# Case Western Reserve University Student Experience Survey (CWRUSES): Graduate Student Summary

The Case Western Reserve University Student Experience Survey (CWRUSES) was launched in February 2019 to a sample of CWRU undergraduate and graduate students. This was a follow-up to the same survey that was administered in 2016.

A total of 800 students were sampled from the School of Graduate Studies. A breakdown of respondent characteristics according to federally-reported categories from the 2016 and 2019 administrations is provided in Table 1.

Table 1. Response Rate and Characteristics of Graduate Student CWRUSES Samples, 2016 and 2019

|  |  | Year | |
|---|---|---|---|
|  |  | **2016** | **2019** |
|  | Responses | 432 | 286 |
|  | Response rate | 54% | 36% |
| Gender | Women | 56% | 54% |
|  | Men | 44% | 46% |
| Race/Ethnicity | Asian | 4% | 9% |
|  | Black | 7% | 7% |
|  | International | 34% | 37% |
|  | Latinx | 3% | 5% |
|  | Multi-racial | 3% | 3% |
|  | Unknown | 4% | 2% |
|  | White | 46% | 37% |
| Student Degree Level | Doctoral | 45% | 58% |
|  | Masters | 55% | 42% |

Overall, the response rate for the 2019 administration (36%) is well below the 54% achieved during the 2016 administration. In 2019, a greater portion of students from under-represented groups responded, corresponding with a smaller proportion of White students completing the survey. The proportions of men and women were about the same as in 2016, but many more Doctoral-level students completed the 2019 survey than did Masters-level students, which counters the responses from 2016.

The 2019 respondents represented primarily the School of Medicine (35%), followed by the College of Arts and Sciences (30%) and Case School of Engineering (27%). The remaining schools did not have sufficient respondents for their data to be reported by school, which constitutes the second part of this report.

## Overall Satisfaction

The overall satisfaction of graduate students at CWRU was evaluated using four items. Students were asked to rate their overall graduate/professional education, the overall quality of their program, whether they would choose to attend CWRU again, and if they would choose to pursue the same field of study. The individual items and percentages are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Overall Satisfaction Items for Graduate Students: CWRUSES 2016 and 2019
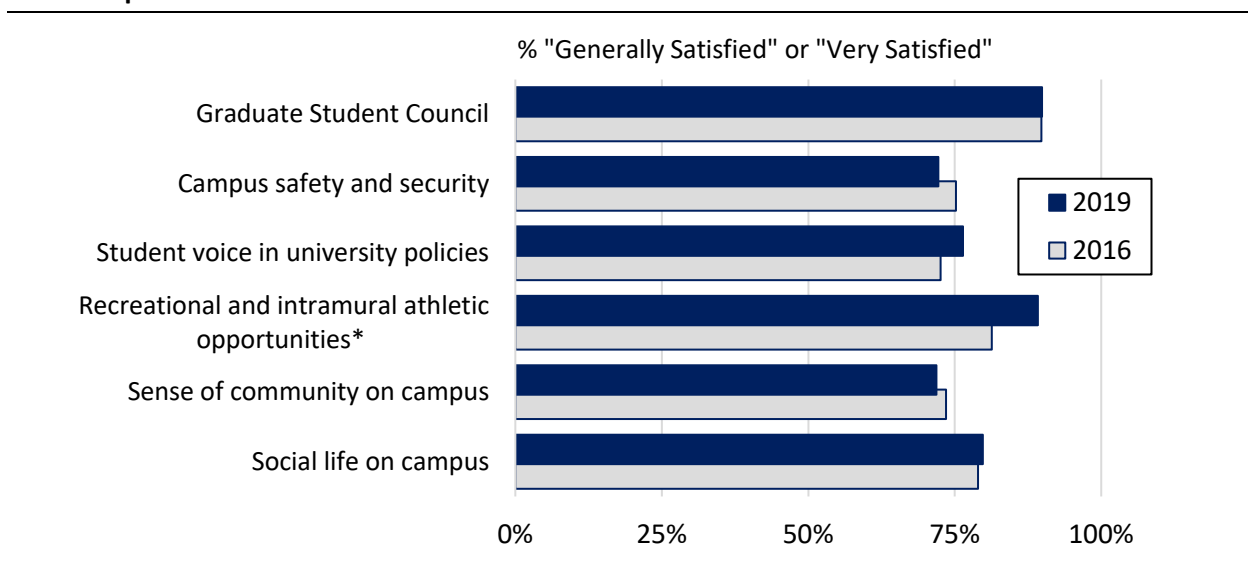
| How satisfied have you been with... | Year | |
|---|---|---|
| | 2016 | 2019 |
| Your overall graduate/professional education? | 85% | 85% |
| The overall quality of your graduate/professional program at CWRU? | 82% | 82% |
| *% "Generally Satisfied" or "Very Satisfied"* | | |
| **If you were to start your graduate/professional career again…** | | |
| Would you choose to attend CWRU again? | 70% | 71% |
| Would you choose the same field of study? | 81% | 82% |
| *% "Probably would" or "Definitely would"* | | |

The 2019 administration saw responses very closely associated to those collected in 2016. The same proportion of students said they were either "Generally Satisfied" or "Very Satisfied" with their graduate/professional education (85%) and with the quality of their graduate/professional program at CWRU (82%) both in 2016 and 2019. About the same proportion of students were likely to say they "Probably would" or "Definitely would" choose to attend CWRU again and that they would choose the same field of study in 2019 than in 2016.

