



Alumni Liaison Committee Report: Spring 2026 Pulse Check

Executive Summary

The Alumni Liaison Committee (ALC) has completed its biannual “Pulse Check” survey, distributed to 522 alumni leaders - class and club presidents and vice presidents, members of affiliated and shared interest groups, Alumni Council representatives, and head agents.

The Spring 2026 Pulse Check was conducted from 3/13/26-3/29/26. The survey generated 88 responses, representing a 17% response rate, a decrease of 10 points from the Fall 2025 Pulse Check and 2 points from the Spring 2025 Pulse Check. This response rate is the lowest we have documented since the introduction of the pulse check survey in 2021.

The reason for this steep decline in participation is unclear. While one hypothesis posits the decline can be attributed to a relatively quiet period following a tumultuous year, the decline may also suggest softer engagement or uncertainty about whether feedback drives impact. Even so, the depth and thoughtfulness of open-text responses indicate that alumni remain attentive, invested, and highly engaged in the College’s trajectory.

Overall, the Spring 2026 Pulse Check reflects a community that is stabilizing after a prolonged period of disruption, but not yet fully settled. Alumni sentiment has become more balanced – and in many cases more positive – as alumni have had time to reflect on President Beilock’s leadership through a turbulent national and campus environment. At the same time, this improved sentiment remains conditional. Alumni are watching closely at how the administration responds to the next significant test.

Across responses, there is a clear sense that Dartmouth has mostly “weathered the storm” of the past two years, navigating leadership transition, campus protests, and external political pressures with relative stability. Many alumni now describe President Beilock’s leadership as pragmatic, measured, and increasingly visible. In the absence of acute external pressures, positive developments on campus such as new residential construction and athletics achievements have helped to re-anchor alumni sentiment in pride and forward momentum.

However, this period of relative calm may be best described as a pause rather than a resolution. Alumni sentiment reflects a “holding pattern,” with underlying tensions around institutional positioning, restraint (still frequently referred to as “neutrality”), and values alignment still unresolved. Trust in the administration is rebuilding but remains fragile; alumni may not be disengaged, just watching and evaluating. A consistent theme is that while leadership has gained credibility, it has not yet earned full confidence in how it will respond under pressure.

Within this context, alumni repeatedly point to one emerging issue as an imminent test case: the naming of the Black Family Visual Arts Center. Feedback on this topic is urgent, emotionally charged, and overwhelmingly negative. Many alumni view the situation not as a procedural matter, but as a clear measure of institutional values and leadership decisiveness. There is a strong perception that delayed action and perceived silence risks reigniting division at a moment when the community is poised to move forward.

More broadly, the data reinforces a central dynamic seen across recent Pulse Checks: communication quality remains the primary driver of alumni sentiment. Positive perceptions increase when alumni feel informed and understand the rationale behind decisions; negative sentiment concentrates quickly when communication is perceived as unclear, delayed, or incomplete. Many alumni are less focused on any single stance or decision and more focused on whether the College communicates that decision with transparency, timeliness, and coherence.

