2025 Western Michigan University Undergraduate Student Survey

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This and other reports related to the evaluation of aspects of the Empowering Futures initiative at Western Michigan University are available from
wmich.edu/evaluation/empowering-futures

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WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY

2025 Western Michigan University Undergraduate Student Survey

Executive Summary

This executive summary highlights key findings from the survey. The full report includes details about these and other survey results.

In spring 2025, more than 600 (*N*=626) undergraduate students completed a survey about their WMU experiences. The survey asked about their sense of belonging, health and wellness, progress toward their educational or career goals, and intent to remain at WMU. We intentionally left these concepts undefined in the survey so that respondents could bring their own meaning and experiences to their answers.

Given WMU's priority of closing equity gaps based on race/ethnicity, we compared results for students who identify as Asian, Black or African American, Hispanic or Latino, multiracial, and White. For consistency with how WMU's Office of Institutional Research reports student demographic data, we also treated international students as a distinct, nonoverlapping identity group.

Belonging

On average, respondents rated their sense of belonging at 7.75 on a scale of 1 ("very weak") to 10 ("very strong"). The average ratings for different identity groups ranged from 7.11 to 8.13—a narrow spread. The differences among groups came close to meeting the conventional standard for statistical significance (p = .06, which is just above the typical cutoff of p = .05), meaning we cannot be certain the observed differences reflect meaningful variation in students' sense of belonging.

More than two-thirds of respondents (68%; *n*=409/606) said they were "very" or "completely satisfied" with what WMU is doing to support their belonging. When asked what WMU was doing especially well in this area, these respondents frequently mentioned student organizations, events and activities, a diverse and inclusive campus, help in making connections, a welcoming campus community, and caring and supportive faculty.

The remaining respondents (32%; *n*=197/606) said they were "not at all," "slightly," or "moderately satisfied." When asked what WMU could do better, they highlighted four of the same six factors identified by the more satisfied students (i.e., organizations, events, diversity and inclusion, connections) but described them as lacking. A unique contribution from this group was a suggestion that WMU do more communication to ensure students know about opportunities to get involved.

Respondents were also asked whom they would ask for help if they were to experience a serious challenge at WMU. Eighty-four percent identified someone at WMU, with academic advisors, friends, and professors topping the list.

Health and Wellness

Regarding their health and wellness, the average rating among respondents was 7.42 on a scale of 1 ("poor") to 10 ("excellent"). As with belonging, the ratings across identity groups were within about one point of each other, ranging from 6.83 to 7.75, and the differences were very close to being statistically significant at the $p<.05$ level ($p=.052$).

More than half of the respondents (57%; $n=338/592$) said they were "very" or "completely satisfied" with WMU's support of their health and wellness. When asked what the University was doing especially well in this area, these respondents cited health care services at Sindecuse Health Center, mental health support and programming, the Student Recreation Center, dining options, and outreach.

Respondents reporting lower levels of satisfaction (i.e., the remaining 43%; $n=254/592$) were asked what WMU could do better in this area. They cited the same factors as highly satisfied students, but with less favorable framing. There was one distinct theme among the less satisfied group, which was a request for greater academic flexibility and accommodation.

Progress Toward Educational or Career Goals

Respondents were also asked to rate their progress toward their educational or career goals. In this area, the average rating was 7.83 on a scale of 1 ("completely off track") to 10 ("completely on track"). The difference between groups is statistically significant ($p < 0.001$), indicating meaningful variation in students' experiences. The lowest average rating was among Black or African American students (7.26), contrasted with the highest ratings among Hispanic or Latino/a/x students (7.89) and White students (8.02).

About two-thirds of respondents (66%; $n=414/623$) said they were "very" or "completely satisfied" with WMU's support of educational or career goals. When asked what the University was doing especially well in this area, these respondents praised WMU's efforts to prepare them for careers and the real world, academic advising and degree planning, effective and caring faculty, and the array of helpful academic support services and resources.

Less satisfied respondents (34%; $n=209/523$) were asked what WMU could do better. They identified the same issues as highly satisfied respondents, but framed these aspects of WMU's performance as needing improvement. In addition, they cited a need for (1) lower costs and (2) improvements in course offerings, scheduling, and transfer credits to support more timely completion of their degrees.

Summary

As described above and illustrated in Table ES-1, there is substantial overlap in topics highlighted by both highly satisfied and less satisfied students regarding belonging, health and wellness, and education and career. This convergence suggests general agreement about the University's role in shaping these aspects of student life. However, it also indicates that they are experiencing these areas of campus life differently. The full report includes details about each theme, along with illustrative quotes.

Table ES-1. Summary of Selected Quantitative and Qualitative Findings About Students' Belonging, Health and Wellness, and Progress toward Educational or Career Goals (N=626)

	Belonging		Health & Wellness		Educational or Career Goals	
Average self-rating on Scale of 1-10	7.75		7.42		7.83	
Identity Group Ratings: Lowest to Highest[a]	I 7.1 A 7.5 B 7.6 M 7.8 W 7.8 H 8.1		M 6.8 H 7.4 B 7.4 W 7.5 I 7.6 A 7.8		B 7.3 M 7.5 I 7.6 A 7.8 H 7.9 W 8.0	
Satisfaction with WMU	Less Satisfied: 32%	Highly Satisfied: 68%	Less Satisfied: 43%	Highly Satisfied: 57%	Less Satisfied: 33%	Highly Satisfied: 67%
Salient Themes in Responses to Open-ended Questions	Needs to Improve	Doing Well	Needs to Improve	Doing Well	Needs to Improve	Doing Well
Communication and outreach	✓			✓		
Connection	✓	✓				
Diversity and inclusion	✓	✓				
Events and activities	✓	✓				
Faculty and/or staff		✓			✓	✓
Student organizations	✓	✓				
Welcoming campus community		✓				
Food			✓	✓		
Healthcare services			✓	✓		
Mental health support and resources			✓	✓		
Recreation/exercise facilities			✓	✓		
Academic support			✓		✓	✓
Advising and degree planning					✓	✓
Career and real-world preparation					✓	✓
Cost					✓	

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Satisfaction with WMU	Less Satisfied: 32%	Highly Satisfied: 68%	Less Satisfied: 43%	Highly Satisfied: 57%	Less Satisfied: 33%	Highly Satisfied: 67%
Salient Themes in Responses to Open-ended Questions	Needs to Improve	Doing Well	Needs to Improve	Doing Well	Needs to Improve	Doing Well
Course offerings, scheduling, and transfer credits					✓	

[a] A = Asian; B = Black or African American; H = Hispanic or Latino/a/x; I = international, M = multiracial; W = White

[a] Highly satisfied = Respondents who said they were "very" or "completely satisfied;" Less satisfied = respondents who said they were "not at all," "slightly," or "moderately satisfied."

2025 Western Michigan University Undergraduate Student Survey

Background

The Empowering Futures evaluation workgroup engaged the Evaluation Lab to conduct an in-person campus-wide survey of undergraduate students at WMU in spring 2024 and again in spring 2025. The survey's purpose is to learn about students' perceptions of WMU, especially related to issues that intersect with the aims of the Empowering Futures initiative. The findings inform the ongoing evaluation of Empowering Futures activities and provide insights into students' experiences at WMU.

Appendix B includes technical details about the survey, including instrument design and respondent recruitment, sampling, and demographics. The survey questions are in Appendix C.

Findings

The survey findings presented in this section are organized around Empowering Futures' priority areas: sense of belonging, health and wellness, learning and sense of purpose, and persistence. Note that we intentionally left these concepts undefined in the survey so that respondents could bring their own meaning and experiences to their answers.

Although this is the second year of conducting the survey, many of the questions were revised, making it inappropriate to compare last year's results with this year's.

Throughout this report, when we compare results for specific groups, we include students who identify as Asian, Black or African American, Hispanic or Latino, international, multiracial, and White. The number of respondents identifying with other racial or ethnic groups is too small for meaningful comparisons.

> **ℹ** Those who wish to explore the data further can do so using the 2025 WMU Undergraduate Survey Data Dashboard. If you need assistance accessing, using, or understanding the dashboard, contact lori.wingate@wmich.edu.

We intentionally left these concepts undefined in the survey so that respondents could bring their own meaning and experiences to their answers.

Sense of Belonging

Students were asked to **rate their sense of belonging at WMU** on a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 = "very weak" and 10 = "very strong." The average rating for all 626 respondents was 7.75 (SD= 1.87). The median rating was 8. Figure 1 shows the respondents' ratings of their sense of belonging.

Figure 1. Students' Sense of Belonging at WMU: Percentage of Respondents Who Gave Ratings of 1 - 10 (N=626)
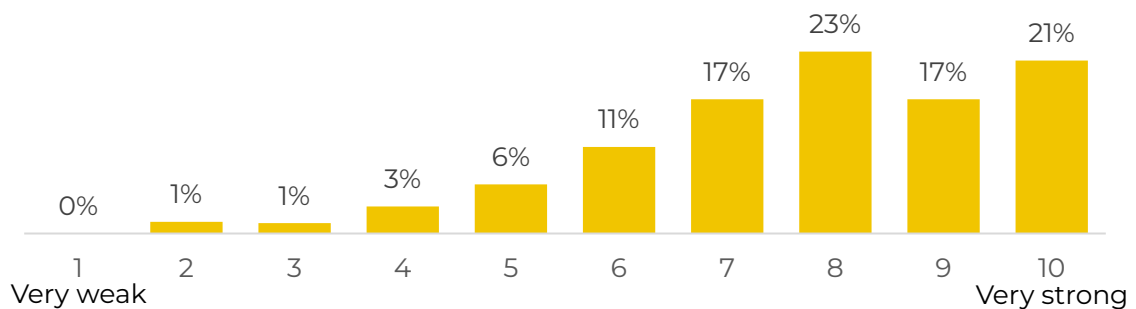
These results suggest that overall, most students have a strong sense of belonging at WMU. Despite the relatively small range in average ratings across identity groups (7.11 to 8.13) shown in Table 1, the differences approached statistical significance (p = 0.06).[1] As shown in Table 1, Hispanic or Latino/a/x students reported the highest average sense of belonging, whereas international students reported the lowest.[2]

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[1] For this and other comparisons across groups on questions using the 1-10 rating scale, we determined statistical significance using analysis of variance (ANOVA) and Tukey HSD (Honestly Significant Difference), with results considered significant at p < .05. Details are in Appendix E.

