**Wesleyan University**

# Student & Faculty Mid-Semester Reflections, Fall 2020

## October 2020

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# Background

- October 2020, Institutional Research surveyed all faculty & students.
- Student survey:
  - Students' academic experiences (advising, scheduling, learning experience etc.)
  - Students' social and residential experiences
  - Students' sense of physical and mental health
- Faculty survey:
  - Faculty's general experience (teaching, research, physical and mental health)
  - Classroom/technology issues for in-person courses (especially hybrid ones)*
  - Resource and pedagogical issues for all courses*
- Gave space for both faculty & students to report on specific "issues."

*This information was sent directly to the relevant offices so staff can offer support.

# Survey Participation
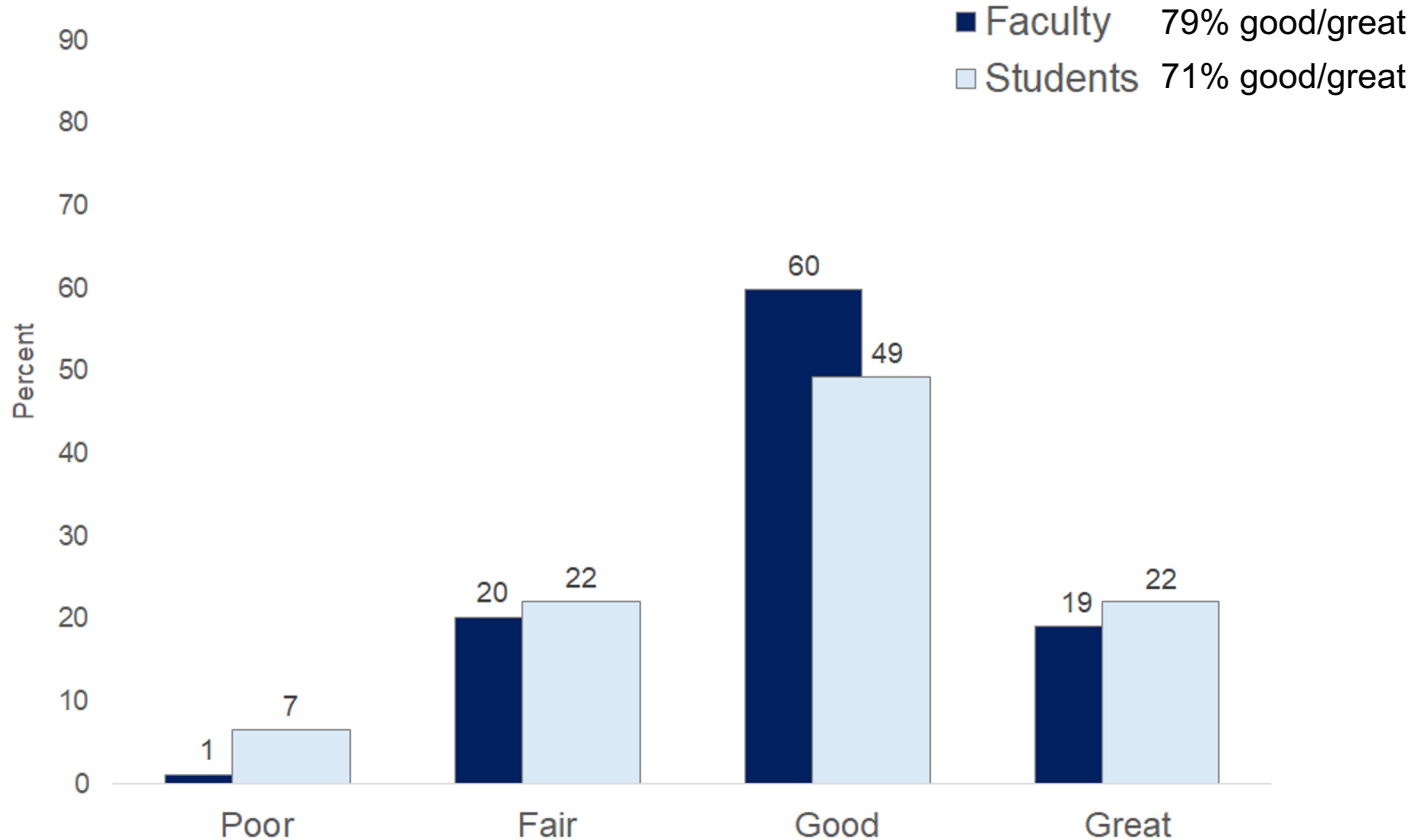
- 48% of students (1,414/2,959)
  - Women (50%) > men (45%)
  - Students of color (44%), especially URM (40%) < White (50%) and international (49%)
  - Frosh > other classes (ascending: 58%, 48%, 42%, 42%; graduate students = 52%)
  - Remote = On campus (49% and 48%, respectively)
- 63% of faculty (290/464)
  - Women (71%) > men (56%)
  - Visiting faculty (44%) and staff who teach (47%) faculty < grid faculty (68%)
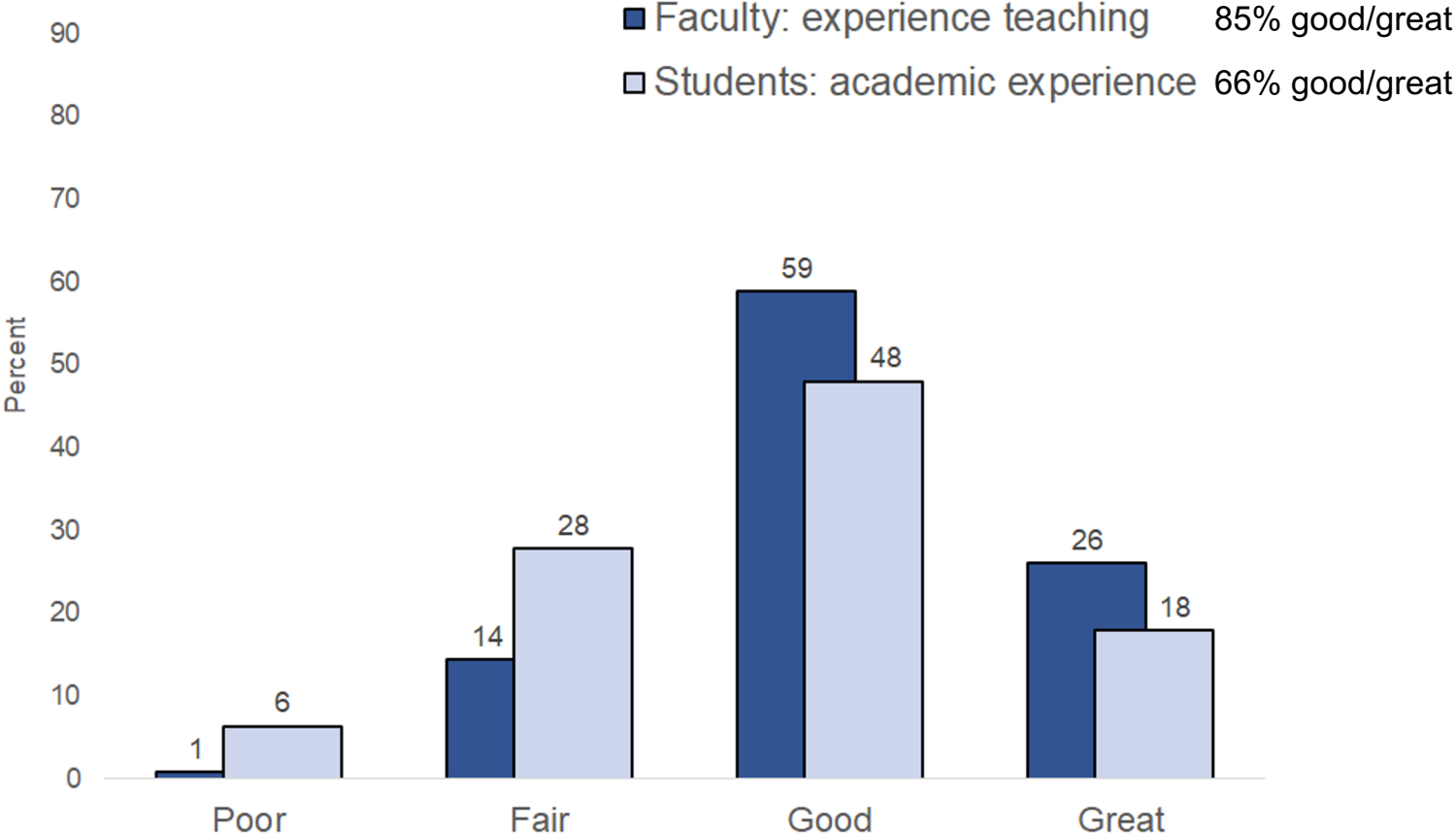
# Some Key Findings

