Dartmouth Dialogues Assessment

Fall 2025 Student Survey Results

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Based on a survey of Dartmouth students across all class years. This report examines student confidence in dialogue skills, beliefs about viewpoint diversity, and the role of dialogue initiatives in enrollment decisions.

Executive Summary

This report presents the topline results from the Dartmouth Dialogue Survey conducted in September 2025. This survey will be repeated in June of 2026 to measure the effect of the Dartmouth experience on the class of 2029.

The survey assessed students' confidence in engaging with diverse perspectives and their beliefs about the importance of viewpoint diversity in the Dartmouth community.

Key Findings:

- An overwhelming 85% of Dartmouth students express confidence in their ability to engage respectfully with differing viewpoints
- Over 90% of students believe that engaging with challenging perspectives is essential to their education, showing extraordinary campus-wide consensus on the value of intellectual diversity
- Students across all class years demonstrate consistent commitment to viewpoint diversity, reinforcing that these values are deeply embedded in Dartmouth's culture from day one. We're not recruiting students who think alike—we're recruiting students who like to think.
- More than half (66%) of incoming students identified dialogue and close to half identified (46%) institutional restraint as factors in choosing Dartmouth over other elite institutions, revealing these initiatives as key differentiators attracting the most intellectually open-minded students.

Survey Methodology:

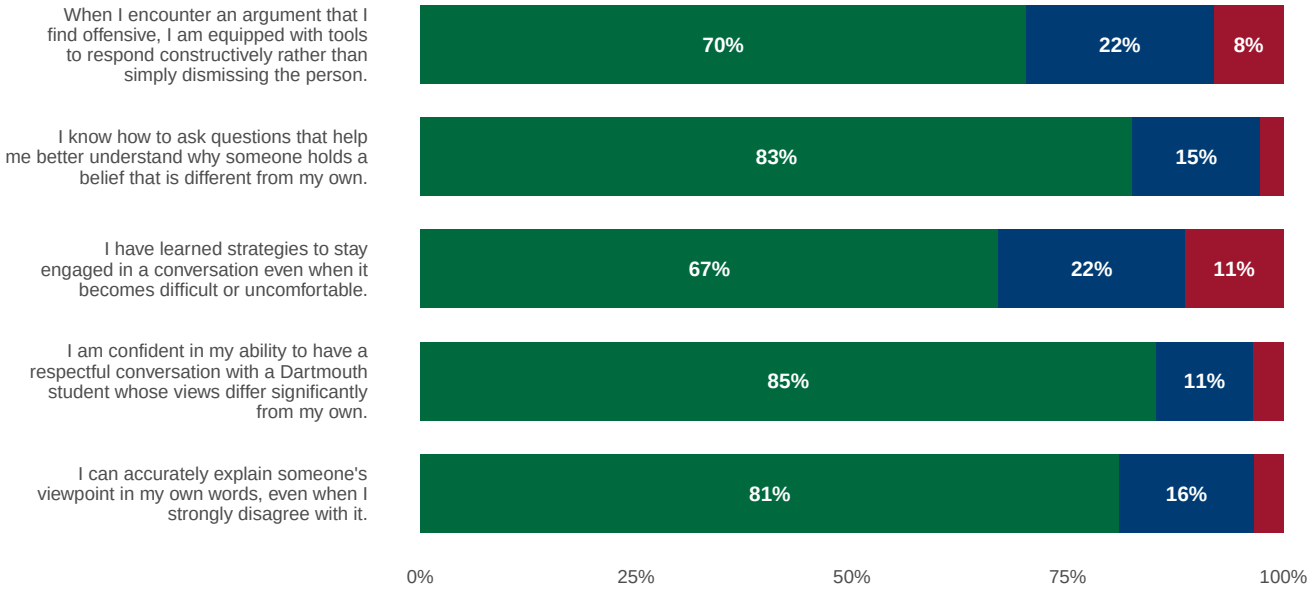
- **Collection Period:** September 19-23, 2025
- **Sample Size:** 845 respondents
- **Margin of Error:** ± 3.0%

Students are extremely confident in their ability to engage in constructive dialogue

The overwhelming majority of Dartmouth students demonstrate exceptional confidence in their dialogue skills. Over 85% of students are confident in having respectful conversations with those holding different views, while 81% have developed the sophisticated skill of accurately articulating opposing viewpoints. This reflects the success of Dartmouth's commitment to fostering intellectual diversity and civil discourse across campus.