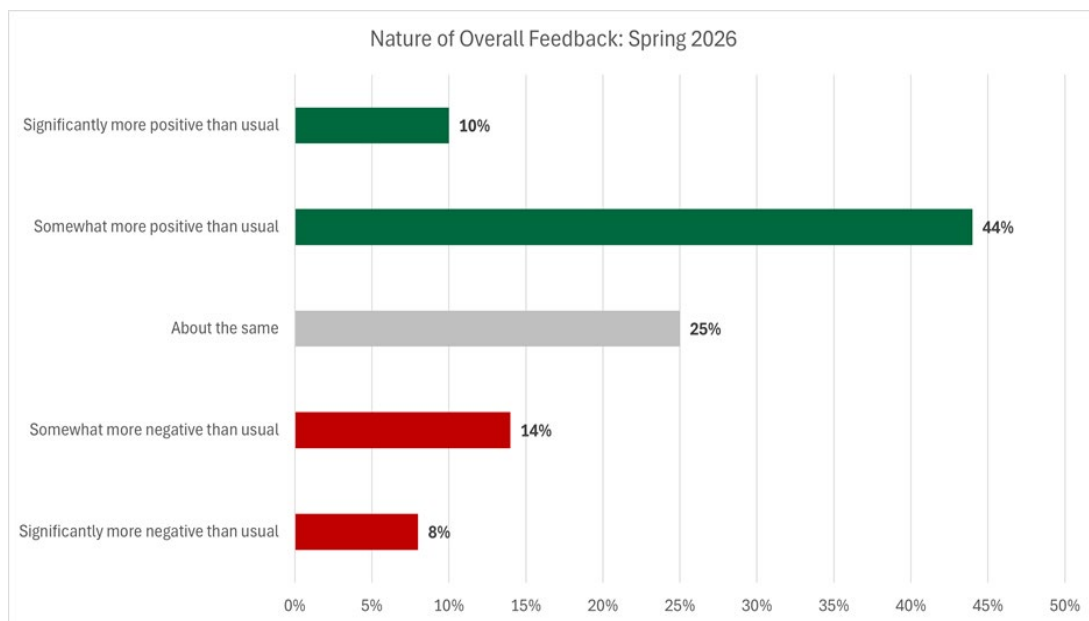
Importantly, the survey also highlights a critical and encouraging insight: alumni remain deeply loyal to Dartmouth and optimistic about its future. Even among critical voices, there is strong underlying commitment to the institution's success. Positive campus developments continue to resonate and help counterbalance areas of concern. This suggests that the foundation for stronger alumni alignment is firmly in place.

In sum, alumni sentiment is improving but remains contingent. The College is seen as having navigated a difficult period successfully, creating an opportunity to reinforce trust and reset momentum. Realizing that opportunity will depend on demonstrating lessons learned, particularly in moments of emerging controversy, through clear, decisive action and effective communication.

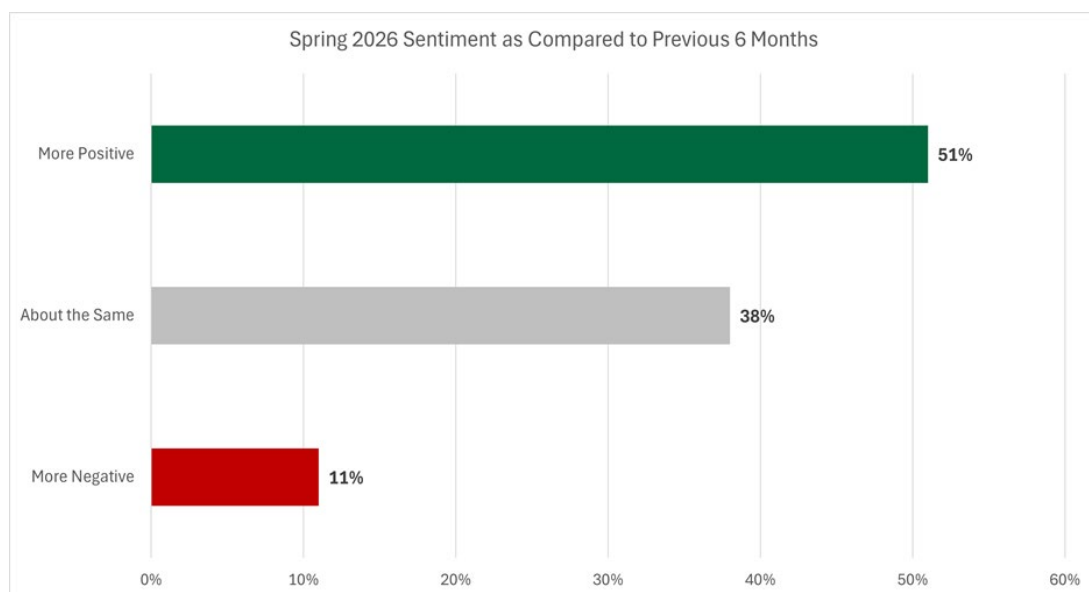
This report summarizes findings from the Spring 2026 Pulse Check and provides longitudinal comparisons to previous surveys beginning in Spring 2021.

