

Alumni Liaison Committee Report: Fall 2023 Pulse Check

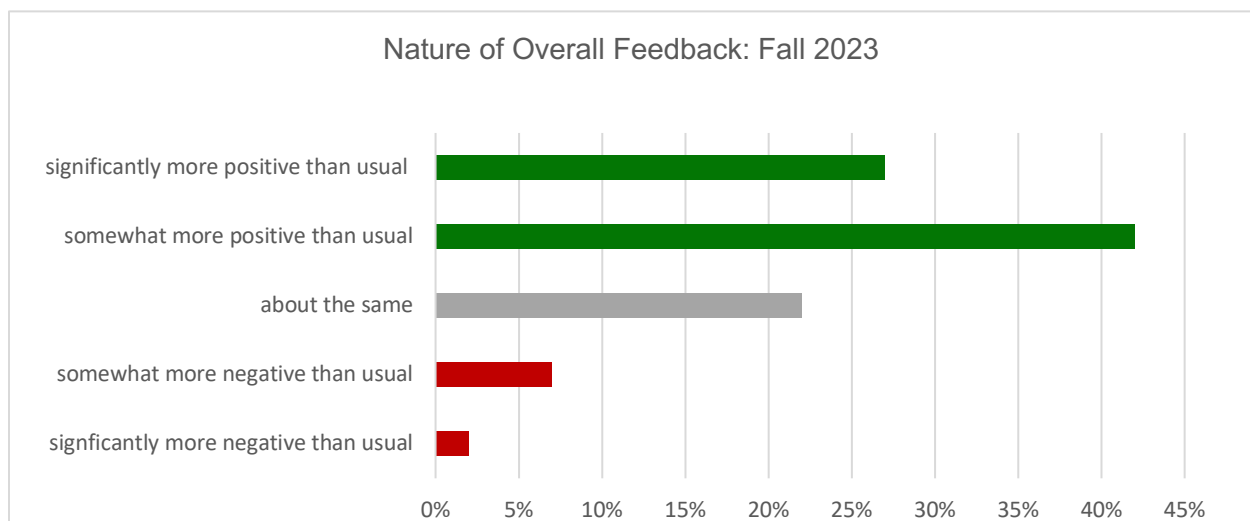
Executive Summary

The Alumni Liaison Committee has once again completed a “pulse check” survey to leaders of class and club organizations, leaders of affiliated and shared interest groups, head agents, representatives from Women of Dartmouth, and the Alumni Council. This **fall pulse check** was distributed to 634 alumni leaders in the **first two weeks of December 2023** in a similar format to the last four pulse check surveys. In this latest iteration, we added an additional question regarding recipients’ awareness around President Beilock’s five inaugural initiatives as well. We received 141 responses overall, i.e., a 22% response rate.

Overall Sentiment

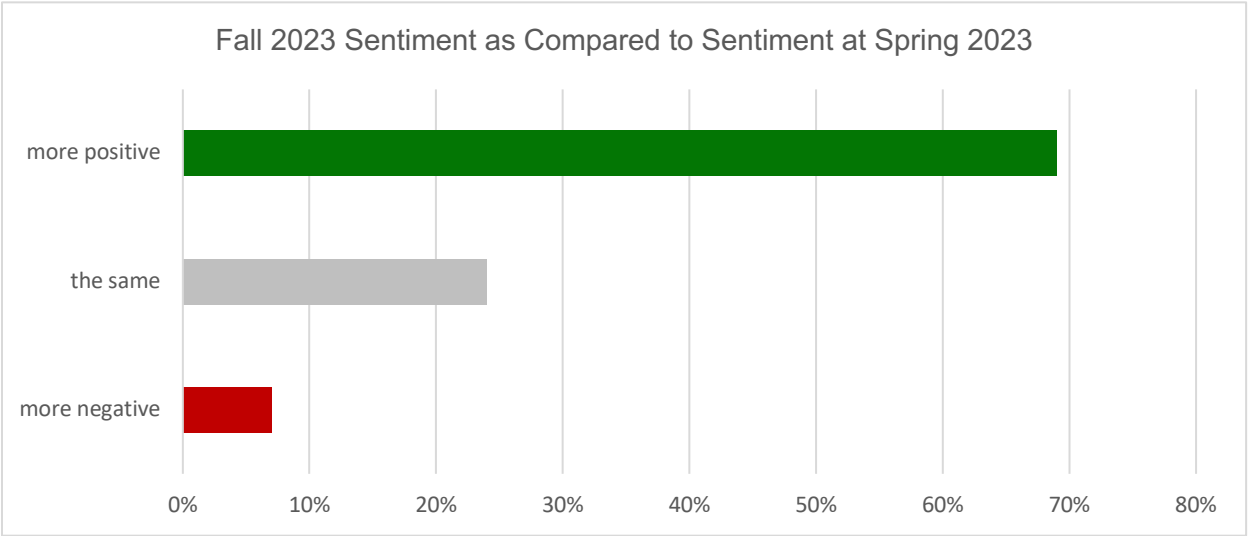
Approximately **84% of respondents had heard some form of feedback**, which was generally similar to the last pulse check (87% in Spring 2023). When asked about the nature of the feedback received, **69% stated that the feedback was significantly or somewhat more positive than usual** - a large increase from the Spring 2023 pulse check of 26%. Only 9% of respondents stated that the feedback they heard was somewhat or significantly more negative than usual, compared to 30% in Spring 2023.

