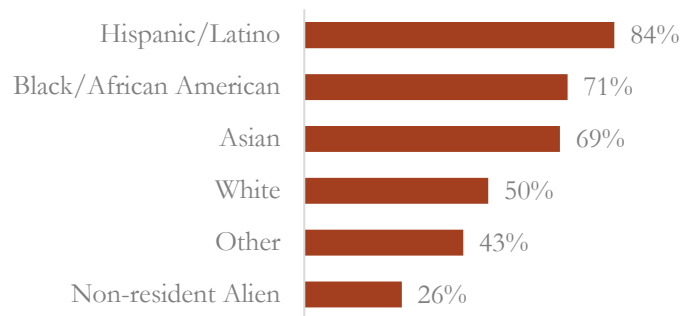
Figure 1: Respondents' Gender and Race



First-generation College Students

More than three out of five (62%) respondents are first-generation¹ college students. Hispanic/Latino, Black/African American, and Asian students are more likely to be first-generation college students. The majority (84%) of the Hispanic/Latino students and 71 percent of the Black/African American students reported that they were first-generation college students (Figure 2). Women (64%) are more likely to be first-generation students than men (59%).

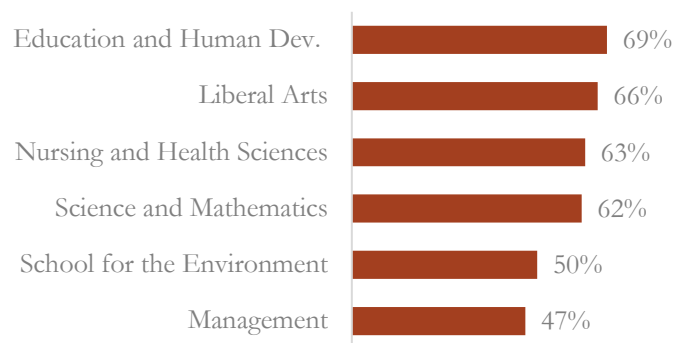
Figure 2: First-generation Students by Race



Note: Other categories include American Indian/Alaskan Native, students who did not disclose a race category or students who have more than one race. They are grouped to ensure confidentiality.

Nearly 70 percent of the respondents from the College of Education and Human Development are first-generation college students. More than 60 percent from the College of Liberal Arts, Robert and Donna Manning College of Nursing and Health Sciences, and College of Science and Mathematics are first-generation college students (Figure 3).

Figure 3: First-generation Students by College



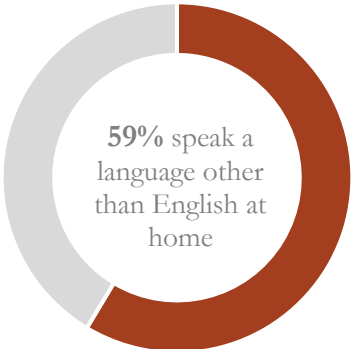
Top majors pursued by the first-generation students include Biology (13%), Management (11%), Computer Science (7%), Nursing (7%), and Psychology (7%). Among the first-generation students, 15 percent are enrolled as undecided compared with 10 percent that are non-first-generation students.

¹ Neither parent nor anyone who raised them holds a bachelor's degree

Language Spoken at Home

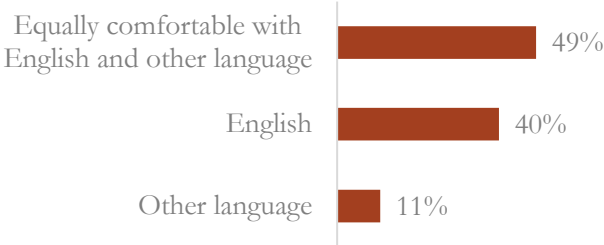
Nearly three out of five respondents (59%) speak a language other than English at home (Figure 4). Respondents reported over 60 different languages spoken at home. The list can be provided upon request.

Figure 4: Percent of Respondents Who Speak a Language Other Than English



Nearly half of the respondents (49%) are equally comfortable with English and other languages (Figure 5).

