

## Alumni Liaison Committee Report: Spring 2024 Pulse Check

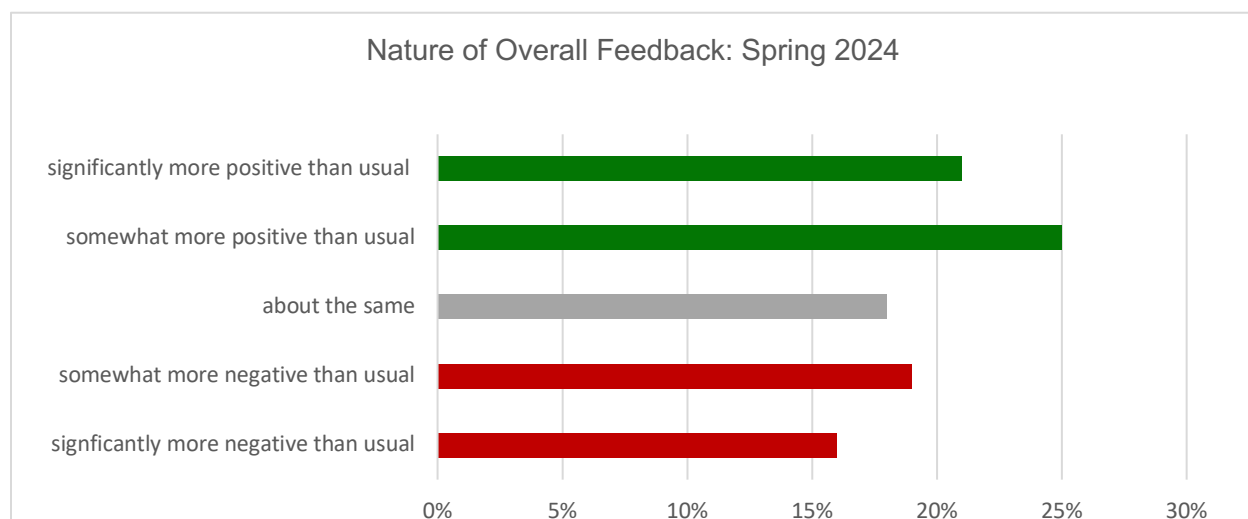
### Overview

The Alumni Liaison Committee has completed its bi-annual “Pulse Check” survey, which was sent to a select group of volunteers comprised of presidents and vice-presidents of classes, clubs, Women of Dartmouth and affiliated and shared interest groups, members of Alumni Council, and class head agents. This **Spring Pulse Check** was distributed to 634 alumni leaders after the May Alumni Council meeting **during the last week of May and the first two weeks of June 2024** in a similar format to previous Pulse Check surveys. The survey deadline was extended one week to coincide with the completion of June reunions, as some volunteers expressed a desire to incorporate feedback from reunion attendees. We received 117 responses overall, a 19% response rate. This response rate was lower than in the fall, likely due to both the overall busy time of the year and that Alumni Councilors had just solicited feedback from their constituents in May but was still in the range of response rates for the Pulse Checks. This report summarizes data from the Spring 2024 Pulse Check and provides a longitudinal comparison of sentiment captured from previous Pulse Checks, beginning in Spring 2021.

