Trends among First-Time Full-Time Freshmen of George Mason University:

Results from CIRP Freshman Surveys between 2000 and 2005

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Prepared by the Office of Institutional Assessment
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I. Executive Summary

1. Introduction to the CIRP Freshman Survey

The Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) is a national longitudinal study established by the American Council on Education and now administered by the Higher Education Research Institute at UCLA. The CIRP Freshman Survey is designed to provide a detailed profile of the entering freshmen classes (mostly first-time full-time freshmen) in the participating postsecondary institutions as well as national normative data for students in similar types of institutions.

FIRST-TIME freshmen are defined as entering freshmen who have never attended any college, including students enrolled in the fall term who attended college for the first time in the prior summer term or who entered with advanced standing (college credits earned before graduation from high school). For more information, please refer to the definition by the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS, at http://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/glossary/).

George Mason University has participated in four CIRP Freshman Surveys since 2000. The entering freshmen in fall 2000, 2001, 2003 and 2005 completed the surveys during the summer before they started college at Mason. For three years (2000, 2001, and 2003), paper surveys were distributed by orientation leaders in small group meetings and students completed the surveys together. In 2005, students received a paper survey through the mail and were asked to return the completed survey when checking-in for Orientation. Those who didn’t bring the completed survey with them were given another copy at Orientation.

Out of 2,529 first-time freshmen enrolled at Mason in fall 2005, 1,709 responded to the survey for a response rate of 68%. Among the 2,458 first-time full-time freshmen enrolled, 1,683 completed the survey – for a response rate of 68% as well. These respondents are representative of the entering first-time freshmen of Mason in fall 2005.

This report not only summarizes the characteristics of entering first-time full-time freshmen in fall 2005 but also compares Mason’s data with the 2005 normative data for public universities (see the following definitions for more details about normative data). In addition, this report provides a trend analysis of four entering freshman classes, when data are available.

- **2005 Normative Data for Public Universities**: based on weighted results from 66,040 freshmen at 26 participating public universities (43 out of 125 public universities participated in CIRP 2005)
- **2005 National Normative Data**: based on weighted results from 263,710 freshmen entering 385 baccalaureate institutions (571 out of 1,555 four-year colleges and universities participated in CIRP 2005). The 2005 National Normative Data are NOT included in this report.

Important Notes:

- *Throughout this report, the terms such as “Mason freshmen” or “the 2005 cohort” refer only to the FIRST-TIME FULL-TIME Freshmen who entered in fall semester and responded to the CIRP Freshman Survey.*
- *ALL results are based on SELF-REPORTED data. In some areas, such as parental income, estimated use of time and college expectations, the data may NOT be reliable or realistic.*
- *Percentages throughout this report may not add to 100% due to rounding and multiple selections.*
2. The 2005 First-Time Full-Time Freshmen at Mason: A Profile

**Background: A Diverse Student Population**

- The percentage of White/Caucasian freshmen at Mason is lower and the percentage of Asian American/Asian and Latino freshmen is higher than that of public universities.
- English is the native language of 80% of Mason entering freshmen. At public universities nationally, it is 90%.
- 9% of Mason freshmen hold a visa status of “permanent residency,” three times that of freshmen at public universities.
- 81% of Mason freshmen were born in the United States; at public universities, the figure is 92%.
- 6% of Mason freshmen are Muslim, six times that of public universities nationally.
- 12% of 2005 Mason freshmen said neither of their parents had an education beyond college; 22% claimed to be the first in their immediate family to go to college. (Please see page 8 for a discussion of definitions of “first-generation college students.”)
- 31% came from a place more than 101 miles away from Mason, the highest percentage since 2000. 64% planned to live on campus, also an all-time high since 2000.

**Finance: More Concerns about College Costs in 2005**

- 53% of Mason freshmen have some concerns about how to pay for college, an increase of 7 percentage points over 2000.
- Compared with 2001, the percentage of 2005 Mason freshmen who received grants or scholarships increased slightly, as did the percentage who borrowed money for school.
- Over half of entering freshmen estimated that chances are very good that they will get a job to help pay college expenses, up substantially since 2000. The percentage expecting that their chances are very good that they will work full-time has remained fairly consistent – between 6-8% since 2000.

**Self-Reported Academics & Study Habits in High School: Better Prepared for College than Previous Cohorts**

- 26% had mostly ‘A’s in high school, an increase of 7 percentage points since 2000 but still significantly behind other public universities (average 55%).
- The 2005 Mason freshmen spent more time studying/doing homework and less time partying during the last year of high school than the earlier cohorts at Mason and than their counterparts in public universities.
- 16% had tutoring or remedial work in math in high school – 5 percentage points higher than the percentage for public universities; and nearly one fifth think they will need it again in college. Nonetheless, 44% rated their Math ability “above average” as compared with the average person of their age – 6 percentage points lower than their counterparts in public universities.
- Nearly three fourths think their academic ability is above average for people of their age, an increase since 2000. Students’ self-reported intellectual confidence, computer skills, math ability and writing ability have also increased slightly since 2000.
- 61% occasionally or frequently came to class late during the last year of high school, far fewer than in 2000. They reported they were less likely to get involved in under-age drinking than earlier freshmen cohorts at Mason and than their counterparts in public universities.
Choice of College, Major and Career: More Freshmen Say Mason was their First Choice

- 63% say Mason was their first choice and 52% say they chose Mason because of its academic reputation: both figures have increased 11 percentage points since 2000 but are still below the percentage for public universities, 71% and 60% respectively.
- Political science is the most popular choice of major for 2003 and 2005 Mason freshmen (9%).
- Business executive is the most popular career choice (8%).

Expectations for College: Optimistic about their Success in College

- 68% estimate that the chance of making at least a B average at Mason is very good – an increase of 21 percentage points since 2000; 58% think the chance of being satisfied with Mason is very good – an increase of 23 percentage points since 2000. Among the students who graduated from Mason in 2005, 90% were “very satisfied” or “satisfied” with their overall Mason experience.
- 80% think the chances are very good that they will socialize with someone of another racial/ethnic group – an increase of 13 percentage points since 2000 and 14 percentage points above the average for public universities.
- 13% expect their professors to contact them weekly about course-related information outside of the classroom and 70% expect it to happen a few times during a semester.
- 75% expect to meet their academic advisors weekly; 23% expect a few times during a semester.

Self-Perceptions and Personal Objectives: Growing Confidence with Themselves

- Except for math ability, Mason freshmen ratings on their abilities are comparable to the average for public universities. In the areas of understanding of others, creativity and self-understanding, Mason freshmen rated themselves higher than their counterparts in public universities.
- Compared with their counterparts in other public universities, Mason freshmen are more likely to say that it is essential or very important for them to improve their understanding of other countries or cultures, to keep up to date with political affairs, and to promote racial understanding.

Political Views: Slightly Increased “Conservative” Population

- Nearly half consider themselves to be “middle-of-the-road,” slightly lower than the public university average. Compared with 2000, there is a slight increase in the percentage of freshmen who identify themselves as “conservative,” but the figure is still lower than the percentage for public universities.
- The 2005 Mason freshmen are close to being evenly divided on the following three issues: “there is too much concern in the courts for the rights of criminals,” “affirmative action in college admissions should be abolished,” and “undocumented immigrants should be denied access to public education.” Slightly more freshmen agreed with the first two statements and disagreed with the last statement.
II. Student Demographics and Family Characteristics

1. Demographic Diversity

George Mason University has a very diverse student population. For four cohorts of first-time full-time freshmen at Mason (as shown in Table 1), the sex and age distributions of Mason respondents are comparable to the national average for public universities. However, Mason respondents are more ethnically, culturally, and linguistically diverse than their counterparts nationally. The percentage of White/Caucasian freshmen at Mason has consistently been lower and the percentage of Asian American/Asian and Latino freshmen has consistently been higher than that of public universities. The percentages of non-U.S. citizens and foreign-born among Mason freshmen are at least seven percentage points above the public university average. About 80% of Mason respondents said their native language was English, a figure ten percentage points lower than public institutions.