What is the nature of the feedback you are hearing in the last 6 months?



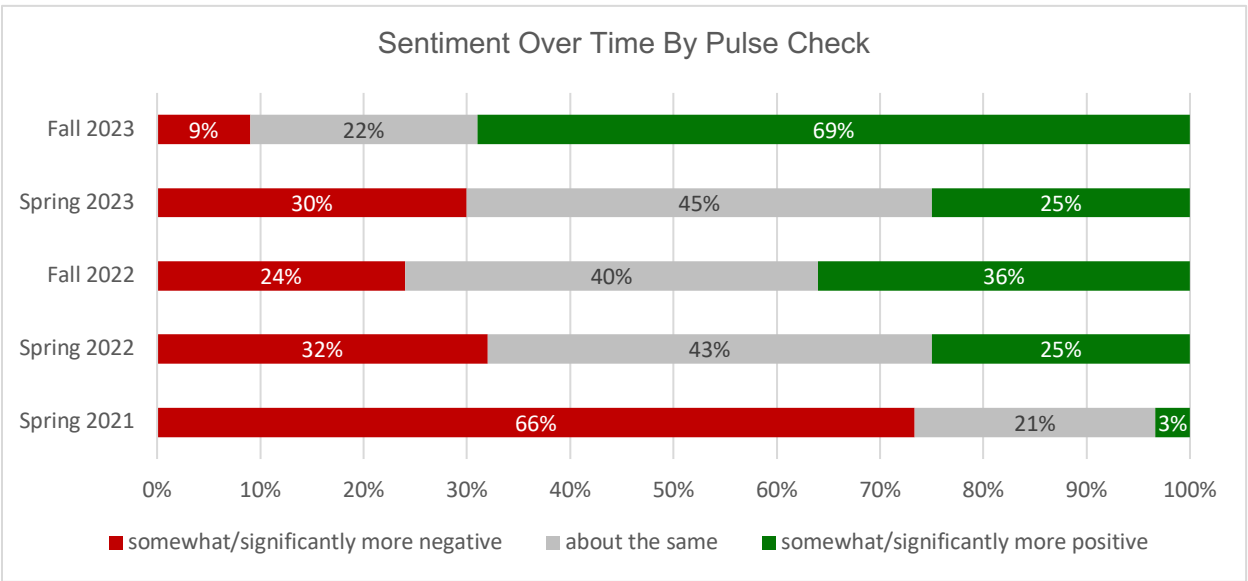
When respondents were asked to consider the feedback that they had received in the Fall of 2023 versus the Spring of 2023, **overwhelmingly (and in line with the previous question) 69% indicated that the feedback was more positive now than at the Spring of 2023**. Only 7% indicated that it was more negative.

Compared to feedback received at the Spring 2023 Pulse Check, do you think the feedback in the Fall of 2023 is more positive/more negative/the same?



