

2018-2019 STUDENT ASSOCIATION

# CLASSROOM CLICKER REPORT

An Affordability Snapshot



# 2019 CLASSROOM CLICKER REPORT

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Affordability continues to be a cornerstone issue that students face at GW, especially in relation to academic equipment fees. According to the 2018 Student Association Affordability Report, “nearly 80% of undergraduate students reported having to pay academic fees in a given semester, with over 50% of students paying more than \$50 a semester.” These costs can sometimes pose as a financial barrier for students looking to enroll in a certain class, thus limiting the course's accessibility.

After hearing numerous concerns from students, there is one type of academic fee that stands out in particular: clickers. Clickers are classroom response systems that can take the form of either a handheld device or a virtual app/website. Used for everything from attendance to in-class quizzing, these services streamline many day-to-day tasks for professors.

However, purchasing clickers often becomes very expensive, especially due to the lack of an enforced universal system. With no standard system mandated across classes, professors are free to choose whichever system they feel is best, sometimes to the detriment of students who are forced to purchase multiple subscriptions to different companies. These costs quickly accumulate, and can sometimes even exceed \$200 throughout a student's time at GW.

To further understand the parameters of this issue, the Student Association sent out two surveys: the first to the entire student body and the second to 102 clicker-using faculty. With over 850 responses between the two surveys, it is clear that academic affordability must be prioritized by Student Association leaders and the GW administration. Academic equipment like clickers should not have to come at an unnecessary or redundant cost to students. Thus, we hope this report will provide the evidence necessary to catalyze the reduction of the financial barriers between students and their education.

## **Nicole Cennamo**

Vice President for Academic Affairs

## **Rilind Abazi**

Undergraduate ESIA Senator

## **Matthew Ludovico**

Undergraduate At-Large Senator

## **Amy Martin**

Undergraduate ESIA Senator

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# TRENDS AT A GLANCE



**70%**

*of students spent over \$25 on clickers in the Fall 2018 semester.*

**87%**

*of professors require TurningPoint, making it the most used system by the faculty.*

**39%**

*of students have had to use multiple clicker systems while at GW.*

**53%**

*of students spent over \$50 on clickers throughout their time at GW.*

**83%**

*of faculty would be willing to abide by a university-wide standardized clicker system.*

**59%**

*of students have used iClicker, making it the system that students are using most frequently.*

A group of students are seated around a long wooden table in a meeting room. They are looking towards the front of the room, some with laptops open. A large yellow rectangular overlay is positioned in the center of the image, containing the text 'STUDENT SURVEY RESULTS' in white, bold, sans-serif font. The background shows a modern interior with large windows and a white wall.

# STUDENT SURVEY RESULTS



# ABOUT THE STUDENT SURVEY

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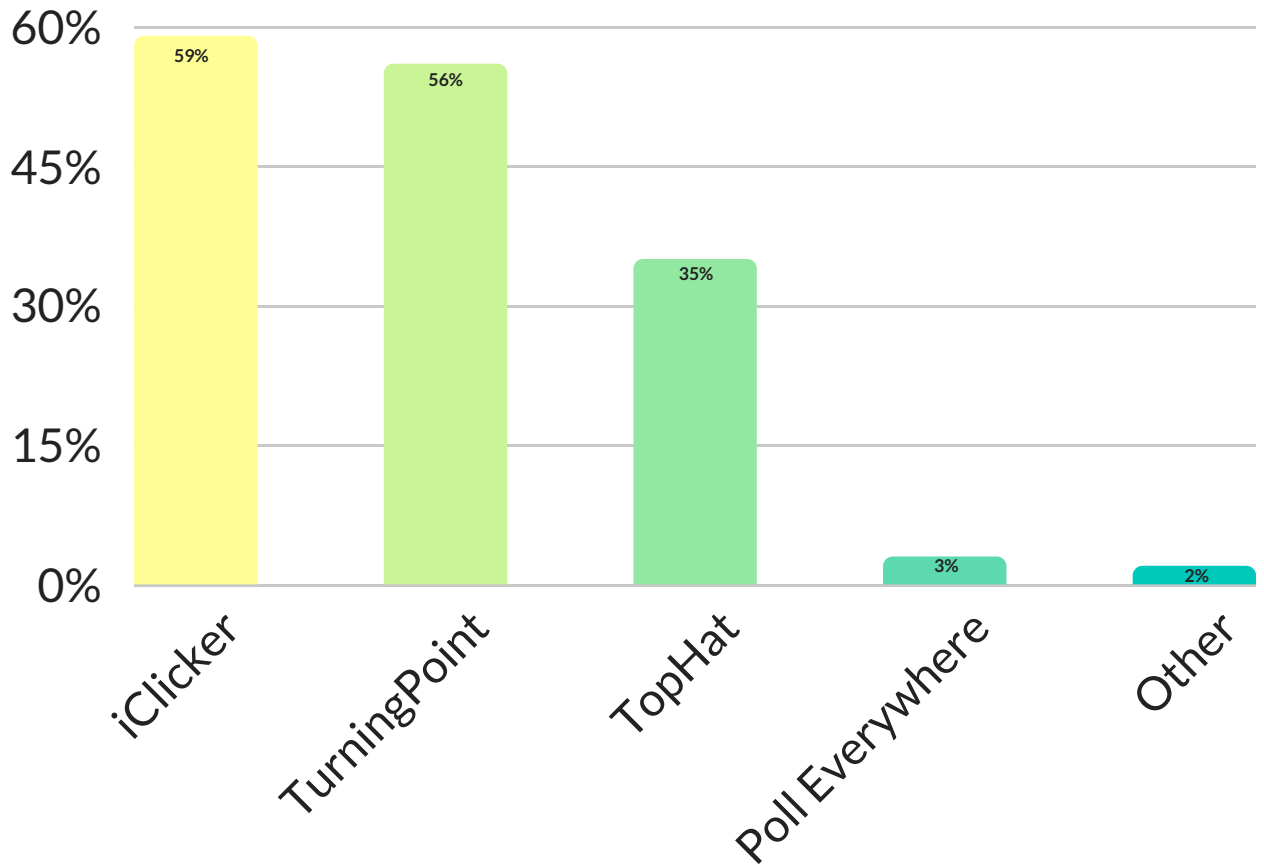
The Student Classroom Clicker Survey was sent out to all students on November 15th and remained open for 28 days. It was promoted through the Student Association weekly newsletter, the Student Association website, and social media pages.

In total, 807 students responded to this survey, with 674 respondents indicating that they have used a clicker system. Up to 133 of respondents indicated that they have never used a clicker by selecting the answer choice "Not Applicable." For this reason, the data presented on the next few pages will only include the responses of students who have utilized clickers.

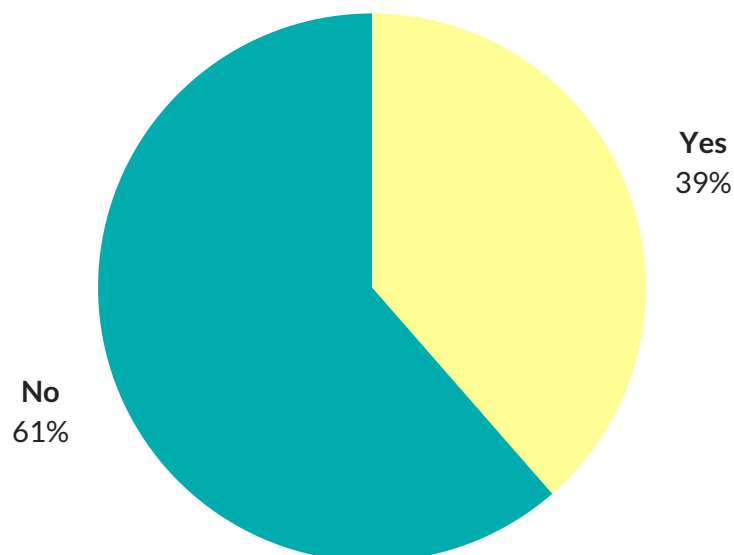
See Appendix A for a breakdown of the number of respondents from each class year.