[2] For consistency with how WMU's Office of Institutional Research reports students' race and ethnicity information: (1) Students who identified themselves as Hispanic (an ethnicity) were not asked to identify a race as well. (2) Students who said they were international are counted as international, and not by their self-reported race or ethnicity. Because "international" is not a race or ethnicity, we refer to the various groups as "identity groups" rather than racial/ethnic groups.

Table 1. Students' Sense of Belonging: Mean Ratings Disaggregated by Identity Group

Identity Group	Count	Mean	SD
Hispanic or Latino/a/x	47	8.13	1.66
White	381	7.81	1.86
Multiracial	58	7.84	1.55
Black or African American	69	7.65	1.84
Asian	24	7.46	2.38
International	37	7.11	1.91
All Respondents	**626**	**7.75**	**1.87**

Next, respondents were asked to indicate **how satisfied they are with what WMU offers to support their sense of belonging** on a five-point scale from "not at all satisfied" to "completely satisfied," with an option to select "I don't have an opinion about this." Of the 606 respondents who registered an opinion, most said they were "very satisfied" (39%) or "completely satisfied" (29%), as shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Students' Satisfaction with What WMU Does to Support Their Sense of Belonging (N=606)
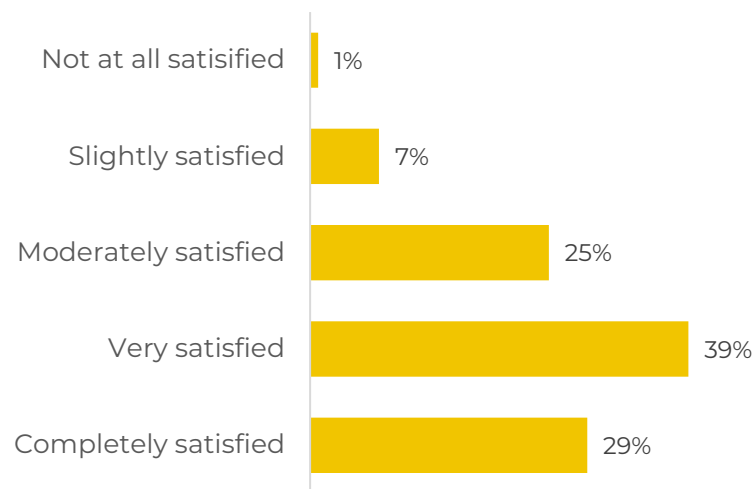
Asian, Hispanic or Latino/a/x, multiracial, and White students reported the highest satisfaction with what WMU does to support their sense of belonging. Within these groups, 68%-74% said they were either "very" or "completely satisfied." In contrast, a little more than half of Black or African American (52%)

and international students (56%) reported these satisfaction levels. All ratings are in Table D-1 in <u>Appendix D</u>.

Students' Opinions About What WMU is Doing Especially Well to Support Their Sense of Belonging

Respondents who reported being "very" or "completely satisfied" (*n=409*) were asked to comment on what WMU is doing especially well to support their sense of belonging. We identified six salient themes across the responses of the 366 students who answered this open-ended question.[3] These themes are listed below, followed by explanations of each.

1. Provides a wide variety of student organizations
2. Hosts many events, activities, and other opportunities for engagement
3. Fosters a diverse and inclusive environment
4. Helps students feel connected
5. Has a welcoming campus community
6. Has caring and supportive faculty

Provides a wide variety of student organizations (n=127): About a third of the answers focused on some aspect of WMU's student organizations. Students noted that there are several organizations that align with various interests, and many said that being a part of student organizations was critical to their sense of belonging. The comments below illustrate the range of comments related to this theme:

> *Having multiple clubs and student organizations to help students find the right people that they can trust and feel good.*

> *As a Christian, I'm happy with the amount of Christian groups on campus, and appreciate that WMU allows them to thrive here.*

> *I know I belong because of my involvement with student organizations!*

> *Having so many RSOs [registered student organizations] available to students really help! It's nice to be able to find a community that I fit in!*

> *I like Greek life. I think if it weren't for my fraternity, I wouldn't feel as well about my sense of belonging.*

Hosts many events, activities, and other opportunities for engagement (n=62): The respondents who indicated that WMU's offerings of events or activities was important for their sense of belonging tended to be less specific

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[3] We considered a theme salient if the topic appeared in 5% or more of the responses and conveyed a specific, substantive idea.

than those who mentioned organizations. Some of the more detailed comments about events and activities included these:

> *Has plenty of events to go to where you can find people who like what you like.*

> *Doing hallway activities or on campus activities where I can go with my group of friends or meet new people.*

> *I like going to a lot of the events that WMU puts on, like Bronco Bash! I also really like the hockey games.*

Fosters a diverse and inclusive environment (n=42): Several respondents emphasized diversity and/or inclusion in their responses about what helps their sense of belonging.

> *WMU has a diverse student body so everyone has somewhere where they can feel understood.*

> *I see a lot of different events and cultural talks all over the campus, and even the cafes and dining center cater to many different cuisines, so it really helps feel at home.*

> *WMU offers many spaces for people of color and LGBT community.*

> *Accepting me even though I'm from another country.*

> *There are numerous multicultural events and clubs on campus where I can find people who I can relate to.*

Helps students feel connected (n=35): Directly or indirectly, several respondents highlighted their friendships and sense of community at WMU. Some pointed to specific efforts by the University to create community, while others shared that they felt part of a community or found friends here.

> *The community is amazing, and I feel like I can be myself and make connections with people that are going to last for a long time.*

> *Promoting a sense of community.*

> *I have been able to find a group of people that I feel great with.*

> *I have friends now – yippee!*

Has a welcoming campus (n=24): Although they overlap with remarks about WMU being diverse and inclusive, students' comments about the campus being a welcoming environment emphasized that students, staff, or faculty are friendly and overall welcoming. Six of these comments included the words "welcome" or "welcoming," such as in these examples:

All the faculty are very welcoming. Every class or building that I go to I feel like I fit in.

Student organizations are extremely welcoming, and the social atmosphere of this university is inviting.

The student center being a very welcoming place for other students to meet and make new friends.

Very welcoming community, and staff is always kind.

Has caring and supportive faculty and staff (n=16). Some respondents emphasized the role of WMU's faculty and staff in helping them feel like they belong here. These comments, such as those below, emphasize personalized care and attention:

All of my professors know me by name ….

I am supported in my goals and feel like I'm valued as a student here.

They care about how you're doing at Western.

All of the teachers and professors want you to succeed! I feel like I am wanted at the school, and it is really important to me.

Other topics. Other recurring, but less common topics mentioned by respondents include the following:

- strong academic programs that help students connect (*n*=9)
- good communication about opportunities to get involved (n=7)
- environmental and spaces that facilitate interaction (*n*=3)

The remaining 10 comments were either too vague to categorize or didn't relate to other themes.

Opinions about What WMU Could Do Better to Support Students' Sense of Belonging

Respondents who said they were "not at all," "slightly," or "moderately satisfied" (*n*=194) were asked to comment on what WMU could do better to support their sense of belonging. Among the 143 respondents who recorded an answer, the most common response (*n*=23) was "nothing"—or a similar answer indicating they didn't have a specific suggestion or thought WMU was already doing OK in this area. We identified five salient themes across the remaining responses. These themes are listed below, followed by explanations of each.

1. Offer more events and activities
2. Promote diversity and inclusion

3. Facilitate connections
4. Support the creation and operation of more student organizations
5. Improve communication

Offer more events and activities (n=22): The most common substantive response about what WMU could do to enhance students' sense of belonging was a suggestion that the University offer more events and activities. Most of these responses did not include more details on the topic but simply said "more events" or something similar. However, one person offered a detailed response about what would help them feel a stronger sense of belonging:

> *Provide more events as an entire college, and sports events with incentives to bring more people together from all ages and majors. [For example,] football games/tailgates make me feel the most sense of belonging from WMU.*

Promote diversity and inclusion (n=19): Various respondents who suggested more attention to diversity and inclusion commented on the need to ensure all students feel welcome and accepted. Their responses identified several subgroups whose members may not feel fully included or understood based on disability, race, culture, political beliefs, gender identity, sexual orientation, and student status. The quotes below illustrate the range of responses within this theme:

> *WMU is so socially segregated, we need more multicultural events that bring different cultures together.*

> *I think that as a Black American in a PWI [predominantly White institution], I don't expect the population of black people to suddenly just rise, but I think the marketing of POC [people of color] spaces would be super appreciated.*

> *Wider acceptance and understanding of disability and LGBT issues.*

> *Acceptance of a conservative POV [point of view].*

Facilitate connections (n=14): Closely related to the theme of offering more events and activities, some respondents said it would be helpful if WMU was more proactive in facilitating connections among students. Example responses include the following:

> *Provide more ways to meet friends for introverted people.*

> *Offer more opportunities to help students connect.*

> *In the dorms, more floor bonding and getting to know the people who are in your dorm.*

> *They could incorporate more conversation-based classes to build connections between students in the classroom.*

Support the creation and operation of more student organizations (n=14): Most of the respondents whose answers focused on student organizations simply stated "more clubs" or something similar. However, four people said it would help if organizations were easier to find. Here are two examples of comments related to this theme:

> *More openness about clubs and stuff. The search engine was really weird.*

> *More opportunities to start and find clubs.*

Improve communication (n=10): Some respondents focused on the need for better communication about what's happening on campus and opportunities to get involved. Here are some examples of these types of comments:

> *Offer more ways to find what is going on within campus so that it is easier to see what is happening every day.*

> *Advertise social events more directly ….*

> *I wish they would reach out better than just through a shared general email.*

Other topics. The only commonality across the remaining 19 responses was a suggestion by three people that faculty, staff, or student leaders could be "nicer" or more "caring."

Quality of Interactions Among Members of the Campus Community

We asked respondents to **rate the quality of their interactions with others on campus**. Figure 3 shows that most respondents characterized their interactions with others on campus as "good" or "very good." Interactions with advisors received the highest percentages of both "excellent" (33%) and "fair" (12%) ratings compared with other groups with other University roles, but the differences are not statistically significant.