Table 1. Demographic Diversity of First-time Full-time Freshmen at Mason, 2000 – 2005

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic Characteristics</th>
<th>George Mason University</th>
<th>2000 (n=1,753)</th>
<th>2001 (n=1,503)</th>
<th>2003 (n=1,137)</th>
<th>2005 (n=1,683)</th>
<th>2005 Public Universities (n=66,040)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sex</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td></td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td></td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td></td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td></td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td></td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 or older</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.6%</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ethnicity</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White/Caucasian</td>
<td></td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American/Black</td>
<td></td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian/Alaska Native**</td>
<td></td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian American/Asian</td>
<td></td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander**</td>
<td></td>
<td>** 1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexican American/Chicano</td>
<td></td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Puerto Rican</td>
<td></td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Latino</td>
<td></td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td></td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Citizenship Status</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S. Citizen</td>
<td></td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permanent Resident</td>
<td></td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither</td>
<td></td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Place of Birth</strong>*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Born in United States</td>
<td></td>
<td>No data</td>
<td>No data</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Came to US before age 6</td>
<td></td>
<td>No data</td>
<td>No data</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Came to US between 6-12</td>
<td></td>
<td>No data</td>
<td>No data</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Came to US after age 12</td>
<td></td>
<td>No data</td>
<td>No data</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Native Language</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td></td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other than English</td>
<td></td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Percentages will add to more than 100% if any student marked more than one category.

** Ethnicity categories were modified in 2001: “American Indian” was changed to “American Indian/Alaska Native;” “Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander” was added after “Asian American/Asian.” Results for 2000 may not compare to those of later years.

*** This item was not included in the 2000 and 2001 surveys.
2. Religious Diversity

Mason students also come from diverse religious backgrounds. In particular, Mason has a strikingly higher proportion of Muslim students than is found at public universities nationally. Table 2 shows the diversity of religious preferences among the respondents from 2000-2005. On average, 6% of Mason respondents are Muslim, compared to 1% at public universities. Roman Catholic is the single largest religious group both at Mason and at other public universities.

Table 2. Religious Diversity of Mason Freshmen

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Religious Preference</th>
<th>George Mason University</th>
<th>Public Universities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>2001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baptist</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buddhist</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Episcopalian</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hindu*</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Islamic</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewish</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lutheran</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodist</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presbyterian</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roman Catholic</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Christian</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Religion</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*SNew item in 2003.

3. Family Income and Sources of College Funds

Compared with the 2000 and 2001 cohorts, more freshmen in the 2003 and 2005 cohorts are from families with annual income above $100,000. As Table 3 shows, 41% of the 2005 freshmen estimated that their parents earned above $100,000 a year, ten percentage points higher than 2000. Twenty-four percent of the 2005 cohort are from families with a reported annual income between $100,000 and $150,000, five percentage points above the average for public universities. This may be related to the relatively higher salary levels and higher cost of living in Northern Virginia. For 9% of the 2005 Mason freshmen, their parents earn less than $25,000 a year – 28% of these students are from families with less than $10,000 annual income.

Table 3. Estimated Parental Income

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What is your best estimate of your parents’ total income last year?</th>
<th>George Mason University</th>
<th>Public Universities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>2001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than or equal to $24,999</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$25,000 to $49,999</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$50,000 to $74,999</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$75,000 to $99,999</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$100,000 to $149,999</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$150,000 or more</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In 2005, 36% of Mason freshmen indicated confidence that they would have enough funds to complete college, a drop of eight percentage points since 2000; 53% have some concerns about college funds, an increase of seven percentage points since 2000. Tuition increases in recent years may have contributed to students’ lack of confidence. Students from low income families are more concerned with their ability to afford college. Among the students who report their parents make less than $25,000 a year, 31% have major concerns about how to finance college and 60% have some concerns. For those reporting parents earning $25,000 to $49,999 annually, 19% have major concerns and 67% have some concerns.

Table 4. Concerns about Financing College Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Do you have any concern about your ability to finance your college education?</th>
<th>George Mason University</th>
<th>Public Universities 2005</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>2001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None, I’m confident I will have sufficient funds</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some, but I probably will have enough funds</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major, not sure I will have enough funds to complete college</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The majority of Mason freshmen rely on family resources (i.e., money from parents, relatives, spouse, etc.) to pay for their educational expenses during the first year (see Table 5). Thirty-four percent of students expect their families to contribute $10,000 or more during the first year and another 15% expect to get $6,000 up to $10,000 from their families. Most Mason freshmen, 92%, report having limited (lower than $3,000) or no money of their own to pay for college.

Table 5. Sources of College Funds, 2005

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How much of your first year’s educational expenses do you expect to cover from each of the sources?</th>
<th>None*</th>
<th>$&lt;1,000</th>
<th>$1,000 - 2,999</th>
<th>$3,000 - 5,999</th>
<th>$6,000 - 9,999</th>
<th>$10,000 +</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family resources (parents, relatives, spouse, etc.)</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My own resources (savings from work, work-study, other income)</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aid which need not be repaid (grants, scholarships, military funding, etc.)</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aid which must be repaid (loans, etc.)</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other than above</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Students who did not respond to one or more of the above resource categories are assumed to have no funding from that/those source(s).

In 2005, between 43-44% of Mason freshmen report receiving some kind of aid (i.e., grants, scholarships, loans, etc.) (see Figure 1). The percentage of Mason freshmen who received aid that need NOT be repaid has slightly increased from 41% in 2001 to 44% in 2005, but is still significantly lower than the average for public universities, which is 60%. The percentage of Mason freshmen who borrow money has increased steadily from 36% in 2001 to 43% in 2005, which is close to the average for public universities (45%). Five percent of Mason freshmen borrowed $6,000-$9,999 and another 6% borrowed at least $10,000 for their first year (see Table 5). These students are obviously at high risk of accumulating a large amount of debt upon graduation.

The percentage of Mason freshmen who received grants or scholarships has slightly increased from 41% in 2001 to 44% in 2005, but is still significantly lower than the average for public universities, which is 60%. The percentage of Mason freshmen who borrow money has increased steadily from 36% in 2001 to 43% in 2005.
Mason freshmen from low income families are more likely to receive grants and scholarships and to have an educational loan (see Figure 2). Among freshmen from families making less than $25,000 a year, 79% received grants or scholarships and 54% took out a loan. For freshmen from families making $25,000 to $49,999 a year, 68% received grants or scholarships and 63% had a loan. Among freshmen from families earning $50,000-99,999 annually, 51% said they borrowed money to pay for college.
4. First-Generation College Students

Previous research has found that students whose parents did not go to college are at a distinct disadvantage when it comes to college access, persistence and graduation. In *The Condition of Education 2001* (published by the National Center for Educational Statistics), Choy (2001) distinguished three groups of college students according to their parents’ highest education:

1) “high school diploma or less” means that neither parent had any postsecondary education;
2) “some college, including vocational/technical” means that at least one parent attended college or a vocational/technical program but neither earned a bachelor’s or advanced degree;
3) “bachelor’s degree or higher” means at least one parent earned a bachelor’s or an advanced degree.

Some researchers define the first group of students as “first-generation college students.”

In addition to the above categories, we further separated the students whose parent(s) had attended a post-baccalaureate program or earned a master’s, doctoral, or first-professional degree. As Table 6 shows, 12% of the 2005 Mason freshmen said neither of their parents had education beyond high school – the figure was the same in 2003. Nationwide, 16% of freshmen in four-year colleges and universities reported the same (this figure is based on the 2005 national norm data, including private and public four-year colleges and universities). In addition, 16% of the 2005 Mason freshmen said neither of their parents had a college degree, 34% had at least one parent with a college degree, and 38% had at least one parent who had education above college.

Table 6. Parents’ Highest Education*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What is the highest level of formal education obtained by your parents?</th>
<th>2003</th>
<th>2005</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Neither parent has education beyond high school</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At least one parent has some postsecondary school or some college, but neither has a college degree</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At least one parent has a college degree</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At least one parent has some graduate school or a graduate degree</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* The national norm for public universities was not reported by CIRP.

In a separate question only for Mason freshmen, we asked whether they are the *first* in their immediate family to attend college. Given the information in Table 7, some students may have considered only their siblings when answering this question because 22% of the 2005 entering freshmen claimed they were the first in their immediate family to attend college.

Table 7. Are you the first in your immediate family to attend college?  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2003</th>
<th>2005</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3 compares three different definitions for parents’ or family educational background of incoming freshmen. According to student responses, between 12-26% of the 2005 Mason freshmen came from families that may not be able to provide them with guidance during college.

*Some scholars define this group of students as “first-generation college students.”

**This group includes students whose parents had no education beyond high school.
5. Geographic Location and Living Plans

The majority of Mason freshmen are from local areas – their homes are within 50 miles of the University (see Table 8). Since 2000, about 25% of students said their permanent homes are within 10 miles of the University, compared with 9% for public universities nationwide. However, the percentage of “out-of-town” Mason students has increased consistently over the past six years. In 2000, 23% of freshmen came from a place more than 100 miles away from Mason, compared with 31% for 2005. This figure is still 13 percentage points lower than the average of public universities.