## Satisfaction with the Extracurricular Experience

Six items addressed graduate students' satisfaction with their extracurricular experience, which relates to their broad experience as members of the campus community. These items are presented in Figure 1.

**Figure 1. To what extent are you satisfied with the quality of the following aspects of your graduate school experience?**



A much greater proportion of graduate students are satisfied with the recreational and intramural athletic opportunities now than they were in 2016, and the difference between means is significant. A larger proportion of students is also satisfied with the student voice in university policies compared with three years ago. There was little to no change in the percentage of students satisfied with Graduate Student Council and social life on campus, while the proportion of students satisfied with campus safety and security and with sense of community on campus has fallen a few percentage points from 2016.

## Satisfaction with Campus Offices and Services

Students were also asked about their satisfaction with various offices and services on campus, and the results are provided in Table 3.

Table 3. Graduates' Satisfaction with Campus Offices and Services: CWRUSES 2016 and 2019

| **To what extent are you satisfied with the following offices and services available on campus?** | Year | |
|---|---|---|
| *% "Generally Satisfied" or "Very Satisfied"* | **2016** | **2019** |
| Access Services | 86% | 90% |
| Athletic Facilities** | 84% | 92% |
| Bursar's Office | 89% | 93% |
| Campus shuttle/bus service | 76% | 75% |
| Career Center | 86% | 85% |
| Center for Women | 96% | 89% |
| Center for Civic Engagement and Learning (CCEL) | 93% | 92% |
| Classroom facilities | 86% | 84% |
| Computer facilities and resources | 85% | 86% |
| Computer services and support | 87% | 89% |
| Dining Services | 80% | 73% |
| Disability Resources | 89% | 88% |
| Educational Services for Students | 90% | 91% |
| Financial Aid Office | 85% | 89% |
| Housing Office | 75% | 73% |
| International Affairs (e.g., International Student Services, Study Abroad, etc.) | 91% | 90% |
| Laboratory facilities and resources | 88% | 83% |
| LGBT Center | 89% | 95% |
| Library facilities and resources* | 91% | 95% |
| Office of Multicultural Affairs | 90% | 92% |
| Registrar's Office | 90% | 94% |
| Residence Life Office | 85% | 93% |
| School of Graduate Studies* | 88% | 91% |
| Student Activities and Leadership Office | 90% | 91% |
| Student Financial Services | 87% | 91% |
| TA Training (UNIV 400) | 71% | 60% |
| Thwing Center* | 90% | 96% |
| Tinkham Veale University Center | 93% | 95% |
| The Off-Campus Housing Listing Service (Aloha) | 70% | 70% |
| University Bookstore | 84% | 83% |
| University Counseling Services[+] | 84% | 88% |
| University Health Services* | 89% | |
| Web-based registration (SIS Self-Service) | 86% | 87% |
| Writing Resource Center* | 91% | 94% |

[+]Offices were combined into University Health and Counseling Services
* Item means significantly different at $p<.05$, **$p<.01$

The biggest gains in satisfaction were found for the Residence Life Office (8%) and for athletic facilities (8%) over the past three years, but only the gain for athletic facilities was significant. A greater proportion of students are satisfied with many offices and services now than they had been in 2016. A markedly smaller proportion of satisfied students was found for TA Training (UNIV 400), dropping by 11%, and for dining services, which saw a 7% drop since 2016, but neither was statistically significant. University Health and Counseling Services were previously separate entities that combined since 2016, so the data for 2019 reflects University Health and Counseling Services as it currently exists.

## Campus Climate

Campus climate was addressed using several sections of the CWRUSES instrument. The first, exploring students' comfort, opportunities, perspectives, and interactions with others, are provided in Table 4.