- Faculty report having a slightly better experience than students
- Academic experience is mixed, with online < on campus
- Student concerns
  - Lack of social interactions & loneliness
  - Workload, stress, and access to wellness resources
  - Academic experience: remote < on campus
- Faculty concerns
  - Ability to conduct research
  - Ability to balance all responsibilities
  - Women more likely than men to report facing these challenges
- Faculty & students report feeling safe on campus and in class, and view testing and compliance with safety protocols as going well

# Overview

# Overall Experience
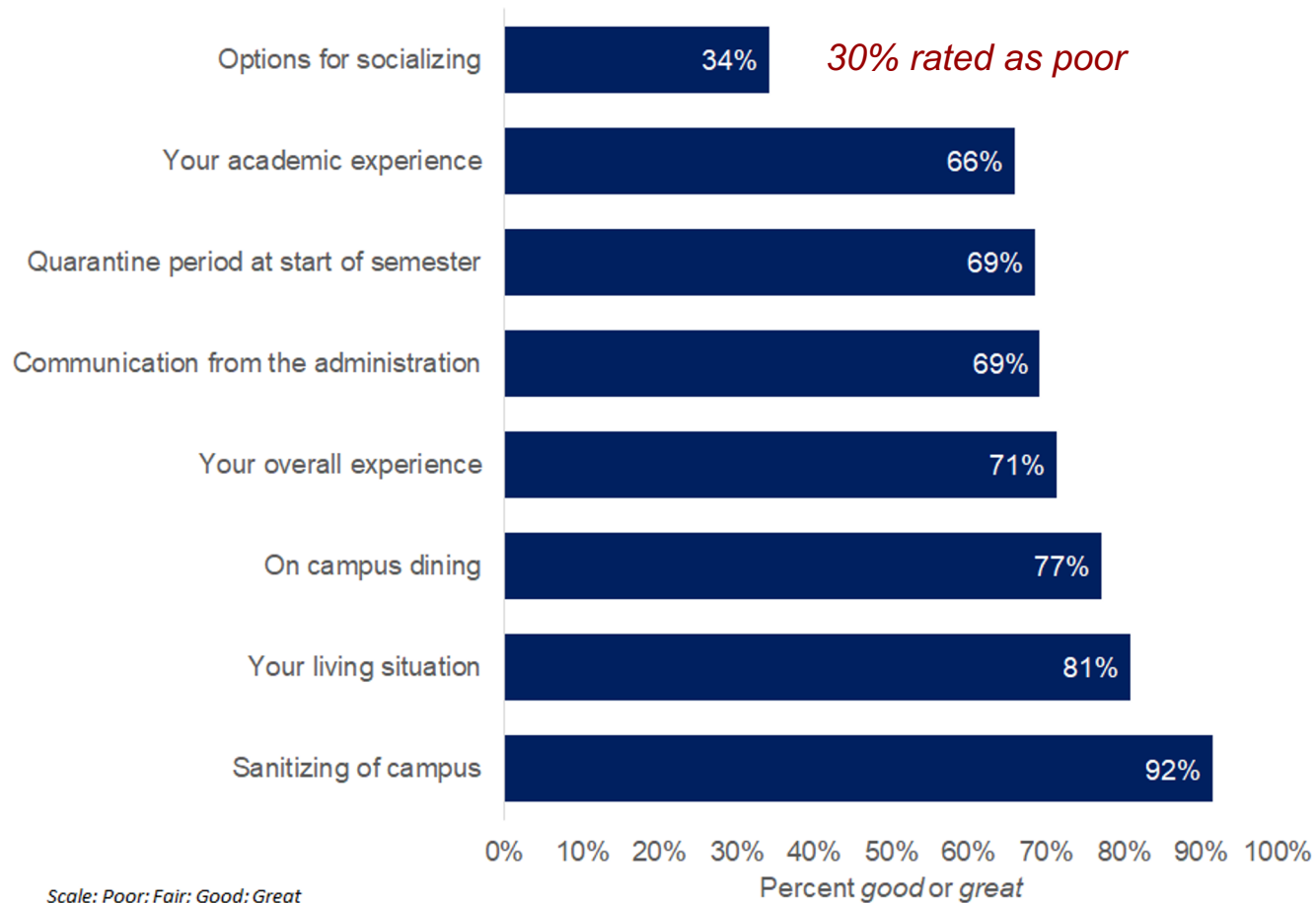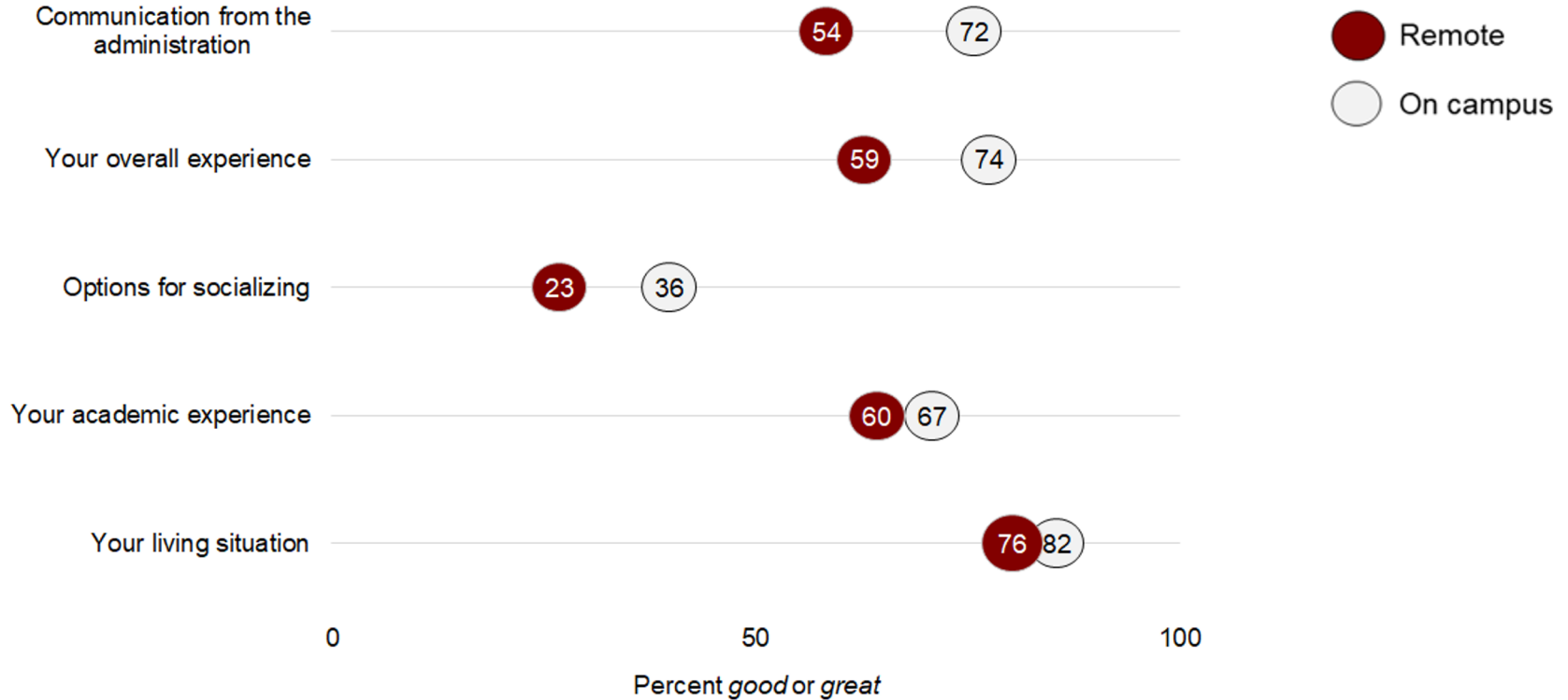
# Academic Experience



