

This report on Wyoming residents' opinions concerning the University of Wyoming is from the Wyoming Election Survey, a statewide telephone poll conducted biennially by the University of Wyoming's Survey Research Center under the sponsorship of the School of Politics, Public Affairs & International Studies, the Center for Research & Evaluation of the Wyoming Survey and Analysis Center, and other University offices. These data are from interviews conducted in early October.

The Wyoming Election Survey was created in 1972 by Oliver Walter, currently professor emeritus of political science and dean emeritus of the College of Arts and Sciences. Jim King, professor of political science, directed the survey in 2020. Survey respondents are asked questions regarding their views on public officials, candidates for elective office, and selected public policy issues. Interviews are conducted by telephone, with numbers for both landlines and cell phones included in the sampling frame. The random sample is drawn by and the interviews are conducted by staff members of the UW Survey Research Center. The survey's margin of error for the complete sample is plus or minus four percent; the margin of error for subsamples are larger and dependent upon the number of respondents to a particular question.

## **I. Perceptions of the University of Wyoming**

A set of questions designed to gauge public perceptions of the University of Wyoming regarding the quality of education provided and the university's role in the state were included in surveys conducted in 2020, 2018, and 2016. Survey responses in 2020 were similar to those in 2018 and 2016, indicating no significant changes in how UW is regarded within the state.\*

Overall, survey respondents give the University of Wyoming positive ratings in all areas. It can be said categorically that UW is viewed favorably within the state. (Question wordings and frequency of responses in the 2020, 2018, and 2016 surveys are provided in the appendix.)

In particular, UW is well regarded in Wyoming for the quality of education students receive. Survey respondents gave the university its most favorable rating on providing an excellent undergraduate education:

- 87% of survey respondents rate the university "excellent" or "good" in its appeal to Wyoming students and their families (Question #8 in the appendix).
- 68% of all respondents and 82% of those with an opinion on the question rate UW favorably on providing an excellent undergraduate education (Question #5).

---

\* Any differences across years are attributable to sampling error for the surveys.

- 68% of all respondents and 85% of those with an opinion on the question give UW offer positive ratings for providing a safe campus (Question #7).
- 61% of all respondents and 73% of those with an opinion on the question offer positive ratings for educating people to participate in the state’s workforce (Question #1).
- 53% of all respondents and 64% of those with an opinion on the question rate UW positively for keeping tuition as low as possible.

The people most familiar with the University of Wyoming are those who have received degrees from UW. Fourteen percent of this year’s respondents hold a UW degree and these survey respondents are especially positive in their evaluations:

- 92% of UW graduates in our survey rate the quality of their educational experience as “excellent” or “good” (Question #10).
- 87% of UW graduates rate the relevance of their educational experience as “excellent” or “good” (Question #11).

The University also receives favorable responses concerning its connections with the state more broadly.

- 60% of all respondents and 74% of those with an opinion on the question rate UW positively (“excellent” or “good”) for being responsive to the state and its citizens (Question #4).
- 56% of all respondents and 64% of those with an opinion on the question rate UW positively for having a strong level of engagement in their community (Question #6).
- 59% of respondents and 60% of those with an opinion on the question offer UW positive assessments for fielding athletic teams that are competitive nationally (Question #2).

In summary, the state’s residents have high opinions of the University of Wyoming. Assessments vary slightly by question but, across this range of questions, the people of Wyoming exhibit support for and pride in UW.

