

# Collaboratively Envisioning an Improved Graduate Student Space

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Sharing results of a Grad Student Survey and considering  
the road forward

# Who we are: Jessica and Rhiannon



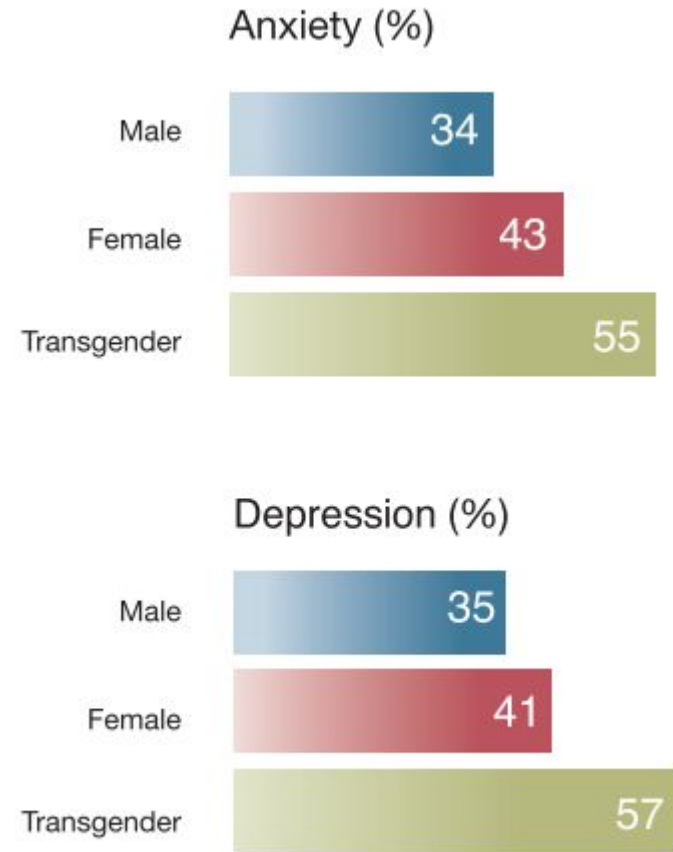
Jessica Sutter  
Department of Physics and  
Astronomy



Rhiannon Jakopak  
Department of Zoology, Haub School  
of ENR; Graduate Student Network

## Broader context

- Graduate students 6x more likely to experience depression and anxiety
- Low rates of completion (around 50% for doctoral, 60% for master's)
- Relationship with advisor correlates with anxiety and depression, completion
- **Overall lack of research**



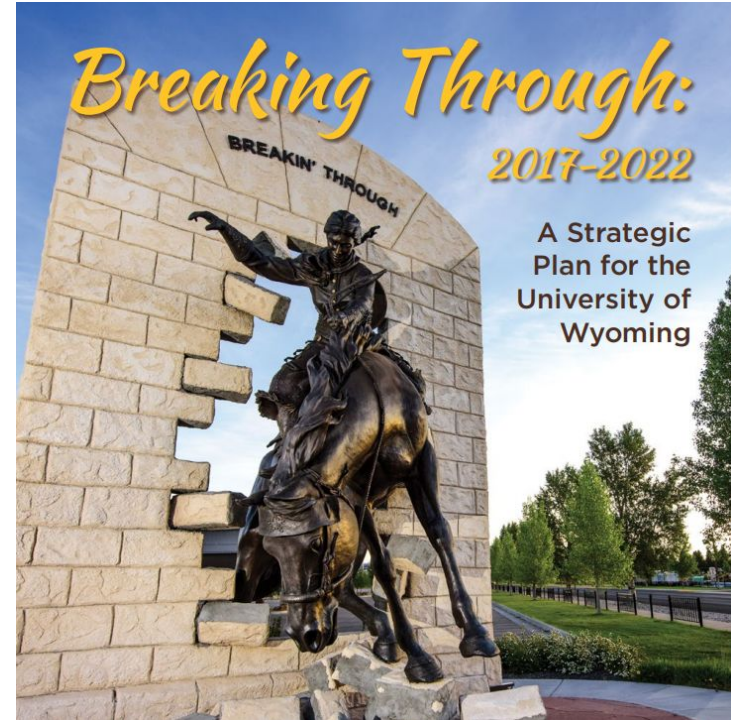
# Graduate education at UW

2400 graduate students (20% of students)

Strategic planning:

- Improve graduation rates
- Expand quality education
- Expand distance offerings
- Support success through new services
- Increase international graduate students