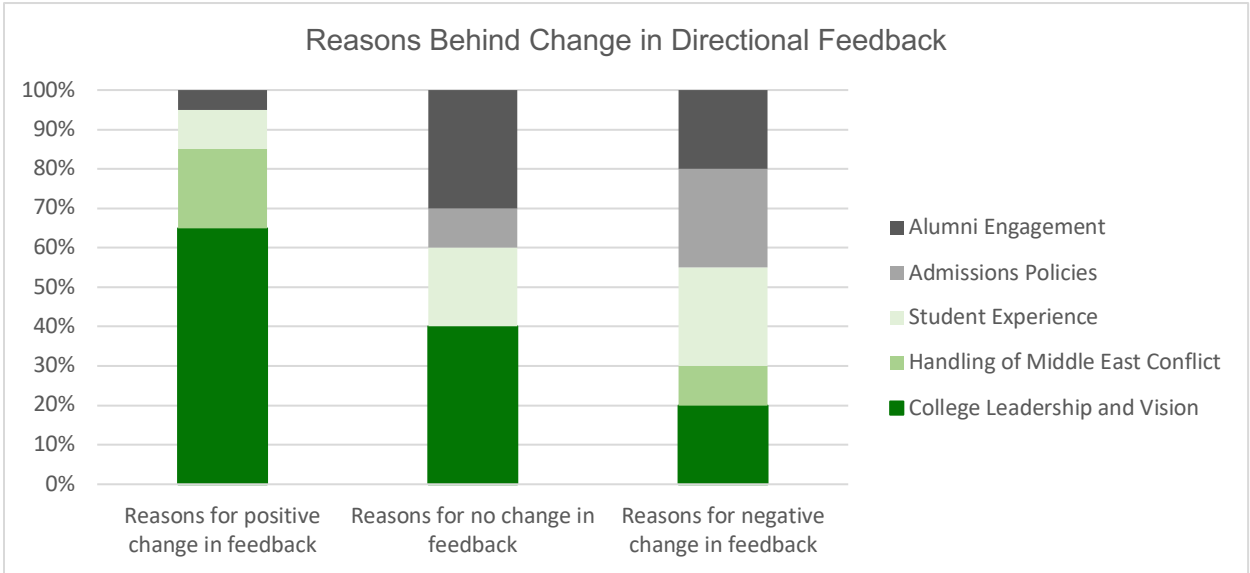
We see this shift towards positive sentiment - with a marked increase in the Fall of 2023 - but also over time and especially since the initial pulse check was conducted in the Spring of 2021.

The Nature of Feedback for Each Pulse Check Survey



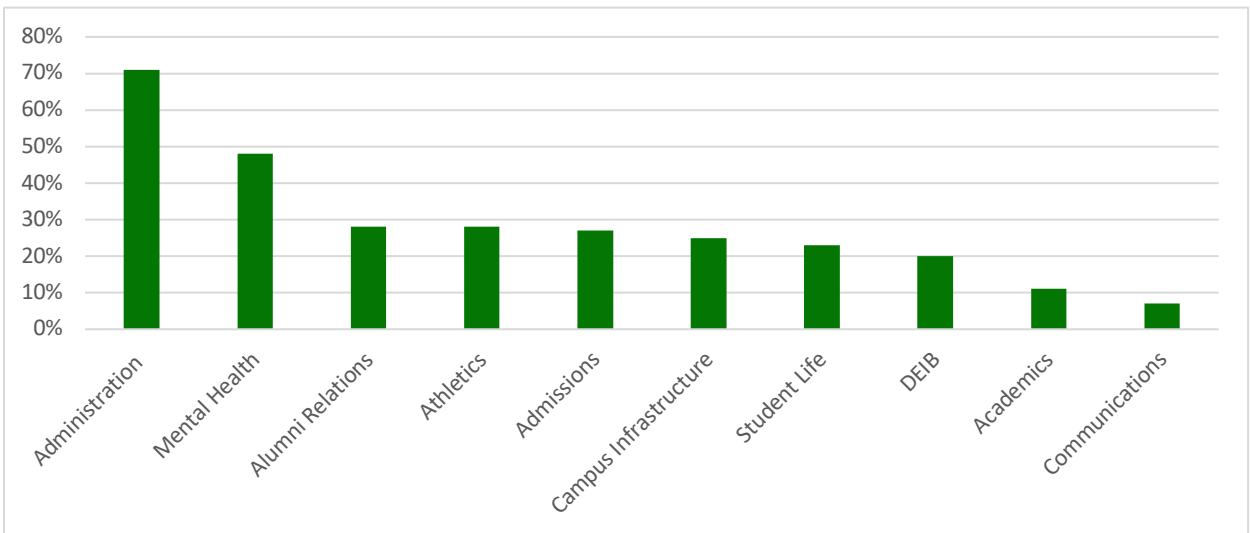
A large part of the positive sentiment can be attributed to the excitement around the start of President Beilock's tenure.