Table 4. Graduate Student Campus Climate: CWRUSES 2016 and 2019

| | Year | |
|---|---|---|
| **To what extent do you agree with the following statements?** | **2016** | **2019** |
| CWRU is a comfortable place for me as a student | 81% | 82% |
| Instructors treat students fairly regardless of their gender/gender identity | 86% | 83% |
| Instructors treat students fairly regardless of their racial, cultural, or ethnic backgrounds | 80% | 81% |
| Instructors treat students fairly regardless of their sexual orientation | 83% | 85% |
| My experience at CWRU prepares me to work in a culturally diverse environment | 78% | 78% |
| I have ample opportunities to meet people of different racial, cultural, or ethnic backgrounds | 76% | 80% |
| CWRU helps students understand the detrimental effects of discrimination | 64% | 64% |
| I see the value of having students from different racial, cultural, or ethnic backgrounds in classes | 93% | 91% |
| I see the value of having students of different genders in classes | 93% | 91% |
| I see the value of having instructors of different genders at CWRU | 93% | 88% |
| I see the value of having instructors of different racial, cultural, or ethnic backgrounds at CWRU | 91% | 91% |
| Faculty members make efforts to assist students whose native language is not English | 54% | 57% |
| Staff members make efforts to assist students whose native language is not English | 50% | 55% |
| Faculty members make efforts to assist students with learning disabilities | 49% | 57% |
| I know how to seek help if I am discriminated against | 57% | 63% |
| *% "Agree" or "Strongly Agree"* | | |

Compared to 2016, a much greater proportion of graduate students at CWRU know how to seek help if they are discriminated against, believe faculty members make efforts to assist students with learning disabilities, and think staff members make efforts to assist students whose native language is not English. Most other items suggest little change in campus climate overall, but the data do show a more pronounced decrease in the proportion of students who see the value of having instructors of different genders.

Holistically, CWRU is an environment where most students feel comfortable and believe they are treated fairly regardless of their gender, gender identity, racial, cultural or ethnic background, and sexual orientation. More than 90% of students see the value of having students from diverse

backgrounds in classes. There is still room for growth in how CWRU helps students understand the detrimental effects of discrimination and how to seek help if they are discriminated against, along with how faculty and staff can make efforts to assist students whose native language is not English or who may have learning disabilities.

The other section on campus climate asks students about discrimination they have experienced. Table 5 provides the proportion of students who have been discriminated against based on certain characteristics.
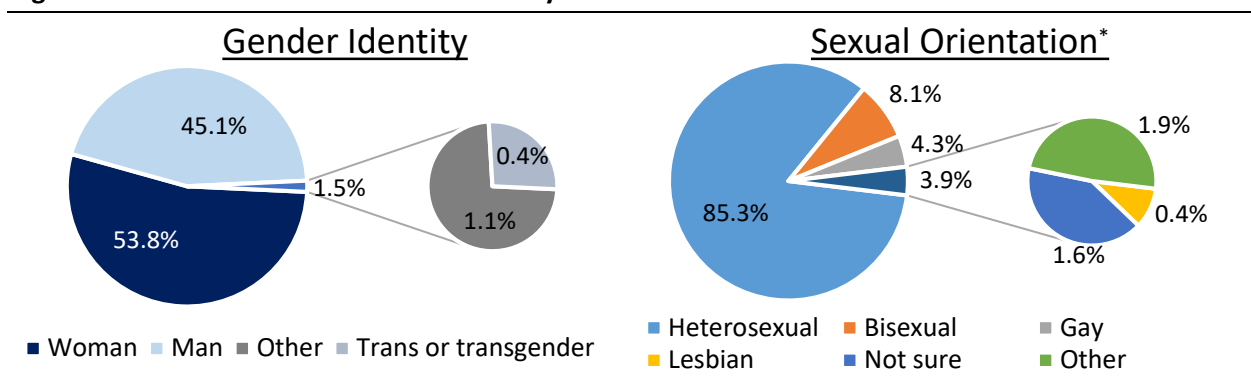
Table 5. Discrimination Felt by Graduate Students: CWRUSES 2016 and 2019

| | Year | |
|---|---|---|
| **I have been discriminated against based on my…** | **2016** | **2019** |
| Racial, cultural, or ethnic background | 14% | 14% |
| Gender | 4% | 11% |
| Sexual orientation | 1% | 1% |
| Religious Affiliation | 5% | 2% |
| Socioeconomic status | 3% | 6% |
| Age | 3% | 3% |
| Disability | 1% | 2% |
| Other | 7% | 5% |

The greatest feelings of discrimination of graduate students stems from their racial, cultural, or ethnic background. A greater proportion of students have identified gender, socioeconomic status, and disability as bases for discrimination in 2019 compared with 2016, while the percentage of students who identify discrimination based on religious affiliation has gone down. Discrimination based on other reasons includes students' accent or fluency in English, political affiliation, weight, and non-traditional academic career.

While the proportion of students who identify gender-based discrimination increased, the percentage identifying discrimination based on sexual orientation has stayed the same since 2016. This has coincided with a small increase in students who self-identify with a gender identity outside the traditional binary. Figure 2 provides a breakdown of 2019 respondents' self-reported gender identity and sexual orientation.