Four pillars: more digital, entrepreneurial, interdisciplinary, and inclusive



# Impetus for this survey

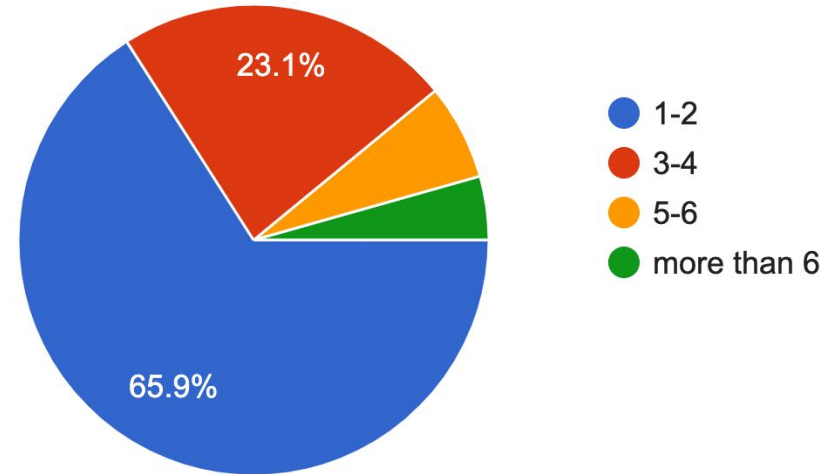
- Multiple conversations with graduate students across campus
- Graduate Student Social Network
- Led by graduate students working to better understand the current UWyo experience



# Survey Respondents

- 321 respondents from all colleges
- Both distance and on campus students
- ~90% domestic students
- Includes ~55% students pursuing masters degrees
  - Also EdD, PhD, JD, DNP, and MBA

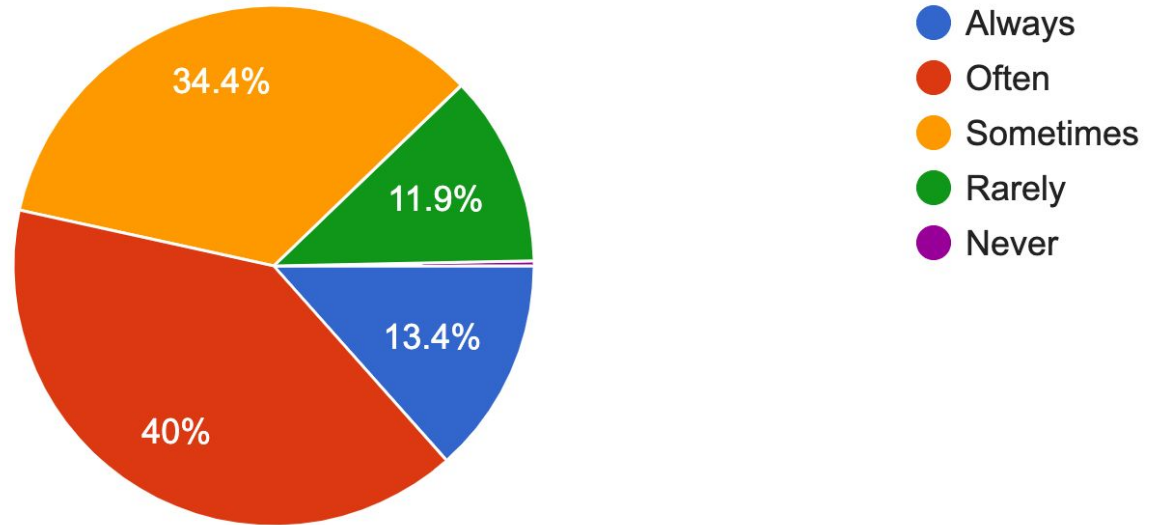
How many years have you been a graduate student at UW?