## What clicker systems have you used throughout your time at GW?



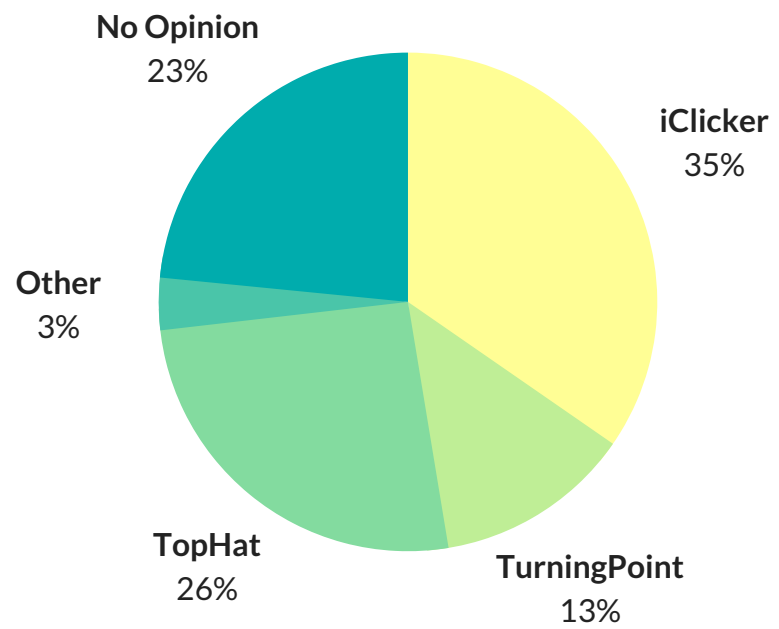
## Have you ever had to use more than one clicker system while at GW?





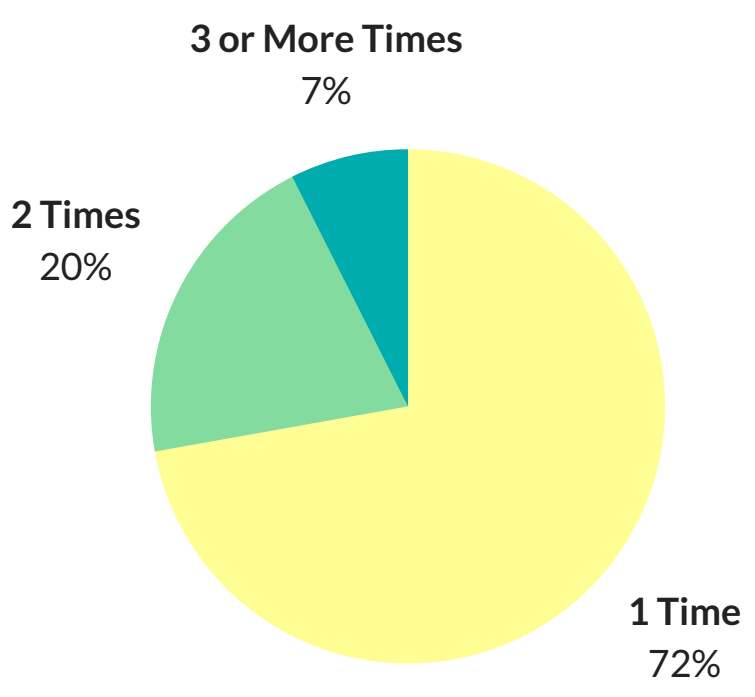
## If you have used more than one clicker system, which do you prefer?

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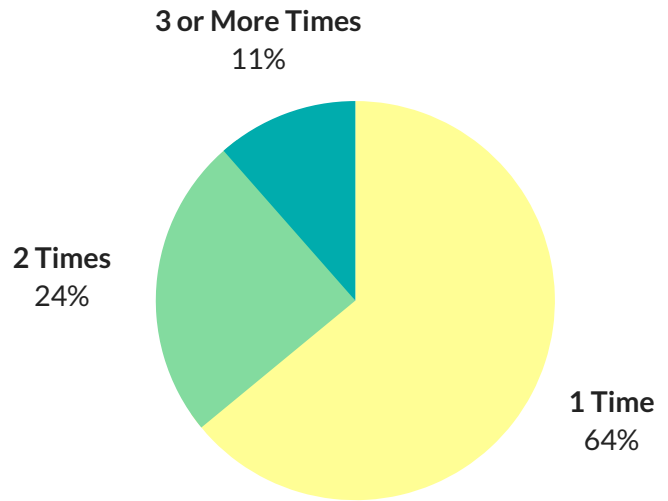


## How many times have you had to purchase a clicker or a subscription?

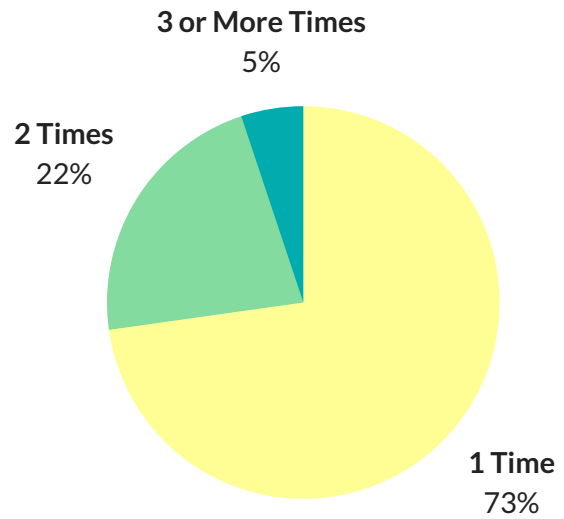
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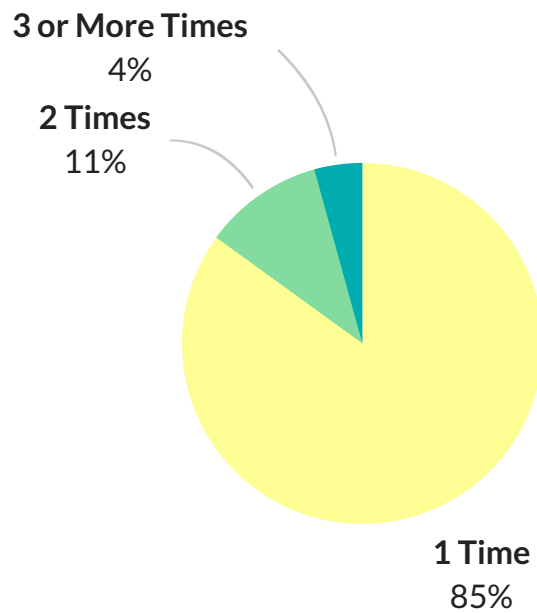
# iClicker



