

Fit, Climate, and Interaction:

Local Questions from the 2007 Enrolled Student Survey



**Office of Institutional Research
Dartmouth College**

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A. Background Information

Survey Method

The Enrolled Student Survey sponsored by a consortium of highly selective, private institutions was administered as a web survey to 3,680 undergraduates who were in residence in Hanover during Spring 2007. The response rate was 33% (n=1,200).

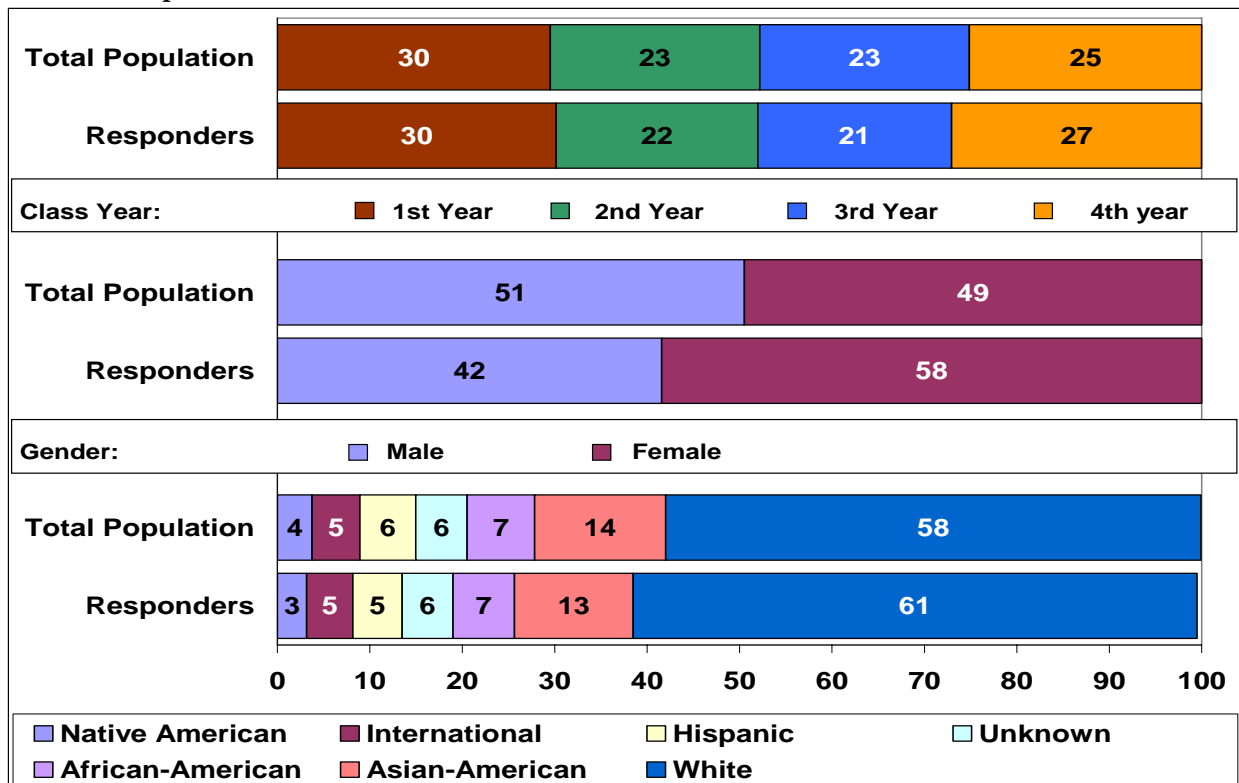
Local Questionnaire Development

Each of the participating schools was given the option of adding 20 questions that could be used to address issues specific to that school. The Dartmouth local questions were developed by the Office of Institutional Research with input from staff in the offices of the President, Provost, Dean of the College, Dean of the Faculty, and Dean of Admissions and Financial Aid.