Figure 3. Students' Ratings of Their Interactions with Students, Professors and Instructors, Advisors, and Student Services and Other Staff
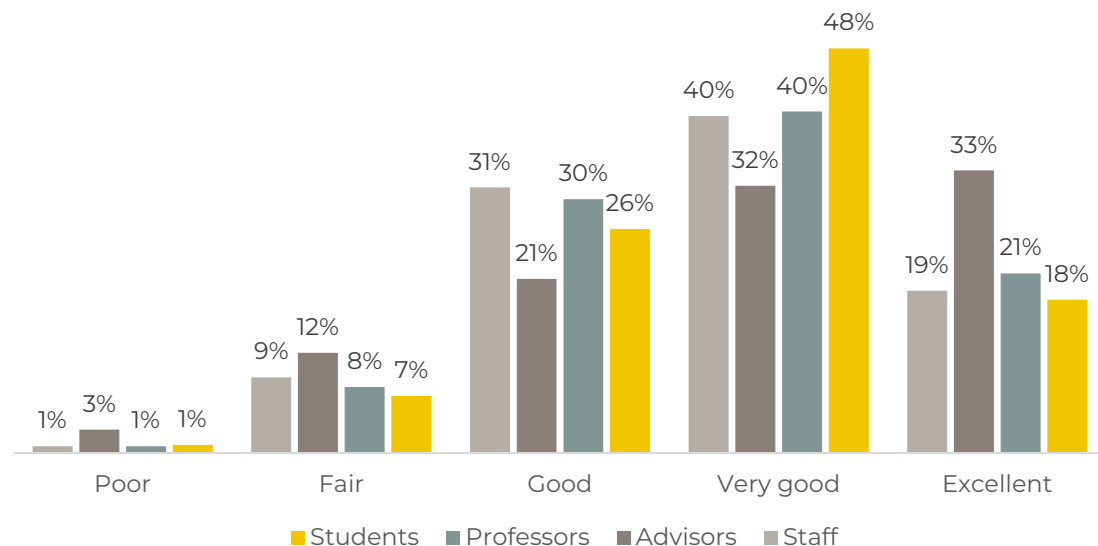
Comparing the responses from members of different identity groups,[4] we found no statistically significant differences in how group members rated their interactions with academic advisors. However, we did find statistically significant differences in the following areas:

- Asian, Black or African American, and international respondents rated their interactions with other students less favorably than respondents from other identity groups.
- Asian and Black or African American respondents rated their interactions with professors less favorably than respondents from other identity groups.
- Asian respondents rated their interactions with staff less favorably than respondents from other groups.

For details, see Table D-2 in Appendix D.

Whom Students Would Ask for Help if Needed

Respondents were asked **whom they would reach out to if they were experiencing a serious challenge at WMU.** The rationale for this question was to learn whether students feel they can turn to a WMU professional if they need help. After students recorded their answer to this open-ended question, they were prompted to indicate whether the person was a WMU professor;

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[4] For this testing, we used chi-square tests of independence to examine group differences in students' ratings.

academic advisor; peer advisor, mentor, or tutor; other type of WMU employee; a family member; or other type of non-WMU person.

Most respondents (84%; *n*=522) identified someone at WMU, most commonly advisors (32%), friends (19%), and professors (17%). Sixteen percent of respondents said they would turn to someone outside of WMU, especially family (12%).

Table 3. Whom Students Would Ask for Help if Experiencing a Serious Challenge at WMU (N=618)

Category	Role	Count	%
Person at WMU (*n*=522)	Academic advisor	200	32%
	Friend	117	19%
	Professor	109	17%
	Peer advisor, mentor, or tutor	57	9%
	Other type of WMU employee (e.g., dean, health center professor, campus job supervisor	39	6%
Person outside of WMU (*n*=96)	Family member	78	12%
	Friend	11	2%
	Other (e.g., therapist, significant other, no one)	8	1%

Across identity groups, the percentage of students who said they would contact someone at WMU ranged from 80% (Black or African American students) to 89% (international students). The differences are not statistically significant.

Health and Wellness

We asked respondents to **rate their overall health and wellness** on a scale of 1-10, where 1 = "poor" and 10 = "excellent." The mean among all 626 respondents was 7.42 (*SD*=1.72). Three-quarters of respondents (75%; *n*=318/626) gave a rating of 7 or higher. The median rating was 8. Figure 4 shows the respondents' ratings of their health and wellness.

Figure 4. Students' Ratings of Their Health and Wellness: Percentage of Respondents Who Gave Ratings of 1 - 10 (N=626)
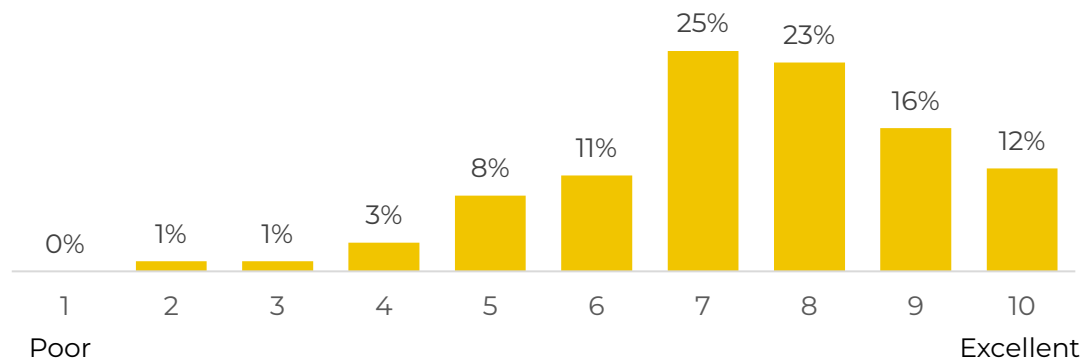

As shown in Table 4, the mean ratings of students' health and wellness varied across identity groups, ranging from 6.83 (multiracial students) to 7.75 (Asian students). The differences across groups approach statistical significance (*p*=.052).

Table 4. Students' Health and Wellness: Mean Ratings Disaggregated by Identity Group

Identity Group	Count	Mean	SD
Asian	24	7.75	1.57
International	37	7.57	1.77
White	381	7.50	1.69
Black or African American	69	7.43	1.64
Hispanic or Latino/a/x	47	7.36	1.82
Multiracial	58	6.83	1.81
All Respondents	**626**	**7.42**	**1.72**

Next, respondents were asked to indicate **how satisfied they are with what WMU offers to support their health and wellness.** Of the 592 respondents who reported an opinion, most said they were "moderately satisfied" (32%) or "very satisfied" (41%).

Figure 5. Students' Satisfaction with What WMU Does to Support Their Health and Wellness (N=582)
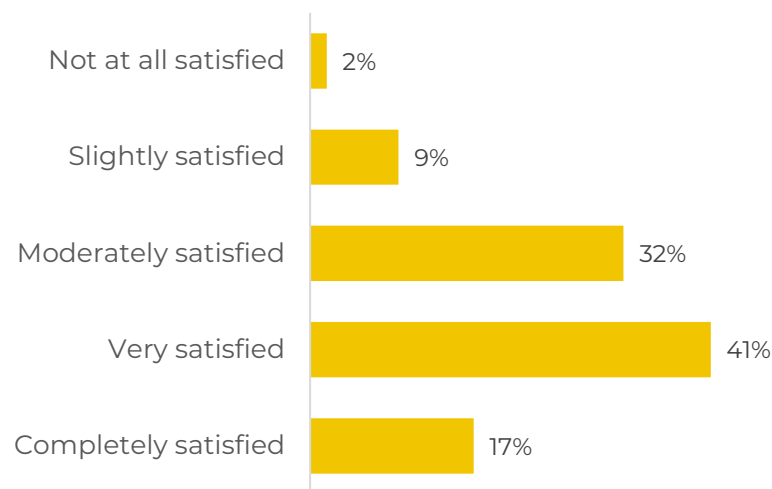
Except for Asian students, between 57%-63% of respondents from various identity groups said they were either "very" or "completely" satisfied. Only 36% of Asian students reported these satisfaction levels. All ratings are shown in Table D-3 in Appendix D.

Students' Opinions About What WMU is Doing Especially Well to Support Their Health and Wellness

Respondents who reported being "very" or "completely satisfied" (*n*=338) were asked to comment on what WMU is doing especially well to support their health and wellness. Among the 309 responses provided, we identified six salient themes, which are listed below, followed by explanations of each.

1. Provides convenient and high-quality healthcare services and resources at Sindecuse Health Center
2. Supports students' mental health and promotes mental health awareness
3. Supports fitness through the Student Recreation Center
4. Offers a variety of food options on campus
5. Does a good job with outreach to ensure students know about resources and events

Provides convenient and high-quality healthcare services and resources at Sindecuse Health Center (n=69). Several respondents expressed appreciation for the services available at Sindecuse. Although mental health services are available at Sindecuse, we included responses specifically mentioning mental health services within the mental health support theme, discussed next. Below are examples of comments about Sindecuse as a healthcare resource:

I've been to Sindecuse multiple times, and they've been super accommodating.

Provided with a well-equipped health center on campus for any health-related issues.

The friendly medical professionals at Sindecuse are knowledgeable and extremely helpful.

As someone who gets sick a lot, since use has been a great resource. I get all of my medications there.

Supports students' mental health and promotes mental health awareness (n=59). Many students said the University's services and activities related to mental health were important to them. Twenty-one of these respondents highlighted that WMU offers free (limited) therapy sessions and seven mentioned mental health week. The comments below illustrate the range of responses related to mental health support theme:

I absolutely love their mental health program in particular. Recently, I have been using their counseling services, which I love that it is very accessible for all students.

Sindecuse offers 8 free counseling sessions, which I am currently utilizing and it has helped a lot.

Drop-in mental health appointments at Sindecuse have been very helpful for me, even if I just use one or two

Having mental health week events helps a lot with de-stressing and helps me relax.

Supports fitness through the Student Recreation Center (n=59). Several students highlighted the rec center as important for their health and wellness. They seem to especially appreciate that it is free for students, convenient, and open early in the morning. Some of the responses reveal students' awareness of the connection between their physical, psychological, and social well-being, such as these:

Having the rec center helps a lot for my health and wellness as it provides a place to improve my physical health while being a social setting, which helps my mental health.

