



# **Danville Area Community College**

## **2026 DACC Student Experience Summary Report**

Released: May 2026

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## Executive Summary

Student experience surveys are essential instruments for higher education institutions, designed to capture vital feedback on student life, academic rigor, and campus interactions. By measuring factors such as academic effort, emotional connection to the institution, and the utilization of campus resources, these surveys provide the data necessary to enhance teaching quality, boost retention, and enrich the overall collegiate journey.

Since 2016, Danville Area Community College (DACC) has conducted biennial evaluations to stay attuned to the needs of our students. While the college previously relied on the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) to survey the students, 2026 marked a strategic shift. DACC developed its own survey tool specifically engineered to align with our institutional goals, cultural values, and diverse student demographics. This transition ensured that the feedback collected identified specific improvement areas within the current academic framework and campus life.

Survey results will be analyzed and then shared with the DACC community, including students, faculty, staff, and external stakeholders. This will also play a key role in contributing to the College's Strategic Plan by providing valuable insights into the needs, concerns, and priorities of our students. The data will help identify areas of strength and opportunities for improvement, guide decision-making and ensuring that the strategies we develop align with the expectations and goals of those we serve. By incorporating these findings, we can create a more focused, effective plan that addresses both current challenges and future opportunities.

As we review the data, it is important to keep in mind how the results will be shared on our campus. **The greatest value of the data comes when the findings are shared, discussed, and analyzed by multiple constituencies on campus.**

Populations we will want to share these results with include:

- President and campus leadership
- Deans, and directors
- Student life personnel
- Admissions and financial aid personnel
- Faculty
- Staff, especially those with face-to-face interaction with students
- Board of trustees
- Student leadership
- General student population
- Parents of students
- Alumni
- Community Members

## Process and Survey Methodology

The development of the student experience survey began with a collaborative design phase in February, focusing on the following areas of engagement: Behavioral, Emotional, Cognitive, and Social. To ensure the instrument was both valid and aligned with institutional goals, the draft questions underwent a multi-level review process. This included feedback loops with academic deans, central administration, and members of the assessment team, whose collective expertise was leveraged to refine the category areas and secure final approval. By integrating these diverse administrative perspectives early on, the

team established a comprehensive framework capable of capturing a holistic view of the student journey.

Once the survey was finalized, the Institutional Research and Institutional Effectiveness Departments defined the target population. All currently enrolled students for credit bearing courses were invited to complete the survey except the Department of Corrections (DOC) students. In the future, we would like to incorporate relevant engagement questions into ongoing surveys for the DOC students. The survey questions were designed to focus exclusively on the students' experiences and engagement during the 2026 Spring Semester.

After final adjustments, survey invitations were sent out to students via email, marking the official start of data collection. The results in this report reflect the responses from DACC students who completed the survey. The surveys were open to students on April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2026 and closed on April 30<sup>th</sup>, 2026. On April 1<sup>st</sup>, an email was sent to the students with their personalized link to complete the survey. Multiple subsequent email reminders were sent to the students on at least a weekly basis to complete the survey. Students were also reminded via Canvas and MyDACC to check their email to complete the survey. To incentivize students to complete the survey, they were entered into a drawing for one of two gift cards. We will continue to experiment with other incentive methods to catch the attention of our students to engage in our surveys.

Of the 2,038 students that were sent the link to the survey, we had a 7.7% completion rate with 157 responses. The margin of error for the response is  $\pm 7.5\%$  at a 95% confidence level. Because the survey was voluntary, the data most likely represent our most engaged student body.



## Demographic Overview

The students who completed the survey are representative of our overall DACC population. This is an overview of the students' demographics reflected in the data set that completed the survey.

Demographics	Response Options	Percentage
<b>Enrollment Category</b>	High School (Dual Enrollment/Middle College/College Express)	26.75%
	Adult Education	26.11%
	Undergraduate	47.13%
<b>Enrollment Status (New/Returning)</b>	New Student (First Year or Transfer)	19.11%
	Returning Student (Continuing enrollment, including last semester)	80.89%
<b>Enrollment Status (FT/PT)</b>	Full-time Student (12 credit hours or more)	56.05%
	Part-time Student (11 credit hours or less)	43.95%
<b>Reason for attending DACC (select all that apply)</b>	Earn an associate degree	67.52%
	Transfer to a 4-year college/university	39.49%
	Earn a certificate	34.39%
	Update job skills	17.20%
	Personal interest/Self-improvement	31.21%
<b>What Gender best describes you?</b>	Male	22.93%
	Female	75.80%
	Prefer Not to Respond	**
<b>Race/Ethnicity (select all that apply)</b>	American Indian or Alaska Native	3.18%
	Asian	**
	Black or African American	15.92%
	Hispanic or Latino	8.28%
	Middle Eastern or North African	**
	Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	**
	White	76.43%
	Other Race	**
	Prefer not to respond	2.55%
Multi-racial	2.55%	
<b>Age Groups</b>	Under 18	14.01%
	18-24	47.77%
	25-34	15.92%
	35-44	13.38%
	45-54	5.10%
	55 and Older	3.82%
<b>Who in your family has attended at least some college? (select all that apply)</b>	Mother/Guardian 2	55.41%
	Father/Guardian 2	42.04%
	Siblings	45.86%
	None of the above (First-Generation)	26.11%

\*\*Data suppressed due to low response

*Enrollment & Motivation Profile*

The survey response data reveals a highly goal-oriented demographic that, surprisingly, also exhibits a strong interest in taking classes for personal interest. Students were encouraged to select all that applied.

Metric	Dominant Group	Insight
Primary Goal	Earn a Degree (67.5%)	The majority are here for the "long haul" credential.
Secondary Goal	Transfer (39.5%)	Significant portion viewing DACC as a stepping stone.
Unexpected Finding	Personal Interest (31.2%)	Nearly 1 in 3 are here for self-improvement, not just a job/career.
Intensity	Full-time (56.1%)	Most respondents are carrying a heavy academic load.

*Demographic & Socio-Economic Snapshot*

- Age Dynamics: Nearly half of the respondents (47.8%) are traditional college age (18-24), and 29.3% of the students were between 25-44.
- First-Generation Students: 26.1% of respondents are First-Generation students. This is a critical segment of our population that is navigating the complexities of college without a roadmap from immediate family members or mentors.
- Race/Ethnicity: The respondents are majority White, followed by Black or African American, and Hispanic or Latino.

*Majors/Programs*

The survey included responses from students across various majors and programs. We have broken these down into the Division or Program Areas.