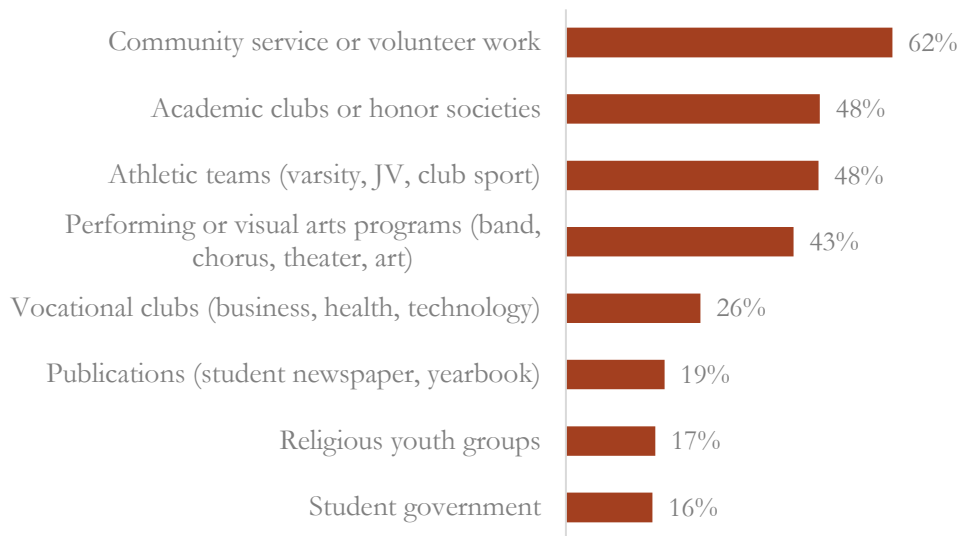
Figure 5: Percent of Respondents Comfortable Speaking a Language Other Than English



High School Engagement

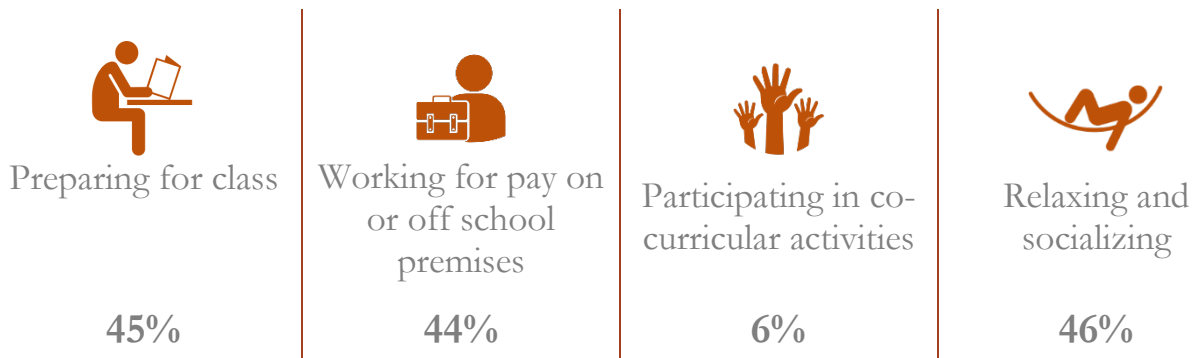
Sixty-two percent of the respondents were involved in community service or volunteer work during their last year in high school. Nearly half (48%) were engaged in academic clubs or honor societies, and athletic teams (Figure 6).

Figure 6: High School Engagement



Nearly half of the respondents (44%) worked more than 10 hours for pay during their last year of high school (Figure 7).

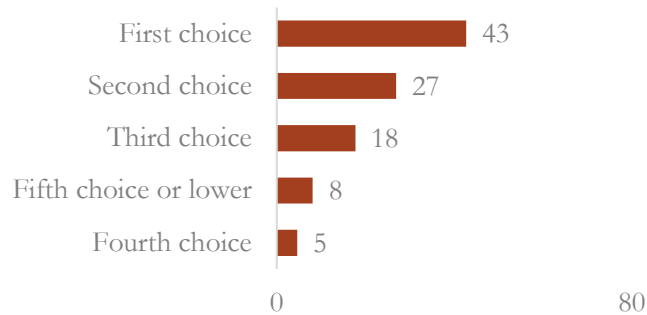
Figure 7: Percent who Spent More than 10 hours in High School Doing the Following Activity