# TurningPoint



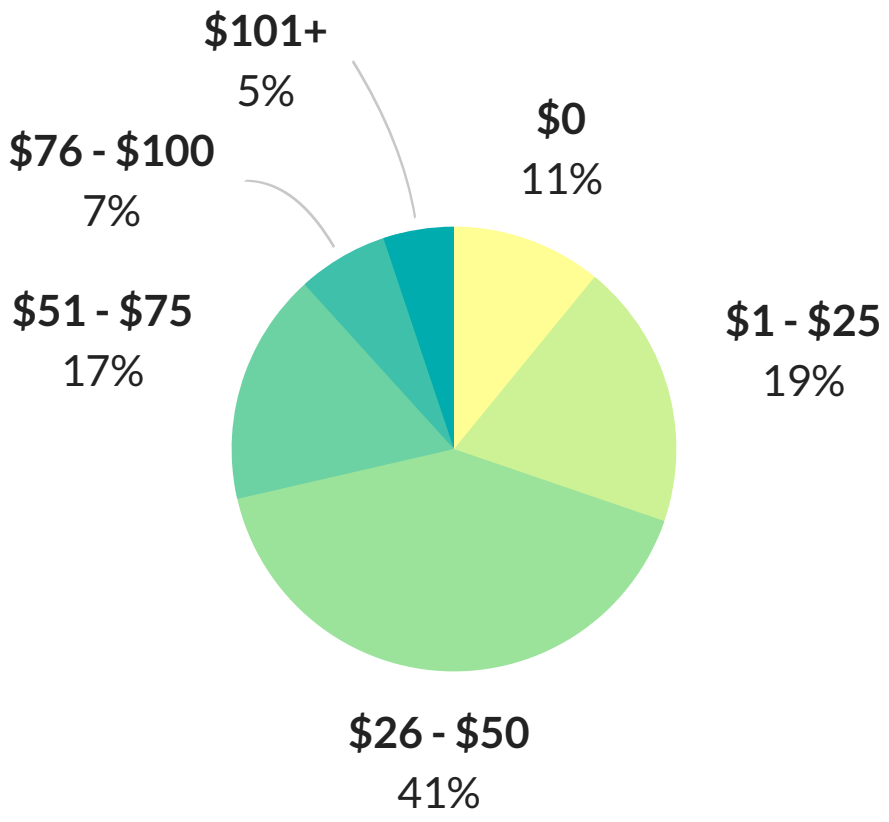
# TopHat





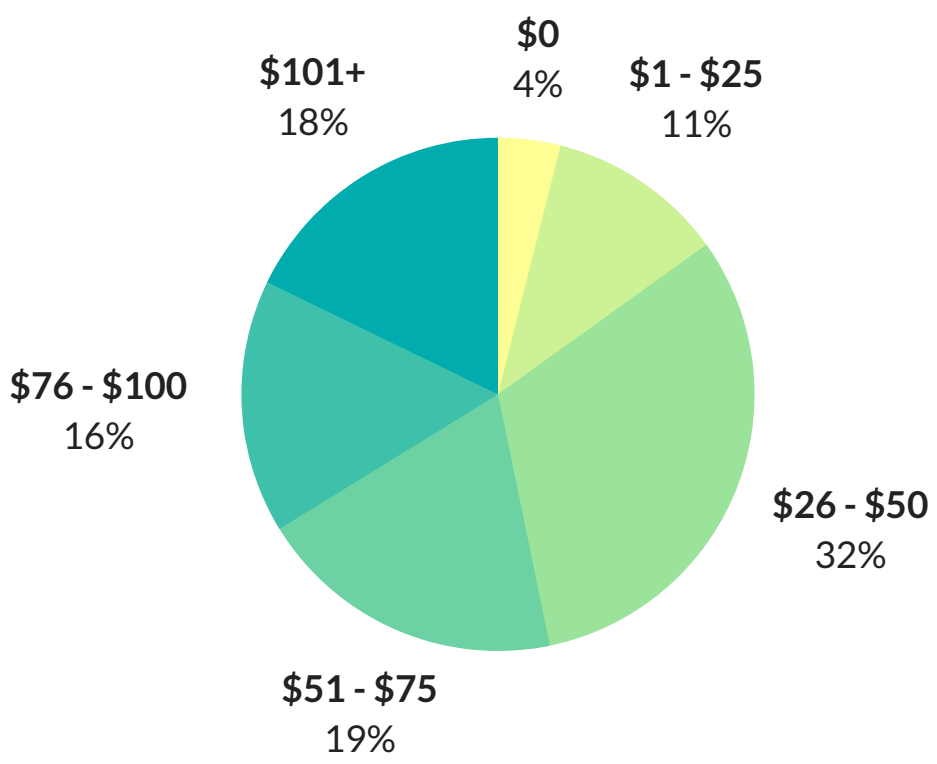
# In the Fall 2018 semester, how much money did you spend on clickers?

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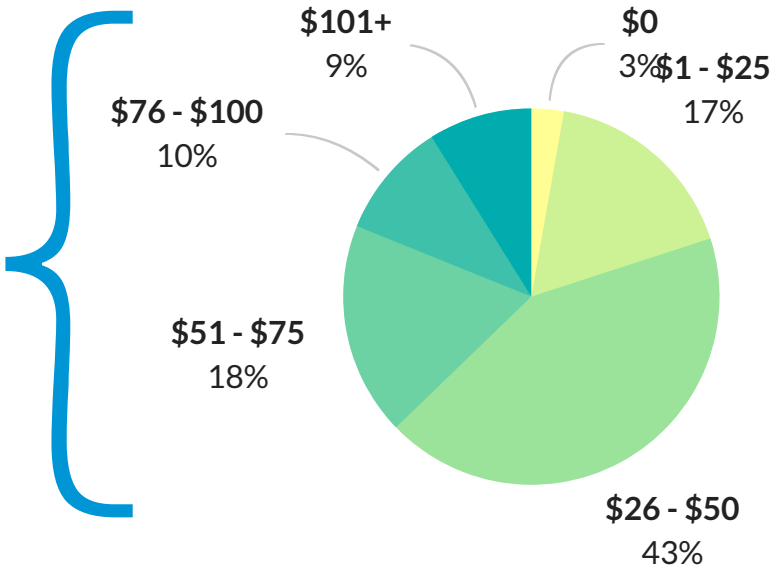


# How much money have you spent on clickers throughout your time at GW?

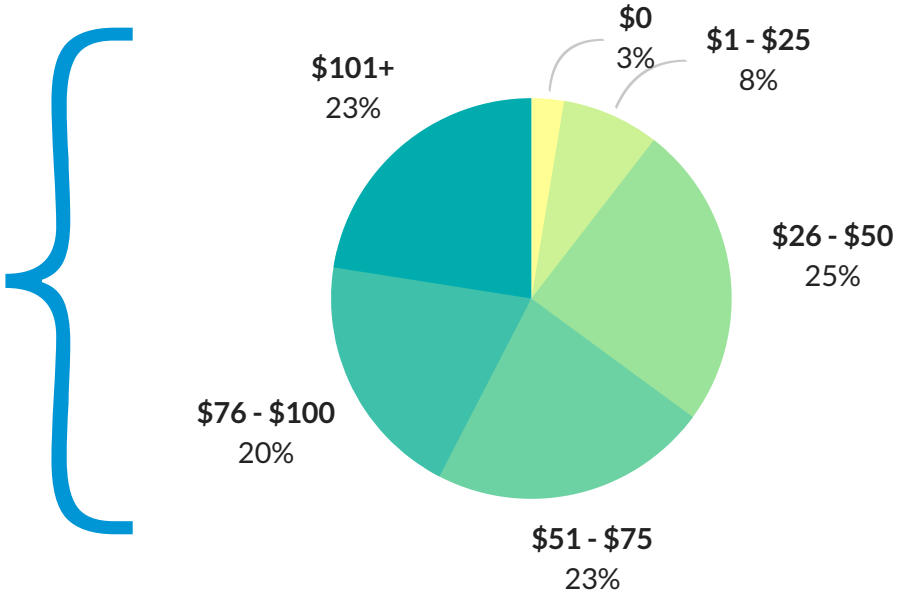
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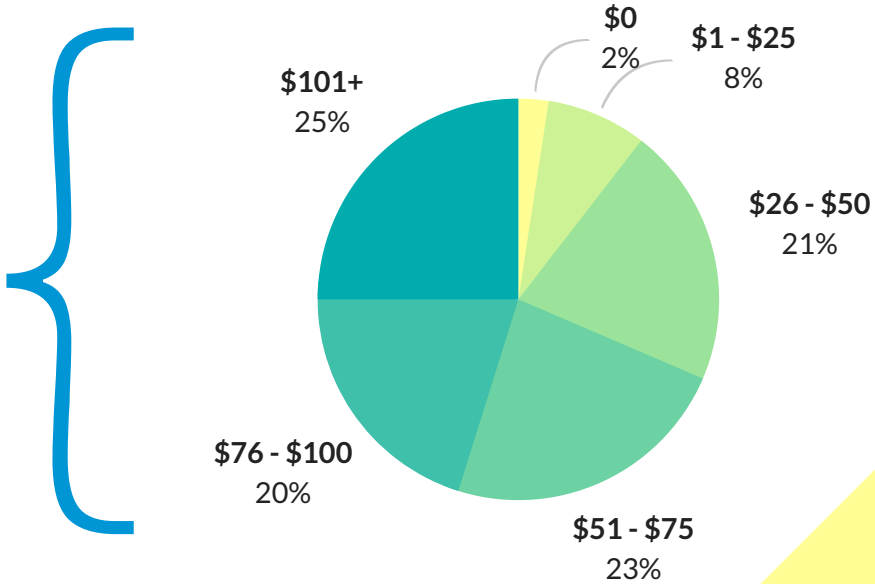
# First-Years



