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### What do Denisonians Think of DCGA

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# What do Denisonians Think of DCGA

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Paul A. Djupe

March 21, 2023

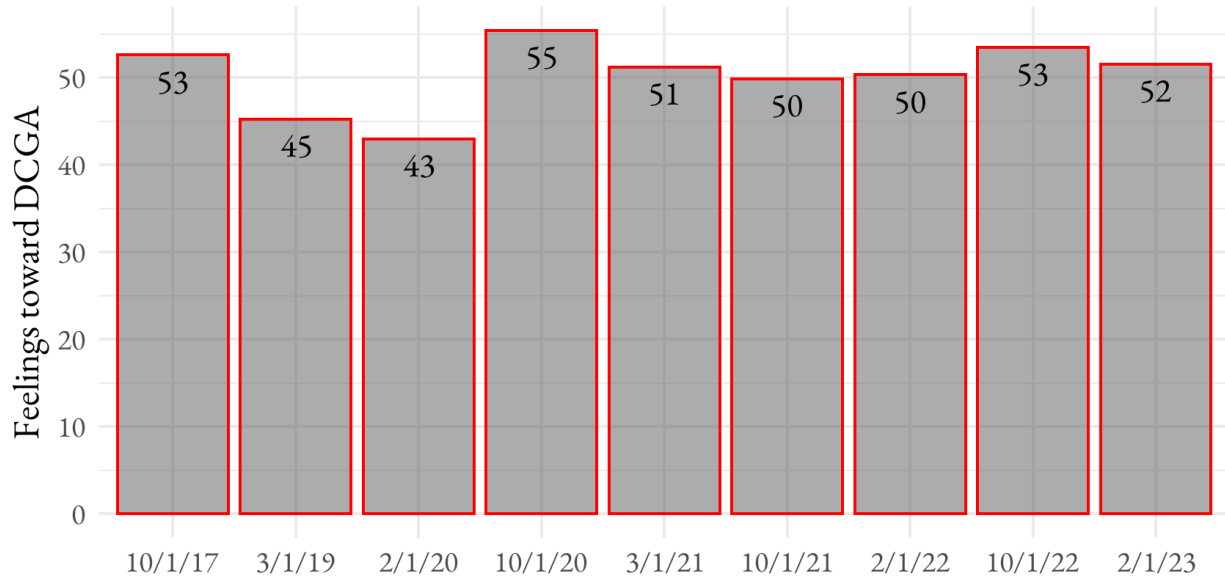
By Paul A. Djupe

When Alex Pan asks you to do something, you say yes. So, when President Pan reached out after the lacrosse article generated some interest, I thought it was time to give the same coverage to DCGA. 127 surveys have asked about feelings toward student government off and on for some years, so we have plenty of data. Sadly, it appears the data only go back to October 2017, but so it goes. The question has remained stable across this time, asking, “How do you feel toward the following public figures, groups, and ideas? Use this feeling thermometer, in which 0 means you feel very cool (negative) and 100 means you feel very warm (positive) toward the person/group/concept.”

The results, below, show feelings bopping around 50 – sometimes a bit higher, but usually right on the money, and a bit lower in 2019-20. DCGA was focused “on internal reforms between fall 2020 and spring 2022, with a revision of the DCGA bylaws on the number of Senators, DCGA Finance Rules amendments, and funding for a vending machine on South Quad.” That doesn’t provide much explanation for why warmth jumped 12 degrees in 2020, which I attribute to a rally around the flag effect of the pandemic. Now, among other things (like the Silverstein swingset), DCGA is working on “supercharging of Facilities’ efforts to procure/install water bottle fillers on campus, as well as renovations to the Huffman Basement Space into a student co-working space.” So, DCGA is busy, but I don’t think many students know about their work.

The trick about feeling thermometer measure is that survey respondents don’t have another way to indicate that they don’t know or don’t care. People with such feelings often pick 50. So, a mean of 50 could represent a split, polarized sample or a bunch of students who just don’t know enough to pick some other number. Let’s find out.