### Alumni Sentiment

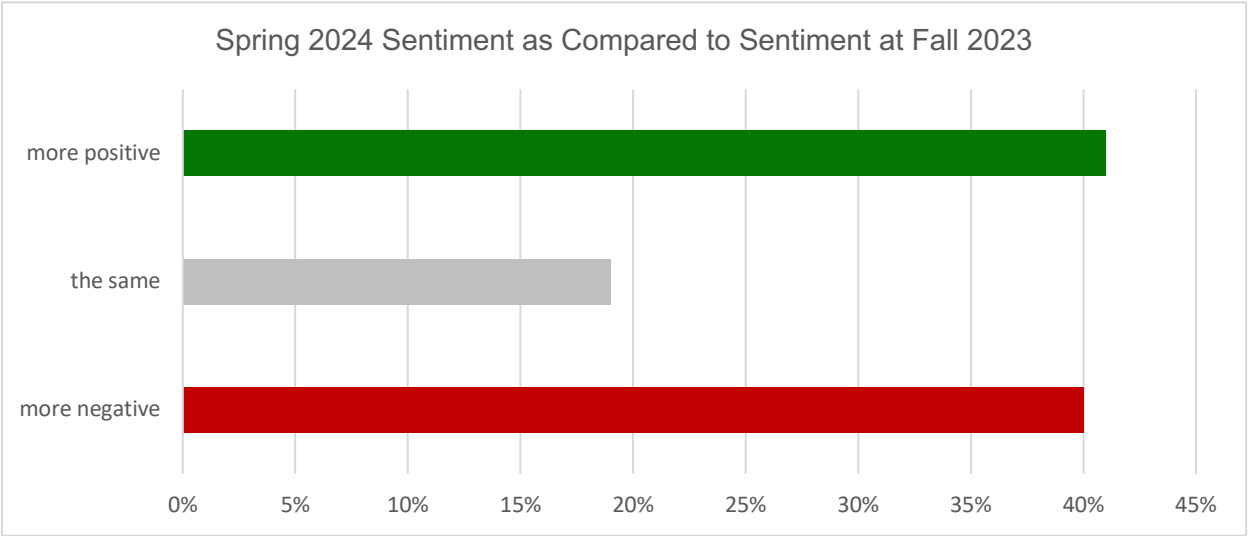
Approximately **94% of respondents had heard some feedback**, up from 84% in the Fall 2023 survey. When asked about the nature of the feedback received, **46% stated that the feedback was significantly or somewhat more positive than usual** - a decrease from the Fall 2023 pulse check of 69%. Approximately **35% of respondents stated that the feedback they heard was somewhat or significantly more negative than usual**, compared to 9% in Fall 2023.

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



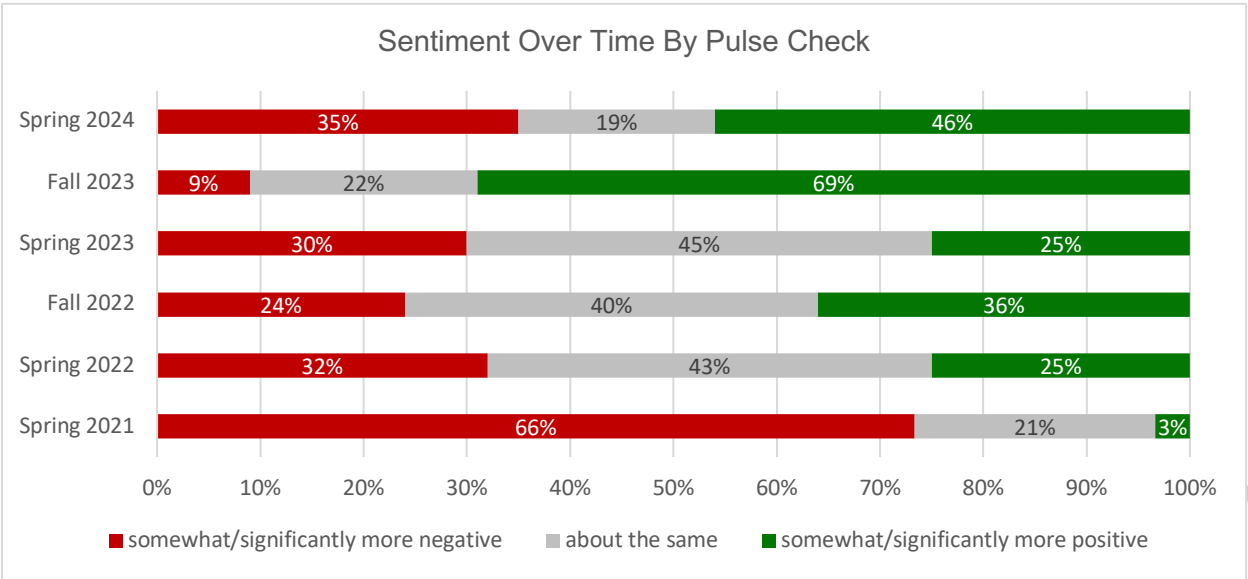
When respondents were asked to consider the feedback that they had received in the Spring of 2024 versus the Fall of 2023, 41% indicated that the feedback was more positive now than at the time of the Fall 2023 survey. **However, 40% of the respondents indicated that it was more negative, which is a significant uptick from the Fall results of 7%.**