Choosing UMass Boston

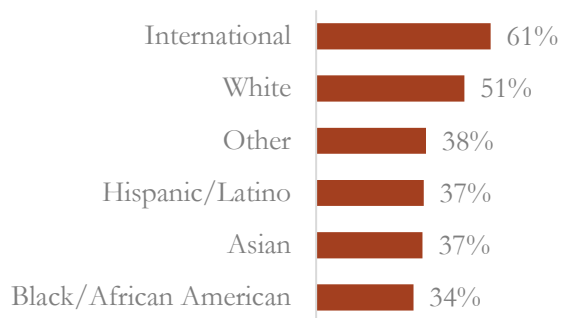
Forty-three percent of the respondents reported UMass Boston as their first choice and another 27 percent reported UMass Boston as their second choice (Figure 8).

Figure 8: Percent Reporting UMass Boston as Their First Choice



Three out of five international (61%) and more than half (51%) White student respondents reported UMass Boston as their first choice compared with 37 percent Hispanic/Latinx, 37 percent Asian, and 34 percent Black/African American respondents (Figure 9).

Figure 9: First Choice by Race



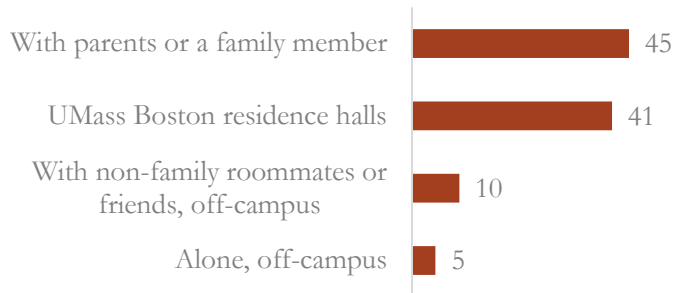
Fifty-six of the respondents have at least one close friend who will attend UMass Boston. Existing literature found that college friendship (the number of close campus friends and emotional connection with them) is positively and significantly related to the six-year graduation rate, and the number of close friends significantly predicts college grade points average.²

² Bronkema, R. H., & Bowman, N. A. (2019). Close campus friendships and college student success. *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory & Practice*, 21(3), 270-285.

Commuting to UMass Boston

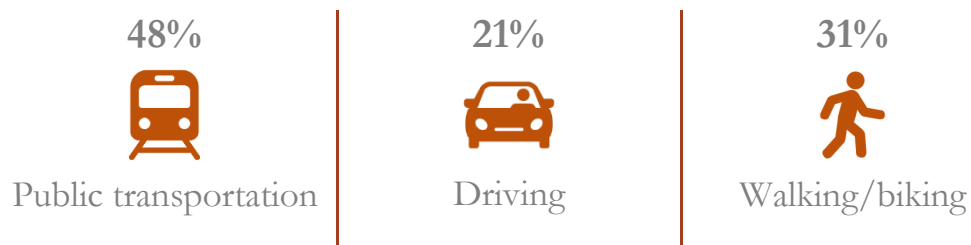
During their first year, 45 percent of the respondents plan to live with their parents or a family member, and 41 percent plan to live at the UMass Boston residence halls. The remaining respondents plan to live off-campus either alone or with non-family roommates or friends (Figure 10).

Figure 10: Respondents' Residence during First Year (in %)



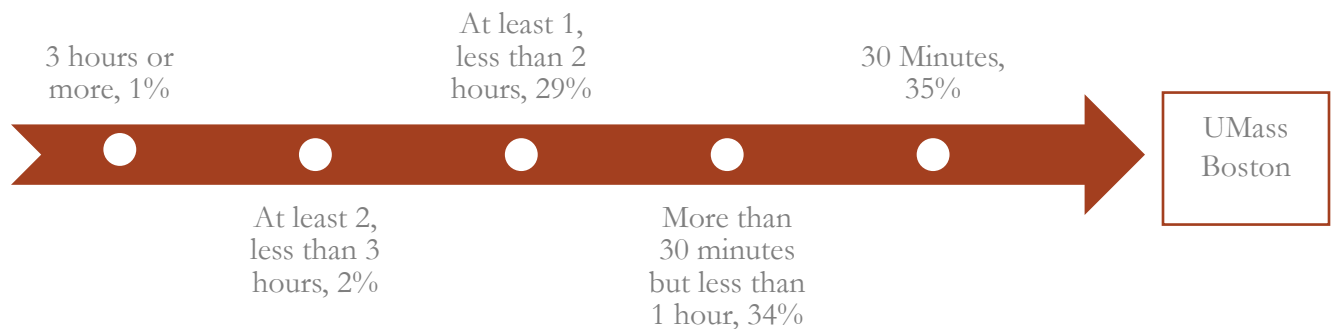
Students except those who reside in the residence halls were asked about their commute. Nearly half of the respondents (48%) most commonly use public transportation to commute to UMass Boston. One in five respondents (21%) drive and 31 percent walk or bike to the campus (Figure 11).