Student Confidence in Dialogue Skills

Percentage of students who Agree, Neither Agree nor Disagree, or Disagree



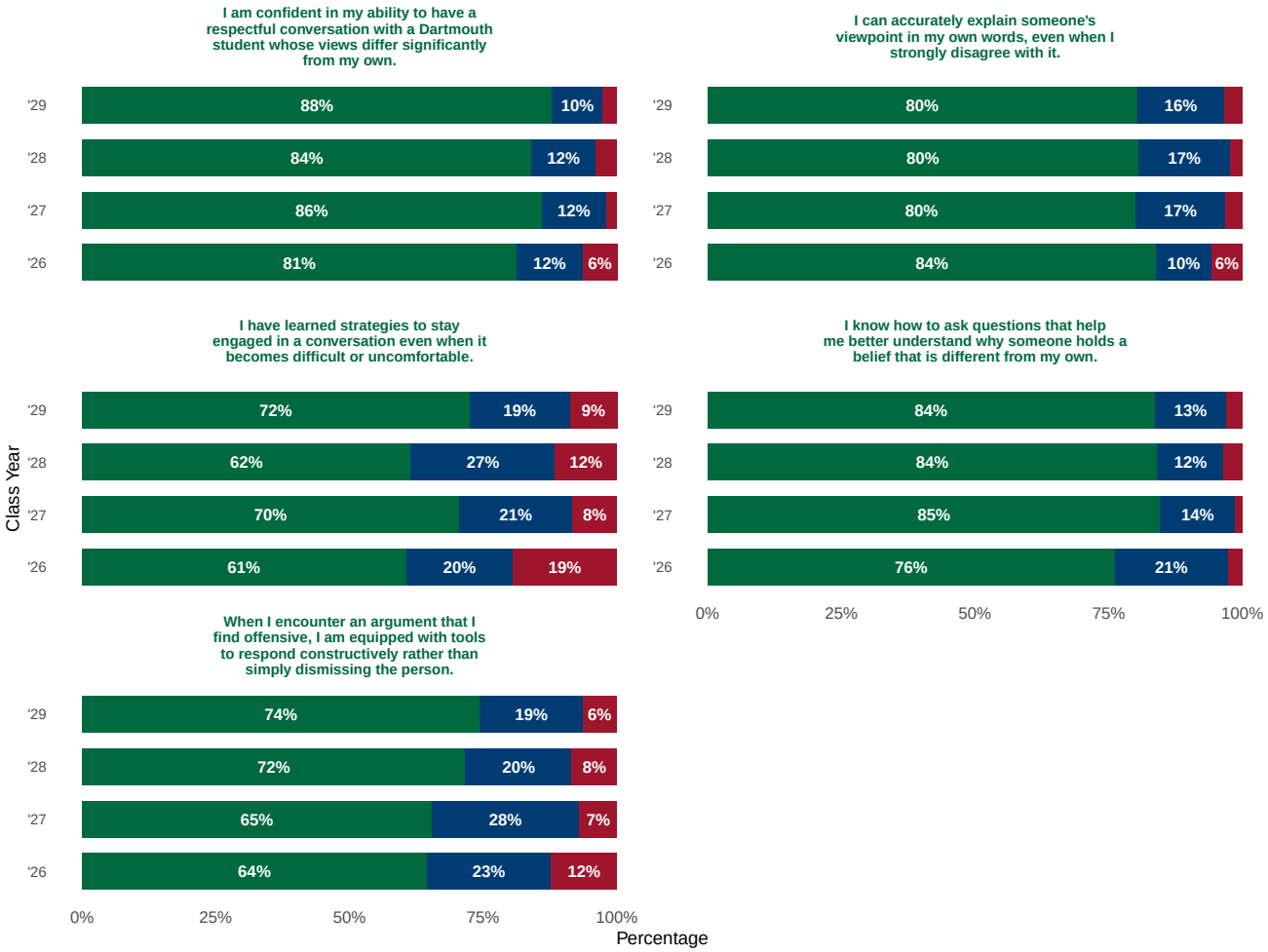
Margin of error: ± 3.0%; N = 842

Results by Class Year

Confidence in dialogue skills remains consistently high across all class years. The data reveals that both new and returning students embrace the culture of constructive engagement that defines the Dartmouth experience.