Table 8. Distance between College and Student Home

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How many miles is this college from your permanent home?</th>
<th>George Mason University</th>
<th>Public Universities 2005</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>2001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 miles or less</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-50 miles</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51-100 miles</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>101+ miles</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

More and more Mason freshmen plan to live on campus. In 2005, an all-time high of 64% of freshmen planned to live on campus, an increase of eight percentage points over the year 2000. In reality, 61% of all first-time freshmen lived on campus in fall 2005.

Table 9. Living Plans of Mason Freshmen

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Where you plan to live during the fall term:</th>
<th>George Mason University</th>
<th>Public Universities 2005</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>2001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With family/relatives</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private home, apartment, room</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College dorm/other campus housing</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fraternity/Sorority</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>&lt;1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In 2005, an all-time high of 64% of freshmen planned to live on campus, an increase of eight percentage points over the year 2000. This percentage is still 21 percentage points lower than that of public universities. Thirty-four percent of Mason freshmen plan to live with family or relatives, a decrease of seven percentage points since 2000.
III. Student Academic Preparation and High School Activities

1. Academic Preparation for College

For the four cohorts of first-time full-time freshmen at Mason since 2000, 99% of them went to college immediately after graduating from high school, which is the same as the national average. For the 2005 Mason cohort, 89% graduated from a public high school.

Research indicates that students with higher high school GPAs tend to be more academically successful in college. Mason freshmen generally report lower high school GPAs than their counterparts in other public universities. As Table 10 shows, 26% of the 2005 Mason freshmen reported a high school GPA of ‘A-’ or better, an increase of seven percentage points since 2000. This figure is still significantly lower than that of public universities, which is 55%. At the same time, the percentage of Mason freshmen reporting “Cs or lower” has decreased such that it is lower than the norm for public universities (2% vs. 4%). The majority of Mason freshmen (72%) reported a ‘B’ average in high school.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Average High School Grades</th>
<th>George Mason University</th>
<th>Public Universities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>2001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bs</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cs or lower</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The percentage of Mason freshmen who had tutoring/remedial work in high school has not changed much in the past six years (see Table 11). In 2005, 16% of Mason freshmen reported having tutoring/remedial work in math, five percentage points higher than the average for public universities. In other subjects, Mason freshmen look similar to their counterparts nationwide.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tutoring/Remedial Work</th>
<th>George Mason University</th>
<th>Public Universities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>2001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Math</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Studies</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign language</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fewer Mason freshmen from the 2005 cohort feel they will need tutoring or remedial work in college than the previous three cohorts and than their counterparts nationwide (see Table 12). Particularly in math, only 18% of the 2005 Mason freshmen expect some tutoring or remedial work, a significant drop from the previous years. This figure is even four percentage points lower than that of public universities.
Since 2000, fewer and fewer Mason freshmen reported that their high schools required community service for graduation, which is against the trend for public universities nationwide. In 2000, 40% said their high schools had this requirement, eight percentage points higher than 2005.

Table 12. Percentage of Freshmen who will Need Tutoring/Remedial Work in College

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tutoring/Remedial Work</th>
<th>George Mason University</th>
<th>Public Universities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>2001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Math</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Studies</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign language</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Nationwide, slightly more freshmen in public universities said their high schools required community service for graduation in 2005 than in 2000. However, this percentage is falling significantly among Mason freshmen. In 2000, 40% said their high schools had this requirement, eight percentage points higher than 2005.

**2. Student Use of Time during Last Year of High School**

Hours spent studying – time on task – is positively related to students’ academic success. The 2005 Mason freshmen are significantly different from earlier cohorts and their national counterparts in two areas: they reported spending more time studying/doing homework and less time partying during the last year of high school (see Table 13). Forty-three percent of the 2005 Mason freshmen spent more than six hours a week studying or doing homework, an increase of 11 percentage points since 2000 and nine percentage points above the norm for public universities. In addition, the percentage of Mason freshmen saying they spent more than six hours a week partying dropped to 12% in 2005 from 27% in 2000. This figure is eight percentage points lower than the norm for public universities. There is also a noteworthy drop in the percentage of the 2003 and 2005 Mason freshmen who reported working for six hours or more per week.

Student-faculty interaction is often used as an indicator of student engagement in college. The CIRP data shows that both nationally and at Mason, the lack of student-teacher interaction after class in high school may be a concern. Fifty-nine percent of the 2005 Mason freshmen spent less than one hour a week talking with teachers outside of class (among them, 15% spent NO time). Nationally, over 57% of incoming freshmen at public universities spent less than one hour a week (among them, 19% spent NO time).

The 2005 cohort at Mason reported spending more time studying/doing homework and less time partying during the last year of high school than earlier cohorts and than their counterparts in public universities.
Table 13. Student Use of Time during Last Year of High School

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>George Mason University</th>
<th>Public Universities 2005</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>2001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socializing</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working for pay</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Studying/doing homework</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exercise or sports</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watching TV</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partying</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student clubs/groups</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Playing video/computer games</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading for pleasure</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Household duties</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteer work</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talking with teachers outside of class</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prayer/meditation</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. Activities Engaged in during Last Year of High School

The Survey also asked students to indicate the activities in which they were engaged during their last year of high school. Table 14 presents the activities in which students were frequently engaged. Eighty-nine percent of the 2005 Mason freshmen frequently used a personal computer and 86% frequently used Internet for research or homework. These percentages are much higher than previous cohorts and slightly higher than the national norm for public universities. Eighty-five percent of Mason freshmen frequently socialized with someone of another racial/ethnic group – 14 percentage points higher than the national average. Sixty-one percent of the 2005 Mason freshmen frequently discussed politics in class in high school – 13 percentage points higher than their counterparts in other public universities.

Compared with previous cohorts at Mason, the 2005 cohort are less likely to say that they frequently felt bored in class, frequently felt overwhelmed by all they had to do, frequently felt depressed, or frequently smoked cigarettes. Thirty-four percent of the 2005 Mason freshmen did feel bored in class frequently, eight percentage points lower than their peers in other public universities.

Table 14. Frequent Activities during Last Year of High School*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>George Mason University</th>
<th>Public Universities 2005</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>2001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Used a personal computer</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Used Internet for research or homework</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socialized with someone of another racial/ethnic group</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussed politics</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussed politics in class</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussed politics with friends</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussed politics with family</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Was bored in class</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussed religion</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asked a teacher for advice after class</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voted in student election</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Felt overwhelmed by all I had to do</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Felt depressed</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smoked cigarettes</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Students were given three options: “frequently,” “occasionally,” and “not at all.” This table only reports the percentage responding “frequently.”
Table 15 presents the activities in which students had ever been engaged, either frequently or occasionally, during the last year of high school. The majority of Mason freshmen had studied with other students (87%), performed volunteer work (84%) and attended a religious service (77%). The 2003 and 2005 freshmen cohorts at Mason are less likely to report that they came late to class than the 2000 and 2001 cohorts, a drop of about ten percentage points.

Nationwide, beer drinking in high school is at a record low in 2005 (Pryor, Hurtado, Saenz, Lindholm, Korn and Mahoney, 2005). The 2005 Mason cohort was much less likely to get involved in under-age drinking: 33% of the 2005 Mason freshmen reported that they occasionally or frequently drank wine or liquor and 28% drank beer, figures significantly lower than earlier cohorts at Mason and than their counterparts nationwide.

Fewer Mason freshmen in 2005 had participated in organized demonstrations occasionally or frequently, but more had worked on a local, state or national political campaign than their counterparts nationwide. The percentage of Mason freshmen who were occasionally or frequently a guest in a teacher’s home is seven percentage points lower than the national average in 2005.

Table 15. Occasional or Frequent Activities during Last year of High School

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activities during the last year of high school:</th>
<th>George Mason University</th>
<th>Public Universities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>2001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Studied with other students</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performed volunteer work</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attended a religious service</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Came late to class</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performed community service as part of a class</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tutored another student</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Played a musical instrument</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participated in organized demonstrations</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drank wine or liquor</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drank beer</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worked on a local, state, or national political campaign</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Was a guest in a teacher’s home</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Students were given three options: “frequently,” “occasionally,” and “not at all.” This table combines the percentages for “occasionally” and “frequently.”