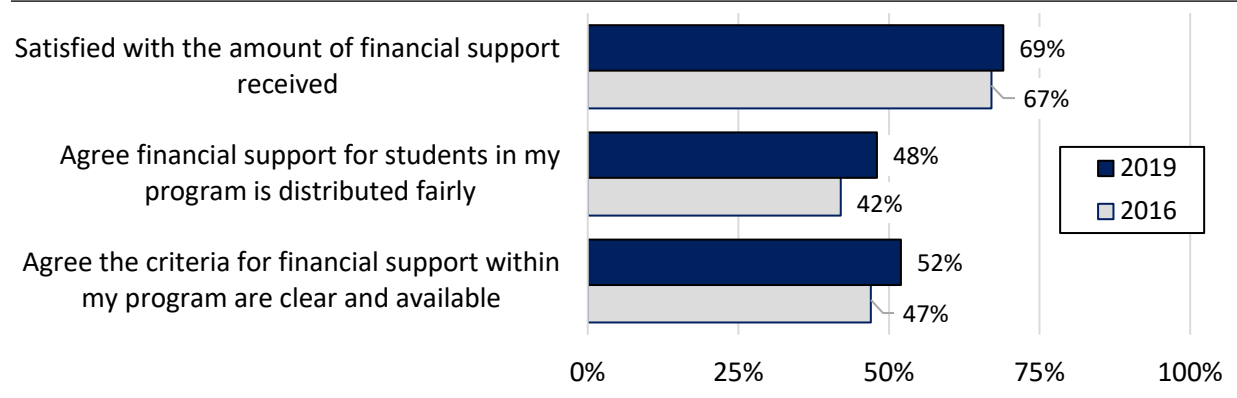**Figure 2. Graduate Students' Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation**



*Respondents were able to identify as more than 1, so percentages sum to more than 100%*

## Financial Support

Several questions asked students about the financial support they have received for their graduate education. The results are provided in Figure 3.

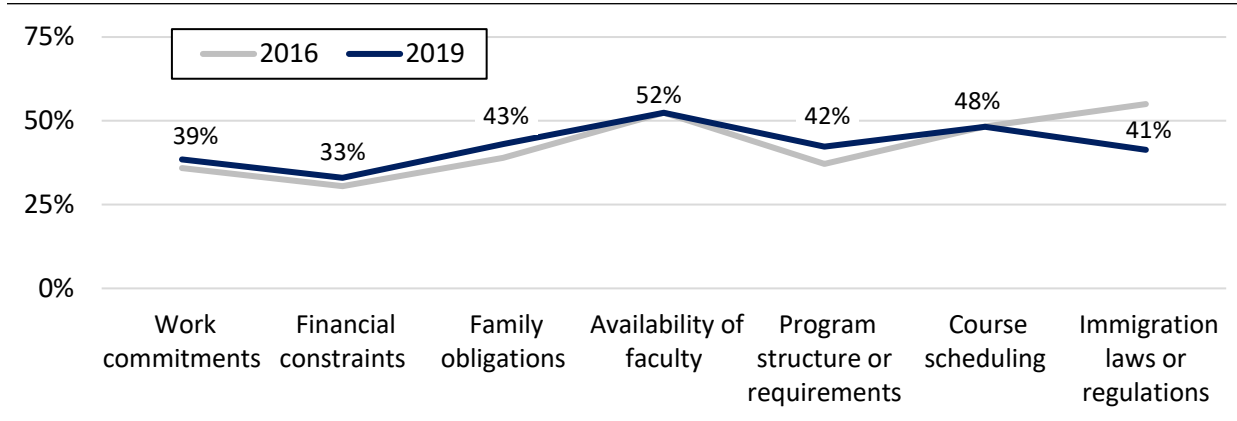**Figure 3. Financial Support Items: CWRUSES 2016 and 2019**



Responses from 2019 suggest slightly more students are satisfied with the amount of financial support they have received. A greater proportion of students in 2019 were likely to at least agree that the financial support for students in their program is distributed fairly and that the criteria for eligibility for financial support within their program are clear and available.

## Barriers to Academic Progress

The final section assessed graduate students' barriers to academic progress. These results are presented in Figure 4.