**Compared to feedback received at the Fall 2023 Pulse Check, do you think the feedback in the Spring of 2024 is more positive/more negative/the same?**



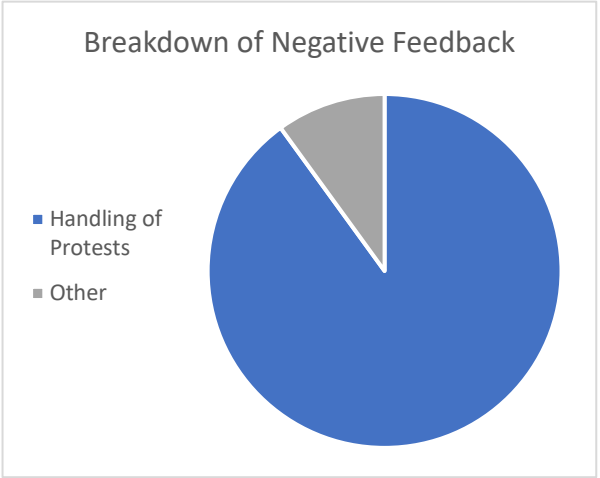
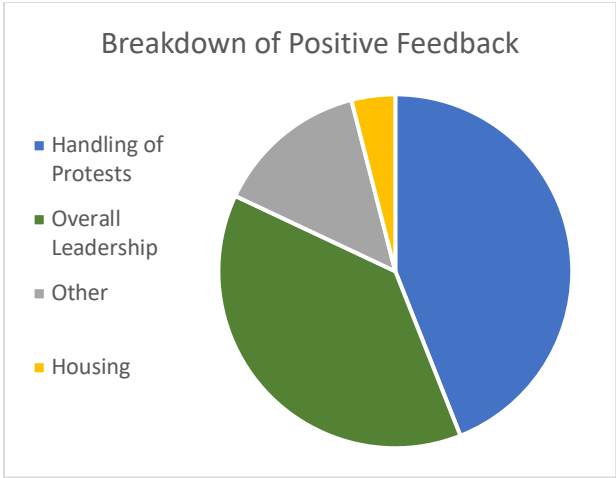
After significant positive sentiment in the Fall of 2023, **we see more negative sentiment in the Spring of 2024** (and in line with previous years) expressed by our most active volunteers.

**The Nature of Feedback for Each Pulse Check Survey**



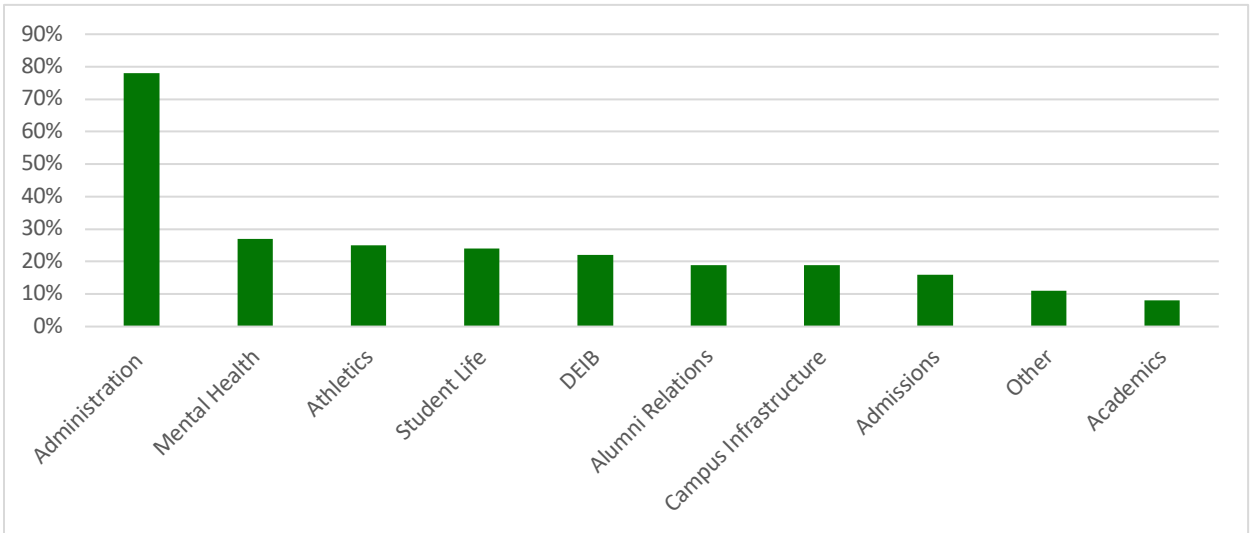
leadership overall and her response to the protests specifically. However, it should also be noted that within the positive responses, there were acknowledgements that some constituents were still mixed in their sentiment on this topic. **Of the negative responses, 90% were related to Beilock’s handling of the protests.**