- 85% of the 2005 Mason freshmen reported frequently socializing with someone of another racial/ethnic group and 61% frequently discussed politics in class – these figures are much higher than the average for public universities.
- Fewer freshmen in the 2005 cohort frequently felt bored in class during the last year of high school compared to earlier cohorts at Mason.
- 61% of the 2005 Mason freshmen said they were late to class occasionally or frequently during their last year of high school, a drop of 12 percentage points since 2000. They were much less likely to get involved in under-age drinking than earlier cohorts at Mason and than their counterparts at public universities.
- The 2005 Mason freshmen are more likely to have worked on a political campaign than freshmen at public universities.
IV. Choices of College, Major and Career

1. College Motivation

“To learn more about things that interest me” is the most important reason for freshmen at public universities to go to college. Among a list of thirteen motivations to go to college, the top five “very important” ones for the 2005 Mason freshmen are listed in Table 16. These top five reasons are exactly the same ones chosen by the freshmen from public institutions as well as by Mason freshmen entering in fall 2000, 2001 and 2003.

Table 16. Most Important Reasons to Go to College

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>In deciding to go to college, how important to you was each of the following reasons?</th>
<th>George Mason University</th>
<th>Public Universities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To learn more about things that interest me</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To be able to get a better job</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To get training for a specific career</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To be able to make more money</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To gain a general education and appreciation of ideas</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Students were given three options: “very important,” “somewhat important,” and “not important.” This table only includes the percentage responding “very important.”

In 2005, an all-time high of 63% of incoming freshmen said Mason was their first choice school – an increase of 11 percentage points over 2000 (see Table 17). But this figure is still lower than the average for public universities, which is 71%. The majority of the 2005 freshmen (55%) applied to three or more institutions other than Mason (see Table 18), a figure very close to the norm for public universities.

Table 17. College Choice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Is this college your:</th>
<th>George Mason University</th>
<th>Public Universities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First choice</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second choice</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third or lower choice</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

63% of the 2005 entering freshmen said Mason was their first choice, the highest percentage since 2000. This figure remains lower than the average for public universities (71%).

Table 18. Number of Colleges to which Students Applied for Admission

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To how many colleges other than this one did you apply for admission this year?</th>
<th>George Mason University</th>
<th>Public Universities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-4</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5+</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2. Reasons for Choosing Mason

CIRP provides students with 18 possible reasons for enrolling at a particular college, and the top reasons cited by Mason freshmen are listed in Table 19. “Very good academic reputation” has been the single most important reason for Mason students since 2000. In 2005, 52% of Mason freshmen cited it as a “very important” reason, a percentage significantly higher than earlier cohorts but still lower than that for public universities (60%). “Graduates get good jobs” is another very important reason for 42% of the 2005 freshmen at Mason, a figure also lower than the national percentage. The percentage of the 2005 Mason freshmen who thought “a visit to the campus” was a very important reason increased by 13 percentage points over 2003 to 42%.

Compared with their counterparts in other public universities, Mason freshmen are less likely to say that “graduates get good jobs,” “good reputation for social activities,” “graduates gaining admission to top graduate/professional schools,” “offered financial aid/assistance” and “ranking in magazines” were very important reasons for them to attend Mason. One out of four Mason freshmen selected “wanted to live near home” as a very important reason, much higher than the percentage for public universities.

Table 19. Top “Very Important” Reasons for Attending this Particular College

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Top “very important” reasons influencing decision to attend this college*</th>
<th>George Mason University</th>
<th>Public Universities 2005</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very good academic reputation</td>
<td>41% 41% 44% 52% +11%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduates get good jobs**</td>
<td>39% 41% 30%** 42% +3%</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A visit to the campus*</td>
<td>-- -- 29% 42% --</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low tuition/The cost of attending this college</td>
<td>28% 26% 26% 30% +2%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good reputation for social activities</td>
<td>23% 24% 25% 26% +3%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Size of college is right</td>
<td>22% 21% 22% 26% +4%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wanted to live near home</td>
<td>26% 25% 24% 25% -1%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduates gain admission to top graduate/professional schools</td>
<td>20% 20% -- 25% +5%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offered financial aid/assistance</td>
<td>17% 17% 18% 17% 0%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information from a website</td>
<td>9% 9% 15% 16% +7%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relatives wanted me to come</td>
<td>9% 9% 11% 11% +2%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ranking in magazines</td>
<td>6% 7% 11% 11% +5%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Students were given three options: “very important,” “somewhat important,” and “not important.” This table only includes the percentage responding “very important.”

** Possible “order effects” for 2003 result on this item.

In a separate question asked only of Mason freshmen, over half said it is “essential” or “very important” for them to attend a college with a multi-ethnic student body (see Table 20). It is particularly true for the 2005 entering freshmen. Female students are more likely to think it is essential than male students, 34% and 25% in 2005 respectively.

Table 20. Importance of Attending a College with a Diverse Student Body

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How important is it for you to attend a college with a multi-ethnic student body?</th>
<th>2003 Mason Freshmen</th>
<th>2005 Mason Freshmen</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>All</td>
<td>Men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essential</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very important</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat important</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not important</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A visit to campus has become very important to freshmen in their decision to attend Mason.
3. Choice of Major

In 2005, 11% of entering Mason freshmen had not yet decided their major field of study, slightly higher than freshmen in public universities. **Business**, including accounting, business administration, finance, international business, marketing and management, is the most popular field for incoming students. Eighteen percent of Mason freshmen have chosen or will probably choose business as their major field. Compared with their peers in other public universities, Mason freshmen expressed lower interest in professional fields and in engineering.

When examining a detailed list of majors, we found the following to be the most popular specific majors among Mason freshmen:

- *Political science* (9% of the 2005 incoming freshmen have chosen/will probably choose it as their major field)
- *Management* (6%)
- *Biology* (5%)
- *Psychology* (5%)
- *Nursing* (4%)

Among the additional questions provided by the Office of Institutional Assessment at Mason, freshmen were asked to specify the reasons that influenced their choice of major (see Table 21). Almost all 2005 freshmen “strongly agreed” or “agreed” that their decision was influenced by their own personal interest and 74% said they were influenced by the potential for employment. Nearly half (42%) agreed that their decision was influenced by their parents or a family member.

Table 21. Reasons for Choosing a Particular Major

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I was influenced to choose my major by…</th>
<th>2003 Mason</th>
<th>2005 Mason</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>Agree Somewhat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My own personal interest</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The potential for employment</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My parents or a family member</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. Career Choice

Freshmen were also asked to select their probable career/occupation among a list of 46 choices. Approximately 17% of Mason freshmen had not decided their career yet, with female students more likely to be undecided. The most popular careers are as follows:

- **Business executive** (i.e., management, administrator) – 8% of the 2005 Mason freshmen, slightly higher among male students
- **Lawyer (attorney) or judge** – 6%, slightly higher among female students
- **Engineer** – 6%, majority are male students
- **Physician** – 4%, more female than male
- **Nurse** – 4%, more female than male

Nationally the most likely career choices among freshmen in public universities are **engineer** (11%), **physician** (8%), **business executive** (8%), **lawyer** (4%), and **pharmacist** (4%).
V. College Expectations

1. Educational Aspirations

As Figure 5 presents, the majority of 2005 Mason freshmen (69%) intend to obtain a bachelor’s degree from Mason and 23% of them do not plan to study for an advanced degree. Forty-four percent of them intend to obtain a master’s degree from a university but only 21% of them intend to do it at Mason. Similarly, 17% of students plan to obtain a doctoral degree, but only 2% intend to get it from Mason. Since Mason has no medical school, almost all students who want to become a doctor (7%) have to get the training from other institutions. Among the 7% of students who want to become a lawyer or judge, one third of them intend to go to Mason Law School.

Figure 5. Educational Aspirations of Mason Freshmen, 2005*

* Percentages in this graph do not add to 100 because divinity degrees, degrees lower than the bachelor’s, and other types of degrees are not reported here. See Table 22 for a full list of degree options on the Survey.

Since 2001, there has been a drop in the percentage of Mason freshmen who have no intention of getting a bachelor’s degree from any college (see Table 22); there has also been a significant increase in the percentage of students who don’t intend to study beyond a bachelor’s degree.