**Figure 4. Graduate Students' Barriers to Academic Progress: CWRUSES 2016 and 2019**



The greatest proportion of graduate students have identified availability of faculty (52%) and course scheduling (48%) as barriers to their academic progress. Both of these were identified as barriers by the same percentage of students in 2016. Immigration laws or regulations has decreased dramatically since 2016, moving from impacting the greatest number of students to impacting a percentage toward the middle. Graduate students in 2019 were more likely to identify work commitments, financial constraints, family obligations, and program structure or requirements as barriers than they were in 2016.
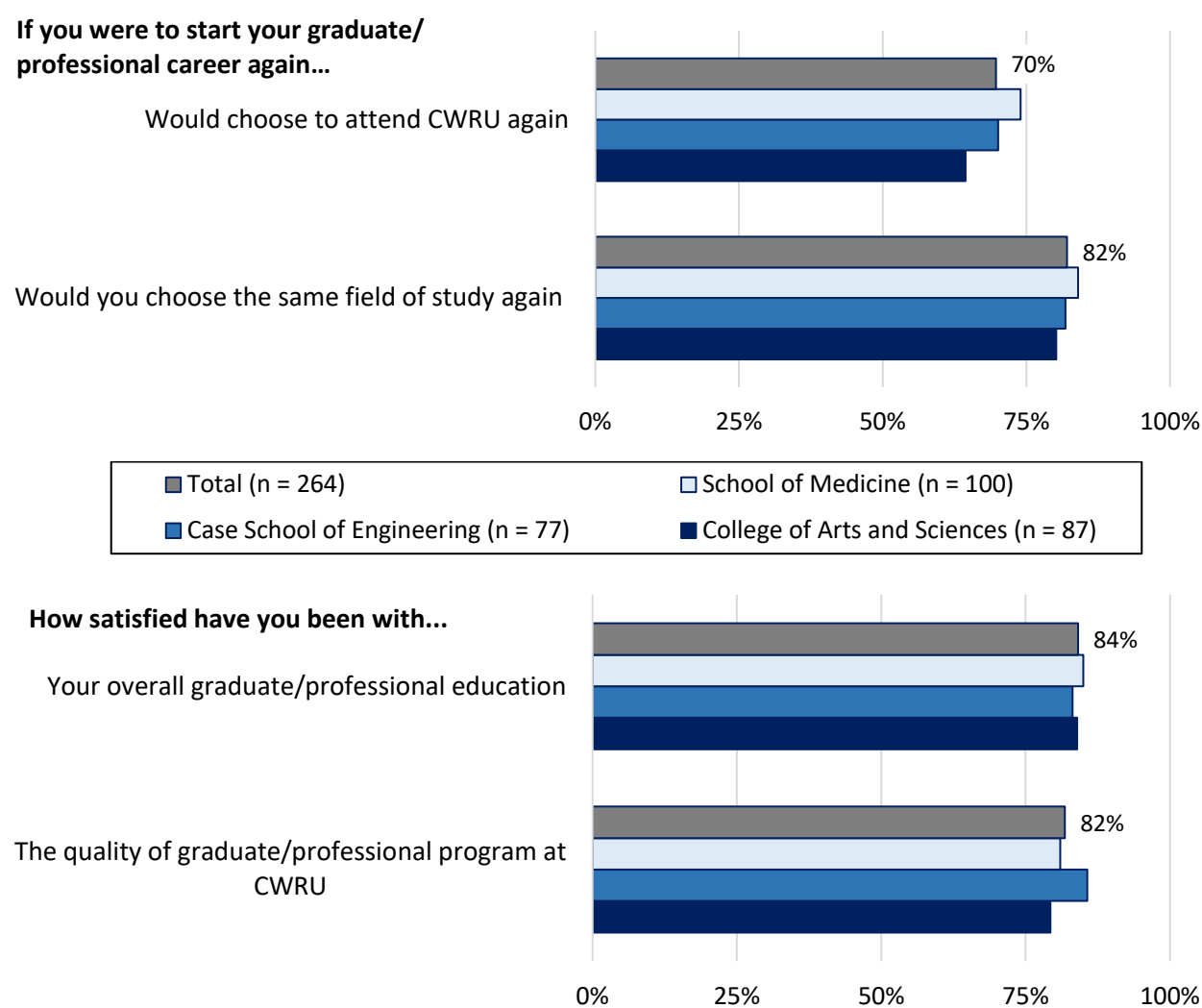
## Results by School

Data from the 2019 administration were further explored as respondents were grouped by program school. Due to the number of programs offered by each school through the School of Graduate Studies, sample sizes varied widely. There were sufficient responses from the School of Medicine ($n$ = 100, 35%), the College of Arts and Sciences ($n$ = 87, 30%), and Case School of Engineering ($n$ = 77, 27%) to be included in the following analyses. There was not a sufficient sample size from Nursing ($n$ = 13, 5%), Management ($n$ = 5, 2%), or Applied Social Sciences ($n$ = 4, 1%) to be included. Total numbers presented below reflect a combination of only the groups from Medicine, Arts and Sciences, and Engineering, as overall 2019 numbers have been presented in previous sections.