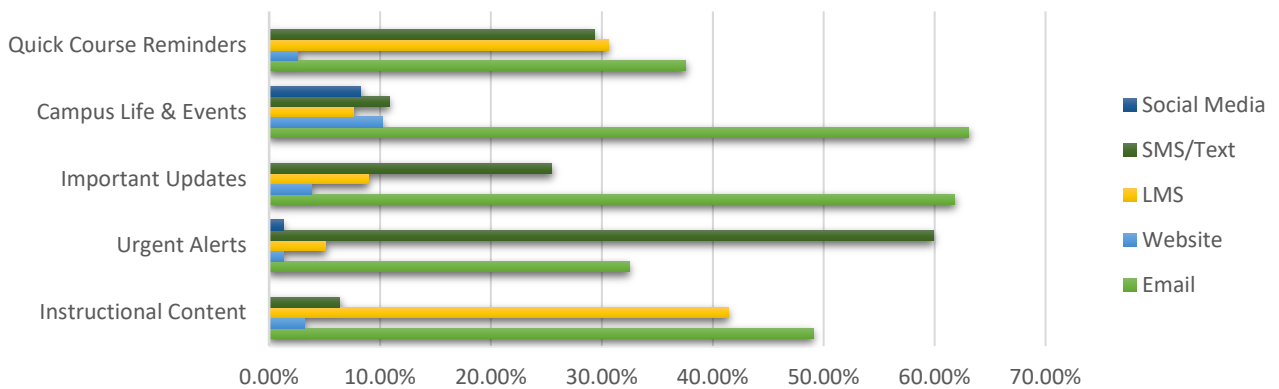
Division/Programs	Percentage
AAS in Arts / Fine Arts	5.5%
AAS in General Studies	9.5%
AAS in Science	9.0%
GECC (General Education Core Curriculum)	5.0%
Allied Health and Nursing	33.5%
Business Management	21.0%
Liberal Arts	7.5%
Math & Science	2.5%
Technology and Information Systems	6.5%

*Communication Methods*

Of the responses, students demonstrate highly distinct preferences for communication based on the urgency and academic relevance of the information.

Priority	Preferred Communication Method	Primary Use
Critical	SMS/Text	Urgent Alerts & Time Sensitive Reminders
Official	Email	Updates, Financial Aid, Campus Events, Instructional Overviews
Functional	Canvas / Email	Direct Instructional Content & Course Deadlines
Low Impact	Social Media / Web	General Awareness (very low engagement for direct impact)

**Preferred Methods of Communication**



*Strategic Recommendations*

- Reserve SMS for Urgency: Do not over use SMS for general events. Since students specifically want it for "Urgent Alerts," over-saturating this channel with "Campus Life" info (10% preference) may lead to students opting out of critical alerts. Because many of our students who responded are also balancing school with work and families, the SMS/Text for urgent alerts are key as they are always on the move.
- Canvas for Instruction: Faculty should be encouraged to keep instructional content within Canvas, as nearly half of students view it as their primary hub for learning materials.
- Email for the "Paper Trail": Continue using Email for registration, financial aid, and graduation. Students view this as the official record method of communication.
- Deprioritize Social Media for Student Delivery: With 0% preference for most categories, Social Media should be used for brand building and reaching out to the community, not solely for delivering essential student information.

## Student Experience Survey Results

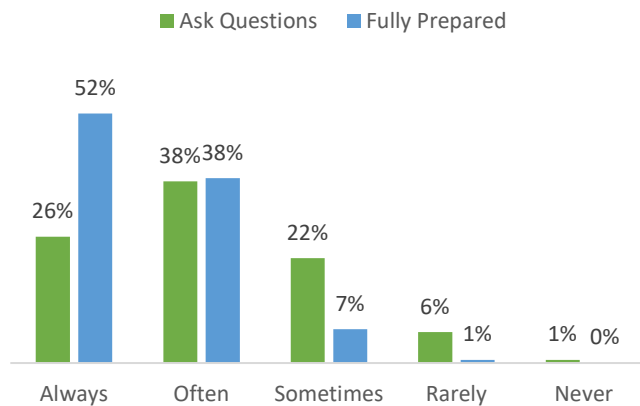
### Classroom Engagement and Participation

Students were asked questions that focused on the active presence and interaction during instructional time.

#### Key Findings by Category

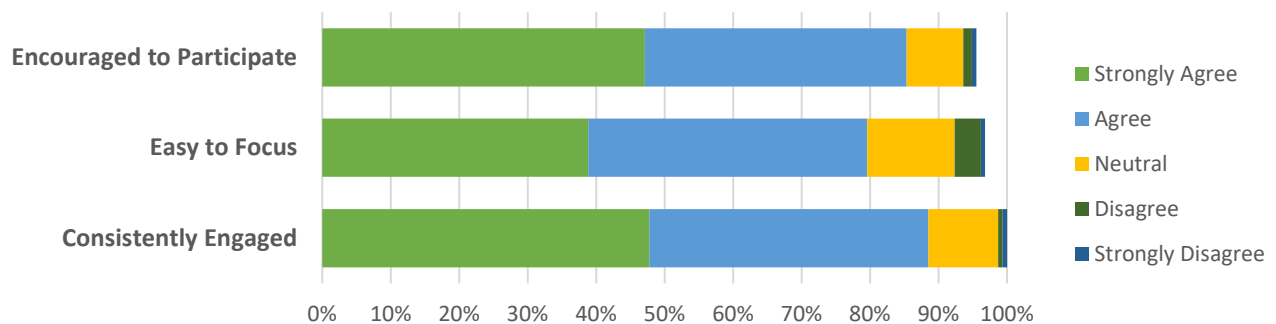
**Academic Habits:** DACC students demonstrate a high degree of academic responsibility, with nearly 90% reporting consistent preparedness for their courses. While students feel overwhelmingly encouraged to participate, there is a notable participation gap of 26% between those who are prepared and those who actively contribute to discussions (63.7%). This suggests that while the classroom environment is welcoming, we may need to explore new strategies to move students from passive engagement to active contribution. While absenteeism is frequently discussed as a hurdle in higher education, only 8% of the respondents reported missing their scheduled classes on an “often” or “always” basis.