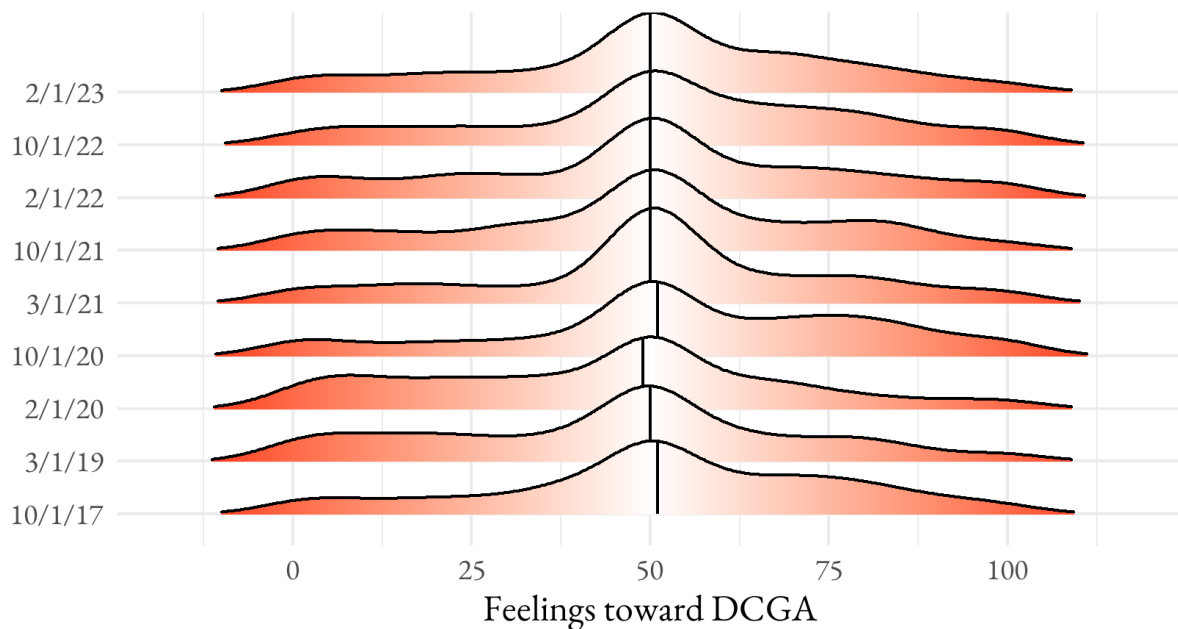
## Feelz Toward DCGA Oscillate Around the Midpoint



Source: 127 Surveys.

Yeah, so there's a lot of giving 50 going on here – fifty (or near it) is the central peak and opinions taper off quickly as we approach the poles of 0 and 100. Students tend not to have tangle opinions about DCGA. Now it could be a good thing that DCGA doesn't attract strong partisans – perhaps it means they're doing a good job. But I suspect that students mostly just don't know much. I still did dig around to see if anyone had strong feelings.

## Feelz Toward DCGA are Likely Non-Feelings



Source: 127 Surveys.

In fact, it was pretty hard to find groups on campus that had strong feelings about DCGA – either positive or negative. It turns out that being engaged with more groups on campus is linked to stronger opinions (farther from 50 is considered a stronger opinion), as are those students who drink more often, which surprised me. Maybe it's not surprising that those students who have had intense political discussions this year also have stronger opinions about campus governance – they surely have strong opinions about everything. All sorts of variables did not have a connection with opinions about DCGA including race, class year, gpa, gender identity, partisanship or being a strong partisan, and others.

That's an interesting set of results because it suggests the lack of a set of tangible interests that would support a political party system. Political scientists have long thought that democracy was unthinkable save in terms of parties. And perhaps we can see why – the lack of deep cleavages linked to governance mean it's harder to fill seats (though kudos for doing it this year!), harder to generate voter turnout, and harder to attract attention for policy moves. It's simply necessary to have a team linked to some foundational interests to support democratic politics, even if it makes governance harder.

*Paul A. Djupe is a local cyclist who runs the Data for Political Research minor. He started onetwentysseven.blog a few years ago in a bid to subsidize collective action. He's on Twitter and you should be too, along with your president.*