

## Alumni Liaison Committee Report: Fall 2025 Pulse Check

The Alumni Liaison Committee (ALC) has completed its biannual “Pulse Check” survey, distributed to 524 alumni leaders, including class and club presidents and vice presidents, members of affiliated and shared interest groups, Alumni Council representatives, and head agents.

The Fall 2025 Pulse Check was conducted from 9/29/25 - 10/19/25, mostly **before President Beilock formally and publicly rejected the Trump Administration’s “Compact for Academic Excellence in Higher Education.”** As with all Pulse Checks, it represents a snapshot of sentiment at a specific moment in time. Where significant developments have occurred since the survey closed, we have noted them below to provide current context alongside the feedback captured during the survey period.

The ALC received **143 responses**, representing a **27% response rate**, an increase of 8 points from the 19% response rate for the Spring 2025 Pulse Check. The participation indicates sustained engagement among alumni volunteers, driven primarily by a period marked by national political tension and heightened public attention on higher education.

The open-text responses indicate that alumni sentiment continues to be deeply shaped by Dartmouth’s navigation of federal pressures on higher education, particularly the Trump Administration’s “Compact for Academic Excellence in Higher Education.” Responding alumni leaders raised important concerns about federal pressures and the potential loss of institutional independence and values, called for more frequent transparent communication with the alumni community, and expressed divided views on campus climate issues, especially lingering sentiment about student activism and discipline.

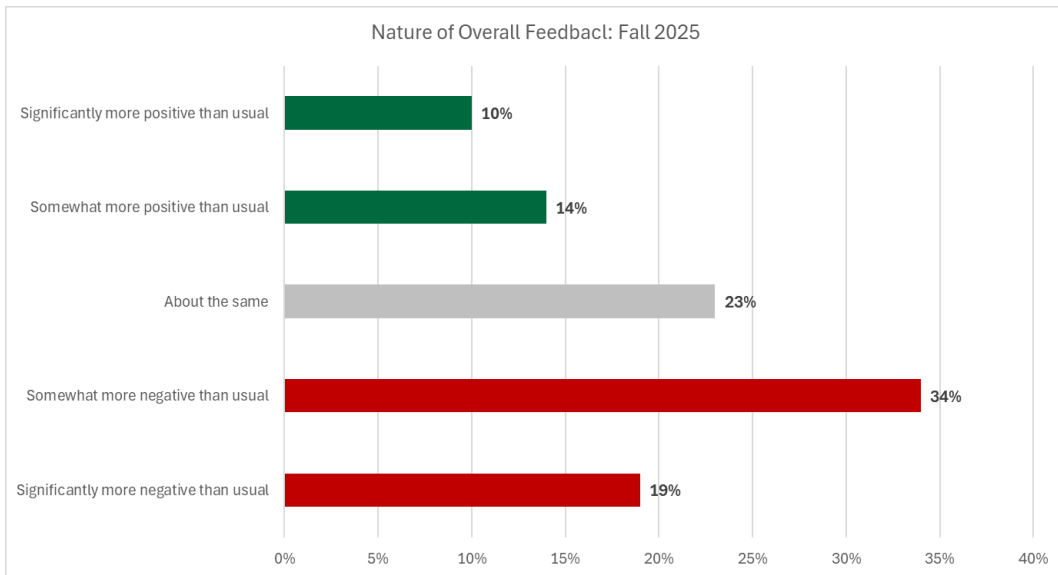
At the same time, the survey captured notable positive developments: improving confidence in President Beilock’s leadership and her ability to navigate Dartmouth through a period of profound uncertainty, genuine pride in campus infrastructure progress (e.g., the opening of the new Hopkins Center and new dorm expansion down West Wheelock Street) and sustainability initiatives, and strong appreciation for Dartmouth’s principled approach to free expression and dialogue.

In this environment, intentional alumni engagement is not optional; it is mission critical. Some respondents commented on how curative transparent, consistent, and values-driven communication is, bringing alumni back into the fold, reinforcing trust, and transforming concern into commitment. At the same time, others reported that classmates have disengaged with the College. We should determine – through systematic tracking of giving participation rates, volunteer retention, and event attendance – whether this represents isolated situations or a broader trend requiring intervention. Our goal should always be to activate alumni, not only as supporters but also as informed advocates and compelling storytellers for Dartmouth’s work and future.