I like that we have the REC and intramurals to be able to go lift, play sports, or just hang out with friends.

Providing workout classes that promote mind and body strength.

Offers a variety of food options on campus (n=27). The availability of food and other topics related to dining options were mentioned numerous times, with respondents highlighting variety, quality, and convenience. Example comments include the following:

> *Providing accessible, healthy food choices on campus.*

> *I get to eat a varied selection of meals every day, keeping my health in shape.*

> *Fresh fruits and vegetables.*

Does a good job with outreach (n=15). Some respondents praised WMU's efforts to keep them informed about services and resources available to support their well-being, such as in the these comments:

> The RA's are always posting resources that are available to help you.

> They advertise services very well so that everyone is aware of them.

> Advising, campus support, checking in on students.

Other topics. Several respondents (*n*=31) said that WM offers good sources and services to support health and wellness, but were not specific about the type of resource they had in mind. Another set of comments (*n*=15) but were extremely general, such as "the way everything is set up."

Other recurring, but less common topics included the following:

- variety of activities, events, and student organizations (*n*=10)

- good instructors (*n*=8) and their willingness to make accommodations (*n*=5) and keep workloads reasonable (*n*=5)

- campus environment and spaces to support wellness and studying (*n*=8)

- therapy dogs (*n*=7) (While comments about therapy dogs could arguably be included under the mental health support theme, these comments made no mention of mental health or stress management, only mentioning the dogs.).

Fourteen respondents said "nothing" or something similar, and the remaining 23 responses focused on a variety of different topics.

Students' Opinions About What WMU Could Do Better to Support Their Health and Wellness

Respondents who said they were "not at all," "slightly," or "moderately" satisfied with what WMU does to support their health and wellness (*n*=254) were asked to comment on what WMU could do better. Across the 200

responses to this question, we identified five salient themes, which are listed below, followed by explanations of each one.

1. Increase accessibility of medical and mental healthcare services
2. Improve communication and outreach
3. Support better nutrition
4. Improve recreational facilities or increase access to fitness opportunities
5. Provide more academic flexibility and support

Increase accessibility of medical and mental healthcare services (n=28). The most common suggestion for better supporting students' health and wellness was to reduce barriers to services such as lowering costs and expanding hours. Many of these comments, like those below, refer to making doctor visits less expensive (including expanding insurance options) and making counseling sessions easier to access.

> *Figure out an affordable cost to see Sindecuse. It's not fair that they don't take some insurance and how I have to go an hour back home whenever I need to see a doctor.*

> *Make healthcare more accessible on campus, especially on weekends.*

> *8 therapy visits should be upped to 12*

> *Have counseling appointments accessible online.*

Improve communication and outreach (n=22). Several respondents indicated a need for more marketing and outreach to ensure students are aware of resources to support health and wellness. Example comments include the following:

> *Make Sindecuse benefits more well known and more awareness of healthy food in dining halls.*

> *Encourage students to use the facilities available at their disposal more often.*

> *They could send emails to students offering to help and offer other resources for those struggling.*

Support better nutrition (n=20). Several respondents said that improving WMU's dining options or otherwise supporting students' nutrition would be helpful. Other than two remarks about making food more affordable, the responses tended to focus on offering healthier food, as reflected in these comments:

> *It would be better if they had healthier food in the dining center that is still good. The only healthy stuff they have are salads and sandwiches, which can get tiring after a while.*

Offer more varieties of healthy dining options

I feel like it's hard to find nutritional options in the dining hall.

While most comments related to the theme of food and nutrition focused on options in the dining hall, one person said they need help with meal planning: "make me meal plans and grocery shopping lists - food regulation is very hard to spend time on for me."

Improve recreational facilities or increase access to fitness opportunities (n=16). Some students said a better or more accessible recreation center would be beneficial. The comments related to this theme tended to lack specifics, such as suggestions for a "bigger," "better," or "updated" gym. Some of the more detailed comments include the following:

Free recreational classes at the SRC would be appropriate for full-time students.

Offer parking for the rec center to those without a parking pass.

Expand/ add more gyms so not all students only have to go to the rec.

Be more flexible and supportive (n=11): Some students pointed to a need for more compassion and accommodation. They suggested that instructors could be more understanding, and a few specifically called for "reduced work." The following comments exemplify this theme:

Communicate with instructors that students need mental health days so they won't punish students for missing class.

Encourage professors to be accommodating when students are sick.

Many teachers fight against student accommodations to the point where getting needs met is an exhausting battle even if one has all the right paperwork and official accommodations through the school. There has not been one semester I have not had to struggle and fight to get profs to follow my university accommodations.

Other topics. Other respondents offered a variety of suggestions for how WMU could better support students' health and wellness, including the following:

- improve class and facility scheduling to better accommodate students' schedules (*n*=6)

- improve professors' performance (*n*=3)

- offer more student organizations (*n*=3)

- improve transportation options (*n*=2).

Eleven respondents said "more resources" or something similar but were not specific about the type of resources desired. Ten people said there wasn't anything WMU could do or indicated it was already doing OK in this area. The remaining 18 comments were either too vague to categorize or didn't relate to other themes.

Students' Experiences of Being Contacted to Check on Their Personal or Academic Well-Being

We asked respondents if they **had ever been contacted by someone at WMU asking about their personal or academic well-being.** This question's purpose was to find out if WMU's increased efforts to communicate with students individually are apparent to students. Two-thirds of respondents (66%; *n*=416) said someone from WMU had contacted them for that reason. A follow-up question asked how they felt about this outreach. Almost all of these respondents reported feeling "neutral" (54%) or "positive" (42%), with only 4% reporting "negative" about the outreach.

Learning and Sense of Purpose

Survey respondents rated **their progress toward their educational or career goals** on a scale of 1-10, where 1 = "completely off track" and 10 = "completely on track." The mean for all 626 respondents was 7.83 (*SD*=1.64). Eighty-two percent of respondents (*n*=516) gave a rating of 7 or higher. The median is 8. Figure 3 shows the distribution of ratings.

Figure 6. Students' Ratings of Their Progress Toward Educational or Career Goals: Percentage of Respondents Who Gave Ratings of 1 - 10 (N=626)
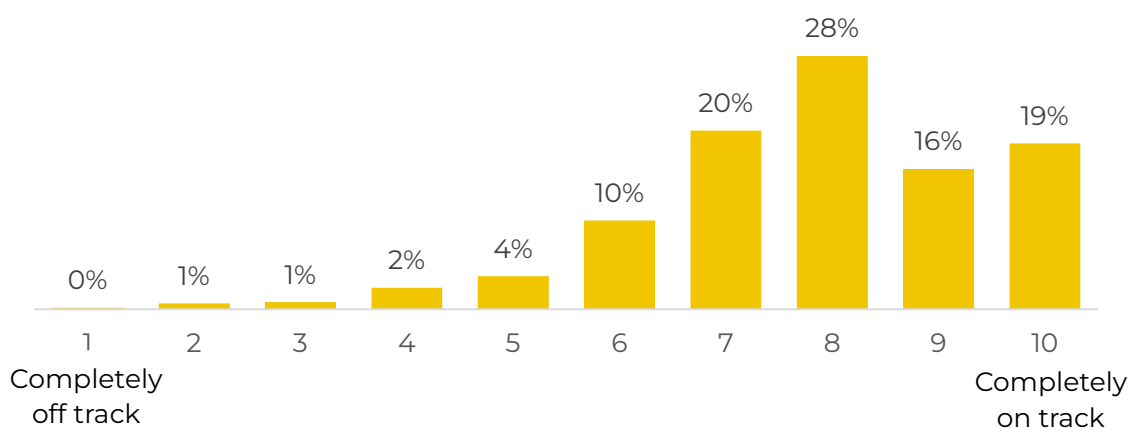
As shown in Table 5, average ratings for progress toward educational or career goals across identity groups groups ranged from 7.26 (Black or African

American students) to 8.02 (White students). The differences across identity groups are statistically significant ($p < 0.001$), indicating meaningful variation in students' experiences. While all average ratings are fairly high, at 7 or above, Black or African American students' ratings indicate that, overall, they don't feel as "on track" to meet their educational and career goals as other groups.

Table 5. Progress Toward Educational or Career Goals: Mean Ratings Disaggregated by Identity Group

Identity Group	Count	Mean	SD
White	381	8.02	1.54
Hispanic or Latino/a/x	47	7.89	1.52
Asian	24	7.79	1.28
International	37	7.57	1.56
Multiracial	58	7.79	1.28
Black or African American	69	7.26	1.98
All Respondents	**626**	**7.83**	**1.64**

Respondents were asked to indicate **how satisfied they are with what WMU does to help them meet their educational or career goals.** Of the 623 respondents who gave an opinion, most said they were "very satisfied" (51%), followed by "moderately satisfied" (28%), as shown in Figure 7.

Figure 7. Students' Satisfaction with What WMU Does to Support Their Educational or Career Goals (N=582)
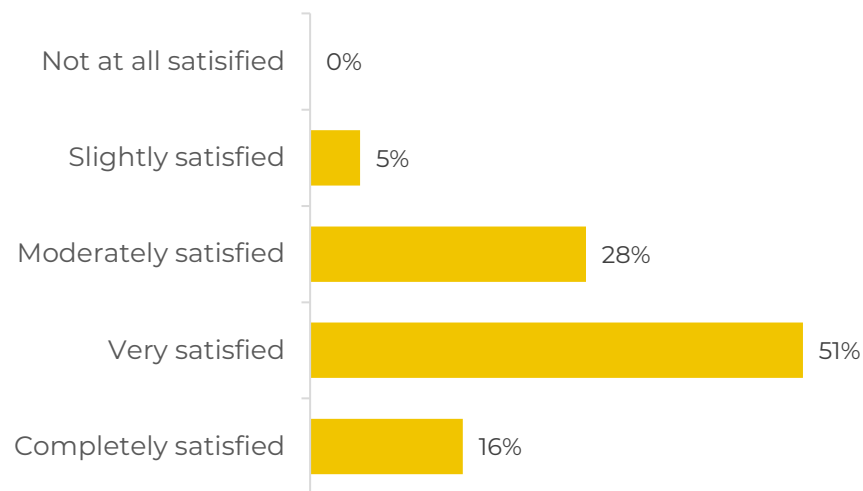
Between 66%-69% of Asian, Hispanic or Latino/a/x, multiracial, and White students said there were either "very" or "completely" satisfied with what WMU does to support their educational or career goals. In contrast, between 56%-58% of Black or African American and international students reported these satisfaction levels. All ratings are shown in Table D-4 in [Appendix D](#).