**ALC Analysis of Open Text Comments Regarding Change in Feedback**



Not surprisingly, the topic with the greatest amount of feedback overall is administration. Mental health continues to be the second most discussed topic, although the relative amount of feedback on this topic has decreased. Athletics continues to be a highly rated topic as well.

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



## Key Themes

**There is both strong positive and strong negative sentiment towards President Beilock's handling of the protests.**

Respondents did praise Beilock on her decisive action and on not prolonging or escalating the protests.

- *"There was a lot of initial enthusiasm over the new president's innovations such as Brave Spaces, climate mitigation, and teach-ins rather than protests over the Israeli/Hamas war. There was disappointment, however, when Dartmouth students eventually emulated some students at other institutions in having protests that many alumni viewed as antisemitic and disruptive of the College's educational mission. The Administration's crackdown on the Green is generally viewed as necessary."* - Class of '67
- *"I support President Beilock, and think she had the right idea to stop protests on the Green, but it could have been done in a less forceful manner."* - Class of '93
- *"The alums and parents of current students I have talked to are happy with the Dartmouth Dialogues program, appreciate Beilock's quick and clear response to the encampment on May 1, and are overall very excited about her leadership."* - Class of '01

However, many thought the response went too far and that significant healing is needed to address the damage and move forward.

- *"Those who aren't on the extremes of the issue have expressed to me how disturbed they were by the overwhelming use of force and the lack of examination of how we can do better."* - Class of '90
- *"We need a way to heal from the arrests and protests. We cannot just leave it as is right now, there is very little trust on both sides."* - Class of '93
- *"The UNANIMOUS sentiments from the more than 50 alumni from whom I have received DIRECT feedback are with respect to temperament and lack of understanding of who we are as a community and how her decisions have a complete disregard for that...Many have expressed disappointment in how the Board of Trustees have responded to this crisis -- their failure to advocate for what is in the best interest of our more than 250 year old institution."* - Class of '84

**The unionization of the Dartmouth men's basketball team uniformly received negative feedback.**

Those that raised the topic expressed frustration and questioned how and why the team was pursuing this course of action and praised Dartmouth's response in opposing unionization.

- *"The men's basketball team's decision to unionize is extremely unpopular with the majority of alums."* - Class of '77
- *"My classmates ... are quite frustrated by the basketball team's efforts to form a union. – Class of '61*

**While some feedback does not rise to the level of statistical significance, we believe the following feedback is worth noting:**