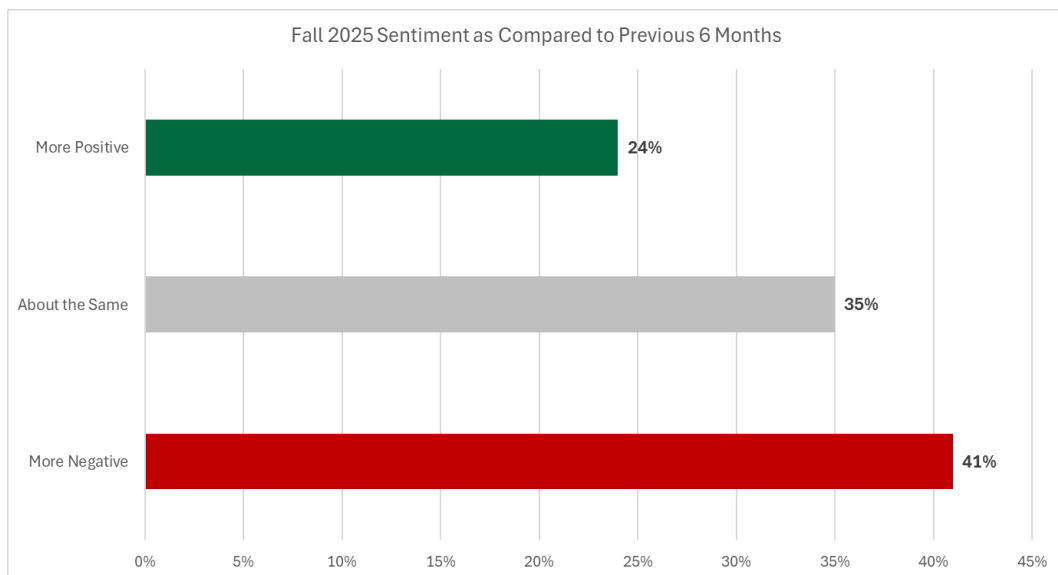
This report summarizes findings from the Fall 2025 Pulse Check and provides longitudinal comparisons to previous surveys beginning in Spring 2021.

## Overall Sentiment

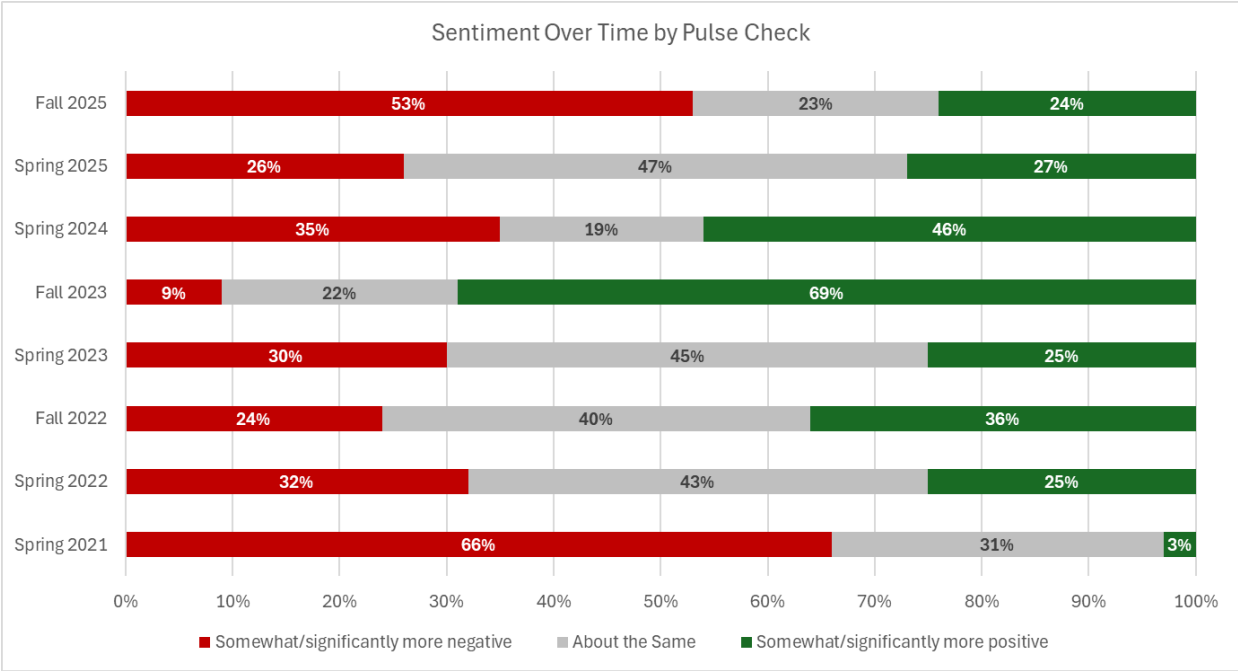
About **93%** of respondents had heard some feedback, up from 89% in the Spring 2025 survey. When asked about the nature of the feedback received, we see a shift to the negative from last Spring. Those who said the feedback was significantly or somewhat more positive than usual was 24% (vs. 32% in the Spring and 42% in 2024) while those reporting somewhat or significantly more negative was 53% (vs 26% in the Spring of 2025 and 35% in 2024). The open-text responses received in this survey were more balanced than these percentages indicate and certainly more balanced than the overwhelmingly negative feedback received by the ALC in the Spring. We would speculate that the negative sentiment from Q4 2025 has perhaps “caught up” to the data.