Overall Sentiment

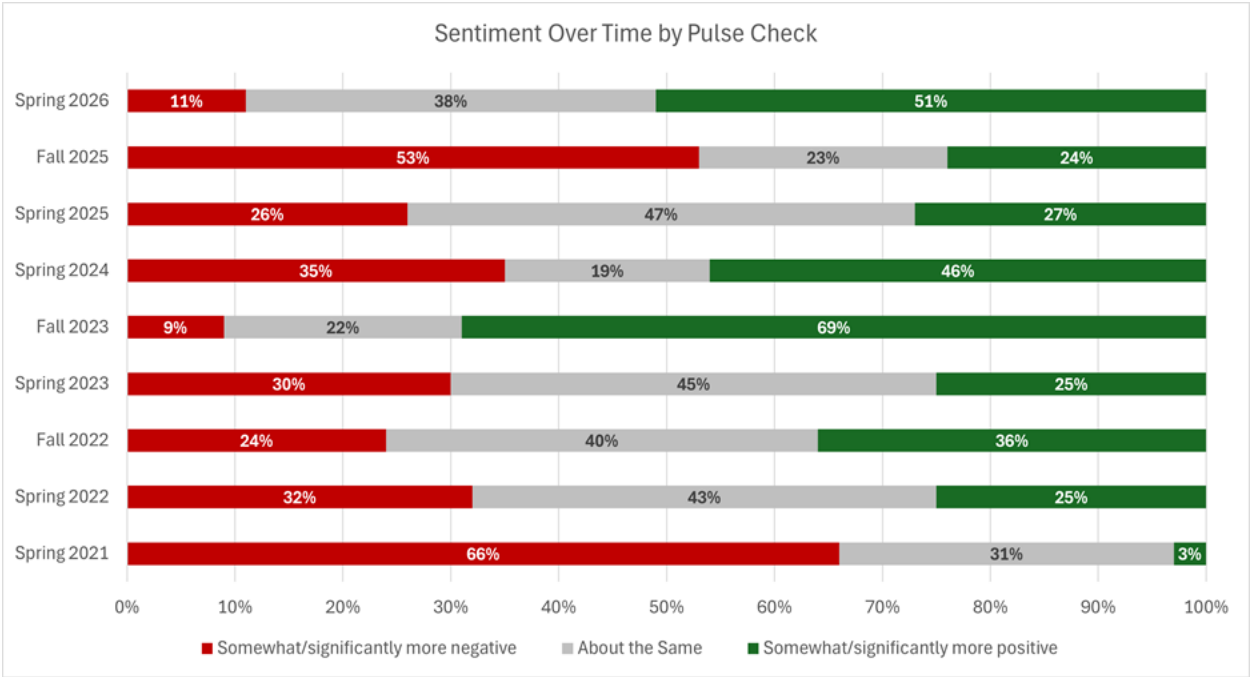
About **91%** of respondents had heard some feedback, down slightly from 93% in the Fall 2025 survey. When asked about the nature of the feedback received, we see a strong shift to the positive from last Fall. Those who said the feedback was significantly or somewhat more positive than usual was 54% (vs. 24% in the Fall and 32% in Spring 25) while those reporting somewhat or significantly more negative was 22% (vs 53% in the Fall 25 and 26% in Spring 25).