Representativeness of Respondents¹

In general, the 1,200 students who responded to the survey were representative of the population of students who were invited to participate (see Figure 1). The percentages between the total population and students responding to the survey are quite similar, with the exception of gender. More women responded to the survey than were in the total student population (58% *vs.* 49%). Although the race/ethnicity differences were not substantial, it is important to note that slightly more white students were survey respondents (61% *vs.* 58%). The class year differences were negligible. These results suggest that the findings in this survey are generally representative of the student population who were in Hanover during Spring 2007, even though the response rate was relatively low.

Figure 1. Class Year, Gender, and Race/Ethnicity/Citizenship Percentages of Survey Respondents and Total Population.



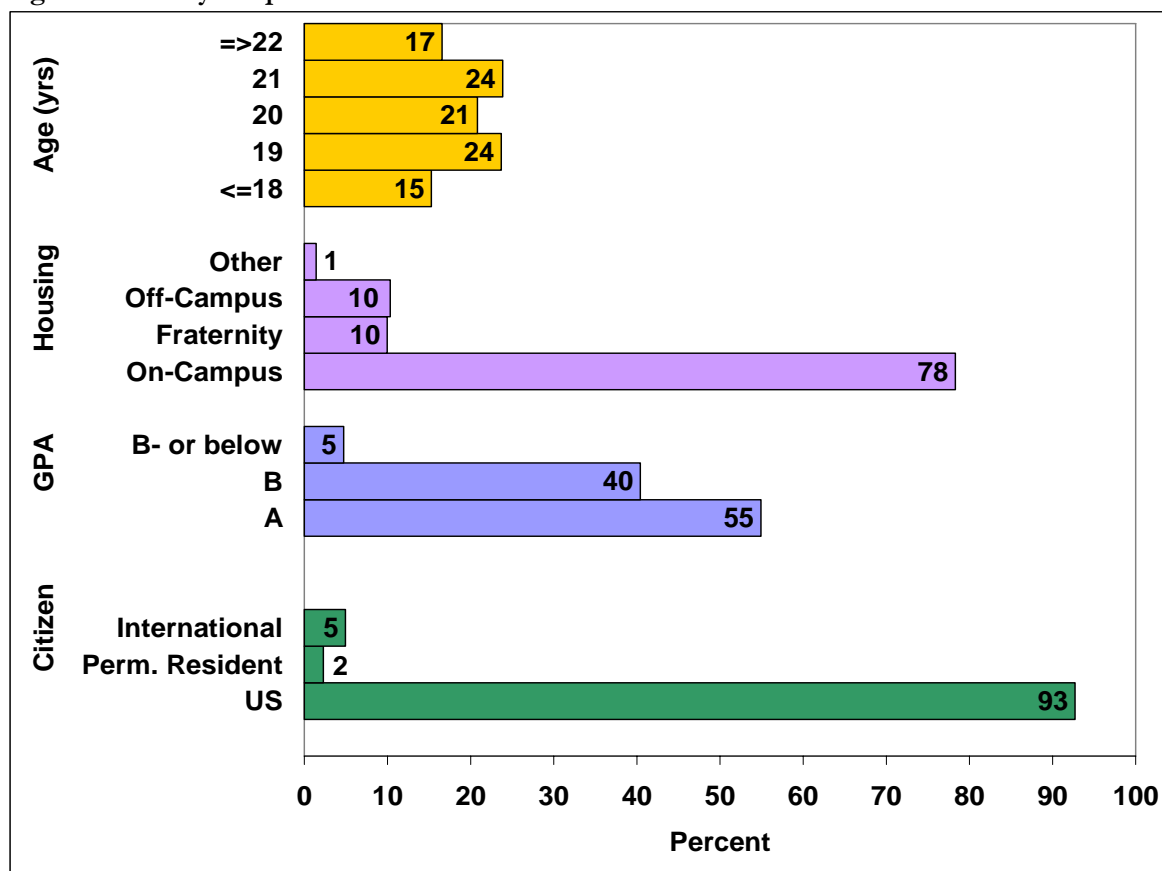
¹ Chi-square tests of independence between proportions of respondents and non-respondents on gender, race/ethnicity, and class year were not statistically significant with the exception of gender.

Student Respondent Characteristics

Characteristics of the student respondents are presented in Figure 1 and Figure 2.