Students' Opinions About What WMU is Doing Especially Well to Support Their Educational or Career Goals

Respondents who said they were "very" or "completely" satisfied (*n*=414) were asked to comment on what WMU is doing especially well to help them meet their educational or career goals. Across the comments from 389 respondents, we identified four salient themes, which are listed below, followed by explanations of each one.

1. Helps students get ready for careers and the real world
2. Provides helpful academic advising and degree planning
3. Has effective and caring faculty and staff
4. Offers a variety of helpful academic support services and resources

Helps students get ready for careers and the real world (n=103). More than one-fourth of the responses about what WMU is doing especially well to help students reach their educational or career goals mentioned help with career preparation or otherwise getting ready for the real world. Specifically, they frequently mentioned internships, practice interviews, resume help, job fairs, networking, and relevant coursework. The following comments illustrate the types of responses related to this theme:

> *This uni [sic] helps students in so many ways. From career coaching, practice interviews and they help build connections by hosting career fairs. All this is more than what a student needs to help set them up for success.*

> *Helping me to find internships and volunteer experience.*

> *Preparing me for the real world with a very interactive curriculum that simulates life after graduation and is very engaging.*

> *Job recruiting and classes that set me up for success with real-world experiences.*

> *Classes right off the bat that are already preparing me for my future career.*

Provides helpful academic advising and degree planning (n=82). Many students praised the support and guidance they received from their academic advisors, describing it as "amazing," "great," or "helpful." They also highlighted the availability, care, and responsiveness of advisors, and the clarity of their

degree plans. The comments below demonstrate what students appreciate about advising services and degree planning:

> *They are good at keeping me on track and making sure I meet the goals I need to graduate.*

> *Advisors are willing to meet with me personally and discuss my academic future and goals I would like to achieve.*

> *Providing academic advisors who care about my success not only as a student but as a person.*

> *My advisor … is fantastic and everything is pretty well structured. I know what I'm supposed to do next*

> *My advisor … has been super effective in helping me curate a plan that aligns with my major and that keeps me on track to graduate*

> *DegreeWorks is a great tool to check what I need done. All the advisors are available for a meeting or a quick email which is convenient. They are also accommodating when it comes to exceptions, such as when I needed a math prerequisite that I was able to replace with a different math class.*

Has effective and caring faculty and staff (n=70). As exemplified by the example responses listed below, students appreciate faculty who demonstrate concern for their well-being and success and consider their career goals.

> *Our teachers are so incredibly helpful with building confidence in us on our future paths and goals.*

> *My professors in my major want the best for me and my future career and help me with connections and bettering myself.*

> *In my experience, many of my professors have been helpful in the learning process and in helping with envisioning a future after graduation*

> *My professors all very clearly care about my success. My professors are all also still working out in the industry actively, and therefore I know I can trust that the information coming from them is not outdated.*

> *Certain professors are so kind a genuinely care about my life.*

Offers a variety of helpful academic support services and resources (n=55). Respondents highlighted a variety of services and resources that are helpful to their academic success, such as tutoring, study groups, the library, the writing center, disability services, study spaces, and Student Success Hub. Mostly the responses identify a specific resource without additional details or refer to

"resources" generally. A few of the more detailed comments include the following:

> *WMU is providing necessary resources such as office hours, RSO's, and Waldo library.*

> *They provide many different ways for me to get help with subjects I'm struggling on and career advice.*

> *Having TAs or SIs available for help or review sessions to gain extra practice or feedback I'm challenging classes.*

Other topics. Less commonly cited factors ways that WMU helps students reach their educational or career goals included the following:

- experiential learning through research, labs, and field trips (*n*=16). While this topic wasn't mentioned by enough respondents to be considered a major theme, one comment stands out as especially important, given WMU's emphasis on experience-driven learning:

  > *WMU offers unique experiences like the Cold Case Program, practicum, research, and job exposure that have helped me realize what I wanted to do for the rest of my life.*

- quality of academic programs or courses (n=17)

- opportunities for leadership, engagement, and networking through student organizations (n=12)

- general opportunities on campus (n=12), although these responses tended to be vague

The remaining responses (*n*=24) covered a variety of different topics, with no common threads.

Students' Opinions About What WMU Could do Better to Support Their Educational or Career Goals

Less satisfied respondents (*n*=209) (i.e., those who said they were "not at all," slightly," or "moderately satisfied") were asked to comment on what WMU could do better to help them meet their educational or career goals. Among the 161 respondents who provided substantive answers, we identified five salient themes, which are listed below, followed by explanations of each one.

1. Offer more career guidance and preparation
2. Improve academic advising
3. Improve course offerings, scheduling, and transfer credits to facilitate timely completion
4. Improve the effectiveness and demeanor of professors

5. Lower costs
6. Provide more academic support.

Offer more career guidance and preparation (n=31). The most common suggestion for supporting students in the pursuit of their academic or career goals was to offer more career guidance and preparation. These responses point to a desire for more career fairs, internships, and assistance with career planning. Comments related to this topic include the following:

Help more with internships and future planning for after graduation. I also feel they could be more helpful with other things offered at Western, such as joining groups and other helpful communities to reach career goals.

There is not a lot of support for transitioning into a career outside of the STEM or business colleges.

Make internships known and available to all fields.

Career fairs for all majors.

Improve academic advising (n=21). Students who expressed a desire for improved advising commented on challenges with accessing and scheduling time with advisors and needing more support for degree planning. Examples of comments on this topic include the following:

My advisor isn't great at responding so that would help a lot.

My advisor wasn't very helpful when it came to looking for classes or finding class replacements. So I think having a helpful and kind advisor would've made a huge difference for me.

Better [advising] services for degree planning.

Better Degree Works. It can be confusing to know which classes are needed.

Improve course offerings, scheduling, and transfer credits to facilitate timely degree completion (n=20). Some students said they would appreciate more or different course options, courses offered more frequently, or approval of more transfer credits. They emphasized the importance of being able to access and complete required classes/credits in a timely manner. The comments below express the sentiments related to this theme:

I would love to see more engineering required classes offered more often or in the summer semesters. Having classes being only in the fall or every other year has disallowed me from graduating in 8 semesters rather than 10.

Plan out better routes for classes that are needed versus electives.

Have classes offered more frequently rather than fall or spring only.

Allow me to spend more course work with classes applicable to my major and career instead of Wes courses that don't relate to anything I need to know and take up way too much of my time.

Improve effectiveness and demeanor of professors (n=17). A group of respondents focused on aspects of instructors or instruction. Some said it would help if professors were more patient, understanding, and caring. Other comments were more general, requesting "better" or "more qualified" professors or more attention paid to teaching quality.

Have more caring teachers.

Getting some better professors would be a decent start. I feel like half of the ones I have just don't understand how to teach a class.

Make sure that the professors are teaching classes well. Under no circumstance should most people in a class drop, or fail.

Lower costs (n=15). Some respondents focused on the cost of their education, implying that the expense was a hindrance to their success. Most of these comments were very brief, such as "cheaper tuition" or "more financial support." However, two students pointed out that the high costs required them to work more:

Make tuition cheaper so I can spend more time interacting in the business college than working.

Avoid raising prices so that I don't have to work as much and combat the high prices of tuition.

Provide more academic support (n=10). Most of the respondents who indicated they would appreciate more academic support specifically mentioned tutors, such in the following remarks:

More educational resources like personalized tutors.

Have tutor in specific career field that has graduated with your major.

Other topics. Other recurring, but less common, topics included the following:

- make coursework more relevant to the real world, such as through hands-on experience and industry-relevant content (*n*=8)

- improve resources or opportunities for specific majors (*n*=5)

- expand or improve access to technology and study spaces (*n*=4).

The remaining 30 responses mentioned a variety of disparate topics.

Persistence and Graduation

We asked students a series of questions to better understand why some students leave WMU and what may affect their certainty about completing their degrees here. When asked if they **plan on returning to WMU this fall**, 96% (*n*=532) of respondents (who weren't graduating in spring or summer) said yes. Nine respondents (1.6%) said they weren't sure, and the remaining 11 respondents (2%) said they were not returning. When asked why, six of the respondents who said they weren't returning said they were transferring, one said they were homesick, and one said they didn't feel like they belonged here. The others mentioned money, being an international student, and waiting to hear about an internship.

We asked respondents to compare **how certain they were that they would graduate when they first started at WMU, compared with how certain they are now** (in two separate questions). Most (65%) indicated greater certainty now than when they first started. However, thirty-five respondents (6%) reported feeling less certain now. When asked why, almost half (*n*=16) cited academic issues. Others identified personal issues (*n*=6), changes in educational goals (*n*=4), financial issues (*n*=4), and social issues (*n*=2). Three respondents didn't give a specific reason.

Limitation

The main limitation with this survey is that we did not use true random sampling, which means the survey respondents may not be representative of the undergraduate population. In particular, freshmen and sophomores are overrepresented.

Discussion

This survey provides a valuable snapshot of how students currently experience WMU. If the main questions are asked in the same way in future iterations, the data can serve as a baseline for monitoring change over time and identifying impacts resulting from Empowering Futures and other initiatives.

Disparate Experiences Based on Identity Group. The survey results show that there are statistically significant–or nearly significant–differences between identity groups in terms of their sense of belonging, health and wellness, and progress toward their educational or career goals. Historically, both Hispanic and Black or African American students have experienced lower rates of retention and graduation at WMU. However, the current findings reflect notable divergences in their experiences. Hispanic or Latino/e/x students gave the highest ratings for belonging and second-highest ratings for progress toward educational or career goals. In contrast, Black or

African American students gave the second-lowest ratings for belonging and the lowest rating for progress toward educational career goals. These findings underscore the need to better understand the specific barriers facing Black or African American students and to identify ways to build on their strengths and support their success.