Figure 11: Commuting to UMass Boston



Thirty-five percent of respondents reported a 30 minutes or less commute. Another 34% reported a commute of 30 to 60 minutes (Figure 12).

Figure 12: Length of Commute to UMass Boston from Residence



First Year at UMass Boston

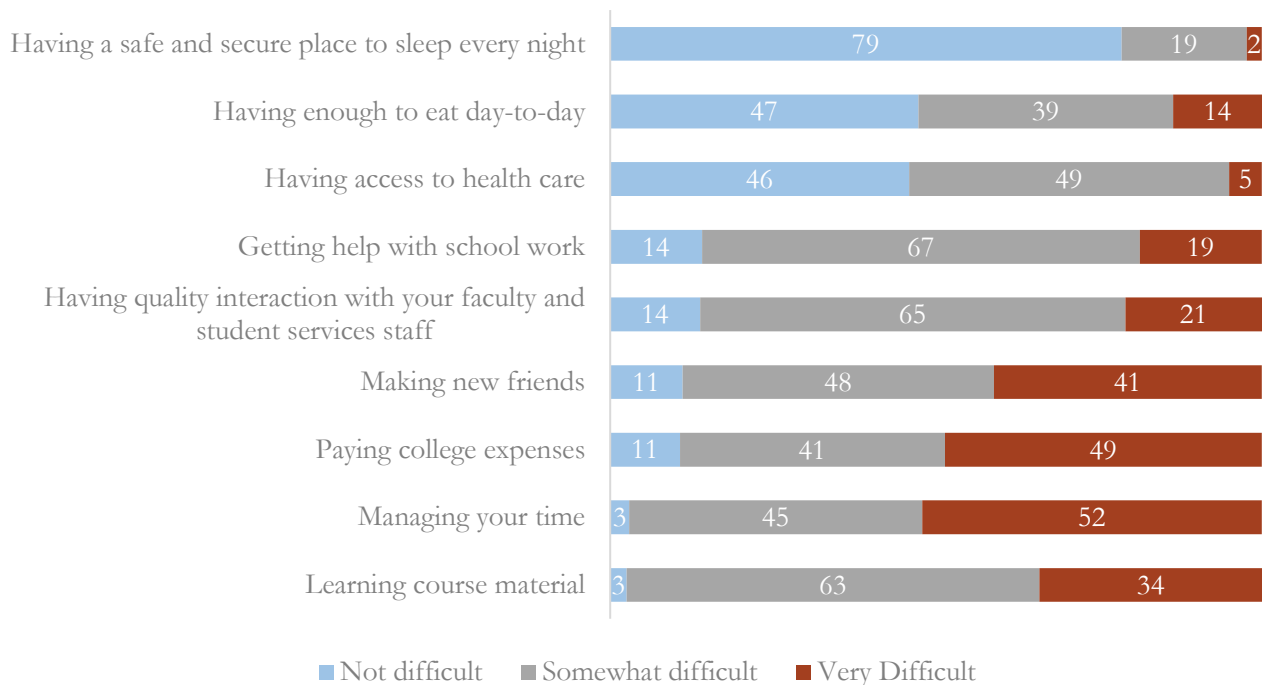
On average, respondents expect to spend 13 hours per week preparing for classes, eight hours working for an off-campus job, and three hours participating in co-curricular activities in their first year (Figure 13).