#### Participation vs. Preparedness



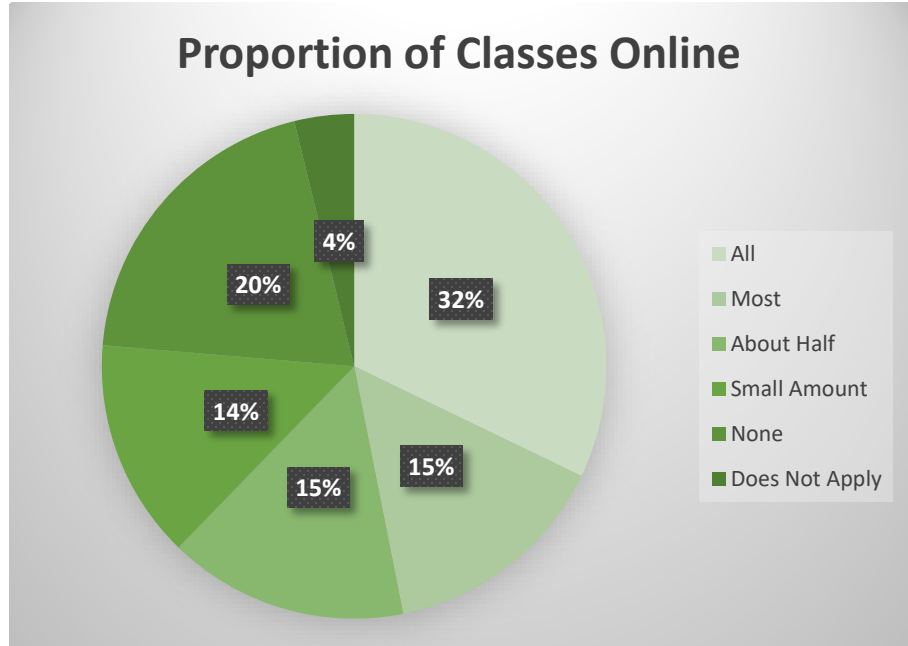
**Student Engagement:** Students report extremely high levels of engagement. Over 88% “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” that they feel consistently engaged, and 85% feel encouraged to participate. The means for these categories (4.34 and 4.36) are among the highest in this survey category (1 being “Strongly Disagree” to 5 being “Strongly Agree”). While engagement is high, the ease of paying attention (79.6%) is slightly lower than the other engagement metrics. This suggests that while students *want* to be engaged, external factors or course delivery might make focus more difficult for about 20% of the group.

#### Classroom Engagement Sentiment



**Online vs. In-Person:**

Nearly one-third (32.5%) of respondents are taking all of their courses online. Despite this high online load, the majority (33.1%) find the difficulty "about the same" as in-person classes, suggesting a successful transition to digital delivery.



## Instructional Quality

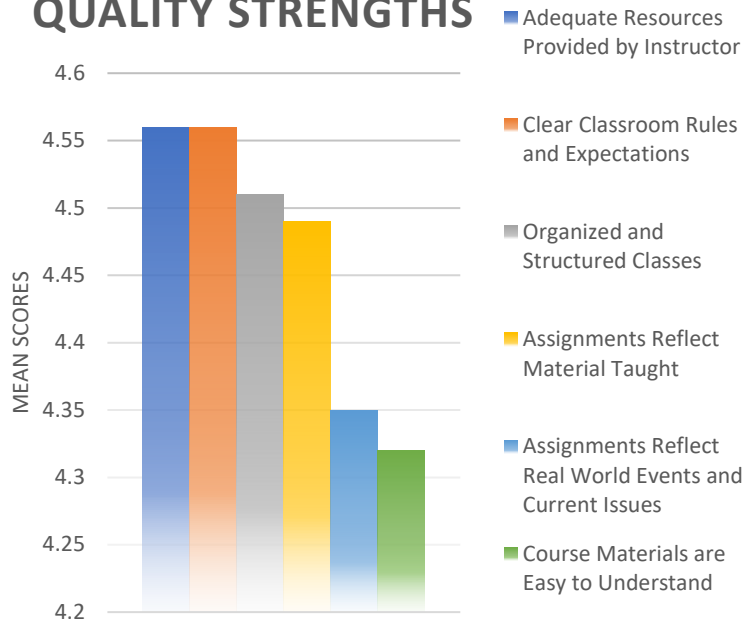
This section focuses on teaching methods, course structure and the nature of the assignments.

### Key Findings by Category

Overall, the student experience at DACC is characterized by highly structured environments and assignments that are relevant to the real world. While instructors are perceived as organized and resourceful, there is a slight drop-off in engagement levels when moving from general classroom management to specific online interactions.

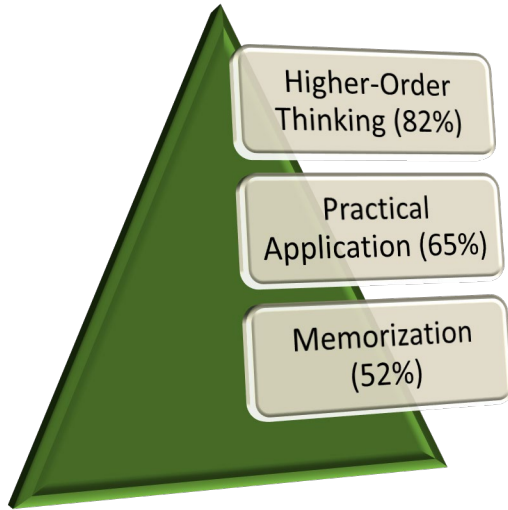
**Strengths:** The Instructional Quality section highlights several core strengths, particularly regarding classroom structure and clarity. An overwhelming majority of students (88%) reported that instructors consistently provide clear expectations, while 91% noted that classes are delivered in a highly organized manner. This sense of stability is further bolstered by the accessibility of course materials, which were praised for their clarity and helpfulness. Together, these metrics suggest an environment where students feel guided and supported by a well-defined academic framework.

## DACC INSTRUCTION QUALITY STRENGTHS



The survey results also demonstrate a strong alignment between curriculum and assessment, ensuring that student efforts are directed toward relevant outcomes. Notably, 91% of students feel that assignments accurately reflect the course material, while 82% highlighted the integration of modern, real-world applications within their projects. Supported by robust resource availability and a responsive faculty, characterized by timely and specific feedback, these data points underscore a high performing instructional model that prioritizes both student success and practical relevance. With Mean Scores trending toward the top of the 5-point scale, these results highlight areas of significant instructional success.

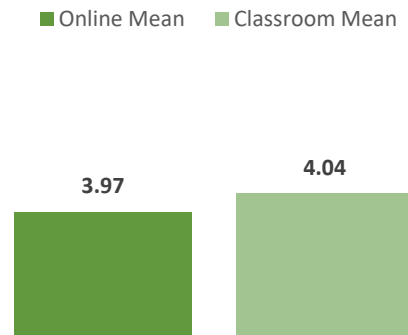
**Cognitive Focus of Coursework:** The survey measured the "mental weight" of the coursework, showing a clear preference for critical thinking over rote learning. The data below is based on the students that reported that "Most" or "All" of their work was based on the following types of coursework.



- **Higher-Order Thinking:** Students felt that the majority of their coursework emphasized analysis, critical thinking and evaluation.
- **Practical Application:** Work requiring labs or strategy development was balanced across the student body.
- **Memorization:** This was the lowest-rated category, indicating that DACC courses prioritize application and analysis over memorizing facts and dates.

**Engagement Gap:** While student engagement remains positive, it showed more variance than the structured stability of classroom organization. Measured on a scale of 1–5 (where 1 is "Never" and 5 is "Always"), interactive methods like group work and polls earned a mean score of 4.04, supported by a responsive faculty providing timely feedback (Mean: 4.30). However, online instructor interaction emerged as the lowest-scoring engagement metric with a mean of 3.97, suggesting a slight gap in consistency within the digital sphere compared to in-person experiences.