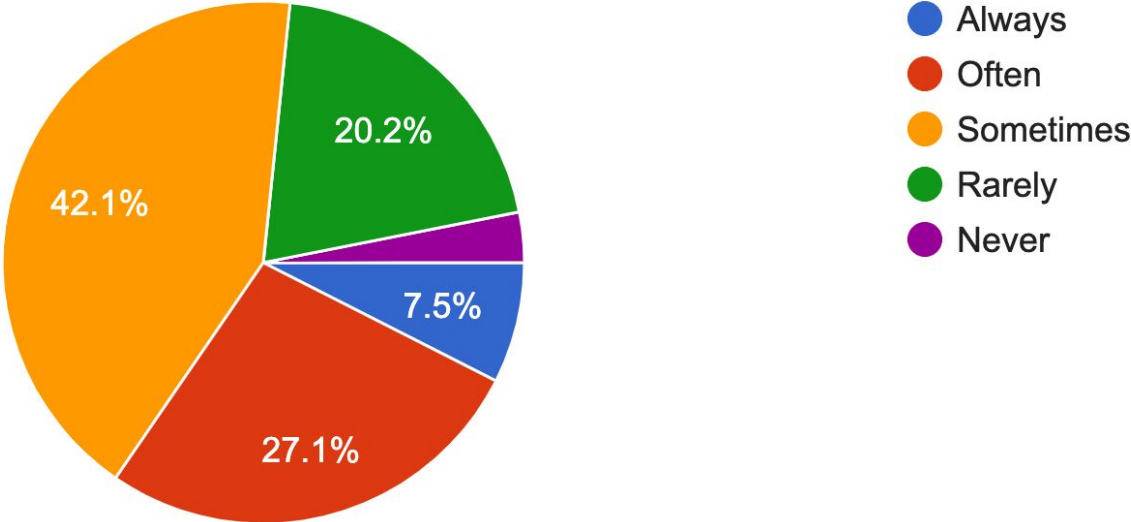
# How often do you feel overwhelmed by your required workload?