Figure 13: Average Hours Expected to Spend during the First Year



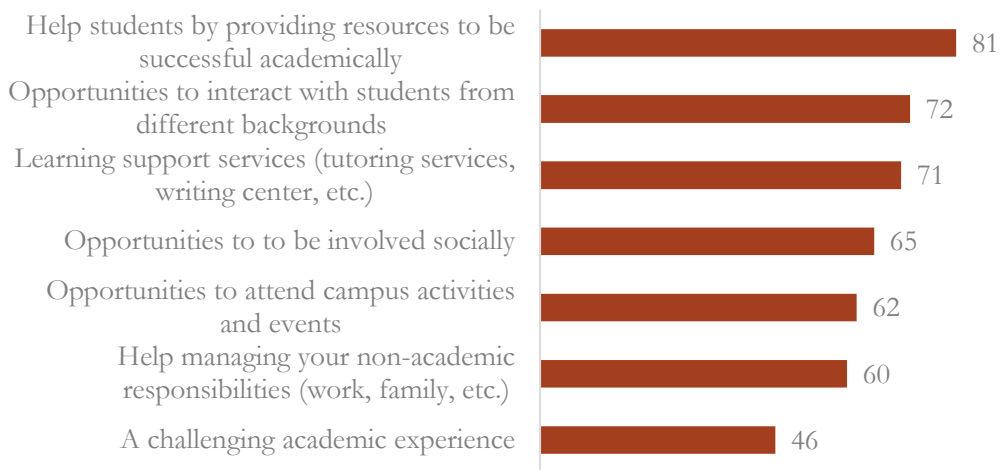
More than half (52%) of the respondents reported that *managing their time* and nearly half (49%) reported *paying college expenses* would be very difficult during their first year at UMass Boston. Two percent of the respondents reported having housing insecurity, 14 percent food insecurity and 5 percent health care insecurity (Figure 14).

Figure 14: Percent of Respondents Indicating “Very Difficult” Activities during the First Year



Four out of five (81%) respondents indicated that it is *important* or *very important* that UMass Boston help by providing resources to be academically successful. More than 70 percent of the respondents indicated that opportunities to interact with students from different backgrounds, and learning support services were *important* or *very important* for the institution to provide (Figure 15).

Figure 15: Percent Indicating the Features that are *Important* or *Very Important* for UMass Boston to Provide



Note: percentages reflect 4 and 5 on a scale of 1 to 5, 1 being *not important* and 5 being *very important*.

The top reported reasons for going to college were to be able to get a better job (58%), to be able to make more money (47%), and to get training for a specific career (44%) (Figure 16).

Figure 16: Top Five Reasons for Going to college



Note: respondents were asked to provide three top answers.

Self-Perceived College Preparedness

To measure respondents' self-perceived preparedness for academic work, a 5-point scale (1 being *not at all prepared* and 5 being *very prepared*) for a set of skills were included. Table 2 presents the percent of respondents indicating *very prepared*, 4 and 5 from the scale, by different racial groups. We found that there is a statistically significant relationship between race and feeling prepared in writing clearly and effectively, thinking critically and analytically, analyzing numerical and statistical information, and working effectively with others. Overall, respondents reported feeling the least prepared in analyzing numerical and statistical information.