### Overall Satisfaction

The four items that represent key indicators of overall satisfaction are presented in Figure 5. School of Medicine students were most likely to choose both the same field and CWRU again if given the choice, as well as being most satisfied with their overall graduate/professional education. Students from Engineering were most satisfied with the quality of their graduate/professional program at CWRU.
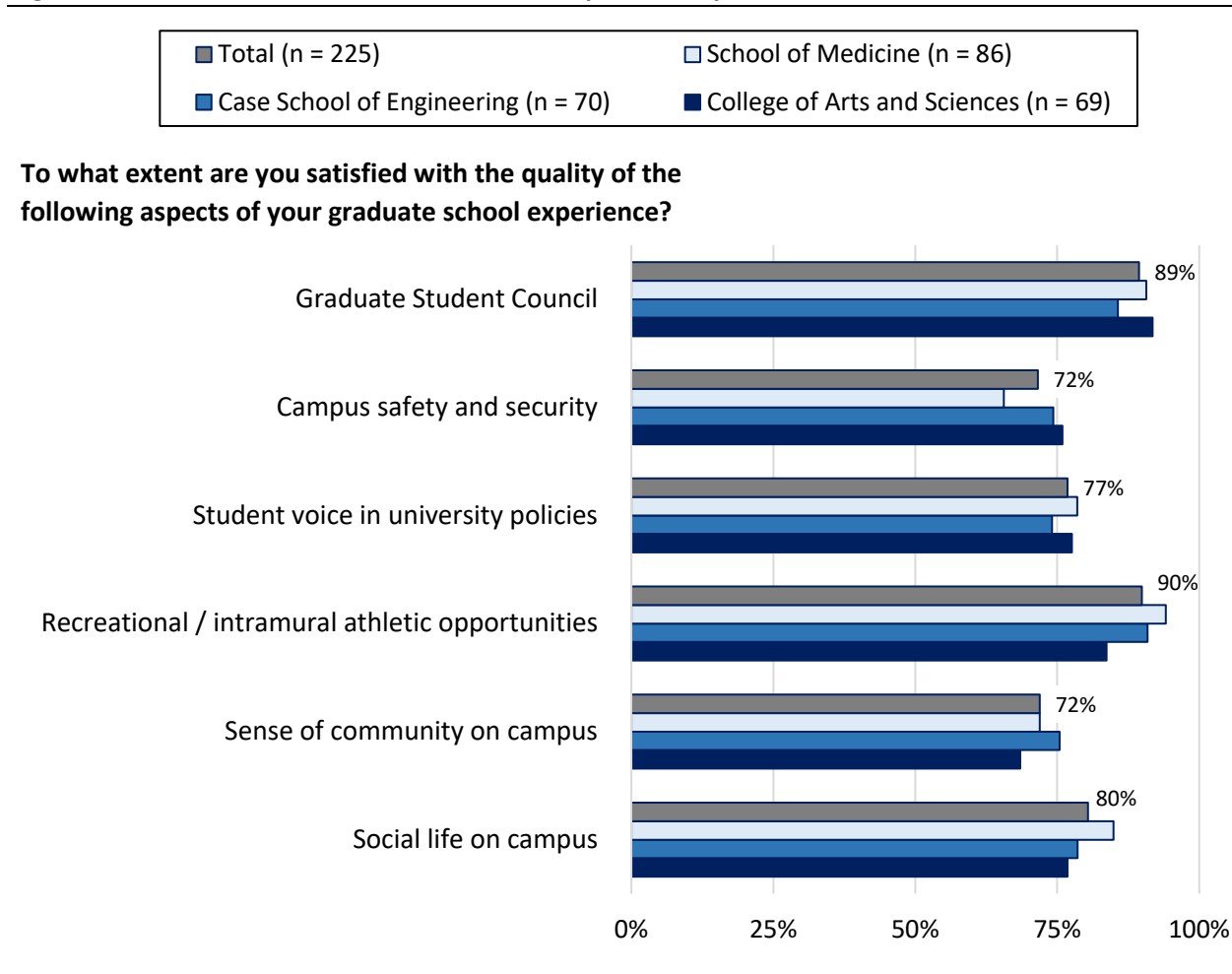
**Figure 5. Overall Satisfaction Items by School: CWRUSES 2019**

## Satisfaction with the Extracurricular Experience

The six items representing satisfaction with the extracurricular experience are presented in Figure 6. These data suggest students from Arts and Sciences are most satisfied with Graduate Student Council and campus safety and security, while Engineering students are most often satisfied with the sense of community on campus. Students from medical programs are those who are most often satisfied with student voice in university policies, recreational / intramural athletic opportunities, and social life on campus. Students from programs in the College of Arts and Sciences seem to be less satisfied than their peers with their social and interpersonal experience at CWRU.

**Figure 6. Satisfaction with the Extracurricular Experience by School: CWRUSES 2019**



Legend:
- ■ Total (n = 225)
- □ School of Medicine (n = 86)
- ■ Case School of Engineering (n = 70)
- ■ College of Arts and Sciences (n = 69)

**To what extent are you satisfied with the quality of the following aspects of your graduate school experience?**

- Graduate Student Council — 89%
- Campus safety and security — 72%
- Student voice in university policies — 77%
- Recreational / intramural athletic opportunities — 90%
- Sense of community on campus — 72%
- Social life on campus — 80%

Taken together, most students are satisfied with their extracurricular experience regardless of their school affiliation. There was minimal difference between schools for most items, suggesting a similar experience for students across schools.

## Campus Climate

Results of the campus climate items by school are presented in Table 6.

