

Aggie Wellbeing Assessment

Sense of Belonging and Engagement

The Wellbeing Improvement Survey for Higher Education Settings (WISHES) has been administered to the Texas A&M University student body in College Station since the 2021-2022 academic year. Texas A&M University surveyed the student body to better understand students’ overall well-being, intermediate outcomes, educational outcomes, and student experiences that influence wellbeing. The survey covered topics such as overall health, psychological distress, suffering or struggling, flourishing, belonging at Texas A&M, resilience, binge drinking, health and academic risks, engagement in extracurricular activities, having a friend, mentor, or professor who makes them excited about learning and cares for them. The WISHES survey is administered in October, November, February, March, and April of each academic year. In the 2021-2022 academic year, the survey was also administered in September to students living on campus. However, the March and April surveys scheduled for spring 2023 were not administered. Since the 2021-2022 academic year, 23,216 students responded to at least one question, yielding an overall response rate of 12%. This report focuses on students’ sense of belonging and engagement.

Figure 1 illustrates the percentage of students who report experiencing loneliness. First-generation students reported experiencing loneliness more than non-first-generation students. Females were more likely to experience loneliness than their male counterparts. Graduate and profession students were less likely to experience loneliness compared to undergraduate students. Additionally, students who were experiencing loneliness were less likely to feel that they belonged at Texas A&M, have a friend they could count on, or be engaged in extracurricular activities.

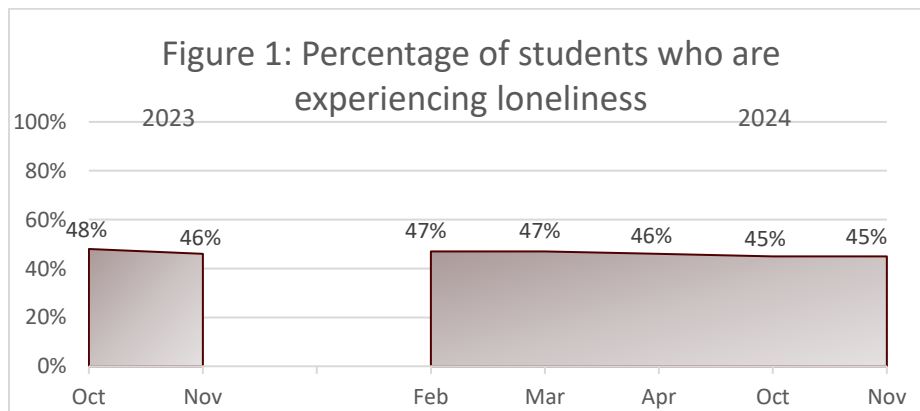


Figure 2 conveys the percentage of students who feel like they belong at Texas A&M University. First-generation students felt they belonged less often than non-first-generation students. When looking at the results across ethnic origins, Black/multi-racial with Black and Asian students were less likely to feel they belong at Texas A&M compared to other ethnic groups. Student who reported that they belonged at Texas A&M University were more likely to be engaged in extracurricular activities (49%) compared to students who were not engaged in extracurricular activities (26%). Students were asked why they felt they belonged or did not feel they belonged. A formal qualitative analysis of those who belonged identified themes such as community (ex: extracurricular activities), atmosphere, legacy, and school spirit. For the students who felt they did not belong, themes among their responses were diversity, academics, expected image, non-traditional students, and not having friends.