# Sophomores

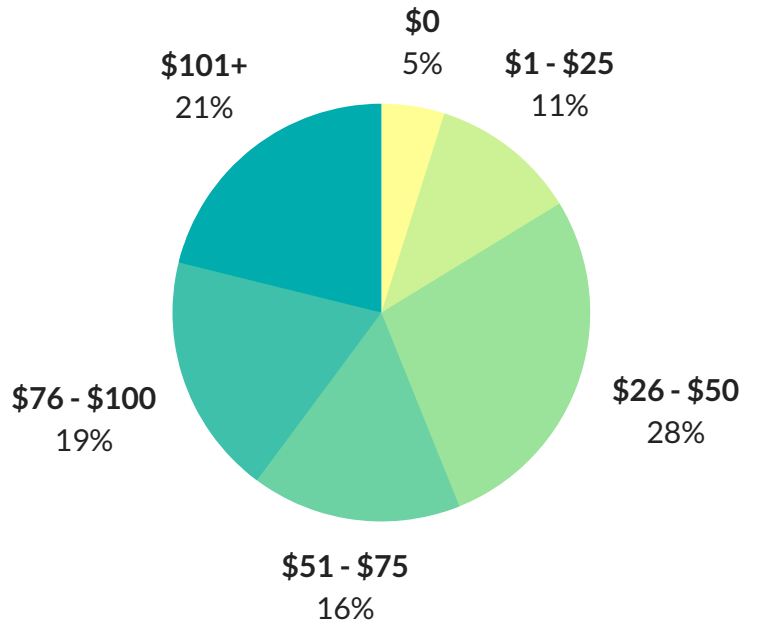


# Juniors

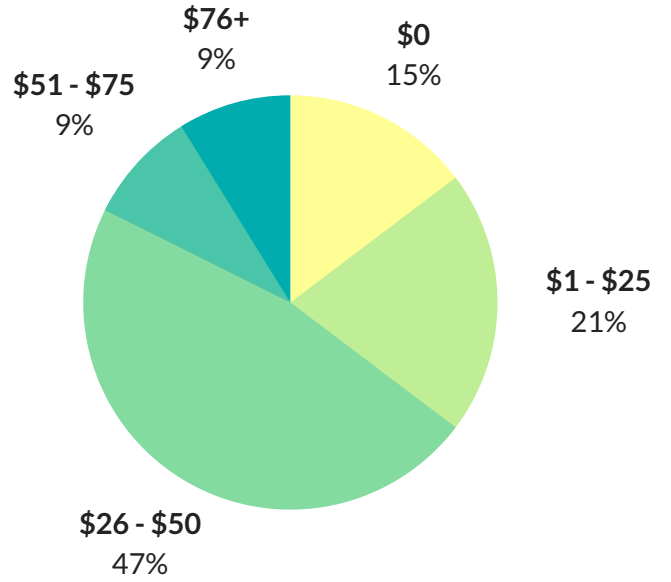




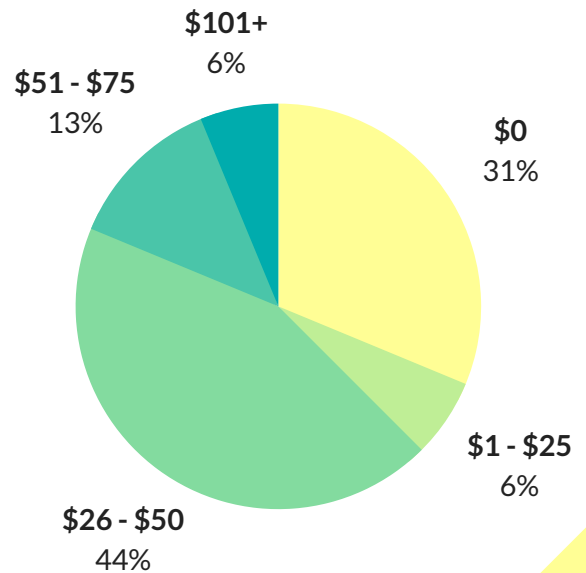
# Seniors



# 1st Year Graduates

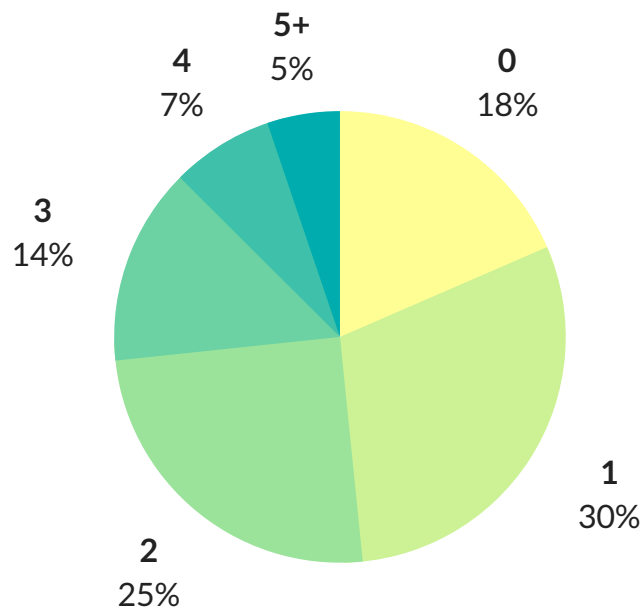


# 2nd Year Graduates

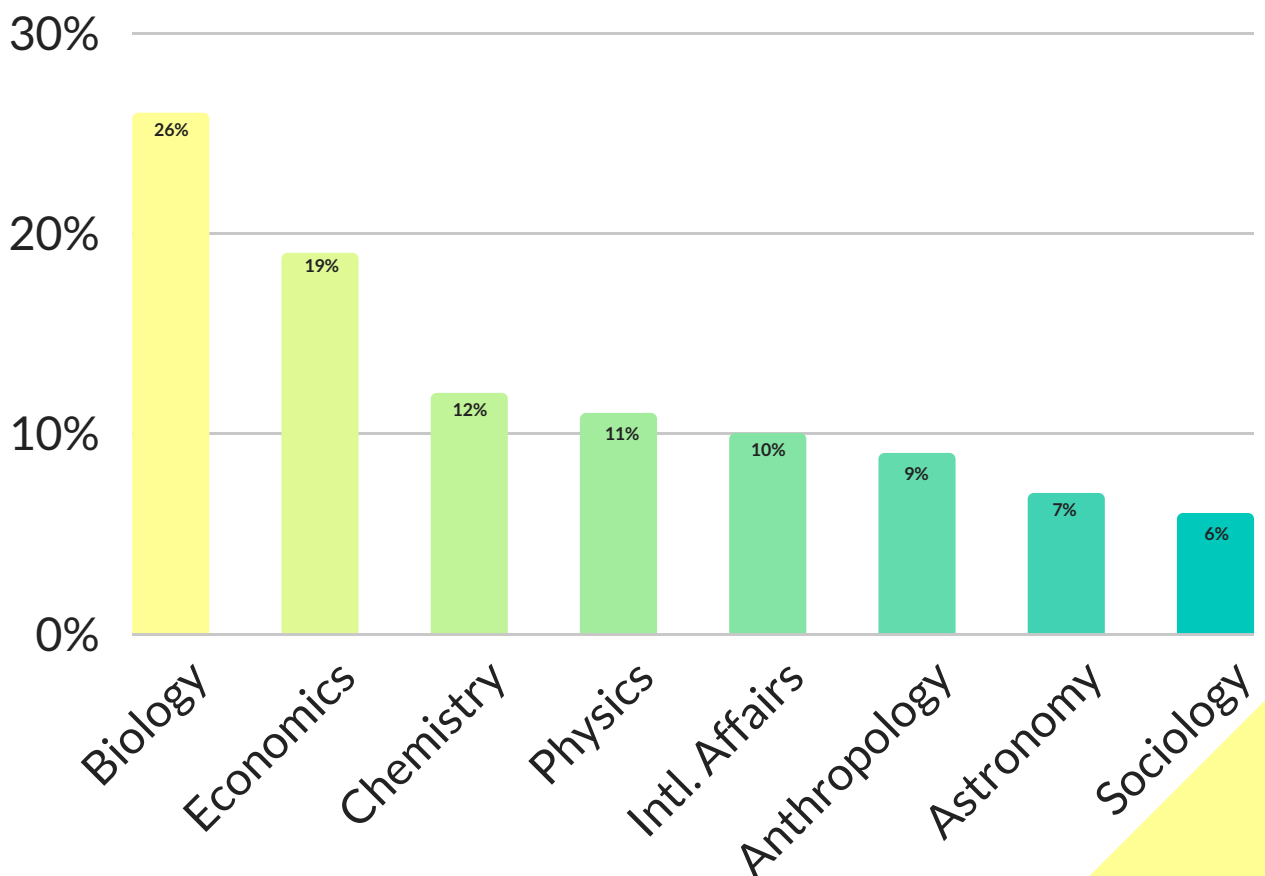




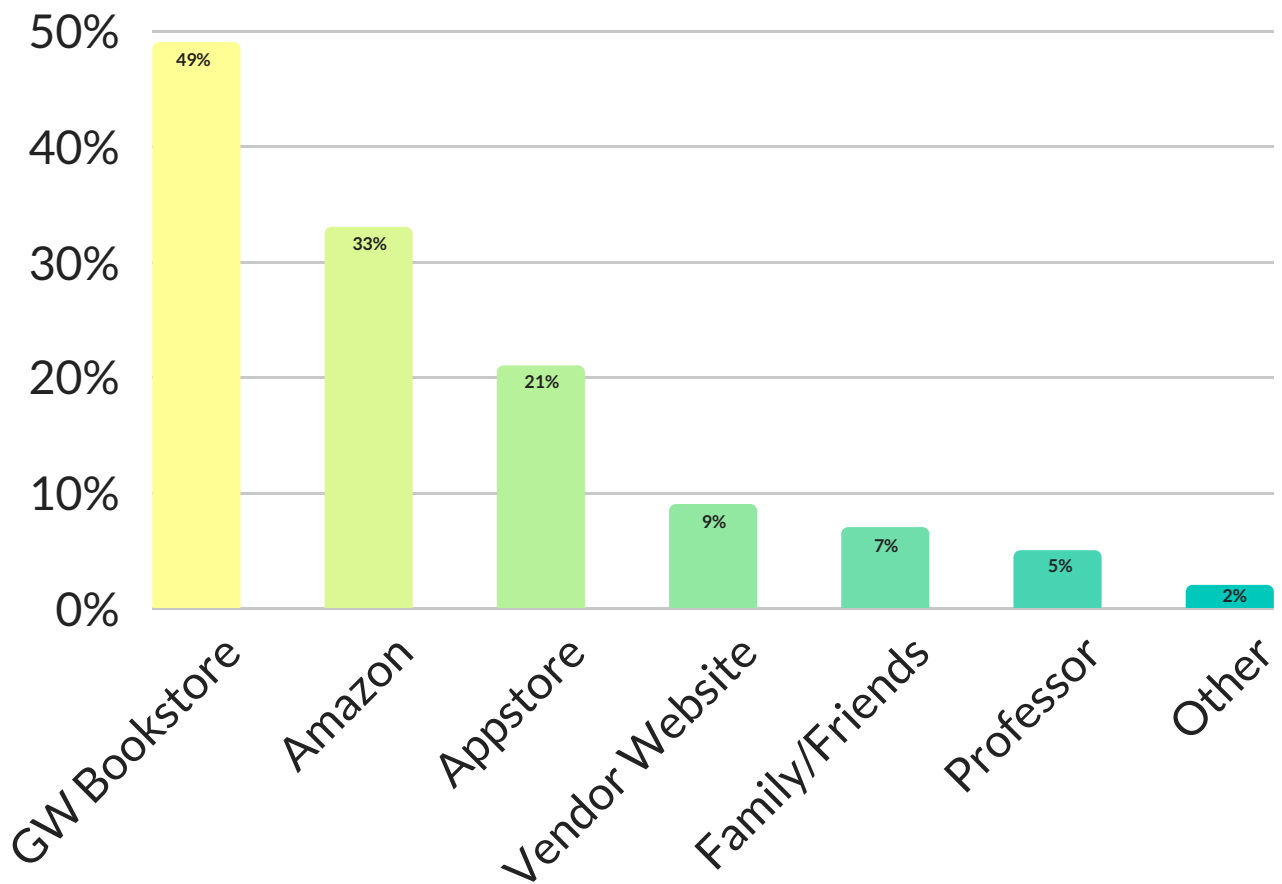
## How many classes have you taken that required you to purchase a clicker?



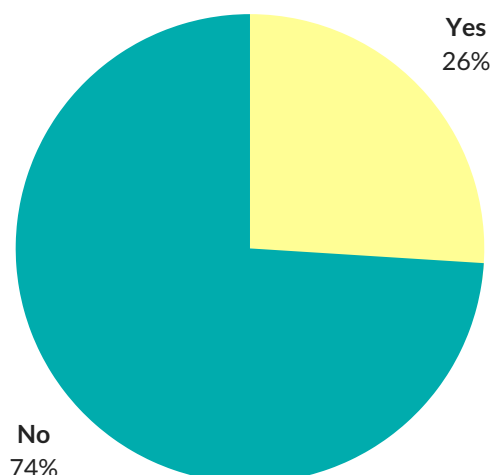
## What specific class(es) have you used a clicker in?



## Where have you bought or received your clickers from?



## Have you ever used a free, online clicker (ex. Kahoot) for a class?



# STUDENT TESTIMONIALS

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In total, 294 students provided an open-ended response when asked about what suggestions they had for GW and the SA.

“ It would be nice if clickers were free at GW or at least standardized so that all professors would use the same program and we wouldn't have to purchase multiple subscriptions during the same semester.”

“With the already high cost of attending GW and the price of textbooks, it would be helpful for professors to utilize the free options for clickers so as to not add an increased expense.”

“ Clickers may be useful for the classroom, but the burden to pay for clickers adds to the number of out-of-pocket expenses... Books can sometimes be used if they're at the library, but clickers have no such flexibility.”

“I don't believe that the financial burden of a clicker is worth the academic benefit in the classroom, being that there are other, free ways to engage students in the classroom.”

“ I wish that there was a universal clicker system that all departments can agree on... it'll be more affordable and sustainable to buy a clicker once and just renew the license when needed.”

The image is a composite. The top portion shows a man with white hair, seen in profile, pointing his right index finger upwards. The background is a blurred classroom or lecture hall with other people seated at desks. The bottom portion shows a person's hands in a grey suit jacket looking at a document on a yellow desk. On the desk, there is a laptop, a mouse, and a sign that reads "Dial '0' for classroom assistance" with a telephone icon. A large, semi-transparent blue rectangle is overlaid in the center, containing the text "FACULTY SURVEY RESULTS" in white, bold, sans-serif font.