### Online Instructor Interaction vs. Interactive Teaching Methods



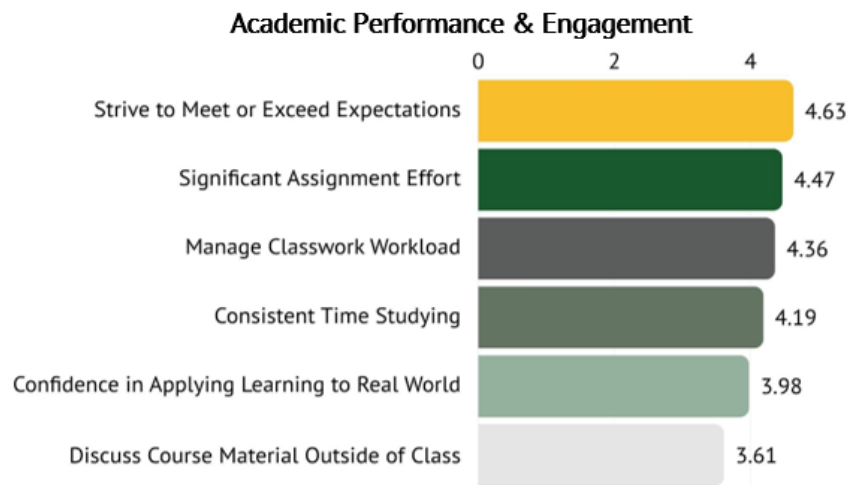
## Study Skills and Learning Preferences

Students were asked questions that focused on individual habits, effort, and cognitive style. Students at DACC demonstrate very high effort and academic responsibility, but engage less in collaboration and applied learning, presenting an opportunity to strengthen peer interaction and real-world learning experiences.

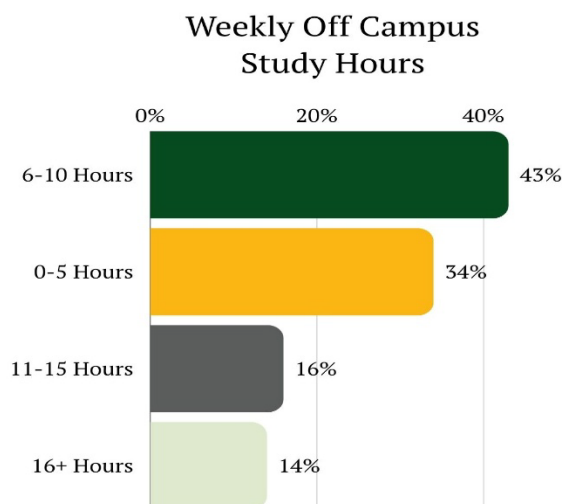
### Key Findings by Category

#### Performance & Engagement:

Students who participated are reporting a very high level of dedication to their coursework and a strong desire to succeed. Most students reported they were able to effectively manage their classwork (93%). An impressive 97% of respondents reported that they strive to meet or exceed their instructor’s expectations. The majority also reporting that even for ungraded assignments, they are putting in significant effort. However, while students are disciplined individually, they are less likely to engage with the material socially outside the classroom and are not overwhelmingly confident in applying learning to real-world situations. Only 54% of students “always” or “often” discuss course material outside of class. There is a significant gap between individual effort versus collaborative and peer learning/networking. This is an opportunity for faculty to strengthen their applied learning (internships, simulations, projects) and increase career connected coursework to increase confidence in our students.



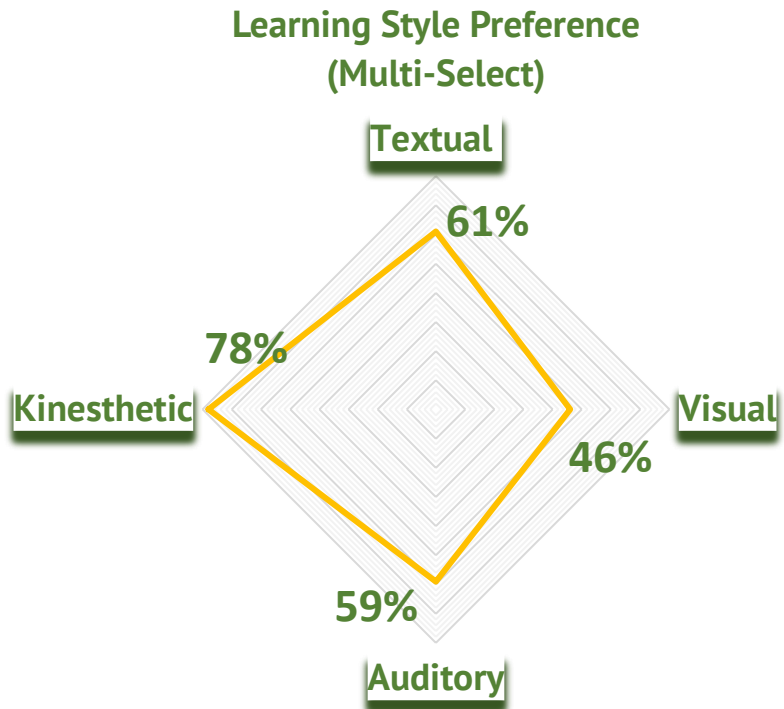
Mean - measured on a scale of 1–5 (where 1 is Never and 5 is Always)



**Study Time:** While 77% of students study up to 10 hours a week, there is a significant group of students putting in over 11 hours of independent study every week. With just over 33% of our respondents in our Nursing and Allied Health programs, this is not surprising.

**Learning Preferences:** Our students have a strong preference for kinesthetic or hands-on learning. This suggests that the most effective teaching strategies at DACC should involve hands-on activities, simulations, labs, or interactive games. This is the peak of the radar chart below, indicating it is the most critical area for instructional focus. Given that peer discussion is still the lowest-rated engagement area, it might be beneficial to introduce more collaborative, hands-on workshops or lab-style study groups that encourage students to talk through problems while physically working on them.

Textual (61%) and auditory (59%) learning was indicated as secondary channels. These two styles are nearly tied, showing that while students want to “do”, they still rely heavily on traditional methods like reading, taking notes, and listening to lectures or group discussions. A balanced approach that combines lecture with a follow-up reading assignment remains highly effective with about 60% of the students. Visual (46%) learning rates last, however it is still appealing to about half of the students who completed the survey.