- ▶ Survey respondents were largely female and white.
- ▶ Class year was almost equally represented, with 4th year responding at a slightly greater rate than 2nd and 3rd years.
- ▶ Respondents were mostly US Citizens who were living on campus.
- ▶ Most respondents were 19 to 21 years of age.
- ▶ 95% of the respondents reported GPAs in A or B range.

Figure 2. Survey Respondent Characteristics.



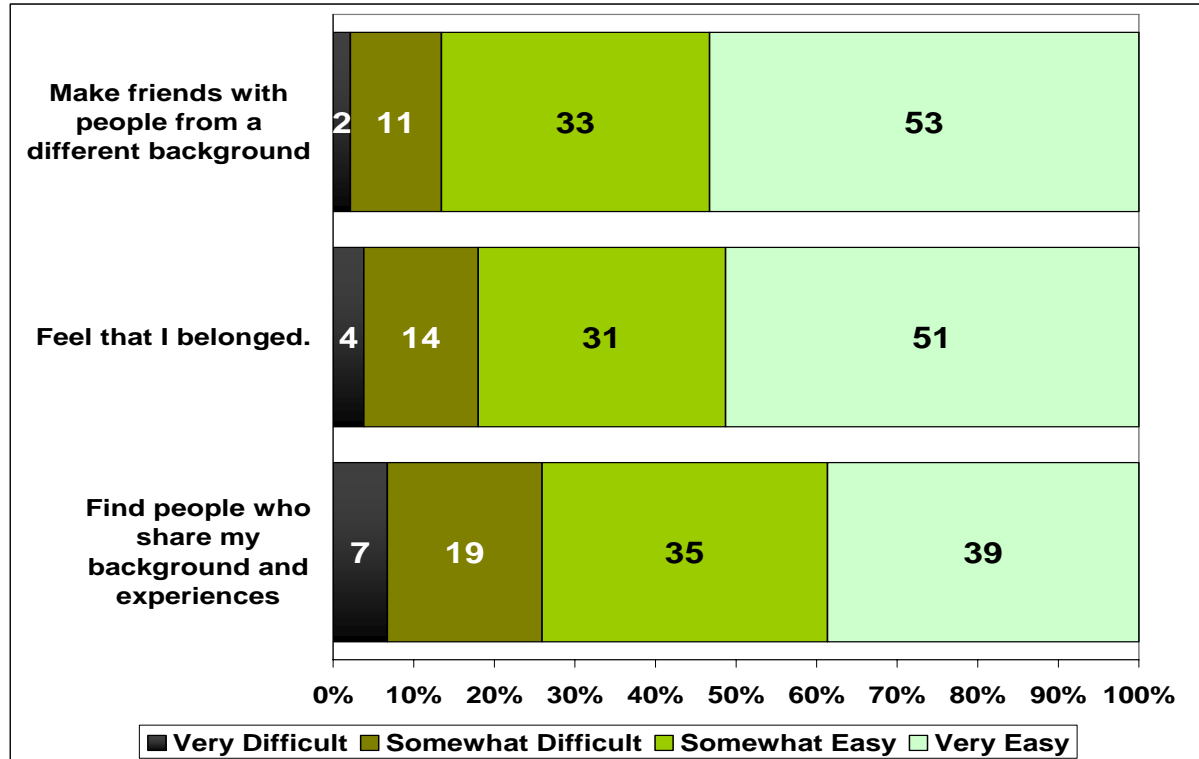
B. Fitting In

Students were asked to indicate how difficult or easy it has been for them to do each of the following while at Dartmouth. The responses were on a 4-point scale and ranged from "Very Difficult" to "Very Easy." They were given the option of marking "Has Not Been Important." Figure 3 contains the results.

Make Friends With People From a Different Background

- ▶ 4% indicated "This Wasn't Important to Them" and were excluded from subsequent analyses.
- ▶ 86% found this "Somewhat or Very Easy."
- ▶ 11% found making friends "Somewhat Difficult" and 2% "Very Difficult."