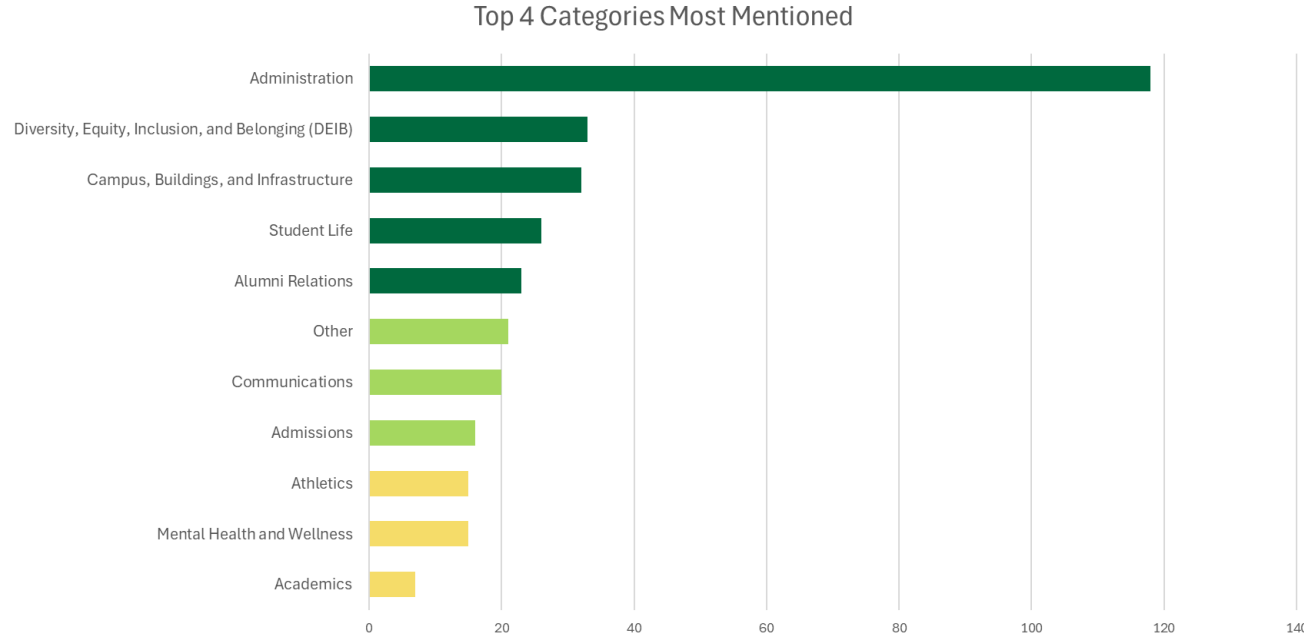
When respondents were asked to consider the feedback they had received in the Fall of 2025 compared to the previous 6 months, a similar negative leaning in sentiment remained.



Overall, after significant positive sentiment in the Fall of 2023 with the arrival of President Sian Beilock and her new administration, we are seeing a continued erosion of positive sentiment to levels not seen since Spring 2022 and the COVID-19 pandemic era.