Student Confidence in Dialogue Skills by Class Year

Percentage of students who **Agree**, **Neither Agree nor Disagree**, or **Disagree**



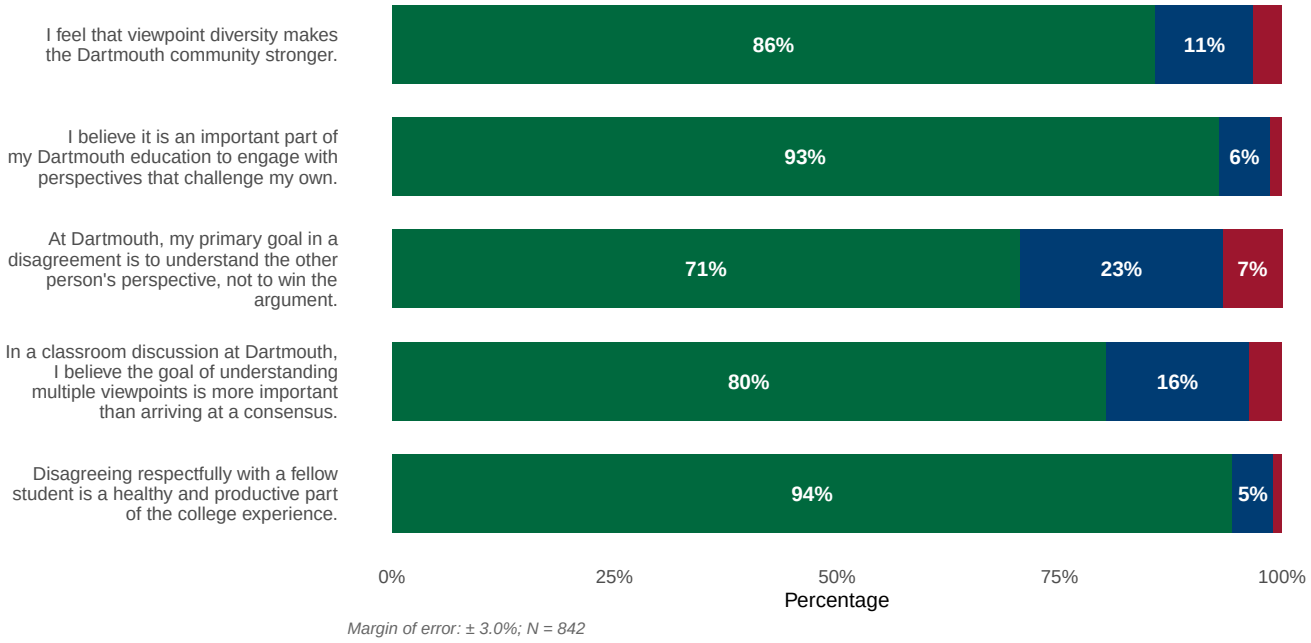
Margin of error: ± 3.0%; N = 846

Students resoundingly believe that viewpoint diversity is critical to Dartmouth

An extraordinary consensus emerges around the value of viewpoint diversity, with 93% of students believing that engaging with challenging perspectives is essential to their education. This near-universal agreement—71% to 94% on the tracked items—shows that Dartmouth students don't just tolerate different viewpoints; they actively seek and celebrate intellectual diversity as fundamental to their academic journey.