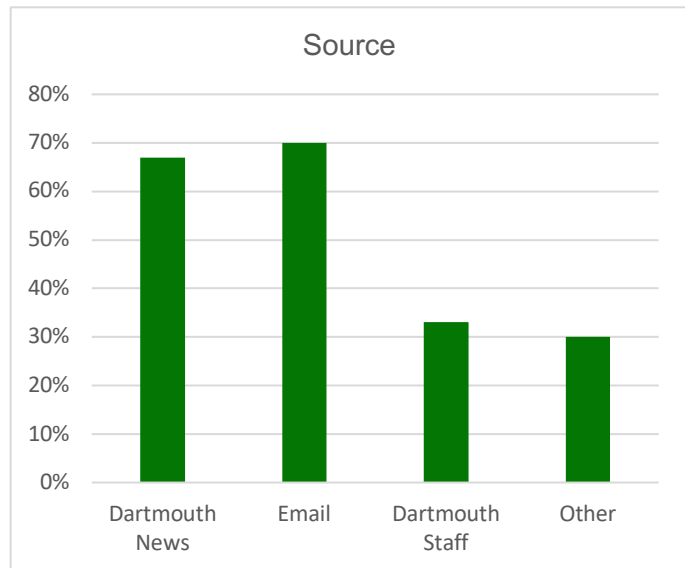
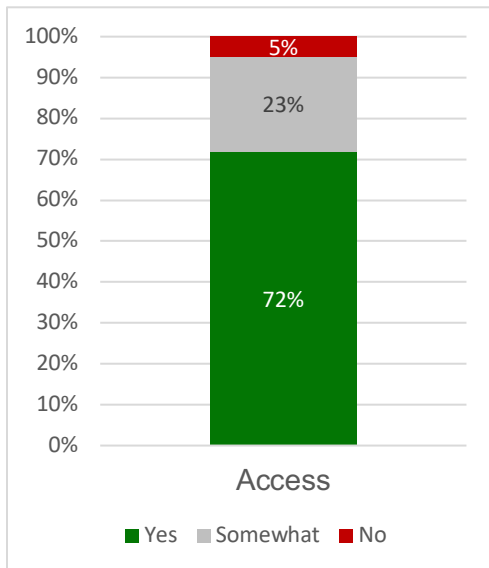
- The rationale for the reinstatement of the SAT/ACT requirement was perceived negatively by some respondents.
- A few volunteers expressed worry that alumni interviewers may be discouraged with their interviewing efforts when none of their seemingly qualified interviewees get accepted and could be reluctant to interview in the future.
- Some respondents expressed disappointment/dismay at the awarding of an honorary degree to a perceived controversial recipient, Richard Ranger '74.

**While alumni volunteers believe information is generally accessible, we believe a further drill down of alumni information sources would be helpful to understand.**

Volunteers generally felt that they were getting the relevant information about the College for their constituents, with 95% affirming access. Dartmouth News and email announcements are the main sources of information.

The ALC has discussed adding additional sources to this question going forward including social media, *The Dartmouth*, national/regional news and class communications. We assume these are some of the sources in “Other” and believe it is important to understand in greater detail how alumni are consuming their Dartmouth information.

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



## Recommendations

The ALC is not surprised that there has been more negative sentiment in this Spring Pulse Check given the events on campus in recent months. However, it is also important to note that many alumni do take the opportunity to praise and support President Beilock's leadership through ALC communications as well.

Going forward, the College should prioritize:

- **Transparency on key high-profile issues.** While it is not practical or necessary to delve into every decision made by College leadership, certain decisions do warrant more explanation and should go beyond email communication. Webinars or videos could be used effectively to disseminate such information.
  - For example, Alumni Councilors praised the live session with Executive Vice President for Strategy and Special Counsel to the President Jomysha Delgado Stephen and Chief Advancement Officer Ann Root Keith during the May Alumni Council meeting, which outlined the communication leading up to and the timeline of the protests. While there can still be disagreement as to the College's response, many agreed a better understanding of the events was helpful. As Councilors do their best to disseminate such information, it is not always possible to do this in a consistent manner, so communication from the College on such topics would have been valued.
  - The negative feedback received on the reinstatement of the standardized testing requirement thus far indicates that more information behind the rationale for the decision would enable alumni to better understand and appreciate the policy change.
- **Follow-through on President Beilock's 5 inaugural pillars.** There was high praise in the fall for these initiatives and we would encourage College leadership to communicate the progress and results against these pillars through updates that can be easily shared by alumni volunteers to their constituents.

The College should continue:

- **Completion of the work of the VOX Working Group.** Volunteers are pleased to see a working group focused on the return of certain in-person events to Hanover and are awaiting the recommendations.

## Conclusion

As mentioned in the Fall 2023 Pulse Check report, the initial "honeymoon" period of Beilock's presidency would inevitably come to an end. With the several petitions that have been circulated, as well as the feedback received at the May Alumni Council meeting and this latest Pulse Check, there is currently a relatively equal amount of strong support and deep disappointment among alumni volunteers in President Beilock's administration. Understandably, there will be anxiety over how the College's existing policy on freedom of expression and dissent will be honored in the future. As we look to move forward, a sincere focus on healing, building trust, and bringing the community together should be a top priority.

## Appendix: Survey Design

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 Checks have asked the same questions for each of the following timeframes: April/Spring 2022, November/Fall 2022, May/Spring 2023, and December/Fall 2023 and June/Spring 2024.

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 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?