Legend:
- Faculty: experience teaching — 85% good/great
- Students: academic experience — 66% good/great

Data by category (Faculty, Students):
- Poor: 1, 6
- Fair: 14, 28
- Good: 59, 48
- Great: 26, 18

# Students

# Students' Overall Impressions



| Category | Percent good or great |
|---|---|
| Options for socializing | 34% — *30% rated as poor* |
| Your academic experience | 66% |
| Quarantine period at start of semester | 69% |
| Communication from the administration | 69% |
| Your overall experience | 71% |
| On campus dining | 77% |
| Your living situation | 81% |
| Sanitizing of campus | 92% |

*Scale: Poor; Fair; Good; Great*

Percent *good* or *great*
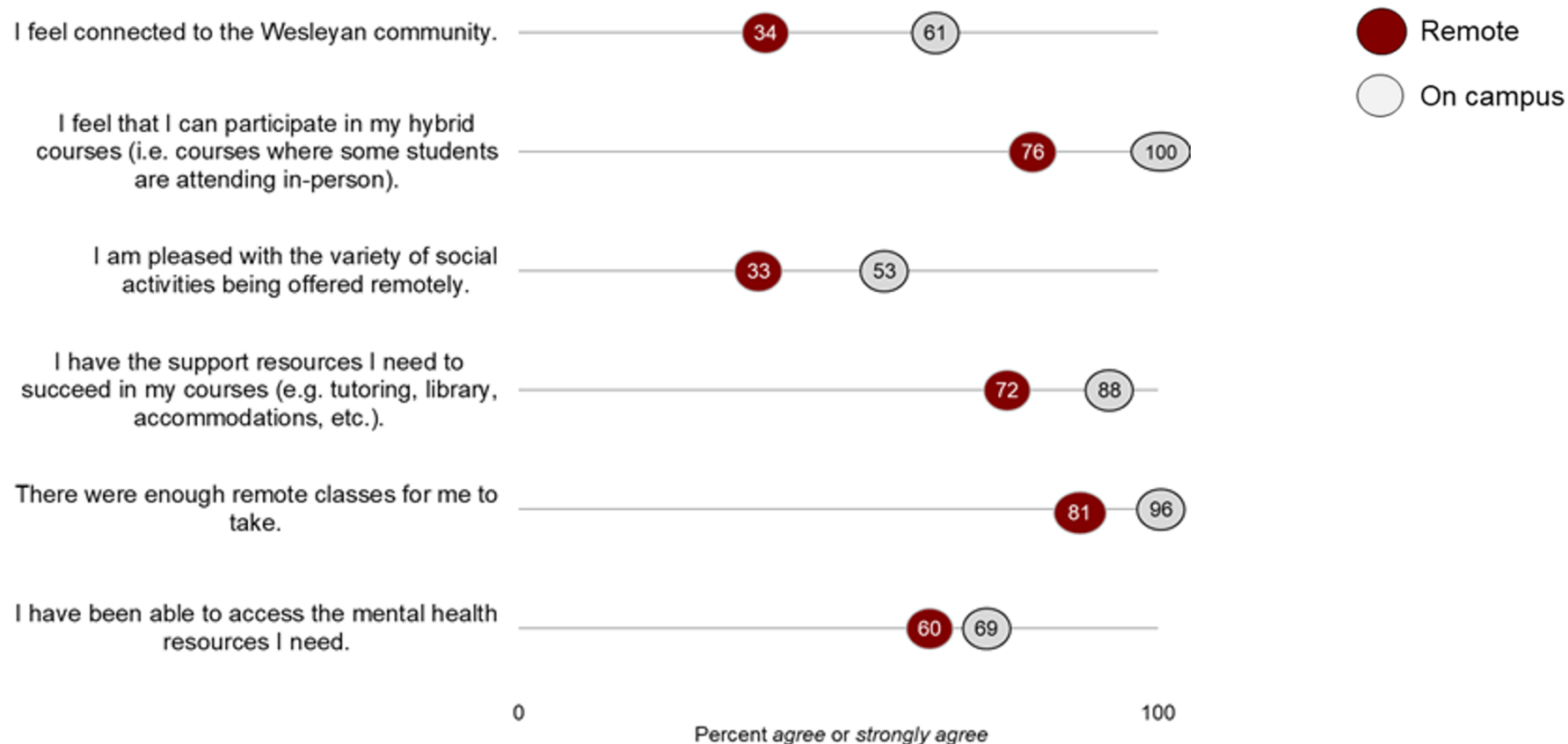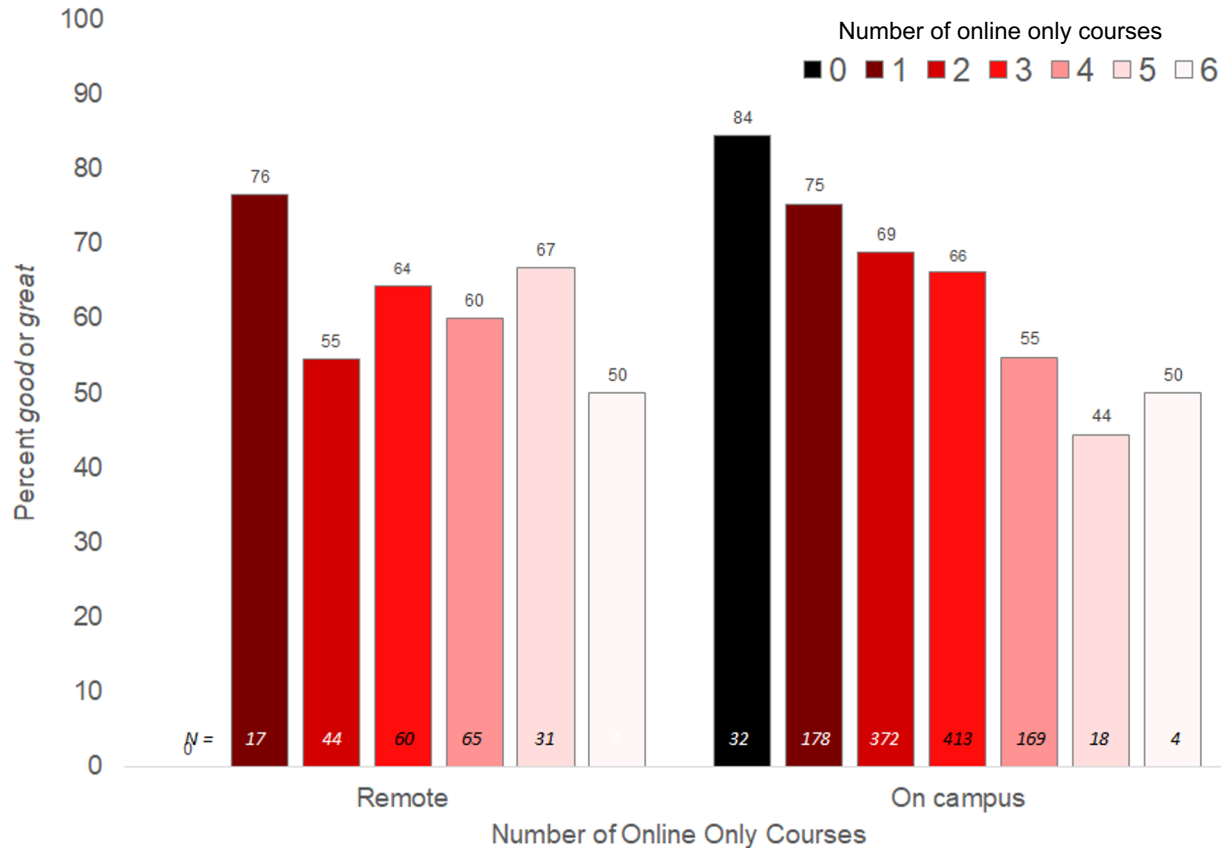
# Overall Impressions: Remote Versus On Campus