ALC Analysis of Open Text Comments Regarding Change in Feedback



Not surprisingly, the topic with the greatest amount of feedback is administration, especially with positive sentiment towards the new President. Mental health follows at almost 50%, confirming it is still very much a top-of-mind issue followed by alumni relations and athletics.

On which topics (up to four) have you heard the most feedback?



Key Themes

This pulse check indicates a few considerations for the College, largely around continuing to execute on the five strategic areas of focus set forth by President Beilock, especially those that are student-facing, and building alumni engagement with the College. The most significant themes are highlighted below.

President Beilock and her new administration have a lot of momentum.

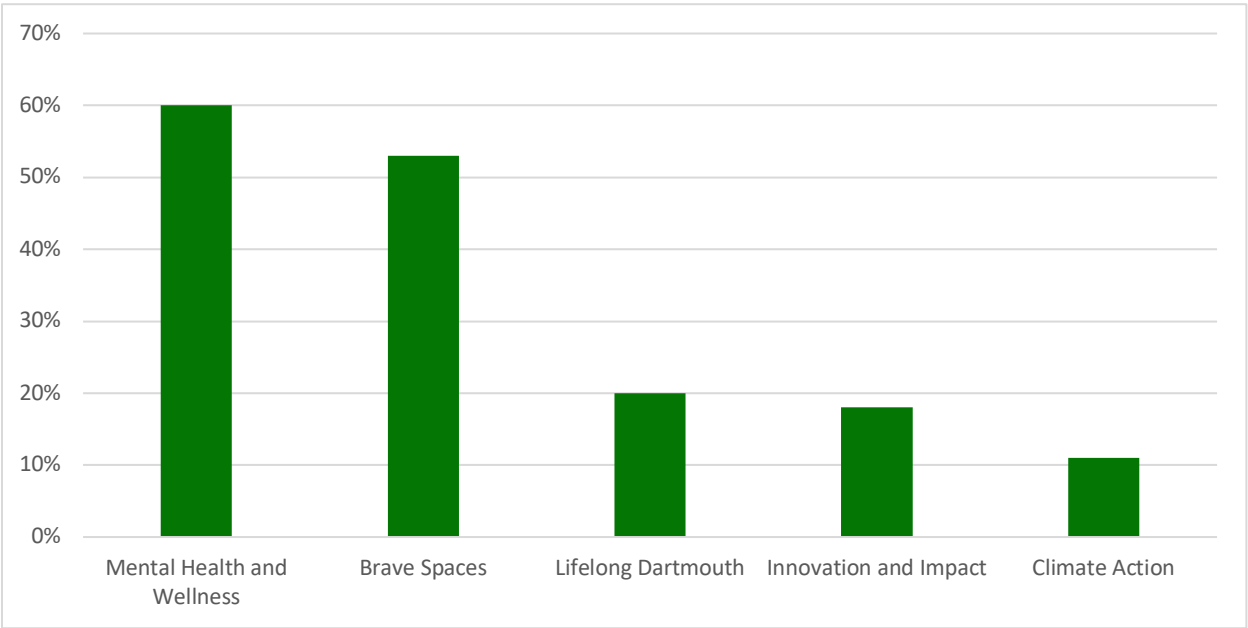
Sentiment regarding the administration has improved since President Beilock assumed office. A majority of comments were about the “excitement”, “hopes”, “anticipation” and “generally very popular” arrival of President Beilock.

Respondents from across Dartmouth’s alumni leadership were enthusiastic:

- “She’s EXACTLY what Dartmouth needs in this moment.”
- “So glad to have President Beilock here. Her presence is making it easier, as a Head Agent, to fundraise from classmates. People want to be involved again.”
- “President Beilock should know that she is creating a positive impact on the alumni.”

Among President Beilock’s five inaugural initiatives, respondents noted that “wellness” and “brave spaces” were most top of mind for their constituencies with 60% and 53% noting these topics, respectively. However, less than 20% of the respondent base selected the other three initiatives, which indicates the need for further communication on these topics.

Which of President Sian Beilock’s five initiatives are you hearing the most about from your constituency or network?



Dartmouth was applauded for its overall response to the Israel-Hamas war.

A majority of respondents mentioned appreciation for the way that Dartmouth has handled the College's response to the conflict through academic discourse, noting that the College's approach stood out especially as our peer institutions and their leadership struggled.