Beliefs About Viewpoint Diversity

Percentage of students who Agree, Neither Agree nor Disagree, or Disagree



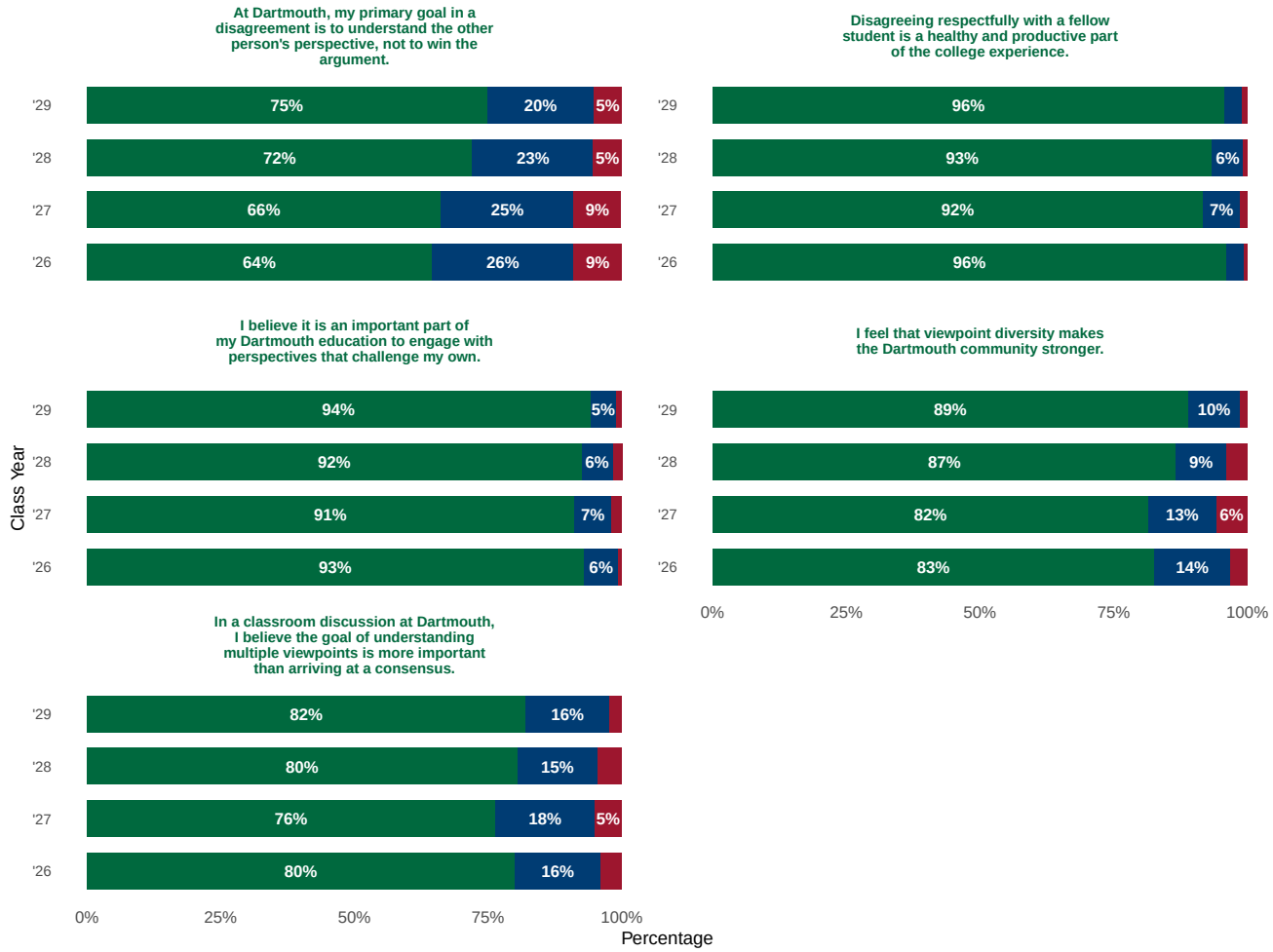
Margin of error: ± 3.0%; N = 842

Results by Class Year

This consistent support for diverse viewpoints spans across all class years, with each cohort demonstrating strong commitment to intellectual diversity. However, it is the case that the class of 2029 is particularly committed to dialogue. We are creating more than infrastructure for dialogue and we are attracting and nurturing young people who will thrive in spaces of intellectual exchange.

Beliefs About Viewpoint Diversity by Class Year

Percentage of students who **Agree**, **Neither Agree nor Disagree**, or **Disagree**



Margin of error: ± 3.0%; N = 846

How dialogue and restraint helped recruit the class of 2029

In a highly competitive admissions landscape where top students choose between elite institutions, Dartmouth's commitment to dialogue and institutional restraint emerges as a decisive differentiator. A majority of incoming students (66%) cited our commitment to dialogue as a factor in their enrollment decision, while 46% identified institutional restraint. Notably, many students were simply unaware of these initiatives when making their college choice, suggesting potential for even greater impact with improved communication. These initiatives attract students who actively seek diverse perspectives and rigorous debate, demonstrating that our first-year students arrive with a strong pre-existing commitment to intellectual diversity.