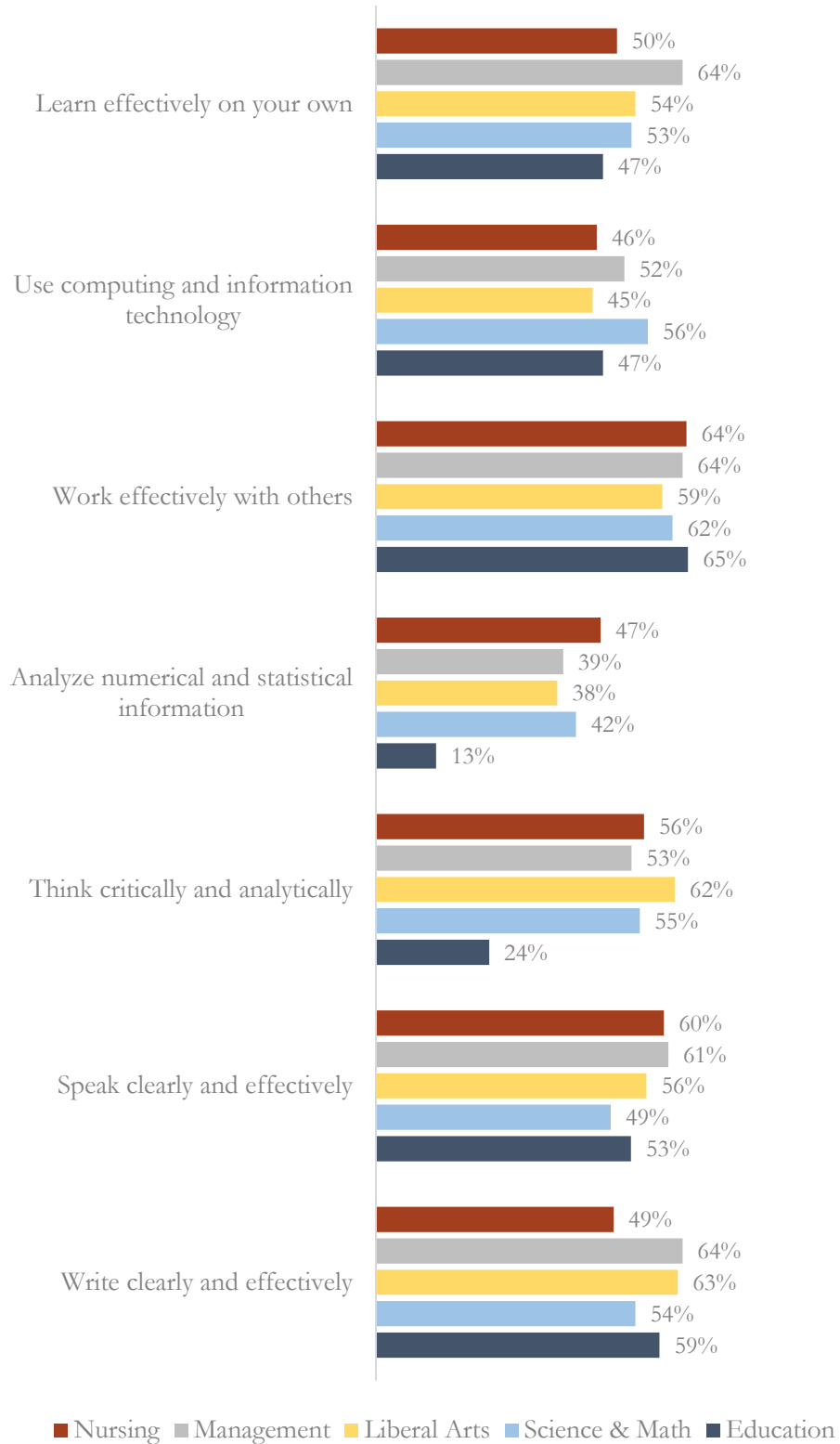
Table 2: Self-reported Academic Preparedness

	White	Black/African American	Hispanic/ Latino	Asian	Non- resident Alien	Other	All
Write clearly and effectively	64%	53%	55%	44%	65%	64%	57%
Speak clearly and effectively	55%	56%	58%	44%	51%	57%	54%
Think critically and analytically	59%	50%	62%	42%	67%	55%	56%
Analyze numerical and statistical information	50%	32%	40%	27%	39%	38%	40%
Work effectively with others	69%	57%	67%	49%	54%	55%	62%
Use computing and information technology	49%	51%	53%	51%	51%	42%	50%
Learn effectively on your own	62%	53%	51%	47%	56%	41%	54%

Note: percentages reflect 4 and 5 on a scale of 1 to 5, 1 being *not at all prepared* and 5 being *very prepared*.

Figure 17 presents respondents' self-perceived preparedness by their college. We only found a statistically significant relationship between the college and thinking critically and analytically.