Table 22. Educational Aspirations of Mason Freshmen

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What is the highest academic degree that you intend to obtain at any college?</th>
<th>George Mason University</th>
<th>Public Universities 2005</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>2001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower than bachelor’s (associate degree, certificate, or none)</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor’s degree</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master’s degree</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctoral degree</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical degree (MD, DO, DDS, DVM)</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law degree</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other degrees (divinity degrees, etc.)</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2. Academic Expectations

The 2005 incoming freshmen are very optimistic about their chance of making at least a B average at Mason – about 68% think the chance is “very good” (see Table 23). This figure has increased by 21 percentage points since 2000 and is six percentage points higher than that of public universities. Over the past six years, there has been a continuing increase in the percentage of Mason freshmen who think they will be satisfied with Mason – 58% rated the chance as “very good” in 2005. The 2005 Graduating Senior Survey (GSS) administered by the Office of Institutional Assessment found that 90% of senior students were “very satisfied” or “satisfied” with their overall Mason experience. Compared with the 2003 freshmen, more 2005 freshmen at Mason are interested in studying abroad and fewer may consider transferring to another college.

Table 23. College Academic Expectations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student estimates chances are “very good” that he/she will*</th>
<th>George Mason University</th>
<th>Public Universities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>2001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make at least a B average</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be satisfied with his/her college</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participate in study abroad</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change majors</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change career choice</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transfer to another college</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work full-time while attending college</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*There were four options for this question: “very good chance,” “some chance,” “very little chance” and “no chance.” This table only includes the percentage responding “very good chance.”

Compared with earlier cohorts and their counterparts in public universities, the 2005 Mason freshmen are more optimistic about the chances of making at least a B average and being satisfied with Mason.

Students’ anticipated studying time increased slightly from 2003 to 2005. In 2005, about 80% of Mason freshmen expect to study at least one hour for each hour spent in class or labs during their first year – the figure was 77% in 2003. Female freshmen expect to study for longer hours than their male counterparts. The 2003 Graduating Senior Survey found that senior students on average spend 1.34 hours studying for each hour spent in class or labs during their last year at Mason.

Table 24. Expected Study Time

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Approximately, how much time do you expect to spend studying during your first year at Mason?</th>
<th>Mason 2003</th>
<th>Mason 2005</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>All Freshmen</td>
<td>Men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than ½ hour for each hour spent in class or labs</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>½ hour for each hour spent in class or labs</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 hour for each hour spent in class or labs</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1½ hour for each hour spent in class or labs</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 hours or more for each hour spent in class or labs</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. Expectations for Social Life in College

Over the past six years, more and more Mason freshmen report that they very likely will socialize with someone of another racial/ethnic group (80% rated the chance as “very good” in 2005). For 2005, there is a significant increase in the percentage of Mason freshmen who think it is very likely that they will get a job to help pay for college expenses, 16 percentage points over 2000 and five percentage points higher than the national average.
More Mason freshmen expect to participate in volunteer/community service work than in the past (25% in 2005) and the percentage who expect to need counseling has steadily dropped to 5% in 2005.

Table 25. Expectations for Social Life in College

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student estimates chances are “very good” that he/she will*:</th>
<th>George Mason University</th>
<th>Public Universities 2005</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Socialize with someone of another racial/ethnic group</td>
<td>67% 74% 73% 80%</td>
<td>+13% 66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Get a job to help pay college expenses</td>
<td>36% 41% 42% 52%</td>
<td>+17% 47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participate in student clubs/groups</td>
<td>41% 40% 44% 44%</td>
<td>+3% 45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicate regularly with professors</td>
<td>30% 30% 31% 33%</td>
<td>+3% 31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participate in volunteer/community service work</td>
<td>18% 16% 23% 25%</td>
<td>+7% 25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strengthen religious beliefs/convictions</td>
<td>- - 21% 23%</td>
<td>-- 23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Play varsity/intercollegiate athletics</td>
<td>10% 9% 10% 12%</td>
<td>+2% 11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participate in student government</td>
<td>8% 8% 8% 10%</td>
<td>+2% 8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Join fraternity/sorority</td>
<td>10% 11% 11% 9%</td>
<td>-1% 12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participate in student protests or demonstrations</td>
<td>7% 6% 9% 8%</td>
<td>+1% 6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seek personal counseling</td>
<td>8% 6% 7% 5%</td>
<td>-3% 8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** There were four options for this question: “very good chance,” “some chance,” “very little chance” and “no chance.” This table only includes the percentage responding “very good chance.”

- More and more entering freshmen are realizing that Mason is a diverse university and the chances are “very good” that they will socialize with someone of another racial/ethnic group.
- The 2005 entering freshmen are more likely than earlier cohorts to think that they need to get a job to help pay for college expenses.

4. Additional Expectations for Experiences at Mason

In addition to the standard questions on the CIRP Freshman Survey, Mason freshmen were also asked to respond to 21 questions that pertain only to Mason students. Some of these questions have been covered in the previous sections and the rest are reported here.

One out of four 2005 Mason freshmen feel it is “essential” for them to contribute to class discussions and to increase their technology skills in classes (see Table 26). A large percentage of students (83%) think it is essential or very important to socialize with students from other racial or ethnic backgrounds. Students’ opinion on foreign language learning is polarized: 24% think it is “essential” while 19% think it is “not important” at all. Keep in mind that the native language for 20% of Mason freshmen is not English.

Table 26. Additional Expectations for Mason Experiences, 2005

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Please indicate the importance to you personally of each of the following:</th>
<th>Essential</th>
<th>Very Important</th>
<th>Somewhat Important</th>
<th>Not Important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Contributing to class discussions</td>
<td>26% 44%</td>
<td>26% 4%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increasing technology skills in my classes at Mason</td>
<td>25% 41%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To be at least moderately fluent in a language other than my native language</td>
<td>24% 25%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td></td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socializing w. students of other racial/ethnic groups</td>
<td>23% 60%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td></td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Studying with other students outside of class</td>
<td>22% 44%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td></td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talking with my professors outside of class</td>
<td>22% 40%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td></td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having serious discussions about social issues in class</td>
<td>22% 36%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td></td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working in team w. other students on a class project</td>
<td>17% 41%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td></td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Mason freshmen also expect to have opportunities to interact with professors out of class – 62% of them think it is essential or very important. Compared with the 2003 entering freshmen, the 2005 freshmen expect very close contact with faculty and with academic advisors. As Figure 6 shows, 13% of the 2005 freshmen expect their professors to contact them weekly about course-related information outside the classroom and 70% expect professors to contact them a few times during a semester, compared with 16% and 47% in 2003 respectively. No one in the 2005 cohort expects no contact from professors, compared with 7% of the 2003 freshmen. As Figure 7 shows, 75% of the 2005 freshmen expect to meet with their academic advisors weekly and 23% expect a few times during the first semester, compared with 14% and 68% in 2003 respectively. Managing student expectations is a challenge for Mason.

Figure 6. Expected Frequency of Interaction with Faculty outside of Class

Figure 7. Expected Frequency of Meeting Academic Advisor

For the majority of 2005 incoming freshmen, it is important for Mason to have a welcoming climate for students with different sexual preferences and for students from different ethnicities – 81% and 71% of freshmen “strongly agreed” with these two statements respectively. Freshmen also expect Mason to have a welcoming climate for people from different religious backgrounds and for people with disabilities.

Table 27. Expected Campus Climate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>It is important that the University climate is welcoming to:</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree Somewhat</th>
<th>Disagree Somewhat</th>
<th>Disagree Strongly</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>People with different ethnicities</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People with different religious backgrounds</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People with disabilities</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People with different sexual preferences</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
VI. Self-Perceptions, Personal Objectives and Political Views

1. Self-Perceptions

Freshmen were asked to rate themselves on 18 personal traits as compared with the average person of their age. In most of these areas (see Table 28), the self-perceptions of Mason freshmen have become more positive over time. Significantly more freshmen entering in fall 2005 rated themselves higher in the following characteristics than earlier cohorts did:

- Drive to achieve – 75% of the 2005 freshmen rated themselves above the average person of their age, an increase of 11 percentage points since 2000
- Academic ability – 74% of the 2005 freshmen rated themselves above the average person of their age, an increase of 9 percentage points since 2000
- Self-understanding – 65% rated themselves above average, a seven-percentage-point increase

Unlike previous years, differences in self-perceptions between Mason freshmen and freshmen in public universities diminished in 2005. For example, in 2003, the percentage of freshmen in public universities who rated themselves above average was at least five percentage points higher than that of Mason freshmen in each of the following areas: academic ability, drive to achieve, leadership ability, physical health, and, particularly, math ability. In 2005, however, Mason freshmen ratings were significantly behind their counterparts only in math ability – 7 percentage points lower than the average for public universities. In all the other areas, the Mason figures are very close (within three percentage points), if not above, the public university average. Particularly in understanding of others, creativity and self-understanding, Mason figures are seven percentage points above the percentage for public universities.