320 responses



# How often do you have stress that negatively impacts your work/school performance

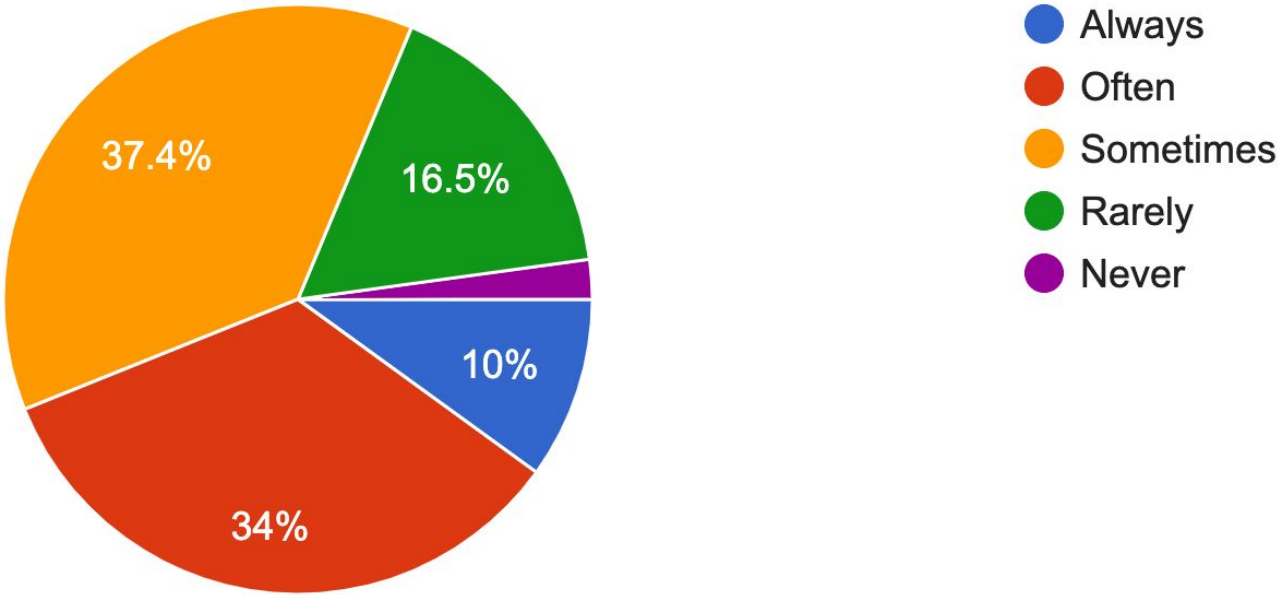
321 responses



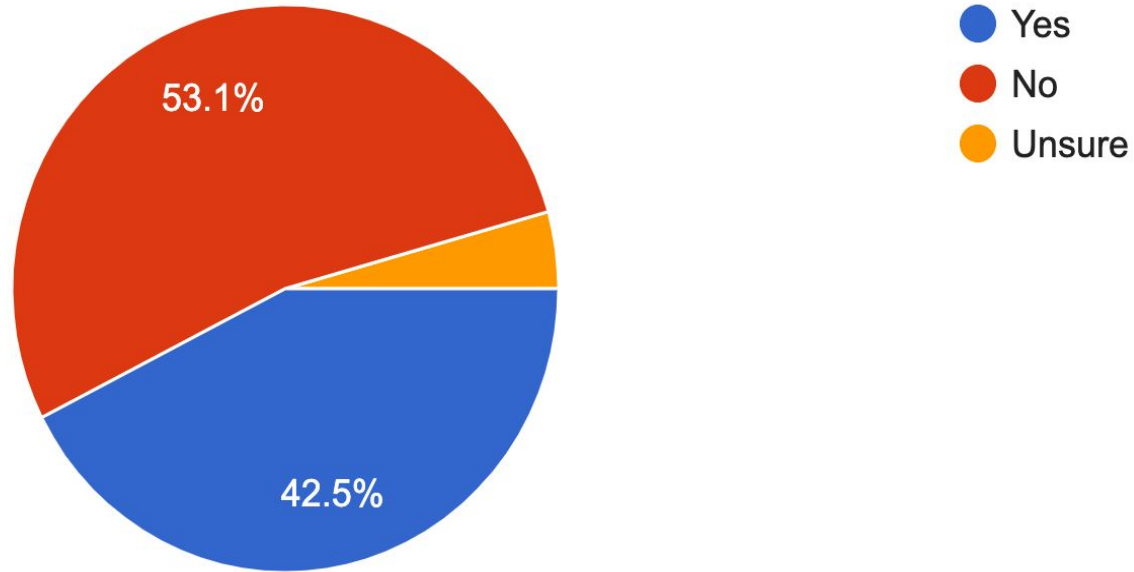


# How often do you have stress that negatively impacts your wellbeing?

321 responses



Have you ever seriously considered leaving your program before completing your desired degree?



# Focusing on the advisor/student relationship

- Major complaints were about negative advisor relationships paired with a lack of resources to address or monitor this issue
- Graduate students appreciate honesty, availability, rapid feedback, and advisors who see them as a whole person
- Graduate students want more career guidance, goal setting, clear expectations, and constructive feedback from advisors





# Specific Quotes from Survey relating to advisors

- “Be more understanding of time commitments. We spend so much time in the lab, class work is often neglected.”
- “Contact us at least once a semester to check on us.”
- “give feedback, be positive”
- “Outline how the PhD program will go, what I need to know, what are normal timelines for work. Instead I ask questions and get more work put on my plate and the process seems more opaque.”
- “Gave timely responses with answers to all the questions I ask. Gave me a clear idea of a timeline and stuck to it”

# Specific suggestions from graduate students

- Build a system for supporting graduate students who experience harassment or abuse from advisors
- Build spaces specifically for graduate student collaboration across campus
- Improve access to information about counselling services, program requirements, and paperwork

## *Opening and Dedication*

### **VINCENT J. WERNIG GRADUATE STUDENT READING ROOM**

**Saturday, October 29, 2016 • 4:00 – 6:30 PM**  
Second Floor, John D. Rockefeller, Jr. Library

**The Brown University Library welcomes  
all graduate students to attend the formal  
opening and dedication of the Wernig  
Graduate Student Reading Room.**



### **BROWN UNIVERSITY LIBRARY**

The Sorensen Family (Joan Wernig Sorensen '72, E. Paul Sorensen '71, ScM'75, PhD'77, Alice A. Sorensen '06, Christian P. Sorensen '06) generously funded the Reading Room in honor of Joan's late father, Vincent J. Wernig P'71, P'72, P'79, P'82, GP'06, GP'06, who was Assistant to the Chairman, Emeritus, and Executive Officer, Emeritus, in the Department of Chemistry at Brown.





# Comments from Distance Graduate Students

- Advisor/advisee relationships can be especially difficult for distance students
  - Some distance students do not know who their advisor is or have never met face to face, can add anxiety around meetings
- Lack of supportive infrastructure for distance graduate students
  - Distance students often feel like a burden on their departments or advisors
- Extra hurdles to submitting paperwork, communicating with committees, and determining the steps necessary to graduate

There is room for improvement in graduate education at UW. What can we (graduate students, faculty, administrators, etc.) do to improve the graduate student experience?

[bit.ly/SSGradStudent](https://bit.ly/SSGradStudent)

# Discussion Questions

- What are some of the changes we could make to improve the graduate program here at UW?
- What are some of the barriers to making positive changes for graduate students?
- Whose voices are missing from this survey?
- How do we track graduate students who leave and why they leave?
- What other questions should we be asking?
- If you are a graduate student who took this survey, how did you experience it?
- If you are a graduate student, how do you feel your voice is heard at the University? Do you know who takes care of graduate students?
- Graduate students: how did you develop your relationship with your advisor? Do you feel comfortable talking with them about major issues?