# Remote Versus On Campus: Differences

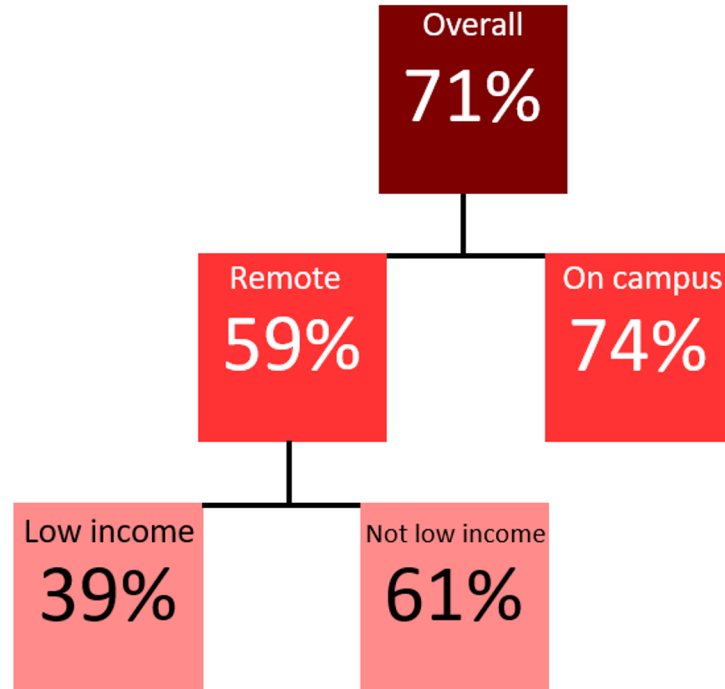# Online Only Courses and Overall Academic Experience

# Student Characteristics & Overall Experience

Predict overall experience from:

- class year
- race/ethnicity
- sex
- remote/on campus
- first generation college (Y/N)
- low income status
- division of major(s)
- double major status
- athlete (Y/N)
- fall athlete (Y/N)

**Overall experience this fall: % *good* or *great***

| Overall |
|---------|
| 71% |

| Remote | On campus |
|--------|-----------|
| 59% | 74% |

| Low income | Not low income |
|------------|----------------|
| 39% | 61% |

# Strengths

# Strength: Safety & Social Distancing

| | % agree or strongly agree | Number responding |
|---|---|---|
| The COVID-19 testing procedure is well organized. | 99 | 1,049 |
| I am able to get tested as needed. | 98 | 1,049 |
| Faculty are following safety guidelines (e.g., social distancing, mask wearing). | 98 | 1,149 |
| I understand what social distancing and mask wearing are required in my current living situation. | 98 | 1,052 |
| I feel safe when attending my in-person courses. | 97 | 898 |
| I feel safe in my living situation. | 97 | 1,047 |
| Staff are following safety guidelines (e.g., social distancing, mask wearing). | 96 | 1,161 |
| I understand the social distancing and mask wearing requirements when I am engaged in social activities on campus. | 95 | 1,054 |
| I have the safety supplies I need (e.g. masks, hand sanitizer, cleaning solutions). | 95 | 1,051 |
| I feel safe when socializing outside of my living situation. | 93 | 1,045 |
| I am comfortable being on campus. | 91 | 1,178 |
| Other students are following safety guidelines (e.g., social distancing, mask wearing). | 86 | 1,174 |
| I know what the university expects me to do if I am not feeling well. | 84 | 1,047 |
| I have found ways to exercise. | 75 | 1,255 |
| I know what the university will expect me to do if I receive a positive COVID-19 test result. | 74 | 1,048 |

# Strength: Safety & Social Distancing

- Students report feeling safe on campus
- Faculty report feeling safe on campus
  - Just a few questioning how often classrooms are being cleaned
- A sense of safety comes with demands:
  - Many students have request that we ease some of our safety protocols
  - Some have suggested that such an easing was promised them
  - Questions about housing COVID capacity rules

# Concerns

# General: academic, social, wellness



Chart showing "Percent agree or strongly agree":

- I regret enrolling in classes this semester. — 11
- I regret coming back to campus. — 13
- There were enough in-person classes for me to take. — 44
- I am pleased with the variety of social activities being offered remotely. — 50
- I feel connected to the Wesleyan community. — 57
- I am able to manage my stress right now. — 61
- I have been able to access the mental health resources I need. — 67

# General: academic, social, wellness

Academic challenges
- On-campus students: lack of in-person classes
- On campus students: need for clarity about hybrid courses
- Remote students: need for clarity about asynchronous options
- On-campus & remote students: perceived increased academic workload

Social challenges
- On-campus & remote students: few opportunities to socialize
- First-years: struggle to meet others

Mental health challenges
- Many students: feel isolated and lonely
- Some students: don't know how to access mental health resources or are reluctant to access
- Faculty: don't always know how to direct students to resources

19

# Remote Students: variety of concerns

- More disconnected and less satisfied than on-campus students
- Time zone differences: difficult for international students to:
  - Attend live classes
  - Pay attention in those live classes (too sleepy)
  - Meet assignment deadlines in those classes
  - Engage in Wesleyan's remote social activities
  - Maintain a healthy sleep schedule

*Requests for **clearly stated asynchronous** options during advanced registration & drop/add*

- Mental health resources are [not always accessible] to remote students.
- Hybrid courses - can sometimes be hard to hear/participate, although we heard about this less in the comments than we expected!