# FACULTY SURVEY RESULTS



# ABOUT THE FACULTY SURVEY

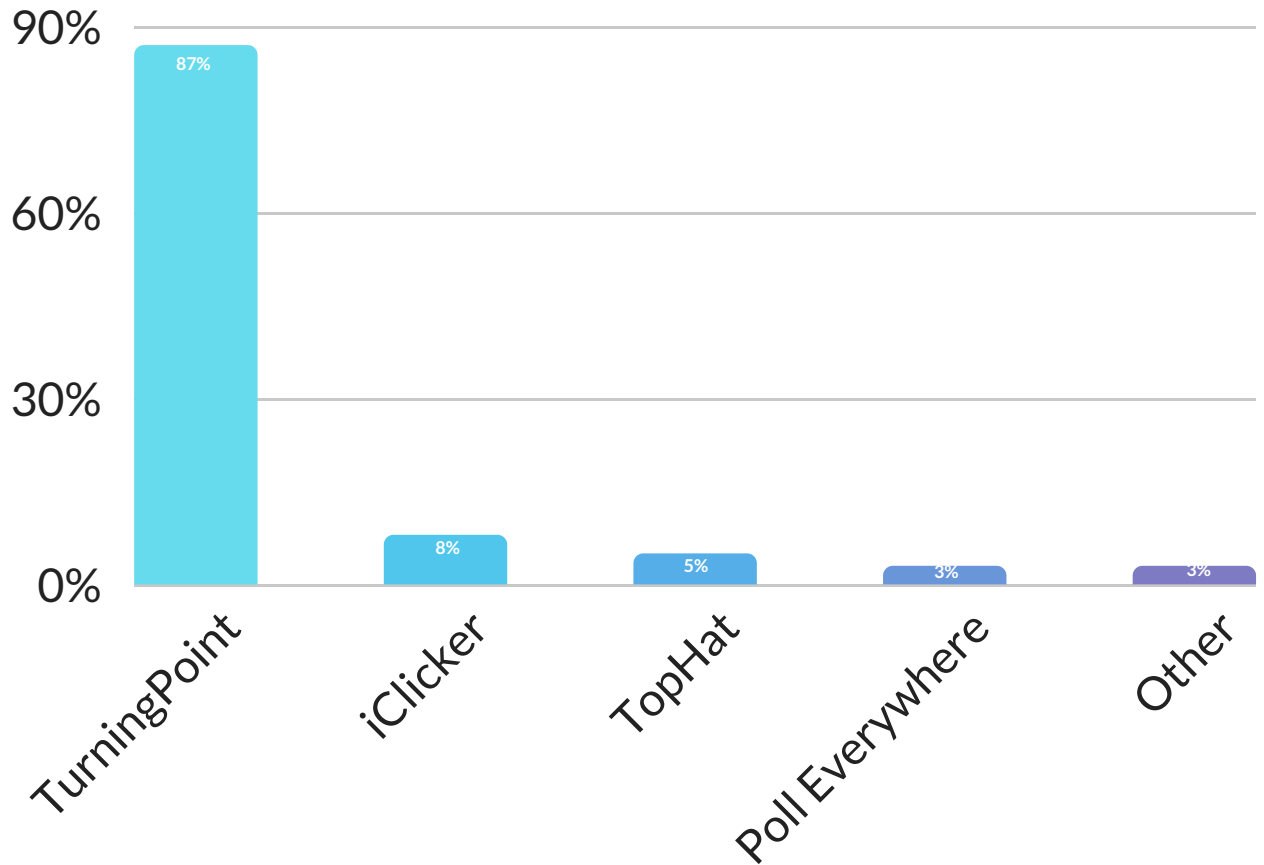
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The Faculty Classroom Clicker Survey was sent out to 102 faculty members on January 9th and remained open for 22 days. It was promoted through emails sent by the GW Office of Academic Planning and Assessment.

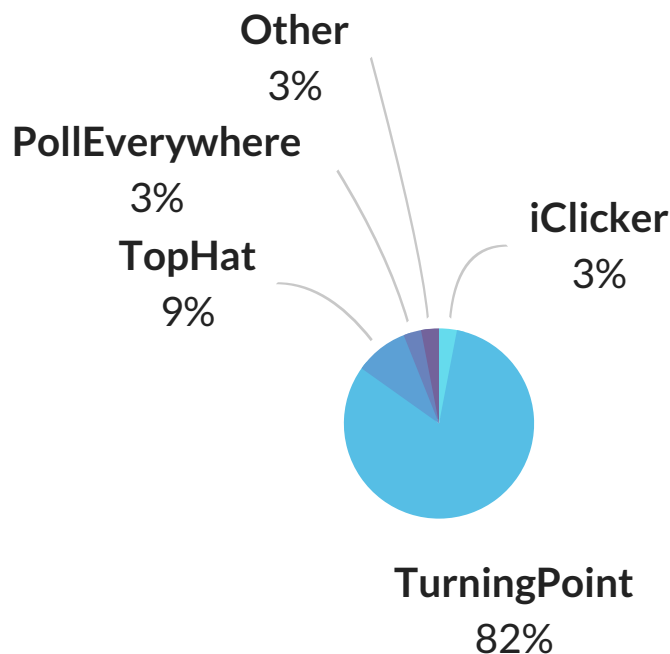
In total, 42 professors responded to this survey, with 37 respondents indicating that they have used a clicker system. Five of the respondents indicated that they have never used a clicker by selecting the answer choice "Never Used." For this reason, the data presented on the next few pages will only include the responses of faculty who have utilized or currently use clickers.



## Which clicker system(s) do you require for your courses at GW?



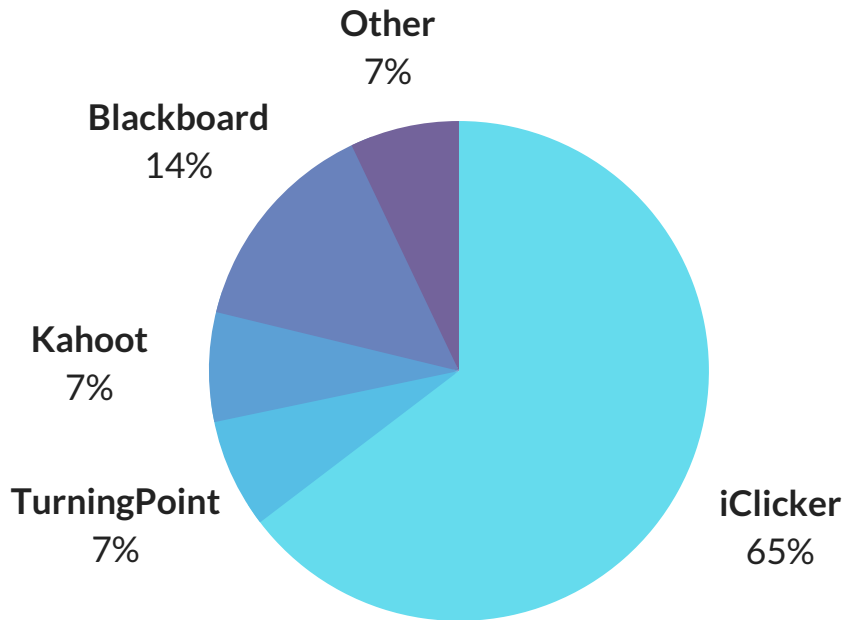
## Which clicker system do you most prefer using for your courses?