Of the 326 comments made by the 143 alumni leaders who completed this survey, the most dominant category was the general “Administration” bucket with almost 40% of all comments.



## Key Themes

### 1. Anxiety over the impending response to the Trump Administration’s “Compact for Academic Excellence in Higher Education.”

One-third of all respondents made some comment about what Dartmouth’s posture toward the **Trump Administration’s “Compact for Academic Excellence in Higher Education”** would be; **all were opposed** to the College agreeing to it. Alumni urged the College to issue a firm rejection of the Compact, viewing it as a threat to academic freedom and institutional autonomy.

*“Our class is adamant that the College must defend academic freedom and not sign the so-called ‘Compact.’”*

**Update post-Survey close:** On October 18, 2025, President Beilock formally rejected the Compact in a communication to the community, reaffirming Dartmouth's commitment to resisting federal overreach and protecting the College's core values. The decision aligned with the unanimous sentiment expressed by alumni leaders through the survey.

It is also important to note that, compared to Q4 '25 comments surrounding the AAC&U Open Letter, there was less intense concern expressed about how the College would respond. Many alumni cited President Beilock’s 10/3/25 communication to the community as a good “signal” of intent, although not a guarantee in the hearts and minds of alums.

*“After the AAC&U letter debacle, things have been quieter. The Compact demand is stirring things up, but I think Pres Beilock’s response so far has been better.”*

*“...fear the College would acquiesce to the administration’s demands to sign the Compact. Classmates are relieved by President Beilock’s most recent communications to the alumni, but a few are parsing her words and still fear the worse...”*

Some respondents described Dartmouth’s silence as “deafening” and cautioned that delay in communicating the College’s stance had allowed speculation and mistrust to grow. Others expressed appreciation for President Beilock’s “measured” approach and for her commitment to maintaining open dialogue with the federal government while protecting Dartmouth’s independence.

*“The response to the Academic Compact...There was a desire from those that communicated that it be a faster rejection. That said, I think that there is a group who are pragmatic and accepting of having a process for giving a formal response.”*

### 2. Forceful calls to resist Federal Overreach and Preserve our Academic Independence and Core Values.

More than half of respondents expressed concerns about federal threats to higher education, academic freedom of institutions, and Dartmouth’s response within this environment.

The nature of the feedback ran the gamut, from some expressing very pointed comments, critical of the College Administration's actions to date, some more supportive, while others took a more thoughtful stance, acknowledging the immense situational challenges and urging that, at a minimum, our institutional values be preserved. Representative comments include:

*"Alumni want Dartmouth to 'live free or die'—to be bold and lead, not capitulate or negotiate with a fascist authoritarian."*

*"Alumni are concerned about President Beilock's appeasement policy toward the Trump Administration."*

*"President Beilock's strong stand to protect Dartmouth from governmental intervention is why feedback in my circles is more positive now."*

*"Positive feedback that Dartmouth stands up for its values, hears diversity of voices. Request that the college continues to be a leader."*

*"As for the current political landscape, there's a lot to navigate. I just want Dartmouth to continue to be dedicated to constructive discourse and making excellent liberal arts education part of our society and accessible to as many people as possible."*

**Update post-Survey close:** Dartmouth has posted updates on its Federal Relations [website](#), sharing actions and our continued commitment to institutional independence:

- February 3, 2026: President Sian Beilock helped to organize and participated in an Association of American Universities summit about renewing trust in research universities with the American public.
- [January 20, 2026](#): Dartmouth signed on to an amicus brief in support of Harvard University (the second such brief the institution has filed).
- Ongoing: President Beilock has continued to regularly travel to Washington, DC to engage directly with members of Congress while working closely with other college and university presidents to coordinate higher education's response to federal pressures.

### **3. Polarized Views of Campus Climate: Expressions of Intolerance, Protests, Free Expression, and Dialogue**

An antisemitic incident in mid-September of a swastika drawn on a dorm room carpet drew a mix of pride and frustration – pride in the manner in which President Beilock and the Dartmouth administration handled it, frustration and concern about a campus climate in which such an act could occur.

As protests have continued on campus, many commended President Beilock for maintaining campus order and upholding free expression, while others viewed disciplinary measures against student protesters as punitive and contrary to Dartmouth's values of dialogue and dissent.