Factors That Influence Students' Satisfaction with WMU. We found substantial overlap in topics highlighted by both highly satisfied and less satisfied students regarding WMU's support of their belonging, health and wellness, and education and career. This convergence suggests general agreement about the University's role in shaping these aspects of student life. However, it also indicates that they are experiencing these aspects of campus life differently (see Table ES-1). For example, regarding belonging, highly satisfied students identified student organizations as a campus strength, while less satisfied students said it was something that needed improvement.

The consistency of these topics, whether framed positively or negatively, makes it clear what matters to students. This information can be leveraged to further strengthen WMU's performance in these areas and ensure benefits are experienced equitably among students.

Notably, only two factors surfaced as something respondents highlighted in more than one area as something WMU was doing especially well or needed to improve: faculty and academic support.

- **Faculty** were highlighted as a strength by students who are highly satisfied with WMU's support of their **educational or career goals** and **sense of belonging**. Faculty also surfaced as something needing improvement by students who are less satisfied with WMU's support of their educational or career goals, underscoring the critical role of faculty in students' academic success.

- **Academic support** was highlighted as needing improvement by respondents who are less satisfied with WMU's support of their **health and wellness** and progress toward their **educational or career goals**. In the area of health and wellness, the requests for more academic support focused on flexibility and accommodation. Regarding education and career, respondents noted a need for more or better tutoring. Students who are highly satisfied with WMU's support of their educational or career goals praised WMU's tutoring, study groups, the library, and writing center, among other services and resources.

Retention and Graduation. According to WMU's institutional research data, 39% of students leave WMU before graduation (as measured by the institution's six-year graduation rate for FTIAC [first time in any college) students. This rate is much higher than indicated by the survey respondents. There are multiple possible explanations for the difference between the survey responses and WMU's actual graduation rates.

For example, survey respondents may have been overly optimistic about their likelihood of returning, felt social pressure to say they would return, or had not yet encountered an issue that would cause their non-return. Additionally, juniors and seniors are underrepresented among survey respondents, compared with WMU's undergraduate population. Overall, it doesn't seem this was a useful question given the misalignment between students' reported intentions and the WMU's actual retention and graduation rates.

Appendix A: Contributors

This survey study was a collaborative effort of the Empowering Futures evaluation team and the Evaluation Lab. Specific contributions are identified in Table A-1.

Table A-1. Study Contributors

Group	Person	Contributions			
		Instrument Development —design (D), input (I), testing (T)	Data Collection	Data Analysis — qual. (QL), quant. (QT)	Report Quality Check
Empowering Futures Evaluation Team	Will Stutz Associate Director—Institutional Research	D			
	Brad Watts Assistant Director—The Evaluation Center	D			✓
	Lori Wingate Executive Director—The Evaluation Center	D		QL, QT	
	Lenore Yaeger Director of Assessment, Marketing, & Communications—Student Affairs	D			
	Brandon Youker Director—Evaluation Lab	D	✓	QL	✓
Evaluation Lab	Samin Al Mahi— Evaluation Associate I	✓		QT	✓
	Rukhsar Barakzai— Evaluation Assistant I	✓	✓	QL	
	Charlie DeGrave— Evaluation Assistant I			QL	
	Jill Eck—Evaluation Assistant II	✓	✓	QL	
	Tanairis García-López— Evaluation Assistant I		✓	QL	
	Victor Hernandez— Evaluation Assistant I	✓	✓	QL	
	Alexia Kryszewski— Evaluation Assistant I	✓	✓	QL	
	Jazmín Morón— Evaluation Assistant II		✓	QL	

Group	Person	Contributions			
		Instrument Development —design (D), input (I), testing (T)	Data Collection	Data Analysis — qual. (QL), quant. (QT)	Report Quality Check
	Blagoja Naskovski— Evaluation Assistant I			QL	
	Grace Osofo—Evaluation Assistant II	✓	✓	QL	
	Justin Varda—Evaluation Assistant I	✓	✓	QL	
	Deborah Williams— Evaluation Assistant II	✓	✓	QL	

Appendix B: Technical Details

Instrument Design

The Empowering Futures evaluation team modified the survey instrument based on the workgroup's and Evaluation Lab's experiences conducting, analyzing, and reporting the 2025 survey (add citation for 2024 survey report). Key modifications include the following:

- We redesigned the survey for private completion by respondents on a laptop or tablet computer.
- While keeping the main topics of belonging, health and wellness, and learning and sense of purpose, instead of asking one question related to each topic, we asked two – one in which respondents rate themselves and one in which they rate their satisfaction with WMU's support in that area.
- We added questions about
  - the quality of students' interactions with various members of the campus community
  - certainty about graduation (currently and retrospective)

To ensure the revised survey would be understood and answerable by students, Evaluation Lab staff piloted the survey with 15 students. The pilot included two versions of questions about students' assessments of their sense of belonging, health and wellness, and progress toward educational or career goals. One version had five ratings of poor, fair, good, very good, and excellent. A second version had a rating scale of 1 to 10, with the end points anchored with labels.

Respondents to the pilot survey indicated a preference for the 1-10 rating scale, so that is the version we used in the final survey.

The full survey instrument is in Appendix C.

Respondents: Sampling, Recruitment, and Demographics

Sampling

According to the WMU Institutional Research (2025) enrollment dashboard, 13,032 undergraduate students were enrolled at WMU in spring 2025. Based on this population, obtaining a representative sample with a 95% confidence interval and a 5% margin of error would require 374 respondents, selected randomly. We set a goal of 600 respondents so that smaller subgroups of students would have a greater chance of being represented in the collected data. We surpassed that goal with 626 respondents.

We chose to recruit participants in person to avoid the problem of very low response rates for student surveys when sent via email. A drawback of that approach is that

our survey sample is not random, and therefore we cannot claim findings are generalizable to the WMU student population.

To obtain a more representative sample of students than the traditional online survey, we opted to focus on representativeness by college. We employed a multistage sampling process consisting of purposive and convenience sampling. First, we determined the percentage of undergraduate students enrolled in WMU's eight main colleges. Next, we assigned lab staff to buildings where most of these colleges' classes are held, at assigned hour-long shifts, Monday through Friday between 9:30 a.m. and 6 p.m. The number of hours allocated to each location was based on the college's proportion of total WMU students and the time it took for the lab staff to reach the targeted number of surveys from the college. After one week, the lab staff moved to other high-traffic areas, including the Student Center, Waldo Library, Lee Honors College, Sindecuse, Sprau Tower and Foundation Plaza, and Valley Dining Center.

To recruit survey respondents, the Evaluation Lab staff approached an individual or group of students and, after confirming they were an undergraduate student, briefly described the anonymous survey and offered $10 in WMU Dining Dollars as compensation.

While the sampling was not random, our intentional efforts to engage a representative sample of students through place and time sampling resulted in a survey sample that closely resembles the WMU undergraduate student population. The lab staff estimated that about 30% of the students they approached about the survey declined to participate.

Demographics

Compared with official numbers about WMU's undergraduate student population for the Spring 2025 semester (WMU Institutional Research, 2025), the survey respondents generally reflect WMU's overall demographics, with a few deviations:

- Students earlier in their academic careers (freshmen and sophomores) are overrepresented, and advanced students (juniors and seniors) are underrepresented.
- While the numbers in Table 1 imply that students who identify as female are slightly overrepresented, WMU's official demographic categories are limited to male and female, making it difficult to compare gender data across these sources.
- Students who identify as Black or African American are slightly overrepresented, and students who identify as White are slightly underrepresented.
- Students from Haworth College of Business are overrepresented, while students in Merze Tate College or with undeclared majors are underrepresented.

Table B-1 presents the demographics of survey respondents, compared with WMU's spring 2025 undergraduate student population.

Table B-1. Respondent Demographics Compared With the Spring 2025 WMU Undergraduate Population *

Variable	Response Categories	Respondents (N=626)		WMU (N=11,577)
		n	%	
Gender Identity	Female	346	55%	52%
	Male	250	40%	48%
	Nonbinary or transgender	27	5%	-
	No response or other	3	<1%	<1%
Racial/Ethnic Identity	American Indian or Alaska Native	2	<1%	<1%
	Asian	37	6%	3%
	Black or African American	78	12%	8%
	Hispanic or Latino/a/e/x	53	8%	9%
	Middle Eastern or North African	4	1%	0%
	Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	0	0%	<1%
	White	385	62%	68%
	More than 1 racial/ethnic identity	60	10%	5%
	Other or no response	7	1%	3%
	International*	27	6%	4%
First Generation**	No	410	65%	79%
	Yes	199	32%	21%
	Don't know or no response	17	4%	-
Classification	Freshman	173	28%	18%
	Sophomore	164	26%	21%
	Junior	141	23%	26%
	Senior	148	24%	35%
College (to account for students with multiple majors, the denominator for these percentages are	College of Arts and Sciences	169	26%	26%
	College of Aviation	58	9%	7%
	College of Education and Human Development	63	10%	10%
	College of Engineering and Applied Sciences	102	16%	12%

Variable	Response Categories	Respondents (N=626)		WMU (N=11,577)
		n	%	
majors represented among respondents (N=651), rather than students (*N=626)*)	College of Fine Arts	63	10%	10%
	College of Health and Human Sciences	62	10%	10%
	Haworth College of Business	128	20%	20%
	Merze Tate or Undeclared major	6	1%	5%

*The survey asked students to identify their race/ethnicity. A separate question asked if they were an international student. For consistency with how WMU Institutional Research reports demographic data, if a student said they were international, we used that as their race/ethnicity identity in this table.

**The survey asked students, "Did any of your parents or guardians graduate from a four-year college?" Their answers to that question may not be consistent with how first-generation is defined on the federal FAFSA form, which WMU uses to identify first-generation students. Therefore, the survey findings and WMU population data may not be comparable.

Appendix C: 2025 WMU Undergraduate Survey Questions

Your responses to this survey will help WMU better understand how students are doing and what they need. The survey is anonymous.

What year are you?

- o Freshman
- o Sophomore
- o Junior
- o Senior

In what WMU college is your major located? (You may select more than one if you have majors in multiple colleges.)