Figure 3: Percent Finding it "Somewhat" or "Very" Easy To Do The Following:



Feel I belong

- ▶ 2% indicated "This Wasn't Important to Them" and were excluded from subsequent analyses.
- ▶ 82% found this "Somewhat or Very Easy."
- ▶ 14% found feeling like they belonged "Somewhat Difficult" and 4% "Very Difficult."

Find People Who Share My Background

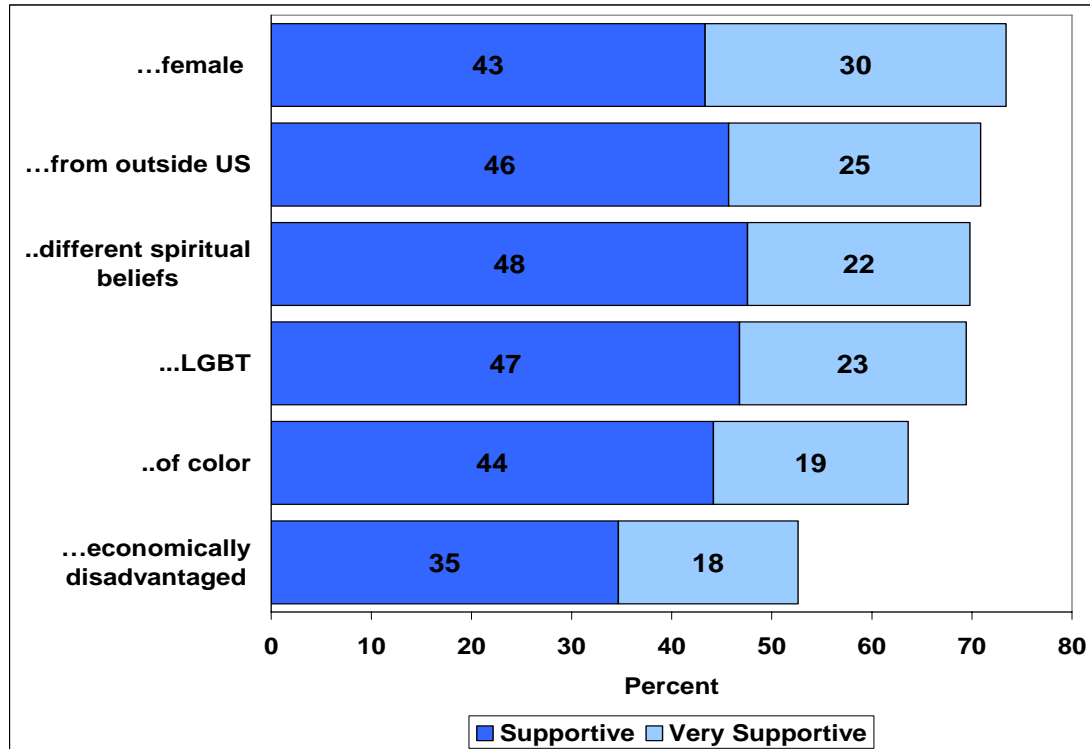
- ▶ 7% indicated this wasn't important to them and were excluded from subsequent analyses.
- ▶ 74% found this "Somewhat or Very Easy."
- ▶ 19% noted finding people with similar backgrounds "Somewhat Difficult" and 7% "Very Difficult."

C. Supportive Climate

How Supportive is the Current Campus Climate?

Students were asked to rate how supportive the current climate on campus is for a list of different people. A 5-point response scale was provided with responses ranging from "Very Unsupportive" to "Very Supportive." Six different groups of people were listed including: Females, Students from Outside the U.S. (International), Students with Different Religious or Spiritual Beliefs, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, or Transgendered students (LGBT), Students of Color, and Students from Economically Disadvantaged Backgrounds. Figure 4 presents the results.

Figure 4. Percent Reporting that the Current Climate on Campus is "Supportive" or "Very Supportive" for the Following Groups of Students:



► Most of respondents indicated that the current climate on campus for different groups was either "Supportive" or "Very Supportive." Perceptions about the supportiveness of the climate for females was the most positive, while the climate for students of economically disadvantaged backgrounds was rated the least supportive.