Table 28. Freshmen Self-Perceptions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage of freshmen who rated themselves above average or highest 10% as compared with the average person of their age*:</th>
<th>George Mason University</th>
<th>Public Universities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>2001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooperativeness</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Ability</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding of Others</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drive to Achieve</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creativity</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-understanding</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership Ability</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Confidence (intellectual)</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Health</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Confidence (social)</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Health</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer Skills</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Math Ability</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing Ability</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spirituality</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>39%**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Speaking Ability</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artistic Ability</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religiousness</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Students were given five options: “highest 10%,” “above average,” “average,” “below average” and “lowest 10%.” This table combines the percentages of “highest 10%” and “above average.”

** Results may not be comparable to earlier years due to addition of “Religiousness” in that year.
2. Personal Objectives

For most freshmen nationwide (including Mason freshmen), the top three “essential” or “very important” personal objectives are as follows: “being very well off financially,” “raising a family,” and “helping others in difficulty.” Table 29 lists those personal objectives shared by more than 25% of Mason freshmen in 2005. Over the past six years, more Mason freshmen thought the following personal objectives were very important for them:

- keeping up to date with political affairs (an increase of 12 percentage points over 2000)
- raising a family (an increase of 6 percentage points)
- helping others in difficulty (an increase of 5 percentage points), and
- influencing social values (an increase of 5 percentage points)

Fewer freshmen in the 2005 cohort thought it was essential or very important for them to integrate spirituality into their lives, a decrease of five percentage points.

Compared with their counterparts in other public universities, more Mason freshmen (both 2003 and 2005 cohorts) would like to improve their understanding of other countries and cultures, keep up to date with political affairs, and help to promote racial understanding. These objectives complement student expectations for a diverse campus climate and their high expectations for socializing with someone of another racial/ethnic group.

Table 29. Personal Objectives of Freshmen

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Top “Essential” or “Very important” Personal Objectives*</th>
<th>George Mason University</th>
<th>Public Universities 2005</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>2001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being very well off financially</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raising a family</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helping others in difficulty</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Becoming an authority in my field</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improving my understanding of other countries &amp; cultures**</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obtaining recognition from colleagues for contributions to my special field</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing a meaningful philosophy of life</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influencing social values</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keeping up to date with political affairs</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Becoming successful in business of my own</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having administrative responsibility for work of others</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helping to promote racial understanding</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrating spirituality into my life</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Becoming a community leader</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influencing the political structure</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Students were given four rating options: “essential”, “very important,” “somewhat important” and “not important.” This table combines “essential” and ‘very important’ responses and reports only the objectives cited by at least 25% of the 2005 respondents.
** New item in 2003.

Over the past six years, more Mason freshmen think it is essential or very important for them to keep up to date with political affairs. Compared with their counterparts in other public universities, Mason freshmen are more likely to consider it essential or very important to improve their understanding of other countries and cultures, to keep up to date with political affairs, and to help promote racial understanding.
3. Political Standing and Political Views

For six years, almost half of Mason freshmen have taken a “middle-of-the-road” standing politically. Since 2000, there has been a slight decrease in freshmen who identify themselves as “liberal” or “middle-of-the-road;” consequently, there is a slight increase of “conservative” freshmen at Mason. Despite this, compared with their peers in other public universities in 2005, fewer Mason students identified themselves as “conservative” – four percentage points lower than the average for public universities.

Table 30. Freshmen Political Standing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How would you characterize your political views?</th>
<th>George Mason University</th>
<th>Public Universities 2005</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Far left</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle-of-the-road</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservative</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Far right</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In 2005, more than 75% of Mason freshmen agreed strongly or somewhat with the following statements (See Table 31: there are no statements on this list in which a majority of Mason freshmen strongly agreed):
- The federal government should do more to control the sale of handguns (42% strongly agreed and 40% somewhat agreed)
- Through hard work, everybody can succeed in American society (43% strongly agreed and 38% somewhat agreed)
- The federal government is not doing enough to control environmental pollution (28% strongly agreed and 50% somewhat agreed)

In 2005, Mason students were more likely to strongly disagree with the following two statements:
- The activities of married women are best confined to the home and family (58% strongly disagreed and another 27% somewhat disagreed)
- It is important to have laws prohibiting homosexual relationships (46% strongly disagreed and another 30% somewhat disagreed)

The 2005 entering freshmen at Mason were divided on the following issues (almost half of them agreed and another half disagreed, details presented in Figure 8):
- There is too much concern in the courts for the rights of criminals
- Affirmative action in college admissions should be abolished
- Undocumented immigrants should be denied access to public education (on this issue there was greater polarization with 18% agreeing strongly and 20% disagreeing strongly).

Over the past six years, increasingly more Mason freshmen agree that “Wealthy people should pay a larger share of taxes than they do now” – an increase of ten percentage points in 2005 over 2000; whereas, fewer freshmen agree that “There is too much concern in the courts for the rights of criminals” – a decrease of eight percentage points over 2000. Compared with their peers in public universities, the 2005 Mason freshmen are more likely to
agree that “Dissent is a critical component of the political process” and less likely to agree that “Grading in the high schools has become too easy” and “Marijuana should be legalized.”

Table 31. Freshmen Political Views

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage of students who agree “strongly” or “somewhat”*</th>
<th>George Mason University</th>
<th>Public Univ. 2005 % change 00-05</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The federal government should do more to control the sale of handguns</td>
<td>83% 81% 77% 82%</td>
<td>-1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Through hard work, everybody can succeed in American society</td>
<td>-- -- -- 81%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The federal government is not doing enough to control environmental pollution</td>
<td>-- -- -- 78%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A national health care plan is needed to cover everybody’s medical costs</td>
<td>-- -- -- 74%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dissent is a critical component of the political process</td>
<td>-- -- -- 73%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colleges should prohibit racist/sexist speech on campus</td>
<td>64% 67% 59% 62%</td>
<td>-2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abortion should be legal</td>
<td>60% 61% 62% 61%</td>
<td>+1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Same sex couples should have the right to legal marital status</td>
<td>58% 58% 66% 61%</td>
<td>+3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Only volunteers should serve in the armed forces</td>
<td>-- -- -- 60%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wealthy people should pay a larger share of taxes than they do now</td>
<td>49% 50% 54% 59%</td>
<td>+10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is too much concern in the courts for the rights of criminals</td>
<td>66% 63% 60% 54%</td>
<td>-8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affirmative action in college admissions should be abolished</td>
<td>51% 48% 57% 52%</td>
<td>+1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undocumented immigrants should be denied access to public education</td>
<td>-- -- -- 44%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If two people really like each other, it’s all right for them to have sex even if they’ve known each other for only a very short time</td>
<td>44% 42% -- 41%</td>
<td>-3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federal military spending should be increased</td>
<td>-- -- 33% 36%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grading in the high schools has become too easy</td>
<td>-- -- -- 35%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The death penalty should be abolished</td>
<td>29% 33% 28% 34%</td>
<td>+5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marijuana should be legalized</td>
<td>35% 37% 37% 32%</td>
<td>-3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Realistically an individual can do little to bring about changes in our society</td>
<td>28% 28% 29% 27%</td>
<td>-1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is important to have laws prohibiting homosexual relationships</td>
<td>26% 25% 21% 24%</td>
<td>-2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The activities of married women are best confined to the home and family</td>
<td>24% 24% 20% 20%</td>
<td>-4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racial discrimination is no longer a problem in America</td>
<td>23% 24% 24% 20%</td>
<td>-3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Students were given four options: “agree strongly,” “agree somewhat,” “disagree somewhat” and “strongly disagree.” This table combines percentages for “agree strongly” and “agree somewhat.”

Figure 8. Three Most Controversial Issues among the 2005 Mason Freshmen*

* Those issues most evenly divided between “agree” and “disagree” among the 2005 Mason freshmen.
Appendixes

1. References


**NAME:**

**ADDRESS:**

**CITY:**

**STATE:**

**ZIP:**

**PHONE:**

**When were you born?**

- **Month:** [ ] 01-12, [ ] 01-31
- **Day:** [ ] 01-31
- **Year:** [ ]

---

**MARKING DIRECTIONS**

Your responses will be read by an optical mark reader. Please,
- Use a pencil or black or blue pen.
- Fill in the oval completely.
- Erase cleanly any answer you wish to change or "X" out mark if in pen.