# On campus students: physical spaces

| | Reporting *insufficient* access | | Total number of responses |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Number | Percent | |
| Olin | 164 | 19% | 867 |
| SciLi | 120 | 14% | 870 |
| Music practice room spaces | 109 | 47% | 231 |
| STEM laboratories | 82 | 24% | 343 |
| Dance studio spaces | 70 | 55% | 127 |
| Art studio spaces | 63 | 38% | 164 |
| Theater spaces | 50 | 43% | 117 |

*Note: While the quantitative data suggests students were relative happy with their access to Olin, a number of students requests more seating in Olin in the qualitative comments.*

# Plans for Next Semester

*If next semester resembles this semester will you study on campus?*

|  | Percent of students | | |
|---|---|---|---|
|  | *Overall* | Remote | On campus |
| Yes | *60* | 34 | 65 |
| Maybe | *31* | 46 | 28 |
| No | *9* | 20 | 7 |

- Remote students: *less* likely to say yes (34%) then those on campus (65%)
- Women: *more* likely to say yes than (65%) than men (55%)
- Seniors, first-years: *more* likely to say yes (64 & 63%) than sophomores (53%)
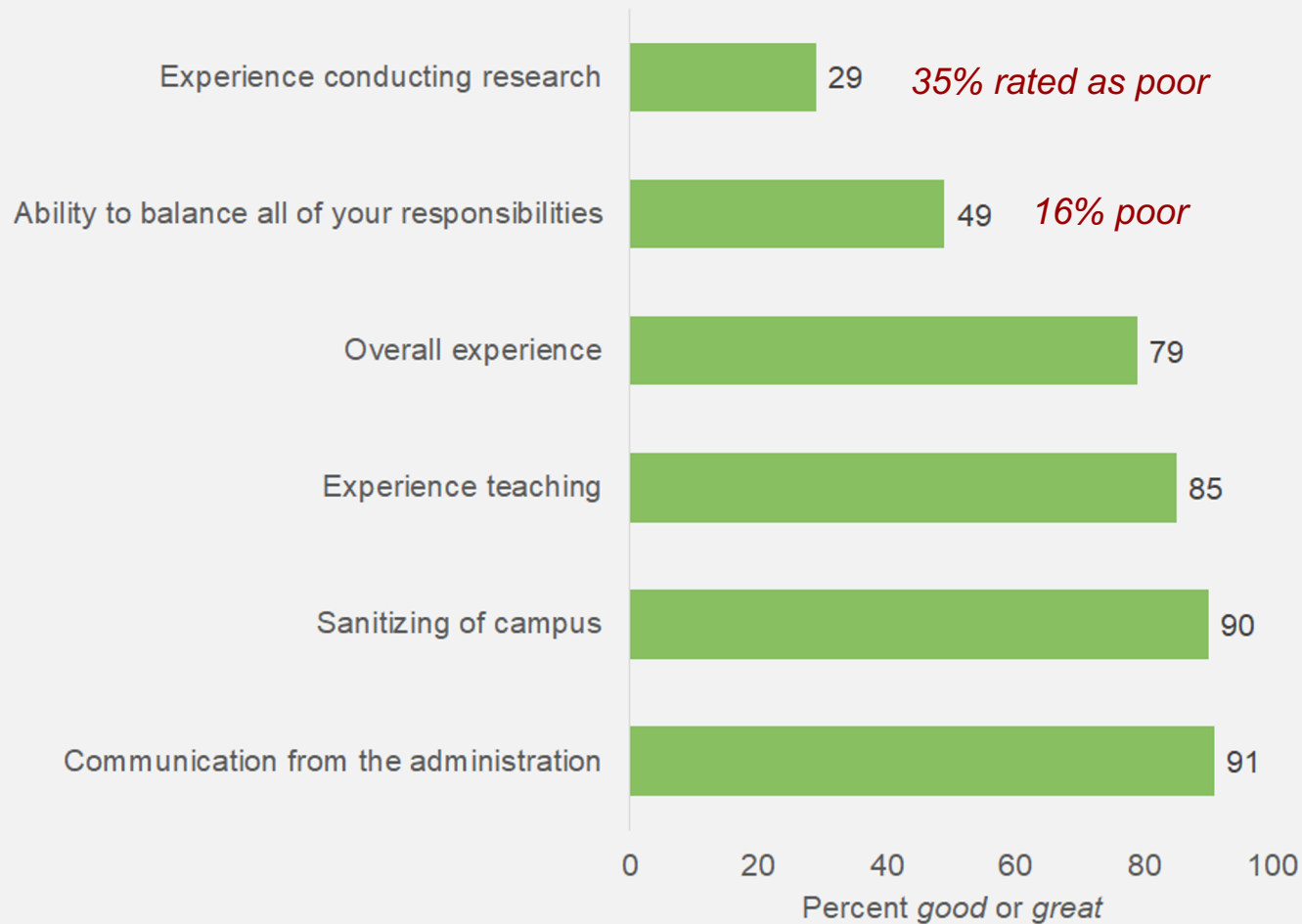
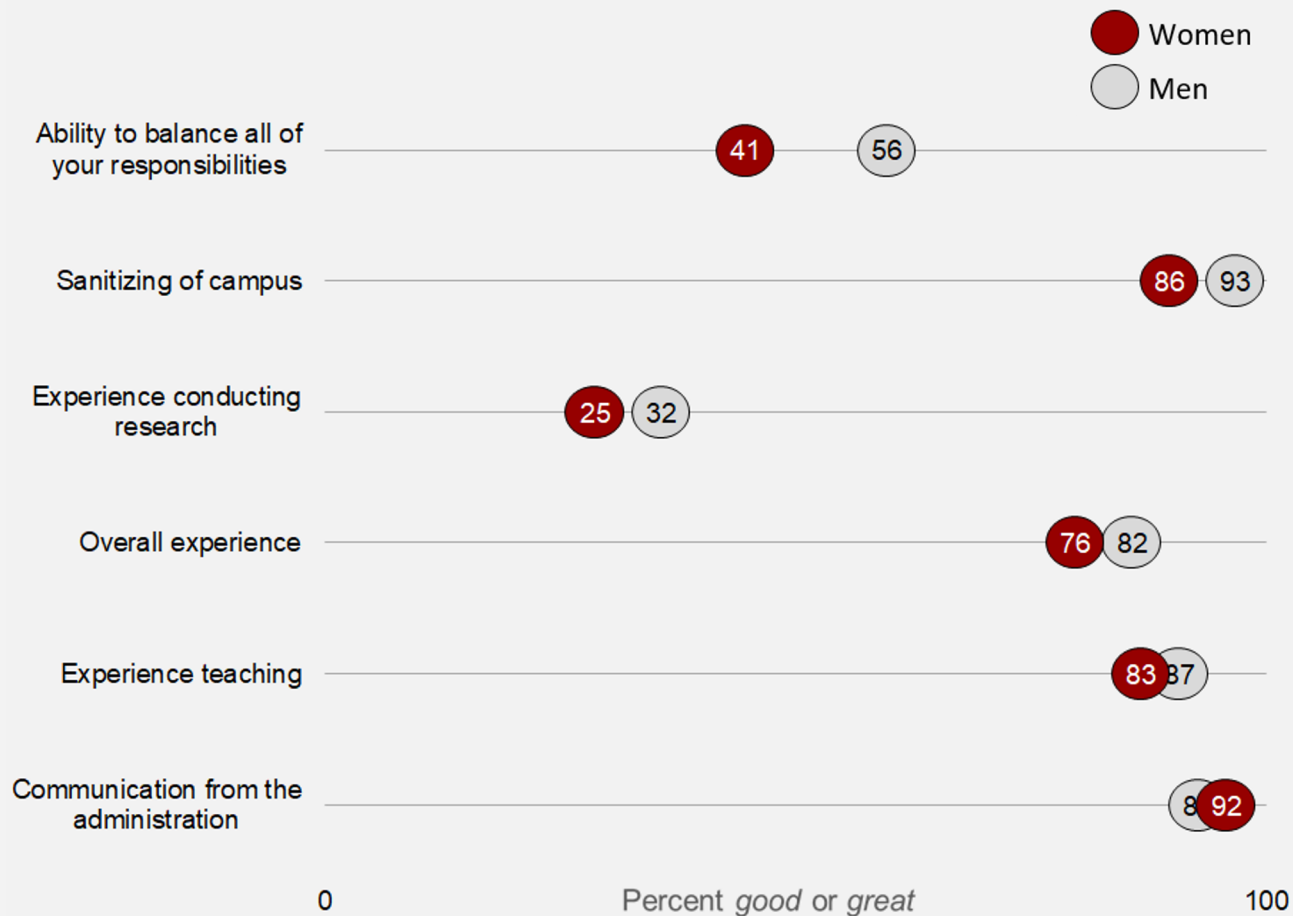# Faculty