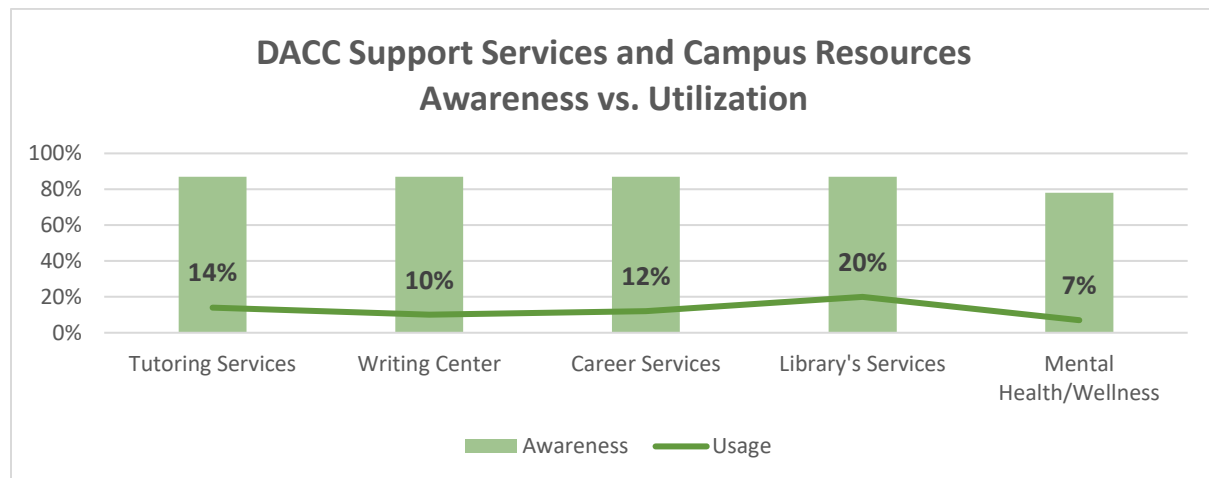
## Campus Resources & Support Services

This section focuses on the utilization of institutional assistance. The campus resource and support services survey data highlight a significant awareness versus utilization gap. Students are largely aware of and satisfied with the resources available at Danville Area Community College, but actual usage rates for many of these services remain low. *Note: Because the survey response was only 7.7%, students who use these services more readily may not have completed the survey.*

### Key Findings by Category

**Awareness vs. Utilization:** Students hold a very positive view of the college’s support infrastructure. The majority (87%) of the surveyed students are aware of our campus support services. Roughly 78% of respondents are aware of the mental health and wellness resources on campus. When we compare the usage of these services, they are underutilized. Many times, when we see high awareness but low usage, the problem isn’t necessarily lack of information, but a barrier to entry. Students know the service exists, but they are choosing not to walk through the door. It will be important for the campus to look at the possible barriers:

- Onboarding process: What does the onboarding process for these services look like and is that a true barrier?
- Hours of Operation: High awareness doesn’t help students if they can’t get to the service. With over half of our students working at least 10 hours or more a week, we may need to relook at access to services.
- Stigma: Sometimes it’s just hard to ask for help. Destigmatizing the social aspect can go a long way through peer advocacy and a more visible campus culture where students and faculty openly share their own challenges.
- Last Minute Needs: These services may be treated as emergency tools rather than regular habits.
- Survey bias: With a low number of respondents, those who did respond may be less likely to need these services.



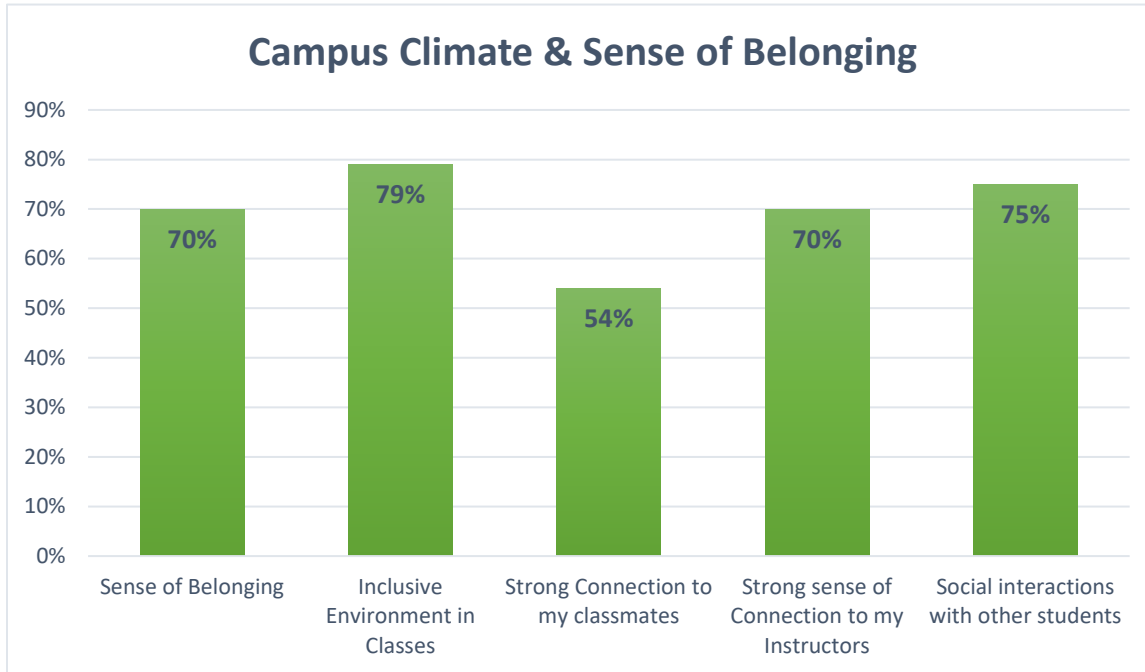
**Advising & Career Planning:** Effective interactions with an advisor act like an academic compass, helping students recalculate their route when plans change. These sessions should move beyond credit-counting to building a strategic launchpad, ensuring their graduation/transfer plan aligns with their long-term career goals. Building these services into a more integrated approach (time in the classrooms, micro-services) might open students to better utilize these services.

- **Advisor Interaction:** Over 54% of students surveyed interacted with their academic advisor at least "Sometimes."
- **Career/Graduation Planning:** Students engage with advisors for long-term planning (Mean: 2.76) more frequently than they use specialized services like Career Services (Mean: 1.83).
- **Career Services Gap:** 59% of respondents have "Never" utilized career services for professional development. Again, the students know the office exists, but they may not know what happens inside.

## Belonging and Social Integration

This section focuses on the emotional connection and peer/faculty relationships. While students feel they *belong* at DACC, they aren't necessarily *connected* deeply to the formal academic social structure (office hours, peer tutoring, projects). The overall response is positive, but the active engagement is still largely classroom bound. Overall, the data reveals a campus culture that feels inclusive and welcoming, even if formal collaborative activities are less common.

### Key Findings by Category



**Campus Climate:** Students overwhelmingly feel that DACC is a welcoming and inclusive environment.

- Institutional Belonging: 70% of students "Agree" or "Strongly Agree" that they feel a sense of belonging at DACC (Mean: 4.05).
- Inclusive Classrooms: This was the highest-rated sentiment in the section, with 79% of respondents feeling valued and included in their specific courses (Mean: 4.20).
- Peer Connection: This area shows more hesitation. Only 53.5% feel a strong sense of connection to classmates, while 32% remain "Neutral" (Mean: 3.72).
- Instructor Connection: Students feel a relatively strong bond with faculty; 70% report a positive connection (Mean: 4.06).
- General Satisfaction: Social interaction levels with other students are high, with 75% reporting satisfaction (Mean: 4.12).

