# Lessons worth keeping: How has COVID-19 impacted perceptions of academic preparedness?

## The Fall 2021 cohorts of students had very different experiences with learning.

The UMD undergraduate student body was, for all intents and purposes, composed of three classes of “first-year” students. The current first-year class participated in their first semester of a traditional, residential on-campus experience; yet their high school experiences were anything but typical, likely involving a wide variety of remote and in-person instruction. Sophomores have had little to no in-person instruction at UMD and disruptions to their senior year of high school. Juniors’ last time on campus was during their freshman year, which they finished remotely. This variety of experiences in high school and at UMD is likely to affect perceptions of academic preparedness for Fall 2021.

## Our student body is composed of three cohorts of “first year” students, with a range of academic experiences.

* **First Year Students:** Junior year of highschool (Academic Year 19-20), was a mix of online and in-person. Senior year of highschool (Academic year 20-21) was unknown. Freshman year at UMD the Fall 2021 semester was primarily in-person.
* **Sophomores:** Junior year of highschool (Academic Year 18-19), was primarily in-person. Senior year of highschool (Academic year 19-20), was a mix of in-person and online. Freshman year at UMD the Fall 2020 semester was primarily online and so was Spring 2021. Sophomore year at UMD the Fall 2021 semester was primarily in-person.
* **Juniors:** Junior year of highschool (Academic Year 17-18) was primarily in-person. Senior year of highschool (Academic Year 18-19) was primarily in-person. Freshman year at UMD the Fall 2019 semester was primarily in-person, and the Spring 2020 semester was a mix of online and in-person. Sophomore year at UMD, the Fall 2020 semester was primarily online, and so was Spring 2021. Junior year at UMD, the Fall 2021 semester was primarily in-person.
* **Seniors:** Junior year of highschool (Academic Year 16-17) was primarily in-person. Senior year of highschool (Academic year 17-18) was primarily in-person. Freshman year at UMD, the Fall 2018 and Spring 2019 semesters were primarily in-person. Sophomore year at UMD, the Fall 2019 semester was primarily in-person and the Spring 2020 semester was a mix of online and in-person. Junior year at UMD, the Fall 2020 and Spring 2021 semesters were primarily online. Senior year at UMD, the Fall 2021 semester was primarily in-person.

"I taught one class online and one class that mixed online and in person sessions. The 40 person fully online synchronous session worked very well, students were well prepared, did excellent work. I allowed accommodations leniently and about 1/4 of the students took advantage of that -- for reasons of health, needing to work a full-time job in order to afford school, family issues they had major responsibility for, etc."

     - Instructor (representative of 156 comments)

## Instructors and students had a general sense that disruptions in learning affected students’ academic readiness for Fall 2021.

Approximately half of instructors (47%) thoughts students were struggling due to remote learning and half or more of students agreed that the COVID-19 pandemic negatively impacted their readiness for the academic year.

## Instructors sensed that something has been lost due to remote learning prior to Fall 2021.

60% of instructors thought that compared to previous semesters, I believe students are less prepared for coursework this semester. 54% said that compared to previous semesters, instructors said their students need more review of the basics. 47% think that students are struggling in their courses because of previous experiences with remote learning.

## The majority of students thought their readiness for the academic year was negatively impacted by COVID-19.

62% of undergraduate students somewhat and strongly agree that their readiness was negatively impacted, and 54% of graduate students also strongly or somewhat agreed.

## Two-thirds or more of instructors and students felt students were prepared in their classrooms.

Despite the general perception of unpreparedness, when asked about specific instances rather than a general feeling, both instructors and students felt that students were academically prepared.

The majority of students (72% Undergraduate, 84% Graduate) and instructors (66% undergraduate instructors, 78% graduate instructors) felt that previous coursework had prepared students for their specific courses in Fall 2021.

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Survey administration and reporting conducted by teams within the Division of IT (Academic Technology Experience), Division of Student Affairs, Institutional Research, Planning, & Assessment, and the Teaching Learning Transformation Center

Want to learn more? See the full report at: https://provost.umd.edu/covid-survey-results