# Concern: Tenure & Promotion

- Challenges balancing responsibilities (read: child care)
- Research has taken a back seat
  - Reengineering courses for remote/social distanced environment has taken priority
  - Students require more attention and support, especially in different time zones
  - Limitations accessing library resources, lab occupancy limits
- Effect of COVID is particularly difficult for women

*I know I have had basically **no time for research** this semester. I am implementing several of the "best practices" we have learned regarding online teaching -- preparing asynchronous videos, lots of community building, checking in with students, in-class group work -- but I am **spending twice as much time prepping** my courses, and I'm worried **I'll just have to re-prep my classes** when I later teach them in-person again.*
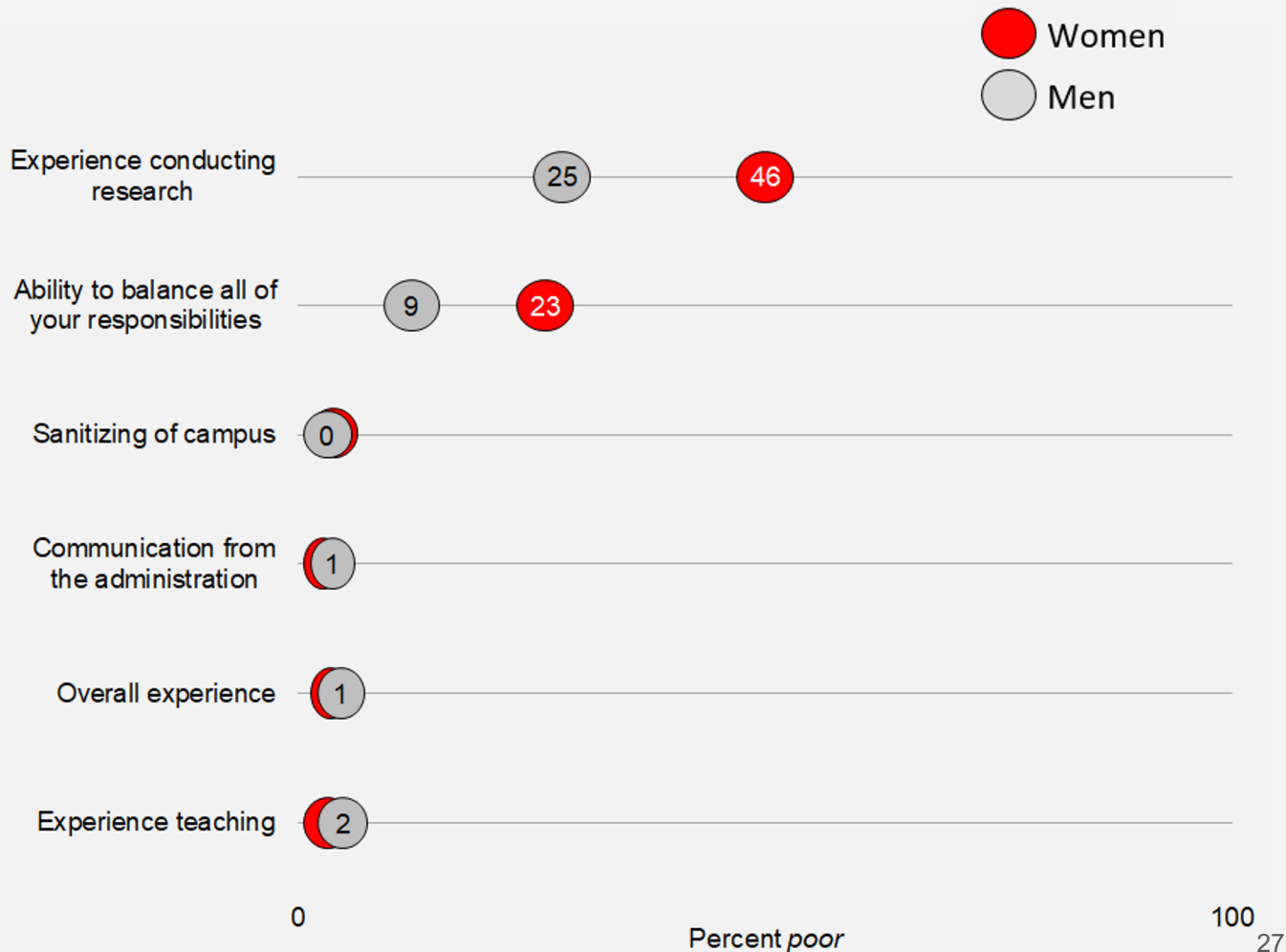
# Faculty: Overall Impressions



Experience conducting research — 29 — *35% rated as poor*

Ability to balance all of your responsibilities — 49 — *16% poor*

Overall experience — 79

Experience teaching — 85

Sanitizing of campus — 90

Communication from the administration — 91

Percent *good* or *great*

# Faculty: Overall Impressions by Sex



Legend: Women (dark red), Men (grey)

| Category | Women | Men |
|---|---|---|
| Ability to balance all of your responsibilities | 41 | 56 |
| Sanitizing of campus | 86 | 93 |
| Experience conducting research | 25 | 32 |
| Overall experience | 76 | 82 |
| Experience teaching | 83 | 87 |
| Communication from the administration | 92 | 8 |