**CORRECT MARK**

**INCORRECT MARKS**

- A
- B
- C
- D
- X

**PLEASE PROVIDE YOUR ID NUMBER (as instructed)**

Mark here if directed

**GROUP CODE A**

|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |  

**2005 STUDENT INFORMATION FORM**

**1. Your sex:**

- [ ] Male
- [ ] Female

**2. How old will you be on December 31 of this year?**

- [ ] 16 or younger
- [ ] 17
- [ ] 18
- [ ] 19
- [ ] 20

**3. Is English your native language?**

- [ ] Yes
- [ ] No

**4. In what year did you graduate from high school?**

- [ ] 2005
- [ ] 2004
- [ ] 2003
- [ ] Never completed
- [ ] 2002 or earlier

**5. Are you enrolled (or enrolling) as a:**

- [ ] Full-time student
- [ ] Part-time student

**6. How many miles is this college from your permanent home?**

- [ ] 5 or less
- [ ] 11-50
- [ ] 101-500
- [ ] 50-100
- [ ] Over 500

**7. What was your average grade in high school?**

- [ ] A or A+
- [ ] B
- [ ] C
- [ ] D
- [ ] C+

**8. From what high school did you graduate?**

**Name of High School**

**City**

**State**

**9. From what kind of high school did you graduate?**

- [ ] Public school (not charter or magnet)
- [ ] Public charter school
- [ ] Public magnet school
- [ ] Private religious/parochial school
- [ ] Private independent college-prep school
- [ ] Home school

**10. What were your scores on the SAT I and/or ACT?**

- [ ] SAT VERBAL
- [ ] SAT MATH
- [ ] ACT Composite

**11. Citizenship status:**

- [ ] U.S. citizen
- [ ] Permanent resident (green card)
- [ ] Neither

**12. Which of the following statements applies to you?**

- [ ] I was born in the United States
- [ ] I came to the United States:
  - [ ] Before age 6
  - [ ] Between ages 6-12
  - [ ] After age 12

**13. If you or your parents were not born in the United States, indicate the country of birth:**

- [ ] You
- [ ] Mother
- [ ] Father

**14. Prior to this term, have you ever taken courses for credit at this institution?**

- [ ] Yes
- [ ] No

**15. Since leaving high school, have you ever taken courses, whether for credit or not for credit, at any other institution (university, 4- or 2-year college, technical, vocational, or business school)?**

- [ ] Yes
- [ ] No

**16. Where do you plan to live during the fall term?**

- [ ] With my family or other relatives
- [ ] Other private home, apartment, or room
- [ ] College residence hall
- [ ] Fraternity or sorority house
- [ ] Other campus student housing
- [ ] Other

**17. Is this college your:**

- [ ] First choice
- [ ] Second choice
- [ ] Third choice

**18. To how many colleges other than this one did you apply for admission this year?**

- [ ] None
- [ ] 1
- [ ] 2
- [ ] 3
- [ ] 4
- [ ] 5
- [ ] 6
- [ ] 7-10
- [ ] 11 or more

**19. Have you had, or do you feel you will need, any special tutoring or remedial work in any of the following subjects?**

- [ ] English
- [ ] Reading
- [ ] Mathematics
- [ ] Social Studies
- [ ] Science
- [ ] Foreign Language
- [ ] Writing

**20. What is the highest academic degree that you intend to obtain?**

- [ ] None
- [ ] Vocational certificate
- [ ] Associate (A.A. or equivalent)
- [ ] Bachelor's degree (B.A., B.S., etc.)
- [ ] Master's degree (M.A., M.S., etc.)
- [ ] Ph.D. or Ed.D.
- [ ] M.D., D.O., D.D.S., or D.V.M.
- [ ] J.D. (Law)
- [ ] B.D. or M.Div. (Divinity)
- [ ] Other

**21. Are your parents:**

- [ ] Both alive and living with each other?
- [ ] Both alive, divorced or living apart?
- [ ] One or both deceased?
22. How much of your first year's educational expenses (room, board, tuition, and fees) do you expect to cover from each of the sources listed below? (Mark one answer for each possible source)

- Family resources (parents, relatives, spouse, etc.)
- My own resources (savings from work, work-study, other income)
- Aid which need not be repaid (grants, scholarships, military funding, etc.)
- Aid which must be repaid (loans, etc.)
- Other than above

23. What is your best estimate of your parents' total income last year? Consider income from all sources before taxes. (Mark one)

- Less than $10,000
- $10,000-$14,999
- $15,000-$19,999
- $20,000-$24,999
- $25,000-$29,999
- $30,000-$39,999
- $40,000-$49,999
- $50,000-$59,999
- $60,000-$74,999
- $75,000-$99,999
- $100,000-$149,999
- $150,000-$199,999
- $200,000-$249,999
- $250,000 or more
- None

24. Current religious preference: (Mark one in each column)

- Baptist
- Methodist
- Presbyterian
- Quaker
- Roman Catholic
- Seventh Day Adventist
- Unitarian/Universalist
- United Church of Christ/Congregational
- Other Christian
- Other Religion
- None

25. Are you: (Mark all that apply)

- White/Caucasian
- African American/Black
- American Indian/Alaska Native
- Asian American/Asian
- Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander
- Mexican American/Chicano
- Puerto Rican
- Other Latino
- Other

26. For the activities below, indicate which ones you did during the past year. If you engaged in an activity frequently, mark ☐. If you engaged in an activity one or more times, but not frequently, mark ☐ (Occasionally). Mark ☐ (Not at all) if you have not performed the activity during the past year. (Mark one for each item)

- Attended a religious service
- Was bored in class
- Participated in organized demonstrations
- Tutored another student
- Studied with other students
- Was a guest in a teacher's home
- Smoked cigarettes
- Drank beer
- Drank wine or liquor
- Felt overwhelmed by all I had to do
- Felt depressed
- Performed volunteer work
- Played a musical instrument
- Asked a teacher for advice after class
- Voted in a student election
- Socialized with someone of another racial/ethnic group
- Came late to class
- Used the Internet for research or homework
- Performed community service as part of a class
- Used a personal computer
- Discussed religion
- Discussed politics: In class
- With friends
- With family
- Worked on a local, state, or national political campaign

27. Did your high school require community service for graduation?
- Yes
- No

28. What is the highest level of formal education obtained by your parents? (Mark one in each column)

- Grammar school or less
- Some high school
- High school graduate
- Postsecondary school other than college
- Some college
- College degree
- Some graduate school
- Graduate degree

29. In deciding to go to college, how important to you was each of the following reasons? (Mark one answer for each possible reason)

- My parents wanted me to go
- I could not find a job
- Wanted to get away from home
- To be able to get a better job
- To gain a general education and appreciation of ideas
- There was nothing better to do
- To make me a more cultured person
- To be able to make more money
- To learn more about things that interest me
- To prepare myself for graduate or professional school
- A mentor/role model encouraged me to go
- To get training for a specific career
- To find my purpose in life

30. How would you characterize your political views? (Mark one)

- Far left
- Liberal
- Middle-of-the-road
- Conservative
- Far right

31. Rate yourself on each of the following traits as compared with the average person your age. We want the most accurate estimate of how you see yourself. (Mark one in each row)

- Academic ability
- Artistic ability
- Computer skills
- Cooperativeness
- Creativity
- Drive to achieve
- Emotional health
- Leadership ability
- Mathematical ability
- Physical health
- Public speaking ability
- Religiousness
- Self-confidence (intellectual)
- Self-confidence (social)
- Self-understanding
- Spirituality
- Understanding of others
- Writing ability
32. Mark only three responses, one in each column.

- Your father's occupation
- Your mother's occupation
- Your probable career occupation

NOTE: If your father or mother is deceased, please indicate his or her last occupation.