*“Many alumni feel Dartmouth is more comfortable disciplining dissent than engaging it.”*

*“Our president has struck a careful balance, but some alumni wish she would be clearer in defense of student voices.”*

*“President Beilock took a firm stand against protestors on campus and a similar stand for free speech. It was leadership and in many ways innovative. FIRE gave Dartmouth the highest speech rating in the ivies.”*

More than before, alumni are feeling more positive about the foundational underpinnings of initiatives like Dartmouth Dialogues, not only for the campus environment on the whole, but they also see how such “proof points” can insulate Dartmouth on the national stage for *doing* the right thing, not just talking about it.

*“I think that alumni are more positive about freedom of speech and Dartmouth Dialogues (brave spaces instead of safe spaces) on campus. Having said that, our class, like most of America, is a bit polarized...”*

*“Dartmouth demonstrated that we were teaching both sides of an issue rather than just one side...”*

#### **Updates, post- Survey Close, and Resources:**

- Dartmouth Dialogues: [Dartmouth Dialogue Survey Results Reveal Impact](#)
- Free Speech: [FIRE Free Speech Ranking](#) for Dartmouth

#### **4. Positive Feedback about Institutional Progress**

Despite the challenging environment, many respondents expressed pride in Dartmouth’s momentum for activities and initiatives that are improving the campus and the student experience. Alumni highlighted the reopening of the Hopkins Center for the Arts, progress on campus housing expansion, and geothermal energy initiatives as points of optimism. Several applauded President Beilock’s “steady hand” and described Dartmouth as “on a roll compared to peer institutions.”

*“I think Dartmouth is on a strong track right now with new housing within the campus, geothermal energy coming online, improved athletic results, and an excellent, broad based academic program combining Thayer School, Tuck, and the Medical School.”*

*“...New construction, completed renovation and re-opening ceremony of the Hop, announcement of Shonda Rhimes' donation for a new residence hall. The sentiment from these developments related to the expansion of physical campus infrastructure has been generally positive; students are happy that needs will be increasingly met...”*

#### **Updates, post- Survey Close, and Resources:**

- Housing: [Alumnae Hall and Riverfront Park Announced](#)

- Student Internship Support: [Internships for All](#) - \$30 Million Raised to Funds Internships
- Mental Health: [Dartmouth Named to the Princeton Review Mental Health Services Honor Roll](#)
- Mental Health: [Dartmouth Convenes Gathering on Youth Mental Health Crisis](#)

## 5. Growing Together and Growing Apart: Alumni Relations

As additional time has separated us all from the depths of the COVID pandemic, opportunities to reunite and connect are being rebuilt, and there were positive statements from mid-range and older classes and clubs as to events and engagement:

*“Our club has seen more faculty and staff visits in the last six months. I think that has gone a long way to promote engagement in club affairs...”*

However, eight alumni raised concerns about the temporary suspension of the Black Alumni of Dartmouth Association (BADA) president’s email access in June 2025. These respondents viewed the move by Alumni Relations as “retaliatory and racially tone-deaf.”

This incident, against the backdrop of federal policies in the DEIB and international student spaces and alongside broader worries about communication and representation, fueled unease among identity-based and younger alumni groups. Alumni emphasized the need for greater transparency and two-way dialogue with the administration.

### **Updates, post- Survey Close, and Resources:**

- In direct response to alumni calls for more frequent, transparent communication, institutional senior leaders including President Beilock held a [State of the College for Alumni](#) event on December 12, 2025. A State of the College for Alumni will now be a biannual event.
  - 83% of survey respondents rated the event "excellent" or "very good"
  - Attendees reported increases in:
    - Understanding institutional restraint: +38%
    - Clarity on academic freedom: +37%
    - Confidence in leadership: +15%
  - Participants described the discussion as "candid," "honest," and "transparent" with some asking for more time for live questions
  - Future requested topics include campus culture, academics, and student life
- New Monthly Newsletter to Alumni: Speaking of Dartmouth

## 6. Improving but Divided Sentiment for President Beilock’s leadership

Compared to the Spring FY’25 Pulse Check and general feedback to the ALC, more alumni lauded President Beilock’s actions as well as improvements they sense in the communication of her values and goals for Dartmouth.