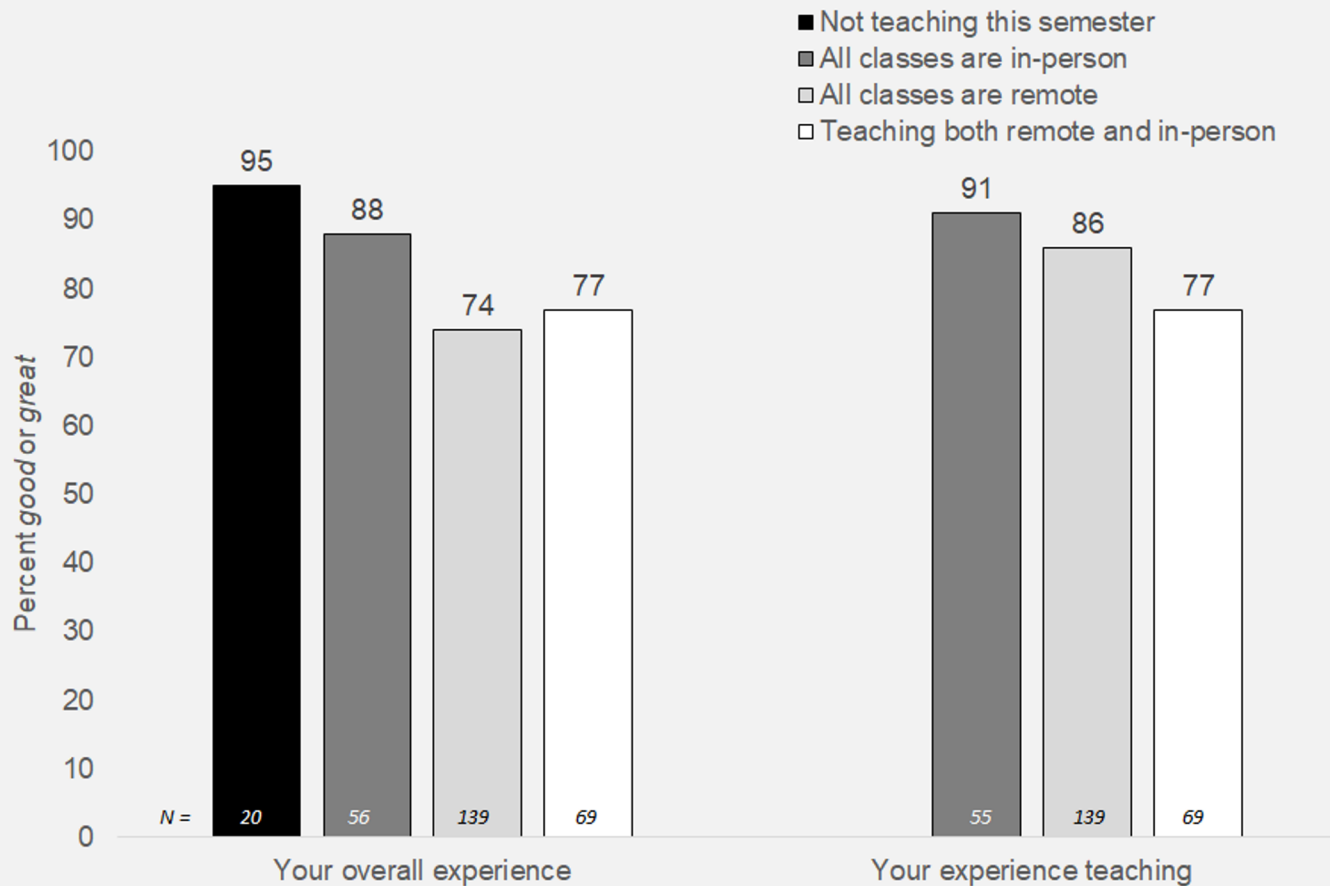Percent *good* or *great* (0 to 100)

Faculty: *Poor* Experiences by Sex

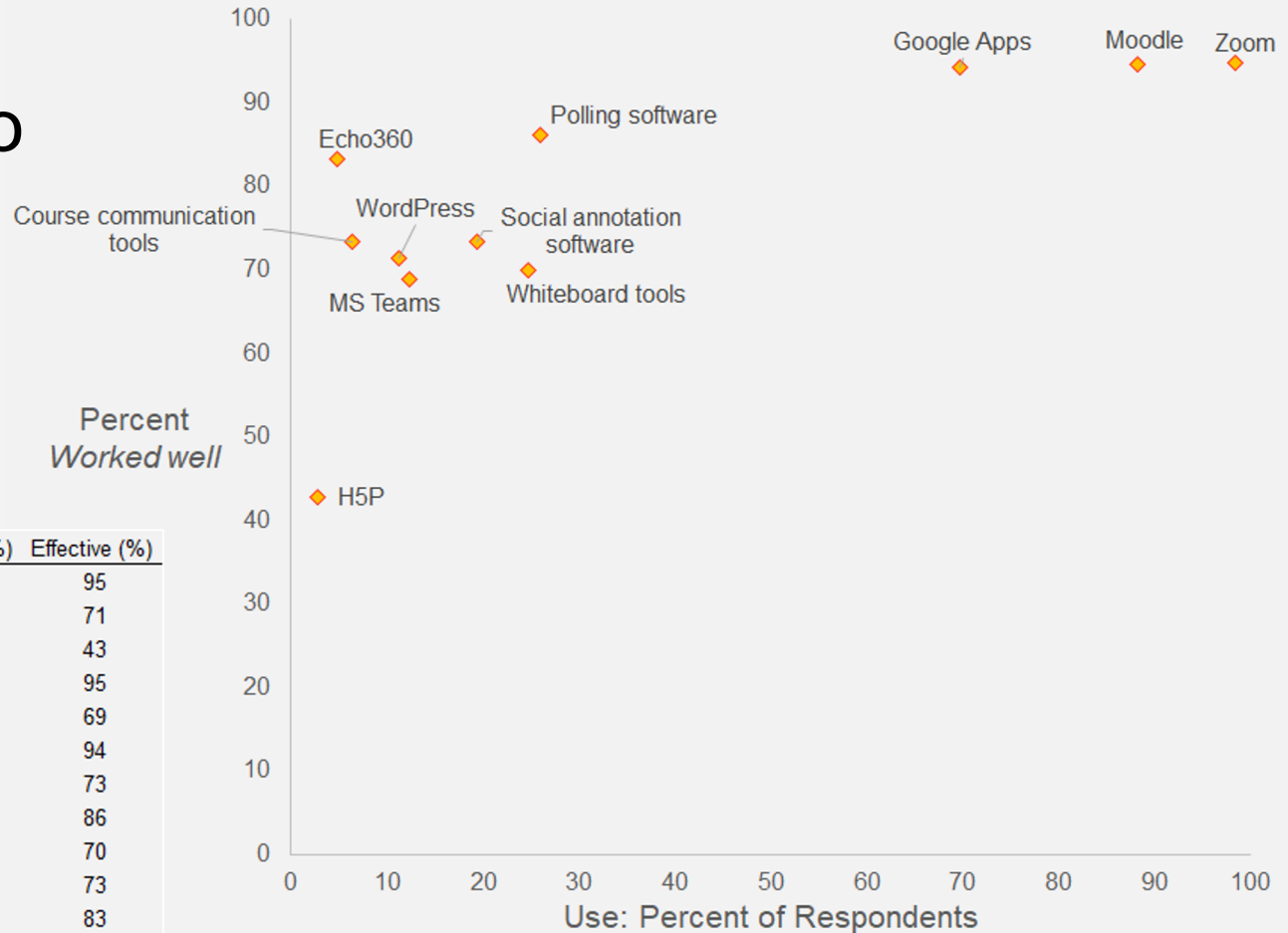# Faculty: Overall Impressions by Teaching Modality

# Teaching and Technology*

- Moodle, Zoom and Google Drive most popular options
- Less popular options have also seen success
- Challenges
  - Zoom fatigue
  - Administering exams remotely
  - Sporadic issues with audio/video/recording in certain "COVID" classrooms
  - Finding rooms that works for pedagogical needs
  - Internet quality/speed affects Zoom interactions
    - Especially for remote students and students in wood frames and specific dorms
    - Hard to share video

*Results on pedagogical strategies sent to CPI/ITS to direct January pedagogical workshops.