Accountant or actuary ..........................................
Actress or entertainer ..........................................
Architect or urban planner .....................................
Attorney ..............................................................
Business (clerical) .................................................
Business executive (management, administrator) ........
Business owner or proprietor ..................................
Business salesperson or buyer ..................................
Clergy (minister, priest) ...........................................
Clergy (other religious) ...........................................
Clinical psychologist .............................................
College administrator/staff .....................................
College teacher .....................................................
Computer programmer or analyst ............................
Conservator or forensic .........................................
Dentist (including orthodontist) ..............................
Dietitian or nutritionist .......................................... 
Engineer ............................................................... 
Farmer or rancher ...................................................
Foreign service worker (including diplomat) .............
Homemaker (full-time) .......................................... 
Interior decorator (including designer) .....................
Interior designer ...................................................
Job placement ........................................................
Lab technician or hygienist ....................................... 
Law enforcement officer ........................................ 
Lawyer (attorney) or judge ..................................... 
Military service (career) ......................................... 
Musician (performer, composer) ..............................
Musician ............................................................... 
Motor vehicle operator .......................................... 
Nurse .................................................................
Optometrist ............................................................
Pharmacist ............................................................
Physician .............................................................
Policymaker/Government ......................................
School counselor ..................................................
School principal or superintendent ..........................
Scientific researcher ..............................................
Social worker, or recreation worker .........................
Social worker ........................................................
Therapist (physical, occupational, speech) ............... 
Teacher or administrator (elementary) .....................
Teacher or administrator (secondary) ......................
Veterinarian .......................................................... 
Writer or journalist ............................................... 
Skilled trades ........................................................
Skilled trades.....................................................
Laborer (unskilled) ............................................... 
Semi-skilled worker .............................................. 
Unemployed ..........................................................
Other ......................................................................
Undecided ............................................................

33. Mark one in each row:

There is too much concern in the courts for the rights of criminals ...........................................
The death penalty should be abolished .................................................................
Marijuana should be legalized ............................................................................
Racial discrimination is no longer a major problem in America .................................
Realistically, an individual can do little to bring about changes in our society ...........
Wealthy people should pay a larger share of taxes than they do now ..........................
Colleges should prohibit racist/sexist speech on campus ......................................
Same-sex couples should have the right to legal marital status ..............................
Affirmative action in college admissions should be abolished ..............................
The activities of married women are best confined to the home and family ...........
Federal military spending should be increased ...................................................

If two people really like each other, it's all right for them to have sex even if they've known each other for only a very short time ..............................................

- The federal government should do more to control the sale of handguns ..............
- Only volunteers should serve in the armed forces ..............................................
- The federal government is not doing enough to control environmental pollution ...
- A national health care plan is needed to cover everybody's medical costs .............
- Grading in the high schools has become too easy ..............................................
- Undocumented immigrants should be denied access to public education ...........
- Through hard work, everybody can succeed in American society .....................
- Dissent is a critical component of the political process ......................................

34. During your last year in high school, how much time did you spend during a typical week doing the following activities?

**Hours per week:**

- Studying/homework ........................................
- Socializing with friends ....................................
- Talking with teachers outside of class ................
- Exercise or sports .............................................
- Partying ...........................................................
- Working (for pay) .............................................
- Volunteer work ............................................... 
- Student clubs/groups ........................................
- Watching TV ...................................................
- Household/childcare duties .........................
- Reading for pleasure .....................................
- Playing video/computer games ......................
- Prayer/meditation ...........................................

**Reasons:**

**Rankings in national magazines** ..............................................................
**I was offered financial assistance** ........................ ...........................................
**The cost of attending this college** ............................................................
**High school counselor advised me** ..........................................................
**I wanted to live near home** .................................................................
**Not offered aid by first choice** ...............................................................
**This college's graduates gain admission to top graduate/professional schools** ...
**I was attracted by the religious affiliation/orientation of the college** ........
**I wanted to go to a school about the size of this college** ..........................
**Rankings in national magazines** ............................................................
**Information from a website** .................................................................
**I was admitted through an Early Action or Early Decision program** ......
**A visit to the campus** .................................................................

35. 3 Do you have any concern about your ability to finance your college education? (Mark one)

- None (I am confident that I will have sufficient funds) ..........................................
- Some (but I probably will have enough funds) ..............................................
- Major (not sure I will have enough funds to complete college) ......................

36. Below are some reasons that might have influenced your decision to attend this particular college. How important was each reason in your decision to come here? (Mark one answer for each possible reason)

- My relatives wanted me to come here ..........................................................
- My teacher advised me ...............................................................................
- This college has a very good academic reputation .....................................
- This college has a good reputation for its social activities .........................
- I was offered financial assistance ............................................................
- The cost of attending this college .............................................................
- High school counselor advised me ..........................................................
- Private college counselor advised me ........................................................
- I wanted to live near home ........................................................................
- Not offered aid by first choice ....................................................................
- This college's graduates gain admission to top graduate/professional schools
- This college's graduates get good jobs ........................................................
- I was attracted by the religious affiliation/orientation of the college ........
- I wanted to go to a school about the size of this college ..........................
- Rankings in national magazines ...............................................................
- Information from a website .................................................................
- I was admitted through an Early Action or Early Decision program ......
- A visit to the campus ..............................................................................
37. Below is a list of different undergraduate major fields grouped into general categories. Mark only one oval to indicate your probable field of study.

**ARTS AND HUMANITIES**
- Art, fine and applied
- English (language and literature)
- History
- Journalism
- Language and Literature (except English)
- Music
- Philosophy
- Speech
- Theater or Drama
- Theology or Religion
- Other Arts and Humanities

**BIOLOGICAL SCIENCE**
- Biology (general)
- Biochemistry or Biophysics
- Botany
- Environmental Science
- Marine (Life) Science
- Microbiology or Bacteriology
- Zoology
- Other Biological Science

**BUSINESS**
- Accounting
- Business Admin. (general)
- Finance
- International Business
- Marketing
- Management
- Secretarial Studies
- Other Business

**EDUCATION**
- Business Education
- Elementary Education
- Music or Art Education
- Physical Education or Recreation
- Secondary Education
- Special Education
- Other Education

**ENGINEERING**
- Aeronautical or Astronautical Engineering
- Civil Engineering
- Chemical Engineering
- Computer Engineering
- Electrical or Electronic Engineering
- Industrial Engineering
- Mechanical Engineering
- Other Engineering

**PHYSICAL SCIENCE**
- Astronomy
- Atmospheric Science (incl. Meteorology)
- Chemistry
- Earth Science
- Marine Science (incl. Oceanography)
- Mathematics
- Physics
- Statistics
- Other Physical Science

**PROFESSIONAL**
- Architecture or Urban Planning
- Family & Consumer Sciences
- Health Technology (medical, dental, laboratory)
- Library or Archival Science
- Medicine, Dentistry, Veterinary Medicine
- Nursing
- Pharmacy
- Therapy (occupational, physical, speech)
- Other Professional

**SOCIAL SCIENCE**
- Anthropology
- Economics
- Ethnic Studies
- Geography
- Political Science (gov't., international relations)
- Psychology
- Social Work
- Sociology
- Women's Studies
- Other Social Science

**TECHNICAL**
- Building Trades
- Data Processing or Computer Programming
- Drafting or Design
- Electronics
- Mechanics
- Other Technical

**OTHER FIELDS**
- Agriculture
- Communications
- Computer Science
- Forestry
- Kinesiology
- Law Enforcement
- Military Science
- Other Field
- Undecided

38. Please indicate the importance to you personally of each of the following: (Mark one for each item)

- Becoming accomplished in one of the performing arts (acting, dancing, etc.)
- Becoming an authority in my field
- Obtaining recognition from my colleagues for contributions to my special field
- Influencing the political structure
- Influencing social values
- Raising a family
- Having administrative responsibility for the work of others
- Being very well off financially
- Helping others who are in difficulty
- Making a theoretical contribution to science
- Writing original works (poems, novels, short stories, etc.)
- Creating artistic work (painting, sculpture, decorating, etc.)
- Becoming successful in a business of my own
- Becoming involved in programs to clean up the environment
- Developing a meaningful philosophy of life
- Participating in a community action program
- Helping to promote racial understanding
- Keeping up to date with political affairs
- Becoming a community leader
- Integrating spirituality into my life
- Improving my understanding of other countries and cultures

39. What is your best guess as to the chances that you will: (Mark one for each item)

- Change major field?
- Change career choice?
- Participate in student government?
- Get a job to help pay for college expenses?
- Work full-time while attending college?
- Join a social fraternity or sorority?
- Play varsity/intercollegiate athletics?
- Make at least a "B" average?
- Participate in student protests or demonstrations?
- Transfer to another college before graduating?
- Be satisfied with your college?
- Participate in volunteer or community service work?
- Seek personal counseling?
- Communicate regularly with your professors?
- Socialize with someone of another racial/ethnic group?
- Participate in student clubs/groups?
- Strengthen your religious beliefs/convictions?
- Participate in a study abroad program?

40. Do you give the Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) permission to include your ID number should your college request the data for additional research analyses? HERI maintains strict standards of confidentiality and would require your college to sign a pledge of confidentiality. Yes  No

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