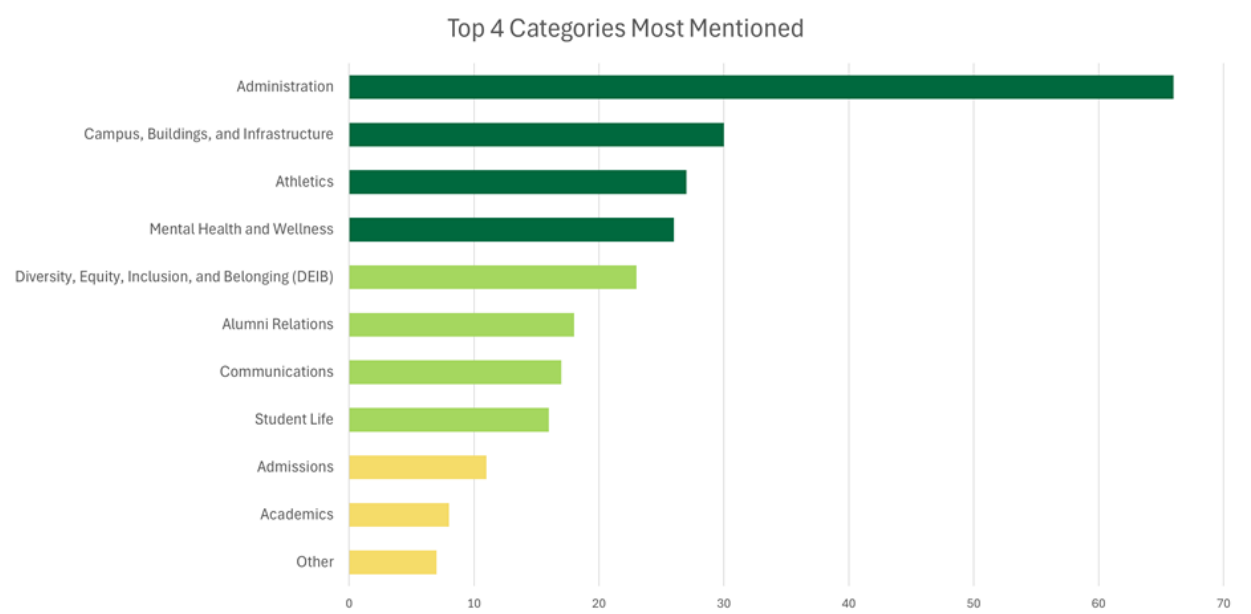
When respondents were asked to consider the feedback they had received in Spring 2026 compared specifically to the previous 6 months, a similar positive leaning remained.



Overall, this sentiment shows a turn from the last 3 reports, where sentiment continually shifted more negative, and shows the beginning of stability and some optimism.



As with most recent surveys, the most dominant category of feedback mentioned was the “Administration” bucket. Unlike more recent surveys, however, it only represented about 27% of all comments, a 10-15 point decline in mix and a shift of interest to other topics.



Key Themes

1. Institutional Leadership: Strengthening Support, still Polarizing

Overall Sentiment: Mixed, Trending Slightly Positive

President Beilock's leadership – her actions, decisions, initiatives, and philosophies – remain the single most dominant topic in alumni feedback. Many alumni feel she is leading pragmatically during a volatile political moment, while others believe her visibility and “neutrality” strategy feel overly performative or insufficiently values-driven.

There is consistent reference to Trump's “Compact” from the Fall and the need to protect higher education, with wide ranging feedback on how President Beilock handled the situation. Many alumni, more than in the past year, praise her for keeping Dartmouth out of the political crosshairs and protecting the College. Others lay criticism at her door, believing that Dartmouth has not stood with other higher education institutions in a moment that demands vocal solidarity.

Alumni are sharply divided on Dartmouth's strategy of “neutrality” (i.e., institutional restraint) when facing federal pressure.

What alumni are saying:

- Supporters see steadiness, pragmatism, and national leadership
- Critics remain concerned about neutrality and lack of moral clarity

Representative Quotes:

- *“We have a very strong new Dartmouth leader... so far, so good.”*
- *“Dartmouth has stayed out of the Administration's crosshairs—which has been favorably received.”*
- *“Sian Beilock is doing a great job. Dartmouth is standing out as a strong institution that plays to its strengths to educate students to contribute positively and fairly to an ever-changing world.”*
- *“The College is hiding behind ‘Institutional Restraint’ when it should instead be taking a public stance.”*
- *“It feels like institutional restraint has become institutional silence.”*
- *“Glad the Compact was rejected – but the response wasn't strong or timely enough.”*

Regarding institutional restraint, it is not a simple approval/disapproval issue. Alumni desire an acknowledgment that institutional restraint is **an intentional strategy**, not avoidance. Further, they want **clearer articulation of decision logic**, especially when the College chooses restraint over public statements, and a better understanding of **where Dartmouth draws the line**.