*“There was negative feedback about President Beilock not signing the letter... She has overcome that in the last 6 months in her support for Harvard, her trips to Washington, and her clear statements that Dartmouth will retain its academic independence.”*

*“Received positive feedback for the great manner in which Pres. Beilock handled a swastika incident that occurred recently on campus. Also, on the manner in which she has been handling Pres. Trump's attacks on universities including free speech on campus.”*

To be very clear, this does not mean that the fallout from student protests in the spring of 2024 or the outcry over not signing the AAC&U letter in the spring of 2025 have dissolved in the hearts and minds of the alumni community. Many alumni criticize her approach as “too cautious” or “morally neutral,” believing Dartmouth has always been and should continue to be an independent thought and moral leader. Some went on to express that alumni have been “lost” and may no longer support the institution as they have done in the past.

*“President Beilock is walking a fine line between political appeasement and academic integrity. Many alumni do not agree with her stance and wish she would come out with a stronger position against the numerous atrocities perpetrated by the current Administration.”*

*“Many feel the College has abandoned its historical reputation for moral independence in favor of calculated neutrality, eroding trust between the administration, faculty, students, and alumni who believe Dartmouth should lead with conscience, not convenience.”*

*“I feel we lost many classmates over the past six months...some of this was self-inflicted wounds by Dartmouth...it was the poor communication that dug the hole much deeper than it needed to be. Dartmouth didn't explain why these decisions were made...there was a mad scramble to communicate better, but minds had been made up.”*

## Recommendations

Like most everything in our current moment, the feedback revealed great polarization within the alumni community regarding Dartmouth's actions of the past year, sharp divisions by generation and political identity that have created wide variation in the level of institutional trust.

The feedback also revealed that when transparent communication and even dialogue occurred, the temperature dropped, reflection took root, and the variability leveled out a bit; understanding – if not always agreement – could be had.

On the whole, alumni are proud of Dartmouth's mission and progress, frequently citing positive developments in infrastructure, sustainability, and academic reputation. They overwhelmingly urge Dartmouth to defend academic freedom, reject government overreach, and provide through action as well as through word the message that dissenting voices are welcome.

The Alumni Liaison Committee recognizes the complexity of the current environment and encourages Dartmouth leadership to focus on the following priorities:

### **1. Reinforce Institutional Independence**

As we write this summary report, we know that Dartmouth rejected the “Compact for Academic Excellence.” We also expect that this will not be the last Trump Administration assault on Dartmouth's autonomy in academic and research matters. Clear, *timely* statements that publicly and unequivocally affirm our independence from federal overreach will demonstrate moral courage and rebuild alumni trust.

### **2. Enhance Communication Transparency and Timeliness**

Host webinars, town halls, or video updates when addressing politically sensitive issues. Written updates are valuable but may be insufficient to convey tone and context. Additionally, respondents cited a need for proactive and more frequent updates – even if it's a “we are working on it” – about high-profile decisions to avoid misinformation and rumor.

### **3. Highlight Positive Institutional Progress**

Share regular updates on major campus initiatives – housing, sustainability, student life, academic achievements, and the arts – to remind alumni and share stories of forward movement.

### **4. Prioritize Healing and Community Connection**

Creating opportunities for alumni dialogue that model the Dartmouth Dialogues framework would encourage debate rooted in respect and curiosity rather than division. In particular, actively including alumni from affinity and identity groups or groups vulnerable in this moment must be a visible priority.

## **Conclusion**

The Fall 2025 Pulse Check captures a moment of both strain and strength for Dartmouth and the entire higher education landscape. Alumni leaders remain deeply engaged, reflective, and invested in the College's direction. While the measured feedback has shifted negative overall, the data also reveal some returning shifts to the positive and a continued profound commitment to Dartmouth and her core values — academic excellence, freedom of inquiry, and community.

Moving forward, the path to restoring trust lies in frequent transparent communication, principled leadership, and visible action to uphold the independence and integrity that define Dartmouth's identity. Impacting the world as they do – in geography, industry, and lived experience – our alumni extend our Dartmouth community and our values in the world in powerful, substantive ways. Allow them to proudly and loudly advocate for the good and right that Dartmouth is doing.

The Alumni Liaison Committee will continue to provide this feedback to the Board of Trustees and College leadership and stands ready to support ongoing efforts to strengthen the partnership between the College and its alumni community.

## Appendix: Survey Design and Background

Since March of 2021, the Alumni Liaison Committee has run “pulse check” surveys approximately 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 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, December/Fall 2023, June/Spring 2024, and May/Spring 2025. 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?