**Peer Interaction and Academic Collaboration:** The data suggests that student-to-student support is largely informal. Since many students offer help but few tutor or collaborate, there is a strong foundation of goodwill that could be channeled into more structured peer-learning programs.

- Informal Academic Help: 75% of students offer academic support to their peers at least "Sometimes" (Mean: 3.19).
- Formal Collaboration: Peer collaboration on projects (Mean: 3.01) is less frequent, with nearly 20% of students "Never" collaborating with classmates.
- Tutoring: While students offer informal help, very few (only 11%) engage in actual tutoring of other students (Mean: 1.89).

**Faculty Engagement:** Despite feeling a "connection" to instructors, students do not frequently interact with them outside of the designated class time. High satisfaction with social interaction combined with low external faculty interaction suggests students are happy with their environment but tend to keep their academic life strictly within scheduled hours.

- Only 26% of students "Often" or "Always" interact with faculty during office hours or for mentoring (Mean: 2.63).
- 28% of respondents "Never" interact with faculty outside of class, indicating that for a significant portion of the student body, the relationship begins and ends with the lecture.

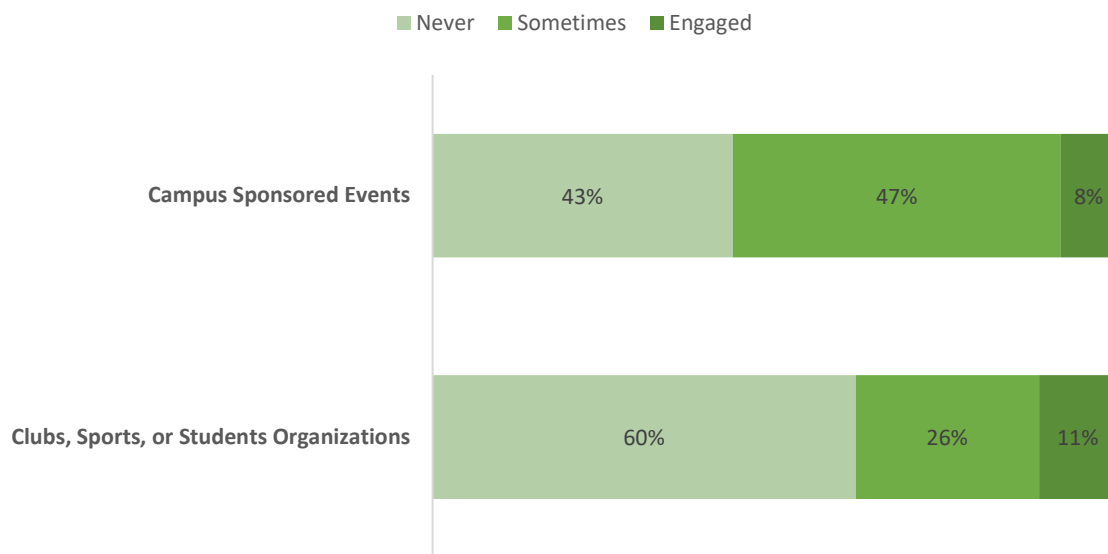
## Campus & Community Involvement

This section focuses on “extra-curricular” engagement and life outside the classroom. The results highlight a common trend in community college demographics: high institutional satisfaction (from previous sections) but very low physical participation in non-mandatory activities.

### Key Findings by Category

**Campus Event Participation and Student Organizations:** While social, academic, and athletic events are a staple of campus life, they see limited traction with the general student body. Many students are balancing school with external responsibilities.

### Campus Events vs. Student Organizations



- Attendance Rates: Nearly 43% of students "Never" attend campus-sponsored events.
- Frequency: Only about 8% of respondents attend these events "Always" (Mean: 2.20).
- Low Involvement: Roughly 60% of students report "Never" participating in clubs, sports, or student organizations (Mean: 1.97).
- The "Core" Group: A small but dedicated group (roughly 11%) "Always" participates.

**Community and Academic Outreach:** Students show a slightly higher inclination toward service and material-relevant events than they do for general campus clubs.

- Community Service: Volunteering had the highest mean in this category (2.37). Approximately 25% of students engage in service "Often" or "Always."
- Course-Related Events: About 39% of students attend community events related to their coursework at least "Sometimes." This suggests that when an event is tied to their professional or academic goals, students are more likely to make time for it.

### *Significant Learning Experience - Open Comments*

Students were asked to provide their most “significant learning experience” during the Spring 2026 semester and any additional suggestions they might have for the future. Their responses are broken down into six primary categories.

**Practical Application & Clinical Learning:** This is the most prominent category. Students overwhelmingly value the opportunity to apply classroom knowledge in real-world or simulated settings, transitioning from textbook theory to hands-on reality.

- Medical/Healthcare: Significant praise for clinical rotations (Nursing, X-ray, Sonography), CNA skills labs, and the cadaver lab in Anatomy.
- Technical/Trade Skills: Building sheds for Habitat for Humanity, performing electrical wiring, learning welding techniques, and making electrical wiring connections were highlighted as transformative.
- Interactive/Simulated Projects: Simternships in marketing, trial projects in Criminal Justice (wearing suits, having a jury), and culinary cooking labs.
- Application: Moving beyond memorization to "professional-level accountability" and problem-solving.

**Time Management & Life Balance:** For many, the most significant learning was not academic, but the development of resilience and discipline.

- The Juggle: Learning to balance college courses with full-time work, high school (dual enrollment), parenting, and sports.
- Resilience: Developing the discipline to handle heavy workloads, online course deadlines, and maintaining high GPAs under pressure.
- Independence: Moving from supervised tasks to independent projects and self-motivation.

**Faculty Impact & Instructional Quality:** Students frequently linked their success to the quality of their relationship with instructors.

- Engagement vs. Passive Learning: Strong preference for teachers who engage and critically challenge students rather than just reading PowerPoints or using YouTube videos.
- Supportive Environments: Praise for instructors who are caring, responsive, and understanding regarding personal difficulties and for their ability to clarify complex material.
- Named Recognition: High marks for specific instructors (e.g., Poff, Thompson, Lohmeyer, Crain, Reed, and Moreland).

**Personal Growth & Interpersonal Skills:** For many, the learning was about social and emotional development.

- Confidence: Overcoming the fear of public speaking in speech classes and feeling more confident to pursue dreams. Students noted an improved ability in understanding lateral reading to verify internet information.
- Networking: Stepping out of comfort zones to meet new people, connecting with peers, and meeting online teachers in person.

- Self-Discovery: Learning through Ethics, Philosophy, and Sociology to understand different perspectives and the "way the brain needs to learn."

**Campus Resources & Support Systems:** Students credited DACC's specific support structures for their most significant breakthroughs

- Advising & Tutoring: The TRIO program for game-planning, the MASS center for math/stats help, and the Mary Miller tutoring center.
- Technology/IT: Support from the Tech Center and IT staff in fixing hardware or navigating online learning platforms.
- Career Services: Using the career fair to plan transitions to 4-year institutions.