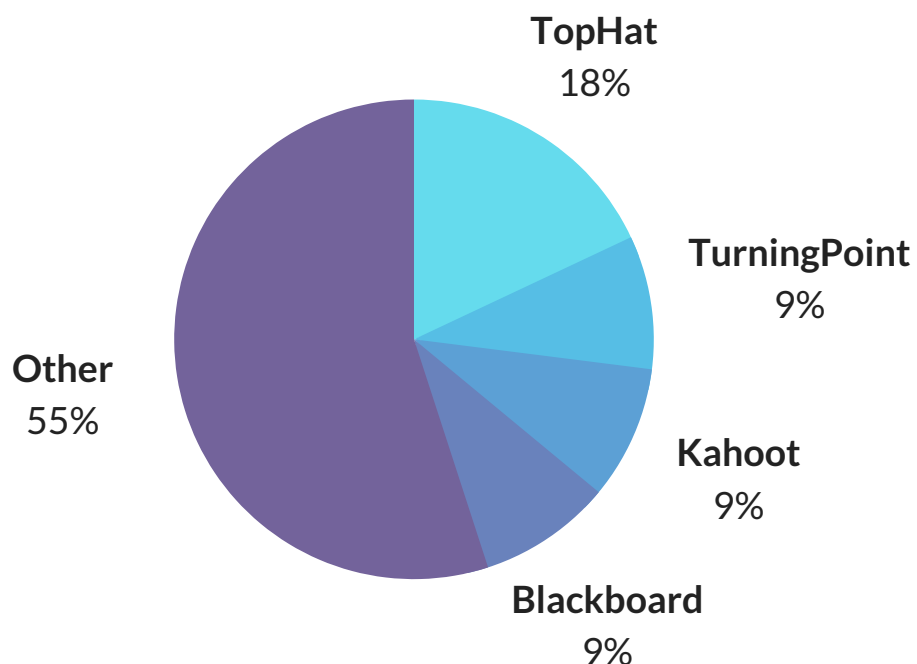
## Which clicker system is your second choice option?

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## Which clicker system is your third choice option?

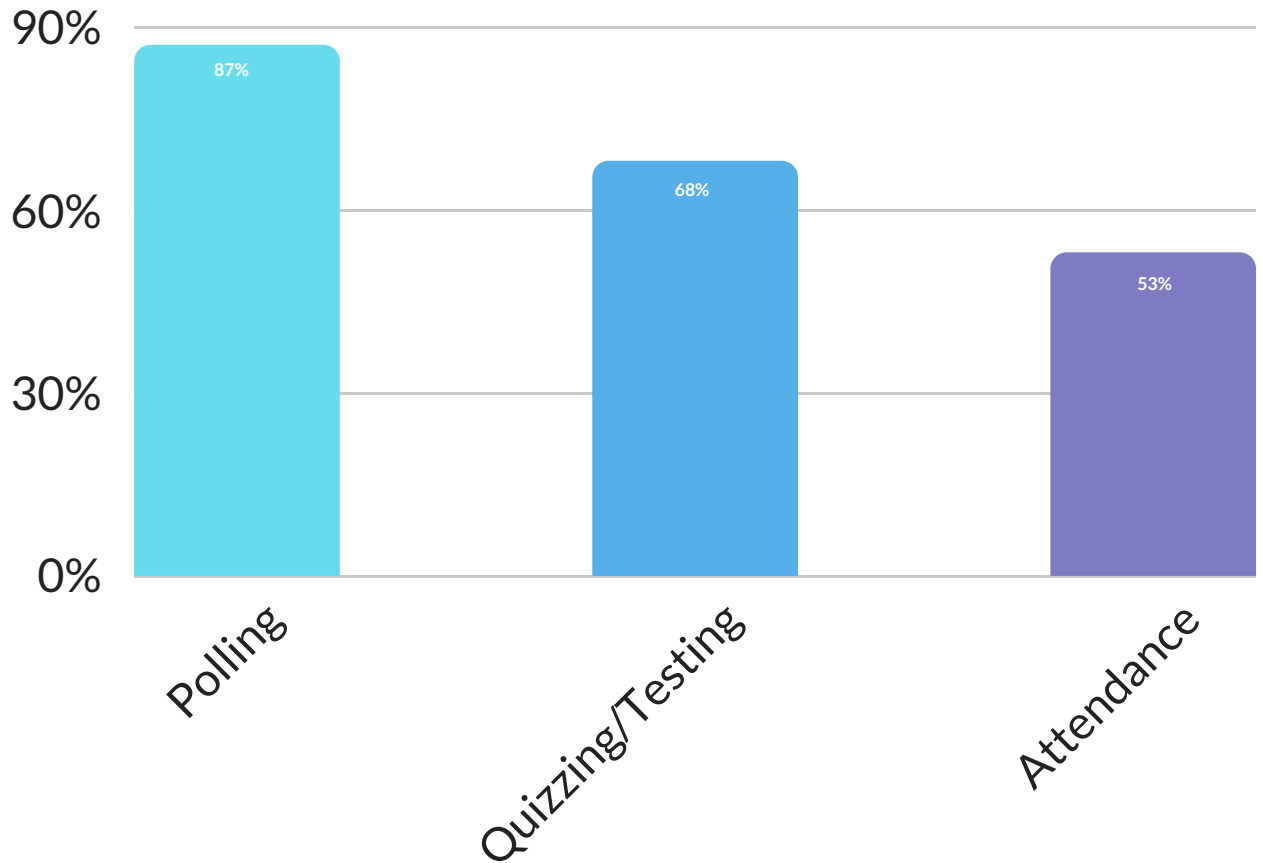
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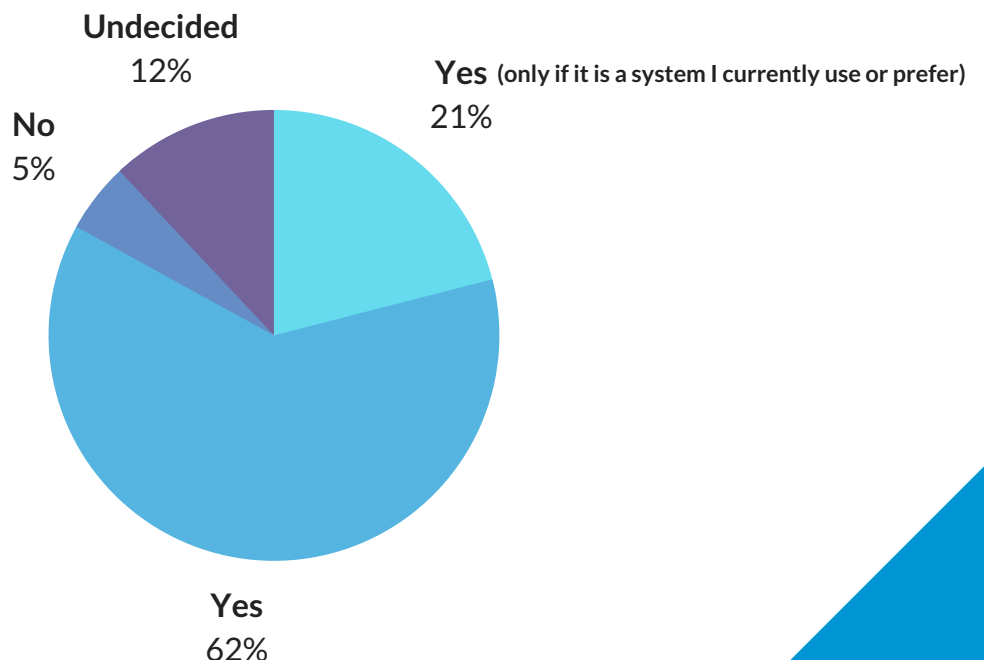




## What features do you use through your chosen clicker system?



## If GW were able to purchase a subscription to one clicker system that met your needs, would you use it?



# FACULTY TESTIMONIALS

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In total, 22 faculty members provided an open-ended response when asked to elaborate on their usage of clickers.

“ I use TurningPoint because my understanding was that it is the system 'officially' endorsed by GW. If that is the case, then professors using other systems should be asked to adopt TurningPoint. Otherwise, the university should adopt another system and ask professors to use that.”

"TurningPoint... is the only system approved by GW, so not sure why folks are using other systems... At other universities the cost of the clickers is included in the students' technology fee, so all students get clickers and never have to worry about the fee.”