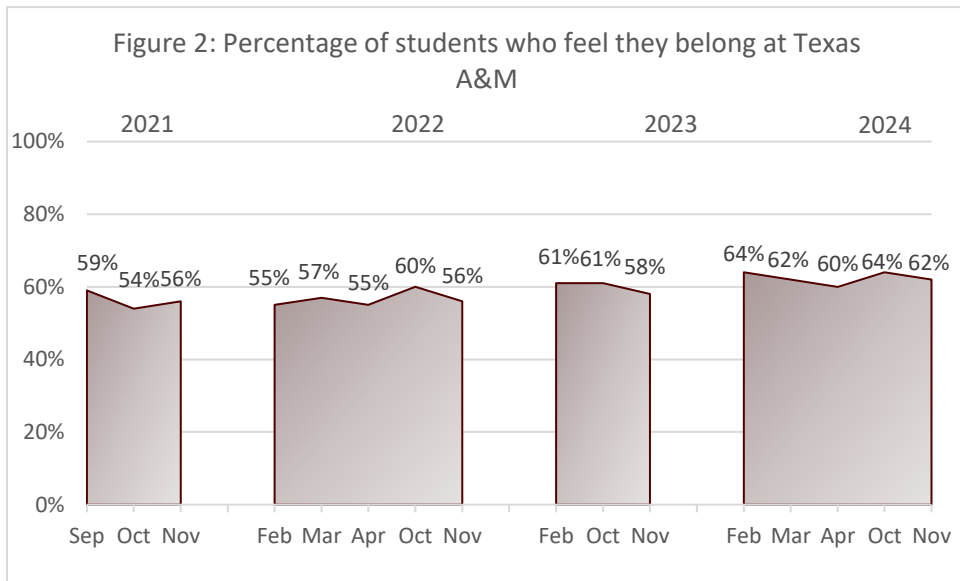


Figure 3, on the next page, displays the percentage of students who reported they had a friend they can count on. According to the data, females were more likely to have friends who they could count on than males. First-generation students tended to have fewer friends to count on than non-first-generation students. Students in the Mays Business School and Public Health tended to have a friend they could count on more often than students in the College of Engineering and the College of Performance and Visualization. Students who had a friend they could count on were more likely to be engaged in extracurricular activities (48%) than those who were not engaged in extracurricular activities (26%).

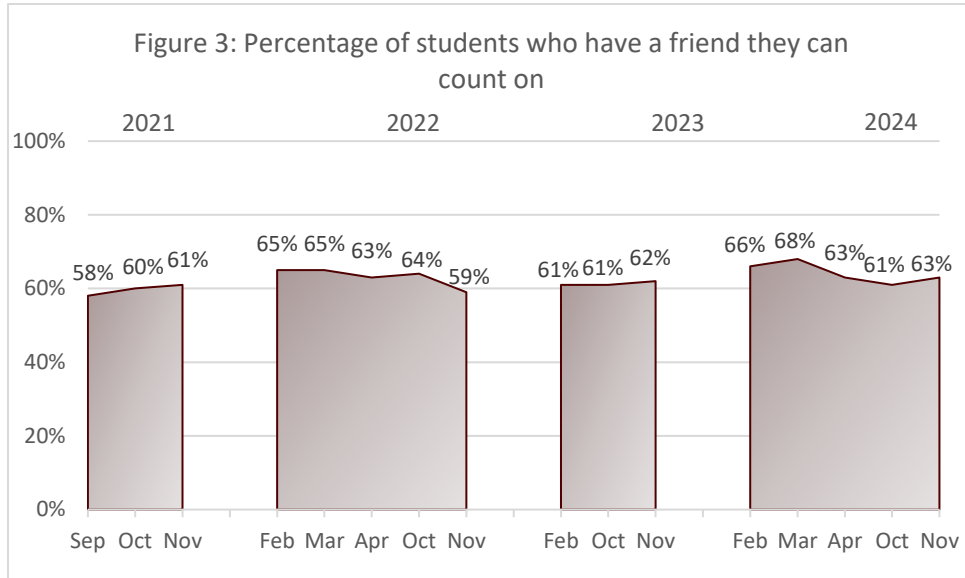


Figure 4 shows the percentage of students who reported they had a mentor who supported and encouraged them. More than one-quarter of student respondents reported having a mentor. Graduate students were more likely to have a mentor who supported and encouraged them compared to undergraduate students. Black/multi-racial with Black students were more likely to report having a mentor who supported and encouraged them compared to Hispanic/Latino and Asian students. Students engaged in extracurricular activities were more likely to have a mentor who supported or encouraged them (60%) than those who were not engaged (32%).