**Institutional Critiques & Challenges:** A small portion of the feedback highlighted significant learning through negative or frustrating experiences.

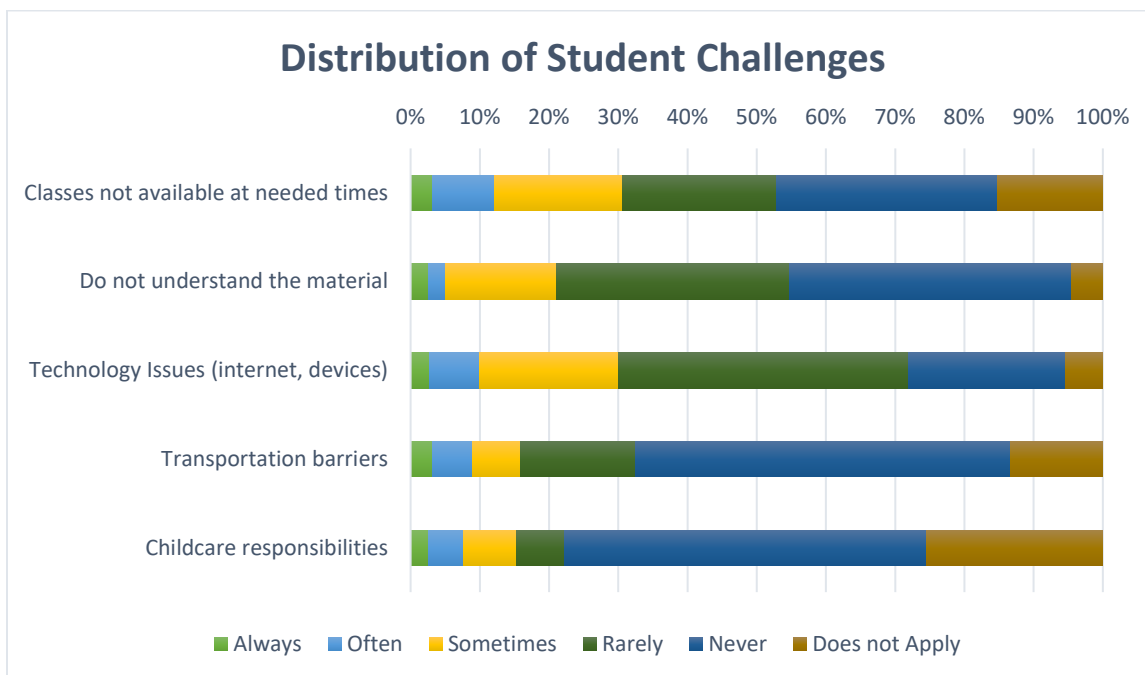
- Curriculum Relevance: A vocal group of students questioned the necessity of General Education "filler" classes that feel like a "waste of money."
- Financial & Resource Gaps: Some students highlighted the massive out-of-pocket costs (gas, scrubs, tools) and the lack of tutoring for those working full-time.
- Campus Facilities: Significant concerns were raised regarding cleanliness and the lack of soap/towels in bathrooms.
- Student Voice: There is a strong demand for a Student Government Association (SGA) and better representation for students at the Correctional Facility.
- Scheduling for Workers: There is a call for graduation ceremonies to be held outside of standard work hours (not mid-day during the week) and for more fully online Associate degree paths

The data suggests that DACC students define "significance" through utility. Whether it is a hands-on lab that prepares them for a job or a time-management realization that allows them to survive a busy schedule, the most valued experiences are those that bridge the gap between being a "student" and being a "professional."

## Barriers to Success

Students often face a perfect storm of obstacles, from financial and essential hardships to a lack of essential learning technology. While most respondents are not frequently derailed by these challenges, logistical hurdles like rigid work shifts and course scheduling present the most common friction. When these scheduling conflicts are combined with the frustration of tackling complex material without academic support, the cumulative pressure forces many to prioritize immediate economic survival over education. Highlighting this financial strain, nearly 8% of surveyed students reported worrying about housing stability within the past year, while another 6% preferred not to answer.

### Key Findings by Category



**Logistical and Institutional Barriers:** The most significant hurdle for students involves the college's schedule rather than their own personal resources.

- Scheduling Conflicts: This was the highest-rated challenge (Mean: 2.17). Approximately 30% of students report that classes not being available when they need them prevents participation at least "Sometimes."
- Transportation: Only about 9% of students face transportation issues "Often" or "Always," with over half (54%) reporting this is "Never" an issue.

**Academic and Technical Obstacles:** Students appear well-equipped for the digital and academic rigor of their courses, though minor friction exists.

- Academic Understanding: Roughly 74% of respondents "Rarely" or "Never" fail to complete an assignment due to a lack of understanding (Mean: 1.87). Only 5% see this as a frequent

(Often/Always) issue. This reinforces the findings that most of our students feel instructors are providing clear expectations and adequate resources.

- Technology Issues: Access to internet and devices is stable for most. 75% of students report that tech failures "Rarely" or "Never" stop them from finishing work (Mean: 1.83).

**Personal Responsibilities:** While community colleges often serve many parents, childcare is a highly specific barrier—affecting few, but likely affecting them significantly.

- Childcare Impact: Over 25% of students checked "Does Not Apply," likely indicating they do not have children.
- Frequency: For those it does affect, about 7.6% are "Often" or "Always" prevented from studying due to childcare responsibilities (Mean: 1.64).

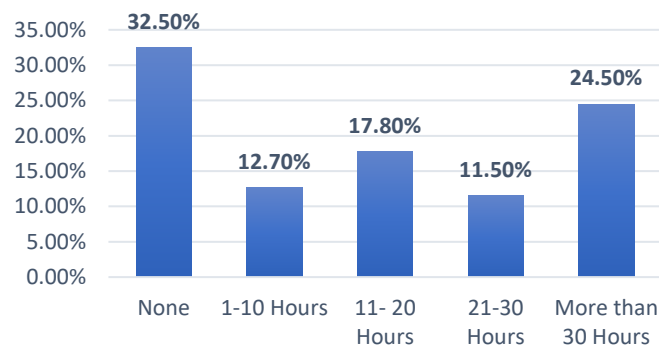
### Summary of Comments

Students were also asked to comment on what barriers had prevented them from participating in more campus events and activities that were not asked in the survey questions. While many students cited, “none”, the majority of those who do face hurdles are juggling significant “real-world” responsibilities. These struggles are categorized below:

**Professional & Financial Commitments:** By far the most cited barrier, work schedules significantly limit student availability. While about 32.5% of students who responded do not work, the majority work at least part time, with almost a quarter of our respondents working more than 30 hours.

- Heavy Workloads: Students reported working 4 days a week, holding down two jobs, or working 50–60 hours per week.
- Afternoon/Night Shifts: Many students work during the same times activities are typically held.
- Career Transitions: Post-plant closure requirements, such as job interviews and seminars, have taken priority for some learners.