Arts and Sciences

- ☐ Aviation
- ☐ Haworth College of Business
- ☐ Education and Human Development
- ☐ Engineering and Applied Sciences
- ☐ Fine Arts
- ☐ Health and Human Services
- ☐ Undecided or Merze Tate
- ☐ Not sure

Display this question:
   If In what WMU college is your major located? = Not sure

What is your major? _____

How would you rate your progress toward your educational or career goals?
Completely off track   Completely on track

| 1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

How satisfied are you with what WMU does to help you meet your educational or career goals?

- o   Not at all satisfied
- o   Slightly satisfied
- o   Moderately satisfied
- o   Very satisfied
- o   Completely satisfied
- o   *I don't have an opinion about this*

What is WMU doing especially well to help you meet your educational or career goals? _____

What could WMU do to better help you meet your educational or career goals?

_____

How would you rate your overall health and wellness?
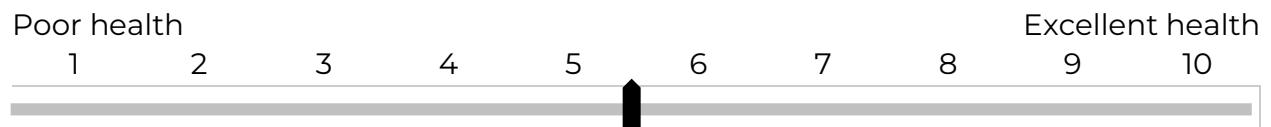
Poor health   Excellent health

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |

How satisfied are you with what WMU offers to support your health and wellness?
Not at all satisfied

- o   Not at all satisfied
- o   Slightly satisfied
- o   Moderately satisfied
- o   Very satisfied
- o   Completely satisfied
- o   *I don't have an opinion about this*

Display this question:

> If How satisfied are you with what WMU offers to support your health and wellness? = Completely satisfied
> Or How satisfied are you with what WMU offers to support your health and wellness? = Very satisfied
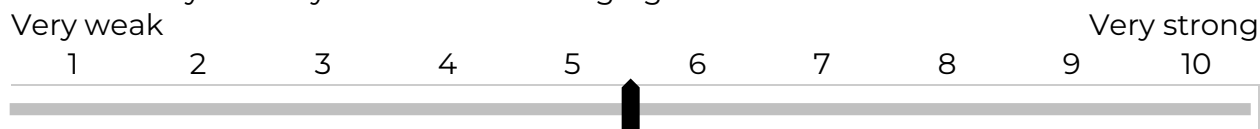
What is WMU doing especially well to support your health and wellness?

_____

Display this question:
> If How satisfied are you with what WMU offers to support your health and wellness? = Moderately satisfied
> Or How satisfied are you with what WMU offers to support your health and wellness? = Slightly satisfied
> Or How satisfied are you with what WMU offers to support your health and wellness? = Not at all satisfied

What could WMU do to better support your health and wellness?

_____

How would you rate your sense of belonging at WMU?

Very weak   Very strong

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |

How satisfied are you with what WMU offers to support your sense of belonging?

- o   Not at all satisfied
- o   Slightly satisfied
- o   Moderately satisfied
- o   Very satisfied
- o   Completely satisfied
- o   *I don't have an opinion about this*

Display this question:
If How satisfied are you with what WMU offers to support your sense of belonging? = Completely satisfied
Or How satisfied are you with what WMU offers to support your sense of belonging? = Very satisfied

What is WMU doing especially well to support your sense of belonging here?

_____

Display this question:
If How satisfied are you with what WMU offers to support your sense of belonging? = Moderately satisfied
Or How satisfied are you with what WMU offers to support your sense of belonging? = Slightly satisfied
Or How satisfied are you with what WMU offers to support your sense of belonging? = Not at all satisfied

What could WMU do to better support your sense of belonging here?

_____

Have you ever been contacted by someone from WMU to check on your personal or academic well-being?

- o   Yes
- o   No
- o   Not sure

Display this question:
If Have you ever been contacted by someone from WMU to check on your personal or academic well-being? = Yes

How did you feel about being contacted?

- o Negative
- o Neutral
- o Positive

How would you describe the quality of your interactions with people from the following groups at WMU?

	Poor	Fair	Good	Very good	Excellent
Other students	○	○	○	○	○
Professors and instructors	○	○	○	○	○
Academic advisors	○	○	○	○	○
Staff in student services or other WMU units	○	○	○	○	○

If you were experiencing a serious challenge at WMU, who would you reach out to for assistance?

_____

Which of the following best describes the person you identified above?
Friend

- o Family member
- o Professor at WMU
- o Academic advisor at WMU
- o Peer advisor, mentor, or tutor at WMU
- o Athletic coach
- o Other type of WMU employee
- o Other non-WMU person _____

Display this question:
    If Which of the following best describes the person you identified above? =
Friend

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Is this friend also at WMU?

- o   Yes
- o   No

In what WMU office does this person work?

_____

Do you plan on returning to WMU this fall?

- o   Yes
- o   No - because I will graduate before then
- o   No - for a different reason (please explain) _____
- o   Not sure

Think back to when you first started at WMU: Did you plan to graduate from WMU?

- o   Yes, I planned to graduate from WMU
- o   No, I planned to transfer
- o   No, I planned to leave for a different reason (please explain) _____
- o   Not sure or I didn't have a plan

When you first started at WMU, how certain were you that you would graduate from WMU? How certain are you now?

	Not certain	Somewhat certain	Completely certain
When you started at WMU	○	○	○
Now	○	○	○

Display this question:
 If When you first started at WMU, how certain were you that you would graduate from WMU? How certain... = Now [Not certain]
 And When you first started at WMU, how certain were you that you would graduate from WMU? How certain... = When you started at WMU [Somewhat certain]
Or If
 When you first started at WMU, how certain were you that you would graduate from WMU? How certain... = Now [Not certain]
 And When you first started at WMU, how certain were you that you would graduate from WMU? How certain... = When you started at WMU [Completely certain]
Or If
 When you first started at WMU, how certain were you that you would graduate from WMU? How certain... = Now [Somewhat certain]
 And When you first started at WMU, how certain were you that you would graduate from WMU? How certain... = When you started at WMU [Completely certain]

Why do you feel less certain now than you did when you started at WMU?
Academic issues

- o Financial issues
- o Health issues
- o Personal issues
- o Social issues
- o Change in educational goals
- o Other _____

Did any of your parents or guardians graduate from a four-year college?

- o Yes
- o No
- o Not sure

How do you identify your race or ethnicity?

- ☐ American Indian or Alaska Native
- ☐ Asian
- ☐ Black or African American
- ☐ Hispanic or Latino/a/x
- ☐ Middle Eastern or North African
- ☐ Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
- ☐ White
- ☐ Other _____

Are you an international student?

- o Yes
- o No

How do you identify your gender?

- o Male
- o Female
- o Female transgender
- o Non-binary
- o Male transgender
- o Other

Thank you for your time. If you need any assistance with any aspect of your WMU experience, contact a member of your support team through the Student Success Hub.

After clicking the "Next" button below, **a new form will appear for you to record your Western Identification Number (WIN) to receive $10 in Dining Dollars**. This is a separate form and cannot be associated with your survey responses.

Appendix D: Detailed Data Tables

Table D-1. Students' Satisfaction with WMU's Support of Their Sense of Belonging

Group	Not at all Satisfied	Slightly Satisfied	Moderately Satisfied	Very Satisfied	Completely Satisfied
Asian (*n*=24)	0%	17%	9%	39%	35%
Black or African American (*n*=68)	1%	4%	21%	31%	21%
Hispanic or Latino/a/x (*n*=47)	0%	2%	30%	45%	23%
White (*n*=368)	1%	7%	23%	40%	29%
Multiracial (*n*=57)	0%	4%	26%	39%	32%
International (*n*=34)	3%	15%	26%	41%	15%
All respondents (N=606)	**1%**	**7%**	**25%**	**39%**	**29%**

Table D-2. Quality of Interactions With Campus Community Members: Mean Ratings Disaggregated by Identity Group

Group	Mean Ratings of Quality of Interactions With...			
	Other Students	Professors	Academic Advisors	Staff
Asian (*n*=24)	3.5	3.4	3.6	3.4
Black or African American (*n*=68)	3.7	3.6	3.9	3.7
Hispanic or Latino/a/x (*n*=47)	3.8	3.8	3.7	3.7
International (*n*=37)	3.6	3.7	3.9	3.7
Multiracial (*n*=58)	3.8	3.7	4.0	3.8
White (*n*=380)	3.8	3.8	3.8	3.7
All respondents (*N varies* by questions, from 616-624)	**3.74**	**3.65**	**3.70**	**3.60**

Students' Satisfaction With What WMU Does to Support Their Health and Wellness

Table D-3. Students' Satisfaction with WMU's Support of Their Health and Wellness

Group	Not at all Satisfied	Slightly Satisfied	Moderately Satisfied	Very Satisfied	Completely Satisfied
Asian (*n*=24)	0%	23%	41%	18%	18%
Black or African American (*n*=67)	1%	7%	34%	39%	18%
Hispanic or Latino/a/x (*n*=43)	0%	7%	33%	40%	21%
White (*n*=359)	2%	9%	32%	43%	14%
Multiracial (*n*=56)	2%	11%	25%	45%	18%
International (*n*=35)	0%	6%	31%	37%	26%
All Respondents (N=592)	**2%**	**9%**	**32%**	**41%**	**17%**

Students' Satisfaction With What WMU Does to Support Their Educational or Career Goals

Table D-4. Students' Satisfaction with WMU's Support of Their Educational or Career Goals

Group	Not at all Satisfied	Slightly Satisfied	Moderately Satisfied	Very Satisfied	Completely Satisfied
Asian (*n*=24)	0%	4%	29%	58%	8%
Black or African American (*n*=69)	0%	6%	38%	42%	14%
Hispanic or Latino/a/x (*n*=46)	0%	2%	30%	45%	23%
White (*n*=379)	1%	5%	25%	53%	16%
Multiracial (*n*=58)	0%	2%	31%	52%	16%
International (*n*=36)	0%	14%	28%	47%	11%
All Respondents (N=623)	**1%**	**5%**	**28%**	**51%**	**16%**