# Faculty: Technology to Engage Students



Percent *Worked well*

| | Use (%) | Effective (%) |
|---|---|---|
| Moodle | 88 | 95 |
| WordPress | 11 | 71 |
| H5P | 3 | 43 |
| Zoom | 98 | 95 |
| MS Teams | 12 | 69 |
| Google Apps | 70 | 94 |
| Social annotation software | 19 | 73 |
| Polling software | 26 | 86 |
| Whiteboard tools | 25 | 70 |
| Course communication tools | 6 | 73 |
| Echo360 | 5 | 83 |

Use: Percent of Respondents

# Next Steps?

**Continue to...**

- Explore options for **socializing**, especially as the weather turns
- Support **mental health & wellness offerings** despite unprecedented demand and disruptions to delivery (e.g., remote)
- Communicate
  - how **external regulations** (e.g., State, CDC) shape Wesleyan's rules and procedures
  - the availability of **study spaces** across campus
  - more explicitly how **"hybrid" courses** will be executed
- Find ways to **support faculty research**
- Encourage transparency around expectations & process for **tenure & promotion**
- Promote COVID-friendly work/course loads & mix via **advising relationships**

# Questions & Comments?

# Student Comments

# Lack of in-person courses

Students expressed disappointment in the few in-person courses available.

*I am on campus, paying more tuition than I have in years past, and yet **all of my classes are over ZOOM**, and I do not feel as though these courses are worth my money.*

*I really do miss classes that are only in person. The **online education**, while still incredible, is **not as fulfilling** as in person classes.*

*I have all online classes because I chose my classes based on the subject matter I am interested in, but given how draining online classes are and how difficult it is to pay attention, **I wish I had sacrificed my interests for the more effective class format**. I wish I didn't have to choose between these two things.*

# Sense of increased workload

Students reported feeling like their workload was worse than previous semesters or the same as previous semesters, when this pandemic should dictate otherwise.

*For almost all of my classes I have to **watch hours of lectures before the class meeting** and also have homework on top of this.*

*Profs think that since their class is online, they can assign **double the work and send out assignments and class emails at all times of day.***

*One professor of mine told me that the school has asked professors to give a **greater quantity of smaller assessments throughout the semester** (i.e. one quiz a week, small writing assignments for each class, etc.), as opposed to a smaller quantity of larger assessments (i.e. just three exams, just one midterm and one final, etc.) to keep students more engaged … I have found that this is true across all four of my classes and **I am absolutely drowning in work** because of it.*

# Lack of social activities

Students simply wish there were more opportunities to socialize and are especially worried about what will happen when colder weather comes.

*There is little to no opportunity for **new students** to socialize with others if they have **all online classes**.*

*We have **that whole stage on Foss, but it barely gets used**. There could be back to back events there every weekend and I think that would improve the campus situation a lot.*

*There is no place to socialise when it gets cold, right now everything relies on being able to go outside but soon it will be impossible. And the **COVID restrictions** in common spaces, being so strict, **will make people gather in rooms** since that's where people won't get told off by the RA.*

# Lack of social activities - isolation

Remote course schedules with few options for socializing have led students to feel isolated, fueling concerns for their own mental health.

*I am struggling immensely with mental health due to COVID restrictions. **There are very few ways to meet people after the initial events**. I would appreciate it if the university created more ways to meet people wherever possible.*

*I find myself getting really **lonely and depressed** on the weekends because I spend all my time either studying or just by myself in my room.*

*I know that lots of students, including myself, feel very isolated and lonely on campus. **We spend so much time alone now,** since many classes and extracurriculars are remote.*

# Remote students' - mental health

In their comments, six remote students lamented their inability to access CAPS for teletherapy.

*I rely on Wesleyan's mental health facility for counseling.* **I cannot afford outside counseling**, *and Wesleyan is not offering private online counseling for remote students. As a result, I am not receiving the mental health care I need to be a successful student.*

*As a Wes student, I was able to first receive the therapy I had been desperately needing with easy access and for free, which were my main limitations in receiving it before. As a remote student,* **my inability to use CAPS has proven horrible**. *This is a reason I regret studying at home among very many others.*

# Study Space

24 on-campus students commented about the need for more study space.

*It is **nearly impossible to find space in Olin or Scili to study**, and with **inconsistent internet service in my senior house**, it is difficult to get work done.*

*I love studying in Olin, but I feel that the setup right now is not ideal. There is very **limited seating**, such that all **students are in relatively close proximity**. I think opening more spaces would provide a better studying experience AND a safer one too.*

*Every weekend, especially in Olin, people physically can't study in there because there in **not enough chairs** because the upper levels are all closed off.*

*I really like studying in **empty classrooms** (in Exley or Fisk, for example) and they **have all been locked**. Finding a quiet study space has been difficult.*

# Requests loosen rules

A number of students cited the low COVID rates as grounds for Wesleyan to ease the rules that current limit their ability to socialize.

*You keep telling things will open up slowly but **nothing is changing**. It's been three weeks now without an active case. If you're going to keep everything closed, **don't lie to us**.*

*I believe the university is being **too strict** with socialization with friends. **People being outdoors are being punished way too severely** and it is only making people congregate inside which is just even more unsafe. Outside and distanced should not be ridiculed so hard.*

*As we have received such a low positivity rate, myself as well as other students feel as though the rules should begin to loosen a bit, **as many other NESCACs have done**.*

# Housing Capacity Questions

18 students questioned stated COVID housing capacity rules.

*Why do **singles and doubles** have the same covid capacity when doubles are bigger than singles?*

*My house is a **6 person house**, yet our **"COVID Capacity" is only 5 people**. While we hope PSafe would be lenient if it were just the people who actually live there, if for some reason they ever had to come in, it is still stressful to know that we could potentially get in trouble for a weird mistake in the rule process.*

*In the dorms, each single room is allowed to have 2 people in it, yet in Low Rise, we have 4 single rooms, a kitchen, and a huge living room, and **we cannot have one guest**. In a dorm, all of our occupants would be allowed in just 2 singles.*

# Next Steps?

**Continue to...**

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- Support **mental health and wellness offerings** despite unprecedented demand and disruptions to delivery (e.g., remote)
- Communicate
  - how **external regulations** (e.g., State, CDC) shape Wesleyan's rules and procedures
  - the availability of **study spaces**
- Find ways to support faculty research
- Encourage transparency around the expectations and process for tenure and promotion
- Promote "new normal" course loads & mix via **Advising relationships**
- Encourage a mix of course modalities and clearly define what "hybrid" means