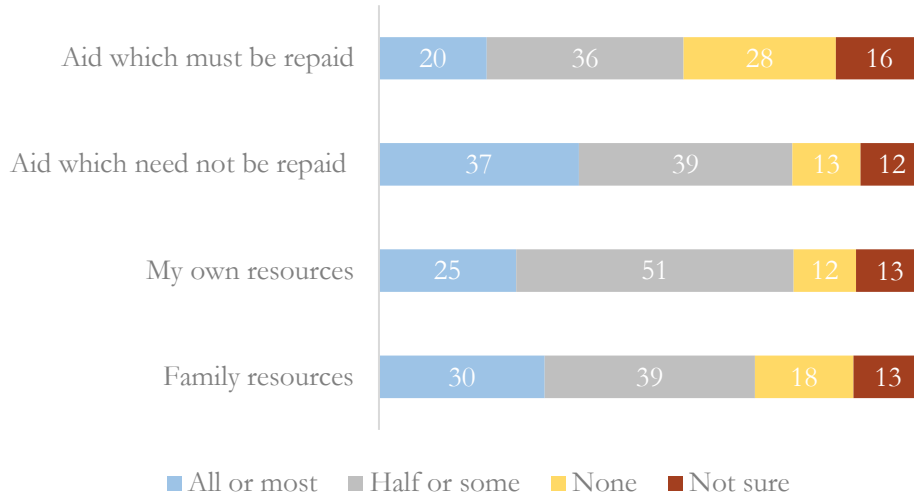
Figure 17: Very Prepared to Do the Following by College



Financial Concerns

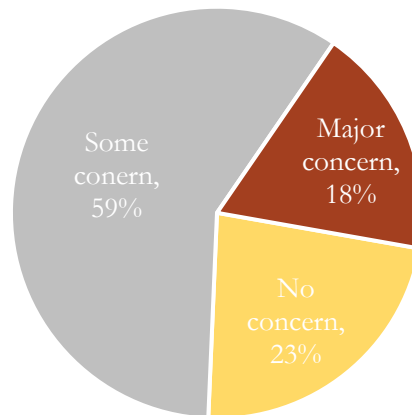
Respondents were asked to report how much of their first year’s educational expenses they expected to cover from four different sources. Thirty percent of the respondents expected *all or most* of the expenses to be covered from family resources, 37 percent from an aid that need not be repaid, and 25 percent from their personal resources. One in five respondents (20%) reported that *all or most* of the expenses were to be covered from an aid that must be repaid (Figure 18).

Figure 18: Percent of Respondents’ Educational Expenses from Expected Sources



When asked whether they have any concerns about their ability to finance their college education, 18 percent of the respondents reported having major concerns, 59 percent reported some concerns, and 23 percent reported no concerns (Figure 19).

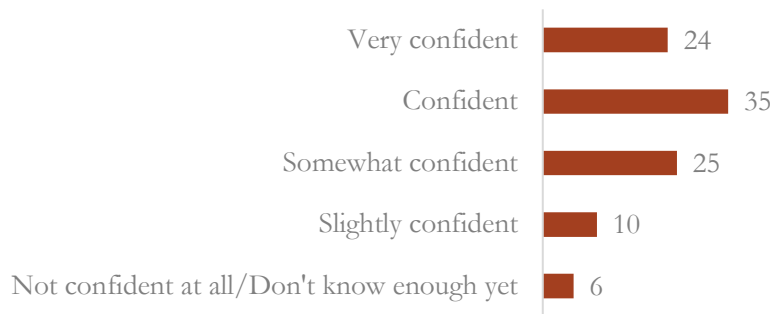
Figure 19: Concerns about Ability to Finance College Education



Major Selection

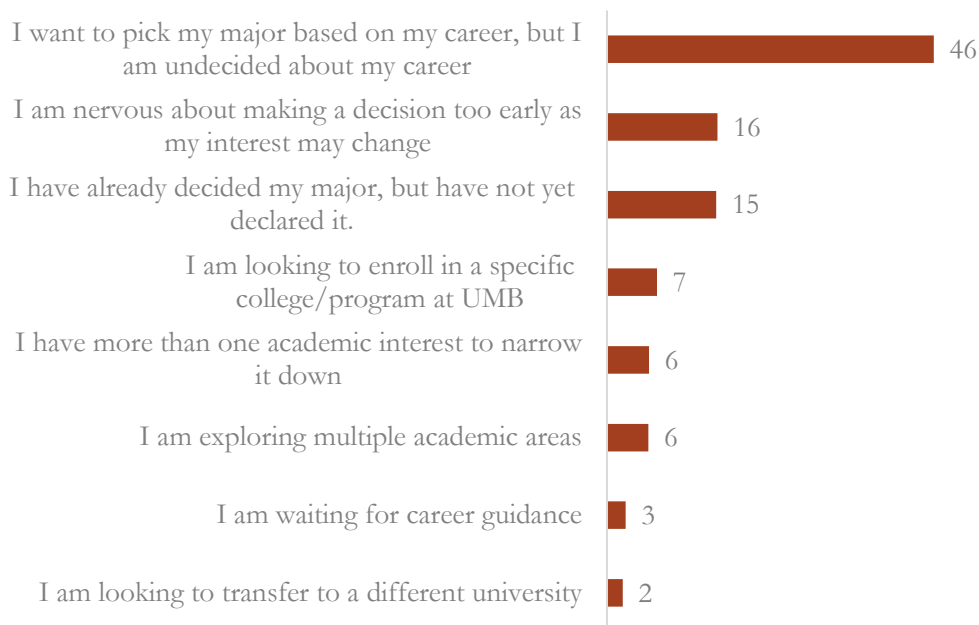
Nearly sixty percent of the respondents reported that they were *very confident* or *confident* that the area of their study will be the right one for them. Six percent of the respondents are *not confident at all* about their major choice (Figure 20).