Appendix E: Significance Testing

By Samin Al Mahi

Sense of Belonging

To explore differences in students' sense of belonging, I first disaggregated the survey responses by racial and ethnic identity. An ANOVA test was conducted to assess whether there were statistically significant differences in sense of belonging across these groups. The resulting p-value (0.06) was greater than 0.05 but less than 0.10, almost reaching the level of statistical significance. While not definitive, this result suggests that there may be meaningful differences between groups that warrant further investigation.
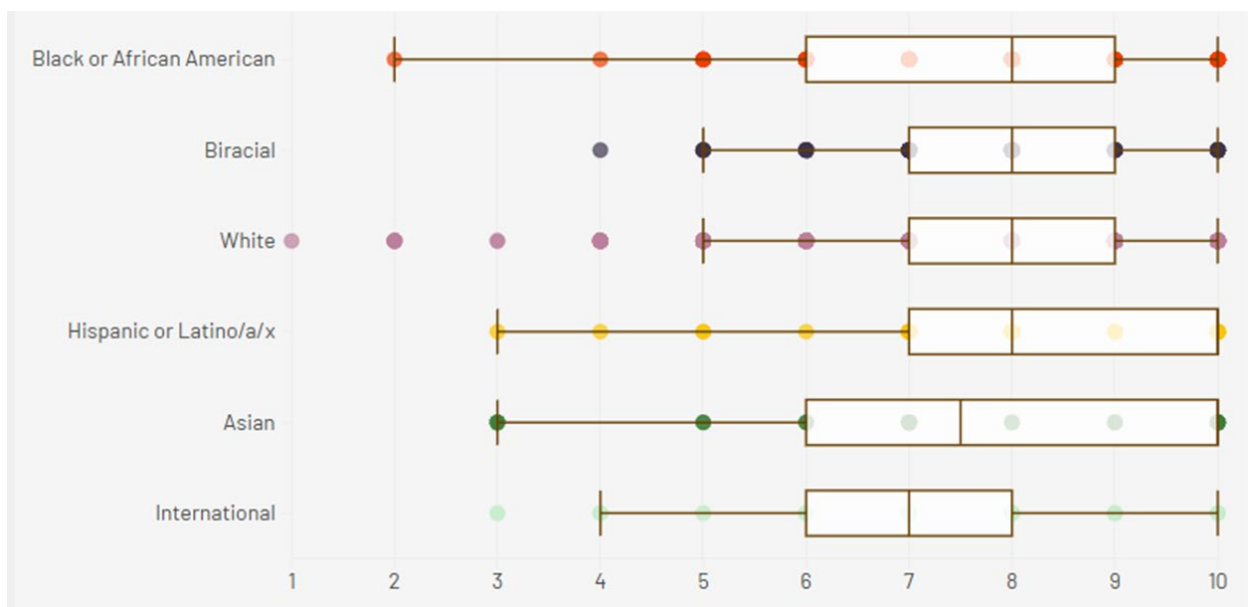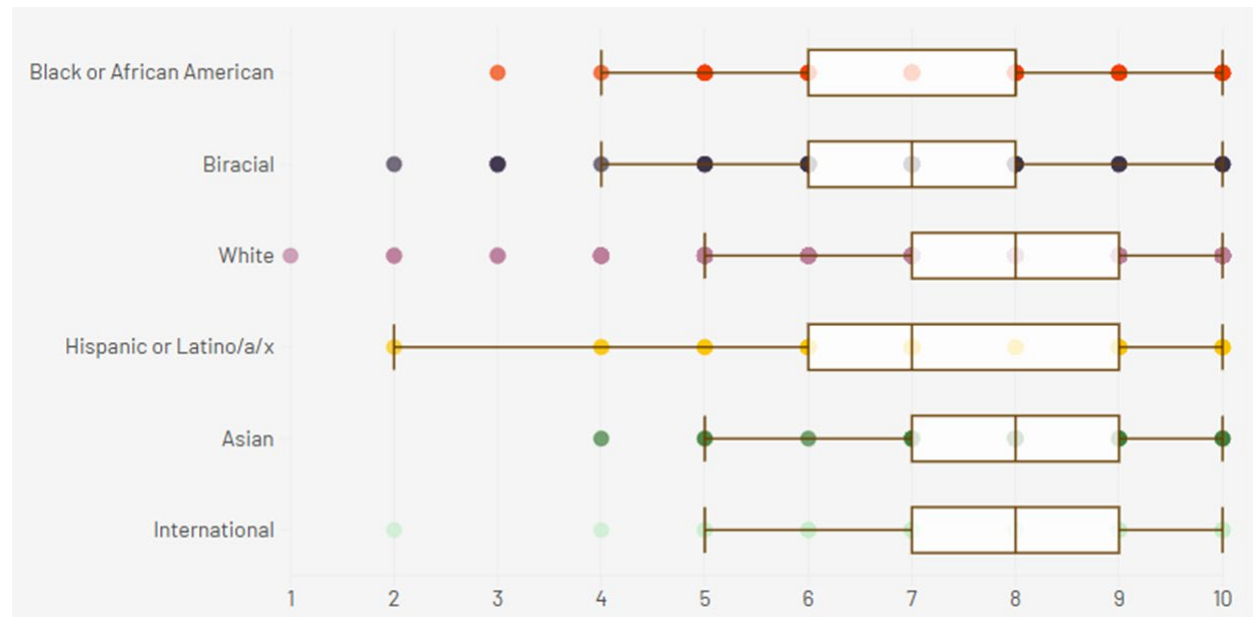

To pinpoint which specific groups may be experiencing lower levels of belonging, I conducted a Tukey HSD post-hoc analysis. The results showed that **International** students rated their sense of belonging lower compared to Hispanic/Latino/a/x students, with a p-value of 0.09. While this finding does not meet the conventional threshold for statistical significance ($p < 0.05$), it suggests a potential disparity that merits attention.

When disaggregated by college, I found that students in the College of **Engineering and Applied Sciences** reported statistically significant differences ($p = 0.036$) and students in the **College of Arts and Sciences** almost showed statistical significance ($p = 0.059$) compared to those in the College of Education and Human Development.

Health and Wellness

To explore differences in students' experiences with health and wellness, I first disaggregated the survey responses by racial and ethnic identity. An ANOVA test was conducted to assess whether there were statistically significant differences in health and wellness across these groups. The resulting p-value (0.051) was slightly above the conventional threshold of 0.05, almost reaching statistical significance.
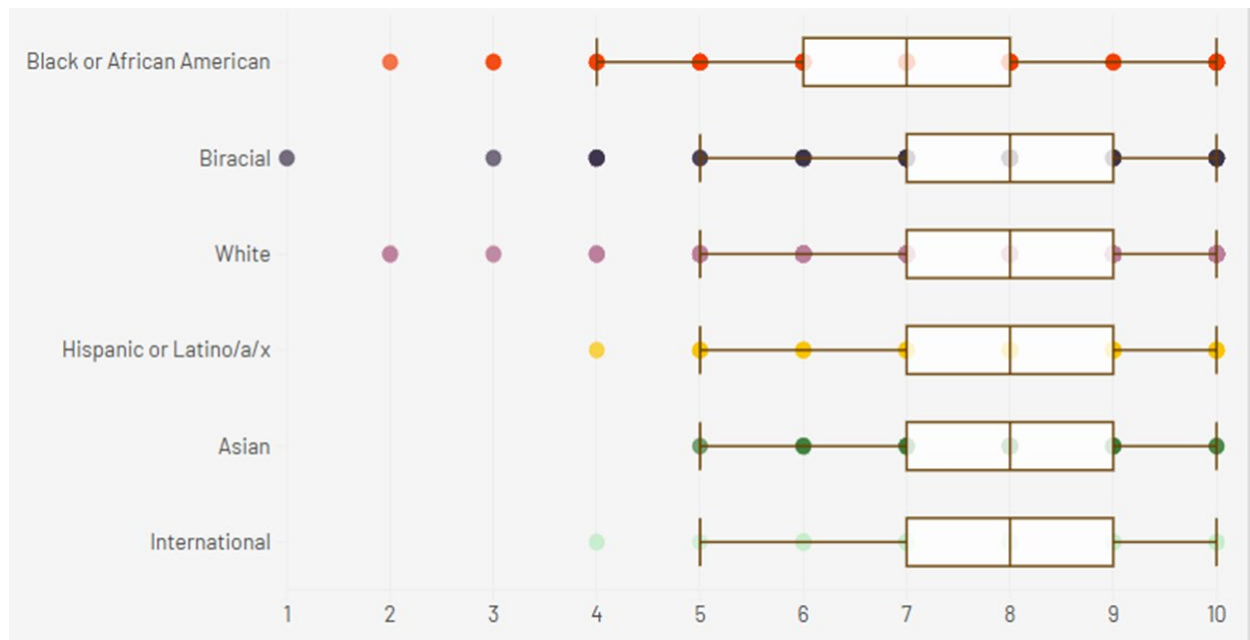

To pinpoint which specific groups may be experiencing lower levels of health and wellness, I conducted a Tukey HSD post-hoc analysis. The results showed that **Biracial** students rated their health and wellness significantly lower compared to White students, with a p-value of 0.0279. In addition, Biracial students rated their health and wellness slightly lower than Asian students, with a p-value of 0.0784, which almost reached statistical significance.

When disaggregated by college, I found that students in the College of Fine Arts and College of Arts and Sciences reported statistically significant differences (p = 0.001 and p = 0.031) compared to students in the College of Aviation. In addition, students in the College of Fine Arts almost reached significant differences (p = 0.055 and p = 0.071) compared to students in Haworth College of Business and students in multiple majors, respectively.

Learning and Sense of Purpose

To explore differences in students' experiences with learning and sense of purpose, I first disaggregated the survey responses by racial and ethnic identity. An ANOVA test was conducted to assess whether there were statistically significant differences in learning and sense of purpose across these groups. The resulting p-value (0.0008) was less than 0.05, indicating a statistically significant difference between racial and ethnic groups.

To pinpoint which specific groups may be experiencing lower levels of learning and sense of purpose, I conducted a Tukey HSD post-hoc analysis. The results showed that **Black or African American** students rated their learning and sense of purpose significantly lower compared to White students, with a p-value of 0.0014. In addition, Biracial students rated their learning and sense of purpose slightly lower than White students, with a p-value of 0.0702, approaching statistical significance.

When disaggregated by college, ANOVA p-value was greater than 0.1, showing no statistically significant differences between the colleges.