**Percentage of Responses for Hours Worked By Current Students**



### Transportation & Geographical Distance:

The number of students who completed the survey reported that transportation is never an issue, however we still have a decent representation of students who find transportation a struggle.

- Vehicle Reliability: Multiple mentions of lacking a "reliable car" or a "long-distance vehicle."
- The Drive: Students cited long commutes (up to 40 minutes) as a reason to head home immediately rather than stay for events.
- Lack of Access: General "lack of transportation" was a recurring theme for students who may rely on others or public transit.

**Family & Caregiver Responsibilities:** The student-parent demographic faces unique challenges. Many of our students are parents and some are also the teacher at home.

- Childcare: Students mentioned having multiple young children at home (e.g., "three under three") who require 24/7 care.
- Homeschooling: Older learners noted they are busy homeschooling their own children, leaving zero "extra" time.
- Home Life: General "things going on at home" or family obligations were cited as primary anchors.

**Academic & Athletic Rigor:** School itself is often the barrier to school activities.

- Course Overlap: Events frequently conflict with scheduled class times or high school hours for dual-enrollment students.
- Study Time: Students use their limited free time to catch up on assignments or prepare for important tests.
- Sports Commitments: DACC athletes (baseball, travel teams, etc.) reported that practices and games consume their entire non-academic schedule.

**Information & Communication Gaps:** Sometimes the barrier isn't a lack of time, but a lack of awareness.

- Timing Awareness: Students noted they simply didn't know the times and dates.
- The "Online Gap": Online students or those not frequently on campus feel "out of the loop" and don't hear about events.

**Personal Disposition & Preference:** For some, the barrier is a simple lack of desire to engage in the traditional campus social scene.

- Introversion: A few students explicitly identified as "strong introverts" who choose not to participate.
- Disinterest: Several responses were a blunt "not interested" or "simply like being at home."
- Evening Events: Some students mentioned they "don't like being out late," which limits participation in evening events.

To boost engagement, we may need to look beyond the traditional campus mold and meet our students where they are. Shorter more frequent events, family friendly events, or quick text alerts may reach our students more effectively. Focusing on practical value, like academic study jams with free food and low-stress grab and go setups can help increase student connections.

## Looking Ahead

Students were asked about their preference for course formats, which looked at online classes versus in-person and what they would like to see offered. The majority of students felt the balance of online vs. in-person was just right.

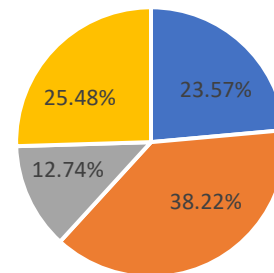
Based on the students' additional feedback on what they would like to see offered, there is a bit of a tug-of-war between the convenience of online learning and the quality of in-person instruction. Their feedback has been summarized into four categories.

### *Key Findings by Category*

**Modality Preference:** Students are divided based on their learning styles and life circumstances:

- **The Pro-Online Group:** Primarily consists of full-time workers (40+ hours) and parents. They view online classes as essential for survival, particularly for computer-related courses where commuting is seen as a waste of time and gas.
- **The Pro-In-Person Group:** These students argue that in-person is "better for ALL classes." They cite difficulty concentrating on online lectures (especially in sciences) and a preference for the "human element" of a teacher talking directly to them.
- **The Hybrid/Balance Supporters:** Many students believe the "balance is near perfect." They advocate for hybrid models—especially in nursing—to get the best of both worlds: flexibility for theory and face-to-face time for labs.

**Looking ahead to next semester, which of the following best describes your preference for course formats?**



- I want more online options
- The current balance of online and in-person courses is just right
- I want fewer online options and more in-person classroom time
- Don't know

**Scheduling & Accessibility:** Some students are asking for the classes that exist outside the standard 8:00am – 4:00pm window.

- **Night & Weekend Classes:** Older learners and full-time employees expressed frustration with the lack of evening options. They want in-person alternatives that don't require them to quit their jobs.
- **Avoiding the Commute:** There is a request for more programs to be offered at DACC to prevent students from having to drive to Champaign.
- **Summer Flexibility:** Student-athletes appreciated online options that allow them to fulfill requirements without being anchored to campus during their off-season.

**Desired Subject Matter & New Programs:** Students identified gaps in the current curriculum that they would like to see filled:

- **Vocational & Practical:** More in-person culinary options and cosmetology.
- **Healthcare:** Specific requests for Dental Hygiene, Drug Treatment (DTS) courses, and more Nursing-based electives.
- **Business & Life Skills:** Beyond standard Accounting, students want "Life Lessons" like taxes and financial wellness, alongside more Marketing and Coding.
- **Liberal Arts:** A desire for a wider variety of Languages (moving beyond just French and Spanish) and more Literature and Early Childhood Education tracks.

**Teaching Method Feedback:** The students offered direct advice to faculty on how to justify an in-person requirement:

- **No More Slide-Reading:** Students are vocal that if a teacher is just going to "read off slides," the class should be a video/online.
- **In-Person Learning Where it Counts:** In-person attendance should be reserved for labs, activities, and hands-on learning.
- **The "Boredom" Factor:** There is a strong distaste for the "read the book and answer questions" format.

## Summary

The Spring 2026 Student Experience Survey reveals that DACC students display exceptionally high academic dedication and institutional satisfaction, with a high percentage reporting consistent course preparedness and the majority of students feeling genuinely engaged. Instructors are widely praised for providing clear expectations, highly organized course delivery, and assignments rooted in real-world application that favor higher-order critical thinking over simply memorization. However, the data highlights a clear engagement gap across modalities; while students feel welcome, they tend to remain passive, showing lower rates of voluntary peer collaboration and a slight drop-off in focus during online instructor interactions. Furthermore, qualitative feedback emphasizes a powerful student preference for kinesthetic, hands-on learning—such as clinicals, labs, and interactive simulations—alongside a vocal distaste for passive instructional styles like monotone PowerPoint slide-reading.

Outside the classroom, the data uncovers a stark contrast between positive feelings toward the college climate and low physical participation in campus life, heavily restricted by the convergence of adult responsibilities and scheduling. This creates a distinct awareness vs. utilization gap, where students know support services exist but rarely use them due to heavy work hours, childcare demands, and long commutes. Students also want more effective communication. Many are just not aware of all the options they have at the college. It may not always be that they do not want to show up, they just might not know exactly when or even how to navigate the system.

Crucially, stakeholders must interpret these utilization metrics through the lens of survey response bias; because the survey saw a low response rate (7.7%), the data likely skews toward highly motivated, self-sufficient students who are less likely to need emergency resources, potentially masking the true depth of basic needs or academic insecurity across the broader student body. Moving forward, DACC learners are actively advocating for greater institutional flexibility to accommodate these realities, specifically requesting expanded night, weekend, and fully online course options, high-utility career services, and practical life-skills programming that fits their limited free time.