Update, post-Survey close:

- As background, the College has adopted a policy of institutional restraint to foster a community and support an environment where faculty, students, and staff engage complex issues, including controversial issues of the day. The institution should not presume that these are “settled” issues or that there is a consensus within the community. An institutional endorsement of a specific position or belief may deter community members who do not share that belief from expressing their skepticism or opposition, thereby chilling speech, shutting down debate, and curtailing the development of the best ideas and outcomes. To provide space for diverse viewpoints to be raised and fully considered, Dartmouth believes it should exercise general restraint in issuing institutional statements.
- [Freedom of Expression at Dartmouth](#)
- [Dartmouth’s policy on Institutional Restraint: Statements from Dartmouth and its academic units](#)

2. Black Family Visual Arts Center & Leon Black Naming

Overall Sentiment: Strongly Negative, Emotionally Charged

There have been growing calls – most notably by Women of Dartmouth and a change.org petition that just began to circulate at the close of this Pulse Check – for the Board of Trustees and the College rename the Black Family Visual Arts Center, as evidence has come to light revealing a strong association between Leon Black ’72 and Jeffrey Epstein. This issue generated some of the **most urgent and unequivocally negative feedback** in the survey. Of those alumni who commented, they view continued inaction as damaging to Dartmouth’s reputation and values.

Representative Quotes

- *“Disgusting look for the College.”*
- *“This is pretty black and white—do it now.”*
- *“Delayed inaction isn’t going to make it go away.”*
- *“I am hearing from quite a few alums that they want his name removed.”*

This is widely perceived as a **test of moral leadership** rather than a procedural issue. Continued silence risks amplifying frustration unless the Board and College leadership provide greater clarity around the process under consideration.

Update, post-Survey close:

- The Dartmouth Board of Trustees, during their scheduled [meeting in mid-April](#), discussed, among other topics, the topic of naming across campus. The Board established a trustee ad hoc committee focused on the issue. Building on its April

meeting, the Board, [during their recent June meeting](#), approved the creation and charter of the ad hoc committee: the Naming Policy Committee. Its mandate is to review and make recommendations to the Board regarding the university's policies and principles for honorary naming and re-naming consistent with the Board's fiduciary responsibility. Any future decisions on honorary naming will be made in alignment with the output of this ad hoc committee. The ad hoc committee will take a comprehensive approach to ensure Dartmouth has clear, consistent standards, processes, and decision-making principles to guide the university on all naming matters.

3. Communications: Improved Volume, Continued Frustration with Clarity

Overall Sentiment: Improving, but fragile

Many alumni recognize and appreciate an increase in communication frequency. However, repeated comments continue to point to a **lack of direct answers on tough topics**.

Common frustration cycle cited by alumni:

- Alumni ask direct questions → receive vague or delayed responses
- Sense that decision-making is slow or unclear

Representative Quotes

- *"It is always better to over-communicate with alumni."*
- *"Receiving answers that don't answer the question feels more dismissive than silence."*
- *"Communications have changed and seem to avoid topics of regular interest."*

Update, post-Survey close:

- Alumni have the option of joining an interest list to receive relevant communications and updates about the institutional priorities that matter most to them: [Five Areas of Focus: Interest Lists](#).
- The newly instituted "From the Green" series, referred to as an Alumni Town Hall, [began last November](#) and is now a virtual termly tradition. The most recent alumni town hall was held on Friday, June 5: [Fostering Resilience and Building Community | Dartmouth Alumni & Families](#).