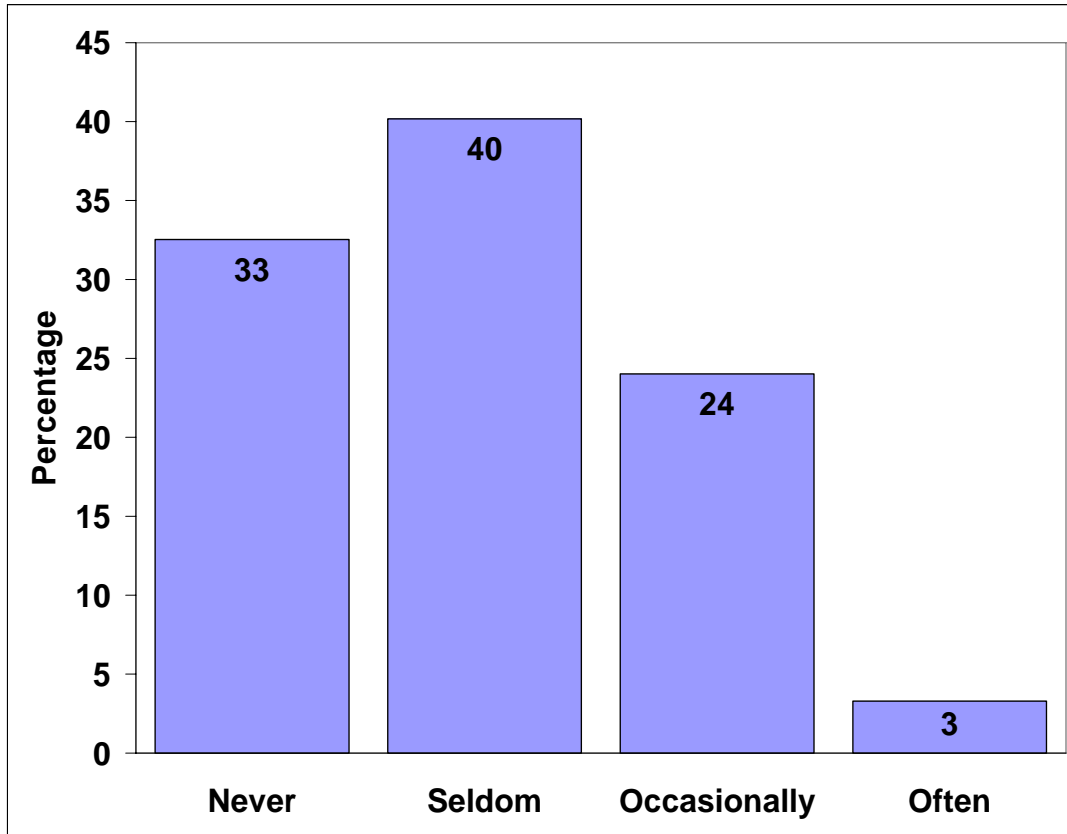
D. Experienced Uncomfortable Interactions or Marginalizing Behavior

How Often Have you had Interactions or Experienced Behavior From Other Dartmouth Students that has Made you Feel Uncomfortable, Excluded, Marginalized, or Discriminated Against?

Students were asked to indicate how often they had experienced interactions that made them feel uncomfortable, excluded, marginalized or discriminated against. Four response options were provided ranging from "Never" to "Often."

► More than 70% of the respondents had "never" or "seldom" experienced interactions that made them uncomfortable. Only 3% of the respondents indicated that they had "often" experienced uncomfortable interactions, and 24% experienced such interactions "occasionally."

Figure 5. Percent Indicating They Had Interactions or Experienced Behavior from Other Dartmouth Students That Made Them Feel uncomfortable, Excluded, Marginalized, or Discriminated Against.



Follow-up questions: Two open-ended questions were asked as a follow-up to better understand 1) how students reacted to marginalizing interactions/behavior and 2) who students turned to when they experienced these behaviors.

How Often Have you had Interactions or Experienced Behavior From Other Dartmouth Students that has Made you Feel Uncomfortable, Excluded, Marginalized, or Discriminated Against?