“ TurningPoint was first introduced to GW in 2007 on a trial basis. It was then adopted and it was intended to be the 'standard' system... [but] was not pursued, encouraged, or enforced, and so various other classes adopted random clicker systems at different times.”

"This is a great idea to try to come up with a subscription plan. I like using clickers, but am concerned about their cost, and there is [oftentimes] confusion early in the semester for some students who have a different clicker system but think it will work with Turning Point.”



# CONCLUSION

# SUMMARY

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***Based on the survey data, there appear to be three primary areas of concern: the lack of a universal system, the high cost of clickers, and the unexpected expense they pose.***

## **Lack of Uniformity**

A major concern surrounding the usage clickers is the lack of uniformity across classes. Back in 2007, GW began promoting TurningPoint amongst the faculty on a trial basis, and a high amount of faculty (87%) use it to this day. But according to the results of the Student Survey, approximately 1 in 3 students have still had to purchase more than one clicker brand throughout their time at GW. The most commonly purchased brand by students was iClicker (59%), followed by TurningPoint (56%). Based on this information, it can be inferred that courses with larger class sizes (such as Biology) are the ones typically requiring the usage of iClicker and TopHat, whereas courses with smaller class sizes rely on TurningPoint. Therefore, although the majority of faculty are abiding by GW's initial mandate, the lack of enforcement has prevented a true university-wide standardization from coming to fruition. By working with the Faculty Senate to enforce a universal system, GW can eliminate the need for students to purchase multiple subscriptions to different brands.

## **High Costs**

According to the results of the Student Survey, purchasing clickers is costly. 53% of students have spent over \$50 on clickers, with 34% spending more than \$75 and 18% spending over \$100. Although this is partially due to students having to buy multiple subscriptions to different brands, only purchasing one subscription can still be a high cost. On average, each clicker costs between \$15 and \$30, with some even costing up to \$60.

# SUMMARY

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Whereas the virtual systems are typically cheaper, physical handheld clickers are more expensive and require the user to purchase additional licensing. Many professors only allow their students to use these handheld clickers, as the unreliable wireless connection can often prevent answers from being recorded when using virtual systems.

In the short-term, one way to reduce costs could be transitioning to free online clickers. Currently, only 26% of students have used a free system like Kahoot. Encouraging more professors to switch to such systems would alleviate some of the financial burden students would otherwise undergo. However, ensuring faculty participation may be a challenge. According to the Faculty Survey, some faculty members expressed concerns with these systems; being that they do not automatically connect to the grading book, they are more cumbersome to utilize. Additionally, the lack of reliable connectivity may also hinder the success of this approach.

With that said, it appears that a campus-wide investment in a specific clicker system may be the most sustainable long-term solution. In the Faculty Survey, 83% of faculty indicated that, if GW were to invest in a campus-wide subscription to a clicker company, they would be willing to use the corresponding clicker system. Specifically, 62% of the faculty would use any system that meets their needs and 21% would use the system as long as it is one they prefer. When deciding on a single clicker system to mandate, GW should explore the possibility of an institutional- buy-in and take into consideration what discounts the companies offer students through a campus-wide investment. The university must take steps to ensure that all students have equal access to the materials necessary for academic success.

## **Unexpected Expense**

Oftentimes, clickers pose as an unexpected cost for students. Unlike textbooks or lab fees, students have no formal way of knowing whether or not a course requires them to purchase a clicker. As with any academic material, students have the right to know what they will be required to purchase prior to the first day of classes (Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008). For this reason, clicker fees should appear in course descriptions found within the Schedule of Classes. Going forward, GW must develop concrete standards regarding the academic fees professors are allowed to require and their corresponding publicization.

# METHODS

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This report was compiled based on the results of the 2018 Student Classroom Clicker Survey and the 2019 Faculty Classroom Clicker Survey.

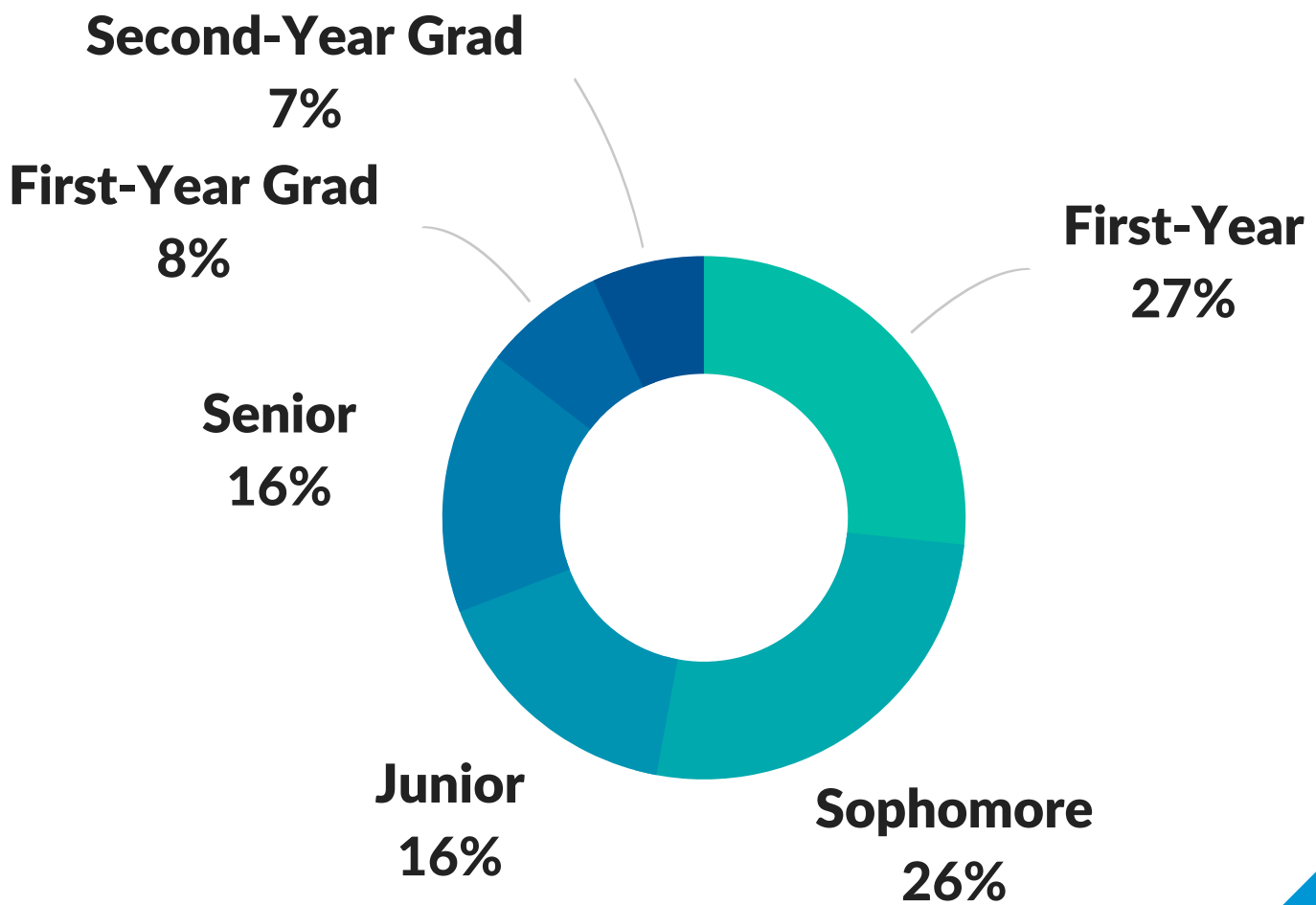
The 2018-2019 Student Association Director of Survey Design Jake Lieberfarb contributed to the data visualization in this report.

Quotes included in the report were taken from the survey responses of individual GW students. They are reflective only of the students' personal views and are not statements made on behalf of the Student Association.

# APPENDIX A

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The graph below demonstrates the total amount of students from each class year who responded to the 2018 Student Classroom Clicker Survey:







# STUDENT ASSOCIATION AT THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

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