4. Student Life: Continues to be a topic of engagement for Alumni

Overall Sentiment: Very mixed, from concerned (on wellbeing) to strongly positive (on housing, investment, and athletics)

On the concerned side, alumni remain worried about whether Dartmouth students are **thriving**, particularly around:

- Mental health
- Food access
- Affordability
- Inclusivity for women and BIPOC students

Representative Quotes

- *“Students are struggling and far from THRIVING.”*
- *“Is mental health getting worse or better?”*
- *“Concerns about food access, pricing, and dining structure.”*

Update, post-Survey close:

- Mental Health: [Dartmouth Marks Milestone in Promoting Mental Health](#)
- Food Access: Dartmouth Dining took over the role of funding and stocking the Dartmouth Food Pantry during the 2023-24 academic year as one of a set of next steps recommended by its food insecurity task force. The task force was an initiative that brought together a group of campus leaders to address issues of food insecurity and to improve awareness of available resources. The initiative reflects a broader goal of making dining on campus more inclusive and accessible. The Dartmouth Food Pantry, located in Kellogg Hall, is available 24/7, year-round, to students with an active Dartmouth ID. Graduate and professional students seeking additional emergency assistance are encouraged to contact their school’s student affairs office.
[Food Resource Update for the Dartmouth Community | Community & Campus Life](#)
- Affordability: [Investing in Access and Affordability | Dartmouth](#)
- Inclusivity for women and BIPOC students: Dartmouth continues to provide a wide range of BIPOC student resources available across the College - NAP, OPAL, ISE, and Tucker, among other offices - encompassing academic advising, mental health support, and community building. [Dartmouth Bolsters Inclusion Efforts | Dartmouth](#)

On the positive side, alumni cite new housing projects, athletics and campus investments as tangible progress. These moments often **counterbalance political frustration**.

Representative Quotes

- *“The new housing affirms the President’s promise.”*
- *“Hockey win was terrific!”*
- *“People love seeing where work is getting done—and done well.”*

Concrete wins help stabilize sentiment, especially when paired with storytelling that connects them to institutional values.

Recommendations

The College has weathered the storm of a particularly difficult period of transition after the investiture of a new college president, a tumultuous season of campus protests and arrests, and a challenging new federal administration. Despite the transition and turmoil, Dartmouth now seems better positioned to move forward.

Albeit a small sample size (88 respondents), the weight of these alumni sentiment suggests there is a group within the community holding its collective breath and hoping the worst is behind it. After a period of uncertainty regarding where the College might stand on critical public issues, this is a moment which presents a meaningful opportunity to reaffirm steady institutional values and institutional confidence.

Based on the feedback and input received during the previous quarter, the Alumni Liaison Committee encourages Dartmouth leadership to act on these three priorities:

1. Communicate with Greater Speed and Precision

Communication has been a consistent issue of concern in recent Pulse Checks. Previously, the ALC has suggested webinars, town halls, and video updates. We continue to believe these approaches are valuable, while also encouraging greater speed, clarity, and consistency in the College's communications with the community.

2. Move Quickly to Provide Transparency regarding the Black Family Visual Arts Center

The naming of the Black Family Visual Arts Center was the single most cited controversy in the alumni responses for this Pulse Check. This suggests a potential flashpoint if not handled soon. We anticipate the issue will continue to intensify, and we encourage the College to make a clear values-based decision and communicate proactively before it evolves into a broader public issue that undermines the rebuilding trust reflected over the last six months.

3. Share More Information About Student Life

The Dartmouth Community is hungry for positive information about student life on campus and the success of its students and student-athletes. Through posts, email communiques, Town Halls, and other means, finding ways to share what is happening on campus would be extremely well-received by alumni. The College can and should remain proactive in addressing issues within its control, helping to balance alumni frustration around broader external pressures (e.g., federal policies affecting higher education) that are inherently more reactive and less within Dartmouth's influence.

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, May/Spring 2025, and March, 2026. 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?