- "Dartmouth's approach to leaning into the teaching of the current events in Israel has been notable and noticeable as compared to its peers. Hearing really good things about what happened early on and how things are going now on campus as compared to some pretty awful press elsewhere at peer schools."

"Brave Spaces" continues to be vital for academic discourse and can set Dartmouth apart as a leader.

The greatest amount of open text comments centered around President Beilock's five areas of focus was "Brave Spaces", with respondents noting that this was a much-needed initiative that could add value to the student experience and distinguish Dartmouth overall.

- "Her use of 'brave spaces' in a 'show me, don't tell me' way by highlighting professors from Jewish Studies and Middle Eastern Studies discussing the situation in Gaza and Israel was a positive way to deal with a complex and serious global issue that was brought up by a number of alumni."
- "Great enthusiasm for the 'Brave Spaces' initiative, but also questions about its practical impact. ... The overwhelming message I am hearing is that alumni want Dartmouth to be a leader here and are proud of the way the College has distinguished itself since Oct 7th."

Like any good Dartmouth alum, a few respondents continued to push for excellence in this area; some respondents noting that the "Parkhurst arrests were an unnecessary and counterproductive escalation" that felt counter to free speech. Overall, 5% of alumni mentioned diversity, equity, and inclusion in open text comments and those who did were concerned with the practice and its impact on free speech.

Mental health was still top of mind for many respondents, and many are hopeful about the steps taken thus far.

Mental health remains a closely monitored issue (as the most recognized of Beilock's initiatives and the second highest topic receiving feedback). Specific mentions of mental health were lower in the pulse check comments, with only 6% of respondents drilling deeper or asking more questions in their open text responses. This appears to be a direct result of the College's announcements over the past year. Those that did mention it were hopeful.

- "Positive changes in student mental health."
- "Mostly praise for the new Dartmouth President and for the increased programming in relation to mental health."
- "The new mental health initiative has drawn many comments of 'about time.'"

Alumni engagement and in-person events continue to be a sore spot.

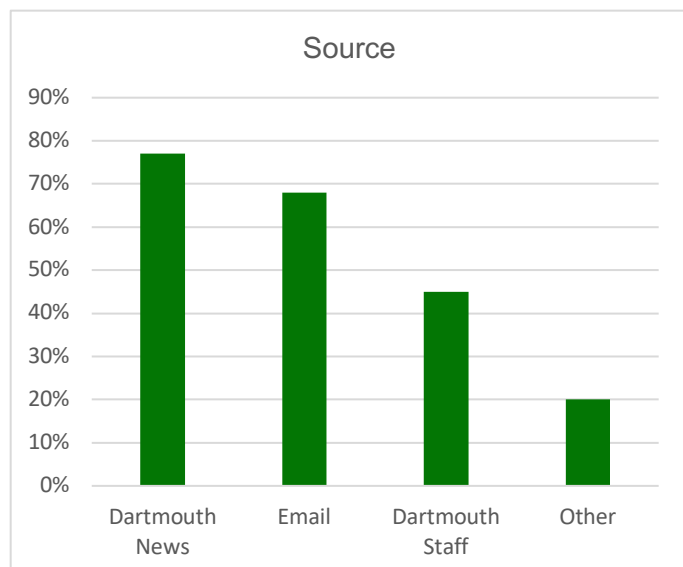
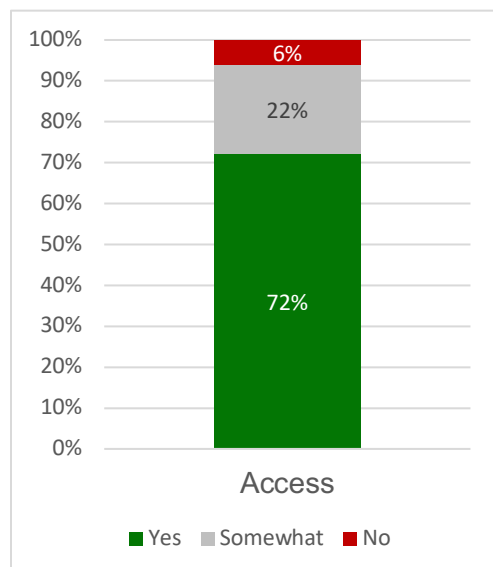
Many of our most engaged alumni would like in-person events back, with mentions of VOX, COW, CAGOW and Head Agents weekend.