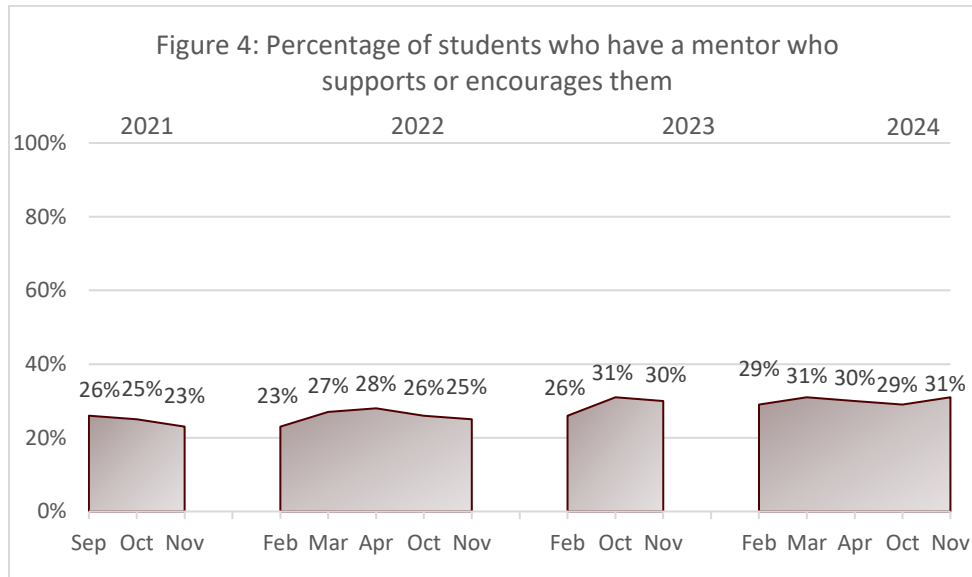
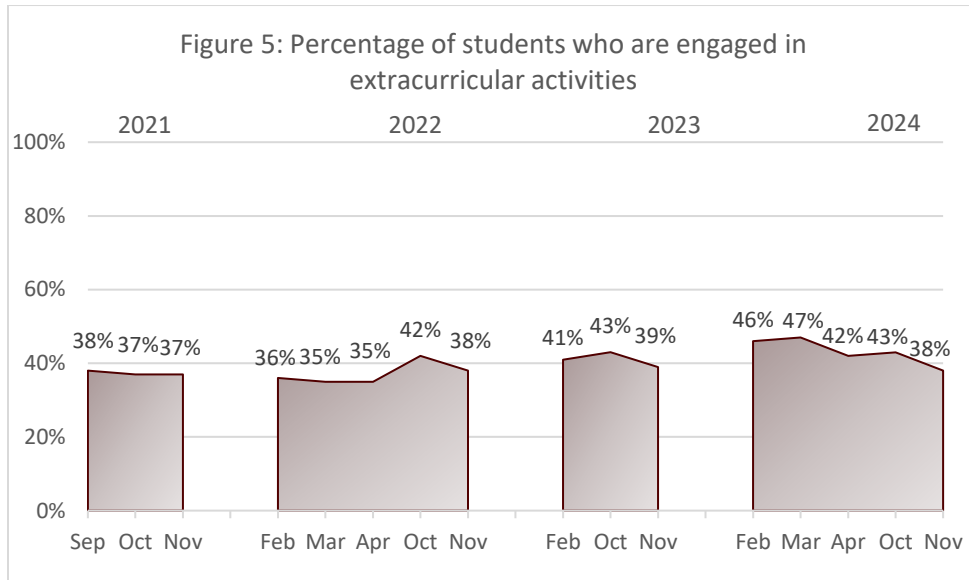


Figure 5 describes the percentage of students who were engaged in extracurricular activities. First-generation students were less likely to participate in extracurricular activities than non-first-generation students. Graduate students were less likely to be engaged in extracurricular activities than undergraduate students. Qualitative comments in response to a sense of belonging question indicate that graduate students feel there are less opportunities to get involved. Non-black multi-racial and white students were more likely to be engaged in extracurricular activities. Male students are less likely to be engaged in extracurricular activities than female students.



Conclusion

Almost half of students who responded to the survey reported experiencing loneliness. Students engaged in extracurricular activities were more likely to feel they belong, have a mentor that supports or encourages them, have a friend they can count on, and less likely to experience loneliness than those not engaged in extracurricular activities. More students had friends they could count on as opposed to mentors who supported or encouraged them, which illustrates how common different support systems are.

This executive summary is updated at the conclusion of each semester and was last updated at the end of the fall 2024 semester.

For more information, please contact wishes@tamu.edu.