

# Spring 2021 gradSERU Survey – Executive Summary

The gradSERU survey, part of the [Student Experience in Research University \(SERU\) Consortium](#), is designed to examine students' experiences across the entire spectrum of their graduate career. CU Boulder uses SERU's comprehensive survey instrument to allow the university community to track progress on key indicators of the graduate school experience over time. Nearly all of the questions are crafted by the SERU consortium to provide consistency of findings across institutions. The survey is intended to help CU Boulder, the Graduate School and individual graduate programs understand more fully who our graduate students are—their backgrounds, identities, academic interests and career goals and to provide support to them.

The 2021 gradSERU survey marks the first in an ongoing series of surveys to be administered every two years. The gradSERU survey was administered to all graduate and professional students enrolled in spring 2021 (excluding students in MBA, Law, or entirely online programs). A total of 5,123 graduate and professional students were invited to take the gradSERU survey between March 29 and May 14, 2021. Overall, 1,445 students responded, for a response rate of 28%.

The gradSERU survey findings disaggregate the student experience and provide sufficient data for analysis at the academic discipline and program level and among various subpopulations. Full survey results are available in the [Tableau report](#). Below is an overview of some of the significant findings of the 2021 gradSERU survey.

## Survey Overview and Highlights

### Financial\*

- Seventy-five percent of graduate students were satisfied with their financial aid from all sources.
- A little over a quarter of respondents are concerned about paying for their education next year.
- Thirty-six percent of respondents reported feeling worried they do not have enough money to cover the cost of housing, and 15% reported they were worried that food would run out before they had money to buy more.

\* Note: the survey was administered before the [announcement of stipend increases and the remission of mandatory fees for graduate students on assistantship appointments](#).

### Academics and Advising

- Overall, 90% of graduate students indicated that their advisor is able to effectively help them with their graduate work.
- More than 80% of respondents rated CU Boulder's courses, programs and services favorably.
- Ninety-one percent of respondents report being treated fairly by faculty members in their program.

## Health and Well-being

- When asked about obstacles toward degree progress, the single greatest response from graduate students (47%) was “emotional health problems.”
- Eighty-one percent of respondents agreed that their program creates a collegial and supportive environment, and 85% reported a feeling of belonging.
- When students were asked about their awareness of mental health and wellness services, 91% of respondents reported that they were aware of [Counseling & Psychiatric Services \(CAPS\)](#) and 69% of respondents indicated that the CAPS availability was sufficient to meet their needs.
- Although many respondents reported that they were aware of the CAPS mental health services, 74% of respondents indicated they had never heard of SilverCloud Online, and 55% had never heard of Student Services Case Management.

## Career Plans

- Respondents indicated that the careers that they were most interested in were: industry/for profit sectors (75%), higher education institutions (63%), and government, noneducational institutions (61%).
- Because of changes in the economy and academic job market, graduate students reported a marked increase in interest in careers in industry/for-profit (40%) and government, noneducational institutions (31%). Increased interest in careers in non-profit organizations (26%) and higher education (24%) were smaller.
- Respondents showed some notable concerns about the availability of guidance in selecting academic (71% satisfaction) and nonacademic (55% satisfaction) career options.

## Equity and Diversity

In this area of the survey, students were asked comparative questions regarding whether the climate for various identity groups is "at least as good as" the climate for other identity groups.

- Ninety-six percent of respondents indicated that the climate for males is at least as good as it is for females. Alternatively, 76% of respondents indicated that the climate for females is as good as for males.
- Overall, 85% of graduate students indicated that the climate for LGBTQ+ students is as good as it is for heterosexual students. However, fewer LGBTQ+ respondents (76%) rated that they are experiencing the same climate as that of heterosexual students.
- Seventy-two percent of respondents indicated that the climate for students with disabilities is at least as good as it is for students without disabilities, with 54% of respondents who identify as having a disability indicating that the climate is the same.
- Overall, 67% of graduate students agreed that the climate in their programs for students in historically marginalized race and ethnicity groups is at least as good as it is for other students, with 55% of students of color and 51% of Asians being in agreement.
- Eleven percent of international students reported having experienced an instance of intimidating, hostile, or offensive behavior based on national origin during the academic year.
- In addition, international students reported that the following have been stressful: managing student visas (63%), and travel restrictions between the U.S. and home country (62%).