- “There is a movement for an in-person VOX and/or Head Agents weekend. Alumni are tired of hearing that we can't do it due to 'equity' when there are many other activities/meetings/reunions in person. There are ways to make it work for those who cannot afford it and the College would earn it back in spades if you bring back alumni who are the most engaged.”
- “While all things President Beilock is beyond positive, alumni leaders are stewing about the lack of on-campus meetings. COW is gone, VOX is virtual (and leaders don't consider it effective anymore), and AC is half-virtual. LOTS of concern about a "leadership cliff" as previous leaders want to take a step back and the incentives to step up and the sense of support when they do are just...gone.”
- *Note: Since the completion of this pulse check survey, Alumni Relations is forming a working group of volunteer leaders and Advancement staff who will work together over the next several months to focus on a return to in-person activities in some form, while recognizing the importance of increased volunteer access and for participation for those who have traditionally been challenged to make the trip back to Hanover.*

Overall alumni communication appears to be improving.

Volunteers generally felt that they were getting the relevant information about the College for their constituents, with 94% affirming access. Dartmouth News and email announcements are the main sources of information.

Have you had access to information from Dartmouth about the topic areas of the feedback? If so, from which sources?



Recommendations

While the overall sentiment in this latest pulse check trends positive, there are some areas that we would highlight as opportunities to build on this momentum.

The College should prioritize:

- Building a more active bridge between the President's five initiatives and current students to improve near-term student life and maintain the excitement of the administration's recent efforts.
- Returning to a more focused, intentional in-person alumni engagement model, at least for the most engaged alumni volunteers.
- Detailing further the three lesser-known initiatives (i.e., Lifelong Dartmouth, Innovation and Impact, and Climate Action) so that alumni volunteers can better articulate and communicate developments here to their constituents.

The College should continue:

- Sharing information about President Beilock's five initiatives with the broader alumni community, especially by providing engaged alumni with tools to easily communicate updates (possible ideas: one-pagers, videos, shareable posts).
- Highlighting examples of "Brave Spaces" in action to connect theory to practice through Dartmouth Dialogues.
- Expanding access and improving policies for "wellness" to ensure that students are well supported through the resources available and that alumni understand that this is now a part of the enduring Dartmouth experience.

Conclusion

Overall, sentiment has improved significantly in this first year of President Beilock's presidency. We hope, and encourage the Board and College leadership to ensure, that this positive sentiment is shared across multiple stakeholders at the College ranging from alumni to students to faculty and staff.

We want to emphasize that many respondents raised an important need to re-evaluate how to best engage with the College, both for them as well as the alumni they represent in their leadership roles. As stated herein, a common refrain was to find greater opportunities to engage with the College through in-person events to share information, cultivate future leaders, and generate enthusiasm around giving. While there are practical considerations to hosting in-person events, the demand to bring alumni together is persistent.

We expect this "honeymoon" phase of Beilock's presidency to continue this year and we will closely monitor sentiment that we receive in advance of and during the May Alumni Council meeting for additional indicators. We do believe execution and follow-through on President Beilock's initiatives will be closely monitored for metrics of success and these results will have a profound impact on sentiment going forward.

Appendix: Survey Design and Background

Since March of 2021, the Alumni Liaison Committee has run “pulse check” surveys twice a year to survey alumni sentiment through its most engaged volunteers: leaders of class and club organizations, representatives from Women of Dartmouth, leaders of affiliated and shared interest groups, head agents, and Alumni Council. The survey was designed to assess the volume and tenor of alumni sentiment as represented by alumni leaders, who, given their broad networks and leadership roles in our organized alumni groups, are in an excellent position to articulate alumni questions, comments, concerns, and feedback.

These pulse checks allow the Alumni Liaison Committee to develop a longitudinal view of alumni sentiment outside of the annual report and elevate emerging issues to the Board and College leadership in real time.

Pulse check surveys have asked the same questions for each of the following timeframes: April/Spring 2022, November/Fall 2022, May/Spring 2023, and December/Fall 2023. Key questions include:

- Have you been hearing feedback about Dartmouth in your alumni organization (classes, clubs, affiliated and shared interest groups) or other networks in the last six months?
- What is the nature of the feedback you are hearing?
- Compared to the previous 6 months, do you think the feedback is more positive/more negative/the same?
- What do you think are the primary reasons for the change in feedback over the past 6 months?
- On which topics (up to four) have you heard the most feedback?
- Have you had access to information from Dartmouth about the topic areas of the feedback? From which sources?

From which alumni organization are you primarily answering these questions?