Influence of Dartmouth's commitment to dialogue

Percentage saying dialogue was Important, Not a Factor, or Unaware of Commitment in enrollment decision

Margin of error: ± 4.8%; N = 307

Influence of institutional restraint

Percentage saying institutional restraint was Important, Not a Factor, or Unaware of Policy in enrollment decision

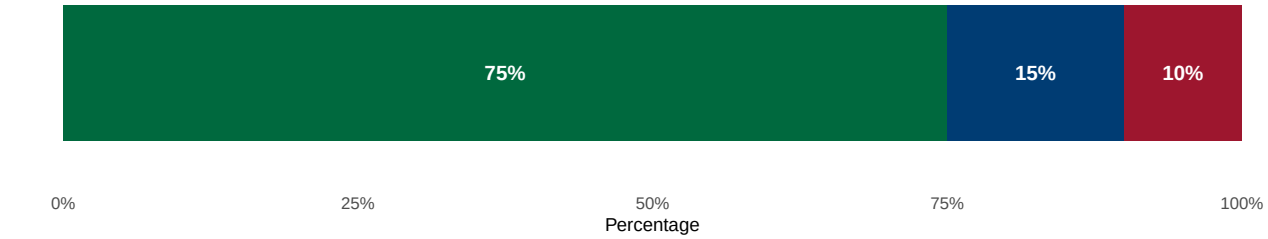
Margin of error: ± 4.8%; N = 308

Qualitative results

When asked to evaluate Dartmouth's effectiveness in preparing students for challenging ideas, an overwhelming 75% of students provided positive responses. This remarkable endorsement demonstrates that Dartmouth's dialogue-centered approach is not just theoretical but delivers tangible results to our students.

From your perspective, how effectively does the Dartmouth academic experience prepare students to engage with ideas they may find challenging or disagreeable?

Percentage of students who view Dartmouth's preparation as **Positive**, **Neutral/Mixed**, or **Negative**



N = 778

General themes

To examine how students at Dartmouth view dialogue, I first read each statement and developed a coding scheme based on the most common themes. I then used OpenAI's GPT-5 to classify each open-ended response by theme (it is possible for a single response to belong to multiple themes). The model's classifications matched human assessments more than 95 percent of the time. In total, there were 681 substantive responses—defined as answers longer than three words and extending beyond generic superlatives.

1. **Small Class Sizes and Seminars (39.2%)**
    - Frequently mentioned as key facilitator of meaningful dialogue
    - Discussion-based format allows for deeper engagement
    - Creates intimate environment for sharing diverse perspectives
2. **Skill Development and Learning Outcomes (31.4%)**
    - Learning to listen and understand
    - Developing critical thinking skills
    - Learning respectful disagreement and constructive dialogue
3. **Diversity of Student Body (18.4%)**
    - Students from varied backgrounds enrich discussions
    - Geographic and cultural diversity brings different perspectives
    - Admission process intentionally creates diverse community

4. **Faculty Role and Support (14.1%)**
    - Professors actively encourage diverse viewpoints
    - Faculty create safe spaces for disagreement
    - Structured facilitation helps productive dialogue
5. **Institutional Culture (13.5%)**
    - Emphasis on collaborative learning
    - Respect for differing opinions embedded in culture
    - Open-mindedness as institutional value
6. **Structured Programs and Initiatives (13.2%)**
    - Specific programs like Dartmouth Dialogues
    - Orientation programs or workshops
    - OPAL talks/Rocky Events/other speaker series
7. **Real-World Preparation (7.9%)**
    - Classroom discussions simulate real-world debates
    - Skills transfer beyond academic setting
    - Preparation for professional and civic engagement

Exemplar responses

The following responses exemplify student sentiment about dialogue.