## II. Grading Wyoming’s Educational Institutions

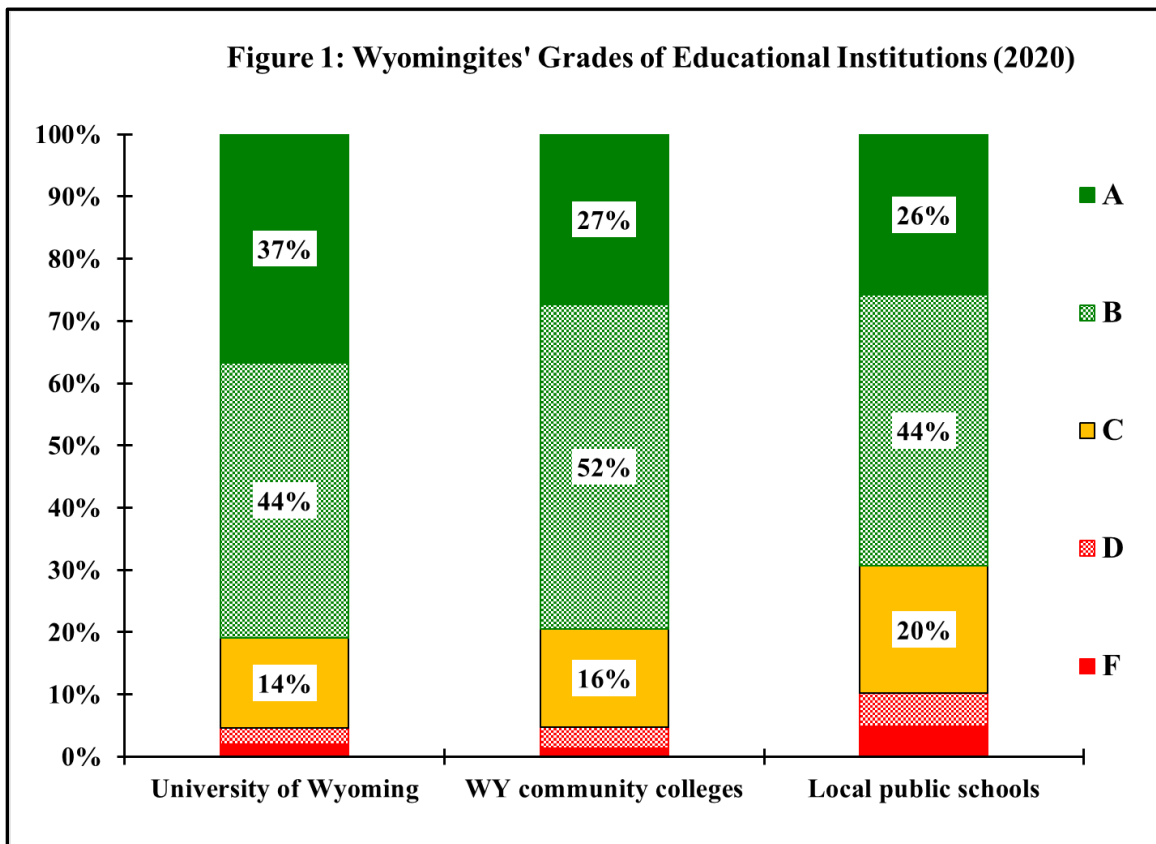
Recent iterations of the Wyoming survey have included the following questions regarding educational institutions:

*Students are given grades A, B, C, D and F for the quality of their work. Suppose the public schools in your community were graded in the same way. What grade would you give your local public schools?*

*What about the state’s community colleges? What grade would you give to them?*

*And finally, what about the University of Wyoming? What grade would you give the University for the quality of its work?*

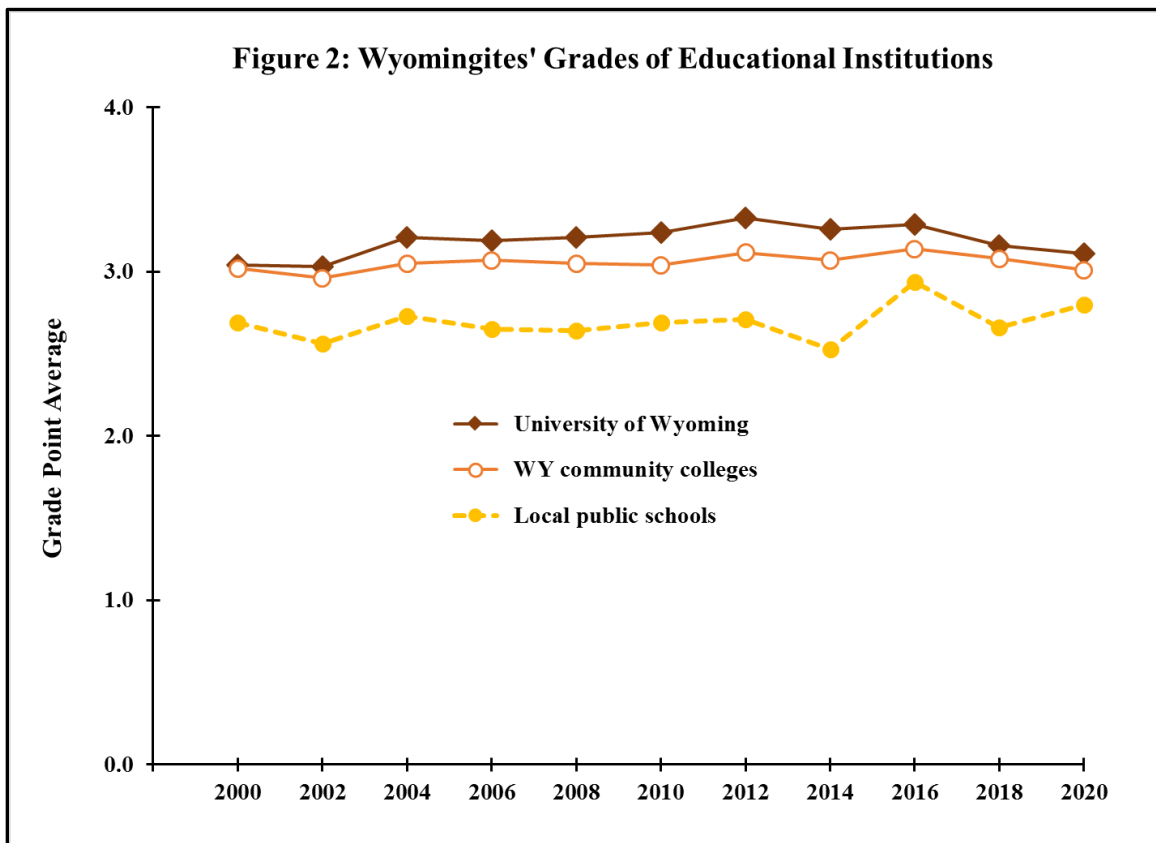
Figure 1 shows that Wyoming citizens rate the University of Wyoming slightly more favorably than they do the state’s community colleges or their local public schools. More than one third of the 2020 survey’s respondents assigned a grade of “A” to the University of Wyoming. In all, four out of five of respondents assigning a grade to UW chose “A” or “B”; only one in twenty believed UW is failing in its mission.