Figure 20: Percent Confident about the Area of Study



Respondents who reported that they are enrolled in an undecided major were asked to indicate the primary reason for being undecided. Nearly half of them indicated that they want to pick a major based on their career but were undecided about their career. Sixteen percent of the respondents indicated being nervous about making a decision too early and another 7 percent indicated that they were looking to enroll in a specific college or program at UMass Boston. Fifteen percent of the respondents reported deciding what major they want to pursue but haven't declared yet (Figure 21).

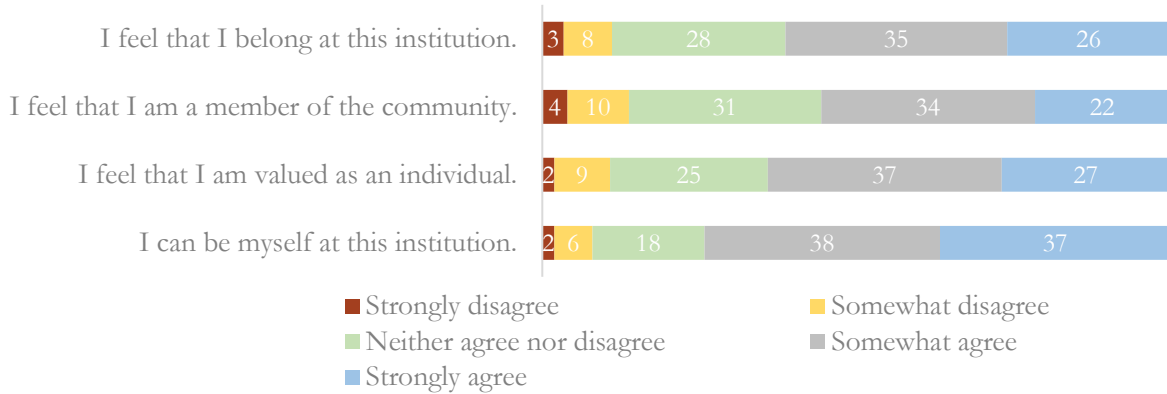
Figure 21: Percent of Respondents Indicating Primary Reason for Being Currently Undecided



Students' Sense of Belonging

Starting in 2021, first-time first-year students were asked about their sense of belonging at UMass Boston (Figure 22).

Figure 22: Respondents' Sense of Belonging at UMass Boston



We created a sense of belonging scale computed from the responses. It is the overall score of four items (please see Figure 22) expressed on a 100-point scale where strongly agree (each)= 25 points. Tables 3 and 4 present the mean score by race and college.

Table 3: Mean Sense of Belonging Score by Race

	<i>n</i>	Mean
White	183	75
Black/African American	84	74
Hispanic/Latino	135	77
Asian	85	73
International	38	83

Note: groups that have less than 5 respondents were removed for confidentiality.

Table 4: Mean Sense of Belonging Score by College

	<i>n</i>	Mean
Education and Human Dev.	16	71
Liberal Arts	182	75
Management	62	80
Nursing and Health Sciences	70	73
School for the Environment	7	78
Science and Mathematics	228	76

This report presents important findings. Any additional data and analyses requests are welcome. Please contact Fatema.Ahad@umb.edu.