- "We are taught how to interact and share our opinions in ways that allow us to just listen and accept that people have different experiences and options during different programs during O week. It feels like it is effective because I've been able to hold conversation with people who have different views and still converse in polite conversation"
- "Dartmouth gives students many resources to engage with opinions that differ from their own, and, in my experience, professors encourage this experience. Both in and outside of the classroom, we are prepared to enter into dialogue with differing viewpoints."
- "Well! I think there is a real culture of dialogue"
- "Dartmouth encourages open mindedness, allowing for intellectual conversation. With their admission process, they bring students from different walks of life to converge and compare ideas."
- "Dartmouth encourages healthy debate which is structured and monitored by experienced individuals like professors to help one understand the opposing perspective rather than dismiss it."
- "At Dartmouth, we are placed into very collaborative environments where ideas are constantly clashing. Early on at Dartmouth, you are learning to defend your own ideas while trying to understand opposing ideas."
- "Very effectively. Dartmouth encourages us to discuss and deliberate our positions, as well as to reconsider them when presented with new information, constantly evaluating the information available to us and making the best choices and decisions we can given that information."

- "Very well. Dartmouth classes are very conducive to discussion where people from opposite ends of campus, and the world, share their differing views on contentious issues."
- "Dartmouth is a school of diverse backgrounds, which brings the chance of collaborating with different ideas and thoughts. This is a place where you will feel challenged and get a better understanding of your thoughts from various perspectives. This challenging nature has made ideas more concrete and thoughtful than ever."
- "Very well, Dartmouth Political Union, Dartmouth Dialogues, and other programs give students opportunity to engage in civil discourse."
- "Dartmouth does a great job at it. Small classes are more conducive to productive dialogue."
- "Very well, especially in my government classes, professors foster a space where disagreement is not only tolerated but encouraged"
- "Very well – I often have debate in my classes and we study heavily how to evaluate claims and take an educated stance." "With the Perspectives curriculum and Dialogues program, I think that Dartmouth makes it accessible to engage with different ideas. In classes as well, we discuss many perspectives and ideas (like in Humanities 1 with perspectives on the works we read)."

Appendix: Tables

Section 1: Confidence in Dialogue Skills

Overall Results

Statement	Agree	Neither	Disagree
I am confident in my ability to have a respectful conversation with a Dartmouth student whose views differ significantly from my own.	85.3%	11.2%	3.6%
I have learned strategies to stay engaged in a conversation even when it becomes difficult or uncomfortable.	67%	21.6%	11.4%
I can accurately explain someone's viewpoint in my own words, even when I strongly disagree with it.	81%	15.6%	3.4%
When I encounter an argument that I find offensive, I am equipped with tools to respond constructively rather than simply dismissing the person.	70.2%	21.7%	8.1%
I know how to ask questions that help me better understand why someone holds a belief that is different from my own.	82.5%	14.7%	2.7%

Results by Class Year

Statement	'26	'27	'28	'29
I am confident in my ability to have a respectful conversation with a Dartmouth student whose views differ significantly from my own.	81.3%	85.9%	84.1%	87.9%
I have learned strategies to stay engaged in a conversation even when it becomes difficult or uncomfortable.	60.6%	70.5%	61.5%	72.5%
I can accurately explain someone's viewpoint in my own words, even when I strongly disagree with it.	83.9%	80.1%	80.5%	80.3%
When I encounter an argument that I find offensive, I am equipped with tools to respond constructively rather than simply dismissing the person.	64.5%	65.4%	71.7%	74.4%
I know how to ask questions that help me better understand why someone holds a belief that is different from my own.	76.1%	84.6%	84.1%	83.6%

Section 2: Beliefs About Viewpoint Diversity

Overall Results

Statement	Agree	Neither	Disagree
I believe it is an important part of my Dartmouth education to engage with perspectives that challenge my own.	92.9%	5.8%	1.3%
In a classroom discussion at Dartmouth, I believe the goal of understanding multiple viewpoints is more important than arriving at a consensus.	80.2%	16.1%	3.7%
I feel that viewpoint diversity makes the Dartmouth community stronger.	85.7%	11%	3.2%
Disagreeing respectfully with a fellow student is a healthy and productive part of the college experience.	94.4%	4.6%	0.9%
At Dartmouth, my primary goal in a disagreement is to understand the other person's perspective, not to win the argument.	70.6%	22.8%	6.6%