Q. If you've had this experience, how do you typically respond to this behavior?

Students were asked to describe how they responded to the experience of uncomfortable interactions or marginalizing behavior from other Dartmouth students using an open-ended comment format. Responses to this question were analyzed with respect to content and emergent themes. Of the students who participated in the survey, 31% (n=369) provided comments to this question. The primary themes of the responses to this question are below.

a) Ignore the behavior/interaction or avoid the situation.

The over-whelming reaction to difficult interactions or marginalizing was to ignore the interaction or behavior. In addition, avoiding the situation or people was also cited. This theme occurred for 41% of the responses to this question.

b) Confront the person

The second most frequently cited reaction is to confront the person who is creating the feeling of discomfort or marginalization. This approach was mentioned in 20% of the responses.

c) Leave

The next most frequent theme to this question was to leave the situation or person. This approach of dealing with the interaction was mentioned in 10% of the comments.

d) Talk with Friends

Discussing the interaction or behavior with friends also surfaced in about 8% of the comments.

e) Do nothing

Another theme emerging from the comments was to "Do Nothing", which surfaced in 6% of the comments.

f) Get angry or frustrated

A few comments noted that the respondent got angry or frustrated at the person or situation. This reaction occurred in about 4% of the comments.

g) Other Themes

Other themes that emerged with less frequency include become uncomfortable, don't know what to do, laugh it off, contact authorities, hide away, do not care, and understand/learn.

Q. If you've had this experience, who have you talked to most often regarding this behavior?

Students were asked to describe who they talked to the most often about discriminating or marginalizing behavior that they experienced. We had 475 responses to this question (includes multiple responses from students). The person that students talked to the most about any marginalizing experiences was their friends (included in 49% of the comments). Family members were mentioned in 14% of the comments followed by Boyfriend/Girlfriend (6% of comments) and No one (6% of comments). Table 1 provides the top responses.

Table 1. Top People To Whom Students Talk When They've Experienced Difficult Interactions or Marginalizing Behavior.

Person talked to:	% of comments
Friends	49
Family	14
Boyfriend/Girlfriend	6
No one	6
Friends from similar backgrounds	5
Residence Mates	3
Female Friends	2
Fraternity/Sorority	2
OPAL/Diversity Committee	2
Campus Staff(Deans/Professors/Community Director/S&S)	2

E. Improving Interactions Between Male and Female Students

Q. What are some ways that interactions between male and female students can be improved?

Students were asked to describe ways that interactions between male and female students can be improved in an open-ended response format. We conducted a content analysis of the responses, looking for common themes. Of the students who participated in the survey, 40% (n=480) provided comments to this question. The primary themes of the responses to this question are below.

a) Reform/Abolish the Greek System

The most frequent theme that emerged from the comments was to change or abolish the Greek system. This was mentioned by 15% of the students who responded to the question.

b) Provide more female-oriented/friendly spaces

The second most frequent theme from responses to this question was to provide more areas where women can feel comfortable. This was mentioned by 11% of the respondents to this question.

c) This is a non-issue

The next most frequent theme in the comments was that difficult male-female interactions was a non-issue. This theme was prevalent in 10% of the responses to the question.

d) Provide alternative social organizations/spaces/events

Nine percent of the students responding to this question thought that providing alternative social organizations, spaces, and events (to the fraternity scene) would improve male-female interactions.

e) Gender neutral events/spaces

Having gender neutral events and spaces was mentioned by 9% of the students who responded to this question.

f) More respect for each other/women need to be more assertive

About 6% of the students responding to this question made a comment containing this theme.

g) Allow sororities to host parties

Six percent of the comments revolved around the theme of allowing sororities to hold parties and serve alcohol.

h) Other themes

Other themes that are less frequently mentioned include educating each other about gender issues, serving less alcohol at functions/events, promoting a dialogue and more open discussion about gender issues, creating a better balance between fraternities and sororities, increasing interactions between males and females in other contexts, addressing sexual assault, changing the dating culture, and having the college work with students to better understand the gender issues.