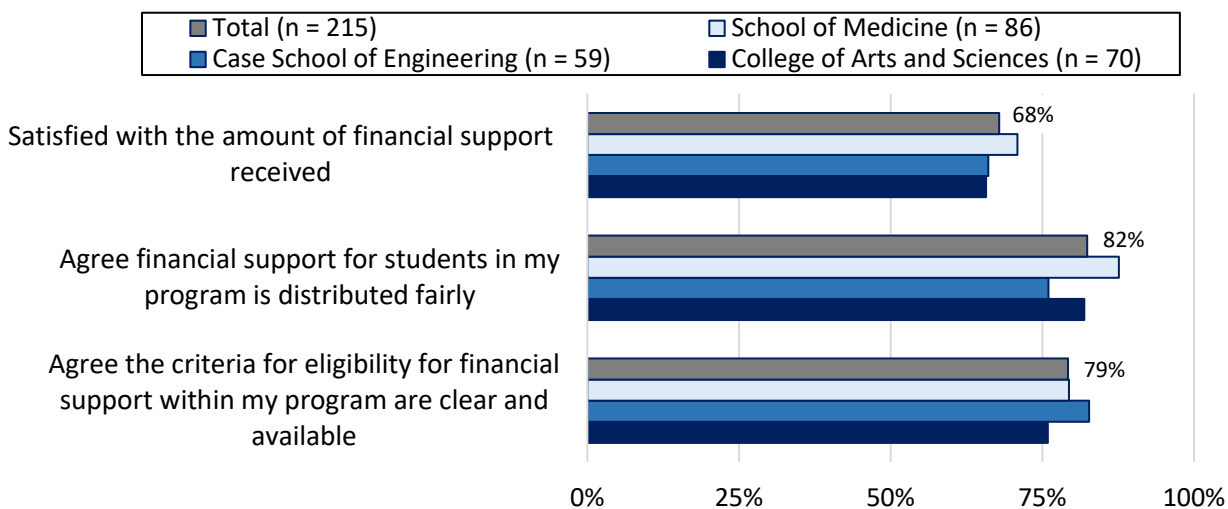Table 6. Campus Climate Items by School: CWRUSES 2019

| To what extent do you agree with the following statements? | College of Arts and Sciences | Case School of Engineering | School of Medicine | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *"Agree" or "Strongly Agree"*  Response n: | 83 | 75 | 96 | 254 |
| CWRU is a comfortable place for me as a student | 77% | 84% | 85% | 82% |
| Instructors treat students fairly regardless of their gender/ gender identity | 86% | 80% | 83% | 83% |
| Instructors treat students fairly regardless of their racial, cultural, or ethnic backgrounds | 83% | 79% | 81% | 81% |
| Instructors treat students fairly regardless of their sexual orientation | 88% | 84% | 83% | 85% |
| My experience at CWRU prepares me to work in a culturally diverse environment | 75% | 81% | 78% | 78% |
| I have ample opportunities to meet people of different racial, cultural, or ethnic backgrounds | 70% | 88% | 80% | 79% |
| CWRU helps students understand the detrimental effects of discrimination | 65% | 69% | 59% | 64% |
| I see the value of having students from different racial, cultural, or ethnic backgrounds in classes | 88% | 89% | 93% | 90% |
| I see the value of having students of different genders in classes | 89% | 87% | 95% | 91% |
| I see the value of having instructors of different genders at CWRU | 84% | 85% | 92% | 87% |
| I see the value of having instructors of different racial, cultural, or ethnic backgrounds at CWRU | 87% | 92% | 93% | 91% |
| Faculty members make efforts to assist students whose native language is not English | 59% | 65% | 45% | 55% |
| Staff members make efforts to assist students whose native language is not English | 56% | 64% | 43% | 53% |
| Faculty members make efforts to assist students with learning disabilities | 53% | 65% | 51% | 56% |
| I know how to seek help if I am discriminated against | 60% | 64% | 60% | 61% |

While campus climate is a complex topic, there are a few patterns that emerge based on students' responses. Students from Arts and Sciences were most likely to say their instructors treat students fairly, but were less likely to have ample opportunities to meet people of different backgrounds and least likely to feel comfortable overall. Students from Medicine were the most comfortable, as well as most likely to see value in diversity of students and instructors. Engineering students noted most frequent support by faculty and staff for students whose native language is not English or those who may have learning disabilities. Overall, there is more similarity across schools than there are differences between them in campus climate.

## Financial Support

The data regarding financial support is provided in Figure 7.