Results by Class Year

Statement	'26	'27	'28	'29
I believe it is an important part of my Dartmouth education to engage with perspectives that challenge my own.	92.9%	91.1%	92.5%	94.1%
In a classroom discussion at Dartmouth, I believe the goal of understanding multiple viewpoints is more important than arriving at a consensus.	80%	76.4%	80.5%	82%
I feel that viewpoint diversity makes the Dartmouth community stronger.	82.6%	81.5%	86.7%	88.9%
Disagreeing respectfully with a fellow student is a healthy and productive part of the college experience.	96.1%	91.7%	93.4%	95.7%
At Dartmouth, my primary goal in a disagreement is to understand the other person's perspective, not to win the argument.	64.5%	66.2%	72.1%	74.8%

Section 3: Enrollment Decision Factors

Influence of Dialogue Commitment

Response Category	Percentage
Important (Primary, Significant, or Minor Factor)	66.1%
Not a Factor	16.6%
Unaware of Commitment	17.3%

Influence of Institutional Restraint

Section 4: Qualitative Results

Response Category	Percentage
Important (Primary, Significant, or Minor Factor)	46.3%
Not a Factor	21.8%
Unaware of Policy	31.9%

Sentiment Category	Percentage
Positive	75%
Neutral/Mixed	15%
Negative	10%

Sample Demographics

Class Year	Number of Respondents	Percentage
26	155	18.3%
27	157	18.6%
28	226	26.7%
29	307	36.3%

Date	Number of Responses
2025-09-23	804
2025-09-24	36
2025-09-25	5

Methodology

1. **Sampling frame & recruitment**: All enrolled Dartmouth undergraduate students were directly emailed and asked to participate in this survey. Students were offered $10 for their time.
2. **Recoding**: “Strongly Disagree” and “Disagree” were combined into “Disagree;” “Strongly Agree” and “Agree” were combined into “Agree”
3. **Missing data**: Students could opt-out of answering any question but did not do so. Only four students declined to answer one of the questions.
4. **Contemporaneous events**: The study was conducted during the second week of classes. An anti-Semitic incident occurred the week before, but no major campus events took place during fielding.
5. **Weighting**: The data are presented without weights. Differences in demographic composition across class years and the small size of certain subgroups make weighting unreliable.

Follow-up in 2026

These exact questions will be repeated at the end of the Spring term in 2026 to assess progress over the year.

Question wording

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements.

The following scale was used: Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neither Agree nor Disagree, Agree, Strongly Agree

1. I am confident in my ability to have a respectful conversation with a Dartmouth student whose views differ significantly from my own.
2. I have learned strategies to stay engaged in a conversation even when it becomes difficult or uncomfortable.
3. I can accurately explain someone's viewpoint in my own words, even when I strongly disagree with it.
4. When I encounter an argument that I find offensive, I am equipped with tools to respond constructively rather than simply dismissing the person.
5. I know how to ask questions that help me better understand why someone holds a belief that is different from my own.
6. I believe it is an important part of my Dartmouth education to engage with perspectives that challenge my own.
7. In a classroom discussion at Dartmouth, I believe the goal of understanding multiple viewpoints is more important than arriving at a consensus.
8. I feel that viewpoint diversity makes the Dartmouth community stronger.
9. Disagreeing respectfully with a fellow student is a healthy and productive part of the college experience.
10. At Dartmouth, my primary goal in a disagreement is to understand the other person's perspective, not to win the argument.

Open end:

11. From your perspective, how effectively does the Dartmouth academic experience prepare students to engage with ideas they may find challenging or disagreeable?

Asked only of the class of 2029:

12. Thinking back to when you were choosing which college to attend, how much did Dartmouth's stated commitment to fostering dialogue across difference influence your decision to enroll here?

    - It was a primary factor in my decision.
    - It was a significant factor, but not a primary one.
    - It was a minor factor.

- It was not a factor in my decision.
- I was unaware of this specific commitment before I decided to enroll.

13. Thinking back to when you were choosing a college, what role did Dartmouth's policy of institutional restraint–the principle that the college itself does not take official positions on controversial social and political issues–play in your decision to enroll?

    - It was a primary factor in my decision.
    - It was a significant factor, but not a primary one.
    - It was a minor factor.
    - It was not a factor in my decision.
    - I was unaware of this policy before I decided to enroll.