The “grade distribution” for Wyoming’s community colleges is similar to that for UW, although fewer survey respondents offered community colleges an “A” grade. Local public schools are viewed favorably, with two-thirds of survey respondents assigning a grade of “B” or higher. Overall, however, UW receives higher marks than the state’s other educational institutions.

The pattern of responses in the 2020 Wyoming survey reflect those of prior years. For purposes of cross-time comparisons, a Grade Point Average similar to what students receive was calculated for the three institutions over the past ten statewide surveys. As seen in Figure 2, UW consistently receives higher grades, followed by the community colleges and local public schools. Additionally, the twenty-year trend in assessments of UW has been slightly upward.

It is important to note that Wyoming’s residents evaluate educational institutions at all levels favorably. In most years, UW has a B+ average while the community colleges and local public schools have “B” and B-” averages, respectively. None of the state’s educational institutions receives a below average or failing marks.



## Appendix

### Survey Questions Pertaining to the University of Wyoming

*“Please rate the performance of the University of Wyoming on the following activities. Is the university’s performance excellent, good, fair, or poor.”*

1. Educating young people to participate in Wyoming’s workforce.

	2020	2018	2016
Excellent	19%	15%	20%
Good	42%	45%	47%
Fair	18%	19%	15%
Poor	3%	3%	3%
Don't know/Not sure	17%	18%	15%

2. Having athletic teams that are competitive nationally.

	2020	2018	2016
Excellent	15%	9%	10%
Good	44%	40%	40%
Fair	24%	32%	31%
Poor	6%	7%	10%
Don't know/Not sure	10%	11%	10%

3. Keeping tuition as low as possible.

	2020	2018	2016
Excellent	18%	19%	20%
Good	35%	38%	38%
Fair	24%	18%	23%
Poor	6%	8%	5%
Don't know/Not sure	17%	18%	13%

4. Being responsive to the needs of the state and its citizens.

	2020	2018	2016
Excellent	14%	12%	14%
Good	46%	44%	52%
Fair	21%	22%	18%
Poor	5%	7%	4%
Don't know/Not sure	14%	15%	12%

5. Providing an excellent undergraduate education.

	2020	2018	2016
Excellent	23%	20%	27%
Good	45%	44%	44%
Fair	14%	14%	14%
Poor	2%	2%	1%
Don't know/Not sure	17%	20%	14%

6. Having a strong level of engagement with your community.

	2020	2018	2016
Excellent	19%	14%	19%
Good	37%	41%	42%
Fair	23%	24%	20%
Poor	9%	10%	9%
Don't know/Not sure	12%	11%	10%

7. Maintaining a safe campus for students, employees and visitors.

	2020	2018	2016
Excellent	23%	20%	23%
Good	45%	41%	50%
Fair	10%	8%	8%
Poor	2%	2%	1%
Don't know/Not sure	20%	29%	18%

8. How well do you think the University of Wyoming appeals to Wyoming students and their families as a desirable place to attend college?

	2020	2018	2016
Excellent	26%	26%	26%
Good	61%	59%	61%
Fair	7%	8%	8%
Poor	1%	1%	2%
Don't know/Not sure	5%	6%	4%

9. Have you received a degree from the University of Wyoming?

	2020	2018	2016
Yes	14%	16%	14%
No	86%	85%	86%

10. If yes, what was your perception of the quality of the educational experience?

	2020	2018	2016
Excellent	49%	43%	35%
Good	43%	50%	53%
Fair	4%	6%	9%
Poor	4%	2%	3%
Don't know/Not sure	0%	0%	0%

11. If yes, what was your perception of the relevance of their educational experience?

	2020	2018	2016
Excellent	43%	44%	21%
Good	44%	42%	62%
Fair	10%	13%	15%
Poor	2%	2%	1%
Don't know/Not sure	0%	0%	1%

---

This summary prepared by:

Jim King, Professor of Political Science  
School of Politics, Public Affairs & International Studies  
University of Wyoming  
1000 E. University Ave., Dept. 3197  
Laramie, WY 82071  
E-mail: [jking@uwyo.edu](mailto:jking@uwyo.edu)