**Figure 7. Financial Support Items by School: CWRUSES 2019**
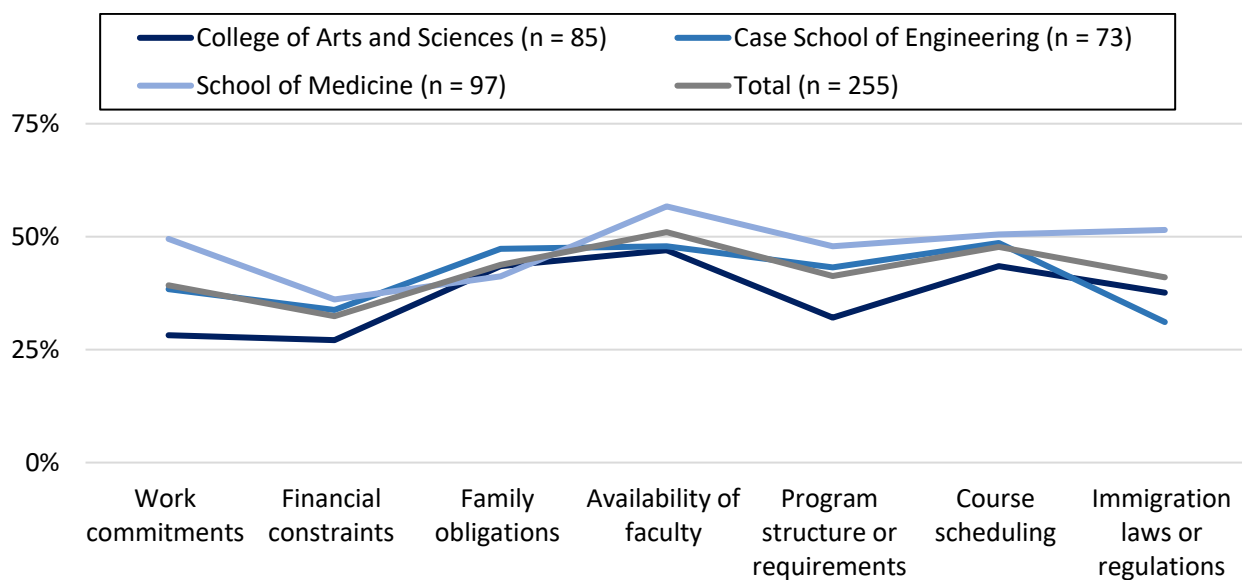


Most students from each school report being satisfied with the amount of financial support they have received. Students from Medicine were most likely to agree that financial support is distributed fairly, while Engineering students agreed most often that the criteria for financial support are clear and available. Students from Arts and Sciences are least satisfied with the amount received and did not agree to the same extent as their peers that the criteria for eligibility are clear and available.

## Barriers to Academic Progress

The barriers to academic progress, broken out by school, are presented in Figure 8.

**Figure 8. Graduate Students' Barriers to Academic Progress by School: CWRUSES 2019**

The greatest barrier for graduate students regardless of school is availability of faculty, followed closely by course scheduling. Financial constraints remain the smallest of barriers for students across schools. There is greater discrepancy between schools on how work commitments, program structure or requirements, and immigration laws or regulations serve as barriers to academic progress, and in most cases students from Medicine were most likely to identify these as barriers. Students from Arts and Sciences rated most barriers as less impactful than did students from other schools.

## Summary and Conclusions

The key indicators of graduate student satisfaction remain high, minimally changed since 2016 survey:

- Most (85%) students are satisfied with their graduate education and 82% are satisfied with their graduate/professional program at CWRU, the same proportions as in 2016
- Students in 2019 were about as likely to choose CWRU again if given the opportunity to start all over again, as well as to choose the same field of study. This was consistent across schools
- 95% of students or more are satisfied with library facilities and resources, the LGBT Center, Thwing Center, and the Tinkham Veale University Center
- The biggest gains in satisfaction with specific departments were found for the Residence Life Office (8%) and for athletic facilities (8%)

Campus climate items suggest CWRU remains an environment where most students feel comfortable and believe they are treated fairly:

- Compared to 2016, a much greater proportion of graduate students at CWRU know how to seek help if they are discriminated against, believe faculty members make efforts to assist students with learning disabilities, and think staff members make efforts to assist students whose native language is not English
- More than 90% of students see the value of having students from diverse backgrounds in classes
- The greatest feelings of discrimination among graduate students stem from their racial, cultural, or ethnic background
- Students from Medicine were the most comfortable, as well as most likely to see value in diversity of students and instructors while students from Arts and Sciences were most likely to say their instructors treat students fairly

Similarly, not much has changed by way of financial support or barriers to academic progress since 2016:

- Slightly more students are satisfied with the amount of financial support they have received, with the greatest proportion coming from programs in Medicine
- The greatest proportion of graduate students have identified availability of faculty (52%) and course scheduling (48%) as barriers to their academic progress
- Graduate students in 2019 were more likely to identify work commitments, financial constraints, family obligations, and program structure or requirements as barriers than they were in 2016

## Additional Information

For additional information about the CWRU Student Experience Survey or this report, please contact:

Edward Bolden, PhD, Associate Director of Institutional Research
Edward.Bolden@case.edu or (216) 368-1500